Article 9 & Global Peace

- Transcending Nationalism -

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Regarding the threat to peace, it is essential to both promote concrete action and to speak out. At this time, however, I would like to start out by considering the proposition from my position as a religious person – as a mountain ascetic seeking a place to meditate in nature (dōjō).

Since recorded history, there has been no period on Earth in which there has not been strife. Even during Buddha’s lifetime, warfare between countries did not cease. Neither have the mass destruction nor genocides of the modern era ended with the development of tools and technology. In fact, the development of tools is the progression of weaponry, and that progression will be difficult to stop as long as insatiable human greed exists.

The revision of Japan’s “Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology” and the export of infrastructure are greed-related businesses. Can Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution serve as a force to deter such greed?

Since the Meiji Era (1868-1912), Japan has developed through pursuing the path of modernization. TANAKA Shōzō, a Meiji politician, denounced pollution resulting from industrial development saying, “True civilization does not devastate mountains, nor rivers, nor villages; nor does it kill humans.”¹ However, Tanaka’s words went unheeded, and modern industry supported both World Wars I and II, resulting in war claiming the lives of millions of people and also contaminating Earth. As well, people’s hearts and minds were devastated, breeding and encouraging conflict, division and discrimination.

¹ Translation from a documentary film on Shōzō TANAKA; http://www.sekihin.net/english/index.html
Seventy years after losing the war, how has this changed?

“We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.” With this preamble, the nation of Japan promulgated a peace constitution revered worldwide.

Postwar recovery steadily progressed, with Japan experiencing economic development in particular due to the Korean and Vietnam Wars that divided those countries north and south. Japan’s development was a result paid for by the blood of others. Upon reflection, I too was living a comfortable life at that time.

Japanese citizens have supported a consumption-based economy, leaving us with a country that now has established a fundamental economic growth strategy of corporate globalization and deregulation.

The postwar efficiency-oriented society even raised a question as to whether the satisfaction of human greed created further greed and therein built a peaceful society.

These days as the world globalizes, governments, economies, industries and information each consist of multi-layered relationships. And running alongside globalization are the ethnic conflicts and wars that are built on nationalism. Conflicts in today’s world are incomparable to those of the past in their steady progress toward global destruction.

Nationalism includes patriotism, but the feeling of love for country and the attitude of valuing tradition are important. Due to globalization, regional characteristics are now being lost, traditions are fading and local culture is disappearing in exchange for convenience; people today are spiritually distressed.
The important thing is to avoid turning a spirit of patriotism into an ideology or an “ism.” For every ideology, there is always an opposing ideology. It is not “isms” that join nation to nation, but each nation giving life to the other nation through respect and understanding.

Conflicts due to “isms” are set against a background of political authority and are born of greed and prejudice, extolling self while denigrating others in the name of justice. This is where conflicts develop, leading to national and political wars.

Fighting an adversary is human instinct; war resides within human nature.

Therefore, in answer to the question of whether Article 9 is a deterrent, my answer would be “No.”

Article 9 does not make peace; human hearts and minds make peace. It is those hearts and minds that made Article 9 and protect it. We must recognize that to no small extent we all have mistaken opinions of our own superiority and others' inferiority due to religious, ideological or other differences and that those opinions breed conflict; we must cut the bonds that that greed has on each person’s heart because it is impossible to understand others when we have lost the heart to value and respect them. This one global world is connected through relationships and exists because of mutual commitment. We must understand that nothing exists independently.

Once these ethics are attained in the political world then it seems that the provisions in Article 9 will no longer be necessary. However, just as no garden is without weeds forever, this is also impossible.

Even Buddha was unable to prevent his own country from being conquered by a
neighboring country. And so goes for we mere humans.

The energy to turn from anxiety to tranquility, from war to peace requires a much, much greater effort and a recognition of human character. That becomes the foundation. Wanting the Peace Constitution and protecting it depend on each person’s heart and actions.