INTERVIEW

From the Reality of a Nuclear Umbrella to a World without Nuclear Weapons: An Interview with Katsuya Okada

Fumihiko Yoshida

Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, Nagasaki University (RECNA), Japan

ABSTRACT

Katsuya Okada served as the Japanese Foreign Minister between 2009 and 2010 when the erstwhile Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) formed the administration for the first time in its history. During his term, Okada worked on several initiatives that have not since been executed. One of these projects was an investigation into the so-called “secret deal” effected between Japan and the United States in the 1960s, specifically with regard to the transit of US nuclear weapons through Japan. In this interview, Okada reflects on the actions he took during his term as the foreign minister. He also airs his opinions on other issues related to nuclear weapons, such as the management of the US-Japan alliance; the “sole purpose” policy of nuclear weapons; the nuclear strategy of the US Trump administration and the Japanese government’s reaction to it; the denuclearisation of North Korea; and Japan’s nuclear disarmament diplomacy.

Harmonisation of Nuclear Disarmament and Defence Policy

Fumihiko YOSHIDA (FY): You served as Japan’s Foreign Minister. I believe that in post-war Japan, you were the foreign minister who tackled the issue of nuclear disarmament most enthusiastically and in the most specific manner. How and why did you become concerned with the issue as a politician?

Katsuya OKADA (KO): Japan is the only nation that has suffered attacks from atomic bombs so it would not be an exaggeration to say that the abolition of nuclear weapons is a desire widely shared by all Japanese nationals. At the same time, in practical terms, Japan is protected by the US nuclear umbrella even if it does not have its own nuclear weapons. Russia and China are located nearby, and North Korea is now armed with nuclear weapons. How can we harmonise Japan’s defence policy in the current security environment with the guiding principle of actualising a world without nuclear weapons? This was a big concern and a conundrum for me and thus, I became interested in the issue of nuclear disarmament.

In the Cold War era, nuclear strategy was at the core of national security. Nevertheless, Japan has evidenced fewer debates on this issue than the European countries. It is regarded that the reality of the nuclear umbrella is incompatible with...
our national aspirations of eliminating nuclear weapons from the world. As a country, thus, we have failed to deepen an overarching debate on this problem. Since the Cold War has ended, we now need to approach nuclear disarmament in a more realistic way.

**FY:** With respect to the nuclear umbrella, you took some tangible action as a foreign minister of the only nation that has suffered the effects of the deployment of atomic bombs. It was reported during your term that a Japanese official in Washington DC was opposed to the plan for the retirement of America’s sea-launched cruise missiles, even though this view was not aired in a formal negotiation. Upon the publishing of this news report, you sent a letter to the US Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defence to clarify Japan’s position. It was extremely rare for a Japanese minister to convey a specific opinion on the US’s nuclear posture. Why did you decide to commit this act?

**KO:** The concerned Japanese official had revealed his views in Washington DC before I became a foreign minister. Reportedly, the official had told the US side that the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons was unacceptable to the Japanese government. As far as I know, the report was not supported by any clear evidence. Nevertheless, I thought it could be troublesome if the US government misunderstood Japan’s official position. Such misapprehension could have had repercussions on the drafting of the US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). At the very least, I had to dispel any misinterpretation by the United States. I thus sent a letter to the two Secretaries to make it clear that I did not subscribe to the views expressed in the report. We must continually reduce nuclear weapons if we are to achieve a world without them. The fact that we rely on the US’s extended deterrence should never be seen as an obstacle to our efforts to reduce and ultimately to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world.

**FY:** Did you think that the retirement of a particular type of nuclear weapon would never create an impact on Japan’s security?

**KO:** I was not so confident that there would be no impact. However, as long as extended deterrence was guaranteed by strategic nuclear forces, I thought that Japan would not face any difficulties without sea-launched cruise missiles.

### Secret Nuclear Deals and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles

**FY:** Japan has adopted the Three Non-Nuclear Principles as its national policy: not to possess, produce or allow the introduction of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, it has been suspected that Japan tendered an implicit approval to the introduction of US nuclear weapons via secret deals negotiated between the officials of the two countries. One of the secret deals was made in 1960 when the US–Japan Security Treaty was revised. The United States maintained that the transit of nuclear-armed vessels into Japan’s territorial waters should be kept outside the purview of a “prior consultation” mechanism on the introduction of nuclear weapons based on the US–Japan Security Treaty. It was suspected that Japan tacitly approved the plan by not declining the US assertion even though Japan was fully aware of the difference in perception. In parliamentary debates, the Japanese government has denied that the “secret deal” exists, and has maintained that it is deemed there is no transit of US nuclear-armed vessels as long as the United
States has not offered to initiate a prior consultation. It was also suspected that a secret agreement on the re-introduction of nuclear weapons into Okinawa in crisis circumstances was negotiated during the US–Japan talks to return Okinawa to Japan. On the day you were appointed the foreign minister, you ordered officials to conduct an in-house probe on these suspicions. Why did you choose to do so?

KO: The issue of nuclear weapons forms the core of the US–Japan alliance. US–Japan diplomacy or the US–Japan alliance cannot be sustained without the trust of our citizens. Nevertheless, it was highly likely that the Japanese government had lied about the covert arrangement. I thought that the truth had to be disclosed and explained. As the foreign minister, I did not want to perpetrate an untruth in parliamentary debates by denying the introduction.

FY: An expert commission established under your instructions published a report on the secret deals. It concluded that a “secret deal in the wider sense” had been effected on the introduction of nuclear weapons in the 1960 revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty. On the other hand, the commission decided that there was no undisclosed agreement on the re-introduction of nuclear weapons after the reversion of Okinawa because no separate official contract was signed apart from the US-Japan joint statement in November 1969. It was revealed during the investigation that the minutes containing the signatures of Prime Minister Eisaku Sato and US President Richard Nixon had existed to permit the re-introduction of nuclear weapons to Okinawa in contingencies. Nevertheless, the expert group came to the conclusion that the deal was valid only between the two leaders, and that it was not handed down to subsequent administrations. Thus, the agreed minutes ceased to be legally binding. What do you think of this decision?

KO: The investigation elucidated that there was a perception gap between Japan and the United States on the introduction of nuclear weapons. Japan considered that even a temporary “transit” constituted an “introduction” according to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, while the United States did not see it that way. The expert group was instrumental in revealing that the perception gap had not been filled. Since 1991, the United States has unloaded tactical nuclear weapons from surface ships and navy aircrafts. Therefore, I believe that nuclear weapons have not been introduced since 1991 in the form of any temporary transit that would violate the Three Non-Nuclear Principles. On the other hand, it is no longer possible for us to assert that there was no introduction at all in the past, as long as the perception gap between the two countries has been identified. We can no longer dispel the suspicion of the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan in the past.

FY: The expert commission concluded that the covert negotiations on the re-introduction of nuclear weapons to post-reversion Okinawa did not necessarily constitute a “secret deal” because there was no “long-term effect” to such an agreement effected between Prime Minister Sato and President Nixon. The reasons listed in the report for this presumption include: (1) Prime Minister Sato was cautious in making the undisclosed deal, (2) Sato seemed to believe that the deal was valid only for himself and (3) the document was stored in the private custody of Sato and was not handed over to the next administration. This agreement seems to state facts that went further
than Article 8 of the US–Japan joint statement on 21 November 1969, but the expert commission indicated that there had been no deal that went far beyond the content of the joint statement. How do you evaluate this conclusion?

KO: Since this commission was set up at my request, I was extremely cautious about the manner in which I expressed my own opinions. Nevertheless, I stated in a press conference at the Foreign Ministry that although the definition of secret deal might be manipulated, this agreement had to be regarded as a secret nuclear deal in a sense. I am now more independent and am more at liberty to express my personal views. To be honest, I do not agree with the conclusion made by the commission. This was a secret deal.

During the investigation effected by the expert commission, Shinij Sato, the second son of former Prime Minister Eisaku Sato and a former minister of trade and industry, revealed that the agreed minutes containing the initials of the two leaders were preserved at his private residence. Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has refused to acknowledge the existence of the document and has taken the view that it is personal and that it does not have any effect as a public document. I felt that the reaction of the officials of the Foreign Ministry was chilly rather than calm when the document was discovered. The expert commission noted that former Prime Minister Sato seemed to consider that the document was effective only for his administration because it was privately stored and was not handed down. Notwithstanding this fact, a document signed by the leaders of both countries must have been binding to some extent, whatever Sato believed. Some members of the commission asserted that, “this is not an official deal, so does not have any effect”, but it must have obligated Sato at least during his term as the Japanese Prime Minister.

US–Japan Alliance Management

FY: Was there no objection from our ally United States to this investigation?

KO: I was somewhat worried about the repercussions of this probe on US–Japan relations, even though the secret nuclear deal was actually made 40 or 50 years ago. The problem touched critical issues pertaining to post-war US–Japan relations such as the revision of the Security Treaty and the reversion of Okinawa. We could not rule out the possibility that some critical information might be revealed. I was, however, determined to disclose all facts. Without such resolve, a thorough investigation could not have been conducted. I was not necessarily confident that the existence of a secret deal would not create a negative impact on US–Japan relations if the US government insisted on the validity of such an agreement, but I made up my mind. I just thought

---

1Joint Statement made by the Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato and the U.S. President Richard Nixon, 21 November 1969.

8. The Prime Minister described in detail the particular sentiment of the Japanese people against nuclear weapons and the policy of the Japanese Government reflecting such sentiment. The President expressed his deep understanding and assured the Prime Minister that without prejudice to the position of the US government with respect to the prior consultation system under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, the reversion of Okinawa would be carried out in a manner consistent with the policy of the Japanese Government as described by the Prime Minister.

Source: Database “World and Japan.” http://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/docs/19691121.D1E.html.
that I would figure out the best solution if a serious problem arose. If I had neglected to conduct the investigation because of this concern, we would have repeated the mistakes made by previous administrations. What was most important was to seek and to reveal the truth.

FY: I have heard you were still very careful to cultivate better communication links with the United States.

KO: When I met US Secretary of State Clinton at the first foreign minister meeting, I explained to her that the issue of the covert agreement belonged to the far past, and that it would not weaken the US–Japan alliance because much of the disclosed information was related to information already disclosed by the United States. I also promised the US government that we would be happy to explain the findings of the investigation to their authorities in advance of the release of the information. I suppose that the US officials wanted us to apprise them in advance if there were any findings that could lead to a change in the current operations. Therefore, the Division of North America of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a series of briefings to its counterpart in the US State Department when the final draft report was almost completed.

FY: What was the positive effect of this investigation on US–Japan relations?

KO: A few points come to mind immediately: both the Japanese and the US governments affirmed that the secret deal signed by Sato and Nixon on the re-introduction of nuclear weapons into Okinawa in contingency circumstances was invalid, at least at present. Besides, we held discussions with the United States with regard to the interpretation of the Sato–Nixon Joint Declaration in 1969 and of Sato’s remarks at a press conference at the National Press Club with regard to the secret deal to allow the United States to initiate an attack operation from US bases in Japan without prior consultation in the case of crisis in the Korean Peninsula. Both sides negotiated a fresh agreement to some extent. The issue of the introduction of nuclear weapons was potentially the most problematic. Even though the perception gap between Japan and the United States on the understanding of the term “transit” was exposed, we were fortunate to be able to affirm that there Japan would not host any port calls by US nuclear-armed vessels due to a change effected in the US nuclear policy in 1991.

We did not face any major trouble in our consultations with the United States. Perhaps this was partly because the other side was represented by the Obama administration which also looked forward to a world without nuclear weapons.

FY: After your probe, you maintained in parliamentary debates that you would not change the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.

KO: Yes. Fortunately, it was apparent that there would not be any temporary transit of US nuclear-armed vessels into our territorial waters, thanks to the changes effected in the US nuclear policy after the Cold War. I was thus convinced that my re-affirmation would not harm US-Japan relations. Also, the types of US submarines that are loaded

---

*Prime Minister Sato said in the press conference in 21 November 1969 that Japan would respond to such a request from the United States in a prior consultation ‘positively and promptly’, while a new agreement under Okada is that Japan would handle such a case “appropriately and expeditiously” (Okada, 2014, 63).*
with strategic nuclear weapons have already been identified. Therefore, if these categories of submarines pass or transit Japan’s territorial waters, we can easily recognise them. Anyway, I believed that there was very little chance of the occurrence of this event. That is why I reiterated my conviction about the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, hoping that the general public would consent to the sentiment. I am confident that most of Japan’s parliamentarians have accepted my opinion.

The Nuclear Strategy of the US Trump Administration

FY: What do you think of the plan to revive nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missiles disclosed in the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) of the Trump administration?

KO: The plan does not make sense with respect to our position against North Korea because of the wide gap in the capabilities of conventional arms between the US and North Korea. Then there is the issue of China. The theory of escalation ladder persisted in the Abe administration. The idea was that developing steps of a ladder leading to a nuclear war would strengthen the credibility of nuclear deterrence. According to this logic, both the United States and China need various types of nuclear and conventional arms to counteract the enemy. If you believe the logic of balance of power using nuclear weapons, this stance may be understandable. However, if we accept nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missiles, it will be extremely difficult to verify our compliance with the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.

FY: Would the dual-use of nuclear and conventional warheads complicate the situation?

KO: I would rather articulate it as a distortion. The foreign minister Taro Kono supported the Trump NPR, but it seems to me that this attitude is incompatible with the Three Principles.

FY: You have also criticised the policy of the first use of nuclear weapons. Is that correct?

KO: Nuclear weapons are inhumane and they possess incomparable destructive power. If they are regarded only as a means of deterrence and retaliatory force, that is somewhat understandable. However, we have to avoid first use. By doing so, we can reduce the role of nuclear weapons.

What matters in terms of the no first use clause is to make the declaratory policy credible. So, in a press conference immediately after I was appointed foreign minister, I carefully stated that, “setting aside the credibility of the ‘no first use’ assertion pertaining to nuclear weapons, I believe that this could be a first step toward the abolition of nuclear arms”, and I also said that “my own philosophy and our hope for achieving the abolition of nuclear weapons make the first use of these weapons unacceptable to me”. The Soviet Union declared a no first use policy during the Cold War, but it has been discovered that the Soviets have actually retained the option of first use. Against this historical background, many Americans feel as if the notion of “no first use” is a cliche. I myself have thus also ceased to use the phrase.
I would prefer to use the iteration of “sole purpose”, which refers to a policy of limiting the objective of nuclear weapons to a tool of deterrence to nuclear use by adversaries. The concept is more flexible than that of “no first use” in that the first use of such armaments against nuclear weapons states is not ruled out under limited circumstances. At the same time, the idea of accepting the sole purpose of deterrence is a way to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. That is why the Obama NPR declared its intention to consider a “sole purpose” policy (US Department of Defense, 2010).

The change in the US administration has made it more difficult for Japan and the United States to hold discussions on this topic, but Japan should be more positive in promoting the “sole purpose” policy in the longer term.

FY: Certainly, the Trump NPR strengthens the role of nuclear weapons and does not rule out first use (US Department of Defense, 2018).

KO: Under the current international environment, I have to accept the US’s reliance on extended nuclear deterrence to some extent but accepting the first use argument is totally against our endeavors to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

FY: In the US–Japan Joint Declaration made in April 2018, President Trump “re-affirmed the unwavering commitment of the US to Japan’s defence through the full range of US military capabilities, both nuclear and conventional”. With regard to nuclear-armed North Korea, Trump emphasised that “all options are on the table”.

KO: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe supports the “all-options-are-on-the-table” attitude espoused by President Trump. Taking the NPR into account, the first use of nuclear weapons should be included in the term “all”. The US–Japan alliance is important, but the actual approval of nuclear first use is a radical departure from our efforts to accomplish a world without nuclear weapons.

FY: But foreign minister Taro Kono praised the NPR highly immediately after it was released. You said in a press conference that his judgement was “totally incomprehensible”.

KO: Definitely. I also pointed out that the Trump NPR had lowered the threshold of nuclear use. I do not understand why the Japanese government lauded the NPR. In 2016 in Hiroshima, standing next to US President Obama, Prime Minister Abe pledged to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. On the other hand, he let his foreign minister praise such an NPR. I wonder which one of the two assertions represents the real Abe.

Japan’s Nuclear Disarmament Policy

FY: Japan did not participate in negotiations with regard to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and has made it clear that it will not sign the adopted treaty. Taking into account the US-Japan alliance and the current security environment in Northeast Asia, is the position of the Abe administration inevitable? Or do you think the Japanese government could have taken an alternative approach?
KO: As the only nation that has suffered the effects of atomic bombings, Japan should have participated in the negotiations. However, I wonder if Japan could have cast a 'yes' vote. It must have been difficult for the Japanese side due to the persistent interference from the United States.

FY: The Netherlands is the only nation that joined in the negotiations as an ally of the United States and as a member state of the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), although it was opposed to the final draft that was proposed for the ballot. Japan could have at least taken part in the negotiations just as the Netherlands did. By the way, the TPNW allows observers to participate in meetings of the States Parties.\(^3\) The treaty does not stipulate any particular requirements for the status of observer, so Japan can attend the meetings as an observer. Do you think Japan should do so?

KO: If a state that cast a 'no' vote is permitted to attend, then yes, Japan should also be present at the meetings.

FY: There is no specific clause in the treaty with regard to the right of observers. They may not possess the right to vote, but an observer country may be able to at least make a statement that expresses its opinion and stand. If observers have such a right, what should Japan, emphasise in such a role?

KO: The Ban Treaty can work only partially without the approval of the nuclear weapons states. Nevertheless, the very fact that the treaty was adopted by a large number of nations has created pressure on the nuclear weapons states. It is not easy for Japan to decide its position as a nation that is protected by the nuclear weapons of the United States. Nevertheless, I am worried that nations may begin to neglect an incompetent Japan in the international trend towards nuclear disarmament.

Looking back, I wonder what Japan has been doing to achieve a world without

---

\(^3\) **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons** (adopted on 7 July 2017)

**Article 8 Meeting of States Parties**

1. The States Parties shall meet regularly in order to consider and, where necessary, take decisions in respect of any matter with regard to the application or implementation of this Treaty, in accordance with its relevant provisions, and on further measures for nuclear disarmament, including:
   (a) The implementation and status of this Treaty;
   (b) Measures for the verified, time-bound, and irreversible elimination of nuclear-weapon programmes, including additional protocols to this Treaty;
   (c) Any other matters pursuant to and consistent with the provisions of this Treaty.

2. The first meeting of States Parties shall be convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations within 1 year of the entry into force of this Treaty. Further meetings of States Parties shall be convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on a biennial basis, unless otherwise agreed by the States Parties. The meeting of States Parties shall adopt its rules of procedure at its first session. Pending their adoption, the rules of procedure of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, shall apply.

3. Extraordinary meetings of States Parties shall be convened, as may be deemed necessary, by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the written request of any State Party provided that this request is supported by at least one third of the States Parties.

4. After a period of 5 years following the entry into force of this Treaty, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall convene a conference to review the operation of the Treaty and the progress in achieving the purposes of the Treaty. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall convene further review conferences at intervals of 6 years with the same objective, unless otherwise agreed by the States Parties.

5. States not party to this Treaty, as well as the relevant entities of the United Nations system, other relevant international organizations or institutions, regional organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and relevant non-governmental organizations, shall be invited to attend the meetings of States Parties and the review conferences as observers.
nuclear weapons. Not too many activities occur to my mind. It is true that Japan has broadcast its message as the only nation that has suffered the aftermath of atomic bombings, but the country has committed almost nothing towards the creation of a world without nuclear weapons. The Japanese government often praises its own nuclear disarmament resolutions, a series of which has been adopted in the UN General Assembly since 1994. Japan has tried to get more countries including the US to endorse such resolutions by gradually changing the texts of the documents. At the same time, I have also felt frustrated by Tokyo’s assertion that the resolutions have been its main achievements in its nuclear disarmament diplomacy. I still feel the same way.

Tokyo has been criticised for its failure to fill the gap between the lofty ideal manifested in the UNGA resolutions and its position on the TPNW. To be honest, Japan’s nuclear disarmament diplomacy stagnates in the state of a stalemate. Its pledge to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons is now taken as an empty promise.

**FY:** Do you have any suggestions for Japan to rebuild its nuclear disarmament diplomacy?

**KO:** As a first step, we must re-think our dealings with China, which has continuously built up its nuclear forces. I pointed out the necessity of nuclear disarmament in my meetings with the Chinese foreign minister. The discussions were sometimes very fierce, but I believed that the tendency towards a nuclear build-up had to be reversed. As the next step, I would suggest that Japan should propose arms control measures not only between the United States and Russia but also involving China and should offer itself as a mediator in these negotiations. The United States and Russia, possessors of the largest cache of nuclear weapons, should make deep cuts in their arsenals, say a reduction to 1,000 warheads for each. This accomplishment can be followed by a US–Russia–China tripartite negotiation. This is the plan that I would advise Japan to propose to the global community.

**FY:** China has also developed its conventional forces. Even so, the military might of the US is still much stronger. Do you think the scope of the tripartite arms control initiative you have mentioned should be limited to nuclear arms, or could it be expanded to include conventional weaponry?

**KO:** If conventional arms are included, it would make it easier for China to justify the further build-up of its nuclear forces because of its inferiority in the conventional military forces. Therefore, it is more appropriate to take a “nuclear-to-nuclear” approach as has been the case in the US–Russia negotiations. The number of Chinese nuclear weapons is substantially smaller than the US stock, but China is still augmenting its nuclear forces. We will anyway reach a point where the reduction of Chinese nuclear forces will become an indispensable clause if we are to induce the United States and Russia to do the same. Japanese diplomacy needs to make a breakthrough in that process.

**FY:** You have maintained that both the United States and China should ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

**KO:** Russia has already done so. As for the United States, it is not easy, given the bitter history that its Congress rejected the treaty. It is definitely possible for China to ratify the CTBT if the country’s leadership makes up its mind. Chinese endorsement will
create the drive to press not only the US government but also its Congress to ratify the CTBT. If Russia, the US and China consent to the CTBT, other outliers including North Korea, India and Pakistan could be encouraged to ratify the document. This is how Japan should pave the way to enter the treaty into force.

The Denuclearisation of North Korea

FY: Diplomatic discussions with regard to the denuclearisation of North Korea are progressing. A US–North Korea summit has been held following a high-level inter-Korean meeting.

KO: Our goal must be the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation (CVID) of North Korea. I do not think that this objective is so easily achievable. However, if there is the slightest chance, we should give it our best effort. There can never be a solution through diplomacy unless the United States and the North Korea engage in serious negotiations.

FY: Tokyo has constantly emphasised the need to apply “maximum pressure”.

KO: North Korea has broken its promises or deceived the international community in many ways. I do not contend that North Korea is the only country that has misled others, but the fact that the country has developed nuclear weapons cannot be denied. Given its track record, we cannot help but take a harsh stance. Having said that, it is unrealistic to argue that we should not act until a CVID is achieved. I cannot accept such an “all-or-nothing” way of thinking. Before the completion of CVID, we should consider lifting some of our sanctions on North Korea. “Action-to-action” is the right approach.

FY: If a negotiation with North Korea proceeds successfully, its consequences could potentially include the conclusion of a peace treaty to end the Korean War, or the normalisation of inter-Korean relations and US–North Korea relations. Taking these possibilities into account, Japan then needs to prepare for a discussion to normalise its relations with the -North Korea. In this scenario, the methods of dealing with economic assistance as a settlement of war and the issues relating to the abduction of Japanese nationals could become problematic. The success of a CVID substantially depends on US diplomacy, but the topic of abduction is a Japan–North Korea matter. If you were the foreign minister at present, how would you handle Japan’s diplomacy with North Korea?

KO: I am wondering whether we own a reliable diplomatic channel to talk to North Korea in a candid manner. I do not think we have such an option. We must first create such a reliable channel. Another issue is to figure out the means to make concerted efforts with the United States, South Korea and China. We do not need to participate in the discussions to accomplish a peace treaty to end the Korean War, because Japan is not a belligerent country. Nevertheless, Japan must play a decisive role at the final stage when the negotiating parties start to shape a new security framework in Northeast Asia through the conclusion of a peace treaty. Japan needs to prepare its policy ideas and its options with regard to making a contribution in this situation. Otherwise, Japan will not be invited into this process.
The Role of Japan as an A-Bombed Nation

FY: The older the atomic bomb survivors get, the weaker the power of their message becomes. It is a pity, but it cannot be helped. The historical fact that Japan was attacked by atomic bombs cannot be changed. However, we cannot rely on the message of the survivors any longer to promote the diplomacy to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. How can Japan retain the Three Non-Nuclear Principles at the core of its national policy and take an influential role in the global nuclear disarmament diplomacy?

KO: First of all, the Japanese government must commit itself seriously to the cause of a world without nuclear weapons and to finding ways to achieve it. It seems to me that the international community does not take Japan as very determined on this account. It is an undeniable fact that fewer survivors will be able to talk about their stories as time passes. Basically, what matters is the stance of the Japanese government.

In recent years, Japanese prime ministers attend peace memorial ceremonies in Hiroshima on 6 August and in Nagasaki on 9 August in their pledge to promote nuclear disarmament. In doing so, they make the same remarks at every single ceremony or simply read out the same statement. They do not appear to be serious on this subject as the decision-makers for the country. Prime Minister Abe pledged to aim towards a world without nuclear weapons when US President Obama visited Hiroshima. Nevertheless, he also accepted a very different policy espoused by Trump. That about-face would be impossible if he was serious about nuclear disarmament.

FY: Does Japan’s sincerity hinge on its willingness to stop the US’s over-reliance on nuclear weapons or its modernisation of nuclear forces?

KO: It is significant for Japan to take a leadership role in nuclear disarmament by persuading the United States, the provider of a nuclear umbrella to Japan, and getting Russia and China involved. Japan is the most qualified country to be the champion of a world without nuclear weapons, because it has been victimised by atomic bombings. I estimate that Japan is not very trusted as a champion of nuclear disarmament because of its obsession with the US–Japan alliance or the nuclear umbrella. It is time for Japan to work seriously on the cause of nuclear disarmament.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on Contributor

Fumihiko Yoshida is Editor in Chief of Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament and Vice Director of Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, Nagasaki University. He was Deputy Director of the Editorial Board of the Asahi Shimbun. He served as a member of the Advisory Panel of Experts on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation for Japan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs.
References

Okada, K. 2014. Gaiko Wo Hiraku [Opening up Diplomacy]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
US Department of Defense. 2010. Nuclear Posture Review. Washington DC: US Department of Defense. https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/NPR/2010_Nuclear_Posture_Review_Report.pdf
US Department of Defense. 2018. Nuclear Posture Review. Washington DC: US Department of Defense. https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF