THE SOCIOLOGY OF A NOT-SO-INTEGRATED DISCIPLINE:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN JAPAN

Takashi Inoguchi
University of Tokyo

Stimulated by Ole Waever's (1998) examination of American and European developments in International Relations, this article examines the growth of the discipline of international relations in Japan, focusing on the major currents of the social science tradition since 1868 and the intellectual agenda of international relations since 1945. Postwar scholarship has reflected the main themes and questions of Japanese history — the causes of war, the struggle for peace, Japan's place in the world and Asia, and Japan's role in the Cold War. To an extent, the organization and substance of IR teaching and scholarship in Japan can be explained by reference to certain sociological and historical variables. Discussions about methodology have not mirrored the "great debates" of the United States, but the younger scholars are moving closer to the American pattern. Recent exposure to and interaction with American scholarship has become increasingly visible, allowing Japanese scholars to make important contributions to debates in the US.

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SOCIAL SCIENCE TRADITIONS IN JAPAN, 1868-2002

As in other societies, the field of international relations in Japan has been greatly influenced by major currents of the social sciences (Inoguchi 1989, 1995). The first of such currents was the *Staatslehre* tradition, which greatly influenced military and colonial studies in the prewar period and remained strong even after 1945. The main feature of this tradition is its emphasis on rich, descriptive detail elucidating complexities of specific events or phenomena. Priority was given to supplying ample historical-institutional background and describing events in contexts and their consequences in minute detail (Cumings 1999). One corollary of this strong *Staatslehre* tradition is the emphasis on law and economics as opposed to political science and sociology. This approach was valued in analyzing international trends that might affect Japan's foreign relations. Even after 1945, the bulk of area and international studies continued in the *Staatslehre* tradition, especially when conducted by government-related think tanks. In sharp contrast to the salience of this tradition in government-sponsored research, most international studies as practiced in the academia are very much humanistic, rather than being relevant to social science or government policy. This reflects the reaction of academics to the domination of the *Staatslehre* tradition.

The second tradition is Marxism, a tradition associated with the conception of social science as *Oppositionswissenschaft*, or opposition science. As if to counter the *Staatslehre* tradition, the vigorous Marxist school was clearly discernible from the 1920s through the 1960s. Marxist categories of political analysis imparted a critical coloring to the observation of political events and the recognition of the ideological biases of the observer. In the 1920s, when the term *shakai kagaku* (social science) first came to be used in Japan, it often denoted Marxism, rendering social science virtually synonymous with Marxism. Marxist influence became particularly widespread after 1945, and from the immediate postwar period through the mid-1960s, the social sciences — economics, political science, and sociology — were often led by Marxists or Marxist-leaning scholars. International relations was no exception. Given the strong *Staatslehre* tradition and the almost continuous one-party dominance observed for nearly half a century since the mid-1950s, it was considered natural or desirable for academics and journalists alike to form a sort of countervailing force critical of government conduct. After the Cold War, while most Marxists have become post-Marxist, many have retained their critical view of government policy. Some have transformed themselves into postmodernists, radical feminists, and noncommunist radicals in the post-Cold War era.

The third tradition is the historicist tradition. This current has been very strong, and as a result the bulk of scholarship in international relations is akin to historical research, and therefore a branch of the humanities rather than the social sciences. In contrast to the *Staatslehre* tradition, historicists do not pay much attention to policy relevance, and their topics tend to involve events and personalities prior to 1945. The spirit that tends to dominate much of international relations is similar to the Rankean concept of history, *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, or “let the facts speak for themselves.”

The fourth current of postwar international relations is informed by the recent introduction of perspectives and methodologies of American political science. In the prewar period the absorption of European social scientific thought — in the form of the works of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Leon Walras, and Alfred Marshall — constituted the antidote to strong Marxist influence in the social sciences. After 1945, American social sciences played a similar role. The American-style international relations has many components, of which two are particularly important: a proclivity for formulation of theories and for vigorous empirical testing. This intellectual tradition became stronger from the 1970s through the 1990s.

It is important to note that these four diverse currents are clearly evident in Japan's international relations studies even today and that they coexist fairly amicably without many efforts made toward integration. Most associational activities, such as framing sessions of annual conventions and of allocating journal pages, are determined by more or less equal representation of four blocs, i.e., history, area studies, theories, and substantive issues. Diversity without disciplinary integration — if not without organizational integration — is thus one of the features of the Japanese academic community, a legacy of the four diverse major social science traditions originating from the one-and-a-half-century experience of nation building, economic development, war, and then peace. The strong tenacity of the four traditions embedded within the Japanese international relations community sometimes makes it hard for some of the more *bumi putra* Japanese academics to discuss matters with much more heavily US-influenced East Asian neighbors. But various efforts to liberate Japanese academics from their slightly insulated academic community have been underway on the basis of their long accumulation of academic achievements.

One of the most vigorous efforts in this regard has been undertaken in the launching of a new English-language journal, *International Relations Of the Asia-Pacific*, published twice a year by Oxford University Press and edited by the author of this article. Referees for the journal are globally distributed: roughly a half of referees are from North America, while a third are from Asia, including Japan and Australia. Submissions also exhibit a roughly similar pattern of geographical distribution. It is remarkable that the journal has been slowly but fundamentally transforming the Japanese international relations community into an entity that is far more intensely interested in the generation and transmission of ideas and insights on a global scale than before. Publication of work in English by Japanese academics has been on the steady increase. Roughly one hundred members of the Japan Association of International Relations have published books in English, and more than three hundred have published articles in English. Let us not forget that the number of American-trained Ph.D.s in Japan is pitifully small at six percent of JAIR (which has 2000 members as of January 2002), when compared to East Asian neighbors, such as Korea, where 60 percent of the Korean Association of International Studies have Ph.D.s from the US. Therefore, the efforts of Japanese IR scholars at making inroads into the global community are laudable. In tandem with this, the perception of the global international relations community regarding the Japanese international relations community seems to be changing slowly.

KEY FRAMING QUESTIONS SINCE 1945

I now turn to the past half a century of development of international relations in Japan in terms of the key framing questions that have driven intellectual agendas in the field (Inoguchi and Bacon 2001; Inoguchi 2001; Sakai 2001). It is very important to note at the outset that in Japan the four great debates as conducted in the United States were not reproduced. Japanese international relations academics have been much more deeply rooted in their own historical soils than their East Asian neighbors. Furthermore, these four traditions and their influences on Japanese international relations have been self-sustaining in a mutually segmented fashion. The question is not so much about 'Japanese international relations theories,' but to historicize and contextualize some of those American international relations theories and to generate insights and positions much more sensitive to historical and cultural complexities. Other social science disciplines such as economics and sociology had been pursued in Japan since well before World War II, but international relations was relatively new, introduced in many universities only after the war. Three key questions that may be identified in the development of the discipline of international relations since 1945 are as follows:

(1) What went wrong with Japan's international politics?
(2) What kind of international arrangements best secure peace?
(3) Why is it that so much remains to be desired in our diplomacy?

All these three questions are interrelated with one another. But it is very important to note that as time passed, the shift has been taking place from one via two to three. The first question, which goes back to the days when Japan's international relations led to war, then to defeat, and to the occupation of the country, is still one of the key framing questions in the study of international relations. It has drawn international relations students to study diplomatic history as well as other aspects of modern Japanese history in the related areas of economics, sociology, and political science. The economics perspective focuses on the productive capacity and production relationships of the Japanese economy whose alleged distortions drove the country into a disastrous war. The sociology perspective focuses on the study of alleged feudalistic social relations and state-led social mobilization that were eventually manipulated and mobilized by the state to support and sustain that war. Political science devoted time to the study of the allegedly insufficient democratic arrangements and institutions — the Imperial Diet, political parties, bureaucracy, elections, the armed forces, etc. Most of the postwar scholarship of the third quarter of the twentieth century has thus revolved around this first key question. If one has to choose only one key framing question in the Japanese social science communities in the latter half of the twentieth century, "What went wrong?" would top the list.

In the study of international relations in Japan, the key framing question that attracted students was Japan's diplomatic interactions with foreign powers. The then newly founded Japan Association of International Relations compiled and edited a multi-volume work on Japan's "Road to the Pacific War" (*Taiheiyo senso e no michi*), mobilizing virtually all the scholars and diplomatic historians active in the field in the 1950s and 1960s. The approach it employed was predominantly descriptive, rather than analytical or theoretical, in sharp contrast to the other disciplines that adopted interesting mixtures of Marxism and culturalism in attempting to address similar issues.

This landmark Pacific War study asks the big what-went-wrong question and devotes chapter after chapter to tracing and examining details of the diplomatic and political dynamics of Japan's external relations. As the work is based primarily on studies of the recently released public documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the volumes are full of newly revealed details that led to the disaster. Most actors are portrayed as having done the right thing in executing the duties they were assigned. The problem is that their dutifulness and diligence collectively did nothing to avert war with the rest of the world. The past presidents of the Japan Association of International Relations include many who were involved in this massive study and remained leaders in the field long after the work was completed and published. Accordingly, the entire discipline had been strongly influenced by the key framing question.

In tandem with the JAIR Pacific War project, newspapers and magazines played an important role in framing the academic agendas of international relations. For the press, the key framing question was the second one mentioned above: What are the best arrangements to secure peace? Debate unfolded on the subject of peace with the allied powers, e.g., should the San Francisco Peace Treaty have been signed? In the context of the Cold War, what was the right choice between a partial peace with the Western powers and a total one including all the Allied powers? The former position was called realism, and the latter idealism. The great debate on realism versus idealism unfolded in the 1960s and 1970s. At a glance it looks like the first great idealism-realism debate in the United States. But in Japan, unlike in the US, realism's victory over idealism was somewhat incomplete.[1] The salience of this realism-idealism debate in the most widely read newspapers and popular magazines was such that the main arena of discussion was journalism, not academia, and the individuals who were involved in the journalistic debates became the best known names in the field.

There is nothing wrong with the debate itself. Intellectuals who speak out in the media have played immensely important roles throughout the last fifty years. The problem was that those in the academic community of international relations ended up becoming less rigorous in their scholarship than their colleagues in other fields of the social sciences. The second framing question was basically a policy question, but given the way in which Japanese society is organized, there is little likelihood that members of the academia can develop careers as experts on policy or become well versed in policy affairs or become well-connected in policy-making circuits. Intersectoral labor mobility is so limited that even scholars active in the journalistic debates over policy could not aspire to active involvement in policy-making circuits. What looked like policy debates, therefore, was in fact mostly illusory. Ultimately the "journalist academics" came to constitute a special species within academic circles. The situation in Japan forms a strong contrast to the case of the United States where professionalization has made great advances for the last half a century, and academics have established themselves by an autonomous/autocentric dynamism.

The third framing question is a more recent one. Although in a sense it is similar to the second, it has led to empirical rather than theoretical investigations of what should be done. In this sense, the third framing question encouraged scholars to carry out empirical studies, often of a meticulous nature. This thrust became dominant in the 1980s and 1990s. However, unlike empirical studies in the United States, those in Japan do not necessarily feel driven to place their research in grandiose theoretical schemes. This tendency reflects, in part, the growing professionalization of Japanese international relations academics, despite the adversities. Competition among international relations academics has somewhat increased in tandem with growth of the membership of JAIR.

The above portrayal may give the impression that the field of international relations has been directly affected by Japan's own development. Diplomatic history, quasi-policy debates, and empirical analyses are depicted as the shifting salient genres predominant in each period of postwar Japanese development. As the key framing questions changed from the 1940s through the 1990s, empirical analyses of various aspects of Japan's foreign relations have become the dominant genre.

A natural question to ask here is whether dynamic debates have been taking place between Japan's four traditions. Over the years since 1945, the first two traditions, *Staatslehre* and Marxist, seem to be waning in their influence. Instead the latter two, historically oriented studies and American social science influenced studies, have been on the ascendance. But the basic tenacity of these four traditions over many years has much to do with the lack of political science and international relations departments on campus that are autonomous in appointment and budget. Therefore the waxing and waning of these four traditions has much to do with the development of Japanese society, i.e., rapid industrialization, the achievement of a high-income society and the relative decline of the state's influence, rather than with the dynamic debates amongst them. Within this, interesting new developments have emerged: realism was to be replaced by the proliferation of other streams of thought, including constructivism, institutionalism, and feminism. The dominance of Japanese realism in the post-Vietnam war period was replaced by the proliferation of post-idealist, and post-realist ideas about how the world works. In the post-Vietnam war period, the academic international relations community played a much larger role in conducting debates about how international relations evolve in academic and non-academic periodicals.

SOCIALIZATION BY GENDER, GENERATION, GEOGRAPHY, AND AFFILIATION

In what follows, I would like to examine some more sociologically disaggregated features of Japanese international relations community *a la* Weber. They are mostly sociologically oriented profiles that would give some more evidence about how tenacious the traditions and how persistent the three key framing questions are.

The source of the following analysis is JAIR's membership directory (Inoguchi and Shiro 2002). The categories of specialization are three: theory, area studies, and history of diplomacy and international politics. It is noteworthy that these three areas of specialization are equally well represented. In this sense, the Japanese pattern is closer to the French pattern (Smouts 1987) than to the American (Waever 1998). International relations theories are roughly synonymous to what are covered normally in standard textbooks such as Viotti and Kaupi (1998) and Baylis and Smith (1998). Area studies are those studies focusing on various parts of the world with emphasis on history and culture. Scholars who focus on the Third World and the former Second World tend to identify themselves more strongly with international relations than with political science. Hence they have a fairly large representation in JAIR. Those focused on the First World tend to identify themselves more strongly with political science. History of diplomacy and international politics is an equally substantial area of specialization. Diplomatic history is alive and well, and well represented in the international relations community.

Generational patterns are rather difficult to discern. One notable feature characteristic of younger generations is that they tend to specialize solely in international relations theory rather than the combination of theory and area studies or theory and diplomatic history, as was more common among the older generations. Very broadly speaking, therefore, the younger the scholar, the closer to the American pattern.

Another distinctive pattern is found between members based in the greater Tokyo area and those based in other parts of the country. It is not surprising to find that, in terms of numbers, the former is larger than the latter. Roughly a half of Japanese universities and colleges are located in the Tokyo area. One notable feature in terms of geography is that more Tokyo-based members specialize in international relations theory whereas more non-Tokyo-based scholars specialize in area studies and diplomatic history. It suggests that the former are more influenced by the American international relations whereas the latter are more traditional.

In terms of distinction between academics and practitioners such as those active in think-tank research, government, business, and journalism, the proportion of the latter is getting larger, now registering more than ten percent of the JAIR membership. This pattern stands in clear contrast to the American pattern of thorough professionalism of international relations academics over the last half century (Waever 1998).

In terms of affiliation with schools/departments, the most notable feature of international relations scholars is that they can be found affiliated with diverse schools/departments, including foreign languages, international studies, liberal arts, legal studies, economics and management. There are virtually no political science or international relations departments which are autonomous in making independent decisions on appointment and budget. These constraints seriously hamper the identity of international relations as a discipline. In addition, Japan's international relations has not chosen the American path of accommodating itself within the political science department. Rather it has been keeping the original aspiration of inter-disciplinary subjects in teaching but has not been able to create substantially strong disciplinary identity.

To augment the above examination of the JAIR membership directory, I examine the list of publications on international affairs compiled regularly by the *Journal of Diplomacy and International Law* of the Japanese Association of International Law. This annual compilation is useful, as it categorizes each book or article under one of four areas: General, Japan, Asia/Africa, and Americas/Europe. Roughly speaking, the General category seems to include those dealing with overall theory and is thus difficult to place under more geographically specific categories. The most easily identifiable trend in these lists is that publications in the General and Japan categories have been steadily increasing whereas those on Asia/Africa and Americas/Europe are on the steady decline.

What does this trend mean, especially in the 1990s and beyond? The following two observations can be made. Publications addressing the issue of "what happened in this or that part of the world?" seem to remain large in number. This type of publication is primarily descriptive. However, more analytic publications seem to be on the increase, as are those more focused on Japan's actions or policy directions. These two seem to indicate that a modicum of conceptual and methodological sophistication seems to have been taking place in the Japanese international relations community. This is very significant since, unlike its Korean counterpart with 60 percent of members with American Ph.D.s, the Japanese international relations community has less than 6 percent of members with similar educational backgrounds, although its percentage has been on the steady increase since the fourth quarter of the 20th century.

DISTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS BY COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE AND THEORETICAL POSITIONS OF JOURNAL ARTICLES

Waever (1998) compares a number of American and European journals in terms of the distribution of authors by country of origin. The Japanese pattern is seemingly similar to the American pattern in which journal authorship is dominated by those residing in the host country. Both are broadly autocentric, meaning that they have their own dynamics of reproducing themselves, not bothering too much with the rest of the world. The American dynamic is market-competitive, with anonymous reviewing mechanisms solidly established and practiced. The Japanese dynamic, by contrast, may be characterized as one of the consociational democracy type, with the language posing great barriers to non-Japanese speaking authors and with the reviewing practice not vigorously practiced. Nevertheless, invited articles from abroad comprise 3-8 percent of the journal's content each year. And most importantly, the Japan Association of International Relations has been publishing its own English language journal with Oxford University Press since 2000. The journal, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, an anonymously and globally refereed journal, has already garnered a high international acclaim.

In terms of theoretical positions of articles, Waever groups them into six categories: 1) formalized rational choice; 2) quantitative studies; 3) nonformalized rationalism; 4) non-postmodern constructivism; 5) poststructuralism, Marxism, and feminism; and 6) other. I have examined all the articles published in the Japanese-language journal *International Relations* from 1988-1998, which totaled 378. Waever examined two American and two European journals: *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Organization*, *European Journal of International Relations*, and *Review of International Studies*. The Japanese-language journal *International Relations* is different from all these four — although seemingly closer to the *Review of International Studies* than the others — and reflects the Japanese interests in area studies and diplomatic history. Upon closer examination, the proportion of articles written in the spirit of non-formalized rationalism and non-postmodern constructivism was found to be 11.7 percent and 24.6 percent, respectively. Even formalized rational choice and quantitative studies do appear, at 1.0 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively. In terms of the absolute number of articles, they represent four and three articles, respectively, for an eleven-year period. The fifth category of post-structuralism, Marxism, and feminism registered 0.8 percent, meaning three articles in the same period. A surprising development in recent years has been the conspicuous rise in the number of soft-rational choice articles: 19 out of 37 articles published in 1998 alone were articles written in that tradition. These figures enable me to make a number of sociological observations about the Japanese international relations community.

CONCLUSION

It should be stressed that recent exposure to American scholarship has become more frequently visible in the writings of Japanese scholars in the field of international relations. This is not limited to perfunctory references, but includes adaptations of their analytical frameworks and directions as well. This trend is evidenced by the greater frequency with which younger scholars, if not those in the twilight of their careers, contribute articles to academic journals and publish scholarly works in the United States and elsewhere. The launching in 2001 of *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* is a proof of this point. Whether the project will be successful or not, and whether Japan's international relations community will be able to "draw on national traditions while keeping up with American developments" (Waever 1998) will be worth watching not only from an academic point of view but also in terms of how it shows Japanese academics mingling with and playing the games of international academia.

NOTES

1 Parenthetically, the second great debate between traditionalism and the scientific school did not take place either, as the behavioral revolution did not take place in Japanese IR. The third great debate between neo-realism and neo-liberalism also did not take place in Japan. Nor is the fourth great debate between rationalism and reflectivism taking place. Many Japanese academics feel that they have been practicing reflectivism from long before it was preached by Americans, although the former were less articulate and sophisticated about methodology.

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