

Sokendai,
The Graduate University for Advanced Studies

War and Peace Symposium series

Looking forward

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The War and Peace Symposium series is now at its term. After 5 years of a dense activity and 5 symposiums, the series is ending with this final report. The motivations for the series, the chronological history of the events and detailed summaries of the symposiums have been given here in the preceding pages. Many of the actions initiated by this program have been fully described, the budget is exhausted and the scientists are getting ready to be involved in other issues. All is wrapped up; we turn the page and engage in new endeavors.

Some of the Sokendai's program initiatives have been (or are in the process of being) financially secured so that they will go hopefully to their completion in the coming years, in particular, the archiving of the remaining documents related to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Gakushuin University or the involvement of high level Japanese scientists around the SESAME project in Jordan, the first advanced scientific instrument in the middle-east region outside Israel.

But, overall, it remains a taste of incompleteness. There is a deep feeling that this group of motivated scientists has still a lot to say, a lot to do on this major topic. More than being dissolved, the initial motivations have even expanded in the course of this series, new topics have been emphasized, new proposals made and new projects formulated. At the end of this program, the study and comprehension of what make War and what help setting up and maintaining Peace remains a fundamental issue, not only to scientists but to humankind, in general.

George Clemenceau, the French prime minister who signed the "Versailles Treaty" ending the World War I, once said "War is much too serious a matter to be entrusted to the military" and I would add, entrusted to any particular community or group. It is only the global involvement of all and everyone that may, step by step, build a better world, a War free society.

Setting up and maintaining Peace is the ultimate quest, the ultimate achievement of the human species. But it is hard to reach, because it is a permanent fight against some of the most natural human biases, as it was put by the same G. Clemenceau "it is far easier to make War than to make Peace".

Even if, as said previously, scientists are only a component of the society which must be concerned with War and Peace issues, they must get involved and bring in their own comprehensive and systematic approach to these engrossing and complex issues. Natural scientists may contribute to Peace by providing a better understanding of the human behaviors, taken as individuals, in terms of biologic, genomic or neurologic processes. Social and political scientists, including anthropologists, psychologists or philosophers might propose new societal organizations that would mitigate or dissolve

basic natural enmity or hatred, often source of conflicts. Political scientists, international lawyers may also find ways to embed more justice, liberty and equality in international policies and regulations. These are all major studies to be discussed between scientists gathered in a multi-disciplinary framework and to be promoted to the general public.

But scientists play another different and major role on the War issues. Scientists are running the engine of innovation. They are fueling the new economy, shaping new wealth and valuing new resources. They may therefore create new imbalance prone to ignite Wars.

Basic scientists are finding new phenomena. Applied scientists and technologists are building new instruments based on these discoveries that may, as well, be used for peaceful purposes like security, control and protection or for building new arms or new engines of mass destruction.

The scientist responsibility is blatant and has rarely been seen as such. Scientists often hide themselves behind sentences like “I am not responsible for the uses of my discovery, this is the society and the politicians who make the decision”. This is “the denial syndrome” as put by Jean-Jacques Salomon, a French philosopher, expert of the history of sciences who has written several papers on the scientist responsibility including a book entitled "Wars and new conflicts: the responsibility of scientists". He was invited to the Sokendai's Symposium but sadly passed away only a couple of months before his attendance. I want here to associate his memory to this contribution. It is maybe time to write down a Universal Scientist Oath, similar in its spirit to the Hippocratic Oath that would raise the awareness of the scientists and their responsibility before humankind. But this subject by itself would require an entire War and Peace workshop as complex issues are involved including the researcher's freedom and independence.

In conclusion, there are only a few projects similar to the War & Peace Sokendai's program in the world and maybe none in Asia. What has already been achieved by the Sokendai's organizers is unique and deserves to be continued and developed further.

I would therefore suggest pushing this program to a higher level, by probably expanding the Sokendai's working group in terms of its scientific scope and international representation and by involving currently poorly represented communities like political scientists, diplomats or international lawyers.

In addition, it looks important to develop a stronger contact with the general public on these issues so as to keep alive the memory of the recent history and to benefit from a more direct involvement of the society in these discussions.

As far as the financial support for continuing this program is concerned, decision makers are certainly sensitive to the importance to Japan, that did survive two atomic bombings, to, with full legitimacy, develop a strong agenda on this absorbing War and Peace issues.

Finally the world is changing and has changed a lot since the start of this project. The fact that the president of the USA is the laureate of the 2009 Peace Nobel Prize for his ambitious plan to begin phasing out nuclear weapons is an important step forward and will raise many issues that would impact on the Sokendai's group program.