

# An Unlikely Bastion of Democracy

The Role of the Hibakusha in  
Japanese Democratic Culture



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Amidst near constant aerial bombings, a quasi-surprise invasion of Manchuria and Korea by the Soviets, a turbulent domestic scene, and a split Cabinet, the Empire of Japan surrendered in mid-August 1945. It was clear to all that the acceptance of unconditional surrender would change the country forever. The rationale for this surrender is exceptionally controversial. However, the events leading up to that decree are stark in their devastation. Among the millions of casualties of the Pacific War, those of the atomic bombs stood alone as the first victims of a terrifying new weapon, whose lasting biological effects would harm generations to come. These victims – known more specifically within Japan as the Hibakusha<sup>1</sup> – had varying symbolism. To some they represented a reminder of the lost war, to some the devastation of nuclear weaponry, and to others a broader example of the horrific costs of war at large. The war left Japan with a new political system and some of its populace with a new ‘Hibakusha’ identity. This new identity first manifests itself politically and socially in the effort to achieve government medical aid for the Hibakusha but later to achieve much more controversial and varying goals. Their support came not primarily from the conservative elite, but rather from a burgeoning civil society. Ultimately, the activism of the Hibakusha and their representative groups exemplify a strengthening of the Japanese democracy by the inclusion of women, proliferation of NGO’s, and the growth of widespread protest culture as seen in the

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<sup>1</sup> Hibakusha (traditional definition): victim of 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki.

Lucky Dragon Incident, 3-11 Incident, and recently by popular response towards Shinzo Abe's 2015 summer military legislation. Ultimately, while the Japanese constitution represented a new era of imposed democracy, the culture that a democracy necessitates was built years later by the Japanese themselves – a key part of which stemmed from the Hibakusha and their experience – a seemingly unlikely source of peace.

In the immediate post-war period, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were purposefully an enigma – but as the dust settled, dormant sentiments of national victimhood grew waiting for a spark. SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) assumed complete control of the post-war occupation and also led the development of a new constitution which implemented the disarmament of Japan, as well as the foundation for Japan's future democracy<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note that the Japanese people did not design or decide to implement this constitution<sup>3</sup>. In fact, they have never built their own democratic constitution. Even the Meiji constitution of 1889 was a "gift from the emperor to the people"<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the democracy that SCAP intended to implement was not expected to be an easy change for the political structure as years of communitarian fascism with a monarchical backbone<sup>5</sup> were not readily compatible with the individualist democracy the United States intended to impose<sup>6</sup>. One of the key regulations SCAP first employed was nationwide censorship of anything that SCAP felt could undermine their

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<sup>2</sup> *Japan: Article 9 of the Constitution*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Menton 67

<sup>5</sup> *Hirohito*

<sup>6</sup> This is especially important to note as the lack of a smooth transition without a democratic culture (and without a culture of self-imposed constitutions) would undoubtedly not led to a fully functioning democracy. However, the work of the Hibakusha and their related organizations slowly help construct this identity, as will be seen in later in this paper.

control: amongst their worries was the issue of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. “SCAP censorship ensured that most Japanese learned little about Hiroshima until the end of the decade”<sup>7</sup>. Even the emperor’s surrender statement lacked clear description of the atomic bomb, referring to it only as “a new and most cruel bomb.... Taking the toll of many innocent lives”. Thus, at the time, it was only within those two cities that the extent of the devastation of the bombs was visible. At the end of the decade, literature and film started to appear outside of the regional context such as *Never forget the song of Nagasaki (1952)* or the Japanese translation of *Hiroshima* which included a plea “for all humanity to heed Hiroshima’s lessons for their salvation”<sup>8</sup>.

Ultimately, the onset of the Cold War in 1949<sup>9</sup> led to a change of focus in the United States, and SCAP started to move away from its occupational role much more quickly than originally anticipated – thus exposing the plight of the Hibakusha. At that very same time “Hiroshima slowly emerged as a broadly contested icon of the national war experience in political and cultural discourse over the character of post independence Japan”<sup>10</sup>. With albeit minimal but nonetheless increased attention toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki came too a focus on the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: the Hibakusha. The term Hibakusha means (legally) victim of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, wider definitions of the term Hibakusha have been proposed, and will be discussed in detail later. Eventually, laws were passed that strictly confined the legal definition of Hibakusha for purposes of determining

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<sup>7</sup> Orr 39

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* 40

<sup>9</sup> *Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan: 1945-52*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid* 41

eligibility for state aid<sup>11</sup>. While “The Law is based strictly on the principle of exclusion... in contrast, the Hibakusha – at least those actively opposed to nuclear weapons – have been the driving force to make the meaning of Hibakusha inclusive”<sup>12</sup>. The rationale for this becomes clearer once one considers that the early 1950’s represented a key beginning in the battle for state-sponsored aid for Hibakusha victims. From this perspective, the state had a vested interest in maintaining a strict and narrow definition of Hibakusha. The fewer the applicants, the fewer people they had to pay. The Hibakusha, however, only stood to gain from a wider definition which could expand the base for their activism, the relevancy of their experiences, and the internationalism of their philosophy. As such, wider definitions have been proposed, such as that of the Gensuikin (a Hibakusha advocacy organization) which defines Hibakusha as “world’s population of radiation victims” (i.e. Chernobyl, Bikini atoll, victims of tests, technology, or bombs worldwide), and numbers worldwide Hibakusha at over 2.5 million<sup>13</sup>. In the early 1950’s, after SCAP’s censorship program ended and the dust had settled, the Hibakusha were finally able to publically explore their experience and advocate for their cause. Historian Glenn Hook articulates the core of these tenets as such: “One of the concrete political aims of the Hibakusha has been to gain financial assistance from the government for medical treatment as well as for livelihood”<sup>14</sup>. However, there lay an inherent problem to their cause. This goal focused on acquiring aid not for the entirety of Japan (a country heavily

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<sup>11</sup> After much lobbying, the Japanese government passed the “A-bomb Victims Medical Care Law” in 1956, and the “Law on Special Measures (for Sufferers)” in 1967. These laws form the foundation for state-sponsored victim’s aid whose inception and eventual alteration are attributable to Hibakusha-related NGO’s and public support. (*Nihon Hidankyo About Us*)

<sup>12</sup> Hook 39

<sup>13</sup> *What is Gensuikin*

<sup>14</sup> Hook 35

bombed conventionally as well as atomically) but for a specific group within the population which suffered unique complications from radiation. Historically, Japan's society has been predominantly homogenous. Susan Pharr describes this homogeneity as an essential tenet of problem solving within the Japanese community<sup>15</sup>. Here lies the problem for the Hibakusha interest groups. In a society where homogenous identification is an essential tenet of problem solving, problems based upon select group identities are understandably sidelined – and atomic victimhood is hardly transferrable or even relatable. As such, for the Hibakusha to succeed, they needed to redefine atomic victimhood. The struggle of the Hibakusha had to become the struggle of nouveau Japan at large.

The Lucky Dragon incident reopened fresh wounds for the Japanese populace, and its far-reaching effects played a large role in the popular nationalization of the Hibakusha cause. The Lucky Dragon Incident occurred in 1954 when a Japanese fishing ship was contaminated by the US 'Castle Bravo' hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific Ocean. Many of its crewmembers suffered from radiation sickness and some eventually died from complications of the exposure<sup>16</sup>. The Lucky Dragon Incident transformed nuclear victimhood – originally considered a regional issue<sup>17</sup> – into one of national paranoia<sup>18</sup>. The initial paranoia sprouted from worries that the Lucky Dragon's radioactive catch entered Japanese markets. It is now understood that two large tunas did in fact enter the system. These worries were furthered when it was discovered that the radiation had affected Japanese produce as well as seafood. Beyond food,

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<sup>15</sup> Pharr 30

<sup>16</sup> Zwigenberg 77-78

<sup>17</sup> Orr 39

<sup>18</sup> Schreiber

rain in cities even as far as Tokyo or Kyoto contained “unusually high levels of radiation”<sup>19</sup>.

Suddenly, the prospect of invisible radiation sweeping the nation seemed to have been realized. A radiation expert at the time named Nagoka Shogo (the director of the peace museum) visited the crewmembers and upon his return stated “I would like to cry to the world: ‘no more Hiroshimas’”<sup>20</sup>. The most pronounced public outcry came to fruition in the Sugunami Petition Movement led by women in the Sugunami District of Tokyo. Nearly 270,000 signatures were collected in the first two weeks for this grassroots demonstration of public will<sup>21</sup>.

Ultimately, around 32 million signatures were gathered which is especially astounding considering that the working population of Japan at the time was 58 million<sup>22</sup>. “As a result of the central role of radiation in the Bikini Incident, the nuclear problem was thus highlighted not as a problem of the past war – the atomic bombings – nor of a minority – the Hibakusha – but a concrete, individually realizable problem of the present peace and of all Japanese”<sup>23</sup>. The Sugunami Petition more specifically intended to “inform the world of the Japanese desire to ban atomic and hydrogen weapons”. The movement did not stop at the petition level. Rather, after 1954, physical manifestations of popular will could be seen in protests that sprouted up across the nation, such as that of the 1955 Hiroshima rally.

The fact that the popularization of the non-nuclear movement was caused in part by the widening of the nuclear victim identity does not mean that the Hibakusha were not a key element of this protest movement. Rather, they formed its personal and emotional epicenter

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<sup>19</sup> Zwigenberg 78

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Manabe Chapter 2

<sup>22</sup> Hook 37

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

and served as ambassadors to the movement's growth. Firstly, the Lucky Dragon incident was not perceived as a unique incident, instead, it was often referred to as "the third nuclear attack against Japan"<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, the seeds of this very non-nuclear movement had already been sown years before. "Already in 1949, a Japanese Communist Party (JCP) declaration stated, 'We Japanese who experienced the suffering caused upon us by the nuclear bomb, call upon the world to abolish [the bomb]'"<sup>25</sup>. Ultimately, we see here that the Suginami petition, and the subsequent growth of the non-nuclear protest movement were in fact popularized extensions of the left's longtime strategy of widening the Hibakusha identity (Note the JCP statement referring to "us" Japanese who suffered from the atomic bomb). Secondly, the demands of the post-Lucky Dragon non-nuclear movement went 'hand in hand'<sup>26</sup> with the demands for aid for the Hibakusha. Just as the identity of nuclear victimhood was expanded, so was the support for sponsoring the victims of Hiroshima & Nagasaki. This was a monumental advancement for the Hibakusha government aid movement as such aid was originally seen as too political (some felt it implied war guilt)<sup>27</sup>. Thirdly, an often repeated reference amongst the Suginami supporters was "Ashes of death" which connected the worries of nuclear fallout word for word with those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki<sup>28</sup>. Alongside imagery of contaminated food and the surviving crewmembers, another visual and emotional representative of non-nuclear sentiment at the time was a posthumously famous twelve-year-old named Sasaki Sadako. Sasaki was a victim of the Hiroshima atomic bombing and suffered from complications from radiation poisoning. "In

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<sup>24</sup> Hook 37

<sup>25</sup> Zwigenberg 77

<sup>26</sup> Hook 38

<sup>27</sup> Orr 58

<sup>28</sup> Hook 38

this way, the threat of radiation came to be individualized in the death of a child”<sup>29</sup>. The metamorphosis of fears of the Lucky Dragon Incident (ultimately surrounding radiation) into that of a child victim of Hiroshima literally represents how the Lucky Dragon Incident underscored that the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were in no way limited to the WWII era.

The Suginami movement was not the only non-nuclear movement to organize, rather, groups like the Gensuikyo<sup>30</sup> (founded in 1955) served as the initial core of the Hibakusha-oriented organized protest movement – and to this day represents similar interests. Chaired in its early years by Yasui Kaoru, the Gensuikyo focused primarily on elevating the status of the Hibakusha within Japan<sup>31</sup>. Originally, Yasui attempted to affect change through a complete trust in government leadership<sup>32</sup>. Yet this proved fruitless – prompting him to wholeheartedly advocate for grassroots activism combined with an emotional appeal. “Quite consciously he promoted awareness of Japan’s unique atomic victim experience, as a means to motivate people to political action”<sup>33</sup>. More specifically, the strength in the Gensuikyo’s emotional claim lay in its “ability to draw on the emotionally powerful appeal of Hibakusha testimony”<sup>34</sup>. Ultimately, “preventing and alleviating the Hibakusha’s suffering and working for peace became synonymous across many political and national divides”<sup>35</sup>. However, recognizing that the

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid* 39

<sup>30</sup> The name of the group is a Japanese portmanteau most closely meaning “Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs”

<sup>31</sup> Orr 48

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* 49

<sup>33</sup> *ibid* 51

<sup>34</sup> Zwigenberg 39

<sup>35</sup> *ibid* 80

strength of his movement was in its popular appeal, Yasui used terms like “‘kokumin’ (meaning the people, as in civic nation) and ‘minshu’ (the people, as in popular masses) in order to emphasize the civic and popular nature of peace activism”<sup>36</sup>. “The Hibakusha became the symbol of victimization that could overcome any factional squabbles and which could unite all Japanese people in their quest for peace”<sup>37</sup>. This new protest culture advocated by Yasui’s Gensuikyo and other groups is emblematic of a new and uniquely Japanese approach to peace protests – especially apt as a transitional protest model in a nation with a historical reluctance towards large protests<sup>38</sup>. Ultimately, the Hibakusha groups realized the need for appealing on a grassroots activist level to pressure the LDP<sup>39</sup> in order to achieve their goals. This postwar approach was not exclusive to the 1950’s, as it later served as the foundation for Japanese anti-nuclear/anti-war protests up to present day.

The Gensuikyo and other Hibakusha-based groups were not static nor were they apolitical. While the Gensuikyo flirted with staying apolitical, things got increasingly complex as cold war tensions (inextricably tied to nuclear weaponry) brought the issue of the atomic/hydrogen bomb and the US military to the core of Japanese popular politics in the late 1950’s<sup>40</sup>. Historian James Orr describes this inevitability by noting that “Yasui’s attempts to keep the movement free of the ‘divisiveness of political factions’”<sup>41</sup> were in vain. Already, the first world conference against atomic and hydrogen bombs, organized by the Gensuikyo,

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<sup>36</sup> Orr 52

<sup>37</sup> Zwigenberg 81

<sup>38</sup> Pharr 30

<sup>39</sup> LDP: Liberal Democratic Party. Right wing political party which historically has dominated

<sup>40</sup> Orr 60

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*

suggested signs of “being coopted to a progressive political campaign”<sup>42</sup>. “Leftist insistence on criticizing US military base expansion at the first conference was already politicizing the movement”<sup>43</sup>. While Yasui originally attempted to maintain the movement’s apolitical nature, he eventually acquiesced stating that “this is an expression of Japan’s condition today” and further stating that “we should develop a broad peace movement based on strengthening close communication among the antibase movement<sup>44</sup>, the ban-the-bomb movement, and all peace organizations”<sup>45</sup>. Out of all of these movements, the antibase movement was the most striking affiliation for the Gensuikyo (which originally intended on simply prodding the LDP and staying apolitical) to accept. This was especially the case in the late 1950’s when the antibase movement (along with other movements) participated in the ANPO demonstrations which are seen as a key expression point in Japan’s protest cultures nascent growth<sup>46</sup>. The political activities of the Hibakusha were not limited to that of being representatives within the Gensuikyo. Instead they were actively promoting their case politically. In the context of the mid-1950’s this can be seen in their 1956 formation of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb survivors, or more commonly known as the Nihon Hidankyo<sup>47</sup>. Regardless of apolitical intentions, the ultimate goals of the Hibakusha groups were inherently political in Japan and

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*

<sup>44</sup> The anti base movement is an ongoing protest movement primarily in Okinawa which for many years has pushed against US military installations on the island of Okinawa and the rest of Japan (Mitchell).

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> Johnston

<sup>47</sup> Zwigenberg 81

the eventual alliance with similar movements signified the cementing of the Hibakusha cause in new Japanese protest culture.

The Hibakusha cause was not always united. Rather, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, Hibakusha-related groups split into many sub organizations, many of which are still active to this day and represent different political twists on their original goals. As will be shown, Yasui's acquiescence to diverse affiliations did not necessarily signify an acquiescence on the part of all those advocating for the Hibakusha. In fact, the resulting polarization within the Hibakusha cause led to many splinter groups such as the National Council for Peace against Nuclear Weapons<sup>48</sup>, or the Gensuikin (a.k.a. The Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs) which formed in 1965 and was more focused on creating alliances with labor unions. Furthermore, the Gensuikin describes its decision to split as a disagreement about whether or not some socialist countries should be allowed to have nuclear weapons. The Gensuikin felt no countries should be allowed these weapons. Historian Ran Zwigenberg notes that "Hibakusha relief soon became the only common ground among the different competing factions of the anti-nuclear movement"<sup>49</sup>. At times, the diversification of interests among these groups demonstrated firstly just how politicized the issue had become, and secondly how in a country with one clearly dominant political party, these Hibakusha groups represented a sort of diverse mock political system, with international conferences regarding international and domestic affairs, and a diverse body of NGO's actively protesting alongside or against the government.

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<sup>48</sup> Orr 61

<sup>49</sup> Zwigenberg 81

Postwar Japan was built on a political structure entirely different from that which preceded it, and the Hibakusha's victim identity helped to fill the vacuum that such a tremendous political change opened. This was not a drastic change since the Hibakusha identity had already started being coopted nationally after the Lucky Dragon Incident as "many, like Tensei jingo columnist Aragai, began to integrate the Hiroshima experience into their own identity as Japanese"<sup>50</sup>. This new identity was not by any means limited to a purely historical perspective, rather, "Hiroshima validated both Japan's absolute rejection of war and its national rebirth as a cultural nation"<sup>51</sup>. In a sense, perhaps the most famous element of the Japanese constitution – that of the nation's peace – originally forcibly imposed by the Americans<sup>52</sup> was culturally adopted by the Hibakusha identity, serving as an ideological pedestal rather than an American chain. Historian James Orr describes how this identity informed that of the younger generations: "Their pacifism grew with consciousness of themselves as Japanese, a people with a special mission in the nuclear era"<sup>53</sup>. Yasui concurred: "By understanding the threat of nuclear weapons, identifying opposition to it as a national cause, and taking action based on that identification", he argued, "the Japanese had regained some of their independence and sense of worth as a nation"<sup>54</sup>. The Hibakusha identity however was not limited to simply non-proliferation, or peace. Rather, the identity had transformed via the widespread activism of Hibakusha groups to be an identity of popular protest and public will – with or without government support. Ultimately, popular manifestations of these ideals have continued to this

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<sup>50</sup> Orr 65

<sup>51</sup> *ibid* 65

<sup>52</sup> *Japan: Article 9 of the Constitution*

<sup>53</sup> Orr 65

<sup>54</sup> *ibid* 67

day and the Hibakusha organizations, with their diverse specializations and interests, have found many battles to fight.

Even amidst widespread popular support for Hibakusha aid as well as the eventual passing of Hibakusha aid laws, Japanese government bureaucracies were hesitant to qualify all victims as aid-eligible, especially those who were non-Japanese, and those whose injuries were not strictly caused by radiation. In 2000, the Japanese Supreme Court ruled that Hideko Matsuya was entitled to government medical aid, rebuking the Health Ministry which initially declined support, and appealed a lower-court decision<sup>55</sup>. Matsuya was 2.45 kilometers away from the blast site, and the Health Ministry required those seeking aid to have been within two kilometers of the blast site. Furthermore, they required that the damage be radiation based and Matsuya's paralysis was caused by a roof tile which hit her skull during the explosion. Eventually, the ruling stated that there was evidence of hair-loss, and partially because of this the court was willing to force the ministry to make payments. The *Japan Times* claimed that this decision "effectively widens the door for state-covered medical care given to Hibakusha, survivors of the bombings". Matsuya had worked with the Nagasaki Confederation of A- and H-bomb Sufferers (another Hibakusha organization), and petitions had "circulated nationwide, gathering more than 1 million signatures". It is not hard to see here that the techniques of the Suginami petition and the work of the Hibakusha organizations had not lost their relevancy as persistent bureaucratic reluctance prompted victims to seek ulterior methods of achieving their goals. This instance also exemplifies the persistent reality of Hibakusha organizations having to abandon hopes of working with the parliament/bureaucracy, as Yasui had disappointedly come

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<sup>55</sup> *Top Court Backs State-sponsored Health Care for A-bomb Survivors.*

to realize. Again, this disappointment reappeared in the form of another legal fight for the Hibakusha, this time for the Korean Hibakusha. In 2007, in a case widely known as the overseas Hibakusha case, the Supreme Court ruled against the Health Ministry's 1974 edict "telling local governments to limit distribution of government support only to atomic-bomb survivors living in Japan"<sup>56</sup>. The forty Korean plaintiffs had been forced to work in Hiroshima at the time and suffered from the bombing. Their case had been ruled against by the Hiroshima District Court, only to be finally accepted and ruled on by the Supreme Court which ordered the ministry to reverse its edict and pay the victims. In total, the rigid bureaucracy was so difficult to persuade that even in 2007 it took the Supreme Court to force it to cave in. This clear example of strong checks and balances between the judiciary and the prestigious bureaucracy is especially relevant considering that this Hibakusha-based ruling served as "the first time the top court has declared a government order illegal and upheld a ruling mandating the payment of damages"<sup>57</sup>.

The elastic and persistent role of the Hibakusha and Hibakusha-related organizations in Japanese protest/political identity was again exemplified in popular unrest after the Fukushima meltdowns in March 2011<sup>58</sup>. At first, there were some who were quick to extend the Hibakusha victim identity. "In terms of being nuclear victims, we are the same"<sup>59</sup> said Sunao Tsuboi, a victim of the Hiroshima bombing. While some other Hibakusha were reluctant to completely extend their identity to a nuclear incident with technically no immediate deaths, the

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<sup>56</sup> *Korean Hibakusha Benefit Snub Illegal*

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> In March 2011, the Fukushima No. 1 power station, triggered by a tsunami, incurred three reactors meltdowns. Radioactive fallout caused many evacuations, currently however there have been no fatalities directly caused by the nuclear disaster. (Hibakusha: Nuke safety biggest lie)

<sup>59</sup> Ito

significance of the extension of this identity, and this extension's prominence in the referenced *Japan Times* article signifies the relevance of this homogeneity in the popular outcry over Fukushima. Protesters against nuclear energy after the Fukushima incident made visible this connection again via the "No More Hibakusha" slogan<sup>60</sup>, displaying the ability of the movement to change and flex with the varying iterations of nuclear harm in Japan<sup>61</sup>. Hibakusha groups specifically were quick to condemn the Fukushima incident<sup>62</sup>. The Gensuikin for example defines a tenet of its organizing goal as the idea that "Mankind and nuclear Technology cannot coexist"<sup>63</sup>, and many other groups issued bulletins pushing for a removal of nuclear technology. This however was not always the case as decades before an anti-nuclear conference closed with a call for "nuclear energy to be used for humanity's happiness and prosperity"<sup>64</sup>, not an uncommon notion at the time. As such, one would be wrong to describe Hibakusha activist groups as static, as cases like these show how the groups have moved to adjust to new information and new circumstances – advocating not simply for issues related to WWII or victim's compensation but for a dynamic philosophy integral to the nation.

The contemporary actions of the Hibakusha groups have not even been limited to strictly nuclear issues, as seen through the outspoken reactions of Hibakusha groups and specific victims towards Shinzo Abe's 2015 summer legislation. Recently, Shinzo Abe's administration pushed bills which would allow Japan to use its own troops in foreign conflicts<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Tanaka

<sup>61</sup> Yokota

<sup>62</sup> Tanaka

<sup>63</sup> *What is Gensuikin*

<sup>64</sup> Orr 62

<sup>65</sup> Kim

To many, this represented a direct violation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution (the article which limits Japan's military). In response, many large protests occurred in Japan (one demonstration numbering around 30,000 outside of the Diet building<sup>66</sup>). Interestingly, these protests occurred regardless of the fact that the emphasis on social conformity led protesters (in this case college students) to be "warned that their actions 'embarrass' their universities, and may threaten potential for employment after graduation since Japanese labor law can allow for that kind of discrimination"<sup>67</sup>. Even though these protests were often led by a younger new generation of protesters, the presence of the Hibakusha identity was clear. One protest, described as a "College Student Protest"<sup>68</sup> reportedly contained many older protesters amongst the crowd; which the reporter attributed to the older generation's widespread disapproval of any changes in article 9. The Hiroshima branch of the Hidankyo stated that "It is becoming an extremely dangerous time", and another Hibakusha Miyako Jodai "criticized the Abe administration for pursuing nuclear power and a security agenda she called 'an outrage against Japan's pacifist constitution'"<sup>69</sup>. Momoko Matsuoto, a young protester demonstrating outside the Diet "drew a triangle between Japan's poor record of nuclear safety, the US atom bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and what she perceives to be Abe's anti-historical march toward militarization"<sup>70</sup>. The issue of the Hibakusha, even after seventy years, remains at the root of these contemporary controversies within Japanese politics.

Controversies which brought "200,000" people demonstrating against the "lack of

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid*

<sup>67</sup> Chen

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*

<sup>69</sup> Kim

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*

accountability and unremitting influence of Japan's nuclear village<sup>71</sup>/<sup>72</sup> and tens of thousands in protest against Abe's bills in 2015.

Japan, a relatively young democracy, had a very quick transition period. The constitution which brought that democracy in the first place was not written by the Japanese people, nor was the previous constitution. As such, the state of its democracy might have been initially seen as dubious, yet today one might not say the same. Japan's democratic growth is due in part to the vocal struggle of the Hibakusha which to this day fosters a popular democratic culture. Larry Diamond describes many core principles to a true democracy, some of which are tangential to the cause of the Hibakusha and some of which are exceedingly apparent in the struggle led or organized with the Hibakusha<sup>73</sup>. Three of these principles stand out as strikingly relevant: First of which being the need for a strong civil society. This can be immediately seen through the many Hibakusha groups such as the Nihon Hidankyo, Gensuikin, Gensuikyo, and others. These groups have shown an ability to transcend traditional Hibakusha issues, and in some case alter their goals (such as with nuclear power) to adapt to the changing times – much like a traditional NGO might. Furthermore, they have moved away from the initial fears of politicizing their movement – as seen through Yasui's capitulation and their contemporary criticisms of Abe's policies and nuclear energy. Secondly, Diamond recognizes the need for a national protest culture. This culture, as mentioned earlier traditionally clashes with historic tendencies towards homogeneity and social conformity evident still in aforementioned Japanese labor laws and a reluctance toward large protests. However, to this day, the Hibakusha have maintained a strong

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<sup>71</sup> A term for Japan's pro-nuclear interest groups

<sup>72</sup> *ibid*

<sup>73</sup> Diamond

presence as well as formed the basis for historic protests (ANPO, for example with Yasui's expressed close coordination with other peace movements) and contemporary protests such as those of Abe's bills or nuclear energy. Thirdly, Diamond describes the involvement of women in these processes as integral to a democracy. While female activists have been very present in Hibakusha confrontations with the government (like the 2000 Supreme Court case for example), they are especially visible in their organization of the Sugunami Petition – a movement which collected signatures from more than half of the working Japanese population and which cemented the beginnings of a movement which blended the issues of the Lucky Dragon Incident and the Hibakusha cause into a national identity of nuclear non-proliferation and of peace. In summary, there were many factors leading to the democratization of Japan, however, the influence and unique identity of the Hibakusha allowed for nuances of homogeneity and unity in creating a new *volksgeist* that itself was rooted in protest culture, the political involvement of women, and a strong civil society, all tenets of a strong democracy.

The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were undoubtedly a tragedy killing hundreds of thousands and leaving many others with debilitating illnesses for years to come. They have, however left behind a group of survivors whose voices, initially silenced by the occupying allies, eventually became an integral part of the voice of popular politics in Japan. Through their involvement in initial attempts at organizing so as to ascertain government aid, to their involvement with outcry after the Lucky Dragon Incident, to their anti-nuclear conferences which politicized their struggle and led to alliances with popular protest groups, to their challenging of the bureaucracy in the supreme Court and of Abe and the 'nuclear village' in the

streets, the Hibakusha have served as bastion of the new Japanese democratic culture, and by all indications will serve so in person and memory for years to come.

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### Bibliographic Analysis

I began my research with a few articles from the *Japan Times*. These articles were clear in their depiction of a protest culture still heavily related to the Hibakusha and pacific war imagery. Ultimately, the *Japan Times* served as an extremely valuable resource through its lens into contemporary Japanese protests and politics. It incorporated stories that were rich in their analysis as well as in their facts: both of which resulted in my many citations of their work. In the same vein of thought, Al-Jazeera brought many more news stories that were very helpful in building a more telling picture of contemporary Japanese protests, especially as Al-Jazeera articles tended to offer more interviews: which were valuable in cementing my analysis.

Furthermore, Al-Jazeera offered an international perspective on these issues, and as such gave much more introductory information on the relevant topic than did the *Japan Times*. I ended up using two reports from the US government, namely one about article 9 of the Japanese constitution, and another article about the occupation. The reason I decided to obtain factual/historical details from government sources was because of their conciseness, clarity, and strong reputation. In the past I have found that online encyclopedias leave much to be desired (in terms of detail and breadth) and I found these reports to be authoritative and surprisingly unbiased. There were a few other sources that I used for relatively small details, such as *History.com's* biography of Hirohito which was useful for one specific factual cite but otherwise was devoid of any useful analysis. Another small cite was *the Rise of Modern Japan* (a fact rich resource) which I used to reinforce my understanding of the Meiji Constitution and quote a small line referencing how the constitution was an imperial gift. The vast rest of my citing was based upon several books and the websites for the various Hibakusha-related groups. As for books, *the Victim as Hero* was extremely helpful in developing an initial idea about the detailed growth of the Gensuikyo and Yasui Kaoru's struggles as a leader: However, the book was not especially clear about the core details of the organizations or the actors – which led me to need to confirm a lot of the details via other works. For this, Zwigenberg was extremely helpful. Zwigenberg's *Hiroshima: the Origin of Memory Culture* was extremely clear in its analysis of Hibakusha related groups and included fantastic quotes about the sentiments of the mass public in the 1950's. Zwigenberg not only confirmed subtle points from Orr's *the Victim as Hero*, it built on them. This allowed the two to form the backbone of my chronological understanding of the Hibakusha and their related groups. With regard to my thesis, Pharr's

*Losing Face: status politics in Japan* was foundational in the beginning of my analysis on Japanese protest culture. A personal hunch that protest culture was not especially prevalent in Japan was initially verified and expanded upon by her work – building the foundation I needed to make my ultimate claims. Manabe's *the Revolution will not be televised* is a very clearly written piece, however its primary claims and focus have little to do with my thesis. However, Manabe includes great details about the Suginami appeal that surprisingly are only alluded to in other works. While this might make Manabe's reputability appear somewhat questionable, some research into her background reinforced my confidence in her claims. Hook's work *Evolution of anti-nuclear discourse in Japan* was very helpful in filling the gaps that Orr and Zwigenberg's analyses missed. Hook follows the Hibakusha through the 1950's – an especially key time period in the growth of the Hibakusha movement. Ultimately, Hook's analysis, alongside Zwigenberg's proved to be the most valuable in terms of clear and concise facts and quotes about this integral time period. As seen in the end of my paper, Larry Diamond's principles of a democracy were an extremely reputable and necessary element of my paper. I had found many sources which implied similar notions, however they often did so in arcane manners. As such, Diamond's principles served as a boon to my paper in terms of their straightforwardness. Finally, the last main sources for my paper were the websites of the Gensuikyo, Gensuikin, and Nihon Hidankyo. All of the websites were roughly the same, although the Nihon Hidankyo had the largest archive and the Gensuikin had the best self-description page. Ultimately, these websites were instrumental in my being able to locate contemporary political publications as well as contemporary mission statements from the groups. The goals and principles of these organizations are somewhat dynamic so their clarification allowed for a

much more thorough contemporary analysis. Ultimately, while books and legal reports formed the foundation of my historical/chronological arguments, the Japan Times, Al-Jazeera and the websites of these organizations built the bulk of my contemporary analysis (which was integral to my thesis).