

Comments on “Moderation in the Pursuit of Justice: Explaining Japan’s Failure in the International Whaling Negotiations” — Paper presented by Prof. Robert L. Friedheim

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As a member of the Japanese government’s delegation to the 46th annual IWC meeting held in Mexico in May of this year, I wish to point out some omissions in Mr. Friedheim’s paper.

Among the anti-whaling groups, there are many fanatical and uncompromising groups which absolutely do not tolerate the killing of even one whale, there also are groups which use the anti-whaling movement as a mean of raising money to maintain their swollen organizations, and which, rather than trying to work towards solutions to problems, seek to maintain the movement by manufacturing problem after problem. Because of the number and influence of such kinds of groups, government representatives from anti-whaling countries (in the recent conference some members of delegations were representatives of such groups) are completely handcuffed by the pressure from these groups.

Some representative from anti-whaling countries often tell Japanese representatives, outside of the conference hall, that they could well understand Japan’s claims, but once in the conference room they would adopt a completely opposite attitude. Even when a representative would have merely a friendly chat with a member of the Japanese delegation, representatives from anti-whaling groups would demand an explanation from the representative about what he had discussed with the Japanese delegate.

Under this kind of persistent surveillance and pressure by anti-whaling groups, it is no exaggeration to say that any opportunities to build mutually trusting relationships between representatives from whaling and anti-whaling countries, and thence to exercise any diplomatic initiatives for coming to mid — or long — term agreements were completely blocked.

Accordingly, as Mr. Edamura has pointed out, it is completely unsuitable to use the IWC, whose extremely uncommon workings go unchallenged, as the object of a case study on international negotiations as they exist in general. Further, in regards to Mr. Friedheim, who is a specialist on international relations, it is unnecessary to belabor the simple fact that diplomatic negotiations are not settled by the will of one country, but it is only fitting that if Mr. Friedheim, who has a deep knowledge of the whaling problem, is going to analyze and criticize the Japanese government’s response to the issue, he should at the same time include

an impartial critique of the intolerant attitude shown by anti-whaling countries, beginning with that of the United States.

Through the IWC's research efforts centered to a great extent around those by Japan and the efforts of courageous international scientists during the past ten years since the implementation of the moratorium on commercial whaling, the belief has recently emerged that whaling, from a scientific point of view, can be permitted under fixed conditions, and we believe the fact that this recognition is arising within some anti-whaling countries and organizations, though the number is still small, should be welcomed. However, a long period will be necessary for this view to be supported by the majority of IWC member countries and reflected in its policy.

Japan will continue to make vigorous efforts at the IWC to deepen the world's understanding of how important for humankind is the realization of the principle of sustainable usage of oceanic life resources and how "mythologizing" a specific species can throw the entire ecosystem into an unstable state. As a result of such deepened understanding, the resumption of appropriately managed whaling can be recognized.

In regards to this policy, within Japan, voices describing this policy as tepid and calls requesting the government to withdraw from the IWC are growing stronger and should be seen as very dangerous signs. Accordingly, the Japanese government sincerely hopes that the IWC will lose no time in achieving normalization of its activities.

Finally, I understand the thesis of Mr. Friedheim, who has carried out research of Japan for many years, to contain sympathy for the people involved with whaling in Japan, along with very caustic opinions arising from anger over the obstructionist present attitude of the IWC. I hope his ideas will be used as reference when considering countermeasures for the preparation of the next IWC conference to be held in Ireland next year.