

No. 8 War and Environment

As you can see in the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, wars among the human beings have destroyed a variety of earth ecosystems, including the human civilizations. Of the many ways to destroy the environment, there is nothing but wars that destroy the earth environment in directly and with a large scale. Huge massacre weapons, such as atomic/nuclear weapons, were invented in the last half of the twentieth century, which has accelerated the environmental destructions (it is said that the atomic/nuclear weapons that the Group of Seven industrialized countries possess can destroy or exterminate the earth for more than 100 times).

The arms expenditure in the world has been increased from 267 billion dollars in 1950 to 1,144 billion dollars in 1984 and then gradually decreased since the Cold War came to an end. However, more than 700 billion dollars are still used for the arms expenditure, although the statistical values are slightly different in organizations/institutions. The United States holds 35 % of the total expenditure, which stands out from other countries. The details of the arms expenditure are as follows, the United States: 250 billion dollars, Russia: 76 billion, China: 65 billion, Japan: 44 billion, France: 43 billion, Germany: 38 billion, and England: 34 billion. Those seven countries spend 78% of the total in the world (In Japan, the expenditure of supporting the United States army bases is included).

No wars as big as World War I and II may not be occurred. However, armed conflicts are now increasing instead. From 1989 to 1996 there were approximately 101 armed conflicts, 95 of which were the conflicts among the armed groups within the nation, not between nations. Those groups that get involved in the conflicts are varied, such a governmental militaries, semi-military organizations, Guerilla groups, terrorist groups, and narcotic armed groups, and the number of those organizations/groups counts up to as much as 254 for total.

Small firearms and rifles spread around world are the weapons that help the armed groups survive. Nowadays it is estimated there are more than 100 million rifles and 500 guns for military use. Including 3-5 million pistols for private use, every ten people in the world will have one or two firearms. What is troublesome is that firearms last for a long period of time and can be re-used from a conflict to another

conflict. Because of this durability, firearms that used to be used in World War II are still used. For example, the well-known Kalashnikov Guns, or AK47s, have been produced around 70 million units in ten countries including the former Soviet Union and most of them are still used in militaries in 78 countries and countless Guerilla and terrorist groups. Moreover, in the 1980s the United States gave weapons equivalent to eight million dollars to anti-government forces, including Taliban. Two-thirds of those weapons have been spread to Pakistan, India, and Tajikistan, which made armed conflicts in those countries more violent (by Michael Lanner).

The countries that produce the firearms are the former Soviet Union, The United States, China, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech, and Israel. Those countries have produced millions of firearms every year. Especially, the former Soviet Union and the United States have spread an enormous amount of firearms in gratis or with low prices for their own political reasons during the Cold War. Nowadays the munitions industries are globalized and become multinational corporations, providing weapons to the whole world through both legal and illegal networks. Those industries, sometimes called “a merchant of death”, cannot maintain their business if there are no wars or armed conflicts (In normal situations those firearms are consumed for army trainings). Needless to say, those industries need potential enemies called “a threat of ...” for survive. For example, those enemies were “a threat of the Communism” and “a threat of invasion from the Capitalism nations” during the Cold War.

Almost 3.2 million people died between 1991 and 1995 because of armed conflicts. This is not so small number as we imagine, comparing to the Vietnam War, in which 4.1 million people died in five years of the latter 1960s. The number of death is increasing since 1975. Moreover, it is characterized that the death rate of civilians has been increasing compared to that of the soldiers (14% in World War I, 67% in World War II, 75% in the 1980s, and 90% in the 1990s).

Armed conflicts are not the only bad factor to spread weapons but atrocious crimes that are increasing in the advanced countries. In the United States many crimes using firearms occur because people can buy a rifle with only 100 dollars. Needless to say, 100% of victims of those crimes are civilians. As a reference (or by the way), the numbers of people in advanced countries put into a prison per every 100

thousand people are as follows, Russia: 687, the United State: 645, and Ukraine: 413 (Japan is 39, which is fortunately the least among advanced countries). on the contrary, those numbers in developing countries are as follows, Indonesia: 20, India: 24, and Nepal: 29. This shows that crime rates are much bigger in advanced countries than in developing countries.

Wide-spreading weapons resulted in more violent conflicts in developing countries and more crimes in advanced countries. More civilians have guns to protect themselves because of increasing crimes, which accelerates the spread of guns. This spreads the so-called “chain of hate.”

Through the globalization of the market system, concentration of capital, and monopoly market, the conflicts become more international. For example, people resist the wealth that multinational corporations possess. However, when dangerous ideas and weapons are accompanied, those resists will be the armed conflicts and Guerilla. As the background of those resists there is an imbalance of wealth around the world, especially the economic gap between the North (advanced countries) and the South (developing countries). The economic gap has become bigger since 1995 (even in the 2000s) between the well-fed advanced countries (i.e., the United States, where 800kg of foods are annually consumed (550kg in Japan), which results in the fact that 55% of Americans are overweight) and developing countries where less than 200kg of food is consumed per country. There are 1.3 billion people in the world who barely make their living with less than a dollar per day. Most of them are from developing countries such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In this desperate situation, 12 million children die for starvation and malnutrition per year and 500 million children suffer from the hunger. People who lost hope and were desperate tend to be violent to solve their problems (by Dan Smith).

It is important to make a persist effort to discuss and compromise for solving the problems including disagreements of advantages (or interests) and opinions. However, some human beings still believe the “logic of the strong,” which is “if I can easily get weapons and use them, weapons will be a quicker way to solve the problems.” There is a room to compromise if people argue or hit others with their fists when they fight; however, if they use weapons for fighting, they may kill others, which will generate the “chain of hate.” Wars are the typical examples for this. From this

point, the Constitution of Japan prohibits abandons wars and prohibits the right of fighting (that is, using weapons to solve the problems among nations). We can be proud of having this constitution. Not only for moral issues but also for environmental preservation to the next generation, it will be more important for the international society to abandon wars in the future. (Reference: WORLD WATCH, translated in Japanese; and the Earth Environment Databook)

The Comparison of Statistics Values (World Watch "MATTERS of SCALE," extracted and partly revised)

Total debt of 47 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries	\$ 422 billion
Total expenditure of every 12 months for weapons and soldiers in Western nations	\$ 422 billion

Amount of money necessary for prevent the influence of AIDS in Africa	\$ 15 billion
Interests of debt that African nations pay every year	\$ 13.5 billion
Profits of Exxon Mobil Corporation in 2000	\$ 16.9 billion
Annual income per person in Zaire	\$ 110
Sum per citizen in Zaire needs for paying off external debts	\$ 236

Time needed to earn the wage for a hamburger of McDonald	
The United State	11 minutes
Kenya	480 minutes

Annual total expenditure to provide basic health and nutrition for all people in developing nations	\$ 13 billion
Annual total expenditure for the pet food in Europe and the United States .	\$17 billion

Annual total expenditure to provide a basic education for all people in developing nations.....	\$ 6 billion
Annual total expenditure for military use.....	\$ 780 billion

Total properties of the 225 richest people of the world	\$ 1 trillion
Annual income of the 500 million poorest people of the world	\$ 1 trillion

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