

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

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

March 2024

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 chair 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. The former government officials they interviewed were unanimous in their opinion that “the nuclear arms situation is extremely challenging.” These officials offered suggestions and proposals for promoting negotiations on nuclear arms control and disarmament.

This April, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who chaired the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023, will visit the U.S. as a state guest and hold summit meetings with President Joe Biden. Based on the study group’s discussions and

research so far, we are taking this opportunity to make urgent proposals on concrete measures that the Japanese government can take to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use and find a new path toward nuclear arms control and disarmament.

These urgent proposals were approved unanimously by the group members and are being published under the name of the “Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives.”

【Study Group Members】 Titles omitted; in random order

Chairman	Tatsujiro Suzuki	Deputy Director, Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, Nagasaki University
Members	Sukeyuki Ichimasa	Head, Cyber Security Division, Policy Studies Department, National Institute for Defense Studies
	Chikako Ueki	Professor, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Faculty of International Research and Education, 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 Urgent Proposals

Toward Sustaining Non-Use of Nuclear Arms and “Maintenance of Nuclear Order”

“The nuclear shadow that loomed over the Cold War has re-emerged. And some countries are recklessly rattling the nuclear saber once again, threatening to use these tools of annihilation.” (from the message of UN Secretary-General António Guterres to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial on the 78th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 2023)

Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, and it has threatened to use nuclear weapons. The world has thus come to realize the nuclear threat once again. On the other hand, China has been accelerating its nuclear arms expansion. According to a report of the U.S. Defense Department, “China will likely field a stockpile of about 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035.” 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. The risk of using nuclear arms in Northeast Asia, where Japan is located, is at an unprecedented high level. Meanwhile, it is now widely believed that the world’s nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation regime, i.e., the “nuclear order” pivoted on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the nuclear disarmament and arms control treaties between the U.S. and Russia, is on the verge of a crisis.

In this situation, although there have been numerous proposals on strengthening deterrence, discussion has hardly progressed on concrete ways to achieve sustained non-use of nuclear arms that will lead to nuclear arms control and disarmament in the future while controlling the current nuclear risk for the meantime.

For this reason, the “Study Group on New Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives” has engaged in discussions to find ways to heighten interest in nuclear arms control and present concrete proposals ahead of the Japan-U.S. summit meeting in April.

Based on its discussions, the group came up with the following proposals on concrete steps that Japan and the world need to urgently take to sustain the non-

use of nuclear weapons that has lasted for some 79 years so far and to maintain the nuclear order.

At the G7 Summit that took place in atomic-bombed Hiroshima City in May 2023, the “Hiroshima Vision” focusing on nuclear disarmament was issued separately from the summit’s joint communique for the first time. In March 2024, Japan chaired a UN Security Council meeting on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.” It is only by not allowing the “Hiroshima Vision” to become an ephemeral declaration and moving forward to take practical action that the significance of holding the summit in the atomic-bombed city can be substantiated. Precisely because we are facing a challenging security environment, we strongly hope that our proposals will help Japan send out its messages to the U.S. and the international community on concrete measures to contribute to advancing nuclear arms control in the future.

Urgent Proposals toward Sustaining Non-Use of Nuclear Arms and Maintenance of Nuclear Order

Proposal 1 : Reconfirm the importance of sustaining non-use of nuclear arms and maintenance of nuclear order, spearhead summit diplomacy for concrete measures to reduce risk of nuclear arms use

The world is currently facing the risk of nuclear arms use. The upcoming Japan-U.S. summit should reconfirm the importance of “sustaining non-use of nuclear arms” and declare that this common principle should be shared by all nuclear powers and nuclear umbrella nations¹. Furthermore, with the arms control treaties between the U.S. and Russia virtually losing their efficacy and the disruption of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, how to maintain the international nuclear order has become an urgent issue. Japan should actively conduct summit diplomacy and engage in candid discussions with leaders of the nuclear and non-nuclear nations on concrete steps to be taken for sustaining non-use of nuclear arms and maintenance of the nuclear order.

Proposal 2: Promote multitiered dialogue to encourage negotiations on nuclear arms control by the nuclear powers

Negotiations on arms control have stagnated, and the involved countries are instead moving toward expanding the role of nuclear weapons. While there are various factors behind this, it is precisely in a situation like this that dialogue among the nuclear powers is of crucial importance. Particularly in Northeast Asia, it is necessary to avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations between the U.S. and China on nuclear strategy. Now is the time when a multitiered mechanism needs to be built to ease tensions among nuclear powers. In the case of the U.S. and China, Japan can play a special role because it is an ally of the U.S. and at the same time, it also has a mutually beneficial strategic relationship with China. In order to support negotiations by the nuclear powers on nuclear arms control for the future, the Japanese government should cooperate with civil society, promote “Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues” focusing on nuclear issues with the involved nations in the region, and build a mechanism for the results of the

¹ Countries that do not possess nuclear weapons but depend on other nuclear powers for nuclear deterrence, such as the NATO members, Japan, the ROK, and Australia. Russia recently declared that Belarus, where it has deployed mid-range nuclear missiles, is under its nuclear umbrella.

dialogues to be reflected in intergovernmental discussions.

Proposal 1: The world is currently facing the risk of nuclear arms use. The upcoming Japan-U.S. Summit should reconfirm the importance of “sustaining non-use of nuclear arms” and declare that this common principle should be shared by all nuclear powers and nuclear umbrella nations. Furthermore, with the arms control treaties between the U.S. and Russia virtually losing their efficacy and the disruption of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, how to maintain the international nuclear order has become an urgent issue. Japan should actively conduct summit diplomacy and engage in candid discussions with leaders of the nuclear and non-nuclear nations on concrete steps to be taken for sustaining non-use of nuclear arms and maintenance of the nuclear order.

The world is indeed facing serious risks of nuclear arms use. While the main reason is Russia’s violation of the Budapest Memorandum² and military invasion of Ukraine, China’s nuclear arms expansion, North Korea’s acceleration of its development of nuclear weapons and missiles, and such other factors have also given rise to heightened tensions worldwide over nuclear arms. On the other hand, with the stalemate in the U.S.-Russia arms control and disarmament treaties, the existing NPT-centered international nuclear order is in crisis.

Based on lessons learned from past nuclear arms control talks, political leadership is particularly important.³ Considering there is overwhelming lack of communication among the major nuclear powers, the U.S., Russia, and China, it is possible to work for the easing of tension using existing frameworks, such as by setting up forums for dialogue focusing on nuclear issues at the G20 and other conferences attended by these three countries.

Japan plays a key role in this process. With the goal of “serving as a bridge between the nuclear and non-nuclear powers,” Prime Minister Kishida took the initiative to set up the “International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons” in 2022. Japan hosted the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023, and in March 2024, Japan chaired the UN Security Council meeting

² The Memorandum stipulates in Paragraph 1: respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine; Paragraph 2: refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. Based on this Memorandum, Ukraine abandoned its nuclear weapons and signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

³ During the Cuban Crisis of 1962 and in the process of signing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the U.S. and Soviet leaders communicated directly to bring about a favorable turn in the situation.

on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.” Advocating the creation of a venue devoted to discussions among leaders on nuclear issues is consistent with the Japanese government’s goal.

Prime Minister Kishida should work with President Biden, who is keen on nuclear disarmament, to reconfirm the significance of 79 years of sustained non-use of nuclear arms since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 and share a common understanding on the imminent risk of nuclear arms use. Furthermore, calling for talks between leaders on nuclear issues will eliminate the lack of dialogue on nuclear arms and contribute to easing the current military tensions. We hope that the upcoming Japan-US. Summit in April 2024 will confirm the importance of sustaining non-use of nuclear arms⁴ and issue a written joint declaration on this matter.

⁴ At the G7 Summit in May 2023, the leaders shared a common understanding of the risk of nuclear arms use facing the world and reconfirmed their intent to “extend the 77-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons.”

Proposal 2: Negotiations on arms control have stagnated, and the involved countries are instead moving toward expanding the role of nuclear weapons. While there are various factors behind this, it is precisely in a situation like this that dialogue among the nuclear powers is of crucial importance. Particularly in Northeast Asia, it is necessary to avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations between the U.S. and China on nuclear strategy. Now is the time when a multitiered mechanism needs to be built to ease tensions among nuclear powers. In the case of the U.S. and China, Japan can play a special role because it is an ally of the U.S. and at the same time, it also has a mutually beneficial strategic relationship with China. In order to support negotiations by the nuclear powers on nuclear arms control for the future, the Japanese government should cooperate with civil society, promote “Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues” focusing on nuclear issues with the involved nations in the region, and build a mechanism for the results of the dialogues to be reflected in intergovernmental discussions.

There is serious lack of dialogue between the U.S. and Russia and between the U.S. and China on nuclear arms control. In its report in 2022, the U.S. Defense Department pointed out that, “China will likely field a stockpile of about 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035.”⁵ The Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States also debated the possibility of a simultaneous nuclear attack on the U.S. by China and Russia,⁶ and there is now an ongoing discussion in the U.S. on whether the number of U.S. nuclear warheads should be increased to counteract China’s nuclear arms expansion and the China-Russia entente. This situation shows that promoting dialogue among the U.S., China, and Russia, eliminating misunderstandings, and avoiding miscalculations is an urgent task.

In November 2023, the U.S. and China held their first high-level arms control talks since 2018. No official representing the military participated on the Chinese

⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2022.” (<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Nov/29/2003122279/-1/-1/1/2022-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>)

⁶ The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States “America’s Strategic Posture.” (<https://armedservices.house.gov/sites/republicans.armedservices.house.gov/files/Strategic-Posture-Committee-Report-Final.pdf>)

side, and it is thought that the talks failed to make any substantial progress.⁷ Furthermore, while the introduction of low-yield nuclear ballistic missiles (W76-2s for deployment on strategic nuclear submarines) during the Trump administration was a decision meant to deter Russia's use of tactical nuclear weapons, there is an opinion that China might have misunderstood this to be aimed at containing China in order to reverse the inferior position of U.S. conventional forces in the West Pacific.⁸

The U.S. and the Soviet Union, and later Russia, have the experience of achieving progress in nuclear arms control and disarmament with diligent confidence building efforts through dialogue. It is necessary to learn from this historical experience and strengthen strategic dialogue aiming at involving China in nuclear arms control. Another idea is to also discuss the impact of AI, cyber weapons, and other advanced technologies on the reliability of nuclear weapon systems.

Japan, whose security is directly affected by developments in China and Russia, should be actively involved in the U.S.-China-Russia dialogue process in order to improve its own security environment. Toward this end, the Japanese government should cooperate with civil society, promote "Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues" focusing on nuclear issues, and build a mechanism for the results of the dialogues to be reflected in intergovernmental discussions. Through the "Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues," it will be possible to communicate to verify each other's intents, enhance the transparency of nuclear forces and strategy as much as possible, and promote information gathering for the security of Japan and the region. Through an accurate understanding of China's and Russia's moves relating to their nuclear policy and strategic goals and the enhancement of confidence-building momentum, it will be possible to contribute significantly to easing tensions not only in Northeast Asia but also in the world.

⁷ Shizuka Kuramitsu, "China, US Hold Rare Arms Control Talks," *Arms Control Today*, December 2023. (<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-12/news/china-us-hold-rare-arms-control-talks>)

⁸ From interviews with former senior U.S. government officials by the "Study Group on New Arms Control and Disarmament Initiatives" in January 2024.

[Bibliography]

1. Akiyama, Nobumasa. *NPT – Kakuno gurobaru gabanansu (NPT: Global Nuclear Governance)*. Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 2015. (in Japanese)
2. *SIPRI Yearbook 2023*.
3. U.S. Department of Defense. *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2022*.
4. Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States. *America’s Strategic Posture*.

[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.

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

 三井住友 笹川平和財団