

The Iraq War Deeply Invades Our Souls,

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Henmi Yo, a former reporter for the Kyodo News Service, is a widely acclaimed writer. Henmi is one of many Japanese voices that have protested the Koizumi government's decision to provide supply and other support for U.S. forces in Iraq. His comment on the Iraq War and Japan's policy options appeared in the Asahi Shimbun on March 28, 2003.

For its sheer brutality, the scene that has emerged before us has hurled the world into what I might call a "new Dark Ages." Wielding high-tech weapons, a barbarian "empire" is set to dominate the world with absolute violence. This empire's intentions are "medieval."

The only thing that is new is the use of state-of-the-art weapons systems. People are being killed with certainty -- and in utter absurdity.

This almost epochal act of insane recklessness, led by American and British forces, is not only brutalizing the Iraqi people and laying their land to waste. It is also invading our souls deeply, even though we are far away from the exploding bombs.

I say this because although this war is completely unethical, we are helpless to stop it. All we can do is imagine, in grief and rage, how the bombs must be tearing up human bodies and cremating many people alive.

Our souls, too, are being blitzed by American and British bombs and trampled upon by American and British military boots. This war of invasion against Iraq was launched despite overwhelming global opposition. Should this invasion remain justified, it will not only be a tragedy for the Iraqi people, but will also deal a grievous blow to human morality. It could spell a crushing defeat of human conscience around the world.

The heart of the issue is not that the United States and Britain launched this campaign without the support of the United Nations Security Council. Even had the Security Council given its unanimous blessing, there would have been no moral justification whatsoever for this war.

No evidence turned up to substantiate suspicions that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons, nor has there been any definitive proof that would tie Iraq to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and al-Qaida. Debilitated by its defeat in the Persian Gulf War and the ensuing sanctions, Iraq was in no shape to pose any real, military threat to America and Britain.

The Saddam Hussein regime submitted to the humiliating U.N. inspections of the presidential palace, and agreed to scrap its missiles. Despite Saddam's aggressive words of defiance against Washington, it is said that his unspoken messages verged on a cry for mercy.

More to the point, it was none other than the Iraqi people who were desperately begging for peace and their personal safety. But instead of heeding their plea and offering them a chance of dialogue, the United States and Britain responded by dropping bombs on them.

There is no question that Saddam is a true tyrant.

But America and Britain have proven just as tyrannical. Their action must be remembered forever as a war crime and duly tried.

The world is spending around \$800 billion (96 trillion yen) on defense, and America's defense budget accounts for more than 40 percent of the world total. This mightiest militarist empire in human history owns as many as 8,000 serviceable nuclear warheads, and continues to develop new weapons of mass destruction, such as the MOAB (massive ordnance air burst) bombs that are comparable to strategic nuclear weapons in their destructive power.

At the core of the George W. Bush administration is a group of so-called neo-conservatives, who are effectively in control of this blatantly bellicose superpower that monopolizes violence in the world and is now set to force its own "standards" on the international community in disregard of the United Nations and international agreements. Relying on their infinitely sophisticated, electronically controlled weapons and war mechanism, these neo-conservatives have come to possess a cyber system that shields scenes of actual genocide from the media-a means by which to exercise absolute violence as never before in human history.

The thinking of these White House neo-conservatives is that America alone has the right to invade other nations in the

name of "pre-emptive attack" and assassinate the leaders of other nations. Such thinking could not be more remote from anything embraced by a modern nation. On the contrary, it is morbidly old and despotic -- the values of barbarians who have no patience for dialogue.

Our world is about to fall under the control of "technologically advanced barbarians," so to speak.

But what is most abhorrent is that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi did not even hesitate to support this empire's absolute violence. And in defending his decision, Koizumi hinted at linking Iraq to another "threat" being posed by North Korea. This must mean Koizumi has accepted this potential scenario of terror -- that after the Iraqi war, the empire may unleash its absolute violence on North Korea, using Japan as the campaign base.

Does Koizumi intend to pass the so-called national emergency bills into law by then, so that Japan will be able to better support the empire's new war of invasion?

While protesting the Iraqi war, must we also imagine and brace ourselves for a hell in which we may find ourselves in the near future for the North Korean issue?

We must not let our eyes be fooled by war pictures provided by the U.S. military. We must use our imagination to picture the mutilated bodies of numerous innocent people. No matter how skillfully the military may "sanitize" this war, there is no such thing ever as a clean war without any bloodshed.

Protesting the present war in distant Iraq is the same thing as protesting the next war that will be fought in our backyard.