

Japan's Denial of Past Military Aggression Undermines World Peace

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August 15 marked the 71st anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender during World War II. However, on this special day when Japan should spend time reflecting on its history of militaristic aggression, its Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent a ritual offering to the notorious Yasukuni Shrine.

The Yasukuni Shrine, which honors 14 Class-A convicted war criminals among 2.5 million Japanese war dead from WWII, is regarded as a symbol of past Japanese militarism.

The honoring of war criminals, no matter what form it takes, only serves to further hurt those Asian neighbors that Japan once invaded. Such perverse acts to whitewash its crimes of military aggression runs contrary to the pursuit of peace in Asia and the world at large.

It's common knowledge that the Yasukuni Shrine is a source of spiritual inspiration for Japan to start another war of aggression. Yet, the country's new Defense Minister Tomomi Inada has tried to associate such a notorious place with the mourning of soldiers belonging to Japan's Self-Defense Forces.

She claimed at a recent seminar that "the Yasukuni Shrine is not the place to vow not to fight. It needs to become a place where we vow to desperately fight when our Motherland is at risk." Her words shocked even the Kyodo News.

The 71-year-peace after WWII was hard-won. Born from the victory over fascism, this peace has been the foundation for post-war international order. This conclusion is not something that can be ignored, denied or overturned by any country.

World peace and the post-war order, which came at the cost of the blood and lives of the peoples of Allied countries, is closely tied to justice.

Last year, the world commemorated the 70th anniversary of the end of the World Anti-Fascist War, but some countries, looking out for their own interests, have turned a blind eye to the wrongdoings of Japan and have even urged Japan to abandon its pacifist constitution. The world today is witnessing the negative impact brought about by this short-sighted strategy.

By erasing its invasion history, Japan is on one hand attempting to lock away memories of the war and on the other hand setting the stage for future action. In the House of Councillors

election in July, lawmakers pushing for Constitution amendments won more than two-thirds of seats. This has led to forward-thinking people in Japan to also begin worrying about the “return of war.”

In order to strengthen military power and shake off the post-war order, the Abe administration usually uses the so-called “China threat” as an excuse to deceive the Japanese public and other parts of the world.

After Japan adopted its new security laws that lifted a decades-old ban on collective self-defense, the Abe administration has been making every effort to contain China by instigating disputes between China and other countries.

On the day when the so-called arbitral decision on the South China Sea dispute was announced in July, Japan, a non-party in the issue, immediately pressured China to accept the arbitration. At the following 11th Asia-Europe Summit and foreign ministers’ meetings on East-Asia cooperation held in last month, Japan reiterated its stance again and again.

In the country’s annual defense white paper issued in early August, Japan pointed fingers at China over the South China Sea issue once again. The paper also made irresponsible remarks concerning China’s armament, military expense and transparency. These actions by the Abe administration has triggered alarm and concern throughout the international community.

Japan’s tribute at the Yasukuni Shrine on Monday once again reminds us that world peace is not that should be taken for granted, it demands continual justice and also the capability to defend it.

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