

**Preventive Diplomacy to Avoid Nuclear War: The Case of Daisaku Ikeda's
Private Diplomacy During the Cold War and Nichiren Buddhism's
Challenge to Contemporary International Crises**

Kazuhiro Tobisawa

The University of Buckingham, Buckingham, United Kingdom

kazuhiro.tobisawa@jcom.zaq.ne.jp

ABSTRACT: Nuclear weapons are a culmination of leading-edge technologies in human history. Humankind has never invented weapons capable of prevailing over them. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has elevated the risk that weapons of mass destruction may be used to a level not seen since the Cold War period. This paper explores a case of preventive diplomacy to avoid nuclear war: the late Daisaku Ikeda's private diplomacy and Soka Gakkai's campaigns against nuclear weapons. Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist lay association, has been modernizing Buddhism as a religion relevant for contemporary human societies through a worldwide action promoting peace, culture, and education over half a century. Their anti-nuclear-weapon activities are an embodiment of the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism, which was founded in 13th-century Japan, in the present days. Preventive diplomacy is a comparatively new concept, which was introduced after the Cold War. Ikeda conducted his private diplomacy to mitigate tensions between nuclear weapon states and to avoid their warfare since the 1960s. Soka Gakkai's historical case might present an ideal model of preventive diplomacy to avoid an apocalyptic nuclear war.

KEYWORDS: Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai, Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Disarmament, Preventive Diplomacy.

Extending my deepest condolences for the passing of Dr Daisaku Ikeda (1928–2023),
Doctor of Letters Honoris Causa of the University of Buckingham,
Soka Gakkai 3rd President and Honorary President, on 15th November 2023.

Introduction

Nuclear weapons are a fruit of a huge number of emerging technologies and human knowledge. But they no longer are a new type of weapons: they have had

over eighty years history of their development, testing, and usage since when Albert Einstein (1879–1955) sent a letter about the “nuclear chain reaction” to US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) in 1939. Because of the war in Ukraine started in 2022, the tension of threat and use of these weapons on the global stage has been heightening rapidly. In fact, a number of Russian tactical nuclear weapons have been deployed in Belarus, and Russia has also modernized 95% of its strategic nuclear weapons in 2023 (*Japan Times* 2023). Furthermore, President Vladimir Putin has revoked Russia’s ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT: Arms Control Association 2023).

This paper explores whether diplomacy is still feasible to prevent nuclear weapon issues by introducing the Japanese government’s and the G7’s initiatives in Hiroshima in 2023, Daisaku Ikeda’s private diplomacy, and Soka Gakkai’s anti-nuclear-weapon activities in relation with the USSR during the Cold War.

The Initiatives of Japanese Government and the G7 Hiroshima Summit of 2023

The G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023 was a well-organized conference, which started with the prayer of the leaders at the atomic bomb cenotaph and had a speech by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as its grand finale. Although the influence of G7 had relatively declined with former US President Donald Trump’s unilateralism and the rises of China and other developing countries in recent years, its participants were unified again by the need of confronting the crisis of Ukraine. It was also a conference where the Japanese presidency’s initial message was more comprehensively reflected in the discussions and the final statement, in comparison with the previous nine G7 Summits. It was about nuclear disarmament. All the G7 leaders including those of US, UK, and France, which are part of the P5 (the five Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council, together with Russia and China), visited Hiroshima and mentioned nuclear disarmament in the conference’s final statement. It can be a milestone in the political history of nuclear disarmament.

The Japanese government has been very keen on the topic under Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, even though its country’s security depends on the US military and nuclear umbrella. Prior to the Summit, Kishida promoted his official statement “Hiroshima Action Plan,” turned to “the world without nuclear weapons” in his speech at the NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons) Review Conference 2022, and especially called for the improvement in transparency of the nuclear force. It was the first Japanese Prime Minister's attendance to such a conference in history. Kishida was born in Hiroshima and has been elected in that region to the Parliament. Both his grandfather and father were members of the Parliament and avid promoters of nuclear weapon abolition. He therefore makes nuclear disarmament his lifework.

At the beginning of his speech, Kishida mentioned that Russia threatened to use nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine and stated critically, "I seriously fear that the disaster of nuclear weapons can be repeated." His action plan consisted of five pillars: [1] calling for a shared recognition of the importance of continuing the record of non-use of nuclear weapons; [2] enhancing transparency; [3] maintaining the decreasing trend of the global nuclear stockpile; [4] securing nuclear non-proliferation and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy upon that basis; and [5] having Japan promote the accurate understanding on the realities of nuclear weapons use through encouraging visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others (Kishida 2022).

For improvement in transparency, he called for disclosing information on the production of fissile materials, such as highly enriched uranium, plutonium, etc., which can be converted to make nuclear weapons. China has never officially disclosed how many nuclear weapons they developed and possess. On the other hand, the G7 Hiroshima Summit's final statement "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament" outlined five points corresponding to the Japanese government's Hiroshima Action Plan:

1. No use of nuclear weapons.
2. Reduction of the number of nuclear weapons.
3. Emphasizing the importance of transparency.
4. Banning the production of fissile material for use in the weapons or other nuclear explosive device: discussion for FMCT (Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty).
5. No nation should carry out any nuclear weapon test explosion or other nuclear explosion: discussion for CTBT (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty), etc.

However, both the Hiroshima Action Plan and the G7 Summit statement deeply disappointed many civil society organizations (CSOs) in Japan, which have

been promoting anti-nuclear weapons activities and campaigns, such as the groups of *hibakusha*, the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki 1945 bombings. Neither document discussed the TPNW (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons), which is the symbol and new hope of the CSOs and legally prohibits all countries, even the P5, to possess nuclear arms. These countries have refused to sign the TPNW.

The Japanese government even under Kishida has been insisting that with the severe global and regional (especially Northeast Asian) security situation, the TPNW's ideas are not realistic. Kishida's political stance is to promote nuclear disarmament only under the NPT regime, not through other ways. This position was common to the other G7 states. However, since the ratification of the NPT in 1970, the number of nuclear weapon states has been increasing and there have been several serious nuclear crises. The CSOs suspect that the nuclear deterrence theory merely encourages other countries to develop and possess nuclear weapons and has been increasing regional and global tensions. However, the deterrence theory is still the fundamental principle of the G7 Summit member countries. Their final statement in Hiroshima focused on the NPT regime but did not refer to the TPNW. Therefore, it can be said that diplomacy for nuclear disarmament at political level is still limited, even under a strongly motivated national leader like Kishida.

Ikeda's Philosophy of Science and the Ukrainian Crisis

Although modern science brought about bright sides, such as great improvement in the lives of human beings and material abundance, it also produced advanced weapons represented by nuclear arms and severe environmental problems. Ikeda described the essence of science and nuclear weapons in accordance with the *Lotus Sutra*:

Science and religion are in complementary relations in nature (Ikeda 1988–2022, VII, 587).

Science in essence tends to quantify everything; and soulless technology spurs on the commodification of human beings. Nuclear weapons symbolize the devilish nature of power. They are like the incarnation of the devil king. "Devil" means robber of life; the exact opposite of "Buddha," one who restores and invigorates life... I have described atomic weapons as the embodiment of darkness. But they could also be described as the

incarnation of mistrust in, and hatred toward, human beings... The philosopher Max Picard [1888–1965] argued that the atomic bomb is a symbol of a “disintegrating” world. Picard wrote, “The very force which holds the atoms together as they form a world is now being used to explode that world. It is by no means accidental that the atom bomb was invented in the day and age which lives and which dies by disintegrating everything.” The devilish nature of power functions to disintegrate and divide. It cuts people off from the universe, alienates them from other people, divides one country from another, and severs people’s bonds with nature. On the other hand, compassion unifies (Ikeda 2011, 57–8).

Knowledge alone cannot give rise to value. It is only when knowledge is guided by wisdom that value is created (Ikeda 2005).

Prior to the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Ikeda issued a statement to the G7 leaders and called for no first use of nuclear weapons (Ikeda 2023b). As he had already stated on January 11, 2023 (Ikeda 2023a),

As I have long asserted, if we consider nuclear weapons solely from the perspective of national security, we risk overlooking critically important issues. In my forty annual peace proposals issued since 1983, I have argued that the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons must be the pivotal focus of any discourse or deliberation. I have also stressed the need to face squarely the irrationality of nuclear weapons with their capacity to destroy and render illegible all evidence of our individual lives and our shared undertakings as societies and civilizations. A further point I would like to emphasize is what might be called the negative gravitational pull inherent in nuclear weapons. By this I mean the way in which escalating tensions around possible nuclear weapons use creates a sense of urgency and crisis that holds people in its grip as a kind of gravitational force, stripping them of their capacity to halt a further intensification of the conflict (Ikeda 2023a).

Regarding the Ukrainian crisis, Ikeda called for ceasing fire immediately and gaining the consensus of the concerned countries based on international humanitarian law and international human rights law at the United Nations and suggested no first use of nuclear weapons (Ikeda 2023a).

The situation in Ukraine brought a serious refugee crisis, too. As of the end of 2023, about six million Ukrainian refugees were displaced (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2024),

And yet the crisis continues. It has not only heightened tensions across Europe but also seriously impacted many other countries in the form of constrained food supplies, spiking energy prices and disrupted financial markets. These developments have increased the desperation of great numbers of people worldwide already afflicted by extreme weather events caused by climate change and the suffering and death resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial that we find a breakthrough in order to prevent any

further worsening of the conditions facing people worldwide, to say nothing of the Ukrainian people who are compelled to live with inadequate and uncertain supplies of electricity amidst a deepening winter and intensifying military conflict. I therefore call for the urgent holding of a meeting, under UN auspices, among the foreign ministers of Russia, Ukraine, and other key countries in order to reach an agreement on a cessation of hostilities. I also urge that earnest discussions be undertaken toward a summit that would bring together the heads of all concerned states in order to find a path to the restoration of peace... Recalling the commitment to protect life and dignity that undergirds International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, I urge all parties to bring about the earliest possible end to the present conflict (Ikeda 2023a).

Respecting human life is a core teaching of Buddhism. In 1280, Nichiren (1222–1282) had already underlined his “life first” philosophy as “Whether one has wealth or not, no treasure exceed the one called life” (Nichiren 2006, 1125).

Regarding the policy of no first use of nuclear weapons, Ikeda insisted that it would mitigate the tensions between the concerned countries. He reiterated in his G7 statement that the nuclear deterrence theory only raises fears and tensions, and mutual mistrust may bring the worst-case scenario of an actual use of nuclear weapons. Ikeda mentioned his efforts aimed at preventing a nuclear crisis during the Cold War. He said that the NPT and the TPNW have common aims and should be in a complementary relation to prevent a nuclear war:

Together with calling for the earliest possible resolution to the Ukraine crisis, I wish to stress the crucial importance of implementing measures to prevent the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, both in the current crisis and all future conflicts... There is already a basis from which to start: that is, the joint statement issued last January by the leaders of the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China in which they affirm that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”... The pledge of No First Use is a measure that nuclear-weapon states can take even while maintaining for the present their current nuclear arsenals; nor does it mean that the threat of some 13,000 nuclear warheads existing in the world today would quickly dissipate. However, what I would like to stress is that should this policy take root among nuclear-armed states, it will create an opening for removing the climate of mutual fear. This, in turn, can enable the world to change course—away from nuclear buildup premised on deterrence and to ward nuclear disarmament to avert catastrophe... The spirit and sense of purpose that prevailed at the time of the birth of the NPT is resonant with and complementary to the ideals that motivated the drafting and adoption of the TPNW. I strongly call for all parties to explore and expand ways to link the efforts made on the basis of these two treaties, drawing forth their synergistic effects toward a world free from nuclear weapons (Ikeda 2023a).

Stopping Escalating Cycles of Mistrust: Ikeda's Private Diplomacy with the USSR and Soka Gakkai's Activities During the Cold War

As a critical case of private diplomacy to prevent the use of nuclear weapons during the Cold War, this paper explores Ikeda's approach to the USSR. In 1956, Japan normalized its diplomatic relations with the USSR. Originally, establishing a bilateral peace treaty was envisioned at the same time, but the Northern Territories, which the Soviets attacked and occupied (even after the Japanese surrender) having unilaterally broken the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact of 1941, remained an insoluble issue. The northernmost territories that Japan asked to be returned became an enormous obstacle on which both sides failed to concede, leaving the issue under continuous deliberation after the normalization. Japan did invade China and neighboring states, but in the case of the USSR it was Japan that was invaded.

Yet, the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact of 1941 mandated that

Article 1: Both Contracting Parties undertake to maintain peaceful and friendly relations between them and mutually respect the territorial integrity and inviolability of the other Contracting Party.

Article 2: Should one of the Contracting Parties become the object of hostilities on the part of one or several third powers, the other Contracting Party will observe neutrality throughout the duration of the conflict ("Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact April 13, 1941" 1941).

As the consequence of the Japanese-Soviet conflict during the Second World War, 600,000 Japanese military personnel were sent to Siberia, where approximately ten per cent of them died. The USSR unilaterally incorporated the Northern Territories in February 1946, and forcefully evacuated approximately 17,000 Japanese from the islands. The Japanese government held that the Northern Territories, unlike the different case of the Senkaku Islands, were a territorial issue between Japan and the USSR.

On October 19, 1956, a "Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration" mentioned in its

Article 9: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan agree to continue, after the restoration of normal diplomatic relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan, negotiations for the conclusion of a Peace Treaty. In this connexion, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, desiring to meet the wishes of Japan and taking into consideration the interests of the Japanese State, agrees to transfer to Japan the Habomai Islands and the island of Shikotan, the actual transfer of these islands

to Japan to take place after the conclusion of a Peace Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan (United Nations 1957, 116).

Since then, however, due to the Northern Territories' issue no Peace Treaty has been signed with Russia. No USSR leader had visited Japan until Mikhail Gorbachev (1931–2022) in 1991, due more to political tensions caused by territorial issues than to ideological confrontation.

The Japanese government continued at all times to pick the Northern Territories' issue as its priority for discussion. This was a typical case of the inductive diplomatic approach of the Japanese government in achieving the objective of signing a peace treaty through repeated deliberations.

Ivan Kovalenko (1919–2005), the Director of the Japan Section, International Affairs Division of the Communist Party of the USSR, feared that the existing power balance between the US, USSR, China, and Japan would shift, leaving the USSR isolated as a result of Richard Nixon's (1913–1994) visit to China in 1972, and the ensuing normalization of China–Japan relations (Editing Committee of “In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda” 2007, 138). He regarded Ikeda with alarm for having had a hand in achieving the normalization, and so he began investigating the Soka Gakkai.

Kovalenko had originally enrolled in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the Far Eastern Federal University of Vladivostok to study Japan. After graduation he served in the military and was involved in the psychological operations in the battle of Khalkhin Gol, in 1939. Following the Second World War, he served as the editor-in-chief of *Nippon Shimbun* (Japanese Newspaper) for the Japanese prisoners interned in Siberia. He was responsible for manipulating the Japanese prisoners to turn pro-Soviet and served as the main agent responsible for Soviet policy regarding Japan.

Kovalenko suspected Ikeda of being pro-China and against the USSR (Editing Committee of “In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda” 2007, 139). Ikeda had called for diplomatic normalization between Japan and China in 1968 and had strongly promoted the friendship between the two countries. However, Ikeda did not support the propaganda of China or any other country, including the USSR. So, trying to categorize Ikeda as either pro-China or pro-USSR was not appropriate. One can say that he became a “close friend” or an “expert” of each country he visited. In his private diplomacy, he embraced dialogue with all sorts of people and political leaders “to awaken their Buddha natures.” Soka Gakkai explains that

all individuals have Buddha natures and

The title “Buddha” means “awakened one” and refers to the state of life—rich with wisdom, compassion, courage, and confidence—of a fully awakened individual (SGI-USA Study Department 2021).

In Nichiren Buddhism, becoming a Buddha is a philosophical endeavor. It is not simply joining a Buddhist school or becoming a monk. *Kosen-rufu*, “the process of spreading the principles of Nichiren Buddhism throughout society for the lasting peace and happiness of all people” (Tay 2022), was described by Ikeda as

an unceasing struggle against the negative forces that prevent humanity from achieving peace and happiness. By bravely responding to and triumphing over the challenges they present, we can elevate the life state of humankind (Ikeda 2022).

Ikeda also expected Soka Gakkai’s young members to play the role of a bridge connecting countries at the levels of promoting peace, culture, and education, but did not instruct them to support the governments’ policies in the same countries. Also, Ikeda and Soka Gakkai never cooperated with riots or violent movements against governments. In the 1960s in Japan, many college students, who were strongly influenced by the anti-Vietnam-War movement, China’s Cultural Revolution, and the May 1968 events in France, joined violent campaigns and activities on campuses against their universities and the Japanese government. Some of Soka Gakkai’s Student Division members, who were attending colleges in Japan, were also influenced by these campaigns, but Ikeda strongly disagreed with their attitude and condemned violent actions in any case. He shared his idea of reforming the society peacefully with the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism.

There is no need to conceive of a revolution based solely on such historical examples as the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution. It is superficial to think that a new society can be built following the same methods of past revolutions, and it is simply unrealistic to imagine that society can be reformed by waving sticks or using violence of any form. The image of a revolutionary as someone who employs such tactics is completely antiquated. And, personally, I do not wish to see a single young person do harm!... I think that the most important issue raised by the student-led All Campus Joint Struggle Committees is how to surmount the egoism of those in power, as well as that in our own lives. In other words, they are searching for a sure way to triumph over the devilish nature inherent in power and human life (Ikeda 2007, 18–9).

In December 1973, under Soviet guidance, A.L. Jarocinski, a member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and Maksim Pavlovič Kim (1908–1996), a

historian and an associate member of the same Academy, visited Ikeda at Soka University, which he had established in Tokyo in 1971. This was a visit made to a Japanese educational organization by members of the Soviet Academy of Sciences at a time when Japanese-Soviet political exchanges were difficult.

Ikeda was prepared for their visit and asked them to convey the following requests to Alexei Kosygin (1904–1980), the USSR's Prime Minister: “the establishment of a United Nations for Education,” “establishment of a cultural exchange association between Japanese and Soviet students,” “establishment of an Oriental Philosophy Faculty in Moscow State University,” an “Academic Exchange Agreement with Soka University,” “establishment of a food agency of the United Nations (for the resolution of food issues),” and the “freezing of nuclear tests.” Jarocinski replied that these were wonderful suggestions but since they were not experts, earnestly asked Ikeda to visit Moscow. This was the first invitation Ikeda received from the USSR (Editing Committee of “In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda” 2007, 140).

On September 8, 1974, at the invitation of Moscow State University, Ikeda set foot for the first time in the USSR. The date, September 8, was the day when Ikeda's Soka Gakkai mentor, Josei Toda (1900–1958), issued the “Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons” in 1957. It is clear that Ikeda visited the USSR with the “Declaration” in mind and with the determination to achieve nuclear weapon abolition. Coincidentally, Ikeda's “Recommendation on Normalization of Japan-China Relations” made in 1968 was on that very date, September 8.

At the time of Ikeda's visit to the USSR there was no doubt that the Academy of Sciences and Moscow State University were following the directions of the Soviet government and the Communist Party. The USSR embassies in various countries served as the bases for their intelligence. It is assumed the same for China at the time. In fact, Ikeda's invitation came from the Moscow State University after some unsuccessful decision-making discussions between the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR as to which institution should host the visitor (Editing Committee of “In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda” 2007, 143).

Kovalenko had much to do with the decision. This can be confirmed from his following report to the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

1. Mr. Ikeda is a leader of Japan's largest 10 million-member Buddhist organization.
2. The Soka Gakkai has a large mass media.
3. We cannot be disinterested in knowing how the Soka Gakkai evaluates the USSR foreign policy.
4. Mr. Ikeda's views are in concert with us as regards the co-existence of the US and USSR (Editing Committee of "In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda" 2007, 144).

The reference made in item 2 to "a large mass media" was to the Soka Gakkai's newspaper, *Seikyo Shimbun*, which has a nominal subscription of 5.5 million. For these reasons, Kovalenko preferred that the invitation be issued from Moscow State University to dilute any political appearance (Editing Committee of "In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda" 2007, 144). Kovalenko also arranged Ikeda's meeting with Kosygin. What he had in mind was that a top-level meeting between Kosygin and Ikeda would foreclose any criticism by members of the Communist Party Central Committee, as was usually the case. In 1994, Kovalenko recalled the situation in 1974:

It was learned that at first the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party did not welcome the visit of President Ikeda of the Soka Gakkai to the Soviet Union. This was because the leadership did not have the correct information concerning the Soka Gakkai. The Party's Central Committee had a long discussion concerning the Soka Gakkai and President Ikeda. There were arguments particularly at the Party's international department. Some maintained that no appropriate information was available about the character of Soka Gakkai and President Ikeda. The invitation could wait until we did further studies. The majority was of the opinion that the invitation should wait until after studies had been made about the objectives of the Soka Gakkai, the personality of President Ikeda as well as their social orientations. I was the only member of the International Department who did not go along with the opinion of the majority. I constantly insisted that President Ikeda must visit the Soviet Union and maintained that he should have top-level meetings and receive a national welcome. In the end my opinion won, and the Party bureaucrats were defeated. A special decision was made that he would have a national welcome. It was also decided that the Ikeda-Kosygin meeting should take place at the Kremlin Palace. However, it was decided that the invitation would be issued not from the Party's central authorities, but from the Moscow State University after weighing up another candidate, the Federation of Foreign Cultural Exchange Organizations. At the meeting with Premier Kosygin, President Ikeda who was the chief of the visiting delegation, shared his thoughts on politics and philosophy as well as the activities of Soka Gakkai that had a membership in excess of ten million. Kosygin was surprised at this and lost no time in stating that contacts between Soka Gakkai and the Soviet social organizations could

build productive and cooperative relations that could contribute to meaningful Soviet-Japan relations (Kovalenko 1994, 20–1).

During his ten-day stay in the USSR, Ikeda held talks with a number of top leaders in education, culture and politics, including the President of Moscow State University, the Minister in charge of Middle and High School Education (Minister for Secondary Education), the First Deputy Minister of Culture, the Chairman of the USSR Supreme National Conference, the Deputy Governor of the Academy of Sciences, the First Mayor of Moscow, the Chairman of the USSR Federation of Foreign Cultural Exchange Organizations, the Mayor of Leningrad, the Deputy President of Leningrad University, and the President of the Theologian Academy. He also met the novelist Mikhail Sholokhov (1905–1984), the winner of the 1965 Nobel Prize in Literature. Ikeda's central topics were nuclear disarmament and the need to avoid a confrontation between the USSR and China. Kosygin gave Ikeda his word that he was not thinking of isolating China:

Ikeda: China is concerned about the Soviets' approach to it.

Kosygin: The Soviet Union has no intention of either attacking China or isolating it.

Ikeda: Can I pass on to Chinese leaders what you told me?

Kosygin: Certainly (Nakazawa 2004, 61–2).

Ikeda sent the Japanese media his recollections of their dialogue, including Kosygin's words on nuclear weapon abolition, on which he spent most of the time.

On the last day of my stay in the Soviet Union, I had an opportunity to have a dialogue with Prime Minister Kosygin. It took about an hour and a half, and I expressed my convictions regarding nuclear issues. Prime Minister (Kosygin) stated clearly that the Soviet Union had no intention of using nuclear weapons and that it was seriously considering their total abandonment through due process. He was not thinking of isolating China. I make it a point to accept things said by people of responsibility. Perhaps he shared his innermost feelings because I was a civilian and not a politician. I also confirmed in China his strong decision and will towards total abolition of nuclear weapons. It seems to me that all mankind shares that wish. I asked myself how these wishes could be implemented. There is no other way than for the top leaders of the world to come together to continue patiently to talk about the matter. At the same time, the key lies in having a civilian exchange on a broad front (Ikeda 1974).

Kovalenko explained that Kosygin instructed him to maintain close relations with Ikeda after the dialogue (Kovalenko 1996, 334). In 1979, Ikeda published an

article in the Japanese media entitled “A Cultivated Man, Prime Minister Kosygin,” concerning the talks he had with the Soviet premier in 1974 and 1975:

The last two meetings I had with Prime Minister Kosygin exceeded two hours and during that time he was consistent in his conviction regarding nuclear disarmament. In fact, it was stronger during our second meeting. I recall Kosygin saying with passion, “There are enough nuclear arms to destroy the whole world. There is no guarantee that something horrible will not happen with someone like [Adolf] Hitler [1889–1945] appearing. Sooner or later, there is no doubt that humankind will decide on nuclear disarmament” (Ikeda 1979).

Vladimir Tropin, who was then the Vice President of Moscow State University, wrote in his book, written in Japanese, *In Search of a Spiritual Silk Road*, referring to Ikeda’s written report to Japanese media, that

Kosygin was a realist politician who clearly recognized that nuclear deterrence would not totally save the world from nuclear destruction (Tropin 2010, 64–5).

Ikeda visited Beijing in December 1974, three months after his visit to the USSR, and informed Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) and Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) about what Kosygin had told him (Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University 2002). It could be surmised that this was important information for the Chinese at a time of aggravated Chinese-Soviet relations.

A month later, in December 1974, Ikeda met with Henry Kissinger (1923–2023) at the Office of the Secretary at the US Department of State in Washington. While what they discussed was not made public, it can be assumed that Ikeda told Kissinger about his visits to China and the USSR as well as his cherished opinions regarding nuclear disarmament and peace. These would have been valuable information to the US regarding the situation concerning China and the USSR. As for the Japanese government, without Ikeda’s initiative Japan would have been left behind diplomatically when the US made a sudden visit to China, bypassing Japan. Kissinger entrusted Ikeda with an apology to the Japanese government for his discourtesy due to the need (of the US Administration) to keep the visit a diplomatic secret (Sato 2007, 204–9). After his return to Japan, Ikeda communicated the message to Eisaku Sato (1901–1975), the then Prime Minister (1964–72). Sato expressed his relief saying that those words had saved the honor of the Japanese government (Sato 2007, 209). The significance of Ikeda’s private diplomacy during 1974 and 1975 was that it involved bringing together four countries, the US, the USSR, China, and Japan.

Ikeda visited the USSR again in 1975 to have his second dialogue with Kosygin. He went again in 1981 to talk with Chairman of the Council of Ministers (1980–85) Nikolai Tikhonov (1905–1997), in 1987 for a second talk with Tikhonov, and on 27 July 1990 for a dialogue with Mikhail Gorbachev (Tropin 2010, 79–80). During his meeting in 1981 with Tikhonov, Ikeda proposed a summit between the US, China, Japan, and the USSR. Ikeda believed that humankind wished for the earliest possible US-USSR summit meeting to take place not in Washington or Moscow but in a neutral third place such as Switzerland. However, at that time no summit leader was willing to go along with his views (Tropin 2010, 89–94).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was globally criticized and the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games that took place a year before Ikeda's meeting with Tikhonov were boycotted by nearly fifty countries including the US, Japan, and China. While the whole world vehemently criticized the USSR, Ikeda visited the country with two hundred Soka Gakkai members, Soka University staff and students in 1981 for cultural exchanges. His purpose was to make both Japanese and Russian citizens come to get to know each other more. For example, an exhibition of Japanese dolls (traditional crafts) was held to introduce Japanese culture and arts (Sato 2007; Tropin 2010). Ikeda must have believed that at times when political tension is at the highest it was important to bring people together through cultural exchange, and for the leaders to talk to each other. In his first meeting with Kosygin in 1974, Ikeda called for mutual understanding between Japan and the USSR at the grass-root level through cultural exchanges. He believed that the mutual mistrust would only escalate into increasing tension, which finally would lead to warfare.

The February 1990's version of *Our Northern Territories*, published by the Japanese MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)'s Ministerial Secretariat of Public Relations for domestic purposes, listed Soka Gakkai President Ikeda's visits to the USSR in 1974 and 1975 twice in its chronological table of Japan-Soviet Relations following the normalization of relations (MOFA 1990, 102–5). This shows that the MOFA too had to recognize the importance of Ikeda's visit to the USSR. However, the references to Ikeda's visits to the USSR were deleted from the 2013 version of the same *Our Northern Territories* (MOFA 2013, 60). Further, there was no description of exchanges conducted by other civil society organizations with the USSR or Russia. This is proof that the government does

not recognize the significance of civilian diplomacy due to its strong belief that negotiation between states remains the sole prerogative of state diplomacy.

The Japanese government remained persistent in its attitude to the Northern Territories issue, so that fierce exchanges continued between Japan and the USSR. The exchanges that took place in 1970 between Haruki Mori (1911–1988), the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and A.P. Okonishnikov, the USSR Chargé d’Affairs ad interim to Japan, spells out clearly the assertions of both parties regarding the Northern Territories issue. Comparing these views it was clear that there was a marked difference on the Northern Territories issue between the Japanese and Soviet governments. The Japanese government gave this issue the greatest priority in bilateral relations and as the most important issue, it assumed no compromise in diplomatic negotiations. Without the resolution of this issue, it would not negotiate regarding a peace treaty. The Soviet government on the other hand regarded the Return of the Northern Territories Campaign conducted by the Japanese government and political publicity as hostile activities against the USSR, and not a territorial issue. It appears it could not understand why “an individual issue” should be an obstacle to having negotiations on the most important inter-states issue such as concluding a peace treaty (MOFA 1990).

The rigidity between the two camps gradually began to loosen as Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the Soviet leadership in 1985. His “New Thinking” in diplomacy and his powerful support for nuclear disarmament opened a dialogue with the Western countries. They also brought about a great change in the situation of Northeast Asia. In his inauguration speech as the Soviet Communist Party Secretary General on March 11, 1985, he clearly stated his intention of improving the relations between China and the USSR. He met with Li Peng (1928–2019), the Vice Prime Minister of China (1983–87) in Moscow and communicated the intention of the Soviet government to seek improvement in Chinese-Soviet relations (Nakazawa 2004, 190–91).

In May 1989, Gorbachev visited China, providing an opportunity for improving Chinese-Soviet relations. Also, on 30 September 1990 at lightning speed he established relations with the Republic of Korea, which was politically in the Western camp. Gorbachev did not visit Seoul, however.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, Gorbachev released on January 25, 1986, a public statement as Soviet Secretary General stating that he would aim

for the total abolition of nuclear weapons by the 21st century (Shultz 1986). He stated that the 20th century had presented humankind with the gift of nuclear energy, but this enormous benefit could well become a means of destruction, and asked the West whether the antithesis can be resolved rationally. Specifically, he posited that the development of space weapons would be an extremely dangerous act. For these reasons he believed it was more rational to start by abolishing nuclear weapons (Nakazawa 2004, 205–6).

Since Gorbachev repeatedly used the term “rationally” in his declaration, it can be interpreted that he was espousing nuclear weapon abolition from a moral point of view. At that time, however, countries in the Western camp, including the Japanese government, merely registered this declaration as propaganda (Nakazawa 2004, 205). By contrast, on January 27 of the same year Ikeda sent an article to the Novosti Press Agency in support of Gorbachev’s statement and included his wishes. Ikeda expressed his opposition to the militarization of space and stated that dependence on “faith in deterrence” rooted in mutual distrust could only result in an arms race contrary to advancing negotiation for disarmament, and that the US-Soviet Summit meeting should work to dispel mutual distrust (Nakazawa 2004, 207). The Novosti Press Agency was established in 1941 as the Soviet Information Bureau and reorganized in 1961 as a national press agency. Since it could be considered the substantial information bureau for the Soviet government, one can assume that Ikeda’s message had surely reached the Soviet leadership.

The US-Soviet summit meeting between Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) in 1986 in Reykjavik, Iceland, and the signing of the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty are both famous events. In the month following the Reykjavik Summit, Gorbachev visited India on November 27, 1987, and with Rajiv Gandhi (1944–1991), the Prime Minister of India (1984–89), jointly signed the “Delhi Declaration on the Principles of a Nuclear Weapons Free and Non-Violent World” (Kundu 2011). The Declaration established ten items, including: making peaceful co-existence the universal norm of international relations, recognizing human life as the highest value, making non-violence the foundation of activities of human community, and uniting under the common principles of disarmament and development regardless of religion and race. With regard to nuclear disarmament, the need was recognized for establishing agreements on six items, including: total nuclear abolition by the end

of the 20th century, suspension of deploying nuclear weapons in space, total prohibition of nuclear tests, prohibition of development and manufacture of new weapon of mass destructions, prohibition of the use and stockpiling of chemical weapons, and reducing the levels of conventional weapons and military forces.

The nuclear weapon abolition referred to in the Declaration reflects the Mahatma Gandhi's (1879–1947) spirit of non-violence, and as such it shows Gorbachev's opening to a sense of morality and spirituality in addition to his merely political approach to the subject. This ideology belongs neither to Marxism nor Leninism; it was Gorbachev's manifestation of his personal feelings, beyond political bargaining on nuclear weapon reduction aimed at relaxation of Cold War tension.

In his Vladivostok speech on July 28, 1986, Gorbachev spoke in favor of Japan's Three Non-Nuclear Principles and the Peace Constitution. However, he pointed out that Japan, a country that should show leadership in advancing nuclear disarmament and peace, was not doing so because it was under the US military and nuclear umbrella. His declaration read as an indirect comment aimed at the US, but it could also be understood to voice his regret that Japan as the only country that was bombed with nuclear weapons had an important mission to bring about world peace but was not able to perform it:

We support a change to having better relations with Japan as it has become a country with first class significance. The country that was the first victim of the US nuclear weapons has in a short period made a great advance in the fields of industry, trade, education, science, and technology to receive our admiration. The enviable success that Japan enjoys is not due merely to the concentration, discipline, and energy of the people of Japan but to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles on which its foreign policy is publicly built. However, attention must be paid to the recent reality that these principles along with the Peace article of the Japanese Constitution are increasingly and markedly ignored... Since the latter half of the 1970s, the US has enlarged its military power in the Pacific and under the pressure of the US, three military states of Washington, Tokyo and Seoul are in the process of being formed... Of the three nuclear weapons states of this region, two states, China and the Soviet Union have the obligation of non-first use of nuclear weapons; however, the US deploys nuclear weapons delivery systems and nuclear warheads on the Korean peninsula, which is one of the regions' critical areas, and has deployed on Japanese territory nuclear weapons delivery vehicles (MOFA 1987, 403–4).

Starting on 25 May 1987 the Soka Gakkai produced an anti-nuclear-weapon exhibition, "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World," which took place at Moscow City Allied Artists Hall on Kuznetsky Most Street in the heart of Moscow

(Tobisawa 2018), under the co-sponsorship of the UN Disarmament Bureau, the UN Public Relations Bureau, the Soviet Peace Protection Committee, and Soka Gakkai. Also, supporting organizations included the Soviet Ministry of High and Middle Special Education, the Soviet Foreign Friendship Cultural Exchange Association, the Soviet Women's Committee, the Soviet National Youth Committee, Hiroshima City, and Nagasaki City. 70,000 people visited the exhibition. According to the Soka Gakkai Office of International Affairs, a great deal of complex effort went into the preparation of the exhibition. Unfortunately, no materials survive from which to learn of the efforts concerned. There was a statement from the First Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Supreme Council, Pyotr Demichev (1917–2010), who was present at the opening of the exhibition: “This is totally in line with our present aim of nuclear abolition.” He implied that the Soviet government was aware that the exhibition was in line with Gorbachev's policy of nuclear abolition (Tobisawa 2018).

According to the Soka Gakkai Office of International Affairs, the Soviet government had consistently said, “We do not wish war. Ours is a country that aims for peace,” and that it was forced to possess nuclear weapons because the US did. The Soviet representatives whom Ikeda met all without exception expressed the same thoughts. On the other hand, it may be said that cooperating in the opening of the anti-nuclear exhibition provided the Soviet government with a political opportunity to be able to profess that it was a peaceful country. On this question, the Soka Gakkai had a different view recognizing, namely, that it was generally accepted at the time in the world of international politics that the USSR was for disarmament and worked in close cooperation with Prvoslav Davinić, a Yugoslavian national, who was the head of the World Disarmament Campaign Office of the UN Disarmament Bureau. Davinić was involved as well in the opening of the Moscow anti-nuclear exhibition.

Compared with the same exhibition in China, the difference was that in Moscow the UN Disarmament Bureau was listed among the co-sponsoring organizations. Even if this proved to be a case of sheer political utility, according to the Soka Gakkai Office of International Affairs, Ikeda had no qualms about being used. He intended to do his best above and beyond the expectation of the Soviets and inspire them by showing the real current of peace. In his opening speech at the exhibition, he challenged the audience to agree that we all have an anti-nuclear obligation.

Japan is the one and only country on which nuclear bombs were dropped. I personally believe that as a Japanese person, a pacifist, and as a Buddhist I have the obligation, the mission, responsibility, and the right to share throughout the world our harrowing and cruel experiences (*Seikyo Shimbun* 1987a).

The exhibition displayed for the first time in the USSR valuable material about the atomic weapons. A panel at the exhibition explained in detail the causes and effects of a nuclear war, including epidemic diseases, leukemia, and starvation (*Seikyo Shimbun* 1987a). No content of the exhibition was changed because it was displayed in the USSR. On the contrary, new exhibits were added including an explanation on the assumed radiation exposure if and when a nuclear bomb would be dropped on Moscow, the history of the US-USSR disarmament negotiations, and expected climatic changes of the planet engulfed in a “nuclear winter.” There was even a panel encouraging the peaceful use of military budgets (*Seikyo Shimbun* 1987a).

The initiator of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), Bernard Lown (1921–2021), was also a welcome guest and in his meeting with Ikeda shared his thoughts after viewing the exhibition, stating that citizens’ diplomacy or something of that kind was needed to initiate a movement for nuclear abolition.

You know, the problem is that the facts (of atomic bombings and devastation caused) are forgotten by all except the Japanese people... in that sense, it is of great significance that the exhibition has been shown around the world. One can never overemphasize the importance of educating humankind. In fact, *TIME* (magazine) referring to the dialogue between President Ikeda and Professor Arnold J. Toynbee [1889–1975] wrote, “The passion of the Soka Gakkai Honorary President has created an anti-war united force of people to people.” I believe this is really an important point. In the end, unless we engage people there will be no political change. The IPPNW too aims at reaching out to make people participate. The key is how we will change their mindsets. It is not enough for doctors to give their patients medicine to restore their health. The role of doctors is to help patients change their way of life. Doctors must help patients understand what will really help them. In that sense, unless we have hundreds of people embark on a new diplomacy, we will not be able to really resolve global issues (*Seikyo Shimbun* 1987a [message of Bernard Lown to the exhibition]).

At the time Gorbachev was out of the country, visiting Romania. Ikeda attended the opening ceremony of his anti-nuclear-weapon exhibition and on the following day, 26 May 1987, met Nikolai Ryzhkov (1929–2024), Soviet Prime Minister (1985–91) at the Kremlin for one hour and twenty minutes (*Seikyo Shimbun*

1987b). Ryzhkov gave Ikeda Gorbachev's message welcoming him to the USSR and praised Soka Gakkai's peace activities. The rest of the time was spent with Ikeda raising six questions and Ryzhkov answering them. Those were nuclear disarmament and peace, Japanese-Soviet relations and the role of Japan in the Asia and Pacific region, the prospects of the USSR-US summit meeting, participation at the Seoul Olympic Games, the agenda of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee General Meeting in June of that year (1987), and expectations for the youth of the next generation. Valentina Tereshkova, the Chair of the Soviet Foreign Friendship Cultural Exchange Association, and Ivan Kovalenko, now Head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, were also at the meeting.

From Ryzhkov's statements that were made public, one senses a somewhat cautious attitude towards Soka Gakkai from the position of a Communist state that denies religion, but one can feel a sense of trust for allowing the anti-nuclear exhibition to take place.

This time, Soka Gakkai Honorary President Ikeda visited the Soviet Union with a noble mission, the exhibition "Threat of Nuclear Weapons to Our World"... The significance of this event is not limited to the exhibition itself, but in bringing the message against nuclear weapons. It is most important and most necessary. The exhibition theme and that it is taking place is most timely and is received with great welcome, and we are satisfied... To be honest, it is not difficult to understand that we do not fully identify with the philosophy of Soka Gakkai. This is because we are unbelievers. However, in our relations as humans and also with regard to international activities, there are great meanings in studying the thinking and philosophy of the Soka Gakkai. I have not read all the Soka Gakkai Honorary President Ikeda's Annual Peace Proposals but that is what I feel. I read his words in this book (collection of Annual Peace Proposals) that he wishes "to work to achieve peace for all humankind." While it is difficult to evaluate his standing with this single sentence, I believe it speaks of the essence of the activities of Soka Gakkai and of its President.

[On disarmament issues:] Today, simply the number of missiles should not affect humankind. It's because humankind can be destroyed even with one tenth or one hundredth of the missiles we already have. What is truly needed now, is a new approach and philosophy for our humankind to survive. What we need is a new approach to the relations between states. This is the very thinking that lies at the basis of the comprehensive disarmament proposal made by Secretary General Gorbachev since last year. It was also the basis of his statement at the International Forum that took place in Moscow early this year. We must consider the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, give thought to the positions of the victimized Japanese people, and exert efforts so that this terrible disaster will not be repeated. As the only atom-bombed country, Japan must

become a country that will sound a huge warning to all humankind. If nuclear war takes place today, the disastrous scene will be a thousand times that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (*Seikyo Shimbun* 1987b).

These statements of Ryzhkov can be said to be consistent with Gorbachev's diplomatic philosophy, "New Thinking." With regard to Japanese-Soviet relations, he recognized the important role and presence of Japan in the Asia-Pacific region and emphasized that the USSR should build good neighborly relations, including economic cooperation, with its geographic neighbor Japan. He did not, however, fail to put in his speech conditions with regard to Japan-US relations and the Northern Territories issue.

Soviet-Japan relations including economic issues, while not satisfactory at present, are important from the perspective of all mankind. Japan could not be disinterested in the nature of its neighboring countries. For this reason, we must build the basis for co-existence. We have no intention of giving a warning as regards Japan-US relations. I do not believe the Japan-US linkage necessarily hinders normalization of the Soviet-Japanese relations. Recently, there are intensified Japan-US economic relations; what it teaches us is that a propensity to have special relations with a single country is not wise in international relations. I believe that Japan needs comprehensive friendly relations. As regards Soviet-Japanese relations, there are issues regarding Shibomai, Hakotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu (the Northern Territories issue). What is important there is whether there is a political will to see progress in Soviet-Japanese relations (*Seikyo Shimbun* 1987b).

In December 1987, immediately following the signing of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Gorbachev government sent a special envoy, Anatoly L. Adamishin, the Soviet Foreign Minister, to Japan to provide an ex post facto explanation. Adamishin presented the explanation to the Japanese government, and he also visited Ikeda to explain the contents of the Treaty (Nakazawa 2004, 218). This would indicate that the Gorbachev government considered Ikeda at least as important as the Japanese government with respect to nuclear policy.

The Japanese government failed to grasp the overall situation following the easing of East-West tensions by continuing to set their priority on the single issue of the Northern Territories. As the Soviet-Western-nations relations improved, the Japanese government made it its top foreign policy priority to realize the historic first ever visit to Japan of the Soviet leader and to open a way for drastic improvement of bilateral relations towards normalization (MOFA 1991).

With that in mind, the Japanese government held seven meetings between the

Japanese and Soviet foreign ministers after the January 1986 visit to Japan of Eduard Shevardnadze (1928–2014), the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1985–90). Also, starting with Shevardnadze’s second visit to Japan in 1988, there were seven meetings of the Peace Treaty working group. In May 1989, the Japanese government proposed, while working on the priority issue of a peace treaty that included the “territorial issues,” to expand overall Japanese-Soviet relations including other areas, economic assistance in particular. Japan welcomed an economic mission from the USSR, which was suffering from a fiscal crisis at the time, shared Japan’s know-how in economic development and, as part of the humanitarian assistance, provided 2.6-billion-yen worth of medical devices to the region suffering from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster and a 1 billion yen worth grant in food and medical goods as well as 100 million dollars credit in food for the purposes of humanitarian assistance (MOFA 1991). It was clear that they were provided with the objective of gaining an immediate return of the Northern Territories. The Soviet government, suffering from a fiscal crisis, naturally accepted the support but the road map concerning the progress of negotiations of a peace treaty and resolution of the Northern Territories issue remained obscure.

In July 1990, the Japanese government dispatched to the USSR Yoshio Sakurauchi (1912–2003), the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan, to finalize the agreement on Gorbachev’s visit to Japan. On July 25, Sakurauchi and the Japanese government mission met Gorbachev, but since the visiting group demanded an immediate return of the Northern Territories from the start, Gorbachev answered angrily, “We can call them our Southern Territories,” and cut short the meeting (Sato 2010, 118). The meeting lasted seven minutes. Masaru Sato, former chief analyst of the Intelligence and Analysis Service of the MOFA, reckoned the seven-minute meeting was reduced to about three and half minutes because of the need for interpretation, which meant a mere one minute and forty-five seconds per person (Sato 2007, 206).

Two days later, on July 27, 1990, Gorbachev held talks with Ikeda. The talks lasted for one hour and thirty minutes (Ikeda 2002, 36). It was customary in those days for the Soviet government to decide prior to meeting with its President, how much time would be allowed, whether ten, fifteen, or thirty minutes, and communicate this to prospective visitors (Ikeda 2002, 36). From the beginning, the time allocated was one hour and thirty minutes. In the talks,

Gorbachev replied to Ikeda's request for his visit to Japan: "Sometime around cherry blossoms the next year." In other words, Gorbachev told Ikeda that he would visit Japan in the spring of 1991. It is well known that indeed the visit was made in April 1991. On July 28, the day after the event, the Japanese media, including the main newspapers, reported on the first page the meeting between Ikeda and Gorbachev and the Soviet leader's intention to visit Japan.

Sato explained the meaning of the talks held between Ikeda and Gorbachev. According to him, the Soviet government was initially prepared to announce Gorbachev's visit to Japan during the talks with Sakurauchi, but that was changed to the talks with Ikeda. Ikeda referred to the conversation in his own notes:

I did some homework for the talks. This is because the situation was very fluid, whether or not the President's visit to Japan would be realized. Two days before my visit, negotiations with the Japanese Parliamentary delegation were not successful and the question of his visit to Japan had been returned to a blank sheet... I said, "We want you to come with your lady Raisa during the most beautiful season, in spring when cherry blossoms are out or in autumn when our maples are in full color." When I told him that we greatly awaited his visit, the President said: "Up to now there were just too many stereotyped dialogues. If we start to work in collaboration, things will be resolved eventually. It will do no good to continue to refer to 'preconditions' or 'final warnings.'" I said to him, "I believe now is the chance for you to visit Japan." He expressed himself definitely and said: "I will definitely realize my visit to Japan. It is not normal not to have dialogue with Japan. If possible, I would like to visit Japan in the spring." In this way, the historical visit to Japan by the highest leader of the Soviet Union became a reality (Ikeda 2002, 48-9).

According to Sato, there was no overstatement in the memorandum. This was the moment when the Japanese government's Soviet diplomacy depended on Ikeda (Sato 2010, 118-19). He went on to say that Ikeda, who did not refer to the Northern Territories issue, was the best contact person as far as the Soviet government was concerned (Sato 2010, 119). In fact, the MOFA was afraid that a possible breakdown of Sakurauchi's talks with Gorbachev, with the resultant failure of the Soviet leader's visit to Japan, would lead to a collapse of bilateral relations. It urgently asked Ikeda to request Gorbachev to visit Japan in their meeting (Sato 2007, 206). Ikeda accepted the request saying that he "would act as a man of culture because that is what he is." Sato took note of Ikeda's comments that he would act as a man of culture and said that Ikeda was able to contribute to Japan's national interest because in this capacity he kept a certain distance from politics (Sato 2007, 206). Sato commented that it was true that with threats from terrorism and conflicts with Communist countries it was

difficult to find compromises among governments, but cultural and educational exchanges could provide answers. The following are his thoughts on the subject.

President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai have steadily promoted international exchanges in many ways including through the Soka Universities... the (Japanese) diplomats have not been able to make good use of the networks created by President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai. Even today the diplomats fail to read signals sent from abroad... Soka Gakkai enjoys a solid presence in Japan as a religious, social, and cultural organization with a network encompassing the elites and the grassroots. No diplomacy can ignore these facts (Sato 2007, 205).

Ikeda and Gorbachev's meeting is evidence of how citizens' multiple and steady cultural exchanges at the grassroots level can provide the key to relaxing tension between states. It is not a sufficient explanation for Sato to point out that the Soviet government informed Ikeda of Gorbachev's visit to Japan because the Soka Gakkai leader did not refer to the Northern Territories issue. The meeting was made possible due to educational and cultural factors. Present at the meeting were Gorbachev's government staff and advisors including Chingiz Aitmatov (1928–2008), a writer and member of the Soviet Presidential Conference (Advisory Board), Anatoly A. Logunov (1926–2015), President of Moscow State University, Gennady Yagozin, Chairman of the Soviet State Education Council, Anatoly Chernyaev (1921–2017), Principal Foreign Policy Advisor to President Gorbachev, Karen Brutents (1924–2017), the First Deputy Chief of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, and a journalist called Dunaev, member of the editorial committee of the Novosti Press Agency (Nakazawa 2004, 247). They were supporters of the "New Thinking" and perestroika and the central brains of Gorbachev's government.

Ikeda published with Logunov their dialogue entitled *The Third Rainbow Bridge* in 1987 in Japanese. It was translated and published in Russian in 1998, and in Chinese in 1990. The dialogue covered the authors sharing their common thoughts on peace and education coming from different regimes and religious views. At the time he met and talked with Gorbachev, Ikeda was preparing for the joint publication of a Dialogue with Aitmatov, *Ode to the Grand Spirit*. The book was published in Japanese in 1991, in German in 1992 and in Russian in 1994. The dialogue covered poetry and literature. Ikeda also had a dialogue with Yagozin when he was the Minister in charge of Soviet High and Middle School Education. Ikeda was a long-standing friend of Dunaev since his first visit to the

USSR in 1975 (Ikeda 2002, 40–1).

Gorbachev had graduated from Moscow State University from which Ikeda received an Honorary Doctorate in 1975, when Logunov was President of the University. Since Moscow State University and Soka University have academic agreements with an active exchange of students, Ikeda's meeting with Gorbachev was a friendly one, unlike a formal courtesy call. It is reasonable to suggest that the degree of trusting relations was different from the outset between private diplomacy based on cultural and educational exchange, which Ikeda had nurtured over fifteen years, and government diplomacy. Also, the Soviet side regarded Ikeda not as a political agent but as a man of culture from the beginning. In 2014, in his "Message for the 40th Anniversary of Ikeda 's Visit to the USSR," Gorbachev called Ikeda "a philosopher who has a keen intellect, a humanist, and a man of letters" (*Seikyo Shimbun* 2014).

After the Cold War, Gorbachev and Ikeda jointly published *Moral Lessons of the Twentieth Century* in Japanese in 1996 and in eleven languages including English in 2005, covering their thoughts on life and philosophy (Gorbachev and Ikeda 2005). Political diplomacy tends to end when issues are discussed and overcome. Cultural exchanges, however, continue at the citizens' level with further exchanges of personnel and information. Cultural relations are apt to continue behind the scenes even when political relations cease. In that sense, cultural relations could be said to be firmer than their political counterparts. In this case, Gorbachev's choice to communicate an important decision of the USSR to Ikeda rather than to a representative of the Japanese government underscored that cultural exchange can at times represent high politics. Gorbachev's April 1991 visit to Japan signified the end of the Cold War in Northeast Asia, as it was the first visit to the region by a supreme leader of the USSR.

A question can be asked today: what is the lesson of Ikeda's private diplomacy and Soka Gakkai's actions during the Cold War for the current Ukraine crisis? There are two key points: mitigating tensions by making dialogues with top-class political and social leaders of the concerned countries and promoting cultural and educational exchanges at the grassroots level. In fact, what civil society organizations, including religious organizations, can do is limited after countries have started wars and intensified battles. Meeting with political leaders directly is rather difficult as they may often lose their composure. However, civil society organizations or their individual members can still promote grassroots level

exchanges. One of the most important points is to avoid isolating citizens in their countries, and to anchor their minds to peaceful human exchanges. Especially in the case when political diplomacy and negotiations are deadlocked, such private diplomacy or activity are useful to maintain a dialogue with the concerned countries.

Conclusion

Nuclear weapons are one of the most spectacular inventions of science in human history. Although human beings created the worst weapons ever, which can blow all of them off the map in just a second, these weapons have now existed for nearly eighty years. With the Ukrainian crisis, the fear that nuclear weapons can actually be used has spread as never before since the end of Cold War.

The Japanese government has been taking initiatives for nuclear disarmament under Prime Minister Kishida, who was born in and has been elected in Hiroshima, since 2021. Japan has also greatly enhanced the consciousness of its allied powers, especially G7 member countries. The G7 Summit in Japan was held in Hiroshima in 2023 and all its leaders, including those of the United States, the United Kingdom and France, which are authorized to possess nuclear weapons under the NPT regime, visited the memorial site where the US atomic bomb was dropped in 1945. The Summit also reinforced a sense of unity in support of Ukraine by receiving its President Zelenskyy. Kishida's proposal for nuclear disarmament called "Hiroshima Action Plan," which he officially announced at the NPT Review Conference in August 2022, became a base of the G7 Hiroshima Summit's final statement. The Action Plan called for five points including enhancing transparency. However, both the Action Plan and the G7's final statement were based on the NPT concept and nuclear deterrence theory and did not mention the TPNW because the nuclear weapon states and their allied powers, including Japan, think the TPNW is not realistic.

The TPNW legally prohibits all countries from possessing nuclear weapons. The five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council (P5) are legally authorized to possess nuclear weapons under the NPT. The G7 Hiroshima Summit was one of the most successful conferences in the Summit's history. However, it can be said that the governments' diplomacy on nuclear disarmament is still less effective when it comes to mitigating tensions between concerned

countries and to stopping the escalation cycles of worldwide nuclear arms race in the post-Cold War era. On the other hand, anti-nuclear weapon civil society organizations and groups of *hibakusha*, whose aim is the total abolition of nuclear weapons, think that the nuclear deterrence theory rather raises the tensions and the fears that the weapons may be used.

Daisaku Ikeda of Soka Gakkai examined the nature of nuclear weapons in accordance with Nichiren Buddhism. In his dialogue with Anatoly Logunov, a Russian Scientist and the former Rector of Moscow State University, Ikeda firstly explained the merits and demerits of science and argued that science and religion are basically in a complementary relation. Ikeda underlined that wisdom, not knowledge only, is needed to use science rightly. He regarded nuclear weapons as the worst thing human beings ever invented when they use science wrongly. Under Buddhist teachings, he called the weapons as the symbol of “devilish nature of power” and a “robber of life.” Ikeda made statements to the G7 Hiroshima Summit and on the Ukrainian Crisis and suggested that the P5 adopt the policy of no first use of nuclear weapons and agree to a cease fire in Ukraine based on international humanitarian laws and human right laws. The aim of these proposals was to mitigate fears that the weapons may be used and to stop the catastrophic loss of human lives in the war. Ikeda also believed that the original ideas of the NPT and the TPNW are consistent rather than adversarial.

The Cold War ended without the use of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that the nuclear race reached the peak and there were several crises such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. In Northeast Asia, Ikeda greatly contributed to mitigate the tensions between Japan, China, United States, and the USSR with his private diplomacy based on Nichiren Buddhism. He and Soka Gakkai did not support any propaganda, but strongly promoted mutual understanding at the grassroots level through cultural and educational exchanges. Ikeda's private diplomacy dramatically improved the relations between Japan, China, the USSR, and the United States. The Japanese government finally depended on him to invite Gorbachev to Japan in 1991. In fact, the USSR's Supreme Leader's visit to Japan was the event that terminated the Cold War in Northeast Asia.

With his private diplomacy, Ikeda played a role of messenger of the national leaders' intentions and connected citizens through cultural and educational exchanges. His private diplomacy succeeded in persuading the leaders to avoid the most negative and worst choices, and in making citizens feel much closer both

in the East and the West. In accordance with Nichiren Buddhism, it can be said that Ikeda tried to awake the Buddha nature of each leader and individual. Becoming a “Buddha” originally means an awakened person who is rich with wisdom, compassion, courage, and confidence. It does not mean becoming a monk or a member of a Buddhist school. In that sense, Ikeda and Soka Gakkai have revived the original teachings of Buddhism, which are philosophical, universal, and for all people in the world even though they are not Buddhists and have tried to return religion to its proper position in society. This was one of the reasons why Ikeda called for restoring diplomatic channels with China and the USSR, which were Communist countries that prohibited or oppressed religion.

References

- Arms Control Association. 2023. “Russia Withdraws Ratification of Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.” November. Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/4a5lmD9>.
- Editing Committee of “In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda.” 2007. *池田大作の軌跡 2——平和と文化の大城* (In the Footsteps of Daisaku Ikeda: 2. The Great Castle of Peace and Culture). Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha.
- Gorbachev, Mikhail, and Daisaku Ikeda, 2005. *Moral Lessons of the Twentieth Century: Gorbachev and Ikeda on Buddhism and Communism*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 1974. “平和への脈搏 訪ソ10日間に思う” (Pulsating for Peace: My Ten Days Visit to the Soviet Union). *Tokyo Shimbun*, September 25.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 1979. “蓄積された風格 コスイギン首相” (A Cultivated Man: Prime Minister Kosygin). *Sunday Mainichi*, February 11. Reprinted in *忘れ得ぬ出会い* (Unforgettable Meetings), Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbun, 1982, 192–93.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 1988–2022. *池田大作全集* (The Complete Works of Daisaku Ikeda). 150 vol. Tokyo: Nippon Seikyo Shimbun.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 2002. *大道を歩む: 私の人生記録3* (Following Moral Principles: My Records of Life, Volume 3). Tokyo: Mainichi Newspaper Co. Ltd.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 2005. “The University of the Twenty-first Century—Cradle of World Citizens (Commemorating the First Commencement Ceremony of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, CA, USA, May 22, 2005).” Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/4bkb4jw>.

- Ikeda, Daisaku. 2007. *The New Human Revolution, Volume 14*. Santa Monica, CA: World Tribune Press.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 2011. *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, Volume III*. Santa Monica, CA: World Tribune Press.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 2022. "Living True to Our Vow to Awaken the Buddha Nature in All People [Ikeda Sensei's Lecture Series, 84]." Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3UwdQLV>.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 2023a. "The Ukraine Crisis and No First Use of Nuclear Weapons." January 11. Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3UL8eyv>.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. 2023b. "Statement on the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the Ukraine Crisis and No First Use of Nuclear Weapons." April 27. Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3JOhaNt>.
- Japan Times*. 2023. "Putin Says Russia's Nuclear Arsenal Is Near Fully Modernized." December 20. Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3WLSAtd>.
- Kishida, Fumio. 2022. "General Debate at the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)" August 1. Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3y6pVQk>.
- Kovalenko, Ivan. 1994. "優れた思想家 国際安全の闘士 I.I.コワレンコ: 訪ソ20年の歴史と証言" (Distinguished Thinker and Fighter in International Security I.I. Kovalenko: A Testimony by Kovalenko about the 20 Years History of Ikeda's Visits to the Soviet Union). *Daibyaku Renge* 11(November):20–1.
- Kovalenko, Ivan. 1996. *対日工作の回想* (Memoir of Intelligence Operation in Relations with Japan). Tokyo: Bungeishunju Ltd.
- Kundu, Nivedita Das. 2011. "Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Delhi Declaration." *Russia Beyond*, November 25. Accessed April 21, 2024. <https://bit.ly/4a2xLHT>.
- MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). 1987. *外交青書 1987年版(第31号)* (Diplomatic Blue Book 1987 [no. 31]). Tokyo: MOFA.
- MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). 1990. *われらの北方領土1990年度版資料編* (Our Northern Territories: 1990 Documentary Edition). Tokyo: MOFA.
- MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). 1991. *外交青書1991年版(第35号)* (Diplomatic Blue Book 1991 [no. 35]). Tokyo: MOFA.
- MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). 2013. *われらの北方領土2013年度版資料編* (Our Northern Territories: 2013 Documentary Edition). Tokyo: MOFA.
- Nakazawa, Takayuki. 2004. *ゴルバチョフと池田大作 冷戦、ペレストロイカ、そして未来へ向けて* (Gorbachev and Daisaku Ikeda: The Cold War, Perestroika, and the Future). Tokyo: Kadokawa Gakugei Publishing.

- Nichiren. 2006. *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, Volume II*. Tokyo: Soka Gakkai.
- Sato, Masaru. 2007. “池田SGI会長の民間外交が果たす意義” (The Meaning of Private Diplomacy by SGI President Ikeda). *Ushio* 11(November): 204–9.
- Sato, Masaru. 2010. *国家の自縛* (Self-Locking of State). Tokyo: Fusosha.
- Seikyo Shimbun*. 1987a. “モスクワ核の脅威展に寄せて：核廃絶は人類共通の課題” (Messages to Soka Gakkai’s Anti-Nuclear-Weapons Exhibition in Moscow: Abolition of Nuclear Weapons is the Common Task of All Human Beings). May 27.
- Seikyo Shimbun*. 1987b. “人類史的視野で21世紀の平和を展望：SGI会長 ルイシコフ首相と会談” (Having A Humanistic View for Peace in the 21st Century: SGI President Met Prime Minister Ryzhkov). May 28.
- Seikyo Shimbun*. 2014. “池田SGI会長の初訪ソ40周年” (Message from Gorbachev for 40th Anniversary of Ikeda’s Visit the USSR). September 8.
- SGI-USA Study Department. 2021. “Becoming Buddhas Here and Now. Concept #4: Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime.” Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/4duKCFJ>.
- Shultz, George. 1986. “Cold War: Reykjavik (Reagan-Gorbachev) Summit (Shultz Memoirs).” October 12. Accessed April 21, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3wmcBGY>.
- “Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact April 13, 1941.” 1941. Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/4a5Vd7g>.
- Tay, Eng Kiat. 2022. “SGS General Director’s March 2022 Editorial: Inheriting the Noble Spirit of Kosen-rufu.” *Soka Gakkai Singapore*, March 15. Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3QxCASy>.
- Tobisawa, Kazuhiro. 2018. *The Influence of Civil Society on Japanese Nuclear Disarmament Policy*. Buckingham: The University of Buckingham Press.
- Tropin, Vladimir Ivanovich. 2010. *精神のシルクロードを求めて：「ロシアが見た池田大作」* (In Search of a Spiritual Silk Road [Daisaku Ikeda as Seen by Russia]). Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha.
- United Nations. 1957. *Treaty Series: Treaties and International Agreements Registered or Filed and Recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations, Volume 263*. New York: The United Nations.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2024 [last updated]. “Ukraine Refugee Situation.” Accessed April 20, 2024. <https://bit.ly/3UJ5otU>.
- Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University. 2002. 周恩来と池田大作 (Zhou Enlai and Daisaku Ikeda), edited by Kazuteru Saionji. Tokyo: Asahi Sonorama.