

# Meiji Institute for Global Affairs

## *MIGA COLUMN GLOBAL DIAGNOSIS*

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Short Curriculum Vitae – Isao Kamae

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He graduated from the Faculty of Engineering at Kyoto University and received a master's degree in information science from the Kyoto University Graduate School. He graduated from the Kobe University School of Medicine (doctor) as well as from the master's doctoral courses from the Harvard School of Public Health (as the first Japanese national to be awarded a doctorate in health decision science).

Served as Director of the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) and the first Chairperson of the ISPOR Japan Regional Chapter.

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### **Thoughts on the Trump Tornado**

The Trump tornado is now raging. Although it was generally anticipated because he had made pledges to this effect during his campaign, Donald Trump began issuing executive orders in surprisingly rapid-fire succession right after his inauguration as president in January of this year. The orders were for a ban on entry into the United States from certain countries in the Middle East and Africa, a ban on acceptance of Syrian refugees, construction of a wall on the border with Mexico, withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and a repeal of Obamacare, among other things. They could not be considered acts of someone in their right mind. It is a matter of common

knowledge that the division in US public opinion is becoming more serious and causing considerable repercussions internationally as well.

Trump's remarks and actions as the new president are evoking criticism and deep wariness from not only former president Obama, who earnestly hoped establish universal healthcare in the United States, which had thus far lacked it, but also a whole line of European leaders of a more traditional stripe, including Chancellor Merkel of Germany and President Hollande of France. Together with the British decision to exit the European Union (EU), the emergence of a new US president who breaks with the conventional wisdom of international politics makes us feel that we are indeed witnessing the end of the world as we knew it so far.

The word "trump" means "a game of cards" in Japanese, but usually refers to the winning card in English. The president is precisely this kind of trump. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not Trump, who advocates "America first," will in fact be a trump card in the power game of international politics.

The term "Pax Americana" (a state of peace as overseen by the US) has long been used since the end of the Cold War. However, it is clear in the eyes of all that with the recent global situation, Pax Americana is in ruins. The evidence includes the destabilization of the Middle East and especially the threat from Islamic countries, China's military buildup and its vigorous advance into open seas, and the North Korean development of nuclear missiles and the threat of spontaneous launches. Just as the history of the Roman Empire shows that the period of Pax Romana (a state of peace as overseen by Rome) did not last forever, it is doubtful that a single US president will really be able to reverse the wheels of history, which are bringing the current Pax Americana to a close. To be sure, "America first" could temporarily bring prosperity back to the US. However, there are apprehensions that the protectionism behind this rallying cry would eventually backfire on the country and result in its decline over the medium and long terms. If he turns out to be the president who plays the "trump card" that accelerates the end of Pax Americana, Trump's name would definitely become one of the ironies of history.

I have a little experience in on-site examination of patients in hospitals. For this

reason, I find it extremely interesting to view Trump's remarks and acts as presented in the mass media from a medical perspective. A few key words come to mind. The first is "somatization." Some patients claim to feel a specific physical abnormality for months even though a physician cannot find an adequate medical reason. These patients are called "somatizers." There is even a report from a hospital in the US that somatizers ordinarily make up as much as 70 percent of all the patients visiting the general internal medicine department.

There are said to be two types of somatizer. One type consists of patients for whom there are definitely medical or physical reasons for the pain or abnormal sensation, but who are hypersensitive to the pain or abnormal sensation, leading them to mistakenly believe the factor is pathogenic. The other consists of patients for whom there are no medical or physical reasons for the pain or abnormal sensation, and are seeking communication with the physician by claiming some physical symptom. The former, of course, requires a cure through treatment (for example, an explanation of the cause to eliminate misunderstanding and, if necessary, psychological therapy or drug administration). The latter, in contrast, require care rather than a cure. In other words, it is important for the physician to listen to what the patient has to say and be a conversation partner instead of attempting to cure the condition. Perhaps the way Trump has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the situation in the US and the world as a whole since the election campaign could be viewed as his own style of somatization. In particular, if he shows strong tendencies associated with the second type of somatization, he would require care. It would be useless for politicians in other countries to take his remarks seriously and venture a logical refutation (cure) of them. If anything, the approach of playing a round of golf together that Prime Minister Abe took may have been more effective as one form of care.

The second key word is "Type A person." Type A people are said to be characterized by hostility. The "A" in Type A stands for "aggressive" or "active." It has nothing to do with the A blood type. Type A people have a fiery temper and are irritable. Their sense of responsibility to their work is so strong that they are prepared to sacrifice their private life for it and find their reason for living in it.

To be sure, Trump's speech and behavior raise suspicions of prejudice and hostility

toward certain groups and countries. His career as a leading businessman reportedly fond of declaring “You are fired!” has the distinct ring of a Type A personality. People with such Type A inclinations, of course, are not that rare; they may often be encountered on a routine basis in any workplace. Medically speaking, Type A patients are at high risk of cardiovascular diseases. In particular, their personality is thought to be a high-risk factor for hypertension, angina pectoris, and myocardial infarction. In the psychological aspect, their inability to trust in the good intentions of others is reportedly liable to make them manic-depressive and to cause them difficulties in interpersonal relations. Therefore, as viewed from the medical perspective, they may require treatment in some cases.

Some experts think that Type A traits arise because of trouble in some form that the person experienced as an infant or toddler in relations of trust with others. This calls to mind the third key word, “adult children.” This term became generally known when former President Clinton confessed that he was an adult child in an interview with the women’s magazine Good Housekeeping. The term is apt to be taken as referring to childish people who are not really adults in spite of their age. But adult children are not the same as adults who are simply immature, because they have difficulties in interpersonal relations deriving from lingering psychological traumas. The childhood experience of a person who was brought up in a troubled family and suffered abuse at the hands of an alcoholic father, for example, will abide as such a trauma.

It is not clear if Trump was brought up in a troubled family and was traumatized by it, and one should refrain from glib comments as to whether or not he is an adult child without a confession to this effect from Trump himself. It should be noted, however, that even problem-solving methodologies logically presented by psychological counselors or physicians are not very effective for adult children. Only the understanding of the person him or herself can solve the problem. Counselors must be careful of the fact that gaps with and confrontation can easily occur over the logic they preach to the adult child. Since his inauguration, Trump has stepped up his criticism of CNN and the New York Times, labeling them “fake news.” If CNN and the New York Times are considered to be logical counselors, one may start to see a pattern of confrontation typical of adult children.

Yet another key word that occurred to me is “narcissistic personality disorder.” An NHK news article dated February 20, 2017 reported on an incident in the city of Sagami-hara that involved the killing and injuring of residents of a facility for the mentally disabled, under the title “Attack on the Disabled – Ex-Employee May Have Narcissistic Personality Disorder.” This kind of technical term from the field of psychiatry has come into use in mass media and is gradually becoming known by the general public. This disorder, however, is not necessarily linked to violent behavior.

According to the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders text revision (DSM-IV-TR), which presents international criteria for diagnosis, narcissistic personality disorder is a broad pattern of disorder marked by grandiosity (fantasized or in actual behavior), the desire to be praised, and lack of empathy. It begins no later than early adulthood and is manifested in various situations. People who have at least five of the following attributes may be diagnosed as having this disorder. People who have a narcissistic personality disorder:

1. Have an exaggerated sense of their own importance.
2. Are taken by fantasies about boundless success, power, talent, or beauty, or ideal love.
3. Believe they are “special” and unique, and that they can only be understood by other people who are special or in high positions. Or they believe they should have ties with such people.
4. Seek excessive praise.
5. Have a sense of entitlement. In other words, for no reason, they expect special preferential treatment or automatic compliance with their own expectations.
6. Make improper use of others in interpersonal relations; they use others to attain their own objectives.
7. Lack empathy; they do not try to recognize the feelings or desires of others. They also do not try to notice such things.
8. Often envy others or believe that others envy them.
9. Exhibit pompous and arrogant traits in their behavior or attitude.

(Taken from the “Quick Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria from DSM-IV-TR”)

We see many people who are active in society who show tendencies of narcissistic personality disorder. At any rate, “narcissism” is a key word, and in the case of President Trump, his slogan of “America first” is linked to a narcissism after his own fashion. Toyo Keizai Online recently published a very interesting article [1]. According to the article, numerous experts, including professors at Harvard University, the University of California, and other universities, broke the Goldwater Rule (an unwritten rule that prohibits psychiatrists and physicians from diagnosing public figures without directly examining them themselves and talking about the results to the media) and began to voice suspicions that President Trump had a narcissistic personality disorder.

The question of whether or not he actually does must be left to professionals in that field. But in any case, if he does have such tendencies to a greater or lesser extent, others will have to resign themselves to having great difficulties in dealing with President Trump. This is because it is nearly impossible to convince people with a narcissistic personality disorder of anything merely by sound argument appealing to obligation or reason. On the contrary, such people need a psychophysiological approach that skillfully takes their anxieties, jealousies, or competitive spirit into account in motivating the desired action. President Trump and the Trump administration are not necessarily one in the same. It may be said that the people in his administration are also faced with similar problems.

Be that as it may, the political reality is that the question now is how Japan will engage with President Trump. For this, no possibilities should be excluded. Besides the conventional approaches proceeding from the dynamics of international politics and economics or legal theory, Japan should draft complex strategic scenarios with the participation of specialists in the area of psychophysiology.

Reference literature

[1] Toyo Keizai Online

Junko Okamoto, “Trump May Be the World’s Strongest Narcissist – What Makes Him Tick?”  
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(Accessed on February 21, 2017)