

# ***THE ADVENT OF NO-WAR ERA***

**An Introductory Summary of “*Shin Senso-ron*”**



**ITO Kenichi**

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# ***THE ADVENT OF NO-WAR ERA***

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### **1. 【Preface】**

First of all, let me introduce myself to you. I am a diplomat-turned professor of international politics and am concurrently president of a foreign policy think tank in Japan. I have recently written a book entitled “The Advent of No-War Era”(Shin Senso-ron), published by Shincho-sha in Tokyo in September 2007. It was, of course, written in Japanese. However, not a few non-Japanese friends of mine suggested that I write an introductory summary of this book in English, and this is the resulting summary. The thoughts contained in the book have been nurtured through my career both as a practitioner and a theoretician.

The book consists of two parts, one analytical and one policy-oriented. In the analytical part, I attempt to delve into the history of war and conclude that “war” is not an inevitable phenomenon embedded in human instinct but a kind of social phenomenon which emerged under certain conditions in the same manner as other social phenomena such as migration of people and business cycles, etc. Therefore, in my view, in the same way as economists propose economic policies to control business cycles, students of international politics can also propose policies to control and overcome “war” based on scientific findings and analysis.

Topics discussed in this book include how “war” emerged in human history and changed over 10,000 years, how “war” has transformed each time a “Weapon Revolution” took place, how the “War Era” ended and the “No-War Era” started, and what all those things imply for us who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Finally, I present proposals on what course Japan should take to contribute to peace in a “No-War Era.” In short, the development of human history can be divided into the three periods of a “Pre-War Era,” a “War Era,” and a “No-War Era.” However, you would be wrong to assume from the name “No-War Era” that humankind has finally entered a Garden of Eden period. The “No-War Era” is tantamount to a “Conflict Era,” when we will have to face different but no less formidable foes than those faced in the “War Era.” For this reason, we

need to clearly distinguish between the threats of the “Conflict Era” and those of the “War Era,” because otherwise we will not be able to identify new foes and cope with new threats effectively.

## 2. 【Strategic/Realist Thinking】

Before I begin the summarization of the body of the book, I should confide that, while there are two paradigms in thinking about, and dealing with, the issue of war and peace, I take the position of “strategic/realist thinker” as opposed to that of “legalistic/idealist thinker.” Legalistic thinkers contend that peace is secured by means of laws and treaties, while strategic thinkers advocate that actual international politics is driven not by words, but by forces which lie behind laws and treaties.

In medieval times, people’s way of thinking tended to revolve around “idealism,” and believed that the only truth was in the Bible. Because of this conviction, they rejected the findings of Copernicus so as to maintain the geocentric theory written in the Bible. However, people in modern times are educated to be “realists” and attempt to acquire scientific knowledge through experiments and observations, though there are exceptions like Marxists, pacifists, and Islamic fundamentalists, who are unquestioningly loyal to their respective Bibles. They are also idealists.

Finally, there is the “tactical approach” and the “strategic approach.” The former is a short-sighted approach often mixing a means with an end, while the latter seeks to look at the object from a wider perspective to grasp the essence of the problem. My observation is that “legalistic thinking,” “idealism,” and the “tactical approach” are usually found together on one side of a coin, while “strategic thinking,” “realism,” and the “strategic approach” are found together on the other side of the same coin.

While urging Japan to choose a course underpinned by “strategic thinking,” “realism” and the “strategic approach,” I acknowledge that Japan tends to lack the essence of “strategic thinking.” In my view, the essence of “strategic thinking” is hidden in the wisdom of understanding the implications of “indirect,” “psychological,” “political” and “peaceful” use of military power. China has a tradition of this wisdom. China says it pursues peace while building military might, which puzzles many Japanese who have no idea of the “peaceful use of military power.”

Japanese leaders and experts should have more in-depth knowledge of what Clausewitz points out. The first thesis of Clausewitz, that of “War as an Extension of Politics,” says that “war is inseparable from politics,” while the second, that of “Collateral of Determination by Force,” says that “the presence of force can serve as a collateral for political resolution if the results of the use of force are anticipated by parties in conflict.” “Strategic thinking” based on at least these two theses of Clausewitz is sorely needed in Japanese thinking about war and peace.

### 3. 【Origin of International Politics and War】

In my view, there is an origin of war. Human beings did not wage wars until about 10,000 years ago, when they stopped hunting after game and started to settle in one place or another in order to cultivate land. When human beings lived in groups for hunting, they kept moving from one place to another and had no regular relationship with human beings in other groups. Even if they came across such groups, they did not have much to do with each other and simply went on their way. Neither trading nor fighting was in order at this stage of historical development.

This was during the Old Stone Age. But when the New Stone Age came about 10,000 years ago, human beings started to settle. And settlements were not organized like nomadic groups. People in settlements were inevitably put in contact with the neighbors around them. Thus an increasing level of regular relationships emerged and developed between settlements. Here, it must be admitted, the way was paved for the birth of a social phenomenon called “war.”

The character of relationships between settlements grew from simple to more complex transactions. Political factors became more important. This “inter-settlement politics” was nothing less than the origin of “international politics” and was accompanied by the use of force when disputes between settlements were not settled peacefully. This is the origin of war. The shift from a hunting economy to an agricultural economy prepared the necessary conditions for the emergence of the social phenomenon called “war.”

At about the same time, such weapons as bows, slings, daggers and maces were invented. This is what is known as the “First Weapon

Revolution.” The cause of the “Weapon Revolution” was the shift of life-style from groups to settlements and the invention of weapons was a result. Demand always comes first, and supply follows, not vice versa. “War” is nothing but a corollary of “international politics,” and this fact explains why “international politics” must first be changed if we want to overcome “war.”

#### 4. 【Emergence of War as a Corollary of International Politics】

In a domestic political system, a “conflict” is resolved by legislative, administrative and/or judicial means. This is possible because there is a central government or a supreme ruler endowed with sovereign authority. Therefore, “war” cannot occur within a “domestic political system.” That is not the case in an “international political system” exactly because there is neither a central government nor a supreme ruler within the system. In an “international political system,” a state of anarchy prevails, where a “conflict” can be resolved only by resorting to “war” if all the diplomatic means are exhausted.

On the basis of an observation by Joseph Frankel that “an international system exists only as a point between a political unity and a complete absence of such a unity,” I put forward a thesis that “an ‘international political system’ has an inevitable tendency to move from a ‘complete absence of unity’ to a ‘unity’ which is identical in form with a ‘domestic political system’.”

Now let me explain the difference between “conflict” and “war.” The key factor to make “war” different from “conflict” is neither the number of fighters involved, nor the level of sophistication of weapons used, but the involvement of an actor called a “nation.” When a “nation” is involved, a “conflict” transforms itself from a physiological phenomenon embedded in human instinct to a social phenomenon embedded in social structure, that is, a “war.”

For the purpose of theoretical generalization, the concept of a “nation” can be replaced here by a more accurate concept of an “independent political unit.” If a political entity has the three key factors of land, people and sovereignty, that entity may be called an “independent political unit.” With this definition in mind, “war” can be defined as an

armed conflict between “independent political units.”

We know that an “independent political unit” is a unit that constitutes an “international political system.” In a “domestic political system,” a “conflict” is handled either legislatively or administratively or judicially. But in an “international political system,” because of its state of anarchy, a “conflict” can be handled neither legislatively, nor administratively nor judicially. It can be handled and brought under control only by diplomatic means; if not, it will likely elevate into a “war.”

Here, the point is in the fact that because of the independent nature of “independent political units,” a “war” becomes inevitable. If the independent nature of “independent political units” is removed, there will be no more “wars” in the “international political system.” However, since the removal of the independent nature of “independent political units” means the demise of the “international political system,” at that moment the system transforms itself into a “domestic political system.” Thus, we can say the emergence of “war” was a corollary of the birth of “international politics.”

## 5. 【From “International” to “Domestic” Political System】

Let me here talk about what is the rule of movement in the “international political system.” Generally speaking, a “system” disturbed by forces from outside moves toward the recovery of its state of equilibrium as it existed before it was disturbed. For instance, a calm and tranquil pond, if disturbed by a stone thrown into it from outside, will recover its calmness and tranquility as it existed before. Again generally speaking, such a state of equilibrium, once regained, remains unchanged until it is again disturbed by an outside force.

Here lies an important question. What is the state of equilibrium for a given “international political system”? My answer is that any “international political system” has a tendency to move toward a form equivalent to a “domestic political system.” This is because, in my view, all political systems, domestic or international, are born from a Hobbesian state of chaos and through ensuing power struggles move toward higher levels of political consolidation.

This process of consolidation is driven by humankind’s instinctive

desire for power. In the process of executing power, a relationship, both antagonistic and cooperative, among rulers and between ruler and subject is formed and a state of disturbance gradually and steadily consolidates itself into a state of equilibrium. In this course of development, at least theoretically, an “international political system” has been and is moving toward a more stable form of political system, which is “domestic.” When and if the “international political system” completes its process of evolution into a “domestic political system,” “war” will lose the social foundation that produces it.

## 6. 【Five “World Empires”】

To illustrate how an “international political system” transforms itself into a “domestic political system,” the following two scenarios may be shown. In an “international political system,” relationships of rivalry exist among “independent political units,” which constitute the system. Some of them become rulers by subjugating others most commonly by the use of force and this process is repeated until all rivalries are eliminated by the consolidation of power in the hand of a single ruler, who establishes rule as a “World Empire.”

The other scenario is that of “independent political units” which maintain the balance of power among themselves based on the principle of mutually beneficial interdependence, which leads to the creation of a “World Government.” In either case, an “international political system,” within the geographical expanse of which there exist multiple independent “domestic political systems,” transforms itself into a “domestic political system” by the convergence of power in a single hand. The result is the birth of either a “World Empire” or a “World Government.”

To illustrate more vividly how an “international political system” actually transformed itself into a “domestic political system,” I divide the world of the “Age of Geographical Discovery” (15-16<sup>th</sup> century) into five “regional political systems.” They are; (1) the Chinese empire system, (2) the medieval European system, (3) the Arab Islamic system, (4) the Indian subcontinent system and (5) the Eurasian inland system.

In each of these five regions, there developed “regional political systems” called: (1) the Ming Dynasty, (2) the Holy Roman Empire, (3) the

Ottoman Empire, (4) the Mogul Empire and (5) the Timur Empire. This development signifies that they departed from an “international political system” and formed a “domestic political system.” The “War Era,” which started 10,000 years ago, could have ended and moved into a “No-War Era” at that time, but did not because of the arrival of the “Age of Geographical Discovery,” which destroyed all those regional political systems.

## 7. 【Three Periods of the “War Era”】

The 10,000 years of history of the “War Era” can be divided into three periods: (1) “Regional Hegemonic War Period,” (2) “World Partitioning War Period” and (3) “World Hegemonic War Period.” The formation of the five regional “World Empires” was the culmination of historical developments in the “Regional Hegemonic War Period.” But with the arrival of the “Age of Geographical Discovery” in the 15-16th century, the regional order of the five “World Empires” was completely shattered.

As the world entered the second phase of the “War Era,” that is the “World Partitioning War Period,” the process of political formation had to be redone from the very beginning all over again. But this time, the players of the game were limited only to Europeans and the position of non-Europeans in the game was that of the spoils of war sought after by Europeans.

This was due to the “Second Weapon Revolution” that occurred through the invention of firearms. During this period, walls that had once divided the world into five regions were removed. Europeans armed with firearms landed at any part of the world and declared that they “discovered” it. Thus, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the partitioning of the non-European parts of the world was over only to open a new page in the history of war, the “World Hegemonic War Period.”

Europeans now moved to vie for world hegemony among themselves. To be precise, there was one non-European nation among them, and that was Japan. This is the story on how the world entered the final stage of the “War Era.” The final goal of the “World Hegemonic War Period,” which they reached after they fought World War I and World War II, can be symbolized by the unprecedented scale of disaster caused by the atomic

bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

## 8. 【From “MAD” to “UAD”】

With the end of World War II, the world entered the next and final stage in the history of war, the “No-War Era.” World War I created the Versailles system embodied by the League of Nations, which was expected to work as a “World Government.” But it did not because it not only failed to resolve the gap between “haves” and “have-nots” but aggravated it by the introduction of the autarkic bloc economy system. This triggered another round of “world hegemonic war,” or World War II.

World War II, however, could not achieve a new state of equilibrium either. World War II also failed to bring disturbances in the “international political system” under control and instead brought about the new disturbance of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The peculiarity of the Cold War, which was a product of the “Third Weapon Revolution,” namely the advent of nuclear weapons, was its deliberate avoidance of “hot war.”

I would like to emphasize that this is one of the main causes behind the move from the “War Era” to the “No-War Era.” The Cold War was unique in the sense that it was waged without directly resorting to the use of military forces. In fact, both the United States and the Soviet Union intentionally avoided resorting to the direct use of military forces. As evident in the cases of the Berlin Blockade of 1948 and the Cuban Crisis of 1962, both superpowers intentionally avoided confronting each other militarily.

It is known that the United States was determined to maintain what they called “assured destruction ability,” as defined by Defense Secretary McNamara in a 1962 speech in Ann Arbor as “a clear and unmistakable ability to inflict an unacceptable degree of damage upon any aggressor even after absorbing a surprise first strike.” “An unacceptable degree of damage” was understood to mean 200 cities, one third of the population and two thirds of the industrial power of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was also understood to be determined to maintain the same “assured destruction ability.”

Therefore, “MAD” (Mutual Assured Destruction) was the rule of the

game in the Cold War. The Cold War years were unique in that they were a transitional period from the “War Era” to the “No-War Era.” A further fact to recognize is that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War, “MAD” has been effectively replaced by “UAD” (Unilateral Assured Destruction) of the United States.

This became clear in 2001, when Russia agreed to the Moscow Treaty and the United States notified Russia of its withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. The Moscow Treaty reduced the number of deployable strategic nuclear warheads of either party to about 2000. The ABM Treaty which was signed in 1972 was a collateral for the “MAD.” The fact that the U.S. can build MD (Missile Defense) networks, whereas Russia cannot, makes a shift from MAD to UAD inevitable. Whether we like it or not, we have to acknowledge that, because of the U.S. role as a world nuclear sheriff, the “No-War Era” is maintained.

## 9. 【Advent of the “No-War Era”】

It is not only nuclear weapons that brought the world from the “War Era” to the “No-War Era.” A fundamental change that took place after the end of World War II in the economic system is another factor helping make the world free of “war.” Over 10,000 years, “wars” occurred as a result of people’s quest for land. Human beings started to wage wars about 10,000 years ago because then they stopped hunting and started to settle in one place. Since then human beings have been possessed of this quest for land and have not hesitated to risk their life to get it. Most of the “wars” in history were driven by this quest for land, including World War II, which was a response of the “have-nots” to the autarkic bloc economy system imposed by the “haves.”

Reflecting upon such history, the post-World War II economic order was built on the basis of the Bretton Woods system, or the IMF-World Bank system. This was a free, multilateral, indiscriminate trade and financial system, which ushered in the free flow of goods, money and people. By lowering border thresholds and opening national markets, it gave opportunities for resource-poor but hard-working countries to survive and even prosper.

Among four key elements of production, i.e. land, capital,

technology and labor, the most important used to be land because all other elements were tied to it. If one nation had land, that nation could have everything, and if not, nothing. But the importance of land has been lost. This system first took root in western countries only. However, when the Cold War ended, it spread into former communist countries as well, and triggered a global-scale liberalization of trade and capital.

As countries become closely intertwined and interdependent, one country's economic bankruptcy cannot but result in that of economic devastation for other countries. I call this state of economic interdependence "Eco-MAD" (Economic Mutual Assured Destruction). Because this new condition of "Eco-MAD" has been implanted in the "international political and economic system," resorting to war as a means of solving international conflicts has become self-destructive not only militarily but economically as well.

#### 10. **【Nationalism and Ideology as a Cause of War】**

There is a view that nationalism is a cause of war and that nationalism is still omnipresent. I deny this view. In fact, a period of nationalism is drawing to an end. Nationalism has never been omnipresent historically. It was born as a by-product of the French Revolution. It spread to other European countries and fuelled counter-nationalism among them, which later triggered World Wars I and II. However, after World War II, European countries realized that such World Wars should never be repeated and overcame nationalism by choosing a path toward pan-European integration.

It is true that in other parts of the world nationalism is still prevalent. This is due to the fact that most of them started their nation-building only recently after World War II as a part of their response to Western colonialism. But, as their nationalism matures, the steady growth of what I call "Eco-MAD" in both regional and global contexts will bring about changes that will make "nationalism" obsolete. The issues we face today such as environmental problems, global warming, energy and food shortages, cannot be solved by nationalism based on national borders.

There is also a view that, even if economic conflicts are tamed by borderless interdependence and political nationalism loses momentum,

ideology remains a problem. According to this view, ideology can mobilize people towards a “war.” But I argue that there is no such direct correlation between “war” and ideology as exists between “war” and land. Nations take advantage of ideology to justify a war, but behind the scenes they keep a close eye on their national interests. While nations justify war for ideological slogans of revolution, religion or nationalism, they never forget to closely calculate the substance of their national interests. Thus, ideology can instigate, justify and intensify “war” efforts, but can never really be the cause of “war” by itself.

#### 11. 【“Copernican Change” in “Strategic Thinking”】

Let us consider what the advent of the “No-War Era” means for our understanding of recent U.S. actions in Iraq. With the advent of the “No-War Era,” when all the acts of “war” are illegal and the “No-War community” is enforcing its new rules of the game, the U.S. actions on Iraq should not be called an act of “war” but a “military sanction” based on the resolution 1441 adopted by the U.N. Security Council on November 8, 2002. In this case, it is more important to make a judgment on the reason (*jus ad bellum*) than on the result (*jus in bello*) of the U.S. actions. And for this purpose, it becomes necessary to refer to the broader perspective of history and to learn from it.

When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and Italy occupied Abyssinia in 1935, Britain and France, then key members of the League of Nations, hesitated to go into action and did nothing to either prevent or punish the invaders. This led to the collapse of the League of Nations and paved the way for World War II. To avoid the repetition of the same mistake, the U.S. acted to enforce Iraq to comply with the U.N. Security Council resolution 687 of 1991 demanding that it dismantle Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). In my view, it is wrong to criticize the U.S. for the actions it took on Iraq. The “No-War Era” would also collapse, as peace in 1920s did, if members of the international community are divided when they should be united for peace.

In this context, I would like to call your attention to what I call a “Copernican change” in “strategic thinking.” Until after World War II, it was common to expect “strategic thinking” to provide a magic formula for

“how to win war.” But the focus has changed to “how to win peace” since the end of World War II.

It is indicative to see that nuclear strategy has never been a strategy for “how to win a nuclear war,” but has always been a strategy for “how to prevent a nuclear war.” In the post-Cold War era, the focus of “strategic thinking” is further shifting to “human security,” “conflict prevention” and “peace building.” This indicates that the “War Era,” which lasted over 10,000 years, is drawing to an end and that the world system is rapidly moving from that of state-centric sovereign nations (“International Political System”) to that of citizen-centric interdependent nations (“Domestic Political System”).

Under such a system, countries are no longer allowed to claim that their sovereignty per se is supreme when that sovereignty entails a “responsibility to protect” their citizens. If they fail to implement their “responsibility” in this sense, the international community can be asked to take action despite any claims of the supremacy of sovereignty. It is against the background of this “Copernican change” in “strategic thinking” and not in line with the conventional wisdom of hegemonic power struggle that we must see the essence of U.S. actions in Iraq.

## 12. 【From “Passive” to “Active” Pacifism】

As to the course Japan should take, I sincerely uphold the spirit of Article 9 Clause 1 of the Japanese Constitution, which says, “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” In view of the fact that humankind as a whole is entering a “No-War Era,” it is taken for granted that we Japanese should choose the renunciation of war as a basic principle of our nation.

But there is a problem with Article 9 Clause 2 of the Japanese Constitution, which says, “In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding Clause, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.” The reason for my criticism of this Clause is because it prevents Japan from becoming a responsible member of the international

community in the “No-War Era.”

When Japanese talk about “war,” they still associate it with World War II. In their eyes, the world is still in the “World Hegemonic War Period,” and the course Japan should take is to keep themselves as far away as possible from such “dirty” wars. In my view, although Japan calls itself a pacifist country, Japan’s pacifism is a fake pacifism. For instance, Japanese do not see “peace-building” as their own issue. It is someone else’s business and Japanese had better leave such tasks to other countries. While Japanese, of course, want to enjoy peace, they are ready to pay for it in money only. If it becomes necessary to do more, they shout, “It’s unconstitutional!”

I propose that Japan move from such “Passive Pacifism,” which says, “We won’t do anything!” to “Active Pacifism,” which says, “We’ll do everything we can.” In these times of growing cross border interdependency, the global system is rapidly changing itself into a domestic system. Under such circumstances, the Japanese will be expected to raise their awareness as global citizens.

We live in a “No-War Era,” when “wars” are crimes and none of us are allowed to be by-standers. Just as citizens are not allowed to be by-standers when others are fighting against crime in the street, countries should no more be allowed to take a neutral position in the international community. The Japanese must understand that it is their responsibility to fulfill their role as a global citizen by moving away from their “Passive Pacifism.” (End)

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## About the Author

Ito Kenichi was born in Tokyo on March 7, 1938. He is currently President of The Japan Forum on International Relation, Inc. (JFIR), The Global Forum of Japan (GFJ), The Council on East Asian Community (CEAC) and is also Professor Emeritus of Aoyama-Gakuin University.

After graduating from Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo in 1960, he studied the Soviet foreign policy at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in Harvard University in 1961-63.

Since then until 1977 he had been in the Japanese Foreign Service serving at the Japanese Embassies in Moscow, Manila, Washington and as Director of the 1<sup>st</sup> Southeast Asian Division in Tokyo. Since resigning from the Foreign Service in 1977, he has been active in such multiple capacities as diplomatic commentator, professor of international politics, president and/or board member of a number of foreign policy think tanks.

He is the author of about twenty books, which include “Kokka to Senryaku” (State and Strategy), “Taikoku to Senryaku” (Great Powers and Strategy), “Futatsu no Shogeki to Nihon” (Japan’s Response to The Two Shocks), “Chiheisen wo Koete” (Beyond the Horizon), and “Cho-kindai no Shogeki” (The Impact of Post-modern Civilization) and “Shin Senso-ron” (The Advent of the No-War Era)

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