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Strategic bombing and Atomic bombing of Japan in the Second World War had demonstrated to the world at large the tremendous might of Air Power. It was proved that large scale deaths, destruction and annihilation could be wrought by just a few men armed with dangerous weapons. The armies, as well as the non-combative civil populations on the surfaces below, had to just contend with their plight amidst explosion, fires, atomic flash and radiation. War had got a new demoniac dimension. With every advancement in military technology, peace became ever more costly for the losing side. "Contesting teams have come to toss out the civilized rule book page by page, and therewith to descend into barbarism and savagery".¹

The documents, epitaphs and memorials of the Second World War have exhorted the world to do away with cruel instruments of war. There have been urgings, pleadings,

resolutions and fervent appeals to this effect. The following words, for example, are carved on the memorial cenotaph in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park:

Rest in peace
for the mistake shall not be repeated.

These reassuring words, though addressed to the souls of countless atomic bomb victims, are potent enough to stir souls of many of us confronted, as we are, with a few probing questions. First, is it apt to call the Martyr's Memorial a Peace Memorial, especially when such a peace was purportedly brought about with a colossally destructive weapon whose shadow still refuses to lift from our minds and psyches? Second, can we pin down any individual nation for the "mistake" which claimed millions of human lives? And third, whose mistake it was and who is pledging whom when nuclear weapons are fast proliferating along with other weapons of mass destruction?

Such a study can also contribute substantially to the global struggle for nuclear disarmament. Some people have maintained that had the war continued sans strategic bombings and atomic bombings, many more millions might otherwise have died in battle or starved to death. But we

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must remember that the aerial bombings' fires, blasts and atomic bombs' radiation are decidedly more consuming than the small fires which all men carry in their stomachs and hearts. In conventional wars men still may have chance to survive but not in nuclear holocausts.

Explaining Japan's slide into War, Toshio Iritani has observed:

In the period between the beginning of the Showa era and the end of the Pacific War, especially after Manchurian Incident, the balance of power within the Japanese elite gradually shifted towards the military. Military leaders acquired political power and could act independently from civilian government. There were no effective checks on the power of military leaders who could command as they saw fit and were free to lead Japanese people into the miseries of war.²

As for the role of the United States, Melvin Small will have us believe that "The story of Pearl Harbor is not that simple" and adds that "Americans might be surprised to discover that experts, the world over, believe that the United States was responsible, in part, for the outbreak of war with Japan in 1941".³ He elucidates: "On 23 July 1941


Franklin Roosevelt finally approved a plan to allow civilian American pilots, in American planes with Chinese markings, to bomb mainland Japan. 4 He adds: "Pearl Harbor came too quickly for the plan to be effected". 5

This study attempts to analyse the writings of the prophets of air power, the strategic bombing campaign against Japan and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It has been rightly observed that "Historians of the generations to come will undoubtedly record the cruel atomic bombings of Japan as one of the darkest moments of the twentieth century". 6

4. Ibid., p.245.
5. Ibid.