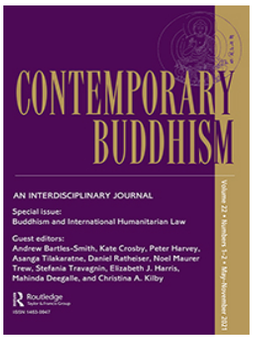

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INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND NICHIREN BUDDHISM

Daiki Kinoshita

Sōka Gakkai, Office of Public Relations, Tokyo, Japan

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how specific Mahāyāna ethics, namely the interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra* by Zhiyi (536–597), Nichiren (1222–1282) and Sōka Gakkai (1930–), can relate to core principles of international humanitarian law (IHL). In particular, it also assesses and discusses how Sōka Gakkai's three key doctrines (the dignity of life, the variability of life and the interconnectedness of life) are congruent with some IHL principles. The paper then analyses how Buddhist organisations today can be advocates of IHL and specifically looks at how Sōka Gakkai agrees with – and commits to – IHL in terms of the humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons.

KEYWORDS International humanitarian law (IHL); *Lotus Sūtra*; Sōka Gakkai; nuclear weapons; bodhisattva; dignity of life; interconnection; Buddhist

Introduction

The teachings upheld by the Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 (Value-Creation Society), which was founded in 1930 as the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai 創価教育学会 (Society for Value-Creating Education) and renamed the Sōka Gakkai in 1946, belong to the tradition of Buddhist humanism that originated from Shakyamuni Buddha.[1] Most notably, Sōka Gakkai is based on the doctrine proposed in the *Lotus Sūtra* (Skr: *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*; Ch: *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經; Jp: *Myōhō-renge-kyō* [T09n0262]). The teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* were transmitted and developed by Buddhist scholars and teachers in India, China and Japan, most notably Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597)[2] in China and Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282)[3] in Japan. The scholarship of Zhiyi affirmed the supremacy of the *Lotus Sūtra* with his classification of teachings and texts (*panjiao* 判教); he discerned a deeply significant distinction between the first half of the sūtra and the second half, which explores further the radically new perspective according to which all human beings are born with the potential for Buddhahood.

CONTACT Daiki Kinoshita kinoshita@soka.jp Sōka Gakkai, Tokyo, Japan

In Japan, during the Kamakura period (1192–1333), the Buddhist priest Nichiren proposed a new form of practice based on the *Lotus Sūtra*, including the recitation of its title with the formula '*Namu-myōhō-renge-kyō* 南無妙法蓮華経'[4] and its representation in the *Gohonzon* 御本尊.[5]

Following and also developing Nichiren's teaching, Sōka Gakkai was founded with the aim to become a Buddhist organisation that promotes peace, culture and education centred on respect for the dignity of life. It is now present in 192 countries and territories around the world.

This paper consists of three sections: the first part concerns Nichiren's and Sōka Gakkai's views on government, violence and war; the second section explains Sōka Gakkai's perspective on IHL; and the final part explores Sōka Gakkai's efforts to limit the use of nuclear weapons.

Nichiren and Sōka Gakkai on government, violence and war

Nichiren was born on 16 February 1222, in a small coastal hamlet in what is now Chiba Prefecture, Japan, and died from natural causes on 13 October 1282, at the age of 61. Throughout his life, Nichiren was moved by the suffering of ordinary people and sought to engage the establishment in dialogue for a more peaceful society. His best-known treatise, titled 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land' (*Risshō Ankokuron* 立正安国論), was written in the form of a dialogue between a host and a guest, and aimed to address contemporary political leaders and provide them with a philosophy of respect for life that would lead to peace. In it, Nichiren writes: 'If you care about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not' (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 24).

Nichiren always used persuasion and dialogue. He often called for debates with established Buddhists from different sects to discuss and clarify the original intention of Shakyamuni Buddha as taught in the sūtras. For this reason, Nichiren was perceived as being unusually outspoken; for instance, he was critical of the Japanese government of the time for cooperating with what he saw as corrupt Buddhist denominations that encouraged a sense of dependency and fatalism in the people, instead of stabilising society and saving the vulnerable. His outspokenness led to a series of persecutions from other schools and from governmental authorities.

Nichiren even experienced armed attacks, ambushes, further banishment and ultimately an attempted execution. One such example is the Komatsubara persecution in November 1264, which he describes as follows: 'Nembutsu believers[6] number in the thousands or ten thousands, and their supporters' (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 81) attacked and attempted to kill Nichiren and 10 men who were accompanying him, 'only three or four of whom were capable of offering any resistance at all' (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 81). Even in such a

situation, Nichiren and his disciples were reluctant to resort to violence and thus were not armed sufficiently to fight against the assailants. Such an attitude reflects Nichiren's belief that '[t]he foremost treasure of sentient beings is none other than life itself' and that '[t]hose who take life are certain to fall into the three evil paths' (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 460), which are the realms of hell, hungry spirits and animals. Because Nichiren firmly believed in the dignity of human life and non-violence, in some extreme circumstances, such as the Komatsubara persecution, he and his disciples had no choice but to use a minimum level of force to protect themselves. In fact, he later received a sword that a disciple gave him to protect his life (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 451). However, Matsuoka 松岡 (2014, 84–85) points out that Nichiren's focus was always to avoid armed conflict and pursue dialogue and discussion rather than to arm himself and his disciples. His approach was to escape from hostile environments, thus protecting himself in a non-violent way while persisting in dialogue.

Nichiren's non-violent philosophy found application in the modern world, with the foundation of Sōka Gakkai in 1930 by Tsunesaburō Makiguchi and Jōsei Toda. With Makiguchi as its first president, the organisation began as a group of teachers focused on educational reform, but later developed into a movement dedicated to the improvement of society through a practice of individual inner transformation based on Nichiren Buddhism.

During World War II, Makiguchi and Toda resisted pressure from the militarist government of Japan to abandon their religious beliefs. The government at that time imposed the State Shintō religion – which proclaims the divinity of the emperor – to glorify its wars of aggression in Asia and suppress all forms of dissent. In 1943, Makiguchi and Toda were arrested and imprisoned as 'thought criminals'[7] for opposing a regime that contributed to warfare, and the former died in prison. After World War II, many ex-combatants, victims of war and atomic bomb survivors joined Sōka Gakkai. These people overcame the pain and suffering of their wartime experiences through Buddhist practice.

Article 5 of the Sōka Gakkai Charter states that the Sōka Gakkai will respect local cultures and customs, and the autonomy of each organisation. Each organisation will develop its activities in accordance with the laws and conditions prevailing in that country or territory and will encourage its members to contribute to society as responsible citizens (Sōka Gakkai 1995). Being a good citizen means living according to the legal system of the modern state.

Even if Sōka Gakkai members embrace the principle of revering the dignity of life, it goes without saying that those who live in countries with conscription must spend time in the army and possibly be deployed in the event of an emergency. Those who live in countries where conscientious objection is allowed may refuse as individuals to perform military service.

Sōka Gakkai's perspective on international humanitarian law

International humanitarian law (IHL hereafter), the primary instruments of which are the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, seeks to restrict the 'means and methods of warfare' and establish minimum standards to ensure the humane treatment of individuals at all stages of armed conflict (ICRC 2014).[8] IHL balances the principle of humanity with military necessity and rests on a distinction between combatants and civilians, civilian objects and military objectives, proportionality and precaution, thereby preventing superfluous and unnecessary suffering (ICRC n.d.a).

From a Buddhist point of view, every person deserves to be treated with respect based on the dignity and value of their life (respect for human dignity also being an important aspect of IHL), and one should show compassion for each individual, regardless of whether they are 'civilians' or 'combatants'. Compassion, in Nichiren's understanding, is 'like the mercy and compassion that a mother feels for her child' and 'the mercy and compassion of Nichiren and his followers' (Sōka Gakkai 2004, 43). Thus, compassion is not something far from the individual, as it is rooted in profound respect for the inherent dignity of each life – our own and that of others – and a desire to see that dignity treasured rather than any hurt or injury being suffered. Nichiren, referring to the *Nirvana Sūtra* (Skr: *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*; Ch: 大般涅槃經 [T12n0374]), quotes, 'The varied sufferings that all living beings undergo – all these are the Thus Come One's [Buddha's] own sufferings' and declares that '[t]he varied sufferings that all living beings undergo – all these are Nichiren's own sufferings' (Sōka Gakkai 2004, 138). Thus, compassion means to feel the suffering of others as one's own and recognise the interconnectedness of oneself and others.

In the same way, Sōka Gakkai considers compassion to be a sense of solidarity with others – with all life – arising from a wish for mutual happiness and growth (Sōka Gakkai Study Department 2017, 159). Sōka Gakkai sees this at the heart and origin of Buddhism, and especially as articulated in the *Lotus Sūtra*, which expounds that Buddhahood, the supreme spiritual and humanistic state of life, which is characterised by boundless compassion, wisdom and courage, is inherent within every person without distinction by gender, ethnicity, social standing or intellectual ability. The *Lotus Sūtra* reads in part, 'This cluster of unsurpassed jewels has come to us unsought' (Watson 2009, 124). This passage suggests that the cluster of jewels is life itself, which contains the world of Buddhahood, and that 'the *Lotus Sūtra* enables us to most profoundly perceive and recognise the treasure of our lives' (Ikeda et al. 2000, 37). According to Sōka Gakkai, Nichiren interprets the treasure tower expounded[9] in the *Lotus Sūtra* as follows:

> In the Latter Day of the Law, no treasure tower exists other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra. It follows, therefore, that

> whether eminent or humble, high or low, those who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are themselves the treasure tower, and, likewise, are themselves the Thus Come One Many Treasures. (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 299)

Principles of protection and dignity of life

IHL calls for the protection of those who do not take part in fighting, such as civilians and medical and religious personnel (ICRC n.d.b). It also protects those who have ceased to take part, such as wounded, shipwrecked and sick combatants, and prisoners of war (ICRC 1988). From a Buddhist perspective, inherent in the IHL principle of protection is respect for the dignity of life, which is central to both Buddhism and IHL.

The practice of the philosophy of respect for the dignity of life can be examined in the life of the bodhisattva. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, a bodhisattva is a sentient being who seeks enlightenment for themselves and others. A bodhisattva is literally a living being who aspires to enlightenment and carries out altruistic practices (Sōka Gakkai Study Department 2017, 319).

Respect for the dignity of life lies at the very core of the bodhisattva way of life. One example is the Never Disparaging Bodhisattva (Skr: Sadāparibhūta; Ch: Chang buqing pusa 常不輕菩薩: Jp: Jōkufyō Bosatsu) who is depicted in chapter 20 of the *Lotus Sūtra*. He was known to bow in reverence to everyone he met and praise their inherent Buddha nature. Although this practice sometimes provoked violence and abuse in return, he never disparaged anyone. He would simply retreat and repeat his practice, honouring the potential for good within his persecutors. Over time, as a result of these actions, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's humanity came to shine, and those who had despised him became his disciples and thus entered the path of attaining Buddhahood themselves.

In times of armed conflict, Buddhist principles would suggest opting for a non-violent resolution. However, when such resolutions are not forthcoming and an impasse has been reached, they would seek for an outcome involving the least suffering and the earliest possible end to the war. Taking the example of Sōka Gakkai, this wisdom then leads to action that promotes peace through nonviolent solutions, such as engaging in dialogue and proposing ways of building peace. For instance, a major activity of Sōka Gakkai organisations around the world is awareness-raising through educational exhibitions, seminars and interactive sessions with speakers engaged in peacebuilding. One example is the Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series of the Sōka Gakkai International – USA (SGI-USA hereafter), where speakers not only address an audience, but engage in active dialogue with youth representatives to help empower them to act for peace.

In addition, and again based on the ideal of the bodhisattva and the central value of the dignity of life, Sōka Gakkai members also commit to

supporting ex-combatants who might suffer from physical or mental illness. For example, SGI-USA has held special conferences at its Florida Nature and Culture Center for ex-combatants to share experiences and support each other.[10] It goes without saying that Sōka Gakkai members believe it is crucial to protect and abide by rules that call for saving the vulnerable such as civilians, medical and religious personnel, as well as military personnel who have ceased to take part in conflict, the wounded, shipwrecked and sick combatants, and prisoners of war.

The variability of life

Article 35 of Additional Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions stipulates in part that '[i]t is prohibited to employ weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering' (ICRC n.d.c).

Nichiren Buddhism supports the ideas of Article 35 based on the principles of variability of life and dignity of life. The variability of life means that the life condition of an individual changes not only from moment to moment but over the long term. For example, a person who has a propensity for aggressive and violent behaviour can undergo an experience that transforms this tendency into a passionate belief in non-violence and the adoption of an anti-war stance.[11] The longer a person lives, the more opportunities they have to change their karma. Denying an individual their right to life – which is a basic human right – denies them the opportunity for self-reflection, inner discipline, and therefore transformation.

According to Zhiyi, this potential for transformation is explained in the Buddhist concept of the Ten Worlds (Skr: *dasa dhātavaḥ*; Ch: *shijie* 十界; Jp: *Jikkai*). The Ten Worlds are 10 states of life equally inherent within each living being at each moment. Life at each moment manifests one of the Ten Worlds. As Zhiyi states in his work *The Great Concentration and Insight* (Ch: *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀), 'life is not fixed in one or another of the Ten Worlds, but can manifest any of the ten, from hell to the state of Buddhahood' (Sōka Gakkai 2002, 416–417). In ascending order, these worlds are the worlds of: (1) hell, (2) hungry spirits, (3) animals (animality), (4) *asuras* (anger), (5) human beings, (6) heavenly beings, (7) *Śrāvakas*/voice-hearers (learning), (8) *Pratyekabuddhas*/cause-awakened ones (realisation), (9) bodhisattvas and (10) Buddhas (Sōka Gakkai Study Department 2017, 152–153).[12]

Each of these worlds possesses the potential for all 10 within it. This means that even those in the lower worlds, also known as the four evil paths (hell, hungry spirits, animals and *asuras*), possess the potential to be as compassionate and enlightened as those in the worlds of bodhisattvas and Buddhahood, because people's life states are dynamic and variable. An example of the variability of life is illustrated in Chapter 12 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, through Devadatta, a person of great evil who finally receives a

prediction that he will be able to attain Buddhahood after infinite *kalpa*s of Buddhist practices.

From such a Buddhist perspective, it could be considered that by prohibiting superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering, Article 35 aims to reduce the number of deaths and ensure opportunities for all parties that live through warfare to reflect, discipline themselves, and transform themselves to attain a higher life state. Practising Buddhism enables them to change their bad karma, which comes from actions during armed conflict.

Those who trample on the dignity of life and kill humans, whether they are winners, losers, enemies or allies, all accumulate bad karma. When they die with bad karma, they suffer after death. Ikeda states in *The Wisdom of The Lotus Sutra: A Discussion*:

> While activity is the main characteristic of one's life current while alive, one's life current after death is passive. From that standpoint, we cannot independently change our state of life after we have died. For instance, while we are alive, even if our underlying tendency is that of the world of hell, through contact with other people and the influence of the environment, we may experience a variety of different worlds – heavens, humanity and so on. But in the state of death we lose touch with external stimuli, reverting to the underlying state of our own lives. (Ikeda et al. 2002, 270)

This statement suggests that it would be difficult for all those who are involved in an armed conflict to transform themselves after they die. In other words, this lifetime is the time for anyone to experience possible changes in their life states with the influences from the environment. Learning about and practising this Buddhist philosophy – the invariability of life – helps those who take part in war reflect on their conduct. They might change the methods of warfare to avoid causing superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, thus ensuring the possibility of all parties involved to undergo positive transformation. Therefore, as the concept of the invariability of life prevails, more people will realise that the deaths of enemies should be minimised and that all parties involved in war should be allowed to live and have the opportunity to change, which reflects the ideals of IHL.

The interconnectedness of life

The *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Skr: *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; Ch: *Huayan jing* 華嚴經; Jp: *Kegon Kyō* [T9n0278]) offers a cosmic view, showing how all the phenomena of the universe interrelate. It illustrates the concept of dependent origination (Skr: *pratītya-samutpāda*; Ch: *yuanqi* 緣起), which teaches the coexistence of all things in the universe, including human beings and nature, in interdependent relationships. The same teaching appears in other texts, including the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The oneness of life and its environment (Ch: *yizheng bu'er* 依正不二; Jp: *eshō-funi*)[13] is clarified within the theoretical framework of 'three thousand

realms in a single moment of life' (Ch: *yinian sanqian* 一念三千; Jp: *ichinen sanzen*), which was formulated by Zhiyi on the basis of the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*. This concept provides an overarching explanation of the nature and processes of life. Zhiyi's thoughts indicate that all life is interconnected. Thus, human beings are also connected to the physical environment; in other words, a living being and its environment are a single integrated dynamic and therefore are fundamentally inseparable.

Nichiren explains this concept as follows: 'To illustrate, environment is like the shadow, and life, the body. Without the body, no shadow can exist, and without life, no environment. In the same way, life is shaped by its environment' (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 644). Life refers to the 'subjective life' (Ch: *zhengbao* 正報; Jp: *shōhō*), and its environment means the 'objective world' (Ch: *yibao* 依報; Jp: *ehō*) that surrounds it. Even though life is supported by its environment, human beings are part of nature and should preserve the environment.

Similarly, IHL also highlights the importance of protecting the environment. The 1977 Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions, Article 35 stipulates in part that '[i]t is prohibited to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment'. Similarly, Article 55 stipulates that '[c]are shall be taken in warfare to protect the natural environment against widespread, long-term and severe damage' and that '[a]ttacks against the natural environment by way of reprisals are prohibited' (ICRC n.d.c).

This prohibition is paralleled in Nichiren by the concept of the oneness of life and its environment. There is no separation of the individual and their environment. To protect the environment is to protect the lives of individuals. As Nichiren writes in 'On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime' (Jp: *Isshō jōbutsu shō* 一生成仏抄): '[I]f the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds' (Sōka Gakkai 1999, 4). This is an illustration of the concept of the oneness of life and its environment.

IHL and Sōka Gakkai: Restrictions on nuclear weapons and tactics

As stated earlier, the Buddhist principles of the dignity of life, the variability of life and the interconnectedness of life correspond to Article 35 that prohibits means and methods of warfare that cause unnecessary suffering and destroy the environment. However, as this article does not explicitly state whether the prohibited means and methods include the usage of nuclear weapons, it has led to differing interpretations among scholars and stakeholders.

Some have argued that the use of nuclear weapons could be legal, depending on the situation. The 1868 Saint Petersburg Declaration, the first formal

agreement that called for the banning of inhumane weapons in war, prohibited the use of weapons that would cause unnecessary suffering as follows:

> Considering: . . . That the only legitimate object which States should endeavour to accomplish during war is to weaken the military forces of the enemy; That for this purpose it is sufficient to disable the greatest possible number of men; That this object would be exceeded by the employment of arms which uselessly aggravate the sufferings of disabled men, or render their death inevitable; That the employment of such arms would, therefore, be contrary to the laws of humanity. (ICRC n.d.d)

This declaration was groundbreaking as the authors saw the need to affirm humanitarian principles in warfare. It also formed a foundation for modern IHL. However, as the Saint Petersburg Declaration does not explicitly denounce all weapons, it does not prevent states from using nuclear weapons to 'weaken the military forces' of an enemy state.

Such interpretations of these prohibitions could conceivably encourage the proliferation of nuclear weapons and run contrary to the respect for the dignity of life and protection of the environment. Similar interpretations could be made regarding the 1996 Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons issued by the International Court of Justice. It reads,

> A threat or use of nuclear weapons should also be compatible with the requirements of the international law applicable in armed conflict, particularly those of the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, as well as with specific obligations under treaties and other undertakings which expressly deal with nuclear weapons. (ICJ 1996, 266)

The Advisory Opinion indicated that the law was not sufficiently clear on whether the use of nuclear weapons is illegal under any circumstances. For instance, Mayama (2014) points out that the use of nuclear weapons could be legal when the state in question is under existential threat or has been subject to a nuclear attack and might need to respond in kind.[14]

Another argument is that IHL bans the usage of nuclear weapons in any situation, which the Sōka Gakkai also supports based on the aforementioned Buddhist ethics (the dignity of life, the variability of life and the interconnectedness of life). Historically, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki resulted in unnecessary suffering. The estimated number of combined causalities in the two cities is 199,000 (Atomic Archive n.d.), and the survivors and their offspring still suffer from aftereffects including leukaemia, trauma and social stigma. O'Connor (2014, 147) writes:

> The long-term impact of nuclear weapons also means a significantly increased risk of cancer mortality throughout the life of survivors. How the temporal aspect of the rule on unnecessary suffering does not manifest itself immediately, is to be understood, requires further analysis. That said, given the

> characteristics that would ordinarily manifest themselves from exposure to radiation, it is fair to contend that this issue must be taken into account in applying the unnecessary suffering rule.

Thus, regardless of the reason or justification behind their usage, the damage that nuclear weapons wreak would be catastrophic and absolutely detrimental to the dignity of all life on the planet. It would also affect victims in the long term. The use of nuclear weapons cannot be justified, in my opinion, as they would cause unnecessary and immeasurable suffering to both civilians and combatants.

In 2017, the United Nations General Assembly made the monumental decision to convene a diplomatic conference to negotiate the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW hereafter), which has been ratified by 66 states as of the time of writing and came into force on 21 January 2021. The preamble of the TPNW recognises the important role that organisations such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, among other international and religious organisations and individuals, have played in contributing to the call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, by bringing into focus the humanitarian impact of any use of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty's Article 8, paragraph 5 states that these organisations 'shall be invited to attend the meetings of States Parties and the review conferences as observers' (UN 2017). While the TPNW has not yet been adopted by a state that possess nuclear weapons, it has promoted an international conversation on whether the international community admits the use of nuclear weapons either in times of war or times of no war.

As a religious organisation that upholds the importance of the dignity of life, Sōka Gakkai also participated in the international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and has consistently engaged in grassroots peace activities towards the elimination of nuclear weapons in cooperation with like-minded organisations, including other faith organisations. For some 40 years, it has engaged in creating and showing panel exhibitions calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons (Sōka Gakkai International 2018); in April 2014, Sōka Gakkai also convened an unprecedented interfaith gathering on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, held at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) in Washington, DC (Tullo 2014).

Earlier on, in 1957, the second president of Sōka Gakkai, Toda, made a declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. This was the starting point of Sōka Gakkai's activities to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Daisaku Ikeda, who later became the third president of the organisation, has continued to spearhead the organisation's movement for the abolition of nuclear weapons and has consistently referred to the declaration in his annual peace proposals since 1983. In his 2007 peace proposal, Ikeda

commented on Toda's declaration, which describes the destructive nature within any person who would use nuclear weapons as 'a devil incarnate, a fiend, a monster' (Ikeda 2007). Ikeda states:

> Those who would use nuclear weapons capable of instantaneously killing tens of millions of people exhibit the most desperate symptoms of this pathology. They have lost all sense of the dignity of life, having fallen prey to their own inner demons. (Ikeda 2007)

According to Ikeda (2007),

> Buddhism classifies the underlying destructive impulses that give rise to such behaviour as 'the three poisons' . . . of greed, anger and ignorance. 'The world of anger' can be thought of as the state of life of those in whom these forces have been directed outward towards others.

The following words of Nichiren well describe the world of anger:

> Since the mind of a person who is in the world of asuras [anger] desires in every moment to be superior to everyone else and cannot bear to be inferior to anyone else, he belittles and despises others and exalts himself. (Sōka Gakkai 2006, 197)

When in the world of anger, we always engage in invidious comparisons with others, always seeking to excel over them. The resulting distortions prevent us from perceiving the world accurately; we fall easily into conflict, locking horns with others at the slightest provocation. Under the sway of such anger, people can commit unimaginable acts of violence and bloodshed.

When an individual's state of mind and heart are within the three evil paths, they are unable to make reasonable judgements. When in such a state of anger, decision-making is ruled by one's ego. It is therefore not impossible that such an individual will not hesitate to kill others by using weapons as destructive as nuclear weapons.

Shakyamuni Buddha was once asked which living beings we as human beings may kill and which we must not kill. His reply was that it is enough to 'kill the will to kill'. As Ikeda (1991) comments in his lecture 'The Age of Soft Power and Inner-Motivated Philosophy' given at Harvard University:

> He [Shakyamuni Buddha] is telling us that, in seeking the kind of harmonious relationship expressed in the idea of respect for the sanctity of life, we must not limit ourselves to the phenomenal level where conflict and hostility undeniably exist – the conflict, in this case, of which living beings it is acceptable to kill and which not. We must seek it on a deeper level – a level where it is truly possible to 'kill the will to kill'. This goes beyond mere objective awareness; it refers to a state of compassion transcending distinctions between self and other; it refers to a compassionate energy that beats within the depths of all people's subjective lives; it is here that the individual and the universal life are merged.

In the 2009 proposal of steps towards the abolition of nuclear weapons, Ikeda (2009) clarified that this challenge too is one of changing the minds of human beings, stating:

> If we are to put the era of nuclear terror behind us, we must struggle against the real 'enemy'. That enemy is not nuclear weapons *per se*, nor is it the states that possess or develop them. The real enemy that we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons; the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realization of our objectives.

In other writing, Ikeda (2007) explains:

> It is this state of mind that would countenance the use of nuclear weapons; it can equally be seen in the psychology of those who would advocate the use of such hideously cruel weapons as napalm, or, more recently, depleted uranium and cluster bombs. People in such a state of life are blinded, not only to the horrific suffering their actions wreak but also to the value of human life itself. For the sake of human dignity, we must never succumb to the numbing dehumanisation of the rampant world of anger.

In conclusion, according to Ikeda, on an individual level, the practice of Buddhism can enable individuals to master their egocentric selves, gradually lessening the influence of the 'three poisons' of greed, anger and ignorance, and bringing out the qualities that constitute Buddhahood: compassion, courage and wisdom.

Conclusion

There are commonalities between IHL and the principles stemming from Mahāyāna Buddhism; this article explained especially how the principles of the dignity, variability and interconnectedness of life, which are found in the Buddhist teachings of Zhiyi, Nichiren and Sōka Gakkai, and explained in the *Lotus Sūtra*, are paralleled in IHL. Furthermore, the principle of protection extends to the restriction of weapons, including nuclear weapons.

More specifically, the dignity of life described in the *Lotus Sūtra* seems to have a substantial overlap with the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Article 51, which calls for protection of civilian life, whereas the dignity, variability and interconnectedness of life, based on Zhiyi's view, relates to Article 35 of the Additional Protocol I, which focuses on the restriction of the weapons and means of warfare.

As seen with the adoption of the TPNW, dialogue among states, organisations and individuals is important, as it advocates for peaceful resolutions to contentious issues. As there is growing consensus by the international community that nuclear weapons are redundant and their very existence a threat to humanity, it is imperative that '[i]n an armed conflict, it is extremely

doubtful that nuclear weapons could ever be used in accordance with the principles and rules of IHL' (ICRC 2022, 1481).

Nichiren Buddhism values the dignity of individuals' lives and holds that an individual has the potential to change and, in doing so, can effect a change in their environment. Parallel with this philosophical argument, IHL has a vital role to play to ensure that all people affected by war not only have their basic human right to life respected but also that the dignity of their life – be they ex-combatants or other vulnerable people – is protected and respected.

Notes

1. Recent scholarship on Sōka Gakkai includes Metraux (1996), Fisker-Nielsen (2012) and McLaughlin (2018).
2. For more about Zhiyi and early Tiantai interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra* see e.g. Ziporyn (2016).
3. About Nichiren, see e.g. Satō 佐藤 (2003, 69–190).
4. Often translated as 'Glory to the Dharma of the Lotus Sutra', the formula contains a vow to embrace and manifest one's Buddha nature.
5. The *Gohonzon* ('object of devotion') is a scroll containing Chinese and Sanskrit characters aimed at aiding in the process of bringing forth the life condition of Buddhahood.
6. Followers of the practice of recitation (*nembutsu* 念仏) of Amida's name, especially in the Pure Land schools.
7. Those who violated the Peace Preservation Law in Japan during and before WWII were called 'thought criminals'.
8. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (GC I, II, III and IV), which have been universally ratified, constitute the core treaties of IHL. The Conventions have been supplemented by Additional Protocols I and II of 1977 (AP I and AP II) relating to the protection of victims of international and non-international armed conflict, respectively; and by Additional Protocol III of 2005 (AP III) relating to an additional distinctive emblem (the red crystal).
9. See Watson (2009, 209–220).
10. From 10 to 13 November 2017, for instance, 165 SGI-USA members joined its sixth Veterans/Active Duty Conference held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. Details are available at https://www.worldtribune.org/2017/11/carrying-mission-kosen-rufu/.
11. The famous story of King Ashoka also suggests that Buddhism inspired him to transform his life. His story illustrates the potential for good within a life of evil acts. It is said that the Indian ruler King Ashoka (304–232 BCE) was a merciless king of the Mauryan Empire and waged many wars. He waged war against the state of Kalinga and conquered it around 261 BCE. The war led to the killing of 100,000 people and the deportation of 150,000 others. The horror of this war and of what it did left him tormented to the extent that he repented of his cruelty and vowed to never again wage war. It is said that he learnt about Buddhist teachings immediately before he started governing his realm, though he did not immediately take it to heart. Ten years after he ascended the throne, he visited the place where Shakyamuni achieved enlightenment and started his circumambulation, seeking the

Buddhist law. Over the following decades of his reign, he constructed wells, planted trees, built hospitals to cure humans and animals, encouraged cultural exchanges and erected stone pillars engraved with edicts, such as those admonishing against the taking of life. See Thapar (1997, 255).

12. For a translation of and commentary on *Mohe zhiguan* see Swanson (2017).
13. Also, non-duality of life and its environment; the principle that life and its environment, although two seemingly distinct phenomena, are essentially non-dual; they are two integral phases of a single reality. In the Japanese term *eshō-funi*, *eshō* is a compound of *shōhō*, meaning life or a living being, and *ehō*, its environment. *Funi*, meaning 'not two', indicates oneness or non-duality. It is short for *nini-funi*, which means 'two (in phenomena) but not two (in essence)'. *Hō* of *shōhō* and *ehō* means reward or effect. It indicates that 'life' constitutes a subjective self that experiences the effects of its past actions, and 'its environment' is an objective realm in which individuals' karmic rewards find expression. Each living being has its own unique environment. The effects of karma appear in oneself and in one's objective environment, because self and environment are two integral aspects of an individual. See Sōka Gakkai (2002, 477–478).
14. See also Nishimura 西村 (2004).

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Notes on contributor

Daiki Kinoshita works for the Public Relations Office of the Soka Gakkai and is responsible for academic affairs. From 2011 to 2017, he worked in the Soka Gakkai Public Relations Office for the Kansai region, where he organised seminars and symposiums. Prior to this, he was a journalist for the organisation's daily Japanese newspaper, the *Seikyo Shimbun*, for about 20 years. He has been an associate member of the Japanese Association for the Study of Religion and Society since 2012, a member of the Research Institute for Indo-Pacific Affairs since 2019, and a member of the International Human Rights Law Association since 2021. He was awarded a bachelor of economics from Keio University in 1991.

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