Prof. Nobuko Nagasaki, Director of the Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies

The first birthday of the joint research project “In Search of Societal Mechanisms and Institutions for Conflict Resolution: Perspectives of Asian and African Studies and Beyond,” launched in FY2005, is coming up. With the newly established Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies of Ryukoku University as a base, the project aims to study and advocate nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution. Director Nobuko Nagasaki (professor of the Faculty of Intercultural Communication) discusses the distinctive features of this ambitious project, its developments so far and its future prospects. (Interviewer: Haruko Uchida, research assistant at the Afrasian Centre)

Q: What do you find exciting about this project to study and advocate peaceful conflict resolution at this time?

Nagasaki: Looking at Asia and Africa today, an often-used paradigm is “development and stagnation in conflicts” and the project started from the question of whether the two can be separated so naïvely. We thought that it is impossible to discuss the issue of development in total disregard of conflicts including colonial rule, and “conflict” alone would not make a good cross-sectional concept for approaching the issue of Asia and Africa.

Our university has strengths in religious studies. With our accumulated knowledge of religious studies methodologies, we believe that we will be able to do something original in research on these regions by relating it to the achievements made so far in Buddhist studies here in Ryukoku. I have high expectations.

Another interesting aspect of the Afrasian Centre is that it has unique research methods and experiences, such as participatory study in conflict resolution. This I believe is another forte of ours, which is not found at other universities.

Q: You have been saying that the keyword for nonviolent conflict resolution is “local wisdom.” Do you think that “locally generated ideas” in Asia and Africa have often been neglected?

Nagasaki: Well, with regard to locally generated ideas, surprisingly few Japanese researchers think there are sources of original learning in Asia. It is unfortunate, but a large majority seems to believe every methodology has to come from the West or from Western things, and studies about Western Europe and North America. I feel the mainstream view is still that if there is anything positive about Asia and Africa, it was brought from the West -- including democracy and economic development.

Q: It seems to me that there are a rapidly increasing number of intellectuals in Asia and Africa who have mastered Western languages, and are making their presence felt in global academic fields.

Nagasaki: Yes, the number is increasing for sure. But I see some problems there. The first is the relationship between those elites and the general public in the area; the question of whether elites are heading for the rediscovery of the locally generated ideas, and whether they are establishing a circulative flow of intellect that hails from there and returns with their own contributions. I am not saying that there’s none. Another issue is that some problems may arise if those elites speak only to the Western society and argue only about the Western framework.

It is good that those elites who master English and are influenced by Europe or the United States work to create and build up knowledge and wisdom in their countries of origin. Actually, it is almost inevitable that they will be influenced. But the question is whether they take up the task of creating knowledge and wisdom by relating to the local people’s traditions, history and way of life. That is certainly what we hope will happen.

Q: In another interview, you described the Afrasian Centre project as a collaborative work among concerned parties and neighbors who understand their hardships. In the organization of this project, it is clear that networking with research institutions around the globe is assumed. Does this mean that the Centre aims to be a system for the circulative flow of intellect as you discussed, if we can encounter that locally generated knowledge in Asia and Africa?

Nagasaki: First, it is very important to provide a shared space for research collaboration, and many people are already doing so. “Neighbor” was the term used by the reporter, but what I meant was that the dualistic relationship between Asia and Africa on one hand and Japan on the other will not work. Unless we become connected with the hegemony of Europe and the United States, our advocacy will not make it into actual conflict resolution, and will not become an idea widely understood by a broad range of people. While communication with the general public in Asia and Africa is of paramount importance for us, the linkage has to include the West. With our links with research institutions overseas including Harvard, multilaceted networking is one of the features of the Afrasian Centre.

Q: The reality is that Europe and the United States are often major actors and stakeholders in conflicts in Asia or Africa, and are also involved when an international framework for solution is set. Assuming there is a body of knowledge as “conflict resolution studies,” where is that particular accumulation of knowledge taking place?

Nagasaki: There are a number of research institutions for peace studies. Among the members of the Centre, Prof. Takehiko Ochiai is involved in African issues and Prof. Hisashi Nakamura, with Norway (which is mediating the peace process in Sri Lanka). The Centre did not conduct joint research with these institutions in the current school year, but we have some plans.

Regarding theoretical studies on conflict resolution, the Centre has the privilege...
Q: Could you share some of the discussions at the second joint meeting?

**Nagasaki:** Prof. Mridula Mukherjee from Jawaharlal Nehru University, spoke on case studies of actual conflict resolution or negotiations. India in its national independence movement achieved a peaceful and great victory, though it did see a limited use of force. In that sense, India’s experience is different from those of other countries. She spoke about Mahatma Gandhi’s nonviolent movement in detail.

**Q:** The talk started from theoretical frameworks and moved to case studies, and in the latter, it was suggested that there is a lot to be learned from India’s experience. But Gandhi’s nonviolent movement is so well known that people involved in conflict resolution perhaps already know what is to be learned from it. What is your view on this point?

**Nagasaki:** On the contrary, I think non-violence and peace are neglected. There’s a lot more to study about his nonviolent approach. Violent solutions are relatively well studied and research methods are there, while cases involving nonviolent solutions are so limited that people are doubtful; all they can say about it, perhaps, is “democracy.”

**Q:** We have an international symposium coming up on March 4 and 5. Can you please tell us more about it?

**Proceedings**

**JETRO.** Proceedings of Symposium, Group 3 “The Filipino Residents in Japan as Potential Care Workers: Realities and Challenges”
Agent or Barrier? The Role of the Nation in Conflict Resolution

This group focuses on studying the various actors involved in conflicts and conflict resolution in Asian and African countries, including states, nations and their nationalisms, international organizations, and NGOs. Our research will examine the historical roles played by these various actors in conflicts and conflict resolution processes.

Our aim is to contribute to the formation of a new theory of conflict resolution from the perspective of area studies that will provide mutual learning opportunities for Asia and Africa. In order to achieve this goal, we will conduct the following: First, we plan to examine various methods and dimensions of conflict resolution and peace-making processes in Asia and Africa based on the research methodology of area studies. Second, we will conduct empirical analyses of available historical data collected through fieldwork. Finally, we will conduct a detailed comparative analysis of conflicts and conflict resolution processes in these areas and try to draw theoretical implications from it.

Among the various issues discussed during the last three research meetings, one of the most important was that of nationalism.

First, the proper way to grasp nonviolent nationalism within the theory of nationalism was discussed in Prof. Nagasaki’s report at the 1st meeting and Prof. Shimizu’s at the 2nd. Then, at the 3rd meeting, Mr. Ishizaka (Research Assistant for Afrasian Centre) showed that the method of Gandhian nonviolence (fasting and proposing alternative plans acceptable to opponents, etc.) has been effective in actual conflict resolution processes in contemporary India.

Also, at the 2nd meeting, Prof. Sano suggested that the present political situation in Iran could be understood through the concept of an “Iranian form of Islamic nationalism.” He then highlighted the relevance of “moderate nationalism” in the Iranian Constitutional Thinking of Taqizade and his group in the 19th century.

The Palestinian Question and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

At the 3rd research meeting on September 14, 2005, Mr. Isamu Nakashima presented an overview of the recent withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip two days earlier (on September 12, 2005), explaining its background and significance.

He began by pointing out that the Palestinian Question and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict are two qualitatively different issues. The Palestinian Question is a problem over the regions of ambiguous sovereignty named the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The proper solution should therefore involve providing sovereignty to the two zones, and granting nationality to their residents. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, on the other hand, is a territorial dispute similar to those taking place in other parts of the world. The solution will be for the two adjoining powers to agree on the issue of borders and security, and to sign a treaty. Before that, however, the Palestinian side should decide who will be its representative. Mr. Nakashima expressed optimism over the prospect of achieving a democratic Palestine because in comparison to other Arab countries, Palestine has the advantage of having experienced the democratic procedures of Israel.

Prof. Tosei Sano, the discussant, pointed out that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be understood primarily as a clash between two different nationalisms. Historically, Palestine has been a buffer zone between regional powers such as Egypt and Syria, and lacks experience in state administration compared to other Arab countries. Therefore, he stated, it will be a challenging task for its people to overcome this weakness and to realize state-building and administrative management.

During the discussion, questions were raised on what exactly national sovereignty should be in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and on a viable logic for the coexistence of the two parties. Mr. Nakashima replied that one effective strategy would be to persuade both parties of the importance of a peace agreement in encouraging the tourism industry particularly in the holy land, which is vital for their survival. (RA Shinya Ishizaka)
Conflicts over Resources and the Environment

Of the four elements that comprise conflicts, i.e., actors, means, objectives and the environment, Group 2 mainly addresses the last two - objectives and the environment. Economic reasons are dominant among the various factors behind full-fledged conflicts as well as fledgling-but-intense frictions between states in Asia and Africa, and in many instances conflicts arise over limited and unevenly distributed resources such as oil and precious metals. Other frictions observed concern agriculture, the environment and migrant workers. This research aims to demonstrate that the game is not zero-sum, and that individual and collective interests of the countries involved can be enhanced through cooperation; and to present possibilities for building a system of cooperation like an international regime for the resolution of conflicts and frictions in these areas.

Specific research topics include the application of the international regime theory to the above-mentioned problems, conflicts and frictions over energy resources and possible solutions through the formation of international regimes, the relationship between U.S. policy toward the Middle East and oil resources, an analysis of Iran’s nuclear development program and a possible solution, multilateral trade talks in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and agriculture in Asia, the impact of global warming on Asia and Africa, conditions and problems of Asian migrant workers in the Middle East, and challenges in energy cooperation in Asia.

Research Assistant’s Pick

Migration – Will It Liberate Women?

At the 2nd research meeting on October 22, 2005, Associate Prof. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas of the University of California at Davis discussed the “placelessness” of migrant domestic workers from the Philippines in Rome. She questioned the recent research findings on international labor migration that while male migrant workers tend to prefer temporary stays and eventual return to the home country, female workers seem to seek permanent settlement. Based on her fieldwork in Rome, Dr. Parreñas pointed out that Filipina migrants in Rome do not necessarily hope to settle there permanently.

As grounds for female migrants’ supposed preference for permanent settlement, studies cite the relatively higher social status of women in the host country, and the rise in their status within the family back home due to their economic contributions through waged labor. Female migrant workers are reluctant to return home, these studies claim, for the fear of losing their acquired status. The problem with this argument, however, is that it postulates that host countries (industrialized nations, or the West) are “advanced” in terms of gender equality while home countries (developing nations, or the non-West) are “backward.” As Dr. Parreñas points out, these female migrants who were supposed to have escaped from gender inequality in their home countries face another gender inequality in the destination. In some cases more intense gender inequality still exists due to the migrants’ isolation from the host society.

There is great significance in Dr. Parreñas’ argument that factors of race and social class must be taken into account in the discussion over the settlement of Filipina domestic workers. The realities of xenophobia and social inequality in Italy that she presented can be observed in other parts of Europe, and may not be negligible in understanding the issue of immigration and permanent settlement.

A string of “conflicts” between immigrants and local residents is taking place in Europe today, as seen in the Netherlands in 2004 and again in France in 2005. Dr. Parreñas’ presentation was quite thought-provoking and conforms with the aim of Afrasian Centre’s project to identify deterrents for these “conflicts.” (RA Daisuke Yamanaka)
Conflicts Perceived Through Network and Local Culture

The key concepts that Group 3 will ponder are “culture” and “networks”. These two concepts can be perceived as both a means to negotiating conflict whilst, at the same time, being a reflection of the environment in which conflict occurs. A key research question will be what kind of impact and influence does culture have on conflict resolution and what contributions can be made from the cultural point of view of conflict resolution. Networks, which are also an integral part of culture and yet often cross over a number of cultural boundaries, can facilitate communication during the negotiation of resolution. In this light, we will attempt to identify cultural factors and the players who have the ability to negotiate with these factors to a satisfactory resolution. The group members share a common idea that the concept of conflict may not necessarily be a universal and general one, but rather local. The context of conflict varies with time. During somewhat stable periods between the two World Wars and during the Cold War, conflicts were perceived as crises. In times of rapid changes as we are experiencing now, conflicts seem to have become an everyday affair. It is reasonable to think that many conflicts are local in nature, and that they arise in the local context, in other words, with local cultural elements which are often overlooked.

Conflict may also be defined as an expression of the negotiation. Thus, conflict is considered within the context of a set of negotiations which are an ongoing and complex process and form an integral part of conflict and resolution. Needless to say, methods of negotiation vary according to different regions and cultures. Therefore, an understanding of networks that can negotiate between these differences will provide new insight into the cultural possibilities of conflict resolution.

Research Assistant’s Pick

Filipino Residents in Japan as Potential Care Workers

With declining birthrate, aging population and thus upcoming labor shortage in the elderly-care industry in Japan, an option to bring in care workers from abroad has come up for debate. Less attention has been paid to long-time foreign residents, but that specific aspect was the focus of the discussion in the symposium, “The Filipino Residents in Japan as Potential Care Workers: Realities and Challenges” held last November 6, 2005.

Ms. Yukako Ueno, a manager and trainer of a nursing home, is very positive about hiring foreigners because (1) there is a serious labor shortage in the market; (2) the nationality of the care worker has no relation to the quality of service, and (3) globalization has potentially positive impact on the moral upliftment of care workers. Mr. Takaharu Hayashi, who runs a temporary staffing agency, noted the deteriorating conditions surrounding foreign workers and their families, and advocated caregiving training as a viable way for their economic and social integration. He also suggested that for foreigners to take the home-helper training course, language competency should not be a requirement but the result. Mr. Junta Shinozawa, who runs a planning and publication company on Philippine matters, shared how Filipinos take full advantage of their mobile phones as dictionary, and that majority of them are females in their mid-to-late thirties interested in landing a job accepted by the society.

Filipino care worker Ms. Maria Fe Harada believes from her own experiences that foreigners are capable of home-visiting care work. Another Filipino Ms. Annabelle Majima shared her strong sense of achievement through the job, though her disclosure about her 16-hour work shift drew gasp from the audience. Finally, Mr. Wako Asato from the academic point of view introduced the experiences of Taiwan and Singapore in receiving workers from abroad, and stressed that management system such as training for Japanese medical/social workers or bilingual manuals and forms, is the key to succeed in this undertaking.

The symposium was very well attended not only by scholars but also by various stakeholders including representatives from nursing homes, Filipino community, church, civic organizations and Filipino Consulate in Osaka. The proceedings of the symposium is in print. (RA Haruko Uchida)
Poverty and Regional Development in the Process of Conflict Resolution

With other research groups focusing on interstate or transnational conflicts, this group mainly examines the relationship between poverty (or more generally, the economy) and domestic conflicts.

The issues for examination can be broadly categorized into two distinctive periods: pre-conflict and post-conflict. In the pre-conflict period, the key question is the effect of economic disparities in a given country -- different levels of poverty, uneven distribution of the fruits of development policies and accessibility to urban economic sectors -- on the relations among different ethnic, religious, and/or regional groups, or on those between urban centers and rural areas. This period is to be studied mainly by members whose research field covers the Asian region.

The post-conflict period, on the other hand, is the major interest of the members whose research focuses on Africa. After achieving independence from the colonial powers in the 1960s, a decade known as the African decade, most of the African countries did not follow a smooth path of state-building but rather experienced frequent conflicts among ethnic, religious and/or political groups over the control and allocation of power. The immediate and crucial issue in these cases is not the causes of the conflict but rather a proper response to the post-conflict situation. In the context of the research interest of Group 4, for example, it involves looking at how the alleviation of poverty and local development have been positioned in the post-conflict “road maps” and what concrete policies are being implemented.

Female-headed Households in Cambodia

This writer (Ms. Nao Sato, graduate student of Kyoto University and research assistant at the Afrasian Centre) gave her presentation entitled “Strategy for Subsistence in Female-headed Households – A Case of a Rice-farming Village in Siemreap Province, Cambodia” at the 3rd research meeting on January 27, 2006.

In the field of development, female-headed households (Fhh) have always been considered “poor” and are beneficiaries in poverty elimination programs. In many Southeast Asian countries however, analyses show that Fhh render lower poverty rate than other types of households. With these findings not being shared among agencies and not really explored, Fhh until now remain to be the major target of poverty elimination programs. In many Southeast Asian countries however, analyses show that Fhh render lower poverty rate than other types of households. With these findings not being shared among agencies and not really explored, Fhh until now remain to be the major target of poverty elimination programs.

In village T where the fieldwork was conducted, Fhh are extended families comprising of the nuclear family and female relatives as members, who become sources of both waged and domestic labor force. These female family members tend to engage in food sales that is considered women’s role in this society. In particular, with support from relatives within and out of the household, they get involved in processing and retailing of foods which provide relatively higher income. Surplus labor in the female domestic workforce within the Fhh allow the female members to find jobs in the female service sector in the cities, which further leads to higher and stable income for the household. Fhh in general suffer various constraints and is disadvantaged unless they take some actions. In Cambodia however, data shows that the social system and the economic structure allow Fhh to overcome these constraints.

The presentation received a comment that it fails to consider rice farming, which is an important enterprise in the village studied, while over-stressing the difference between Fhh and other types of households. Another suggestion was to consider negative factors that may be attributed to the husband, like for example his spending binge, upon household income. These comments were well taken and will be examined in her planned long-term field research this year. (RA Nao Sato)