

Nuclear Issues in Japan

By Shikata Toshiyuki

China carried out underground nuclear experiments in the western Lopnor desert on May 15 and August 17 of this year. On their heels came a French underground nuclear test at Mururoa Atoll in the South Pacific on September 6. Both China and France had suspended nuclear blasts before the indefinite extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was formalized because they feared their nuclear tests would raise the hackles of non-nuclear powers, which in turn could affect the extension of NPT. The two countries resumed nuclear experiments, allegedly aimed at recovering delays in the development of nuclear weapons, apparently to beat the signing of a comprehensive international treaty banning nuclear tests (CTBT) scheduled for 1996.

Non-nuclear powers agreed to the indefinite extension of NPT and recognized the vested rights of nuclear powers only because they trusted the nuclear powers to be reasonable enough to ban nuclear tests as the first step of their efforts toward complete elimination of nuclear weapons. They also trusted the nuclear powers to honor their pledge to restrain themselves. The resumption of nuclear tests by China and France betrayed that trust, fomenting an outrage that could shake the foundation of the nuclear non-proliferation scheme.

Given growing international criticism, campaigns against French nuclear tests spread around the globe. Protests came not only from southern Pacific countries neighboring the test site, but also from faraway European countries. In Japan, which this year marked the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, protests against the French tests arose nationwide.

During the Cold War Japan's security relied heavily upon the U.S. as a nuclear deterrent, making anti-nuclear movements politically motivated, and grass-root movements used by opposition parties were for their own anti-government activities. Now, the disappearance of the

Cold War structure from Japan's political world has erased the political tinge from anti-nuclear movements and the movements are being conducted on a national scale. The unanimous approval on August 4 this year of a resolution against the resumption of French and Chinese nuclear tests by both chambers of the Diet was the first resolution adopted on a suprapartisan basis since the end of the Cold War. It was also the first unanimously approved parliamentary action since 1974.

Three angles needed to consider Japanese nuclear issues

Nuclear problems in different countries have different facets. It is important to view nuclear problems in Japan from three angles.

The experience of 1945

Above all is the atomic bombing experienced by Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Anti-nuclear movements in Japan are not aimed at appealing to the international community emotionally based on the Hiroshima-Nagasaki experience. Instead, they are based on the Japanese people's sense of mission that they have to tell all of mankind that nuclear weapons are most inhumane attack weapons, packing enormous destructive power, against which there is no means of defense; exposure to radiation of nuclear weapons has hereditary effects; and that nuclear weapons, if used, not only indiscriminately destroy military targets but citizens as well.

Diversification of values among the Japanese in postwar society makes it extremely difficult to get national consensus in deciding basic policies. Yet, there has consistently been one national consensus: Japan will never arm itself with nuclear weapons. It is hardly possible to find Japanese who object to the nation's three non-nuclear principles: not possessing, not making and not

introducing nuclear weapons. These principles will, without doubt, be maintained in the future.

The U.S. umbrella

Secondly, Japan's security relies on the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Through adherence to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, Japan is provided with the U.S. nuclear umbrella and keeps the Self Defense Forces armed only with minimal, purely defensive conventional weapons for the defense of its own territory. Nuclear powers contend their nuclear weapons are for their own defense and would not be used against non-nuclear powers. But, the existence of nuclear weapons itself is a threat. Even if a nuclear war takes place among nuclear powers, the war would disrupt the environment, affect nonbelligerent non-nuclear powers and, eventually, all of mankind.

As a result of the unprecedented nuclear arms race during the Cold War, mankind has learned that nuclear weapons cannot be used militarily. Since the end of the Cold War, however, some have tended to harbor the illusion that nuclear weapons can be of benefit politically, though the possibility of global nuclear war has receded. The nuclear powers intend to maintain nuclear weapons as a tool to preserve their prestige as major powers and thus are hesitant about an abrupt move toward complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Besides, some countries such as the Korean People's Democratic Republic (North Korea) refuse inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—though they are party to the NPT, assuming that non-nuclear powers will be able to have a bigger international voice simply by keeping the world guessing as to whether or not they possess nuclear weapons. On the other hand, some non-nuclear powers yet to accede to NPT consider it wise to keep open the option of possessing nuclear weapons.

Some countries possess nuclear

weapons as a diplomatic option, though they do not intend to use them. Accordingly, some countries which have a different political system and different values than Japan, could use their nuclear weapons as political leverage against Japan, though they do not pose an actual military threat. More, laxity in control of nuclear weapons and of technology for development of nuclear weapons after the Cold War could result in the sudden emergence of new nuclear powers.

Against such a background, Japan, which is a major economic power but a non-nuclear power, adopts a basic policy of adhering to its security treaty with the U.S., with which Japan shares values, whereby Japan will be continually

provided with the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Even after the Cold War, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty will have significance until nuclear weapons are eliminated or completely put under international control. At the same time, this Japan-U.S. arrangement has a secondary effect of assuring neighboring Asian countries, still fearful of Japan's possible reemergence as a military power, that Japan does not need to become a military power as long as the arrangement exists. This is one reason why Russia, China and Southeast Asian countries support the continuation of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.

Some Japanese suggest that Japan's objection to nuclear testing and insistence on abolition of nuclear weapons,

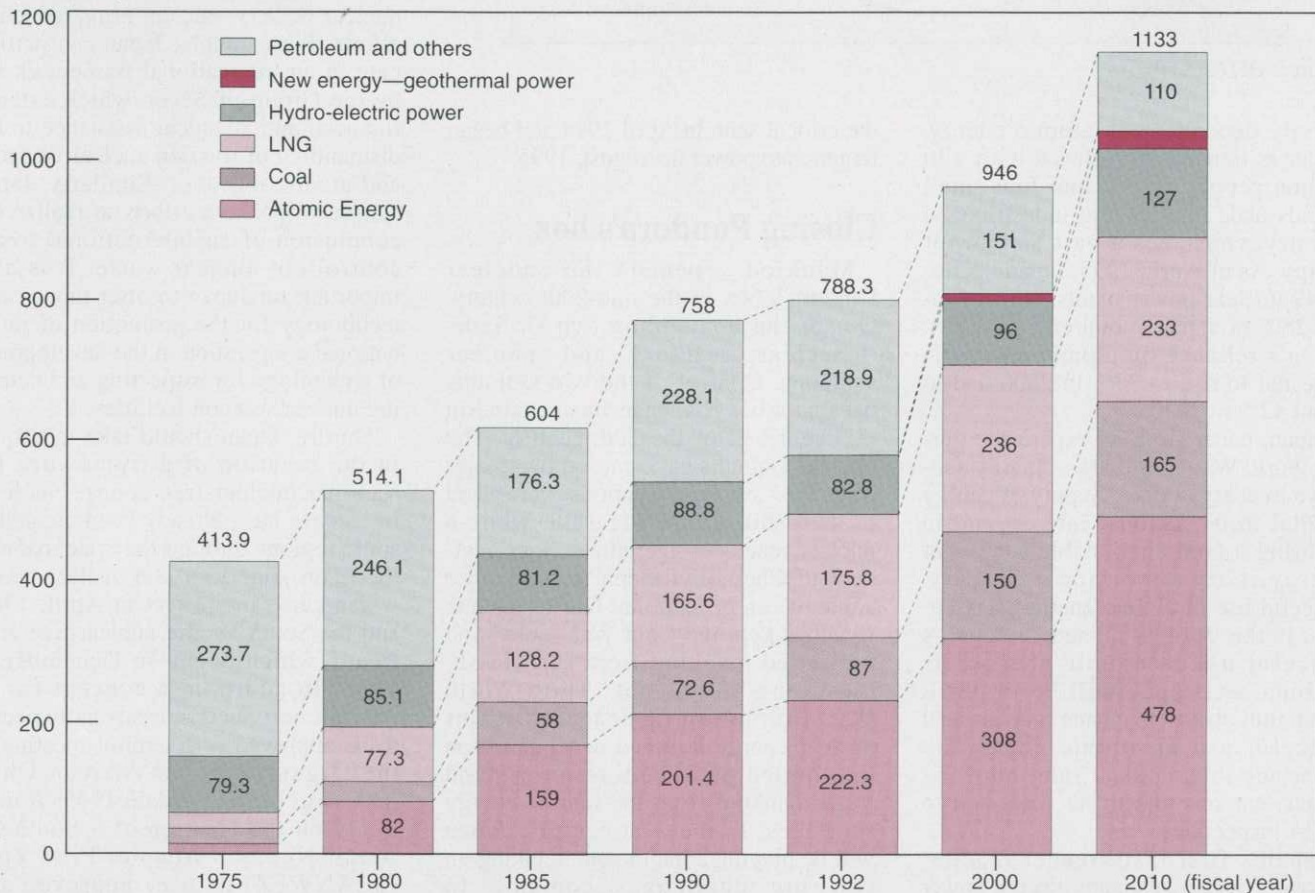
despite its reliance on the U.S. nuclear umbrella, are logically inconsistent. But, it is not so, just as signing up for traffic accident insurance in no way contradicts participation in a traffic accident prevention campaign. In a similar conjunction, the World Health Organization (WHO) requested an International Court of Justice (ICJ) recommendation concerning the illegality of using nuclear weapons. When the ICJ asked the governments of the world to submit their opinions on the issue, Japan pointed to the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons from the same standpoint.

Dependence on atomic energy

The third point is that Japan, as a nation lacking natural resources, is

GRAPH ONE
Changes in composition of generation of electric power

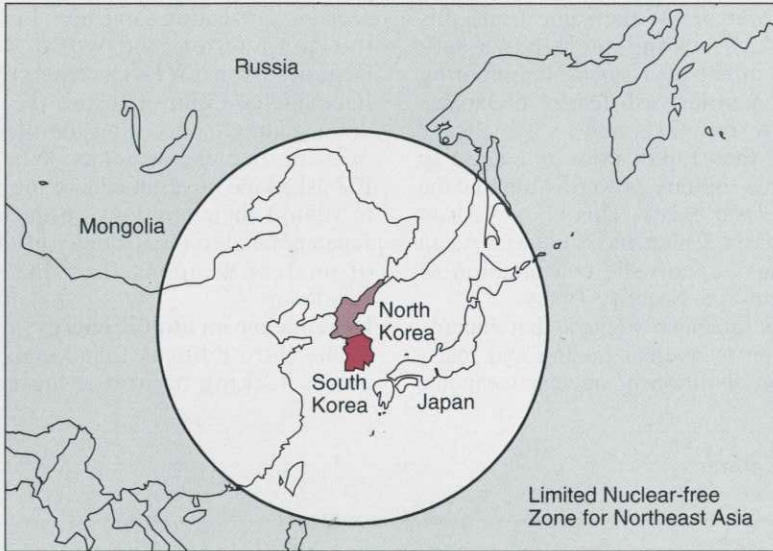
(billion kwh)



(Source: Interim report released by the Demand-Supply Subcommittee of the Electricity Utility Industry Council June, 1994)

GRAPH TWO

Areas Involved
 North Korea
 United States of America
 People's Republic of China
 Mongolia
 South Korea
 Russia
 Japan



(Source: GIT/CISTP)

heavily dependent on atomic energy. Japan is densely populated with 120 million people packed into four small islands and, as a leading industrialized country, consumes a vast amount of energy. As of April, 1995, Japan operated 49 nuclear power plants, which supply 28% of Japan's total energy needs. Japan's reliance on atomic energy is expected to rise to 33% in 2000 and to about 42% in 2020.

Japan, partly from its experience during World War II, is extraordinarily sensitive to energy crises. Supply of energy is vital to its national interest and in ensuring a continual, stable supply of energy is its top national priority. Peaceful use of atomic energy is essential. If the door is closed to Japan's peaceful use of atomic energy, its national existence will be in peril. Japan thus strives to ensure its continual peaceful use of atomic energy by observing international rules allowing its nuclear reactors to be subjected to IAEA inspections.

Japan's first fast-breeder reactor, "Monju," which generates electric power while multiplying plutonium, reached

the critical state in April 1994 and began to generate power in August, 1995.

Closing Pandora's box

Mankind opened the nuclear Pandora's box in the mid-20th century. Out of the box sprang two Goliaths—nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons. Control of the two Goliaths became a big challenge for mankind in the latter half of the 20th century. The nuclear Goliaths have caused two major tragedies: nuclear weapons were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while a nuclear reactor triggered a serious accident in Chernobyl. Seen from another angle, it can be said that fear of nuclear weapons kept the Cold War "cold" and prevented mankind from senselessly blustering into a "hot" Third World War. Promotion of peaceful use of nuclear energy lessened dependence on the limited petroleum resources and freed mankind from the fear of energy shortages. In the 21st century, Japan will be playing a major role in taking on two big challenges common to mankind: close Pandora's box by elimi-

nating nuclear weapons and using nuclear energy safely and efficiently. Japan has three key roles in leading a campaign for complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Firstly, Japan should conduct campaigns both at the government and grass-root levels, link their activities with campaigns in other non-nuclear powers, and organize a global anti-nuclear movement (civilian campaigns against the French nuclear tests were held in Tahiti, near the test sight in Mururoa Atoll, and drew more-than-expected participation from around the world). Japan's parliament has adopted a resolution against the Chinese and French nuclear tests and the government has issued statements on a number of occasions. As official expression of its displeasure over the Chinese tests, the government has decided to partly suspend extension of grants to China.

Secondly, Japan should support the nuclear powers' nuclear arms reduction efforts. For example, Japan can participate in an international framework led by the Group of Seven which extends financial and technical assistance to the dismantling of Russian nuclear weapons and atomic reactors. Similarly, Japan can make positive efforts to realize the conclusion of an international treaty controlling nuclear waste. It is also important for Japan to offer money and technology for the promotion of international cooperation in the development of technology for inspecting and detecting nuclear weapon facilities.

Thirdly, Japan should take initiatives in the creation of a framework for regional nuclear-free zones. Nuclear-free zones have already been created in some regions through the conclusion of the Latin American non-nuclear treaty, which came into effect in April, 1968, and the South Pacific nuclear-free zone treaty, which began in December of 1986. In addition, a concept for an African non-nuclear treaty is expected to be approved at a summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to be held in late 1995. A draft treaty on the creation of a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) is to be approved at a summit meeting of the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) around the same time.

Apart from those, a concept for the creation of a limited nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia has also been proposed by the Center for International Strategy, Technology and Policy (CISTP) of the Georgia Institute of Technology. The project, of which this writer is a research staff member, is led by Dr. John E. Endicott. The U.S.-North Korea nuclear talks represented a move to deter North Korea's efforts to develop nuclear energy for military purposes. However, even if such a move turns out to be successful, a framework for the future security of Northeast Asia has yet to be worked out, nor has a vision for such a framework even been presented.

As a venue for dialogue on the security of the Asia-Pacific region, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was launched in July, 1994, marking the first step toward the creation of a framework for multilateral collective security in Asia. Yet, the different strategic environment in Southeast Asia from that in Northeast Asia has led to the CISTP move to establish a framework for multilateral regional security cooperation limited to Northeast Asia, without waiting for ARF. Seven countries involved in the security of Northeast Asia—Japan, China, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, the U.S. and Mongolia—are becoming increasingly dependent on each other economically.

But when it comes to security, they still hardly trust each other and have no venue for dialogue. The most practical means for removing their profound mutual distrust would be to reduce the nuclear threat, because the nuclear threat is a common concern of all seven countries. Nuclear powers would not accept a complete elimination of nuclear weapons outright if proposed abruptly.

Nuclear-free zones

The Northeast Asian nuclear-free zone concept holds to the minimum requirements for participants so that nuclear powers will find it easy to accept, because acceptance by nuclear powers is the top priority of the scheme. The membership requirements were

limited to the following six points to make nuclear powers' acceptance easy.

1. The initial membership will be limited to seven, considering that the more members there are, the less coordinated they will be.

2. A nuclear-free zone, for example, will be established inside a circular area with a radius of 2,000 kilometers from Seoul, the center.

3. Nuclear weapons will be limited to non-strategic nuclear weapons and other less powerful nuclear weapons. ICBM, SLBM and other strategic nuclear weapons will be reduced within a separate framework.

4. Nuclear weapons located in this non-nuclear zone will not be destroyed, but simply relocated outside the zone.

5. Transfer and relocation of nuclear weapons will be limited to the control of nuclear warheads. Launchers and other equipment will be exempted.

6. To bring this concept to fruition, a provisional international consultation organization will be established with seven countries participating.

It is not advisable to establish a firm organization from the beginning. Hiroshima is mentioned as a prospective site for the organization's headquarters. No nuclear power has acceded to the nuclear-free zone treaties in Latin America and the Pacific region. This concept presupposes the accession of major nuclear powers such as the United States, Russia and China, which would be an historic breakthrough in disarmament. To encourage nuclear powers to join, the scheme is fabricated, above all, in such a way that they will find it easy to join.

Fourthly, to make sure Japan will never arm itself with nuclear weapons, Japan should cooperate with the U.S. in building a theater missile defense (TMD) network. As Japan will remain surrounded by nuclear powers for many years to come before the final elimination of nuclear weapons, and it must consider its security against this background, Japan must be fully prepared for a sudden change in the strategic environment surrounding the country. In anticipation of possible proliferation of nuclear weapons, Japan should enhance its regional defense

strength based on the U.S. nuclear umbrella and the TMD network.

Nuclear program an open book

Japan's role in peaceful utilization of nuclear energy is very clear. First, Japan should keep its peaceful use of nuclear energy transparent. The long-term plan for development and use of atomic energy, drawn up by an expert panel of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission in May 1994 as the basis of Japan's atomic energy policy, called for a substantial delay in the implementation of a proposed plutonium utilization program, though it envisioned the continued production of plutonium. It urged Japan to declare the country will never possess a surplus of plutonium, so that the international community will not be alarmed by Japan's plutonium development program.

Secondly, Japan should establish a framework which would enable international inspection and other controls on the possession of nuclear fuel and on the development and safety of nuclear technology. In pursuit of new energy sources, Japan has already joined an International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project.

Elimination of nuclear weapons is still far down the road. As a major non-nuclear power with technological prowess and economic might, Japan must play the role of guide on the road to abolition of nuclear weapons. In such a role, Japan should not become involved in mere sentimental campaigns. Rather, Japan is required to engage in activities on a step-by-step basis towards realistic policies. Nuclear powers, for their part, must rationally push for nuclear arms reductions by keeping the current nuclear parity. The 20th century was fraught with wars and revolutions. Nuclear powers and non-nuclear powers must cooperate with each other to make the 21st century a century of peace free from fear of nuclear weapons. ■

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