

## **Nuclear Disarmament After Ukraine: The Future of Soka Gakkai's Anti-Nuclear-Weapons Movement**

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**ABSTRACT:** Soka Gakkai developed in Japan in the aftermath of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and few causes are dearer to its members than the campaign for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. However, the war in Ukraine made disarmament unpopular and the public opinion in several countries became more interested in rearmament and deterrence. The paper analyzes several documents produced in 2022 by Soka Gakkai and its related organizations, and is also based on interviews with Italian volunteers of Senzatmica, the anti-nuclear-weapon branch of the movement. They believe that, rather than creating a crisis in their campaign for nuclear disarmament, the war in Ukraine in fact confirms that its aims are timely and reasonable.

**KEYWORDS:** Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, Toda Peace Institute, Daisaku Ikeda, Senzatmica, TPNW, Nuclear Disarmament, Soka Gakkai's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Ikeda Peace Proposal 2022.

### *Introduction*

In 2019, I published a paper on Soka Gakkai's campaign for nuclear disarmament (Šorytė 2019). Soka Gakkai was founded in Japan and, after the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, its second President, Josei Toda (1900–1958) denounced atomic weapons as the embodiment of absolute evil. In a famous speech of September 8, 1957, in front of 50,000 Soka Gakkai youth in Yokohama's Mitsuzawa Stadium, Toda called the movement to action with particularly strong words.

Today I would like to state clearly my feelings and attitude regarding the testing of nuclear weapons, a topic that is currently being debated heatedly throughout society. I hope that, as my disciples, you will inherit the declaration I am about to make today and, to the best of your ability, spread its intent throughout the world.

Although a movement calling for a ban on the testing of atomic or nuclear weapons has arisen around the world, it is my wish to go further, to attack the problem at its root. I want to expose and rip out the claws that lie hidden in the very depths of such weapons. I wish to declare that anyone who ventures to use nuclear weapons, irrespective of their nationality or whether their country is victorious or defeated, should be sentenced to death without exception.

Why do I say this? Because we, the citizens of the world, have an inviolable right to live. Anyone who jeopardizes that right is a devil incarnate, a fiend, a monster. I propose that humankind applies, in every case, the death penalty to anyone responsible for using nuclear weapons, even if that person is on the winning side.

Even if a country should conquer the world through the use of nuclear weapons, the conquerors must be viewed as devils, as evil incarnate. I believe that it is the mission of every member of the youth division in Japan to disseminate this idea throughout the globe (Toda 1957).

An interesting feature of this speech is that there is no doubt that Toda was firmly opposed to the death penalty (Ikeda 2009, 12–3). His call to execute the leaders responsible for the use of atomic weapons should thus be intended as a paradox. What Toda implied was that the death penalty is evil, but the use of nuclear weapons is an even worse evil, in fact a manifestation of the “devil incarnate.”

Based on Toda’s appeal, Soka Gakkai became a key international player in the fight for nuclear disarmament. In 2009, Toda’s successor Daisaku Ikeda published a five-point plan for nuclear abolition (Ikeda 2009). In Italy, in 2009, ten Soka Gakkai youth members met to study the five-point plan. This was the origin of *Senzatomica* (Without Atomic), a project that matured in a first exhibition organized in Florence in 2011, which gathered 60,000 visitors. Since then, *Senzatomica* has become a household name in Italy. More than eighty exhibitions attracted some 365,000 visitors. There are similar initiatives in several other countries.

The Toda Peace Institute (originally called the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research) was established by Ikeda in 1996 to deal with a wide range of international peace issues, including nuclear disarmament. *Senzatomica* and the Toda Peace Institute, as well as other Soka Gakkai organizations, became partners of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. Understandably, Soka Gakkai was proud of this recognition, which in a way also acknowledged the efforts of the Buddhist movement (Soka Gakkai 2017).

The coming into force on January 22, 2021, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), when the 50<sup>th</sup> state ratified it, was also celebrated by the Soka Gakkai organizations, which had campaigned in favor of it throughout the world.

In my interviews with Soka Gakkai members in Italy and elsewhere, I perceived a great sense of excitement about the TPNW and the achievements of Senzatomica and other similar campaigns in countries other than Italy, notwithstanding the fact that COVID-19 had temporarily put a halt to exhibitions and public rallies.

Thirteen months after the TPNW came into force, on February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Almost overnight, the situation changed completely. Rather than disarmament, politicians in several countries started discussing the need for rearmament in front of the aggressive attitude of non-democratic regimes such as Russia and China. Even Germany vowed to substantially increase its military spending and even Finland and Sweden, two traditionally peace-loving and neutral countries, asked to join NATO.

Worse still, as it became clear that Russia would not defeat Ukraine in a few days as President Putin had expected, Russian leaders started warning that, if the West would not stop helping Ukraine with weapons, a nuclear war was a possibility. For example, on April 25, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in an interview published on the official website of Russian Foreign Ministry, stated that, while Russia does not want a nuclear war,

The risks are quite high today. I would not like to see them blown out of proportion, but many would love to do it. This threat is serious and real. It must not be underestimated (Lavrov 2022).

It seems that 2022 is becoming the worst year of the century for those who promote campaigns for nuclear disarmament. Yet, this is not how Soka Gakkai and its volunteers see the situation. I will first examine President Ikeda's annual Peace Proposal for 2022, which was published a few weeks before the war started, then two documents of the Toda Peace Institute about the war itself, and conclude with a look at what Senzatomica is doing in Italy since the war in Ukraine started.

### *President Ikeda's 2022 Peace Proposal*

From 1983, President Ikeda publishes every year a Peace Proposal to the United Nations. These texts are, as I have noted elsewhere, written in a very professional style and language, and reveal an in-depth understanding, unusual for religious leaders, of how the United Nations work (Šorytė 2019, 27; 2021).

Ikeda's Peace Proposal for 2022 was published on January 26. From the point of view of nuclear disarmament, the year 2022 had started with what looked like a positive development, one Ikeda emphasized in his Peace Proposal. The leaders of the five states that admit being in possession of nuclear weapons, i.e., the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom, signed a "Joint Statement on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arm Races." President Putin signed for Russia.

This was somewhat ironic, considering that in the statement the five leaders promised "to avoid military confrontations" and to resolve international problems through "diplomacy" and "dialogue" ("Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races" 2022). As we now know, Putin signed the statement when his invasion of Ukraine was already in its final stages of preparation.

The leaders stated that their ultimate goal was "a world without nuclear weapons." Meanwhile, they said they regarded

the avoidance of war between Nuclear-Weapon States and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities.

We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons—for as long as they continue to exist—should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war. We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented.

We reaffirm the importance of addressing nuclear threats and emphasize the importance of preserving and complying with our bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments. We remain committed to our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, including our Article VI obligation "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

We each intend to maintain and further strengthen our national measures to prevent unauthorized or unintended use of nuclear weapons. We reiterate the validity of our previous statements on de-targeting, reaffirming that none of our nuclear weapons are targeted at each other or at any other State (“Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races” 2022).

Ikeda commented that he

hoped that this [statement] will lead to positive action toward those ends.

Here, I call on the UN Security Council to use this joint statement, with its recognition of the importance of self-restraint, as the basis for a resolution urging the five nuclear-weapon states to take concrete measures to fulfill their obligations to nuclear disarmament stipulated by Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

I further urge that language calling for a high-level meeting on the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons be agreed to and included in the final statement of the NPT Review Conference scheduled to be held this year. This high-level meeting should invite the participation of states that possess nuclear weapons but are outside the NPT framework, thus materially advancing progress on nuclear disarmament (Ikeda 2022, 23).

At the same time Ikeda, who is certainly not naïve and has spent his life observing United Nations politics, noted that the Joint Statement was “subject to various interpretation” (Ikeda 2022, 23). In the same April 2022 interview I mentioned, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov gave an example of this different “interpretations” when he stated that deploying the Iskander missile systems in Kaliningrad, which can carry nuclear warheads, does not in his opinion violate Russia’s commitment to de-targeting, i.e., not aiming nuclear weapons at other states. He acknowledged that on the issue of missiles in Kaliningrad the United States and the NATO countries do not share his opinion (Lavrov 2022).

The war in Ukraine also proved that Russia interprets differently from the West what it means that, as long as they are not abolished, nuclear weapons “should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war.” For Russia, threatening the use of nuclear weapons to prevent other countries from helping Ukraine is a “defensive” use aimed at “preventing war,” while others see it as a form of nuclear blackmail justifying and protecting a war of aggression.

Ikeda noted that COVID-19 actually increased the nuclear danger because it brought to light new risks surrounding nuclear weapons by creating situations that could disrupt the chain of command: political leaders of nuclear-weapon states have had to temporarily transfer power to their deputies due to COVID-19 infection. There were

also major [COVID-19] outbreaks aboard a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and a guided missile destroyer (Ikeda 2022, 23).

More generally, COVID-19 taught us, in the words of Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, the Japanese UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, that “seemingly low-probability events can actually occur with little warning but with catastrophic global effect” (Ikeda 2022, 24).

Ikeda noted that the Biden administration accepted to renew the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) in February 2021, while Donald Trump had previously expressed doubts about it.

Ikeda believes much more is needed:

The UN Security Council should create an opportunity to discuss the steps needed to bring the era of nuclear weapons to an end, adopting the outcome of those deliberations in a resolution, thereby initiating a process of fundamental transformation... Nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-dependent states need to face the stark reality that they are condemning themselves and the world to conditions of extreme and unending precariousness so long as they rely on nuclear deterrence rooted in mutual threat (Ikeda 2022, 24–5).

Ultimately, Ikeda believes that the root of the problem lies in “toxic” nuclear-dependent security doctrines, and proposes a “process of detoxification.” With words that the Ukraine war proved prophetic, Ikeda warned that a “toxic” political mentality is based on “continuously demonstrating readiness to use them [nuclear weapons.]”

This is actually made worse by the “distrust and suspicion” Ikeda sees prevailing among rival world leaders (Ikeda 2022, 25). One of the causes is a resurgent nationalism, which Ikeda suggests to counters with a notion embodied in a Japanese expression his predecessor Toda first used at a Soka Gakkai Youth Division meeting in 1952. The term Toda introduced there is *chikyu minzokushugi*, which can be translated as “global nationalism” (Ikeda 2022, 8). Today, we would say that we are “citizens of the world.” Toda’s speech was pronounced during the Korean war and, rather than eliminating nationalism, he proposed to make it global. We should be proud to be Japanese, Koreans, or Americans, but we should learn to go beyond this and become proud of being humans, all citizens of the same God-given world, which is of course a deep religious and Buddhist concept.

The alternative is tragedy. Ikeda also mentions another document signed a few days before his 2022 Peace Proposal, a joint statement by the United States and Japan on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) dated January 21, 2022. The two countries stated that,

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, forever ingrained in the world's memory, serve as stark reminders that the 76-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons must be maintained ("Japan-U.S. Joint Statement on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT]" 2022).

The U.S. and Japan applauded the previous declaration of the leaders of the five nuclear countries, and reiterated that the total abolition of nuclear weapons should be the ultimate goal.

The declaration called on world political leaders to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is also a cause dear to President Ikeda. He has long stressed that those visiting the sites of the atomic bombings and the museums there, even if they are politicians and have seen many horrors during their lives, never leave Hiroshima and Nagasaki unimpressed. Ikeda suggested that a future summit on non-proliferation be held there, "generating irreversible momentum toward the abolition of nuclear weapons" (Ikeda 2022, 26).

### *The Toda Peace Institute and the War in Ukraine*

The Toda Peace Institute has published different documents about the war in Ukraine, including articles presenting different points of view. I will analyze here two texts I believe are of special significance: the statement Toda's director, Kevin P. Clements, published on February 28, a few days after the war had started, and a later policy brief on escalation and de-escalation published in April 2022.

Clements' reaction to the outbreak of the war was one of outrage.

As a peace researcher for over 40 years, it appalls me that in 2022 we are trying to make sense of an outmoded 20th century invasion aimed at changing borders and seizing sovereignty. This war is the most blatant act of cross border aggression that I have seen since the Second World War and a major contravention of the UN Charter.

The war is an assault on the principle of non-interference and a clear act of international aggression. Its initiator, President Putin, keeps changing his mind about why he initiated it and is keeping the Russian public in the dark about its purpose. He has instructed his

media that it not be called an invasion and is clamping down on Russian peace protesters and public intellectuals opposing the war. The war is the irrational act of a man desperate for global attention and a desire to re-acquire the lost territories of imperial Russia (Clements 2022).

Dismissing the pretexts presented by Russian propaganda, that the war was an answer to the possibility that Ukraine joins NATO, Clements stated that, “War is never the answer to anything.” Nor will the invasion protect Russia’s security, Clements said. “On the contrary Putin’s aggression and attempt to restore Imperial Russia, will generate pain, grief, trauma and long-term insecurity.”

Noting that

the Russian invasion of Ukraine reactivated painful memories of the German invasion of Sudetenland and Poland at the beginning of World War Two and for those living in Kiev, the German Invasion of the Ukraine in 1942 (Clements 2022),

the director of the Toda Institute joined “the international community in condemning the illegal actions taken by the Russian Leaders.” “There is never any excuse for blatant aggression,” he declared.

On the other hand, as a peace institute, Clements’ organization remained committed to support any effort for a diplomatic solution.

If there is no desire on the part of Russia to enter good faith negotiations, we must look for some riper moment. We mustn’t lose sight of our commitment to nonviolent solutions even in the chaos of violence (Clements 2022).

Clements reminded his readers that Josei Toda’s message was one of seeking “nonviolent alternatives to war” and never lose sight of the human suffering. While supporting the suffering Ukrainians, Clements insisted that we “must not fall into the trap of demonizing the Russian people” (Clements 2022).

In April 2022, the Toda Peace Institute published a comprehensive analysis of the situation in Ukraine signed by German scholar Herbert Wulf. This paper addresses the question how it may be possible to pursue nuclear disarmament campaigns after (and even during) the war in Ukraine.

Wulf starts with a quote from German psychologist Harald Welzer, dated March 16, 2022, which gives the flavor of how Germany suddenly and surprisingly changed after the Russian invasion.

Four weeks ago, would anyone in Germany, except notorious right-wingers, have applauded if someone wanted to “fight to the end”? Would have anyone paid serious

admiration to elected representatives of a modern state, appearing in front of the camera in combat green T-shirts, unshaven and overnights, so that they can also believe their continuous commitment to their country and their struggle? Who would have thought that terms like “bravery,” “fatherland,” “hero,” etc. etc. could suddenly not only be said, but positively understood? (Wulf 2022, 2).

Having noted how much Germany changed in a few weeks, the document warns against considering the Ukrainian crisis simply as a return to the Cold War. It lists six main differences between the current situation and the Cold War period. First, no matter how Putin calls it, what is happening in Ukraine is typical, traditional hot war. There was no hot war in Europe during the Cold War, although there had been hot wars outside of Europe, in Korea and Vietnam.

Second, the boundaries between war and peace are less clear than during the Cold War, as evidenced not only by theories of hybrid war fought mostly through cyberattacks but also by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine between 2014 and 2022.

Third, Wulf believes that unlike in the Cold War there is no grand ideological competition between two rival ideologies. During the Cold War, there were Communists in the West attracted by the ideology of the Soviet Union. Wulf states that today the Russian system “is in no way attractive” to Westerners (Wulf 2022, 8). He lives in Germany. The Italian situation may suggest some nuances. In Italy, there is a misguided but sizable minority of the population, including some intellectuals, who find the ideology of Putin and Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church attractive enough, and see in them the alleged defenders of traditional Christian and family values against American and European secular humanism. Also, the impact and pervasiveness of Russian propaganda should not be under-evaluated (Ottaviani 2022).

Fourth, paradoxically, the documents noted, during the Cold War the Soviets behaved more predictably, more arm controls treaties were in force, and there was more confidential but effective communication between Moscow and Washington aimed at preventing a nuclear war. That this still works today is something we cannot be sure of.

Fifth, the architecture of the world order has changed. The world is not bipolar as it was during the Cold War. The Chinese believe it is, and the only confrontation that matters is theirs with the United States, but Russia disagrees

and, according to Wulf, others such as India, Turkey, Brazil, and the Arab world are also developing ambitions.

Sixth, the document notes that economy has changed. Europe is much more dependent on Russian gas and oil than it ever was during the Cold War. As a German, Wulf acknowledges that this was not an accident but a strategy by German leaders persuaded that a strict mutual dependency between Europe needing the gas and Russia needing the corresponding money would have guaranteed stability and peace. The strategy, Wulf admits, “boomeranged,” and the Ukrainian war demonstrates it created a huge opportunity for blackmail (Wulf 2022, 9).

The document reminds us that German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1918–2015) defined a strategy of dealing with the Soviet Union consisting in walking on “two legs,” defense and détente. The two, Schmidt believed, were not mutually exclusive. The Western world should provide itself with nuclear weapons as deterrent and at the same time persuade the Kremlin to sign treaties making sure nobody would use them (Wulf 2022, 6).

The strategy continued with Putin’s Russia, generating some debate. The Toda Peace Institute was on the side of those advocating more détente and less defense. However, as Wulf noted, if this side had been already put on the defensive by the 2014 events, with the 2022 war it has “disappeared” altogether (Wulf 2022, 11: again, he refers to Germany and I would not be so sure about Italy).

The document is realistic enough to acknowledge that “it takes two to tango” (Wulf 2022, 6).

The Kremlin’s current strategies suggest that there can hardly be peace in Europe in future without regime change in Moscow. With a criminal regime, a policy of détente is not possible (Wulf 2022, 10).

This, however, cannot be the last word for those like the Soka Gakkai volunteers who pursue a world without nuclear weapons. With patience, they should look for any opportunity to return at least to a world order where the superpowers talk to each other to avoid a nuclear war, and continue to work to promote and keep in force reasonable international treaties. To make this aim achievable in the future, Wulf’s report concludes, just like the statement by Toda’s director Clements, by inviting to keep alive a dialogue with Russia, which is different from a dialogue

with Putin. The last words of the texts are a quote by a Lithuanian poet who writes also in German and is known in Germany, Laurynas Katkus:

After the liberation of Ukraine, it will be our duty to help this nation [Russia] regain the sense of reality and free itself from destructive phantasmagoria and phantom pains. If we just watch and put our hands in our laps, another leader will take Putin's place and the cycle of revenge will repeat itself (Wulf 2022, 12).

### *Senzatomica Volunteers Continue Their Work*

The documents published by the Toda Peace Institute are scholarly analyses. Their literary genre naturally includes sobriety, and warns against any unjustified optimism. On the other hand, Soka Gakkai's efforts for nuclear disarmament do not include only, nor even mostly scholars. Soka Gakkai's strength and effectiveness depends on its army of enthusiastic volunteers.

Accordingly, in conclusion, I turn to the Italian Senzatomica activists. I met some of them, and tried to listen to their voices. How do they react to the war in Ukraine? How do they answer the objection that now, in times of war, governments should focus on defense rather than disarmament?

The answer is that they turn the objections on their head. For them, the war in Ukraine precisely proves them right, and is a great opportunity to restart their campaign with a new enthusiasm after COVID-19 made events and exhibitions impossible.

As one volunteer put it

The conflict in Ukraine has shown the failure of the policy of nuclear deterrence. Far from preventing the outbreak of a war that is dramatically affecting the lives of millions of people, it has contributed to the dangerous resurgence of nuclear conflict.

Another insisted that

The statements of Russian leaders regarding the war in Ukraine have unequivocally shown the true face of nuclear deterrence as an instrument of blackmail that places humanity on the brink of catastrophe. The only way to prevent the use of atomic weapons is their total elimination. Never before has it been more necessary to pursue a policy that aims at nuclear disarmament.

Senzatomica plans to continue with its campaign in favor of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). No NATO country has signed it. However, Germany and Norway, which are members of the NATO, announced

their participation as observers in the First Conference of the TPNW State Parties, scheduled in Vienna on June 21 to 23, 2022. Sweden and Finland, NATO candidate states, had also announced their participation as observers, as did Switzerland, which is not part of the NATO but had not signed the TPNW either.

Soka Gakkai volunteers regard participation as observers as important, and insisted that Italy should join these countries. On May 18, their work bore some fruit, as the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives passed a resolution that asked the government to “come closer to the content of TPNW.” The Committee specified that this should happen “consistently with Italy’s obligations as a NATO member and the positions of our allies” (Senzatomica 2022).

Senzatomica is now planning a brand-new exhibition, which will tour different Italian cities in 2023, and will focus on the TPNW, whose very existence is ignored by many Italians. This will be part of the campaign “Italy, Think Again!” whose aim is asking the Italian government to reconsider its position on the TPNW. Together with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Senzatomica promotes the “ICAN Cities Appeal,” which asks local mayors and city councils to support nuclear disarmament and the TPNW.

Indeed, this is part of a broader international Soka Gakkai project, the Second People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition, which started in 2018. As Ikeda explained,

Through the People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition campaign, first launched by the SGI in 2007, we have worked with ICAN and other groups to advocate for the adoption of a nuclear weapons ban treaty. The second People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition began in 2018, the year after the TPNW came into being. The second decade focuses on universalizing the ideals of the TPNW through the work of civil society actors. This year [2022] we are committed to furthering momentum in this direction because we are convinced that the support of the world’s people is an essential foundation for strengthening the treaty’s efficacy (Ikeda 2022, 28).

*Conclusion: Jivaka and Vimalakirti, or It All Starts in the Heart*

Ikeda always includes stories from the Buddhist classics in his Peace Proposals, emphasizing that, while a non-religious audience can appreciate them as well, his arguments are not purely secular but are rooted in his spiritual experience.

In the 2022 Peace Proposal, he mentions Jivaka and Vimalakirti. Jivaka lived in the kingdom of Magadha in ancient India during Shakyamuni's lifetime. Trained by excellent masters, he became a great doctor. Invariably, kings asked Jivaka to stay with them, promising to him fabulous rewards. But Jivaka preferred to travel and go where he was needed, understanding his mission was universal (Ikeda 2022, 9).

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* takes his name from a disciple of the Buddha, famous for his compassion, who fell ill. When he heard of Vimalakirti's illness, the Buddha sent his disciple Manjushri with many others to visit him. Manjushri asked Vimalakirti what his illness was. He answered that, "Because all living beings are sick, therefore I am sick," and then offered the following analogy to fully communicate what he meant:

It is like the case of a rich man who has only one child. If the child falls ill, then the father and mother too will be ill, but if the child's illness is cured, the father and mother too will be cured (Ikeda 2022, 4).

Outside of the specific Buddhist context, the enigmatic answer is not easy to understand. What Vimalakirti meant is that sometimes parents who have a sick child also become sick themselves, for no other reason that they are attuned to their children and the children's pain become their pain. Vimalakirti "was not actually suffering from any specific illness" (Ikeda 2022, 4) but his empathy with the sickness of all living beings was so great that he physically shared their condition of being sick.

Ikeda derives from this story a lesson about security. We are all interconnected. We cannot pursue our security ignoring the security and the suffering of others. It is a valuable lesson in time of war. It is only when the nations and their leaders realize that the only acceptable nationalism is *chikyū minzokushugi*, the "nationalism" we all share as citizens of the world, that they can decide that a global elimination of the nuclear weapons is not a naïve dream but something reasonable and convenient for all countries.

Soka Gakkai members engaged in the nuclear disarmament campaign analyze international politics, and discuss treaties and statements. They do it with competence. However, they know that ultimately only compassion and a work at the level of the heart may one day enable them to achieve their noble aims.

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