



ICNND and Civil Society in Japan

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Introduction

The creation of the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) provided an important opportunity for policy dialogue between the government and civil society of Japan. Since its launch in October 2008, a certain level of civil society participation has been permitted by the ICNND, albeit quite limited. Two NGO Advisors were appointed by Co-Chairs Gareth Evans and Kawaguchi Yoriko. The NGO Advisors are playing the role of promoting dialogue between civil society and the Commission in both Australia and Japan.¹

In Japan, a regular roundtable between Co-Chair Kawaguchi and Japanese NGOs began in December 2008. A diverse range of Japanese groups working on nuclear disarmament assembled to launch the "ICNND Japan NGO Network" in January 2009.² The Network cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Japanese Secretariat of the Commission in organizing the roundtable. It also helped realize a discussion session between ICNND Commissioners and *Hibakusha* (survivors of the atomic bombs) at the Commission's second meeting in Washington, D.C.³

This paper aims to identify the key issues to be addressed in the government-civil society dialogue over the ICNND, and to overview the challenges and prospects for civil society in advancing Japan's nuclear disarmament policy.

Government-Civil Society Relations

Policy-oriented dialogue on nuclear weapons between the government and civil society started in Japan at the time of Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, an expert panel backed by the Japanese government, in 1998-1999. NGOs made collective submissions to the panel and invited panel members to participate in public forums.

Until then, Japan had a history of over four decades of a nation-wide movement against nuclear weapons. Its origin was in the public response to the US hydrogen bomb testing at Bikini atoll in 1954, through which Japanese fishermen directly suffered. However, the national movement was soon politicized in the Cold War context: the anti-nuclear movement has long been placed in the context of political confrontation between the long ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the socialist/communist camp. Also, ideological division between socialists and communists over the question of how to address Soviet nuclear weapons further complicated the political context.

Initiation of policy-oriented dialogue between the government and NGOs on the occasion of the Tokyo Forum was therefore significant. It represented the post-Cold War era in nuclear debates in Japan. While traditional organizations against atomic and hydrogen bombs are affiliated to political parties and trade unions, independent NGOs equipped with advocacy capacity and resources were

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1 An overview of the works of the NGO Advisors is annexed at the end of this paper.

2 Activities of the ICNND Japan NGO Network can be seen here: <http://icnndngo-japan.wordpress.com/>

3 See: Kawasaki Akira, "The ICNND and Japanese civil society," Nautilus Policy Forum Online, <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/09037Kawasaki.html>

launched and grew since the late 1990s. These developments occurred in parallel to the rise of global civil society, symbolized by the World Court Project that helped realize the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of nuclear weapons (1996), the Ottawa Treaty on anti-personnel landmines (1997), and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (1998).

A decade has passed since then. Disarmament groups have increased dialogue with the government on nuclear weapons policy, including regularly reviewing the Japan-led annual UN General Assembly resolution on nuclear disarmament co-sponsored by Australia and others. Mutual understanding, including personal relations, between government officials and NGO activists has been somehow promoted. It is against such a background that the ICNND was launched, and the Commission presented a new dimension in government-civil society relations. At that timing, the historic change of government took place in September 2009 and the LDP lost power for almost the first time after over half a century of being the ruling party (except for a very short exception in 1993).

Japan's dilemmas

Since 1968, Japan has claimed that the Three Non-Nuclear Principles—not to possess, manufacture, nor allow introduction into its territory of nuclear weapons—are the fixed line of its national policy. However, the Three Principles have been just a component of the broader four basic nuclear policies of Japan: 1) adhering to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles; 2) making efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons; 3) depending on the US nuclear umbrella or extended nuclear deterrence for its security; and 4) promoting civil nuclear energy.

Today, nuclear proliferation is being highlighted worldwide as a serious, present danger, particularly in the post-9/11 context. This has led the US to shift its nuclear policy towards gearing up disarmament under the new administration. As the global community intensifies efforts for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, two fundamental dilemmas of Japan are becoming clearer than ever. One is that Japan depends on US nuclear weapons while calling for the elimination of such weapons. The other is that it promotes civil nuclear energy, including the most sensitive technology such as reprocessing, while it demands others—North Korea, Iran etc—to cease developing such technology.

These fundamental questions apply to both of Japan and Australia - the two ICNND hosts. These countries are the two key allies for the United States in the Asia Pacific region, and their security is based upon the US extended nuclear deterrence. Also, Australia exports uranium to the world, while Japan has accumulated huge stocks of plutonium and will shortly commence its commercial production. These two countries together form the front and back ends of the nuclear fuel cycle—making both of these non-nuclear weapon states the bearers of grave responsibility for the world's nuclear fuel cycle.

Civil society groups in Japan have grasped these issues. In its submissions to the Commission, the ICNND Japan NGO Network has advocated four major points: 1) creating international frameworks to outlaw nuclear weapons, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention, 2) reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies, 3) making new efforts to prevent proliferation responding to a possible expansion of civil use of nuclear energy, and 4) creating a regional non-nuclear, peace system for Northeast Asia.⁴

4 Open letters submitted by the ICNND Japan NGO Network to the Commission can be found at the following URLs: http://www.peacedepot.org/icnnd/JapanNGOnetwork_openletterE.pdf

The issue of extended nuclear deterrence is being highlighted as a question of whether Japan will accept measures to limit the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. Such measures include having nuclear-weapon states declare that “the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter others from using nuclear weapons,” or having them adopt a no-first-use (NFU) policy of nuclear weapons. The Japanese government has been consistently negative on these steps. Both the Australian and Japanese media have reported that this question is at the core of the ICNND debate, and particularly focused on Japan's resistance to accepting such measures.⁵

Debates over no-first-use

How are the pros and cons of NFU and other limiting measures on the role of nuclear weapons discussed in Japan? MOFA bureaucrats, who are generally reluctant to accept these measures, argue that Japan is threatened by North Korean biological and chemical weapons, and therefore that limiting the role of nuclear weapons to only deterrence of nuclear weapons would undermine Japan's security. Also, they question whether a NFU policy is verifiable, arguing that Japan cannot rely on an unverifiable commitment of nuclear-weapon states, presumably implying Chinese threats.⁶ The bureaucrats conclude that Japan needs extended deterrence from the US “as it is now.”⁷

On the proponents' side of NFU, there are two approaches. One is the “abolitionist approach,” to value NFU as an interim step towards nuclear disarmament and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons role in security policies. The other is the “realist approach,” to emphasize that North Korea can be deterred by a minimal nuclear deterrent under a NFU posture, or even by conventional deterrence. The peace movement takes the former approach, while the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which dramatically won the general election for the Lower House in August 2009 and took the central position of the new government in September, looks closer to the latter. Particularly, the new Foreign Minister and former Secretary General of the DPJ Okada Katsuya is quite vocal on this issue. He has publicly supported NFU as a way to “go half-away from the nuclear umbrella.”

Although economic and social agendas such as recession, employment, pensions and social welfare were dominant topics of the general election, the nuclear issue was somewhat debated before the election. Prior to the election, major newspapers debated whether NFU would be good for Japan.⁸ Furthermore, NGOs conducted a survey of political parties' “nuclear umbrella” policies. The result was that the LDP was the only party that clearly opposed NFU. The then-ruling coalition partner

http://icnndngoJapan.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/20090617_japan_ngo_letter.pdf

5 Daniel Flitton, “Australia, Japan in nuclear rift,” *The Age*, 4 September 2009

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/australia-japan-in-nuclear-rift-20090903-f9yw.html>

“Japan reluctant to accept proposal for US to reduce its N-role,” *Kyodo News*, 13 September 2009

<http://www.zeenews.com/news563190.html>

6 For background information and recent debates over no-first-use in Japan, refer to:

Masa Takubo, “Japan's Challenges and Dilemmas over Nuclear Disarmament,” *Disarmament Diplomacy*, Issue No.91 Summer 2009 <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd91/91mt.htm>

7 Typical views of present and former MOFA bureaucrats can be found in the August 2009 issue of *Gaiko Forum* (in Japanese).

8 On 6 August 2009, the 64th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan's second largest national newspaper the Asahi Shimbun expressed in its editorial titled “64 years and counting,” support of no-first-use and a Northeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone, naming such steps as a “nonnuclear umbrella.” The Yomiuri Shimbun, the largest national newspaper, however, criticized in its editorial titled “Obama's nonnuclear goal worthy but difficult,” that such steps would make the nuclear umbrella “not serve its purpose,” and criticized Okada Katsuya, the central proponent of NFU at the DPJ, by name.

New Komeito said that it would support NFU “if there is an international consensus.”⁹ The DPJ cautiously replied that NFU is “a topic to discuss with the US.” Among the two other parties that joined the DPJ-led ruling coalition after the election, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) answered that it supports NFU as a step to go away from the nuclear umbrella, and the conservative New People's Party (NPP) said that it would support NFU with the condition that deterrence is maintained.¹⁰

Twisted public opinion

On one hand, there is a long-held belief by mainstream conservatives and bureaucrats that a strong extended nuclear deterrence, including a first use option, is vital for Japan's security. They claim that this is the demand of Japanese public opinion. They take note of a strong public sentiment against North Korea, saying that the public feels unsecured in the face of the WMD-armed dictatorship. On the other hand, proponents of NFU and other steps towards disarmament claim that their call is in line with the longstanding national desire for a nuclear-weapon-free world. They point out how widespread localities declared to be nuclear-free are, representing the deeply rooted anti-nuclear sentiment of Japanese civil society.¹¹ As explained above, all parties other than the LDP are flexible in regards to reducing Japan's reliance on nuclear weapons. Now, which of these two positions best represents the Japanese public opinion? Moreover, how can one interpret the fact that there is a certain rise of discourse for a “nuclear Japan”?¹²

The author analyzes the complicated structure of Japanese public opinion on this topic as follows. Japan's security post-WWII has been maintained by two, mutually-contradictory pillars: one, the pacifism symbolized in Article 9 of the 1947 Peace Constitution; the other, the Japan-US military alliance based on the 1960 bilateral Security Treaty. These two pillars fundamentally contradict to each other, but paradoxically have long coexisted. The pacifism, originating from the horrific experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has called for nuclear weapons abolition and formed the basis of the Non-Nuclear Principles. However, Japan's military reality has been totally dependent on the US nuclear force, which could even destroy the whole of humanity many times over. Japan upholds an “idea” of nuclear abolition, while relying on US nuclear weapons as a military “reality.” These two points are mutually-contradictory in discourse, but are somehow mutually-supplementary as policies.

This paradox applies to other security fields. For example, under Article 9, Japan is supposed to be prohibited from sending troops overseas for the purpose of using force. But the military reality is that Japan is not free from US demands on allies to help it combat in Iraq or Afghanistan. This demand caused a desperate measure to be taken by the government in sending troops to Iraq, but continuing to claim that their activities are purely humanitarian and in “non-combatant areas,” despite being clearly seen as logistical support of US military operations.

9 It is also remarkable that Ikeda Daisaku, the religious leader of Soka Gakkai, the founding body of political party New Komeito wrote that “US disarmament efforts will be complicated if allies insist on continuing or strengthening the 'nuclear umbrella.' Such a demand would constitute a violation of the spirit of the NPT,” in his op-ed in the Japan Times, 8 September 2009. <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/eo20090908a1.html>

10 For the survey results, see: http://icnndngo-japan.wordpress.com/2009/08/14/nuke_umbrella_answers/
Another survey of all electoral candidates on the Three Non-Nuclear Principles was conducted by Peace Pledge Japan . See: <http://3nnp.jp>

11 Fukuyama Shingo and Umebayashi Hiromichi, “Japan Ready for 'No Nukes',” *Japan Times*, 25 August 2009, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/eo20090825a1.html>

12 A symbolic example is that after his dismissal, former Air Self Defense Force admiral Tabogami Toshio began to publicly call for Japan to develop nuclear capabilities, and this has received much media attention. On 6 August 2009 he held a lecture in Hiroshima with the same purpose, and 1300 people gathered from throughout Japan.

The Japanese public are used to living in this self-contradictory structure, and have done so for decades. They are used to calling for a nuclear-free world while at the same time asking the US to protect them with nuclear weapons. They are used to saying that Japan does not want any more wars, while assisting US wars in the Middle East and South Asia. As time goes by, they seem to have lost the sense of guilt or hypocrisy within this contradiction; in a kind of collective paralysis. The twisted policies of Japan reflect the twisted public opinion.

“Pacifism” and “military realism”

There have been attempts to reconcile this self-contradictory situation over Japan's security. The political campaign to revise Article 9 of the Constitution, that has been active since the 1990s, is the clearest example of such an attempt. Twisted security policies—among the two pillars of pacifism and military realism—can be “cleared” through having the the realism pillar absorb the pacifism pillar. In this campaign, Article 9-based pacifism has been attacked and dismissed as “unrealistic.” It is true that Japanese peace groups have traditionally talked much about the “idea” of peace or nuclear abolition, but have been far weaker in drawing attention to and bringing about changes in “reality.”

Yet this revision attempt has not been successful so far. The 2007 resignation of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, the leading advocate of Constitutional revision, was highly symbolic. When he took power he presented a long agenda for strengthening military cooperation with the US. However, almost none of these were achieved, and Abe was cornered until resigning because of ill health. Since then, public support for the LDP obviously and significantly decreased, until finally it lost power in August 2009. The main agenda of the “LDP vs non-LDP” debate has been predominantly socio-economic issues, but, in terms of foreign policy, public support for the pacifistic approach is increasing as support for the militaristic approach is decreasing.¹³ This silent trend should be underscored when analyzing the drastic change from the LDP ruling to the non-LDP ruling.

Indeed, the recent US shift towards nuclear disarmament is demanding a new way of thinking in regards to Japan's post-war security realism. The contemporary US shift means that the situation that “the US deterrence is the might” no longer exists. MOFA bureaucrats are demanding that the US extended deterrence should remain “as it is now.” But what would happen if the US responded that it cannot maintain it as is? At this critical juncture, there are still few signs of forward-looking discussions among Japanese policy-makers and civil society on how to deal with this change.

Just as the post-war Japanese pacifism may have been too “ideal,” Japan's so-called “military realism” would better be called “military idealism” today, as far as it sticks to Cold-War thinking in regards to the almighty US deterrent. Therefore, today's governmental change is a valuable opportunity to comprehensively review peace and security mechanisms of Japan. It is time to create ways to bring life to pacifism that was founded after the destruction and suffering in wars. With this pacifism at heart, concrete, realistic and lasting peace and security mechanisms must be established. How to design a less nuclear-dependent security for Japan and Northeast Asia is the first, urgent task. Civil society should tackle this challenge in partnership with the new government, policy-makers, experts and the media.

New government

13 Apparently the approval rate of Article 9 recently increased, and as of 2008, most public opinion poll results show that the majority opposes revision of Article 9.

Where will Japan go from now? Are there any prospects for the new government to drive the country into a new direction? On 9 September 2009, the three ruling coalition members (of the DPJ, SDJ and NPP) agreed on the following policies with regard to nuclear weapons:

- Take a leading role in the international community in nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons including through efforts for early entry-into-force of the CTBT, early realization of a FMCT and playing an important role at the NPT Review Conference.
- Under international cooperation, stop North Korea's nuclear and missile developments and make utmost efforts to solve the abduction issue.

While not directly on nuclear weapons, the following policies on linked topics were also agreed upon:

- close and equal relations with the US in relation to the Japan-US Alliance
- building confidence and cooperation with China, Korea and other Asia-Pacific countries aiming at building an "East Asia Community."

It is still unclear how much energy the new government will invest in nuclear disarmament related works as a priority. Pensions, employment and other social welfare issues are regarded as urgent top priorities, amongst many other matters. Also, views within the DPJ on security policies are diverse. The party's internal consensus making system is still weak, and there are number of cautious and resistant voices in the DPJ and the broader ruling coalition against a straightforward approach to support US disarmament efforts.

The fact that the ICNND will meet in Hiroshima in October with a view to making agreements on its Report is thus timely. The Hiroshima meeting can hopefully generate attention of the new government, policy-makers and the media to push the new disarmament agenda forward. And engagement of civil society will be a key.

Ways Ahead

In concluding this paper, here are several scenarios of Japan's future path.

Scenario A: No significant change. If the US Nuclear Policy Review turns out to be very conservative, Japanese bureaucrats succeed in resisting any substantive change in the US extended nuclear deterrence policy, and the new government does not prioritize the issue, no significant change would occur in the US nuclear-centered security policy for Japan and the Northeast Asian region.

Scenario B: Reducing nuclear, but replacing with conventional weapons. If both the US and the new Japanese governments cooperate in adopting no-first-use or other significant measures to limit the role of nuclear weapons in security policies, it would greatly serve the global nuclear disarmament process. However, excessive emphasis of the need for non-nuclear deterrents to support the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons would pose the potential risk of a build up of conventional weapons, realignment and strengthening of the US forces in the region, and strengthening of missile defence, which would lead to new instability within the environment in China and the rest of the Northeast Asian region. The direction of DPJ policies on missile defence and conventional weapons are not yet defined.

Scenario C: Creating less military-dependent security mechanism. Many NGOs are recommending a reduction in the role of the US nuclear deterrence in Northeast Asian security, and replacing this with the creation of cooperative security mechanisms through non-military means. Example of this include the proposal for a Northeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone being promoted through the cooperation of NGOs in Japan, Korea and Mongolia, and regional mechanisms for conflict prevention as advocated and put into practice by the NGO network, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).¹⁴ Similar research is also being undertaken within the academic world.¹⁵

Scenario D: A nuclear Japan? While it is true that some debates on Japan potentially maintaining nuclear weapons have been appearing within the media, the likelihood of this being realised is not as high as some overseas observers are concerned. As you have seen, the split between the LDP and the DPJ is between either “continuing reliance on the US nuclear umbrella as until now”, or “maintaining reliance upon the nuclear umbrella while reducing the role of US nuclear capabilities.” No political parties are supporting the option of Japan's leaving the US nuclear umbrella in order to develop its own nuclear capabilities. However, the escalation of debate regarding Japan developing nuclear capabilities such as that of former Air Self Defense Force admiral Tabogami Toshio could lead to effectively driving the political choice of building up conventional weapons to replace US nuclear weapons, as in Scenario B.

While considering these scenarios, this will hopefully be an opportunity to deepen dialogue on policy issues between civil society and the new government, which claims to be “led by politicians and not bureaucrats,” and for Japan to truly contribute to nuclear disarmament and the creation of a sustainable peace mechanism for Northeast Asia. The ICNND will be most effective if it can, keeping the 2010 NPT Review Conference in view, actually contribute to promotion of deepening such dialogue.

14 See NPO Peace Depot's website on the topic:

<http://www.peacedepot.org/e-news/nwzf/list1.htm>

As to the activities of Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Northeast Asia, visit its Online Peace Forum:

<http://www.globalcollab.org/gppac-northeast-asia/>

15 Scholars of Japan's Cooperative Security Initiative are proposing a concept of “Asian Mutually Assured Dependence.”

Annex

NGO Advisor Activities

As of June 2009

- NGO Advisor Akira Kawasaki was centrally involved in the organization and launch (January 2009) of the ICNND Japan NGO Network. This network is a broad coalition of civil society organisations aiming to make recommendations to the ICNND to assist its steady path to global nuclear abolition, and expand the participation and cooperation of civil society.
- In concert with this umbrella body, Kawasaki has helped the organisation of regular roundtables with Co-Chair Yoriko Kawaguchi. Two roundtables were held so far (24 December 2008 and 25 May 2009).
- Led efforts in Japan to facilitate the participation of four Hibakusha at the Washington meeting in February 2009, including grassroots fundraising, media promotions, and accompanying the Hibakusha to the United States.
- Ruff visited Japan in Nov 2008, collaborated with Japanese NGOs to meet Co-chair Yoriko Kawaguchi and Diet members from various political parties, discuss nuclear weapons abolition and promote parliamentary, media and NGO engagement with the Commission. He visited again in March 2009 and met with parliamentarians, civil society groups and journalists, including Amb. Nobuyasu Abe (ICNND Advisor/ Former UN Under-Secretary-General); Taro Kono (LDP member, Secretary-General of PNND Japan); Mizuho Fukushima (Chair, Social Democratic Party) etc.
- Kawasaki organised a visit to Tokyo by Co-Chair Gareth Evans and Secretariat Head Ian Biggs (26-27 May 2009), including meetings with parliamentarians, key civil society members and media, including Yasuo Fukuda (Former Prime Minister); Yohei Kono (Speaker, House of Representatives); Katsuya Okada (Secretary-General, Democratic Party of Japan); also around 30 participants in roundtable with Diet members.
- These activities have contributed to raising awareness amongst Diet members and other policy makers, as well as the media - both visits received significant domestic and some international media coverage.
- The ICNND Japan NGO Network is holding a regular series of seminars for general citizens to raise awareness and deepen understanding of the ICNND. Topics of discussion include extended deterrence, Nuclear Weapons Convention, and strengthening nonproliferation efforts related to civilian use of nuclear energy.
- Further information on the Network's activities is available on blog:
<http://icnndngojapan.wordpress.com>
- ICAN working with Australian NGO partners, especially the United Nations Association of Australia, advocated for the establishment of the Commission.
- An academic nuclear disarmament research roundtable was held in Melbourne in Oct 2008 and members met with Gareth Evans and were briefed following the Commission's first meeting in Sydney.
- ICAN advocated for a broad parliamentary enquiry into nuclear disarmament. An Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament is now being undertaken by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, a multiparty, standing committee. See:
<www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/nuclearnon_proliferation> The Inquiry report is now expected in August 2009. ICAN and many partner organisations made submissions and a number were invited to appear in public hearings. The Inquiry terms of reference specifically include the Commission:
The Committee is to inquire into and report on:
 - The international treaties involving Australia which relate to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament
 - How these treaties advance Australia's objectives in this field
 - How the treaties might be made more comprehensive or effective
 - How inter-parliamentary action can assist in strengthening treaty-based aspects of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime
 - How the Committee and the Parliament can contribute to the work of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament

- Civil society groups are promoting the re-establishment of a parliamentary nuclear disarmament group.
- Ruff joined the Australian delegation to the 2009 NPT PrepCom as an NGO representative.
- A roundtable between senior ICNND secretariat staff and civil society organizations was held in the leadup to this year's NPT PrepCom.
- Ruff assisted former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser to convene a group calling for nuclear weapons abolition, promote Australia's contribution, and support the work of the Commission. The group also includes Sir Gustav Nossal - medical scientist, Dr Barry Jones - former Labor government minister and Australian Labor Party President, General Peter Gration - former Defence Force chief, and Lieutenant-General John Sanderson - former Army chief, former governor of South Australia. The group recently published an op-ed simultaneously in the major broadsheet newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne: www.theage.com.au/opinion/imagine-theres-no-bomb-20090407-9zj0.html