

# Challenges for Nuclear Disarmament Await the Next U.S. Administration

By **DONOWAKI Mitsuro**

Senator John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee for the U.S. president, expressed in his speech on May 27 his support for reconsideration of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Therefore discussion of nuclear disarmament is expected to restore momentum regardless of who will become the next U.S. president, Senator Obama or Senator McCain. In addition, some international issues related to nuclear disarmament are also linked with the coming U.S. presidential election.

The first issue is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. government announced on June 27 that it had initiated the process of removing North Korea from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism and of lifting North Korea's status under the Trading with the Enemies Act. Bush Administration seems eager to achieve the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program before the end of its term. However, as President George W. BUSH told Prime Minister FUKUDA Yasuo at the Hokkaido-Toyako Summit, priority should be given to strict verification of North Korea's declaration of its nuclear program. If the measures under the Second Phase are duly implemented, the Third Phase will follow, which includes such measures as the total abandonment of North Korea's nuclear weapons. Even though the complete denuclearization of North Korea remains the highest goal, the six-party agreement of September 2005 is a package as a whole. In this sense, the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea is not possible without a resolution of the abduction issue, nor will total implementation of the agreement be attainable. It is therefore highly improbable that all issues can be resolved within months. As handling of those issues will be suspended until the next U.S. administration, North Korea might be satisfied with the success of its delaying tactics.

Secondly, it is the Iranian nuclear issue. Since Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons becomes possible if it continues its uranium enrichment activities for another year, there arose in Israel an argument that, in order to prevent this, there is no way but to launch a preemptive assault on nuclear facilities in Iran, which must be carried out during the Bush Administration because no US presidential candidates are reliable. Moreover, there is even a controversy over which is more effective to launch an assault in order to retain U.S. as an ally, before or after the presidential election. This can be regarded as a grave situation if we remember that Israel previously made preemptive

attacks against Iraq and Syria.

The third issue is the U.S.-India negotiation on civil nuclear cooperation. In order that the Cooperation Agreement which had been concluded between U.S. and India in July 2007 be approved by the U.S. Congress, special safeguards agreement should be reached between India and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), then be approved by the IAEA Board of Governors, and 45 nations of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) should approve an exemption for India by consensus. However, India seems to be plunged into a political crisis over its negotiation with IAEA, which is now in the final stage. Left wing parties are threatening to pull out of the ruling coalition if the government reaches an agreement without national debate. Although it has been reported that President George W. BUSH and Prime Minister Manmohan SINGH in their meeting at the Hokkaido-Toyako Summit confirmed their determination to conclude the negotiation, time seems to be running out as this year's Plenary Meeting of NSG had already been convened in May in Berlin and U.S. Congress is to adjourn for summer recess earlier than usual because of the coming presidential election.

In the U.S. which adopts the two-party system, the change of administration which can take place in every 4 or 8 years would inevitably cause political stalemate and loss of much time and energy because it involves a large-scale replacement of senior officials in the administration. On the other hand, this could also serve as a precious moment for the nation to redress the political balance like the back-swing of a pendulum and to give a second thought to its direction. Nuclear disarmament is an issue at stake not only for the U.S. but also for the whole international community. The majority of people in the world hope to realize a world in which the possibility of using nuclear weapons is reduced to virtually nil. Therefore, an opportune time may be around for us to resolve ourselves to find a drastic solution to the above-mentioned problems, by seeking the best wisdom of governmental practitioners and other leading intellectuals of all the nations concerned.

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