

International Organizations & Japanese

By Naoyuki HARAOKA

Rising Importance of Int'l Bodies in Globalized Age

The Nov./Dec. issue of *Japan SPOTLIGHT* showed us that global governance in the 21st century is key to achieving world peace and prosperity. As described very well in this issue by a number of distinguished authors, nations can no longer survive without good governance of international relations in a globalization-centered era.

Even without reading these materials, we are aware of this in our daily life. Businesspeople in Japan are now increasingly concerned about their significant disadvantages resulting from Japan's being so far behind other countries in the competition for concluding FTAs. This situation has possibly been brought about by the malfunctioning World Trade Organization (WTO) symbolized by the stuck Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations. Nations have no choice but to pursue the conclusion of FTAs as a substitute for multilateral trade rules in this vacuum of a multilateral trade regime.

The most important function of an FTA is to lower or dismantle tariffs on goods traded between partner countries, meaning that in the partners' markets, a third country's goods will be discriminated from those of the FTA partners.

Japanese people recently feel growing concern about their national security in regard to Chinese assertiveness in its neighborhood, which can be settled by good governance of international politics and will eventually have to be tackled by the United Nations.

Insignificant Presence of Japanese Employees in Int'l Bodies

International organizations such as the WTO and the United Nations should play a pivotal role in achieving effective global governance. The responsibilities of international organizations are shared by their secretariats and member countries' delegations. The *Chart* shows us that the number of Japanese employees working for the United Nations and its affiliated organizations' secretariats increased steadily through the 1990s and 2000s. However, even in 2008 from which the latest data are available, the number is fewer than 700 persons; that corresponds to only a little more than 1% of the number of employees at UN-affiliated international organizations. In the case of Japanese director-class employees, the figure is much lower and corresponds to less than 10% of the total number of Japanese employees.

Looking at national delegations joining discussions or negotiations on a wide range of international economic and political issues on the basis of materials prepared by the secretariats, Japanese delegates consisting of government officials, including professional diplomats, usually do not continue to work for a long time. Most of them leave the delegation within a few years and do not stay in the same post for many years, whereas in most cases the other countries' delegates tend to work for a longer time.

Significance of Small Presence in Int'l Bodies

What are the possible demerits of this extremely insignificant presence of Japanese employees working for international organizations' secretariats and the more frequently changing members of Japanese delegations than those of any other nation?

The most significant disadvantage is the loss of sensitivity to current developments in international policy discussions. International organizations frequently organize informal exploratory brainstorming meetings in which participants discuss issues of the future. In many cases, 10 to 20 years after these exploratory meetings, the issues discussed become central to the interests of the world community and occasionally are put on the negotiating table to achieve a concrete outcome.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a Paris-based international organization, is particularly well known for these exploratory meetings based upon research papers done by its secretariat.

For example, the issue of the potential of regional FTAs being a substitute for multilateral trade rules was discussed in one of the OECD Trade Committee meetings. New trade issues such as harmonization of trade rules and environmental concerns or labor standards which are now to be covered by negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) were already picked up by one of the OECD exploratory meetings at the beginning of the 1990s. Also, the issue of regulatory reform to achieve an increase in growth potential was a very popular discussion subject in the OECD in the mid-1990s and eventually became a common policy agenda item to be pursued by many OECD members, including Japan, at the beginning of the 21st century.

The issue of stopping bribery in developing countries was one of the most important issues in the second half of the 1990s in the OECD, and the discussion was successful in concluding the Anti-Bribery Convention, which is now working well to deal with cases of bribery in African countries. Around the same time, the OECD secretariat and national delegations exerted a great deal of time and energy in creating a code of corporate governance, including corporate social responsibility (CSR), that is to be respected and observed internationally. Now, CSR is a very popular concept and Japanese companies are working hard to collect as much information on other countries' CSR activities as possible.

These examples, I believe, show very well that you could easily be far behind trends in international policy concerns if you were not watchful about these exploratory discussions or rather actively involved in them. Japan has not been out of these discussions, but I do not think that it has been actively involved in them from their beginning. Since this is the case, it is very difficult to take the initiative in any discussion. This means Japan will eventually be behind the trends. In any international policy discussion, I believe, actively

participating from its exploratory stage is very important. Otherwise, you cannot be a leader who can influence the rule-making process seriously at its later stages.

If your country has many of its people working in the secretariats of international organizations and your delegates have the same responsibility for a longer time, your country will become much more easily aware of what is going on in international policy discussions even from its informal, exploratory stage. Your sensitivity to the most up-to-date trends in policy discussions in the international community will increase.

Merits of Working for Int'l Bodies

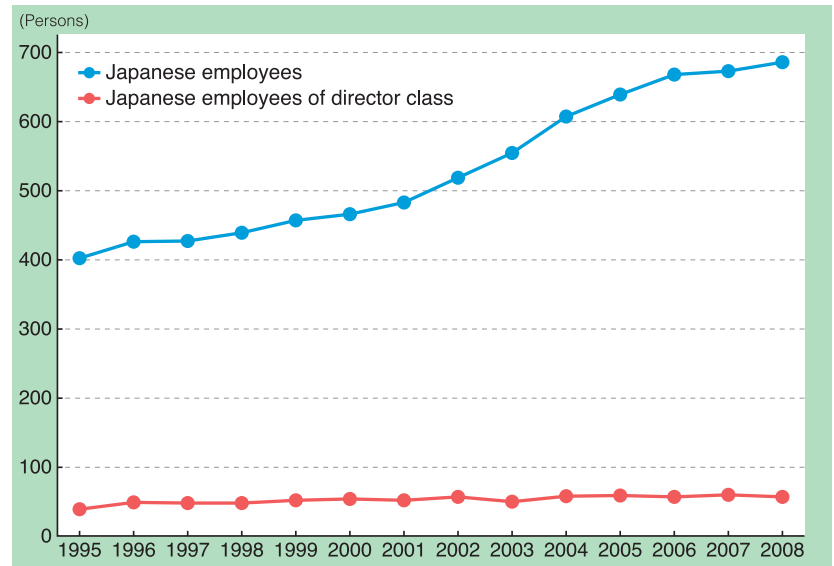
Working for the secretariat of an international organization has two special meanings for an individual. The first is that one can acquire the capacity to view an international issue without being indulgent in regard to his or her own nation's interests since one has to forget one's nationality while working as an international civil servant. People with the capacity to view issues in a neutral way could provide an objective eye in decision-making of foreign policy if they come back to their own countries' governments after working for some years as international civil servants. They would then be national treasures.

The second possible asset brought to international civil servants' countries after they return home is the networks they have built up among their colleagues in international organizations during their working years. This is also true in the case of national delegates having stayed in the same job for a long time. Human relations are sometimes instrumental in improving international relations. Friendship occasionally goes beyond national borders.

Int'l Bodies – Good Working Place for Japanese in Future

In the light of the above, I believe Japan needs more people working for international organizations. However, I am not pessimistic about the current situation. First of all, as you can see in the *Chart*, the number of Japanese employees working for the secretariats of international organizations is steadily increasing. Secondly, a job opportunity in an international organization may be increasingly attractive for Japanese who have a rich international experience since job opportunities for them in Japan are becoming fairly limited due to the stagnant economy. In the near future, there will be the possibility for Japanese of mature age who already have good international experience to pursue a job overseas among one of these interna-

No. of Japanese working for int'l organizations



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

tional organizations. This would enable Japan to respond more quickly and flexibly to trends in international issues and be more agile in responding to any challenge facing the world community.

One of these challenges today is the worldwide tendency of deflation after the economic crisis. How to avoid deflation seems to be many countries' central interest today. Fiscal and monetary policies are naturally the policy tools to fight deflation. Some argue for maintaining stimulatory fiscal policy, while others argue for a change in monetary policy – in particular, adoption of an inflation-targeting policy.

The OECD and other international bodies have been discussing the latter's appropriateness for a number of years since an inflation-targeting policy in which a central bank announces a desirable level of inflation to stimulate the economy and get it back to the normal recovery process was one of the issues discussed in many exploratory and informal international meetings, as mentioned above. Since its being picked up by one of the OECD exploratory meetings more than 20 years ago, 26 countries have adopted such a policy and, according to the latest research, the economic performance of a country that has adopted an inflation-targeting policy is better than those without it.

Some economists with experience in working for an international organization support inflation-targeting in Japan since they are more sensitive to trends in international policy discussions. I hope that working experience in an international organization will soon be considered very useful and the influence of such experienced internationalists will eventually prevail to get Japan out of deflation. **JS**

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