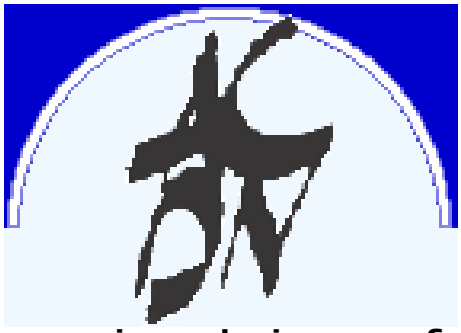
https://acdn.net/spip/spip.php?article320



Tetsuya Endo, former vice chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of Japan

How Realistic Is a Nuclear-Armed Japan?

Publication date: Friday 20 July 2007

Copyright © www.acdn.net - All rights reserved

This article was originally published in AJISS-Commentary, an online publication of The Association of Japanese Institutes of Strategic Studies (AJISS) consisting of four leading Japanese think tanks: Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS), The Japan Forum on International Relations (JFIR), The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), and Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS).

Following is an article on the same subject by Akira Kawasaki: "Article 9's Global Impact".

Whether Japan should go nuclear is a long-standing question. The country has seen several waves of heated debates on this issue in past decades, beginning in 1960 when Japan revised and renewed the Security Treaty with the United States. The debate was revived shortly after China conducted its first nuclear weapons test in 1964, and this carried over well into the 1970s, when Japan mulled whether to join the international nonproliferation regime (Japan signed the NPT in 1970, but delayed ratification for six years). The North Korean nuclear test in October last year fuelled the latest wave of the nuclear debate, which was more intense than ever. Yet the question of a nuclear-armed Japan has been raised more often abroad than within Japan.

The pros and cons of a nuclear Japan aside, how feasible is it for Japan to acquire nuclear weapons? Many of the past debates have centered on security considerations and little attention has been paid to technological aspects and the international framework concerning nuclear energy. I hope to examine the latter aspects by taking into account as broad a range of issues as possible.

Feasibility

Technologically, Japan is capable of developing nuclear weapons if it invests considerable time and money. A major nuclear energy user possessing 55 nuclear reactors and committed to its nuclear fuel cycle program, Japan possesses high-level nuclear technologies, a substantial amount of plutonium and the capability to enrich uranium. Although nearly all this plutonium is reactor-grade plutonium unsuitable for nuclear explosion, Japan does possess a small amount of high-grade plutonium. A majority of its uranium is low-enriched, but Japan is capable of producing highly-enriched uranium if it wishes. Japan indeed retains highly-enriched uranium for use in research and experiments, albeit in an extremely small amount. Nevertheless, it is virtually unthinkable for this country to divert nuclear fuel to make bombs in secret. Its plutonium and uranium are kept under strict IAEA verification, and Japan is a highly transparent society. Even if Japan succeeds in manufacturing nuclear warheads, where is it going to test them? Some people say simulation technology can substitute for an onsite test, but the first nuclear warhead at least would require an onsite test. However, there is no geographically suitable place for such a test in Japan.

Given time, it is not technologically impossible for Japan to develop nuclear weapons as well as their delivery systems. However, developing more than one or two nuclear bombs would require enormous money. There is a huge gap between possessing the technology to produce one or two nuclear bombs and arming oneself with nuclear weapons "effectively".

What about the legal and policy aspects? Article 9 of the Constitution makes no mention of nuclear weapons, and the Japanese government has established an interpretation that the Constitution does not prohibit Japan from possessing nuclear weapons as long as they are retained for exclusively self-defensive purposes. In practice, though, the 1955 Atomic Energy Basic Law, which regulates Japan's nuclear activities, limits the use of atomic energy to peaceful purposes alone and bans research and development for other purposes, including weapons

Copyright © www.acdn.net

production. Successive governments have also adhered to the three non-nuclear principles of not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan, which were incorporated into a parliamentary resolution. Although the non-nuclear principles are not legally binding, they have become an important pillar of Japan's national policy. People may suspect that such domestic arrangements could be overturned through legal or administrative procedures. Given the strong anti-nuclear sentiment among the Japanese people, however, this will not happen so easily.

International Restraints

Greater restraints on a nuclear-armed Japan come from abroad than from within. Japan will be faced with severe economic and political risks if it ignores international restraints and embarks on the development of nuclear weapons.

The first restraint is the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. To arm itself with nuclear weapons, Japan would have to withdraw from this international nonproliferation regime. The withdrawal of a major nuclear energy user could trigger a domino effect worldwide, dealing a serious blow to the already shaken nonproliferation regime. The consequences of becoming internationally isolated are shown all too clearly by Japan's diplomatic situation starting from the 1930s.

The second is the possible suspension or termination of bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements that Japan has concluded with countries such as the United States, France, Britain, Canada, and Australia. These agreements ensure steady supplies to Japan of natural uranium, enriched uranium and nuclear energy technologies among other things on condition that Japan use the supplied material and technologies strictly for peaceful purposes. As soon as it is discovered that Japan has diverted them to weapons development, Japan will not only see its supplies of nuclear fuel cut off but will also be required to return all the material provided theretofore. This will lead to a virtual suspension of all nuclear activities in Japan, causing serious economic damage to a country in which nuclear energy accounts for a third of total power generation.

Japan's acquisition of nuclear weapons would have a grave impact on international politics as well. The Japan-US security alliance, which sits at the very foundation of Japan's national security policy, includes a US nuclear umbrella over Japan (extended deterrence). Behind the domestic argument that Japan should arm itself with nuclear weapons lie suspicions about the efficacy of this nuclear umbrella. However, such suspicions only beget US distrust in Japan, which might bring about a drastic change in the nature of the Japan-US alliance. Would the US permit Japan to go nuclear in the first place? I think this is hardly possible given the US attitude toward the NPT system as well as past examples of Japan-US negotiations on nuclear energy.

The development of nuclear weapons by Japan would seriously damage its relations with its neighbors. More than half a century has passed since World War II came to an end, but Japan's relations with Asian countries remain still sensitive. The thought of Japan going nuclear would evoke nightmares of the past in these countries. At any rate, a nuclear-armed Japan would fuel fear among its neighbors and destabilize the region.

As the sole nation to suffer a nuclear attack, Japan has advocated the elimination of nuclear weapons throughout its postwar history and has made nuclear disarmament, including the complete banning of nuclear tests, an important pillar of its diplomacy. In addition to its own non-nuclear policy, Japan has proactively cooperated in global efforts against nuclear proliferation. A turnabout in its nuclear policy would disrupt Japan's diplomatic consistency and seriously undermine its diplomatic principles.

As I mentioned above, Japan has the technology to develop nuclear weapons and, with the relevant legal revisions, Japan could actually embark on a nuclear weapons development program. Developing its own nuclear weapons is by no means impossible for Japan. However, it would require huge commitments of manpower, material and money,

Copyright © www.acdn.net

and it would not be so easy to change the persisting popular anti-nuclear sentiment. More importantly, a nuclear-armed Japan would face severe isolation from the international community. Given all these grave risks, it is clear that the nuclear option is surely not in the national interest of Japan and far from a realistic policy choice.

AJISS-Commentary No. 8, 20 July 2007,.

The views expressed in this piece are the author's own and should not be attributed to the Association of Japanese Institutes of Strategic Studies

Article 9's Global Impact

By Akira Kawasaki | July 26, 2007

Editor: John Feffer

Foreign Policy In Focus

The Japanese government is on the verge of abandoning its historic commitment to pacifism. The current prime minister, Shinzo Abe, has made constitutional revision a major plank of his reform agenda. Coming to power in September 2006, Abe said that he would aim for a constitutional revision within five to six years. The central focus of attention is Article 9, in which Japan renounces the sovereign right to wage war. In May 2007, with relatively little fanfare, the Japanese Diet passed legislation to hold a national referendum to revise the constitution and amend Article 9.

Constitutional revision is not in the immediate offing. The referendum bill establishes a three-year moratorium on the actual referendum. Two-thirds of Diet members would need to initiate such a referendum and a majority of the voters would need to support revision for it to happen. However, the debate in Japan on constitutional revision has rapidly accelerated. Constitutional change will not only affect the size, composition, and mission of the Japanese "self defense forces." It will also undermine peaceful relations in the East Asian region. And it will destroy one of the most important models of a demilitarized state that the world has ever seen.

History of Article 9

In the first half of the 20th century, Japan colonized the Korean peninsula, Taiwan, and several islands in the Pacific. It also invaded China, the Philippines, and other Asia-Pacific countries. Twenty million people in the region fell victim to Japan's harmful acts through genocide, coerced labor, human experiments, and sexual slavery (of the "comfort women"). At the same time in Japan, approximately three million people, many of them civilians, lost their lives in the air raids on Japanese cities, the ground war in Okinawa, and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Potsdam Declaration of July 1945, which Japan accepted at the end of World War II, confirmed the wrongness of Japan's war of aggression. The present Japanese constitution was adopted in 1946 and came into effect in 1947. Article 9 of the constitution was designed to guarantee that Japan never again wage war by stripping it of any offensive military capacity. "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes," the article reads. "In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be

Copyright © www.acdn.net

recognized."

Article 9 is therefore Japan's pledge to the people of the Asia-Pacific and the world to never again repeat its mistakes. From the outset, this unique peace clause in a national constitution served as an international pledge.

Limiting Japan's Militarization

In 1954, Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) began operations. Despite the restrictions of Article 9, the SDF has continued to expand, and Japan's military expenditure is now one of the highest in the world. As a result of this expanded military capacity, some argue that the Japanese government has not honored Article 9 and that it is thus irrelevant to view Japan's policies in such a "pacifist" framework.

But Article 9 has indeed acted as a restraint on the militarization of Japan. Based on Article 9, for instance, the Japanese government adopted and has maintained what it calls an "exclusively defense-oriented policy" that has limited Japan's SDF capability to the "minimum necessary level." The Japanese government cannot employ defensive force unless and until another country mounts an armed attack on Japan. As such, Japan cannot pose a threat to the security of other countries. Moreover, Japan is prohibited from dispatching armed troops to foreign territory for the purpose of using force. Since 1992 Japan started sending troops overseas to serve such purposes as UN peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Nevertheless, the government explained that such overseas deployments have been for peaceful purposes not for the projection of power. However, because of these restrictions, Japan was unable to engage in actual combat even when it acceded to U.S. demands by dispatching troops to Iraq.

After adopting the constitution, Japan also maintained an interpretation of Article 9 that prohibited it from exercising the right of collective self-defense. Despite the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, this interpretation has restrained Japan from being directly engaged in armed conflict involving the United States. The constitutional restrictions also extend to the commercial realm. According to the "three principles on arms control," declared in 1967 and strengthened in 1976, Japan can't export arms, regardless of the destination. The exception for military technology transfer between Japan and the United States notwithstanding, these arms trade control measures amount to one of the highest standards in the world. Finally, the "three non-nuclear principles" enjoin Japan from possessing, producing, or permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons into the country. Since the prime minister first committed Japan to the principles in 1967, the government has regarded them as a fixture of national policy.

These various constitutional interpretations and principles have played an important role in limiting Japan's militarization and thus in establishing trust relationships between Japan and the Asia-Pacific region. In July 2005, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), a worldwide NGO network, submitted an action agenda that declared that "Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution has been the foundation for collective security for the entire Asia Pacific region."

The Path to Revision

Those who favor revising the Japanese constitution employ roughly four types of arguments. They argue, first, that the United States forced this "peace constitution" upon Japan. Second, Japan cannot defend itself without having a sufficient military force of its own. Third, a strengthened alliance with the United States requires a change in Article 9. And finally, Japan must change the constitution in order to contribute to international peace operations through the UN. Among these four categories of arguments, the third is the central driving force behind the current revision agenda. Few within Japan argue for the country to create a military independent of the U.S. alliance. Ironically, a policy pushed by Washington, namely that the revision of Article 9 is necessary for fuller integration with U.S. military

Copyright © www.acdn.net

strategy, ultimately appeals to a group within Japan who reject the current constitution because it was originally imposed by the United States.

Since the late 1990s, U.S. military forces in Japan have expanded their responsibilities to include the whole Asia-Pacific region, and post-September 11 even the Middle East has been brought into this ambit. Despite Article 9, Japan's SDF provided support for the U.S. military in its operations against Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 2003. Joint development of weapons, such as the missile defense system, has also been underway. Because of the global reorganization of its military bases, the United States has also been pressuring Japan for a more complete military cooperation and partnership.

The push to expand U.S.-Japanese security cooperation has focused the revision debate on the right of collective self-defense. "Japan's restrictions on its right to collective self-defense are a constraint on its alliance cooperation," declared the 2000 report of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (also known as the first Armitage Report). "Lifting this prohibition would allow for closer and more efficient security cooperation." Also problematic in this regard is the section of Article 9 that prohibits Japan from having and using armed force. Changing this section would enable the SDF to work with "normal" military missions. The new draft constitution put forward by Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in November 2005 did not attempt to change the language on the renunciation of war but proposed to change the name of the Self Defense Force into a Self-Defense Army. This revision attempts to keep Japan's overall peace image while freeing the SDF from its exclusively defense-oriented policy, the non-use of force overseas, and the non-exercise of the right of collective self-defense. Freed of all these restrictions, Japan could become fully engaged with the expanded U.S. global military posture.

The Japanese corporate sector also has an interest in this fuller engagement, particularly connected to joint weapons development and weapons exports. In January 2005, the Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations (Keidanren) presented a set of recommendations for constitutional revision, stating, "The inability to exercise our right to collective self-defense translates into denying supportive activity to our allies, and is acting as a hindrance." The corporate sector is particularly focused on overturning Article 9's ban on arms exports.

The constitutional revisionists have adopted a dual strategy. They are pursuing a long-term strategy of revising the constitution within five to six years. But in the short term, they are pushing for concrete steps to widen military integration with the United States. These short-term steps include incorporating overseas activities as a primary mission of the Self-Defense Forces, upgrading the Defense Agency to the Defense Ministry (December 2006), and establishing a panel to study ways to allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense without touching the constitution itself (April 2007).

Even before revising the constitution itself, the revisionists are pushing Japan into an action-reaction dynamic with its neighbors that generates an arms race in East Asia. This is in turn threatens the security of all countries in the region, including Japan.

Global Article 9 Campaign

Japanese peace groups have also adopted a dual strategy. They are working to strengthen campaigns domestically to resist the government-led constitutional revision. And they are discovering the global potential of Article 9 in the efforts to abolish war and achieve peace. Article 9 is not simply a provision of the Japanese law. It acts as an international peace mechanism by restraining war and an arms race.

According to a May 2007 opinion poll conducted by the Asahi Shimbun, a national newspaper with the second largest readership in Japan, in May 2007, nearly 80% of the population recognized that "Article 9 has helped maintain peace

Copyright © www.acdn.net

in Japan." With regard to a constitutional revision, although nearly 60% answered that a constitutional revision is necessary, less than 20% supported the idea of having a Self-Defense Army by changing Article 9. With regard to the revision of Article 9 specifically, almost 50% preferred not to change it, while 30% supported change.

The majority of the public recognizes of the value of Article 9 for peace, although they are open to having a new constitution for a new age. If the Japanese peace movement simply opposed constitutional revision, it would risk being dismissed by the public as "conservative." To ensure that the Japanese public continues to support retention of Article 9, the peace movement needs to demonstrate the active value of Article 9 and ways to realize its potential.

Part of that effort will require linking Article 9 to other international norms and institutions. The UN Charter calls for a peaceful resolution to conflicts. The UN has also called for decreases in military expenditure and the reallocation of limited resources to solving poverty, epidemics, disasters, and to protecting humans from war and violence. Japan's Article 9 works in line with and supplements such UN efforts. The Japanese constitution's preamble recognizes that "all people in the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and war."

Japanese peace activists are going global with their Article 9 campaign, inspired by the 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace's call that "every Parliament should adopt a resolution prohibiting their government from going to war, like the Japanese Article 9," and the 2006 Vancouver World Peace Forum's declaration that "We call for governments to constitutionally renounce war (e.g. Japan's Article 9)." In order to break the cycle of war and violence worldwide, the Global Article 9 Campaign to Abolish War encourages the peoples and governments of the world to adopt peace laws similar to Article 9 in every country, and work towards demilitarization and a culture of peace. The campaign articulates nine mechanisms for peace that include reductions in military spending, promotion of nuclear-weapon-free zones, ending violence against women, supporting conflict prevention, and mitigating the negative environmental impact of the military.

Japan's Article 9 cannot survive if it continues to be an isolated and special clause in the world. It should instead be promoted and shared by many peoples and governments. To share the common vision and to create a global network of action to realize the nine mechanisms of peace, a broad coalition of Japanese peace groups was recently formed to host a "Global Article 9 Conference to Abolish War" in Tokyo in early May 2008. Watch for and join this effort.

Akira Kawasaki is on the executive committee of the Japanese peace organization, Peace Boat), and a contributor to Foreign Policy In Focus).

Copyright © www.acdn.net