

Japanese Foreign Policy toward Africa: The Move to Partner-Country Ownership

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Introduction

Japan-Africa relations have evolved considerably over the decades. However, the intensification of the relationship is only a recent phenomenon. This relation was not direct or long-lasting because of the geographical and psychological distance.

This research will come back to history at first to show that Japan-Africa relations have been often determined by relations with other countries or international developments.

After World War II (WWII). Japan-Africa relations were largely determined by the context of the Cold War and the relationship with the US. However, we do witness certain changes in Japanese foreign policy toward Africa as the Japanese economy grows and Japan starts to show some autonomy in its diplomacy toward Africa.

Since the 90s, Japan started to be involved more proactively in Africa. The TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) process was initiated and Japan sent SDF (Self-defense Forces) to Africa several times. At the same time, an ODA charter was adopted. The charter announces principles solemnly but applies them with considerable discretion and the adoption is considered to be an attempt to control ODA policy with that discretion. The ODA structure, which was fragmented before, was integrated to be more coherent during the 2000s when Japan

started to become involved with Africa more proactively. This research will try to show the motivations of this change.

However, Japan's engagement in Africa must face serious challenges. With economic stagnation, Japan cannot increase ODA toward Africa. New actors such China or India, other emerging countries, have started to affirm their presence, and traditional actors such as France, UK and US are coming back. We are witnessing "new scramble for Africa."

What can Japan do in this situation? To answer this question, the notion of "middle power" will be examined to think about Japan's diplomacy toward Africa.

1 Evolution of Japanese Foreign policy in Africa

(1) History of Japan-Africa relation: Before WWII

-Special relation with Ethiopia

Japan developed a close relation with Ethiopia based on two kinds of sympathy. One was a general sense of sympathy with imperial regimes.¹ Another was sympathy with non-European nations in the beginning of 20th century when there were not many non-European countries which had kept their independence, Japan, and Ethiopia being two such states. They struggled in a Europe-dominated world order. As examples of this mutual support, Ethiopian people welcomed the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905² and at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Japan proposed that the principle of equality of all races be included in the Treaty of Versailles, which was refused by major powers but welcomed by non-white nations including Ethiopia.³

The amicable relation developed further in the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. In 1927, Japan sent several ministers to Ethiopia to discuss a treaty on trade and friendship. In 1930, a special delegation attended the coronation ceremony of Haile Selassie and the Treaty of Friendship

was signed at that occasion.

Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs Blattengueta Herouy Wolde Selassie's official visit to Japan in 1931 made Ethiopia the first African country to pay an official visit to Japan.⁴ Herouy offered two lions to the Emperor of Japan as gifts from Emperor Haile Selassie.⁵ Herouy expected to get loans to purchase arms to prepare a war against Italy but Japan, which had already engaged in war in China, could not afford to offer such loans.⁶

This friendship between Japan and Ethiopia worried Mussolini. Italy had ambitions over Ethiopia and was also hostile to Japanese progress in China. He mobilized the media and instigated a campaign against "yellow peril." It was strongly suspected that it was pressure from Western Countries, mainly Italy, which put a stop to the proposal of royal marriage between Prince Lij Araya Abeba and Masako Kuroda, daughter of Viscount Hiroyuki Kuroda.⁷ At least, it is clear that the development of Japan-Ethiopia relations, especially economic relations, attracted much attention from Western countries.⁸ In 1931, the import of Japanese textiles into East Africa occupied more than half of the total imports of the region and Western countries felt threatened by Japan's economic development.⁹

However, when Italy annexed Ethiopia, Japan concluded an agreement with Italy. Tokyo recognized Italy's conquest in Ethiopia and Rome recognized Japan's conquest in Manchuria.¹⁰ This agreement was satisfactory for Japan which considered that Manchuria was far more important than Ethiopia.

Furthermore, Italy accorded Japan the status of the most favored nation and Japanese interests in Ethiopia were protected. This arrangement paved the way to a future alliance between Japan, Italy and Germany which would be concluded in 1940.¹¹

-Commercial relation with South Africa

Japan started to have a commercial relationship with South Africa in the early 20th century. Japan established diplomatic contact with South Africa in 1910 when its first honorary Consul arrived in Cape Town. At first, the trade between Japan and South Africa was modest. However, during the First World War, the export of wool to Japan increased significantly.¹² Japanese saw South Africa as a potential market for manufactured products and an attractive source of raw materials.¹³

However discriminatory treatment toward Japanese nationals limited the commerce between two countries. In 1913, South Africa's parliament adopted new laws which aimed to restrict Indian immigration. As this law banned Asians from entering South African territory generally, it made it difficult for the Japanese to continue trade with South Africa.¹⁴ Furthermore, this law had a significant psychological effect and Japanese leaders had quite negative feelings about it. At that time, Japan had a permanent seat at the League of Nations and therefore they felt that Japanese people should receive the same treatment as Europeans.¹⁵

It was the economic difficulties of South Africa during the Great Depression which changed the situation. The Great Depression strongly damaged the exportation of South African wool to Europe and it made South African leaders reconsider their position about Japan which had considerable potential as a market.¹⁶

In 1930, the South African government decided to effectively treat Japanese people as “honorary whites.” In 1936, after trade tensions with Australia, Japan stopped importing Australian wool and replaced it with South African wool. In 1936, Japan registered large benefits in the trade with South Africa. But in 1937, the trade balance became favorable to South Africa because of wool exportation.¹⁷ This intensification of trade brought two countries to establish a diplomatic relationship in 1937 and

Japan constructed an embassy in Pretoria soon after.¹⁸ However, as the relationship between Japan and the UK deteriorated, the relationship between Japan and South Africa deteriorated as well.

The examples of Ethiopia and South Africa show that Japanese involvement in Africa was often determined by other factors than Japan and Africa themselves. In the case of Ethiopia, Japan tried to establish an amicable tie between non-white nations. However, it was Italian influence which made Japan renounce this approach and it seems Japan did not resist strongly. In the case of South Africa, the international situation before WWII halted the relationship. We can see that Japan-Africa relations were often determined by relations with other countries or international conditions rather than Japan-Africa relations considered in isolation.

(2) After WWII: Increase of ODA toward Africa

-The facts and figures of ODA toward Africa

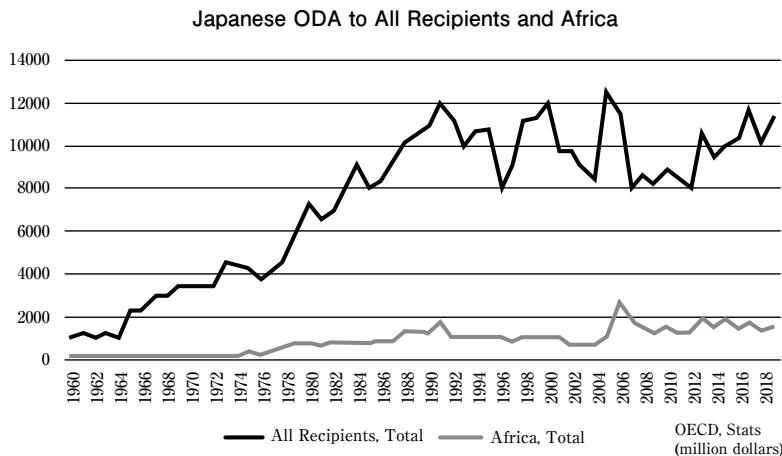
After the end of WWII, the relation between Japan and Africa restarted and trade began to grow slowly. Even though the share of trade with Africa remained relatively small for Japan, Japanese exports had a significant effect on African countries. Japan always registered a surplus in trade with Africa. This trade imbalance became structural and Africa always remained an importer of manufactured products from Japan.¹⁹

In 1963, Nigeria decided to limit import of Japanese products because of the considerable trade deficit. Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda threatened to follow.²⁰ After several years of negotiation, Japan decided 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.²¹

Japan 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 was maintained around that level consistently. The amount was relatively small, 62 million dollars, in 1970 but reached 1.3 billion dollars in 1988 and stayed above 1 billion dollars until 1996.

The recession in Japan in the 1990s and the budget reform decreased the level of ODA considerably. In 1997, ODA toward Africa decreased below 1 billion dollars. Modest distribution continued until 2004 but it increased again above 1 billion dollars in 2005 and has been maintained above this level until today.



-Concentration of ODA to certain countries

Japanese ODA toward Africa was concentrated in several countries. During the 1960s and the beginning of 1970, about 80% of ODA in Africa was reserved for Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia.

This concentration continued even in the 90s. The top 10 recipients of Japanese ODA were Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan,

Zaire, Senegal, Madagascar, and Malawi. Those countries received about 70% of Japanese ODA in Africa.²²

Cumulative ODA figures in 1996 also show the prioritization of almost the same countries. That concentration of ODA in several countries suggests to us that Japan prioritized those countries. We must analyze the reasons which led Japan towards those prioritizations.

-Prioritized country approach

At first, Japan prioritized countries which had natural resources. For example, Nigeria has rich petroleum reserves, Madagascar has important reserves of chrome and Japanese aid had an objective to secure those resources.²³

Secondly, political influence in the international arena was also an important factor. In the 70s, Kenya was politically stable and was highly influential in the OAU (Organization of African Unity) and United Nations. Kenya was a leader of moderate faction regarding the question of colonialism and apartheid.²⁴ Japan had strong economic interests in South Africa especially in term of natural resources, therefore attitudes toward apartheid was an important factor in the distribution of ODA.²⁵

The case of Tanzania is instructive. Japanese ODA for Tanzania was directed at legitimating commercial interests in South Africa. In fact, Tokyo used ODA to attract “Front-line States” (Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and for charismatic leader Julius Nyerere to calm the anxiety of African countries regarding Japanese interests in South Africa.²⁶ The ODA amount to Tanzania declined as this country lost its position as a regional leader. Instead, Zambia, which gained a leadership position among Front-line States, absorbed an increased amount of Japanese ODA.²⁷

2 Decision making in Japanese ODA policy toward Africa

(1) External factors

-Influence of the Cold War

As with diplomacy with other parts of the world, Japan's diplomacy with Africa was conditioned by the East-West antagonism and especially by relations in the context of the Cold War. Japan was expected to be opposed to the countries which declared themselves to be socialist. By contrast, Japan was required to support countries such as Somalia, Kenya, Zaire, and Malawi by giving them priority in ODA.²⁸

However, with economic growth, Japan started to show some independence in its ODA policy toward Africa. The first sign of independence was observed in the 70s when the diversification of resource providers seemed to be more important than relations with the US after two oil shocks in 1973 and 1979.²⁹ Japan sent Foreign Minister Kimura to Ghana, Nigeria, Zaire, and Tanzania after the first oil shock in 1974 and it was the Japanese Foreign Minister's first visit to Africa. After the second oil shock, Foreign Minister Sonoda visited Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Tanzania, and Kenya in 1979.

Japan started to rapidly increase aid to countries whose relations with the US were not particularly good, but which had natural resources or potential to be markets for Japanese products. During the 1980s, Japan provided 21% of its ODA to socialist countries while the US provided only 6% of its ODA to those countries.³⁰ ODA provided to Tanzania under the reign of Julius Nyerere, "Dean" of African Socialism, clearly illustrates this policy.³¹ Japan started to show some independence in its diplomacy toward Africa even in the context of the Cold War.

-Image of Japan

With its economic development, Japan was asked more and more to

share the burden in international politics. Japan was accused of taking advantage of the political and economic systems of the world without contributing (theory of the *free rider*). Americans saw Japanese taking profits from the peace assured by US military efforts. In the 80s, the US, which was suffering from budgetary deficits and external deficits, strongly asked Japan to take more responsibility in the maintenance of international order.

In those years, “Japan-bashing” language was common in the media. Japanese were often described as economic parasites who did not share their wealth with developing countries. In this context, the Reagan administration insisted that Japan increase its ODA to Africa.³² At that time, Japan was recording huge benefits from the trades with the US. The Japanese government responded positively to the request to alleviate critiques over the trade surplus and increased ODA to Africa considerably.³³

(2) Internal factors

-Absence of general direction of ODA policy in Africa

On one hand, external factors influenced the ODA policy of Japan toward Africa. On the other hand, there was not a well-defined approach inside the Japanese administration. In fact, Japan did not have an integrated strategy of its ODA policy toward Africa. A senior official who had worked in the directorate of Economic Cooperation of MOFA (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) stated in his speech in 2000,

“We didn’t have a specific aid policy for Africa. As we increased the amount of ODA, we provided ODA where there were needs and ODA for Africa has increased dramatically. Then we realized that Japan had become the top donor in many African countries. Japan found itself being involved in Africa via ODA.”³⁴

As his remark testifies, Japan did not have an integrated ODA strategy toward Africa. As we saw previously, Japanese aid served economic or political interests. But these cases were often decided case by case without strategic vision for long-term outcomes.

-Ministerial disagreements regarding Africa

To understand this lack of coordination, the case of South Africa under Apartheid is interesting. Japan replaced the US as the primary trading partner of South Africa in 1987 and this provoked strongly negative reactions from the international community.³⁵ MOFA, which is more sensitive to international critics, tended to denounce Apartheid. But MOF (Ministry of Finance) and MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, reorganized in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in 2001), which were more sensitive to the needs of the business world, were opposed to sanctions.³⁶

South Africa has 80% of the world's platinum reserves.³⁷ Platinum is a particularly important material for car manufacturing to produce catalytic converters. But after 1987, with increasing criticism from the international community, the relationship with South Africa became too risky and it became obvious the end of Apartheid was approaching. Finally, Japanese government levied sanctions against South Africa and trade between the two countries declined at the end of the 1980s.³⁸ This example shows clearly that each ministry has its own priorities and there was little harmonization between them.

MOFA's position is not strong in comparison with other ministries because it does not have a domestic constituency. For example, METI (the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) can consolidate its position by relying on Sogo Shousha (international trade companies) but MOFA does not have this kind of support.

Regarding ODA policy, MOFA must consult MOF to decide a budget for a project. Other ministries may also be involved. For example, for a project which concerns the import of agricultural products, MOFA must consult MAFF (the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) which has a strong domestic constituency.³⁹ To mitigate this weakness, MOFA took advantage of gaiatsu (external pressure). The pressure of the US was used by MOFA to convince other ministries to increase ODA budgets and projects.⁴⁰ Thus Japan's commitment to Africa was influenced by the relation with the US. However, this influence was also accepted and promoted by MOFA.

At first glance, it appears that Japanese foreign policy toward Africa is decided upon to serve the general interests of Japan but the reality is an absence of unified orientation. The criticism is often made that Japanese bureaucracy is too vertically organized and each ministry pursues only its interests.

Because of geographical and probably psychological distance, political level involvement is limited in Japanese policy in Africa. The relationships with the US or China and the position toward the neighboring countries such as South Korea or North Korea could be issues in elections but the position on Africa will not be electorally relevant. Consequently, politicians give wide latitude to the administration. However, without an integrated strategy, each ministry tends to act for its own interests without coordination.

3 History and Philosophy of Japanese ODA Diplomacy toward Africa

(1) History of Japan's and Asia's development

-Meiji restoration

In the Meiji era after the opening of Japan to the outside world, 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 Ministry of Industry was established in 1870 as the development agency for infrastructure such as railroads, lighthouses, ports and harbors, and the telecommunication system, and also to develop modern mining and large scale heavy and chemical industries. Until it was abolished in 1885, the Ministry of Industry alone employed more than 1,000 experts. The Ministry of Home Affairs hired almost 250 foreigners between 1876 and 1895 to establish agricultural experimental stations to introduce western farming methods and products, and model factories to transfer technology to light industry. During the same period, the Ministry of Finance drew on about 125 foreign experts to help set up a modern monetary system and introduce corporate business organization. Other ministries and public enterprises hired almost 10,000 foreigners and the private sector welcomed 12,500 foreigners between 1870 and 1899.⁴¹

The ratio of “learning cost” in the ordinary accounts of the central government was about 6 % in the period from 1868 to 1872. In the subsequent 5 years, the learning costs were almost doubled but the government ordinary accounts also increased more than twice the level of the previous five years. Therefore, the ratio dropped to 2.7 %. During the period from 1878 to 1882, the ratio dropped to 1.7%, and for the rest of 19th century, the ratio remained at a level slightly over 1%.⁴²

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 initiative as the fact that the government invited a considerable number of foreigners and spent that much money shows. The state also established and managed public factories such as Tomioka Silk Mill and Yahata Steel Works which was constructed mainly through compensation from the first Sino-Japanese War.

In 1873, the Home Ministry was created, and this Ministry had a control of public enterprises. Under its control, public factories were sold at relatively low prices. Companies such as Mitsui and Mitsubishi bought most of these factories and consolidated their bases to be *Zaibatsu* (*trusts*) later.

At that time, several key sectors were protected by the government. For example, Mitsubishi group which became the first Japanese company which entered in the market of maritime transport, took advantage of strong protection by the government against foreign competition.⁴³

The Meiji government almost completely banned foreign direct investment.⁴⁴ Doing so, Japan limited the trans-frontier movement of capital. Therefore, foreign ownership or management of Japanese institutions was practically non-existent.⁴⁵ Japan did not seek to introduce capital from overseas or take loans from foreign commercial banks. Rather, Japan planned and enacted its investment policy by domestic saving.⁴⁶

The textile industry was one of the most important industries in Japan before WWII with cotton and silk occupying a particularly important place in Japanese exports. These industries were developed because of the poor labor condition and low-cost labor of mainly women and children. Government attempts to introduce welfare legislation were aborted because of strong opposition from businesspeople, who exercised paternalism and labor control.⁴⁷ In 1889, a bill to prohibit child labor below the

age of ten was defeated, with business arguing such a bill would jeopardize modernization.⁴⁸ Labor organization was not allowed and therefore, the business was protected from strikes.⁴⁹ Government left employers free to pursue their own labor policy, thus increasing profits by paying low wages.⁵⁰

-Economic development of Japan after WWII

After WWII, it was also the state which played a major 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.⁵¹ The stance of Prime Minister Yoshida was maintained by the following Prime Ministers such as Ikeda Hayato and Sato Eisaku. The stance is called the "Yoshida Doctrine." Respecting this doctrine, Japan reconstructed the economy destroyed by WWII while depending for the major part of its defense on the US.

In 1949 MITI was created mainly by the initiative of Shirasu Jiro, right-hand man of Yoshida.⁵² This was a confirmation of Japan's intention to promote development by trade. For that purpose, experienced diplomats were integrated to the new ministry. The MITI played the main role in the coordination of the public sector and the private sector to secure national interests in trade. During the era of economic growth, MITI was reputed as "Notorious MITI" or "Mighty MITI" to describe its wide range, competence and presence.

MOF also played an active role in the development of Japan by regulating financial institutions. The practices were the following: (1) The preferential allocation of foreign exchange and import licenses (2) discriminatory tax-subsidy provision and import tariffs (3) subsidized loans from government financial institutions and implicit influence on the al-

location of loans made by heavily the regulated private financial sector.⁵³ Through these kinds of activities, the government controlled and favored key industries, and guided economic development.

We can see that the government was strongly involved in the protection and management of domestic industry. For example, when Europe started to get rid of restrictions on imports of various products, Japan was under pressure to follow that tendency. Japan removed several restrictions on import. However, the Japanese government under the direction of MITI, included many products in the list of special protection. Especially, restrictions on import of automobiles were not removed until 1965 and products such as beef or sugar continued to be protected even longer.⁵⁴

-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 developed 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.

Akamatsu's theory does not mention labor conditions or what kind of regime best supported development. However, we can point some similarities between Japan's development and that of other Asian countries. Asian countries including Japan initiated their developments by the textile industry taking advantage of low-cost labor. As in Japan in the Meiji era, working conditions were not much respected by governments including authoritarian ones like the Japanese government before WWII. We can take the example of Park Chung-hee in South Korea, Mahathir bin Mohamad in Malaysia, Ferdinand Edralin Marcos of Philippines, and Haji Muhammad Soeharto of Indonesia, etc. These regimes are classified as "developmental dictatorships." The most telling example is China. It is widely acknowledged that China achieved its development under strong and authoritarian leadership of the Communist party with protectionism associated with compulsory transfer of technology. China has been one of the major recipients of Japanese ODA since 1979 and it is only in 2021 that Japan stopped ODA to China.

The Japanese government claims that Japan contributed to the development of Asia by ODA, private financial flow 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 development of Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.⁵⁵ Despite certain critiques from traditional western donors, politicians and bureaucrats remain solidly committed to this model of development.⁵⁶

Japan's development and Asian countries' development were realized in different eras and different ways although there are some similarities and it is not yet clear that Asian countries will achieve the development of the level of Japan and South Korea which are OECD countries. However, Japan's economic stagnation for decades largely affected the image of Ja-

pan's strong economy in comparison to the quickly growing economies of some other Asian countries. Probably, it is wise not to distinguish clearly between Japanese model and Asia's model and to assimilate the Japanese development model into the Asian development model.

(2) Philosophy of Japan's ODA policy

-Central role of State

From the research on history 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. 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. This was brought about by a well-planned strategy developed mainly by government officials. This experience of development influenced and determined the development philosophy of Japan.

This philosophy made Japan distance itself somewhat from the neo-liberal development model called the “Washington consensus” which has been largely prompted by international financial institutions based in Washington.

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.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ 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 account of the realities of the challenges that African countries' economies were facing.⁵⁹

Japan also played a key role in the formation of the New Development Strategy (NDS) which was adopted by DAC (Development Assistance Committee) of OECD in 1996.⁶⁰ The NDS especially insisted that the conditions of each country should be taken into account. It proposes that recipient country governments should take more responsibility in development and that donors should help them.⁶¹

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.⁶² 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 in-

frastructure, effectiveness and efficiency of government could be applied in Africa.⁶³ He also argued that after the takeoff stage, the orientation of policy may change to promote some industries.⁶⁴

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 an important role in the formation of developing strategies which fit the local conditions of each country.

-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 which 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.⁶⁵ 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 in a position to impose its ideas on recipient countries. This principle played a role in maintaining good relations with recipient countries without imposing political conditions to them. At the same time, this principle perfectly fits Japan's philosophy of aid that favors ownership of the process by recipient countries.

-Ownership and emphasis on loans

In its philosophy of aid, loans were seen preferable to grants because Japan thought that they would stimulate 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.

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.⁶⁶

The speech entitled “Nasakeha Hitonotamenarazu” (Compassion is not for others)⁶⁷ made by Aso Taro, Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time is also 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.⁶⁸

His speech spoke very clearly Japanese philosophy of aid which dif-

fers 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 Africa⁶⁹ and it was no longer possible to remedy that situation only by rescheduling debt. In consequence, since the end of 80s, the cancellation of debt had become a rule of the international community.

In 1996, on the occasion of the G8 meeting, the IMF and World Bank adopted an initiative in favor of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). This initiative aimed a united action of the international financial community to bring back the debt of those countries to sustainable levels. In 1999, the HIPC framework was fixed and 41 countries including 33 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.⁷⁰ Japan was obliged to follow the HIPC initiative to cancel debts by providing new financial aid. That new financial aid is used to repay debts.⁷¹ This approach to rescuing the indebted countries is thought to avoid moral hazards and stimulate ownership by the recipient country.⁷² 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.

However, the most recent tendency is an increase in loans. Yen loans restarted to Cameroon and in Zambia in 2009,⁷³ and to Uganda, in Kenya, in Tanzania, and in Mozambique in 2010.⁷⁴ According to JICA, between 2010 and 2021, 54 loan projects have been approved in Africa. Recipients are Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique, Nigeria, Cabo Verde, Zambia,

Botswana, Mauritius, and the African Development Bank. These Yen loans have mainly financed infrastructure projects such as construction of roads, ports and bridges.⁷⁵ However, this increase of loans is considered to be a compromise to meet commitment in the difficult budget situation.⁷⁶

We can see that Japan compromised its philosophy to prefer loans to grants as it must conform to the international paradigm. 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.

4 Perspectives on Japanese foreign policy toward Africa

(1) ODA reform

-Adoption and application of ODA charter

In 1989, Japanese ODA exceeded that of the US, making it the world's largest donor country. Japan kept that position for 10 years. Since that time ODA to Africa has increased consistently. In 1992, the Prime Minister Cabinet adopted the ODA Charter which defined Japan's general orientation regarding ODA for the first time. The main principles are the following.

- ① Environmental conservation and development should be pursued in tandem.
- ② Any use of ODA for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts should be avoided.
- ③ Full attention should be paid to trends in recipient countries' military expenditures, their development and production of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, their export and import of arms, etc., both so as to maintain and strengthen international peace and stability, and from the viewpoint that developing countries should place appropri-

ate priorities in the allocation of their resources in their own economic and social development.

- ④ Full attention should be paid to efforts for promoting democratization and introduction of a market-oriented economy, and the situation regarding the securing of basic human rights and freedoms in the recipient country.⁷⁷

In 2003, a new charter was adopted. It conserved 4 principles already mentioned but several concepts such as “Human security” and “Peace building” had been added. Particularly, assistance to facilitate peace processes; humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance, such as assistance for displaced persons and for the restoration of basic infrastructure; assistance for assuring domestic stability and security, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants (DDR) are especially mentioned.⁷⁸

This adoption of the Charter together with “4 principles of ODA”⁷⁹ is the demonstration of the will of Japan to associate its philosophy of aid with real-world practices. But this equally involves compromise between MOFA officials who would like to conform to western countries’ goals of using development assistance to promote human rights and democracy and METI officials who are skeptical about interference into domestic affairs of recipient countries.⁸⁰ At the same time, the adoption of the Charter is a response to the accusation of Japan having no clear aid policy.⁸¹ In general, we should suppose that Japan had two primary motivations to adopt the charter. One was to integrate its ODA policy. Another was to alleviate criticism over its aid practices from the western countries.

The Charter was applied in a relatively strict way in Africa. Japan suspended the ODA to Kenya in 1991, to Sudan in 1992, to Nigeria and Zimbabwe in 1993 and to Gambia in 1995 not for respecting the Charter’s requirements.⁸² The most telling example is the sanctions against Nigeria,

an important producer of petrol with considerable economic potential and diplomatic weight in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was difficult for Japan to take sanctions against Nigeria before the adoption of the Charter.⁸³

At the same time, Japan recognized the efforts of those countries which did try to conform to the principals of the Charter by increasing ODA. This was the case in Benin in 1991, in Ethiopia in 1993, in Ghana in 1995, in Madagascar in 1991 and 1993, in Tanzania since 1991, in Zambia in 1991 and 1993 and in South Africa in 1994.⁸⁴

In Asia, the application was more discretionary. After the Tiananmen Square Incident, Japan suspended only a small part of its ODA to China, the biggest recipient of Japanese ODA at that time. Japan also did not take any measures in Indonesia to make it respect human rights in East Timor.⁸⁵ In Africa, the Charter was applied in the stricter way mentioned above because the continent represents smaller interests for Japan to be compared to other parts of the world.⁸⁶

In the same way, Japan did not suspend its ODA to Zimbabwe despite the persecution of white farmers there in 2002. Japan was the biggest donor in Zimbabwe at that time and took a very cautious position compared with the UK and other European countries. It seems that Japan was afraid of the deterioration of relations with President Mugabe. Japan continued to give certain advantages to Zimbabwe without taking the principals of the Charter into consideration.⁸⁷

In the 2000s, the application of negative incentives became scarcer with only three incidents, in Myanmar when the junta placed Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest in 2003, when Coup d'état occurred in Guinea in 2008, and when the government was overthrown illegally in Madagascar in 2009.⁸⁸

In fact, there is no clear criteria in the Charter about what kind of human rights abuses or which level of military action can result in sanc-

tion.⁸⁹ It leaves quite a lot of room for discretionary latitude.⁹⁰ In addition, the Japanese government is insisting more on conditions for a positive application to give aid than it is focused on conditions for the recipient to be penalized with regard to non-conformity to principles stipulated in the Charter.

It might be the result of the negative reaction from the business world to restrictive measures being put in place in Asia.⁹¹ Therefore, the adoption of the Charter can be interpreted as an attempt to legitimize ODA politically and have better control over this policy by discretionary application. At the same time, we can also see the increasing will of Japanese government to take firmer control over ODA policy and practice.

-ODA organizational reform

In the general reform of ODA, decision-making and implementation structures were reformed to be more coherent and centralized in the 2000s. The most important measure of the reform is that the Yen loan function of JBIC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation) was integrated into JICA. In MOFA, the International Cooperation Bureau in charge of planning of ODA policy was created by absorbing related functions. On top of that, the Council of Overseas Economic Cooperation composed of the Prime Minister, Chief Cabinet Secretary, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry was created.

Therefore, the ODA structure was reconfigured to a top-down structure. The Council of Overseas Economic Cooperation decides general orientation of the ODA policy. The International Cooperation Bureau of MOFA plans ODA policy and JICA implements that policy. Through these reforms, ODA distribution was intended to be executed in a “strategic, effective and agile manner while coping flexibly with ever changing

situations”⁹² according to the Cabinet decision on the ODA charter.

Broadly MOFA’s position was strengthened because it got a monopoly in the planning of ODA. The merger of the Yen loan function of JBIC with JICA also reinforces MOFA because JICA is an organization under control of MOFA and JBIC was an organization under control of MOF. This reform thus considerably reinforced MOFA’s position in ODA decision making. At the level of organizational structure, Japanese policy toward Africa has been integrated gradually towards a more centrally directed, coherent model.

(2) From economic involvement to political involvement

-Increase of SDF activities in Africa

After the end of the cold war, we observed several changes in Japanese engagement in Africa. ODA continued to play a major role in Japanese activity in Africa. But since the 1990s, Japan has increased its presence in Africa with detachments of SDF (Self-defense Forces) also. Starting with ONUMOZ in 1993, Japan sent SDF personnel to Zaire (currently 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). We must ask what provoked this change, who played a major role in bringing this change about and what this change means.

-Activism of government officials in policy making regarding Africa in the case of ONUMOZ (United Nations Operations in Mozambique)

It is interesting to observe the activism of government officials in decision making to send SDF (Self-defense forces) to ONUMOZ (United

Nations Operations in Mozambique). The International Peace Cooperation Law was adopted by Japan in 1992 but the Japanese population was still extremely cautious about the SDF's overseas operations. In this situation, Japan decided to dispatch three movement control units of 48 SDF personnel each, 144 personnel in total, to Mozambique in 1993.

The decision to send SDF to Mozambique was principally made by the MOFA officials. The Prime Minister at that time, Miyazawa Kichi and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kono Yohei were not supportive or were at least cautious about the idea of sending SDF to Mozambique.⁹³ Just before the decision was made, Prime Minister Miyazawa asked senior MOFA officials if there was an embassy in Mozambique.⁹⁴ He probably wanted to emphasize the difficulty of sending SDF where there was no diplomatic representation.⁹⁵ In fact, there was no Japanese embassy in Mozambique. On the exact same day that the ministerial committee decided on the SDF detachment, they decided to establish Japanese embassy in Mozambique.⁹⁶

The motivation behind this detachment was probably a matter of diplomatic considerations. The G7 summit scheduled in July 1993 in Japan was expected to be difficult for Japan regarding its trade surplus. The detachment of SDF was a way for Japan to show its contribution to world peace and therefore calm the critics over its trade surplus.⁹⁷ In the process, it is important to note that civil servants, who are generally considered to be resistant to new approaches, were more active in these changes than politicians, who are often viewed as being more active and eager for visibility.⁹⁸ This example shows clearly the activism of MOFA officials which can be observed widely in the Japanese diplomacy toward Africa.

Increase of SDF operations does not mean necessarily that Japan has intentionally increased its military presence in Africa. It is more correct to say that Japan looked for the opportunities to show its contribution to

world peace and Africa offered these opportunities. In fact, about 70% of the discussions in the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) are currently taken up with African issues. Therefore, it is quite natural that Africa provided Japan with opportunities for these types of contributions to UN related activities.

(3) Challenges of Japanese involvement in Africa

- UNSC reform and Japanese commitment in Africa

It is widely acknowledged that one of MOFA's biggest ambitions is to get a permanent seat in the UNSC and SDF deployments serve to support this ambition by showing Japanese contribution to world peace.

This consideration probably pushed MOFA to a stronger commitment in Africa. This is also true of the TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) process which was 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.⁹⁹ 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.¹⁰⁰ 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.

The reform of UNSC is one of main motivations but far from the only one. Japan's involvement in Africa is largely associated with its ambition to play a larger role on the international scene. In 2000, the same senior official previously cited said in his speech.

After all, I am convinced that Africa is a touchstone for Japan to

know if it is a country which can truly play a global role. If Japan is satisfied to be a regional power in the Asia-Pacific, it does not need to commit so much to Africa. Such was Japanese policy in Africa in the 70's. But if Japan assumes a global role as an important country in the international arena, it cannot avoid Africa. The quality of a global power relies on its will and capacity to get involved actively and assume its responsibility not only in specific regions but also in major global issues.¹⁰¹

-Failure of UNSC reform

As we saw previously, one of the important motivations of Japanese commitment in Africa is the reform of UNSC, but this motivation faces serious challenges. In the 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 of the reform based on Ezulwini consensus.¹⁰² The G4, including Japan, tried to harmonize the G4 project and the AU project in vain.¹⁰³ 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 continues to have ministerial meetings about the SC reform on the margins of the General Assembly of the United Nations every year. In 2015, at the 70 years 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.¹⁰⁴ However, there is no clear achievement in the negotia-

tion for the moment.

- Japan as a middle power in Africa and the Asian development model

Japan has constantly strengthened its ties with Africa but it has had to face several challenges in recent years. With the economic stagnation which started in the 1990s, Japan cannot increase financial contributions as before and this restriction has imposed some more conditions on Japanese ODA policy in Africa. Furthermore, UNSC reform appears to be difficult to be realized.

In this context, the notion of middle power is an interesting model with which to rethink Japanese engagement in Africa. Professor Scarlett Cornelissen of Stellenbosch University in South Africa describes Japanese Foreign Policy toward Africa with this concept.

Generally, a superpower is understood as a country which tries to extend its influence across the whole 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.¹⁰⁵ A middle power tends to emphasize certain values. 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 middle power. Canada often emphasizes the notion of “human security” in its diplomacy. The definition of “human security” is largely understood as a need to protect individuals in conflict. It was a new notion compared to the classical notion of security which mainly focused on security of the state. By promoting a certain value, in this case the notion of “human security”, Canada maintains its status in international politics, probably with a higher profile than its real economic, political, or military power would support.

According to Cornelissen, in Japan’s case, the “East Asian develop-

ment model” can be this kind of value which can elevate Japan’s status in the international arena.¹⁰⁶ 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.”¹⁰⁷ According to Cornelissen, this type of diplomacy can be classified as a typical middle power diplomacy.

It is also important to recognize that a middle power’s diplomacy is a reflection of its own internal politics and the values of its society. The case of Canada is interesting once again. The identity of Canada as “the country that desires peace” has its origin in the diplomacy of Lester B. Pearson, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs who mediated the Suez conflict in 1956. Canada was also a principal contributor to the emergency force which was sent to the conflict zone to observe the cease-fire.¹⁰⁸ Canada has maintained this kind of diplomacy by contributing personnel to PKO in many fields and played a major role in the campaign against landmines (International Campaign to Ban Landmines, ICBL).¹⁰⁹ Canada used this approach to diplomacy as a tool to consolidate its national identity which was, at that time, threatened by the independence movement of Québec and at the same time to pursue a global reach for those values.¹¹⁰

Japan has also 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 a one of the fundamental concepts of NEPAD. Emphasis on ownership in NEPAD is reminiscent the fundamental value of Japanese aid philosophy based on its own development.¹¹¹ Promotion of this concept of ownership in TICAD is a reflection of the value of effort and self-reliance which is deeply rooted in Japan’s society, which can

be considered as a character of middle power diplomacy as 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. As we saw previously, Japanese engagement with Africa faces difficult challenges. Japan will not be able to play the role of a superpower because of both its domestic constraints and international conditions. In this context, Japanese foreign policy toward Africa should be questioned regarding its relevance and the notion of middle power provides us with a clue.

Conclusion

Before WWII, Japan's relation with Africa was influenced and often determined by other factors other than Africa itself such as relations with third countries or international conditions. After WWII, this tendency continued. Under the Cold War, Japan's relations with Africa were often determined by other factors such as the relationship with the US.

However, this tendency started to change slowly in the 70s and 80s. Japan started to rethink its commitment with Africa to secure natural resources or gain political support in the international arena.

Japan continued to affirm the proactivity and independence of its diplomacy toward Africa in the 90s. Japan strengthened its commitment in Africa by sending SDF personnel and by initiating the TICAD process. By doing so, Japan started to have its own independent policy toward Africa. Still, Japan-Africa relations are influenced by other external factors just as all other relations between countries are. However, we can cautiously say that Japan started to have its own independent relationship with Africa for the first time in history.

Endo stated that Japan's foreign policy toward Africa was shifting from "Reactive" to "Principled".¹¹² He concluded "In the era of change

that affected the ODA environment and Africa itself, it is difficult to treat Africa as a ‘distinct entity’. At the very least, it is certain that we have reached a phase in history that brings to the foreground the necessity of developing more-proactive policies toward Africa.”¹¹³ Today, Africa is worth the development of a particular and specific approach from Japan just as any other regions.

We can see that the word “ownership” could be interpreted in multiple ways. In fact, the concept of “ownership” that Japan is promoting strongly in dealing with Africa also applies to Japan itself. By reforming and strengthening the relation with Africa, Japan started to have “ownership” in its relationship with Africa. The shift to ask for Africa to have “ownership” of its development is also a shift for Japan to have an “ownership” in its own relationship with Africa, independent of its allies.

At the same time, we have to admit that Japanese foreign policy toward Africa faces serious challenges. The ambition to be a global power faced an obstacle in the UNSC reform failure in 2005. The TICAD process is being reinforced but it is difficult to imagine that there will be a drastic increase in ODA. 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. In 2018, the Japanese delegation to African Union in Addis Ababa and the embassy in Mauritius were inaugurated. Japan has considerably increased its number of embassies in Africa and counts 37 missions in Africa. But most of the newly inaugurated embassies face a significant shortage of staff. Japan’s diplomatic network is over-stretched compared to its real capacity. Minister of Foreign Affairs Kono Taro himself admitted this in his speech to MOFA officials in the beginning of

2018 “Until now we tried to increase the number of embassies, but we have to slow down the speed and try to make each existing embassy perform more effectively.”¹¹⁴

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.” By placing emphasis on a specific value, Japan will be able to show its contribution to international security and maintain a certain level of presence without having to devote a “superpower-like” level of resources to the project. The Asian development model could provide a diplomatic asset to Japan by serving as the value that Japan can promote.

At a time when the global presence of Japan declines in economic terms, middle power diplomacy to emphasize values could play a role to raise or maintain the Japanese presence, at least in Africa. This is also in line with the shift towards “ownership” and independence in relations with Africa.

Annotation

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