

Summation of the NASSS International Graduate Students International Relations Workshop, July 31, 2007

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The morning session of the International Relations session was led by Dr. Andrew Rotter. David Potter and Fujimoto Hiroshi served as discussion leader. About 20 graduate students from Japan, the United States, Korea, and the Philippines participated in the seminar.

The morning session was designed to serve as a follow-up to the plenary sessions of NASSS held over the previous two days. Professor Rotter had delivered his keynote address on July 28 on the topic of religious typologies in American foreign policy. He had provided discussion questions on that topic for seminar participants to consider before they attended the workshop. He and the moderators decided before the session opened, however, not to simply follow the list of questions. Rather, it was hoped that students would discuss with each other the issues that they thought most pertinent to the study of religion and United States foreign policy.

Professor Rotter opened the discussion by asking the original question that had driven his research: why is religion not systematically considered in explanations of American foreign policy making? The graduate student discussion that ensued made it clear that they had not considered religion in that light, either. Very quickly, differences in research methodology between political scientists and historians became clear. Political scientists studying American politics, including foreign policy are trained to think about their research in terms of variables that can be operationalized, preferably in quantifiable terms. They tend to see the issue of religion and politics in terms of interest groups and their observable behavior in foreign policy making processes. Historians, on the other hand, are more amenable to the idea of religion as a background, or cultural, aspect of foreign policy making that may be quantifiable but is nonetheless important.

The moderators had been somewhat concerned about communication problems between Japanese and non-Japanese participants in the workshop. They were happy to observe, however, that participants quickly took up issues of their concern and did not let language or other barriers deter them from a vigorous discussion.

In the afternoon session, six papers on work in progress were presented and discussed. Ms. Hiramatsu Ayako of the University of Tokyo, first talked about her work, "Coalitions of Congressmen in the Polarized U.S. House of Representatives in the 1990s: An Alternative Mechanism of How the Congress Gets Its Job Done." This paper aimed to answer two research questions of the studies on the U.S. Congress: why Congress functions the way it does and how it becomes possible to build majorities on the floor. Unlike previous studies that tried to answer the questions either by formal institutions or political parties, her paper focused on the working of ideology caucuses of the 104th House of Representatives. The presenter tried to make academic contributions to the American Studies by clarifying the splitting lines of American ideologies in the Congress, where parts of the dividing ideologies in the entire American society were represented.

Mr. Kakehi Masaki of the International Information Section, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, temporarily on leave from Kyushu University, presented his ongoing work: "U.S. Plan of Sending Administrators and U.S.-Republic of Vietnam(RVN)Relations." He discussed the irony of President Kennedy's policy in the context of U.S.-RVN relations. His paper showed that while the purpose of sending U.S. administrators to the RVN government was to prevent it from breaking down internally by improving Ngo Dinh Diem's administrative method and to defend its independence from communism, this plan was tantamount to colonial rule and limited RVN sovereignty. One participant commented that the presenter could make a good contribution to the study of the Vietnam War since there had been few works in Japan dealing with U.S.-RVN relations in the context of the war.

Ms. Kohama Shoko, another graduate student of the University of Tokyo, presented her work, "Dealing with Precarious Democracy: Arms Sales to Israel in the Johnson Years." Her paper aimed to demystify the American decision to become a prime arms supplier to Israel during the Johnson administration. In contrast to the previous studies which focused on factors such as changes in the strategic environment, domestic politics, and the features of decision-making process, her paper shed light on the role of decisionmakers' perceptions or misperceptions that mediated or distorted information concerned with the situation surrounding them such as Israeli domestic situation or the tide of American public opinion. She concluded that LBJ-era policies vis-à-vis Israel were, to some extent, affected by policymakers' "misperceptions" about domestic politics in both the U.S. and Israel.

Mr. Covell Meyskens of the University of Chicago presented his paper, entitled "Against Racism?: Liberal Internationalism and Orientalism in Office of War Information Films on US-Japan Relations." His paper explored the ambiguities of the OWI's response to American racism towards Japanese and Japanese-Americans through an examination of OWI educational documentaries,

highlighting the strains between liberal internationalism and Orientalism in the lessons the OWI provided the public on conduct conducive to American ascendancy in East Asia. He suggested that liberal internationalists in the OWI condemned the racial approach in the OWI as anathema to the government's ideology of racial equality and postwar plans to reintegrate Japan into the world order.

Ms. Nakamura Hiromi of the University of Tsukuba presented her paper, entitled "Why Is the War Powers Resolution Not Working? The Failure of the Liberals in its Legislation." Focusing on the many loopholes in the provisions of the War Powers Act of 1973, she looked at reasons for its deficiency relevant to the shortcoming of the anti-war liberals' capacity to control the legislative process. Her paper suggested that the reasons for the deficiency could be explained by their ideological and institutional constraints to establish the consensus in the chambers. She pointed out that institutionally, the anti-war liberals did not have full support from the committee chairs, and ideologically, the liberals' ideas concerning war powers often seemed to go beyond the Framers' intention.

Ms. Ohtake Mari of Nagoya University made the last presentation, entitled "Henry L. Stimson's Diplomatic Leadership at the London Naval Conference of 1930." As the title of her paper shows, she focused on Henry L. Stimson, then the Secretary of State, who played a significant role in the ratification of the naval limitation treaty. Her paper explored why Stimson approved the "great compromise" and finally proposed to Japan a comprehensive ratio of 69.75 percent. She suggested that Stimson received telegrams from William R. Castle, the American Ambassador to Japan, who reported Japanese leaders like Shidehara Kijuro were working hard to avoid the failure of the conference. She also mentioned that Stimson believed that the ratio given to Japan would not be too high because Japan's existing cruisers already exceeded those of America's.

Prof. Rotter first made comments and suggestions after each presentation. Graduate students then raised a few questions to each presenter. We are delighted to note that we had very valuable and stimulating discussions in this international setting.