

US-Japan Intellectual Exchange

Global Health Cooperation as a Strategy to Cut through the Stagnation

Tadashi Yamamoto, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 12, 2009
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Intellectual exchange between the United States and Japan is stagnating. This March, with the support of the United States-Japan Foundation, I visited Washington DC to consult with US experts about possible strategies to respond to this stagnation. While there, I realized that big changes are underway in how the major US think tanks operate in America's capital.

One of these changes is that think tank activities on traditional security and economics are becoming more active and diverse, partly in response to the rise of emerging new powers on the international scene. Yet, all

the while, American think tanks' interactions with Japanese think tanks and government agencies such as the Japanese embassy are losing the dynamism they once had. Another one of these changes is that development aid for global health issues such as communicable diseases is starting to be recognized as a major issue.

The level of activity in Washington focusing on China and Korea stands in stark contrast to the stagnation of US-Japan intellectual exchange. Last year, 20 of the major Washington-based think tanks carrying out research and exchange activities related to Northeast Asia undertook activities focusing on China. In comparison, only nine carried out Japan-related activities, the same number as those organizing activities concentrating on Korea. The current state of affairs seems to be a product of the remarkable rise of China's economy and, in the case of Korea, a major push on the part of the Korean government and business sector.

In contrast, most of Japan's policy research institutions are making major cutbacks in their international activities due to severe financial difficulties. As a result, a dark shadow has fallen over Japan studies in the United States as well.

論点



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日米の知的交流

日米間の知的交流活動が低迷している。その打開策を米関係者と検討するため、アメリカの米日財団の協力を得て今年3月に、ワシントンを訪れ、そこでこの首都を拠点に活動する米国の主要シンクタンクの動きに大きな変化が起きていることを実感した。

一つは、伝統的な国際安全保障・経済分野の交流活動が、新興国の覇権とも絡みつき、多様化する一方で、日本のシンクタンクや大使館などの政府機関との交流活動がかつての活発さを失っている（以下）ことである。もう一つは、感染症対策など国際保健活動を巡る国際支援が大きな課題として認識され始めている（以下）ことだ。

保健分野で低迷打開

ワシントンに居る日本の知的交流活動の不振は、中国や韓国の活動と対比し、時に際立って昨年、ワシントンに拠点を置く主要シンクタンクが主催した東アジア関連の研究の場、中国を対象とした

ものは20件、これに対して、日本は9件で、韓国と同数であった。こうした研究活動の現状の背景には、中国経済の目覚ましい台頭があり、韓国場合は、政府や業の大きな努力があると思われる。これに対し、日本の研究機関の多くが資金難により対外的活動を大幅に縮小したため、結果として

1998年の約800万が、2007年には半減している。基金運用による助金の低迷は低金利が主な要因だが、景気低迷も背後にはあり、米側でも政策の決定にかかわるような日本との共同研究は減っている。こうした現状に対し、ワシントンのシンクタンク関係者の間から

「国際保健活動の研究を強化し始めている。特に、国際保健分野の主要資金源である盖茨財団は、昨年秋季の金融危機で資産が20%減少したにもかかわらず、助成金総額を、08年の33億が今年09年には38億にまで増強している。そして、米国のシンクタンクは、高度な医療システムを備え、人間の安全保障にも理解を示す日本に対し、「国際保健の分野で共同研究や会議を」という期待を抱いている。また、日本の動きは、ここでも積極的と言いたい。

限額は資金であら。緊急経済対策として、政府は巨額な補正予算を組んだが、そのほんの一部でも民間の対外交渉・研究活動に利用できるものだろうか。

世界に広がっている新型インフルエンザが世界的大流行を起せば、医療や衛生面で立ち遅れている途上国は莫大な人的被害を被る。このため、地球規模の危機を引き起こす（と）もなにかない。日米共同の国際保健研究を土台とした途上国支援は、そうした危機を緩和するやとを促すことで通った新しい日米関係を構築する契機にもなるはずだ。国際企業による財政支援が望まれる。

In fact, the amount of funding that foundations such as the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership, the United States-Japan Foundation, and the Japan-US Friendship Commission can provide for US-Japan intellectual exchange activities has fallen steadily, declining from roughly \$8 million in 1998 to about half that in 2007. Low interest rates are the main culprit for the drop in grantmaking by the Center for Global Partnership, which operates off of funds from its endowment and, with the economic downturn, joint US-Japan think tank initiatives that have an impact on the policy process are declining, even on the US side.

In response to this state of affairs, Washington think tank experts are saying, “In order to revitalize policy research and intellectual exchange, we must put an end to this trend of declining Japanese funding and restore funding to the levels of at least twenty years ago.”

Japan is withdrawing from private-level exchanges at just the very time that America’s major think tanks are deepening their exchanges with China and Korea. It also comes as US think tanks are starting to expand their activities related to global health and international development aid. It is worth noting that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, one of the major funders for global health activities, dramatically increased its grantmaking from \$3.3 billion in 2008 to \$3.8 billion in 2009, even though its assets shrank 20 percent since last autumn due to the financial crisis.

American think tanks are now holding out hopes of being able to carry out joint research and dialogue on issues such as global health with a Japan that has such an advanced medical system and that has demonstrated its understanding of human security. However, considering how things have been moving on the Japan side, it is difficult to say that Japan’s response is likely to be positive.

The problem is funding. The government has pulled together a large stimulus package as an emergency response to the economic crisis, but would it not have helped if a tiny fraction of this could have been used to support international research and dialogue on the part of Japanese civil society?

For example, developing countries around the world with weak health systems will suffer an awful human toll if the swine influenza that is spreading around the world becomes a more deadly global pandemic—this could give rise to a crisis of worldwide proportions. Development activities growing out of US-Japan policy research and dialogue on global health could help ease these kinds of crises and, at the same time, provide an opportunity to help revitalize US-Japan relations. It would be nice if there could be financial support from the government and business for this kind of thing.

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