Proposals for Reducing Nuclear Risks and New Nuclear Arms Control - On the Occasion of the 80th Anniversary of the A-bombings

Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control
and Disarmament Initiatives
Security Studies Program
Sasakawa Peace Foundation

March 2025

About the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) runs the Security Studies Program to engage in research activities and make policy proposals based on such studies, aiming at contributing to peace and stability in the Asian region and the world.

In September 2018, SPF started a research project on how Japan – an advanced country in the civilian use of atomic energy and the world's only atomic-bombed nation in a war – can contribute to global nuclear non-proliferation. Since then, this project has studied a broad range of topics, including international management of plutonium, North Korea's denuclearization, Japan's response to the rise of Russia and China in the international nuclear energy market, and how to protect nuclear facilities in light of Russia's attacks on nuclear power plants in its armed invasion of Ukraine. Findings from these studies will be published as policy proposals eventually to be conveyed to the Japanese government, international organizations, and other relevant bodies.

In Fiscal 2023, a new "Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives" was created with the participation of new members to look at ways to reduce the risk of using nuclear weapons and achieve new nuclear arms control and disarmament amid the unprecedented heightening of the risk of nuclear arms use in light of Russia's nuclear intimidation in its invasion of Ukraine, China's rapid nuclear arms expansion, North Korea's attempts to accelerate its development of nuclear weapons and missiles, and other ongoing changes. As part of the study group's research activities, its chairperson and three other members visited the U.S. in January 2024 to interview former senior U.S. government officials who were involved with nuclear arms control negotiations and experts on nuclear strategy. Based on the results of these efforts, " Urgent Proposals toward Sustaining Non-Use of Nuclear Arms and Maintenance of Nuclear Order—Ahead of the 2024 Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting" was published prior to the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in April of the same year. In November of the same year, the chairperson and six others visited South Korea to exchange views on the situation in Northeast Asia regarding nuclear weapons with former government officials and members of the South Korean parliament. These officials we interviewed were unanimous in their opinion that "the nuclear arms situation is extremely challenging." Meanwhile, they offered suggestions and proposals for promoting negotiations on nuclear arms control and disarmament.

In October 2024, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced that the Nobel Peace Prize would be awarded to the Japan Council of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo),

citing “the extraordinary efforts made by the representatives of the hibakusha to establish a nuclear taboo”.

The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On this occasion, based on the past discussions and research activities of the study group, here we make recommendations on concrete measures that the Japanese government could adopt to reduce the risk of nuclear use, ease future tensions, and find a path toward new nuclear arms control and disarmament, while reaffirming the significance of the nuclear taboo.

These policy recommendations will be published under the name of “the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives” with the approval of all committee members, taking into account that there are various discussions among the experts.

【Study Group Members】Titles omitted; in random order

Chairman	Tatsujiro Suzuki	Professor, Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, Nagasaki University(RECNA)
Members	Sukeyuki Ichimasa	Head, Cyber Security Division, Policy Studies Department, National Institute for Defense Studies
	Chikako Ueki	Professor, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University
	Masakatsu Ota	Senior and Editorial Writer, Kyodo News
	Miho Okada	Professor, School of Liberal Arts and General Education, National Defense Academy
	Mitsuru Kitano	Advisor, Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (former Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna)
	Heigo Sato	Professor, Faculty of International Studies, Takushoku University
	Wakana Mukai	Associate Professor, Faculty of International Relations, Asia University
Officer in Charge	Yuki Kobayashi	Research Fellow, Security Studies Program, SPF

Background to the recommendations

Concerns about “two collapses”: the “nuclear taboo” and the “nuclear order”

On February 24, 2022, Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, followed by frequent threats to use nuclear weapons, brought renewed global awareness of the nuclear threat. During interviews with experts in the U.S. conducted by the Study Group, former government officials and nuclear strategy experts interviewed testified that "in the fall of 2022, when Russia was forced to withdraw from Halkiv in Ukraine, once occupied, there were serious concerns about the use of nuclear weapons by Russia.[1] President Putin has since repeated his nuclear threats. In November 2024, he announced that he would expand and relax the criteria for the use of nuclear weapons in the country, including "even if an attack against Russia is carried out by a country that does not possess nuclear weapons, it will be considered a joint attack if the nuclear weapon states participate or support it.[2] North Korea has also shown a intention to use nuclear weapons preemptively.[3] In November 2023, Israel's Heritage Minister said that the use of nuclear weapons was an option in the battle against Hamas, the Islamic organization that effectively controls Gaza, and Prime Minister Netanyahu immediately suspended the Heritage Minister.[4] This current situation of lightly repeating nuclear threats and referring to the possibility of nuclear use has given people around the world concern that the 79-odd years of nuclear non-use since 1945 might be broken.

As for the continued non-use of nuclear weapons since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is worth noting that a "nuclear taboo" has gradually formed. The "nuclear taboo" was conceptualized by the American political scientist Dr. Nina Tannenwald. Dr. Tannenwald analyzed the cases of the Korean War (1950-1953), the Vietnam War (full-scale U.S. intervention: 1964-1975), and the Gulf War (1990-1991) in which the U.S. participated, and pointed out that the reason nuclear weapons were not used in each case was that the inhumanity caused by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki gradually led to the formation of practical norms that restrained the use of nuclear weapons. She called these practical norms "nuclear taboo.[5]

As mentioned above, the frequent occurrence of blatant nuclear threats against certain countries is an open challenge to the "nuclear taboo" and is considered a situation in which the continued non-use of nuclear weapons is in jeopardy. In October 2024, in its reasons for awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to the Japan Council of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo), the Norwegian Nobel Committee also complained that “the nuclear taboo is under strong pressure”.

While emphasizing the "nuclear taboo" based on the experience of the atomic bombings of

---

[1] Testimony of former government officials and nuclear experts interviewed during research activities in the United States conducted in January 2024 by the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives. See "U.S. Interview Summary”. [https://www.spf.org/global-data/user205/interviewreport.pdf]

[2] NHK, "President Putin Approves Lowering of Criteria for Use of Nuclear Weapons, Aiming to Curb U.S.," November 20, 2024. [https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20241119/k10014643571000.html]

[3] NHK, "North Korean leader Kim condemns Japan-U.S.-South Korea military cooperation, emphasizes "strengthening nuclear deterrence,"" November 18, 2024. [https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20241118/k10014641761000.html]

[4] Reuters, "Israeli cabinet minister's comments on 'option' of using nukes on Gaza sparks suspension," November 6, 2023. [https://jp.reuters.com/world/us/IJOQCLLVTRI75JONNJ5L52N6H4-2023-11-06/]

[5] The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945” Nina Tannenwald, 2007, and see Japan Association for Disarmament Studies, "Disarmament Encyclopedia," Shinzansha, 2015, "Nuclear Taboo" section, pp. 102~103. Dr. Thomas Schelling, winner of the 2005 Nobel Prize in Economics, also referred to the "nuclear taboo" in his acceptance speech.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki as described above, this study group went one step further and discussed how to perpetuate the non-use of nuclear weapons as a policy theory.

Not only the "nuclear taboo," but also the world nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, or "nuclear order," based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Nuclear Disarmament and Arms Control Treaties between the United States and Russia, is also facing a crisis. If international society backtracks on its obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament in good faith (Article VI), one of the three pillars of the NPT, there is a risk of further uncontrolled nuclear arms expansion with no upper limit on the number of nuclear weapons and missiles deployed. In addition, the frustration of non-nuclear weapon states and others at the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament led to the creation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Although 94 countries have signed the treaty and 73 countries have ratified it, the nuclear weapon states and countries dependent on the nuclear umbrella remain opposed to signing it, and the gap between non-nuclear weapon states and nuclear weapon dependent states remains deep. There was a hope that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) enter into force as soon as possible, but in November 2023, Russia withdrew its ratification of the treaty, increasing the number of countries that have not ratified the treaty from nine to ten.

Since the end of the Cold War, disarmament and arms control treaties between the U.S. and Russia that have reduced nuclear forces have either expired or been rolled back one after another. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), which eliminated intermediate-range nuclear forces between the United States and the Soviet Union, expired in 2019. One of the most important remaining treaties is the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), but Russia suspended implementation of the treaty in March 2023. The treaty expires in February 2026, but with the U.S. and Russia in serious conflict, there are fears that it will expire without a framework in place to replace it. In that case, the U.S. and Russia would enter a situation where there is no framework for a bilateral treaty on nuclear issues. In addition, China has remained reluctant to hold talks with the U.S. on disarmament and arms control, despite repeated U.S. overtures to do so.

The crisis of the "nuclear order" is also observed in the field of nuclear testing and proliferation. Regarding nuclear tests, for example, satellite imagery analysis has indicated that North Korea is preparing for its seventh nuclear test, according to experts. Russia is also showing signs of resuming testing, with the accelerated construction of the Novaya Zemlya nuclear test site. Some experts believe that Russia is “approaching the possibility of resuming nuclear testing”.[6] The United States also left room for resumption of nuclear testing in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), developed under the first Trump administration, which began in 2017.

Concerns about nuclear proliferation are also serious. Iran is increasing its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which contains up to 60% uranium-235 that can be converted into nuclear weapons.[7] As Iran's vulnerability is demonstrated in the direct engagement between Iran and Israel, some observers have indicated that Iran may be on the verge of nuclear arms.

Russia's military invasion of Ukraine was another blow to the nuclear order. In December 1994, the Budapest Memorandum was signed between the United States, the United Kingdom, and

---

[6] “Nuclear Crisis: The Dissolving International Order” Masakatsu Ota, Hayakawa Shinsho, August 2024 (citing research by Jeffrey Lewis).

[7] Reuters "Iran Raises Enriched Uranium Stockpile 'Significantly' - IAEA Director General," December 7. [https://jp.reuters.com/markets/commodities/USJKYG2WZZJE3B2WH2QO4OAX7A-2024-12-06/]

Russia, and the former Soviet Union member states of Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, respectively. In exchange for these three countries, including Ukraine, giving up their nuclear weapons deployed in the former Soviet Union and joining the NPT, the U.S., U.K., and Russia promised to respect the sovereignty and existing borders of the three countries.[8] The current situation in which Russia, which is specially authorized to possess nuclear weapons under the NPT, ignores international agreements, militarily invades countries that have agreed to abandon nuclear weapons, and repeatedly threatens with nuclear weapons, has led to widespread voices in Ukraine that "nuclear weapons should not have been relinquished". Furthermore, the Ukrainian case is also worrisome in that it may spread the idea that nuclear weapons must be possessed in order to prevent an armed invasion.

The countries that have expressed interest in possessing nuclear weapons as a means of ensuring their own national security are not limited to those just mentioned. If these countries were to acquire nuclear weapons and a nuclear proliferation domino were to occur, the NPT regime would be shaken and the "nuclear order" could collapse.[9]

In addition, Belarus amended its constitution, which stipulated "nuclear-free" since independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in February 2022, and the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons was reportedly completed in December 2023.The deployment of nuclear weapons in such non-nuclear-weapon states raises tensions in the region, and in this case, it cannot be overlooked in that it has a nuclear threat aspect because it was carried out in the midst of the Russia-Ukraine war.

In this way, the situation surrounding nuclear weapons is becoming increasingly severe on a global scale, and Northeast Asia is one of the most serious regions in the world. China's nuclear warhead stockpile was estimated to be in the low 200s in 2015, but according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) Yearbook 2024, it will reach 500 in 2023.The U.S. Department of Defense's report points out that "China may possess 1,000 nuclear warheads in 2030", [10] and there is a possibility that the transition from the two-nuclear-weapon state system of the United States and Russia to the three major nuclear-weapon states of the United States, China, and Russia will proceed. North Korea also continues its development of nuclear weapons and missiles. At the beginning of this year, it began to call the ROK its "primary enemy," declaring that it will no longer pursue peaceful reunification. This situation has led to a growing tendency for neighboring countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their own security. In South Korea, public opinion is gaining momentum in favor of its own nuclear armament and nuclear sharing with the United States.[11]

---

[8] Embassy of Ukraine in Japan, "Joint Statement: US, UK, Ukraine Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the Budapest Memorandum" March 2014. [https://japan.mfa.gov.ua/ja/news/19061-aide-mmoire-shhodo-porushennya-rosijeju-imperativnih-norm-mizhnarodnogo-prava-jus-cogens] The Memorandum
Paragraph 1: Respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and existing borders
Paragraph 2: No threat or use of force against Ukraine
clearly states. With this Memorandum, Ukraine renounced its nuclear weapons and signed the NPT.

[9] "Nuclear Crisis: The Dissolving International Order" pp. 192-223.

[10] The Department of Defense "MILITARY AND SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS INVOLVING THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA 2024"[https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/18/2003615520/-1/-1/0/MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2024.PDF]

[11] JoongAng Ilbo, "South Korea goes from 59% to 71% in favor of its own nuclear arms...17% to 35% in favor of Japan's nuclear arms as well," October 8, 2024 [https://japanese.joins.com/JArticle/324629]。However, when the diplomatic and economic losses (economic sanctions, impact on peaceful use of nuclear energy) incurred by the ROK due to nuclear armament are pointed out, the percentage in favor of nuclear armament decreases to about 35% (as introduced in a workshop with the Asia Pacific Leaders Network held in Seoul by the study group).

Amid growing concerns about the collapse of the nuclear taboo and the nuclear order, a number of proposals have been made in Japan and abroad on strengthening nuclear deterrence and reducing nuclear risks. On the other hand, there has been a lack of discussion on concrete measures that will lead to détente, future nuclear arms control, and disarmament.

In response to this situation, then Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced the Hiroshima Action Plan at the NPT Review Conference in August 2022 as the first step in a realistic roadmap toward a world without nuclear weapons.[12] Furthermore, in May 2023, at the G7 Summit held in Hiroshima, the site of the atomic bombing, the "Hiroshima Vision" focusing on nuclear disarmament was adopted for the first time apart from the joint statement. Rather than making these ideas mere a call, is there a way to promote nuclear arms control and disarmament? Precisely because of the severe security environment, Japan should continue to communicate concrete contribution measures to the international community toward the advancement of nuclear arms control in the future. Based on this recognition, the Study Group proposes the "Three Principles for Nuclear Risk Reduction" and makes recommendations as concrete measures based on the Three Principles for the reduction of nuclear risks, future détente reduction, and new nuclear arms control. On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is strongly hoped that this proposal will reawaken interest in nuclear disarmament and contribute to the international community.

[12] It is based on five actions: (1) sharing the importance of continuing the non-use of nuclear weapons, (2) improving transparency, (3) maintaining the downward trend in the number of nuclear weapons, (4) non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and (5) promoting visits to the sites of atomic bombings by leaders of various countries. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Prime Minister Kishida Attends the 10th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," August 2, 2022.

Recommendations for Reducing Nuclear Risks and New Nuclear Arms Control

In order to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear weapons and to promote future nuclear arms control, the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives advocates[13] the "**Three Principles for Reducing Nuclear Risks**" that nuclear-weapon states should adhere to. These principles follow existing international treaties such as the NPT and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and take them one step further by also referring to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) opinion on the "legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.[14] Bearing in mind the severity of the current international security environment surrounding nuclear weapons, the Study Group reiterates the importance of these principles. In addition to calling on the Japan governments to appeal to the nuclear-weapon states and develop diplomacy toward new nuclear arms control, including a message from the war-devastated countries that "Nagasaki will be the last place to be bombed," we will make three recommendations in the following order: what should be addressed urgently as a concrete measure based on the three principles, what should be addressed as a medium-term goal, and efforts for new nuclear arms control in the future.

Three Principles for Reducing Nuclear Risks

1. Continue not to use nuclear weapons and do not threaten non-nuclear-weapon states with nuclear weapons

2. Do not conduct nuclear tests

3. No new deployment of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapon states

[13] Under the NPT, the five countries that are permitted to possess nuclear weapons (the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China) are called nuclear-weapon states, and the nine countries that are allowed to possess nuclear weapons (India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea) are called nuclear weapon states. The rest of the countries, including those that have not signed the NPT, are called non-nuclear states.

[14] In July 1996, in response to a request from the UN General Assembly, the ICJ stated that "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally violate the rules of international law applicable to armed conflicts, and in particular the principles and regulations of humanitarian law. The Court cannot make a final conclusion as to whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons is legal or illegal." See Mitsuru Kurosawa, "50 Years of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Progress in Nuclear Disarmament," Shinzansha, April 2021, p. 220.

Recommendation 1: Japan should lead discussions in the international community toward an agreement to continue the non-use of nuclear weapons and not to threaten non-nuclear weapon states with nuclear weapons.

The threshold for the use of nuclear weapons is being lowered, as Russia has announced that it will lower its criteria for the use of nuclear weapons and North Korea has indicated that it will not hesitate to use nuclear weapons first. Against this backdrop, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations has reminded the world of the importance of the "nuclear taboo," that nuclear weapons must never be used. Japan should strongly appeal that all nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-armed umbrella states[15] should reaffirm the importance of "continuing the non-use of nuclear weapons" and share this philosophy that was confirmed at the G7 summit "Hiroshima Vision." At the same time, Japan should lead discussions in the international community with the aim of reaching an agreement that does not involve nuclear threats, especially against non-nuclear-weapon states

The world is now at an unprecedented risk of nuclear use.[16] In October 2022, there were serious concerns about the use of nuclear weapons by Russia. Since then, Russia has persistently repeated nuclear threats that could be described as “nuclear harassment”. Together with Israeli ministerial statements and North Korea's suggestion of a first use of nuclear weapons, tensions over nuclear weapons are rising around the world, and the "nuclear taboo" is on the verge of being broken.

A speech by the President of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Jørgen Vatne Friednes, at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo on December 10, 2024, reflected this state of the world.[17] The award-winning Nihon Hidankyo Representative Committee member Tanaka Terumi also conveyed to the world the reality of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, saying, “In addition to the sacrifice of civilians, there is a ‘nuclear taboo’, such as the nuclear threat by Russia, a nuclear superpower, in the war in Ukraine, and the emergence of a cabinet minister who talks about the use of nuclear weapons amid Israel's relentless attacks on the Gaza Strip in the Palestinian territories. I feel boundless frustration and indignation that it is about to be destroyed”.[18]

While the international situation regarding nuclear weapons is becoming increasingly severe, it is not entirely hopeless to find hope for the continuation of the “nuclear taboo” and the “nuclear order”. In January 2022, just prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the five nuclear weapon states (the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China), which are authorized to possess nuclear weapons under the NPT, issued a joint statement stating “nuclear war cannot

---

[15] A country that does not possess nuclear weapons but relies on the nuclear deterrence of its nuclear allies. Specifically, it refers to the member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Japan, South Korea, Australia, etc. Russia has declared that Belarus, which has newly deployed Russian intermediate-range nuclear missiles, is also under its nuclear umbrella.

[16] In an interview survey in the United States conducted in January 2024 by the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives, most of the former government officials and nuclear experts interviewed expressed their concerns about the current situation surrounding nuclear weapons, such as "the increased risk of nuclear use since the Cuban Missile Crisis" (Dr. Scott Sagan, Stanford University). See U.S. Interview Summary. [https://www.spf.org/global-data/user205/interviewreport.pdf]

[17] The Nobel Peace Prize "Speech by Jorgen Vatne Friednes, President of the Norwegian Nobel Committee" [https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2024/12/presentation-speech-japanese.pdf]. "As 2025 approaches, the world is entering a new, more unstable nuclear age, and the role of nuclear weapons in international politics is changing. Existing nuclear-armed states are modernizing and strengthening their armaments, and new countries appear to be preparing to acquire nuclear weapons. While major arms control agreements expire without being replaced, threats to use nuclear weapons are openly and repeatedly made in the ongoing war."

[18] NHK "Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony Japan Hidankyo Tanaka Hidankyo [Full text of speech]," December 11, 2024. [https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20241211/k10014664891000.html]

be won and must never by fought” .[19] It suggests that the “nuclear taboo” conceptualized by Dr. Tannenwald is being internalized in the consciousness of political leaders in nuclear weapon states.

Under the modest hope, it goes without saying that Japan's role is vital to realize the “Three Principles for Reducing Nuclear Risks” proposed this time by the “the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives”. The Japanese government has repeatedly stated that it will “build bridges between the nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states”, and in 2017, former Prime Minister Kishida established the “the Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament”. In 2022, when he became Prime Minister, he established “the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World Without Nuclear Weapons”.

As a way for Japan to play a role as a bridge, the study group proposed in April 2024 to “create a forum for discussions specializing in nuclear issues among the leaders of each country”.[20] As the Cuban Missile Crisis has shown, it is extremely important for the leaders of nuclear weapon states to communicate with each other without preconditions in order to prevent the accidental use of nuclear weapons due to miscalculation or misreading the intentions of the other party. In the research activities conducted by the study group in the United States, a former government official who has been involved in arms control negotiations with Russia cited “the isolation of President Putin due to the lack of dialogue between the leaders triggered by the spread of COVID-19” as the background to President Putin's decision to invade Ukraine and repeated nuclear threats .[21] It symbolizes the importance of confirming the intentions of the leaders through dialogue and building trust.

Japan, on behalf of the non-nuclear states, should also strongly call on the nuclear-weapon states to discuss not to make nuclear threats against non-nuclear-weapon states and to institutionalize the Negative Security Assurances (NSA) that does not use or threat to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states, and should act as a bridge as we approach the 80th anniversary of the A-bombings.

---

[19] NIKKEI "Putin's 'Nuclear Threat' Remarks Weaken, Considering China's Concerns" October 28, 2022. [https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOGR2851A0Y2A021C2000000/]

[20] Sasakawa Peace Foundation, "Urgent Proposal for the Continuation of the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons and the Maintenance of Nuclear Order ~Ahead of the 2024 Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting~," April 2024.

[21] Testimony of former government officials and nuclear experts interviewed during research activities in the United States conducted by the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives in January 2024. See U.S. Interview Summary. [https://www.spf.org/global-data/user205/interviewreport.pdf]

Recommendation 2: Promote negotiations on concrete measures to reduce the risk of nuclear use

While nuclear arms control negotiations have stalled and countries are rather shifting to policies that enhance the role of nuclear weapons, there are also moves to avoid accidental nuclear war due to a lack of dialogue or as a result of misreading the intentions of the other party. In order to accelerate such moves and reduce the risk of nuclear use, we request that negotiations first proceed with specific topics on an individual basis. These include not deploying satellite attack weapons (ASAT), not attacking satellites associated with the operation of nuclear weapons systems, not conducting nuclear tests, prohibiting cyber-attacks on nuclear systems, and not delegating the use of nuclear weapons to AI.

As noted in Recommendation 1, close communication among the leaders of the nuclear weapon states is first and foremost essential to prevent the accidental use of nuclear weapons and to ensure the continuation of the "no use of nuclear weapons" and the "nuclear order". It is desirable to enter into a dialogue on individual, specific themes once a certain degree of trust has been fostered among the leaders through repeated communication. In light of the current international situation, one idea would be to start with a discussion on the role of nuclear deterrence in reducing regional tensions and nuclear nonproliferation.

As individual themes, we would first like to call on the nuclear weapon states to prohibit measures that undermine confidence in nuclear weapons systems. A ban on cyber-attacks on nuclear weapons systems and "not entrusting the use of nuclear weapons to AI", as confirmed by the leaders of the U.S. and China, would be good footholds for discussion. Japan should also appeal for increased international momentum on measures to reduce nuclear risks, such as not deploying satellite-attack weapons (ASAT), not attacking satellites related to the operation of nuclear weapons systems, and not conducting new nuclear tests with maximum respect for the aims of the CTBT, including those of non-signatory states.

In Northeast Asia, in particular, negotiations to reduce nuclear risks are urgently needed. The proposal of a "ban on the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in the region" proposed by former government officials interviewed during the study group's research activities in the United States is also worth considering.[22] As shown in the course of the negotiations of the INF Treaty signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987, the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles could motivate the first use of nuclear weapons and risk a limited nuclear war.[23] This is also important because it is consistent with (3) of the Three Principles for Reducing Nuclear Risks.

As one concrete idea to realize a ban on the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Northeast Asia, the above-mentioned former government official proposed "advancing negotiations on the prohibition of the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles by announcing a moratorium on the development of U.S. missile defense systems, which China is wary of".[24] Although careful consideration is required in terms of future technological renewal of missile defense and additional deployment, Japan should take note of such a proposal. The research activities in the United States also raised concerns about the risk of nuclear use in the

---

[22] Testimony of former government officials and nuclear experts interviewed during research activities in the United States conducted by the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Concepts in January 2024. See U.S. Interview Summary. [https://www.spf.org/global-data/user205/interviewreport.pdf]

[23] US-Soviet Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations and Japan Diplomacy, Takao Segawa, Hokkaido University Press, 2016

[24] See footnote 22.

event of a Taiwan contingency. We would also like to add that some experts[25] have suggested that the no-first-use of nuclear weapons in the event of a Taiwan contingency should be a starting point for dialogue between the United States and China.[26]

[25] See footnote 22.

[26] It has also been pointed out that Russia and North Korea may deploy Russian nuclear weapons in North Korea under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty signed at the June 19, 2024 summit. In that case, although it does not fall under (3) of the three principles for reducing nuclear risks of our study group, we express our concern that it will increase tensions in the region.

Recommendation 3: Japan should lead a dialogue aimed at reducing reliance on nuclear deterrence in order to ease tensions and manage new nuclear arms control.

Nuclear deterrence and the strategic stability based on it require certain conditions to function. Given the risk that these conditions will break down and nuclear deterrence will fail, nuclear arms control is necessary in the long run to reduce tensions, improve the regional security environment, and lead to less reliance on nuclear deterrence. This will require new measures, such as strengthening negative security assurances (NSA) that do not include nuclear attacks on non-nuclear weapon states or threats with nuclear weapons. Japan, which has announced that it will act as a "bridge" between the nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, should take an active role in easing tensions and taking the lead in new nuclear arms control.

"The Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives" began with discussions to accurately grasp the current situation regarding nuclear weapons, with the objective of making recommendations to specifically promote nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament. In this context, it acknowledged the role of nuclear deterrence to a certain extent in the current international situation, and also proposed measures to stabilize deterrence.
However, the risk of failure of nuclear deterrence is also pointed out by the Group of Eminent Persons for Substantial Progress in Nuclear Disarmament, which was established by former Prime Minister Kishida when he was foreign minister. "Nuclear deterrence, while it may promote stability, is dangerous to long-term international security, and all countries must seek better long-term solutions", the Group of Eminent Persons said.[27]

Given that nuclear war did not occur during the Cold War, it can be said that mutual deterrence through nuclear weapons, and strategic stability based on such deterrence, did not show a breakdown between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It is pointed out that, in addition to the capability of nuclear weapons and the intention to use them, a correct understanding of the capability and intention, as well as shared situational awareness, are important conditions for nuclear deterrence to be established. Furthermore, the study group believes that there are three conditions for the establishment of strategic stability: mutual understanding, compliance with rules, and sharing of interests. While U.S.-Soviet relations were of decisive importance during the Cold War, China is now emerging as an important player in the nuclear weapons arena as well. It is difficult to say that what was shared between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War is now shared by the United States and China. In addition, mutual nuclear deterrence risks failing due to accidents, misunderstandings, and miscommunication. Since nuclear arms control negotiations and other measures have contributed to mutual deterrence and strategic stability between the United States and the Soviet Union, there is an urgent need to secure similar mechanisms and dialogues between the United States and China, as well as the United States and China.

For the time being, it is important to promote stability through nuclear deterrence, but if mutual nuclear deterrence is violated, it will be a crisis for humanity as a whole, and Japan and other nuclear umbrella states may become targets of attack. Therefore, instead of nuclear deterrence, policies that promote stability are needed. In other words, from a long-term perspective, we should consider ways to reduce our dependence on nuclear deterrence.

---

[27] Recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons for Substantial Progress in Nuclear Disarmament. March 2018. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000349263.pdf]。 The Group of Eminent Persons was established in May 2017 by then-Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

The embodiment of the Negative Security Assurance (NSA) mentioned in Recommendation 1 is one of the important themes for this purpose, and the international society should begin with a reaffirmation of past international agreements and declarations at international conferences. At the 1995 NPT Review Conference, which decided on the indefinite extension of the NPT, the five countries that were authorized to possess nuclear weapons made a declaration to allow non-nuclear weapon states to have NSA.[28] The NSA has been strongly urged by non-nuclear weapon states as a condition for signing the NPT since the NPT negotiations began in the 1960s, but the inclusion of the NSA in the treaty's text was not realized due to the lack of alignment among the nuclear weapon states. Based on the declaration at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, Japan, as the world's only atomic-bombed nation in a war, should represent the non-nuclear weapon states and work to strengthen the NSA, as was considered by the U.S. Obama administration. Such efforts would be highly appreciated by international society as an effort to reduce the role of nuclear weapons and to continue the "nuclear taboo" and "nuclear order. It will also contribute to the realization of the "prevention of nuclear threats against non-nuclear-weapon states" advocated by the Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives in the three principles.

In order to consider ways to reduce dependence on nuclear deterrence from a long-term perspective, we would like to propose that Japan lead an international dialogue with countries that have similar awareness of the problem. For example, it would be a good idea to use existing organizations such as the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), a meeting of foreign ministers of non-nuclear-weapon states established in 2010 under the leadership of Japan and Australia.[29]

Considering that Northeast Asia is a region with a strong nuclear shadow, it is also significant for Japan to promote dialogue focused on the region. In urgent recommendations published in April 2024, the study group called for active involvement in the US-China-Russia dialogue process and for the Japan government to promote Track 2 exchanges of the Japan-US-China-Russia dialogue focused on nuclear issues, in cooperation with civil society. This means that Japan will support dialogue between the three nuclear powers, the United States, Russia, and China. It is also important to cooperate with South Korea, which is part of the U.S. nuclear umbrella, while both are in a severe security environment. Japan and the South Korea should discuss measures to reduce threat perception and nuclear risks. In addition, Japan, China, and South Korea are engaged in consultations on a wide range of fields, including the economy, and frank dialogue should also be pursued in the nuclear field.

[28] At the conference, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France declared that they would not use nuclear weapons unless a non-nuclear-weapon State State that is a party to the NPT attacks in cooperation with or in alliance with a nuclear-weapon state. China has declared that it will grant Negative Security Assurances (NSA) to "nuclear-weapon-free states or nuclear-weapon-free zones." Japan Society for Disarmament Society, Encyclopedia of Disarmament, Shinzansha, 2015, pp. 246-247

[29] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan webpage "Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Initiative (NPDI)" [https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/npdi/index.html]

[Bibliography]

1. “Disarmament Encyclopedia” Japan Society for Disarmament Studies, Shinzansha, 2015
2. “SIPRI Yearbook 2024”
3. Office of the Secretary of Defense “MILITARY AND SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS INVOLVING THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA 2024”
4. Nina Tannenwald “The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945” 2007
5. "Nuclear Crisis ~ The Crumbling International Order" Masakatsu Ota (Member of the study group), Hayakawa Shinsho, 2024
6. “Comparative Politics of Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Countries That Have Acquired Nuclear Weapons and Countries That Have Abandoned” Mitsuru Kitano (Member of the study group, Minerva Shobo, 2016)
7. “US-Soviet Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations and Japan Diplomacy” Takao Segawa, Hokkaido University Press, 2016
8. “Designing for a Nuclear-Free Era: A Realistic Process from the Perspective of International Politics, Nuclear Non-Proliferation, and International Law” edited by Fumihiko Yoshida et al., Waseda University Press, 2024
   (The members of the study group, Sato and Wakana Mukai, are listed as editors and authors.)
9. “New Horizons of the Nuclear Age” edited by Sukeyuki Ichimasa (member of the study group), Interbooks, 2024
10. “Basic Concepts of Reviving the Crossroads of the World ~ An Invitation to Comparative Politics and International Politics” Kazuya Nakamizo and Ryo Sahashi, eds., Iwanami Shoten, 2024 (Wakana Mukai, a member of our study group, is in charge of "nuclear disarmament" as one of the authors)
11. RECNA・Nautilus Institute・APLN, “Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons Use in Northeast Asia: Implications for Reducing Nuclear Risk” (March 2023) https://www.recna.nagasaki-u.ac.jp/recna/bd/files/Year_2_NU-NEA_Report_E_2303
12. RECNA・Nautilus Institute・APLN, “What Should Be Done? Practical Policies to Prevent Nuclear Catastrophe”（March 2024）https://www.recna.nagasaki-u.ac.jp/recna/bd/files/Year_3_NU-NEA_Report_E_2403.pdf
13. Hiroshima Round Table, "Hiroshima Watch"（August 2024, in Japanese） https://hiroshimaforpeace.com/roundtable/hiroshimawatch2024/

[Previous SPF Proposals on Nuclear Energy]

“Proposals to the Japanese Government Concerning International Management of Plutonium: Aiming for reduction in plutonium stocks and adoption of new international norms,” May, 2019.

“Proposals to the Japanese Government Concerning the Denuclearization of North Korea: With a View to Reduction of Nuclear Threat and Establishment of New Security Framework in Northeast Asia,” February, 2020.

“Japan’s Contribution to Global Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: Toward a

Policy for Fulfilling the Responsibilities of Japan as the Only Country to Have Suffered From Atomic Bombs," April, 2020.

"Rise of China and Russia in the Civilian Use of Atomic Energy: Strengthening the Global Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime and Japan's Role," April 2021. (in Japanese)

Urgent Proposal: "Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Challenges in the Civilian Use of Nuclear Energy and Japan's Role," July, 2022.

"Protection of Nuclear Facilities and Japan's Role — In Response to Russian Invasion of Ukraine and Attacks on Nuclear Power Plants," February, 2023.

"Urgent Proposals toward Sustaining Non-Use of Nuclear Arms and Maintenance of Nuclear Order—Ahead of the 2024 Japan-U.S. Summit"
2024 年 4 月

"U.S. Interview Summary" (in Japanese) 2024 年 4 月

While all members are in agreement on the overall recommendation, one member submitted a written opinion on some of the contents, which is attached herewith.

Written opinion

Mitsuru Kitano

I have endeavored to be actively involved in the development of these recommendations, and I believe that as a whole, it is a substantial and good content, and I would like to express my appreciation for the efforts of the chairperson, the members, and all others involved.

However, with regard to the third item in the “Three Principles for Reducing Nuclear Risks” in the proposal, I have expressed my opinion in the study group that it should be “oppose nuclear proliferation” or “do not transfer nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states”. I would like to express here my opinion that it is difficult to agree with the statement of “No new deployment of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapon states” as one of the "principles.

First, I would like to make it clear that I also do not believe that more and more new deployments of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states would be a good thing. If this were to happen, tensions in the region would rise. There is a high probability that the "security dilemma" will lead to countermeasures by its adversaries, further increasing the nuclear risk. In some cases, this would be a dangerous course to take.

On the other hand, the following points must also be borne in mind. First, the reality of the world is that there are countries that violate international rules, pursue nuclear development, and invade neighboring countries by force. Is it unacceptable for a nuclear-weapon state to deploy nuclear weapons in a non-nuclear-weapon state with which it is allied in order to respond to the threat of a state that seeks to change the status quo with force, including nuclear force? Without considering the background and circumstances that led to such a situation, is it right to simply say “no deployment from now on”? Second, the deployment of nuclear weapons controlled by a nuclear weapons state to a non-nuclear weapons state is permitted under the NPT, and there have been and continue to be examples. It is, on the part of non-nuclear-weapon states, a recognized means of self-defense under the NPT. In an increasingly difficult security environment, is it a good idea to block such NPT-approved means of self-defense in response to imminent and unjustified violations? Third, "no new deployments" would mean that the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus, which has already been made, is not an issue, but that any future attempt by South Korea to seek the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons (or similar cases) in response to the North Korean nuclear threat would not be allowed, which is an appropriate " principle"? Fourth, South Korea is currently the subject of much discussion on how to respond to the nuclear threat. Various options are being discussed, including possessing its own nuclear weapons, sharing NATO-style nuclear weapons, and redeploying U.S. tactical nuclear weapons. Going to its own nuclear arsenal would be a withdrawal from the NPT, but redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons is possible within the framework of the NPT. Comparing the two, it would be preferable to settle for the latter rather than the former (whether the U.S. would comply is another question).

I have participated in the discussions in the hope that the recommendations of the study group will reach both those who value security and those who value disarmament and arms control. The two communities should not be divided, and I have joined the work because I believe it is important to include a disarmament and arms control perspective when considering security, and a security perspective when considering disarmament and arms control. From my standpoint, regardless of the background and circumstances, to say that the means of self-defense permitted to non-nuclear-weapon states under the NPT are "not allowed" in the future must be considered a disregard for the security perspective.

Appendix

Activities of "Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives"

Meetings/ Research	Date	Activities
First Study Meeting	May 30, 2023	Explanation of study group's goals, direction of research work
Second Study Meeting	July 3, 2023	Speech by outside lecturer and exchange of views, "Nuclear Policy in the Era of the Bush Jr. Administration and Its Impact on China"
Third Study Meeting	July 27, 2023	Speech by two members and exchange of views 1. "Background to the Conclusion and Regression of Arms Control Treaties in the Last 50 Years" 2. "History of Diplomatic Negotiations on North Korea's Denuclearization and Factors Behind Failure"
Fourth Study Meeting	Sept. 26, 2023	Speech by member and exchange of views "The Significance and Future of Arms Control Treaties from the Russian Point of View and Future Outlook"
Fifth Study Meeting	Oct. 31, 2023	Speech by member and exchange of views "Implications of Export Control on International Situation and Nuclear Arms Control"
Sixth Study Meeting	Nov. 27, 2023	Speech by member and exchange of views "U.S.-Soviet and U.S.-Russia Arms Control Issues Relating to Nuclear Tests"
Research, Trip to U.S.	Jan. 14-21, 2024	Interviews with 13 former U.S. government officials involved with nuclear arms control talks and experts on nuclear strategy
Seventh Study Meeting	March 26, 2024	Drafting of urgent proposals to the Japanese government on sustaining non-use of nuclear arms and maintenance of nuclear order ahead of Japan-U.S. summit in April 2024
Eighth Study Meeting	April 25, 2024	Exchange of opinions on how to proceed with the study group in FY2024
Ninth Study Meeting	May 17, 2024	Speech by member and exchange of views "New Horizons of the Nuclear Age"
Tenth Study Meeting	June 12, 2024	Speech by outside lecturer and exchange of views "The Current Situation of Nuclear Weapons and the History of Nuclear Arms Control from the Russian Perspective"
Eleventh Study Meeting	July 10, 2024	Speech by member and exchange of views "Basic Concepts for Reviving the Crossroads of

		the World”
Twelfth Study Meeting	Aug. 29, 2024	Sorting out issues and exchanging opinions on the future
Thirteenth Study Meeting	Oct. 3, 2024	Speech by outside lecturer and exchange of views “The Relationship between AI and Nuclear Weapons Systems”
Fourteenth Study Meeting	Oct. 25, 2024	Speech by member and exchange of views “The Effects and Limits of Russia's Nuclear Threats”
Fifteenth Study Meeting	Nov. 5, 2024	Speech by member and exchange of views “The Current Situation of the Nuclear Debate in South Korea”
Research, Trip to South Korea	Nov. 26-29, 2024	Workshops with ASIA-PACIFIC LEADERS NETWORK Exchange of Views with the National Assembly Institute for the Future of Korea
Sixteenth Study Meeting	Dec. 12, 2024	Summary of Recommendations
Seventeenth Study Meeting	Jan. 9 & 14, 2025	Compilation of Policy Recommendations

SPF 笹川平和財団