

Help the Poor, Help Ourselves

Merging Individual and Collective Interests in the Official Discourse on Japanese ODA since 2000

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Abstract Japanese ODA has attracted much attention in the last three decades. This paper aims to shed light on the intellectual evolution of the official discourse on Japanese ODA based on the analysis of two main 'modes of thought' at the foundation of it, namely national interest and international affiliation. Based on a detailed content analysis of official documents and public debates, the paper will take the role of institutional actors – Japanese political leaders, foreign ministers and intellectuals – into consideration. The role of such “entrepreneurs” has been crucial for shaping the current official discourse on Japanese foreign aid. The paper will argue, in fact, that the official discourse is a juxtaposition of two clashing ideas carefully shaped to enlarge the consensus (both domestic and external) toward the Japanese government's policies.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Historical Evolution of Japanese ODA and its 'human turn' – 3 Japan's ODA in the New Millennium: Two Opposed Visions Merged Together. – 4 Conclusion.

Keywords Japanese foreign aid. International development. Ideas. Discourse. Public policy. Sociology of knowledge.



1 Introduction

In the last fifty years, Japanese Official development assistance (or Overseas Development Assistance, ODA) has undergone several transformations. Guiding concepts and philosophies have been transformed too in this process of evolution. How have they been integrated in one single discourse?

The main argument of this paper will be that these changes were the result of both external and internal structural factors (i.e., the emergence of new dominant philosophies in the field of international development and changes in the Government of Japan's policy priorities). At the same time, these changes were brought about because of the action of “intellectual entrepreneurs” (cf. Schmidt 2008) pushing forward their agenda born out of a specific social context and supported by a network of individuals with a certain degree of influence in the policymaking arena. These factors have affected the emergence of two 'modes of thought', i.e.,

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two manners of interpreting the scope and target of economic cooperation (Mannheim 1936). These two ideational 'poles' guiding aid-giving within the Japanese government are the concept of national interest (*kokueki*) and affiliation with the international community (*tsukiai*).

The basic assumption is that "agents and structures are mutually constituted or codetermined entities" (Wendt 1987, 350). In other words, it will be argued that the emergence of certain intellectual entrepreneurs and their ideas cannot be explained if not in terms of the appearance of certain ideas and discourses at a systemic level (i.e., institutional, national, and international). At the same time, systems exist and reproduce because of the actions and interactions of agents (cf. Wendt 1987).

This paper aims to identify ideational clashes and juxtapositions in the official discourse on Japanese ODA, and related relevant actors who have contributed to shaping it. Therefore, a corpus of official documents and public speeches by these actors has been assembled. This corpus is mostly constituted by ministerial statements, policy papers and transcriptions of parliamentary debates. Subsequently, a thematic analysis of the collected textual data has been carried out. Themes have been identified after several readings revealing of both the superficial and deep contents of the texts. In a following phase, the key-themes have been sorted out through software-guided labelling and triangulation with the existing literature and other relevant official documents.

In the first part of the paper, Japanese ODA will be historically contextualised. Its character as both a humanitarian and a strategic-diplomatic policy will be stressed. At the same time, it will be underscored that ODA has always represented the interests of diverse stakeholders, both public (ministries, implementing agencies) and private (companies), each of which with different "horizons of action" (cf. Mori 1995).

In the second section of the paper, the focus will shift on how the official discourse on ODA has evolved since the early 2000s. The role of prominent intellectual entrepreneurs will be illustrated. Former JICA President Ogata Sadako, former minister of Foreign Affairs Kawaguchi Yoriko and current Prime Minister Abe Shinzō were chosen, among other Japanese intellectuals and policymakers, as representative of a specific mode of thought (either bureaucratic/conservative or liberal/humanitarian) and of a specific contribution made to the discourse on ODA in a specific historical context. Concurrently, their ideas about ODA, intended as both cognitive and normative entities (cf. Schmidt 2008, 307), will be analysed.

In light of these facts, the last part of the paper will provide a discussion of the 2003 and 2015 reviews of Japan's Charter. Both amendments were aimed at promoting a paradigm change in terms of the relationship between donor and recipient, advocating for an equal relation rather than one of dependence of the latter on the first. But at the same time

both reviews have stressed the importance of protecting Japan's national interest while giving aid.¹

2 The Historical Evolution of Japanese ODA and its 'human turn'

Since the early postwar period, ODA has been for Japanese governments the most important instrument of foreign policy. First, ODA has been a key element of the Japanese *nemawashi* - "going around the roots" - diplomacy, made of quiet and mostly behind-the-scenes negotiations (Hook et al. 2013, 80). Especially in the 1990s, members of the international community accused the Japanese government of using its ODA merely for commercial reasons, giving birth to the expression checkbook diplomacy.

In the last three decades, scholars of Japanese Official development assistance (ODA) have discussed in depth the particularities of the Japanese ODA. Historically, ODA has been subjected to internal and external forces (i.e., business interests, foreign diplomacy, and international politics). In other words, two broad ideas of national interest (*kokueki*) and international affiliation (*tsukiai*) have come to the fore (Arase 1994, 2005; Hasegawa 1975; Hook, Zhang 1998; Mori 1995; Söderberg 1996; Alesina, Dollar 2000; Ampiah 1998; Katada 2005; Asplund, Söderberg 2017).²

From a quantitative point of view, the percentage of Japanese GNI (gross national income) allocated to international cooperation has slightly changed since 1960, from a maximum 0,34 (1984) to a minimum 0,17 (2012).³ Figure 1 summarises the historical evolution of Japan's ODA. The red-dotted line represents Japan, while the black-dotted line represents the average of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries.

1 Since the Abe administration came to power in late 2012, the Government of Japan (GOJ) has promoted a more proactive foreign policy. Representing a conservative political majority, the Abe administration has been keen to reassess the importance of the *kokueki* factor in international politics. In addition, facing the emergence of new Asian donors, it has been keen on 'marketing' the Japanese approach to development. This attempt to reform clearly appears from the lexical choice used by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Japanese: with a 2015 cabinet decision the GOJ has reviewed the 2003 ODA Charter and renamed it *kokusai kyōryoku taikō* (Charter on international cooperation) rather than *kokusai kaihatsu enjo taikō* (literally Charter on international development assistance) (cf. MOFA 2015c).

2 See Hasegawa 1975: *The Objectives of Foreign Aid: Japanese Aid for Domestic Prosperity and International Ascendancy*. These two words acquire significance when we consider the scope of Japanese ODA in the 1970s.

3 The 2012 data is the lowest excluding the 0,14 percent registered in 1964.

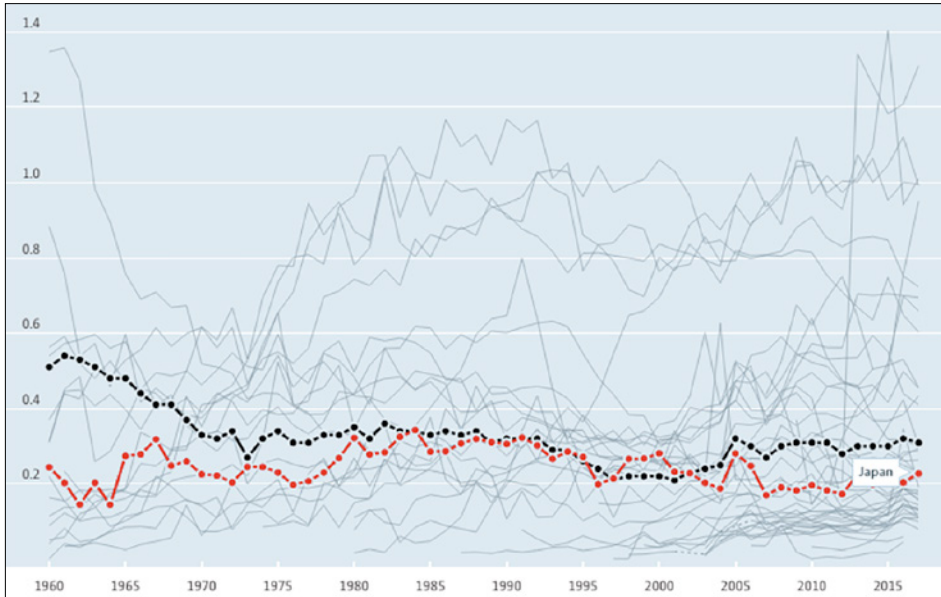


Figure 1. Japan ODA evolution (1960-2017) (Source: OECD-DAC)

In the 1960s, the allocation of funds to international cooperation gained an economic significance.⁴ The top recipients of Japanese ODA were Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and Malaysia. Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke viewed ODA as a tool to secure “as many raw materials as possible, and sell manufactured goods overseas” (Sato 2013, 14).⁵

Under the Ikeda administration, in 1964, Japan entered the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as the first Asian country to be accepted in a Euro-American institution. This diplomatic success gave Ikeda the possibility to put Japan on a different position in the East-Asian frame of political and economic relationships. In those years,

4 The Japanese effort in international assistance might also be explained in terms of the obligation (*giri*, in Japanese) that the country’s political leadership felt toward the international community for the economic assistance received in the early postwar. Upon joining the World Bank (WB) in 1952, in fact Japan had received a number of loans to rebuild the country’s economic foundations and infrastructures (cf. WB 2016). The country’s policymakers were eager to show the country’s readiness to repay such a debt helping other countries in need (cf. Furuoka, Oishi, Kato 2010, § 2.1).

5 The words were pronounced before a Budget committee of the House of Representatives in 1960 (cf. Sato 2013).

the “Flying Geese Paradigm” (*gankō keitai*) gained popularity.⁶ In 1967, Japan graduated from the WB status of borrower. Assistance policies in this early period were centred around loan-based infrastructural aid and trade promotion.

Especially in the mid-1970s, after the conclusion of the Vietnam War, Japanese ODA gained a specific strategic significance: with the retreat of the US military presence in the region and among the tensions between China and Russia for the influence in the area, Japan was tasked with the maintenance of peace and stability. Given the constitutional constraints on the use of military forces abroad, such a task could be performed mainly through diplomatic and economic means (Lam 2013, 164).⁷

Between the 1970s and the 1980s, through aid loans, the GOJ built a *de facto* yen-based regional economy. On the one hand, this was a concerted strategy between Tokyo and Washington of ‘burden sharing’ to stabilise Asia and balance the trade deficit the US had accumulated with Japan before 1985 (Islam 1991b, 196).

On the other, until the mid-1980s, yen-loans became a major tool of economic advance as the yen appreciated against the dollar after the 1985 Plaza Accord (Arase 2006, 101). Yen-loans were instrumental in the creation of a Japan-led regional financial arrangement based on export-driven economy (Jessop, Sum 2006a, 190-1). Up until recent years, much of Japan’s cooperation fund has been given to recipient countries in form of loans. In the GOJ’s rhetoric, loans contribute to the recipient’s ownership

6 This economic model was described by the Japanese economist Akamatsu Kaname (1962). According to it, industrial development was the leading force of economic development. A less industrialised country has to import industries and productive methods from other more industrialised countries in order to catch up with them on the path of development. In the mid 1960s and 1970s, prominent political and academic figures such as the then Foreign Minister Okita Saburō and Hitotsubashi University economist Kojima Kiyoshi took inspiration from the paradigm to formulate their policies and proposals regarding a new and peaceful Asian regional integration.

7 Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution of Japan states as follows: “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized”. After World War II, Japan virtually renounce to maintain any form of military force (cf. Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet (Kantei) 1946-47). This article is currently at the centre of the political debate. The current Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) government led by PM Abe Shinzō plans to reform Art. 9 in order to allow the SDF to act as a full-fledged army. However, it might be argued that Art. 9 was in principle renounced a few years later, in 1954, when the Japanese Self-Defense Forces were established with the duty of protecting the country’s “peace and sovereignty”, preserving the country’s “security”, and, when necessary, maintaining the public order. The SDF were also tasked with contributing to the peace and security of the international community within the activities of the United Nations (Jieitai hō, Shōwa 29 [1954], June 9, Law No. 165; URL http://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/search/elawsSearch/elaws_search/lsg0500/detail?lawId=329AC0000000165&openerCode=1 [2018-06-12]).

of the development projects, to the recipient's self-help effort (*jijo doryoku*) and autonomy (*jishusei*), and to the promotion of South-South cooperation (Katō 1980; King, McGrath 2004; Sasuga 2007). However, this situation undeniably favoured Japanese businesses striving to secure supplies of raw materials and markets for their products and services.

The private sector had a major stake in ODA. Until the late 1990s, most of Japanese ODA loans were in fact tied, that is to be used on procurements to Japanese companies (Katada 2005, 6). Arase (1994) analyses the coordination between business federations, such as Keidanren, and economic ministries, such as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), now the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI); and agencies, such as the Economic Planning Agency (EPA, now part of METI) in aid-giving. He maintains that these actors favoured a "reorientation" of Japanese ODA since the mid-1980s: in the context of rising production costs in Japan, manufacturers started looking for opportunities of investment in developing countries (where wages and production costs were lower) in order to keep their competitiveness (Arase 1994, 172-3).

In this context, in 1989, Japan emerged as the world's top donor. The Japanese mercantilist approach to development assistance and the low ratio of ODA against GDP (0.2 against the fixed rate of 0.7 %) became the object of criticism from the international community and particularly from the US. Japan was accused of being an international "free rider" profiting from Washington's military protection to recreate a co-prosperity sphere in Asia by means of foreign aid (Islam 1993, 321-2).

The GOJ's practices as a donor however came under scrutiny in the early 1990s. In that period, the poor results of neoliberal programs based on market reforms and structural adjustment implemented by IFIs in order to curb poverty in the Third World were evident (cf. Ferguson 1990). A new paradigm of "inclusive neoliberalism" emerged, based on "social policy, infrastructure, governance reforms and conflict management" along with the traditional focus on growth and privatizations (Hickey 2012, 683-4). Within the United Nations a new view of development emerged. In 1990, the United Nations Development Program published its first Human Development Report stressing the importance of a paradigmatic change in international development policies (UNDP 1990, 1). Development needed to be seen not exclusively in terms of GNP growth or capital accumulation. The new vision stressed the importance of expanding the range of "choices" and improving "human capabilities" in education and health (UNDP 1990, 3).

In this new climate, the GOJ established its view of development. Criticising WB and IMF (International Monetary Fund) policies, in 1991 the Office Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) – a division of the Minister of Finance – published an occasional paper critical of the IMF and WB's policies and called for a reevaluation of the role of the state in a country's economic development (Katada 2005; Wade 1996). One of

the reasons leading to such a reform, was the fear of economic instability spreading outside the formerly socialist bloc. In fact, the fall of the Soviet Union required an action by the rest of the international community toward integration of the formerly collectivist economies in the global neo-liberal economy (Craig, Porter 2004, 64).

A new form of development assistance based not only on economic transfers, but on the transfer of knowledge, know-how, and institutional arrangements, took form at the international society's level and Japan adapted to it. "Peer pressure" by other OECD countries eventually led the GOJ to conform to other donor's practices and multilateral institutions guidelines and curb the image of Japanese diplomacy as based only on mercantilist considerations (Katada 2005, 7).⁸ In response to such criticism, in 1992 the GOJ approved a series of regulations on ODA, the ODA Charter (MOFA 2003a). The document was conceived by the GOJ in order to improve Japan's image in the donors' community promoting regularity and transparency (Arase 1994, 195). In addition, the document stressed the importance of human rights, basic freedoms, and environmental conservation. However, the 1992 ODA Charter did not have a relevant impact on the overall aid allocation process which lacked coherence, transparency, accountability, and efficiency (Kawai, Takagi 2001, 13; Arase 2005, 271). Moreover, even if enshrined in the Charter, the provision of "software aid" was burdened with the lack of preparedness of Japanese development officials and by the rigid bureaucratic structure of the GOJ's aid sector (Fujisaki et al. 1997, 538).

Even after the 2008 reform of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), now the only ODA implementing agency, and other reforms inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Japan's ODA has been in fact a highly institutionalised and bureaucratised process involving slightly less than a dozen ministries and agencies. As stressed by Mori (1995), the result of this institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of ODA has been the subjugation of policymaking, of which the MOFA is in charge, to the different "horizons of action" of other actors involved and to the power relations in place among them (Mori 1995, 10).⁹

8 In retrospect, such criticism against Japan was only partially justified: the US, for instance, were giving nearly double the tied aid that Japan gave to its recipients. Japan's ratio of tied aid in the 1980s was also under the DAC average (Islam 1993, 345). In addition, in 1990, Japan allocated to foreign aid the equivalent of the 0,3% of its GNP against the 0,19 of the US. Furthermore, the percentage of grant aid (0,27) was also higher than that of the US (0,19).

9 On the one hand, the MOFA has acted to uniform its ODA to the international standards set by international organisation such as OECD; on the other, he saw in institutional actors such as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) two more conservative forces: the first trying to lobby lawmakers for a more strategic use of international cooperation apt to serve Japanese companies' interests abroad; the latter, acting as the 'control tower' of the country's economic policy, pulling the 'brakes' on a possible uncontrolled expansion of ODA budgets (cf. Pempel 1982; Shimizu 2015).

In the mid-1990s, the GOJ was urged by experts in Japan and outside to make its ODA process more transparent and more 'humanitarian' in scope. In addition, internal scandals involving MOFA bureaucrats, and international events as the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York contributed to the reshaping of Japanese foreign aid. The case of misappropriation of ODA funds by an LDP lawmaker, and allegations of development cooperation funds misuse in the early 2002 spurred further reform in the Ministry, and in the overall GOJ's aid policies, leading to drastic budget cuts to Japan's development assistance (cf. Arase 2005, 271; Hatakeyama, Freedman 2010, 354; Jain 2014).

The 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami caused a drop in the GOJ's allocations to ODA. Under the Abe government the ratio of ODA/GNI has returned on a growing trend given the renovated importance attached to this policy by the LDP administration. In 2015, the Japanese government approved a Charter revision (MOFA 2015c), allowing the allocation of ODA funds to security-related areas, previously not included in the framework of international cooperation (see *infra*).

3 Japan's ODA in the New Millennium: Two Opposed Visions Merged Together

After giving an overview of the historical evolution of Japan's ODA since the early postwar, in this section, the two guiding principles of ODA policymaking in Japan will be discussed in further detail. The scope of this paper is in fact not only to present the evolution of the guiding modes of thought in Japanese ODA with regards to facts that might be identified as structural (for instance, changes in the larger international context). The role of certain individuals, that, drawing upon Schmidt (2008) might be described as intellectual entrepreneurs. These are defined as "catalysts for change as they draw on and articulate the ideas of discursive communities and coalitions" (Schmidt 2008, 310).

Naturally, a comprehensive discussion of all those who have contributed to the discursive and intellectual evolution of the Japanese ODA is not possible here. For the scope of this research the analysis will focus on the evolution of the discourse on Japanese ODA since the early 2000s until 2015. Therefore, three representative figures will be analysed: namely, former JICA president Ogata Sadako, former Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yuriko, current Prime Minister Abe Shinzō and former Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio.

The former, notably two women, were the most important actors behind the first ODA sector reform initiated in the early 2000s after a series of bribery and corruption scandals. Ogata, former special envoy to the United Nations (UN) can be considered one of the strongest advocates in Japan of

a liberal/humanitarian and internationalised idea of human-centred foreign aid. Abe and Kishida can be instead identified with the *raison d'état* guiding ODA policymaking in Japan. Both were and are high ranking members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the major conservative force in contemporary Japanese politics. The analysis of these individuals' position in the context of the ODA discourse will lead then to consider how different and sometimes conflicting modes of thought can be integrated and provide the intellectual basis for the official discourse on ODA.

3.1 Ogata Sadako and the Alignment of Japanese Aid

The revision of the ODA Charter (MOFA 2015c), on the one hand, reflected the peer pressure from the OECD/DAC donors' community favouring an expansion of Japanese ODA to geographical areas other than Asia where Japanese interests were limited (Katada 2005, 7). On the other, roughly coincided the end of Japan as number one in foreign aid.

The 2003 Charter's 'vision', which brought together global (the fight against global poverty, and terrorism, the need for good governance, etc.) and national concerns (accountability, transparency), was a natural consequence of the scandals involving the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and the ODA bureaucracy which led to the sacking of the then Foreign Minister Tanaka Makiko by Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō.¹⁰

The year 2003 was a crucial moment for the evolution of the Japanese "aid philosophy". An important role was played by Former UNHCR Commissioner Ogata Sadako. Ogata, a US-educated official, became the agency's president in October 2003 after an extensive experience at the UN.¹¹

¹⁰ For a more detailed account of the Suzuki scandal, cf. Berkofsky 2002, Jain 2014 and Hara 2008.

¹¹ After her studies in English Literature at the University of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo, Ogata got an M.A. in International Relations at Georgetown University in 1953, and 10 years after, a Ph.D. in Political Science at Berkeley University. She entered the UN in the late 1970's when she was appointed Minister at the Japanese Mission at the UN and afterwards she was Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN. In the 1980s she was appointed as Representative of Japan on the UN Commission on Human Rights, and worked as Human Rights expert on Myanmar. She also served in the UNICEF executive board. Ogata served as UN High Commissioner for Refugees from 1991 to 2000. She is the only woman ever to hold the post. In 2001, she was elected Co-chair of the Commission on Human Security along with Indian economist and Nobel Prize Amartya Sen. In the same year, Ogata was appointed by the GOJ as special representative of the Prime Minister of Japan on Afghanistan Assistance. She also made contributions in academia, as Associate Professor of International Relations at the International Christian University, University of the Sacred Heart, and Sophia University in Tokyo. In the 1980's she served as Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Sophia University. See the Biography of Mrs. Sadako Ogata at <http://www.un.org/News/dh/hlpanel/ogata-bio.htm> (2018-06-12).

The new president promoted a new approach to development assistance, based, among the others, on the concept of human security. At the same time, Ogata sponsored a rationalisation of the Japanese international aid sector. The guiding principles of her presidency were put forward in her 2003 inaugural address: more attention was to be given to the *gemba*, the field of action for aid practitioners, i.e., the recipient country and its population.

In this occasion, JICA will radically revise its organisation and tasks in order to respond to the Japanese people's expectations and to deal rapidly with the needs of the developing countries on common issues affecting the international community. Concretely, with the promotion of a radical change in our officials' awareness of their work, we will promote a reform focusing on the four pillars of result-oriented action and efficiency; transparency and accountability; people's participation and peacebuilding. Our work will be founded on a recipient-centred approach [*gembashugi*]: we will as always prioritize the necessities [*kankaku*, lit. "perceptions"] of those on the field [*gemba*], and their voices will be reflected in our action [*gemba no koe*]. At the same time, we will contribute to the social and economic development of developing countries including in our action the philosophy of human security which focuses on societies and peoples. (Ogata 2003; Author's translation)

JICA は、この機会に、より国民の期待に応え、国際社会の共通の課題や途上国のニーズに迅速に対応できるよう、これまでの組織・業務のあり方を抜本的に見直します。具体的には、職員の意識改革を行い、成果重視・効率性・透明性・説明責任、国民参加、及び平和構築支援の4つの柱に重点を置いた改革を進めてまいります。仕事では「現場主義」を基本とし、常に現場の感覚を大切にし、現場の声を反映しながら事業を運営するとともに、社会や国民に焦点を当てた「人間の安全保障」の考え方を踏まえて、途上国の社会経済の発展に貢献してまいります

In much the same spirit, in a 2006 speech, Ogata announced a JICA reorganisation that would take effect in 2008, expressing her conviction that the new organisational structure and tasks, resulting from the merger of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)'s overseas operations division into JICA, could improve Japanese aid giving on a global level.

According to Ogata,

Our world is increasingly interlinked. Borders are no longer barriers to transnational crime, terrorism, or even diseases such as SARS. In such an environment, ODA is more important than ever. Assisting developing and poor countries are requirements for building a prosperous global

community [...]. More comprehensive planning will be possible through simplified and quick decision making [...] This, in turn, will result in a more integrated and efficient foreign assistance program that can better address the needs of developing nations. (JICA 2006)

On the other hand, domestic dynamics were also decisive in shaping a new ODA framework in Japan. As Mori (1995) argues, different ministerial actors are involved in drafting the GOJ's aid policies.

3.2 Kawaguchi Yoriko and the Reappraisal of “national interest” in Japan's Foreign Aid

The 2003 ODA Charter was supervised by Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko.¹² An US-educated former WB economist and Ministry of International Trade and Industry official, Kawaguchi took over the post at the head of MOFA the previous year at the end of a troubled period for Japanese diplomacy discredited by a series of scandals in the early 2000s. Given her position as successor to the scandal-hit Tanaka Makiko, her approach to international cooperation, and foreign affairs in general, had to be more bureaucratic and practical. Moreover, as a career government official and member of the dominant Liberal-democratic Party, her approach had to be consistent with the government's: with the statements hereby analysed, she appears to counterbalance the prevalently humanitarian vision of the newly elected JICA president.

As the newly appointed Minister argued during a question time in the National Diet, one of the greatest result the Japanese post-war diplomacy has achieved is Japanese 'independence'. This has yielded positive results for the international community and for Japan itself. In turn, Japan has been able to choose its path toward the realisation of its “national interest” being identified with Japan's own peace and prosperity. One way has been to forge an alliance with the US; the other to harmonise its policies with that of the (Euro-American) international community. Both elements have contributed sensibly to Japan's recovery and economic growth after World War II. These two pillars of Japanese foreign policy have also allowed Japan to proactively make its contribution on a global scale. In fact,

It is crucial that the world is peaceful and develops consequently, for Japan has a national interest in the fact that the world is peaceful, secure and developed, just for being dependent on other countries. For this

¹² Kawaguchi is a long-serving LDP official in charge of environmental issues and foreign affairs. She is also an academic: she holds a professorship at the Meiji Institute for Global Affairs and serves as an Executive Advisor to the Sasakawa Foundation Peace Foundation.

reason, its cooperation with the international community is extremely important.¹³

日本は世界が平和であって、安全、発展をしているということに日本の国益を持っている国であるわけですから、それだけ日本は世界のほかの国々に依存をしているわけですし、世界が平和であって発展をしていくということが重要である。そのために、日本は国際協調ということを非常に重要なこととして考えているわけです。

Against this background, Minister Kawaguchi went on asserting the necessity of an unprecedented endeavour by the Japanese diplomacy in order to secure a stable, peaceful and prosperous global order. On the one hand Japan needed to further strengthen its cooperation with neighbouring countries, such as those in Southeast Asia. Then, it needed to remain engaged in different peace-building initiatives in Asia, such as in Sri Lanka, East Timor and Afghanistan, making its contribution to the peace process. According to Foreign Minister Kawaguchi, Japan also needed to cooperate with other international partners on issues like the nuclear non-proliferation, with regards to North Korea and Iran.

Furthermore, Japan needed also to take the lead in revitalising Iraq after the 2003 US military campaign. According to Kawaguchi, foreign policy is an integral part of the culture and mentality of country that produces it. A good result is achieved when diplomacy is capable to enhance, and, at the same time, been enhanced by, feelings of “pride” and “belonging” in fellow countrymen.

[...] I agree that diplomacy and the Japanese psyche are two connected factors. I already said that the protection of peace and prosperity is part of the national interest. The encouragement and pride toward Japan of the Japanese people is in fact one component supporting and sustaining diplomacy. At the same time, they are the product of a good diplomacy. I believe that this does not concern exclusively diplomacy. The life-style of each one of us, our education, our personal security, the pride for our culture: in other words, these are all factors that combined will build up a sense of self-esteem and self-respect in the Japanese people. This is the spirit that guide our foreign policy and is its driving force. The results of a good policy ought to be found in that relation and it needs to be further promoted.¹⁴

¹³ See 159th Diet Session, House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Commission, 6th meeting, March 12, 2004, 37/141.

¹⁴ See 159th Diet Session, House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Commission, 6th meeting, March 12, 2004, 87/141. Author's translation.

外交が日本の精神とかかわっていくものであるというのは全くそのとおりだと思います。平和と繁栄の確保が国益であるというふうに申し上げましたけれども、日本人精神の高揚あるいは日本人の国に対しての誇りといったようなもの、これは一つは外交を支持するもの、サポートするものであると思いますし、同時に、いい外交の結果生まれるものでもあるというふうに思います。それからまた、これは外交だけとかかわり合いを持っているわけではない、一人一人の生き方、教育ですとか生活の安定ですとか、あるいは文化に対する誇りですとか、そういったいろいろなこと全部が合わさって、我が国の要するに日本人の自信あるいは自尊心、そういったことをつくり上げていくということで、それが外交の背景にあって外交をサポートするものであるというふうに私は思います。そしてまた、いい外交の結果、それがさらにはぐくまれる、そういった関係にあるというふうに私は考えております。

3.3 The 2003 ODA Charter as a Juxtaposition of “modes of thought”

The cabinet decision revising the ODA Charter recognised the GOJ's endeavour side by side with the international community in tackling global issues, such as poverty, human security, conflict prevention, and new global 'threats' such as terrorism. The document recognised that in tackling these issues, ODA could guarantee a “benefit” (*rieki*) to Japan as well, specifically in forging positive diplomatic and economic relations. In fact,

As one of the world's major actors, Japan is determined to use proactively its ODA to take measures to solve these issues. Tackling these issues would benefit our country too, in different ways, broadly speaking, increasing friendly relationships and exchanges with every country, and strengthening our role in the international arena. In addition, Japan, which is highly dependent on foreign countries for the supply of raw materials, energy and food, will enjoy the favor of international trade while deepening its relation of mutual dependency with its recipients, and will contribute proactively to their security and development through its ODA. For Japan, which aspires to peace, making the Japanese presence felt both domestically and internationally proactively tackling these issues through ODA, is the most suitable policy to gain the sympathy of the international community. Therefore, from now on ODA should play an always greater role. (MOFA 2003b; Author's transl.)

我が国は、世界の主要国の一つとして、ODAを積極的に活用し、これらの問題に率先して取り組む決意である。こうした取組は、ひいては各国との友好関係や人の交流の増進、国際場裡における我が国の立場の強化など、我が国自身にも様々な形で利益をもたらすものである。さらに、相互依存関係が深まる中で、国際貿易の恩恵を享受し、資源・エネルギー、食料などを海外に大きく依存する我が国

としては、ODAを通じて開発途上国の安定と発展に積極的に貢献する。このことは、我が国の安全と繁栄を確保し、国民の利益を増進することに深く結びついている。特に我が国と密接な関係を有するアジア諸国との経済的な連携、様々な交流の活発化を図ることは不可欠である。平和を希求する我が国にとって、ODAを通じてこれらの取組を積極的に展開し、我が国の姿勢を内外に示していくことは、国際社会の共感を得られる最もふさわしい政策であり、ODAは今後とも大きな役割を担っていくべきである。

Aiming at their resolution, the GOJ identified the following guidelines:

1. Self-help (*jijo doryoku*): ODA should be aimed at fostering good governance, developing human resources, a legal system, and the foundation of an economic system, respecting the recipient's 'ownership' of the development process and its specific growth strategy.
2. Human security: ODA should be aimed at cooperating with developing countries in preventing conflicts, natural disasters, and epidemics, empowering local communities through human resource development. Not only this would contribute to the protection of individuals, but it would also make them strengthen their abilities to respond to such crises.
3. Equality: ODA should take into account the situation of the poor and the powerless and tackle income inequalities on a local base. Specifically, its initiatives should improve women's participation in their societies.
4. Export of Japanese experience and expertise: ODA should be based on the Japanese development experience. In other words, Japanese high-level technologies, know-hows, and high-skilled human resources must be deployed in accordance to the requests of the recipient.
5. Harmony with the international community: GOJ's ODA should be harmonised with the development goals set by the major international organisations. Cooperation must be sought with other subjects as NGOs and private enterprises (MOFA 2003a).

As a result, a new ODA vision emerged. On the one hand, it reflected an international discourse on human development, human security and empowerment that had been promoted by the United Nations since the early 1990s, and by the WB in the late 1990s. On the other, even if not too explicitly, the MOFA recognised the importance to preserve national interest in its foreign policy (*kokueki*).

3.4 The Abe Administration and Its “proactive” Approach to Foreign Aid: the 2015 Revision of the Charter

In February 2015, the Abe administration provided a new revision of the document regulating Japan’s international cooperation (MOFA 2015a). The decision was taken by the government in the broader context of the “proactive contribution to peace” launched by the Abe administration in 2013. Since the inception of its second mandate as prime minister, Abe has pledged to reinvigorate the country’s foreign policy, which, according to the LDP leader, was frustrated under the DPJ (Abe 2013a, 246). In his essay “For a Beautiful Country”, citing the example of Yokota Megumi, a Japanese girl abducted to North Korea in 1977, Abe denounces the inability of the Japanese post-war system to protect its own citizens against foreign threats (Abe 2013a, 252-3). Abe hints at the article 9 of the 1947 constitution, which bars Japan from having a full-fledged army. Even if he does not specifically refer to Japanese international cooperation, the spirit of Abe’s words indicated a stronger focus on security issues in comparison with previous administrations.

The cabinet’s policy paper underscores the role of ODA in securing Japan’s peace and security. In addition, it stresses the importance of an “evolution” of the policy in order for Japan to become an equal partner of developing countries and to help the international community to solve important issues. One of the most apparent feature of the new cabinet decision is the shift from the use of the expression *kaihatsu enjo* (literarily: aid for development) to *kaihatsu kyōryoku* (literarily: cooperation for development).¹⁵

Though the wording of the 2015 cabinet decision on ODA puts great emphasis on the needs of the recipient countries in terms of economic and social development, human security, good governance and democracy, as in the previous revision, the national interest aspects are evident. In the premises of the document it is stated that international cooperation with both prominent members of the international community and developing countries is “essential” for Japan in order to “secure its national interests”. Further, the document reads:

Japan will promote development cooperation in order to contribute more proactively to the peace, stability and prosperity of the international community. Such cooperation will also lead to ensuring Japan’s national

¹⁵ In fact, this is not a new feature of the GOJ’s discourse on ODA. As Jain (2014) maintains, the emphasis on ‘cooperation’ rather than on ‘assistance’ has been relevant since 1980s in the Japanese aid discourse and it may indicate a sort of “reciprocity” of the donor-recipient relations. However, the GOJ’s decision to change the name of the policy might indicate a further ideational and discursive shift toward presenting donor-recipient relations as equal.

interests such as maintaining its peace and security, achieving further prosperity, realizing an international environment that provides stability, transparency and predictability, and maintaining and protecting an international order based on universal values. (MOFA 2015a, 3)

The reason for such an emphasis is to be found in the recognition by Japanese policymakers that the international system has undergone profound changes in the last two decades. Interdependency among national economies, technological innovation and growing influence of supranational non-state actors play a fundamental role in today's international system. At the same time, risks and threats have multiplied.

Environmental issues, natural disasters, food shortages and famines, energy issues, infectious diseases, international terrorism, organised crime, and piracy, political instability, economic crises, ethnic divisions and civil wars – especially whether they have a regional configuration –, are increasingly transboundary phenomena: they might originate in one country but can affect other countries if not the entire international community. In this situation, no country, reads the document, can defend itself on its own against such global threats and challenges.

Therefore, the most important challenge for Japan is to provide assistance in order to secure the building of “stable foundations” for development in the recipient countries. That is, contributing to a) peace building; b) to the implementation of the rule of law; c) to the creation of a transparent, accountable and inclusive governance; d) to democratisation and reduction of the gender gap; and d) to the construction and management of a solid economic infrastructure (MOFA 2015a, 2). This view is consistent with the ODA guiding principle of *jijo doryoku*, or self-help. However, the most relevant aspect of the revised Chapter is its recognition of ODA in the security and para-military areas.

Japan will also provide assistance to enhance capacities in developing countries such as: the capacity of law enforcement authorities including capabilities to ensure maritime safety; the capacity of security authorities including capabilities to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime including drug trafficking and trafficking in persons; and the capacity of developing countries in relation to global commons such as seas, outer space, and cyberspace. (MOFA 2015a)

Before 2015, specific security issues were not included in the ODA Charter. Under the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government (2009-2012), foreign aid was considered instrumental to realising “peace and prosperity” across the globe and to “living in harmony” with the international society (Ohno 2013, 78-9). This principle was reflected in the attempt by the DPJ government to get NGOs, private business and the general public more

involved in international cooperation and in the decision-making process. Though maintaining a generally liberal-humanitarian approach to international cooperation, in the 2009 ODA Review, the DPJ also affirmed the importance of preserving Japan's "national interest", that, however, had to be "enlightened" (78-9).

However, the vision of the national interest emerging in the 2015 Cabinet decision on the Development Cooperation Charter is based on a definition established in 2013 by the GOJ. According to the definition offered by the cabinet secretariat (CAS) in 2013, Japanese national interest is

To protect Japan's national sovereignty, its territorial autonomy, the protection of Japanese citizens' livelihoods and assets, the support of national culture and traditions and the maintenance of the country's peace and security. [...] It is to realize the prosperity of the nation and its people through the strengthening of free trade towards the creation of a stable, transparent and sustainable international environment. (CAS 2013; Author's translation)

Lastly, national interest relates to

the universal values of respect for freedom, democracy, rule of law and the maintenance and protection of an international system based on [international] rules. (CAS 2013; Author's translation)

In other words, GOJ policymakers seem to see national interest and international (or worldwide) interest as two mutually dependent concepts. This principle is further elaborated in the 2015 *Diplomatic Bluebook*. It is in the mutual interest of Japan and the international community to work on common "interests" such as maintaining security, peacekeeping and peace building in former war zones (for instance, through an enhanced participation of Japanese troops in international missions); fighting international terrorism (for example, the Islamic State); working on disarmament and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, strengthening the role of the United Nations; promoting the rule of law, in order to facilitate the settlement of disputes; promoting human rights and women inclusion in societies around the world (cf. MOFA 2015b, 175-8).¹⁶

Another important feature of the 2015 document is the emphasis on the promotion of "quality growth". As mentioned above, the GOJ aims at building through aid the economic and institutional foundations of economic growth in developing countries. In order to provide a kind of aid that fits

¹⁶ See MOFA 2015b, ch. 3 "Japan's Foreign Policy to Promote National and Worldwide Interests". <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000106463.pdf> (2018-06-12).

into this category, the Cabinet decision underscores three broad guiding principles, drawn upon Japan's own experience in the post-war reconstruction: inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience.

In order to resolve the poverty issue in a sustainable manner, it is essential to achieve economic growth through human resources development, infrastructure development and establishment of regulations and institutions as well as the growth of the private sector enabled by the aforementioned actions, which are aimed at a self-reliant growth of developing countries. However, such growth should not be merely quantitative in nature, given that some of the countries that have achieved a measure of economic growth face challenges such as widening disparities, sustainability issues, inadequate social development, and political and economic instability. Rather, it should be "quality growth". Such growth is inclusive in that the fruits of growth are shared within society as a whole, leaving no one behind. It is

sustainable over generations in terms of consideration to, among other aspects, harmony with the environment, sustained socioeconomic growth, and addressing global warming. And it is resilient, able to withstand and recover from economic crises, natural disasters and other shocks. These are some of the challenges Japan has tackled in its post-war history. Japan will take advantage of its own experience, expertise and technology as well as lessons learned in order to provide assistance to realize "quality growth" and poverty eradication through such growth. (MOFA 2015a, 5)

The Cabinet decision underlines security issues that were not included in the 2003 Charter revision. In order for the recipient countries to "help themselves", in fact, developing countries should be able to preserve their nation's peace and security. These are in turn considered the "prerequisites for nation-building and development" (MOFA 2015a, 6). For this reason, Japan intends to take steps to enhance its developing partners' law enforcement and surveillance capabilities, particularly with regards to maritime security. In other words, the 2015 Cabinet decision allows the GOJ to provide aid for basically military purposes (McGrath 2015; Jain 2016). In conclusion, since 2015, it has been clear that the GOJ foreign aid ideational framework has been framed on the basis of the idea of the "Proactive Contribution". This is presented in official documents as a duty that Japan has facing the expectations of the international community which, in turn, has given Japan "respect and confidence" (MOFA 2015a, 3). In other words, pledging an increased effort in the international arena, the GOJ seems to be looking for a "legitimation" of its possible new role from the international community.

3.5 Quality Aid for Quality Growth

The discourse on “quality growth” resonates with the one of “quality aid” which has been discussed by the country’s scholars and experts and promoted by Prime Minister Abe Shinzō since his comeback to power in late 2012. For example, Kurosaki and Ōtsuka (2015) have underlined the necessity for Japan to achieve a transition toward “quality” in aid. Japan does not need to retain its position as a “big donor”, rather, it has to become a model of “smart donor” exporting its know-how, technical assistance and technology accordingly to the needs of the recipient countries. The basic argument of many of the articles collected in the edited book is that in the twenty-first century, Japan will not be able to get back to the top of the world’s largest donor. The US primacy appears to be unreachable. However, Japan might still have a say in the global development industry exerting a sort of intellectual leadership drawing upon its own experience as a developing country in the immediate postwar.

This point was already developed in 2005 by the then Japanese Foreign Minister Asō Tarō who defined Japan a “trailblazer” and therefore a model for emerging Asian countries (Asō 2005).

At the 21st International Conference on the Future of Asia in May 2015 that Japan will continue to pursue its aim of making “all-out efforts” for the peace and prosperity in Asia reminding the audience of the crucial role of Japanese assistance to Asia since the 1950s. On the one hand, Abe pledged a more proactive role in Asia, including in security matters, implicitly recognising possible threats to the peace and stability of the region.

On the other, Japan’s Prime Minister pointed at the importance of the country’s outward economic strategy, reassessing its position as a regional donor and a leading economy since the early postwar period. In his address, Prime Minister Abe stressed a change of paradigm in Asia-Japan relations. The Japanese leader in fact admitted that Asia was “no longer a recipient of assistance”, rather a “partner for growth” (Abe 2015). However, in Abe’s words, Japan seems to retain a privileged position. His invitation to the audience – head of states and political and business leaders from East and Southeast Asia – to “be innovative” appears to be a call to embrace the Japanese model and learn the Japanese lesson.

What appears clear is that Prime Minister Abe tries to depict a Japanese-influenced “way of operation” that might lead to solving emerging problems in Asian countries.

We now stand at a historical crossroads. What future awaits us beyond Asian growth? Unfortunately, it will not necessarily be only good news. Failure to meet the continuously expanding demand for energy will put the brakes on our high rate of growth. And even in Asia, the wave of a graying population is about to surge. As a result, Asia must be innova-

tive. We must use innovation to confront the issues that lie in store for us. [...]. Whether a blessing or a curse, Japan has grappled with the problem of energy constraints for many years as an island nation having only scarce resources. Having begun to face the issue of an aging population quite early on, we have also improved our medical services. Japan intends to share those technologies and experiences openly with other Asian nations. Moreover, I would like to bring about further innovation by working together, through the amalgamation of young minds from around Asia. (Abe 2015)

Cooperation between Japan and Asia is seen as the way to pursue new economic growth based on innovation and quality. Further in his address, Prime Minister Abe might be suggesting that quality growth can be possible also with “quality aid” from Japan. In its concluding part, Prime Minister Abe’s address could also be interpreted as a form of “advertisement” for Japanese aid being praised as a “quality creator” wherever it had been allocated (Abe 2015).

Creating quality. That is the Japanese way of operating. More than half a century ago, in Indonesia, there was a project to prevent flooding, to tap water for agricultural land, and create electricity through hydropower. Japan supported the development of the Brantas river for more than 30 years. [...] Assistance from Japan is not one-sided. The Japanese live under the same roof as the local engineers, and they think and move forward together. Rather than simply bringing Japan’s technologies into a country, we foster the people there and make the technologies well-established. This is how Japan operates. [...] Asia, with its ongoing dynamic growth, is no longer a recipient of assistance. It is instead our partner for growth. In this Asia, it is also a partner generating innovation. That’s exactly why I believe that the Japanese way of operation is now much more suited to the Asian countries than ever. We create quality. And we think together and move forward together with the people of Asia. (Abe 2015)

In his address, PM Abe has underscored the fact that Japanese aid has had a crucial role in promoting innovation across the Asian continent. This innovation has also been applied in order to reduce the risk of natural disasters. In a period in which the rhetoric of the “knowledge-based society” has become dominant (cf. Jessop 2008), Abe seems to underline the importance of aid in creating knowledge and innovation. On the other hand, he seems to appeal his audience to beware of donors that, contrary to Japan, are not keen on creating quality and keep the distance from their recipient. PM Abe make use of powerful images of Japanese officials working side by side local engineers on ODA projects. In this way, he reinvigorates one of the features of Japanese ODA: the heart-to-heart

cooperation. The stress on concepts like the “togetherness” of Japan and Asia, and vice-versa, the “Asianness” of Japan, is particularly telling of the attempt that the GOJ is willing to make in order to build positive relations with governments across Asia in a period of diplomatic competition with other regional powers like China.

4 Conclusion

In this article, the intellectual evolution of Japanese ODA has been analysed. In the first section, the intellectual evolution of Japanese ODA has been put in the context of changes at a broader level, namely the field of international aid. After Japan was devastated in World War II, the country received loans for the reconstruction from the US and the WB. In 1954, Japan agreed to disburse war reparations to countries in Asia. In the GOJ official discourse, the decision was taken based on the perception of a duty to repay the international community for the assistance received in the early postwar.

More practical and immediate necessities were however playing a crucial role: Japan needed to ensure a sufficient supply of raw materials for its industries, and, to do this, it needed to restore its national image, at a time when all over Asia the dreadful memories of the Japanese wartime aggression were still alive. In other words, Japan had to integrate into the new global order founded on the US-led liberal international community. Later on, aid has assumed different connotations: most importantly in the 1970s the Japanese leadership came to see it as a strategic tool to ensure comprehensive national security. A dichotomy is here visible: on the one hand, aid was an instrument through which Japan declared its affiliation to the US-Western bloc. On the other, given the constraints of the postwar constitution on the dispatch of troops outside the country, it saw in aid a means to protect its interests abroad and advance its political status in the international arena. A turning point happened at the end of the 1980s when Japan emerged as the world's number one aid donor. The retreat of the US whose policymakers started attaching less importance to aid as a diplomatic tool in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union was crucial in Japan's rise. Japanese aid-giving policies attracted much more attention than before and were often criticised for their ‘mercantilist’ orientation.

According to some authors, peer pressure, especially in the 1990s and early 2000s, was a decisive factor contributing to change. At the same time, the arrival of catalyst figures such as Ogata Sadako in decision-making positions in the Japanese aid giving institutional chain has accelerated the process of reform and the integration of ‘new’ ideas into the official discourse on ODA. If on the one hand the liberal/humanitarian idea has contributed to the formation of the contemporary official discourse on ODA in Japan, a preeminent role has been played by the bureaucratic/con-

servative idea. The emergence of conservative intellectual entrepreneurs as PM Abe Shinzō has favoured a periodical reassessment of the idea of national interest over international affiliation. As a result, the two ideas, apparently conflicting, appears to be juxtaposed in the official discourse. In conclusion, it might be said that this juxtaposition enables policymakers to promote one idea without totally renouncing the other, therefore, attracting a larger consensus – in the case of foreign aid both at the domestic and at the external level) – toward their action.

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