

Nuclear Weapons and Human Beings — Hiroshima's Role in Today's Society —

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Approximately 27,000 nuclear warheads are presently deployed in the world, threatening the very existence of human beings. Nevertheless, the process of nuclear disarmament is at a standstill.

The Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), held in New York in 2005, came to failure.

The failure was due to the loss of opportunities for big power nations to cooperate with each other to establish a world order; the end of the Cold War has significantly reduced the threat of world war. Moreover, the failure was largely due to U.S. reluctance to work on its own nuclear disarmament.

Emphasizing the significance of nuclear weapons in terms of its security strategy, the U.S. has not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Continuing to promote the development of small nuclear weapons, the nation has established its pre-emptive strike policy.

While demanding the nuclear abandonment of other nations, the U.S. does not wish to relinquish its own nuclear weapons, strongly alienating nuclear-free nations and significantly eroding trust in the NPT regime.

India, for example, has not signed the NPT, complaining that the regime is unfair. North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 1993.

This is the origin of the anguish felt by international society, which has not yet been able to control or handle nuclear weapons created by humans, even 62 years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Unlike 62 years ago, several issues are now clearly presented regarding nuclear weapons.

1) The number of nations with nuclear weapons has increased. Moreover, there is a possibility that many more nations will possess such weapons in the future.

2) Research continues to create ever smaller, higher-functional nuclear weapons.

3) Consecutive nuclear testing and the use of depleted uranium munitions have significantly increased the number of those exposed to nuclear radiation.

4) The nuclear black market is enhancing the risk of nuclear proliferation throughout the world.

These issues represent the nuclear threat is becoming increasingly serious over

the course of time and that, regrettably, the wishes of Hiroshima/Nagasaki for the elimination of nuclear weapons have neither created a nuclear-free world nor prevented wars.

These issues also reveal the fragility of Hiroshima's peace philosophy and activities. Hiroshima has disregarded Japan's hypocrisy. While demanding that nuclear weapons be eliminated from the world, the nation is placed under the "nuclear umbrella."

In this era of terrorist threats, it is therefore necessary to think again about the significance that Hiroshima and Nagasaki has for us.

Since a long time ago, human beings have engaged in many wars.

Different wars were fought for different reasons. Some wars originated from territorial issues, others from religious conflicts and revolutions. All the nations engaging in such wars believed that they had good reasons to do so and that "right and justice" were on their side.

Weren't there any other options except such wars? Why did human beings hate each other so much? Rational reflection after the wars leads to a realization of the foolishness of war.

Nevertheless, human beings are still engaged in wars in many nations around the world, such as in Afghanistan and Iran.

Most adversely affected by these wars are always the cities and people living there.

By the 19th century, wars were being fought by battle-expert organizations, or specially trained troops. After the 20th century, however, wars have now been transformed into national all-out wars, compelling all residents in the nations involved to become engaged. Furthermore, the 20th century saw great advances in science, leading to the development of new types of weapons and more effective means of transport. As a result, once a war begins, cities face incomparably more serious destruction and damage than before.

It is said that the Second World War claimed the lives of approximately 50 million people, including both combatants and non-combatants, 25 million of whom were civilians.

What must be remembered regarding such civilian victims are the disasters of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the Second World War. These atomic weapons, used for the first time in the history of human beings, instantly destroyed the cities, killing and injuring many people. Many of the survivors still suffer from radiation after-effects.

It has not been significantly revealed yet what effects radiation imposes on humans. It has been revealed, however, that those exposed to radiation will become afflicted with cataracts, leukemia, thyroid cancer, breast cancer, lung cancer and/or other diseases within several years.

For example, Sadako Sasaki, a girl exposed to the atomic bombing radiation at the age of two, seemed to have no trouble with her health as she was growing up. In 1955, 10 years after her exposure, however, she was diagnosed with leukemia due to the radiation and hospitalized. From her hospital bed, she continued folding paper cranes with the wrapping paper of medicines she took every day.

In Japan it is believed that cranes live to be 1,000 years old, which makes the crane a symbol of longevity. Hoping that she would overcome her disease, she continued folding the paper cranes. Despite her sincere hope, though, eight months after first struggling with the disease, she died.

Sadako Sasaki's death has made the paper crane a symbol of activities calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons and the realization of world peace.

A movie titled *Yunagi no Machi, Sakura no Kuni* (City of Evening Calm, Nation of Cherry Blossoms), is now showing in Japan. This movie is based on a comic strip with the same title by Fumiyo Kono from Hiroshima. Last year, asked by a weekly magazine company to write a review of this comic, I read it for the first time. I was very surprised that the young woman comic artist, born in 1968, had such keen insight on the atomic bombing.

Every summer, the media reports the number of atomic bomb victims who died during the previous year, and that a list of their names was placed into Hiroshima's public memorial for atomic bomb victims. These people were simply referred to as "atomic bomb victims" without any reflection on what the phrase really means.

The heroine of the comic dies from the after-effects of an atomic bomb. Shortly before her death, the heroine says "Do the guys who dropped the bomb think 'Great! I've killed another one!'" This phrase sharply indicates the fact that the atomic bomb was dropped to kill people and continues to kill people even after the end of the war.

The comic artist's keen insight clearly sheds light on the essence of nuclear weapons.

By the 19th century, wars were being fought within the realm of certain principles, order and moderation, all of which are completely lost and ignored in today's wars.

For example, the U.S. announced as their military achievement how many

organized armed enemies they had killed in the Iraq War. Such an announcement makes it sound like the purpose of the war was to kill people.

This represents a deterioration of human beings.

Without rational nature and continuing this deterioration, human beings caused the tragedies of Hiroshima and Auschwitz in the Second World War.

It is still necessary to talk about Hiroshima and Auschwitz even 62 years after the end of the war, and it will be permanently necessary to do so.

Why is it necessary?

Is this due to the incredible number of victims?

Is this due to their unusual way of being killed?

All of these are certainly right, but aren't enough. In terms of the number of victims, the bombings of Dresden and Tokyo may have claimed many more lives than the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hiroshima and Auschwitz make those who hear the city names think about the nature of human beings. This is because the tragedies of the two cities continuously pose such questions as who we are and how far we as human beings have moved away from our rational nature.

Human beings are wonderful creatures. We can create wonderful cultures. On the other hand, we human beings are ugly creatures who have caused tragedies such as Hiroshima and Auschwitz.

What can be found in both the Hiroshima and Auschwitz tragedies is the theory of "people annihilation." The nuclear weapon is an embodiment of this theory, still very brutally killing people in Hiroshima.

Since the end of the Second World War, Hiroshima has been continuously calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This is because the city aims to deny the annihilation theory realized in nuclear weapons and to become human beings again.

The reflection on world peace poses the following question: Is world security derived from nuclear weapons or from the abolition of nuclear weapons? This reflection also poses another question for Japanese people: Is it possible to protect national security without nuclear weapons?

These questions can be summarized as how the nuclear deterrence theory should be regarded. This theory is currently gaining significant support in the international society.

1) The reality of today's international society indicates that nuclear proliferation is fueled by the nuclear deterrence theory, which justifies the possession of nuclear weapons.

2) The nuclear deterrence policy is therefore incompatible with the nuclear no-proliferation policy.

3) In this regard, the nuclear deterrence policy is contradictory. The elimination of nuclear weapons is the only measure that can prevent nuclear proliferation.

Some people claim that while it is morally right to deny nuclear weapons, there is a reality that it is impossible to counter violence in international society.

However, it is necessary to face the realities that the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not things of the past. There are still many nuclear weapons testing victims in different regions of the world, such as in Semipalatinsk, Nevada, the South Pacific region and Australia. Furthermore, many people were exposed to depleted uranium in the Gulf War and continuing in the Iraq War.

At the beginning of this speech, I referred to the fragility of Hiroshima's peace philosophy and activities. Japanese people have been talking about peace and calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons while under the protection of the United States. Depending on the U.S. for Japan's security, Japanese people have almost stopped thinking deeply.

If Hiroshima earnestly hopes to eliminate nuclear weapons, it is naturally essential to face the issues of the security partnership between Japan and the United States as well as the nuclear umbrella.

I think it is preferable to undo the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in the future. Although it is, of course, impossible to do so all at once, gradual efforts are needed.

The Japanese security regime up to now, which emphasizes the relationship between the U.S. and Japan, should be gradually replaced with a security regime that emphasizes alliances and friendships with East Asian nations.

As long as Japan is dependent on the U.S., which never tries to abolish its nuclear weapons, and as long as Japan does not have any doubts about the legitimacy of such dependence, Hiroshima's wish will never reach the people of the world. This is the fragility of Hiroshima's peace philosophy and activities.

To overcome such fragility, Hiroshima should not only disseminate information on the atomic bombing tragedy, but also call on the Japanese government to exercise its nuclear elimination policy.

Hiroshima has been criticizing the use of weapons of mass destruction as an inhuman military means. However, Hiroshima has almost failed to criticize that such weapons are used for political purposes to realize national benefits by sacrificing the general public in other nations.

Where does this failure stem from? I guess Hiroshima is so occupied with its

tragic experiences that it sometimes forgets to think about issues from the human perspective. It is important to recognize that the tragedy of the Hiroshima atomic bombing is essentially the same with the tragedies that struck Vietnam and now Iraq.

I experienced the disaster brought by the nuclear weapon to people in Hiroshima. I strongly believe that nuclear weapon issues should be dealt with from a human perspective.

The reflection of such issues from a national viewpoint often leads to acceptance of the reality of the international policy, which is determined by the international balance of power. As a result, the nuclear deterrence policy is accepted as an unavoidable choice to maintain world order.

To think from the perspective of human beings is to work across national boundaries to change the reality of our dependence on nuclear weapons.

Changing such reality, although difficult, can be realized by continuously and firmly trusting the possibilities of the future and of the innate goodness of human beings. Moreover, going beyond the boundaries of nations is the only way of overcoming supporters of the nuclear deterrence theory.

At the same time, to realize a hopeful and bright future, it is necessary to think anew about the civilization we live in now of science and technology.

This reminds me of one event.

In July 1997, the U.S. conducted a sub-critical nuclear experiment at the nuclear-test site in Nevada. I saw on TV that, at the moment of the test's success, scientists and technologists engaged in the experiment burst into applause. I found the scene very horrible.

To the scientists and technologists, the experiment was interesting in terms of science and technology. It's probably natural for them to become delighted with the experiment's success.

Being devoid of imagination, however, they can't see the massacre that would be brought by their experiment. Their contribution to such massacres, whether they are aware of such contribution or not, reminds me of the scientists engaged in the Manhattan Project, the project that developed the first atomic bombs.

We human beings have already acquired the knowledge and technologies to produce nuclear weapons. Even if Hiroshima's call for a nuclear-free world is realized, we humans cannot escape the fear of nuclear weapons unless we overcome the theory of people annihilation and truly love peace.

I believe this is so because of the disasters of Hiroshima and Auschwitz.

What should be done by Hiroshima in this era of nuclear weapons is to think from a human perspective and deny nuclear weapons supported by the theory of people

annihilation.

Furthermore, based on the tragedy of Hiroshima, it is necessary to think anew about the significance of modern science and technologies themselves.