

Japanese Foreign Policy toward Africa: Towards a Middle Power Diplomacy*

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Abstract

We have to admit that Japanese foreign policy toward Africa faces serious challenges. Japan certainly remains the world's 3rd largest economic power but it does not have the financial capacity of the US or China. It also does not have historical ties with Africa like France or the United Kingdom. It is high time to realize that Japan is a middle power, at least in Africa, and will remain so. Recognizing that Japan is a middle power in Africa, Japan can choose an approach to diplomacy that relies on values such as the "East Asia development model."

Introduction

Japan started to have contact with Africa in the 16th century. Portuguese missionaries brought a Black slave to Japan.¹ After the Meiji Restoration, Japan had

quite close relations with several African countries such as Ethiopia and South Africa. But mostly the relation was sporadic and irregular.²

Japan began to have a more constant relationship with Africa after World War II (WWII). At that time, Japan-Africa relations were determined by the context of the Cold War and the relationship with the US. However, we did witness certain changes in Japanese foreign policy towards Africa as the Japanese economy grew and Japan started to show some autonomy in its diplomacy towards Africa.

Since the nineties, Japan began to be involved in Africa even more proactively, namely through the TICAD process as well as by sending the SDF (Self Defense Force) to several African countries. As Japan tried to enlarge its presence in international politics, Africa became a focal point of its activities.

Today, Japan's engagement in Africa faces serious challenges. With economic stagnation, Japan cannot increase ODA towards Africa. New actors such as

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¹ Midori Fujita, *Afrika Hakken (Discovery of Africa)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004), 5.

² Japan and Ethiopia had both Imperial regimes and developed a special friendship. South Africa was an important trade partner. Especially, Japan imported South African wool.

China, India, and other emerging countries, have started to affirm their presence, traditional actors such as France, UK and US are also making a comeback. We are witnessing a “new scramble for Africa.”

What can Japan do in this situation? To answer this question, this paper will examine the notion of “middle power”. It is now time to reconsider this ambition and introduce more value-oriented diplomacy in Africa. Only by doing so, Japan can then maintain its presence in Africa and in World politics.

Middle powers are countries with capabilities immediately below those of the great powers, but still far above most secondary states in the international system.³ One may wonder if Japan is too powerful to be categorized as a middle power. Certainly, its economic strength ranks third after the US and China. However, as of 2017, its military expenditure ranks eighth the world. Moreover, as Soeya argues, Article 9 of the Constitution that prohibits the use of force greatly constrains Japan’s freedom of action in international security.⁴ The alliance with the US has also allowed Japan to shy away from some security issues.⁵ Due to these constraints, despite Japan possessing the world’s third largest economy, Japan’s diplomacy is constrained and consigned to the rank of a middle power.⁶

Previous studies demonstrated that Middle power is better defined by behavior rather than by a traditional quantitative method based on structural criteria such

as GDP or military power.⁷ Middle power tends to be concentrated on a small range of particular issues and, more usually, on regional rather than global concern.⁸

Equally, previous studies identified several definitions on middle powers. Copper and Higgott, classified types of middle power behaviors in 3 categories respectably, *Catalysts*, *Facilitators*, and *Managers*.⁹ *Catalysts* are entrepreneurial middle powers which can act as a catalyst with respect to diplomatic effort, providing the intellectual and political energy to trigger an initiative and, in that sense, take the lead in gathering followers around them.¹⁰ *Facilitators* are middle powers which would be facilitators for some form of associational, collaborative, and coalitional activity.¹¹ *Managers* are middle powers with a heavy emphasis on institution-building.¹²

There are already several works which delve into the Middle power diplomacy of Japan after the end of the Cold War. However, there are not so many specified approaches on the relation to Africa. This paper will additionally introduce the Middle power notion from a policy-oriented view.

By first studying historical evidence and philosophical influence, this paper attempts to understand the status of Japan-Africa relations. The paper will then go on to introduce the notion of middle power and demonstrate how Japan has behaved towards Africa and how said behavior became middle

³ Bruce Gilley and Andrew O’Neil, “China’s rise through the prism of middle powers,” in *Middle powers and the rise of China*, eds. Bruce Gilley and Andrew O’Neil (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 13.

⁴ Yoshihide Soeya, “Prospects for Japan as a middle power,” *East Asia Forum*, July 29, 2013, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/29/prospects-for-japan-as-a-middle-power/>

⁵ Kyoko Hatakeyama, “A Middle Power’s Roles in Shaping East Asian Security Order: Analysis of Japan’s Engagement from a Normative Perspective,” *The Australian journal of politics and history* 65, no. 3 (2019): 468.

⁶ Soeya, “Prospects.”

⁷ James Hamill and Donna Lee, “A Middle Power Paradox? South African Diplomacy in the Post-apartheid Era,” *International Relations* 15 (2001): 34.

⁸ Hamill and Lee, “A Middle Power Paradox?” 35.

⁹ Andrew F. Cooper, Richard A. Higgott and Kim Richard Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993), 24.

¹⁰ Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers*, 24.

¹¹ Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers*, 24.

¹² Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, *Relocating Middle Power*, 25.

power-like by showing evidence of Japanese involvement in Africa. Then, this paper will analyse the values that middle power diplomacy is composed of, from the points of view of history and the philosophy of Japan and other Asian countries. Finally, it will show that middle power-like diplomacy is the way that Japan should take in its approach to Africa.

1. Middle power diplomacy of Japan toward Africa

1.1 Evolution of Japan Africa relation

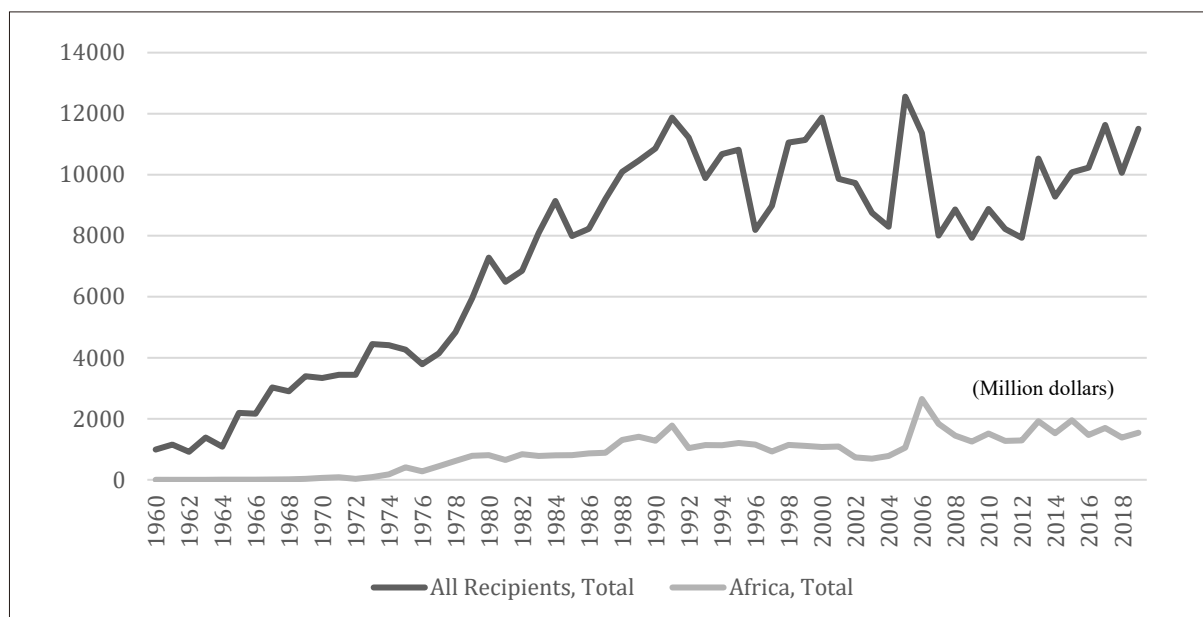
1.1.1 Importance of ODA (Official Development Assistance) for Japanese diplomacy after WWII

After the end of WWII, Japan began to have relationships with African countries again as it had been interrupted by the war. Japan started to show signs of rapid recovery whereas Africa's economy was stagnated. Given these circumstances, ODA

became the main means of Japanese diplomacy toward Africa. As the pacific constitution forbids Japan to have military forces, Post WWII Japan's diplomatic means are limited to economic, and technical cooperation. SDF is military force without any doubt. However, Japan cannot use this to influence other countries theoretically. Largely spoken, the power of Japanese diplomacy after WWII has stemmed from its economic power. It is truer in the diplomacy toward developing countries including African countries where economic assistance can easily generate diplomatic effects. The shift to ODA after WWII led to a more holistic and constant engagement with Africa.

In 1966, Japan begun to provide loans with preferential interest rates to Uganda as the first aid to Africa; and Japan also accorded export credits to Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria in the same year.¹³ Japan has continued to disburse ODA to Africa since then. The share of Japan's global ODA for African countries was under 10% until 1977. It grew to over 10% in 1977 and maintained around that level

Figure 1: Japanese ODA to All Recipients and Africa



Source: OECD Statistics

¹³Rebecca Lynn Spyke, "Japanese foreign aid policy: Influences and Motivations" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 1999), 233.

consistently. The amount was small, sixty-two million dollars in 1970, but reached 1.3 billion dollars in 1988 and stayed above one billion dollars until 1996.

The recession in Japan in the 1990s and the budget reform decreased the level of ODA considerably. In 1997, ODA towards Africa decreased below one billion dollars. Modest distribution continued until 2004 but it increased again above one billion dollars in 2005 and has been maintained above this level until today as the following line chart shows.

1.1.2 Increase of SDF activities in Africa

After the “Gulf war shock”, humiliation resulted from incapacity to contribute to multinational efforts to defeat Iraq; International Cooperation Law (PKO law), which would result in multiple dispatches of SDF in Africa, was adopted in 1992.¹⁴ In addition, Japanese society had begun to question the wisdom of postwar pacifism by criticizing it as “one-country pacifism” and arguing for somewhat proactive pacifism.¹⁵ At the same time, this period corresponded with the end of the Cold War, which gave Japan larger room for Japan to play in international politics.

When the International Peace Cooperation Law was adopted in 1992, Japan decided to dispatch three-movement control units of 48 SDF personnel each and 144 personnel in total, to Mozambique in 1993. Starting with ONUMOZ in 1993, Japan sent SDF personnel to Zaire (currently the Democratic Republic of Congo) and Kenya for relief operations (supplies, medical, sanitation and water) for Rwandan refugees from the civil war in 1994. Japan then started to participate in the anti-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia in 2009. From 2012 to 2017, Japanese SDF

personnel participated in UNMISS (United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan). ODA continued to play a key role in Japanese activity in Africa. However, since the 1990s, Japan started to engage more proactively in Africa with detachments of SDF (Self-defense Forces).

1.2 Japan as a middle power in Africa

1.2.1 Notion of a Middle power

In this context, the notion of middle power is an interesting model with which to rethink Japanese engagement in Africa. A superpower is understood as a country that tries to extend its influence across the entire world. A middle power does not seek that kind of worldwide engagement but tries to concentrate its resources on a defined field or limited region of crisis.¹⁶ A middle power tends to emphasize certain values such as “human security.” By doing so, a middle power maintains visibility of its commitment in the international arena and consolidates its position as representing a just cause.

Canada is a typical example of a middle power. Canada played a leading role in the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, known informally as the Ottawa Treaty in 1997; by negotiating and networking with small and medium countries and NGOs.¹⁷ Canada has focused on the specific field, Anti-Personnel Mines in this case and concentrated its resources. This kind of diplomacy could be considered as a typical middle power diplomacy. Canada often emphasizes the notion of “human security” in its diplomacy; empathizing on the specific value, “human security”,

¹⁴ Yoshihide Soeya, “Japanese security policy in transition: The rise of international and human security,” *Asia-Pacific Review* 12 (January 2005): 105.

¹⁵ Soeya, “Japanese security policy,” 104.

¹⁶ Scarlett Cornelissen, “La politique japonaise de moyenne puissance et l’Afrique: Un cadre d’analyse pour dépasser l’opposition réactif-proactif,” *Afrique Contemporaine*, no. 212 (April 2004): 38.

¹⁷ Hiroshi Tsukada, “Canada gaikouniokeruningen no anzenhosho (The notion of Human Security for Canadian diplomacy),” *Reference* (April 2005): 58. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/view/download/digidepo_999898_po_065103.pdf?contentNo=1&alternativeNo=

and in this case could thus be considered as a middle power like behavior.

It is also important to recognize that a middle power's diplomacy reflects its own internal politics and the values of its society. Canadian middle power diplomacy, based on value, has the effect of consolidating the identity as a "peace loving nation" which was once threatened by the independent movement of the French speaking Quebec region.¹⁸

1.2.2 Applicability of the Notion of Middle power to Japan

There are some significant differences between the Canadian situation and Japanese situation. Canada has been acting for long time as a "Peace-loving country" and participated in various peacekeeping operations. Japan was very reluctant to participate in overseas' operations not only because of the pacific constitution but also the hostile public opinion. Like Canada, Japan also pushed the notion of "human security" in international politics with the Initiative of Sadako Ogata.¹⁹ However, Japan cannot participate in those operations to protect "human security" like Canada, and this could affect the credibility of the Japanese argument.

According to Cornelissen, in Japan's case, the "East Asian development model" can be the value that can elevate Japan's status in the international arena.²⁰ The Tokyo declaration adopted in 1993 at TICAD I stipulates, "We recognize that the Asian experience of economic development and the catalytic role of international cooperation offer hope and provide a challenge for African economic transformation."²¹

Japan has tried to promote the values of its society

in its diplomacy toward Africa. One of the pillars of TICAD is "Ownership." Japan emphasized its support for NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development) at TICAD III. Ownership of the development process by African countries and people is one of the fundamental concepts of NEPAD. Emphasis on ownership in NEPAD is reminiscent of the fundamental value of Japanese aid philosophy based on its own development.²² The promotion of this concept of ownership in TICAD reflects the value of effort and self-reliance which is deeply rooted in Japan's society, which can be considered as a characteristic of middle power diplomacy much like Canada is doing in its diplomacy as a peace-promoting nation. Japan's diplomacy has acquired several characteristics which are typical to middle power diplomacy. Japan unconsciously has started to behave like a middle power in Africa.

According to Copper and Higgott's definition, middle powers act as a "*catalyst*" when they use diplomatic skills to trigger initiative and take the lead on an issue-specific problem.²³ Japanese diplomacy, which promotes the "East Asian development model", can be considered as a "*Catalyst*" behavior. By promoting the "East Asian development model", Japan tries to trigger the African initiative in the development policy and lead on issue-specific development problems.

There are several researches in parallel on the notion of middle powers and there is no well-established definition. However, previous studies show similarities of Japanese diplomatic behavior in Africa to middle power behavior.

¹⁸ Tsukada, "Canada gaikouniokeruningen," 57.

¹⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from 1990 to 2000, President of JICA from 2003 to 2012.

²⁰ Cornelissen, "La politique japonaise," 47.

²¹ "Tokyo Declaration on African Development 'Towards the 21st Century,'" MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad2/ticad22.html>

²² Cornelissen, "La politique japonaise," 48.

²³ Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, *Relocating Middle Power*, 24.

2. Philosophy of Japanese ODA Diplomacy toward Africa

If Japan behaves like a middle power, the “Asian development model” is a value to be promoted as we saw previously. To see the content of the “Asian development Model, we have to understand the history and philosophy of the development of Japan and those of Asian countries.

Japan’s development and the rest of Asia’s development have some common points, both having been realized through strong state initiatives. Since the 1990s, Japan started to emphasize the virtues of the Asian model of development globally, but especially in the context of Africa.

2.1 Philosophy of Japan’s ODA

2.1.1 Economic development of Japan

In the Meiji era after the opening of Japan to the outside world, the Japanese government sought to import western technology. It implemented an important measure to transfer western technology and thousands of foreigners were invited to Japan for that purpose.

The leaders of the Meiji era were aware that Japan was far less developed than western countries and tried to close the gap through state initiatives, such as when the government invited a considerable number of foreigners for the technology transfer and spent a significant amount of money. The state also established and managed public factories such as the Tomioka Silk Mill and Yahata Steel Works which was constructed through compensation from the first Sino-Japanese War.

After WWII, it was also the state which played a key role in the development of Japan. In the context of the Cold War, Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru proposed to concentrate the country’s limited

resources on economic development rather than to become involved in military conflicts.²⁴ The stance of Prime Minister Yoshida was maintained by the following Prime Ministers such as Ikeda Hayato and Sato Eisaku and was called the “Yoshida Doctrine.” Respecting this doctrine, Japan reconstructed the economy which had been destroyed by WWII, while depending on the US for the majority of its defense.

2.1.2 Contribution of Japan to Asia’s development and Asia’s development model

The “flying geese paradigm” of Akamatsu Kaname, developed in the 1930s, had become popular in the 1960s. In this model of development, a country initiates a process of industrialization by producing a product with less added value and it becomes the exporter of this product. After the country develops by exporting this product, it abandons this product to produce a product with more added value. This abandonment allows another country to produce that abandoned product and initiate its own development. As an early country to be industrialized, Japan is identified as the front goose and other Asian countries are identified as the geese that follow it in a “V”.

This model of development continued to have pertinence to explain the development of Asia. After the development of Japan, NIEs countries (Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea) followed the development path of Japan. After the development of NIEs countries, ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries followed the development path of NIEs.

The Japanese government claims that Japan contributed to the development of Asia through ODA, private financial flows such as exportation credits and investment by the government and private sector. According to the Japanese government, this form of aid put in place since 1970 contributed to the

²⁴Yoshida was Premier minister between May 1946 and May 1947, and between October 1948 and December 1954.

development of Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.²⁵ Despite certain critiques from traditional western donors, politicians and bureaucrats remain solidly committed to this model of development.²⁶

At first, Japan formed its philosophy of development based on its own development. Then, the development of Asian countries supported by Japanese aid confirmed and consolidated that philosophy.

2.2 Contents of the Philosophy of Japan's ODA policy

2.2.1 Central role of the state

From the research on period from the Meiji era to the post WWII era, we can see that the development of Japan was realized under governmental control. The government protected infant industries against international competition. The liberalization of domestic markets was allowed only when domestic industry acquired the competence to challenge international competitors in that field. This liberalization was very selective, and technology transfer was strongly encouraged by the government.²⁷ The development process, post-WWII, was also directed by the government.

Japan was certainly developed through free markets and free trade. However, free markets and free trade were controlled by the government.²⁸ This was brought about by a well-planned strategy developed by government officials. This experience of development influenced and determined the development philosophy of Japan.

This philosophy made Japan distance itself from

the neoliberal development model called the "Washington consensus" which has been prompted by international financial institutions based in Washington.²⁹

In 1990, Japan published "East Asia Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy," through the World Bank. The authors of this report concluded that the rapid growth of East Asian economies was primarily due to application of a set of common and market friendly economic policies, leading to both higher accumulation and better allocation of resources.³⁰ This report emphasized the importance of selective state intervention in the economy and therefore challenged the paradigm of neoliberalism which privileged the role of the private sector.

In November 1991, OECF (Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund, which later became JBIC) published a report about problems with the Structural Adjustment Programs of the World Bank and IMF. The report admitted that Structural Adjustment Programs can have positive effects in certain developing countries, but they can also have negative effects if certain conditions are not fulfilled.³¹ The report explained that exporting industries can develop faster when they are temporarily protected instead of being liberated rapidly. Regarding Africa, the report criticized the World Bank for forcing the privatization of industries too early without taking into account the realities of the challenges that African countries' economies were facing.³²

Japan also played a key role in the formation of the New Development Strategy (NDS) which was adopted by DAC (Development Assistance Committee) of

²⁵ "Japan's ODA Annual Report (Summary) 1996," MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/summary/1996/c_7.html

²⁶ Cornelissen, "La politique japonaise," 46.

²⁷ E. Wayne Nafziger, *Poverty, and wealth: comparing Afro-Asian development* (Greenwich: JAI press, 1994), 196.

²⁸ Lynn Spyke, *Japanese foreign aid policy*, 93.

²⁹ Lynn Spyke, *Japanese foreign aid policy*, 95.

³⁰ World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1994), 325.

³¹ OECF, *Sekaijinkono kozochoseiapurochi nomondaitennitusite (Issues Related to the World Bank's Approach to Structural Adjustment)* (Tokyo: OECF, 1991), 7.

³² OECF, *Sekaijinkono kozochoseiapurochi*, 10.

OECD in 1996.³³ The NDS especially insisted that the conditions of each country should be considered. It proposes that recipient country governments should take more responsibility in development and that donors should help them.³⁴

Japanese economist Goto Kazumi criticized the uniform application of the neoliberal development model to developing countries. He pointed out the importance of cooperation between public sector and private sector and the danger of believing naively in market mechanisms.³⁵ The emphasis on the public sector clearly reflects the Japanese aid philosophy as confirmed by its own experience.

Another Japanese economist, Ito Takatoshi, argued that the East Asian development model can be useful in Africa. He pointed out the virtues of the Asian development model such as the importance of social infrastructure, effectiveness and efficiency of government could be applied in Africa.³⁶ He also argued that after the takeoff stage, the orientation of policy may change to promote some industries.³⁷

Globally, the Japanese philosophy of aid is that each country should develop its own strategy of development considering its own conditions. For that purpose, taking ownership and the development of self-reliance by developing countries is encouraged rather than accepting development models imposed from outside. The public sector must play a significant role in the formation of developing strategies which fit the local conditions of each country.

Regarding the structural adjustment program promoted by Bretton Woods Institutions based on

Neoliberal aid paradigms, Japan is overly cautious, even hostile. Neoliberal aid paradigm aims to reduce role of state by promoting privatization and small government while Japan emphasizes the role of state in the development planning and its execution. The Asian development model is considered as an alternative to Neoliberal development model.

2.2.2 Policy of aid based on request

Therefore, in the fields of aid, the active role of recipient countries is encouraged. To receive Japanese aid, it is the recipient country that develops a project and presents its proposal to the Japanese embassy of that country. This process based on request is called *Yoseishugi* (principle of request). Although the Japanese government and companies have important means to identify, formulate and propose a project for a recipient country, the recipient country has a strong say in the process.

This principle comes from the history of Japanese aid. Japanese aid after WWII was initiated as a substitution of compensation for WWII for the Asian countries which had suffered from Japanese aggression.³⁸ The aid to Asia aimed to alleviate anti-Japanese sentiment and maintain cordial relations with the leaders, including authoritarian leaders. Under those conditions, Japan was not able to impose its ideas on recipient countries. This principle played a role in maintaining good relations with recipient countries without imposing political conditions on them. At the same time, this principle perfectly fits Japan's philosophy of aid that favors ownership of the

³³ Lynn Spyke, *Japanese foreign aid policy*, 96.

³⁴ "Wagakunino Kaihatsuenjo, 1997 (Japanese ODA 1997)," MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/hakusyo/nenji97/index.html>

³⁵ Kazumi Goto, *Kozochosei to higashiasianokiseki wokoete (Beyond 'Structural Adjustment' and 'East Asian Miracle.' Development Management Reexamines)* (Kobe: Kobe University, 1996), 105, 114. www.research.kobe-u.ac.jp/gsics-publication/jics/gotoh_4-1.pdf

³⁶ Takatoshi Ito, "What can developing countries learn from East Asia's Economic Growth" in *Annual Bank Conference on developing economy 1997*, eds. Joseph Stiglitz and Boris Pleskovic (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1997), 194.

³⁷ Ito, "What can developing countries learn," 194.

³⁸ Motoki Takahashi, "Enjo kyocho nihon no taihinkonkokuenjohenotoi (Harmonization of aide: Question about the Japanese aide in poor countries)," *JDCJ Forum*, no. 23 (2003): 29-43. https://www.idcj.jp/pdf/IDCJ_FORUM23.pdf

process by recipient countries.

2.2.3 Ownership and emphasis on loans

In its philosophy of aid, loans were seen preferable to grants because Japan thought that they would stimulate the effort to repay the debt, in consequence, encourage the recipient to take ownership of the development process. For example, a senior official of MOFA said the following in an interview in 2002.

ODA is not a charity activity. The idea to do charity activity between a country to a country is not polite to the recipient country. It means that we do not consider that recipient country equal. I think the notion of charity is particularly good between individuals. But not at the level of countries. President Rowling of Ghana used to give the speech titled "We Africans also have pride." Some Europeans thought it was unpleasant. However, our conviction is to treat the partners equally. I think it is hard to repay the debts. But this will guide us to make the efforts to repay.³⁹

The speech titled "Nasakeha Hitonotamenarazu" (Compassion is not for others)⁴⁰ made by Aso Taro, Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time is helpful to understand the philosophy of Japanese foreign aid. In the speech, he said,

I say to those who doubt the utility of ODA that we have a calculation for the long future. ODA is the important means to promote Japanese values. I guess

now it is obvious why Japan preferred loans to grants. ODA will be only charity if the recipient people do not have the intention to develop. For that reason, we have dared to tell that we do not give but we lend.⁴¹

His speech clearly outlined the Japanese philosophy of aid which differs significantly from that of major western donors.

Japan tried to maintain this position in its aid policy toward Africa, but the situation of Africa and the paradigm of international society did not allow it to do so. Between 1987 and 1995, ODA received by sub-Saharan Africa, except for South Africa, reached 10% of the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa⁴² and it was no longer possible to remedy that situation only by rescheduling debt. In consequence, since the end of the 80s, the cancellation of debt had become a rule of the international community.

In 1996, during the G8 meeting, the IMF and World Bank adopted an initiative in favor of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). This initiative was aimed at united action by the international financial community to bring back the debt of those countries to sustainable levels. In 1999, the HIPC framework was fixed and forty-one countries including thirty-three African countries were identified to take advantage of the initiative.

Therefore, the international situation did not allow Japan to consistently follow its philosophy of aid in Africa.⁴³ Japan was obliged to follow the HIPC initiative to cancel debts by providing new financial

³⁹"Nihongatajizokukanou na kaiatsu (Japanese vision of the sustainable development)," MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/listen/interview/intv_06.html

⁴⁰The proverb means the good thing we do for others will return to us. Therefore, we do good things not for benefits of others, but for our benefits.

⁴¹"ODA Nasakeha hitonotamenarazu (ODA: Compassion is not for others)," MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/18/easo_0119.html

⁴²Katsumi Hirano, "KanasasukisuSamittoha naze Afurikanitsuitehanashiattanoka (Why was the African issues discussed in Kananakis Summit?)," *Africa Report*, no. 35. (Tokyo: JETRO-Institute of Developing Economies, 2004): 23. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/view/download/digidepo_8419246_po_ZAF200209_007.pdf?contentNo=1&alternativeNo=

⁴³Katsumi Hirano, "TICAD 3 to TICAD inishiatchibu (TICAD 3 and the TICAD Initiatives)," *Africa Report*, no. 38 (Tokyo: JETRO-Institute of Developing Economies, 2004): 4. https://ir.ide.go.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=47946&item_no=1&page_id=39&block_id=158

aid, and that new financial aid is used to repay debts.⁴⁴ This approach to rescuing the indebted countries is thought to avoid moral hazards and stimulate ownership by the recipient country.⁴⁵ But in practice, it is no different from cancelling debts and after these experiences of cancelling debts, Japan became very cautious about providing new loans to African countries and Japanese ODA became composed mainly of grants.

We can see that Japan compromised its philosophy to prefer loans to grants as it must conform to the international paradigm in its aid to Africa. However, we can also see from the emphasis on loans which Japan believed would stimulate efforts to repay and therefore achieve the development objectives; Japan privileged ownership of the process by African countries.

Globally, the Japanese philosophy of aid is that each country should develop its own strategy of development considering its own conditions. For that purpose, taking ownership and developing self-reliance by developing countries is encouraged rather than accepting development models imposed from outside. The public sector must play a vital role in the formation of developing strategies which fit the local conditions of each country.

The Asian development model has its root in Japan's philosophy of aid which was proved by the development of Japan and Asian countries. And insisting this kind of value, Japan acts like a middle power.

3. Perspectives on Japanese foreign policy toward Africa

Japan started to act proactively in Africa at the beginning of nineties. However the economic stagnation, that began at the onset of the nineties, imposed serious constraints of Japanese involvement in Africa. Japan has additionally had to face several challenges such as a failure of the reform of UNSC (United Nation Security Council) and the rise of emerging countries in Africa. This chapter will explore the direction in which Japan's diplomacy in Africa is heading.

3.1 Challenges of Japanese involvement in Africa

3.1.1 Failure of UNSC reform

It is widely acknowledged that one of MOFA's biggest ambitions is to get a permanent seat in the UNSC and this consideration has pushed MOFA to a stronger commitment in Africa. This is also true of the TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) process, started in 1993. The official narrative emphasizes the importance of Japanese initiative in the time of "Aid Fatigue." But it is often said that the trigger for this initiative was a telegram issued by the Japanese delegation in the UN.⁴⁶ The Japanese delegation sent a telegram to MOFA headquarters which urged it to think about ways to attract African countries to engage with discussions of UNSC reform.⁴⁷ TICAD has become an important process for Japan and also for Africa, and it has certainly served Africa's development but it is also important to note that Japan has always maintained its ambition to be a permanent member of UNSC with support from African countries.

This motivation faces serious challenges. In the

⁴⁴ "Jusaimukoku nitaishuru shien (Aide to HIPC)," MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/jisseki/kuni/j_00/honpen/honpen_18.html

⁴⁵ MOFA, "Jusaimukoku."

⁴⁶ Sadaharu Kataoka, "Africa mondai to Nihon (African issues and Japan)," *Chiiki Kenkyu (Geographical studies)* 9 no.1 (2009): 247.

⁴⁷ Kataoka, "Africa mondai," 247.

summer 2005, the group called the G4 composed of Japan, Brazil, Germany, and India tried to push UNSC reform forward, but it did not have the expected result. The G4 prepared a reform proposal in July 2005 and expected the African countries to join to support the proposal. However, the AU chose to present their own proposal for reform based on the Ezulwini consensus.⁴⁸ The G4, including Japan, tried to harmonize the G4 project and the AU project in vain.⁴⁹ In addition, many countries joined the “Uniting for Consensus” movement initiated by Italy to oppose any kind of reform.

Japan has not renounced its ambition for a permanent seat in the UNSC. Since 2010, the G4 has continued to have ministerial meetings about Security Council reform on the margins of the General Assembly of the United Nations every year. In 2015, at the 70th anniversary of the UN, the meeting was held at the level of heads of state and government. In 2008, Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on expansion of and equitable representation in the UNSC started. Japan, together with the other G4 countries continue to struggle to start text-based negotiation on Security Council reform.⁵⁰ However, there has not been and clear progress in the negotiations to date.

3.1.2 Challenges come from emerging countries

There are also serious challenges coming from emerging countries, especially from China. China is not a member of OECD/DAC (Development Assistance Committee). Therefore, it is impossible to know the

exact amount of its assistance to Africa. What is known, is that China became the largest trading partner of Africa and investment is increasing rapidly. Since 2000, China has been organizing, FOCAC (Forum on China–Africa Cooperation) every 3 years. Not only China, but also India, Russia and Latin American countries have similar forums.

In this situation, Japan has chosen to ally with traditional donors which share core values such as democracy and human rights. For example, Japan concluded The Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure with the EU.⁵¹ Africa is expected to be a central field for the partnership. This kind of cooperation in Africa is also an illustration of a shift toward more value-oriented diplomacy.

3.2 Application of Asia’s development model to Africa

3.2.1 Asia-Africa cooperation

Faced with these challenges, Japan started to function as a middle power diplomacy *de facto*. Having in mind the history of its own development and that of other Asian countries, and the philosophy of aid coming from these histories, Japan tries to export the Asian model of development to Africa.

Japan succeeded in putting Asia’s development model on the agenda of multilateral forums. An Asia-Africa conference on investment and trade was held in Tokyo in 2006 as a follow-up conference to TICAD III. Forty-eight countries from Africa and thirteen countries from Asia participated. In the conference, examples of investments between Asia and Africa

⁴⁸The Ezulwini consensus demand at least two permanent seats with veto power, and two non-permanent seats for Africa while G4 proposal demand at 6 permanent seats (including 2 African countries) without veto power, and four non-permanent seats (including 1 African country).

⁴⁹Toshiyuki Takabayashi, *Kokurenkaikakumondai nitaishuru Afurikashokoku no shisei-Afurikarengono Ezlwini Consensus (Africa’s attitude toward SC reform-Eslwini consensus of AU)* (Tokyo: JETRO-Institute of Developing Economies, 2005), 16. <http://hdl.handle.net/2344/00008196>

⁵⁰“Anporikaikaku no Keii to Genjo (SC reform process and current situation),” MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/un_kaikaku/kaikaku2.html

⁵¹“The partnership on sustainable and quality infrastructure between Japan and the European Union,” MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000521432.pdf>

were intensively discussed as were the roles of government in the management of natural resources, agriculture, manufacturing, and services.⁵²

To advance the Asian development model in Africa, South-South cooperation is promoted. In the TICAD process, Asia-Africa cooperation is often mentioned and after the TICAD III, JICA launched the AAKCP (Asia-Africa Knowledge Co-Creation Program) project. The purpose of this program is to offer a forum to share knowledge and experience of rural development in Asia and in Africa.

This program created six sub-programs in the field of rural development and resulted in cooperation in the field of hospital improvement. For example, in one of them, Japan assisted hospitals in Sri Lanka to improve by introducing management skills from Japanese enterprises. Based on these experiences, doctors from Japan and Sri Lanka cooperated to introduce that experience to Africa.⁵³ This sub-program, namely Kaizen, introduces the Sri Lankan and Japanese experience in hospital management which promotes the principle of the 5S (sort, set, shine, standardize and sustain), (Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI))-TQM (Total Quality Management) process for better hospital management systems.⁵⁴ A total of 15 African countries—Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda—participate in this program.⁵⁵

The Japanese initiative is welcomed in Africa. For example, Kaizen- 5S (sort, set, shine, standardize and

sustain) (Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI))-TQM (Total Quality Management) was recognized by Ministry of Health in Malawi as a platform for the improvement of medical service in Malawi.⁵⁶

3.2.2 Applicability of Asia's development model to Africa

It is not entirely clear how applicable the Asian development model is to Africa. It is important to underline the differences in international conditions between the era when Japan or other Asian countries developed and the current conditions in which Africa seeks to develop. In this regard, two points are particularly important.

Firstly, the industry of manufactured products, especially the textile industry, played a role as an engine of development in Asia. The competition over these kinds of products is much harsher today, especially from countries such as China. Secondly, the technology gap with developed countries is wider than that Japan or other Asian countries had to face. This gap makes it more difficult to transfer technology to local production.

According to research, the applicability of an external model depends on the will of the importer.⁵⁷ Unlike former colonial powers and models they imported to African countries or the International financial institution imposing their model of structural adjustments, Japan has neither the means nor the intention to impose the Asian model of development on African countries. From the perspective of African countries, the Japanese initiative is certainly interesting

⁵² "TICAD Ajia Ahurika bouekitoushikaigi (Asia-Africa conference on the investment and trade)," MOFA, accessed April 4, 2022, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/ticad/as_af_gh.html

⁵³ "KireinaByoin puroguramu (Clean hospital program)," JICA, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/health/5S-KAIZEN-TQM/index.html>

⁵⁴ JICA, "KireinaByoin."

⁵⁵ JICA, "KireinaByoin."

⁵⁶ Fujita Planning, *Malawikokubuyoununeikaizennimuketa 5S-KAIZEN-TQM fukyu Gyomukanryohoukokusho (Final report on 5S-KAIZEN-TQM in hospital management in Malawi)* (Tokyo: JICA, 2016), 2. <https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12268579.pdf>

⁵⁷ Yves Dezalay and Bryant G. Garth, "Legitimizing the New Legal Orthodoxy," in *Global Prescription. The Production, Exportation, and Importation of a New Legal Orthodoxy*, eds. Yves Dezalay and Bryant G. Garth (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 307-334.

but the concrete measures to be put to import the Asian model are not yet to be found. Although there are several individual examples as we saw previously with hospitals, they remain small and symbolic in comparison with the scale of engagement that Japan claims. The application of the Asian model to Africa remains a diplomatic rhetoric.

There are researchers who are suspicious, even negative, regarding the applicability of the Asian model of development to Africa. Some of them suspect that infrastructure development supported by yen loans will not generate the same results as Asia in Africa where conditions for industrialization have not yet been met.⁵⁸ Certainly, more discussion about the pertinence of the model should be raised from the point of view of development economics. However, virtues such as the leading role of the state remain pertinent, and propagating them could be a useful asset for Japanese diplomacy towards Africa. By promoting middle power diplomacy based on the value such as the rightness of the Asian model of development, Japan can seek to increase its weight in international politics. In practice, the amplification of public relations activities focused on the promotion of the Asian model of development is expected as well as the reinforcement of existing activities such as Asia-Africa cooperation.

Conclusion

We must admit that Japanese foreign policy toward Africa faces serious challenges. Japan certainly remains the world's third largest economic power, but it does not have the financial capacity of the US or

China. It also does not have historical ties with Africa like France or the UK. It is high time to realize that Japan is a middle power, at least in Africa, and will remain so. Therefore, Japanese diplomatic presence will remain as that of a middle power, at least in Africa.

Recognizing that Japan is a middle power in Africa, Japan can choose an approach to diplomacy that relies on values such as the "Asia development model." At a time when the global presence of Japan is declining in economic terms, middle power diplomacy to emphasize values could play a role in raising or maintaining the Japanese presence, at least in Africa. Japan has already started to function as a middle power *de facto* in Africa. It is now time to act as a middle power with the consciousness of a middle power.

The diplomacy based on values will also guarantee some independence and originality of Japanese diplomacy which has been accused of not having its own direction and orientation, and to being guided mainly by the US.⁵⁹ Even though the "Asian development model" seems to be an appropriate value to be promoted for the moment, it will not prevent other values from being promoted in the future. Other values will also give directions to Japanese diplomacy.

This is also an important test for Japanese diplomacy. In the near future, it is highly possible that Japan has to act as a middle power not only in Africa but also internationally. The Japanese diplomacy towards Africa provides us with an important lesson to see the real capacity and flexibility of Japanese diplomacy. In other words, Japan needs to mobilize its diplomatic resources and recompense its declining presence. Canada succeeded to assure its diplomatic

⁵⁸Motoki Takahashi, "Nihonto Ahurikanokakawari sonoarikatato atarashii tenkai (Japan Africa relation the current status and new development)," in *Gendai Ahurika kouza (Lecture about contemporary) Africa*, eds. Mitsugi Endo and Yuichi Sekine (Tokyo: University of Tokyo press, 2017), 105-134.

⁵⁹For example, Purnendra and Inoguchi identified Japanese diplomacy as "Karaoke Diplomacy." Japan can only act in the scheme defined by the US like a song of Karaoke has to be sung to music. (c.f. Jain Purnendra and Takashi Inoguchi, *Japanese politics today: beyond Karaoke democracy?* (New York: Jain Palgrave, 2000) XV.)

presence by mobilizing its diplomatic resources to promote just cause and convince other countries in the international arena. This is the direction that Japanese diplomacy should take and investments to strengthen its diplomatic network, not only in its dimension but also in its intellectual ingenuity will be needed.

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