



**The Atomic Shadow on Japanese Society: Social Movements, Public Opinion and Possible Nuclear Disarmament**

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Social Movements, Public Opinion and the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament***

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“Japan, as the only country in the world that experienced the devastation of nuclear weapons, is making efforts to ensure that the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain in the memories of mankind and to realize a peaceful and safe world free of nuclear weapons at an early date”.<sup>1</sup> These words, from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ pamphlet “Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: Japan’s Efforts”, express a sentiment echoed in almost all major statements on Japan’s role in nuclear disarmament: as the world’s only victim of atomic weapons, Japan has a natural role on the frontline of any global effort to rid the world of the fear of nuclear war.

The other side of this positive image of Japan as a nation of natural nuclear disarmers is the term “nuclear allergy” - shorthand for the popular Japanese antipathy to nuclear weapons (sometimes also extended to other uses of nuclear energy). As Glenn Hook has pointed out in a study of Japanese militarization and demilitarization, the expression “nuclear allergy” originated with Prime Minister Satō Eisaku in the 1960s, but was then widely taken up in American and Japanese discourse about the US-Japan strategic alliance, and more recently about the possibility of Japan’s acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>2</sup> Though some commentators use the term in a positive sense, arguing that the “nuclear allergy” is a healthy constraint on Japan’s military ambitions<sup>3</sup>, the phrase is also often used to suggest an instinctive, unthinking and ill-informed negative reaction to nuclear weapons (or more broadly to all uses of nuclear energy) – in short, the “nuclear allergy” is seen as a disease to be cured.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper I want to probe the question of Japanese attitudes to nuclear weapons and to disarmament a little more deeply. As Peter Katzenstein has pointed out, the notion that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki spontaneously produced mass opposition to nuclear weapons in Japan is a myth (as indeed, in a sense, is the view of Japan as the only victim of nuclear bombing, since not all the dead of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were Japanese). Although the memories of the bombings of course exert an important influence on public attitudes to war in Japan, the so-called “nuclear allergy” was the product of a complex set of political conflicts which were played out particularly in the decade following the end of the postwar occupation of Japan.<sup>5</sup>

Katzenstein’s analysis focuses on policy formation, and argues that Japanese military policy came to be informed by a set of deep seated (though not immutable) values – an overwhelming focus on economic security, for example – which guided strategic decision-making throughout the postwar decades. Here I am more interested in considering how public opinion and popular discourse create possibilities and limitations for Japanese civil society to engage in debates about nuclear weapons. In other words, does a “nuclear allergy” really exist, and if so does it really provide fertile ground for the development of movements that promote nuclear disarmament? How do other aspects of public discourse – for example, changing images of the United States, China and North Korea – affect the public terrain in which issues of nuclear disarmament are debated? To answer these questions, we need in particular to explore three aspects of public discourse and activism in postwar Japan: the changing fortunes of anti-nuclear movements; the popular image of the US “nuclear umbrella”; and shifting images of the external nuclear threat to Japan’s security.

### *Postwar Activism – The Rise of the Anti-Nuclear Movement in Japan*

The words quoted at the beginning of this paper, and the phrase “nuclear allergy”, suggest a direct and unmediated connection between the horrific experience of the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and a Japanese national desire for a world without nuclear weapons. In reality, of course, matters were much more complicated. Attitudes to nuclear weapons were affected by the shifting currents of politics and popular culture. To understand contemporary Japanese popular responses to calls for nuclear disarmament, it is important to understand how these attitudes were formed and re-formed throughout the postwar decades.

The Allied Occupation authorities who assumed control of Japan after the end of the Asia-Pacific War quickly imposed tight restrictions on the publication of information about, and images of, the atomic bombings and their effects. In the immediate aftermath of defeat, therefore, most Japanese people had only hazy notions of the agony and devastation caused by the bombings. As John Dower notes, “the first graphic representations of the human effects of the bombs did not appear until 1950, when the married artists Maruki Iri and Maruki Toshi published a small book of drawings of scenes they had witnessed or heard about in Hiroshima.”<sup>6</sup> The Marukis later went on to produce a major series of murals on nuclear weapons and their effects, helping to shape Japanese and global perceptions of the threat of nuclear war. During the late 1940s, though, even a literary eyewitness account such as Nagai Takashi’s *The Bell of Nagasaki* could only be published after censorship, rewriting and extensive delays. For survivors of the bombings, moreover, the experience was so profoundly traumatic that it often took years for them to find the words to express what they had witnessed. For some, such as poet Hara Tamaki, this involved creating an entirely new fractured poetic form, conveying his sense of being “cut off from language” by the total uprooting of the known world wrought when the bomb fell on his home city.<sup>7</sup>

During the first years of the Occupation most people in Japan found that the urgent tasks of survival and rebuilding shattered lives consumed their energies.

While new political parties and a trade union movement quickly emerged in occupied Japan, scope for a mass anti-atom bomb movement was limited. It was only as the Occupation drew to an end that anti-nuclear activism in Japan began to gather momentum. For example, in 1950, the Japanese Communist Party and other left wing groups began a successful movement to gather signatures in support of the Stockholm Appeal.<sup>8</sup> The real upsurge in public support for such movements, though, came in the mid-1950s, following the “Lucky Dragon” incident. In March 1954, the crew of the Japanese fishing vessel *Daigo Fukuryû Maru* [*Lucky Dragon 5*] suffered radiation sickness, from which one man soon died, after being exposed to fallout from the first US hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll. The issue was initially handled with considerable ineptitude and insensitivity by the US government, producing a huge upsurge of public emotion in Japan.<sup>9</sup>

In retrospect, the unexpectedly passionate reaction to the “Lucky Dragon” Incident can be seen not simply as a result of US diplomatic blunders, but as a belated response to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By 1954, restrictions on reporting of the atomic bombings had been removed and a growing number of photographic images, films, eyewitness accounts and literary and art works were bringing home to Japanese people the real meaning of the atomic bombings. This coincided with a gathering worldwide anti-nuclear movement reflected, for example, in the founding of Britain’s Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958. The second half of the 1950s therefore witnessed the high water mark of mass anti-nuclear activism in Japan.

The year after the “Lucky Dragon” Incident was the tenth anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the memorial ceremony drew vast crowds, leading to the proclamation of the Hiroshima Appeal on the abolition of nuclear weapons and founding of the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs [*Gensuikyô*]. Initially a relatively broad alliance including prominent Socialist Party members, scientists, Buddhist priests and others, *Gensuikyô* had a major impact on public perceptions of nuclear weapons in Japan

in the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>10</sup> Japan's experience as victim of nuclear attack, and the presence of a strong anti-nuclear movement in Japan, also enabled Japanese activists to play an important role on the world stage in organizations such as the World Peace Council.

Like other sections of the international anti-nuclear movement (including the World Peace Council itself), however, *Gensuikyô* fell victim to Cold War divisions. By the beginning of the 1960s it was becoming increasingly dominated by the Japanese Communist Party, which focused its condemnation on the "imperialist" nuclear weapons of the United States and Britain rather than those of the USSR. This led to repeated splits within the movement, with opponents of the Communist Party line departing in 1961 to create the National Council for Peace and against Nuclear Weapons [*Kakkin Kaigi*] and again in 1965 to form the Japan Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs [*Gensuikin*], which was closely aligned with the Japanese Socialist Party and the major trade union federation *Sôhyô*.

Such political splits were, of course, far from being unique to Japan. However, in postwar Japan the divide between the Communist Party and other leftwing forces (which came to be known by the generic label "New Left") were particularly bitter and profound, and made any cooperation between the two sides impossible. This profoundly affected the anti-nuclear movement in Japan, ultimately creating a public image of the movement as factionalised and narrowly ideological. It may be debated whether this public image is wholly fair, but it is undoubtedly influential. If Japanese people have a "nuclear allergy", it may also be said that large swathes of the Japanese population, particularly of the younger generation, have some form of "anti-nuclear movement allergy" - just one part of a wider "allergy" towards whole "postwar progressive" school of political thought of which the 1950s anti-nuclear movement was a core part. Any effort to arouse public interest in nuclear disarmament today has to take account of the lingering antipathies created by the bitter ideological divides of the 1950s and 1960s.

The late 1960s in Japan (as elsewhere) saw an upsurge of New Left student movements. Though anti-war activism (including heated critiques of nuclear weapons) formed an important part of this movement, the focus was more on the Vietnam War and on efforts to bring about a social revolution within Japan's "controlled society" than on the issue of nuclear disarmament, which had come to be identified with the "old left". In this context, grass-roots support for nuclear disarmament did not wholly disappear, but rather fragmented and diffused, with large national movements like *Gensuikyô* and *Gensuikin* losing much of their popular appeal, and activism dispersing amongst a host of smaller, less overtly ideological and often locally-based movements.

### *Post-Ideological Pacificism - Peace and Anti-Nuclear Movements since the 1960s*

Many of the characteristics of the Japanese activism of the 1960s and beyond were embodied in groups like "The Society of Voices of the Voiceless" [*Koe naki Koe no Kai*], established by Kobayashi Tomi at the height of the 1960 protest against the revised Mutual Security Treaty [*Ampo*] between Japan and the United States. An art teacher from a commuter suburb of Tokyo with no previous experience of political activism, Kobayashi deliberately set out to create a movement without complex ideological agenda which would appeal to the natural human desire for peace rather than war. The key platform of the Society was that "anyone can take part"; its main strategy was to promote actions which ordinary people could realistically pursue in the midst of their busy daily lives. Though the scale of support for the Society declined from the end of the 1960s on, it still survives today, and Kobayashi continued to edit its bulletin and play a central role in its activities until her death in 2003.<sup>11</sup>

This style of open-ended, non-ideological (sometimes even anti-ideological) peace activism was also reflected in the movements that sprang up in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. A good example was

CHANCE! (as in “Give Peace a Chance”), a movement which began as an anti-war Internet mailing list created immediately after the 9/11 attacks. At its peak the list had a membership of around 1700, but its influence extended much further than this number suggests. One of its main aims was to encourage the organization of “peace walks” in various parts of Japan. (The choice of words is significant – rather than “peace marches”, with their overtones of ideological militancy, “peace walks” evoke the image of a healthy family activity in which the non-ideologically committed may also take part). By the second half of 2002, over 20 “peace walk” groups had been established in various parts of Japan.

These events, like anti-war protests in many other parts of the world, were notable for their success in attracting a wide variety of participants, ranging from teenagers through families with small children to late-middle-aged veterans of the 1960s anti-Vietnam War and student movements. CHANCE! had also helped to generate a wide range of other local groups and activities, including “yellow ribbon” anti-war protests, movements supporting Afghan refugees in Japan, and a protest movement against Japan’s new state of emergency laws [*yûji hôsei*].<sup>12</sup> A similarly non-ideological linking of peace activism with pleasurable social activity also characterizes one of the most successful of post 1960s Japanese social movements – the Peace Boat which, since 1983, has used travel as a tool to educate Japanese people (and others) about issues of war, peace and historical responsibility.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, a large share of Japanese peace and anti-nuclear activism continued to take place within small-scale, local movements – some focused around short-term and specific issues such as the expansion of US military bases; others created on a longer-lasting basis. Examples include the “Lucky Dragon 5 Museum”, created in a portside area of Tokyo in 1973, and the Grassroots House Peace Museum established by local activists in Kochi City in 1989. The former displays the original “Lucky Dragon 5” boat and runs ongoing educational activities on the dangers of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing, while the Kochi museum links issues of peace to questions of Japan’s historical responsibility for



war.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, local peace movements (of which there are very many) often overlap and intersect with the surprisingly rich array of grassroots Japanese movements devoted to the task of promoting reconciliation between Japan and its Asian neighbours: groups like the East Asia Collaborative Workshop [*Higashi Ajia Kyôdô Wâkushoppu*], based in central Hokkaido.<sup>15</sup>

This brief outline indicates some of the strengths and weaknesses of the civil society basis for nuclear disarmament activism in Japan. On the one hand, despite the widespread perception of the Japanese public as generally disengaged from politics, a broad range of social movements – including peace and anti-nuclear movements – have continued to thrive in Japan throughout the postwar period. These are, however, often small and local, and although some have developed connections to local (town or prefectural) governments, they are seldom linked into large-scale networks with an impact in national politics. Small size means that the movements often rely on the enthusiasm of a few individuals, and may disappear if those individuals move away, age, die or become unable to give time to the cause. Against a background over half a century of almost unbroken Liberal Democratic Party rule, critical Japanese social movements have developed a profound mistrust of and generally a disengagement from mainstream politics, and links between civil society and political parties are generally weak.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the period from the mid-1990s onward witnessed the rise of a new brand of social movement in Japan – grass-roots right-wing nationalist movements which, unlike their critical and peace oriented counterparts, very quickly succeeded in forming close links to the political world, including links to prominent LDP politicians. The most famous example is probably the Society for History Textbook Reform [*Atarashii Rekishi Kyôkasho o Tsukuru Kai*] formed in 1996 to push for more overtly nationalist content in Japanese history textbooks and for the removal of critical reference to problems like the “comfort women” issue. A nationalist agenda has also been promoted by a constellation of movements created in response to the abduction of Japanese citizens by North

Korea: the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (AFVKN, generally known in Japanese by the abbreviation *Kazokukai*, founded in 1997), the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (NARKN, commonly known in Japanese as the *Sukuukai*, founded in 1998), and the Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Connected to North Korea (commonly known in Japanese as *Chôsakai*, founded in 2003). Though the AFVKN initially as a movement of family members desperately worried about the fate of their missing relatives, it subsequently became highly politicized, leading to the departure of some of its original members.<sup>17</sup> I shall return to the link between politics and grassroots nationalism, and its impact on perceptions of the nuclear threat, later in this paper.

By contrast with nationalist grassroots movements, which have political connections and receive massive mainstream media coverage, critical and peace-oriented grassroots activists, particularly when they are locally based, find it hard to attract the interest of the national media or to make their voices heard in nationwide arenas. Invisibility and an inability to make a clear mark on political life are probably among the reasons why grassroots peace and anti-nuclear activism in Japan has had difficulty attracting widespread support from the young. Although, after a period of marked quiescence, there have recently been signs of renewed youth interest in social and political issues, this interest tends to focus more on problems such as unemployment, low wages and homelessness, which young Japanese see as immediately relevant to their own lives, rather than on more “remote” issues such as nuclear disarmament.

### *Under the Umbrella - The Image of a Secure Japan*

Why does nuclear disarmament seem remote from everyday life? To answer this question, we need to consider two paradoxically coexisting images of Japan which both have a profound influence on popular responses to the nuclear weapons issue: the image of a “secure Japan” and the image of an “insecure

Japan". The image of a "secure Japan", still present in contemporary discourse in Japan, emerged in the wake of the signing of the revised Mutual Security Treaty with the United States in 1960. After the defeat of the impassioned anti-Security Treaty demonstrations of 1960, the Japanese government consciously and successfully sought to shift the policy focus away from security issues and towards economic growth.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to defuse an emerging upsurge of opposition to the further renewal of the Treaty in 1970 and to allay concerns surrounding the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972, Prime Minister Satô Eisaku in 1967 enunciated the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" [*Hikaku San-Gensoku*], on the basis of which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974. The Principles stated that Japan would never possess nor manufacture nuclear weapons, nor allow their introduction into Japanese territory. A further advantage of the announcement of these principles, from the Japanese government's point of view, was that they helped reduce public concerns about nuclear issues at a time when the government was energetically pursuing the expansion of nuclear power. (Japan's first nuclear power plant, Tôkai 1, had been completed in 1965.)

Extending Glenn Hook's reflections on the power of metaphor in military policy, we can see how the combination of the concept of the "nuclear umbrella" with the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" helped to generate a growing popular sense of Japan as a place secure from the threats of nuclear weapons. Although substantial numbers of Japanese people continued to oppose Japan's reliance on the US "nuclear umbrella", the "umbrella" image at least provided a comfortingly distanced sense of security. An umbrella is something that extends protectingly above one's head without actually touching one's body. The nuclear weapons that protected Japan, in other words, could be seen as existing elsewhere, out there in the stratosphere, while Japan itself – thanks to Satô's "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" – was happily nuclear-weapons free.

As we now know, however, what Satô had in fact offered the Japanese people were Two Non-Nuclear Principles [*Hikaku Ni-Gensoku*] and One Non-

Nuclear Illusion [*Hikaku Ichi-Gensô*]. While it was true that Japan did not possess or manufacture nuclear weapons, only by the most casuistic use of words could it be said that Japan did not allow the introduction of nuclear weapons to its territory. The United States stored nuclear weapons in Okinawa, over which Japan had “residual sovereignty” when the islands were under US occupation.<sup>18</sup> Before Okinawa was returned to Japan, Satô reportedly signed a secret agreement with allowing the US, even after reversion, to “raise the question” of reintroduction of nuclear weapons to Okinawa in an emergency.<sup>19</sup>

Also, as Satô must have known, further secret agreements confirmed at the time of the signing of the renewed Security Treaty in 1960 allowed US ships carrying nuclear weapons to dock in Japanese ports and to pass through Japanese territorial waters.<sup>20</sup> When US archival documents on this agreement came to light in 2000, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs categorically denied their existence, stating that “there is absolutely no secret agreement under the Japan-US Security Treaty.”<sup>21</sup> However, in 2009 former Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Tamura Yôhei revealed that there was in fact a Ministry document on the secret agreements, which was passed on to each Foreign Minister as they came into office.<sup>22</sup> In the lead-up to the 2009 Japanese general election, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Okada Katsuya stated that, if his party came to power, they would investigate and make public the content of any secret agreements attached to the Security Treaty.<sup>23</sup>

As commentators point out, changes in the nature of weaponry mean that the agreements may have little practical significance today, since there is now little need for US vessels carrying nuclear weapons to enter Japanese ports. However, the political significance of the issue remains great. The image of a “secure Japan” from the 1960s onward rested on the idea that Japan was covered by a protective but remote “nuclear umbrella”, while nuclear weapons themselves were absent from Japanese territory. Revelations that nuclear weapons had in fact been deployed in Okinawan bases and had even been sitting in Japanese ports, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs blatantly lied

about their presence to the Japanese population, could have a considerable impact on Japanese public opinion, forcing at least some sections of the Japanese population to become more conscious of nuclear weapons as something less far removed from daily life than they had imagined.

### *The Enemy at the Gate - The Image of an Insecure Japan*

While the “Three Non-Nuclear Principles” helped to create a sense of security, domestic and international political events from the 1990s onward have served to create a new sense of an external threat to that peaceful, nuclear-weapon-free Japan, thus reducing public opposition to increased military spending and (in some quarters) even evoking demands for Japan to acquire its own nuclear weapons.<sup>24</sup> The formation of this image of “insecure Japan” has been a complex and intriguing process, and deserves more attention than it has received so far.

Over the past twenty years, the economic and political order in Northeast Asia has been transformed, with profound implications for Japan. The depth of the transformation may be likened to that of the period from the 1880s to the first decade of the twentieth century, when Japan emerged as the dominant force in East Asia, or to the period from 1945 to 1955, when the Cold War order was set in place. In East Asia, the years since the beginning of the 1990s have witnessed the collapse of much of that order; yet the Korean Peninsula remains divided, and until some resolution is found to the ongoing Korean crisis, a post-Cold War region cannot fully come into being. Whatever shape this yet-to-be-completed post-Cold War order takes, it will clearly involve a rebalancing of the relationship between the two major regional powers, Japan and China. Japan, long the dominant economic force in the region, is already being forced to come to terms with the presence of a neighbouring economic superpower – China – which is also increasingly taking a key political role on the regional and world stage.

Interestingly though, despite intermittent “China bashing” in the Japanese media (and vice-versa), the rhetoric of insecurity within Japan for the past fifteen years has focused much less on China than on North Korea. The image of North Korea as the major threat to Japan gathered strength in the second half of the 1990s, and became overwhelming after the 2002 summit between Prime Minister Koizumi and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il, and the admission by North Korea that it had been responsible for the kidnappings of Japanese citizens in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In some ways, fear of North Korea is understandable and unsurprising. Ever since the death of Kim Il-Sung in 1994 and the subsequent collapse of the North Korean economy, the future of the DPRK has been the subject of intense speculation. Attempts by the Kim Jong-Il regime to shore up its position by the development of nuclear weapons have seriously destabilized Northeast Asian international relations, and revelations about the kidnappings, and the reported deaths of eight of the kidnap victims, caused justified outrage in Japan.

Nevertheless, the intensity of the fear and loathing of North Korea expressed in the Japanese media requires some explanation. After all, even a nuclear armed North Korea so far lacks the technical capacity to fire a nuclear warhead at Japan, and in any case the evidence suggests that the North Korean nuclear program is all about trying to persuade the United States to negotiate directly with the Kim Jong-Il regime, rather than being any part of a serious scheme to launch a military attack on Japan (an act which would obviously be suicidal from the North Korean point of view).

The making of the demonic vision of North Korea in Japan can be attributed to a variety of factors. One was the fact that the abduction issue involved human stories which evoked a genuine public outpouring of emotion, and once this emotion surfaced, the structure of the Japanese media served to magnify it. On the one hand, Japan’s highly competitive and rather lurid weekly magazines competed with one another to publish the latest revelations on the issue. On the other, the more serious but very cautious daily newspapers were reluctant to

publish any stories that questioned the stance taken by the abduction support groups, for fear of evoking a backlash from their readers.

The bizarre quality of some of the abductions, in which people were literally plucked off the street or the beach by North Korean agents, contained that nightmarish element which (like stories of serial killings) provokes both fascination and a sense that “no-one is safe”. The abductions were a human rights issue in which Japan was unequivocally the victim, and those who rallied to support the abductees therefore did not have to confront the uncomfortable questions of historical responsibility raised by other controversial human rights problems like the “comfort women” issue. Moreover, the sense of personal vulnerability evoked by the abductions was reinforced by the official and media response to North Korean missile tests near or across Japanese territory in 2006 and 2009. The Japanese Self Defense Force was very visibly placed on high alert, and in some cases public transport in areas close to the rocket’s trajectory was cancelled, impressing on the minds of ordinary people the sense of a real physical threat to their safety. There could be no more striking contrast than the utter invisibility of the US nuclear weapons, which for years silently entered Japanese ports – with no apparent preparations being made to deal with mishaps – and the hyper-visibility of the North Korean nuclear and missile tests.

There are, however, two more specific structural factors that help to explain the making of a North Korea-focused image of “insecure Japan”. The first is the close and symbiotic relationship between the government and civil society groups engaged with the abductee issue. While grassroots peace and anti-nuclear groups (as we have seen) have had only tenuous links to central government, the government has played a powerful role in fostering and encouraging grassroots activity related to the North Korean threat. A good example of this is the work of the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue, which was created in September 2006 and is attached to the Prime Minister’s Office. In addition to its multilingual website, which disseminates pamphlets, videos and a recording of Noel Stookey’s “Song for Megumi”, the Headquarters also runs its own dedicated

online video channel, broadcasting advertisements on the abduction issue and cartoon films such as the 25-minute *anime* Megumi.<sup>25</sup> It also offers grants of up to 100 million yen to individuals and civil society groups to create educational material, art exhibitions, videos, translations etc. aimed particularly at “raising the awareness” of Japanese young people and international audiences about the fate of the Japanese abducted by North Korea. One condition of the grants is that the information contained in the works produced must conform with the government line on the abductions.<sup>26</sup>

A second important aspect of North Korean abduction and nuclear issues is the close relationship that exists between grassroots social movements and security think tanks. To illustrate this, it is worth briefly exploring the role of two figures who have helped to create and sustain these links: Araki Kazuhiro and Okazaki Hisahiko. Without wishing to overemphasize the significance of these two individuals in public debate on North Korea, I would argue that they provide good illustrations of an strand of nationalist thought which has been profoundly influential in shaping the image of “insecure Japan”.

As I have described elsewhere, Araki Kazuhiro is a nationalist academic and public commentator who has close links to prominent South Korean conservatives, and who emerged in the mid-1990s as a vocal commentator on the security threat emanating from North Korea. Araki was also one of the early public figures to take up the abduction issue, as a time when it was receiving little attention from mainstream politicians.<sup>27</sup> He subsequently became head of the Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Connected to North Korea [the *Chôsakai*], and has also established his personal security think-tank, the Strategic Intelligence Institute Inc. [*Senryaku Jôhō Kenkyûjo KK*]. Araki lists one of his current positions as “Opinion Leader for the Office of the Inspector General, Eastern Section, Ground Self-Defence Forces” [*Rikugun Jieitai Tôbu Hômen Sôkanbu Opinionrîda*]<sup>28</sup>. In this capacity, he argues strongly for an expansion of Japan’s military capabilities.



Okazaki Hisahiko is another, even more prominent, conservative public commentator who also took the abduction issue to heart well before it had become regular headline news in Japan. A member of an elite political family and a former Ambassador to Thailand, Okazaki describes himself as “three-quarters diplomat and one-quarter soldier”, because over the course of his career he was seconded to the Defense Agency to serve in a variety of defense related posts.<sup>29</sup> On retiring from the diplomatic service he became a Senior Advisor to the major Japanese public relations firm Hakuhold, and in that capacity was appointed head of a special Hakuhold Okazaki Research Institute, established in 1995.<sup>30</sup> The Okazaki Research Institute appears to have severed its official connection to Hakuhold and become an independent NPO in 2003, but it remains one of Japan’s major private security think tanks, and regularly supplies commentators on strategic matters for programs such as NHK news.

The Okazaki Research Institute, whose officers include a number of former Foreign Ministry and other bureaucrats, is known for combining energetic advocacy for expanded Japanese military spending with enthusiastic support for the Japan-US alliance. Okazaki himself is also a supporter of the Japan Society of History Textbook Reform, and was (with Araki Kazuhiro) one of the signatories of a full page advertisement placed in the Washington Post in 2007 condemning the US Senate’s call for an apology to the “Comfort Women”.<sup>31</sup> From the late 1990s onwards, Okazaki became an energetic supporter of the abductee families, and in May 2000 he was influential in persuading a major Japanese NGO, the International Friendship Exchange Council [*Minkan Gaikô Sokushin Kyôkai*] to take up the abduction problem, which has since become a major focus of its work.<sup>32</sup>

My point in exploring these links between strategic think tanks, the abduction issue and security concerns is twofold. First, I want to argue that, although much of the media outpouring surrounding the abduction issue was indeed a spontaneous response to a shocking political event, the ground had already to some extent been prepared by the work of commentators and think tanks with a broad political agenda, and with links to very experienced public

relations institutions. Secondly, while I do not question Araki's and Okazaki's sincere concern for the plight of the abductees, I would argue that for them, and for others with similar political views, a focus on the threat emanating from North Korea also serves a wider aim of creating a rationale for an expanded Japanese military.

To push this point a little further, I would argue that, for nationalist commentators such as Araki and Okazaki, North Korea plays a particular and vital role. Both men have also intermittently made public comments highlighting the Chinese threat to Japan's security and regional role. However, given Japan's extremely strong economic ties to China, it is diplomatically very difficult to use the "China threat" as an argument for large-scale Japanese rearmament. North Korea, on the other hand, is a country to which Japan has virtually no economic connections, and whose unusual approach to international relations creates fertile ground for the cultivation of an image of a "rogue state" from which absolutely any outrage, including nuclear attack, is possible. In this way, North Korea has since the 1990s to some degree become a "stand in" in Japanese public discourse for the less easily debatable fear of a resurgent China. Fear of North Korea provides a plausible basis for demands for military spending, with results which would also (of course) help to strengthen Japan's position vis-à-vis China.

This push for military expansion, to which groups like the Strategic Intelligence Institute and the Okazaki Research Institute have made their contribution, seems to have born some fruit. Strategic analyst Des Ball, for example, has noted Japan's massive expenditure on new military technology systems, particularly air defense systems, since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Ball notes, little explanation of this boost in spending has been provided to the public, so its significance has gone largely unremarked by mainstream media.<sup>33</sup>

The focus on the North Korean threat has had a far-reaching and ambivalent impact on public attitudes to peace, security and nuclear weapons. On the one hand, it has revived the sense (powerful in the 1950s and early 1960s, but much weaker in the 1970s-early 1990s) of the immediacy of a nuclear threat. On the

other, it has created a very narrow vision of the threat, focused almost entirely on the figure of the North Korean “rogue state”. Meanwhile, the revisionist discourse of pro-US nationalists such as Okazaki has promoted the vision of Japan as a historical “victim”, but has oddly little to say about the most obvious example of that victimhood, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Rather, the focus of such revisionists is on events such as the “unjust” Tokyo War Crimes Trials or the “Japan bashing” surrounding the memory of events like the Nanjing Massacre and the “Comfort Women” issue.

The highlighting of the North Korean nuclear threat has therefore coincided with a fading public memory of Japan’s own experience of atomic bombing. The shifting public mood was vividly captured in 2005, when a British newspaper reported on the fate of the Maruki Gallery, which displays Maruki Toshi and Iri’s famous Hiroshima Murals. Visitors to the gallery, the report noted, had dwindled from 64,000 a year in the mid-1980s to around 14,000 by 2004. As the curator observed: “People’s memories have begun to fade. There are fewer and fewer people who have experienced the war, including myself”. Two gallery visitors in their late teens, asked who dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and why, struggled to find an answer: “I think it was America, is that right? I think had something to do with the war.”

The only country they could name that has nuclear weapons today was North Korea.<sup>34</sup>

### *Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament Movements in Japan Today*

This brief overview of the shaping of public attitudes to nuclear weapons and disarmament in Japan highlights the complexity of the cultural and social environment in which debates on the nuclear issue take place. Japan has a long-lasting and still active tradition of peace and disarmament movements, but these are for the most part sustained by small and geographically dispersed groups of activists with little access to mainstream media and politics. The image of a

“secure Japan” developed from the 1960s onwards made it relatively easy for most people to ignore Japan’s deep entanglement in global nuclear strategy, and made the presence of nuclear weapons in or around Japan itself largely invisible. Since the 1990s a new consciousness of a nuclear threat has emerged, but this has tended to be narrowly confined within the framework of fears of North Korea.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to see in this uneven terrain of public discourse some basis for the expansion of active support for nuclear disarmament, and to suggest that the present moment offers particularly promising possibilities for such expansion. The advent of the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government, though it may not herald major changes in policy, shows signs of opening the way for a wider range of social movements to engage with the world of national politics. The change of regime may help dispel some of the political cynicism engendered by half a century of one-party dominance. The DPJ’s new MPs include several with NGO or social movement backgrounds, including Peace Boat activist Kushibuchi Mari and patients’ rights activist Fukuda Eriko. The DPJ has long signaled its intention to place improved relations with regional neighbours at the top of its foreign policy agenda, and Prime Minister elect Hatoyama also moved quickly to express interest in issues of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, meeting with the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki shortly after his party’s sweeping victory.<sup>35</sup> All this, of course, takes place in the international environment of a renewed interest in nuclear disarmament, most conspicuously articulated by US President Obama in his April 2009 speech in Prague.

Meanwhile, the failure of existing hard-line government approaches to produce any resolution to the North Korean abduction issue appears to be generating subtle shifts in public and media attitudes to this problem. In the context of a changing political environment, opportunities are opening to move the debate about the Korean nuclear crisis away from its obsessive focus on the North Korean regime and Kim Jong-Il, and into the wider framework of a search for collaborative regional efforts to seek denuclearized security. It would be risky

and simplistic to assume that such efforts can rely for sustenance on Japan's status as "the only country in the world that experienced the devastation of nuclear weapons". Though the memory of the bombings survives, it is less vivid than it once was, and for most of today's generation of Japanese the rhetoric of "security" is much more potent than the rhetoric of "peace".<sup>36</sup> The new push for nuclear disarmament needs to rally the existing forces of the Japanese peace movement while also responding to wider Japanese concerns about security in a rapidly changing East Asia.

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- <sup>1</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, *Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: Japan's Efforts*, Tokyo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 2007, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/policy/pamph0709.pdf> accessed 2 September 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> Glenn D. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan*, Lonon, Routledge, 1996, pp. 146-157.
- <sup>3</sup> See for example Martin Griffith and Ichie Asakura, "Assessing Japan's Nuclear Allergy: Domestic Constraints and International Drivers", paper presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Oceanic Conference on International Studies, University of Queensland, 2-4 July 2008, <http://www.polsis.uq.edu.au/OCIS/Griffiths.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintarô, for example, has spoken of the "nuclear allergy – more correctly, nuclear ignorance" of those Japanese who "are apt to fear even nuclear [energy] for peaceful use". Quoted in Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization*, p. 156.
- <sup>5</sup> Peter Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan*, Cornell, Cornell University Press, 1998, see particularly pp. 2 and 199-201.
- <sup>6</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1999, p. 414.
- <sup>7</sup> See Kuroto Kazuo, *Genbaku to Kotoba*, Tokyo, San-Ichi Shobô, 1983; John Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 125-153; the phrase "cut off from language" is cited on p. 146.
- <sup>8</sup> Morita Yoshinori, *Gensuibaku Kinshi Undô no Ayumi*, Tokyo, Nihon Seinen Shuppansha, 1971, p. 105.
- <sup>9</sup> See Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the Occupation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 71-75.
- <sup>10</sup> On the creation of *Gensuikyô*, see Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement 1945-1970*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 8-10.
- <sup>11</sup> On the Society of Voices of the Voiceless, see Kobayashi Tomi, *Kaigara no Machi: Koe naki Hitobito to no Deai*, Tokyo, Shisô no Kagakusha, 1980.
- <sup>12</sup> Kobayashi Ichirô, "Mâketingu to Shisutemu o Ikashita Shakai Undô: CHANCE! no Keiken kara" (Social Movements which Mobilize Marketing and Systems: the Experience of CHANCE!), *People's Plan.*, no. 20, Autumn, 2002, pp. 131-138; Takeuchi Kazuharu, "Netto de Sensô o Yamesaseru", (Stopping War via the Internet) *Shûkan kinyôbi*, 5 October, 2001, p. 17.
- <sup>13</sup> See <http://www.peaceboat.org/english/index.html> ; also Yoshioka Tatsuya, "Experience, Action and the Floating Peace Village", in Jennifer Chan ed., *Another Japan is Possible: New Social Movements and Global Citizenship Education*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 317-322.
- <sup>14</sup> See the museum websites: <http://www.d5f.org/top.htm> and <http://ha1.seikyô.ne.jp/home/Shigeo.Nishimori/> ; also Kim Yeong Hwan, "Promoting Peace and Reconciliation as a Citizen of East Asia: The Collaborative East Asian Workshop and the Grassroots House Peace Museum", *Japan Focus*, 17 December 2007, [http://www.japanfocus.org/\\_Kim\\_Yeong\\_Hwan-Promoting\\_Peace\\_and\\_Reconciliation\\_as\\_a\\_Citizen\\_of\\_East\\_Asia\\_The\\_Collaborative\\_East\\_Asian\\_Workshop\\_and\\_the\\_Grassroots\\_House\\_Peace\\_Museum](http://www.japanfocus.org/_Kim_Yeong_Hwan-Promoting_Peace_and_Reconciliation_as_a_Citizen_of_East_Asia_The_Collaborative_East_Asian_Workshop_and_the_Grassroots_House_Peace_Museum) accessed 10 August 2008.
- <sup>15</sup> Kim Yeong Hwan, op. cit.
- <sup>16</sup> For an interesting discussion of this issue, see Robin M. LeBlanc, *Bicycle Citizens: The Political World of the Japanese Housewife*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999.
- <sup>17</sup> See Hasuike Tôru, *Rachi: Sayû no Kakine o Koeta Tataakai e*, Tokyo, Kamogawa Shuppan, 2009.
- <sup>18</sup> For example, J. Graham Parsons, a senior diplomat in Japan and later Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs writes in his unpublished memoirs of "nuclear weapons on board US Navy ships, the presence of which we never confirmed or denied, or in Okinawa where they had long been stored". J. Graham Parsons, "The Far Eastern Bureau, March 8 1958 – March 31 1961",

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typescript held in J. Garaham Parsons collection, Box 13, Folder 15, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington DC.

<sup>19</sup> Schaller op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>20</sup> Internal evidence from diplomatic correspondence suggests that these agreements were decided on, through the efforts of then Prime Minister (and brother of Satô Eisaku) Kishi Nobusuke between 28 October and 13 November 1959. See telegrams from Australian Embassy Washington DC to Foreign Affairs Canberra, 31 October 1959 and 13 November 1959, in National Archives of Australia, Canberra, Series no. 9564, Control Symbol [227/14/2/2 PART 2](#) "Japan and USA International Committee on Security", 1959-1966. The first reports information from the State Department that "Security Treaty negotiations were still marking time" and that Kishi was trying the get agreement of senior LDP politicians that "he should be allowed to use his judgment on a number of important issues which still needed to be settled". The second reports information from the same source that "negotiations were now progressing well and the question of consultations was now largely settled".

<sup>21</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, 30 August 2000.

<sup>22</sup> *Tokyo Shinbun*, 3 July 2009. See also Schaller op. cit., pp. 195-197.

<sup>23</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, 12 July 2009.

<sup>24</sup> One of those who has recently pushed this view is former Air Defense Force Chief of Staff Tamogami Toshio, see Tamogami Toshio, *Saru demo Wakaru: Nihon Kaku Busôron*, Tokyo, Tobishima Shinsho, 2009; also *Sunday Times*, 23 August 2009.

<sup>25</sup> See [www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abduction/index.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abduction/index.html) and <http://rachi.channel.yahoo.co.jp>

<sup>26</sup> See [www.rachi.go.jp/jp/shisei/keihatsu/index.html](http://www.rachi.go.jp/jp/shisei/keihatsu/index.html)

<sup>27</sup> See Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Refugees, Abductees, 'Returnees': Human Rights in Japan-North Korea Relations", in Sonia Ryang ed., *North Korea: Towards a Better Understanding*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2009, pp.129-155.

<sup>28</sup> See Araki's homepage, <http://araki.way-nifty.com/about.html> , accessed 3 September 2007.

<sup>29</sup> See entry on the Okazaki Research Institute website, [http://www.okazaki-inst.jp/mutsu\\_munemitsu/Mutsu\\_Munemitsu\\_index.html](http://www.okazaki-inst.jp/mutsu_munemitsu/Mutsu_Munemitsu_index.html) accessed 10 September 2009.

<sup>30</sup> *Yomiuri Shinbun*, Tokyo, 27 May 1999; see also <http://www.okazaki-inst.jp/okazakibio.eng.html> accessed 10 September 2009.

<sup>31</sup> *Washington Post*, 26 April 2007. For a reproduction of the full advertisement, see <http://www.occidentalism.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/thefact.jpg>

<sup>32</sup> See [http://www.fec-ais.com/reports/abduction/ab\\_suport.html](http://www.fec-ais.com/reports/abduction/ab_suport.html) accessed 8 September 2009.

<sup>33</sup> See *Canberra Times*, 6 May 2008.

<sup>34</sup> David Pilling and Richard Sunley, "Fading Vision of Hiroshima's Horror", *Financial Times*, 5 August 2005, [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8b98e616-05c6-11da-883e-00000e2511c8.html?nclick\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8b98e616-05c6-11da-883e-00000e2511c8.html?nclick_check=1) accessed 15 December 2008.

<sup>35</sup> *Mainichi Daily News* 8 September 2009.

<sup>36</sup> When debating the title of a forthcoming book within editor from a prominent Japanese publishing firm, I was told: "don't put 'peace' in the title. Peace doesn't sell!"