

The English version of the column by Dr. Daisaku Higashi, professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, published on 11 June 2020 in Mainichi Newspaper (One of the three major newspapers in Japan.)

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“Tackling Corona Virus with Human Security Approaches”

By Dr. Daisaku Higashi, Professor at Sophia University

Published on 11 June 2020 in Mainichi Newspaper

I published my book, *Civil Wars and Mediations: How Can We End the Modern Wars?* in January 2020. The book is based on my field research in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq for the last 10 years, as well as my engagement with the peace process as a UN political affairs officer.

In this book, I argue that Japan earned the trust, to some degree, of different conflicting parties in the Middle East and Africa due to Japan’s assistance as a peaceful nation; thus, we should utilize that trust to facilitate dialogues between different conflicting parties to enable them to identify solutions themselves. In this context, I also insist that Japan play a role as a global facilitator in tackling the global security challenges that one nation cannot solve, namely the “challenges of Human Security.” The challenges of Human Security include global warming, natural disasters, and the pandemic; Japan should promote “dialogue between different nations, international organizations, NGOs, and experts to seek a global solution to these transnational challenges,” I emphasized in my book.

In the 4 months since the book’s publication, the world has been drastically changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. And I am convinced that the COVID-19 pandemic is typical of the phenomena illuminating the challenges of Human Security in recent times.

We should have a global solution to global challenges. I fully agree with the concept, “No one will be safe until the whole world is safe,” according to Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in Foreign Affairs (April 30, 2020). Even if a nation can contain COVID-19 temporarily, the virus will come back to the state as soon as it opens its economy and permits people from foreign countries to enter it. Thus, we cannot have full protection of individuals from COVID-19 until we solve this pandemic around the world, through effective medicines and universal vaccinations. With regard to Japan, it cannot host the summer Olympics in Tokyo in 2021 unless we have a global solution and containment.

At the same time, two dominant powers in the world – the United States and China –

are blaming each other and do not seem to be playing a leading role in promoting a global solution. Japan has contained the number of COVID-19 deaths to less than 1,000, due to the national public health behaviors (such as washing hands and wearing masks) and the serious treatment by medical staff. Japan has also advocated the concept of “Human Security” in the last two decades; I believe that Japan is in a good position to enhance a global solution to this pandemic.

As for a concrete policy, Japan may collaborate with the European Union, as it just started the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with the EU in 2019. Japan and the EU can facilitate dialogue, supporting UN and its international agencies, to share information regarding effective medicines and treatments, as well as to create the framework to conduct vaccinations worldwide, once a vaccine becomes available; Japan could discuss it with the international community, including vulnerable countries in Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and South America. The dialogue could be advanced by online meetings and communications, simultaneously sharing the information with the US and China.

I believe that this is the time for Japan to have the will to contribute to a global solution with these initiatives and efforts.

The Japanese people might be too modest to think that Japan could play such a role, but many third world countries expect these kinds of roles from Japan. It should be also recognized that promoting a global solution will also improve the safety of the individuals in Japan, and the world.

Profile:

Daisaku Higashi obtained a Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of British Columbia in Canada. He also worked as a program director for NHK (Japan Public TV Network), as Team Leader for Reconciliation and Reintegration in the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and as a Minister-Counsellor in the Japanese mission to the United Nations in New York.

Below is a copy of the column that appeared in Mainichi Newspaper on 11 June 2020

発言



東 大作 上智大教授

コロナ禍を人間の安全保障で

私は今年1月に「内戦と和平——現代戦争をどう終わらせるか」(中公「新書」)を出版した。南スーダンやアフガニスタン、シリアやイラクなどで10年ほど積み重ねてきた調査や、現地の国連職員として和平プロセスに関わった経験をまとめた本だ。

そこで私は、戦後日本が平和国家として実施してきた支援のおかげでアフリカや中東では紛争当事者の双方から信頼されていることを実感しており、その信頼を生かし、紛争当事者が対話を通じて紛争解決していくのを促す、いわゆる「グローバルファシリテーター」(世界的な対話促進者)を日本は目指すべきだと主張した。またその役割は、紛争解決にとどまらず、「地球温暖化、大規模災害、感染症など、一国では解決できない、いわゆる『人間の安全保障』の課題について、他の国や国際機関NGO、専門家などが知恵や経験を出し合い、共に解決を目指していくプロセスを作っていくことだ

も役割を果たせるはずと論じた。それから約4カ月、世界は新型コロナウイルスによって一変した。そしてこのコロナ禍は、典型的な形で「人間の安全保障」を脅かしている。それは近年ないと感じている。グローバルな感染症にはグローバルな解決が欠かせない。世界的外交誌「フォーリン・アフェアーズ」に掲載された「世界全体が安全になるまで、誰も安全にならない」という論文の通りである。たとえ一国が一時的にコロナの抑え込みに成功したとしても、世界的に感染が拡大していれば、経済を開放した途端に、コロナはまた戻ってくる。だから、治療薬やワクチンの開発や普及を通じて、世界全体で解決しなければ、私たち一人一人の安全も確保できない。日本についていえば、世界的に鎮静しないと、来年の東京オリンピックも開催できないであろう。

一方、現在の世界で経済的かつ事実的に圧倒的な力を持つ米国と中国は、非難合戦に明け暮れ、到底、グローバルな解決に向けた指導力を発揮できるような見えない。

そうした中、日本は高い公衆衛生感覚や一般市民の行動様式、医療従事者の献身的な活動などのおかげで、コロナの死者を米国に比べ2けたほど少ない数で抑えている。コロナ人間の安全保障の重要性をここ20年来訴えてきたことから、まさに世界全体での解決に向けて、大きな役割を果たせる位置にいると思う。

具体的には昨年、経済連携協定(EPA)や戦略的パートナーシップ協定(SPPA)が発効した欧州連合(EU)と協力し、治療薬に関する情報共有や、ワクチンができた際の世界全体への普及を迅速に進める制度作りを、中東やアフリカ、南米やアジアの途上国とも連携して進める。オンライン会議などを駆使し、米国や中国とも情報を共有しつつ、グローバルな対話促進者としての役割を担う。そんな気概を今こそ持ちたい。

日本人は謙虚で、「そもそもは無理」と考えがちだが、世界を見渡して他に候補国もなく、多くの途上国は日本に期待している。しかもそれは回り回って、日本人一人一人の安全を高めることにつながるのだ。

ひがし・たいさく、NHKディレクター、国連フガシ政務官、国連日本政府代表部公使参事を務めた。