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The ODA Charter and changing objectives of Japan's aid policy in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War freed donors' aid policies from the co-ordinate system of East/West competition around the world. As a result, it was no longer necessary for the United States and its allies to continue providing aid on ideological grounds and/or geo-strategic needs. In the post-Cold War era, it became necessary for donor countries to evolve new rationales to convince their sceptical publics of the continued necessity for aid. One such new rationale was the imperative of promoting democracy and good governance as a way of guaranteeing international peace and security. This article examines the Japanese response to this development by identifying the factors that led to the inauguration of the ODA Charter. Thereafter, the content and intent of the Charter is examined and its application in Sub-Saharan Africa is analysed to highlight the changing objectives of Japanese aid policy in the continent.

INTRODUCTION: JAPAN'S AID POLICY IN THE COLD WAR ERA

The two often-stated fundamental objectives of Japan's aid policy in the Cold War era were 'humanitarian and moral considerations' and 'the recognition of interdependence among nations' (MFA 1980). Two other issues often stressed, in line with these two objectives, as constituting the aim of Japan's aid programme included the 'development of developing countries' and 'support for their self-help efforts' towards economic and social development (*ibid.*). Indeed, the Japanese believed that such contributions to economic and social stability in the developing countries would help to promote cordial bilateral relations and ensure regional/global peace and stability (JIIA 1990: 63).

Inherent in these objectives were the four basic attitudinal parameters characterising Japan's aid policy since its official in-

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auguration in October 1954 when the country joined the Colombo Plan, which had been launched in 1950 to facilitate economic and technical co-operation among the member countries of the British Commonwealth. These parameters as identified by Seizaburo Sato (1977: 375) included: an intense concern with improving its international status; a deep anxiety about international isolation; a desire to conform to world trends; and an emotional commitment to Asia.

The objective of the first parameter was directed towards repairing and normalising diplomatic relations between Japan and other countries in the aftermath of the damage done to its international image during the Second World War. It was pursued by what Jun Morikawa (1997: 27–8) refers to as *Senden gaiko* or 'PR diplomacy'. Japan's dependence on the outside world for its well-being, typified by its poor natural resource base and the need for external markets, provided the basis for the second parameter.

The third parameter was dictated by Japan's desire to join the league of the big economic powers by contributing its fair share to the burden of providing assistance to the developing countries. With the rapid expansion of the country's economy in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the country became a member of the OECD in April 1964, leading to the internationalisation of its aid programme. The country's emotional attachment to Asia is best understood against the background of the post-war political imperatives of assuaging anti-Japanese feelings, deriving from the brutality of Japan's imperial army in the region during the Second World War, and promoting friendly relations with the countries of South East Asia.

There is a need to go beyond the officially stated aid policy objectives to properly understand the main objectives behind Japan's aid policy in the Cold War era. Couched, as they were, in such broad and grandiose terms as, 'international interdependence' and 'humanitarian consideration', these official objectives were no more than a subterfuge to cover up the fact that Japan's aid policy lacked any definitive objective (Wright-Neville 1991: 7). Indeed, some authors argue that there was a hidden agenda behind Japan's aid policy, which was 'to bind its clients into a grand economic embrace and to build a tight orbit of recipient states around its economy' (McNamee & Glasgall 1989: 30).

It is an indisputable fact that Japan's aid policy was primarily directed at serving two interrelated economic objectives. The first was the establishment and maintenance of friendly relations with countries/

regions that were endowed with energy and natural resources, which were indispensable to the Japanese industrial production process, with the aim of ensuring a stable supply of these resources. This was particularly the case in the aftermath of the first oil shock of 1973. The second was to secure markets for its goods. The basis of the two objectives can be found in the fact that Japan's economic prosperity is based on a pattern of trade, whereby it imports raw materials, processes them and adds value, and then exports the finished products to earn foreign exchange (JFIR 1998: 35).

Two Japanese scholars, Hirohisa Kohama and Juro Teranishi (1992), have none the less suggested that Japan's aid policy lacks a discernible objective, a development that they blamed on the various diverse factors that impinge on policy formulation. Although a cursory examination of the institutional machinery of Japan's aid policy indicates a highly centralised organisational structure with well-defined areas of responsibility, in reality the aid machinery, known as the '4+19' system of ministries (JFIR 1998: 57), is riddled with overlapping bureaucratic functions and responsibilities. In the centre of this complex machinery are three Ministries and one Extra-Ministerial Agency. These are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Finance (MOF), the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Economic Planning Agency (EPA), which is an autonomous agency within the office of the prime minister. In addition, there is the Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund, (OECF) which is in charge of ODA loan (Yen loan) management and the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), which is responsible for implementing all aspects of technical cooperation. Subsumed under these institutions are eighteen other agencies that are involved in the execution of various aid policy aspects.

It goes without saying that this unwieldy institutional machinery makes the prospect of fashioning definitive aid objectives rather complicated and difficult. Although these institutions are supposed to work harmoniously, there is a high level of inter-ministerial bureaucratic in-fighting on policy content and direction. This is especially evident between the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Finance on one hand, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the other. There are also the usual intra-ministerial struggles to gain control over the policy process, and internal departmental squabbles between globalists and regionalists, as well as between idealists and realists (Yamazawa & Hirata 1992). The possibility of the evolution of a defined aid policy objective becomes a

mirage as each of these institutions projects and articulates its own parochial interest. Consequently, the aid policy objective emanating from the intense inter- and intra-ministerial struggles can only be a compromise, which will not reflect a clear-cut position.

It is also important to note that there is a fundamental difference between the factors that influenced the emergence of Japan's aid policy towards Asia, and that towards the rest of the developing world. Japan's aid policy towards Asia was a by-product of its aggression and occupation in Asia during the Second World War. Its aid programme in the region therefore emanated from post-war reparation payments to certain Asian countries; a policy option embarked upon by Tokyo to gain acceptance into the community of Asian nations. It was from this modest beginning, amounting at the outset to only $10·6 million in 1955 at the then exchange rate, that by gradual and progressive stages the country's increasing capacity to disburse economic assistance became its most effective instrument of foreign policy. In 1991, Japan attained the position of the world's top aid donor, a position it retained in 1996 with an aid budget standing at $9·44 billion.

Thus unlike Western donor countries whose aid policy was as a result of ideological and/or geo-strategic needs, or based on neo-colonial imperatives or missionary/humanitarian considerations, economic assistance was Japan's main tool for re-establishing positive relations with the countries of Asia and for developing a general climate of friendly relations with the developing world. In return, the goodwill generated from such aid disbursements enabled Japan to repair its battered image, and to initiate and promote its trade and investment drive, especially in Asia and Africa.

It is against this background that the objective of Japan's aid programme, rather than being seen in altruistic terms, is often characterised as being imbued with a policy of 'uncompromising self interest'. As John White (1964: 18) observed, the notion of aid as an instrument for promoting global political stability and economic growth was alien to the Japanese. To him, the undisguised objective of Japanese aid policy was to promote exports, establish friendly ties with developing countries that could later be exploited, and to assert its membership of the G.7 and the OECD. In other words, aid was seen as the most important instrument for promoting national and global interests, especially in ensuring domestic economic welfare.

Apart from the economic imperative in Japan's aid policy objective, there was also the question of American influence. For example, Robert Orr (1990: 3) identifies aid as one of the 'intricate web of issues

frequently taken up by policy makers on both sides of the Pacific', with particular reference to global economic realignment and burden sharing. To be sure, Japan's participation in the June 1954 Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific derived directly from the dictates of its national interest. However, the American pressure on Japan to make contributions in defence of the 'free world', especially in Asia against perceived communist incursion into the region, may have facilitated this participation. It will be recalled that this was at a period when America's strategy was to contain the Soviet Union within the context of the Cold War.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is evident that during the Cold War period, Japan's aid policy was wholly devoted to serving three objectives. First, to complement and reinforce America's geo-strategic and ideological interest within the framework of the United States/Japan co-operative strategic aid policy (Orr 1990: 109–31). Second, it was used as an instrument for securing access to raw and mineral resources and for expanding export markets (Owoeye 1995: 9–34). Lastly, in the late 1980s, aid became the most useful diplomatic instrument for placating the African states for their rising criticism against Japan for its position as the leading trading partner to apartheid South Africa (Ampiah 1995: 117–23).

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the coordinate system of East-West competition and confrontation around the world, it became imperative for Japan to make some adjustments in its aid policy to reflect this new reality. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the end of apartheid and the inauguration of a new South Africa with black majority rule also meant that one of the main propelling factors behind Japan's aid policy, especially in the 1980s, had now become obsolete. Consequently, some discernible changes in the objective of Japan's aid policy in the sub-continent became noticeable, the most important of which was that Japan began to place less emphasis on the use of aid as a strategic and economic policy instrument. Instead, its aid policy began to focus more on poverty alleviation and meeting basic human needs.

But, more fundamentally, Tokyo began to move in the direction of using aid as an instrument for encouraging recipient countries towards adopting a more positive approach with particular reference to the promotion of democracy and good governance. The most comprehensive demonstration of this new thinking in Japan's aid policy is contained in the Four Guidelines announced by Prime Minister Kaifu

in April 1991. These policy guidelines, which in June 1992 metamorphosed into the ODA Charter by a Cabinet decision, constitute a major change and readjustment in Japan's development aid policy objective in the post-Cold War era.

THE YOSHIDA DOCTRINE AND POST-COLD WAR AID POLICY REALIGNMENT

The end of the Cold War, and most importantly the fall-out from the Gulf War, served as catalysts for this re-evaluation in Japan's aid policy objectives. Already well adjusted to the tenor and terrain of the Cold War policy framework, the dynamics of the post-Cold War international order evidently caught the country unawares. This was demonstrated by the inability of the country's political leadership to comprehend the rapid regrouping of political forces. Believing, as it were, that the Cold War would never end, they lacked an appropriate strategy for dealing with its aftermath. Thus when faced with the challenge of a New World Order, it became apparent that the dictates of the 'Yoshida Doctrine',[1] which had served the country so well in the post-war era, had become obsolete. Predictably, Japan started casting around for a new policy option to replace this long held doctrine.

However, Japan's customary low profile foreign policy and lack of policy initiative on issues affecting international peace and security hindered this process of charting a new course in foreign policy. For example, when the country was faced by the diplomatic challenge associated with the outbreak of the Gulf War in January 1991, it had no adequate policy response beyond its 'cheque-book diplomacy'; it was surprised and disappointed that its $13 billion financial contribution to the multinational coalition failed to earn it much acclaim from the international community. That the Japanese political leaders did not understand why their country had to face such a firestorm of harsh criticism in the aftermath of the Gulf War is a clear indication that they lacked an understanding of the new role that the world was demanding of Japan. Nevertheless, due to the far-reaching consequences which global changes held for its regional and international role, the country had to come to terms with the fundamental transformation in the post-Cold War international political system and react accordingly. It was from this premise that the four policy guidelines and the ODA Charter developed.

THE FOUR POLICY GUIDELINES AND THE ODA CHARTER

Arising from the end of the Cold War was the transformation of the post-Second World War international political system, which had been in place for nearly fifty years. One major consequence of this was that the advanced democracies of the West, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, introduced and elevated the two related issues of democracy and good governance into a global agenda (Diamond 1992). These is no doubt that these Western countries saw the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a triumph of democracy in the political/ideological battle of the Cold War. That they therefore began to tout the superiority of democracy over communism or any other form of governance for that matter, was indicative of their conviction that it was by promoting democracy that international peace and security could best be assured in the post-Cold War era (Diamond 1994). This consensus is evident in the declaration of the G.7 Summit of July 1989, where the need by Western donor countries to stress the importance of the value of freedom and democracy was unanimously agreed upon (JIIA 1990: 42).

As one of the staunchest members of the Western alliance, Japan needed to react and respond to the new realities and make necessary adjustments in its aid policy. It was partly in response to the consensus within the G.7 that Japan realigned its aid policy to reflect this new thinking of using aid to promote democracy and good governance. The end products of this policy realignment were the four policy guidelines and the ODA Charter, which represented a major shift in the objectives of Japan's aid policy. The most fundamental policy change can be seen in the country's new commitment towards providing support for democratisation and promoting the respect of basic human rights and the due process of law in its aid recipient states. Hitherto, Japan had not regarded the level of democracy or the human rights record of its aid recipient countries as a significant element in its aid policies. The process which culminated in this policy change will now be examined.

The first Japanese attempt to formulate a comprehensive policy response to the evolving post-Cold War order was made in April 1991. In an address to the National Diet (Parliament) on 10 April, Prime Minister Toshiku Kaifu unveiled the four guidelines of Japanese aid (JIIA 1993: 44). In the speech, the prime minister announced that the Japanese government would take into consideration the following

developments in future aid allocation and disbursement to recipient countries:

(a) trends in military spending;
(b) trends in the development of the weapons of mass destruction;
(c) trends in the export and import of weapons;
(d) efforts directed towards 'market oriented' economic reforms, democratisation and guaranteeing basic human rights.

In addition to reflecting the consensus opinion within the G.7 and OECD on democracy and good governance, an analysis of the content and context of the four policy guidelines reveals the depth of concerns within the Japanese political establishment about negative political developments in the Asian region, especially in China, Myanmar, North Korea and Indonesia. The guidelines also reflect the government's anxiety and sensibility to the growing domestic antagonism to lack of accountability in ODA management following revelations of the misuse of aid money in Indonesia and the Philippines. Furthermore, by expressing concern not only about democratisation and human rights, but also about the unrestrained arms build up in the Asian sub-region, Japan was being guided by the dictates of its national interest, derived from its fear of being dragged into regional/international conflicts.

A perceptive analysis shows that the first and second principles of the guidelines were directed specifically towards its two immediate neighbours to the West, China and North Korea, both of which produce and export missiles and weapons of mass destruction. They also helped to serve notice to India and Pakistan, two countries in Asia that were among the top recipients of Japanese aid, but were actively involved in the development of nuclear weapons and had refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Still on the military dimension, as Japan was the only country within the G.7 practising a restrictive arms export policy, it was in a position to give an appropriate riposte in the third guideline to the major arms exporting countries of Britain, the United States, France and Germany. It was also intended to serve as a warning to other arms exporting countries like Taiwan and China that were embarking on aggressive arms exports to the Middle East, a region that is of vital interest to Japan in terms of oil supply. Without doubt, the fourth guideline was directed towards countries which were not only reluctant to embark on the painful road of market liberalisation, but were also dragging their feet in following the path of democracy and good governance as prescribed by donors.

The four policy guidelines were transformed into the Official Development Assistance Charter of Japan (JODAC) by a Cabinet

decision of 30 June 1992. This made the principles contained in the Charter applicable to the aid policy process, and binding on all ministries and agencies involved in the process. It is, however, important to note that the Charter amounts to no more than an official statement of intent, lacking the force of law. If compared with laws that are backed by legislation according to Articles 41 and 59 of the Constitution, the Charter is not legally binding.[2]

Irrespective of the legal nuances surrounding the Charter, it is clear that Japan, susceptible as it is to international pressure and particularly to American influence, did not allow the issue of legality to derail the enactment of what was largely perceived by Japanese as a sound policy and in conformity with the country's national interest. It would none the less be expecting too much if the policy did not meet with legal opposition from certain quarters within the Japanese political establishment, and there are indications that the four guidelines, as well as the principles of the Charter, to large extent represent the highest level of consensus that is possible within the 'iron triangle' of power in Japanese political life.[3] Indeed, that the Cabinet adopted the Charter in spite of reservations against it from a section of the Liberal Democratic Party, as well as opposition to it from certain bureaucratic factions and some leading figures within the business community, was a major political achievement for Prime Minister Kaifu.

A cursory look at the basic principles and objectives of the Charter shows that they are directed at enhancing Japan's national and global interests. They are also designed to serve as a reference document or 'talking point' in the political dialogue between Japan and its aid recipient countries. The four essential principles of the Charter are as follows (ODA Annual Report 1994: 247–51):

(a) environmental conservation and development should be pursued in tandem;
(b) any use of ODA for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts should be avoided;
(c) full attention should be paid to trends in recipient countries' military expenditure, their development and production of mass destruction weapons and missiles, their export of arms, etc., so as to maintain and strengthen international peace and stability, and from the viewpoint that developing countries should place appropriate priorities in the allocation of their resources on their own economic and social development;
(d) full attention should be paid to efforts for promoting democratisation and introduction of a market-oriented economy, and the

situation regarding the securing of basic human rights and freedoms in the recipient country.

It should be noticed that apart from reflecting Japan's new environmental concerns, the Charter does not contain anything new or sensational when compared with the four guidelines already espoused in April 1991. In conformity with the imperatives of political conditionality, the two approaches incipient in the use of aid as an instrument of political reform were embedded into the ODA Charter. On one hand, there is the positive linkage, whereby Japan pledged to actively support and provide increased assistance to aid recipient countries that are moving in the direction of a positive democratisation process, respect for human rights and limiting military expenditure. On the other hand, there is the negative linkage, whereby Japan makes it clear that aid to recipient countries that run foul of any or a combination of the four principles would be reviewed. This review may take the form of either delaying or suspending assistance to such countries.

It is instructive to note that the Charter is completely silent on the specific measures that would be employed in the enforcement procedure. Also lacking in the Charter is a clear articulation of the degree of human rights violations, truncation of the democratic process, abridgement of fundamental rights and level of military spending that would trigger off enforcement action. In this regard, if the Charter is contrasted with the Resolution on Human Rights, Democracy and Development of the European Union (Press Release 9555/91), and other EU procedures (ACP-EU Courier No 155, 1996), it can be defined as an ambiguous document. This is especially evident when the level of its vagueness and the subtle attempt to build a discretionary latitude for implementation into it is considered. Particularly evident in the document is the attempt by the Japanese government to stress the positive linkage rather than the negative linkage as its policy instrument. It is likely that the emphasis on the positive linkage was in response to the groundswell of opposition from the business community and bureaucrats to the use of negative linkages, especially in Asia.

In spite of the great consensus building efforts put into its formulation and eventual adoption by the Cabinet, the Charter still attracted scathing criticism from politicians, the business and academic community, and bureaucrats. For example, it was reported that powerful ministerial bureaucrats opposed the Charter on the ground that it severely limited their 'large scope of action', and that they dem-

onstrated this by dragging their feet on its application (FOJ 1997: 74). With respect to the application of the negative linkage in the Charter in Asia, some leading members of the Liberal Democratic Party made it known that this will not mean that, 'Japan will start to twist arms and aggressively intervene on behalf of democracy' (Kingston 1993: 48). It was perhaps in reaction to these criticisms that Prime Minister Kaifu remarked that it should be understood that the Charter is an admonition for countries benefiting from Japan's aid to assume a more 'acceptable behaviour' (Tagaki 1995: 108).

By far the most caustic criticisms against the ODA Charter were those made by Junji Nakagawa (JAIL 1993), who labelled it as 'dictatorial interference' and 'illegal intervention' in the domestic affairs of aid recipient countries. Despite these scathing remarks, Nakagawa endorsed the Charter as being 'politically correct' with the argument that by introducing it, Japan has moved towards the use of its aid policy as a means to universalise such values as peace, democracy and human rights. This was through its attempt at checking unrestrained militarisation, especially in the Asian sub-region, as well as by promoting democracy, securing human rights protection, and pushing for market liberalisation in its aid recipient countries.

If taken together, it is clear that the Japanese government is seeking to pursue a dual policy objective with the four policy guidelines and the ODA Charter. For the first time, the country made a conscious effort to bring the interpretation of its democracy and human rights policy in line with that of other Western countries and particularly of the G.7 members. Previously, it had refrained from taking negative action against countries accused of egregious violations of human rights and/or truncation of democracy by cloaking itself in the provisions of Article 2.7 of the United Nations Charter, which prohibits external intervention in the domestic jurisdiction of member states. This had notably been the case in dealing with China and Indonesia following the massacres in Tienanmen Square and in East Timor respectively, and with Thailand and Myanmar following the military coups in both countries. In order to justify the change in its hitherto very restrictive interpretation of Article 2.7, the twin issues of human rights and democratisation were taken out of the realm of matters that are purely within a country's internal affairs, and expanded into that of universal values. In the new thinking, human rights and democratisation were seen as the basis for world peace and security, and therefore as the legitimate concern of the international community.

Second, and most important, by establishing a linkage between its

aid policy and security interests in Asia, the country was seeking to send a message to the Asian countries about the consequences of unrestrained arms races and military spending. This was at a time when the countries of Southeast Asia were continuing with their military build-up and armament programmes, as if the global trend towards reduced armaments was not applicable to the region. Now, with the enunciation of the principles of the ODA Charter, it became clear that Japan's new perception of comprehensive security was being reflected in its aid policy, and that this policy was being transformed into an instrument for exercising political leverage. Indeed, the four guidelines and the principles of the ODA Charter represent an attempt to define this concept of comprehensive security beyond the traditional confines of Japanese/American military cooperation in Asia to other parts of the developing world.

It is evident that in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Japan had begun to define the concept beyond the military sense of security in Asia and the narrow interpretation of its global economic security. It was expanded to include political stability and economic development in the developing countries, as well as its application to trends in military expenditure and arms transfers. In the emergent policy, it is clear that more emphasis was being placed on global rather than regional peace and security. This was born out of the realisation that the country's own well-being and its position as a leading participant in the global economy was based on the inviolability of free trade as the corner stone of international economic relations. It is in this respect that the ODA Charter can be described as a unique document, because it provides an insight into the intricate dynamics of Japan's national interest. Apart from this, it enunciated, for the first time, clear-cut criteria on which Japan's aid allocation and disbursement would be based, and against which the aid policy could be measured and analysed.

THE APPLICATION OF THE ODA CHARTER IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In order to understand the context within which the principles of the ODA Charter have been applied in Sub-Sahara Africa, there is a need to properly situate Japan's aid policy towards the sub-continent. For example, it has been argued that Japan's engagement in the sub-continent is mostly in fulfilment of its obligations within the United

States–Japan strategic aid plan (Inukai 1993: 253). While there is some truth in this argument, Japan's African aid policy was not totally born out of the exigencies of the Cold War, neither was it based on altruism. At its inauguration, Japan's aid policy was also designed to serve the country's exclusive national interest as an economic instrument to gain procurement access to mineral resources and expand export markets. Although by the mid-1980s it had become quite evident from a cost–benefit analysis that Japan could not be said to have any significant economic interests in Sub-Saharan Africa, aid had become the main diplomatic tool for attenuating criticism against its expanding trade relations with apartheid South Africa.[4]

In addition, there was the physical and psychological barrier in the Japanese conceptualisation of Africa. Physically, Africa is regarded as a far-off continent with which Japan has no historical ties, and where in real terms most Japanese cannot easily identify their country's national interest. In psychological terms, most Japanese still see Africa with a jaundiced eye, underlined by the stigma of the slave trade and the exploits of colonialism. In the post-colonial period, Japanese perceptions of Africa were first dominated by the conventional stereotyped image of an 'uncivilised continent', and later as a 'starving continent', characterised by hunger and famine with frequent occurrence of natural and self-inflicted disasters (Sato 1994: 105).

It was perhaps as a result of the realisation of the lack of an easily identifiable and cogent national interest on which to base its aid policy in Sub-Saharan Africa from the 1980s that Tokyo began to emphasise humanitarian/moral considerations and global interdependence. With the absence of a domestic factor on which to base an activist aid policy in Sub-Saharan Africa, it was again based on the dictates of the US–Japan strategic aid plan that Japan embarked on a quantitative expansion of its aid policy beyond its traditional Asian base. What is important to note here is that, in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan coupled with the effort to contain the Iran–Iraq war from spreading to other parts of the Middle East, there was increased American engagement in both regions. It became imperative for Japan to take over some of the global burden of the United States by providing more assistance to the countries of Africa and Latin America (JFIR 1998: 39).

By 1985, Japan had begun to put into place policies in fulfilment of its obligations under the cooperative strategic aid plan, although it must be mentioned that Tokyo's receptiveness to the idea of increased assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa was also at the request and behest of

the Bretton Woods institutions (*Africa Confidential* 1989: 5). This was a period when a succession of conservative governments around the world were following various neo-classical economic approaches, and savagely cutting back on both bilateral and multilateral aid and launching frontal attacks on multilateral institutions. Consequently, Japan became the only country in a position to offer a substantial financial contribution to the Special Programme for Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa. This was a financial window specially created to enable the Bretton Woods institutions to deal more effectively with the enormity of the economic crisis in the continent.

Among the positive strategies adopted by Japan was to readjust the volume of the various components of its aid to the sub-continent. Consequently, there was an increase in the volume of grant and technical aid assistance, as well as in the level of Yen loans. The first concrete step in this direction was that it embarked on a programme of extending about US$500 million in non-project grant aid in support of the structural adjustment efforts of the Sub-Saharan African states (JIIA 1990: 59–60). Second, it embarked on a conscious policy of substantially increasing the volume of ODA loan aid flow to the sub-continent. For example, in 1987, out of the total Japanese ODA loans of US$7·037 billion, only US$290 million, or 4·1 per cent, was disbursed to Sub-Saharan Africa. By 1988, due to its contribution to the World Bank's Special Program for Africa and syndicated loans involving international financial institutions, the volume of ODA loans to the sub-continent had increased to US$972 million, that is, 8·7 per cent of the total US$11·156 billion ODA loans (*ibid.*). This was apart from an increase in the number of Sub-Saharan African states eligible for its debt relief measures for least developed countries from six to fifteen.

Thus, in the 1980s, Japan aid policy in the sub-continent was directed exclusively towards serving two main objectives. It became an instrument for promoting positive political relations both within the context of the Cold War and for enhancing bilateral relations, as well as for damage control purposes with reference to Japan's expanding economic relations with apartheid South Africa. In other words, Japan's aid policy in Sub-Saharan Africa became the main instrument for pursuing both broader Western objectives and narrow Japanese interests.

In the immediate post-Cold War period, the orientation of Japan's aid policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa points to its becoming a component of Tokyo's effort to globalise its foreign policy. The

TABLE 1
Japan and the application of political conditionality in Sub-Saharan Africa

Date	Country	Measures taken	Subject	Approach
1991	Benin	Increase in aid	DEM	Positive
1991	Cameroon	Increase in aid	DEM	Positive
1991	Zaire	Aid suspension	HR/DEM	Negative
1991	Kenya	Expression of concern	HR/DEM	Negative
1992	Zambia	Increase in aid	ME/DEM	Positive
1992	Malawi	Aid suspension	HR	Negative
1992	Sudan	Aid suspension	HR	Negative
1993	Zimbabwe	Expression of concern	HR	Negative
1993	Ethiopia	Increase in aid	HR/DEM	Positive
1993	Sierra Leone	Aid suspension	HR/DEM	Negative
1993	Kenya	Aid resumption	HR/DEM	Positive
1993	Sierra Leone	Aid resumption	HR/DEM	Positive
1994	Ghana	Increase in aid	DEM	Positive
1994	Gambia	Aid suspension	HR/DEM	Negative
1994	Malawi	Aid resumption	HR/DEM	Positive
1994	Nigeria	Aid suspension	DEM	Negative
1994	South Africa	Commencement of aid	HR/DEM	Positive
1995	Gambia	Expression of concern	HR/DEM	Negative
1996	Niger	Expression of concern	DEM	Negative

Abbreviations: HR = Human Rights; DEM = Democracy; ME = Market Economy.
Source: Compiled from Japan's ODA Annual Reports 1990–1997.

country's desire to seek a more active political role in world affairs, commensurate with its economic capability, demands that the focus of attention be expanded beyond Asia. As the top aid donor since 1991, it is also evident that the country is using its expanded development assistance programme as an instrument of achieving this objective. The success of this strategy can be seen in the increasing Japanese clout within the multilateral financial institutions, as well as in the level of its agenda-setting influence on development issues, especially within the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Currently, Japan is the fourth largest donor to Sub-Saharan Africa after France, the United States and Germany, accounting for about 10 per cent of all DAC aid flow to the continent, with about 80 per cent of its assistance being provided in the form of grant and technical aid (MFA 1996). In 1990, it was the top, second and third leading donor to three, four and seven states respectively. The assumption therefore was that Japan was one donor country which was well placed to exert some influence on the course of political and economic change in Sub-Saharan Africa.

An examination of Japan's aid policy in Sub-Saharan Africa as shown in Table 1 reveals a case by case, carrot-and-stick approach in the application of the principles of the ODA Charter. As can be seen in Table 2, showing the volume of aid flow from Japan to individual Sub-Saharan African states between 1990 and 1996, in conformity with the negative approach, which meant that assistance to countries deemed to be in breach of the Charter would be reviewed, negative actions in the form of expressing concern and aid suspension were taken against some countries, for example Kenya (1991), Sudan (1992), Nigeria (1993), Zimbabwe (1993) and Gambia (1995). Even so, a look at the figures for Japan's aid disbursements to these countries (except Nigeria) reveals variations in annual volume that sometimes make it difficult to see the overall effect of such sanctions. Other countries where the negative principles of the ODA Charter were invoked include Malawi and Sudan in May and October 1992 respectively, Sierra Leone in May 1993, and Gambia in July 1994. Earlier, in 1991, aid was suspended to Liberia and Zaire, largely because of the deteriorating security conditions in both countries rather than as sanctions. The decision to suspend aid is usually taken after holding necessary consultations. It is after the failure to resolve the contentious issues at stake within the framework of appropriate policy dialogues that enforcement actions are taken.

On the other hand, as can also be seen in Table 2, the positive approach, which meant increased assistance to countries that had made demonstrable efforts in adhering to the principles of the Charter, has likewise been taken. Example of such countries include Benin (1991), Cameroon (1991), Ethiopia (1993), Ghana (1994), Madagascar (1991, 1993), Tanzania (from 1991), Zambia (1991, 1993) and South Africa (1994). These are countries which are perceived by donors to be taking positive steps towards implementing desired political reforms aimed at expanding the democratic space by abandonment of one-party authoritarianism.

One fact that is evident in the examination of the political reform process in most of these states is that there is no empirical evidence to suggest that Japan's role was particularly decisive in exerting pressure to force regimes in its top aid recipient countries towards embarking on positive political reforms. Indeed, in response to a questionnaire sent to ambassadors from Sub-Saharan African states with Missions in Tokyo in January 1998, most of the respondents strongly disagreed that Japan's role and influence was a determinant factor in their country's political reform process. Using the example of Kenya and Nigeria, it is

TABLE 2

Japan's bilateral ODA (grant and technical aid only) to Sub-Saharan African states, 1990–1996, in million US$

	Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
1	Angola	0·01	0·09	3·00	0·11	0·12	0·12	5·17
2	Benin	2·89	11·60	5·40	16·97	11·37	12·28	27·45
3	Botswana	0·59	1·27	0·27	1·68	3·04	3·72	4·26
4	Burkina-Faso	1·74	4·35	9·30	6·88	11·82	6·66	14·85
5	Burundi	7·42	8·37	8·98	8·21	7·42	4·14	1·01
6	Cameroon	4·18	15·97	9·39	10·31	9·18	3·16	5·52
7	CAR	8·04	8·35	20·21	14·27	10·43	49·80	30·61
8	Cape Verde	–	4·94	9·16	9·39	2·96	2·25	3·64
9	Chad	0·01	–	0·06	0·11	0·17	0·17	0·29
10	Comoros	4·33	3·06	2·85	5·56	1·64	4·26	0·31
11	Congo	0·38	3·26	1·92	2·40	0·38	0·30	0·18
12	Côte D'Ivoire	20·00	27·66	12·00	36·40	20·40	47·07	56·37
13	Djibouti	5·81	9·99	6·28	5·67	17·96	28·15	17·89
14	Eritrea	–	–	–	–	0·06	0·66	2·01
15	Ethiopia	11·23	17·64	10·50	47·64	43·89	62·49	50·15
16	Equit. Guinea	0·71	1·00	1·49	1·33	1·32	0·77	0·23
17	Gabon	0·14	0·42	0·54	0·54	0·23	0·26	0·24
18	Gambia	6·44	4·01	5·08	12·73	11·50	2·29	0·10
19	Ghana	28·80	36·84	22·34	33·53	53·36	37·01	36·98
20	Guinea	7·69	20·03	24·59	19·39	23·27	40·16	18·30
21	Guinea Bissau	3·07	2·85	2·70	6·51	3·66	11·42	10·88
22	Kenya	75·52	48·01	57·69	57·06	78·08	93·77	76·12
23	Lesotho	0·75	0·83	1·65	0·13	1·38	1·80	7·91
24	Liberia	6·42	0·55	0·20	0·05	0·03	–	–
25	Madagascar	14·52	34·87	16·47	48·91	33·81	30·01	47·52
26	Malawi	16·69	18·45	25·79	26·29	28·79	51·04	41·08
27	Mali	8·98	9·45	9·98	9·09	22·31	28·21	12·51
28	Mauritania	3·20	9·04	8·13	25·81	24·81	36·25	24·84
29	Mauritius	7·09	4·41	1·67	0·86	1·22	8·30	4·22
30	Mozambique	17·47	16·42	39·84	20·18	44·70	41·26	32·17
31	Namibia	0·19	1·52	6·13	14·28	9·78	20·84	4·74
32	Niger	29·40	28·11	22·55	29·17	43·39	22·03	8·03
33	Nigeria	27·19	19·59	50·42	15·03	9·87	6·96	1·63
34	Rwanda	11·36	9·21	16·81	14·30	16·47	1·50	0·55
35	S. Tome & Principe	2·54	1·10	1·03	6·26	3·17	2·33	2·22
36	Senegal	60·05	25·30	46·17	35·60	76·05	67·52	58·66
37	Seychelles	0·81	3·66	2·25	0·88	0·86	5·45	0·96
38	Sierra Leone	5·97	0·88	3·84	4·10	10·66	3·62	0·85
39	Somalia	8·52	1·53	0·15	0·18	–	0·02	0·01
40	South Africa	0·15	0·40	1·05	1·80	3·09	4·34	7·30
41	Sudan	38·94	51·02	27·44	15·22	20·60	21·19	18·64
42	Swaziland	0·09	2·42	3·29	3·33	7·13	5·59	10·22
43	Tanzania	43·40	56·10	79·33	99·60	106·67	125·87	109·49
44	Togo	2·35	8·80	1·91	3·48	1·74	0·68	2·23
45	Uganda	9·47	14·92	14·57	11·03	35·29	23·91	26·90
46	Zaire	18·20	21·02	4·78	0·51	4·45	5·38	4·53
47	Zambia	40·11	61·02	73·68	68·94	87·35	62·04	48·27
48	Zimbabwe	17·95	31·01	42·28	22·92	25·29	67·12	45·02
	Total	580·81	661·34	715·16	774·64	931·17	1054·17	883·06

Source: Japan's ODA Annual Reports 1990–1997.

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evident that Japan is not in a stronger position *vis-à-vis* other donors in using its aid to promote political liberalisation in its top aid recipient countries. In spite of the fact that Japan was the top donor to Nigeria in 1990 and 1992 and has remained the top donor to Kenya since 1991, it cannot be regarded as one of the dominant countries capable of positively influencing political development in either country.

Rather, it was how to respond to the diplomatic pressure from Washington, Ottawa, the Nordic countries and the European Union that occupied central stage in the foreign and domestic policies of the Nigerian and Kenyan governments. In other words, these two states did not feel threatened by the possibility of aid sanctions from Japan. It is safe to assume that in their diplomatic calculations they did not consider Japan as being in a strong position to pressurise them towards undertaking internal political change.

There is also evidence to suggest a pusillanimous attitude towards Africa within Japan's aid bureaucracy in the application of the principles of the ODA Charter. This is discernible in the rather impotent attitude within official circles, both at the level of government officials and in the aid implementing agencies, in applying sanctions in a proactive way. The common reason to explain and defend this position is that Africa is still a remote and unfamiliar policy terrain at best. Consequently, the tendency is that policy outputs towards the continent are subjected and attuned to the whims and caprices of the United States and of Western European countries, rather than being independently conceived. To shield itself from direct criticism and untoward diplomatic pressure from the African states for taking negative policy measures, Japan has developed the diplomatic practice of attributing all negative policy taken against any country in the sub-continent to its membership of the Western alliance and particularly of the G.7. Again, this is evident in Japan's dealings with Kenya and Nigeria. This position is reflected in the following contrasting statements by the Japanese and American ambassadors to Nigeria. On the one hand, Mr Takahisa Sasaki attributed Japan's decision to impose sanctions on Nigeria as a fall-out from its membership of the G.7, which agreed to ban economic ties with Nigeria because of the annulled 12 June 1993 presidential elections (*Post Express* (Lagos) 29.1.1998). On the other, Mr William Twaddell stated that the imposition of sanctions on Nigeria was dictated by an official policy of the United States, which prohibits development aid to countries where the democratic course has been abused (*Post Express* 30.1.1998).

In both countries, Tokyo was slow in reacting to events, despite its

declared determination to apply the ODA Charter appropriately in countries where the democratisation process is stalled and/or the government is accused of egregious human rights violations. In the case of Kenya, Japan only decided to act after mounting domestic and international criticism. It decided in November 1991 to postpone its balance of payment support assistance to the country. This was at a time when the Kenyan government was waging a war of attrition against opposition forces and defying both internal and external pressure to open up the democratic space by revoking the one party political structure. Even then, the duration of sanctions was short lived, because, by March 1993, Japan had resumed its aid programme in Kenya.

This was after President Moi had implemented some cosmetic political changes by holding multiparty elections on an uneven political playing field between his political party and those of the opposition. That Tokyo's action against the Moi government only took the form of a refusal to announce the amount of newly committed aid is attributed to Kenya's economic and geo-strategic importance to the Western powers. However, when it is considered that the United States was among the donor countries exerting pressure on the Kenyan government, this claim is seen to be spurious. In fact, the United States did suspend aid to Kenya, despite the presence of an American military base at Mombasa as part of its military strategy in the Indian Ocean for protecting vital sea lanes used for oil imports from the Middle East.

Regarding Nigeria, the presidential election was annulled in June 1993 and the country returned to full-blown military dictatorship in November 1993. But Japan did not take any step to suspend its assistance to the country until March 1994. This was after other donor countries had imposed one form of sanction or another on the military regime. It is, however, in Nigeria that Japan demonstrated that the ODA Charter was worth more than mere intentions. As a leading oil producer with demonstrable economic potential,[5] and one with some diplomatic influence in Sub-Saharan Africa, conventional wisdom suggests that Japan would not do anything to antagonise the country openly. It is therefore a little difficult to speculate on why Japan chose to use the country as a test case to demonstrate the credibility of the ODA Charter. Evidently, neither Japan's economic interest nor its search for resource security came into play in the decision to impose an all-embracing aid sanction against Nigeria. Nor does the argument that Japan did not want to break ranks with the other Western powers

within the donors consultative forum, which were also applying aid sanctions against Nigeria, fully explain this issue.

Indications are that the invocation of the negative principles of the ODA Charter against Nigeria was a reflection of the on-going bureaucratic struggle for the control of ODA policy between the globalists and the regionalists, as well as between the realists and the idealists. Besides, unlike South Africa which has a very strong lobby in Japan, or Kenya to which some bureaucrats have sentimental attachments, or even Malawi where a large number of Japan Overseas Corps of Volunteers (JOCV) members have served, Nigeria does not evoke any sentiment or passion within the Japanese political establishment (interview, Ambassador Kurokochi 1998). It was therefore easy to keep the sanction policy in place, as no group was interested in pushing for a review.

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This study has attempted to identify and examine the changes that have occurred in the objectives of Japan's aid policy. The effect of these changing objectives on Japan's aid policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa has then been highlighted and discussed. It is argued that at its inauguration in October 1954, when within the ambit of the Colombo Plan Japan provided about $10·6 million to finance its technical cooperation with the Asian countries, the main objective of the policy was to seek good neighbourliness in Asia. By 1964, with Japan's attainment of full membership in OECD, aid became its most potent foreign policy instrument, not only for pursuing its national and global interests in terms of resource security and opening up of export markets, but also for promoting friendly relations with the countries of the developing world.

Within the context of the Cold War, Japan's aid policy was to some extent influenced by American demands within the US–Japan cooperative strategic aid plan. Nevertheless, it was also modified to reflect changes that occurred in the international political system. This change in the objective focus of Japan's aid policy is particularly evident after the end of the Cold War. With the inauguration of the four policy guidelines in April 1991 and the enactment of the ODA Charter in June 1992, a change in Japan's attitude concerning the policy of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of its aid recipient countries became noticeable. By the principles of the ODA Charter,

Japan committed itself to linking its aid to political conditions, and tacitly began to use it to support democracy and good governance, as well as to promote respect for human rights, protect the environment, and support market liberalisation. Indeed, the ODA Charter represents a major attempt by Japan to stop placing an exclusive premium on economic issues, and emphasise such non-economic values as civil and political rights.

In pursuance of the positive and negative approaches inherent in the application of the ODA Charter, Japan has increased or suspended its aid programmes in various Sub-Saharan African states, depending on their adherence to the principles of the Charter. Of course, it can be argued that Tokyo can afford to do this because of its very limited economic interests in Sub-Saharan Africa. It can indeed be inferred from the manner in which the principles of the ODA Charter have been applied in the sub-continent that Japan is sometimes willing to sacrifice its economic interests to gain political credibility for the Charter. We may therefore conclude that the objective focus of Japan's aid policy in the continent has shifted from the pursuit of economic prosperity to the search for political influence concomitant to its economic superpower status.

NOTES

1 The dictates of the 'Yoshida Doctrine' emphasised economic reconstruction and growth, minimal defence spending, and close cooperation with the United States. The doctrine never contemplated the end of the Cold War, nor did it envisage the demise of the Soviet Union as a superpower or the meteoric rise of China as an important actor in the international political system.

2 Article 42 stipulates: 'The Diet shall be the highest organ of state power, and shall be the sole law-making organ of the State', and Article 59 specifies that for a bill to become law, it must be passed by the Diet. The Charter did not go before the Diet neither was it debated and passed by the Diet.

3 This refers to the caucus of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the top bureaucrats and the leaders of the business community. See Miura (1998).

4 By 1986, Japan had become South Africa's foremost trading partner, eliciting wide international condemnation.

5 Crude oil accounts for 91·9 per cent of total Nigerian exports to Japan, while the cumulative value of Japanese investment in the country as at 1996 stood at US$169 million. Total Nigerian exports to Japan amounted to US$165·6 million and imports from Japan to US$309·7 million.

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