From study of international relations to the study of global relations: possible future roles of the study of international relations in the distant future

Atsushi SHIBASAKI

Contents

I Introduction: IR is not the one and only kind of the study of international relations (SOIR)
II More plural, more international IR: recent reflections on the future of International Relations (IR) or International Relations Theory (IRT), and the prophetic argument of a psychologist/cognitive scientist, Masanao Toda in early 70s which still poses rigorous and radical frame of reference when we deeply contemplate the role and future of SOIR as social science.

Needless to say, I am not the only person who has the right to think about the future of SOIR/IR. This is an only one of the ways to depict its future, and there could be many ways to do it. I would be glad we could find the way by examining this suggestion.

My argument is rather simple or rather parsimonious, as follows:
A. International Relations (IR) or the study of international relations (SOIR) is a discipline, made initially for analyzing international (interstate) relations.
B. Now, most of IR/SOIR scholars study ‘global relations’ (which covers almost all kinds of relations of actors which play some role and give influence each other, within and across national borders, including states) under the name of international relations.
C. IR or SOIR is not a sufficient/appropriate discipline for the study of global relations because it was by definition and from the start, not made to do so.
D. For this reason, any kinds of IR or SOIR are not sufficed for the study of ‘global relations’. Consequently, in order to study ‘global relations’, we have to make a new discipline: the study of global relations (SOGR).
E. To be sure, it is not easy for us to make SOGR immediately. Then, we need to find out what to do, to prepare for making the study of global relations (SOGR). This means the important task for the scholars of IR/SOIR is not criticizing ‘isms’ for each other or partially modifying some aspects of existing theories. We must learn how to make a discipline from day one.

1 This paper was read at the annual convention of Japanese Political Science Association (October 9th, 2011, Okayama University), Session C-4, “Propositions and Interpretation in International Relations Theory”.
2 Associate Professor, Komazawa University, Faculty of Global Media Studies
I would suggest one goal and four agendas for its making.

I am going to explore these contentions in brief. In conclusion, I would propose that IR stands at the crossroads whether to be GR/WR along with the shift from SOIR to the study of global/world relations (SOGR) or to remain as IR.

A. definition

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1. international relations= interstate relations, international society
2. ir=international relations as a phenomenon
3. IR=International Relations as an American (English) discipline (social science)
4. SOIR=all sorts of the study of international relations in the world (including IR, not vice versa)

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Here I define “international relations” as interstate relations, in its original and strict sense. I use “ir”(small-ir) as a phenomenon (all of what happens in small-ir). I refer to “IR”(large-IR) as a discipline called International Relations that is an “American” (Hoffmann) or “English”(mainly written, spoken, circulated in English) social science. “SOIR” is all kinds of researches concerning on ir, regardless of being done inside or outside of IR.

As many of IR scholars might misunderstand, SOIR includes IR and not vice versa. In Figure 1, Most IR scholars imagine the image-A as present state of IR-SOIR relations. However the truer image is not A but B, the right side. Many other disciplines outside IR has dealt with ‘international’ or ‘global’ issues for over centuries but many IR scholars tend to ignore such studies and they tend to imagine that IR is the only professional and authorized discipline for international relations. However, the reality is quite different. From history to sociology, economics to cultural studies and so on, there are enormous achievements for the study of ir. Just like Karl Deutch’s insightful proverb that United States is only a minority in international relations (Deutch 1968), we might have to say that IR is only a minority in SOIR. We will back to this point later.

Figure 1

B. ir is culture.

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1. culture= device made by the human being in order to survive and live better (Hirano 2000)
2. Small ir as a representation for the whole world
3. Evaluation of ir as cultural function
4. The role of ir: past, present, and future
5. Prescription for the malfunction of ir:(1) to repair them or add new parts (2) to find a alternative or substitute

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The first basic premise of my argument is that ir (as a phenomenon) and IR (as a discipline) is a culture. Here I define culture as a device for the human being to live or survive better (Hirano 2000).

Small ir has been regarded as a representation for the whole world. Thinking about ir means almost equally thinking about the world, because the consequence of ir decides the fate of the whole world. In this sense ir is regarded as a world order and ir and world politics are interchangeably used.

The worth of ir is evaluated whether it functions as culture well or not. As a world order, be it as Pax Britannica or Bipolar system or as such, ir has contributed to world stability by its structure of the separation of human society based on national border in general, even though the separation has been at the same time the sources of conflict. Small ir
has been played the role as culture in general (regardless of wars and conflicts and so on) and it still plays such role (regardless of the globalization). IR has also contributed to understand/explain ir and preventing the conflict from being bad to worse or worst (though it often has failed or mispredicted).

However, as stated earlier, international relations is now transforming into global relations and as a world order, the framework of international relations does not efficiently and successfully deal with global issues such as environmental issues, terrorism, human security, and so on. In that sense, international relations as culture is not functioning well. If we find malfunctions of ir as culture, there are two things to do. (1) to repair them or add new parts (2) to find a alternative or substitute.

C. SOIR and IR are also culture. IR is only one part of SOIR.

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1. Large IR as a core discipline of SOIR.
2. IR is only one part of worldwide SOIR.
3. Evaluation of IR as cultural function
4. the role of IR: how to manage ir past, present, and future
5. Prescription for the malfunction of IR: (1) to repair them or add new parts (2) to find an alternative or substitute (3) to evacuate from IR (4) doing SOIR without concerning IR.

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Large IR has been often regarded as a core discipline of SOIR at least by many IR(T) (theory) scholars. But, as underlined, IR is only one part of worldwide SOIR. Just like ir, the worth of IR is evaluated whether it functions as culture well or not. Of course, large IR has been playing the role as culture in general (how to manage ir) and it still plays such role.

However, again, if we find malfunctions in IR, there are four things to do. (1) to repair them or add new parts (2) to find a alternative or substitute (3) to evacuate from IR completely (4) doing SOIR without concerning IR (what I do is doing SOIR as a prototype of SOGR with watching IR (sometimes I pretend to be inside).

The second important premise in this section is that IR is not the only kind of knowledge or discipline of the study on international relations (SOIR). Though IR has developed and expanded its influence around the world (and we have to admit IR has some kind of “soft power”), they contain only one part of the knowledge or wisdom of SOIR. There would be many types of SOIRs in the world, some can be fit and merged into IR or IRT (International Relations Theory), but some would be incommensurable or be regarded not suitable for IR.

However (just like the discussion of biodiversity) it would be better for us to reserve the possibility that some SOIRs might have far better ability to grasp the world as it is than IR(T) and many IR scholars cannot appreciate the fact because they don’t have enough skill/knowledge to discover or understand such different type of intelligence. If IR forgets this humility about the status of it’s own (and doesn’t aware of its tendency of IR-centrism), any effort to realize plurality or internationality (will be discussed later) would result in another “colonization” of other types of knowledge by rendering them into understandable only in the one-sided interest of IR.

D. How to make a discipline: three conditions and two purposes

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0. Yoshikawa(1993,96)
1. Three conditions: (1)making a collection of facts (defining an area) (2)finding laws (3) making theories.
2. Two grand proposes: (1) to understand the world as a whole (2) to be practical (for the human being) =discipline as culture

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Before we discuss the future of the discipline, we have to confirm how a discipline is being made in general, in order to judge the future.

According to Yoshikawa, there are three conditions in order to make a discipline:
(1) making a collection of facts (defining and limiting an area) (collection: inclusion set that was defined by defining the point of view of the discipline and selecting all the subjects relating the point of view)

(2) finding laws (that is relevant to all the facts in the area defined) (simple fundamental principle by counting up all the relations between the elements that belong to the inclusion set according to the viewpoint and deducing from the set of relations)

(3) making theories (the system that describes phenomena that could happen without contradiction against the laws). For example, IR/SOIR collect the facts about interstate relations solely and tries to find a law (like balance of power, security dilemma, complex interdependence and so on) and seek to build a theory (-isms). This process is sequential, needless to say.

Yoshikawa also pointed out that any discipline has two fundamental purposes: (1) to understand the world as a whole (this is based on intellectual curiosity of humankind towards the unknown) (2) to be practical (for the human being) (to save one’s lives, to live better by managing conflicts and so on). Medicine is the most obvious example and SOIR (IR) also is the case. His contention resonates our understandings about ir/IR/SOIR as culture. Each discipline has this purpose in common, and it has particular goals for each.

E. Changing subject inevitably invites changing discipline

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1. another organized hypocrisy? :the subject we are dealing is becoming not ir or not only ir.
2. If the subject (collection) is not (only) ir, the study of the subject is no longer SOIR or IR.
3. The only solution: go back to the collection process and make a new discipline

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If what SOIR scholars deal with is not ir or not only ir, we need to go back from the start: collections. We have to decide if it is time for us to do it or not.

If the subject (collection) is not ir or at least not only ir, the study of the subject is no longer SOIR or IR. Most of us know that we are dealing with not only ir (in the strict meaning of the word as interstate relations) and we have to include other relations in order to explain what we want to study. However, almost all of them don’t dare to back to collections and try to make a new discipline. Why not make a new discipline from scratch, instead of denying, criticizing, mending the existing one?

Instead, some of them like Waltz are keep on following the original collection and restrict themselves only to see interstate relations (in terms of a origin of discipline, it is a right attitude). Some of them are trying to add new facts in the collection and criticize the “narrowness” of these austere realists. However their effort to challenge IR seems to be doomed to fail (and has been so in my view) unless they become aware of the need to make a new discipline based on the new collection including ir. This explains why all the past and present efforts to mend IR into “better” discipline by introducing new actors, epistemologies and criticizing state-centric premises and so on has not been so fruitful or could not give fatal damage to the defenders of realists or (neo-neo) positivists.

II More plural, more international IR: recent reflections on the future of International Relations

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1. Smith’s six wishes and three perspectives (more plural, more international, located in the real lives of the real people): wishing for the moon
2. solution: devise a new discipline
3. subject (need to be collected): global relations (politics from any social location, and any identity)
From study of international relations to the study of global relations (A. Shibasaki)

4. discipline=not Large GR (upgrade version of IR, including IR) but SOGR (including SOIR)

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Here I will take one example to reflect on this aporia of such critics of the reform. Smith’s six wishes and three perspectives are sincere but such change would not happen because the field wasn’t created to satisfy these demands from the beginning. If we want to make his wishes come true, we have to devise a new discipline. We may call it Large GR instead of IR, because his collection implies all relations in the world (= global relations). To make it more precise, we rather call it SOGR instead of GR (upgrade version of IR).

A. Six wishes, three perspectives

There are many articles and books on the self-understanding, reflection, and future tasks of IR, especially since late 1990s to the present. Among them I take Smith’s concise and elaborated reflection as a typical example.

For Smith, there are his six wishes as the answer to the question: “How should international relations develop over next twenty years?” (Smith [2010:727-730] He uses ir to refer to both small-ir and large-IR).

1. All approaches should be seen as having normative commitments.
2. International relations has to become less of an American discipline.
3. International relations has to reject its current, and historic, privileging of a specific and culturally entailed, social scientific research.
4. International relations academics need to reflect on their relation to power and on their social relations.
5. International relations needs to focus on the relationship between the material and the ideational.
6. International relations should not take the core concerns of the most powerful as the dominant issues for the discipline.

Judging from his early or recent papers on this topic, these points seems not so new to us at first glance. First remark is a rejection of pure objectivity or neutrality in social science, the second is a typical critic of American IR, the third is a discontent on treasuring only one type of positivism, the fourth is an issue of positionality and Foucauldian power relations, the fifth is an emphasis of the interaction between ideas and materials, and the last one is a repudiation of IR as a tool mainly for rulers or elites.

After explaining six wishes, Smith went further to set three questions, which leads to the big question as a concluding remarks: “Where should the field be going?”(Smith [2010:730-731]).

1. What should international relations be about?
2. What are the big questions that should animate our scholarship?
3. What are the implications of these questions for how we do research?

His answer for the first question is, IR should be “about a patterns of international and domestic power” and serves the “understandings of politics from any social location, and any identity, and not be an Archimedean point of neutrality”. IR “has to be a discipline located in the real lives of real people”. As for the second question, he emphasizes the importance of the analysis of identity and epistemology (“How do we categorize our thinking?”). And the answer for the last question is to understand the diversity of human identity (not a common single one), and the world of the powerless and to take heed of our locationality or positionality.

He concludes as follows (Smith [2010:731]):

International relations runs the danger of becoming a discourse applicable only to one part of the world, organized by powerful theories, legitimized by a specific and flawed epistemology, and “disciplined” by the structures of the discipline itself.

So IR has to become “more applicable to politics outside the world of the dominant power, more interested in the security concerns of the powerless, and better able to account for why we focus on some
politics rather than others”. To put it simply, Smith wishes that IR should become more ‘plural’ and more ‘international’.

B. Wishing for the moon? or It’s easier said than done

I believe that his wishes and perspectives on the future derive from his sincere attitude towards making IR more relevant, good social science. However we can draw at least three points concerning this argument.

First, there is a room for doubt if IR was, originally, made for realizing his wishes. He only might try to change the thing into the one that cannot be so, because it was never devised to do so. For example, if IR is “the powerful”-centered discipline, there could never be the possibility to change its focus into the powerless, because the definition of the discipline constructs the contents. I assume that any hardline realist knows the existence or significance of the powerless or ruled, but he consciously omits his analysis simply because the discipline requires. That’s the rule of the game. This can be applied to his critic of positivism, (pseudo-) neutrality, normative commitment and so forth. In this respect, we can say that he is only wishing for the moon (In Japanese, Naimono Nedari).

Second, Smith only insists what to do, but he never shows how. Just as I have been contending, the change he wish might be almost difficult for IR scholars to do it because most of them never trained to do so. One example we can get from recent efforts to find out “non-western IR theory”(Acharya and Buzan [2010], Tickner and Waever [2009]). I appreciated the efforts of finding out “non-western” IR by the authors, but basically they only try to report the commensurability of these “non-western” IR “theory” to the dominant IR(T), without assuming there are vast areas of SOIR in the world, which doesn’t fit to western IR(T) but could have ample insights on ir is fruitless.

Lastly, Smith pays almost no attention to the importance of the roles of the discipline that needs to consider. Without the perspectives on how the world would be going in the future, rearrangement and re-shuffle within or between IR disciplines and import “non-western” theories via screening by the Sanma effect (defanging insights of SOIRs into ones only acceptable and understandable for IR scholars and vice versa).

C. Resetting collection inescapably invites resetting concrete goal of the discipline

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1. common purpose: human survival and better lives
2. The goal of SOIR: how to manage ir (IR was born after ir)
3. The goal of SOGR: how to manage gr (no common understandings on the structure of gr)
4. Task of gr: what is gr? what is the best way to manage it?

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The goal of SOIR is basically how to manage an existing relationship between states because SOIR/IR is the study on ir. SOIR was made after ir emerged (be it from 19th century or 1919 to 1950s).

However, as for gr, there is no common understanding about the contents and structure at present. Then the goal of SOGR is to grasp the structure of gr and finding out a new device to manage gr in order to survive or live better (Figure 2).

In order to find out the goal of SOGR, I am going to draw one of the possible answers from the inspiring lecture of Masanao Toda, in the next section.
From study of international relations to the study of global relations (A. Shibasaki)

III The Most Important Goal for the human being: Control of excessive energy and the need for the new social organizations

A. Finding out a new social organization: Toda (1971)

0. Toda”Possible Roles of Psychology in the very distant future” (1971): making a new social organization by making “total human/social science"

1. Co-existence by self-restraint
2. Acceleration of changes and increasing excessive energy
3. the limit of existing “aged” social organizations
4. the most crucial goal for the human being: “create a truly new social organization that can make possible for more free and more affluent individuals to participate in the process of information-control (that is to say, the process of creation) directly by consuming its energy”
5. total human/social science (interdisciplinary): minds (psychology), macro concept (SOIR→SOGR?)

Masanao Toda (1924-2006), a prominent psychologist and cognitive scientist famous for “urge theory”, named such a device for managing the problems of human society, as “new social organization” in his 1971 article.

He has already pointed out almost forty years before that social organizations (including nation-states) were ‘aging’ and malfunctioning because acceleration of changes and mass-production of excessive energy are beyond control of these old organizations.

According to Toda, the solution is to invent new social organizations whose mission are to control/save the acceleration of changes and to make excessive energy of the human being more useful for the social participation and contribution for the progress and to prevent the collapse.

B. Masanao Toda: One of the neglected prophetic scholars

Masanao Toda (1924-2006) was a prominent psychologist and cognitive scientist. He wrote many papers and books from 1950s and was famous for initiating cognitive science in Japan. He is also known for devising “urge theory”, which made possible the integrated analysis of intellect and emotion very uniquely (Toda [1992/2007]).

Here, we are going to explore his early controversial lecture made at the Conference in London in 1969 (Toda [1970]). This lecture was translated into Japanese and published in 1971 (Toda [1971]). Though the main contents are the same, he developed his ideas more concretely and deeply in 1971 version. We can learn a lot from his lecture about the role of science or social science ‘in the very distant future’.

By mentioning ‘very distant future’, he was thinking about next twenty or thirty years. Though the years have passed over his span of future, his argument still holds for understanding our present and future society and roles of academic disciplines.

C. ”Possible Roles of Psychology in the very distant future” (1971)

(1) Co-existence and Self-restraint of the human being: essential condition for the sustainability

First, he tries to set out the basic condition for the survival. That is: We have to learn the way to coexist and to be self-restraint on this earth. The reason is so simple: as far as we can predict, there is almost no possibility for us to leave the earth and find out the other place to live in outside of the earth or for aliens to visit us and take us out.

As long as we have to live within this closed earth, we have to live together by learning self-restraint. In order to attain this, psychology would be the “master science”, because self-restraint is basically the matter of individual’s mind. Then the question is how to achieve this.

(2) Acceleration of changes: basic condition of
modern society

Second, we have to understand the basic condition of our modern society. Toda defines the feature of modern society as “acceleration of changes”. He describes the history of modern world as a contention between “positive feedback by science and technology, or information and control” versus “negative feedback of nature (like population growth, natural disaster and so on)”.

Basically human history can be summarized as the continuous victory of the former to the latter, and it seems that we have overcome almost all of negative feedbacks and now, we seems to be almost free from them. However, we must not forget “there is a last resort (of negative feedback); the human being itself.” Anyway, changes have tremendously accelerated and there seems no way to stop it. This is the underlying trend of our society.

(3) Making of new social organizations and management of excessive energy: the most important goal for the human being

If the acceleration of change is unprecedentedly developing, what is the problem? Toda points out two phenomena that are interconnected. One is the issue of “excessive energy” and the other is the “aging of social organizations”.

First, now we have vast excessive energy, which is too enormous to consume completely, because of the acceleration. People are getting more and more free for the work to survive and got more information and can expand the area of control by themselves. However, we cannot control others freely because we must respect each other’s dignity. Then people turn to acquire many goods and machines and try to consume excessive energy by using them. But the effort would result in accumulating discontents because

1. Efficiency of energy consumption is also getting higher and higher
2. Such control over machines does not leads to a reproduction of the society and they lost their purpose in life

3. As the consequence of acceleration, they are getting more and more far away from the direct and meaningful participation in the progress of technological civilization

Without having a chance to play a creative role for the society, they put their discontents towards their social organizations.

Basically, any social organization (including nation-states) has a role of “arranging the way people use the energy and of inputting as much energy as it can into the process of expanding reproduction of information-control (positive feedback) or of preventing it from shrinking”. For example,

A state is a social organization whose propose is to manage the forms of energy consumption of its nation, to absorb excessive energy which emerges, for example by preventing needless troubles, and to use it for the maintenance or development of the whole energy of a nation (like improvement or enhancement its culture or wealth). (Toda [1971:341])

However, it is very hard for the present social organizations to deal with these excessive energy, because, according to Toda, the present social organizations we are depending upon was made, so long before, suitable for the society which most of the people have very limited, marginal energy to survive. There is a considerable gap between the ability of present social organizations and the amount and power of excessive energy that is needed to control.

Thus, we are now in the situation that on the one hand there gets more and more excessive energy and on the other hand we only have an “aged social organizations”, which cannot manage such energy. Consequently Toda defines the most crucial goal for the human being is to “create a truly new social organization that can make possible for more free and more affluent individuals to participate in the process of information-control (that is to say, the process of creation) directly by consuming its energy”.

Needless to say, it is very difficult for us to create a new one. First, we do not have enough time. Second, we don’t know what it will be like, nor have any vision or design for it. If we miss the chance, the cost of the eruption of the present social organi-
zations would lead us to the chaos, because of the enormous excessive and uncontrollable energy (including nuclear energy).

(4) Devising a total human/social science and difficulties of it’s making: the role of psychology and other human/social science

We have to find a way to save energy or control energy by making a new social organization. Then the problem is how to make it. Toda’s strategy is to set up a new discipline so-called “total human/social science.” (Toitsu Ningen Shakai Kagaku)

However, it is almost difficult for us to devise such science. The reason is that human/social science is almost left behind compared to natural sciences. Toda asserts this is the fatal defect of our society. Then the answer for Toda is very clear: to upgrade human/social science into completely precise and rigid one. Toda predicts that its form would be, at the beginning, is only a “model” rather than a “theory”, which is huge and elephantine but is able to produce conditional predictions for the society.

In the long run, it would be possible to make it, but there are many difficulties. As for Toda, the cause for underdevelopment of human/social science is the infestation of “general theories”, which seek to explain broad areas by simple principles. This is unavoidable because human society is too complex and our ability of information processing is poor. In addition, there has been a struggle between these general theories.

Unfortunately, general theories until now too much put emphasis on its generality, especially in the field of psychology. Each theory overemphasized its verity compare to others too much. Consequently, debates in the academic field have kept on true or false debates from start to last and the progress by cumulating theories could never happened. If one rigidly tries to judge whether they are true or false, we can say general theories, which emerged out of a hunch, or serendipity is bound to be probed as false. (Toda[1971:349])

However if the possibility is there, all we can do is to describe the dynamic reality of the society and try to find out not one single general theories but “component theories (Buhin Riron)” which we can use by combining other theories and which has a flexibility to revise if they are not relevant.

In this “toal” (as Toda notes, it means not only single form but interdisciplinary collaboration of scholars) human/social science, psychology plays a central role, for human is the last unit of human society. In this sense, psychology is located as like a nuclear physics. However, Toda also insists that the study of individual is not enough. We have to locate an individual within a broad social context one lives in.

One has to keep in mind that there are significant differences between human/social science and physics. First, the difference of the size between micro unit and macro unit is entirely different. The difference that of human/social science is far smaller (one to 7 billions). Second, the relationship between scholar and the subject is entirely different. In physics, a scholar is “macro” and the subject (say, an atom) is “micro”. However, in human/social sciences, a scholar is “micro” and the subject (say, society or international relations) is “macro”. This implies that in general, it is far more difficult for a scholar of human/social science to grasp the macro concept. Thus, the most necessary task is to find out the new excellent macro concept (like a new social organization).

D. Existence of the structure of the ruler and the ruled: Hatano’s patch for Toda

Giyoo Hatano made some comments on this intriguing paper (Hatano [1971]). First, Toda tends to treat human beings so sweepingly as a single one, who shares one single same destiny. Hatano pointed out that there is a relationship between the rulers and the ruled, which Toda didn’t take account of. In this sense Toda’s discussion is based on naïve optimism and elitism. Second, for these rulers (minority in number), it gets easier and easier to maintain its mechanism of dominance. Their basic strategy is “to provide ‘better lives’ discriminately”, by manipulating hearts and minds of the ruled by monopoliz-
ing education, media, and knowledge. There seems almost no way to turn this structure down. Third, if the “total human/social science” is possible to realize, the exposure of all the predictions by it will lessen its predictability, because most of them repel such kind of predictions. On the other hand if the prediction were made open limitedly, it would serve the interest of the ruled.

Fourth, in this context, the role of psychologist is not to control minds of people but expose the way of control used by rulers. Psychologist should take the side of “actor who take action positively”, not on the side of the rulers. In this sense, for Hatano, the schema of Toda is too much indulged in elitist thinking or in favor of the rulers.

Hatano warned that psychology had a tendency to be on the side of the controllers and did not care about the controlled. Based on the notion of human dignity, nobody has the right to control someone without consent.

He concludes:

The mission of psychologist should be not to develop the way of more effective control humans but to lessen the possibility of being controlled unconsciously – by exposing the knowledge of these recidivous modus operandi and its effects. (Hatano [1971:361])

The comments made by Hatano give us appropriate modification of Toda’s schema. Especially, the need for the discipline to be on the side of the ruled echoes Smith’s emphasis of the importance of the powerless and a moral commitment.

IV From IR to GR/WR: the making of alter-IR via doing proto-IR

A. How to make SOGR?

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SOGR: collection/laws/theory

Mission 1: envisage the image of gr, whole structure, relationship or every levels (1) prediction (2) past structure of the world as a whole

Mission 2: collect the facts of gr (global governance, global civil society, Empire-Multitude scheme, global protests, riots, terrorism, or any kind of global issues (cases, events, thoughts, philosophies)

Mission 3: collecting and inventing methodology for SOGR: doing SOGR without depending on (at least) IR

Accumulating “dynamic descriptions”: how the small facts relates to the whole world, how that analysis reveals the feature of global relations

Mission 4: what was IR? Analysis of collection/laws/theory process of IR itself

Follow Toda, the goal of SOGR is to device new social organizations in order to manage gr in order to avoid collapse and realize stability, in other words, to make gr function better as culture.

Like other discipline, SOGR has to go through the collection/laws/theory process. At present I will pose four strands of agendas for its making. Mission 1: envisage the image of gr, whole structure, relationship or every levels (1) prediction (2) past structure of the world as a whole. Mission 2: collect the facts of gr (global governance, global civil society, Empire-Multitude scheme, global protests, riots, terrorism, or any kind of global issues (cases, events, thoughts, and philosophies). Mission 3: collecting and inventing methodology for SOGR: doing SOGR without depending on (at least) IR (This paper is one of the examples). Accumulating “dynamic descriptions”: how the small facts relates to the whole world, how that analysis reveals the feature of global relations. Mission 4: what was IR? Analysis of collection/laws/theory process of IR itself.
B. Smith and Toda: what do we learn from them?

Section I provides the basic assumption of this paper: IR is only a part of SOIR, ir/IR/SOIR is culture which contribute to the survival or better lives of the human beings, and the roles, not contents is better starting point for grasping the future of SOIR. In section II, we observed discussion of Steve Smith as an exponent of exploring the future of IR from “inside” and found out that the seek for plurality and internationality only by reshuffling inside arrangements or trying to blame the flaws most of which they are aware of has its limits and the flaw of this type of argument is that there is almost no vision of the social roles of the discipline in relation to outside of it.

Section III outlines the classic but inspiring lecture by Masanao Toda and posed that making new social organizations and finding the way of managing excessive energy in the way for the people as many as they can to participate in the reproductive process in order not to invite chaotic collapse of the whole society. However, as Hatano tells us and Smith warns, social scientist has to be on the side of the ruled, not the ruler.

Considering these contentions in the light of the premises posed on section I, how the future roles of the study of international relations should be?

C. Four points

Here are the four points, concerning on possible roles of the study of international relations. The first two points address more directly about the role itself, and the rest is about inevitable tasks which SOIR (IR) itself has to impose on itself in order to play that role.

Mission (1) Making new social organizations: visions and ways of thinking

Following from Toda, the most important roles of SOIR would be how to envisage and realize new social organizations that can manage excessive energy. Of course there are many disciplines that can contribute to this task, SOIR has many advantages to do it. First, as I have mentioned before, the issue of world order (“how the world make of it?”) has been the central problem of SOIR, whether it connected to the issue of energy or not. For most of the SOIR/IR scholars this is an issue of the endurance of Westphalian sovereign state system against ongoing globalization or interdependence. As Toda himself referred, psychology has not enough tools to do it because psychology basically treats the analysis of individual level.

However, this task seems not easy to do. On the one hand, most of IR scholars know that modern sovereign state system is in the status of “aging”, but researches over twenty or thirty years has proved that we haven’t found the alternative. On the other hand, we have to keep in mind that however old they are, we have to make use of these aged organizations as possible in order to avoid collapse. In this sense, we have to deal with this mission not by completely denying the importance and the roles of old social organizations. We should try to find a new one and at the same time make use of it fully to prevent collapse.

Then what to do in order to find a way to create it? One way of doing is to offer the alternative directly. In fact we already have ample materials on the post-Westphalian world order, from global governance to American empire, from global civil society to Multitude. However one important fact that most of these arguments IR has overlooked is that new social organizations are needed not only at the level of global order as a whole but almost every level of governance from individual relations to global relations. We have to design a new multi-layered structure of world order and do not confine its focus on ‘international’ level. This implies that designing a new social organization requires basic principle of the structure of the world at all levels and the relationship between every level.

This is not an easy task. One solution I propose is to analyze the vision or concept of how the worlds make it, in the past, present and the future. Any new social organization would be based on the new worldview. Of course, to find out the new one directly is almost impossible. In order to figure out the new organization, we have to make clear what
kind of epistemology these old social organization are based on. For example, I have posed the thesis of <self, state, and international relations> as one of the most important epistemology of modern world. If this formulation is correct, the new social organization can be deducted from the modification of it (Shibasaki [2009][2011]).

**Mission (2) Study of proto-/would be-new organizations, which might satisfies the demands of participation**

As confirmed, the main role of SOIR is bifronted operation, to create new social organizations and to prevent collapse of our society by patching up the ‘aged’ ones, at the same time. Another way of finding out the path to new social organizations is to gather concrete cases to the real world. We can cite many examples where old ones are in the state of malfunction and trials to make it better: Ottawa Process in 1997, Seattle in 1999, Cochabamba in 2000 to 2001, Protests in G8 Summit or other important conference, the protection of environment and human rights and so on. These are in some sense symptom of collapse and at the same time symptom of new organizations. Philosophically, the debate on the roles of Global Civil Society, transnational social movements, and (not favored by IR scholars) Negri/Hardt’s discussion on Empire/Multitude should need to be examined (Shibasaki [2011a]).

Of course, these cases are not the only places to put focus on. We have to look closely to the ongoing reformation of old organizations because they are also changing at the same time. We have to investigate what do they mean, how did them affect the way of making new social organizations.

**Mission (3) Accumulating “dynamic descriptions”: issue-oriented proto-SOIR**

As Toda pointed out the danger of “general theory”, we need to gather dynamic description on world politics no matter how it can directly connect to IR or IRT. I use the word proto-IR (SOIR) that means the issue-oriented analysis, which is not necessarily based on traditional IR. In this study, we have to be free from the constraint of IR. We don’t have serve to IR theories in order to study ir. If IR is make up of full of borrowing concepts and theories fro outside of IR, why not using these tools? Any kinds of theoretical thinking can produce new and unique analysis. We can make another IR or SOIR from any cases, any theories, any materials by ourselves. I have tried to offer some kind of examples by writing “Michael Moore vs. Socrates”, “Al Gore vs. Soseki Natsume”, “Enron and Uchimura Kanzo” and so on (Shibasaki [2008a, 08b, 10a]). Of course, this presentation is also one of the trials.

One good example is Minamata Gaku (the study of Minamata), proposed by Masazumi Harada and other scholars and activists who have been involved in the issue of Minamata disease (Harada ed. [2004]). Minamata disease is one of the first examples of deadly pollution, which was caused by the corporation and the government and most mainstream academicians could not do anything but worsen and prolonged the damage to the people and environment of Minamata area.

Harada proposes his understanding of Minamata Gaku as follows:

Minamata Gaku is trying to become a discipline that is interdisciplinary, barrier-free, and transcends sectarian academic factions, specific fields, areas, and paradigms. The important condition is it must be a discipline which seek to break down the wall between so-called “specialists” and “laymen (non-specialists)”, and allow for citizens, workers, and victims of the disease themselves to participate in its making. In order to establish such position, we need the energy to destroy the existing framework of science. Minamata Gaku has to tackle with authoritarianism, bureaucratism, conservatism and so on prevailing everywhere. (Harada [2007:124])

On of the most impressive feature of Minamata Gaku is that it is not a discipline that can allow one-sided teaching by well-learned ‘specialists’ towards untaught ignorant ordinary people. On the contrary, Minamata Gaku is based on listening to such people by ‘specialists’. It is a discipline not for scholars to give them the knowledge or theory
one-sidedly without knowing the reality but to learn from them by asking them to teach. Minamata Gaku drives from Shozo Tanaka, who was also famous for the struggle against the pollution by Ashio Copper Mine. Tanaka’s famous remark is “Society is the University”. If we really want to make IR or SOIR change for the discipline for the powerless or everyone, we need to learn from such Copernican turn as for the identity of our discipline.

Minamata Gaku also tells us what Smith is worrying about moral commitments and norm. Harada insisted that if the powerful repress the powerless (poor fisheries and its families who had been suffered, discriminated by the disease), being neutral is to be on the side the powerless, because their relationship is at first very asymmetrical.

This kinds of study surely promote the “plurality” and “internationality” of the discipline, for we will come to know how diverse analysis on ir phenomenon is possible by using theories, concepts or ways of thinking that have been neglected or excluded (consciously or unconsciously) by the traditional IR.

Mission (4) Another proto-IR: how to make out a new idea

Another aspect of proto-SOIR is proto-IR, which refers to the analysis of the developments of IR theories in order to find out how new idea or concepts was born and at the same time why IR has constructed as such. This reflection would be useful to shed light on the nature of IR not for the justifying the present situation but for elucidating why IR has developed as such a small/narrow discipline Smith and others deplored, in terms of culture discussed in section I.

We know there are so many works on the history of the discipline, but most of them are not focusing on this question. I have addressed on this issue by revisiting the path of Kenneth Waltz’s way of thinking from the beginning of his career to the publication of Man, the State, and War (1959). Such analysis would be one of the clues. (Shibasaki [2009b])

V Conclusion: From SOIR to SOGR

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1. ir → gr (including ir)
2. SOIR → SOGR (including SOIR)
3. IR → GR???: we still need IR?
4. SOIR vs IR: plurality and internationality
5. Japanese SOIR is not dominated by IR: its function as counter-intellect(culture) (Yamakage 2000) and potential to make SOGR

As stated from the beginning, my prospect is that the study of international relations inevitably has to become the study of global relations (SOGR). The subject of research of SOGR is global relations (gr), which subsumes international relations (ir). The notion of gr indicates every relation of every level on this earth by everyone (real lives of the real people) and a goal is to create new social organizations to control and manage gr.

From the standpoint of IR, this is somewhat ridiculous and some of them would say SOGR is not IR and that’s all. IR scholars would say “IR is my specialty and by writing and teaching IR, I get a job and will keep on doing it is the only option.” However, to repeat again, IR is nothing but only one kind of SOIR, and many SOIR have shifted to SOGR without changing its name and without restart from the collection that must be needed. If IR sticks to interstate relations, the discipline will surely “develop”. However, the development of the discipline would be the battlefield of “general theory” (intrinsically false, according to Toda), which tenaciously clings to the old organizations that are about to collapse with criticizing as “backward social science.”

Further, if IR is not suitable for this transformation, we can leave it as it is. All we have to do is not to make quarrel with closed-minded IR(T) scholars by engaging infertile another “great debates” but to perform sound and new studies of gr.

Before concluding this paper, I am going to explore a few more argument on the position of Japanese SOIR. Most of the Japanese SOIR scholars know that Japanese SOIR is not dominated by IR.
Most scholars know and often teach the history of great debates, basic assumption of isms, but only a few of them participate in the IR debates (I would not say to be part of IR is a bad thing). As Yamakage and others have pointed out, it rather works as a counter intellect not in the sense of absolute neglect or rejection of IR but in the sense of its identity that is not subject to IR. In the light of these self-understandings, Japanese SOIR has the potential to contribute to the shift from SOIR to SOGR.

As implied in introduction, in 1968, Karl W. Deutsch posed ten fundamental questions in his book, The Analysis of International Relations. Ten years later he expanded the questions into twelve and kept it twelve in the last edition of 1988. One of the brilliant guidance of how to understand the world he wrote is that United States is a minority in the world.

As Americans see it, most of the world is inhabited by ‘foreigners.’ That is, of the world’s 4 billion people, only about 220 million – roughly one in 18 are Americans. We are a minority of the total population, not only in numbers but also in land area, property, knowledge, and (presumably) power. (Deutsch [1978:1])

The implication of this is clear. IR, no matter how it means “American social science” or “English-written social science”, is also a minority in SOIR (in the broadest sense) in the world. I am not sure if scholars of IR really take a chance to face this fact and to change themselves to accept other SOIRs not for the purpose of importing for the sake of IR (like scavenger hunt) but for making a new discipline (like SOGR) or not. Anyhow, it would be the time for us to start to think about how to make a truly plural, worldwide discipline for human survival or better lives.

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