



# **ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATION ACADEMY**

## **NPNW & NPT – Japan as a Bridge-Builder**

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**Memorandum for the Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida**

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**Subject: TPNW & NPT – Japan as a bridge builder**

*Japan, given its influence on the international arena, could play a stronger role in the international security regime by assuming a more pronounced position towards TPNW.*

In the current security environment Japan can play a pivotal role in the ongoing discussions about the future of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and its linkage with the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Japan possesses the right combination of long-term commitment to disarmament and shorter and medium term security considerations with a good deal of political influence in the region and worldwide, as well as a sufficient amount of political power to exert influence in the international system. This makes Japan a powerful bridge builder between nuclear possessors and states who are in favour of immediate disarmament which has the additional benefit of safeguarding Japan's security by allowing it to rely on extended deterrence for longer in an increasingly uncertain regional environment.

Internally Japan faces a divide between the government and civil society over how to achieve security and what route to take towards nuclear disarmament. We believe that if not addressed, the divide will continue to grow, leading to mounting political and societal tensions. This may cause problems in managing Japan's security as it could impact the alliance with the United States, affect Japan's defence capabilities, and weaken Japan's role as a bridge builder. Given the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict, it is important to carefully weigh the policy options with a view to reducing the risk of a nuclear escalation.

We propose a diplomatic strategy based on four interlinked solutions. Their combination will help to manage public opinion expectations on progress towards nuclear disarmament and make a better use of Japan's political power to shape the international system.

1. First, the Japanese government should reach out to the wider public with a proactive messaging campaign on its commitment to advancing nuclear disarmament and showing its engagement in respective practical steps, including through the NPT framework. It is vital to reiterate Japan's long-standing fruitful collaboration with the IAEA in providing safety and security of nuclear material and facilities. All of this shows willingness to enter into dialogue and a sense of the need for greater transparency. The importance of these developments would be tangible even on a global scale through merging seemingly parallel discourses of nuclear deterrence vs. nuclear disarmament. While these narratives are difficult to reconcile, Japan's work on reducing nuclear risks through its membership of the Stockholm Initiative and the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) bridges these discourses and addresses concerns of both communities.
2. Second, Japan should reinvigorate NPDI, as one of its founding members, and make its contribution to the initiative more visible to civil society. The NPDI remains an active contributor to the NPT review cycle and does a good deal of work for enhancing

transparency, verification and improving legal instruments to safeguard nuclear activities. The NPDI is not particularly well-known outside of a small number of nuclear policy specialists in government and civil society alike. Japan should enhance the focus of NPDI on advancing the nuclear disarmament agenda, with the active participation of civil society when possible, and greater transparency in the way nuclear-weapon states fulfil their disarmament commitments. Increasing the amount of exposure and publicity the NPDI receives will reassure members of the general public that the Japanese government is proactive on disarmament and in control

of its messaging in a growingly difficult security environment. In addition to this, reinvigoration of other formats, such as the Middle Powers Initiative, would result in a multiplier effect.

3. Third, Japan should actively promote a standing platform in academic and think tank communities to stimulate broader debates about the connection between stability and disarmament. This is particularly important in the current context where an increase in power shifts and cross-domain threats are clearly intensifying global insecurity. More complex dialogue is needed, boosting the quality of the public debate on security by presenting a more sophisticated argument around the challenges states are facing and how they are addressed. This also holds the potential to update deterrence thinking to find nuanced solutions for new or changing threats, including in the cyber domain, space and with regards to AI and other emerging and disruptive dual-use technologies. The creation of such a standing platform should take into consideration the lessons learned from the Japan-led Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament as well as the subsequent Track 1.5 Meetings for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament.
4. Fourth, Japan could signal some goodwill towards TPNW signatories by attending the first meeting of states parties of the TPNW as an observer. This would satisfy some domestic constituencies who would like to see the government engage more closely with the TPNW while also showcasing Japan's leadership on the conversation around the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons internationally. This aspect could help Japan create another link between the pro-TPNW actors and opponents to the Treaty, e.g. through sharing its experience of assisting the victims of nuclear bombings and NPP accidents. This would send a positive signal to TPNW signatories without requiring any commitment from Japan to join the treaty, also alleviating the concerns of the international community in the wake of debates regarding the interpretation of Japan's Constitution Article 9. On the other hand, Japan could also use this opportunity to vocalise its related concerns in a constructive manner. Such an action could arguably contribute to discussing and amending the inconsistencies within the TPNW itself. Moreover, in the mid-term perspective this can presumably be extrapolated to other U.S. allies such as South Korea, Australia or some NATO member states, especially as Norway and Germany already signalled their intention to observe the first meeting of the states parties. Finally, to mitigate the potential risks – linked to a more pronounced position towards TPNW – on Japan's relationship with the United States (including extended deterrence), a special working group on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation should be established within Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee.

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