



# Political Influence on Japanese Nuclear and Security Policy

## New Forces Face Large Obstacles

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**PASCC**  
PROJECT ON ADVANCED SYSTEMS AND CONCEPTS  
FOR COUNTERING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION



# **Political Influence on Japanese Nuclear and Security Policy: New Forces Face Large Obstacles**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Japan's nuclear weapons policy has long enjoyed a stable, if somewhat internally inconsistent, equilibrium. Anti-proliferation efforts co-exist with reliance upon the United States' nuclear deterrent, alongside dependence on a nuclear energy program robust enough to potentially support nuclear weapons capability. These policies have been promoted and maintained by Japan's bureaucracy rather than by political bargains, with their bureaucratic proponents separately stovepiped rather than organized into a coherent whole. But new developments appear to leave Japan's nuclear security policy – and its relations with the U.S. over this policy – in flux. New threats and changing public attitudes are gradually eroding taboos on nuclear weapons. New or newly energized political actors stand to amplify the impact of such public opinion shifts. A more actively nuclear Japan could destabilize the U.S.-Japan alliance, raise nuclear weapons levels in Asia, and undercut Japan's role as a model nonnuclear ally; on the other hand, new *anti*-nuclear sentiment could hinder ongoing U.S.-Japan nuclear dialogue.

This report first assesses the bureaucratically led status quo of Japanese nuclear policy and how its stakeholders have evolved. It then turns to an examination of newly emerging political influences on security policy, including nuclear policy – the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) governments of 2009-2012, the new Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) administration led by Prime Minister Abe, apparently rising tides of nationalism, and the anti-nuclear-power movement.

Though concerns about increased politicization are certainly justified, we find that these actors are less willing or able than they appear to dislodge Japan from its non-nuclear status quo. Finally, the catastrophic nuclear accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant following the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake (GEJE) in March 2011 sharply reanimated previously latent opposition to nuclear power, which may yet be redirected towards nuclear weapons as well.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Japan and the United States are arguably each other's most important security partners. Since the two countries' signing of their Mutual Security Treaty in 1951, Japan has hosted U.S. military bases critical to U.S. strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. In return, the U.S. has committed itself to defend Japan from external aggression. In the area of nuclear weapons, however, Japan's alliance relationship with the United States has always been an uneasy one. While Japanese citizens have long been wary of nuclear weapons and Japan's policymakers have consistently pursued nuclear disarmament throughout the postwar period, Japan relies on the U.S.' nuclear deterrent for its own security. Meanwhile, Japan has aggressively pursued the development of a civil nuclear power industry in order to lower its dependence on oil imports as its energy source, all at the same time. As a result, Japan possesses one of the world's most advanced civil nuclear energy programs, as well as technological sophistication that would allow Tokyo to weaponize its civil nuclear power capability in a relatively short amount of time. In other words, Japan's post-World War II nuclear policy is a set of three separate policies that have been bound by the norm of renunciation of nuclear weapons—the self-image that continues to define Japan today. And in recent years, the tension among these strands of nuclear policy has grown only more complex.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a gradual but significant evolution in how Japanese citizens and policymakers perceive their country's physical security and what they perceive to be legitimate responses to security threats. As the only country ever exposed to nuclear attack, a core part of Japan's postwar identity has been its steadfast maintenance of a non-nuclear policy – despite its technological capabilities. Indeed, its strong advocacy for nuclear disarmament has been a major foreign policy priority. Japanese citizens and policymakers alike have long resisted robust military capabilities and nuclear weapons in particular.

But changing public attitudes and the emergence of new threats have begun to open a once-taboo dialogue about Japan's own nuclear capabilities. Japanese citizens, responding to

provocations by North Korea and to increasingly sensationalistic media coverage of North Korea and China, are developing a sense of insecurity that leads them to question Japan's non-nuclear status quo. North Korea's covert nuclear development program and the international community's persistent inability to convince Pyongyang to renounce its nuclear capabilities have become immediate enough security concerns to prompt many Japanese citizens to rethink their resistance toward nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, the rapid modernization of Chinese military capabilities, particularly in the areas of air and naval forces, has made that country's strategic forces a greater security concern for Japan in the long-term. Ideological resistance to nuclear weapons is also fading along with the World War II generation.

At the same time, the catastrophic nuclear accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant following the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake (GEJE) in March 2011 created a completely different dynamic in Japan, particularly among the public. Not only the magnitude of the accident itself but also the incompetence demonstrated by the leadership in power at the time in responding to the accident and its aftermath planted a deep sense of anxiety regarding the desirability of nuclear power as Japan's energy source. This has forcefully reactivated Japan's nuclear "allergy," leading to a nation-wide grassroots movement *against* nuclear power, let alone weapons, and the particular groups advocating reduced dependence on nuclear power are also often the same groups advocating nuclear disarmament. The GEJE may have a lasting impact on how Japan views its own safety and security, what measures it is willing to pursue to achieve these, and the place of the U.S.-Japan alliance in pursuing these, especially with regard to the nuclear components of these security arrangements (perhaps including nuclear-powered instruments of security other than weapons themselves, such as the aircraft carrier now home-ported in Yokosuka). The GEJE represents a "formative experience" or "critical juncture" that resets the trajectory of public and policymaker opinion and thus remains influential long after the event itself has passed. Similar "exogenous shocks" in recent years – the 1991 Gulf War and the 1995 Kobe Earthquake in particular – have had clear impacts on Japanese security consciousness and policy lasting a decade or more.

Recent changes among elite political actors and in the policymaking process political-process only stand to amplify the impact of such public opinion shifts. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) formed Japan's first semi-durable government not controlled by the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) from 2009 to 2012, during which time successive prime ministerial administrations aimed to suppress bureaucratic influence and politicize security policy, as well as to institute durable reforms that would preserve a lesser role for bureaucrats even under future non-DPJ governments. During this period, the center-right LDP, which had governed for more than 50 years, suddenly found itself a small opposition party with incentive to re-tool as a conservative party with a more aggressive security policy. The tables turned in late 2012, with the LDP returning to power, but led by a Prime Minister, in Shinzou Abe, who also seems unusually intent on imposing political influence on security policy, often from a comparatively nationalist perspective. More generally, the emergence of a more genuinely competitive party system in Japan – including, lately, a challenge from the new, populist, and right-wing nationalist Japan Restoration Party (JRP) – has newly exposed politicians to public-opinion pressure and increased voter leverage. Public opinion has always been crucial in nuclear and security policy, but these changes may make security policy more thoroughly politicized and volatile than before, just as the Japanese public, responding to provocations from North Korea, may be acquiring a heightened sense of insecurity and in turn warming to the idea of nuclear weapons.

These developments appear to leave Japan's nuclear security policy – and its relations with the U.S. over this policy – in flux. Japan's nuclear policy remains compartmentalized between “dependence on nuclear deterrence,” “pursuit of nuclear disarmament” and “support of a safe but robust civil nuclear power industry.” In the foreign and security policy areas, given the heightened level of concerns for North Korea's nuclear program, Japan's dependence on U.S. extended deterrence is greater and more explicit than ever, while Japan also remains committed to its nuclear disarmament goals. Domestically, however, the public is wary of nuclear power, presenting a great challenge for the government as it continues to pursue an energy policy that necessitates maintaining an advanced civil nuclear energy sector.



To date, when the nuclear issue has been raised in private discussions between U.S. and Japanese security policy specialists, the Japanese side has continued to assure its U.S. counterparts that its going nuclear would be unadvisable from a strategic point of view, and therefore unlikely. This represents the bureaucratically led, policy-driven (as opposed to politics-driven) status quo. But the U.S. can no longer assume that such strategic calculations are the sole driver of Japan's nuclear policy. Japan's non-nuclear status quo is also held in place by less strategically rational political and public opinion elements, some of which may be changing their positions, and all of which necessarily inject more potential for volatility than when bureaucrats set policy more autonomously.

A more actively nuclear Japan could destabilize the U.S.-Japan alliance, raise nuclear weapons levels in Asia, and undercut Japan's role as a model nonnuclear ally. On the other hand, the reemergence of *anti*-nuclear sentiment could create a political environment that undercuts the ongoing U.S.-Japan nuclear dialogue. Understanding how these opposing trends combine to shape Japan's nuclear security consciousness will be valuable for U.S. policymakers and senior military leaders who continue to constructively engage their Japanese counterparts in a wide range of policy dialogues.

This report first assesses the bureaucratically led status quo of Japanese nuclear policy. It identifies the separate and partly contradictory sub-components of that policy and the stakeholders, mostly bureaucratic, who have helped cultivate these sub-component policies while keeping them relatively autonomous from each other. As Japan's geo-political environment has changed, the relationships among these sub-components and their respective stakeholders has only grown more complex. The report then turns to an examination of newly emerging political influences on security policy, including nuclear policy. Though concerns about increased politicization are certainly justified, we find that in practice, the various actors in a position to politicize security policy, and thereby to detach nuclear policy from its status quo, have not held and do not hold as significant potential to make an impact as might have been anticipated. This is true for security policy in general, and the bar is set even higher for nuclear weapons policy in particular. We briefly discuss

the 2009-2012 DPJ government as a recent “most likely candidate” to politicize security policy, one that ultimately proved willing but unable to do so, and then turn to more current and ongoing potential sources of security policy politicization, including the new LDP administration led by Prime Minister Abe, the emergence of such new parties as the JRP and an apparently rising tide of nationalism more broadly, the anti-nuclear-power movement, and more general changes in public opinion toward nuclear power.

## **NUCLEAR POLICY COMPONENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

One of the major challenges in understanding Japan’s nuclear policy is the diverse set of stakeholders. Each dimension of Japan’s nuclear policy—deterrence, disarmament, and civil nuclear power—has its own stakeholders. They often work in stovepipes, which has led to nuclear policy’s current compartmentalization. After a brief overview of Japan’s nuclear policy, we attempt to better understand of the stakeholders in each dimension of Japan’s nuclear policy and assess the level of interaction (or lack thereof) among them, particularly upon heightened nuclear concern regarding North Korea and President Obama’s announcement of his government’s renewed commitment to nuclear disarmament.

### JAPAN’S NUCLEAR POLICY: AN OVERVIEW

Japan’s choice to become a non-nuclear weapon state has deep psychological underpinnings in Japan’s postwar identity as a “*heiwa kokka* (peace state)”<sup>1</sup> as well as “the only country that has been a victim of an atomic bomb (*yui-itsu no hibaku-koku*).”<sup>2</sup> As Nakasone Hirofumi, while Foreign Minister in 2009, succinctly put it: “As Japan suffered nuclear catastrophes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the country knows the horror of nuclear devastation from its own experience... I believe it is Japan's mission to convey to all people around the world the facts

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<sup>1</sup> Mike M. Mochizuki, “Japan Tests the Nuclear Taboo,” *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (July 2007), p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Heisei 20 nen-do Nihon no Gun-shuku Fukakusan Gaiko* (Japan’s Disarmament and Nonproliferation Diplomacy 2008), p. 30, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/gun\\_hakusho/2008/pdfs/hon1\\_3.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/gun_hakusho/2008/pdfs/hon1_3.pdf) (accessed June 20 2012).

of the calamity of nuclear bombings that happened in August 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, across the boundaries of various political viewpoints and ideologies.”<sup>3</sup>

“Three Non-Nuclear Principles (*Hikaku San-gensoku*),” introduced by Prime Minister Sato Eisaku in 1967, has been the foundation of Japan’s postwar nuclear policy. Under these principles, Japan has pledged that it will not “produce, possess, or allow the introduction of nuclear weapons onto Japanese soil.”<sup>4</sup> These principles were then put into the larger context of “Four Pillars of Nuclear Policy (*Kaku Yon Seisaku*)” in 1968. These “four pillars” included: (1) promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy; (2) efforts in global nuclear disarmament; (3) reliance on U.S. extended deterrence; and (4) steadfast maintenance of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.<sup>5</sup>

Based on these fundamental principles, Japan has developed its postwar nuclear policy with three dimensions: commitment to global nuclear disarmament (which has evolved to include its strong support for nuclear non- [and counter-] proliferation), reliance on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence (more commonly known as the “nuclear umbrella”), and a commitment to develop civil nuclear program.

*Commitment to global nuclear disarmament* has been the most pronounced dimension of Japan’s nuclear policy. Nuclear disarmament has been one of the most important priorities for Japan’s postwar diplomacy. Tokyo considers the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)—

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. ”Statement by Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone: “Conditions toward Zero-11 Benchmarks for Global Nuclear Disarmament” April 27, 2009.

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/arms/state0904.html> (accessed August 1, 2012).

Here and below, Japanese names are written with surnames first, except as necessary in citing English-language sources. Non-standard transliterations are occasionally used when these are more familiar for the particular names in question.

<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Sato’s statement in response to the question by Representative Narita Tomomi, Budget Committee, House of Representatives, 57<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, December 11, 1967, <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/syugiin/057/0514/05712110514002a.html> (accessed July 1, 2012). In practice, Japan accepted what might be seen as an exception to the third principle. It permitted U.S. Navy ships to make port calls without asking the United States to state whether or not those ships carried nuclear weapons.

<sup>5</sup> Prime Minister Sato, in response to the question by Eda Saburo, 58<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, January 30, 1968, <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/syugiin/058/0001/main.html> (accessed August 19, 2012).

and the safeguard under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as well as the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)—as critical international frameworks for nuclear disarmament. Japan signed the NPT in 1970, ratifying it in 1976.

Japan has also annually, since 1994, submitted a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly. In 2008, Japan co-sponsored the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICND) with Australia, producing a report that identified an achievable path to the eventual elimination of nuclear arms.<sup>6</sup> Following the conclusion of the 2010 NPT Conference, Japan, working with Australia, launched the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NDPI). This ten-nation group has met five times at the foreign minister-level since its establishment, as of the fall of 2012. Finally, Japan has been active in working with other countries to start negotiations for the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).<sup>7</sup>

As the nature of the concerns related to nuclear weapons evolves due to the diversification of the countries which aspire to become nuclear-weapon states, and due to the increasing availability of relevant technology not only to such countries but also to non-state actors with malicious intentions, Japan's support for the cause of nuclear disarmament is also evolving into efforts to more actively participate in multilateral discussions focused on nuclear nonproliferation and counter-proliferation. For instance, when the G-8 summit launched the "G8 Global Partnership for the Proliferation of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction" (G8GP) in 2002 for a 10-year mandate, Japan initiated a number of assistance programs, including providing assistance to Russia for dismantling its nuclear weapons and submarines and hosting multinational capacity-building seminars in WMD

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Heisei 20 nen-do Nihon no Gun-shuku Fu-kakusan Gaiko* (Japan's Disarmament and Nonproliferation Diplomacy 2008), pp. 30-33, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/gun\\_hakusho/2008/pdfs/hon1\\_3.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/gun_hakusho/2008/pdfs/hon1_3.pdf) (accessed December 10, 2012); Ogawa and Schiffer, "Japan's Plutonium Reprocessing Dilemma," p. 21; International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament web page, <http://www.icnd.org> (accessed November 5, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. *Nihon no Gunshuku Fukakusan Gaikou Dai Roku-ban (Heisei 25 nen)* (Japan's Arms Control and Non-proliferation Diplomacy, 6th Edition (2013)) March 2013. pp. 9-12.

nonproliferation such as Asian Export Control Seminars and Asian Non-Proliferation Seminars (ASTOP). Japan was one of the first countries to sign the U.S.-initiated Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which is a multilateral coalition aimed at counter-proliferation of WMD and related technologies.

*Reliance on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence* has been attracting greater attention in recent years. In the framework of the U.S.-Japan alliance, the United States is Japan's ultimate security guarantor. In particular, Article 5 of the Mutual Security Treaty between Japan and the United States obligates the United States to come to Japan's defense when it faces external aggression. This U.S. defense commitment of Japan has always been understood to include nuclear extended deterrence (more commonly referred to as the "nuclear umbrella"). Indeed, as noted earlier, the "Four Pillars of Non-Nuclear Policy" set forth by Prime Minister Sato explicitly include "reliance on U.S. extended deterrence" as a part of Japan's non-nuclear policy.<sup>8</sup>

Security assurance provided by the United States, particularly its "nuclear umbrella," has played an important role in Japan's maintaining its policy of renouncing nuclear weapons. Even if Japan's own constitution denies it the right of belligerency and prohibits Japan from building defense capability beyond what is minimally necessary for self-defense, the Japanese government has never ruled out the option of building an independent nuclear weapons program. In 1957, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi announced that while Japan would not seek nuclear weapons, a government review had concluded the possession of nuclear arms was not necessarily unconstitutional.<sup>9</sup> Kishi's successor Ikeda Hayato, preferring Japan to pursue economic growth over military buildup, explored the option of acquiring nuclear weapons as a means to reduce Japan's defense budget.<sup>10</sup> Even after Japan ratified the NPT in 1976, the Japanese government argued in 1978 that its constitution did not prohibit the

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<sup>8</sup> Policy address by Prime Minister Sato, 58<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, January 27, 1968, <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/syugin/058/0001/main.html> (accessed May 1, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Kurt M. Campbell and Tsuyoshi Sunohara, "Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable," pp. 218-253 in Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn, and Mitchell B. Reiss, eds., *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Choices* (Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> Green and Furukawa, "Japan: New Nuclear Realism," p. 349.

possession of nuclear weapons so long as those weapons did not exceed what was “minimally necessary” to defend Japan—a claim that Tokyo reiterated in 1982 and has upheld since then.<sup>11</sup>

Up until the present, there have been two known occasions on which the Japanese government quietly but seriously explored the policy option of acquiring an independent nuclear capability. Its first such deliberation took place under the watch of Prime Minister Sato from the late 1960s through the 1970s.<sup>12</sup> The second known study of Japan’s nuclear option was initiated by the Japan Defense Agency (JDA; now the Ministry of Defense) from 1994 to 1995, as Japan came out of the first North Korean nuclear crisis to face China’s nuclear test in 1995, eyeing the potential expiration of the NPT. However, in both of these occasions, its alliance with the United States (and the existence of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence) was a key factor that led Japan to conclude that it would not be in Japan’s interest to seek an indigenous nuclear weapons program.

Given concerns over North Korea’s nuclear program and China’s augmentation of its nuclear forces, the reliability of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence has been more actively debated in Japan. The debate particularly intensified among Japanese political leaders, defense officials, and other intellectuals after President Obama announced during his visit to Prague in April 2009, “I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the

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<sup>11</sup> Statement by Sanada Hideo, Director of Cabinet Legislative Bureau, at the Budget Committee of the House of Councillors, March 11, 1978; Statement by Tsunoda Reijiro, Director of Cabinet Legislative Bureau, at the Budget Committee of the House of Councillors, April 5, 1982. Extracted from *Heisei 19-nendo Ban Bouei Handbook* (Handbook for Defense 2007) (Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 2007), pp. 603-605.

<sup>12</sup> The two Study Group reports were never released in their entirety to the public. Summaries of both, however, were reported by *Asahi Shimbun* on November 13, 1994. For quotes from the summary of the two Study Group Reports reported in *Asahi Shimbun*, see [http://homepage.mac.com/ehara\\_gen/jealous\\_gay/nuclear\\_armament.html](http://homepage.mac.com/ehara_gen/jealous_gay/nuclear_armament.html) (accessed December 8, 2008). For a later analysis that contains additional information, see Yuri Kase, “The Costs and Benefits of Japan’s Nuclearization: An Insight into the 1968/70 Internal Report,” *Nonproliferation Review* 8, No. 2 (summer 2001).

peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons,”<sup>13</sup> followed by the U.S.-Russia agreement over a new START in March 2010.

*Japan's commitment to develop a civil nuclear program*, while the least pronounced, has the longest history, long predating Japan's adoption of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles and its ratification of the NPT. Japan is the world's third-largest user of nuclear energy, ranking only behind the United States and France.<sup>14</sup> It has a robust civil nuclear energy program in which, prior to the March 11<sup>th</sup> accident at Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station, 55 light-water power reactors were operated by ten electric power companies, with additional plants either under construction or in regulatory review.<sup>15</sup>

Japan resumed its efforts to develop a civilian nuclear power industry after the conclusion of the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty. In 1955, the United States and Japan concluded the Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United States of America Concerning Civil Uses of Atomic Energy. This bilateral agreement, renegotiated and revised many times (most recently in 1988), allowed U.S. technology assistance that included the provision of enriched uranium, research reactors,<sup>16</sup> and staff training at U.S. national laboratories.<sup>17</sup>

Demonstrating its commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy (which was necessary in order to receive U.S. technological assistance), Japan signed a series of international treaties and agreements. In November 1955, Japan signed a bilateral agreement with the U.S.

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<sup>13</sup> The White House. *Remarks by President Barack Obama*. Prague, Czech Republic. April 5, 2009. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered> (accessed July 22, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, “World Net Nuclear Electric Power Generation, 1980-2007,” <http://www.eia.doe.gov/fuelnuclear.html> (accessed May 5, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery and Mary Beth Nikitin, *Japan's Nuclear Future: Policy Debate, Prospects, and U.S. Interests*, CRS Report for Congress, RL 34487 (February 19, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> The reactors provided by the United States under the agreement included a water boiler reactor that became the first reactor to go on-line in Japan.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Nakano, “Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Between the United States and Japan” in Yuki Tatsumi ed., *New Nuclear Agenda: Prospects for U.S.-Japan Cooperation*, (Stimson Center, 2012), p.44. [http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/New\\_Nuclear\\_Agenda\\_FINAL\\_3\\_15\\_12.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/New_Nuclear_Agenda_FINAL_3_15_12.pdf) Nakano's chapter (pp 41-61) provides an excellent summary of U.S.-Japan cooperation in the civil nuclear power industry.

that allowed the latter to loan highly enriched uranium to Japan for nuclear reactor research. The agreement imposed the conditions that (1) the spent fuel would be returned to the U.S., and (2) Japan would provide an after-use report on the loaned uranium.<sup>18</sup> Japan and the U.S. took this initial arrangement a step further when the two countries signed the Agreement for Cooperation between Japan and the United States Concerning the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in February 1968.<sup>19</sup> Japan also became one of the first nations to join the IAEA upon that body's establishment in 1957, subjecting itself to IAEA inspections. Furthermore, it became the first country with significant nuclear activities to implement the Additional Protocol (adopted by the IAEA in May 1997) in 1999, permitting expanded inspection activities by the IAEA.

Domestically, Japan institutionalized its commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy through a series of legislative acts dating to the 1950s. The 1955 Atomic Energy Basic Law (*Genshi-ryoku Kihon-ho*) obligates the Japanese government to limit all research, development, and use of nuclear energy only to “peaceful purposes”<sup>20</sup> and provides the principles on which additional laws have been enacted to regulate Japan's civil nuclear power activities.

## STAKEHOLDERS IN JAPAN'S NUCLEAR POLICY

Japan's nuclear policy has three dimensions—commitment to nuclear disarmament, reliance on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence, and maintenance of a robust civil nuclear energy program. As briefly mentioned in the previous section, these three dimensions are often discussed independently of one another in Japan. To present, there has been very little effort demonstrated by the Japanese government to better integrate these three dimensions

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<sup>18</sup> Since then, the agreement has been revised and replaced by subsequent U.S.-Japan Agreements for Cooperation Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. See *Heisei 2-nen ban Genshiryoku Hakusho* (Atomic Energy White Paper 1990) <http://www.aec.go.jp/jicst/NC/about/hakusho/wp1990/sb2090102.htm> (accessed March 1, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> The agreement was replaced by a new Agreement for Cooperation between Japan and the United States Concerning the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in 1988.

<sup>20</sup> *Genshi-ryoku Kihon-ho* (Atomic Energy Basic Law), Article Two, <http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htldata/S30/S30HO186.html> (accessed February 3, 2013).



and force a coordinated and comprehensive nuclear policy.

Such a lack of policy coordination has led to one dimension of Japan's nuclear policy working against its other dimensions. For instance, Japan's civil nuclear energy program has often complicated Japan's efforts in nuclear disarmament. In particular, Japan's pursuit of a closed nuclear fuel cycle in its civil nuclear energy program has been considered highly controversial. A closed, complete fuel cycle can create a ready supply of materials that can be used to construct a nuclear weapon, putting Japan's nonproliferation commitments in question.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most important contributing factors to the current lack of comprehensive nuclear policy in Tokyo is a lack of coordination among the stakeholders in all dimensions of the policy. Up until the present, the stakeholders in each of the three dimensions of Japan's nuclear policy have pursued their own policy goals mostly independently of one another. This section catalogs the stakeholders in each area of Japan's nuclear policy.

#### *Nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation, and counter-proliferation*

Nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation, and counter-proliferation are international norms whose implementation has been supported by multi-layered multilateral initiatives. The NPT, coupled with safeguards by the IAEA, provides the most comprehensive normative framework. They are expected to be supplemented by multilateral arms control treaties such as the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)<sup>22</sup> and multinational export control mechanisms (such as the Nuclear Suppliers' Group [NSG], Wassenaar Arrangements, and Missile Technology Control Regime [MTCR]), and other international coalitions (such as the Proliferation Security Initiative [PSI] and United Nations Security Council [UNSC] Resolution 1540).

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<sup>21</sup>Michael J. Green and Katsuhisa Furukawa, "New Ambitions, Old Obstacles: Japan and its Search for Arms Control Strategy," *Arms Control Today* (July 2000). Accessed at <http://www.cfr.org/arms-control-disarmament-and-nonproliferation/new-ambitions-old-obstacles-japan-its-search-arms-control-strategy/p3701> (Accessed April 3, 2013)

<sup>22</sup>Japan has strongly supported an early ratification of CTBT and pushed to start negotiation for FMCT.

In this policy area, there are two major stakeholders within the Japanese government. One is Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). In particular, the Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Science Department—led by its director, who carries the rank of ambassador—has played a central role in MOFA's efforts in this area. Working through Japan's Permanent Missions to the United Nations (New York), to the International Organizations in Vienna (where IAEA Headquarters are located) and to the Conference of Disarmament (CD) (Geneva), the three divisions under this Department—the Arms Control Division; Non-proliferation, Science and Nuclear Energy Division; and International Nuclear Energy Cooperation Division—have forged Japan's diplomatic efforts to advocate nuclear disarmament and non- (and counter-) proliferation.<sup>23</sup>

The second major stakeholder in this area within the Japanese government is the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). In Japan, export control is regulated through the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law. As all exports from Japan require METI's licensing, METI plays a central role not only in enforcing export control in Japan, but also in reaching out to other countries to build their capacity in this area. Within METI, the Trade and Economic Cooperation Bureau, led by its director-general, is in charge of export control. The Bureau's Security Export Control Division is in charge of managing overall regulation, engaging in discussion with other countries on export control policy-related issues, and organizing capacity-building activities for other countries. The Security Export Inspection Division engages in outreach efforts within Japan, as well as examining the exporters. The Security Export Licensing Division focuses on examining and approving or rejecting export licenses.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. *About the Ministry*. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/about/hq/org.html>. Ambassador Amano Yukiya, the incumbent IAEA Secretary-General, served as the Director of this department between 2002 – 2005, and as Ambassador of the Permanent Mission in Vienna between 2005 – 2009 (until he was elected as IAEA Director-General). International Atomic Energy Agency. "IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano: Biography" <http://www.iaea.org/About/dg/amano/biography.html>. (Accessed May 13, 2013)

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. "Export Control" <http://www.meti.go.jp/policy/anpo/englishpage.html> (Accessed June 30, 2013).

In addition, anti-nuclear non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Japan have added important voices against nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants within Japan during the Cold War. Both of the two major anti-nuclear NGOs in Japan—*Gen-sui-baku Kinshi Nihon Kyougikai* (Gensui-kyo, or Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs) and *Gen-sui-baku Kinshi Nihon Kokumin Kaigi* (Gensui-kin, or Japan National Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs) — have been organized primarily by supporters of the Japan Communist Party (JCP) and Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ). Activities by these NGOs have been losing traction since the end of the Cold War, particularly after the emergence of the nuclear problem in North Korea. The political decline of the primary supporters of these two NGOs—the JCP and SDPJ—has also contributed to the NGOs’ declining presence. Following the accident at Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station in March 2011, however, a civic movement against Japan’s continued reliance on nuclear power has revived anti-nuclear weapon NGOs such as Gensui-kin and Gensui-kyo. The potential implications of their revival will be discussed below.

#### *Reliance on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence*

The sustainability of Japan’s reliance on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence very much depends on whether Japan can maintain confidence in the U.S. commitment to defend Japan under the U.S.-Japan alliance. As such, this area is influenced by the success of efforts to manage the U.S.-Japan alliance in a manner that enables Japan to continue to have such confidence in the United States.

The predominance of the U.S.-Japan alliance management historically made MOFA the primary stakeholder. From the perspective of managing broader U.S.-Japan relations, the entire North American Affairs Bureau—the First and Second North America Divisions, Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Division, and Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) Office—was the primary stakeholder in this area. In particular, its Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Division and Japan-U.S. SOFA Office have played critical roles in managing the U.S.-Japan alliance.

In recent years, however, the Ministry of Defense (MOD, formerly the Japan Defense Agency [JDA])—has emerged as another important stakeholder. As the Department of Defense (DOD) began to play a greater role in alliance consultation on the U.S. side, the MOD, as DOD’s institutional partner, increased its presence in alliance consultation. Within the MOD, the Defense Policy Section, Japan-U.S. Cooperation Section, and Strategic Planning Office—all housed within the Defense Policy Bureau—and the Defense Planning Department of Joint Staff Office specifically engage with the United States in consultation on extended deterrence. As the scope of the discussion between the officials of the two countries in the framework of alliance consultation becomes wider in its scope in coming years, the significance of the MOD, as Japan’s primary national defense agency, will likely continue to increase.

#### *Maintenance of a robust civil nuclear power industry*

While the stakeholders in the areas of nuclear disarmament (including non- and counter-proliferation) and extended nuclear deterrence are primarily interested in Japan’s external policy goals (with the exception of METI), the stakeholders in civil nuclear power industry have a primarily domestic focus. Also, because the utilization of nuclear power as an alternative source of energy is one of Japan’s important domestic policy priorities, the number of stakeholders within the Japanese government is bigger.

For instance, in the area of research alone, the Ministry of Culture, Education, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) is the primary stakeholder regarding basic-to-intermediary research, while METI leads commercial/advanced research. Cooperation with the United States on civil nuclear power is led by the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA), a government agency established in 2005 with the merger of the Japan Nuclear Cycle Institute (JNC) and Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute (JAERI).

In the area of industry regulation, there has not been an independent national regulatory body in Japan. Prior to the March 2011 accident at Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), housed within METI, and the

Nuclear Safety Commission, housed within the Cabinet Office, regulated various aspects of the nuclear power industry. Following strong criticism of the Japanese government's inability to quickly respond to the Fukushima disaster and lack of rigor in enforcing safety standards for nuclear power plants, NISA and NSC were merged and attached to the Ministry of Environment. Additionally, since the Fukushima nuclear emergency, several cabinet-level positions were created: the Minister for the Restoration from and Prevention of Nuclear Accidents, and the Minister of State for the Corporation in Support of Compensation for Nuclear Damage.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the power industry—electric power companies, in the case of Japan—is an important stakeholder in this area. Nine of the ten utilities in Japan own, operate, and distribute nuclear power. Nuclear power plant projects have not been particularly sensitive to market conditions. In addition, the Japanese government provides monetary incentives to municipalities that house nuclear power plants. Such subsidies aim at offsetting any potential business risks commonly associated with being located in proximity to nuclear power plants.<sup>26</sup>

## EVOLUTION IN RELATIONS AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS

During the Cold War, there was very little connectivity among the policy goals of the three dimensions of Japan's nuclear policy. The international environment during those years allowed Japan to maintain its compartmentalized nuclear policy. With possession of nuclear weapons and their technologies limited to the five “declared nuclear states (the United States, Soviet Union, England, France, and China),” it was relatively easy to make a distinction between nuclear weapon “haves” and “have nots.” The number of countries that could afford civilian nuclear power as an alternative source of energy was also limited. The existing global nonproliferation regime—commonly referred to as the “Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) system”—was established on the premise that nuclear-

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<sup>25</sup> The Office of Prime Minister, List of Ministers.

[http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/noda/meibo/daijin/index\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/noda/meibo/daijin/index_e.html) (Accessed May 1, 2013)

<sup>26</sup> Nakano, “Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Between the United States and Japan,” pp. 44-45.

related technologies and materials are controlled by a small number of countries, with declared nuclear states working to ultimately abandon their nuclear capabilities. Given such an external environment, Japan did not have to aggressively try to integrate its nuclear policy—it could strongly advocate a global nuclear disarmament goal even while contradictorily relying on the U.S. nuclear “umbrella” for its safety and investing in developing a sophisticated, indigenous civil nuclear power industry.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this landscape began to change drastically. The world first grappled with the challenge of preventing those involved in the nuclear weapons program in the former Soviet countries from “selling” their expertise to states and other entities that might abuse them. It also became extremely difficult to convince those with nuclear ambitions from pursuing their own nuclear programs. The first North Korea nuclear crisis and subsequent nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 were one of the early indicators that a world without the Soviet Union would not necessarily be a safer place as far as the nuclear question was concerned. If anything, these events seemed to suggest that it would be more difficult to stop those with nuclear aspirations absent the equilibrium in strategic forces between two superpowers.

Further, progress in science and technology—rapid developments in the internet in particular—has made the transfer and sharing of information around the globe much easier, making the world “flat.”<sup>27</sup> While this has brought positive attributes of globalization, such as better accessibility to goods and knowledge, it has also intensified the downside of globalization, the heightened risk of nation-states as well as hostile individuals obtaining information and materials that could pose a threat, such as those related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the growing recognition of nuclear power as an alternative source of energy, combined with the lowering of costs, has led a greater number of countries to pursue civilian nuclear power plants.

Given all these developments, the response to the nuclear challenge in the post-Cold War world has become more multi-faceted and complex than that during the Cold War. It

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2005).

requires the stakeholders in a country's nuclear issues in today's world to better coordinate in shaping the country's nuclear policy. In short, an "all-of-government" approach is essential for a country to have an effective nuclear policy.

Japan has also been impacted by such evolution. First, North Korea's nuclear crisis brought into sharper relief one of the contradictions in Japan's nuclear policy. How can Tokyo advocate global nuclear disarmament when it is completely dependent on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence for its security?

Specifically, the existence of a clear, direct nuclear weapons threat against Japan revived the debate within Japan over acquisition of an independent (if limited) nuclear capability. In the mid-1990s, the then-JDA conducted an internal study that assessed the pros and cons of Japan's acquiring a nuclear capability. The study concluded that, given the expected damage not only to the U.S.-Japan alliance, but also to Japan's relationship with South Korea and China, as well as to Japan's international reputation as a non-nuclear state, it was not in Japan's national interests to pursue such an option. As the North Korea crisis drags well into the 2000s with no sign of real breakthrough toward North Korea's denuclearization, this issue is debated in Japan more openly than ever before.

There are three major differences between the public nuclear debate within Japan in the 2000s and that of the Cold War era and the 1990s. First and foremost, there is a significantly higher degree of political tolerance among those who entertain the idea of Japan going nuclear. Previously, a politician's reference to Japan's potential nuclear capability or questioning Japan's non-nuclear policy meant an immediate dismissal from his position in the government or in a political party. This is no longer the case. For instance, in April 2002, then-leader of the Democratic Party of Japan Ozawa Ichiro stated in a speech, "With the plutonium reserve from nuclear power plants, Japan has enough to produce thousands of warheads."<sup>28</sup> Former Chief Cabinet Secretary (and later Prime Minister) Fukuda Yasuo also maintained that position when he mentioned the possibility of Japan's pursuing a

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<sup>28</sup> *Kyodo News*, April 6, 2002.

nuclear option in case the international security environment deteriorated.<sup>29</sup> Aso Taro, while serving as foreign minister for the Abe government in 2006 (prior to becoming Prime Minister himself), argued that it would be important for Japan to discuss all options, including the possession of nuclear weapons. He further rejected the notion that a nuclear debate is somehow taboo, arguing that “Japan is a free country that does not control people’s opinions.” Despite severe criticism in the mass media suggesting these comments were “inappropriate,” none of these figures were fired or forced to resign from the positions they held at the time.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the tone of debate has grown more reasonable. Although the debate over Japan’s nuclear option is still spearheaded primarily by those who can be categorized as “right-wing”<sup>31</sup> (which sometimes implies a greater degree of political extremity than the same term does in the United States), their arguments have grown more pragmatic. For instance, many of them, unlike during the Cold War, do not support Japan abandoning its alliance with the U.S. and remilitarizing in order to develop a full range of offensive capabilities, including nuclear weapons. Rather, they propose a range of options for Japan far from this extreme. For instance, Ushio Masato, a conservative journalist who specializes in military affairs, suggests that Japan, while maintaining a strong alliance with the U.S., gradually abandon the Three Non-Nuclear Principles. He proposes that Japan revise the principle of not allowing the introduction of nuclear weapons on Japanese land, thereby permitting the U.S. to deploy

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<sup>29</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 1 and June 3, 2002

<sup>30</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, October 20, 2006; Nakagawa Shoichi, “*Jiritsu shita Kokka no Kaku-busou Rongi* (Nuclear Debate of an Independent Nation),” *Voice* (December 2006), pp. 46-51.

<sup>31</sup> Sometimes referred to as “neo-autonomists” or “nationalists,” these figures argue that Japan needs a more independent security policy, implicitly suggesting that Japan keep an open mind about acquiring nuclear weapons. See, for example, Rust M. Deming, “Japan’s Constitution and Defense Policy: Entering a New Era?,” *Strategic Forum* No. 213 (Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, November 2004), [http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF213/SF213\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF213/SF213_Final.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2008); and Richard J. Samuels, “Securing Japan: The Current Discourse,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Volume 33, Number 1 (winter 2007), <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/samuels/Samuels%20JJS%20article.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2012).



its nuclear weapons in Japan.<sup>32</sup> Itou Kan, another conservative political analyst, advocates Japan's acquiring a nuclear deterrence capability that is minimally required for Japan to defend itself but rejects the idea of Japan becoming a major military power.<sup>33</sup>

Third, moderates have entered the debate. For instance, Toshiyuki Shikata, a respected retired Japan Ground Self-Defense Force officer who is known for his strong support for the U.S.-Japan alliance, advocates a robust discussion in Japan over nuclear weapons. While opposing the idea of Japan pursuing an independent nuclear capability, Shikata believes such a debate will allow Japan to actively engage in its alliance relationship with the U.S. and thereby ensure the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella.<sup>34</sup> Morimoto Satoshi, who served as defense minister in 2011-2012, maintains that Japan needs to have a more thorough debate over its nuclear option, both inside and outside the government, although he argues that the acquisition of nuclear capability would not serve Japan's interests.<sup>35</sup>

The greater focus on whether Japan has sufficient deterrent capability is a reflection of the Japanese public's disappointment in global nuclear disarmament efforts. Polls taken following North Korea's nuclear tests in 2006 suggested that the Japanese public (1) regarded the discussion on nuclear weapons as less of a taboo, and (2) had lower confidence in the international nuclear nonproliferation regime. For instance, the opinion poll taken by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in November 2006 showed that 45% of respondents agreed that Japan should have a more open discussion on nuclear weapons.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in the opinion poll conducted by the *Mainichi Shimbun* in November 2006, while only 14% advocated Japan's

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<sup>32</sup> Ushio Masato, "*San Gensoku wa Dankai-teki Haiki-wo* (Three Principles to be Relinquished Gradually)," *Will* (January 2007), pp. 77-79.

<sup>33</sup> Itou Kan, "*Jikoku no Bouei ni Sekinin wo Moteru Atarimae no Kuni-ni* (Toward a Normal Country that Can Be Responsible For Its Own Security)," in *Nibon Kakubusou no Ron-ten* (Points of Debate in Japan's Nuclear Option) (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyu-sho, 2006), pp. 189-251.

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, Shikata Toshiyuki, "*Gunjiteki Tsu-ru kara Seijiteki Tsu-ru he* (From a Military to a Political Tool)," *Will* (January 2007), pp. 38-45.

<sup>35</sup> Morimoto Satoshi, *Nibon Bouei Saiko-ron* (Japan's Defense Revisited) (Tokyo: Kairyu-sha, 2008), pp. 266-278.

<sup>36</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November Opinion Polls, conducted November 11-12, 2006, <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls/2006/poll-06-18.htm> (accessed July 2, 2012).

acquiring nuclear capability, 61% considered it all right to discuss nuclear options.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, in January 2008 opinion polls conducted by the MOFA on Japan's disarmament and nonproliferation policy, fewer than half (47.5%) of the respondents thought the NPT was helpful in international peace and stability. Among those who did not think the NPT was helpful, almost 73% identified the lingering nuclear weapon problems with North Korea and Iran as the reason for their answer.<sup>38</sup> While Japan's advocacy for a nuclear-free world continues to derive vast support from the general public, a growing sense of nuclear insecurity, driven primarily by North Korea, is forcing Japan to recognize that while nuclear disarmament is a worthy norm, it also needs to pay greater attention to sustaining the viability of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence in the more immediate future. In other words, better policy coordination is required among stakeholders in nuclear disarmament (plus non- and counter-proliferation) and stakeholders for extended deterrence within Japan's broader national security policy.

Among the stakeholders for maintaining confidence in U.S. extended nuclear deterrence, there has been a more explicit recognition that a long-term goal of a nuclear-free world can be compatible with the goal of maintaining the effectiveness of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence. For instance, the 2010 National Defense Program Guideline (NDPG), Japan's mid-term defense policy planning document, proposed that Japan would play a "constructive and active role in international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, so as to achieve the long-term goal of creating a world without nuclear weapons" while acknowledging that "as long as nuclear weapons exist, the extended deterrence provided by the United States, with nuclear deterrent as a vital element, will be indispensable."<sup>39</sup> This is the first time that the NDPG argued the necessity of U.S. nuclear extended deterrence in the context of a more immediate tool necessary to defend Japan while it continues to pursue a

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<sup>37</sup> "Kaku Hoyuu 'No', Giron wa Yonin ("No" to the Possession of Nuclear Weapons, but OK to Discuss)," *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 27, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Nihon no Gunshuku Fukakusan Gaikou ni kansuru Ishiki Chosa* (Opinion Polls on Japan's Disarmament and Nonproliferation Diplomacy), conducted January 11-27, 2009, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/chosa/i\\_chosa.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/chosa/i_chosa.html) (accessed June 15, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and Beyond*. December 17, 2010.

[http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/d\\_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf) p.2 (accessed June 1, 2013).

long-term goal of nuclear disarmament.

While there has been some nascent effort in Japan to resolve its dilemma of being an advocate for global nuclear disarmament while continuing to rely on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence, the accident at Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in March 2011 created a gap between the two external policy goals mentioned above and the future of Japan's civil nuclear power industry. Following the accident, the Japanese public's aversion to nuclear power has been growing stronger, prompting Kan Naoto's pledge of "zero nuclear power plants" when serving as prime minister between 2010 – 2011. Indeed, under the watch of his government, all existing nuclear power plants in Japan ceased operation, which the government claimed necessary to conduct safety stress tests. Although the succeeding government led by Noda Yoshihiko reversed Kan's decision and began to pave the way to resume the operation of some nuclear power plants, Kan's "zero nuclear power-plant" pledge galvanized mass anti-nuclear protest (in which not only Kan but also his predecessor Hatoyama Yukio participated).

Whether the resurfacing of "anti-nuclear power plant" sentiments among the Japanese public has empowered "anti-nuclear" NGOs to spread their influence enough to have spillover effects in other dimensions of Japan's nuclear policy needs to be carefully monitored. The developments among anti-nuclear NGOs are especially critical. As examined earlier, the established anti-nuclear NGOs are organized by Japan's Communist and Socialist parties, thus often making them anti-U.S. and anti-U.S.-Japan alliance. For instance, the website of Gensui-kin (an anti-nuclear NGO organized primarily by the Social Democratic Party of Japan, the former Socialist Party) also includes disapproving commentary on the U.S. military presence in Okinawa, the U.S.-Japan alliance, and the Japan Self-Defense Forces. This suggests that if empowered enough by the public sense of anxiety vis-à-vis the safety of nuclear power plants and their risks, the activities of "anti-nuclear" NGOs may begin to garner support for their anti-U.S. and anti-U.S.-Japan alliance activities as well.

## **POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON NUCLEAR AND SECURITY POLICY**

Thus far, this report has examined Japan's multiple nuclear policies and their stakeholders, as well as how the interaction among these stakeholders has evolved. But another set of issues looms large as a potential major factor that can influence nuclear policy's future: the evolving role played by Japanese political leaders in Japan's policy-making processes.

The role that Japan's political leaders play in the policy-making process in Tokyo has undergone significant changes during Japan's postwar political history. Under what is known as "the 1955 System," in which the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) enjoyed dominant, long-term rule, Japan effectively had a "dual governance" system—governance by the LDP-led cabinet, or government, supported and sometimes even led by a strong bureaucracy, with oversight by but also much deference from the broader LDP majority in the Diet. During the LDP's more than fifty years of nearly uninterrupted predominance, most of its prime ministers struggled to assert their leadership roles in running the country.

While there had been sporadic efforts to enhance the Prime Minister's role in policy-making process – and, by extension, to enhance the role of politicians more generally – it was the comprehensive administrative reform initiated by Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro's government that created the structure for the prime minister to exercise his leadership in policy- and decision-making if he so chooses.<sup>40</sup> And it was his successor Koizumi Jun'ichirou who, during his five-year tenure, proved how much the prime minister can exercise leadership if he effectively leverages the decision-making process to his advantage. However, following Koizumi's departure in 2006, none of his short-lived LDP successor administrations – those led by current prime minister Abe and then Fukuda Yasuo and Aso Tarou – were able to assert their role in the policy-making process as deftly as Koizumi had. Following these three prime ministers' short tenures, the LDP lost power to the DPJ in the general election of August 2009. The DPJ received voter support by criticizing LDP's

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<sup>40</sup> Shinoda Tomohito. *Kantei Gaikou: Seijiteki Leadership no Yukue* (Prime Minister's diplomacy: future of political leadership) (*Asahi Shimbun shuppan-sha*, 2004); Takenaka Harukata, *Shushou Shibai: Nihon Seiji no Henbou* (Prime Minister's Dominance: Evolution of Japanese Politics) (*Chuo Koron Shin-sha*, 2005).

methods of governance. In particular, the DPJ's first Prime Minister, Hatoyama Yukio, claimed that the LDP had allowed the bureaucracy to run the government and that his own DPJ would inject *seiji shudo* (leadership by politicians) to allow elected legislators to assume a greater role in the policy-making process. The DPJ also criticized the LDP's "dual governance" system, and insisted that it would end such a practice in order to ensure unity between the DPJ and the government. In addition, DPJ politicians insisted that they were knowledgeable enough on policy matters not to need support from the bureaucracy. However, with the failure of Prime Minister Kan and his government to effectively respond to the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station, the DPJ demonstrated that overreach by politicians in policy-and decision-making process could prove extremely counterproductive, incapacitating the government.<sup>41</sup>

In December 2012, as a result of these DPJ policy failures, the LDP returned triumphantly to government, ending the DPJ's three-year rule. Prime Minister Abe, winning a second chance to serve as the prime minister, appears to be trying to establish a leadership style similar to Koizumi. For instance, in the area of foreign and security policy-making, he has moved to establish a Japanese national security council to assist the prime minister independent of the bureaucracy. He has also made clear his intention to put his comparatively distinctive hawkish and nationalist stamp on foreign and security policy.

If Abe's renewed effort to institutionalize the enhancement of the Prime Minister's role in policy-making process succeeds, it might lead Japan to depart from the status quo in which policy matters are discussed and decided in a stovepiped manner. In the case of nuclear policy, this may allow Japan to integrate the three dimensions of its policy and offer a more comprehensive nuclear policy. As the 2010 NDPG outlines, there is a greater recognition among stakeholders that maintaining the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence to maintain Japan's security is an extended but interim measure consistent with advocating

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<sup>41</sup> On the problem caused by Prime Minister Kan's insistence that he be in charge of all the aspect of the response to Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station accident, see Japan Restoration Initiative, *Fukushima Genpatsu Jiko Dokuritu Chousa Inkai: Chousa Kenshou Houkoku-sho* (Fukushima nuclear accident Independent Assessment Committee: Investigation and Assessment), pp.74-119.

nuclear disarmament and preventing nuclear proliferation. Institutionalization of a policy-making process that allows the prime minister to break down traditional stovepiping among government agencies might facilitate better policy coordination among the stakeholders for nuclear disarmament and extended deterrence. At the same time, overly heavy-handed or poorly managed attempts to exert political influence and shift Japanese nuclear policy from its long-gestating, sensitively handled, and carefully balanced status quo risks destabilization, popular pushback, and ultimately the opposite of the intended result.

Meanwhile, new citizen activism has emerged as another potential political influence on Japanese nuclear policy, one that stands to make difficult the integration of the civil nuclear power industry into the remaining two dimensions of Japan's nuclear policy. While there is a clear recognition of the nuclear security challenges Japan faces from North Korea, anti-nuclear power sentiment following the 2011 Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station remains strong, particularly among the Japanese public. In fact, the post-Fukushima surge of wariness toward Japan's continuing to operate nuclear power plants has created a new dilemma *within* Japan's civil nuclear power policy. Today, the government needs to be responsive to the public's concern about the risks of having nuclear power plants within Japan and work toward lowering, if not eliminating, the role of nuclear power in Japan's energy policy. At the same time, the Japanese government is determined to compete in the export of nuclear power plants to developing countries that also seek to lessen their dependence on oil. How Japan can forge a civil nuclear power policy that maintains its technological advantage and sophistication and promote it as an industry with global competitiveness while lowering its own dependence on nuclear power at home – let alone how such a policy can be integrated into Japan's comprehensive nuclear policy – is a newly emerging policy dilemma for which Japan has yet to find an answer.

Other sources of potential political influence have emerged as well. Some observers point to a rising tide of nationalism in Japan, spurred in part by maritime territorial disputes with both China and South Korea. Related, the populist and nationalist Japan Restoration Party emerged as a genuine third party in the 2012 Lower House election that brought the LDP

back to power. It gained nearly as many seats as the flagging DPJ, and it (along with other smaller and new conservative parties) has since attempted to cooperate with and exert influence on the ruling LDP, especially in matters related to security policy. Finally, as noted above, general public opinion seems to have become more open to the notion of independent Japanese nuclear capabilities, something that might support but also actively bring about moves by Japanese policymakers away from their current stance.

To what degree, then, should we expect such politicization – that is, party-political leverage but also public opinion leverage as channeled through parties – to influence Japanese nuclear and broader security policy? We first briefly examine the 2009-2012 DPJ government, which consciously aimed to avoid over-dependence on bureaucratic policymakers, and which had served as the main driver of revitalized party competition in Japan, as an illustrative case of potential but largely stymied political influence.

### THE CASE OF THE DPJ<sup>42</sup>

By the time the DPJ took control of Japan's government in 2009, ousting the long-ruling LDP, the Japanese policymaking environment had already begun to amplify the (potential) influence of public and political opinion relative to bureaucratic expertise. Through repeated institutional reforms and reorganization, Cabinet power, particularly the power of Prime Minister, had been strengthened. The greater “presidentialization” of political leadership and a greater emphasis on two-party competition had meanwhile triggered politicization of a wide range of policy issues, including those, such as security policy, that had previously been considered more “non-political.” The DPJ explicitly aimed to take advantage of this evolution and inject political influence into the security policymaking process as a matter of democratic principle.

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<sup>42</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from and discussed in greater detail in Robert Weiner and Yuki Tatsumi, “How Does the Democratic Party of Japan Affect Security Policy? High-profile Stumbles and Quiet Progress,” U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Center on Contemporary Conflict, Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD (PASCC) Report 2012-008 (July 2012).

In its three years in office, the party appeared to do just that but with poor results, both from its own perspective and from that of its American alliance partner. The DPJ mishandled reorganization plans for U.S. military installations in Okinawa, the emerging dispute with China over the Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands, and the nuclear plant disaster caused by the GEJE. But a closer look shows that the party proved both less willing and less able to exert political influence than initially expected. This reflected not only attributes of the party itself, but also the general nature of security policymaking. Ironically, the DPJ's very pursuit of anti-bureaucratic policymaking and promotion of two-party competition did begin to expose security policy to greater political and public leverage, but where this occurred most thoroughly, the party stumbled most damagingly. Meanwhile, on many substantively important but less well-publicized or politically salient issues, the DPJ actually quietly progressed along a security policy trajectory that was familiar and constructive, and whose nuclear-policy elements largely maintained the status quo.<sup>43</sup> Though this pattern may be reassuring to the U.S., it still suggests the need to be aware of the risk of politicization of previously under-the-radar security issues. The DPJ's experience suggests that the management of security policy has new potential to vex all incumbent Japanese governments, DPJ-led or otherwise, and thereby to contribute to governance destabilization across the board in Japan – but we should also expect successor Japanese governments to recognize this dynamic and avoid such an aggressively political approach to security policymaking in the short-to-medium term. This suggests, in turn, that the bureaucratic

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<sup>43</sup> For similar arguments concerning the DPJ's maintenance of Japan's security policy trajectory, if not the correlation of success with low political salience, see Jeffrey Hornung, "Japan's DPJ: The Party of Change," *PacNet* 24 (April 4, 2012); Rikki Kersten, "Japanese Security Policy Formation: Assessing the Koizumi Revolution," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65:1 (2011), 5-23; and Paul Midford, "Japan's Security Policy under the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)," *ISPI Analysis* 81 (December 2011). For an argument that the DPJ retains a good portion of its opposition-nurtured DNA and may well deviate significantly from the status quo, see Daniel Sneider, "The New Asianism: Japanese Foreign Policy under the Democratic Party of Japan," *Asia Policy* 12 (July 2011), 99-129. For a more neutral forecast made during the early days of the DPJ administration, see Leif-Eric Easley, Tetsuo Kotani, and Aki Mori, "Electing a New Japanese Security Policy? Examining Foreign Policy Visions within the Democratic Party of Japan," *Asia Policy* 9 (January 2010), 45-66. For a pre-DPJ argument concerning built-in pressures toward continuity in Japan's security policy trajectory, see Christopher Hughes, "Japan's Military Modernisation: A Quiet Japan-China Arms Race and Global Power Projection," *Asia-Pacific Review* 16:1 (2009), 84-99.



stovepiping of nuclear policy is unlikely to be resolved through political will.

The DPJ did not seek to exert political influence in order to engineer a radically different security policy. Its policy positions with regard to security were not as distant from those of the LDP as many American (and Japanese) observers feared. Though the party began mainly as a home for moderate defectors from the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), it quickly began to receive defectors from the LDP as well and thereby take on a more conservative (and heterogeneous) cast. If anything, the DPJ's ascendance *removed* any remaining traces of the type of left-right foreign-policy polarization found in, say, South Korea. Meanwhile, the DPJ included few politicians who specialized and politically invested in defense issues (though this comparative inattention to defense was not unique to the DPJ), and, unlike the LDP, made little effort to cultivate such policy expertise among its rank-and-file legislators. If anything, when the party attempted to differentiate itself from the LDP on these grounds, this reflected tactics rather than principle.

More significant is that the DPJ approached the policymaking *process* differently from the LDP, in a way that attempted to amplify the influence of popular (public and party-driven) opinion. by emphasizing political leadership – unlike previous LDP governments, which relied more heavily upon bureaucracy for policy expertise. Upon first taking office in 2009, the Hatoyama administration quickly consolidated policy decision-making power among a small group in the Kantei (Prime Minister's Office) and Cabinet, isolating both foreign policy and defense bureaucrats and the party's own non-Cabinet legislators. He then eliminated the DPJ's Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC), a “shadow Diet committee” system in which DPJ legislators could engage in bureaucrat-led “study sessions,” something particularly valuable for the large majority of DPJ legislators who at any given time were *not* serving as Cabinet ministers or ministers' deputies. Hatoyama also eliminated the Cabinet vice ministers' meeting (*jimu jikan kaigi*), a regular coordination meeting held among administrative vice ministers (that is, the top non-politically-appointed official in each ministry) prior to Cabinet meetings. The DPJ viewed these as a symbol of politicians' dependence on the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the government established as the ultimate

decision-making body within each ministry the Three Political Appointees Meetings (*seimu sanyaku kaigi*) for ministers, deputy ministers (*fukū daijin*), and senior parliamentary vice ministers (*seimu kan*) – that is, for the only political appointees within each ministry. On security policy matters in particular, the DPJ also established a freestanding advisory panel, headed by former Defense Minister Kitazawa Toshimi, independent of both the Cabinet and the Policy Research Committee.<sup>44</sup>

The DPJ's structural reforms were driven by a deep sense of distrust and outright rejection of bureaucratic expertise (bureaucrats, amid this decline in policymaking potency, cultivated symmetrical distrust of DPJ policymakers). But with each of its three successive yearlong administrations, the DPJ gradually backtracked farther away from its insistence on political leadership and the isolation of bureaucrats. Following Hatoyama's failed attempts to revise reorganization plans for Okinawa's Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma without the benefit of bureaucratic input and his subsequent resignation in May 2010, his successor, Kan, reinstated the PARC and *bumon kaigi* (Policy Department Meetings), and Kan's successor, Noda, directed all of his cabinet members to “optimize the potential of the bureaucracy” and reinstated regular meetings among the administrative vice ministers of all government agencies.

The DPJ certainly had a certain impact on Japanese security policy, but how much? The clearest and best-known example, and the one that served as the party's “first impression” upon its taking power, was the Hatoyama administration's attempted re-negotiation of Futenma relocation plans between August 2009 and May 2010. DPJ policymakers went out of their way to re-examine previously established agreements between Japan and the U.S., consulted defense and foreign affairs bureaucrats only minimally, and displayed poor coordination among themselves in the process – and were then widely blamed for policy failure. The immediate end result was a reversion to the *status quo ante* preferred by the U.S., and the path to that result unnecessarily expended resources on both countries' parts and

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<sup>44</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, February 21 and 22, 2012, 4.

strained relations between the two.<sup>45</sup> Other “high-profile stumbles” under DPJ rule included the Kan government’s failure to effectively respond to a Chinese trawler that rammed into a Japan Coast Guard vessel near the disputed Senkaku Islands, and a series of gaffes by novice DPJ Ministers of Defense displaying unfamiliarity with basic policy issues.<sup>46</sup>

In a few areas, though, the DPJ successfully managed issues highly visible to the Japanese public. Perhaps the clearest example was Operation Tomodachi (or “Friend”), the joint humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) effort undertaken by Japan’s Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. military following the GEJE. Another DPJ policy initiative well received within Japan – though not by U.S. alliance managers – was the termination in January 2010 of the Japan Maritime Self Defense Forces’ (JMSDF) refueling operations in the Indian Ocean in support of U.S. and allied forces engaged in Afghanistan. In contrast with Futenma, Indian Ocean refueling offered an ideal opportunity for the DPJ to set itself apart clearly – but politically safely – from the LDP and the status quo of the Japan-U.S. alliance. This was thanks to the highly asymmetrical political salience of the operation. SDF deployments, even in comparatively safe and politically uncontroversial environments, are closely watched within Japan, but to the United States, the JMSDF’s contribution carried more symbolic than operational importance. The DPJ’s quick withdrawal from the operation upon taking power – as promised in its election campaign – constituted a notable, if not extremely weighty, policy success for the party.

Perhaps most notable, though, a significant number of lower-profile – and, not coincidentally, often more-complex – policy initiatives pushed by the DPJ maintained the status-quo trajectory of gradual expansion of the Japan Self Defense Force’s roles and capabilities strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance, including continued reliance on the U.S.

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<sup>45</sup> Hatoyama’s Futenma policy has been widely discussed in deeper detail elsewhere. See, for example, Daniel Sneider, “Déjà Vu on Okinawa: Is There a Crisis in US-Japan Relations?,” *The Oriental Economist* 77:11 (2009), 1-3; Andrew Yeo, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) and Emma Chanlett-Avery and Ian E. Rinehart, “The U.S. Military Presence in Okinawa and the Futenma Base Controversy,” Congressional Research Service report, 3 August 2012.

<sup>46</sup> *Yomiuri Shinbun*, December 5, 2011; *Asahi Shinbun*, February 5, 2012, 4; *Sankei Shinbun*, February 7, 2012, 2.

nuclear umbrella without expansion of Japan's own nuclear-weapons capabilities or involvement.

The DPJ maintained Japan's ballistic missile defense (BMD) development and cooperation with the United States, and under Prime Minister Kan moved to increase the size of the Aegis fleet by two.<sup>47</sup> It gradually pushed for the relaxation of the Three Principles of arms non-export, in part to ease participation in such U.S.-led ventures as BMD and the development of the next-generation F-35 fighter plane (though not to fruition, as noted below).<sup>48</sup> It continued to push for the creation of a Japanese version of the U.S.'s National Security Council as a means of unifying and streamlining security and crisis management, an initiative previously proposed by LDP Prime Minister Abe Shinzou during his first administration and since taken up by him during his second.<sup>49</sup> The DPJ also worked to improve relations with Asian neighbors other than China, particularly South Korea, contrary to early concerns that the party might align Japan more closely with China at the expense of the United States and other partners in Asia. The party also maintained and even expanded SDF overseas deployment activity (tame by U.S. standards, perhaps, but significant by Japan's).<sup>50</sup> Finally, and most broadly, the DPJ issued National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) that could just as easily have been issued by the LDP, despite the DPJ's having produced them through an enhanced process of political deliberation.<sup>51</sup> What political influence there was on the NDPG process served mainly to reinforce the status quo – most notably, the failure to relax Japan's Three Principles of Arms Exports as originally planned.<sup>52</sup>

One simple rule of thumb that seems to have emerged from the DPJ's experience (and is

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<sup>47</sup> Midford, "Japan's Security Policy."

<sup>48</sup> *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, December 21, 2011, 3; *Asahi Shinbun*, December 28, 2011, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Sankei Shinbun*, February 29, 2012, 2.

<sup>50</sup> *Sankei Shinbun*, February 22, 2012, 1; *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, April 18, 2012, 1; *Asahi Shinbun*, February 29, 2012 (evening ed.), 2; *Mainichi Shinbun*, March 7, 2012, 5; *Asahi Shinbun*, March 15, 2012, 4.

<sup>51</sup> See Weiner and Tatsumi, *op. cit.*, for a case study of the DPJ's NDPG deliberation process.

<sup>52</sup> "Shamin Renkei Aseru Shushou" [Prime Minister Hastens to Align with SDPJ], *Asahi Shimbun*, December 7, 2010; "Shamin to Kiken na Fukuen" [A Dangerous Make-up with SDPJ], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 7, 2010; "Buki Yushutu San-gensoku Minaoshi Assari Sakiokuri" [Revision of Three Principles of Arms Exports Nonchalantly Postponed], *Sankei Shimbun*, December 7, 2010.

applicable to more-experienced parties like the LDP as well) is that the party fared worse in those security policy areas more salient to the Japanese public – that is, on issues that politicians and citizens could easily find out about and digest well enough to threaten to pressure policymakers. But relatively few security issues are politically salient. Only some aspects of security policy align with longstanding political and historical themes, allow easy packaging and presentation by mass media and political actors, and thereby become easily comprehensible and/or politically motivating to average citizens. In Japan, these include anything touching on Japan's wartime history and subsequent constitutional constraints on military power., such as dispatches of the Self Defense Forces to violent areas, territorial disputes with Asian neighbors, U.S. military installations in Okinawa (though salience for this issue area is often low in mainland Japan), and revisions to the Constitution. Responses to immediate incidents and crises also tend to be highly salient.

Many other issue areas fall “under the radar” and largely fail to penetrate voters' consciousness, regardless of whether security policymakers and analysts recognize them to be substantively important. These generally involve long-term or broad security strategy or infrastructure and/or more highly technical matters. In Japan, examples include Self Defense Force assets and capabilities and most developments in U.S.-Japan alliance relations outside of Okinawan basing issues. Note the distinction between responses to incidents and crises and policies enacted in *anticipation* of incidents and crises. Japan's response to a North Korean missile launch will be highly salient to its citizens; Japan's general strategy and policy toward the Six-Party Talks will not. Specific decisions to dispatch the SDF to a war zone will be highly salient; changes to the general legal infrastructure surrounding such dispatches will not.

Japan's nuclear weapons policy, of course, is rooted in perhaps the most salient event in Japanese history, one that combines Japan's wartime history and a man-made disaster: the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the same time, nuclear weapons policy does have a large non-salient component as well. Steps toward acquiring greater autonomous nuclear weapons capability that are tangible, explicit, and easy for the public (as

opposed to policy watchers) to understand, while incredibly high-stakes, are also rare. In addition to actual use of the weapons, such steps would include weapons tests or explicit announcements of new capabilities or intentions to that end, including, say, withdrawal from relevant international compacts or internal Japanese policies. Non-salient policy steps in this direction, though, would include anything short of such bold moves that nonetheless better establishes the legal, diplomatic, or technological foundations for such shifts. And to the extent that critics are correct that a robust Japanese civil nuclear energy program undercuts the legitimacy of its anti-proliferation efforts because of the latent ability to transfer technology and other capabilities from the energy sector to weapons, this implies that the very advancement of the nuclear energy program constitutes a (formerly) non-salient, under-the-radar advancement of weapons capability.

Nuclear energy policy itself, meanwhile, had long been a policy area truly salient only in municipalities and regions targeted to host nuclear power plants, but it is now rooted in perhaps the most politically salient event in Japan *since* the end of World War II: the 3/11 disasters. Indeed, nuclear energy can now be considered a *more* salient political realm than even nuclear weapons – and could have been considered so even before the 3/11 disasters – because the greater visibility of the issue, compared to nuclear weapons, outweighs its lower stakes. The progress of the issue is trackable via the more easily-grasped metric of whether off-line nuclear power plants have come back on line or have been approved to do so – and with several dozen such plants in the country, there are frequent opportunities for such decisions, which in many cases constitute one of the largest political issues in the prefecture in which a plant is located. The economic impact of the loss of nuclear energy, meanwhile, is felt on a daily basis by both opponents and proponents of re-starting the industry, and this effect stands to grow even more acute if and when the early success of Prime Minister Abe’s “Abe-nomics” policies begins to cool.<sup>53</sup> Also (though this admittedly borders on the tautological), the simple fact that nuclear power remains a highly debatable issue, with many proponents remaining despite the 3/11 crises, keeps the issue front-and-center politically.

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<sup>53</sup> Martin Fackler, “Nuclear Issue in Limbo as Indecision Grips Japan,” *The New York Times* (February 11, 2014).

This stands in contrast to nuclear weapons, attached to which a strong taboo understandably remains, and which few proponents are able to whole-heartedly support, even if they hold reasonable security-minded rationales for doing so.

Such salience, in turn, both makes policy more error-prone and magnifies the errors – more than the successes – that do occur. Political salience does not provide opportunities for public buy-in so much as opportunities for critique. And in Japan in particular, “rally round the flag” effects that might counteract this dynamic are particularly weak, with the possible exception of responses to North Korean or Chinese provocations, or to humanitarian crises. Even then, though, security and foreign policy successes in Japan rarely trump economics as either the basis of citizens’ decisions in the voting booth or leaders’ claim to popularity or legitimacy.<sup>54</sup> Japanese politicians gain little electoral capital from foreign and security policy expertise and accomplishment, as evidenced by the small number of politicians who specialize in these areas. To borrow an example offered by Epstein and O’Halloran, security policy in a non-polarized but competitive party system may be like airline safety: the aim is to prevent failure, and there is little credit to be had when things go right.<sup>55</sup> Salience may also *make* failure slightly more likely if politicians falter under the close scrutiny it attracts, or if salience entices them to take undue risks. Of course, in a vicious cycle, policy failure does also reinforce the salience of the policy area. Failure attracts disproportionate media and parliamentary attention.

In the DPJ’s case, it faltered on highly salient security policy issues not because of the unpopularity of its policy stances, but because of perceived incompetence. Security policy is becoming a proxy for competence, even if not yet a means to distinguish the main parties from each other on policy grounds. This is especially so for “valence” issues over which citizens agree on a consensus end and disagree only about means, such as disaster relief or the desirability of avoiding nuclear weapons capabilities *if possible* given Japan’s security environment. This is more likely to be so when major parties are relatively similar in their

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Matt Kearney and Megumi Naoi, “Pork for Hawks: Pork Barrel Politics and Candidates’ Policy Positioning,” unpublished manuscript (June 2012).

<sup>55</sup> David Epstein and Sharyn O’Halloran, *Delegating Powers* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

security policy positions, but also, and more importantly, because citizens prove willing to judge parties' competence regardless of how well formed their opinions are on the merits of various policies.

These patterns imply that higher political salience for security policy issues may be undesirable from the perspective of Japanese governments, as well as that of the United States (this assumes a narrow goal of policy success, rather than, say, a deepening of Japanese deliberative democracy for its own sake, in which case more public awareness and political involvement in security affairs would be highly desirable by definition). For Japanese ruling parties, popularization and politicization of security policy promises to be troublesome. In turn, the United States should be concerned when it observes previously non-politically-salient issues being made more salient. This occurred, for example, when the DPJ went out of its way to investigate past secret U.S.-Japan nuclear agreements, thus making an otherwise obscure security issue more salient; it occurs when either the government or opposition attempts to politicize a security issue as a tactic within two-party competition, as with the DPJ's promise to cease the JMSDF's Indian Ocean refueling operations; or when the United States itself weighs in heavily on an issue, as it did in responding to Hatoyama's questioning of Futenma relocation plans. In the nuclear policy realm, the most likely such dynamic in the near future is the increased linkage of nuclear energy policy to nuclear weapons policy (whether the development of autonomous capabilities or the continued reliance on the U.S. umbrella). As discussed above, nuclear power and weapons, despite their common components, have long been kept separate in Japan, but the increased salience of nuclear power issues may well have ripple effects that increase the salience of nuclear-weapons issues – in the minds of the public, at least, even if their respective bureaucratic structures remain stovepiped.

At the same time, Japanese governments likely will try to redirect their limited political resources away from security issues and toward domestic concerns. The LDP learned this lesson during Abe's first term as prime minister, when voters repudiated him at the polls for his focus on foreign affairs. The DPJ seemed to learn this lesson as its three years in



government went by. It seemed to be aware of the salience-failure dynamic and to learn to avoid it.

But despite their efforts, governments are unlikely to fully succeed in deemphasizing security concerns, which issues often emerge as unpredictable “exogenous shocks” that inevitably attract media and public attention, as seen with the Futenma re-negotiation and various maritime disputes between Japan and its neighbors. The emergence of security as a proxy for competence, combined with the asymmetrical dynamic that gives politicians and governments little to gain from success and much to lose from mistakes, suggests that security policy, at least in the short term, might serve as a de facto and generic force that disciplines and thereby disadvantages incumbent governments – something similar to the generic “pains of governing” that produce secular-trend erosion in any government’s public support ratings with each additional month that that government serves. Security now occupies a more prominent place among the many policy challenges Japanese governments must navigate and, inevitably, sometimes stumble upon. This could be particularly hurtful for non-LDP governments, since those parties will have a “shorter leash.” A generic “valence issue” dynamic, in which all governments stumble to some degree over security policy challenges, could harden into one in which the anti-LDP opposition, in particular, loses trust over foreign policy, as has tended to be the case for the Democratic Party in the United States. This is not to suggest, though, that LDP governments will remain immune to possible backlash if they appear less than competent with regard to foreign affairs and security.

### WILL PRIME MINISTER ABE POLITICIZE NUCLEAR POLICY?

As noted above, the DPJ’s three years in office represented a “most likely case” for the potential of politicization of security policy. The party was explicitly willing to put its own political stamp on security policy, both as an expression of policy differences with the previously governing LDP and as a matter of principle with regard to how it felt policy should be made. The party was also *able* to do so, if it so chose, in the sense that it enjoyed a

sizable Lower House majority and its control (with coalition partners) of the Upper House. In practice, though, the DPJ either encountered obstacles to imposing its political will or imposed it without producing particularly novel results. This partly reflects the nature of the party itself, but also reflects the evolving Japanese political party system overall and the general nature of security policymaking in Japan. It remains not only procedurally difficult but also politically unwise to make bold security-policy moves. If the DPJ was constrained by these conditions, then other political actors might be even more so.

The report here turns to assessing whether other political actors and forces now thought to have the potential to politicize security policy – Prime Minister Abe, the revived LDP in general, and new nationalist movements and parties like the Japan Restoration Party – should prove any more willing or able than the DPJ to do so. It concludes they are also likely to have only muted influence, especially when it comes to moves away from the country’s nuclear-weapons status quo and towards more autonomous capability. If anything, the most potent source of popular influence on security policy in the short- to medium-term points in the *opposite* direction where nuclear weapons are concerned: the anti-nuclear-power movement that has emerged in the aftermath of the 3/11 disasters.

Keeping in mind the general lesson of the political danger of highly salient security policy issues, how likely is current Prime Minister Abe to politicize nuclear policy? As noted above, more decisive political leadership has the potential to harmonize nuclear policy’s main strands of anti-proliferation, reliance on the U.S. nuclear umbrella, and robust pursuit of civil nuclear energy capabilities. At the same time, political influence necessarily injects more volatility into policy outcomes than does gradualist bureaucratic leadership shielded from public opinion.

Prime Minister Abe seems to represent another “most likely case” of political influence toward greater autonomous nuclear capabilities, in comparison with his LDP colleagues and predecessors. While prime ministers in Japan still face more obstacles to unilateral leadership and imposition of their own policy preferences than do prime ministers elsewhere, their powers of leadership are certainly on the rise. In Abe’s case, this mostly

reflects his individual characteristics as a political leader, though to a certain extent it also reflects changes within the LDP.

First, Abe's individual policy outlook is significantly more hawkish and nationalist than that of perhaps any Japanese prime minister since at least his grandfather, Kishi Nobusuke, who served in the 1950s, when progressive-conservative polarization had not yet cooled after the close of World War II and Japan had not yet settled into its "1955 System" of conservative dominance and emphasis on economic growth over security concerns or more pointed ideological conflict. The scion of one of Japan's political "first families," with a grandfather and great uncle preceding him as Prime Ministers and a father who would likely have done so as well if not for an untimely death due to illness, Abe first rose to prominence for reasons other than his lineage by taking hardline stances towards North Korea while serving in high LDP posts during Prime Minister Koizumi's administration in the mid-2000s.<sup>56</sup> Abe claimed a major role in restricting the return of Japanese citizens previously abducted by North Korea after the DPRK permitted them to visit Japan, and he vigorously pressed for sanctions after North Korean missile tests. On the strength of this reputation (which was amplified by newly-emerging daytime-television "wide shows" eager to lavish attention on the sensational abduction issue and any telegenic politicians involved<sup>57</sup>), Abe succeeded the immensely popular Koizumi as Prime Minister in 2006. Gradually, though, he began to be perceived to be overly reliant on the very policy strengths that first propelled him into office. Amid a still-stagnant economy, Abe put much emphasis on highly-salient foreign policy, security, and historical-memory issues, discussing revisions to the Constitution that would both expand the capabilities of the Self Defense Forces and promote a return to "patriotic education," and making ill-advised statements regarding the Japanese government's lack of culpability in the forced sexual slavery of "comfort women" during World War II. This misplaced policy emphasis only added to wide variety of other challenges: five scandals on the part of fellow LDP politicians, one of whom was forced to resign as Defense Minister

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<sup>56</sup> James L. Schoff, "Political Fences and Bad Neighbors: North Korea Policy Making In Japan and Implications for the United States," Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis Project Report, June 2006

<sup>57</sup> Hyung Gu Lynn, "Vicarious Traumas: Television and Public Opinion in Japan's North Korea Policy," *Pacific Affairs* 79:3 (Fall 2006), 483-508

for having suggested that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki might have been justified; widespread mismanagement of pension records and a slow government response to this issue; the reversal of Koizumi's popular to decision to expel rebellious LDP lawmakers from the party in the run-up to the LDP's landslide 2005 election victory; and, not least, the general disadvantage of his predecessor Koizumi having set an impossibly high bar of popularity.<sup>58</sup>

Under Abe, the LDP suffered a devastating loss in the Upper House election of 2007, ceding control of that House to the DPJ, and giving that party its first significant hold on parliamentary power and putting it in position to block further Cabinet initiatives. Several weeks later, Abe suddenly resigned as prime minister (though not as a member of the Lower House), citing both poor health and the notion that his presence only encouraged parliamentary gridlock. He thus became the first in a succession of six post-Koizumi "musical chair" prime ministers to serve only about one year in the post before giving way to a new face.

With this ignominious leadership history behind him, most political observers expected Abe's retreat to the LDP backbenches to be followed by a retreat from electoral politics entirely. Abe's stature in his home electoral district in Yamaguchi Prefecture, however, remained robust enough for him to retain his parliamentary seat in the election of 2009 while most of his LDP colleagues were felled by the wave of anti-LDP sentiment that swept the DPJ into government for the first time. And by the time the DPJ administrations of Hatoyama, Kan, and Noda had run their course, Abe had re-emerged as the LDP's standard-bearer, taking advantage of a shallow leadership pool amid his now-diminished LDP (and perhaps taking advantage of his comparative youth as well – most LDP Prime Ministers first take that job at too advanced an age to remain contenders even six years later, but Abe had begun in his early 50s).

In his second, current term, Abe would seem well positioned to make more effective use of

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<sup>58</sup> Kristi Govella and Steven Vogel, "Japan in 2007: A Divided Government," *Asian Survey* 48:1 (January 2008), 97-106.

his leadership position in pursuing his particular security-policy and nationalist aims. His electoral mandate, first, is much stronger than before. In his first term, he came into office on Koizumi's coattails through an intra-party selection. In his second, he came into office through a decisive trouncing of the DPJ in the Lower House election of 2012, with the LDP gaining a historic, near-super-majority-strength victory, and the DPJ reduced to 50-odd seats, only about half the size to which the LDP itself had been cut down in 2009, and barely larger than the third-largest party. This overwhelming victory, in turn, served to purge any remaining hint of prior political failure and to re-legitimize his personal policy goals.

At the same time, in the run-up to the election and in the early stages of his new administration, Abe conveyed to political analysts and Japanese citizens alike that he had learned hard lessons about policy priorities from his earlier term. This served further to legitimize his security policy aspirations when they did appear, but more important has been the fact that these have not appeared as prominently. Abe has made economic recovery his first priority, and his economic program – quickly dubbed “Abe-nomics” – quickly began to achieve results, giving him the popularity and political capital to pursue security initiatives on a now-less-scrutinized second track.

He has not shied away from spending this capital. In his first year in office, Abe took steps to begin a process of constitutional review, again with an eye toward establishing a firm basis for collective defense through re-interpretation of the Constitution if not outright amendment. He has also begun to push against the Three Principles, exploring the possibility of exporting arms to international groups taking part in peacekeeping operations. He established a Japanese version of the National Security Council, thus further concentrating chief-executive power over security decision-making. The end of his first full calendar year in office found Abe shepherding to passage a Special Intelligence Protection Act that aggressively sanctions leaks of classified information – over the objections of the majority of the Japanese public.<sup>59</sup> Abe is pursuing expansion of the Self Defense Forces' budget and capabilities, and has kept rhetoric over the disputed Senkaku / Daiyou Islands at

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<sup>59</sup> Andrew L. Oros, “Does Abe’s Rightward Shift Threaten His Legacy?” *PacNet* 2 (January 7, 2014)

a high pitch. Perhaps even more ostentatious, and upsetting to the Chinese and South Korean governments, was Abe's visit in late 2013, upon the one-year anniversary of his return to power, to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, which honors the memory of World War II Class A war criminals among other Japanese soldiers.

With regard to nuclear policy in particular, Abe himself has hewn to the status quo in public statements – but such high-ranking members of his party as LDP Secretary General Ishiba Shigeru have explicitly referred to the desirability of Japan's maintaining the option to build nuclear weapons.<sup>60</sup> This pattern echoes that seen during Abe's first term as Prime Minister, during which Abe himself remained circumspect while closely-allied leaders of his party and government openly began to discuss the possibility of Japan's acquiring nuclear weapons, especially immediately following North Korea's 2006 missile and nuclear tests.<sup>61</sup> And before serving as Prime Minister, when Abe himself was one such sub-prime ministerial party leader with more leeway to make frank security-policy pronouncements, he played the same “bad cop” role. While Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary in 2002, Abe argued, controversially, that nuclear weapons with a range consistent with self-defense objectives would be consistent with Constitutional restrictions.<sup>62</sup>

Abe has also forthrightly pushed to bring Japan's nuclear reactors back on line, and has aggressively pushed for the export of nuclear power technology, including to aspiring nuclear-weapon power India. By the end of February 2014, Abe had gone so far as to announce a draft of a revised Basic Energy Plan that described nuclear power as an “important baseload electricity source” and more concretely established the government's openness to restarting off-line nuclear plants and building new ones.<sup>63</sup> This reverses former

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<sup>60</sup> “Hiroshima Mayor Skeptical of Abe Atomic Arms Vow,” *The Japan Times* (August 6 2013), and Jeff Kingston, “Abe's Nuclear Energy Policy and Japan's Future,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 11:34 (August 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Mike M. Mochizuki, “Japan Tests the Nuclear Taboo,” *Nonproliferation Review* 14:2 (July 2007), 303-328.

<sup>62</sup> Katsuhisa Furukawa, “Japan's Policy and Views on Nuclear Weapons: A Historical Perspective,” *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics, and Strategic Studies* 37 (2010), 1-30.

<sup>63</sup> Jonathan Soble, “Japan in U-turn over Nuclear Policy,” *The Financial Times*, 25 February 2014, accessed at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3ee7c4f2-9dd6-11e3-83c5->

Prime Minister Kan's determination to take and keep all of Japan's nuclear plants offline (a policy not supported uniformly within Kan's DPJ government or by his DPJ successor Noda, but not as formally and emphatically discarded by them).

Abe also appears buoyed by an apparent rise in nationalism and security-mindedness among the Japanese public at large. In the 2012 Lower House election that brought Abe and the LDP back to power, the LDP was not the only winner. The even more avowedly nationalist Japan Restoration Party nearly won enough seats to overtake the DPJ as the LDP's main challenger (although both the DPJ and JRP finished similarly far behind the LDP). Maritime disputes with China over the Senkaku / Diaoyu islands and with South Korea over Takeshima / Tokdo have encouraged a spike in xenophobically tinged nationalism against these two countries, to such a degree as to prompt violent incidents against ethnic Korean residents of Japan.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, nuclear-test and kinetic provocations on the part of North Korea have made Japanese citizens more amenable to the idea of a more robust defense against that country – a sentiment that Abe, with his personal history of hardline stances against North Korea, is particularly well positioned to take advantage of. And while such sentiments are nominally directed at North Korea, they may be exploited to push for advances in defense capabilities that are in practice directed at China as well (or, to echo the terms used above, the high salience of North Korean provocations helps propel security-capability expansions that would otherwise be of low salience to the public, even though the latter might have proceeded with relatively little opposition in any case precisely because of that lower salience).<sup>65</sup>

An observer would be forgiven for observing this policy record and extrapolating it to expect Abe eventually, in the later portions of his likely extended time in office, to push, slowly but surely, for expansion in Japan's nuclear weapons capabilities. But it seems more

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00144feab7de.html#axzz2ubkDvw2M; see also Hiroko Tabuchi, "Reversing Course, Japan Makes Push to Restart Dormant Nuclear Plants," *The New York Times*, 26 February 2014, p. A6.

<sup>64</sup> Chico Harlan, "New Enmity Between Japan and Korea Plays Out in Tokyo's Koreatown," *The Washington Post* (November 29, 2013)

<sup>65</sup> Christopher Hughes, "'Super-sizing' the DPRK Threat: Japan's Evolving Military Posture and North Korea," *Asian Survey* 49:2 (February 2009), 291-311

likely that the opposite pattern will hold. It is precisely because Abe holds so many comparatively ambitious security policy goals that he is unlikely to push for what would be extremely ambitious steps towards establishing greater nuclear autonomy.

The public-support threshold that a nuclear-expansion effort would need to clear is extremely high. In isolation, when asked in opinion polls whether one is comfortable with the notion of considering a move toward autonomous nuclear-weapons capability, Japanese citizens might be more positive than before. But in practice, public comfort with nuclear weapons would first require the public to collectively achieve comfort with at least four inter-related intermediate steps, each of which itself would constitute a major transformation: 1) Article 9 of the Constitution, through which Japan now renounces the right to wage war, would need to be amended; 2) the Three Non-Nuclear Principles (no possession or manufacture of nuclear weapons, nor permitting their introduction into Japanese territory), which are not law but have taken on the de facto weight of law (as have their counterpart Three Principles of Arms Exports noted above), would need to be abandoned; 3) the Self Defense Forces would need to be permitted to acquire offensive capabilities, thus breaking from their history of possessing only (or at least maintaining that they possess) “exclusively defense-oriented” capabilities; 4) and, finally, more amorphously and perhaps most difficult – the Self Defense Forces would need to earn widespread trust as a professional military organization, something that even the SDF’s widely-praised performance in the humanitarian assistance operation following the 3/11 disasters is still far from producing.<sup>66</sup> Any one of these objectives would consume practically all of a Japanese administration’s political capital. Indeed, Abe has already begun to spend political capital on Constitutional revision, which in most contexts other than nuclear weapons policy would represent any administration’s crowning achievement, not simply an intermediate step. In Japan, even firmly establishing that nuclear weapons are a legitimate option would qualify as significant. The political capital involved in making significant steps toward nuclear weapons

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<sup>66</sup> On evolving but still-wary public attitudes toward the SDF in particular, see, for example, Sabine Fruhstuck, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (University of California Press, 2007), and Takako Hikotani, “Japan’s Changing Civil-military Relations,” *Global Asia* 4:1 (2009).



capability would simply be too great.

Besides this basic budgetary limit on political ambition, one can point to other conditions that will likely discourage Abe from pursuing politically driven steps away from the nuclear status quo. Economics also plays a role. First, that Abe has been able to pursue his security-policy goals without debilitating legislative and public pushback thus far is largely due to the fact that his economic program was rolled out first, and, much more important, that this program has actually proven successful. This is perhaps the first time in two decades that Japanese citizens have viewed an economic upturn not as a temporary fluctuation or as artificially manufactured through government stimulus unsustainable over the long term, but, rather, as the result of systematic and durable economic policy. That said, Abe's economic success over his first year or so of this second term is by no means guaranteed to last. If the current comparatively high economic tide were to recede, and if Abe were thereby left stranded with only revisionist security policy to his name, public patience with his priorities might quickly grow thin.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, a nuclear weapons program (as opposed to, say, the export of nuclear technology) is itself a direct drain on the treasury, even in an economy as large as Japan's, and, given the existence of the U.S. nuclear umbrella, is likely to be viewed by many as an extravagance.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, Abe's recent political history, for him more than for other LDP leaders, discourages costly moves away from the nuclear status quo. More than any other LDP prime minister – again, since at least his grandfather Kishi in the 1950s – Abe has had personal experience with the dangers of over-reliance on security policy as a signature legislative achievement. And Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine and heavy-handed passage of “state secrets” legislation in December 2013 has already dealt him his first acute drop in Cabinet support. At the same time, as a well-established security hard-liner (again, by Japanese standards, at least), Abe has no need to go out of his way to prove his *bona fides* in this regard. If anything, Abe has a

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<sup>67</sup> Richard Katz, “Abe Gains Both Houses of Diet: How Will Abe Use His Greatly Enhanced Power?” *The Oriental Economist* 81:8 (August 2013), 1-3.

<sup>68</sup> Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

need to avoid confirming some of the public's perception of him as an extreme hawk. If Japanese citizens were to trust any leader with taking steps away from the nuclear status quo, it would more likely be someone other than him. He has retained the support of most citizens, but he has also conditioned them to be on guard for extremism.

This also applies, in a weaker form, to parliamentarians within Abe's own LDP. The LDP's current leaders below and beyond Abe do, as a group, focus more on defense issues than their predecessors. Ishiba Shigeru is chief among these, having been one of the few politicians in either party to have long concerned himself with defense and foreign policy issues rather than more voter-friendly domestic concerns; others include Koike Yuriko and Ishihara Nobuteru. But the LDP remains a broad center-right party, with significant portions resistant to nuclear weapons either on principle or for the expense they would entail. The LDP is also a party whose rank-and-file members are comparatively well empowered, in contrast to the DPJ's backbenchers.<sup>69</sup> They enjoy bases of electoral support independent of the central party apparatus and have greater ability to foment intra-party dissension.

The need to avoid antagonizing parliamentarians applies more strongly, meanwhile, to the LDP's coalition partner Koumeitou (the Clean Government Party). Koumeitou is a lay-Buddhist party that began as a peace-promoting member of the anti-LDP opposition. Though Koumeitou has shifted to the right over the last three decades – and, in the last decade or so, has done so precisely to make itself a palatable coalition partner for the LDP – an issue as salient and extreme as nuclear weapons might well test that party's ability to compromise. This is likely even more true of Koumeitou's rank-and-file voters than of its party organization and leadership – and the LDP values Koumeitou more for its ability to deliver votes to LDP candidates than for its legislators' contributions to parliamentary majorities (with the notable exception of possible Constitutional revision, in which Koumeitou's delegation *would* be necessary for the LDP to achieve super-majority support).

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<sup>69</sup> On LDP internal organization, see for example, most recently and comprehensively, Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen, *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions* (Cornell University Press, 2010).

The LDP will almost certainly regress to the mean in its vote support at the next election, at which time Koumeitou's cooperation will become even more valuable.

It should be noted that the need to rely on coalition partners to form a government and make policy is one that now applies across the political spectrum in Japan's increasingly fragmented party system. And the more such "veto players" whose buy-in is required for policy change, the less likely policy change becomes, especially when it comes to the dramatic change that a departure from Japan's nuclear status quo would represent.<sup>70</sup>

It should also be noted that Abe represents a particularly aggressive brand of security policymaking even within the LDP. Given his current popularity, and the fact that no national election is likely to be called again until the summer of 2016, Abe is likely to remain in office for a considerable length of time by Japanese standards, bucking the recent trend of single-year prime ministers (a trend that Abe himself kicked off, as noted above). But there is no particular reason to think that he is representative of a new breed of LDP leaders. When he is eventually replaced, the likelihood that that new LDP chief will pursue revisionist nuclear policy should grow even smaller.

The LDP has always granted more deference to bureaucratic opinion. It was the precedent of such LDP deference that made the DPJ appear politically activist toward traditional bureaucratic policymakers. It is true that the notion of enhanced "leadership by politicians" (*seiji shudo*) had first been made by LDP administrations, pre-dating the DPJ's rule. Some argue that the trend toward "politicians' leadership" was originally set when Prime Minister Hashimoto first established legislation to reorganize the ministries in 1998. Abe himself during his first term in 2006-2007, sought to enhance policymaking capacity among the prime minister's staff by increasing the number of special assistants to the prime minister (*shusho hosakan*) and establishing a Japanese-style national security council.

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<sup>70</sup> George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (Princeton University Press, 2002). For an application of the veto players concept to Japanese nuclear policy in particular, see Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Veto Players, Nuclear Energy, and Non-proliferation: Domestic Institutional Barriers to a Japanese Bomb," *International Security* 36:2 (Fall 2011), 154-189.

However, when it comes to security policy, we should expect the LDP to concentrate its political-influence efforts on more electorally lucrative domestic sectors such as construction and agriculture, especially under future prime ministers who, unlike Abe, don't happen to have made their political reputations on hardline security stances. Also, bureaucrats themselves may grow more willing and better able to resist the new politicization of security policymaking as time passes.

### OTHER PARTY SYSTEM ACTORS AND EFFECTS

Another potential source of political influence on security and nuclear policy is the new Japan Restoration Party (JRP). Even more than Abe, the JRP is unabashedly hawkish, populist, and nationalist. One of its two co-leaders, Ishihara Shintarou, is perhaps the most prominent and outspoken of Japan's extreme conservatives. In Richard Samuels' convincing taxonomy, Ishihara is the only politician (as opposed to, say, professors and cartoonists) named as representative of the quadrant of Japanese security-policy space that favors both a robust Japanese military capability *and* the weakening of the U.S.-Japan alliance to allow for greater Japanese autonomy (Abe, by contrast, shares the first of these two positions but not the second).<sup>71</sup> In Ishihara's career as a writer, Lower House member, and governor of Tokyo, he has, among other acts, more than once stated clearly that Japan should build nuclear weapons to defend against China; threatened to purchase the disputed Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands and forced DPJ Prime Minister Noda to preemptively purchase them instead, aggravating Japan-China relations; and often been accused of racism for, as an example, warning of the crime-committing danger posed by non-Japanese residents of Asian and other foreign descent in the event of an earthquake.<sup>72</sup> The party's other co-leader, Hashimoto Tooru, a political newcomer and populist former governor of Osaka prefecture and mayor of Osaka City, has made statements defending practices concerning wartime "comfort women" and suggesting that Japan might benefit from dictatorship. Both Ishihara

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<sup>71</sup> Richard Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 133.

<sup>72</sup> Tomohiko Taniguchi, "Ishihara and the Senkakus: The Japanese State of Mind," *Brookings Northeast Asia Commentary* 63 (November 2012)

and, in a reversal from his earlier stance, Hashimoto, were also dismissive of the post-3/11 anti-nuclear-power movement during their time as chief executives in Tokyo and Osaka, respectively.<sup>73</sup> In the most recent Tokyo gubernatorial election, the JRP backed Tamogami Toshio, a former Air Self Defense Forces general best known as having been dismissed from his JASDF post for winning an essay contest designed to justify Japanese colonial rule in Asia.

If the JRP were a minor extremist party, as most of Japan's post-war political history might have suggested would be the case, then this would be of little concern. But, as noted above, while the JRP emerged only just before the 2012 Lower House election through the merger of several smaller newly formed parties, it won more than 50 Lower House seats in that election. This was not only a robust start to its political life, but also one that nearly rivalled the suddenly struggling DPJ.<sup>74</sup> As a newly ascendant party, the JRP appears poised to undercut the DPJ's appeal as the only viable alternative to the LDP. And since it locates itself to the right of the LDP on policy, it has every incentive to distinguish itself from the LDP by moving even further to the right. At the same time, it enjoys a certain amount of bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the LDP. As one of several parties supporting Constitutional revision, it stands to help the LDP construct the parliamentary super-majority necessary for that effort, and seems even more willing to do so than the LDP's own coalition partner Koumeitou.

However, the flash of the JRP's initial victory and the sensational nature of its leaders belie structural flaws that will likely limit the JRP's ability to maintain anything close to its current parliamentary strength, let alone an ability to extract concessions on nuclear policy. There is little to suggest that the JRP will escape the fate of other new Japanese parties who burst onto the scene with promising campaign showings and then dwindled into irrelevance within

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<sup>73</sup> Richard Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* (Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>74</sup> Steven R. Reed, "Challenging the Two-party System: Third Force Parties in the 2012 Election," pp. 72-83 in Robert Pekkanen, Steven R. Reed, and Ethan Scheiner, eds., *Japan Decides 2012: The Japanese General Election* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

one or two election cycles.<sup>75</sup> The party likely gained votes as much as a vehicle for anti-DPJ protest as for its own stances. Its politicians have little experience. When its initial tide of vote support inevitably recedes by the next election, most of its candidates will likely either lose convincingly or defect to the LDP. In addition, unlike most small new parties, the JRP's unusual combination of a dual leadership structure – with two highly charismatic leaders – has served to build in internal strife between these two co-leaders and their respective camps of supporters.

Perhaps a more genuine potential source of politicization of nuclear and security policy can be found in system-level party system dynamics – that is, the attributes of the system as a whole, as opposed to those of any particular party. Here, the threat of politicization is mixed. The Japanese political system as a whole is growing more popularized, driven by voter pressures and preferences rather than by party bosses or bureaucrat. And the decline of polarization among parties, counterintuitively, actually encourages parties to compete with each other over security-policy performance. But the apparent return to dominance of the LDP is likely to undercut these trends, draining the system of competitive incentives.

Japan's policymaking process has grown more exposed to popular and political influence in recent years, in a manner reminiscent of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Progressive era in the United States. Major parties now select their leaders through primaries rather than deliberations among party elites. The prime ministership has grown “presidentialized,” with prime ministers serving as the public face of their parties and as the vehicle for their parties' success rather than the other way around.<sup>76</sup> Election results had grown more volatile even as the set of viable national parties grew comparatively more stable (until immediately prior to the late-2012 Lower House election), with major parties' shares of the Diet swinging wildly

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<sup>75</sup> Steven R. Reed, “Buumu no seiji: Shin Jiyuu Kurabu kara Hosokawa renritsu seiken e [Boom politics: from the New Liberal Club to the Hosokawa coalition government],” *Reviasan* 18 (Spring 1996), 61-70.

<sup>76</sup> Ellis S. Krauss and Benjamin Nyblade, “Presidentialization in Japan? The Prime Minister, Media, and Elections in Japan,” *British Journal of Political Science* 35:2 (2005), 357-368; Kenneth Mori McElwain, “Why are Japanese Parties Undisciplined?” *Social Science Japan* 45 (September 2011), 19-23.

from one national election to the next, and with even established leaders vulnerable to defeat in their home districts as partisan tides rose and fell. None of these processes particularly selects for leaders with policy knowledge, as opposed to political skill (these are not mutually exclusive in theory, but appear to be at least partly so in practice). This is particularly the case for foreign and security policy knowledge, given the comparatively small attention paid to such matters by most Japanese voters. This increasing popularization of the political process also tends to yield shorter leadership careers – as illustrated by the short tenures of all Japanese prime ministers other than Koizumi over the last fifteen years – and thus a higher “burn rate” through whatever policy expertise does exist among political leaders.

Meanwhile, the decline in party polarization actually produces more politicization of security policy. The 1955 System paired a center-right LDP government with an opposition Socialist party that hewed strongly to the left on security and foreign policy and (not coincidentally) remained significantly smaller and less electorally viable than the LDP. Under these conditions, the parties’ separation on policy grounds was vast and clear – but so much so that the opposition’s stance so delegitimized in the eyes of all but its own supporters, transforming security policy debates into ritual exercises unlikely to translate into political pressure on the LDP. Now, Japan’s major parties are close enough “on the merits” with regard to security to leave security policy open for real contestation. This allows security to become a front-burner issue.

And if security policy grows more politicized, it is difficult to imagine that senior bureaucrats will be immune. It may become difficult for a director-general who worked for a one party’s minister to stay on the same job for another party’s. The same might be true of the close-knit community of non- (but often former-) government security experts within Japan’s universities and its small but potentially influential network of think tanks.

On the other hand, these dynamics – the emergence of a genuinely competitive but less polarized party system – can hardly be taken for granted yet in Japan.<sup>77</sup> They assume that

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<sup>77</sup> This argument draws from Robert J. Weiner, “The Remains of the DPJ,” pp. 65-71 in Robert Pekkanen, Ethan Scheiner, and Steven R. Reed, eds., *Japan Decides* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp.

the DPJ will rebound from its historic 2012 loss just as the LDP did after its serious loss in 2009 – perhaps not as gloriously so, but at least enough to continue to challenge the LDP and provide voters with a viable and broadly-palatable alternative.<sup>78</sup> But the DPJ faces harder obstacles than the LDP did during its time as a humbled opposition party. In both 2009 and 2012, small opposition parties gained back a large share of votes simply by providing the single obvious, default alternative to an unpopular government. But now, the DPJ must also differentiate itself from the JRP, from charismatic independents, and from other “third-force” rivals for anti-LDP opposition, and it lacks a distinctive platform beyond “we’re not the LDP.” The currently-diminished DPJ did shed (against its will) some of its traditional-conservative elements in its 2012 defeat, and this might allow it to emphasize its fiscal conservatism, social progressivism, and comparatively restrained attitude towards resurgent nationalism and realist approach to security policy – or, more succinctly, this might let it become known as the party least likely to put its foot in its mouth over intra-Asian history issues – and this might let the DPJ set itself apart from both the LDP and the JRP.<sup>79</sup> But appeals based on general image and competence will likely matter more – and the DPJ is disadvantaged here as well. It loses on “freshness” to the JRP and on competence to the LDP. The DPJ has also failed to develop durable non-policy strategies that provide a fallback position during bad times – distributing pork barrel or recruiting high-quality candidates, for example. Similarly, the party has not exploited prefectural or municipal elections to provide itself a fallback position in which to install promising future candidates and groom them for the next election. The DPJ continues to refrain from approaching local elections aggressively and thus remains essentially a minor party at the local level, and its party branches are simply campaign vehicles for comparatively small number of incumbents who run them.

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<sup>78</sup> Masahisa Endo, Robert Pekkanen, and Steven R. Reed, “The LDP’s Path Back to Power,” pp. 49-64 in Robert Pekkanen, Steven R. Reed, and Ethan Scheiner, eds., *Japan Decides 2012: The Japanese General Election* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

<sup>79</sup> Christian G. Winkler, “Right Rising? Ideology and the 2012 House of Representatives Election,” pp. 201-212 in Robert Pekkanen, Steven R. Reed, and Ethan Scheiner, eds., *Japan Decides 2012: The Japanese General Election* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)



## ANTI-NUCLEAR-POWER BACKLASH AS PRO-STATUS-QUO POLITICIZATION

Alongside Japan's individual political parties and its party system as a whole, changes in grassroots public opinion can also be seen as a potential source of political pressure away from Japan's nuclear-policy status quo. Two streams of public opinion in this vein have been alluded to above: a gradual warming to the formerly taboo notion of Japanese autonomous nuclear weapons capabilities, and an apparent rise in nationalism. The former has gradually been growing with the passing of the generations that directly witnessed Japan's atomic bombings and the more general privations of war, and that in turn formed the backbone of Japan's peace and nonproliferation movements. Younger generations treat security policy, including nuclear weapons, more pragmatically, and their security consciousness is more strongly shaped by the immediate nuclear threat posed by North Korea and the larger but latent threat posed by China. The rise in nationalism shares some of the same roots, but in recent years has been more acutely spurred by tensions with China and South Korea over interpretations of World War II-era history, which itself is partly a product of political reform and increasing economic competitiveness on the part of those two neighbors; and by conflict over disputed island territories.

But these have been undercut quite dramatically by the response to the 3/11 disasters: the earthquake and tsunami that both caused massive destruction and dislocation in the Tohoku (northeast) region of Japan, and, more important, the resulting catastrophic nuclear power plant accidents in Fukushima, whose impact reached as far geographically as the Tokyo metropolitan area, and more symbolically, across the entire nation. The Fukushima incident immediately triggered a resurgence of the anti-nuclear power movement in Japan, and quickly enlarged it to national scale.<sup>80</sup> This recent wave of public opposition to nuclear-power, though both newly-emergent and no longer as vocal as it was at its immediate post-disaster peak, is much more robust and mainstream than any apparent resurgence in either Japanese nationalism or pro-nuclear weapons sentiment, and is likely to remain so even as

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<sup>80</sup> Daniel Aldrich, "Post-crisis Nuclear Policy: From Top-down Directives to Bottom-up Activism," *Asia-Pacific Issues* 103 (January 2012).

time passes after the Fukushima incidents.

Anti-nuclear-power sentiment in Japan quickly became widespread in the aftermath of the 3/11 disasters. Within a few months, up to three-quarters of opinion-poll respondents voiced support for the complete phasing out of Japan's reliance on nuclear power, and as little as one percent voiced support for increasing Japan's nuclear power supply.<sup>81</sup>

Anti-power opinion not only resides collectively among broadly diffused individuals, but also is cultivated and transmitted, in part, by a genuine movement, with established organizational infrastructure and broad appeal. This movement enjoys an organizational base that predated the 3/11 disaster, largely in the form of municipal- and prefectural-level campaigns to oppose the siting of nuclear plants in a variety of provincial cities.<sup>82</sup> In many prefectures in Japan, the question of whether a given local nuclear plant would be allowed to be constructed or maintained represented the main issue in gubernatorial campaigns, similar to the role of military base politics in Okinawa prefecture. The pro-plant side was generally represented by government officials and utility companies, plus the power plant labor force; the opposition movements were more broad-based. Both these sides proved durable over decades of gubernatorial campaigns. In recent years, even before the Fukushima incidents (but more regularly and dramatically afterwards), governors themselves have begun to switch sides and question the desirability of power plant operations. Even in highly centralized Japan, these governors enjoy significant power to constrain power generation, and, in the process, to legitimize the anti-power stance.

Since the 3/11 disasters in Fukushima, though, a nationwide movement has been grafted onto this more piecemeal, localized foundation. The issue has spread well beyond the areas immediately affected by either the Fukushima disasters themselves or by other nuclear plants.

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<sup>81</sup> Jeff Kingston, "The Politics of Disaster, Nuclear Crisis and Recovery," p. 196-197, in Kingston, ed., *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan* (Routledge, 2012), pp. 188-206

<sup>82</sup> Daniel P. Aldrich, "Future Fission: Why Japan Won't Abandon Nuclear Power," *Global Asia* 6:2 (Summer 2011), 62-67

This development was not immediate. For more than a year after 3/11, political protest outside Fukushima itself proved rare. But as opposition petitions in major urban areas began to suffer rejection from political leaders, mobilization began to build – to a large extent through decentralized calls to action on the part of large numbers of smaller non-governmental organizations.<sup>83</sup> Demonstrations against nuclear power began to bring tens of thousands of people into the streets – by far the largest protests since the 1960 demonstration against the signing of the U.S.-Japan Security treaty.<sup>84</sup> In a country where protest demonstrations of any size are extremely rare outside Okinawa (in contrast to, say, South Korea), such mass mobilization captures the attention of citizens well beyond those who take part in the protests themselves.

Of course, as discussed above, nuclear power and nuclear weapons are two distinct areas of policy, and they have been dealt with in Japan via two comparatively autonomous and stovepiped policy communities. But at the level of public opinion, the barrier between these two policy realms is much more porous. An anti-nuclear-power movement has great potential to become linked to or re-purposed into an anti-nuclear-weapons movement. This is partly because of the technological connection between the two: as noted above, nations with comprehensive nuclear power industries, not to mention the general technological resources found in Japan, are well-positioned to become nuclear weapons producers if they so choose. Indeed, as noted above, the simple presence of Japan’s robust nuclear power industry is sometimes called into question Japan’s commitment to nonproliferation, even absent any particular movement toward a nuclear weapons program.

But this technological connection is not necessarily what drives citizen-level linkage between nuclear power and nuclear weapons. The simple fact that these two issue areas have “nuclear” in common is enough. Even if nuclear power generation and nuclear weapon creation were to rely on entirely different processes and technologies, opposition to the

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<sup>83</sup> Kawato Yuko, Robert Pekkanen, and Tsujinaka Yutaka, “Civil Society and the Triple Disasters: Revealed Strengths and Weaknesses,” in Jeff Kingston, ed., *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan* (Routledge, 2012), pp. 78-93.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* (Cornell University Press, 2013), 134.

former naturally seems to promote opposition to the latter. And such opposition is likely to remain a political force that more than counteracts any revisionist positive public opinion toward nuclear weapons driven by nationalism, the dissolution of anti-nuclear taboos (and perhaps even the growing salience of threats from North Korea or China). Though Japanese citizens' increasing openness to nuclear weapons, rooted in the simple waning of taboos or recognition of a more threatening geopolitical environment, is real, it is passive and latent. More citizens may support the idea of nuclear weapons when asked by a pollster, but there exists no significant non-governmental organization, activist movement, or other element of civil society proactively dedicated to augmenting Japan's nuclear-weapon capability. Increasing nationalism that might be harnessed in support of nuclear weapons, meanwhile, is more intense than this, but confined to a narrow sliver of the Japanese population. Active nationalists receive a great deal of media attention, but a closer look at their support base and political achievements finds little in the way of significant gains (the recent and likely ephemeral success of the JRP notwithstanding).<sup>85</sup>

Anti-nuclear-power opinion is more intense, more broad, and more institutionalized and organized. The anti-nuclear-power movement has the benefit of dealing with a tangible, "not in my backyard (NIMBY)," quality-of-life problem.<sup>86</sup> The safety issues surrounding nuclear power generation are viewed as immediate problems with immediate consequences, as opposed to the threat of nuclear attack, whose impact would be immeasurably larger but whose likelihood is too small to sustain political interest. Nuclear power's "NIMBY-ness" is also important because it has the potential to transcend progressive-conservative divides. Activism is spurred not only by the simple magnitude of the disasters themselves, but also their enduring media appeal. Daytime "wideshows," for example, mentioned above as one important medium for keeping the North Korea abduction story alive, have done their part with regard to nuclear power as well. The invisible yet significant dangers to health and food safety are immediately graspable even by politically less-sophisticated viewers.

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<sup>85</sup> Matthew Penney and Bryce Wakefield, "Right Angles: Examining Accounts of Japanese Neoliberalism," *Pacific Affairs* 81:4 (Winter 2008/2009), 537-555

<sup>86</sup> Daniel P. Aldrich, *Site Fights: Divisive Facilities and Civil Society in Japan and the West* (Cornell University Press, 2010).

There is also an element of fortuitous political geography that makes the anti-power stance politically potent and a pro-power stance more politically risky. First, the Fukushima accident was initially feared to threaten the safety of residents of the entire Tokyo metropolitan area, who make up the largest geographical voting bloc in the country. Though the LDP is often portrayed as a rurally-focused party that depends little on large metropolitan areas for vote support, the party has actually long done well in Tokyo and other large cities' more blue-collar areas, and this is even more the case now that the DPJ has made inroads in rural areas and the LDP has come to rely on support from its coalition partner Koumeitou's urban strongholds. At the same time, the Tohoku region, the site of all three components of the GEJE disaster, itself happens to be the rural conservative region in which the DPJ and anti-LDP opposition has threatened the LDP most, largely because it is the home region of former-DPJ leader Ichiro Ozawa and close to the home regions of former DPJ leaders Hatoyama and Tsutomu Hata, among others. Since this region is more politically divided than others of its type in Japan, its political sensitivities are granted more deference.

The easily graspable appeal of the anti-nuclear-power issue allows it to be exploited widely within Japan. The Tokyo prefecture governor's election of early 2014 is a telling example. The election was called suddenly upon the resignation of the incumbent due to a political funding scandal, and soon was partly transformed into a referendum on nuclear power generation upon the attention-getting entry of former prime minister and former Kumamoto Prefecture governor Hosokawa Morihiro, who declared himself a single-issue anti-nuclear-power candidate.<sup>87</sup> This development emerged in a Tokyo prefecture that, again, was indeed significantly connected to the Fukushima disaster, by virtue of both its relative proximity to the plant and the Tokyo Prefectural Government's status as the largest single stockholder in the Tokyo Electric Power Company, which owns the Fukushima plant indirectly affected by the Fukushima disaster. But, still, Tokyo was only indirectly affected by the disaster itself,

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<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Soble, "Tokyo Election to Spark Nuclear Debate," *The Financial Times*, 10 January 2014, accessed at <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/8b04ee3e-79e4-11e3-a3e6-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2ucbcUtnC>.

with not a single nuclear power plant, and with any number of other issues potentially at stake, at least by comparison to smaller and more rural prefectures. That nuclear power might prove one of many issues now important to Tokyo voters in a local-level election, as noted immediately above, seems reasonable; that it would be perceived, by national media if not by the preponderance of Tokyo voters themselves, as the signature issue of the campaign seems more surprising and significant. Anti-power candidate Hosokawa was backed most prominently by none other than former LDP prime minister Koizumi, who had already begun to emerge from retirement to oppose his former party on the issue.<sup>88</sup>

At the same time, some point to the results of this very Tokyo gubernatorial election as a sign that citizen mobilization around opposition to nuclear power has already begun to taper off, not even three years removed from 3/11. Hosokawa not only lost the election, but came in third place by a large margin. The loosely-LDP-affiliated winner, Youichi Masuzoe, gained 43 percent of the vote, a second anti-power candidate supported only by the Japan Communist Party and Social Democratic Party of Japan gained 20 percent, and Hosokawa, supported by the DPJ and DPJ offshoot People's Life Party, gained only 19 percent.<sup>89</sup> Soon afterwards, as if he had waited for such a concrete sign that Japan's anti-power sentiment had begun to recede, Prime Minister Abe made his Basic Energy Plan announcement reaffirming the place of nuclear power in Japan's energy mix. Even before this election, some observers had noted that large-scale public demonstrations are now "in policymakers' rearview mirror," with crowds of tens of thousands who massed at the demonstrations' peak roughly one to two years after the disaster starting to dwindle down to the hundreds.<sup>90</sup> More generally, it does seem reasonable to expect citizens' ire to cool as time passes, and to expect the more deeply institutionalized and entrenched "nuclear village" of establishment nuclear

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<sup>88</sup> Martin Fackler, "Nuclear Issue in Limbo as Indecision Grips Japan," *The New York Times* (February 11, 2014).

<sup>89</sup> Tokyo-to Senkyo Kanri Iinkai, "Heisei 26-nen Tokyo-to chiji senkyo kaihyou kekka (2014 Tokyo prefecture gubernatorial election voting results)," 10 February 2014, accessed at [http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://sokuho.h26tochijisen.metro.tokyo.jp/h26chi\\_kai.html](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://sokuho.h26tochijisen.metro.tokyo.jp/h26chi_kai.html)

<sup>90</sup> Richard J. Samuels, "Author's Response: 3.11 and the Fog of Politics," *Asia Policy* 17 (January 2014), p. 177.

power advocates – utilities and other industrial allies, the regulatory bureaucracy, and pro-power researchers – to eventually outlast a newer and more atomized citizens’ movement.

But even if anti-power public sentiment and public mobilization begin to fade, they might still retain enough latent potency to remain a significant factor in nuclear weapons discussion. Indeed, anti-power sentiment might prove even more potent when linked to nuclear weapons issues than it is within the nuclear power debate itself. Nuclear power, again, is a more immediately divisive issue, with proponents able to depend on both the “nuclear village” and a broad appeal to economic necessity. Nuclear weapons are much easier to oppose. Latent distrust of nuclear power – and the general distrust in government that the Fukushima disaster engendered – might well still be sufficiently potent to contribute additional opposition when applied to nuclear weapons debates if policymakers were to move at all beyond discussion to concrete steps towards nuclear weapons capabilities. And since Japan’s Self Defense Forces, despite their stellar performance in Operation Tomodachi, are still not necessarily perceived as a more competent and trustworthy institution than power companies, there may be a smooth transition from concern over utilities’ ability to safely handle nuclear material to concern over the SDF’s ability to safely handle nuclear weapons. Note also that even a hypothetically revitalized nuclear power industry might even prove hostile to the development of such capability, despite its ability to provide much of the technological foundation for enhanced nuclear weapons capability, since a nuclear weapons program would compete directly with nuclear power producers for fuel.<sup>91</sup>

It also seems imperative not to impute too much in the way of a single-issue mandate to the results of a single election like the Tokyo governor’s race, especially in this case. Though Hosokawa styled himself as the champion of maintaining constraints on nuclear power production, he was a poor candidate otherwise. He emerged to contest a snap election after

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<sup>91</sup> Richard J. Samuels and James L. Schoff, “Japan’s Nuclear Hedge: Beyond ‘Allergy’ and Breakout,” pp. 232-264 in Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Travis Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2013-2014: Asian in the Second Nuclear Age* (The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2014), p. 253.

a long period of retirement from politics, was saddled with a shaky political image after having abruptly left the prime ministership two decades prior and an aristocratic image that plays poorly outside of his home prefecture of Kumamoto (from whose former lords he is descended), and was forced to compete for the anti-nuclear vote with the eventual runner-up, who lacked Hosokawa's name recognition but enjoyed the organizational support of Tokyo's progressive political machinery. If anything, what seems most significant is that such an election, detached from any debate over particular nuclear power plants, could so quickly be exploited and converted at all into what was widely perceived as a nuclear-power referendum, not that the most vocal of the anti-power candidates ultimately lost.

This point applies more generally. We should be wary of reading too much in the way of security-policy mandates into election results, especially when dealing with large-scale national or prefectural elections more complex than a narrow referendum (or single-issue elections genuinely tantamount to a narrow referendum), and especially when considering such high-salience, high-stakes policy areas as nuclear weapons. Samuels and Schoff, for example, argue that the 2012 return to power of the pro-nuclear-power Abe, juxtaposed with polling that shows widespread "popular opinion against all things nuclear in Japan . . . is a reminder that overwhelming majorities can vote against their polled preferences and that even democratic governments can act independently of public opinion."<sup>92</sup> They continue in this vein with regard to nuclear weapons: "The connection of public opinion to policymaking is particularly tenuous with regard to national security. . . . [T]he decision to forgo an independent nuclear arsenal was based on realist calculations amid U.S. pressure, not on polling data. Campbell and Sunohara's conclusion is correct that 'although public sentiment against nuclear weapons remains strong, its ability to fully inhibit the decisions of Japanese leaders should not be exaggerated.'<sup>93</sup> But Japanese voters in 2012 chose the LDP simply as an alternative to what they perceived to be an incompetent DPJ government, not as an endorsement of the LDP's or Abe's policy positions themselves. It is certainly true that policymakers can easily ignore public opinion on security matters when the matters in

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 252-253, citing Campbell and Sunohara, *op. cit.*, p. 242.



question are low-salience and the public neither feels strongly about them nor cares to keep abreast of policy decisions. Even on a high-salience, high-stakes issue like nuclear weapons, ignoring public opinion might be politically safe when it is the public that supports policy revision and elite policymakers who aim to reaffirm the non-nuclear status quo. But to do the opposite and defy public opinion in order to depart from the non-nuclear status quo on a high-salience issue seems much more risky, as Abe's first prime ministerial term and the DPJ's time in office both show. Getting elected despite unacted-upon differences with the public over nuclear weapons is one thing; getting re-elected after defying the public over nuclear weapons is another.

Finally, and perhaps more to the point as a reason not to assume that anti-nuclear power public opinion has already reached its peak as a damper on any move toward nuclear weapons capability: the Fukushima accident has not yet ended. Incidents such as high-volume spills of radioactive water continue to occur, and accusations of clean-up mismanagement by TEPCO continue to mount.<sup>94</sup> Much potential seems to remain for further setbacks or negative revelations to reactivate more intense protest activity.

Of course, the idea that resistance to nuclear power might be leveraged against moves toward nuclear weapons with significant effect is rooted in the fact that the nuclear-weapons taboo in Japan remains incredibly strong in the first place.<sup>95</sup> As noted above, nuclear weapons may be the epitome of a high-salience, high-sensitivity political issue. One cannot be pro-nuclear weapon in Japan so much as, at most, *open* to the option of nuclear weapons. The base of support is so fragile that linkage to the separate but highly unpopular issue of nuclear power may be damaging enough to dissuade political entrepreneurship.

A more fundamental geopolitical and alliance shift would likely be necessary for pro-weapons public opinion to reverse this trend and override both Japan's traditional nuclear taboo and the newly potent linkage to the anti-nuclear-power movement, as well as the

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<sup>94</sup> See, for example, most recently, Martin Fackler, "Worst Spill in 6 Months Is Reported at Fukushima," *The New York Times*, 21 February 2014, p. A4.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Katsuhisa Furukawa, *op. cit.*

hurdles noted above regarding the “intermediate” steps of Constitutional revision and deeper trust of the Self Defense Forces. If the U.S. were to walk away from its “denuclearization” commitments vis-à-vis North Korea, or if the U.S. were to communicate a new unwillingness to “stand with Japan” in the Senkaku / Diaoyu dispute, for example, the impact might be broad and deep enough to mobilize widespread public-opinion support for elite-level policymaking attempts to depart from the non-nuclear status quo. But, even here, such a U.S. withdrawal of commitment would need to take immediate and tangible form – for example, failure to act in response to a Chinese move to build structures on disputed islands and thereby buttress a claim of sovereignty. In contrast, moves taken by the U.S. that lessen its commitment or capability in the region but in a way only visible to policy and military professionals, for example, would have little impact.

## **CONCLUSION**

Nuclear weapons policy is complex in all countries, but in Japan it is made especially so by a unique and unenviable historical legacy that uncomfortably juxtaposes sincere anti-proliferation efforts with reliance on the U.S. nuclear deterrent and a robust nuclear power industry. Further, Japan’s traditionally bureaucratic policymaking style has only recently begun to grapple with the tumult of genuinely democratic, politically informed input, especially in the security policy realm. New popular (as opposed to unelected) political forces – newly emerging types of public opinion and activism coupled with new parties and new breeds of leader amid an evolving party system – have begun to assert their right to influence policy. Greater political input on nuclear policy could mean unifying that policy’s disparate strands, but just as likely – at least given the “steep learning curve” in the short term – is that politicization will also bring trial, error, and volatility.

Thus far in Japan, though, those with an inclination to impose more genuinely popular influence on nuclear policy have not been able to do so, and seem likely not to be able to do so in the near future. In the case of the DPJ, the impetus to impose political leadership was thwarted by insufficient organization and policy skill, especially in those security policy areas

most visible to the public. In the meantime, where political leadership was indeed imposed, it brought about relatively little change. In the case of current Prime Minister Abe and the LDP, there is sufficient political will and skill to make (comparatively) smaller-scale security policy changes, but nuclear policy seems to require too much political capital for any change to be likely in the short to medium term. Party system evolution also mitigates against policy change, insofar as it seems to be regressing to LDP dominance. And at the broader level of public opinion, the gradual fading of nuclear taboos and the emergence of a narrow but vocal group of more-aggressive nationalists stand to be overpowered by a wave of anti-nuclear-*power* activism strong enough to help prevent departures from the nuclear *weapons* status quo as well.

Overall, the threat of politicization of Japanese nuclear and security policy is genuine, and there are enough sources of such politicization that they deserve continued scrutiny. But they remain muted, and they seem to be receding in the short to medium term, even by comparison to the recent peak of concern upon the DPJ's taking power in 2009. While new political forces and policymaking processes will continue to inject added volatility into the *methods* of Japanese nuclear and security policymaking, the fundamental direction and pace of that policy is likely to remain stable.