Panel Discussion

Panelists: Seiichi Kondo
Keisuke Kikuchi
Hirotsugu Aida
Moderator: Katsuhiro Kohara

Kohara   Thank you very much. Now that we've heard from our two speakers, I think we can all agree that they had some very interesting things to share. There are many keywords to consider when it comes to the overall situation Europe finds itself in according to Kondo-sensei. The question has been raised as to whether liberal democracy and its principles can be carried out on their own moving forward. As pointed out by Kondo-sensei, "Europeans won't say this to your face but in Europe, the doctrine of European supremacy is alive and well. Historically, this was embodied by colonialism and it seems that within the tradition of colonialism, religion was met negatively." One of the issues with which we need to come to grips is that the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen were not isolated, unexpected incidents; rather they have their roots in a very long history. Kondo-sensei goes on to address how Japan can offer assistance regarding this distinctively European tradition and issue.

Kikuchi-sensei provided us with an easy-to-understand explanation of France's unique circumstances, conditions, and history, touching upon the journalistic content of *Charlie Hebdo*, and providing commentary on the rising anti-immigration sentiment that is spreading across Europe – not just France – as personified by the German group PEGIDA, which calls for the expulsion of immigrants. With its history of anti-Semitism, Germany finds it hard to openly call for an end to immigration. However, cracks have appeared recently in this façade, and it is apparent that this is not a problem only for France.

Especially interesting was how the voicing of discrimination had changed. We can refer to this as the changing face of racism. In days past, the basis of discrimination was racial difference. However, today *cultural difference* – in this case, the idea that there is a substantial difference between European and Islamic culture – serves as the basis for opposing immigration. This development has not been sufficiently discussed in Japan so

its identification is of great importance. In France, *freedom of expression* is restricted in various guises making it difficult to openly discuss racism. However, in pointing out the liberal traditions of Western Europe; the doctrines of liberal democracy, secularism and gender equality; and in trying to figure out how Islam fits into all of this, Kikuchi-sensei noted that he found an increase in feelings of hatred and rejection of Islam.

Responding to our two guests, Mr. Hirotsugu Aida of the Kyodo News provided many useful comments and also posed many questions. Based on Mr. Aida's concerns, the differences between American and European culture cannot be dismissed. I think this is important. As was pointed out, the separation of church and state is also treated differently in France than in the U.S.. There are also big differences within Europe itself. In France, the "burqa ban" prohibits women from wearing headscarves in public places, while in Germany there are no such prohibitions. U.S. President Obama made comments very critical of this law at the time of its passage. Even in Europe, opinions were divided on the headscarf controversy. The U.S. also had a different take on the matter. However, if the argument becomes one of the separation between church and state, then the discussion begins to lose its focus, so I think we should concentrate on the circumstances in Europe.

The last point touched upon included a sensitive issue that I believe may be controversial. Most certainly many Japanese newspapers voluntarily refrain from using caricatures. However, Tokyo Newspaper, Chunichi Newspaper and other publications sometimes used caricatures after careful discussions were carried out in-house. But after receiving criticism from readers, these newspapers soon withdrew these images and offered apologies. So then, how should we look at these series of events? From Mr. Aida's point of view, there was no need to refrain from publishing these controversial caricatures. Even though this is a point on which opinions will differ, I believe it needs to be addressed.

First, however, let's have our two guests respond to the questions posed by Mr. Aida and then we can proceed to our discussion.

Kondo   The difference between the U.S. on the one hand, and France as well as the rest of Europe is just that, I believe. Japanese newspapers almost never published such caricatures. When they did, they invited criticism and were soon retracted. Whether this is desirable or not is difficult to say. The current issue, however, in the end, involves ethnic confrontations rooted in history. On the one hand, France ostracizes its immigrant population under the pretext that "those who are opposed to Western values must leave."

On the other hand, Muslims believe that their god and prophet is being desecrated and that this constitutes a criminal act, and so they revolt. Extremists then pray upon this indignation to orchestrate attacks. Both sides have their well-defined public stances but the root of the problem lies in ethnic confrontation. The Japanese media needs to explain clearly the history of mankind with which ethnicity and religion are so intricately entwined and then decide whether to publish such illustrations. Personally, I feel that they could have published such pictures with due explanation of the background of the attacks. If not just Muslims but also average Japanese feel the same negative emotion, I feel there is really no choice but not to run such content, while providing some sort of explanation. It very well might be permissible if the media take the same position as they do with other content involving crude sexual depictions, or those that may offend or harm children – in which case they show self-restraint and refrain from dissemination. I can't help but feel this might be best. This should be done freely based on the various media's characteristics and policies. The last things we want to see is the publications getting together and deciding whether or not to publish said content at all.

Kikuchi   The question of just how far *freedom of speech* should be regulated is a difficult one indeed. France has a long history of anti-Semitism that dates back to the Dreyfus incident. During the Nazi occupation, the Vichy administration cooperated with the Germans, and during this period, the French police hunted down huge numbers of Jews, with roughly 75,000 of them being sent to the gas chambers. After the war, anti-Semitism remained to some extent, with historical revisionism and the like repeatedly creating a sensation. It is important to recognize the existence of details like this when considering the legal controls that have been placed on statements denying the existence of the gas chambers.

However, the question of whether these restrictions on freedom of speech should be expanded or not has led to a big split in opinion. This is due to the fact that, once you pronounce a certain subject to be taboo, unintended consequences inevitably follow. An example of this can be seen recently in France where the sociologist Edgar Morin and several other intellectuals were sued on suspicion of anti-Semitism. In almost every case, the speech in question amounts to no more than criticism of Israel's policy of occupation of Palestine. The lawsuit was dismissed but, wilting under pressure from Zionist groups, the media abandoned the subject, making a point not to criticize Israel.

Meanwhile, there are cases where the regulation of speech is abused by nations. An example can be seen in Japan where the pros and cons of regulations to restrict hate

speech are being discussed. The concern here is that anti-nuclear demonstrations held before the Prime Minister's residence and protesters demonstrating against the construction of U.S. military bases would have their activities curtailed if such restrictions should actually come into existence. The reporting on Islam by *Charlie Hebdo* probably includes discriminatory nuances; and ideally this should not invite lawsuits but, rather, be condemned in the court of public opinion. However, directly after the terrorist attack that is the subject of our discussion, some 8 million copies of the issue commemorating the victims were sold. This leads me to believe that such public commendation will not be forthcoming.

The expression "separation of church and state" has gained currency of late, so I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about it further. In 2004, France established the Law on Religious Symbols, which prohibits the wearing of the hijab in public schools. The separation of church and state is a principle that the republic of France adheres to and the wearing of religious symbols in public schools amounts to a violation of the principle of *laïcité*, which establishes secularism in education. After the creation of this law, Muslim girls were made to remove their headscarves in public schools and, should they resist, they were to be expelled. With the passage of the "burqa ban" in 2010, the prohibition on veils for Muslim women and girls was expanded from public schools to society at large.

Laïcité (secularism) was originally born out of the power struggle between royalists and republicans following the French Revolution. Until the beginning of the 19th century, churches traditionally provided education for the masses. In France, this instruction consisted of Catholic priests gathering the children of peasants for Sunday school, where they would teach them the scriptures of the Bible. However, the Catholic Church was supported by the royalists at that time, and thus did not recognize the revolutionary administration as the legitimate authority. So the political leadership of the republican faction established a public school system, seeking to wipe out the political clout of the church by introducing free and compulsory education, thereby enshrining into law the principle of *laïcité* and instituting religiously neutral formal education.

Seen in this light, then, the principle of *laïcité* was born out of a power struggle that followed the French Revolution; but, by making formal education non-religious, it also fulfilled the role of securing religious liberty for minority groups including Protestants and Jews. In reality, the revisions of 1882 and 1886 that established *laïcité* in the public schools were restricted to secularism on three fronts: the teacher, the curriculum and the classroom. That is to say, educators were not to be made up of clergy, and the curriculum had to incorporate a diverse sense of values and worldview, beginning with evolutionary

theory. What's more, classes were carried out in non-religious environments as opposed to those of churches and other religious facilities. Accordingly, educators – i.e., the government – were always the ones demanding *religious neutrality*, and there were never any problems regarding which religion the children in the classroom identified with. That was the original spirit of *laïcité*.

Looking back on the sequence of events described above, I think it is clear that the Law on Religious Symbols, which was established in 2004, deviates tremendously from the spirit of *laïcité*. For, in 1989, when the first headscarf controversy arose, Socialist Party Minister of Education Lionel Jospin requested that France's Administrative Court provide a legal judgment on the matter, and was told that expelling students who wore headscarves would be "illegal." The only exception that would be recognized would be if the students in question were deemed to be participating in religious activities. In other words, the children wearing headscarves were not deemed to be likely to infringe on other students' religious freedoms by encouraging others to join a religious group; the act of wearing a headscarf to school itself was an act of *religious freedom*; and children could not be expelled from school solely based on this.

Then, when the second headscarf controversy occurred in 1994, the Minister of Education at the time, François Bayrou, issued a directive stating "wearing religiously symbolic clothes (for show) at school amounts to a religious act," and attempted to expel the girls wearing the headscarves. However, once again, the Administrative Court ruled that "the wearing of a headscarf cannot immediately be construed as a religious act," and in effect annulled the Ministry of Education's directive. By way of these twin Administrative Court rulings, it became obvious that headscarves could not be prohibited based on the one hundred year tradition of *laïcité*. Thus, when the third headscarf controversy occurred in 2003-2004, the government moved to finally settle this dispute by enacting a new law – the Law on Religious Symbols – effectively ending the controversy that had dragged on for a quarter century. Since then, religious neutrality has been demanded not only of teachers but also of pupils. Now a belief in so-called secularism has become a condition for setting foot in France's public schools.

Kohara   *Laïcité* has a long history, but I think you've done a great job of covering the main points. Looking back, we can see that *laïcité* was established as a result of a desire for national religious neutrality in order to protect religious minorities, but the interpretation has changed to simply "excluding religiosity." I wonder if we can interpret this to mean that today the French have largely forgotten the historical details behind

laïcité. Would this mean that *laïcité* remains as a principle, but that its interpretation has changed over time?

Kikuchi I think you've hit the nail on the head. Looking at the interpretation of *laïcité* over the last 100 years, there were no particular problems with Muslim girls wearing headscarves to school. Originally, *freedom of expression* and *religious dignity* were compatible in Europe, as can be seen by the traditions of *laïcité* and *religious liberty* being compatible in France. However, against the backdrop of rising Islamophobia, the traditional interpretation of *laïcité* has been turned on its head, moving from *guaranteeing religious liberties* to *excluding religion* altogether. Two years ago, when the philosopher Pierre Tevanian visited Doshisha University, he referred to this as "a conservative revolution in the interpretation of *laïcité*." If it is true that the Middle East is seeing a rise in Islamic fundamentalism, then one can also say that French public opinion has been hijacked by "*laïcité* fundamentalism."

Kohara While many questions remain, discussions highlighting these cultural differences are ongoing; let's ask Kondo-sensei a little about this. I believe that the aim of the cultural administration of UNESCO is to connect people through culture irrespective of politics and economy. However, according to Kikuchi-sensei, these cultural differences have been abused, instead leading to the present state of confrontation. Does UNESCO have any tangible initiatives for responding to these conditions in Europe and the world at large?

Kondo UNESCO was established in the aftermath of the Second World War. The pretext was that there were not enough structures on the political and economic fronts – like the UN Security Council – for preventing war. In the end, the question of whether to go to war or not is a question that each person needs to come to grips with. As the famous passage from the UNESCO charter reads: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." No matter what kind of political or economic structure is created, ultimately where there is hate, there is war. UNESCO was created to help man overcome his hatred for his fellow men. UNESCO has done a variety of things on this front. Iranian President Khatami even led a cross-cultural dialogue on the subject. While these have produced results, at the end of the day, ancient resentments always come to the fore. While not uttered, developed countries also harbor negative feelings towards the developing world as well as toward

Islam. Mankind is making a visible effort to overcome this but, inevitably, things don't go as planned. An example of France's inconsistency can be seen in the Convention on Cultural Diversity. This pact created by France seeks not to exclude any culture on the grounds that because cultures differ, they need to be respected. Canada has something similar on the books. In reality, the target of the Convention is the U.S.. There is a steady stream of Hollywood movies entering France. The French movie industry claims that it would be crushed [in the absence of legal protection]. That's nonsense. It is tantamount to arguing that, in order to respect diversity, the French film industry – a minority using our example – needs to be protected by ignoring the WTO's general rules on free trade. That is the ultimate goal here, and it's why the façade of "cultural diversity" is presented in forcibly pushing through aid for developing countries. Recently, however, the real intention – to exclude anything that is different from French culture or French values – has become clear. UNESCO activities have, to a certain extent, produced results but, with elections and politically difficult circumstances, it becomes impossible to protect public positions. Even so, it is not like UNESCO is not needed. It is for this very reason that it needs to continue to try and create situations where people can coexist by hiding its real intentions from the public to some extent and supporting peaceful solutions through its public stances. A flawless system is probably impossible; I believe that mankind will forever be grappling with this matter. Efforts aimed at realizing peace and stability must be strengthened. We must firmly strengthen these efforts.

Kohara   Your comments on France's Convention on Cultural Diversity are intriguing. If one looks only at the language of this act, it seems great, but engaging in a battle to defend one's own culture highlights a philosophy unique to France.

Mr. Aida provided a comparison with the U.S.; it seems like the leading U.S. newspapers have not, for the most part, published or reprinted such caricatures. Can you tell us how these types of issues are handled and discussed in the U.S.?

Aida   The Huffington Post was very quick to provide a summary of the U.S. media's reaction to this. There are literally thousands of newspapers in the U.S., so it is impossible to know them all, but the most influential media include the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, CNN, and the AP. The Huffington Post provided a summary of media trends [involving these and other media] on January 14.

Opinions were widely split on the illustration that sparked the initial shooting incident. The Washington Post did not print the catoon at issue on their news pages but,

because its news pages and op-ed page are under different editorial control, it was carried by its op-ed page. The paper was highly conscious of its journalistic duty to get to the root of the problem. In other words, the paper felt the need to establish the root cause of the incident and to present it to its readers with the hopes of creating a dialogue, a sense of duty that brought up reminders of the origins of the free press in the U.S.. Next, we have the image of Muhammad weeping. With the exception of the New York Times, all of the major media carried this. The New York Times painstakingly researched the incident and also looked into its own journalism. By the way, the Asahi Newspaper is similarly creating a Public Editor position [similar to the New York Times] . Ombudsmen have been around for a long time. They conduct internal investigations into the problems at their own newspapers and then report on them. They may call on external well-known journalists and assign them to a post. The New York Times Public Editor is the former editor of the Buffalo News, a major newspaper in New York State. A former executive vice-president who had also served as managing editor, she was vehemently opposed to the New York Times decision not to print the second cartoon, voicing concerns that it was "problematic." There was strong dissent on the decision not to print the first one and it seems that this dissent was like this: "This cartoon led to the death of 12 people, why can't we show it? It just strays too far from our journalistic origins."

It was the editor-in-chief of the New York Times who made the final decision. He explained his decision as follows: "At first I thought we should run it, but, after thinking it through, I couldn't help but realize I would be putting our reporters at risk. So, I asked everyone who would be affected what they thought." He felt that the majority opinion on the matter was that running the second cartoon would not present a danger. However, in the end, it was determined that it would be best not to run the caricature for the sake of the country's Muslims. This was the decision reached by editor-in-chief [Dean] Baquet. At the time of the incident involving the Danish newspaper, Mr. Baquet was working at the Los Angeles Times. Most newspapers chose to run the offending cartoon, but he also decided not to run the caricature when he was managing editor of the Los Angeles Times. This decision created many problems within the newspaper, as there were reporters who cited this decision in resigning. This seems to have been a way of thinking unique to the current editor-in-chief of the New York Times. What is the basis of this way of thinking, I wonder? There was the matter of taking into account the feelings of Muslims, a minority group. While such things are rarely voiced in the U.S., as is widely known by those who have done any reading regarding the New York Times, a large number of the leading reporters at the New York Times are Jewish. Therefore, even if the consensus is

that publishing the caricature would not create any problems, one can't help but wonder whether there was a feeling of anxiety regarding this decision. A unique newspaper, the New York Times holds a special place in the U.S. and enjoys a very good reputation. It is hard to know for sure whether this had any bearing on their ultimate decision not to publish the cartoon, however.

Kohara   The mainstream U.S. media's response was also split, with heated discussions quite common. There was also the opinion that it would be useful to discuss the issue and bring the details out in the open. U.S. newspapers have ombudsmen. Japan is definitely behind when it comes to employing them. In Japan, there are several newspapers that publish caricatures. When these provoke objections, the newspaper sometimes issues apologies but even with these, it is hard to discern from outside what discussions are taking place within the newspaper.

Aida   One thing I'd like to add is that taking into account the feelings of minority groups is an immensely important matter. However, if this is not balanced against the news value, there is the very real possibility that almost all news reporting will disappear, as nobody will want to offend any minority group. Controversy in the U.S. media raised this fundamental point. It is "What is news value?" As journalists we believe that empowering people through knowledge is very important; that's why we work in this field. It is this knowledge that spurs debate, with the idea being that a way forward will become apparent through the voicing of a diverse range of opinions. We practice a kind of liberal ideology in our work. My biggest concern is that when we choose not to publish something there is the danger of this foundation crumbling.

Kohara   That can also be considered a question of the value of liberal democracy, can't it? I have a final question for Kikuchi-sensei. How do you feel the Japanese media will respond to the series of events in France? What do you propose Japan should do?

Kikuchi   First of all, I'd like to comment on the question of whether the *Charlie Hebdo* illustrations should have been published or not. I myself am really not uncomfortable running it. If the media exercises voluntary restraints and decides not to run such content under the pretext that it would bother minority groups, it runs the risk of avoiding dialogue on a number of controversial issues. However, if the objective of carrying such content is simply to offend Muslims, as was the case with *Charlie Hebdo*, this is totally

different from explaining content with the intent of gaining a better understanding of the problem. I myself presented a commentary one week after the incident utilizing several copies of the illustration. Simply adding taboo words does nothing to solve the problem and in fact serves to weaken the media, I believe.

Finally, I'd also like to emphasize that Europe's Islamophobia should not be viewed as somebody else's problem; rather I believe we should try to understand it in the context of Japanese xenophobia. When reading the Japanese accounts of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, I was struck by the overwhelming amount of culturally comparative commentary pitting Europe against Islam. Reporters provided detailed coverage of the incidents by presenting them in chronological order, while French and Muslim researchers provided commentary based respectively on "freedom of expression" and "the dignity of religion." However, even with the caricature incident and headscarf issue, if the problem at hand is not European and Islamic cultural difference, but rather racism in the name of "freedom of expression" and "*laïcité*," then what is the best way to proceed? Maybe we need to take a more multifaceted approach to Europe's Islamophobia and Japan's xenophobia.

The situation that Muslims from all around the world found themselves in following 9/11, and the situation that Japanese residents of Korean descent found themselves in following the North Korean kidnapping of Japanese citizens are, to a certain extent, similar. After detection of the incident, the Japanese mass media began bashing North Korea and, in fact, various sanctions were imposed on Japanese residents of Korean descent by national and local governments. Examples of such sanctions include frequent compulsory searches of the General Association of Korean Residents, not allowing the Mangyongbong-92 vessel to enter Japanese ports, not allowing Korean school students to sit for university entrance exams, and excluding Korean schools from the free public education system. Meanwhile, at the grassroots level, there has been a deluge of racist violence and hate speech directed at these people, as personified by incident of Korean women's traditional *chima jeogori* being torn up and the raid on a Korean School in Kyoto conducted by the *Citizen Group That Will Not Tolerate Special Privileges for Koreans*. The way I look at it, these circumstances are probably similar to the situation that France's Muslims find themselves in, but this point of view is almost totally absent from Japanese media reports on the *Charlie Hebdo* incident. But then, to the extent that the comparative cultural argument for Europe and Islam is taken seriously, there should be no expectation that this point of view will gain traction. Even with that being the case, I do think we need to rid ourselves of Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" paradigm as quickly as possible.

Kohara   Thank you very much. I think this subject has come into much clearer focus thanks to all of your efforts. I don't think there is any special need to rush to a conclusion today. However, I do hope there is a general understanding that we cannot afford to ignore events that occur in Europe. While Japan by no means has a large Muslim population like Europe, Kikuchi-sensei pointed out that we may have similar issues to deal with. The issue of *freedom of speech* is important for us as well. We need to look at and continue to consider incidents that occur in Europe as having a profound impact on us all.