

Was My Dream in Paris Realized?

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Without grants-in-aid, I would not have become the scholar I am today. They have been that instrumental in advancing my career. As I am a political scientist who approaches his research from a deeply empirical, not a purely theoretical, perspective, I am not able to somehow manage to do my work with “just a pen and paper.” Depending on the subject, my research employs historical or normative approaches. In either case, I must probe and analyze a huge volume of data. This makes grants-in-aid indispensable. Therefore, I cannot help but to be puzzled when I hear colleagues in the natural sciences voice biases regarding researchers in the humanities, especially when they say that all we need is a pen and paper or that we while away our time drinking. I find it even more ridiculous when I hear people in the humanities parroting the same notion about a pen and paper. To make this kind of a dichotomy between the sciences and humanities is ludicrous in the first place.

All of that said, for about a half century until a little over a decade ago, it was very difficult for me to acquire the use of grants-in-aid in my specific field of research—political science. From my mid-30s, I worked in a research institute attached to the University of Tokyo. However, it was not until I was in my mid-50s that I was able to take advantage of grants-in-aid in doing my political science research. I am not sure why that was—maybe it was because I had almost no political science colleagues in the research institute or possibly because of the fact that I had earned my PhD in the United States. I was perplexed not to have received these grants over the 20-year period when I was in my prime years as a junior researcher. Fortunately, however, I was able to use small grants-in-aid to do research in the economics field during my 30s and 40s. This made me very happy, as without the grants I would not have been able to advance some of the main components of my political science research. Thanks to small grants-in-aid in the economics field, I was most likely the first person in Japan to attempt an empirical analysis of such subjects as Japan’s political business cycle, the election manifestos of its political parties, and the Japanese system of “special-interest” legislators.

Complementing these small grants-in-aid, I was lucky to also receive occasional financial help from private foundations. From time to time, I was also able to tap into grants-in-aid when doing group research, though it was not that useful in pursuing my empirical research.

That I was not blessed with the use of large-scale grants-in-aid over those long 20 years is an extraordinary experience. But it was a blessing in disguise. First, I had the opportunity to become a member of a leading academic journal called *International Organization* in the United States; second, to become a member of the Committee on International Peace and Security within the United State Social Science Research Council; and, third, to be appointed as the senior vice rector of the United Nations University. The first experience taught me how to get articles published in leading academic journals. While working among the best academics of that time, the second experience showed me how to write applications for research grants and what goes into the award-decision process. As all the academic programs fell within my purview in the third case, I was able to learn how to handle an array of tasks as the chief executive, including how to organize and hold academic conferences, apply for research funding to convene them, and publish and disseminate papers after conferences. All of these experiences I gained over a period from my early 30s to early 50s. Owing to them, I have been able to get a great many papers, journal articles, and book chapters published in the United States. My academic books have been published also by such top-tier publishers as Oxford University Press, Stanford University Press, Routledge, Springer, and Palgrave-Macmillan.

It was in my mid-50s when my application for a large-scale grant-in-aid was accepted for the first time in my life. It was a dramatic change, like a blessed rain falling on a parched land. Even if I had been able to acquire some small grants in my 30s or 40s, they would have been insufficient to undertake a large-scale data-generation project. So, the timing was serendipitous. What I had yearned to do since my 30s was to conduct a large-scale poll of public opinion in Asia. In the early 1970s, I set off for Paris seeking an interview with Dr. Jacques-Rene Rabier (Institut Français d'Opinion Publique), who had created the Eurobarometer as a public opinion poll, which is carried out regularly, to register how European citizens live their life. As I hoped to do a similar one in Asia, I sought his advice on how to build a survey. His response was, first, to prepare questions that are plain and simply stated and that are regularly asked and, second, to pose questions that have concrete and close connections to people's daily lives.

Some 20 years later in 1999, I won a substantial grant-in-aid to conduct an extensive international and comparative public opinion poll on democracy (and incomplete democracy) in 18 Asian and European countries. Interest abounds about political systems and the regimes created by states. Yet empirical research on what citizens think about their own country's regimes had not been conducted over a very long span of time, from Aristotle to Robert Alan Dahl. At last in 2005, I received a large-scale grant-in-aid to carry out a massive public opinion survey covering 29 Asian countries on the "daily lives of ordinary people"—particularly, their "quality of life." I was truly grateful, literally from the bottom of my heart, for the grant that made this epochal project possible. The dream that I had envisaged at age 34 when I was in Paris had at long last come true. In this first project, I published three academic books, and in the second, two books with more to come in the near future. In that second survey, some 55,000 observational data were collected and analyzed, and they continue to yield published articles. Whereas the majority of the articles have been published in English, in order to feed the results back into Japan's society, I published a 477-page long book in Japanese in September 2013.

In these ways, grants-in-aid have been to me like an angel descended from heaven. Though I had to wait for a long time for her to arrive, it was well worth the bidding of my time. As seen in Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, and other indices, there are an overwhelming number of citations referring to my work. In fact, within the fields of political science and international relations, I have been unrivaled as a Japan-based researcher from the 1990s through the 2000s into the 2010s. That the angel made me wait for so long was a blessing in disguise.