

Question from Chair (Hon. Gareth Evans)

Tatsujiro Suzuki: Tatsu, you are a scientist, you head RECNA, you are active in the Pugwash movement, and of course you are Japanese. I'd like your comments from a Japanese perspective on what you have heard from Chung-in and Tong Zhao about the regional impact of the JCPOA and INF setbacks – will they make the task of bringing nuclear weapons under control in this part of the world even harder, or have only a marginal impact?

RESPONSE by Tatsu Suzuki

Impact of JCPOA and INF setbacks on Nuclear Disarmament from Japanese perspective

Japanese government position to JCPOA is very clear that it supports to maintain the JCPOA, while Japan is preparing for import ban of oil from Iran. It is difficult to set up alternative payment mechanism to continue oil import, while Japan has been diversifying oil import and now the share of Iranian oil in total oil supply has been declined to about 5%. Japan continues to maintain good relationship with Iran but has been loyal to the Trump Administration's policy. And thus it is facing subtle political dilemma here.

For INF Treaty, initial response from the Japanese government was that “The situation in which the United States feels it must end or withdraw from the Treaty is extremely regrettable, and that this situation must quickly be resolved as soon as possible.” (Press conference of Mr. Taro Kono, October 23, 2018). But later, Japanese government now expressed its view as follows; “but I believe that the situation in which the treaty must be ended is not desirable for the world. Going forward, Japan will firmly hold exchanges with the United States and Russia, as well as related countries such as China, and will contribute to creating a framework that will be conducive to international disarmament” (Press conference of Mr. Taro Kono, February 1, 2019) It is clear that there are concerns about potential impact of INF Treaty setback on regional security, especially on increasing Chinese nuclear threats.

From a broader perspective, I believe Japanese “nuclear dilemma” is further deepening, especially after the adoption of the Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons

(TPNW) in July 7, 2017. Japan's official position on the TPNW has not changed since the beginning of the negotiation of the Treaty. In a press conference at the Peace Ceremony in Hiroshima, August 6, 2018, Prime Minister Abe noted that not a single nuclear power had joined the new treaty because it "was created without taking into account the realities of security." He also stressed that "the differences among various countries' approaches had become evident in recent year and reaffirmed Japan's position that it would seek to serve as a bridge between nuclear and non-nuclear states."

However, civil society and the public has totally different views. Mayor Matsui of Hiroshima and Mayor of Taue of Nagasaki, unsatisfied with the government position, both requested that Japanese government should join the Treaty as the only country who suffered the nuclear bomb attack. According to a public polling done by ANN, 57% of the public support the view that Japan should join the Treaty (ANN poll, December 17, 2017).

Primary due to increased security threats from DPRK, Japanese public was concerned about strong military pressure from the US (with strong support from Japan). According to the same polling above, about 25% believed that such military pressure will NOT solve the nuclear crisis and about 41% believed that it might lead to military conflicts in the region.

In my view, it proves that nuclear deterrence against DPRK is NOT working and the public is not so sure that dependence on nuclear deterrence brings more security.

RECNA has been promoting the idea of "comprehensive approach towards a North East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NEA-NWFZ)", in which DPRK, ROK and Japan will constitute Nuclear Weapon Free Zone and the surrounding three Nuclear Weapon States (China, Russia, and the US) provides "Negative Security Assurance" to those three countries. This approach, which can be consistent with US-ROK and US-Japan alliance, could eliminate the necessity of nuclear umbrella for those countries.

Japan can and should lead such idea in the region and take more positive attitudes to TPNW, if they seriously try to lead the nuclear disarmament efforts and be a bridge between NWS and NNWS.

At the recent the third Prep Com of NTP Review Conference, it is increasingly evident that the gap between NWS and NNWS is widening. Frustration among NNWS against NWS and umbrella States has been so strong that they are moving on to create a new international norm on nuclear weapons.

Japan is on the wrong side of the world now. But it is also very unlikely that NWS will join the NWS in the near future. Japan should take a leadership in bridging the gap through innovative diplomatic efforts such as promoting the idea of NEA NWFZ in the region, supporting various risk reduction approaches (ex. no-first-use policy) and work with civil society to convey the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon use.

It is now important for Japan to convey their message noted in the Russell-Einstein manifesto in 1955, responding to the Bikini nuclear test and tragic experiences of Dai-Go Fukuryumaru (Lucky Dragon), which is “Remember your humanity and forget the rest”.