[For Abolition, Peace and Security: Confronting Nuclear Powers & East Asian Crises](http://www.asiapacificinitiative.org/for-abolition-peace-and-security-confronting-nuclear-powers-east-asian-crises/)

*Dr. Joseph Gerson\**

Bikini Day, International Conference, Shizuoka, Japan - February 27, 2013

I want to thank Gensuikyo for the opportunity to join this year’s Bikini Day commemorations. With the 2015 NPT Review conference approaching; with China’s rise, North Korea’s nuclear test, and the U.S. “pivot” to Asia and the Pacific shaking the region, as well as with new and aggressive nationalist governments across Northeast Asia, our exchanges and planning are vitally important.

As I begin, I want to suggest that Oishi-Matachichi, a modest man and the most courageous Daigo Fukuryu Maru survivor, provides us with a model for the political will we need.[[1]](#endnote-1) Last May I learned that he was hospitalized with a stroke. For years I have been impressed by his persistent, patient and compassionate efforts to help Japanese and others around the world learn from the catastrophe of the Bravo H-bomb test and about the imperative of nuclear weapons abolition. I was afraid that we were going to lose him.

Imagine my delight when I saw Oishi-san’s photo featured in an on-line article about his return to the Lucky Dragon museum and to his campaigning for nuclear weapons abolition.[[2]](#endnote-2) Like him, but in our own ways, we must keep on keepin’ on.

There is near-universal agreement about the need and possibility of eliminating nuclear weapons. We have U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon’s “five point plan.” The New Agenda Coalition has pressed the “urgency” of working for a “comprehensive …legally binding framework for the elimination of all nuclear weapons.” The Non-Aligned Movement urges near-term complete disarmament. We have the International Court of Justice’s advisory opinion and a host of draft abolition conventions.

It has been widely reported that President Obama has a “radical” plan to reduce the United States’ deployed nuclear arsenal by a third.[[3]](#endnote-3) It is not “radical”, and it doesn’t remove the double standard that is fueling nuclear weapons proliferation from East Asia to the Middle East. In truth, neither the U.S. nor Russia has yet to fully implement the New START Treaty, with its bottom line of 1,550 deployed omnicidal weapons. Even that number relies on a duplicitous agreement to count multiple Hydrogen warheads on a U.S. or Russian bombers as a single weapon. Thank you President Obama for this baby step, but the world needs more radical and courageous action to create a nuclear weapons-free world.

We need to be looking unflinchingly at reality. As the *New York Times* reported, “The big question is how to accomplish” Obama’s proposed reduction. The reality is that with U.S. missile defense deployments, NATO expansion, and Washington’s overwhelming conventional and high-tech weaponry, Moscow has become increasingly dependent on its nuclear arsenal. It is in no hurry to negotiate the reduction of the size of its nuclear arsenal. In the unlikely case that a treaty is negotiated, Republicans in the U.S. senate would likely block its ratification. Nor should we expect that President Obama will unilaterally reduce the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal as the first President Bush did at the end of the Cold War. We also know that the Joint Chiefs agreed to the proposed cuts only after Obama accepted that any reductions not undermine U.S. first strike capabilities.

Nevertheless, U.S. diplomats will ballyhoo President Obama’s plan when the U.S. is called to task at the NPT PrepCom and other forums for its nuclear double standards and for not pressing Israel to join the Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone conference mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. And there will be questions about Secretary of State John Kerry’s statements that the vision of a nuclear weapons free world is a “goal” and that it will take “centuries” to achieve President Obama’s vision.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Our security is also threatened by new political and military realities in Northeast Asia and by the U.S. “pivot.” Here the Abe government, with its ambition of largely restoring the pre-war imperial era, is the most nationalist and militarist in decades.[[5]](#endnote-5) Following Ishihara’s provocations that sparked the continuing and very dangerous crisis with China, it was no surprise that Chinese nationalist forces and dynamics have matched Prime Minister Abe’s militarist responses to the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands dispute. Elsewhere, China’s militarily reinforced claims to 80% of the South China Sea opened the way for the U.S. to reinforce its regional hegemony, as a number of ASEAN nations turn to the U.S. as a way to counter-balance an expansive China. And, on the Korean peninsula, Kim Jung-un’s nuclear test has assaulted regional security, reinforcing South Korean and Japanese militarists, and eliciting calls from the margins of each nation to become nuclear powers. [[6]](#endnote-6) In the case of South Korea there are appeals for the return of U.S. nuclear weapons to reinforce Washington’s nuclear umbrella, which is actually one of the contributing causes of Pyongyang’s test.[[7]](#endnote-7)

No wonder that some analysts compare this to the months leading up to August, 1914 when nationalism, inter-locking alliances, and the refusal of the dominant powers to make way for a rising nations resulted in the cataclysm of World War One.

It is in this context that outgoing U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell and other U.S. officials insist that China must “accept that the United States is going to plan an enduring, strong role in the Asia-Pacific region” even as it wants “a stronger, deeper relationship with China.”

In fundamental ways U.S. Asia policy has changed little since the 1890s, but seven decades after the end of the 15 Year War and a generation after the Cold War, Washington is adjusting to new political and geostrategic realities in Asia. The U.S. elite now accepts that “Asia will return to its historic status with….half of the world’s economic output.” Like Joseph Nye, they believe that “American must be present” here, that “markets and economic power rest on political frameworks, and American military power provides that framework.” [[8]](#endnote-8) Hence Washington’s military, economic, political and soft-power “pivot” to Asia and the Pacific and the continuing campaigns of engagement with and containment of China.

In this environment, AMPO, Japanese militarism and U.S. alliances across the region are being reinforced to contain Chinese military power and influence. But, these are not the only dynamics at play. Lesser powers, including Japan and other Asian and Pacific nations, find themselves caught between the U.S. and China. As a Vietnamese acquaintance put it vividly, smaller nations like hers fear that “the U.S. and China might “cut a deal” behind their backs. So, “whether they shake hands or they kick their balls, we are worried.” It is thus necessary to listen to what members of the U.S. elite are saying not only about China, but about U.S.-Japanese economic relations, about Japan’s economic stagnation, its reckless nationalism, and about its military policies. And there are unspoken fears that Japanese leaders will conclude that economic interests will ultimately dictate closer relations with China than with the United States.

Unlike the Bush II era, the U.S. elite recognizes that its hegemony cannot prevail by militarism alone. Economic ties and dependencies and other relationships built with the so-called “soft power” of cultural attraction and integration are seen by many in the U.S. Establishment as equally important to militarism. Thus the U.S. has pressed Japan to join the Trans Pacific Partnership negotiations in order to ensure that Japan’s two feet are firmly cemented in North America rather than being seduced by the temptations of greater integration with the Chinese economy. Kurt Campbell put it bluntly: “Without such a significant economic engagement, our relationship is going to wither.”[[9]](#endnote-9) Elsewhere, the recent Armitage-Nye report[[10]](#endnote-10) warned that “it is in Japan’s economic security interests to cease delaying entry into [TPP] negotiations.” and that “it is incongruous that Japan does not have an FTA …with its most important ally, and we strongly encourage Japan to enter negotiations.”[[11]](#endnote-11) No wonder Abe clicked his heels and saluted last week in Washington.

The Armitage-Nye report, with contributors from across the U.S. national security and corporate elite, reads as a reflection of U.S. anxiety about the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance and provides marching orders to Japan’s rulers. The study is rooted in the reaffirmation that “The United Sates and others rely on Japan as the maritime lynchpin to a stable, strategic equilibrium in the Asia-Pacific region.” **But**, the report focuses on the concern that, beginning with the Hatoyama government’s challenges to the alliance, AMPO has been in “a time of drift”. At the core of the report is the challenge that, “For Japan…there is a decision to be made. Does Japan desire to continue to be a tier-one nation,” allied to the United States, “or is she content to drift into tier-two status?” Abe responded to this directly last week, saying that Japan would remain a “tier one nation.”

Loyal to the U.S. imperial system’s need to address changing geostrategic realities, Armitage and Nye express concerns about Japan’s aging population, its declining birth rate, its deep national indebtedness, the rapid turnover of prime ministers, and a “sense of pessimism and inward focus among many young Japanese.” They and others in the U.S. Establishment worry about Japanese nationalism, which they fear could drag the U.S. into an unwanted war with China and which is undermining efforts to create a functional trilateral U.S.-Japanese-ROK alliance targeted against North Korea and China.

Of course Armitage and Nye report that if Japan will take the medicines that the wise men of Washington prescribe, “Japan is fully capable of remaining a tier-one nation.” To ensure that this happens, the report opens with a double-edged sword: an implied threat related to Japan’s energy needs and the solution in the form of the dictate that the U.S. and Japan become “natural resource allies” and that Japan “must revitalize” the alliance with the U.S. by recognizing the two nations’ “common political and commercial interests in promoting…civilian nuclear power domestically and internationally.” Japanese energy security, they argue, lies in greater Japanese dependence on and investment in U.S. natural gas reserves, and Abe agreed.. And, of course, Japan’s Self-Defense Forces are given pride of place, described as “the most trusted institution in Japan…poised to play a larger role in enhancing Japanese security and reputation if anachronistic constraints [read Article 9] can be eased.”

How do we reinforce the will of diplomats and political leaders who share our commitments?

While writing this speech, I came across an article about a speech by U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon who reiterated that “The future of nuclear disarmament rests on many shoulders” including “a robust collective effort by civil society.” Most striking was the enormous photograph that accompanied the article. It featured mayors Taue and Akiba and several of us marching behind a “No Nukes” banner. I recognized the picture from our march on the eve of the NPT Review Conference to the U.N, where 7 million Gensuikyo petition signatures were presented.[[12]](#endnote-12)

A picture is worth a thousand words, and its message was clear: people’s power drives policy decisions. Inspired by Oishi-san's and others’ tenacity, we must do all we can to build the popular forces that can impact the 2015 NPT Review; preserve the Japanese constitution and its intent: to cut military spending, reverse arms races and prevent wars here in Northeast Asia and elsewhere. It is we who can create the world of common and human security that ensures the real security of our children and grandchildren.

Addendum #1

Summary and excerpts from *Anchoring stability in Asia*, the CSIS Armitage-Nye Report of August 2012

Understanding that the power needed to contain and discipline China’s rising influence is economic as well as military, the report envisions much deeper integration of Japanese and U.S. economic, trade and military policies.

The report focuses on four primary areas: energy; trade; Japan’s relations with its neighbors (a diplomatic way of saying its disregard for history and hyper-nationalism ;) and military preparations. The energy section begins with condolences for the losses of 3-11 and moves to insist that “Japan and the United States have common political and commercial interests in promoting safe and reliable civilian nuclear power domestically and internationally. Tokyo and Washington must revitalize their alliance in this area…The 3-11 tragedy should not become the basis for greater economic and environmental decline.”

The section goes on to highlight the importance of natural gas, noting the burgeoning U.S. production of LNG and Japan’s need for it. The report stresses that “the United States and Japan should be natural resource allies as well as military allies” and that “natural gas can revitalize bilateral trade and also increase Japan’s foreign direct investment in the United States…Without large infrastructure investments U.S. gas production cannot grow.”

On the subject of oil, the report notes that Japan is “currently the world’s third-largest oil importer” and that “the next major shift in the global oil market is likely to be a massive sure in flows of oil and gas from Middle East producers to increasingly wealthy Asian consumers.” After appreciating Japan’s naval anti-piracy missions “off of Somalia” and reduced Japanese oil imports from Iran, the report goes on to say, “Tokyo’s increased participation in multinational efforts to combat piracy, protect Persian Gulf shipping, confront threats to regional peace, such as those currently posed by Iran’s nuclear program, and to secure sea-lanes (i.e. South China Seas) will be needed and welcome.”

The Economics and trade section warns that “it is in Japan’s economic security interests to cease delaying entry into [Trans Pacific Partnership] negotiations] and that “it is incongruous that Japan does not have an FTA (Free Trade Agreement] with its most important ally, and we strongly encourage Japan to enter negotiations.” Noting that Japan has FTAs with Mexico and Canada, it urges “a bold, innovative multilateral free trade agreement,” called the Comprehensive Economic, Energy and Security Agreement (CEESA) joining the United States, Japan, Canada and Mexico” which “would substantially broaden and deepen the U.S.-Japan economic, security, and strategic energy relationship.”

The report diplomatically avoids specific references to the legacies of Japanese wartime sexual slavery of Korean and other women, the Nanjing and other massacres, and the enduring wounds of Japanese colonialism. Instead it states that “Absolutely critical to the alliance and the region’s stability and prosperity are strong U.S.-Japan-ROK relations. The three democratic allies in Asia share common values and strategic interest.” They collaborate to “jointly deter North Korean pursuit of nuclear weapons and help shape a regional environment best suited to respond to China’s re-rise”, which is the purpose of the pivot. Stating that “it is not the place of the U.S. government to render judgment on sensitive historical issues…the United States must exert full diplomatic efforts to diffuse tensions and refocus the attention of its allies on core national security interests…it is essential for Japan to confront the historical issues that continue to complicate relations with ROK.” This, in fact, is one reason why the U.S. delayed Prime Minister Abe’s visit to the United States, informing him that rather than welcoming him in January, if he sent the proper signals, he could meet with President Obama in February.

Where should the U.S-Japanese-ROK cooperation lead? The model presented in the report presents is the June, 2012 trilateral naval drills. It urges “quick movement to conclude pending defense pacts between Tokyo and Seoul, including the SFOMIA for intelligence sharing and the ACSA to promote the sharing of military supplies.”

While restating that the U.S. has no opposition to China’s “stable and predictable” re-rise –the report expresses “particular unease” about “China’s possibly expanding core interests”, specifically the South China Sea and the Senkaku Islands, and the increased activity of the PLA Navy in these disputed territories.

The report also points to six domestic challenges that could impact China’s future foreign and military policies (energy constraints, environmental degradation, demographic realities, income inequality an restive ethnic minorities and “endemic corruption”) and stresses the importance of “The alliance’s strategy” of blending “engagement and hedging, benefitting the uncertainties about how China might choose to use its rapidly growing comprehensive national power.”

**How to “hedge”?**

* Expand the geographic scope of alliance activities
* Joint work on missile defense technologies
* Increased focus on interoperability and “missions to sustaining sea lines of communication”
* Strengthen ASEAN and other mult-lateral regional institutions
* Strengthen the U.S.-Japan-India strategic dialog (to further surround and isolate China.)

**The military section**, titled “Toward a New Security Strategy” reiterates many of these points, focusing on the next round of the Roles, Missions and Capabilities (RMC) review that is now beginning. Assuming that Japan will opt to remain a “first-tier nation” it urges a greater global role for Japan’s military: “Today, areas of interest extend further south and a great deal west – as far as the Middle East….A new review should include a broader geographic scope as well as an all-inclusive combination of our military, political and economic national powers.

The report calls for:

* Repudiating “anachronistic constraints” [Article 9 limitations] on Japan’s use of military power
* Greater integration of the U.S. Air Sea Battle and Joint Operational Access concepts with Japan’s “dynamic defense” doctrine, as they seek to reduce Chinese influence in what Beijing terms its “Near Sea” and the “First Island Chain” (Japan-Taiwan-Philippines)
* Fostering greater Japanese and South Korean confidence in U.S. extended [nuclear] “deterrence strategies and capabilities”
* “Offensive” Japanese responsibilities to help secure the flow of oil through the South China Seas and the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf
* Greater joint military weapons co-production and interoperability to reduce costs midst “looming budget cuts and fiscal austerity” in the U.S. and Japan. This, not coincidentally, would increase the interdependence of the two nations and their militaries
* An ambiguous approach to Futenma, asserting that “the details of the disposition of U.S. forces on Okinawa” has resulted in a “third-order issue “absorbing “time and political capital” “better invested in planning for an optimal structuring of forces for the coming decades.” (This brings to mind Henry Kissinger’s arrogant description of Vietnam as “a fifth-rate agricultural power” not long before U.S. troops were forced to retreat from that nation.)

The report concludes with a celebration of Operation Tomodachi, in which the U.S. assisted relief efforts following the Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima meltdowns, which “gave the alliance the meaning and value it urgently needed.”

\*Dr. Joseph is Director of Programs for the American Friends Service Committee’s Northeast Region and of its Peace and Economic Security Program. He is the Convener of the Working Group for Peace and Demilitarization in Asia and the Pacific and author of *Empire and the Bomb: How the US Uses Nuclear Weapons to Dominate the World*.

1. See Matashichi Oishi. When the Sun Set In the West: The Lucky Dragon and I, University of Hawaii Press, 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Akira Hatano. “Ship that survived 1954 H-bomb test draws renewed attention” Asahi Shimbun http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\_news/social\_affairs/AJ201301160006 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. R. Jeffrey Smith. Obama administration embraces major new nuclear weaons cut: The Center for Public Integrity, February 8, 2013, <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2013/02/08/12156/obama-administration-embraces-major-new-nuclear-weapons-cut>; David E. Sanger. “Obama to Renew Drive for Cuts in Nuclear Arms”, *New York Times*, February 11, 2013/ [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Michael R. Gordon. “Kerry Links Economics to Foreign Policy”, *New York Times*, January 25, 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See, among others, Narusawa Muneo. “Abe Shjinzo, a Far Right Denier of History”, <http://www.asiapacificinitiative.org/abe-shinzo-a-far-right-denier-of-history> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. It is worth noting that many believe that the dictator Park Chung-He, President-elect Park’s father was assassinated in a U.S.-backed coup because of his refusal to abandon the country’s nascent nuclear weapons program. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Steve Herman; “Rising Voices in S. Korea, Japan Advocate Nuclear Weapons,” Voice of America,

   <http://www.voanews.com/content/rising-voices-in-south-korea-japan-advocate-nuclear-weapons/1604309.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Joseph Nye. “The Right Way to Trim”, New York Times, August 4, 2011. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Interview: Kurt Campbell: China should accept U.S. enduring leadership role in Asia.” Asahi Shimbun, February 9, 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye. “Anchoring Stability in Asia”, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, August, 2012. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Dream of nuclear-weapon-free world is possible, Ban says  
    UN News Centre 24 October 2011  
    [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=40169#.URaz62fYElQ](https://webmail.afsc.org/owa/redir.aspx?C=5wUvmNoYDUSXCh7TwwaUzwzIXbCv4c8I-dCAPg0IeVlwIYvCPce7NZGqdm3ce69C7VlEYA73KBM.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.un.org%2fapps%2fnews%2fstory.asp%3fNewsID%3d40169%23.URaz62fYElQ) [↑](#endnote-ref-12)