

**Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador YAMAGAMI Shingo at
the book launch for “Alliances, Nuclear Weapons, and
Escalation: Managing Deterrence in the 21st Century”,
Strategic Defence and Studies Centre,
Australian National University,
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(Final)

1. Introduction and Acknowledgements

- Professor Stephan Fruehling,
- Professor Andrew O’Neil,
- Professor Oriana Skylar Mastro,
- Professor Veronica Taylor,
- Former Australian Ambassador to the United States, Mr
Dennis Richardson,
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,
- I would like to start my remarks by thanking the Strategic

Defence and Studies Centre for the opportunity to speak to you today about this new contribution to scholarship on the question of nuclear deterrence and alliance systems.

- With the past few weeks serving as a sobering reminder of the potential threat of the use of nuclear weapons to dictate strategic choices, to say that this book is timely might be the understatement of the year!
- Through the many contributions by some of the most outstanding scholars of defence and strategic policy from Japan, Australia, Europe and the US, this book provides a much-needed analysis of what is at stake in a world where the threat of nuclear war has become more pronounced.
- The exploration by Professors Fruehling and O'Neil of the inherently political nature of escalation and extended deterrence, and what steps may be required to create a

commonly accepted strategy within the Indo-Pacific to respond to great power competition, provides considerable food for thought.

- And as Ambassador of Japan, I did make particular note of the contributions by Professors SATAKE, TSURUOKA, and MURANO, whom I all know, and their arguments concerning public opinion in Japan related to extended nuclear deterrence.
- What I should also state at this point is that the views that I will share today are my own thoughts on the questions of nuclear deterrence and alliances.
- So while aware of the disappointment this may come to some in the media hoping for an exclusive, I hope that you'll accept these remarks in the spirit they are given.

2. The East Asian region and nuclear escalation

- Without doubt, the spectre of nuclear war has become an all-too-real scenario in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- While it never truly disappeared, there was hope in the aftermath of the Cold War that progress would be made on arms reduction, particularly with states that had previously not been party to control mechanisms to prevent nuclear proliferation or reduce nuclear arsenals.
- Yet over the past 30 years, what we have witnessed, particularly in East Asia, is a push by emerging powers such as China to pursue larger nuclear arsenals.
- The US Department of Defense estimated as recently as last year that China will possess up to 700 deliverable warheads by 2027 and 1000 by 2030.

- For Japan, and arguably for the region as a whole, one matter of grave concern related to China's growing nuclear capability is the complete absence of any form of agreement to limit either the type or delivery systems of its nuclear arsenal.
- While the US and Russia ostensibly have the New START treaty in place, at least until 2026, no similar consensus on limiting nuclear weapon numbers exists in the Indo-Pacific region.
- This situation is expertly addressed by various contributors to Professor Fruehling and O'Neil's book, particularly in the context of the potential outbreak of hostilities over Taiwan.
- Without any means to control the growth in nuclear arsenals among nuclear capable states in this region, we face a dire situation the outcome of which is near impossible to accurately predict.

3. Deterrence and escalation

- Yet this dilemma is directly related to the question of deterrence.
- There is a distinct irony in the fact that had Ukraine not surrendered its nuclear arsenal following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia would have been much less likely to choose invasion as a means to overthrow the Ukrainian government and confront NATO.
- For non-nuclear states such as Japan and Australia, the choice of nuclear deterrence through alliance with the United States versus acquiring nuclear weapons themselves has a long and somewhat convoluted history, even more so in the case of Japan with its history of being the only nation to have suffered nuclear attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

- When coupled with Japan's historic advocacy for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament together with Australia, it appears to present both nations with something of a Faustian bargain.
- Yet as the security environment in the region continues to grow even more severe in the face of growing belligerency from China and other authoritarian states, old norms and attitudes are being gradually cast aside as the struggle between democratic and authoritarian states is brought sharply into focus.
- As Professor Fruehling and O'Neil so astutely put it, the old argument surrounding the binary choice of nuclear disarmament versus deterrence is a false one which ignores the realities of strategic environments.

4. North Korea

- For Japan, this is a particularly relevant point. Japan, as you are all no doubt aware, is ringed by nuclear power states, three of them, who have run rough-shod over the rule of law.
- The most egregious and consistent violations of nuclear non-proliferation regulations are conducted by North Korea.
- To date, North Korea has already launched 11 ballistic missiles this year, for a total of 9 launches (one of which ended in failure a few weeks ago).
- While the world's focus has been on Ukraine, North Korea has been escalating the pace of its missile tests and has been experimenting with different types of launches.
- With North Korea showing no indication that it has any intention of abandoning its reckless nuclear weapons program, Japan is in the unenviable position of having to

observe each missile launch while taking measures to protect ourselves from North Korea's belligerency.

5. Japan's Domestic Nuclear Discussion

- The reality of Japan's strategic environment means that it is inevitable that arguments for and against extended deterrence will rise to the surface from time to time.
- The recent public commentary by former Prime Minister ABE Shinzo to the effect that Japan should possess its own nuclear weapons is a reflection of a continuing debate that has gone on for decades but has more recently taken on a greater urgency.
- On the one hand you have those calling for an overhaul of Japan's domestic legal framework to substantially modify the so-called 3 non-nuclear principles to neither "manufacture, possess nor permit the introduction of nuclear weapons into

Japan”.

- On the other hand you have Japan’s wartime experience, coupled with the events of March 2011 at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.
- Both arguments have strongly influenced public opinion.
- The sum total of all of these views means that Japan still needs a considerable amount of discussion to reach a national consensus on extended nuclear deterrence.
- That is, of course, an entirely understandable situation.
- As the only nation on Earth to have suffered the tragedy of being attacked with nuclear weapons, Japan has a particular role in advocating for restraint and dialogue to replace any desire to push the nuclear button.

- Probably the most poignant visual representations of what devastation nuclear weapons can wreak are displayed at the Peace Museum in Hiroshima and Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki.
- For anyone visiting Japan, a trip to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to see both museums is a must in order to understand what happened and why it is so important for the global community to prevent it ever happening again.
- When one gazes out at the modern urban landscapes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is easy to forget that the suffering that accompanied the bombings of those cities continues to this day in the form of victims of radiation poisoning and their descendants.
- They are a reminder of the heavy price that humanity continues to pay in pursuit of the nuclear option.

- We must never forget that the penalty for complacency around nuclear weapons is quite simply extinction.
- So as not to end on that rather grim note, I will say that it is thanks to the work of academics such as Professor Fruehling, O'Neill, and Skylar Mastro that we, particularly in democracies, can openly debate and consider what deterrence, escalation, and alliance systems mean and how they can be most effectively used to prevent the unthinkable.
- It is my hope that their work in this book will go a long way to informing those in positions of power on the best way forward.
- Thank you.

[Ends]