

Message from Project Leader

In 2016, our project “Establishing a New Paradigm of Social/Human Sciences based on Relational Studies: in order to Overcome Contemporary Global Crises” (“Relational Studies on the Global Crises (RSGC)”) was selected for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology’s “Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research” program as a new paradigm in multi-disciplinary and practical research. During the application and selection procedure, we benefited from the advice and guidance of many people. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to them. Thank you.

The new research paradigm embraced by RSGC investigates how local conflicts and disputes around the globe (such as in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and South-eastern Europe) are influenced by the globalization of information and ideas, objects and money, and the movement of people, causing these local conflicts to interplay in complex ways, bringing about crises on an international level.

These contemporary problems highlight the failure of sovereign nations, as well as of the international society that arose around these nations and was considered “common sense” in modern social sciences up to the 20th century. No thesis has

appeared yet, however, that analyzes the events accompanying this “new crisis” in a comprehensive manner from a multi-disciplinary point of view.

To solve the problems of a modern global society that finds itself in crisis, we must analyze not only the subjects themselves, but also the relationships between the subjects, and how subjects on various scales and different levels interrelate. We need to look at changes in relationships and interrelatedness.

The defining characteristic of RSGC is that it involves wide-ranging research that sheds light onto a variety of relationships, from narrow ranges of communities to global networks. The goal of RSGC is to create a new field of applied research that tackles these new global crises by reaching across the barriers between existing disciplines such as political science, economics, area studies, and cultural anthropology. In bolder terms, the goal of RSGC is to tear down walls between disciplines and build a new academic field that can catch up with the real crises taking place today.

To accomplish that goal, RSGC organizes international conferences in Japan and abroad every year. At these conferences, we explore new theories for understanding global relationships by discussing a variety of urgent cases, such as refugee problems

and civil wars, and bringing together the wisdom of researchers and practitioners from conflict areas as well as frontline researchers from all over the world. In doing so, we broaden the horizons of global academic disciplines by demonstrating the strengths of Japanese-style area studies to put social science research from Europe and North America into perspective.

The project involves more than thirty researchers spread across five research groups and several invited research projects. We brought together frontline researchers focusing on various research topics in a variety of fields, such as political

science, economics, international relations, cultural anthropology, history, literature, and agriculture. I feel nervous at the mere thought that we must find a way to turn the enthusiasm of all these researchers into something concrete under the umbrella of this challenge we call “Relational Studies on Global Crises.” It is an undertaking that will put our capabilities as regional representatives to the test. However, I also think this challenge will be highly rewarding.

I encourage you to look forward to the various research challenges RSGC will be tackling.
(Keiko SAKAI)

Main activities in 2016 (all areas)

<Main achievements>

In 2016, the General Affairs Unit embarked upon two projects intended to establish a basis for research in the field. The first was the creation of a website. In August, the Public Relations Committee of the General Affairs Unit took point in launching a website and put out a call for invited research. The website also listed various events organized by the research groups, such as seminars and workshops, making it into a space for soliciting the involvement of many researchers.

The second project of the General Affairs Unit was to establish the Center for Relational Studies on Global Crises at Chiba University, a base of operations for research activities. The Center for Relational Studies on Global Crises was newly established on

April 1st, 2017 as the sole center for humanities and social sciences at Chiba University. The center provides support for the various research projects carried out in those fields and spreads awareness of RSGC.

Together with the International Research Promotion Group, the General Affairs Unit also emphasizes international research collaboration and the international dissemination of research. Starting in its second year, RSGC plans to hold yearly international research conferences together with major non-Japanese universities and research institutions. With 2017 as the second year, the General Affairs Unit and International Research Promotion Group moved to select a theme for that year's international conference.

As a result of their deliberations, they settled on a theme of “immigrants, refugees, and multicultural symbiosis” for the conference, all of which are both causes and consequences of contemporary global crises. The National University of Singapore’s Middle East Institute was chosen to co-host the event. In February, we invited Professor Engseng Ho (the director of the afore-mentioned institute) and other major researchers to discuss the program, the researchers to be invited, and the scheduling of the conference (it is currently planned for January 5th-6th, 2018).

The role of the International Research Promotion Group is to forge close ties with local researchers from regions in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East that are exposed to civil wars and other effects of contemporary global crises. In February, we invited the president of Baghdad University in Iraq. The upshot of that was that Chiba University and Baghdad University concluded an exchange agreement—a first for Japan. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs greatly approved of this agreement and showed its appreciation by inviting the delegation from Baghdad University to meet with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Sonoura.

<Other activities>

The most important challenges for the General Affairs Unit will be to determine how to promote individual research projects in the field of RSGC, theorize this field, and develop research methods for it. To support this endeavor, the General Affairs Unit meets three times per year, and

a general meeting is held once per year. These meetings provide project members with the opportunity to deepen their mutual understanding of each other’s research, and to share ideas about RSGC.

As a result of discussions held at these meetings, we decided to set up multiple projects across the research groups that function as work spaces where the theoretical work needed to establish RSGC can take place. To be able to publish the results online, the Editorial Committee is preparing a series of working papers for online publication, among other initiatives.

Also, in order to obtain cooperation from leading researchers who have been conducting research closely related to RSGC, the General Affairs Unit brought the following people on board to serve as critics: Osamu Ieda (Hokkaido University), Noboru Ishikawa (Kyoto University), Jun Ishida (Tokyo University), Shinichi Takeuchi (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), and Eiji Nagasawa (Tokyo University). They will participate in various research projects in the field, and advise the General Affairs Unit as appropriate.

Many specially appointed researchers and research collaborators are participating in the General Affairs Unit. To nurture young scholars and promote their research, the Young Researchers Cultivation Committee held a research reporting meeting for specially appointed researchers in March.

Main activities in 2016 (per research group)

Research Group A01: “States and Institutions: Fixed Relationships”

One objective of Research Group A01 is to carry out research on individual nations and systems. The research group focuses how nations as entities/institutions maintain their national sovereignty in regions, and how they function (or fail to function) as breakwaters against not only the influence of superpowers and global changes taking place outside regions, but also increasingly widespread and intrusive cross-border events such as the arrival of refugees and immigrants or antagonism between religions, religious sects, and ethnic groups.

In 2016, the first year of research, the group focused on these matters while carrying out literature research, on-site surveys, and so on mainly in Iran (Matsunaga), Egypt (Emi Suzuki), Pakistan (Inoue), Indonesia (Masuhara), and Turkey (Iwasaka). The research group also dispatched research collaborators Marilène Karam and Khalil Dahbi to Turkey and Tunisia, respectively, to carry out surveys. In addition, these research collaborators gathered relevant historical materials at places such as archives and libraries.

Also, project member Nakayama reviewed literature on the problem of refugees from the Middle East. She performed this activity as part of her research on the movements of refugees and migrants from Middle-Eastern and African countries towards places such as neighboring countries and Europe (which are actualizations of the condition of

nations and systems) and on the governance and international regime issues related to those movements.

The research group's most prominent achievement in 2016 was probably the organization of an international workshop at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in February. Titled "Imagining an Alternative 'Post-Secular' State: Historicizing and Comparing National Struggles over Re-secularization," the workshop offered a venue for debates from the perspective of comparative historical analysis, political theory, and legal philosophy. These debates focused mainly on the cases of Turkey and Iran, which both experienced seizure of political power by religious revival-focused social movements after undergoing secularization imposed from the top of the country down as part of a modernization effort. Researchers from Turkey, Iran, Australia, and the United States were invited to the workshop. In 2017, the research group plans to hold another international workshop on the same themes, but this time focusing on Pakistan and Egypt. This ongoing research work to consider the transitioning of the nation-religion relationship from the viewpoint of “re-secularization” stands at the center of A01's activities.

Research Group A02: “Political/Economic Regional Integration”

Research Group A02 performed a detailed analysis of the factors that inhibit integration. It accomplished this by

focusing on the relationships between lower-tier meso-and micro-entities (such as between enterprises, between political groups, or between ethnic groups) that factor into formation of the macroeconomic conditions of political and economic regional integration. The research group jointly wrote papers about the impediments to and relationships involved in regional integration, and built on this by organizing an international symposium in November to analyze the causes of divisions among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The symposium examined the idea that income divides, differences in political creeds, and internal divisions within peoples form obstacles to political and economic integration. To the symposium, the research group invited representatives from international organizations for ASEAN development, political refugees who were the first to be accepted into Japan, and also people from Myanmar and international students who are living in Japan, to speak at the symposium and hold seminars. The results were published as a research volume entitled "ASEAN Integration and Development" (Sakuhinsha) .

The volume focused mostly on Myanmar. A representative of the research group met in Yangon with former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, who was involved in the democratization of the country during military rule and served as a point of contact for Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. The representative conducted an interview with the former prime minister about Myanmar's "democratization road map" and "Rohingya problem" (the issues surrounding treatment

of Myanmar's internal "refugees" and unrecognized "minority ethnic groups").

In February, the research group invited scholars of conflict resolution from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs for a (co-hosted) seminar on security research about Africa. The seminar featured a lively debate about the role of the African Union in conflict resolution in Africa.

Relatively small "fluctuations" such as trade friction, manifestations of support or non-support for political measures from industry groups, regional conflicts, and anti-government demonstrations can amplify fluctuations throughout the entire system. Research group member Mizushima published "Poppyurizumu to wa nani ka (What is Populism)" (Chuko Shinsho), a book about the "populism" that is sweeping the world today. These kinds of developments also demand the emergence of regional integration as a new system. In 2017, the research group will deepen its research into these mechanisms by focusing on cases from Europe and North America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region.

Research Group B01: "Norms and Identity: Between Social Bonds and Nationalism"

Research Group B01 focuses on conducting surveys and research about the societal consciousness and social bonds of communities in various regions participating in global society.

In 2016, the research group devoted its work mostly to examining consciousness of social bonds and multicultural symbiosis in refugee and immigrant societies. It organized a workshop together with research collaborators at the International

Metropolis Conference held in Nagoya. Together with research collaborators, the research group presented an analysis of the status of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, and Sudan, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and the intake of immigrants and refugees in Europe and Japan (as well as the ideologies behind that intake).

One of the things reported on at the aforementioned workshop, on the topic of medical care and nursing for refugee societies, was the nursing work being done by the Osaka Red Cross Hospital in Lebanon. After the workshop, the research group also made strides towards connecting research on refugees with medicine by joining hands with the Chiba University Graduate School of Nursing to organize a series of workshops about refugee assistance. UNDP staff working in Syria and UNICEF staff working in Amman were invited to these workshops, leading to a lively exchange of opinions and information between not just researchers, but also practitioners. Workshops were also held together with Research Group B02 and with projects outside these relational studies.

Meanwhile, in Research Group B01, group member Yamamoto raised the topic of contemporary Egyptian visual arts, which are searching for new directions as a result of the Arab Spring, and invited up-and-coming Egyptian film directors to visit. The aim of Yamamoto's research is to shed light on the social bonds that are expressed by films, literature, and non-verbal symbols such as historical memories. The research group plans to develop this research on non-verbal symbols further in 2017 by focusing on

sports and nationalism, centering around the research of group member Fukuda.

Regarding societal consciousness represented by symbols and objects, the women's veil is an important research topic in the Islamic world. The research group organized a workshop in February where group member Obiya reported on cases from Central Asia and the Middle East that had been examined using sociological and historical methods.

Research Group B02: "Cross-border Non-state Networks: Failed States and Conflict"

Research Group B02 focuses on analyzing the true condition of "failed states" that result from events such as conflicts and civil wars, and also on analyzing the true condition of the non-state actors that emerge in such power vacuums as well as the cross-border networks involved.

In 2016, the research group focused on the following two main objectives while carrying out its research work.

Firstly, the research group performed preliminary work towards carrying out public opinion surveys in failed states from 2017 on (for example in Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sierra Leone, and Bosnia). In practice, the research group advanced discussions on (1) network-building with local research organizations, and (2) designing research that should help identify "gaps in views of the nation" that can be observed in people who live in failed states. With an eye towards future research, the research group established cooperative relationships by co-organizing two workshops, one in September with

specialists invited from major universities in Iraq such as Baghdad University, and one in February with specialists invited from the Syrian Center for Policy Research, based in Syria. Also, throughout the year, the members and collaborators of the research group actively traveled inside Japan and abroad to identify research institutions that could conduct public opinion polls. They also crafted opinion questionnaires suitable for use across all the countries involved.

Secondly, the research group proceeded with empirical studies of non-state actors that carry out cross-border activities. In 2016, the research group focused on trends in the Islamist movement. It carried out research on the current situation of, and prospects for, domestic and international politics of current Middle-Eastern countries, using social movements theory and various theories from comparative political science. In January, the members and collaborators of the research group organized a workshop with guest speakers. By bringing in knowledge of experts from various countries and regions, the research group highlighted the relationships that can be seen between a variety of Islamist movements. The research group also carried out field surveys on Islamic NGOs in Lebanon and Jordan and confirmed that cross-border activities based on religion have a strong impact in both countries.

Research Group B03: Civilizations and Global Networks: from Ecospheres to the Globalization of Thought, the Economy, and Movement

The aim of Research Group B03 is to examine possibilities for global

problem-solving approaches and the creation of a global commons, inspired by the rise in problems and phenomena observed around the globe that cannot be solved through inter-state relations alone. In 2016, the research group spent most of its time carrying out the following research work.

Firstly, the research group decided to start by considering the global commons on a region-by-region basis, consequently focusing on Southeast Asia and the Mekong region. The research group organized an international symposium in November together with Research Group A02. At this symposium, participants approached the regionalism of ASEAN and the Mekong region using frameworks from international law, economy, politics, and so on. The results were published as a research volume entitled “ASEAN Integration and Development” (see above). Also, in January, the research group organized a special lecture on two topics: the current state of development of the Mekong region and NGOs, and slave trade/human trafficking and NGOs in the Mekong region. With an eye towards carrying out a quantitative analysis of global civil society that could form the basis of a global commons, the research group also purchased a database, striving to understand changes in the number of civil society networks and developments in each region.

Members of the research group also made steady progress in their individual research, with representatives conducting surveys in Vietnam and Laos as well as engaging in interview research and data collection in countries such as Italy, Germany, the United

Kingdom, Turkey, and Zambia. In Zambia in particular, research group members visited a refugee camp and performed preparatory work for a field survey from the viewpoint of agriculture. From the standpoint of dealing with environmental problems, the research group obtained the cooperation of the Iraqi Embassy in Tokyo and other collaborators to hold a seminar in November on the current condition of wetlands in southern Iraq. The research

group aims to combine human and social sciences with natural sciences, and it is promoting collaboration between fields such as agriculture and environmental studies and natural sciences.

In 2017, the research group plans to conduct research on the global commons while cooperating with members of other research groups and other entities, to organize seminars on the global commons and hold international workshops.

In 2016, we put out a call for invited research. Seven proposals were chosen.

We are establishing a new category of area studies research, involving not only research groups working within predetermined collaborative research frameworks, but also individuals engaged in invited research. We are putting out calls for such research, and will connect individual efforts with those of the research groups to develop and expand our new area studies research.

We put out a public call for proposals in September 2016 on the following topics.

C01: Relational studies on national polities and social movements (domestic and transnational) focused on regions not covered by existing research groups (including East Asia, North and South America, and Russia and the surrounding areas)

C02: The economic, socio-cultural, and security roles of regional integration and cooperation agreements (such as those of the EU, ASEAN, and FTAs) and changes in the relationships between various countries

C03: The impact of global movements of people, the propagation of technology, and the propagation of ideas on changes in, connections among, and entrenchment of relationships

C04: The presentation of new epistemic frameworks and analytical perspectives on relational studies, and attempts to construct theories and analytical methods

Following the call for invited research, a tentative decision was reached on about seven research projects (one in C01, two in C03, and four in C04).

In the future, we aim to contribute to the establishment of a new category of area studies by continuing to seek ways to link these projects to the projects of the research groups and those spearheaded by the General Affairs Unit.

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