

**Japan as „Thought Leader“**  
The Japanese Grant Scholarship for Human Resource Development and its  
implications in Vietnam and transitional economies in Asia

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## **Abstract**

### **English**

The study sheds light on contemporary Japan-Vietnam relations from the point of view of a specific cooperation program: the “Japanese Grant Aid for Human Development Scholarship” (JDS), a scholarship program included in the vast range of Japanese foreign aid initiatives in developing Asia. The JDS programme, started in 2000, offers training in areas like law, economics and public administration to young state officials and future leaders from developing countries in Central, South and Southeast Asia and Africa, in public and private universities in Japan. It is argued that also through the JDS, Japan has reshaped its regional relations, in particular with a number of Southeast Asian nations.

The present study aid relations between the Southeast Asian country and Japan from 2000 to 2015 are presented. The study aims to shed light on an apparent discursive ambiguity of today’s Japanese foreign policy. It is assumed that aid initiatives in human resource development, have been discursively conceptualised by the different actors participating in Japanese official development assistance (ODA). Instead of looking at the concept of development as a single discursive apparatus, this research looks at how different discourses and “styles of thought” interact between donor/recipient country, donor/other donors and even among different donor’s agencies. These styles of thought have been assessed through qualitative interviews and documentary analysis. It is argued, in sum, that an interplay of considerations such as Japan’s “national interest”, Japan’s affiliation to the international society and humanitarianism have shaped Japanese knowledge-based aid since 2000. National interest, however, still appears to be the strongest drive in aid disbursement.

## **German**

Die vorliegende Arbeit behandelt die Beziehungen zwischen Japan und Vietnam unter dem Gesichtspunkt eines spezifischen Kooperationsprogramms: des "Japanese Grant Aid for Human Development Scholarship" (JDS); ein Stipendienprogramm, das in den zahlreichen japanischen Entwicklungshilfe-Initiativen in Entwicklungsländern Asiens enthalten ist. Das JDS-Programm, das im Jahr 2000 gestartet wurde, bietet jungen Staatsbeamten und zukünftigen Führungskräften aus Entwicklungsländern in Zentral-, Süd- und Südostasien sowie Afrika Weiterbildungsmöglichkeiten in Bereichen wie Recht, Wirtschaft und Staatsverwaltung an öffentlichen und privaten Universitäten in Japan. Es wird argumentiert, dass Japan auch durch die JDS seine regionalen Beziehungen, insbesondere mit einigen Nationen Südostasiens, neugestaltet hat. Aus diesem Grund werden in der vorliegenden Studie die Hilfsbeziehungen zwischen dem südostasiatischen Land und Japan von 2000 bis 2015 dargestellt. Die ausgewählte Fallstudie zeigt eine diskursive Ambiguität der heutigen japanischen Außenpolitik auf.

Es wird argumentiert, dass Hilfsinitiativen Japans für die Humanressourcenentwicklung von den verschiedenen Akteuren der öffentlichen Entwicklungshilfe diskursiv konzipiert wurden. Anstatt das Konzept der Entwicklung als einen einzigen diskursiven Apparat zu analysieren, untersucht diese Forschungsarbeit, wie unterschiedliche Diskurse und "Denkstile" zwischen Geber- und Empfängerland, Geber und anderen Gebern und sogar zwischen verschiedenen Geberorganisationen interagieren. Diese Denkstile wurden durch qualitative Interviews und dokumentarische Analysen ausgewertet. Zusammenfassend wird argumentiert, dass ein Zusammenspiel von Überlegungen, wie Japans "nationalem Interesse", Japans Zugehörigkeit zur internationalen Gesellschaft und Humanität die japanische wissensbasierte Hilfe seit 2000 geprägt habe. Das nationale Interesse scheint jedoch immer noch der stärkste Antrieb bei der Auszahlung von Beihilfen zu sein.

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## 1. Introduction

The present study deals with Japanese foreign aid for Human Resource Development (HRD) in the public sector. Previous research has shown that since the postwar, Japanese foreign aid has been dominated by two major ideas: on the one hand the preservation of national interest on the other the willingness to be part of the US-led international community.

This combination of the two might be identified also in Japan's contemporary aid strategy. In fact, in recent years the Japanese government (GOJ) has stressed the importance of using its Official Development Aid (ODA) to protect its national interest in multiple occasions. However, ODA has also been used to foster positive political relations with other countries and to help developing countries to improve the business climate. These factors too are considered to be contributing to the general national interest.

This research stems from the hypothesis that programs targeted at developing human resources in the public sector in developing countries in Asia, specifically in Vietnam, are determined at the policymaking level by similar considerations. On the one hand, Japan has started investing more ODA funds in HRD programs at a time when the international discourse on development was shifting from promoting economic growth and fiscal restraint to capacity building and institutional development. In the early 1990s, development economists and experts started considering these two principles as key to reducing poverty in developing countries.

The Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS), a program offering a two-year MA program for public officials from developing countries in Japan, for example, was initiated in 1999. At a global level, the discourse on development had shifted notably. That year the Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen published *Development as Freedom*, arguing for education and human resource development as key to poverty reduction. The period of structural adjustment programs imposed by the International Financial Institutions (IFI) on developing countries seemed gone. At the same time, the 1997-8 Asian economic and currency crisis had been blamed by experts in and outside International Financial Institutions (IFI) on inefficient state

administrations and the lack of governance in East Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea (s. for instance Hughes 1995). The “East Asian model” of a state-controlled market sponsored by the World Bank (with Japanese sponsorship) in 1993 with the “East Asian Miracle” report, was in crisis. A new generation of administrators needed to be trained in order to avoid new crises that could undermine the global financial stability. In the context of Japanese intervention to reign in the financial crisis which had also affected Japanese banks and firms manufacturing in Southeast Asia. Domestically, Japanese policymakers were also keen to enhance international student programs in order to increase the international reputation of Japanese academia, promote mutual understanding and positive relations with foreign countries and Japanese ideas abroad.

*Main research question and literature review*

Against this background, the present research will address the following research question: *how have cooperation in the field of human resource development been discursively conceptualized by major Japanese institutions involved in aid giving, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)?*

In the last four decades studies on Japanese ODA have proliferated. One of the first studies is that of Hasegawa (1975) identifying the twofold character of Japanese ODA – defending national interest (*kokueki*) while reaffirming Japan’s membership in the international community (*tsukiai*). The first term refers in fact to the *raison d’état*; the latter, instead, refers to “company”, “association” even “friendship” (Arase 2005). In the 1980s, scholars like Alan Rix stressed the fact that Japanese ODA was a bureaucracy-led process where policymakers and business elite members’ interests were involved. This feature made Japanese ODA hard to reform and to be influenced from foreign donors and IFIs. Toward the end of the 1980s, Japan emerged as the world’s top donor of foreign aid. Dennis Yasutomo (1990) analyzed Japan’s rise in the global arena as a pacifist “superpower”. This ascent was due to the long-term vision of Japanese policymakers in the aftermath of WWII and a

consequence of Japan's constitutional constraints (eternal repudiation of war). Therefore, both political and economic reasons are at the foundations of this policy (Inada 1990).

At the same time, Japanese ODA – as the entire foreign policy of the country, especially during the Cold War – have remained dependent on the grand foreign strategy of the U.S. Islam (1990) argued that Japan's allocation of aid to the developing world was part of the strategy of “burden sharing” for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Japan's ODA remained a highly institutionalized and bureaucratized process involving a dozen ministries and agencies. Mori (1995) offers a convincing political economic analysis shedding light on the role and horizon of action of the single institutional actors involved in the decision-making process. This variety of actors resulted in a general lack of consistency and difficulties to reform. David Arase (1994) stressed the preeminent role of state bureaucracy and private businesses interests in the allocation of public funds to international cooperation. In the mid-1980s, Japanese business associations and entrepreneurs who started transferring parts of their productive activities abroad, especially in developing Asia, for instance in Indonesia and China. ODA has thus become crucial in order to support Japan's competitiveness. That is why the *keidanren*, the most prominent association of Japanese entrepreneurs, has always been particularly keen to have ODA increased as they are crucial in developing the infrastructural frame necessary to support industrial production (communications, energy, etc.). Arase (2005) again argues that such a system, which is unique among the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), often lacks transparency and coherence. Several aspects of its ODA policy have fallen under criticism by DAC. To begin with, its geographical distribution. The flow of aid disbursement has been directed mainly to Asia: in 1970s aid to Asia counted for the 80 percent of the total, in 65 percent in 1980s and still held a predominant position in the first decade of the 21st century (53 percent in 2007-8) (Söderberg 1996, 34; Potter 2012, 12); secondly, ODA disbursements as percentage of GDP (0,25 percent) lags far behind the 0,7 percent established as a target for the next decade at the Monterrey Consensus in 2002. Moreover,

some scholars noted that Japanese ODA, in comparison to other DAC countries, are less gratuitous as the interest rates on ODA loans are higher.

Since 1945, ODA has been a key element of Japanese *nemawashi* (going to the roots) diplomacy (Hook & Zhang 1998). Previous studies have demonstrated that aid funds served as retaliation or lubricant for Tokyo to acquire political and economic gains. Such a political use of Japanese ODA has been discussed with regards to China (Katada 2001); Africa (Ampiah 1997) and in the United Nations (Alesina & Dollar 2000). More recent studies (such as Katada 2005; Lam 2006; Yoshimatsu 2012) have shown that especially after the September 11, 2001 New York attacks, the Japanese government has joined the “battle of ideas” against extremism and global terror in the effort to build stable and democratic institutions in developing countries and foster human security. The view that aid could serve to guarantee the country’s comprehensive security (Akaha 1991) was accentuated. In the last decade, Japan has shaped its identity in foreign policy on its value-oriented aid (Asplund 2015; Yoshimatsu 2012).

These studies have the merit to describe ODA from the point of view of the policy in general. Not much attention has been devoted to a specific policy included in the ODA framework. Apart from a chapter in a book by King and McGrath (2005), little attention has been dedicated to aid programs in the sector of “knowledge-based aid”. This study, through the case study of the JDS program, aims to fill this gap in the literature.

#### *The socio-historical origin of ideas and mode of thoughts*

This research is largely concerned on ideas and their use in the making of policies. Ideas are the constitutive elements of public discourses and narratives and are used by political leaders and ideational entrepreneurs to gather consensus presenting problems and proposing solutions. Ideas are not however absolute and transcendent entities. As Karl Mannheim argued in the 1930s, they are immanent and representative of a certain *mode of thought* proper of a certain social and historical context. Even Ideas such as “national interest” (*kokueki*) and “affiliation to the international

community” (*tsukiai*) (s. Hasegawa 1975; Arase 2004) cannot be separated from the broader socio-historical context in which they were articulated and reproduced. According to scholars of Japanese foreign policy and foreign aid (s. Söderberg 1996; Arase 2004; Rix 2011), these two drives were already present in Japanese foreign policy in the 1950s. After its defeat in World War II, Japan needed to enter the international arena with a new “face”. Japanese postwar conservative political leaders such as Yoshida Shigeru confronted the task to rebuild the country’s economy and at the same time aimed to rebuild Japan’s national reputation abroad.

In this spirit, Japan signed the Colombo Plan in 1954 and started providing aid to countries in Asia. It might be argued that for policymakers of the time, taking such a step was a necessary measure to re-establish Japan’s national reputation as a country of peace, in particular facing the US and those countries like China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Vietnam, involved in the Japanese military aggression in the 1930s and 1940s, and South Korea and Taiwan which had been under Japanese direct control since the end of the 19th century. Only pursuing positive relations with other countries, Japan could survive economically, ensuring its industries a sound supply of raw materials and, afterwards, markets for its manufactured goods.

Later, however, national interest and international affiliation have been continually adjusted or reshaped following changes in the broader international context surrounding Japan. This has happened particularly after the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s-early 1990s. National interest and affiliation to the international community have gradually become largely overlapping concepts (s. for instance the 2015 ODA Charter revision). International peace and stability equal Japanese security and economic growth. To maintain international peace and stability infrastructural aid was clearly not sufficient. A broader effort in other areas, such as HRD, became necessary to avoid the emergence of “failed states” from the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern bloc, and in more recent years, the emergence of extremism and terrorism. Military intervention abroad, under the label of the UN-led peace keeping operations, and within strict restraints on the dispatch of military personnel, became a tangible reality (for example in Cambodia in 1989 and more recently in South Sudan). For this reason, it might be said that it since the 1990s, it has become part of the Japanese national

interest to work alongside the international community to promote HRD in sectors like health (prevention of epidemic diseases), public security (prevention of terror attacks) or even lawmaking and justice (improvement of the business climate). Japanese “pacifism”, which has been one of the pillars of Japanese foreign policy since the early 1950s, gradually came to coincide with the “realism” which was also inherent in the country’s diplomatic strategy (Oguma 2014).

*The juxtaposition of conservatism and liberal humanitarianism in the GOJ’s official discourse and aid giving institutions*

These two ideas (or *modes of thought*, the conservative-realist and the liberal-humanitarian-pacifist) appear however to be juxtaposed in the official discourse on ODA promoted by the GOJ. This allows for a larger consensus. However clashes between these two ideas emerge in the Japanese aid giving discourse and institutional arrangement.

It might be argued that the multiplicity of actors involved in the aid giving process is at origin of these clashes. In the empirical part of this study, through a thematic analysis of qualitative in-depth interviews with Japanese officials from MOFA, JICA and employees from a contracting organization JICE, working specifically on the JDS program, it will be shown that preoccupations with the preservation of the national interest are more rooted at the policy-making level (MOFA) rather than at the implementation one. This might be explained in terms of the different position of actors in the aid-giving chain. As one of the major ministries in the Japanese administration, the MOFA has continuous contacts with other ministries and the lawmaking arena. After ODA-related corruption scandals erupted in the early 2000s, MOFA was brought under closer surveillance by the public opinion too.

JICA officials, instead, seem to promote a different recipient-focused client-oriented view of foreign aid. JICA has dozens of branches in every developing country in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Therefore, it has to maintain contacts with the recipients of Japanese aid and present aid as a

request-based and inclusive process aiming at fostering the recipient's self-help (s. Arase 2004; King & McGrath 2005; Söderberg 1996).

In other words, the different position of the two major institutions involved in the process of aid giving affects the individual official's perspective and contributes to the internal variety of the official discourse. With regards to HRD, it might be said that the two concept of national interest and affiliation often clash. The sincere liberal-humanitarian preoccupation with contributing to advancing education in developing countries contrast with the conservative-bureaucratic one of providing education to foreign government's official in order to foster positive political relations or creating the condition for the advance of the Japanese interests in a foreign country.

*The JDS program: strategic allocation of scholarships*

Concretely, with regards to the specific case of the JDS program, it might be argued that the number of scholarship available for country might be linked to specific interest Japan holds in the recipient country. As of 2014, Myanmar and Vietnam were the largest recipient of the JDS scholarships. Vietnam, in particular, has been part of the program since 2002 and in 2015 has overcome China in terms of the aggregate number of JDS alumni at nearly 500 people in less than 15 years. The total number of state officials trained in the JDS program amounts at over 3 thousand.

Furthermore, the Japanese government's effort in providing "knowledge-based aid" to developing countries in East Asia, in particular in Southeast Asia, can also be analyzed against the background of the attempt to establish a Japanese "intellectual leadership" in Asia. This strategy was launched in the mid-2000s under Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō and Foreign Minister Asō Tarō (s. Asō 2005). Meeting with the national and foreign press, foreign Minister Asō maintained that Japan was Asia's trailblazers and indicated in Japan's history as a developing country an asset for emerging countries. Such a strategy has been revived recently by Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (s. Abe 2013 and 2015).



### *The rise of China and Japan's search for an intellectual leadership*

Clearly, part of Japanese policymakers' preoccupation lies in the rise of China and its repercussions on regional and global arrangements. China, in fact, appears to be one of the major "significant others" (s. Berger & Luckmann 1966) facing which Japanese governments and policymakers have shaped Japan's foreign policy. Two decades of economic stagnation and a critical public opinion have put a brake on Japanese expenditure in foreign aid since the early 2000s. In the meantime, China has emerged as a political and economic powerhouse in the Asia-Pacific region and recently has also established itself as a major donor (s. Kitano & Harada 2015). Other non-OECD-DAC donors such as South Korea have also emerged putting an end to the Japanese quasi-monopoly of aid in East Asia. Given the strategic character of foreign aid for Japanese diplomacy, experts and policymakers in Japan have promoted a debate on the evolution of this foreign policy tool. Kurosaki, Ôtsuka and others (2015), for example, argue for a transition from *quantity* to *quality* in Japanese international cooperation. Gone are the days of "Japan as number one" (s. Vogel 1972) and "Japan as the world's top donor" (s. Yasutomo 1990). According to the authors, Japan needs to find another way, and invest more in exporting knowledge and know-how through its aid. In other words, as the then Foreign Minister Asô argued in 2005, Japan needs to become Asia's "thought leader".

### *Japanese "localized" hegemony in intellectual aid: the case of Vietnam*

Though it has maintained a strong focus on infrastructural loans, in some cases Japanese foreign aid has laid the groundwork for institutional reforms in a few East Asian countries. Exemplary is the case of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRVN). After an official hiatus of twenty-some years, Japan and the SRVN have reestablished relations in the early 1990s and gradually expanded their bilateral ties. Nowadays, Japan-Vietnam relations have reached the status of a "strategic partnership" encompassing aid, trade and investments but also security cooperation. How has this been possible? It might be argued that since Vietnam's opening to the global economy in the late 1980s, Japanese

business leaders have seized the opportunity to expand their businesses in a country in high need of foreign investments and with considerable reserves of raw materials and cheap labor. Between the early 1990s and the early 2000s, however, from a Japanese and international investor's perspective, Vietnam's institutional framework was still underdeveloped. The need for legal guarantees and predictability on the investor's end, combined with the political pressures of international donors, has caused the Vietnamese Communist leadership to adapt the country's legal and institutional framework without renouncing to its prerogatives in terms of political power. The result of this evolution is the "socialist-law governed state" (s. Nguyen Viet Thong 2011) promoted by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in recent years. Through JICA, Japan has provided assistance to the Vietnamese leadership with legal expertise and advisory in the sector of economic planning. Among the others, through multiple research projects led by eminent Japanese scholars such as the economist Ishikawa Shigeru and Morishima Akio, JICA has provided assistance drafting economic policy papers, the civil code and amending the country's constitution in a market-oriented sense. These research projects which in the last decade have provided policy guidelines have been integrated with HRD programs implemented through grants and technical cooperation. Such cooperation has resulted in early 2016 in the election of a Japan-trained Minister of Justice, Mr Le Thanh Long, who got his Ph.D. in International Law with a JICA scholarship at Nagoya University in the early 2000s.

*The twofold strategic character of aid for HRD programs*

Against this background, it might be possible to identify a twofold strategic character in ODA grant programs such as the JDS. As mentioned previously, Vietnam has been one of the largest recipient of this grant aid scholarship. The number of students accepted every year has seen an increase around 2006, when economic cooperation between the two countries was strengthened. It might be argued that Japanese policymakers and diplomats started seeing Vietnam as a strategic ally in the Asia-Pacific region. However, given the request-based character of Japanese ODA, it might be argued that Vietnamese policymakers also saw a gain in implementing this type of cooperation.

In other words, Japanese *intellectual hegemony* is not imposed top-down, but the product of converging interests between donor and recipient in a specific historical moment. In fact, the same level of cooperation cannot be observed elsewhere. Through such programs, specifically targeted at young leaders and public officials in LDCs in Asia and Africa, the GOJ has tried to pursue a form of intellectual leadership over countries in the Asia-Pacific. At the same time, Japan provides assistance to the transition toward market-based economic arrangements in the recipient countries complying with the international aid discourse on “good governance” and institution building as key for poverty reduction. Lastly, in the GOJ’s strategy seems to be aimed at limiting China’s political and economic assertiveness especially in Southeast and Central Asia. This strategy has remained unchanged despite two government changes in 2009 and 2012, when the Democratic Party of Japan came to power and the Liberal-Democratic Party made a comeback respectively. Meanwhile, SRVN’s leaders have seen in Japan an important ally. Japanese diplomats have in fact eased the country’s negotiations with international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and provided aid without strict conditionalities (such as broader democratization). Japanese aid have in some way helped the consolidation of the CPV’s power in a period of market reforms.

In sum, it might be concluded that, especially with regards to countries such as Vietnam, that have developed a strategic partnership with Japan, bureaucratic-realist considerations are embedded in aid for HRD programs.

### *Structure and content of the thesis*

In the chapter 2, the theoretical framework will be discussed. In particular, the discussion will focus on ideas and the creation of intellectual hegemonies in international relations. In the third chapter, the methods chosen to conduct the research will be illustrated. Elements of the case-study approach and text analysis will be provided. In the following chapters, data will be presented and discussed.

Chapter 4 deals with the socio-historical context of Japan's JDS program. A survey of the history of Japanese-Vietnamese relations will be presented up until the recent strengthening of bilateral relations. Lawmakers and policymakers perspectives on the ties between the two countries will be introduced. Chapter 5 deals with the evolution of Japanese ODA philosophy from the early 2000s. In particular the role of influential individuals in the field of foreign aid (each representing a certain social category and the respective mode of thought regarding aid policies). In conclusion, chapter 6 sheds light on the JDS program. After tracing the historical origins and evolution of the program, the perspective of the participants in the program (Japanese government officials and university professors and administrative staff members, on the donor's end; students and Vietnamese public officials on the recipients' end) will be discussed. This part of chapter 6, which constitutes the core part of the present research will report on the fieldwork that has been conducted between 2015 and 2016. In the concluding chapter, general conclusions will be put forward. The limitations of this study will be also discussed.



## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Introduction

After its defeat in WWII, Japanese post-war governments have tried to rehabilitate its image of wartime aggression through the renounce to war (as sanctioned by Article 9 of the post-war constitution) and aid. Especially after Japan joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1964, and graduated from the status of borrower according to the World Bank (WB) in 1971, it was important for Japanese aid policymakers to comply with international guidelines in aid disbursement. Japanese “development experience” became a model for newly independent countries in Asia (Sen 1999; King & McGrath 2004). However, mercantilist and strategic considerations were never excluded in aid policy making in Tokyo (s. Yasutomo 1990; Söderberg 1996; Arase 2005). In this sense, aid has been a tool to be deployed in international politics to gain comparative advantage and political influence (Ampiah 1997; Alesina & Dollar 2000). Aid was also conceived as a tool to build Japan’s comprehensive security and a favorable business environment in recipient countries. Especially from the mid-1980’s Japanese businesses started investing in order to secure their supply of raw materials and industrial outsourcing posts (s. Yasutomo 1990; Jessop & Sum 2006).

Hasegawa (1975) has effectively described Japanese aid-giving “mode” as a constant process of negotiations between endemic (*kokueki*, national interest); and external factors (*tsukiai*, affiliation) (Arase 2005, 10).

As a member of the leading international institutions promoting economic cooperation internationally, Japan has taken part in the transition from a liberal market-oriented aid giving model, to a more inclusive liberal-democratic one. As part of this effort, in 1999, the Government of Japan (GOJ) started the Japanese Grant Scholarship for Human Resource Development (JDS).

The JDS offers training for young state officials and future leaders from developing countries in Central, South and Southeast Asia, and, since 2013 in Africa, in public and private universities in Japan. “Highly capable young officials (mainly government) who are expected to engage in implementing social and economic development plans as a future leader” (JICE, 2008) are the targets of the JDS. Among the areas of intervention, which are negotiated with the recipient country every four years, public policy, economic growth, legal and free market reforms have great relevance. As of f.y. 2014, a total of 3000 students were instructed in Japanese universities under the JDS scheme (JICA 2014). The hypothesis that will be here presented is that such a program, even though it is one of the most recent in the ODA initiative, have a path-dependent characterization. In other words, in the formulation of the policy, as in its implementation, the guiding principles seem to be those of protecting the national interest and asserting the Japanese affiliation to the US-led international community.

Against this background, *how has human resource development been conceptualized in the official discourse on Japanese ODA?* More specifically, how has it been discursively adapted to the two driving forces of national interest and affiliation to the international community? To take it on a broader perspective: how conflicting ideas interact and are negotiated in a single official discourse?

In order to tackle these research questions, it will be useful to consider here the following variables. As an independent variable, the change in the East Asian regional economic and political equilibria will be considered. In the last decade, the rise of China has attracted much scholarly attention (s. for instance Kang 2007). China has in fact established itself as a major regional political and economic powerhouse in East Asia, while economic stagnation has primarily contributed to the perception, both inside and outside the country, that Japan had been “surpassed” and deprived of the role as a regional leader it had held since its economic boom in the 1960s (s. Hagström & Gustafsson 2014, 12-3). A series of ODA-related corruption scandals in the early 2000s and an increased US engagement in the international arena following the September 11, 2001 attacks at the New York World Trade Center accelerated the end of Japan’s preeminence as the world’s top donor. However,

facing constitutional constraints on the deployment of troops abroad, international assistance has been the most important tool for Japanese diplomacy. With the emergence of “new donors” (in Japanese: *shinkō donā*) at the regional level (such as South Korea and China), though, Japanese primacy as the primary donor to developing Asia has been put at risk. Recently, Japanese administrations have tried to revamp the policies in the attempt to re-establish a sort of leadership.

## **2.2. Context of the research**

Human resource development has been singled out as one of the priorities in Japanese ODA since the early 2000 (Furukawa, Oishi & Kato 2010). The emergence of such a priority was caused by a set of both domestic and external factors. Scandals of misuse and misappropriation of ODA funds in the early 2000s spurred a revision of the decision-making process and a revision of the GOJ’s aid-giving guidelines (s. Berkofsky 2002; Rothacher 2006). The 2003 ODA Charter approved by the GOJ was in line with other OECD donors, promoted among the others “economic and social infrastructure development, human resource development and institution-building” (MOFA 2003), as part of a global effort toward the realization of the 2000 UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Japan’s experience as the first Asian country to be able to catch up with the “West” in the late 19th century and in the early postwar period would become a fundamental tool in this effort: Japan’s contribution is in fact defined also in terms of transfer of knowledge and know-how (Sunaga 2004, 6-15).

Therefore, much attention was paid to the enhancement of “good governance” and “human security”. The GOJ’s attention to these principles resonated the dominant view at the international level that held development as an inclusive phenomenon that prioritized interventions toward poverty reduction beside economic growth. This view, which had been developed since the early 1990s by economists like Amartya Sen, encompassed the promotion of, among the others, education, healthcare, and the reduction of income inequalities.



At the same time, the 2003 ODA Charter underscored the importance of pursuing aid policies that could preserve Japan's national interest with the risk of conflicts with the rest of the international donor community. To quote Sunaga,

A majority of the Japanese public [...] believe that people in recipient countries where Japan has provided a good deal of ODA, in fact do not even know the source of their aid. For them, it appears that their tax yen are being spent meaninglessly, so they have called for the government to make Japan's ODA more visible in recipient countries. Measures to this effect might include sending more Japanese experts and business people to developing countries, using more Japanese technologies and expertise, and intensifying public relations activities such as displaying Japanese flags in schools and hospitals, and on equipment financed by Japan's ODA. The international donor community, however, seems to be moving in an opposite direction: national flags should be taken down (2004, 11).

In this context, a tension between harmonizing aid policies with international partners while preserving the national interest might be observed. In his article, Sunaga, former Ministry of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Ministry of Defense (MOD)'s official, maintained that an agreement was found among different currents at the policy-making level, which linked national interest to the broad international development and well-being. As a consequence of the above mentioned ODA-related scandals in the early 2000s, Japanese policy-makers were urged by international partners and the national public opinion to make the ODA decision-making process more transparent and accountable. Thus, Japanese policy-makers had worked in order to reconcile diverse positions pushed forward by the old and new stakeholders in the ODA decision-making process. On the one hand, scholars, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international partners defended a more interest-free mode of aid giving, while on the other, business leaders, and the general public opinion asked for more strategic and politically and economically motivated contributions. To the latter group belong the proponents of the use of ODA

in order to contribute to the country's national security (Sunaga 2004, 10). The resulting official discourse is in other words a product of an interplay of, and a negotiation between, different ideas: in fact, it merges the GOJ's willingnesses to stick to internationally recognized values and practices, and to pursue the nation's well being, through, for example, the use of ODA for trade promotion or legal development with the aim of safeguarding Japanese investments in a developing country.

If one analyzes the recipient's end, it might be possible to identify similar patterns. The case of Viet Nam, which will be discussed later on, is exemplary. It will be worth anticipating here some points of it. Since the late 1980s, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (SRVN) has undergone a now thirty year-long period of structural reforms that favored its economic development and its integration in the international system (s. Masina 2006; Fforde 2009). During this period, Viet Nam re-established diplomatic relations with countries like Japan and the US which were considered enemies less than a decade before (s. Nakano 2006). For its rapid economic development, Viet Nam has gone as far as to become a "poster boy" for the World Bank (s. Craig & Porter 2006). This rapprochement has ushered in new ideas to be implemented as policies in the field of governance and economic management of the country (as the introduction of private property, laws on investments, equitization, i.e., privatization, of shares of State owned enterprises). If, on the one hand, these have helped the Vietnamese political leadership to attract investments and capitals in the country, on the other they have created ideational conflicts, for instance, on what concerns the single-party political system the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) wants to preserve (s. Beresford 2008; Vuong 2014). In addition, if, on the one hand, these ideas were, and still are to a certain extent, dominant/hegemonic in the international arena, on the other, they served the interests of the country's political leadership insofar they have been used to implement policies that, among the others, have helped the CPV maintain its power.

### **2.3. Negotiating the national with supranational interest**

Ideas are a basic component of political discourses. They are the product of significant interactions in the social realm. This naturally applies to the exchanges among states in international relations. The success of certain ideas and their transformation into actual policies depend on different factors: among the others, the urgency of the problem, the adherence of the ideas to the dominant public philosophy at a micro- (domestic, national) as well as at a macro- (international, global) level, the breadth of the proponents' social network, their influence, and their political power. In international relations, especially with regards to the specific case of Japan, national interest and international affiliation are guiding principles in diplomacy.

In particular, when it comes to Japanese foreign policies, as it has been already noted, the two main ideas shaping foreign policies are the protection of "national interest" and the adherence to the US-led international community's principles and guidelines. At a first glance, these two ideas might seem conflicting. However, in the last decade they have been integrated by the GOJ's policymakers in the public discourse on foreign aid. Since the 1980s, the first concept, especially, has been reframed facing the growing interdependence between nation-states.

#### *2.3.1. Neoliberalism and the "revision" of national interest*

National interest is an idea associated with the emergence of the nation-state as a form of political association. It gained currency in the second part of the eighteenth century, approximately at the same time when the American Constitution was drafted (Burchill 2005, 1-2). International relations scholars like Weldes (1996) have tried to describe national interest as both the "basis for state action" encompassing a wide range of goals policymakers try to pursue in foreign policy and the "rhetorical device" through which policymakers try to establish legitimacy and support toward state policies (Burchill 2005, 3).

Since the aftermath of World War II, “national interest” has been seen as the core element of a country’s foreign policy. Especially realist scholars such as Hans Morgenthau (2005), who is regarded as the founder of realism in international relations, saw in “interest defined as power” the foundations of a nation-state’s foreign policy in the wider context of the perennial struggle among peers for the international balance of power. Morgenthau defined it as “objective law” guiding nation-state’s conduct. National interest for Morgenthau is intended in terms of national security as “protection from the power of others”, and maintenance of global order, notwithstanding any abstract or speculative moral principle (1950, 853-4). Historical, political and cultural environments affects the way policymakers interpret interests and power, but their action, as every social behavior, is shaped by regularities and repetitive patterns (Morgenthau 2005, 9-10).

Other major currents in international relations have established their view of national interest. Liberals and neo-liberals have argued for a concept of interest as cooperation among states based on free trade, free movement of capital and people. At a later stage theorists of this school have argued for the construction of an institutional system that could encourage “cooperative habits” while carrying out monitoring and sanctioning functions (s. Burchill 2005, 119-21).

The international exchanges and global mobility of capitals have increased since the 1980s. This process has favored the growth of international non-state actors, such as multinational enterprises, operating beyond national borders. In certain cases, as in Europe, states have given up their autonomy to a certain degree in order to favor regional integration and the creation of new political entities (s. Jessop 2002). These processes – respectively tagged “globalization” and “regionalization” – have caused scholars of international relations to re-think the concept of national interest. Among the others, the so-called English school has tried to trace a “middle way” between realism and liberalism. Against the concept of “anarchy”, which characterizes the realist view of international relations, scholars like Hedley Bull have proposed the concept of an international order guaranteed by an international society sharing similar interests and concerns – arms control, fear of war, economic interdependence, control of population, conservation of the natural environment, etc.

– independent of geographical and cultural connotations. In light of these facts, it becomes easier for states to formulate agreements, laws and policies respecting aspiring to a common good (Bull 2008, 85). In other words,

The English School believes international order rests on a balance of power in the world, a recognition of common functional or utilitarian interests where the mutual benefits of reducing instability and enhancing predictability are recognised, and common procedural (rather than substantive or cultural) values which establish rules and infrastructure for the mediation of conflict and the possibility of co-operation (Burchill 2005, 183).

### *2.3.2. Affiliation and intersubjectivity in defining nation-states' international policies*

Following social constructivism, national interest, in the same manner of “national identity”, is best understood as “endogenous to interaction” between states (Wendt 1992, 394). According to this current, which refuses realism’s normative and essentialist approach, the national interest has not a clear definition, but it can be defined as the product of interactions among subjectivities. Policies targeted at protecting national interest, thus, are attached meaning only insofar as they are drafted in relation to other subjects and significant others – i.e., enemies or allies (*intersubjectivity*). Against this backdrop, it can be argued that the national interest is socially constructed, as it finds its *locus* of definition in specific political practices. These, in turn, are determined by processes of institutionalization and legitimation which reduce choice of deliberate action, uncertainty and ensure order. Currently a dominant model of global economic and political governance is that of neoliberalism. With the emergence in the 1980s of this model in key countries for the functioning of the global economy – such as the US and the UK – its keywords and imperatives – such as the preoccupation with the business climate – became widespread. The contemporary system of international relations has been profoundly influenced by the diffusion of neoliberalism. Rules and common procedural values have been defined at the supra-national level (in international financial

institutions, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization; think tanks such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; the United Nations system, and so on). Affiliation (*tsukiai*, in Japanese), therefore conformity to standards, guidelines and rules, have become increasingly important for policymakers across the globe to secure access to information and establish reliability in the face of their international partners. Inevitably, for many countries – especially those in dominant positions at a regional level such as Japan – this meant a revision of national interest-related diplomatic priorities (such as military development for national security or the exploitation of natural resources abroad) in name of trade- and diplomacy-based exchanges between national states, and more recently, regional association of states.

This might explain why in actual policy papers and official documents, the concept of national interest has remained ambiguous and “rubbery” (Jain 2014). To take a more structuralist perspective, it might be possible to say that the institutions governing the social setting and the presence of significant others, for instance, opponents, constrain the ways in which interests might be pursued. Therefore, national interest may be best understood with regards to a set of “limitations”: actors may pursue their national interest only insofar as a) their policies aimed at pursuing national interest coincide with the interests of the ruling and dominant national elites; b) their policies do not clash with interests of other actors with a greater available power; c) their policies contain an “interiorization” of relative international constraints – regional or global (s. Poulantzas 1978; Jessop 2002).

In sum, it is possible to say that national interest, as an idea and as a set of concrete interests, can be defined and pursued through policies that are inserted in the framework of a “stock knowledge” shared among states that are part of a certain *sovrastucture* of the international community, i.e., that of neoliberalism (s. Wendt 1999, 142-3; Harvey 2005). This structure of knowledge is also there to constrain the possibilities of action for the individuals. Therefore, the pursue of diverse interests (e.g., economic, political, military) broadly labeled as “national interest” is entrenched in this dynamic process.

## 2.4. Why ideas matter

In recent years, ideational scholars of social sciences have underlined the fact that ideas are a major force shaping policies (s. Béland & Cox 2010; Finnemore & Sikkink 1998; Gilardi 2012; Hay 2010; Mehta 2010; Schmidt 2008; 2010). According to these authors “ideas matter” as “the primary source of political behavior” (Béland & Cox 2010, 4) and the “substantive content of discourse” (Schmidt 2008, 303). Furthermore, ideas and discourse have in fact a “transformative power” on political reality. The concept of discourse will be discussed further below. Here, the social origin of ideas will be analyzed.

According to authors like Vivien Schmidt (2008; 2010), ideas can be defined as a “primary source of political behavior” (Béland & Cox 2010, 4), and, second, as “interpretive frameworks” of any political and economic action (Carstensen & Schmidt 2015, 318). Therefore, ideas matter in politics. Schmidt identifies two broad categories of ideas which can be transformed in actual policies: cognitive, defining “what is and what to do”; and normative, defining “what ought to be done”. Specifically,

Cognitive ideas speak to how (first level) policies offer solutions to the problems at hand, how (second level) programs define the problems to be solved and identify the methods by which to solve them, and how both policies and programs mesh with the deeper core of (third level) principles and norms of relevant scientific disciplines or technical practices. Normative ideas instead attach values to political action and serve to legitimate the policies in a program through reference to their appropriateness [...] Normative ideas speak to how (first level) policies meet the aspirations and ideals of the general public and how (second level) programs as well as (first level) policies resonate with a deeper core of (third level) principles and norms of public life, whether the newly emerging values of a society or the long-standing ones in the societal repertoire (Schmidt 2008, 307).

What is interesting here is the interaction between those two kinds of ideas in policy. In particular, it is worth focusing on the interactions between ideas at the “normative” level, that is, on the occasions in which two different ideas born out of two different sets of values conflict or interact in a single policy.

Ideas are thus worth studying as they are the core of politics and policymaking. It has been stressed that different types of ideas can interact and be defined or redefined in their process of interaction. Ideas are not, in fact, independent entities. They are best understood against the backdrop of meta-ideas that are proper of a specific socio-cultural and historical dimension. It might be also added that they are not independent from their proponents. In other words, they are the intellectual projection of an individual embedded in a set of significant social and historical events, such as his education, his life experiences, the affinity with a certain social class or *milieu*, and so on.

#### *2.4.1. The sociology of knowledge*

Meta-ideas or zeitgeists, especially, as Mehta (2010) defines them, are not a *donné*; rather, it can be argued that they are socially constructed. The thesis according to which ideas are social construct is proper to the sociology of knowledge. Since the late 19th century, “ideas” have been considered not as a given of the human individual, a somewhat metaphysical entity, but the product of a certain social setting of which an individual is part.

Scholars like Karl Marx, Max Weber and György Lukács greatly contributed to the birth of this orientation in social sciences. Marx saw in the existence of social classes a cause for the development of different worldviews. For him, this “debunking” was instrumental to unmasking the “false consciousness” preventing the proletariat from realization of their condition of economic and social oppression (Mannheim 1936, 74-5). Weber, for example, demonstrated that religion is experienced differently depending on the social origin of the believer, may he or she be a peasant or an intellectual (s. Mannheim 1936, 7). Drawing upon Marx, finally, Lukács saw the issue of the sociality of thought



and knowledge as a way toward the emancipation of the proletariat, defined the only class that able to interpret the social and historical reality in its “dynamic totality” (Izzo 1999, X).

However, it was Karl Mannheim that in the 1930s developed the first articulated scholarly work in the field. In his seminal *Ideology and Utopia* (1936), Mannheim argued that ideas and modes of thought leading to certain decisions and concrete actions do not originate in the individual as such, but in the individual as part of his or her own social group. An individual is thus to a certain extent, predetermined by the fact that he or she was born and raised in a certain milieu in a determined society.

Only in a quite limited sense does the single individual create out of himself the mode of speech and of thought we attribute to him. He speaks the language of his group; he thinks in the manner in which his group thinks. He finds at his disposal only certain words and their meanings. These not only determine to a large extent the avenues of approach to the surrounding world, but they also show at the same time from which angle and in which context of activity objects have hitherto been perceptible and accessible to the group or the individual (1936, 3).

In this sense, the individual, argued Mannheim, cannot be fully identified as a “thinker”; rather he or she is a participant in a social process of thinking, and therefore, knowing. Each individual attaches *meaning* to a certain event according to a worldview he or she inherits from his or her group: ideas, meanings and concepts bear in themselves a “crystallisation” of the group experience. This is what Mannheim refers to as *Sinnausgerichtetes Sein*, existence with reference to certain meanings (1936, 293).

Drawing upon Mannheim, Bohnsack (2010) further elaborates this concept: he maintains in fact that social actors bear two types of knowledge: one is the reflexive-theoretical; while the other one is a pre-reflexive “tacit/crystalized knowledge”. If the former might change across the actor’s life, the second seems independent of the actor’s decisions and incorporated by him/her in a “structure of

practices”, which might be referred to in terms of Bourdieu’s “habitus” (s. Bourdieu 1977). In other words, when approaching knowledge or understanding, the observer is confronted with the impossibility to treat “knowledge” and “actions” only in terms of the subject which is their carrier. On the contrary, the social context in which action takes place influences the decision, the modalities and the results of the actor’s enterprise. Such a “crystalized knowledge” is at the origin of what Mannheim defines as “modes of thought” that guide the individual’s action.

Mannheim’s approach in fact enables to look not only for “what”, but also for “how” something is known (Bohnsack 2010). In a period of rising nationalism around Europe, Mannheim’s major concern was to arrive at a “science of politics”, devoid of ideological connotations (1936). According to the Hungarian scholar, too often individuals were deceived by concepts like “collective identities” or “collective minds”. His major purpose was to show that they did not exist in reality. Every form of knowledge and respectively, every form of thinking – i.e., “mode of thought” – is a historically and socially limited entity. In other words, it is the product of significant historical and social events (1936, 48-9). Hence his interest in the study of ideologies and utopias. Ideological or utopian perspectives were in fact the product of the irrational/unconscious result of specific historical conditions, inseparable from the specific social *milieu* to which the thinker belongs. Therefore, in order to trace the “set of meaningful social events” that contributed to the appearance of a certain intellectual current cannot be overlooked (1936, 294).

In other words, the “mode of thought” might be described as the unity of the “sociality and historicity of thought”: as each historical period has its own peculiar artistic style, each historical period has its own “styles or modes of thought”. This approach has the advantage of treating knowledge as a co-operative, open and evolving concept rather than a stable and fixed one. when approaching knowledge or understanding the observer is confronted with the impossibility to treat “knowledge” and “actions” only in terms of subjects. The social context in which action takes place influences the decision, the modalities and the results of the actor’s enterprise. In turn, as it has been noted above, they are the expression of each social grouping’s *Weltanschauung* (worldview) that might

be, in broad terms, conservative or transformational (s. Izzo 1999, xii-xix). For these reasons, Mannheim argued that in spheres of thought and human activity, such as politics, it was necessary to “unmask” those propositions marketed as “absolute truths”: they are in a *relational* position with values, meanings, norms proper to a specific social and historical conditions. Naturally, these make up a constant flux and therefore subject to change. Consequently, so are values, concepts, ideas, styles of thought and ideologies (1936, 75-9).

#### *2.4.2. From ideas to discourses*

To summarize, ideas can be broadly defined as interacting socially constructed guiding principles and frameworks of reference for political actions. This conception is drawn upon recent developments in discursive institutionalism and Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. In the opening paragraph of this chapter, it has been argued that “ideas” are also worth attention as they contribute to the construction of discourses. But what is meant here by discourse? How is discourse defined?

The term “discourse” recalls the work of the French scholar Michel Foucault. In 1972, Foucault proposed his definition of the concept: discourse is a group of statements that are linked the one with the other at the statement level, that is, by their being functional in a specific field of knowledge (be it economy, medicine, the prison or sexuality) at a given time in history, in a given “social, economic, geographical and linguistic” space (Foucault 1972, 129-31). In other words, it is “a series of rules embedded in words and things, *langue* and reality” (p. 47), an “ordering force” that orders objects and determines possible and non-possible statements in a given domain.

Discourses are the product of “anonymous and historical” rules governing the enunciative dimension of the time-space framework in which they can be found (Foucault 1972, 131). However they possess linkages with historical, socio-economic and institutional arrangements.

Discursive formations play an important role in tracing the history of ideas. They are in fact the formalization of dominant ideas (positivities) in a certain field of human knowledge, which are

systematized into specific discursive practices characterizing certain disciplines, branches of knowledge (*connaissances*), and sciences. To clarify this argument, at the conclusion of *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault cited the example of the appearance of the psychiatric discipline at the beginning of the nineteenth century which he had discussed in one of his previous works, *Madness and Civilization*. He argued that the contents of the nineteenth century texts on psychiatry he had analyzed, and the way they were arranged inside the texts, had nothing to do with the way in which mental diseases were described in medical treatises a century earlier. He maintains that those discursive formations he singled out, went well beyond the boundaries of the single psychiatric discipline. There were relations, linkages, and correspondences with other fields of human activity. According to Foucault, this reflected the emergence of new paradigms in the social, economic, and politico-judicial spheres (Foucault 1972, 197-8). The sum of these relations could be called an *episteme*, i.e., an over-arching concept in which in a specific space, and at a specific time in history, all discursive formations, and therefore disciplines and sciences are grounded (Foucault 1972, 211).

This process, however, could not be considered a natural one. It presupposed, instead, the existence of powers and authorities disciplining them. The existence, in texts and documents, of certain statements, and discursive formations, in fact, presupposed the inclusion and exclusion of others (s. Hook 2001; Young 1991). Such a process could not occur overnight. Rather, it was a historical process, whose signs discourse continues bearing. Discourses are in fact spaces “of multiple dissensions”, that is, they encompass several irregularities, contradicting statements and oppositions. Studying these contradictions, interruptions, and inconsistencies, it is argued, is necessary to understand how discourses develop and is periodically reorganized through the incorporation of different groups of statements – even critical ones (s Foucault 1972, 168-173).

Discourse is the path from one contradiction to another: if it gives rise to those that can be seen, it is because it obeys that which it hides. To analyse discourse is to hide and reveal

contradictions; it is to show the play that they set up within it; it is to manifest how it can express them, embody them, or give them a temporary appearance (168-9).

#### *2.4.3. Discourse as cooperative: from structure to actors*

Nevertheless, Foucault's theoretical framework is of help only up to a certain extent. If on the one hand, it is useful in its description of discourse as a *dispositif* of power, on the other its limitations appear when approaching the internal conflicts and juxtaposition of ideas that might be found contemporarily in a single discourse. How do these contradiction emerge? Is there anybody pushing for new or critical groups of statements to be incorporated in an already established discourse? In *The Archeology* this issue is not tackled. According to Foucault, in fact, changes in discourse are determined by a series of transformations at the structure-level (s. Foucault 1972, 190-1). Therefore, his analysis seems to deny the role of "intellectual entrepreneurs" or the fact that, especially in the field of policymaking, two conflicting ideas might represent the interests of two conflicting that are juxtaposed after a process of negotiation.

In fact, for this research, it appears useful here to treat discourse not just as the emanation of an invisible power acting at the system-level, rather as a cooperative process where an interplay of ideas, susceptible to change, and originated in different social contexts, can be detected.

In fact as Harvey maintains, discourses "are also institutionally based, materially constrained, experientially grounded manifestations of social and power relations" (1996, 80). In other words, they are embedded in every social process and internally "heterogeneous". The internal heterogeneity of discourses is due to the emergence of dominant/hegemonic discourses (for ex. on society, the self, nature, religion, nationhood, etc.) and their internalization of "counter-hegemonic" and dissident ones (Harvey, 1996, 89). Moreover, discourses can be shaped and modified by those in a socially dominant position in order to mask their own class interests.

However, at the level of dominant classes, for example in state administration, the uniformity of discourses cannot be taken for granted. Particularly in contemporary state apparatuses, policymakers and public officials might come from different social contexts. Education, available resources and the process of socialization in single Ministries or agencies where they are employed play a crucial role in the formation of ideas and “modes of thought”<sup>1</sup>. To better understand this concept it is worth referring to the conception of the state elaborated in the late 1970s by Nicos Poulantzas. The Greek scholar is renowned for his conception of the state as the sum of the social conflicts produced by the class struggle. Discussing the issue of state power, Poulantzas argued for the existence of “power centers”. Power centers are nodes in the state apparatus exercising political power in specific areas of the state administration. Accordingly, each of them has its own organizational specificities but they are also hierarchically organized according to the social forces involved in the ongoing class struggle. These centers can also acquire more power if the class they are constituted by is able to realize its interests in function of the capacities of its opponents. But, ultimately, power centers contribute to the unity of the political power under the state (Poulantzas 1978, 113-9).

Against this backdrop, it will be useful to develop a concept of discourse that might take into consideration the social origin of ideas and their interplay in the resulting discourse(s). To put it differently, in the analysis of the Japanese public discourse on official development assistance (ODA) in human resource development (HRD), it might be useful to consider discourse as a multi-variate phenomenon constructed through the interaction of different power centers bearing different social connotations and tied to each other by a “silent power struggle” which is constantly mitigated and negotiated.

From a discursive-institutionalist viewpoint, discourse is in fact an “over-arching” concept which indicates both the group of ideas expressed in a series of statements, and the process constituting it.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be true especially in Japan where formal and informal networks (membership in a certain organization such as advisory councils, old boys and alumni associations, or even family bonds) play a fundamental role in the country’s political life, offering spaces where negotiations on divisive issues occur and where ultimately compromises can be reached. S. Schmidt, Carmen (2004). Japan’s Elite Networks at the Apex of Power. *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 36, pp. 73-84.

In other words, discourse is interpreted as an interactive process serving to “generate” and “communicate” ideas to the public (Schmidt 2010, 48). Discourse might have a coordinative or communicative characterization. The first regards the policy level and refers to the negotiating processes among political elites and interest groups involved in the creation and justification of policies: these processes might involve transnational “epistemic communities” sharing both cognitive and normative ideas about a common policy enterprise; or “discourse coalitions” at a national level. The latter, in turn, regards the political level and refers to the discourse implemented by political elites facing a general public: it basically consists in the “mass process of persuasion” that members of the political and national elites begin in order to have the policy discussed and deliberated upon by the general public or other political entities (s. Schmidt 2008, 310-1).

It is discourse in fact that guarantees the success or the failure of a certain idea or policy – as it was already discussed above, the relevance of the issue, its viability and appropriateness are other important factors: as an interactive process discourse may serve to exert influence on the audience beyond its primary function of representing ideas. For example, discourse involves a function of persuasion. For this reason,

Successful discourses may be manipulative, they may lie, they may be “happy talk” or “spin” to obscure what political leaders are really doing, and they may even be vehicles for elite domination and power (Schmidt 2008, 312).

The main policy ideas which will be here discussed with reference to the Japanese aid for human resource development in Viet Nam, are, as already mentioned, those of national interest and affiliation. According to the previous academic literature on ODA, these two concepts have been the guiding force behind the GOJ’s aid-giving policies. Foucault himself focuses on the “interactions”, or, to say it with him, “disarticulations”, “juxtapositions”, and “incoherences” of different groups of statements in a certain discursive formation referred to a certain knowledge. However, the French scholar did lay out a series of interpretive tools, but did not elaborate a practical approach to the study

of knowledge (Keller 2010). Instead, the sociology of knowledge's approach in fact enables to look in greater detail for "how" something is known not just for "what" (Bohnsack 2010). In addition, it succeeds in properly situating its origins in a specific social reality and in its respective network of human relations, so that it is not treated as the product and source of an "invisible" power. The concept of discourse laid out by Schmidt and others (2010), on the foundations of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, can thus enrich Foucault's definition. In other words, it is possible to identify the origin of dominant ideas, policies and discourses in social interactions and in the agency of single actors embedded in and interacting with a certain social and historical structure.

### **2.5. The construction of a discursive hegemony**

A drawback of institutionalism and, broadly, social constructivism is however that it does not take into consideration intrinsic unbalances in the structure where relations among subjects happen. If, on the one hand, it does focus on *intersubjectivity*, it does not account for unbalances which *structurally* determined and might affect the interactions between individuals. Against this backdrop, it might therefore ignore the ways in which dominant or hegemonic ideas might emerge. This is the case of the study of international relations and international development.

In the context of the current international system, it would be naive to conceive the "knowledge" it is constructed upon, merely as the institutionalization of an equally shared and participated *pretheoretical* knowledge. Due to a consistent unequal distribution of resources among nation states, this *recipe* knowledge has been largely imposed by dominant on subordinate actors in the field of



international development (s. Craig & Porter 2006; Dasandi 2014; Hafner-Burton & Montgomery 2006; Harvey 2007)<sup>2</sup>.

### 2.5.1. *The concept of hegemony and its relevance in today's IR*

In order to gain a better view on the issue, it might be worth looking at the work by the Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci is often cited for his studies on power and hegemony. As a founding member of the Italian Communist Party, the Italian intellectual's main concern was to be found with securing a way through which the progressive class, i.e the proletariat, could come into power and sustain its position as a *hegemon* in the Italian society in the 1930's. In defining *hegemony*, Gramsci identified two main concepts: 'domination' (*dominazione*) and 'intellectual and moral leadership' (*direzione*) (Gramsci & Forgacs 2000, 249; Storey 2008, 79).<sup>3</sup> A good definition of hegemony can be found in the passages of the *Prison Notebooks* in which Gramsci deals with the role of the intellectuals in the capitalist society. He refers to this social group as "functionaries", or mediators, between civil society and the state. He goes on explaining that intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" who are in charge of the "subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government" in urban as well as in rural areas (Gramsci & Forgacs 2000, 307). Hegemony is thus constituted through:

1. The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is

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<sup>2</sup> Dasandi (2014), for example, argues that structural inequalities in international trade and political networks are at the foundations of the shortcomings in sensibly reducing poverty in the last three decades. The privileged position of certain countries in the international system of trade and economic relations leads to the establishment of what Emile Hafner-Burton and Alexander Montgomery (2006) call "power positions". It is in fact these power positions in international social networks that make certain policies more practical or rational, virtually excluding any alternative. S. Dasandi, Niheer (2014). International Inequality and World Poverty: A Quantitative Structural Analysis. *New Political Economy*, 19 (2), pp. 201-226, and Hafner-Burton, Emile and Montgomery Alexander (2006). Power Positions. *Journal of Conflict Resolutions* 50 (1), pp. 3-27.

'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. 2. The apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed (Gramsci & Forgas 2000, 307-8).

In sum, hegemonic power is exerted through a balanced combination of force of the rulers and consent of the ruled. The role of intellectuals and state bureaucrats is particularly relevant. They serve as "smootheners" of contradictions and possible social conflicts and, in contemporary national states, "consolidators" of the central state's power within their society. Furthermore, they are "organic" in the sense that they emerge within a certain socio-economic formation (superstructure) with the emergence of a dominant social stratum. Their influence over the entire social formation is exerted through personal networks and associations, which might have both national (parties, professional associations) and international breadth (International clubs such as the Rotary, or, nowadays, networks of university alumni, international think tanks). Education is a crucial factor in the creation of an intellectual class (s. Gramsci & Forgas 2000, 310-3; Gramsci 2007, 306).

Poulantzas (1978) further elaborates the concept of hegemony<sup>4</sup>. First, it is in place when the political interest of the dominant are constituted as representative of a "general interest" and, second, when a specific dominant class or fractions of it is able to exert influence over a broader power bloc formed by diverse dominant classes or fractions (Poulantzas 1978, 140-1).

More recently, scholars of political science, international relations and international political economy (see for instance Arrighi & Silver 2006; Cox 1983; Jessop 1998; Jessop & Sum 2006a,

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<sup>4</sup> According to him, hegemony is a "historical situation" in which class domination is not reduced to simple domination by force or violence, but comprises a function of leadership and a particular ideological function by means of which the dominant/dominated relation is founded on "active consent" of the dominated classes (Poulantzas 1978, 138).

2006b; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Poulantzas 1978) have drawn upon Gramsci's work on hegemony.<sup>5</sup> The Cultural political economy approach (CPE) developed by Jessop and Sum (2006b) provides an appropriate framework for the present study, as it enlarges the scope of the definition to the international scale. In CPE, hegemony is treated as a "fluid" and "flexible" concept. Global hegemonies are the product of a multi-scalar process of adaptation and negotiation between "actors with different horizons of action" (global, national, regional, etc.). Their success depends on their ability to "absorb alternative meanings and marginalise resistances", therefore on their capacity to "adapt to more global or local circumstances" and to be strengthened through the "prosaic" of everyday life. This approach rejects the idea that hegemony is an exclusively top-down process. Rather, it stresses the importance of "sub-hegemonic nodes" that develop appropriate "technologies of power" that "anchor" globally hegemonic discourse to a regional or local level. Furthermore, sub-hegemonic nodes contribute bottom-up to the emergence of new discourses (Jessop & Sum 2006b).

As stated above, the concept of development entails elements that might be considered discursive constructs (e.g., structural adjustment, poverty reduction, governance, good governance, etc.) finalized at ensuring a global disciplinary governance on the world's poor (Escobar 1995; Craig & Porter 2006). As the case of the rise of the institutional idea that governance is at the foundations of development has shown, discourses have changed in correspondence with precise historical and economic turning points as the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, and consequent fears for the soundness of global capitalism, or the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. Therefore, any shift at the level of discourse cannot be detached from shifts in certain "material apparatuses" and "social

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<sup>5</sup> Even though the scope of the cited studies diverges, their authors employ similar concepts and terminology, as well as the focus on the "social". Cox is the first author to adapt Gramscian categories to the study of international relations. According to him, since the XIX century, international relations were characterized by the hegemony of one powerful state, which was able to complete a *revolution* and expand its new domestic order *beyond* its own state's boundaries (Cox 1983, 61). In order to build an alternative to the dominant capitalist democratic model, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) revisit and radicalise Gramsci's conception of hegemony, confuting its "foundational" character. According to Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony and power have to be conceived as "pragmatic" constructs which are "internal" to the social, thus contingent and periodically rearranged (p. 142). On the other hand, Arrighi and others (1997) have merged Gramsci's theory of hegemony with the French historian Fernand Braudel's concept of *longue durée* (long duration) to analyse the social and economic origins of the rise and fall of hegemonies in international capitalism since the XVI century (Arrighi & Silver 1997).

practices” (e.g., neoliberal capitalism, IFI, development agencies, fiscal restraint, market liberalizations, etc.). As Jessop and Sum maintain, these kinds of “imaginaries” correspond “to real material forces in the existing international political economy”. Economic systems and the relative set of regulatory political institutions are not the product of mere rationalism (economism). Rather, they are the product of social relations that emerge from specific institutional arrangements and historical as well as geographical conditions (Boyer 2002, 37-9; Jessop & Sum 2006a, 4). In fact, it is “the interaction between the discursive and extra-discursive that gives relatively successful economic and political imaginaries their performative, constitutive force in the material world”. Thus, following this interpretation, it is possible to conciliate the neo-Gramscian concern with “the economic, political, and intellectual-moral bases of power” and the neo-Foucauldian one with “specific technologies of individual and social power” (Jessop & Sum 2006b, 158).

What however is particularly of interest here is the integration of different ideas into a single discourse and how this can evolve or be modified by inward as well as outward intellectual forces. In addition, apart from discourse what other elements contribute in shaping a hegemony?

### *2.5.2. Rescaling hegemony*

A country like Japan has been able to concentrate its foreign aid flows in Asia since it gained membership in the OECD – which defines and supervises aid-giving – establishing itself as an “aid superpower”; with the rise of other regional donors, most notably China, however, Japan is looking for alternative ways to define its role under the OECD framework. Thus, it appears important for all the members of an international society of nation-states, where the institution of foreign aid is in place, to “speak the same language”. Continuous reference in GOJ’s texts and policy papers to common themes as democracy, good governance, human security, etc. can be interpreted as a way to be integrated in the broader “social” landscape of international relations. The presence of this concepts at the national level may also indicate, in fact, that a sort of intellectual dominance is in

place. Those keywords indicate, in fact, that there is a consensus among major donors on the leading ideas and objectives of international aid, identified by relevant and recognizable experts in the field. At the same time, they are dominant because of hegemony is realized. Following Gramsci, this might be defined as a consensus, which is mutually constructed or enforced by the subject with more available power on its subordinate(s). This seems to happen also in the field of international development between donor countries and their recipients. At the same time, their diffusion might imply a degree of “force”: as they are passed down from research centers, think tanks and universities to international organizations, national governments, and, finally, local communities. Furthermore, they might be appropriated by policymakers and used as the foundations of specific policies or they might be used by political leaders to gain consensus.

In the 1990s, especially after the foundation of the World Trade Organization in 1995 and the 1997 Asian Financial and Currency Crisis, the US-UK model of neoliberal governance was promoted at the level of international financial institution (IFI) as a blue-print solution to achieve sustained growth avoiding new setbacks. Pressure was put especially on Asian countries such as Japan, the then dominant economy of the area and promoter of an “Asian way” to development<sup>6</sup>, in order to embrace neoliberal standards and favor the “unhindered capital flow” across the globe (Harvey 2005, 93). After the Asian financial and currency crises, Japan took the lead in helping affected economies in the region to recover with financial aid and transfers of knowledge. As it will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, securing profitable business environment in key countries in Asia, mainly through cooperation initiatives in the sector of economic planning and legal reform was crucial for the GOJ and the Japanese business elite looking for investment opportunities abroad. In this process, also due to the pre-eminent role of Japanese aid in East Asia, neoliberal tenets were inevitably transferred to developing Asia. However, the adoption of neoliberalism in many parts of East and Southeast Asia has been limited to the economic and financial sectors. With the interests of the Japanese business community clear in mind, Japanese diplomats have been careful in imposing more

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<sup>6</sup> S. the 1993 Japan-funded World Bank study on the “East Asian Miracle”. *Infra*.

“political” conditionalities on their aid – such as democracy or the issue of human rights abuses – in countries like China, Myanmar or Viet Nam. In turn, local political elites have been able to keep the flow of aid and investments from Japan stable without been undermined in their authority. Ultimately, they have appropriated neoliberal concepts for economic management and deliberately discarded others in the field of social and political institutions (e.g., representative democracy, free press, etc.). Neoliberal hegemony might be in place but only partially realized, while Japanese “intellectual leadership” might be contextual to certain areas and realized only in presence of common interests between the donor and the recipient.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

Citing the case of the driving motives of the Japanese ODA – i.e., national interest vs. international affiliation – It has been shown that political discourses might be constructed by political leaderships on the basis of ideas which are clearly contrasting. The diffusion of neoliberalism since the 1980s has provided industrialized countries with a new framework of reference for their foreign policies. For industrialized countries, the imperative in foreign policy, as Harvey suggested, has become to work toward the unhindered global circulation of capital. The English School of IR has well summarized it in its studies: nation states should abide to common guidelines – culturally defined – renouncing to part of their individual interest in order to guarantee a common benefit for a community of states, that is the possibility to attract and export capital. This idea has reshaped the concept of national interest and, at the same time, that of international affiliation. It might be added that such a conception of the global system is the product of a certain social and historical context, broadly speaking the one that spans from the early 1980s (conventionally coinciding with the Reagan and Thatcher administrations in the U.S. and Great Britain).

The field of foreign aid has been affected by this historical turn too. Discourse is where changes are mostly visible. In the case which will be discussed in the following chapters, that of Japanese ODA

in HRD to Viet Nam, it is possible to identify a bureaucratic/conservative strain of ideas juxtaposed with a more liberal/humanitarian one. With Mannheim, they have been called modes of thought.

With the emergence of neoliberalism, the liberal/humanitarian idea has become dominant in the field of foreign aid. Japanese discourse on ODA has incorporated neoliberal tenets (for example, the creation of “good business environment” in recipient countries) in its assistance. Exporting a model of aid common to other major international donors (such as the U.S. or the WB and the UN), based on the transfer of knowledge and know how in certain fields of public administration, the GOJ is contributing to the development of a pseudo-neoliberal systems in transitional economies in developing Asia. In this sense, through aid programs aimed at training future bureaucrats and state administrators, it is contributing to the consolidation of neoliberalism’s hegemony. Naturally, this process is not unidirectional (i.e., only from donor to recipient); it is rather bi-directional. Benefitting from its relatively dominant position in regional affairs, in fact, Tokyo is projecting a “rescaled hegemony” – and not a diffused leadership, as conservative Japanese policymakers would like to see – based on the reach of common interests between the GOJ and the recipient country’s administration. For instance, in countries like Viet Nam – where the image of Japan as a model of economic and institutional success is widespread – Vietnamese administrators have revealed in recent years a certain preference for Japan-sponsored cooperation projects and partnerships with the GOJ. However, these are instrumental insofar as they allow the Vietnamese leadership to attain its own aims (such as keeping the flow of investments in the country stable).

In light of these facts, the methods of inquiry will be discussed in the next chapter.





### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter the role of neoliberalism and its founding ideas on contemporary international relations have been discussed. Specifically, ideas and discourses have been sorted out as units of analysis. Drawing upon authors like Mannheim, it has been argued that ideas, which are at the foundations of every political discourse and actual policies, are socially and historically constituted elements. In turn, discourses are the product of the combination of such elements mainly per juxtapositions, removal or absorption of sometime contrasting ideas into a single perspective. Discourses are, in fact, internally diverse entities. One example have been drawn from the case of the discourse on Japanese ODA. In the previous chapter it has been argued that it integrates two opposite “modes of thought”: a “conservative” and a more “liberal” one; one based on the idea of preserving the “national interest” in opposition to one another based on the idea of “international affiliation”. This feature of the Japanese political discourse on the country’s ODA cannot be fully grasped without considering the broader socio-historical context of neoliberal hegemony. Another factor has also been considered: the GOJ’s strive for regional leadership (*hegemony*) in Asia-Pacific. After losing its primacy as the world’s top donor at the beginning of the 2000s, Japan has tried to retain a position of leadership in the area, providing material and intellectual aid to countries in developing parts of East and Southeast Asia. As it will be demonstrated in the following chapters, this project has succeeded in certain countries such as Viet Nam. However, this has been possible because of a mix of consensus (shared interests) and coercion (the dominant neoliberal approach to economics and politics).

In this chapter the methods employed to collect data will be discussed with regards to the main research question of this thesis: *how has human resource development been conceptualized in the official discourse on Japanese ODA?*

The main sources of data were the many actors involved at the policy-making and in the policy-implementing level from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to university professors, to implementing agencies as JICA and contractors like JICE, and the students enrolled in the program. The fieldwork has been mostly exploratory given the fact that apart from official documents, there is a gap in the literature on Japanese ODA in HRD. Apart from text and discourse analysis on official documents available on Japanese ODA effort, qualitative semi-structured interviews have been the primary method of enquiry used (Heigham, Croker 2009).

### **3.2. Approach to and methods of data collection**

#### *3.2.1. The case study approach*

The project has been carried out through the entire three years of the Ph.D. program. During this time-span, data have been retrieved in different ways.

In order to analyze the approach of Japanese government officials and practitioners to ODA-tied HRD programs in Asia, and their “modes of thought”, a case-study has been selected. The JDS provided an exemplary case of a development shaped by the interplay of the ideas of national interest and international affiliation.

The case study approach allows for an analysis centered on the principle of *boundedness*. A case can be in fact defined as a “bounded system” where an individual or an institution interacts with a site and their interactions are determined by the context in which they occur. The breadth of the case, i.e., its boundaries, are determined by the scope of the researcher’s interest (Hood 2009, 68-9). In other words, case studies allow for an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. It also allows for a longitudinal analysis, namely a continued collection of data over a continued period (Hood 2009, 86).

The collection itself can be carried out with different methods as interviews, direct observation and analysis of documents, rules, policies, statements and even artifacts (Hood 2009, 77).

According to the generalization proposed by Stake (1995), the present study might be defined as an instrumental case study, aiming at shedding light on a particular phenomenon or issue in order to instrumentally develop categories to describe, back or confute certain theoretical assumptions (s. Stake 1995; Hood 2009, 70). Following the characterization of Duff (2008), it might be added that the present research has a descriptive character insofar as it aims at offering a “detailed and contextualized picture of a particular phenomenon” (Hood 2009, 71). In this light, the case study approach has proven useful in order to gain an understanding of a specific ODA program as the JDS not only through the GOJ’s official account; instead, especially through interviews with public officials, professors and students, it has been possible to gain an insight of real-life context of the project. In this context, it has been possible to shed light on processes of ideas transmission and diffusion from a larger international/global context to an individual one. In other words, it has been possible to carry out an analysis of the interplay between actors and structure in a given institutional and historical context.

In addition, it is assumed that the more the data are varied and diverse the more triangulation may be effective.

### *3.2.2. Selection of official documents and secondary literature*

The first phase of the data collection has regarded the analysis of official documents dealing with the JDS program and the ODA in general. Secondary literature has been useful in this phase in order to get a grip on the current debate and identify potential interviewees.

A set of relevant policy papers, public speeches, and reports both at a national (such as MOFA’s annual ODA White Papers; speeches by Prime ministers and Foreign ministers; JICA’s policy papers in the field of governance, institution building and HRD; JDS Reports) and at an international level

(such as WB World Development Reports; OECD-DAC Peer Reviews; Governance Handbooks; USAID 2013 policy paper on governance and democracy) were identified and analyzed. In turn, these texts and documents were coded. The resulting codes were confronted and analyzed in light of those emerged from the analysis of the interviews.

### *3.2.3. Qualitative interviews: reaching out to the elites and focusing on specific groups of participants*

Fieldwork research has been conducted in Japan from April to October 2015, while a second brief fieldwork in Hanoi has been scheduled in January 2016. During the first fieldwork 11 qualitative interviews have been conducted: 6 with top officials in the Japanese development institutions (MOFA, JICA) and in the leading public interest company managing the JDS project (JICE). Five more interviews have been also conducted with people in charge of the international students in selected Japanese universities, some of them with previous experiences as practitioners in the development sector.

If on the one hand, official documents are broadly available on institutional websites and libraries, on the other, a different effort has been necessary in order to collect sufficient data. Interviewees, in Japan and Viet Nam, have been reached out in two main ways: 1) directly contacting possible interviewees via email or telephone; this communication style has proven only partially useful as particularly time-consuming. Emails were often ignored or answered after weeks; 2) via network, i.e., via other interviewees acting as “gatekeepers” of a network of elite individuals involved in specific nodes of the ODA chain. This type of communication has been beneficial in order to reach out to new interviewees. Usually, one interviewees contacted the possible new interviewees in advance presenting the profile of the researcher and the concept of the research. This method has been particularly beneficial in order to interview JDS students, and in order to collect data in the second fieldwork in Viet Nam. Therefore, interviews have been *geographically* concentrated where

“gatekeepers” were available. Coincidentally, interviews were carried out in institutions among the most involved in the JDS project, and broadly, in HRD assistance to developing Asian countries: Nagoya University, Kyūshū University and Hitotsubashi University are among the top Japanese universities accepting foreign students from developing Asia, most of them holding GOJ’s funding. Interviews were intensive and semi-structured.

Elite interviews are a sub-category of “intensive” interviews. As other forms of qualitative intensive interviews, elite interviews involve “in-depth, one-on-one conversations” aiming at acquiring an “in-depth understanding” of a certain phenomenon and at uncovering unanticipated aspects of it. The term “elite” here does not bear specific social connotations. In fact, even though elite respondents may have political, social or economic importance of some sort, the term refers to the specialistic knowledge to which they have access. Elite respondents though can provide information that is otherwise unavailable to the general public (Babb 2012, 301-2).

For its characterization, elite interviews are largely “unscheduled”. Unscheduled interviews have a “general objective” and are not carried out on the basis of a specific set of questions. This feature allows to avoid excessive standardization. As Manheim and Rich (1995) note, interviews with experts or elite have not the purpose to collect pre-specified data, rather to gather information that might be used to “discern a pattern in specific behaviors”.

However, at least in the case here discussed, a certain degree of structure have shown its utility. In multiple occasions, the main points of the interviews were sent to the interviewees in advance. This has been deemed a necessary step in the process of trust-building with the interviewees. The absence, though, of a strict structure allowed for unscheduled questions or requests to clarify previous answers or even to deal more specifically with related topics or issues.

Questions were aimed at gaining an insider’s perspective on the ODA-related HRD initiative in Asia. The main focus was on aspects linked to the policy itself, i.e., its origin, the process of decision-making, the coordination among the different actors involved (Ministry, agencies, NGOs, recipients).

In addition, the “perception” of the usefulness of JDS-like HRD project in the larger context of Japan’s ODA was investigated.

Interviews with experts, development practitioners and people involved in training programs at the university level, have focused on the following themes:

- the role and connections between the training program, development agencies, supporting semi-governmental agencies and the policy-makers at a governmental level<sup>7</sup>;
- the future of Japanese foreign aid: present and future trends with regards to “governance” and “human resource development” in an always more competitive environment (e.g.: how emerging donors affect policies);
- Japanese leadership in Asia: how development practitioners and experts depict developing countries;
- ideas about Japanese national interest vs the needs of recipient countries from an institutional point of view;
- practical issues related to exchange programs and students’ life in Japan (selection processes, bureaucratic problems, etc.).

The limited availability of the interviewees to give longer interviews or follow-ups can be cited among the difficulties encountered following this method.

A slightly different path has been followed for the interviews with the JDS students. Rather than being elite interviews, these interviews are configured as “specialized interviews” (s. Babb 2012, 307). These interviews are used to collect data from participants belonging to specific groups. Differently from elite interviews, specialized interviews were not conducted to get exclusive information. Rather, they were conducted in order to uncover motivations and perceptions of a

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<sup>7</sup> One of the fieldwork’s aim was to get access to the policy-making level. This process was difficult and time-consuming. However, luckily enough, informants and “gatekeepers” in universities and agencies have provided help.

specific group of people (foreign students involved in a ODA-funded scholarship program in Japan). These interviews were more structured and had the primary aim to identify their personal backgrounds, uncover ideas, perceptions and expectations toward Japan, the program they were enrolled, and their professional future in their home country. This type of qualitative interviews have been preferred to more structured and scheduled surveys. The main reason for this choice can be summarized as follows: even if the JDS students can be considered part of the same group of individuals involved in the same aid initiative, they differed in terms of nationality and academic schedule. Opting for qualitative interviews allowed for “tailored” semi-structured conversations and for the mutual trust-building between researcher and participant.

Fifteen students currently enrolled in two public universities in Japan (Nagoya and Kyūshū) in programs aimed at strengthening governance with a focus on law studies were interviewed. A majority (seven) of the students reached for this research are nationals from three Mekong sub-region countries (Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar).

The major themes touched upon were:

- the student’s personal, academic and professional background;
- the student’s position in the public sector in his/her home country;
- his/her ideas on Japan; previous knowledge of Japanese language or culture;
- purpose in coming to Japan and experience in the new country;
- academic life and things learnt in Japan;
- ideas of reforms to be implemented: how the Japanese experience will affect the student’s job once they are back home.

The length of the interviews ranges from 30 (especially with agencies officials) to 60 minutes (with students and universities officials). Some of them were audio-recorded and transcribed afterwards. However, due to general conditions of the setting, individual preferences of the

interviewees (and the interviewer) the majority of them were conducted vis-à-vis with the support of notes. Field-notes and off-the-record observations were also kept. No interviewee declined to answer any questions or interrupted the interviews.

Interviews however may expose to the risk of collecting unverified or partial information. For this reason, the analysis has not been limited to qualitative interviews, but has required an additional phase of triangulation of the collected data with official documents, news and secondary literature, some of which were already been investigated in the first phase of the research.

#### *3.2.4. Direct observation*

During the second fieldwork, data have been retrieved through direct observation. In fact, it was possible to take part into one of the phase of the policymaking process of the JDS program, namely the exchange of opinions (*iken kōkan*) between representatives of the Japanese universities involved in the program and the Vietnamese ministerial counterparts. In this sense it can be considered a “political” event in a formal institutional context.

On these occasions, data were collected in presence of the researcher “embedded” in the delegation of Nagoya University to Hanoi in January 2016. The observation took the connotation of an *obtrusive* observation, as the people who were involved in the delegation were all aware of the researcher’s presence (Babb 2012, 331-5). Again, following Babb’s description the observation was largely unstructured: the main purpose of it was in fact to observe and identify recurrent ideas, discourses and patterns of interaction. At the same time, expectations, criticisms and proposals on both sides regarding the program could be assessed and collected as useful data. In fact, even if such events have not a decisional character, they are among the few public occasions, whose access is



nevertheless reserved, the donor and the recipient parties meet to exchange ideas and views on the program.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.3. Data analysis: coding and triangulation**

As already underscored in the previous chapter, it has been noted that the GOJ's discourse on its ODA contains at least two broad "ideas" – one concerned with national interest, and the other concerned with affiliation to the international community.

Drawing upon Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* (1936), two broad categories of styles/modes of thought have been taken into account: a) conservative/bureaucratic; b) Idealistic/liberal.

The first category emerged with the first bourgeois governments in Europe. The bourgeoisie had emerged in the second half of the XIX century as the ruling class in Europe and started expressing its own way of thinking state affairs as opposed to the (historical) conservatism of the noble class. The main tendency is to "turn political problems into matters of administration" (Mannheim 1936, 118). In the case study which will be presented in the following paragraphs, positions of this sort are evident in references by government officials and experts to concepts like the "national interest" and "cost-effectiveness" of the aid enterprise.

The political and social dimension of the ODA is overlooked, in favor of a more "measurable" perspective (Mannheim 1936, 120). In international politics, this intellectual orientation could be defined as fundamentally "realist", i.e., concerned with the survival of the state against threats to its security (either domestic and international) (Dunne & Schmidt 2011).

Opposed to this view dominant at the policy-making level (i.e., MOFA), the latter style of thought has as its most relevant feature that of a "Liberal-Humanitarian Idea" (LHI). The LHI sketches a "correct" and "rational" future in reaction to an "evil present". This reaction has its roots in broad

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<sup>8</sup> It might be argued that these meetings have only a consultive function: If proposals arise during the meetings they will be then transmitted to the JICA national office and, if considered viable, to the agency's headquarters in Tokyo. In order for them to become part of the actual policy, there needs to be a discussion inside the MOFA and between the GOJ and the recipient government.

“ideas”, like “humanity”, “reason and justice” or “human well-being” which provide “frames for a content [...] purposely left undetermined” (p. 222). Even if Mannheim wrote in the pre-WWII period, some similarities might be drawn with the recent years. The dominant liberal-humanitarian current of development studies sees “development” as the ultimate goal of humanity for the “Millennium” (s. for instance the UN’s MDGs); specific “development” targets are then set at the level of international organizations or national governments around the world. In these occasions, “developed” future(s) are put in sheer contrast to an “evil” present situation that needs to be addressed and radically transformed through international organizations’ and single states’ intervention.

### *3.3.1. Coding*

On the one hand, in the case of interviews with MOFA, JICA, and JICE officials, and experts and consultants attention has been paid to their “modes of thought” à la Mannheim. In particular, references to the role of aid in the general foreign diplomatic strategy of the GOJ and to the cost-effectiveness of the process; on the other, reference to aid as a client-oriented process and to the discussion-based process of aid giving. Other codes were assigned to text strings to identify the perception on the relations between Japan and the world, Asia and the international institutions.

In the specific case of Japanese ODA, this intellectual current is concerned with a sort of “customer-oriented” approach that seems to prioritize the development “needs” of the recipient countries and the role of Japan as a disinterested donor concerned with the economic and institutional advance of its Asian neighbors. This view seems to relegate conservative considerations on the background. Simultaneously, in the interviews with the JDS students and alumni images of Japan as a “model” and as an advanced and developed country have been observed. Similarities and differences between the students’ countries of origin and Japan are often traced.

These two macro-ideas, which are the main constituents of the GOJ's official discourse on international aid, have provided the backdrop for a more specific coding of the textual data.

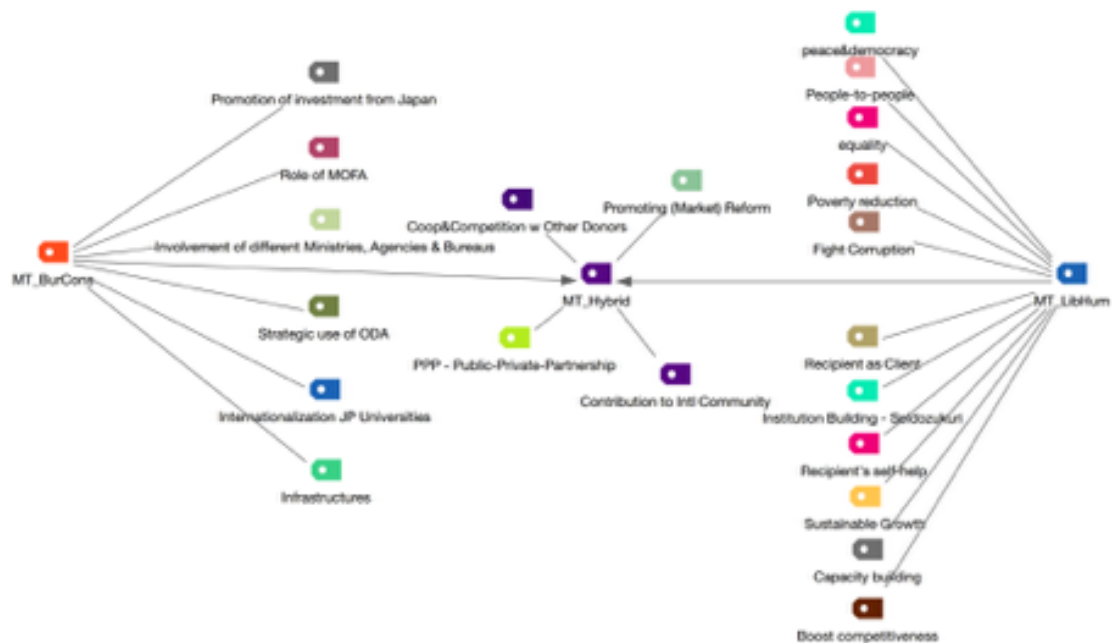
These have been analyzed with the help of a software for qualitative data analysis, MaxQDA, helping the management of large sets of data, and easing data triangulation.

Interviews and other relevant documents have been coded in order to reveal the major underlying themes drawing. In addition, several sub-codes have been identified. Aid policy, aid philosophy and the perception of Japan role in the world have been identified as the main themes recurring in the interviews. In this way, it has been possible to identify both the intellectual orientations (aid philosophy) and the principles guiding the policy implementation (aid policy). A more general thematic category has been assigned to the strings of text dealing with geopolitics or the role of Japan in the world as seen from the interviewees' perspective. A second more detailed codification has helped to identify the bureaucratic (for example concerning identifying fiscal, diplomatic or economic reasons) and the liberal rationales (as in the relations between Japan and other donors, or between Japan and the IFIs) behind aid giving. At the same time, this second coding has shown how different narratives interact the one with the other integrating domestic and external considerations at different levels of the aid giving sector in the GOJ. Furthermore, in this effort, several sub-codes have been identified. These have served to pinpoint in more detailed recurrent relevant ideas and perceptions involved in the aid-giving process. Codes have then eased the triangulation of data, allowing to conduct cross-analyses of interviews and documents.

Coding has been conducted during several readings of the texts collected. Coding tags have been assigned in order to summarize the basic message/content of single text strings. When possible, codes have been grouped according to the above-mentioned modes of thought à la Mannheim (conservative vs liberal), which offered a useful tool of analysis. To these two, a mode of thought "Hybrid" (MT\_Hybrid) macro-code has been added in order to regroup liminal themes resulted from the data analysis. In other instances, codes have been grouped in thematic macro-areas other than the

modes of thought. The following schema offers an overview of the thematic macro-areas, codes and subcodes used in the data analysis process.

**Figure 3.1: Map of codes**



As shown in the figure (3.1), three main macro-level codes have been identified: mode of thought (MT) bureaucratic-conservative (BurCons), liberal-humanitarian (LibHum) and hybrid. In the first category text strings related to state administration, national interest, and the involvement of different parts of the central government in ODA were included. In opposition, text strings concerned with international issues, the international debate on development, and a client-oriented approach were included in the second category. Text strings including both bureaucratic-conservative and liberal considerations were arranged in the hybrid category. In this last category, themes such as the Japanese contribution to the international community, the promotion of public-private partnerships and the instances of cooperation or competition with other international donors have been considered.

In the table below a list of the codes employed in data analysis is presented.

**Table 3.1: Codes employed during data-analysis**

<b>Upper code</b>	<b>Code</b>
Strategic use of ODA	National Interest
	Criticism
Japan & World	Japan as a model
	MT_BurCons
MT_Hybrid	Promoting (Market) Reform
	Japan & World
Japan as a model	Society
Japan & World	Japan & Asia
Japan & World	Japan & Intl. Organizations
Legal development	Training in law and administration
	MT_LibHum
	International experience interviewees
National Interest	Other domestic factors
MT_Hybrid	Contribution to Intl Community
MT_LibHum	Institution Building - Seidozukuri
Students' profile	Public officials
MT_LibHum	Capacity building
	Students' profile
MT_BurCons	Strategic use of ODA
Capacity building	HRD - Technical
MT_Hybrid	PPP - Public-Private-Partnership
Japan & World	Japan & China
MT_LibHum	Recipient as Client
	International discourse
Training in law and administration	Nagoya University
Japan as a model	Regulations
MT_Hybrid	National Interest
Capacity building	Criticism
Students' profile	Japan as a model
Japan & Asia	MT_BurCons
MT_LibHum	Promoting (Market) Reform
MT_LibHum	Japan & World
Students' profile	Society
	Japan & Asia
MT_BurCons	Japan & Intl. Organizations

Upper code	Code
National Interest	Training in law and administration
National Interest	MT_LibHum
National Security	International experience interviewees
MT_BurCons	Other domestic factors
Capacity building	Contribution to Intl Community
Students' profile	Institution Building - Seidozukuri
good governance	Public officials
Japan & Intl. Organizations	Capacity building
MT_BurCons	Students' profile
MT_LibHum	Strategic use of ODA
MT_BurCons	HRD - Technical
MT_LibHum	PPP - Public-Private-Partnership
National Interest	Training in law and administration
	Japan & China
Japan & Asia	Recipient as Client
MT_BurCons	International discourse
Students' profile	Nagoya University
Training in law and administration	Regulations
MT_BurCons	Coop&Competition w Other Donors
Contribution to Intl Community	Educational Development
MT_LibHum	Inter-country differences
MT_LibHum	Asianism
Capacity building	Fight Corruption
Japan as a model	peace&democracy
Institution Building - Seidozukuri	Lack of training
Japan & World	Alternative views
Capacity building	Involvement of different Ministries, Agencies & Bureaus
Capacity building	Public Opinion
MT_LibHum	Fiscal Restraint/JP economic growth
	Security cooperation
International prestige	Internationalization JP Universities
Public officials	risk reduction
Public officials	Professional character of the program
peace&democracy	Training in finance and economic policy
MT_BurCons	International prestige
National Interest	Non democratic gvt.s
MT_LibHum	Boost competitiveness
National Interest	Infrastructures
Institution Building - Seidozukuri	Poverty reduction
Japan & Intl. Organizations	Social Remarks
peace&democracy	Japanese pop culture
Institution Building - Seidozukuri	Promotion of investment from Japan
	China vs Vietnam
MT_Hybrid	Kyushu University
Capacity building	Preparation of JP officials
Students' profile	Japan as leader/proactive
Japan & Asia	Recipient's self-help

### *3.3.2. Triangulation*

According to Patton (2002), triangulation, the process of cross-analyzing data from different sources, investigators, theories and methodologies, serves to test a research's consistency. In this specific case, after coding and a first data analysis a triangulation of the data was carried out. This process was deemed necessary to give account of the different perspectives of the individual participants in the research and identify shared views and issues among them. Triangulation has been conducted on interviews of different individuals both at the level of Japanese aid administration and at the level of JDS students. For Japanese public officials, triangulation was conducted in order to identify traces of their belonging to a certain institution in the utterances that were recorded. In this case, data retrieved from interviews were triangulated with ministerial and agency official documents, policy papers, secondary literature and official declarations of ministers, ministry officials and governmental agencies directors. In the course of this process, parliamentary sessions were also taken into consideration. On the other hand, regarding interviews of JDS students, through triangulation, it was possible to identify common ideas and expectations about Japan and to reconstruct the participants' own Weltanschauung. In the case of Vietnamese JDS students, the results of the codings were cross-analyzed with secondary literature and interviews with JDS students of different nationalities. Needless to say, different participants provided different perspectives on the perceived "intellectual leadership" that Japan exerts in their respective countries. In particular, it was possible to identify influences of the interviewees' profession or social position in her/his ideas. Influences of the international discourse on development could also be identified triangulating interviews with official documents and policy papers sanctioned by international financial institutions such as the WB and the IMF, OECD and the UN system.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the methods of data collection and analysis. Drawing upon a theoretical framework grounded, among the others, in the studies on discourse and hegemony (for ex. Harvey 1996) and on the sociology of knowledge by Mannheim (1936), this methods have been utilized in order to study the modes in which aid is conceived and discursively articulated by a donor (Japan) and recipient (Viet Nam).

First, the advantages of the case study approach has been discussed. This research method allows to treat an object of study as a bounded system, that is, to take into consideration a variety of sources as long as they belong to a certain system, socially, institutionally and historically defined. Following this approach, it has been possible to retrieve data from different data sources such as qualitative interviews, policy papers and official documents, direct observation and secondary literature. Then, it has been possible first, to identify possible “gatekeepers” and gain access to interviewees and previous studies. Following the collection, data have been analyzed. The data analysis has been conducted both analogically and digitally. A first screening of the data sources has been conducted through intensive reading. Then, the core analysis has been conducted with the aid of text analysis and mixed-method research softwares such as MaxQDA. Computer-based analysis enhance the possibilities to manage large databases of textual data and facilitates the coding of relevant texts. Furthermore, it helps to implement an effective triangulation of sources. Codes have been identified in order to grasp the core message and ideas of a certain utterance (s. § 3.3 and 3.3.1). The identification of codes has allowed a triangulation of the sources. Therefore, it has been possible to cross-analyze the data identifying differences, commonalities and the broader socio-historical context at the foundation of certain utterances.

In conclusion, in this chapter the methods for data collection and analysis have been presented and discussed in light of the theoretical framework described in the previous chapter. In the following pages, the data will be presented and discussed in detail.





## 4. Toward a strategic partnership for peace and prosperity: Japan-Vietnam relations toward the 21th century

### 4.1. Introduction

Japan is today one of Vietnam's most important international partners. Since the country's opening to the international market in 1987, with the *Đổi Mới*, "renovation", Japan has supported VN's development strategies and its accession to multilateral organizations. In multiple occasions, Japan has acted as an intermediary between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) and international organizations such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In recent years Japan has become Vietnam's largest donor of aid and is amongst its largest providers of investment. It is evident that this strategy is the product of the co-ordination of different interest on both ends. The *national interest* of both donor and recipient has played a major part in this process.

In order to tackle the main research question (*how HRD has been discursively conceptualized by Japanese institutions in charge of aid giving?*), an overview of the aid relations between Japan and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam since the late 1980s will be provided. It might be said that on the one hand, Japanese interest toward Vietnam has its roots in the prewar era, while the latter's interest toward Japan has been growing since the early 1990s. Multiple reasons may have caused the enhancement of mutual exchanges. First, Vietnam is located in a strategic area of Southeast Asia, at the border with China and is run through by the Mekong River, a major regional trade route and crucial destination for infrastructural investments. Second, Vietnam is rich in raw materials, namely oil, coal and recently discovered rare earths. These two features make Vietnam an important country in Japan's – a country poor in raw materials and dependent on imports – diplomatic strategy. Third, Vietnam and Japan seem to share common interests: on the one hand, in the last three decades the Vietnamese political leadership has sought to attract capital to sustain the country's development and forge good relationships with as many countries as possible; this has not prevented, however, the

emergence of border conflicts and territorial disputes with China, Vietnam's most influent and powerful neighbor, and, consequently, the search for trustworthy allies. On the other hand, in international relations, the Japanese political elite has complied with the US's China containment strategy (Gurtov 1970)<sup>1</sup>.

The bilateral relations were further strengthened in the 2000s. Recent reputation surveys have shown a general appreciation of Japan by the Vietnamese population and tighter cultural exchanges (s. MOFA & Ipsos 2014). This has not happened by chance. Common strategic interests, such as the need perceived by both countries to reign in the military threat posed by China, and Japanese foreign aid have played a major role. But is this enough to state that Japan is exerting "leadership" over developing countries like Vietnam? In 2005, the then Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Asō Tarō declared that Japan should become Asia's "intellectual leader" exporting its knowledge and know-how to other countries in the Asia-Pacific out of its own experience as a developing country. More recently in 2013, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal, the Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō stated that "many countries in Asia are expecting Japan to exert a leadership in the region" against the growing threat of China. In the Japanese aid debate, scholars and commentators are seeking a way for Japan to regain its leadership in the international aid sector. "From big donor to smart donor", titles a recent collection of articles on the opportunities offered by recent developments in Asia's economy, society and urbanization: to regain its leadership, Japan must invest more in knowledge-based aid. It appears, however, that this view ignores the agency of the recipients, which in some cases opt for Japanese aid out of *opportunity* and *availability*, rather than a Japanese objective leadership in a certain field. This is, for instance, the case of Vietnam.

The main hypothesis which will be put forward in the following chapter is that through such initiatives Japan has been constructing an "intellectual leadership/hegemony" over Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1970, Melvin Gurtov (a researcher with the RAND Corporation) described the significance of Vietnam in the U.S. Asian policy. An all-Communist Vietnam was considered to pose a "serious threat" to the region's stability and spur Chinese activism in instigating new socialist-oriented insurgencies. This would have run counter Washington's national interest – a broad category comprising the containment of China's power and influence in East Asia (Gurtov 1970, 12-32).

Hegemony is here interpreted in the Gramscian sense (see *supra*). Namely, hegemony is described as a political phenomenon in which leadership is exerted through both imposition by the dominant and active consent of the dominated. The “construction of consent” is here crucial in order to understand such dynamics. As the second largest economy in the world and Asia’s unchallenged economic leader at the time when the official cooperation started between Japan and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) in the early 1990s, Japan was still in a position of dominance over other Asian neighbors and a model in terms of economic policies. An “Asian model of development” had emerged (and was heavily publicized) in opposition to the “Western” one. Such a development model prioritizing economic growth over poverty reduction was undoubtedly perceived by the Vietnamese leaders as more suitable to the developmental needs of their country. Interestingly enough, recent surveys show that Japanese aid enjoys high rates of appreciation and approval in the Vietnamese population. On the other hand, even if it stresses aspects such as the fight of corruption and accountability of the public administration, it might be said that Japanese aid lacks the power of “moral suasion” that could destabilize or delegitimize the one-party government. Interestingly enough, it might be argued that Japanese aid had a positive effect on the Vietnamese economy in general and on the permanence in power of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Against this background, the history of Japan-Vietnam relations since the late 1980s early 1990s will be considered.

#### **4.2. Fighting for leadership in East Asia: Japanese role in Indochina’s stabilization**

Japanese diplomatic activism with regards to Vietnam dates back to the 1960s, and was further strengthened at the end of the 1980s. Diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian reasons can be cited as a major driving force. Hirata (1998), among the others, discusses the Japanese pro-activism in Vietnam and in former Indochina in the early 1990s in terms of diplomacy. According to the scholar,

In the 1990s, Japan has been trying to gain a higher status in international politics commensurate with its economic strength, for example by gaining a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Japan views an active role in political affairs in Indochina as a stepping-stone for a greater leadership role in international political affairs (Hirata 1998, 28).

Japanese diplomats argued that this goal was to be achieved with a more comprehensive intervention by Japan in the peace process. Japanese economic power had already been recognized by partner nations: the GOJ was often criticized for using its economic power as a diplomatic tool (the so-called “checkbook diplomacy”; s. Arase 1994 and 2005; Hirata 1998; Katada 2005). However, in light of a progressive US disengagement from the Pacific front, Japanese political leaders saw in the Cambodian issue a propitious moment to exert a proactive leadership in the region. From the late 1980s until the early 1990s, Japanese diplomats were engaged in international forums and conferences on the In the Cambodian peace process, the GOJ produced its effort in a) negotiations with regional and global powers (ASEAN and Australia; the UN Security Council); b) organizing a peace conference with the rival political factions in Cambodia with Thailand; c) persuading the various warring factions in Cambodia to accept the comprehensive peace plan drafted by the UN Security Council; and d) offering a direct Japanese participation in the peacekeeping operations and law enforcement in support of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) (Hirata 1998, 29).

At the same time, Japanese political leaders were aware that authorizing the country’s Self Defense Forces (SDF) could cause widespread opposition both inside and outside the Diet and preventing Japan from assuming an active role in the international arena. The dispatch of military troops abroad was in fact barred by a 1980 Cabinet decision interpreting the constitution’s Article 9 in sense of not allowing troops to take part into missions that could involve firefights. A bill allowing the participation of Units of the SDF to the UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia submitted by the Kaifu Cabinet was rejected by the Diet in 1990. After a few amendments, the bill was passed in

1992, nearly two years after it was submitted for the first time. In 1993, six hundred SDF military and 75 civilian personnel were dispatched to Cambodia (Katzenstein 1996, 126-7).

Leaving strategic considerations aside, it is worth stressing that the GOJ's interests in continental Southeast Asia had been since the prewar period mainly economic and commercial. Only relatively recently, they have finally converged into a "value-oriented diplomacy" (Yoshimatsu 2012, 363), as partly illustrated by the case of the drafting of the SRV's CPRGS in 2002.

#### *4.2.1. Prewar relations until the WWII*

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the French colonial rule in Indochina greatly reduced the political liberties of the Vietnamese. Hundreds of activists were jailed for their insurgent activities. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, groups of Vietnamese intellectuals and activists sought repair abroad, and set anti-colonial political movements. In the 3-year period between 1905 and 1908, hundreds of Vietnamese students fled to Japan and studied there. It was the so-called *Đông-Du* (Go East) movement.

In the last years of the nineteenth, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, Japan had emerged as a regional power, after the Imperial restoration of 1868 and the military victories against China and Russia. Domestically, the country enjoyed a period of economic and institutional development, and of thriving cultural and political activity which attracted many young students and political activists from all over East Asia. Those elite foreign students admired the capacity of Japan to emerge as a world-power. Asian reformists and nationalist activists saw in Japan a possible Asian leader nation that could have guided the continent out of "Western" colonialism. Among them there were the Chinese Sun Yat-sen and the Vietnamese Phan Bội Châu. Today their both considered among their respective countries' "fathers of the nation".

Even though Asian reformists like Sun and Phan were able to build their personal network in the Meiji Japan's political establishment, the then Japanese government considered too bold a move

confronting the Euro-American bloc, which had hegemonized the continent, and appealing to young intellectuals, banned from their countries as “revolutionaries”, and often forced into hiding from the colonial authorities, to come to Japan. In fact, the Japanese establishment of the time prioritized a strategic “alignment” with the “West” in order to pursue the country’s interest: economically, expanding its sphere of influence on the continent in Northern China (Manchuria) and in the Korean peninsula; and, politically, being treated as a “peer” by the Euro-American powers who had Japan sign unequal treaties in the 1850s-60s.

Part of this strategy, for example, was the Franco-Japanese Treaty of 1907, with which the two countries recognized their respective areas of “special interest” in China (Mongolia, Manchuria and Fukien, today’s Fujian for Japan) and (Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan for France). Japan also recognized French authority over Indochina. Phan, wanted by the French colonial authorities, was eventually deported from Japan the following year. Disillusioned with Japan, Phan was able to flee Vietnam for a second time and to find shelter in China. There he became acquainted with Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese nationalists. He would be finally caught by French authorities in Shanghai in 1925.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Japanese businesses mushroomed in Vietnam. Japanese *karayukisan*, prostitutes, with their pimps, established their activities in the major cities of French Indochina becoming in a few cases hotel-keepers. During WWI, exploiting the economic bubble some Japanese businesses opened branches in Hanoi and Saigon. Then, the Japanese government opened consulates in Haiphong and Saigon in the early 1920s. (Ohno 2006, 102-3; Shiraishi 1990, 3).

WWII brought radical changes the bilateral relations and built up a legacy that would last until the post-war years. Indochina had not been included in the Japanese continental expansion in the 1930s. However, for the Japanese military, engaged on the Southern Chinese front, and on the Pacific front, it had a strategic significance, especially for the supply of food and natural resources (s. Marr 1995; Ohno 2006). Between the end of 1940 and mid-1941, the Japanese Imperial Army occupied French Indochina. Until 1945, it was in fact a “bloodless” occupation, determined through a series of

treaties between Tokyo and the French government of Vichy, formally allied with the Japanese. The objective of the Japanese military command was to maintain order and peace in the region (*seihitsu hoji*), while maximizing the strategical advantage given by the access to natural resources and local workforce. Between 1942 and 1943, Japan became Vietnam's largest and only trading partner (Tran, Nguyen & Nguyen 1970, 266). The Japanese invasion of Indochina nevertheless caused a decisive fracture with the US. Washington froze Japanese assets and enforced an oil embargo against Tokyo (Marr 1995, 22-28; Shiraishi 1993, 117).

Contrary to other parts of Asia, and probably mostly due to the French presence, the 4 year-long Japanese occupation did not bring about initiatives of cultural assimilation and homogenization of Vietnam and the Vietnamese (*nihonka*). However, Japanese language teaching, Japanese cinema, and Japan-oriented Pan-Asianist propaganda spread rapidly. Attempts of "japanization" of youth movements were however enforced in South Vietnam, where the Japanese rulers had reestablished a monarchy under Emperor Bao Dai (s. Marr 1995, 80-134). On the other hand, the strengthening of the Japanese role in Indochina accelerated the process of formation of a national liberation front, the Việt Minh, ended with the August revolution (Nguyen 1987, 138).

In March 1945, the Japanese military overthrew the French colonial administration with a *coup d'état*. Japanese rule worsened the food supply conditions in the rural areas of North Vietnam hit through 1944 by a dramatic famine that killed millions (Grandjean 2004, 95-98; Marr 1995, 97-100). the Indochina became part of the Great Co-Prosperity Sphere, and it would have remained so until the Empire of Japan's surrender in September that year.

#### *4.2.2. From postwar reparations to the Fukuda doctrine*

The proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) by Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi in 1945 did not end the conflict in the country. Hostilities would continue for almost three decades,



with France wanting to restore its colonial rule in Indochina, and, after 1954, with the US military intervention.

With the 1954 Geneva Conference, Vietnam was temporarily divided into two countries: the DRV in the North, with Hanoi as its capital; and the non-communist State of Vietnam, then Republic of Vietnam (RV), in the South, with Saigon as its capital. Japan interrupted all its official relations with the DRV. Japan provided war reparations and aid to the RV, becoming one of its major regional trade partner in the 1960s and 70s (Shiraishi 1990, 7-30).

Unofficial and informal relations were never completely cut off. Japanese trade associations were keen on maintaining their businesses within the DRV, but their commercial activities were inevitably affected by the trade sanctions the US imposed on the DRV and by the conflict in the country, from the mid-1960s until the early 1970s. However, even at the heyday of the Vietnam War, human and political exchanges between the two countries continued. The activities of Japanese political associations like the Japan-Vietnam Friendship Association, the Japan Committee to Support the Vietnamese People, linked to the Japanese Communist Party, and the Citizens' League for Peace in Vietnam (*Beheiren*), formed by left-leaning urban intellectuals, were representative of such informal connections (Shiraishi 1990, 38-9).

Japan normalized its relations with North Vietnam (the present-day Socialist Republic of Vietnam, hereby SRV) only in 1973. In 1972, the Government of Japan (GOJ) had already opened its frontiers to DRV diplomatic delegations and to students (Shiraishi 1990, 45). Two years after the normalization, in April 1975, the GOJ signed an agreement with the DRV on the provision of a grant of 28 million USD and opened its embassy in Hanoi, in October that year (Shiraishi 1990, 61). Japan continued maintained its cooperation policies even after the unification of North and South Vietnam into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) and the 1975 US commercial embargo. Despite the suspension of the aid to the newly born state in 1979, after rising tensions with Cambodia over the Khmer Rouge, the GOJ remained one of the few non-Communist countries to keep diplomatic relations with the SRV, in the hopes that they could serve as a "bridge" with the US. At the same time,

the US started seeing favorably Japanese proactive engagement in the region in the light of a progressive US disengagement from East Asia, after the Vietnam War (s. Shiraishi 1990, 69-74).

In 1977, the Fukuda cabinet revamped its diplomatic strategy towards Southeast Asia, the so-called “Fukuda Doctrine”. This marked a new era in Japan relations with Southeast Asia. Japan in fact pledged to “support the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)”, including Vietnam even if it was not yet a member country, with “economic means”. The GOJ also stressed the will to promote “heart-to-heart” human relations, as the foundation of a peaceful coexistence between Indochina and the other ASEAN countries (Shiraishi 1990, 74; s. also Sudo 1992; 2005). Despite criticism from other members of the Association, and the US, Japan kept a line of cooperation with Hanoi (Bouissou 2003, 233).

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the GOJ’s decision to restart aid disbursements to Hanoi, after the Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia, was instrumental in paving the way to a revived engagement of the international community in the SRV. This move was also favored by the decision of the SRV political leadership to pursue a more open foreign and trade policy in the context of a continuation of the country’s “renovation” following the end of the Cold War. This strategy led to the SRV’s joining of ASEAN in 1995, and to the growing involvement of Hanoi in the region’s politics. It also served to foster stronger relationships with Japan, which in 1977 had pledged to contribute to the economic and institutional development of the region through the Fukuda doctrine.

The economic importance of ASEAN for Japanese policymakers was stressed in the early 1970s, when the first bilateral meeting (the ASEAN-Japan forum on Rubber) was launched. This first official gathering was organized mainly to deal with trade disputes. Some ASEAN countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, criticized Japanese export-led trade policies toward Southeast Asia, and wanted to reign in further trade aggressiveness. In the first half of the 1970s popular anti-Japanese sentiment was widespread from continental to Pacific Southeast Asia<sup>2</sup>. In this context, particularly in

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<sup>2</sup> In 1972, in Thailand a boycott on Japanese import was organized (s. Sudo 2013, 34). The symbolic episode of this wave of anti-Japanese sentiment took place in 1974, during a visit to Jakarta by the then Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei. Students protesting against the Japanese policies toward Indonesia surrounded the PM’s temporary residence, after attacking and destroying Japanese goods and properties (s. Hansen (1975).

the aftermath of the 1973 Oil shock, the GOJ took steps to keep its relations with the ASEAN leaders as friendly as possible, especially with those countries rich in raw materials. Japan was, and still partly is, in fact dependent on the imports of oil and natural rubber for its industries (Sudo 2013, 33-4).

### **4.3. Vietnam's "new thinking"**

#### *4.3.1. Đổi Mới as a comprehensive phenomenon*

Since 1986, Vietnam has undergone a process of massive political and economic process of reform, called *Đổi Mới* (literally "renovation"). This state-mediated process of opening the country to the global market economy spurred an unprecedented economic growth, which helped to reduce poverty by a third and favored the transition from an import-substitution economy to an export-oriented one (s. Dollar 2002; Fforde 2009). On the other hand, the *Đổi Mới* years also signaled a radical political transition. As one scholar puts it,

[...] Vietnam made radical changes in its strategic thinking, known in Vietnamese as '*Đổi mới tư duy đối ngoại*' ('new thinking in diplomacy'). Hanoi gradually settled the thorny Cambodia issue; normalized its relations with 'former enemies' and 'hostile forces' like China and the US; re-established ties with other capitalist powers (including Japan) and financial institutions; as well as initiated negotiations with ASEAN counterparts for a membership. The end of the Cold War in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist bloc, which once served as 'the cornerstone of Vietnam's Foreign Policy' officially put an end to this ideology-driven and alliance-based thinking, and re-oriented Vietnam's Foreign Policy toward a 'multifaceted' and 'omni-directional' one (Thuy Thi Do 2014, 4).

This transition was spurred by a shift in the SRV relations with the Soviet Union and Hanoi's progressive distancing from Moscow, until the collapse of the USSR. At the end of the 1980s the

USSR tried to revamp its Asian strategy: the then Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Secretary General Michail Gorbachev promoted a new engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, aiming at stabilizing the relations with China. The Soviet leader pledged the USSR's withdrawal from Afghanistan and Mongolia, paving the way for the end of the USSR's military support to the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia (s. Evangelista 1986, 573-4; Nakano 2006, 154; The New York Times 1986). Furthermore, the Afghan military campaign put the USSR's economy in great distress. Against this background, Moscow was eager to "rationalize" its aid policy to Vietnam. In fact, the criticism inside the CPSU's leadership's over the lack of effectiveness of USSR's cooperation with, and economic support to the SRV had become harsher. In mid-1987, Vietnam and the USSR agreed on a new form of economic cooperation based on joint-ventures and trade rather than on subsidies (Nakano 2006, 153-5).

The SRV had to gradually adapt its national economy and its foreign policy to the new international situation. First, the SRV's economy was affected by the end of the subsidies. Parts of the SRV's leadership were keen to speed up the economic *Đổi Mới*. Second, the rupture of the USSR-SRV's axis also meant that the SRV had to rely increasingly on its own means to secure national security. Between 1988 and 1989 the Communist leadership laid the foundations of a new foreign policy based on a multilateral approach and on the establishment of friendly relations with "all the countries" (Nakano 2006, 160).

This new attitude at the leadership's level translated itself into a rapprochement with the SRV's Indochinese neighbors (Laos and Cambodia), ASEAN countries, and, most importantly, with China and, later in the 1990s, with the US. After the demise of the USSR, China became a model for certain currents in the Vietnamese communist leadership. One reason supporting this, was the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s leadership's capacity to strike a balance between the one party rule and its economic development. More specifically, China's economic policies in the areas of industrialization, agricultural modernization, and foreign capitals attraction. Key for this, in the hope of the

Vietnamese leadership, was the withdrawal of the Vietnamese army from Cambodia, completed in 1990 (Nakano 2006, 203).

After the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the SRV started implementing the diplomatic strategy drafted by the Communist leadership at the end of the 1980s, and consequently the economic reforms that transformed the SRV's centrally planned to a more diversified market-oriented economy. These reforms aimed at a dramatic reduction of the inflation rate (which in 1988 amounted at the 160 percent), and stabilization through fiscal adjustment and monetary restraint; at the same time, the liberalization of foreign trade and investment. Foreign direct investments (FDI) in the country accounted for the 5 percent of the country's total GDP in the second half of the 1990s (Dollar 2002, 10-1; Thuy Thi Do 2014, 5). Such reforms spurred rapid growth in the early 1990s resulting, on the one hand, in poverty reduction, a better access to healthcare and education for millions of people, and, on the other, in development imbalances between urban and rural areas. However, reforms ended up increasing corruption in the public sector, at the local and national levels (Fforde 2009, 487).

#### *4.3.2. Looking for new international partners: Japan, the WB and the US*

In this context Japan emerged as one of the SRV's major international partners (s. Thuy Thi Do 2014). Japanese policymakers' and aid practitioners' interest toward Vietnam increased in the early and mid-1990s. In 1992, the GOJ resumed its economic cooperation with the SRV. That year, Tokyo reopened the 45,5 billion JPY credit line opened before the SRV invaded Cambodia in 1979. The move was possible after a round of diplomatic negotiations between the US, Japan and the SRV, that spanned from the unsolved issue of the missing in action (MIA) between the US and the SRV to the issue of aid resumption between the GOJ and the SRV. After the then Japanese Foreign Minister Watanabe Michio persuaded the SRV diplomacy to deal with the US over the MIA issue, that the US,

initially contrary to the GOJ's initiative, approved the resumption of Japanese aid to the SRV (Hirata 1998, 27).

However, the resumption of Japanese aid provoked opposed reactions in the SRV leadership. On the one hand, a part of it welcomed with skepticism. Japan was in fact believed to use its economic power to establish a sort of neocolonial rule in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, more liberal views expected Japan to exert a "containment force" against the US in the Asia-Pacific region (Nakano 2006, 214-5). Along with it, Japan used its position as a member of the most prominent regional and international organizations and financial institutions (IFIs), and major US ally in the Asia-Pacific region, to favor a larger international engagement with Vietnam's economic development (Thuy Thi Do 2014, 5). In 1993, Japan and France paid off the SRV's debt at the IMF and favored a restart of loans to the country (Hirata 1998, 28). At the same time, the World Bank (WB) restarted financing projects in Vietnam after a 15 year-hiatus. The following year, the WB pledged a 246 million USD loan for two projects: a structural adjustment credit and an agricultural rehabilitation project (s. WB 2016).<sup>3</sup>

#### *4.3.3. The role of the World Bank*

Japan was only one of the major donors that urged Vietnam to develop a sound and consistent set of regulations. Particularly, the World Bank had a crucial role in setting the agenda for legal reform in Vietnam.

In its first studies on the economic and political situation in the SRV, the WB stressed the importance of creating a sound regulatory environment to favor Vietnam's transition to a market-based economy. SRV-WB relations in the last three decades follow to a certain extent the timeline already presented with regards to the SRV-Japan relations. They have been strengthened since the early 1990s, but have been informally in place since the late 1980s (s. Cling, Razafindrakoto &

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<sup>3</sup> Data from World Bank (2016). Projects and Operations. Vietnam, Projects. Available online at: [http://www.worldbank.org/projects/search?lang=en&searchTerm=&countrycode\\_exact=VN](http://www.worldbank.org/projects/search?lang=en&searchTerm=&countrycode_exact=VN)

Roubaud 2013). In 1993 the Bank reopened its operations in the country and contributed with research, reports and policy advice to the further opening of the country to the international market.

One of the early WB studies on Vietnam's legal framework is dated 1994. The survey was conducted by Nathalie Lichtenstein of the Legal Department of the WB and reviewed the laws and decrees implemented by the SRV since the launch of the *Đổi Mới*, focusing on provisions regarding companies, contracts, banking and foreign investments. The study noted how the legal reform undertaken by the SRV leadership since the late 1980s was instrumental to the country's economic transition. Moreover, it noted that Vietnamese lawmakers were striving to make the country complete its transition toward a market economy, while preserving its original socialist-oriented socio-political system. In order to do this they had in fact to blend several legal traditions into a hybrid system that suited the local reality: the local classical Chinese-influenced legal tradition, the French codes imposed during the colonial period, and the socialist lawmaking tradition with Soviet, Chinese, and, partly, US-common law influences (Lichtenstein 1994, 3). This "legal diversity" can be seen as a consequence of the division of the country lasting from the mid-1950s until the mid-1970s. In fact, while in the government of North Vietnam promoted a collectivist mode of production, in Southern regions of Vietnam, sectors of the local population were still familiar "with the workings of the market economy" (Pham Van Thuyet 1995, 1).

After surveying and discussing the legal framework of the SRV, the study concluded by listing four priority areas for legislative intervention. First, a new land law, in order to break the exclusivity of state's property over land, thus creating a market for land leases and mortgages. Second, a reform of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the approval of a new company law, reducing the state's share in the productive sector, and inequalities between private and public enterprises in terms of access to markets. Third, a revision of existing regulations on companies and foreign investment in order to facilitate foreign companies investments in Vietnamese companies and "corporatization". Forth, provide an overarching set of rules for everyday transactions, and possible disputes, through the revision of the civil code. In addition, other measures would be required in areas such as bankruptcy,

competition and securities. In sum, such provisions would ensure a more stable legal framework and expand the “confidence” in the legal system that would usher in new investments and new economic growth (Lichtenstein 1994, 60-1).

Despite some improvements in the country’s legal framework, a 1995 WB report, reads as follows:

Considerable impediments remain for further development of the private sector [...]. A deficient legal framework made up of complicated regulatory laws and uncertain substantive laws is perceived by the private sector as one of the most serious obstacles to its expansion (Pham Van Thuyet 1995, 1).

In addition, the 1995 WB Report stressed the relative distance between legislative action undertaken in the economic sector (with investment, bank and company laws), and its consequences in practice. Little had been done though to strengthen the country’s legal infrastructure, specifically, with regards to law enforcement and the court system. In these areas, “ideology” was responsible for limiting the possibility of development of a “healthy” private sector, favoring the state sector over it. In particular, ideology affected the independence of the judiciary and the backwardness in land privatization (Pham Van Thuyet 1995, 39-40).

Again in 1998, the WB President’s Memorandum on the Bank’s Country Assistance Strategy (CAS), stressed the importance for Vietnam to take steps in order to determine a positive investment climate also favoring the implementation of the WB’s development assistance disbursement. The government, read the document, needed first, to rationalize and make more transparent, the investment approval procedures and their respective modalities of access; second, to accelerate the equitization of the market, i.e., the division of certain assets into stocks accessible through a stock-market mechanism to private investors; third, to deregulate foreign investments in Vietnamese companies; forth, to reform the financial market through the creation of a “satisfactory legal framework” allowing foreign groups, such as offshore banks, to operate on the Vietnamese financial



market, in particular, with regards to BOTs, securities, and mortgages (Wolfensohn, Sandstrom & Lindbaek 1998, 23).

#### **4.4. Japan's rediscovery of Vietnam**

##### *4.4.1. Southeast Asia and its importance as a source of stability and opportunity: the Hashimoto doctrine*

For Japanese policymakers, Southeast Asia still represents a region of extraordinary significance in terms of “stability” and “opportunity” (Tamaki 2014, 37-8). The two concepts are unequivocally bound together.

At the beginning of the 1990s Hashimoto Ryūtarō had established himself in the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) as a leading political figure keen to follow a path of regional integration with other Asian countries (s. Sudo 2013, 102-3).<sup>4</sup> His role was crucial for the evolution of the Japan-ASEAN relations toward the new millennium. In particular, he recognized the importance of the region for the economic stability and growth of East Asia.

His vision was expressed in a speech in Singapore during his ASEAN visit in January 1997. On that occasion, Hashimoto renewed the GOJ's commitment toward Asia. Keeping the Japan-ASEAN economic cooperation as the central pillar of the relationship, the Hashimoto administration aimed to expand the partnership at the policy level. Specifically, Prime Minister Hashimoto proposed to expand the scope of cooperation to security issues, international law enforcement, and to scientific and cultural exchange. These dialogues would have the effect to build mutual trust and respect for each others' cultures and traditions. The strengthening of the Japan-ASEAN relations was however bound to both domestic and international factors. First, the “limitations” the GOJ faced in its endeavor to implement reforms domestically and its economic difficulties; second, the presence of the

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<sup>4</sup> In particular Sudo stresses that Hashimoto was active in promoting the need for an East Asian Economic Caucus to enhance economic and trade cooperation in East Asia (Sudo 2013, 104).

US in Asia, as the ultimate guardian of peace and security in the area; and third, an enhanced participation of China in the regional affairs through dialogues and meetings, in order to build “ties of trust” between China and the rest of the world (MOFA 1997; Sudo 2002, 135-137).

Twenty years after the first GOJ’s aid package to ASEAN, under Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo, and ten years after another aid package subscribed by Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru, Prime Minister Hashimoto proposed a “multidimensional” partnership between Tokyo and ASEAN (Lee, 1997)<sup>5</sup>. Through the so-called “Hashimoto Doctrine”, in fact, the GOJ proposed to enhance the cooperation between Tokyo and the Southeast Asian nations. The main reason is to be found in the widespread idea among the Japanese diplomacy that ASEAN is “a force for political and economic stability” in Asia, and that, for this reason, “Japan intends to enhance co-operation” with it (MOFA 2004, 56; Tamaki 2014, 38), also given its relevance in terms of Japan’s economic interest: ASEAN countries have been the largest recipients of Japanese FDI in the last decade. Furthermore, the GOJ publicizes its support to the political and economic stability, and growth of ASEAN, because its very growth is “beneficial” to Japan (MOFA 2009, 41; Tamaki 2014, 38).<sup>6</sup>

Southeast Asia is in sum the *locus* where the GOJ can both ensure its economic and geopolitical leadership. In this sense, the number of summits and official meetings between Japanese and ASEAN leaders have established through the years since the early 1970s, is not surprising (s. Sudo 2009 and 2013; Yoshimatsu 2012).

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<sup>5</sup> The Hashimoto doctrine can be described as a follow-up of the Fukuda and Takeshita doctrines, the programs of economic assistance to the ASEAN region drafted by the government of Japan in order to foster good economic and diplomatic relations with the countries in the area. Together with the Hashimoto doctrine, they form the pillar of the contemporary relations between ASEAN and Japan. A detailed account of the programs might be found in Sudo (2002) and Pressello (2014).

<sup>6</sup> As specified by Tamaki (2014, 38), the MOFA clearly points at the development of the Mekong subregion as key to the future development of the wider ASEAN maxi-region.

#### 4.4.2. *A Japanese glimpse of Vietnam: the opportunities of a country “blessed with latent energy”*

In the early 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, Vietnam was at the center of the Japanese political debate. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the MOFA pledged to take steps to strengthen its diplomatic capacities. Foreign Minister Watanabe Michio (1991-93) announced a plan to hire more than a hundred new officials and to expand expenditure both in bilateral and in multilateral cooperation<sup>7</sup>. Against this background, the GOJ restarted its cooperation with the SRV. During his first visit to Tokyo in 1993, the SRV Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet met with Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi and agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation as the *Đổi Mới* advanced (Leifer 1995, 281). In the Diet, Watanabe defined Kiet’s visit as an “epoch-making event” (*kakkiteki na koto*) and reaffirmed the GOJ’s “support” and “total appreciation” for the SRV’s economic and social policies. Furthermore, Watanabe stressed Prime Minister Miyazawa’s effort as a mediator between the US and the SRV, and, at the same time, expressed his desire to see a deepening of the friendly relations between the SRV and China<sup>8</sup>. It is worth noting that the following year, US President Bill Clinton lifted the US trade sanctions against Vietnam (Nakano 2006).

Briefly after the restart of the Japanese ODA to the SRV, policymakers started seeing the SRV also in terms of “opportunities”. These opportunities can be roughly described in economic and geopolitical terms. During a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chamber of Councillors in 1995, Japanese economist, former Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), and progressive politician Kojima Keizō addressing a senior MOFA diplomat, Katō Ryōzō, stated as follows:

I went to Vietnam as a member of the UN Commission for the Mekong River. I felt many things about the country, but in particular, that it is a country with great potential and that it

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from Watanabe’s speech at the 126th Session of the Diet, House of Councillors, Foreign Affairs Commission, 1st meeting, March 26, 1993, 8/150.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

will probably grow in different ways in the next few years. Furthermore, I have another tie to Vietnam. We were the first to successfully develop oil extraction in the Mekong Delta, though it was eventually taken over by the Soviet Union. For this reason I have bitter memories of Vietnam. However, on the one hand there is the country's potential. On the other its degree of stability. How stable is Vietnam? In particular China is extraordinarily increasing its military expenditure. In other words, is not there the risk for this region comprising Vietnam to be involved in a Second Cold War?<sup>9</sup>

Katō, then in charge of the Asian Bureau of the MOFA responds that Vietnam is involved in a process of poverty reduction through economic growth and the *Đổi Mới* policy. In addition, it is showing a “proactive” attitude regarding its participation in regional affairs. The MOFA official showed confidence in Vietnam's contribution to regional security through its ASEAN membership. However, as Katō specifies,

Vietnam is a country blessed with a latent energy (*senzairyoku*). Since Vietnam is a promising country, and in order for us to contribute to the security and development of the local and

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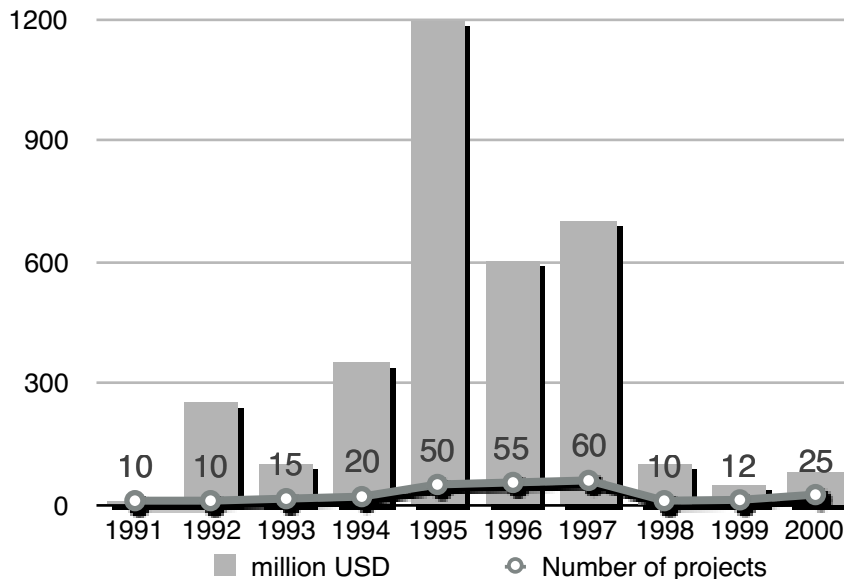
<sup>9</sup> 134th Diet Session, House of Councillors Foreign Affairs Commission, 8th meeting, November 29 November, 1995. My translation, 54/71. “私の時間が非常に少ないものですから、恐らく一問しかできないと思うんですけども。一つは、私は前からベトナムといろんな関係がありまして、一番古くは国連のメコン委員会というのがありまして、あそこに十ばかりダムをつくるということで、環境問題だとかいろんな関係で議論がたくさんありまして、結局これは今でもまだ実現していないわけでありまして。国連メコン委員会のメンバーとして行きまして、私もいろんなことを感じたんですけども、確かにポテンシャルのある国で、これから恐らくいろんな形で伸びていくであろうというふうに思って帰ってきたわけです。それからもう一つのかかわりというのは、メコンのメコンデルタ、あの地域で石油開発というのを最初にやって、ヒットしたわけでありまして。しかし、これは結局ソ連にとられたというか、そういう形になってしまったんです。ですから、ベトナムについてはいろいろ苦い思い出があるんですけども、果たしてこの国のポテンシャル、それからもう一つは逆に安定度といったようなものはどの程度のものなのか。殊に中国が最近非常に軍事力を増強しておりますね。だから、ベトナムを含めてあの辺一帯がいわば第二次の冷戦の渦中に取り込まれるという危険性が果たしてないのか。この辺のことを、ベトナムの将来についてのお考えをぜひ伺わせていただきたい、こういうふうに思っております”。

international community, we are aware of the importance of a relationship in which, like now, our proactive assistance is welcomed (*uketotte morau*) by Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

The “reified” view of Asia, contended on the two extremes of “threat” and “opportunity” is here apparent (s. Tamaki 2014). However, considered the traditional view of ASEAN as a relatively stable region held by the Japanese policymakers (Tamaki 2014, 33-9), it might be said that much more attention was paid to the strategic economic advantage the improved relations with the SRV could ensure to the GOJ and to Japanese investors.

According to a report by Mitsubishi UFJ (2007), based on data of the SRV’s MPI, Japanese investments in Vietnam have boomed in the first half of the 1990s. In the graph compiled by the analysts at Mitsubishi UFJ, it is possible to see that the disbursements in FDI by Japanese investors reached a peak in 1995 (see fig. 4.1).

**Fig. 4.1: Japanese FDI to Vietnam (1991-2000)**



*Elaborated from Mitsubishi UFJ (2007). Kasoku suru Nihon kigyō no tai Betonamu tōshi [Japanese companies’ investments to Vietnam advance]. Tokyo: Mitsubishi UFJ.*

<sup>10</sup> 134th Session of the Diet, House of Councillors Foreign Affairs Commission, 8th meeting, November 29 November, 1995, 55/71. My translation.

“いずれにいたしましても、ベトナムは潜在力に富む国でございますし、将来性のある国だということでございますので、私たちは、地域社会と国際社会の安定と発展に寄与するためにはベトナムとの間に今のような積極的な支援、それを受け取ってもらうという関係、これがあることが重要だと認識いたしております”。

In fact, at the end of the 1980s, Japanese trading companies (*sōgō shōsha*) and industrial conglomerates (*keiretsu*) had seen an opportunity for business in the SRV's economic opening up. Among these, Nisshō Iwai, Mitsui Bussan, and Mitsubishi Oil (now JX) played an important role.

After the SRV started withdrawing its troops from Cambodia in 1988, and in the context of the SRV's economic reforms, Japanese trade companies like Nisshō Iwai (Now Sōjitz Corp.) started setting up branch offices in Vietnam (Sketch Pro 2014; Tomoda & Takeda 2005, 82). Nisshō, Mitsubishi and Mitsui focused their activity on mining, chemical production, and oil and gas extraction. For instance, in 1992, Mitsubishi, through Mitsubishi Oil (present day JX), got the Vietnamese government's permission to develop the Rang Dong Oilfield, and started large-scale cement production (Mitsubishi UFJ 2007, 3). Mitsui rose to importance in the early 1990s when SRV's Industry vice-minister Lê Văn Dỹ visited Japan and met with Mitsui's managerial staff asking for their advice in drafting the country's industrialization masterplan.

The masterplan for Vietnam's industrialization included infrastructural modernization in energy generation and distribution, transport and communication (railways, highways, port facilities), and the development of a national telecommunication network. In order to do this, Mitsui advised the government of the SRV to apply for long-term low-interest loans at the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), the WB, and other bilateral and multilateral donors (Tomoda & Takeda 2005, 83).

In early 1991, Mitsui vice-president Ishikuri Kazutani visited Vietnam announcing that Mitsui would provide assistance to the SRV government on the industrialization strategy, and that it would give middle and high-level young officials in the SRV's public administration the possibility to study and intern in Japan. Along with this, the Japanese advisors urged the SRV government to take measures to involve the private sector in the industrialization strategy. As a result, Mitsui was granted the permission by the MPI to invest in a few projects in steel production and construction, oil and gas extraction, chemical and plastics, rice processing, and clothing (Tomoda & Takeda 2005, 83-4).

The resumption of the GOJ's ODA to the SRV caused a rapid increase of Japanese FDI to Vietnam in the following three years. Mitsui was among the Japanese companies that looked for partnerships and joint-ventures with local companies in the construction sector in order to secure bids tied to infrastructural loans from bilateral and multilateral donors. From the Japanese investors' perspective, the revived GOJ involvement in Vietnam through international cooperation in 1992-93 was in fact instrumental to reducing the country-risk and spurring the private sector's involvement in the national industrialization strategy. Moreover, Japanese investors reportedly appreciated the GOJ's request to the SRV government to use its ODA loan "to improve the investment environment" (Tomoda & Takeda 2005, 85-9).

As Japanese parliamentary records reveal,<sup>11</sup> the resumption of official aid flows to the SRV might also have been the result of a compromise between the Foreign ministry and exponents of the business elite: as discussed above, on the one hand, in the resumption of ODA to the SRV and the consequent diplomatic effort toward the normalization of the SRV's relations with the international community, showed the desire of Japanese policymakers to make its contribution with regards to an international issue; on the other, the national interest (*kokueki*) rationale is also apparent.

Since the late 1980s, when the SRV started its market reforms, the presence of oil field in the area of the Mekong river delta attracted the GOJ's attention. It is reported that Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru was preoccupied with finding Japanese operators interested in the explorations and development of oil fields in Vietnam. Therefore, between 1991 and 1992, the Japanese Foreign Minister and vice-Prime Minister Watanabe Michio held meetings with Mitsubishi Oil managers to discuss the terms of oil extraction in Vietnam. The meetings were arranged by Izui Jun'ichi, an entrepreneur interested in the oil extraction industry in Vietnam, with strong connections with MITI high-level bureaucrats and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) chieftains. Izui apparently worked as an intermediary between the Mitsubishi executives and relevant figures in the LDP, in particular, with Watanabe with whom he was acquainted. In October 1991, Izui sent money as "political donation" to

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<sup>11</sup> S. especially 141th Session of the Diet, House of Representatives, Budget Committee 7th meeting, November 28, 1997, 303-357/436.

Watanabe. As declared by Izui in the the Budget Commission of the House of Representatives, that money was a bribe directed to Watanabe for his intercession with the Vietnamese authorities on behalf of Mitsubishi Oil's that in October 1992 was successful in its bid for the exploration and development of the Rang Dong Oilfield in South Vietnam.<sup>12</sup>

#### *4.4.3. The Ishikawa Project*

In the mid-1990s, the GOJ had started, in selected countries, forms of “intellectual cooperation” (*chiteki shien*) complementing the economic and financial one. Among these countries there was the SRV.

The 1995 Ishikawa Project might be defined by Japanese scholars the “flagship” project in this area of cooperation (s. GRIPS 2003; Ishikawa 2005 and 2008; Ohno 2002; Ohno & Ohno 2002; Ohno 2007). This study aimed to support the SRV's government in drafting suitable economic and social policies to build a market-oriented economy in the country against the background of its progressive integration in the world economy. The project saw the involvement of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the SRV Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and Hitotsubashi University, a public university in Tokyo. The 6 year-study was agreed upon during an official visit to Tokyo by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) former General Secretary Đỗ Mười that year.

The major aim of this GOJ-SRV intellectual cooperation project was the drafting and implementation of the Sixth and Seventh Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plans (Ishikawa 2002, 1). Funded by the GOJ through its ODA, the project was ended in 2001 and has produced scientific publications as well as policy recommendations to the CPV's leadership in strategic areas

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<sup>12</sup> Drawn from the 141th Session of the Diet, House of Representatives, Budget Committee 7th meeting, November 28, 1997, 303-357/436. A more detailed account of the Izui scandal might be found in Blechinger (2000).



such as agriculture, trade and industry, currency, and the reform of state owned companies (SOE) (GRIPS 2003; Ishikawa 2005, 27-9).<sup>13</sup>

The project leader was Ishikawa Shigeru. International and Asian economics specialist and member of the Japan Academy, an organization that assembles the country's leading academics and scientists, since the 1960s Ishikawa had been an economist with the Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University, one of the elite academic institution for training and research in social sciences and economics<sup>14</sup>. the Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, and Jōsai University in Saitama. In the 1950s he was research fellow at Harvard University and at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. In 1991, SOAS awarded him an honorary fellowship. He is considered a leading figure in Japan in the field of development studies. Before leading the research project, Ishikawa had worked with the World Bank (WB) as deputy chair on a commission in charge of drafting policies for a WB loan for the development of universities in China. He had then presided a JICA special research committee on economic assistance to Egypt. In 1993, he was nominated president of the commission on Economics training and research in Vietnam at the Ford foundation, and the following year, he led another JICA special research committee on economic assistance to Vietnam (s. GRIPS 2010).<sup>15</sup>

As an economist, Ishikawa promoted a state-mediated process of development that could sustain a gradual transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one. One of the central

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<sup>13</sup> See National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) (2003). Vietnam's Industrialization Strategy in the Age of Globalization. The Ishikawa Project. Tokyo: GRIPS Development Forum. Available online at: <http://www.grips.ac.jp/forum/module/vietnam/materials/1ishikawa.htm>

<sup>14</sup> According to a ranking compiled by the Japanese weekly "Diamond" in 2010, Hitotsubashi University is among the top-5 universities in Japan for its "research capacities" (*kenkyūryoku*), and among the top-10 for its "instruction capacities" (*kyōikuryoku*). This results are consistent with the 2014 ranking published by the economic weekly "Shūkan Tōyō Keizai", placing Hitotsubashi at number 11 out of 300 in its general ranking of the country's "most influential" (*hontō ni tsuyoi*) universities. See Shūkan Diamond (2010) (retrieved online at: <http://web.sapmed.ac.jp/kikaku/infomation/0227daiyamondokiji.pdf>) and Shūkan Tōyō Keizai (2014) (available online at: <http://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/26869>).

<sup>15</sup> Professor Ishikawa Shigeru's profile might be found at: <http://www.grips.ac.jp/forum/newpage2008/ishikawa.htm>, accessed June 20, 2016 [Ref.: GRIPS (2010). Ishikawa Shigeru sensei nōto. Tokyo: GRIPS Development Forum.]

themes in Ishikawa's work is in fact the role of the government in the creation of a market economy in low-income countries and transitional economies. According to the Japanese economist,

In the poorest or transition countries, domestic markets are extremely primitive. In terms of productivity, organization and human resources, such countries have not reached a stage where mere deregulation can unleash the latent market power to sound development (Ohno 2002, 6).

Therefore, governments need to take measures in order to create "rules and frameworks such as laws, deregulation, privatization and free trade" (Ohno 2002, 6). But more importantly, the governments must not ignore the development needs of the single sectors of the national economy. In this light, it has to take measure in order to implement trade and investment policies, and at the same time promote technological and industrial development. According to Ishikawa, in fact, it is important that governments in developing countries be "flexible" in mixing state and market in their policies, according to the level of development of the single country. In a lecture in 2002, for example, he defended the Chinese development model, based on a gradual reform of the SOE, rather than a abrupt wave of privatization and liberalization as happened in some countries of the former Soviet bloc (Ishikawa 2002, 20).

On the other hand, Ishikawa recognized (and criticized) the role of the WB in shaping the agenda of international development. Between 1999 and 2000, Wolfensohn promoted a new paradigm of development, which clearly appears in his remarks at the Tenth Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Wolfensohn recognized the need to "rethink" development in terms of a multifaceted process. First, he argued for the need of a more inclusive approach to the local actors on the end of the donors and the IFIs, forging capacity building and a sense of ownership of the development projects, thus attracting wide consensual support on the recipient's end. Second, he put forward a long-term vision of development realized through the use of comprehensive development frameworks (CDF) and, at the same time, a "sharper poverty focus".

Third the process had to be reliable and measurable: for this reason, Wolfensohn introduced the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). This document was thought of as a policy paper emphasizing the “ownership” and “participation” on development programs by the recipient communities. Furthermore, the PRSP should indicate the poverty reduction initiative’s “macroeconomic framework”, and “implementation timeframe”, and, at the same time, suitable indicators through which progress can be measured (Wolfensohn 2000, 4-5). This paradigm shift was explained by Wolfensohn in terms of a consideration of the new challenges presented by globalization. While admitting to the irreversibility of this process, the WB President, recognized the importance of further trade-openness and liberalization in order to spur growth while reducing poverty. To this aim, he recognized the importance of “safety nets” protecting the “poorest” from possible side-effects of globalization, namely inequality. This effort would be vane, though, without taking specific steps in order to foster new and improved global “rules” in international trade, specifically, ensuring equal access to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Only in this way, according to Wolfensohn it was possible to frame an “increasingly inclusive” approach to development (Wolfensohn 2000, 9-11).

In the early 2000s, Ishikawa appeared to appreciate the “shift” in the international aid “ideology”, from “poverty reduction” to a more comprehensive “poverty reduction with growth promotion” strategy, including investments infrastructures and industries. In the 1990s, thanks to the influence of the work of eminent economists as Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz, the Bank had embraced a different approach, that of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). In Ishikawa’s perspective, this new approach was positive as it stressed the importance of “non-income” aspects, as the level of health, education, access to social safety nets, etc. to attain development; and, on the other hand, it stressed aspects like participation, “consensus building” among all the stakeholders involved in economic activities in the recipient countries, aimed at fostering a sense of “ownership” of the development initiatives by the citizens. However, citing the case of the SRV in the mid-1990s, Ishikawa is clear stating that such a strategy is difficult to pursue in absence of sound fiscal resources.

According to the Vietnamese government, a large part of the resources for poverty reduction must come from the national budget— although they are partly financed by external and local resources. Where the budget revenue is small, it restricts the extent of poverty reduction measures.

In sum,

the World Bank’s poverty reduction strategy will remain hard to understand, and there is even a risk that the new policy framework will be regarded as another new conditionality (Ishikawa 2002, 32-3).

In this sense, Ishikawa values the Japanese experience as a developing country in the early post-WWII period, and as an aid donor since the 1950s (s. Ishikawa 2005 and 2008). Often citing the example of the joint JICA-Hitotsubashi-MPI project, of which he had been in charge, he favored the Japanese approach to aid giving (request-based, non imposing, negotiating and bending policy solutions to the recipient’s needs) over the model adopted by other Western major donors (conditionalities) for it is more likely to create “mutual trust” and “friendly ties” between the donor and the recipient. As Ishikawa puts it,

What is clear from the lessons learned from the East Asia model is that *mutual trust* was established when Japan provided aid without attaching conditionalities and by continuing serious policy dialogue based on *equal partnership*. Japan must retain this approach in supporting the current low-income countries of East Asia (Ishikawa 2005, 28).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Cursives are mine.

According to Ohno (2014), the Ishikawa Project was the first major policy dialogue the GOJ has launched with its ODA recipient countries. Others followed suite in 2003, 2008 and 2011, under the leadership of different public actors such as the Japanese embassy in Vietnam, JICA, the Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO), the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) (Ohno 2014, 87). In fact, it might be said that the Ishikawa project ushered in a period of stronger cooperation between Japan and Vietnam. Consequently, it might be added, Japanese policymakers' attention toward the SRV has grown steadily.

#### **4.5. Vietnam as a strategic ally: views from Japan**

##### *4.5.1. Stabilize or perish: the Asian Financial Crisis and the New Miyazawa Initiative*

It was, however, toward the end of 1997, that Japanese interests toward political and economic stability in Southeast Asia became even more apparent. In the 1997-8 the burst of the Asian financial and currency crises (AFCs), originated in a credit bubble in Thailand, hit Japanese economic and financial stability and urged the GOJ to promptly intervene in order to stabilize the region (s. Hook, Gilson, Hughes & Dobson 2002; Hughes 1999; Jessop & Sum 2006; Shiraishi 2005). The Hashimoto cabinet extended millions of yen in insurance credit, preferential low-interest loans, and new infrastructural projects, such as the construction of international roads. Japan pledged to train around 20 thousand personnel over five years in the political, social and financial sector, with special emphasis on the latter. The program was in fact conceived to remove those “structural weaknesses in the region’s financial markets” that had caused the monetary crisis (MOFA 1998). In addition, the GOJ also pledged to grant ASEAN businesses more access to the Japanese market (Sudo 2013, 111-2).

The AFCs had in fact affected many Japanese companies and had repercussions on the Japanese national economy too. From the mid-1980s until the early 1990s, in light of the yen's appreciation against the dollar, many Japanese manufacturers sector outsourced parts of their productions in Asia where production costs were sensibly cheaper to keep their competitive advantage. The Japanese manufacturing sector had become "regionally embedded" (Shiraishi 2005, 6). Japanese foreign direct investments (FDI) grew accordingly, as interest rate on capitals remained relatively low (s. Jessop & Sum 2006, 187-209). Borrowing from Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum's study on the Asian crisis,

The reinvestment- and export-oriented Japan-led production order depended heavily on external trade and financing. It was complemented by an American-dominated dollar-bloc regime that could enhance its external trade by stabilizing its import-export prices as well as providing external financing at no exchange risk. So complementary and stable were these features between 1985 and 1995 that they produced a certain 'structured coherence' between the production and financial orders that stabilized exportist regimes of accumulation that are based on the dynamics of investment-production-reinvestment (Jessop & Sum 2006, 194).

Policymakers in Tokyo clearly acted to contain the effects of the financial havoc and responded quickly to contain the effects of the financial upheaval, contributing 19 billion USD as financial aid to Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia. Japanese creditors (namely, Japanese banks) were in fact exposed to failures to be repaid (MOFA, 1998).

A footnote in the MOFA's 1998 ODA Report specifies:

By some estimates (notably on p. 103 of the Economic Planning Agency's FY 1998 Annual Economic Report), economic strains throughout Asia could have the effect of cutting real

GDP growth in Japan by half a percentage point [...] Japan has made heavy direct investments in this region (e.g., 308.5 billion yen to Indonesia alone in FY 1997).

In addition, as the report states, as of December 1997 “Japanese banks had outstanding loan assets to Asia worth a combined \$114.7 billion” (MOFA 1998)<sup>17</sup>. Under these circumstances, the GOJ’s renewed its commitment to ASEAN at the Japan-ASEAN summit at the end of 1997. In that occasion, Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō announced a series of measures to help those ASEAN countries most affected by the financial crisis. The measures were then implemented, in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, the following year, and are known as the New Miyazawa Initiative after Finance Minister Miyazawa Kiichi.

At the Group of Seven (G7) Finance Ministers’ Meeting in October 1998, Finance Minister Miyazawa Kiichi announced a series of measures to stimulate economic recovery in East Asia totaling 30 billion USD. The GOJ decided to take concrete steps to overcome the AFC. As of October 2000 the GOJ had provided 80 billion dollars in short- and medium- to long-term assistance programs to ASEAN member countries, including a 64 million dollar project aimed at strengthening Japanese initiatives in human resource development (MOFA 1998 and 2000).

According to Marc Castellano (2000), this economic initiative had different rationales. First, in the GOJ, and especially at the Ministry of International Trade and Industry level, there might have been a drive to protect Japanese exports to the countries affected by the AFC (34 % of the total) and Japanese businesses registered abroad. Second, the above-mentioned Japanese banks’ credit default exposure put at risk the Japanese financial sector too. Third, the Miyazawa Initiative was successful in promoting the internationalization of the Japanese yen.

The Miyazawa Plan was not a success in every respect, however. It did little, if anything, to boost the internationalization of the yen. Moreover, the plan was not universally welcomed in

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<sup>17</sup> The full text 1998 ODA Report is available in English and Japanese at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/summary/1998/3.html>.

Asia. A not-insignificant number of critics charged that Tokyo's aid program was largely self-serving and was geared toward saving overseas Japanese businesses. Furthermore, the fund distribution process was asserted to be slow, unfair and secretive. Certainly, Japan received little credit from the West for its contribution to the region. More importantly, critics inside and outside Japan began to challenge the fundamentals of Japan's ODA policy.[...] Japan's foreign aid philosophy, shaped from its own postwar experience, traditionally viewed infrastructure and industry as the keys to fostering sustainable growth and development. This thinking began to change, however, as a result of the East Asian economic crisis (Castellano 2000).

The two year-period between 1997-8 accelerated the GOJ's reconsideration of its assistance policies to Southeast Asia. According to the 1998 ODA Report,

Japan has proactively contributed to human resource development in each one of its recipient country. Our country is firmly convinced that in order to foster continued economic and social development in developing countries, along with the provision of economic and social infrastructures, which constitutes the foundations of development, nurturing human resources of all kind is necessary and inevitable. In light of this, in recent years, Japan has supported the process of reform (*ikō katei*) in various countries in Indochina, in Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia in their move toward a market-oriented economic system (*shijō keizai ka*). To this end, under the advice and leadership of our country's experts, programs of key cooperation and support toward the formulation of major policies (*jūyō seisaku chūsā shien kyōryoku*) have been carried out within the process of reform core of governmental actors promoting institution building through the modernization (*seibi*) of the decision making and legislative frameworks which enables various economic reforms. Furthermore we have provided financial assistance to student-exchange programs funded by developing countries' governments. To date, we have supported such initiatives in Malaysia,



Thailand, and Indonesia. In 1998, in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis that has disrupted the program, we have provided a 14 billion yen loan to Malaysia.<sup>18</sup>

Cooperation between the SRV and the WB has proceeded smoothly until the early 2000s. A turning point in the relation, can be found in 1999, when Vietnam was chosen by the Bank as the “pilot country” in East Asia of its new Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) (s. *supra*; Wolfensohn 1999; Ohno 2007).

#### 4.6. Toward a strategic partnership

As it was shown in previous paragraphs, since the late 1980s, the Vietnamese leadership has been looking for a normalization of the country’s international relations with Asian neighbors, including China and with former enemies such as the US and Japan. Against this backdrop, in the early 2000s, Japan-SRV’s bilateral cooperation gained momentum.

##### 4.6.1. Towards the CPRGS: The SRV, the Bank and the Japanese intermediation

In 2001 the government of the SRV submitted an Interim PRSP to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) in order to raise additional funds to promote growth and curb

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<sup>18</sup> MOFA 1998. My translation. (開発途上国の経済・社会開発を進めるにあたっては、開発の基盤となる経済・社会インフラの整備を行うとともに、各種人材の育成が必要不可欠であり、我が国はこれまでも、各国に対し、人材育成のための協力を積極的に行ってきた。こうした中で、近年、インドシナ、中・東欧、中央アジア諸国等において市場経済化へ向けての移行が行われつつあり、このような移行過程を支援するため、経済諸改革にかかる重要政策の策定や法制度整備等の制度造りを行っている政府機関の中核において、我が国の学者等専門家が助言・指導を通じて知的支援を行う「重要政策中枢支援協力」が実施されている。我が国は、ポーランド、ジョルダンに対して産業対策の分野で、ヴェトナム、カンボディアに対して法制度整備分野で人材育成を含めたこうした支援を行っている。また、途上国政府が行う対日留学プログラムに対し、資金協力を行っている。これまでマレーシア、タイ、インドネシアに対し支援を行ってきたが、98年度は、アジア経済危機の影響を受けて継続が困難となったマレーシアに対し、約140億円の有償資金協力を行った)。

poverty in the country. This document was formulated by the Vietnamese government in order to comply with the WB and IMF guidelines that required the aid recipients to present “specific” and “operational” measures to the international creditors.

This approach was adopted by the CPV’s leadership in framing the SRV 2002 PRSP, and consequently, its 2006-10 Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan. Authors have often stressed the specificity of the SRV’s “Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy” (CPRGS) compared to other PRSPs.<sup>19</sup> According to Ohno Izumi,

There are two aspects that have made Vietnam’s PRSP very unique compared to early PRSPs:

(i) its strong growth orientation, including comprehensive reference to the role of large-scale infrastructure in pro-poor growth; and (ii) its status as supplementary to existing strategic documents, such as the Five-Year Plan and Ten-Year Strategy (Ohno 2007, 10).

The specificity of the SRV’s document of economic policy might be observed from its very title (CPRGS instead of PRSP). In addition it might be seen as the result of strong political stances taken by the Vietnamese leadership, and “soft” pressures by the donors. As one of the major multilateral donor to the SRV, the WB could exert a relatively strong influence on the policy- and law-making process in the country. However, instead of adopting a rigid and confrontational approach toward the CPV leadership, the Bank adopted a negotiating “non-doctrinary” and practical approach coordinating its initiatives with the SRV’s government and other agencies (experts, consultants, bilateral donors) functioning as intermediary. This approach effectively recognized the “specificities” of Vietnam. As Cling et al. (2013) point out, the WB could not “afford to lose a client which has huge financing needs” growing steadily, with a sound financial solvability, and potentially with a low risk of

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<sup>19</sup> The specificity of the CPRGS will be further discussed in the following paragraphs. However it might be worth saying, as a preliminary note, that earlier PRSPs, as that prepared for Mali in May 2002, focused on poverty reduction initiatives, through reforms at the level of public administration, and fiscal and monetary policies.

default. *A posteriori*, the WB could benefit from the successful market reforms in the SRV to publicize its policies in other parts of the globe (Cling, Razafindrakoto & Roubaud 2013, 9).

If this approach was deemed successful by the WB, it worked as well for the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) leaders. In fact, in taking strong stances against the the policies suggested by the IMF (as the privatization of SOEs and state banks), the CPV leadership was successful in reining in the influence of the WB's sister institution and maintaining domestic legitimacy (Rama 2008, 43).<sup>20</sup> Instead, keeping a close cooperation with the WB and other major bilateral donors has however been key to attracting foreign funding, both as FDI and ODA, and has enhanced the SRV's international integration. At the same time, the CPV leadership could ensure the international community's positive recognition of the country's development effort. In this endeavor, the adoption of key concepts, such as "democracy", "rights", "freedom", etc. in the country's official policy documents indicates somehow the willingness of the CPV leadership to "blend" its country's specific economic and social policies, at least if taken at their face-value, in the dominant global neo-liberal discourse. (Cling, Razafindrakoto & Roubaud 2013, 10-2).

Part of the success of this negotiating process might be attributable to the role of the GOJ, via JICA, and its experts. As Hatakeyama (2008) pointed out, Japanese officials opposed the first PRSP for its excessive stress on social aspects, such as investments in education and welfare, and the lack of initiative in the development of an infrastructural and industrial structure. Citing this reason, Japan refused to contribute to the First Poverty Reduction Strategy Credit in 2001. At the same time, Japan "marketed" its own approach (already expressed in the Ishikawa Project), and seize the opportunity to win over the Vietnamese government, particularly the MPI, the WB, and other bilateral donors,

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<sup>20</sup> According to Cling, Razafindrakoto & Roubaud, the IMF tried to promote its "hard-line" austerity and privatization measures on the SRV. A conflict emerged with the CPV's leadership on the speed of the privatization process, resulting in the end of the IMF-linked disbursements in 2002, with the last of its programs ending in 2004 (s. Cling, Razafindrakoto & Roubaud 2013, 10; Rama 2008, 35). Vietnamese leaders' skepticism with regards to the IMF's policies was also influenced by the criticism directed at the institution in the wake of the Asian Crisis by other Asian leaders (for a detailed recognition of sources, s. Head 2008 and 2010). Article IV consultations, i.e., meetings between IMF and member countries representatives in the context of the IMF's surveillance over member countries' policies and economic performances, are still functional (s. IMF (2016). Vietnam and the IMF. Updated June 27, 2016. Available online at: <http://www.imf.org/external/country/VNM/index.htm?type=9998#56>. Accessed June 29, 2016).

also through the “network” of personal contacts of individual high-level officials in the Minister of Finance (MOF), as Ishii Naoko,<sup>21</sup> to adopting a different approach to Vietnam’s development (Hatakeyama 2008, 352; see also Quang Nguyen & Stewart 2005, 23-4).

As Ishii and former Ambassador to Vietnam Kitano Mitsuru (2003) reported with regards to a Donors’ Meeting in May 2002,

Even when *poverty reduction* is set as the major target of development, no one could deny that *economic growth* is a fundamental “channel” to reach it. Nonetheless, the PRSP as it was implemented in other countries before, stressed the expansion of public investment in the basic service in the social sector. The “channel” of poverty reduction through the promotion of *infrastructural modernization (infura seibi)* and sustainable growth was overlooked. Our fear that this could happen with regards to Vietnam too became reality [...] The problem, above all, was the fact that the software application called “infrastructural modernization” did not work properly. Furthermore, it was important that that application was installed in order for the computer called “poverty reduction and growth” to perform at its best. In this sense, we thought we should get an update of the computer’s operating system so that the software could run. (Ishii & Kitano 2003, 37).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> At the time of the drafting of the Vietnamese PRSP, Ishii Naoko was Director of the International Bureau’s Development Institutions Division (*Kokusai kyoku kaihatsu kikan ka*) at the MOF. She was appointed Deputy Minister in 2010. Since 2012, she is CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility, an international Fund, funded by 183 nations, cooperating with major IFIs on environmental sustainability around the world.

<sup>22</sup> Ishii, Naoko & Kitano, Mitsuru (2003). *Nihon no koe o PRSP e*. *Kokusai kaihatsu journal*, 3, 37-9. Cursives and translation are mine. “貧困削減を開発における主要なターゲットとして考える場合にも、経済成長が貧困削減の重要なチャネルであることは、誰も否定し得ないところである。一方、各国で策定された PRSP は、社会セクターにおける基礎サービスへの投入の拡充に重点を置いたものとなった。大規模インフラを整備し、持続可能な成長を促進することによって貧困削減を達成するというチャネルは無視されてきた。ベトナムについても、作成される PRSP が同様のものになるのではないかとの懸念は現実のものとなった [...] 問題は、その上では、日本が得意としている「インフラ整備」というアプリケーション・ソフトがうまく走らないことだ。しかも、このソフトは、「貧困削減と成長」というコンピューターの機能の発揮のためには、なくてはならない大事なものだ。そうであるならば、OS のほうをこのソフトが走るようにバージョンアップしてもらおうではないか...”。

It took in fact several months of negotiations before the Japanese approach was adopted in the PRSP. The Japanese side could leverage its position as “interpreter” of the needs of the Vietnamese government according to which “growth” was a top priority in the economic agenda. As the excerpt from Ishii and Kitano’s article clearly illustrates, the Japanese delegation at the Donors’ Meetings on Vietnam stressed the importance of large-scale infrastructural projects, not as an alternative to, but as a priority over or, at least, a complement to programs in the social sector. The Japanese diplomatic effort was not limited to the Vietnamese case, but was expanded to major international meetings on development (Hatakeyama 2008, 352).

At the end of November 2002, the Japanese line promoting “poverty reduction with and through economic growth” was finally agreed upon by the WB. Japanese officials had however to persuade other donors, and the Vietnamese government too. Negotiations went on until December 2002. This effort finally led to the revision of the first PRSP at the Donors’ meeting of that month. The very name of the policy document was changed. The presence of the terms “Comprehensive” and “Growth” in the title of its final version is explanatory. In addition, a new chapter was added stressing the fundamental character of investments in the development and modernization of the country’s infrastructures. In the end, “Japan’s development philosophy was able to garner acknowledgement at a multilateral level” (Hatakeyama 2008, 353).

#### *4.6.2. Relations in the early 2000s: reinforcing economic ties and promoting cultural exchange*

In October 2002, the Secretary General of the CPV, Nông Đức Mạnh visited Tokyo. During his stay, Mạnh met with Japanese business leaders and was received at the Imperial Palace. Most importantly, he held talks with Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō. The two leaders stressed the need for their countries to “act together, advance together” to guarantee peace, stability and prosperity in East Asia (MOFA 2002a). To this end, they agreed to increase the bilateral political

dialogues; to reinforce economic ties; and to promote bilateral cultural and human exchanges. They also recognized the positive results attained in the fields of trade and investments by the Working Group on Investment and Trade set up in 1999 by the two countries. Thanks to the bilateral endeavor, it was possible for the two parties to sign an official agreement on investments by the following year.

Furthermore, the GOJ expressed appreciation for Vietnam's economic achievements upon the implementation of the *Đổi Mới* reforms and pledged to further support the country's comprehensive reforms. In turn, Mạnh conveyed the CPV and SRV government's positive opinion of Japanese ODA and their impact on Vietnam's development since the restart of the economic assistance in the 1990s. Specifically, Mạnh and Koizumi acknowledged the need to boost cooperation in human resource development, training, and information technology.

Possibly, the most important aspect of Mạnh's visit in Tokyo is the strengthening of the partnership with Japan on "Foreign Policy Issues of Mutual Interests" (MOFA 2002a). Among these, the situation in the Korean peninsula<sup>23</sup>; the SRV's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CNTBT); and the common effort in fighting international terrorism, as pledged in regional forum since 2001<sup>24</sup>. Finally the two leaders confirmed their intention to sponsor cultural events in occasion of the 30th anniversary of the bilateral relations the following solar year.

The Koizumi-Mạnh meeting came 6 months after Koizumi's visit to Vietnam. Upon his arrival in Hanoi, the Japanese Prime Minister met with the country's top leaders, Prime Minister Phan Văn Khải, and the CPV Secretary General Mạnh. On that occasion, Koizumi stressed the importance of Vietnam in the context of the Japanese proposal for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership with the ASEAN and invited the CPV's Secretary General to visit Japan by the end of the year. Official

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<sup>23</sup> According to the Communique, Mạnh appreciated the effort produced by Koizumi toward the normalization of Japan's relations with North Korea, in the hope that the GOJ's policy could lead to foster peace and stability in East Asia. See MOFA (2002a).

<sup>24</sup> Regional cooperation in the field of the contrast to international terrorism took off in October 2001, with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)'s Counter-Terrorism Statement agreed upon by the members in Shanghai. The pledge was further revamped at the Copenhagen Asia-Europe Meeting in September 2002. See MOFA (2002a).

accounts by the Japanese government refer to the visit as “epoch-making”, inasmuch as it spurred a new and stronger partnership between the two countries (MOFA 2002b)<sup>25</sup>. After meeting Prime Minister Khải, Koizumi reportedly stated that Vietnam would “certainly develop” because it was able to resist the hardships of the war against the United States during the 1960s and 1970s (MOFA 2002c).

In April 2003, a year after Koizumi’s mission to Vietnam, SRV Prime Minister Khải visited Japan and met with the Japanese Prime Minister in his Official Residence. The two leaders agreed on the terms of an agreement on Japanese investments to Vietnam that was eventually signed in November that year. After discussing bilateral policies with regard to trade, investments, human resource development, tourism, and ODA, Khải stressed the role of Japan as a model for emerging economies in Asia, defining it the “engine” of Asia’s economic growth.

The cherry blossoms are in full bloom, which naturally indicates a portent of good relations between Japan and Vietnam. Japan is the engine for the advancement of this region and also an important partner for Vietnam. I would like us to build long-term, stable relations of mutual trust (MOFA 2002c).

#### *4.6.3. Reinforcing legal cooperation for investment attraction*

In November 2003, the Agreement between Japan and the SRV for the Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment was signed by Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko and Vietnamese Minister of Planning of Planning and Investment Võ Hồng Phúc in Tokyo. Most importantly, the agreement committed the Vietnamese party to guaranteeing equality with foreign as well as local private and public investors (Art. 2-3), and the Japanese investors’ free initiative in designated areas in Vietnam (Art. 4). To this end, the two contracting parties were required to

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<sup>25</sup>Available online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0204/vietnam.html>. Accessed July 5, 2016.

promptly notify the other party about changes in relevant regulations regarding investments (Art. 7). In addition, it bounded the Vietnamese government to granting access to the country to operators involved in investment activities (Art. 8), while guaranteeing them “fair and equitable treatment and full and constant protection and security” (Art. 9). In this regard, the agreement stressed that expropriations and nationalizations of investments are not allowed unless they are required as “emergency measures”. In this case, a compensation at a “fair market value” should be paid by one party to the other. A specific article then dealt with the measures to be taken in case of atypical events that might be threaten properties and investments, such as armed conflicts revolutions.

An investor of a Contracting Party, which has suffered loss or damage relating to its investment activities in the Area of the other Contracting Party due to armed conflict or a state of emergency such as revolution, insurrection, civil disturbance or any other similar event in the Area of that other Contracting Party, shall be accorded by that other Contracting Party, as regards restitution, indemnification, compensation or any other settlement, treatment no less favorable than that which it accords to its own investors or to investors of any third country, whichever is more favorable to the investor (Art. 10)<sup>26</sup>.

Finally, Article 18 obliged the two parties (especially Vietnam as the recipient of Japanese investments), to take “appropriate measures” to remove factors obstructing or affecting negatively the investment environment, especially with regards to intellectual property rights protection, through periodical consultations.

The importance of further bilateral cooperation in the field of legal development was only hinted at. However, less than a month later, the issue was put in evidence in the final report on the Japan-Vietnam Joint Initiative. Launched during the Koizumi-Khải meeting in April that year in order to promote bilateral trade and investment attraction, while publicizing Vietnam’s advancements in the

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<sup>26</sup> See the “Agreement between Japan and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment”. Tokyo: MOFA, pp. 1-22



policy area, it involved both government officials from either side, and people from the private sector. For Vietnam, the Vietnamese MPI Minister Phúc, and Vice Ministers from the relevant economic Ministries in the SRV. For Japan, most notably, the Ambassador to the SRV, Hattori Norio, the Keidanren Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Japan-Vietnam Economic Committee Miyahara Kenji, and the Director of the Development Institutions Division of the MOF Ishii Naoko, along with representatives from the Technical Cooperation and Southeast Asian Division of the MOFA, METI, JBIC, JETRO and JICA.

The meeting's final report stressed the fact that Japanese investments to Vietnam were relatively small in comparison with other Asian countries. The report continued suggesting a list of policies the SRV should promptly implement in order to become more attractive for foreign investors, and to further promote economic integration and interdependence in the ASEAN region. Intervention should be concentrated in the following areas:

1) *Regulations*: relevant laws regulating investments need to be reconsidered and improved, in order to reduce impediments barring foreign operators from investing in Vietnam.

2) *Capacity building*: not only must the rules be amended and improved, implementers and supervisors must be trained too, in order to ensure the correct functioning and implementation of the very rules. Interventions must be focused on customs, tax offices, courts, authorities dealing with intellectual property, and on groups and organizations compiling official statistics.

3) *Standardization*: Partly linked to point 2). Relevant institution such as the judicial, and legal and industrial authorities must comply with recognized international metrologies and standards.

4) *Infrastructural development*: transport, telecommunications, and power networks must be made more functional and efficient; policies for the treatment of waste water and industrial solid might be dealt with through international cooperation (GOSRV & GOJ 2003, x-xi)<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> See Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Government of Japan (2003). Japan Joint Initiative to Improve Business Environment with a view to strengthen Vietnam's Competitiveness. Report. December 4, 2003. pp. i-118.

5) *Support to investors*: the report stresses the importance to promote investments in the automotive sector (automobiles and motorbikes), as well as in the electronics and appliances. Furthermore the report asked for a deregulation on joint ventures (eliminating the 40% minimum share for the local partner), and in banking (long term credit).

Most notably, the report urged the government of the SRV to take steps toward “corruption eradication” and human resource development in the legal sector. According to the document, corruption originated because of “ambiguous” laws and regulations that leave plenty of room for the single official’s discretion. At the same time, the report underscored that many Vietnamese judges and lawyers did not possess the necessary knowledge for serving the profession, specifically concerning business disputes. The reason was that law education had been suspended for decades before the *Đổi Mới*. According to the report,

The capacity of judges, especially local judges, is not adequate, while legal procedures and proceedings are complicated and lengthy. As a result, private enterprises tend to be unwilling to put cases to trial. Vietnamese enterprises often prefer to find alternatives for the resolution of their disputes. There are also delays in the enforcement or execution of court judgments. It is alleged that judgments have a tendency of being unfavorable to foreigners. This situation seriously damages public confidence in the justice system, making private enterprises hesitate in doing business and making investment (p. 72).

In turn, the Vietnamese government pledged to implement its 10-year Legal System Development Strategy (LSDS) by 2010, in order to increase the quality and quantity of the country’s legal professionals.

#### *4.6.4. Grounds for Japanese Legal Assistance to Vietnam*

In the context of the mid-1990s resumption of international aid to Vietnam, forms of intellectual aid were implemented in the country by Japan and other international donors. In its 2000 “Country Assistance Policy for Vietnam”, the GOJ argued for the need of a “balanced” and “sustainable” growth, based on the creation of infrastructural and human preconditions for it, and on poverty reduction initiatives. The policy paper also stressed the “long-term development vision” Japanese officials implemented in their policies toward Vietnam. This vision gives priority to “soft” forms of aid, specifically, policy research, institution building and human resource development. According to Ohno Izumi, one of the leading Japanese researchers on Japan-Vietnam cooperation, in the 1990s, Japan became the SRV’s “dominant aid provider” in the transport and power sectors, as well as the main supporter of “large-scale, policy-oriented” programs in areas such as policy research (Ishikawa project, see above), judicial support and economic reform (through the 1998-9 New Miyazawa Initiative) (Ohno 2002, 14-15).

Leading the initiative, JICA launched its legal cooperation project (*hōseibi shien*) in 1996.

The project started one year after the investment boom in the SRV 1995 and had the main aim to foster good governance in the country through the rule of law thus improving the investment environment in the country. Specifically, it aimed, at the Vietnamese government’s request, to establish a cooperation on the issue of the drafting of a new civil code and was led by Nagoya University Emeritus Professor Morishima Akio. Morishima’s work with Vietnam had begun a few years before in 1992, when he was asked by the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice to provide legal advice. He was then involved in legal training for Vietnamese officials two years after (Taylor 2013, 245). In 2000, he was appointed coordinator of a study group on the reform of the Vietnamese Civil Code entrusted to support the Vietnamese side’s effort. The drafting process involved frequent discussions between Vietnamese officials and Japanese experts and resulted in the 2005 Civil Code containing provisions on assets and property rights, rights on land use and contracts, and intellectual property rights and technological transfers (Matsubara 2012, 165). The code preserved its peculiarities. In fact, first, it covered both civil and commercial relations, regulating the entire private

sphere. Second, it comprised concepts belonging to both modern capitalist and socialist legal traditions. On top of it, it also proclaims its “Asianness”, referring to sociocultural aspects such as national culture, cooperation, social harmony and so on. The centerpiece of JICA’s *hōseibi shien* was however the development of human resources, through judicial training, the development of judgment manuals, and of a reference system of precedents and their application in practice (Kaneko 2011, 33-36).

The Vietnamese officials’ preference for the Japanese model might be found in terms of its “trial-and-errors” approach. This approach was in line with the CPV’s intent to build an “integrated application of law” that could replace the overly “flexible” application of the law of the pre-*Đổi Mới* period. The project was “an attempt to support the building of an institutional basis for normative development through the judicial application of the code, beyond a short term goal of legal transplant” (Kaneko 2011, 36-38). The reasons might also lie in the appreciation of the Japanese “experience” as the first Asian country to adopt the European (mostly German) legal traditions and adapt it to its local situation. Morishima (2001) puts it as follows:

Since the Meiji era, the European legal system, a product of a different non-Asian culture, was introduced to Japan. On the basis of this experience, we assumed that a simple transplant of legal systems which is completely separated from the social norms and reality of the recipient country. Under this backdrop, we have conducted discussions with legal scholars from Vietnam and Cambodia and we proposed a legal system that might be accepted by these countries’ societies. At the same time, we let these countries decide which legal technical solution might fit the best. In addition, we deemed extremely important to develop human resources that in the future could proceed with the establishment of the law with their own

capacities. From such a perspective, we implemented long- and short-term training programs as one of the central pillars of our assistance project (Morishima 2001, 1).<sup>28</sup>

JICA's action has been based on four pillars:

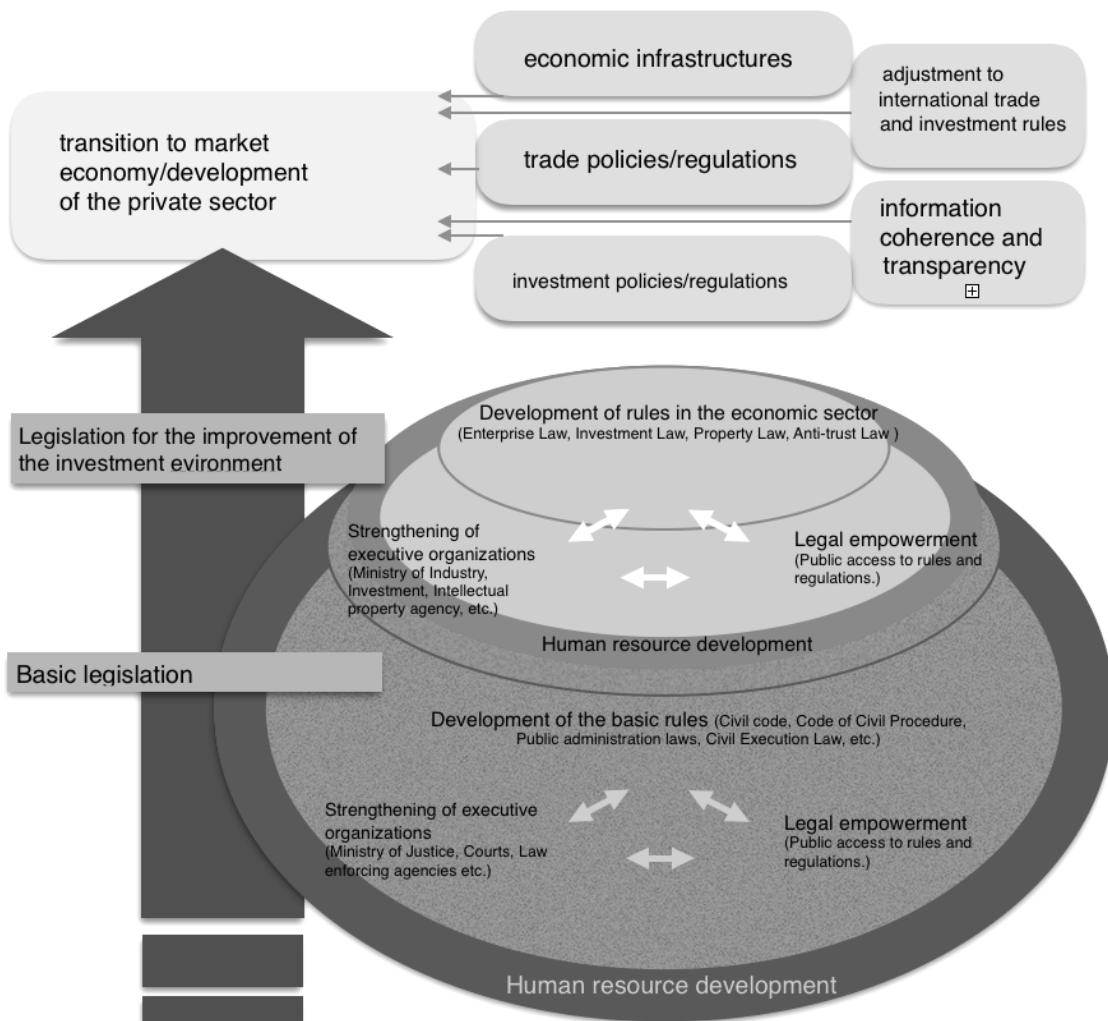
- 1) *equality* (i.e.: helping the recipient country's government improve transparency and accountability; its judicial system's capacity; and guarantee a fair access to the judicial to all citizens, *legal empowerment*);
- 2) *peace and democracy* (i.e.: help drafting constitutions and fundamental rules, as constitutions or civil codes; fostering trust in the legal system; reducing domestic ethnic and intra-societal conflicts; promoting participation of all social and ethnic components in the decision-process as necessary for nation-building (*kokumin zukuri*); stressing the concept of "common good"; preserving diversity of ethnicities, languages, and religions in multi-ethnic countries);
- 3) *fighting corruption* (promoting equality (s. 1); drafting special anti-corruption; setting up ad-hoc commissions; drawing the people near the law);
- 4) promoting the *transition toward a market-economy* and the involvement of the *private sector* (reducing business risk through legal development; guaranteeing fair access to business opportunity; and regulating business competition) (s. Figure 4.2 and JICA 2011, 27-29)

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<sup>28</sup> See Morishima, Akio (2001). My translation.

“しかし、明治以来、アジアとは異なる文化の所産であるヨーロッパの法制度を継受してきたわが国の経験に基づき、継受国の社会の規範や実態と全く乖離した法制度を単に移植しても機能しないという前提のもとに、ベトナムやカンボジアの法律家と議論をして、できるだけこれらの国の社会が受容できるような法制度を提案するとともに、法技術的な選択肢のなかからどのような制度を選択するかはこれらの国の決定に委ねるという態度で臨んできた。また、被援助国が将来自らの力で法整備を進めていくには人材育成がきわめて重要であることから、支援プロジェクトの主要な柱として長期・短期の研修プログラムを充実してきた”。

**Fig. 4.2: Legal assistance, the transition to a market economy, and the engagement of the private sector**



*Elaborated from JICA (2011).*

At the foundations of these principles, JICA stressed the importance of human resource development. Figure 4.2 clearly reflects this philosophy. Human resource development (*jinzaiikusei*) is in fact represented as the basis both of the process of “establishing the basic rules” (*kihonteki na ruru no seibi*), in legal terms (through reforms of the civil code and of the public administration); and of the process of “establishing the rules in the economy” (*keizai bun'ya no ruru no seibi*) (for instance, through new company, investment and intellectual property laws).

In line with the emerging discourse on development at the international level, the declared aim of this form of cooperation was fostering good governance and contribute to institution- and nation-building in Vietnam. Since the second half of the 1980s International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and major donors started asking their aid recipients to “adjust” their legal frameworks in order to attract investments while keeping the aid flowing. Legal reform was in fact one of the “conditionalities” donors have been imposing in their aid initiatives to developing countries. In the discourse that JICA borrows from the UN, OECD, and the WB, however, legal cooperation is not just an measure based on an economic and financial rationale. Instead, it is coherent with other initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, crucial in promoting “good governance”. In addition, it is a tool to promote universal human rights and to help to create equality among sexes and ethnicities in a single country.

Nevertheless, as the 2011 JICA Guidelines on Legal Assistance (Kadai betsu shishin: Hōseibi shien) clarified, the business rationale played a major role. When translated into concrete initiatives by the recipient country’s government, legal cooperation, in fact, helped to reduce the business risk for foreign investors, thus attracting capitals, creating jobs, spurring consumption and economic growth.

Legal cooperation initiatives [...] have been implemented since the second half of the 1980s by each organization dealing with international development. The international trend toward cooperation in the legal sector has the following features: first, it promotes legal reforms in

the economic sector in order to create a proper legal environment for investments. Making use of the failed experience of the structural adjustments promoted in the 1980s by the World Bank and other international institutions, donors have realized the necessity for an institutional foundation of economic development. At the same time, influenced by the studies of neoinstitutionalist economists such as R. Coase and D. North, donors have supported, with the recipient's consensus, the creation of a legal system including laws on private property, contracts, companies, bankruptcy, and taxes (JICA 2011, 33).<sup>29</sup>

The project was divided in 3 phases (1996-9; 1999-2003; 2003-7). The first phase was dedicated to the research and presentation of suitable foreign legal models to the SRV's leadership. The second phase saw an expansion of the project, from its theoretical phase to a more practical one which involved more structured policy proposals regarding the reform of the civil code and the judicial system. Specific projects for the development of know-how and human resources in the relevant fields were started. In addition, JICA's long-term experts took part as advisors in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)-sponsored SRV's Ministry of Justice's survey of the country's legal needs. In the third phase, human resource development (HRD) was given priority. Specifically, targets and time schedule of the legal reforms were further specified, seminar on Japanese law were organized in Vietnam and Japan, with the active involvement of CPV officials, and partnerships between Japanese and Vietnamese university were signed (JICA 2011, 74-6). In the 2011 JICA guidelines on legal cooperation, the project was presented as a cooperative process,

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<sup>29</sup> My translation. “法整備支援は、上述のとおり、1980年代後半以降、各開発援助機関により活発に行われてきているが、法整備支援を巡る国際的な援助の潮流としては、以下に述べるようなものがある。まず、投資に適した法環境の整備のために行われる経済分野の法改革がある。世界銀行などは、1980年代の構造調整の失敗の教訓として、経済発展のための制度的基盤の改善の必要が認識されると同時に、R.CoaseやD.Northに代表される新制度派経済学の影響を背景に、法制度改革が経済発展にプラスの影響を与えるというコンセンサスがあることを前提として、移行経済国を含め多くの途上国において、私的所有権、契約法、企業法、倒産法、税法などの制度構築への支援を積極的に行っている”。



based on mutual gain and mutual exchange. Accordingly, the reform and development needs of the aid-recipient were given priority over the strategic interests of the donor.

#### *4.6.5. A shift toward a comprehensive partnership*

Between 2003 and 2004, Japanese-Vietnamese relations slightly shifted toward a new direction. From an initial focus on merely economic and financial matters, the partnership got further enhanced in areas such as international politics, security, and cultural exchange. Official meetings between the two countries' leaders became frequent. In early June 2004, Prime Minister Khải and Prime Minister Koizumi met in Tokyo and expressed their appreciation for the 2003 Agreement on investments, and pledged to further promote Japan-Vietnam cooperation. Prime Minister Khải hoped that “investments from many Japanese corporations” could contribute to his country's development (GOJ 2004).<sup>30</sup>

During a two-day visit to Japan, in July that year, the SRV's Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyễn Dy Niên and his Japanese counterpart Kawaguchi Yoriko signed a statement “Toward a Higher Sphere of Enduring Partnership” (in Japanese: *fukyū no partnership no arata na chihei e mukete*), where the two sides recognized the importance of “bilateral policy dialogues in various fields”, such as political and military consultations aiming at deepening the mutual understanding among policymakers of the two countries and at promoting “coordinated and effective” bilateral relations. On the diplomatic end, the two countries recognized the importance of Japanese ODA to Vietnam. Tokyo pledged to enhance its assistance in areas such as institution building and poverty reduction, taking proactive steps in protecting the natural environment and the people's “quality of life”. The two sides also committed to increasing people-to-people exchanges and visa liberalization policies, aiming at promoting tourism. The two sides welcomed the increase of the number of students of Japanese language in Vietnam, as a way to promote mutual understanding between peoples at the grassroots

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<sup>30</sup> Available online at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/koizumiphoto/2004/06/04vietnam\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/koizumiphoto/2004/06/04vietnam_e.html). Accessed July 7, 2016.

level. In addition, cooperation in the field of human resource development would be enhanced by the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s Japan Fund for Public Policy Training and other initiatives such as an "East Asia Talent Training Centre". Further on, the two sides vowed to promote bilateral cooperation in the development of the Mekong Region.

However, pledges to cooperate in the area of trade and investment occupied a major part of the statement. The two sides acknowledged the progresses in the field of economic cooperation and trade and vowed to promote economic relations in the 2003 ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership, aiming at further improve the business environment in Vietnam. Specifically, the Japanese side seemed concerned with the SRV's accession to the WTO, and expressed its complete support with regard to the negotiations between the SRV and the international organization. The strategical significance of the Japan-Vietnam partnership was already clear.

#### *4.6.6. Boosting cooperation: the role of Abe Shinzō and Nguyễn Tấn Dũng*

In 2006, under the first Abe and Dũng administrations, the two sides further enhanced their ties. Prime Minister Abe Shinzō took over from Prime Minister Koizumi in September 2006. Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng had succeeded to Prime Minister Khải in June 2006. The former had emerged as a prominent campaigner on the issues of the abduction to North Korea of Japanese citizens in the 1980s and a prominent figure in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). From 2001 to 2006, he served as Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary and Chief Cabinet Secretary under Koizumi. In the run for the succession at the LDP leadership, Abe emerged thanks to the support of junior, middle ranking, and more conservative party leaders (Chan 2006; Hisane 2006). Abe might be described as a foreign policy "hardliner" willing to reaffirm Japanese presence in Asia, engaging with new partners as India and Australia on the basis of these country's recognition of the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, while controlling via diplomatic channels the

possible emergence of “problems” with neighboring countries like China and South Korea. Vietnam was not included in the list of Japan’s new Asian partners (s. Abe 2013, 160-4).<sup>31</sup>

The latter, instead, emerged in the late 1990s, when he was appointed to the Central Committee of the CPV Politburo. In 1997 he was chosen as Deputy Prime Minister by Prime Minister Khải. In that year, Dũng notably became a key figure in the Party policymaking body favoring the conclusion of a two-year negotiation for a Bilateral Trade Agreement with the United States (Hayton 2010, 9). After holding the post of State Bank Governor for two years, in 1999, he was elected first Deputy Prime Minister (Thayer 2000, 12). According to Vuving (2012), Dũng was “skillful” enough to unite different political currents internal to the CPV. On the one hand, Dũng was able to present himself as a market reformist; on the other a proponent of the CPV’s monopoly on state power.

Underlying Mr. Dung’s rise to power is an evolving mixture of four policy currents that characterizes contemporary Vietnamese politics. The first is driven by the conservatives, who advocate the primacy of political stability through regime preservation. The second is represented by the reformers, who promote domestic modernization and international openness by adopting liberalism and capitalism. The marriage of communism and capitalism has led to the ascent of two other policy currents. One follows the middle of the road, trying to bridge the diametric differences between communism and capitalism. The other pursues the dual way, accumulating profit the capitalist way and power the communist way (Vuving 2012).

Dũng is also described as a statesman with close ties to the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). It is hardly a coincidence that under his administration became the target of massive public investments (Tran Van Tho 2013, 126). His effort to reform them on the model of other Asian industrial conglomerates, reining their political influence and internal corruption, eventually did not have

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<sup>31</sup>For a more detailed description of PM Abe’s rise to power and diplomacy, see also Chan (2006) and Hisane (2006).

success. However, Dũng's election at the head of the government in 2006 ushered in a period of economic growth and diplomatic activism which resulted in Vietnam's further regional and international integration (Associated Press 2016)<sup>32</sup>. The Strategic partnership with Japan was Dũng's first major foreign policy act following the guidelines promoted by the CPV in the late 1980s on the rapprochement with the world's major powers (Thayer 2015, 10).

In the official document, the importance of the bilateral relations was once more underscored, with regards to the economic, scientific, technological, political, and cultural dimension, as already agreed in 2004 by Foreign Ministers Kawaguchi and Niền. However, the international security issue had gained preeminence. The two sides showed their "determination to further expand and strengthen bilateral relations as strategic partners for peace and prosperity in the Asian region". In particular, the two leaders expressed their will to cooperate on issues such as the nuclear disarmament (specifically with regards to the Korean Peninsula), or the reform of the UN Security Council, with Japan and Vietnam supporting mutual aspirations to become respectively a permanent member, and a non-permanent member of the group in the 2008-9 term (MOFA 2006)<sup>33</sup>.

#### *4.6.7. Exchanges at the formal and informal level*

Both formal and informal exchanges at a high level have continued until very recently. In 2007, the SRV President Nguyễn Minh Triết became the first Vietnamese president to visit Japan. During his official visit in Tokyo, Triết met with Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo. It was an occasion to revamp the bilateral partnership agreed upon the previous year, and to lay a 44-point agenda for the implementation of the strategic cooperation between the two countries. The Vietnamese leader also

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<sup>32</sup> It is worth noting that Prime Minister Dũng oversaw the final stage of negotiations with the WTO for Vietnam's accession. S. Associated Press (2016), available online at: <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/e412a9b770ff4f33a17e8a7d7a0368e9/vietnam-prime-minister-step-down-after-10-years-office>. Accessed July 7, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Abe, Shinzo & Nguyễn Tấn Dũng (2006). Japan-Vietnam Joint Statement: Toward a Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia. Tokyo: the Government of Japan. Available online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/vietnam/joint0610.html>. Accessed July 7, 2016.

expressed his appreciation for the enhanced economic assistance (approximately 100 billion JPY per year) Japan had provided since 2004 (Shiraishi 2014, 243). The agenda stressed the importance of cooperation between Japan and Vietnam in infrastructural development, economic and trade cooperation, legal and administrative reforms, business exchanges, international security, climate change, science and technology, cultural heritage preservation, and tourism.

Specifically, the document attached relevance to the Japanese efforts in providing “soft” aid, namely aimed at fostering “good governance”, to Vietnam. Point 16 and 17 of the Agenda, in fact, recognized the Japanese experts’ role, most notably, in the reform of the Criminal and Civil Codes, and in providing both liquidity for a SRV’s financial fund for poverty reduction and assistance to the tax system reform (MOFA 2007; Shiraishi 2014, 243).

In this regard, the visit to Vietnam by Japanese Foreign Minister Kōmura Masahiko in July 2008 is also worth mentioning. During Kōmura’s visit, new agreements were reached on economic cooperation especially in the energy sector. The summit also served to stress the importance of the Japan-Vietnam relations in the larger framework of the Japan-Mekong cooperation<sup>34</sup>. At the first Japan-Mekong Summit earlier that year, Japan had pledged a 20 million USD-credit line for the development of the East-West Economic Corridor. On the occasion, Kōmura signed a protocol with Nguyễn Thiện Nhân, SRV’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Training on the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) (S. infra). Nearly 450 million JPY were allocated to the program through which a maximum of 35 Vietnamese young officials from central ministers and other state-organizations are accepted as graduate students in a Japanese university every year. According to the MOFA’s press release, the program was deemed necessary by the two sides for the following reasons:

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<sup>34</sup> S. MOFA (2008a). Available online at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/g\\_komura/vietnam\\_08/kg.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/g_komura/vietnam_08/kg.html). Accessed July 7, 2016.

- With the introduction of the *Đổi Mới* policy (renovation) in 1986, the establishment of an investment environment, of a legal system, and a reform of the state administration have become a fundamental issue [in Vietnam].
- On the other hand, the training of human resources sustaining growth and reform has not made progress. Recent measures taken confronting the country's recent transition to a market economy have not been enough.
- In this situation, Japan, with the aim to favor the transition of the country to democracy and market-economy, at the request of the government of Vietnam, against the backdrop of the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship, has implemented grant cooperation (MOFA 2008a).

Given that, the program was expected to

Let the human resources promoting their country's transition to a market-economy take the leadership in every sector in the near future and at the same time, contribute to an even stronger Japan-Vietnam partnership (MOFA 2008b)<sup>35</sup>.

On the informal end, Shiraishi (2014, 245-6) notes the relevance of Japan's Crown Prince Naruhito's visit to Vietnam in February 2009, inaugurating the Japan-Mekong Exchange Year. The visit by the heir to the Chrysanthemum Throne was held on the sidelines of the Japan-Mekong Summit Meeting. It was an event that signaled the close relationship Japan and Vietnam were enjoying. Crown Prince Naruhito himself noted the importance of the even stronger bilateral ties to contribute to Asia's peace and prosperity in the new millennium.

Japan and Vietnam have a long story of bilateral relations. These days with the agreement on a strategic partnership for peace and prosperity in Asia, they have become even closer allies.

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<sup>35</sup> See MOFA (2008b). Available online at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/h20/7/1182060\\_912.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/h20/7/1182060_912.html). Accessed: July 7, 2016.

The two countries have also agreed upon an economic partnership and celebrated the 35th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Japan-Vietnam relations are getting tighter in every sector. I will indeed be happy if my visit to Vietnam contributes in some way to further promoting the friendship and goodwill between our countries and our peoples (Shiraishi 2014, 246)<sup>36</sup>.

Prince Naruhito visited Vietnam just five months after the two countries signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which expanded the scope of the 2003 Agreement on Investments. With the EPA, the two parties committed to further cooperate in the fields of trade of goods and services, movement of people, intellectual property protection, and agreed to further improve the business environment in Vietnam. The agreement established a Joint Committee and several issue-based operational Sub-Committees in charge of monitoring the implementation of the measures listed in the agreement and suggesting modifications and amendments to the contracting parties (MOFA 2008c)<sup>37</sup>.

The Japan-Vietnam Strategic Partnership (JVSP) was further enhanced by Secretary General Mạnh in his second visit to Japan. At a summit with Prime Minister Asō Tarō, the two sides underscored the importance of bilateral ties based on “mutual trust and benefit”, contributing to “the resolution of several issues” on a bilateral, regional and global level (Shiraishi 2014, 247).

#### *4.6.8. The DPJ years*

It might be said that the Japan-Vietnam partnership was not affected by political instability in Japan. Prime Minister Koizumi’s resignation in September 2006 opened a period of political

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<sup>36</sup> See also Imperial Household Agency (2009). A provisional translation of the address by Crown Prince Naruhito is also available in English at: <http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/e-okotoba/02/press/gaikoku-h21az-vietnam.html>. Accessed July 7, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> S. MOFA (2008c). Agreement between Japan and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for an Economic Partnership. Tokyo: MOFA. Available online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/vietnam/epa0812/agreement.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2016.

uncertainty that deteriorated a 5-decade long LDP political dominance. In a 6 year-span, three prime ministers from the conservative camp (Abe, Fukuda and Asō) and three more from the progressive camp (Hatoyama, Kan and Noda) occupied the post without being able to stay on for more than a year. However, political instability and the August 2009 “regime change” (*seiken kōtai*)<sup>38</sup>, did not change Tokyo’s attitude toward Vietnam sensibly.

The new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)-led government, installed in September 2009, sought to further strengthen its ties with Vietnam and other countries in the Mekong Sub-Region. Under the Hatoyama administration, Japan organized the first Japan-Mekong Summit, held in Tokyo on November 7, 2009. Recognizing the existing disparities in terms of development among the countries of the Mekong Sub-Region (excluding China and Myanmar), Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio launched his “initiative” to promote comprehensive and green development in the area.

The Japanese Prime Minister went on stressing that sustaining the area’s economic growth via its ODA was a “priority” for Japan, and pledged to allocate 500 billion JPY in assistance to the region until 2012. Furthermore, Hatoyama underscored the importance of transfers in knowledge and know-how from Japan to developing countries in the area. In this regard, Hatoyama hoped to increase the number of summits at the leadership level among the summit’s member countries. In addition, the DPJ leader stressed the plan for Japan to invite 30 thousand students from the region by 2012 in order to “revitalise contacts and exchanges” and build a sense of “trust” between Mekong countries and Japan. Hatoyama also expressed appreciation for the US engagement in the region, through its support to the democratization process in Myanmar and hoped for a positive cooperation between Japan and China (Cabinet Secretariat 2009)<sup>39</sup>.

At the end of the Summit the parties adopted an Action Plan in 63 points, aiming to promote:

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<sup>38</sup> At the August 30 elections, 2009, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won the majority of seats in the House of Representatives. For the first time in Japan’s postwar history, an opposition party was able to gain a parliamentary majority and, consequently, to elect a cabinet, without any coalition partners.

<sup>39</sup> Cabinet Secretariat (2009). Joint Press Conference by the Leaders of Japan and the Mekong Region Countries following the Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting. November 7, 2009. Tokyo: Government of Japan. Available online at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hatoyama/statement/200911/07mekong\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hatoyama/statement/200911/07mekong_e.html). Accessed July 8, 2016.



- a) *Comprehensive Development*, both through “hard” and “soft” infrastructures, a greater involvement of private groups in partnership with the public sector, and the promotion of intra-regional standardization of legal and economic systems;
- b) *Human Dignity*, through the promotion, by means of Japan’s ODA, of measures tackling the effects of climate change on the region’s natural environment, promoting disaster-risk prevention, and fostering a sustainable management of the region’s water resources, curbing vulnerability, promoting initiatives targeted at the achievement of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in fields such as primary education and health, assisting democratic transitions (as in Myanmar), cooperating for the peace and stability of the region (particularly with regards to the threats posed by North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic tests), also supporting Japan in its international campaign to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council;
- c) *Cooperation and Exchanges*, in order to promote mutual understanding between Japan and the Mekong countries and the protection of cultural heritage; particularly with regard to young people (for example through Japanese ministerial initiatives such as the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths, JENESYS), and local communities (through symposia and meetings to discuss policies of tourist attraction and protection of the cultural heritage).

Speaking on behalf of the other Mekong leaders, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng expressed his appreciation of the initiative by the Japanese government:

The leaders of the Mekong subregion countries and Japan share the same view that cooperation between the Mekong subregion and Japan will bring about practical benefits to all the countries concerned and this cooperation will contribute to the development of friendship and partnership between ASEAN and Japan. At the same time, the successful implementation of Mekong-Japan cooperation will foster the stability of the wider region. It is

my strong wish that Vietnam will always be a reliable partner that contributes to the friendly cooperative relations between the Mekong subregion and Japan (Cabinet Secretariat 2009).<sup>40</sup>

At the bilateral level, under the three DPJ administrations (Hatoyama, Kan, and Noda), Japan-Vietnam relations were further expanded. During his visit to the SRV in October 2010, Prime Minister Kan Naoto signed a “Joint Statement” on the development on a strategic partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia, recognizing shared strategic interests between the two countries. The Japanese Prime Minister also vowed to make the bilateral ties not only “strategic”, but also “comprehensive”, stressing once more the wide range of issues covered by the Japan-Vietnam partnership, and its crucial importance for Japanese diplomats and political leaders in the last decade (Shiraishi 2014, 252). Two months later, the first bilateral diplomatic-military summit was held in Hanoi at the presence of high officials from the two countries Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense.

Most notably, in October 2011, 8 months after the Great Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami which heavily hit Northeastern Japan causing a series of nuclear meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Plant, Japanese Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko visited Vietnam and signed a second Joint Statement. This document focused on “actions” taken and to be taken under the strategic partnership framework. Noda vowed to strengthen exchanges and dialogues, encompassing more cooperation in the field of defense and security. On that occasion the DPJ leader and Prime Minister Dũng officially welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding paving the way for bilateral defense cooperation through the establishment of official summits between the respective Ministries of Defense. In addition, Noda pledged nearly 93 billion JPY in aid for Vietnam’s infrastructural development projects such as the North-South Expressway, and the Nghi Son Thermal Power Plant. Furthermore, the two parties pledged to double the bilateral trade by 2020 and to strengthen their

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

cooperation in the fields of disaster prevention, climate change, nuclear energy, new technologies and rare earths extraction and manufacturing (Noda & Dũng 2011).

In September 2012, Japan-Vietnam cooperation for the development of a nuclear and rare earths industries was further promoted. Regarding the latter, in particular, cooperation between Japanese and Vietnamese groups was started in the Dong Pao mine, Northwestern Vietnam. Furthermore, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on accepting Vietnamese care givers and health professionals in Japan under the framework of the 2008 EPA and in consideration of the need for Japan to cope with a shrinking workforce in the health-sector (MOFA, MHLW, METI 2012, Shiraishi 2014, 256)<sup>41</sup>. Japanese ODA to Vietnam in fiscal year 2011, amounted at an unprecedented 300 billion JPY (Shiraishi 2014, 257).

It might be difficult to deny that Noda's vow to help Vietnam in a period of economic hardships following the Triple Disaster of March 11 bore a symbolic value. Especially after the rise of the Senkaku-Diaoyu territorial dispute with China, diplomatic relations with Vietnam have become even more "strategic", as the two countries found themselves sharing similar diplomatic targets.

#### *4.6.9. The return of the LDP and the GOJ's "open diplomacy" toward ASEAN*

Three years after the DPJ ascent to power, the Japanese political arena once again underwent some changes. At the December 2012 General Elections, the LDP led by former Prime Minister Abe, won by a landslide. A second Abe cabinet was formed. The Japanese leadership's attitude toward Vietnam did not change. Instead, it looked stronger than ever in early 2013. Abe's visit to Hanoi was held in fact in the context of a diplomatic tour of Southeast Asia, during which, the Japanese Prime Minister visited Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. Being Abe's first diplomatic act, the tour had a programmatic significance. In Jakarta, the Japanese leader gave a speech laying the foundations of the Japanese diplomacy under his administration, particularly with regards to the Japan-ASEAN relations.

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<sup>41</sup> MOFA, MHLW, METI (2012). Available online at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/s\\_noda/vietnam1110/pdfs/5.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/s_noda/vietnam1110/pdfs/5.pdf) Accessed July 8, 2016.

Japanese diplomacy should be “open” (*hirakareta*) and one that is based on the “richness of the seas” (*umi no megumi*). The Japanese leader listed the following five pillars:

- 4) Freedom of thought, expression and speech as universal values
- 5) The seas as *common goods* (*komonzu*), that cannot be taken over by force but have to be administered by the rule of law.
- 6) A free and open diplomacy aiming at a regional economy based on a network of relations bounding all the countries together (*tagai ni musubiatta keizai*) through trade, investment and flows of people and things. Against this backdrop, Japan will continue to invest in connectivity in Southeast Asia, especially in the Southern Economic Corridor in the Mekong subregion.
- 7) Achieving a full mutual cultural understanding
- 8) Promoting and working together promoting exchanges among the younger generations, making the world a free, open, prioritizing the rule of law over violence.

It is worth noting that these five pillars are instrumental to the achievement of Japanese national interest (*kokueki*) identified here as the permanence (*banko fueki*) and the eternal continuation (*mirai eigō*) of freedom and peace in the Asian seas (MOFA 2013)<sup>42</sup>.

In Hanoi, the first stop of his tour, Abe was welcomed by the man with whom he had signed an agreement on the strategic partnership between the two countries in 2006: Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng.

Dũng congratulated Abe on assuming office and expressed his hope toward an enhanced Japanese role in the Asia-Pacific facing the changes that have affected the region’s strategic environment in the previous years. Dũng also stressed that Vietnam saw in Japan an “important partner” with which it shared “regional challenges and mutually complementary economic relationship” (MOFA 2013c). In

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<sup>42</sup> Abe Shinzō (2013b). *Hirakareta, umi no megumi: Nihon gaikō no arata na 5 gensoku*. Tokyo: MOFA. Available online at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/25/abe\\_0118j.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/25/abe_0118j.html). Accessed July 10, 2016.

turn, Abe reaffirmed Japan's effort in promoting Vietnamese growth through aid and vowed to further promote cultural and people exchanges, in particular at the youth level, in order to promote friendship and cooperation.

More importantly, however, the two leaders showed shared concerns toward China's assertive attitude with regards to the South China and East China Seas territorial disputes. Specifically the two stressed that they "would oppose changing the status quo with force in the South China Sea" and role of "the rule of law" in international dispute resolution. Abe also asked that Vietnam supported the GOJ to solve the issue of the Japanese citizens abducted to North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, using its official diplomatic channels with Pyongyang (MOFA 2013c)<sup>43</sup>.

#### *4.6.10. Finding common interests toward a strategic partnership: the China threat*

2013 has been an especially important year for the bilateral ties. In the context of the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the diplomatic relations, political leaders of the two countries met several times in Japan, Vietnam and on the sidelines of regional meetings, as the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Summit in Darussalam, in Brunei. In December that year, the two sides met again this time in Tokyo. SRV Prime Minister Dũng paid an official visit to Japan's Prime Minister Abe. The strategic partnership reached a new step with the Japanese leader vowing to provide patrol vessels to Vietnam to reinforce the country's Coast Guard through ODA, and to further strengthen the cooperation in the field of human resource development through the establishment of a Japan-Vietnam University.

As regards the SRV's security situation, since 2011, there have been some changes concerning the dispute with China over the control of the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea/East Sea. This area of the Pacific is considered of vital importance by the governments of China, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Philippines for its fisheries and reserves of minerals and hydrocarbons. Furthermore, it is also significant in terms of global trade. As Storey (2014) puts it,

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<sup>43</sup> MOFA (2013c). Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Visit to Vietnam. Tokyo: MOFA. Available online at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pm\\_v\\_1301/vietnam.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pm_v_1301/vietnam.html). Accessed July 11, 2016.

Located at the crossroads of South, Southeast and Northeast Asia, the South China Sea occupies a critical geographical position. The sea lanes that pass through it provide the shortest route between the Pacific and Indian Oceans and function as vital arteries of world trade and energy shipments. As a result, instability or conflict in the area could threaten the free flow of maritime commerce with serious repercussions for the global economy. While all countries in the region have a strongly vested interest in maintaining stability and secure sea lanes, as noted later, an accidental military clash at sea could put that collective interest at risk (Storey 2014)<sup>44</sup>.

In the last four decades, these countries have been entangled in disputes and tensions that cyclically re-emerged. After the tensions first erupted in the 1970s, the situation was relatively stable in the 1990s and 2000s. The 1992 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea Dispute provided the framework for a very general code of conduct based on self-restraint and cooperation of the parties involved to agree on a specific set of norms in the following years. Through the mediation of ASEAN, and a “softer” Chinese approach to foreign policy toward Southeast Asia the status quo remained unchanged. In 2002 a non binding Declaration on the Conduct was signed by ASEAN and China with the effect of further reducing tensions.

This has not, however, prevented a resurgence of the dispute. After China came out untouched by the global financial crisis of 2007-8, and having hosted the 2008 Olympics, Chinese leaders had grown confident in the possibilities for China to become a new world power. Therefore, they allowed for an increased activism of the Navy in the South China Sea with the aim to pressure other claimants to agree to more favorable terms toward China (s. Storey 2011, 287 and 2014).

China’s political and military assertiveness caused an escalation of the territorial tensions with Vietnam and the Philippines in particular. Especially after multiple incidents involving Vietnamese

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<sup>44</sup> See online version § 6. Available at: [http://www.cairn-int.info/article-E\\_PE\\_143\\_0035--disputes-in-the-south-china-sea.htm](http://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_PE_143_0035--disputes-in-the-south-china-sea.htm).

fishing boats being harassed or sunk by Chinese vessels with the Vietnamese crew arrested and deported between 2011 and 2012, tensions escalated again. Vietnam now considered China's operations in the area a threat to its national security. In June 2012, the Vietnamese National Assembly passed a new Law on the Sea explicitly placing the Spratly and Paracel Islands under Hanoi's jurisdiction (AFP 2012)<sup>45</sup>. The South China Sea Dispute has since attracted the attention of other regional powers including Japan, whose major foreign trade routes pass through the area, and the US. In 2012, the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the United States had "a national interest in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia's maritime commons, and respect for international law in the South China Sea".

Against this background the GOJ has kept its economic assistance to the SRV at relatively stable levels even after 3-11. In addition, it has inaugurated cooperation with the SRV in the defense sector: responding to Hanoi's requests, Tokyo has provided second-hand patrol boats since 2013 contributing to the enhancement of Vietnam's coast guarding capacities (Drifte 2014; Hosoda 2014, 173).

#### *4.6.11. Cooperation in the energy sector and international politics*

During the 2013 meeting between Abe and Dũng, the two sides also agreed upon a series of infrastructural projects, such as the building of Long Thanh International Airport, the development of Eco-cities and cooperation in nuclear and coal-fire power (totaling 100 billion JPY in ODA loans) aimed at pursuing Vietnam's industrialization strategy. In turn, Japan appreciated the SRV's willingness to contribute troops to UN peacekeeping operations (MOFA 2013d).

In early March 2014, SRV's President Trương Tấn Sang was the second Vietnamese President to visit Japan. Together with Prime Minister Abe, Sang signed a second statement on the Extensive

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<sup>45</sup> See AFP (2012). Retrieved online September 26, 2016.

partnership for peace and prosperity in Asia, which fixed Japan-Vietnam's cooperation priorities into three macro-areas: Security, Economy, and Culture and People Exchange. In addition, the two sides agreed on an enhanced cooperation on regional and global issues, providing a framework of action in regional (APEC, ASEAN and ASEAN+3, ARF) and international fora (UN) aiming at fostering peace and stability in Asia and in the world (Abe & Sang 2014).

In his address to the Japanese National Diet, Sang stated that:

Our world and our region are seeing many and profound changes. Globalization and trends in multitiered economic arrangements have enlarged the chances and promoted the view that the Asia-Pacific region could become the core of a new world power for the 21st century. Even after the 2008-9 global financial crisis our region has continually been the engine of the world's economic recovery and growth. At the same time, we perceive that the structure of the global economy is changing and that a new model of economic growth is emerging, one that is sustainable and respects the natural environment, and that is based on knowledge and advanced technologies. Therefore, "renovation" and "creation" in order to respond to a changing world has become an inevitable choice. Vietnam and Japan are no exception [...]. We are following with great interest the important reforms implemented by the Government of Japan. We appreciate the success of Prime Minister Abe's economic policies (*abonomics*) and we are happy that they are helping the country to overcome with strength the effects of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Not only are these important and firmly conducted policies a demonstration of the abilities of adaptation and renovation which are typical of Japan and the Japanese people and part of their respected tradition, but they also show the rightness of the Japanese government's leadership. The recovery of one of the world's economic powerhouses is tied to the common prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. Vietnam appreciates Japan's successes and trusts in the fact that they will continue in the future. Your successes are a



valuable experience that should be taken as reference at a point in time when Vietnam is reorganizing its economy and renovating its development model (Trương Tấn Sang 2014)<sup>46</sup>.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese president recognized Japanese role in providing legal assistance to Vietnam with regard to the amendment of the country's constitution. He also wished for the continuation of the Japanese assistance in the legal sector. Apart from the economic aspects of the partnership, the security-related ones gained further relevance in following high-level meetings in Hanoi in July 2014, on the sidelines of the Asia-Europe Meeting in Milan in October 2014, during the visit to Japan by the CPV Central Committee Secretary General Nguyễn Phú Trọng in September 2015 and finally in November 2015 further strengthened the bilateral cooperation.

In July 2014, Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio signed with the SRV MPI Minister Bùi Quang Vinh an agreement for the provision of six used patrol vessels to strengthen Vietnam's coast surveillance capacities during his official visit to Hanoi. In an interview with the Vietnamese newspaper Tuoi Tre, he argued that:

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<sup>46</sup> Trương Tấn Sang (2014). Henka suru sekai ni teki o suru tame no satsu shin to kōzō. Address by Truong Tan Sang, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the National Diet (Japanese translation). March 18, 2014. Tokyo: the National Diet of Japan. My translation. “我々の世界と地域は、多くの深い変化を目の当たりにしています。グローバル化と多層的な経済連携の趨勢は大きなチャンスとアジア太平洋が21世紀において世界の新しいパワーの中心となる展望を拓いています。2008年から2009年の世界金融危機の後も、我々の地域は引き続き世界経済の回復と成長のエンジンとなっています。同時に、我々は、世界においても地域においても、経済構造の改革と、持続可能で環境に優しく、知識と高い技術に基づく発展に向けた成長モデルの変更が大きな趨勢となっていることを感じています。したがって、「変化する世界に適応するための刷新と創造」は各国、各民族の必然的な選択です。日本とベトナムも例外ではありません。これは私が本日皆様と共有したい考えでもあります。我々は日本政府の重要な改革を高い関心を持ってフォローしており、安倍総理のアベノミクス政策が喜ばしい成功をもたらし、日本が地震と津波の影響から力強く回復するのを助けていることをうれしく思います。これらの重要な断固たる政策は、日本と日本国民の特徴的で価値ある伝統である適応と刷新の能力を表すだけでなく、日本の国会と政府の指導の正しさを証明するものです。世界の経済大国の一つである日本の復興はアジア太平洋地域の共通の繁栄と結びついています。ベトナムは日本の成功を歓迎し、引き続き日本の成功を信頼しています。皆さんの成功は、ベトナムが経済の再構築と自身の成長モデルを刷新していく過程において参考とすべき貴重な経験でもあります”.

Japan is aware that improving Vietnam’s capability of maritime law enforcement is an urgent, necessary task, so we are mulling over conducting human resource training in this field alongside the supply of patrol vessels to Vietnam (Tuoi Tre 2014).

He also expressed his endeavor to implement the “intensive and extensive strategic partnership” agreed upon by President Sang and Prime Minister Abe in March, and maintained to be eager to see Vietnam’s development in the near future (Tuoi Tre 2014)<sup>47</sup>. Kishida’s move anticipated the 2015 revision of the ODA Charter, which recognizes the possibility to contribute to enhance the recipient country’s capacities in law enforcement and security (including cooperation in non-traditional security issues such as the prevention of cyber-attacks).

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).

Most importantly, in 2015, Vietnam officially expressed its support to Prime Minister Abe’s “Proactive Contribution to Peace” and the newly adopted security laws. During Trọng’s visit to Japan, the Partnership was reaffirmed through the “joint vision statement” signed by the two leaders. Security consideration emerges as the top priorities of the partnership. At points 9, and 10, the document reads as follows:

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<sup>47</sup> Tuoi Tre News (2014). Available online at: <http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/21367/minister-fumio-affirms-japan-will-provide-vietnam-with-patrol-boats-naval-training>. Accessed July 11, 2016.

9. The two leaders shared the intention to strengthen cooperation in security and defense by promoting visits and interactions at various levels, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of dialogue mechanisms, actively coordinating to implement bilateral security and defense agreements, and strengthening cooperation in the field of human resource training.

10. The two sides shared the intention to enhance cooperation in maritime safety and security, such as in search-and-rescue, and in dealing with nontraditional security issues, such as cyber security, cybercrime, terrorism, transnational organized crime, piracy, etc. The two sides signed a Memorandum on Cooperation between Coast Guard Agencies.

11. Japan affirmed its continued assistance to help Vietnam enhance its capacity of maritime law enforcement agencies, address post war unexploded ordnance clearance and participate in UN peacekeeping operations. The defense authorities of both countries signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on UN Peacekeeping operation (MOFA 2015f).

It might be worth noting that the discussion of economic issues, which in previous years topped the bilateral agenda, occupy the second part of the document. This part is however significant insofar as it vows to enhance economic cooperation connecting the two country's economic development strategies, production capacities and work together in training human resources. An example of the pledged cooperation in the field of human resource development is the note on the establishment of a Japan-Vietnam University at the Vietnam National University in Hanoi.

#### *4.6.12. The impact of knowledge-based aid on economic exchanges between Japan and Vietnam*

It is difficult to measure the effect that Japanese knowledge-based aid has had on the economy of Vietnam in the last three decades. At any rate, it might be possible to claim that in more than two decades of cooperation, Japanese knowledge-based aid and human resource development has borne

its fruits. The enhancement of the bilateral cooperation in the field of economic planning and legal development, for instance, can be cited as one of the reasons of the investment boom registered between 2006 and 2014.

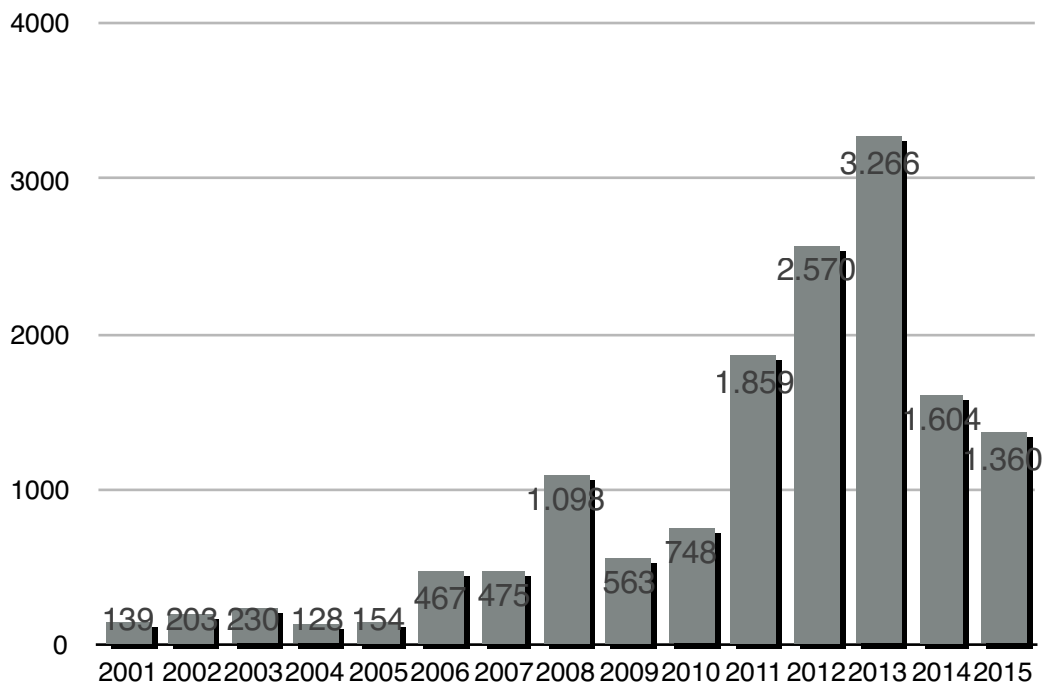
In particular, Japanese legal cooperation in Vietnam has contributed to the drafting of a new civil code, to the development of a regulatory apparatus on competition and on public service; to the reform of the laws on disputes resolution; to capacity building in the legal professions (lawyers, judges, and prosecutors). The range of activities is diverse (s. Table 4.1). However, all of the items presented in the table below are based on the transfer of know-how and knowledge through consulting and training of local personnel. One might go as far as to say that, apart from infrastructural loans constituting most of the aid transfers to Vietnam, the judiciary sector is at the core of JICA's activities in the Southeast Asian country. The effort in the legal sector comprises JICA's assistance to the draft of a competition law and of policies promoting business competition in Vietnam. At the same time, it is in JICA's and thus in the GOJ's interest to favor a reform of the judicial, strengthening the capacities and reliability of local courts and their personnel. The harmonization of the local legal system with the emerging international regime of the *rule of law* is in fact among the top concerns of both international donors and the recipient government. In the table below, currently active JICA cooperation initiatives in the field of legal development in Vietnam are presented (Source: MOFA 2015b).

**Table 4.1: Japanese projects in legal development in Vietnam**

Country	Project
Vietnam	<p><u>The Project for Harmonized, Practical Legislation and Uniform Application of Law Targeting Year 2020 (2015-2020)</u></p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of a sound legal basis to support the country’s economic development</li> <li>• Consultancy to the major judiciary institutions</li> </ul> <p><u>Enhancing corporate finance management capacity to implement SOE restructuring (2014 - 2017)</u></p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favoring the reform process of State owned Enterprises (SOE)</li> <li>• Enhancing SOE financial soundness and efficiency.</li> </ul> <p><u>Project for Capacity Development of the Office of the National Assembly (2014 - 2017)</u></p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the role of the Parliament (National Assembly) and its trustworthiness</li> <li>• Reinforcing the consulting and organizing role of the Office of the National Assembly</li> </ul> <p><u>The Project for Capacity Development of Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Administration (HCMA) and National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) (2013 - 2016)</u></p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding knowledge and know-how of the young government officials trained in the two top schools.</li> </ul> <p><u>Project for the Improvement of Legal Framework for Competition Law and Policy (2012 - 2016)</u></p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a system of fair market competition in the country</li> <li>• Strengthening of the Vietnam Competition Authority, Ministry of Industry and Trade.</li> </ul> <p><u>Technical Assistance for the Legal and Judicial System Reform (Ph. 2) (2011 - 2015)</u></p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening collective and individual capacity for the implementation of laws and sentences accordingly to the country’s development needs.</li> </ul> <p><u>Human Resource Development Project for Traffic safety in Hanoi (2006 - 2010)</u></p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of traffic-related accidents and deaths through knowledge diffusion.</li> </ul>

Once again, it might be worth stressing that such an effort appears to be functional to the creation of a positive business environment in Vietnam. In this light it might be worth noting that since 2006, Japanese investments in Vietnam have been growing steadily, touching their apex in 2008, when they were seven times higher than the former maximum recorded in 1995. Fig. 4.3 below clearly shows the trend.<sup>48</sup>

**Fig. 4.3: Japan’s FDI to Vietnam (2001-15)**



Source: JETRO 2014 and 2016a.

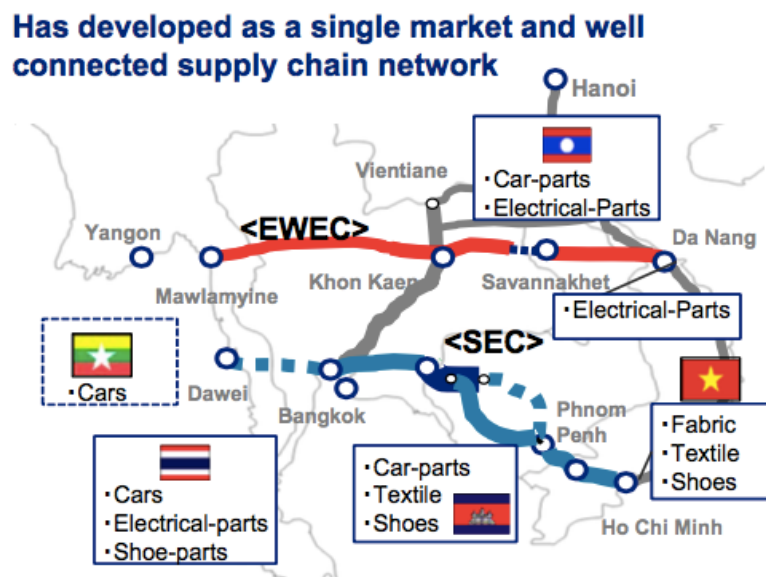
It is worth noting that after years of constant increase, the volume of Japanese investments in Vietnam abruptly declined by 65 percent in 2014. According to JETRO, the yen’s depreciation against the dollar was one of the major factors behind this. In addition, Japanese investments to Vietnam have been affected by the reconstruction works in Northeastern Japan and in the preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (Nikkei 2015). According to JETRO’s survey, two-thirds of Japanese investors are considering to expand their businesses in Vietnam perceiving

<sup>48</sup> Available online at: <https://www.jetro.go.jp/world/japan/stats/fdi.html>. Accessed July 16, 2016.

improvements in the country's business environment. However they suggested that the country's administration reduces administrative procedures and take steps to contain the rising production costs for manufacturers (s. JETRO 2016b, Nikkei 2015).

In fact, in recent years like its neighbors in the Mekong sub-region, Vietnam has attracted the attentions of Japanese manufacturers in sectors like textile and clothing, car-parts and electrical parts (see figure 4.4).

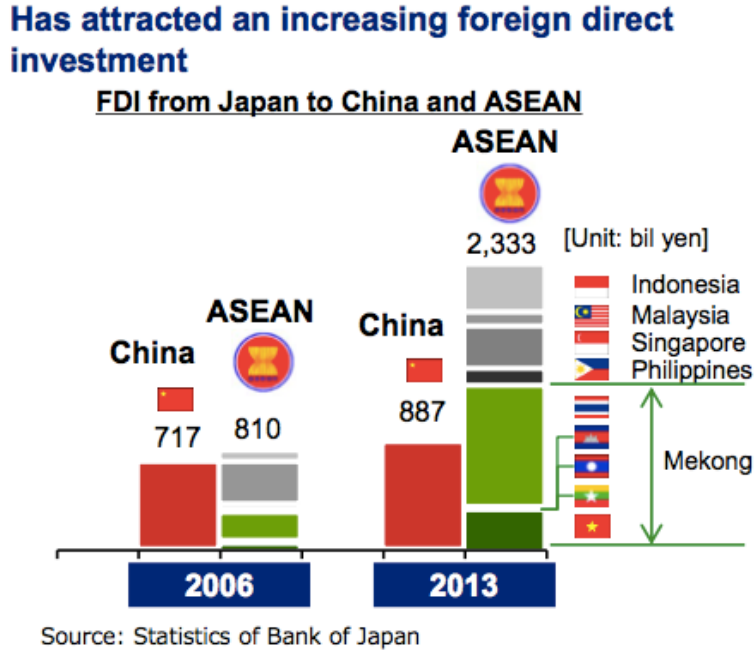
Fig. 4.4: Mekong's attractiveness



(Source: METI 2015)

In total, in 2013, Japanese investments in the Mekong sub-region have more than doubled those in China since 2006. Investments to Vietnam account for nearly a fifth of the total in Southeast Asia and a third in the Mekong sub-region (figure 4.5).

Fig. 4.5: Japanese Investments in China and Mekong Area



(Source: METI 2015)

#### 4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter an overview of the developments in Japan-Vietnam relations have been provided. The analysis has discussed the origins of the bilateral relations in the pre-WWII period and has then focused more on their evolution since the early 2000s.

In the first part of the chapter the Japanese effort to present itself as the economic, political and intellectual leader of Asia has been analyzed referring to the major policies the Japanese government has adopted toward ASEAN, and more specifically to Vietnam, since the early postwar. In the immediate postwar and during the Vietnam War, the role of the civil society, in particular that of trade associations or pacifist groups has been crucial in order for the two countries to maintain contacts with each other. In following years, Japanese ODA has been singled out as one of the major



diplomatic tool causing the rapprochement between Hanoi and Tokyo. Most importantly, official initiatives as the Fukuda, Takeshita and Hashimoto doctrines have been fundamental to strengthen the bilateral relations between Tokyo and Hanoi.

Furthermore, these initiatives have laid the groundwork for the enhancement of the bilateral relations since the early 2000s toward the construction of a strategic partnership based on economic and cultural exchange and, more importantly, common strategic interests. In the next chapter, another aspect of the bilateral cooperation: trade, investments and HRD.

It might be noted that despite the 2009 and 2012 government changes (*seiken kōtai*), Vietnam has remained central in Japanese Asian policy. If on the one hand, the first concrete diplomatic and economic initiatives were taken by the LDP-dominated administrations in the early 2000s, as Oguma (2014) stresses, the DPJ PM Hatoyama Yukio promised to take steps aimed at creating an Asian community on the model of the European Union. To that end, the DPJ PM promised to tackle the issue of the US bases in Okinawa, and therefore the principles of the US-Japan Security Treaty. Hatoyama's promise was never translated into an actual policy. However, the DPJ administrations never reduced its efforts in strengthening the partnerships with Vietnam and other countries in Southeast Asia (p. 552).

In this chapter it has been attempted to provide evidence of the strategical character of the relations between Japan and Vietnam. In the previous chapter the discussion has focused on the official and diplomatic ties the Japanese and Vietnamese governments have consolidated through the postwar. It has been noted how these ties have become strategic particularly at the end of the 1980s, when the SRV entered in the “renovation” (*Đổi Mới*) era. Furthermore, it has been shown that since 2006 bilateral ties have improved to the point that the two countries have signed multiple cooperation agreements. The Vietnam's strategic position in GOJ's diplomatic strategy toward the Asia-Pacific region has not been affected by the 2009 and 2012 historic government changes (*seiken kōtai*).

In this chapter, light has also been shed in detail on the economic and “software” cooperation that the two countries have conducted since the early 2000s. For Japan, Vietnam’s strategic value is to be found in its richness in raw materials and in its potential as a destination for Japanese investments and consumer products. In addition, from a Japanese policymaker’s perspective, Vietnam is valuable insofar as it cooperates with Japan and the US in the military containment of China in the Pacific, and, at the same time, supports the GOJ’s plan to reform the UN’s Security Council. On the other hand, from a Vietnamese policymaker’s perspective, Japan is a valuable donor and ally. Japanese investments in Vietnam have boomed from 2006 to 2013 creating jobs for thousands of Vietnamese. At the same time, aid has been generously provided in various sectors, such as infrastructures and HRD.

Japan has also provided assistance to Vietnam as a mediator between the country and the international community, easing tensions between the SRV and the WB and favoring the SRV’s membership in the WTO. Japanese policymakers and aid practitioners have been able to adapt their policies to the needs of their counterparts without imposing conditionalities that would put the CPV’s leadership at risk. Eventually, Japanese aid, including that in the HRD sector seems to have rather strengthened the party’s role in the country and favored the improvement of bilateral formal and informal exchanges. This might be true especially in the sector of juridical cooperation. In January 2016, for instance, the newly elected PM Nguyễn Xuân Phúc nominated the first Japan-trained Minister of Justice in the SRV history. Mr Lê Thành Long was instructed in Japan as a JICA trainee in international law at Nagoya University. He earned his Ph.D. in 2003 from the same university and since 2008 was director of the international cooperation department at the Ministry of Justice in Hanoi. In 2011 he was appointed Vice-Minister (Nagoya University Alumni Association 2012<sup>49</sup>; VGP News 2016).

In conclusion, it might be possible to argue that, given the strategic character that Japan-Vietnam relations have assumed in the last decade, the national interest factor in ODA-funded HRD

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<sup>49</sup> See NUAL (2012). Available online at: <https://www.nual.nagoya-u.ac.jp/english/activity/event.html#meeting>; VGP News (2016).

programs directed at Vietnam cannot be renounced by Japanese policymakers. However, Japanese intellectual hegemony in Vietnam has been “negotiated” with the Vietnamese leadership and “rescaled” in consideration of the regional and global political and economic arrangements. The image of Japan as a model for development and the threat posed by China’s assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific have played an important role in bringing Hanoi and Tokyo closer to each other.



## **5. Japanese ODA: “structural” changes and domestic intellectual entrepreneurship**

### **5.1. Introduction**

In the last 50 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. In this chapter an overview of these transformations will be given.

The main argument of this chapter 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 (GOJ)’s policy priorities). At the same time, these changes were brought about because of the action of “intellectual entrepreneurs” (s. 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. 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 emergence 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 (see Wendt 1987).

In the first part of the chapter, Japanese ODA will be historically contextualized. 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” (s. Mori 1995).

Then, the focus will shift on how the official discourse on ODA has evolved since the early 2000s. The analysis will proceed against the backdrop of the two main intellectual “poles” guiding policymaking in the aid sector in Japanese administrations: one is the concept of national interest (*kokueki*); the other is affiliation (*tsukiai*). In the second section of the chapter, 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” intended as both *cognitive* and *normative* (s. Schmidt 2008, 307) about ODA will be analyzed.

It will be argued, in fact, that the 2003 revision of the 1992 ODA Charter, supervised by former Foreign Minister Kawaguchi, was a first tentative of establishing a vision of ODA in order to rationalize the policies. In this document, the traditional conservative/bureaucratic view holding that ODA was a diplomatic tool serving Japanese national interest was placed side by side with a more liberal/humanitarian and internationalizing view of ODA, advocated by JICA president Ogata. Peer pressure of the international community and domestic scandals favored the adoption of the document which has provided the ideological background to the GOJ’s policies until very recently. In the last session of this chapter the 2015 will be discussed in brief. Since the Abe administration came to power in late 2012, the 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 appears clearly 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) (s. MOFA 2015).

At least at the discursive level, in fact, the Abe administration has also promoted 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. In the concluding session, it will be discussed how such ideas have been integrated into ODA policies and how, in this broader context, they have affected the formation and implementation of specific human resource development assistance programs.

## **5.2. The historical evolution of Japanese ODA and its “human turn”**

In the last three decades, scholars of Japanese Official development assistance (ODA) (for instance: Arase 1994 and 2005; Hasegawa 1975; Hook & Zhang 1997; Mōri 1995; Söderberg 1996) have discussed in depth the particularities of the Japanese ODA. Most importantly, they have identified the internal and the external forces (i.e., business interests, foreign diplomacy, and international politics) shaping the GOJ’s aid allocation since the early postwar. These studies have often stressed the unicity of Japanese ODA.

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 *institutionalized* and *bureaucratized* process involving slightly less than a dozen ministries and agencies. As rightly stressed by Mori (1995), the result of this institutionalization and bureaucratization 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). On the one hand, Mori saw in the MOFA an internationalizing force trying to uniform its ODA to the international standards set by international organization as the OECD; on the other, he saw in institutional actors 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, putting a "brake" on possible uncontrolled expansion of ODA budgets (s. Pempel 1981; Shimizu 2013). In other words, the allocation of ODA has always been subjected to the influences of different "power centres" with their own agenda (S. Poulantzas, 1978).

However, these influences can be summarized in the two broad ideas of national interest (*kokueki*) and international affiliation (*tsukiai*). These concepts were first identified by scholar and UN advisor Hasegawa Sukehiro (1975)<sup>1</sup> as the guiding ideas at the foundations of Japanese postwar diplomacy. The term *kokueki* refers to a vast range of interests ranging from national security to economic prosperity. The term *tsukiai* instead literally means "company", "association" even "friendship". In other words, these two principles stood for a process of foreign policy making directed by both an endogenous and exogenous pulls.

At the same time, the MOFA has in recent years sponsored periodical meetings with NGOs and representatives of the civil society in order to improve the transparency of the aid-giving process which in the early 2000s has been at the center of a public debate after ODA funds misuse and corruption in the ministry (s. Yakushiji 2006). The entire process is also monitored by and coordinated with supranational institutions such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other donors.<sup>2</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> S. 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.

<sup>2</sup> The OECD has for example defined the basic principles of ODA for its member countries. ODA are aid flows to countries and territories identified by the Development Co-operation Directorate which is "provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies" and "administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective"; it must be "concessional in character" and convey "a grant element of at least 25 percent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent)" (DAC-OECD, 1972).



around the roots”, diplomacy, made of quiet and mostly behind-the-scenes negotiations (Hook 2005, 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. Other scholars have stressed the link between Japanese aid disbursement habits and Japanese political advance in the international arena (s. Alesina & Dollar 2000; Ampiah 1997; Katada 2005).

Yet, ODA have been a fundamental ingredient of economic cooperation with the developing countries. Specifically, several studies have shown that Japan’s ODA has impacted on local development in countries in East Asia, like Indonesia and China (s. Hatakeyama 2008; Ohno & Ohno 2002; Ohno 2014a and 2014b; Sawada 2014). In particular, they have been beneficial to Japanese business associations and entrepreneurs that in mid-80s started transferring parts of their productive activities abroad, especially in developing countries in Asia, ODA is crucial in order to support Japan’s competitiveness.

Connected to the ODA, there is also a specific discourse, whose origins, and how it has changed through the decades, will be the object of following chapters. It will suffice here to mention a few *ideological* features, such as those of *self-help*, *ownership* and *experience*, that are being used by the GOJ in order to build an *hegemony* in the field of development in Asia.

In the following paragraphs, the historical evolution of Japanese ODA, and the major ideas which have shaped the policies of the government of Japan (GOJ) since its start in the 1950s.

### *5.2.1. Reestablishing a national reputation*

After the defeat of the Empire of Japan in 1945, countries in Asia and Southeast Asia which were occupied by Japanese military started claiming for war reparations. In 1950s, leaving aside China, Korea and Taiwan, war reparations were evaluated in terms of Japanese assets and infrastructures, Japanese war reparations started flowing to countries which were militarily occupied from 1941 to

1945. In 1952 Burma agreed on a 200 million dollar war reparation plan; in 1956, the Philippines reached an agreement on a 550 million dollar plan in yearly installments over 20 years; in 1958, Indonesia accepted a 220 million agreement; South Vietnam ratified the San Francisco Treaty, receiving nearly 39 million dollar (MOFA), barely a tenth of what they asked for (Bouissou 2003, 136). In 1954, Japan joined the Colombo Plan, a regional organization for economic cooperation and development in the Asia-Pacific macro region, officially becoming one of its multilateral donor the following year (s. Tang Sew Mun 2012, 94).

In the 1950s, Japanese political leaders as Yoshida Shigeru saw in ODA an opportunity to boost Tokyo's *national interest*. In the early postwar period, the term primarily coincided with the ideas national security and prosperity. ODA provided Japanese policymakers with a completely pacific tool to secure the nation's survival in the new global order; furthermore it helped the political leadership of the time to project a new image of the country that contrasted with that of aggression and colonialism of the wartime period. In fact, such disbursements were the chance for the postwar leadership to rehabilitate Japan's national image in front of the newly born international community. The main target of this diplomatic effort were the Asian neighbors and the US, which after the war had become Japan's most prominent ally. 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 (s. WB 2013). The country's policymakers were eager to show the country's readiness to repay such a debt helping other countries in need (s. Furuoka, Oishi & Kato 2010, §2.1).

In the 1960s, the allocation of funds to international cooperation gained an economic significance. 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)<sup>3</sup>. Southeast Asia was attractive for Japanese companies expanding abroad trying to secure their supply of raw materials (especially oil and natural rubber from Indonesia) (s. Lam 2012). PM Kishi’s words are revealing of the Japanese policymakers’ renewed interest towards Asia. Contrary to the wartime period, though, in the new global context, this interest could be realized through an effective economic diplomacy and not through military aggression.

However, a real implementation of this new and pacific “Asian policy” was enacted a few years later. 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 economical relationships. In those years, the “flying geese paradigm” (*gankō keitai*) gained popularity.

According to this economic model of development defined by the Japanese economist Akamatsu Kaname (1961), industrial development was the leading force of economic development. This could be attained through the adoption of industrialized advanced countries’ industries in order for a less advanced countries to catch up with them on the path of development. In the mid 1960s and 1970s, basic concepts of the pattern were deployed in Japanese foreign policy by prominent political figures as Foreign Minister Okita Saburo, the promoter of the concept of “comprehensive security” through investment and economic aid, and Tokyo Hitotsubashi University economist Kojima Kiyoshi in his proposals regarding regional integration in the Asia-Pacific region (s. Korhonen 1994, 102-6).

However, as Kasahara (2004) noted, this paradigm implied a *hierarchical* structure inasmuch as Japan was at the head of the flock of Asian developing countries, the rising “tigers”, and “dragons”, as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia emerging from the 1950s until the 1980s. Against such a backdrop, due to the higher degree of industrial development Japan reached in the

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<sup>3</sup> The words were pronounced before a Budget committee of the House of Representatives in 1960 (s. Sato 2013)

1960s and 1970s, and its self-characterization as an advanced country (*senshinkoku*), relations between Japan and its Asian neighbors have been characterized by relative inequality and imbued of “moderate nationalism” (Korhonen 1994, 105-6).

To summarize: in 1954, Japan took part in the Colombo Plan and started providing economic assistance to neighboring countries in form of war reparations. The Japanese political leadership saw in economic a way to repay its duty toward the international community. Between 1952 and 1953, Japan had in fact after received an aid-package from the World Bank for the reconstruction of the country after the extensive destruction brought by the war. On the other hand, Japanese post-war political leaders attached them an instrumental value toward Japan’s economic and diplomatic advantage (s. Katō 1980; Yasutomo 1990). To conclude, it can be said that since the GOJ started providing aid to developing countries, Japan’s political establishment (dominated for the most part by the conservative Liberal-democratic party) has been busy adjusting the country’s policies in order to safeguard the country’s *tsukiai* (affiliation) with the US-led system of international relations powers without renouncing to the *kokueki* (national interest) (Arase 2005, 9-10).

### *5.2.2. Becoming the world’s top donor: business, diplomacy and international discourse in Japan’s ODA*

Following Furuoka, Oishi and Kato (2010)’s periodization of Japan’s ODA, a major turning point in Japanese aid policy happened in the late 1960’s. In 1967 Japan graduated from the WB status of borrower. Assistance policies in this early period were centered around loan-based infrastructural aid and trade promotion. Especially in the 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,<sup>4</sup> such a task could be performed mainly through diplomatic and economic means (Lam 2013, 164).

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 stabilize Asia and balance the trade deficit the US had accumulated with Japan before 1985 (Islam 1990, 196). On the other, until the mid-1980’s, yen-loans became a major tool of economic advance as the yen appreciated against the dollar after the 1985 Plaza Accord (Lam 2006, 101). Yen-loans were instrumental in the creation of a Japan-led regional financial arrangement based on export-driven economy (Jessop & Sum 2006, 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* 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 favored 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) analyzes the coordination between business federations like the Keidanren and economic

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<sup>4</sup> 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 WWII, Japan virtually renounce to maintain any form of military force (s. Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet (Kantei) (1946-47). The Constitution of Japan. Available online at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html). This article is currently at the center of the political debate. The current 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 N. 165). Available online at: [http://law.e-gov.go.jp/cgi-bin/idxselect.cgi?IDX\\_OPT=3&H\\_NAME=&H\\_NAME\\_YOMI=%82%a0&H\\_NO\\_GENGO=S&H\\_NO\\_YEAR=29&H\\_NO\\_TYPE=2&H\\_NO\\_NO=165&H\\_FILE\\_NAME=S29HO165&H\\_RYAKU=1&H\\_CTG=1&H\\_YOMI\\_GUN=1&H\\_CTG\\_GUN=1](http://law.e-gov.go.jp/cgi-bin/idxselect.cgi?IDX_OPT=3&H_NAME=&H_NAME_YOMI=%82%a0&H_NO_GENGO=S&H_NO_YEAR=29&H_NO_TYPE=2&H_NO_NO=165&H_FILE_NAME=S29HO165&H_RYAKU=1&H_CTG=1&H_YOMI_GUN=1&H_CTG_GUN=1)

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 favored 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).

The GOJ’s practices as a donor however came under scrutiny in the early 1990s. Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, the wave of criticism against foreign aid, which had begun two decades earlier, grew stronger. In Africa and Latin America, foreign aid had not succeeded in reducing poverty; rather, major donors and international financial institutions had imposed tight fiscal parameters (i.e, cuts to public spending in the welfare sector) and conditionalities (such as the concession of land to foreign private groups at a discount price), on the recipient countries for the allocation of funds, mostly in form of project-based loan-aid (s. Ferguson 1990). In the long run, such practices resulted in the increment of the recipient countries’ national debts, thus increasing the poverty rate. In extensive parts of subsaharan Africa, such as in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia, for example, Western foreign aid could not prevent the emergence of civil conflicts, the spreading of infectious diseases such as AIDS, nor could it halt chronic food shortages (s. Maren 2002; Moyo 2006; 2009). In several Latin American countries, structural adjustment programs promoted by the WB and the IMF caused widespread popular unrest: IFIs and major international donors were accused of violating entire peoples’ democratic and human rights in the name of “free market reforms”, “liberalization” and “deregulation” (s. Global Exchange 2001; Ellis-Jones 2002). Domestically, national administrations were put under pressure by the public often contesting the lack of transparency either of objectives and rationale for the allocation of funds. (s. for instance the case of Canada in James & Karoff 2008). Domestic and international criticism resulted in a general decrease and stagnation of the aid volume from the North to the South of the world in the 1990s (Martens 2001) As a result, there were repeated calls for a general reorganization and a rethinking of

aid, even among the OECD-DAC community of donors (Hynes & Scott 2013). Policymakers in the US, the world largest donor at that time, moreover, started looking for a adjustment of aid policies. Since the end of World War II, aid had been considered as “a tool designed first and foremost to advance U.S. political and security goals” (Hastedt 2014, 166). However, first the crisis and then the fall of the Soviet Union made aid less important in the general US’ foreign strategy (USAID 2009).

Against this backdrop, in 1989, Japan had emerged as the world’s top donor. The Japanese mercantilistic 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). “Peer pressure” 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 mercantilistic considerations (Katada 2005, 7). 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).

Another criticism to Japanese ODA was that it was used for political advance in the international arena (s. for instance Ampiah 1997). Alesina and Dollar (2000) have in fact demonstrated that Japanese aid is 345 % more than average to so-called “UN friends” (Alesina & Dollar 2000, 46). However the article shows also that this practice is common among major donors such as France, Germany, the UK and the US. In fact, these countries seem to provide aid to serve their “strategic interests”, mostly in former colonies in order to spur investments and trade. This practice has another consequence: that of recruiting friendly countries that may ease the passage of resolutions proposed by the donors (Alesina & Dollar 2000, 56).

In light of these facts, since the 1990's until the early 2000's, the GOJ has shown receptive of the climate of the time adjusting its policies to international organizations and international donors' recommendations. For example, it has increased its untied aid (Katada 2005, 7; OECD 2014), and it has drafted an ODA Policy Outline (or Charter, *taikō* in Japanese) (1992) aimed at regulating the country's aid giving for the first time in four decades (Arase 1994, 194-5). The document promoted regularity and transparency, and was conceived by the GOJ in order to improve Japan's image in the donors' community (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). In the mid-1990's, the GOJ was urged by experts in Japan and outside to make its ODA process more transparent and more "humanitarian" in scope (Arase 2005, 271). In addition, internal scandals involving MOFA bureaucrats, and international events as the September 11 attacks in New York contributed in the re-shaping of Japan's ODA. The case of ODA misappropriation of ODA funds by an LDP lawmaker, and allegations of ODA 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 the ODA (s. Arase 2005, 271; Hatakeyama & Freedman 2010, 354; Jain 2002). It might be argued that this transition ended with the revision of the 1992 ODA Charter in 2003.

### *5.2.3. A new (old) priority for ODA: human resource development*

Furuoka, Oishi and Kato (2010) stress that after the GOJ approved its new aid policy guidelines in 2003, a new aid-giving priority, i.e., contributing to developing country's human resource development, emerged. According to the authors,



Japan's ODA program has shifted its focus from physical capital development to human capital development in aid recipient countries through various educational programs, technical cooperation programs, support of SMEs, and so on. These programs reflect the Japanese government's belief that the development of human resource is the 'key' to nation-building and economic development in the aid recipient countries (Furuoka, Oishi & Kato 2010, §5.2).

This is partly true: not only because it is not a totally "new priority", since programs with a similar scope were already in place in the 1960's; not only because "hardware" aid (for example infrastructure provision through aid or grants) remains the prevailing form of cooperation; but, most of all, because it is naive to think that those programs might be completely disinterested.

First, the GOJ's effort in aid for HRD in Asia dates back to the early postwar period. Training programs for Indonesian nationals were set up in the early 1960's through ODA loans. Hundreds of college students and teachers were invited to Japan to be trained in Japanese language and Japanese studies (*nihon kankei gakka*). This endeavor was a reflection of a general interest shared by the Japanese political and business elites to support Japanese companies in their expansion abroad (s. Furukawa, Kitani & Nunoo 2015). However, it took a few decades before the "human dimension" of development was officially recognized in Japan's ODA. In 1992, the ODA Charter recognized the importance of a human dimension in the effort to reduce poverty globally. The limitations of the 1992 Charter commitments were however evident in the first years after its adoption. The provision of "software aid" was burdened by the lack of preparedness of Japanese development officials and by the rigid bureaucratic structure of the GOJ's aid sector (Fujisaki, Briscoe, Maxwell, Kishi & Suzuki 1996, 538).

The "humanitarian" view of the 1992 Charter was nevertheless further strengthened in 2003, when the revised Charter was adopted. It included pledges to contribute to the resolution of economic inequalities, ethnic conflicts, environmental problems, and to the issue of terrorism through the promotion of human rights and democracy. (s. MOFA 2003; Sasuga 2007). This might

have been a consequence of the emerging dominant discourse on aid at the international level. Therefore it can be argued that the *tsukiai* component of the Japanese ODA was prioritized in the policymaking process. However, the 1992 Charter ushered in a period for Japan's aid giving policies: it might be argued in fact that the focus started shifting towards software aid at the aid-giving policy-making level in Japan.

As discussed in previous paragraphs, in the early 1990s, 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 (s. 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). In the same period, at the United Nations' level, a new view of development emerged. In 1990, the UNDP 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 just in terms of GNP growth or capital accumulation. The new vision stressed the importance of enlarging "choices" and improving "human capabilities" in education and health (UNDP 1990, 3). In 1995, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development stressed the necessity of a development that "place[s] people at the center". Principles like education, democracy, equal access to opportunities, free market, peace and tolerance were given preeminence (UN 1995, 8-9)<sup>5</sup>. In addition, 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. 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 in order to avoid the risk of the spreading of economic instability outside the formerly socialist bloc (Craig & Porter 2004, 64).

In this new intellectual climate in the field of international aid, the GOJ enabled a more "Japanese" view of development. Criticizing WB and IMF policies, in 1991 the Office Overseas

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<sup>5</sup> The text of the Copenhagen Declaration might be accessed at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/116/51/IMG/N9511651.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed May 6, 2016).

Economic Cooperation Fund (OECE) – 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). This breakaway from the IFIs’ dominant vision eventually led to the publication of a special report on the Asian Miracle (1993), mainly sponsored by Japan to describe the “Asian way” to development based on domestic investments in technological advance and development of human resources (WB 1993, 4-5).

At the time of the dispute with the WB, Japan’s endeavor in favor of human resource development in the developing world was already evident inside the Bank. In 1988, the GOJ and the WB created a fund with the aim to support the implementation of several WB’s technical assistance programs with a strong focus on

“human resources and institutional capacity” (WB 2013, 1-2). The Japan Policy and Human Resource Development Fund (PHRD) is one of the largest funds in the WB: it has provided financial and technical support to the Bank’s projects from preparation to the implementation phase. Through the years the PHRD Fund’s disbursements have been directed mostly to programs for agricultural and rural development in Africa, social inclusion for disabled people, and disaster risk management. The Fund has also been providing scholarships (as the Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program, established in 1987, and the Japan Indonesia Presidential Scholarship, established in 2008) for developing countries nationals pursuing an MA degree in Japanese, US, Indonesian and a few African universities (WB 2013, 17; JJ/WBGSCP 2016). Furthermore, the Fund provides financial support for the promotion of the partnership and cooperation between the GOJ and the Bank through the recruitment of Japanese staff and consultants (WB 2013, 3).

In conclusion, it can be said that this vision had attracted consensus in some countries in Asia to the point of becoming “hegemonic”: this is the case of Vietnam, where Japan has gradually become the largest bilateral donor and has a say in multilateral donors’ initiatives (as those promoted by the WB). As it will be shown in the following chapters, this is not an hegemony in the gramscian sense. The degree of domination changes becoming symbolical more than physical, as donors can intervene

only to a certain point in the recipients' domestic affairs; but at the same time the intellectual leadership (*direzione*) has a crucial role. It is "rescaled" in the sense that it is in place at a regional level but not at a larger global one.

### **5.3. Japan's ODA in the New Millennium: Two opposed visions coming together**

In this section, the two guiding principles of ODA policymaking in Japan will be discussed in further detail. The scope of this chapter 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). In this chapter, 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". 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 analyzed: namely, former JICA president Ogata Sadako, former Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yuriko and current Prime Minister Abe Shinzō. The first can be considered one of the strongest advocates in Japan of a liberal/humanitarian and internationalized idea of foreign aid. The other two 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.

### *5.3.1. Ogata Sadako and the “alignment” of Japanese aid*

The revision of the ODA Charter, on the one hand, reflected the peer pressure from the OECD-DAC donors’ community favoring 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.<sup>6</sup>

2003 was a crucial year 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 United Nations (UN)<sup>7</sup>. She promoted a new approach to development assistance, based, among the others, on the concept of human security. At the same time, Ogata sponsored a rationalization of the Japanese international aid sector. The guiding principles of her presidency were put forward in her 2003 inaugural address:

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed account of the Suzuki scandal, see Berkofsky (2002); Jain (2002); and Satō (2007).

<sup>7</sup> 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 in 2001 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/hpanel/ogata-bio.htm> and <http://www.unhcr.org/sadako-ogata-japan-1991-2000.html>.

In this occasion, JICA will radically revise its organization 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-centered 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.<sup>8</sup>

In a 2006 speech, she announced a JICA reorganization that would take effect in 2008, expressing her conviction that the new organizational 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

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<sup>8</sup> S. Ogata (2003). My 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に、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、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”。

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.

### *5.3.2. Kawaguchi Yoriko and the reappraisal of "national interest" in Japan's foreign aid*

The 2003 ODA Charter was supervised by Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko, that had taken over the post at the head of MOFA the previous year at the end of a trouble period for Japanese diplomacy discredited by a series of scandals in the early 2000's. As the newly appointed Minister argued during a question time in the National Diet, one of the best result of the Japanese post-war diplomacy has been the achievement of "independence". This has yielded to positive results for the international community and for Japan. In turn, Japan has been able to choose its path toward the realization 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 harmonize its policies with that of the (Euro-American) international community. These two factors 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 reason its cooperation with the international community is extremely important.<sup>9</sup>

Against this background, Minister Kawaguchi went on asserting the necessity of an unprecedented endeavor 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 neighboring 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 revitalizing Iraq after the 2003 US 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.

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<sup>9</sup> S. 159th Diet Session, House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Commission, 6th meeting, March 12, 2004, 37/141. My translation. “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ございますから、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”.



These feelings are on the background of our foreign policy and they are its driving force. The results of a good policy is to be found in that relation that needs to be further promoted.<sup>10</sup>

### 5.3.3. *The 2003 ODA Charter as juxtaposition of “modes of thought”*

The cabinet decision revising the ODA Charter recognized the GOJ’s endeavor 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 recognized 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

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<sup>10</sup> S. 159th Diet Session, House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Commission, 6th meeting, March 12, 2004, 87/141. My 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、日本人の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、そういったような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、そういったことを作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”。

to gain the sympathy of the international community. Therefore, from now on ODA should play an always greater role.<sup>11</sup>

Aiming at their resolution, the GOJ's enlisted 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.

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<sup>11</sup> S. MOFA (2003). Kaihatsu enjo (ODA) taikō. Available online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/seisaku/taikou.html>. Accessed June 30, 2016. My translation. 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。

5) Harmony with the International community: GOJ's ODA should be harmonized with the development goals set by the major international organizations. Cooperation must be sought with other subjects as NGOs and private enterprises (MOFA 2003).

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 recognized the importance to preserve national interest in its foreign policy (*kokueki*).

*5.3.4. 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. The decision was taken by the government in the broader context of the “proactive contribution to peace” launched by the Abe administration in 2013. The 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* (lit.: aid for development) to *kaihatsu kyōryoku* (lit: cooperation for development)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> 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 1980's 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.

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 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 (GOJ 2015a, 3)<sup>13</sup>.

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, organized 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

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<sup>13</sup> The cabinet decision on development cooperation charter: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000067701.pdf>

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 democratization and reduction of the gender gap; and d) to the construction and management of a solid economic infrastructure (GOJ 2015, 2). This view is consistent with the ODA guiding principle of *jijo doryoku*, or self help.

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.

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).

In other words, in the GOJ policymakers' view, national interest and international or worldwide interest are 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 non-proliferation 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 (s. MOFA 2015d, 175-178)<sup>14</sup>.

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 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 self-reliant development 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 postwar 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).

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<sup>14</sup> See Diplomatic Bluebook 2015 <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000106463.pdf>

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 (Asahi Shimbun, 2014; McGrath 2015).

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.

#### *5.3.5. 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 21st 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 as 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 1950’s. On the one hand, Abe pledged a more proactive role in Asia, including in security matters, implicitly recognizing possible threats to the peace and stability of the region. On the other, Japan’s Prime Minister pointed at the importance of Japan’s outward economic strategy, reassessing Japan’s 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”. However, in Abe’s words, Japan seems to retain a privileged position. His invitation to his 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 suit 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 innovative. 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 openhandedly 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.

Cooperation between Japan and Asia is seen as the way to pursue new economic growth on the basis of 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.

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 (s. 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 characters of Japanese ODA: the heart-to-heart cooperation. The stress on concepts like the “togetherness” of Japan and Asia, and viceversa, 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.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter the intellectual evolution of Japanese ODA has been analyzed. In the first section of the chapter, 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 the WWII, 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 made out of 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 strategical 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 criticized 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/conservative idea. The emergence of conservative intellectual entrepreneurs as PM Abe Shinzō has favored 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.



## 6. The JDS program: modes of thought, discourses and historical patterns of ODA

### 6.1. Introduction

Researching “ideas” has proven instrumental to avoiding simplifications regarding the official discourse on ODA promoted by the GOJ and the criticism that has been directed at it in recent years.

It is not possible to criticize it exclusively in humanitarian or strategical terms. The official discourse presents, in fact, at least two main components (*kokueki/tsukiai*) being juxtaposed in order to get a larger consensus toward it. This process needs catalysts, i.e., intellectual entrepreneurs that can spur change and implement a certain discourse. In this, the catalyst’s social *milieu*, the institution he represents, as well as the historical period in which he lives, are at the foundation of its worldview (*Weltanschauung*) (s. Schmidt 2008; Mannheim 1936). In the preceding chapter the emergence and integration of certain ideas in the Japanese official discourse on ODA has been analyzed. The case that will be presented in the following paragraphs, appears to be no exception to the rule.

In this chapter, the focus will shift on how these ideas have been implemented in the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS), a program of scholarship funded by the Government of Japan (GOJ) through its ODA. Here too, an interplay of “humanitarian” and strategic considerations could be observed through the analysis of textual data collected through series of qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with public officials involved at different levels of aid policymaking and implementation. On the one hand, liberal/humanitarian considerations could be found especially at the implementation level (implementation agency, program contractors, universities). On the other, conservative/bureaucratic considerations could be found at the policymaking level (ministry).

Looking at the countries involved in the JDS program one might argue indeed that *geostrategic* considerations are part of the program. The main target of the JDS are, in fact, low and middle income countries in Southeast and Central Asia. Japan has had a traditional interest in forging good relations

with countries in these specific areas. As it has already been discussed previously, since the end of WWII, Japanese policymakers have prioritized aid giving to countries rich in raw materials in order to support Japan's domestic industries' development. In many cases, this situation has brought benefits to the recipient countries as well, in terms of investment attraction and job creation. In recent years, however, international cooperation priorities and aid giving patterns have changed globally (s. Craig & Porter 2006). As other major donors, Japan has adapted to the new paradigm. Thus, Japanese policymakers have made a further effort promoting, alongside "traditional" forms of "hardware" cooperation, "software" cooperation. Training human resources employed in the public sector might be seen as one of them. At the same time, it might be argued that Japanese political leaders have not given up the idea of using these forms of cooperation strategically. It might be said that especially in the early 2000s they have become a means for Japanese policymakers and experts to establish an "intellectual leadership" in the region against the advance of China (s. Asō 2005).<sup>1</sup> This intellectual dominance, or *direzione* à la Gramsci, Japanese policymakers are keen on establishing, may have its roots in student exchange programs at the regional level or in more specifically targeted programs as the JDS. The close association of these programs with the Japanese government is apparent as public universities are also involved.

In the previous chapter, an overview of the political relations between Japan and Vietnam has been presented. It has been argued that since the early 1990s, Japanese policymakers' interest has been directed to Vietnam. This "discovery" of Vietnam by Japanese policymakers has its roots in the prewar era and has always been multiple reasons. First, Vietnam is located in a strategic area of Southeast Asia, at the border with China and is run through by the Mekong River. Second, Vietnam is rich in raw materials, namely oil, coal and recently discovered rare earths. Third, Vietnam and Japan

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<sup>1</sup> Ironically, until 2013, China had been the major recipient of the JDS program. More than 400 Chinese public officials were trained in Japan, arguably acquiring expertise, know-how, and developing a social and professional network in the country. In this sense, it might be said that Japan has contributed to a certain extent to the creation of positive bilateral relations

share strategic geopolitical interest in the region. In the following paragraphs, economic relations and Japanese initiatives in “software” aid will be discussed.

The main hypothesis which will be put forward in the following chapter is that through such initiatives and from its vantage point as one of the most developed economies in East Asia, Japan has attempted to project an “intellectual leadership/hegemony” over Vietnam. Since the late 1990s the GOJ has promoted abroad through international cooperation a model of governance and economic development carved out of its Japan’s experience as a developing country in the aftermath of World War II. In particular in the 2000s, Japan has promoted, with the consent of the recipient countries, the adoption of dominant standards (such as, for instance, investment laws and laws on intellectual property). In the last decade, Vietnam has been one of those countries that have enjoyed Japan’s advice and recommendation in an attempt to improve the business climate in the country opening to international investors.

However, it would be shortsighted to argue for the existence of a Japanese-only intellectual total dominance. Rather, the preference of the very SRV leadership shall be considered. In addition, the dominant global neoliberal ideology and its respective model of governance based on the *rule of law* enshrining private property and competition is gaining ground in transitional economies such as Vietnam.

In the first section of this chapter, the JDS program will be historically contextualized. Then, its main features (to whom it is directed, the estimated amount of money allocated to it, its educational and diplomatic scopes) will be discussed. In the second section, instead, the results of the quality interviews with Japanese development officials and policymakers on the utility of HRD programs will be presented in detail. The dominant modes of thought will be presented; interplays, juxtapositions and conflicts will be discussed. In the last section of the chapter, the results of interviews with JDS students will be discussed and commented in order to present the construction of Japanese intellectual leadership as a “co-operative” process, rather than a unidirectional one.

## **6.2. The JDS Program and the GOJ's diplomacy**

The scope of the present research is to investigate how Japanese ODA-related HRD programs have been discursively conceptualized by major institutional actors (namely JICA and MOFA) since the early 2000s. In the case-study here analyzed, discourse is interpreted as both the sum of ideas that are “represented in the discourse” and as an “interactive process” that the agents may carry in a certain setting (Schmidt 2008, 309). Institutions have a major role both in influencing and being influenced by discourses. Institutions in fact can be seen as a given and as a contingent factor that constrain the actors and are created or changed by the latter (Schmidt 2008, 314). In light of this, it has been possible to consider Japanese official discourse on ODA as a complex systems where ideas interact and are not static entities but change in response to changes at the system level and changes brought by influential individuals. In the previous chapter this model has been discussed at a general level. In this chapter the two main approaches, one prioritizing Japan's national interest, the other Japan's international affiliation, will be investigated with regards to a specific ODA grant program: the JDS. Before proceeding with the analysis, it is worth discussing the origins of the program and its scope.

The JDS is the first scholarship program of the GOJ financed through its ODA grants. Through these, the GOJ provides each student a scholarship for the completion of a 1 or 2-year English-taught Master course in a Japanese university. The program “targets highly capable young officials who are expected to engage in implementing social and economic development plans as a future leader” (JICE 2016). At the moment the program is directed at 13 developing countries mostly in Central, South and Southeast Asia, and is designed exclusively to train public officials in several sectors of the state administration: from justice to public policy, from environmental protection to agriculture, and infrastructure operation and maintenance (JICE 2016). Target countries are: Myanmar and Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia in mainland SE Asia; the Philippines in insular SE Asia; Bangladesh in South Asia; Mongolia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia. Students from China,



Indonesia and Sri Lanka have also been involved in the program. In 2013, the JDS has been extended to Ghana, the first non-Asian country. Assistance will be extended to Nepal starting in the f.y. 2016. Since 2000 the JDS has supported the training of 3,434 students<sup>2</sup> in Japanese universities (JICA 2016).

According to the Japanese International Cooperation Center (JICE), a public interest company (*ippan zaidan hōjin*) which manages the project and assists the students while in Japan, the program aims to create mutual benefit for the program fellows and for their public employers. If, on the one hand, the first may attain new expertise in “policy making” and “institutional building” in a “world-leading technological country”, the latter may benefit from “highly-capable and motivated officials” eager to contribute to the development of their own country (JICE 2016).

The JDS is one of the most recent initiatives aimed at fostering human resource development (HRD) in developing countries in Asia. Since 1954, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been involved in similar activities. In the 1950s, the GOJ started inviting to Japan hundreds of government officials, engineers, technicians to Japan offering training in specific fields as education, governance, health, peace-building and security, economic planning, environmental policies, etc.<sup>3</sup>, and sponsoring Knowledge Co-Creation (JICA 2016).

In 1983, the Nakasone cabinet decided to accelerate the attraction of foreign human capital to Japan. In that period, the number of outgoing students was greater than those incoming in Japanese academies. Japanese political leaders and policymakers became aware of the gap between the Japanese and the Western education system. They had also understood that education was an important factor in determining national prestige and in creating positive bottom-up relations with other countries through mutual understanding. Nakasone’s program was conceived not only to

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<sup>2</sup> The figure includes those currently enrolled.

<sup>3</sup> An exhaustive list of the fields covered by the JICA Training in Japan Program (*kadai betsu kenshū*) might be found at: [http://www.jica.go.jp/activities/schemes/tr\\_japan/summary/lineup.html](http://www.jica.go.jp/activities/schemes/tr_japan/summary/lineup.html) (in Japanese. Accessed June 1, 2016).

promote the internationalization of Japanese academics and to enhance the international prestige. It had also a specific strategic rationale. In fact, as Ōta (2003) maintains,

The Proposal states the fundamental importance of Japan enhancing its mutual understanding through both international exchange and the promotion of activities and friendly relations built upon mutual trust with other countries. On the basis of this statement, the Proposal describes, that the significance of international educational exchange is to have incoming international students attain an accurate understanding and wide range of knowledge about Japanese society and culture. In other words, educating international students at Japanese institutions is primarily beneficial to the national interest. From the purview of the country's development model known as "catch-up with the West," this was the turning point of both Japan's diplomatic and international education policies. The government realized that a great number of young Japanese people had studied in Europe or the U.S., and that Western knowledge, science, and technology were being imported through those students. Moreover, these returnees turned in favor of their former host countries in general. However, Japan had not endeavored to promote the understanding of the country internationally, particularly through the acceptance of international students. A small number of international students were recognized as being disadvantageous to national security. [...] In short, the International Student 100,000 Plan turned out to be one of the most important and challenging national policies set beyond the scope of higher education to raise the Japan's prestige, promote national security and become fully integrated within the emerging international society (pp. 35-6).

It might be argued that at the time Japanese policymakers became aware of the role of education in an era of increased economic and cultural exchanges beyond national boundaries. Therefore, an opener and more internationally integrated educational system could ease the transmission of Japanese ideas, concepts, and experience abroad (s. Kameoka 1996 in Ōta 2003, 25). Against this

background, the Plan to Accept 100 thousand International Students was launched aiming to attract 100 thousand foreign students in Japanese universities by 2000. As a result of the measures adopted with the Plan, the number of foreign students increased steadily between 1983 and 2000. The increment was supported by the rapid industrialization of East and Southeast Asia and by the expansion of Japanese aid programs in the region. Through cooperation, Japan had established programs for human resource development with its developing partners, mostly through technical cooperation (i.e., dispatching experts and consultants), loan aid, and multilateral cooperation (as those in partnership with the WB). The Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) took the lead in the implementation of the Plan. In addition, other groups started investing in the promotion of measures to train foreign human resources. Other quasi-governmental organizations such as the Japanese society for the promotion of science (JSPS) and the Japan Foundation contributed to the government's effort providing scholarships and grants to foreign students and researchers on a regular basis.<sup>4</sup>

Many governments in the region, as that of Mahathir in Malaysia, saw in Japan a model of development and pushed policies promoting periods of training in Japan for sectors of their national workforce (s. Ōta 2003; Seo 1997).

However, Nakasone's Plan fell short of its target. In 2001, the number of foreign students enrolled in Japanese universities amounted at 78,812 people (Ōta 2003, 27). In the second half of the 1990s the number of foreign students enrolled in Japanese universities did not grow at the same pace it had between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s. The Asian currency and financial crisis of 1997-98 had a severe impact on East and Southeast Asian developing economies, such as South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia and therefore reduced the possibility to go study abroad for thousands of students from the region. In addition, systemic setbacks, such as the relatively low number of courses in English, the difficulties for many students to reach a level of proficiency in

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<sup>4</sup> S. Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. About Us: Brief History. Available online at: [https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/about\\_us/history.html](https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/about_us/history.html). Accessed September 16, 2016.

Japanese that could allow for integration in a largely homogeneous society, economic stagnation, high living costs and unavailability of information regarding the course offer for perspective foreign students were singled out as obstacles to further implementation of the 100 thousand Student Plan.

According to Ōta (2003, 44 ff.), in 1998 Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō stressed the importance to pursue the original Plan's objectives and further improve its implementation. MEXT officials started working on a new strategy that could reinvigorate the 1983 Plan stressing its importance in the context of Tokyo's foreign policy. In a report of the MEXT Commission on International Student Policy, the GOJ's foreign student policy was described as a tool to secure security and peace; exert intellectual influence in the international arena; attaining globalization in the country's social and economic structure (Ōta 2003, 45).

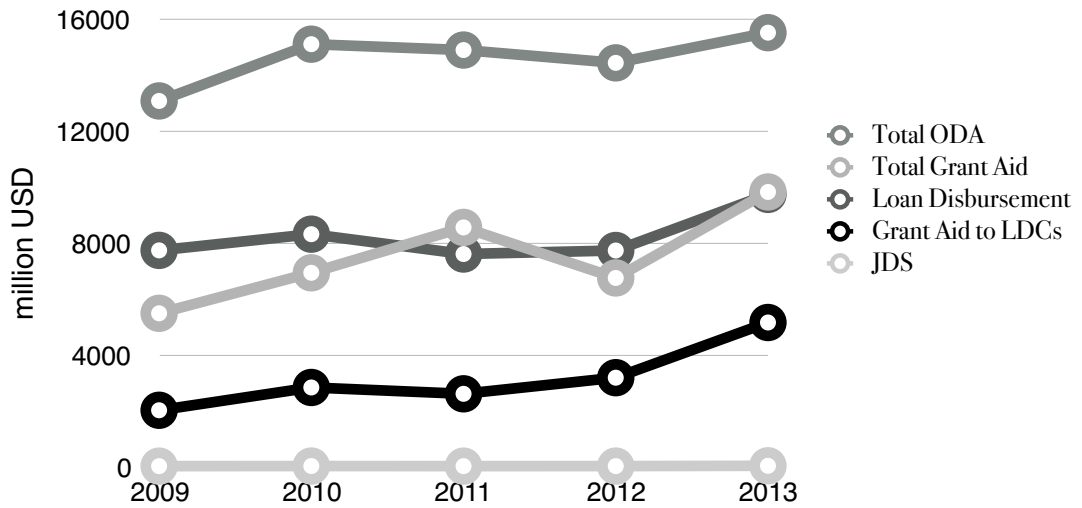
Against this background, in 1999, PM Obuchi announced a "comprehensive plan for enhancing human resources development and human resources exchanges in East Asia" in order to "prevent the reoccurrence of a crisis and to build a foundation for medium to long-term stable economic development" (Obuchi 1999).

In the same year, the cabinet decided to revive the 1983 "Plan to Accept 100 thousand International Students" and started the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Development Scholarship (JDS). The necessity to further revive the program could be also explained differently: the end of the bubble economy in the early 1990's led to a wave of outsourcing of productions abroad by many medium and large enterprises (Jessop & Sum 2006, 195-7). Japanese investors and banks too were affected by the Asian crisis. In order to continue investing abroad, business leaders needed to have guarantees on "favorable business environments" and, possibly, "gatekeepers" that could provide information and guidance.

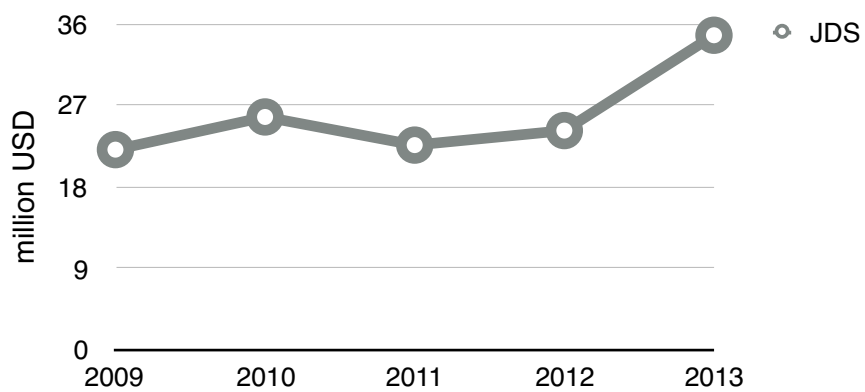
In its initial phase, the program involved only two countries: Laos and Uzbekistan. Through the years the program has been extended to other recipients. In 2014 only 226 students from 12 countries were involved in the program. Funds have been rather stable from 2009 to 2012 at around

20 million USD, with an increase in f.y. 2013 up to 35 million USD (Fig 6.1 and 6.2, source: MOFA).

**Fig. 6.1: JDS vs total ODA**



**Fig. 6.2: The JDS in detail**

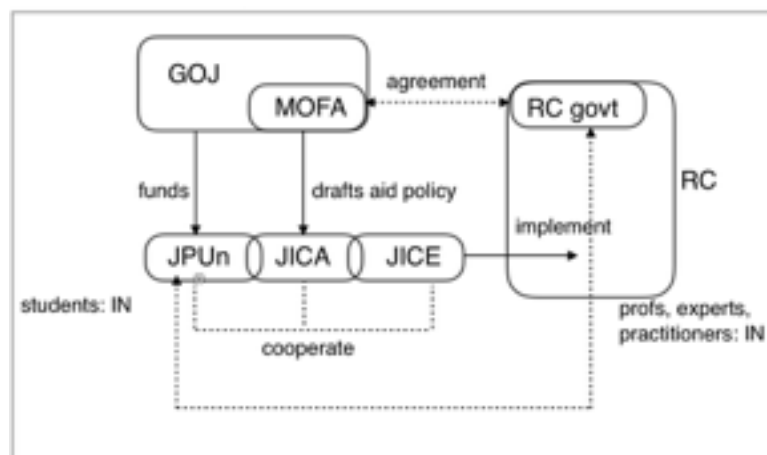


While programs like the MEXT or JSPS scholarships are open to students of any background, a particularity of the JDS is the fact that it is aimed at a particular category of participants (public officers and government officials).

Perhaps the most relevant sphere of intervention is that of law and administration. Being exposed to dominant ideas about “governance”, rule of law, and taught of specific regulations such as those on intellectual property, through education and training in Japan, JDS Alumni might contribute to reforms in their own country. According to JICE and host universities staff involved in the program, in the last 15 years, a few JDS alumni have been promoted to the ranks of ministerial bureau-chief, or even vice-minister. By and large, this might contribute to reform domestically in the recipient country and to Japan’s national interest in the long run in terms of fostering positive relations with the recipient country’s administration.

As other GOJ’s ODA programs, the JDS is a matter of diplomacy. It is the MOFA who decides whether or not to include a certain country in the program, after meetings with the recipient country’s government. In figure 6.3, the JDS decision-making process, and the relevant actors involved, are represented.

**Fig. 6.3: The making of the JDS**



Operatively, in order to respond efficiently to the needs of the recipient countries, the GOJ, the government of the recipient country (RC), the Japanese embassy in the RC, and JICA constitute a commission of experts where implementation, deadlines, area of intervention, host universities in Japan and the profile of the students are discussed and finalized.

As shown in the figure, the GOJ, through the MOFA, initiates negotiations with the recipient country (RC)'s government. The MOFA in coordination with JICA drafts the aid policy for the single recipient country. Then, JICA organizes the selection of candidates in the RC. The selection of candidates is carried out by professors dispatched by host institutions in Japan with the help of JICE. Finally, JICA provides the scholarships and assign, with JICE and Japanese Universities (JPU), the students to their host institutions. At the same time, the GOJ provides economic assistance to public and private universities through initiatives as the Super Global University Program (started in 2014 by the Abe cabinet), aiming at boosting Japanese top universities' international competitiveness.<sup>5</sup>

### *6.2.1. Human resource development and the spaces for Japanese intellectual hegemony in East Asia*

Though programs like the JDS have not so far drawn much attention, it may be argued that it is one of the most important initiatives in HRD the GOJ has implemented so far<sup>6</sup>. Its importance has been repeatedly stressed by policymakers until recently. During a 2014 parliamentary debate,

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<sup>5</sup> This plan has been launched by the LDP-Abe administration in 2014, as a follow-up of the 2010 Global 30 Universities Plan, to offer financial support to the country's top universities and boost their competitiveness globally (Japan Times 2014). See also § 3.3.3.

<sup>6</sup> Along with grant assistance, the GOJ provides a number of projects for human resource development funded by yen loans. The main areas of intervention are those of public administration, training of technicians and researchers. The aim is to strengthen higher education in order to enable recipient countries governments to make use of a skilled workforce able to frame better and implementable development strategies, and, on the other hand to enlarge the population of skilled workers (JICA 2015). Earlier projects were initiated in 2005 (Malaysia) while the most recent projects involving China started in 2013 (JICA, 2015). According to the MOFA, more than 75 billion yen have been spent so far for such projects, which saw the involvement of nearly 7 thousand students mainly from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam (Kishida, 2014; JICA, 2015).

Kishida Fumio, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, reiterated the importance of the GOJ programs for human resource developments from an MOFA perspective.

Our effort to accept students and young people from developing countries [...] is very important in light of our plan to Accept 30 thousand foreign students by 2020. Moreover, is very important in terms of supporting the training of leading human resources that will be in charge of the social and economic development of developing countries, and their future. In order to support the governments of developing countries in their plans of human resource [...] our government intends to continue to put effort on the admission of foreign students through ODA.<sup>7</sup>

As previously argued, since the 1980s Japan's foreign student policy has been constructed on a strategical rationale. Higher education was seen by Japanese policymakers as a tool to disseminate Japanese ideas, knowledge and expertise abroad, in an attempt to promote a better understanding of Japan and positive relations with foreign countries. In other words, foreign student policies and cooperation programs in the field of HRD are aimed to foster friendly relations (*yūkō kankei*) with the recipient countries through “mutual understanding” (*sōgo rikai*) and “human relationships” (*ningen kankei*) (MOFA 2006, pag). On the other, they can be deployed to attain strategic geopolitical aims: for instance, “containing” or “re-balancing” China's assertiveness in the region (s. Hughes 2009; Takamine 2006).

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<sup>7</sup> Kishida Fumio (Minister of Foreign Affairs), February 19, 2014, 9 am meeting: 20/299. “[...]途上国の青少年あるいは留学生の受け入れということは、先ほども質疑の中で出ておりました、留学生受け入れ三十万人計画を推進する上でも大変重要でありますし、また、途上国の社会ですとか経済開発を担う、将来を担う指導的な人材の育成を支援するという点からも、大変重要な視点だと考えます。[...]こうした無償資金協力も進めているわけですが、あわせて、円借款の活用ということにつきましては、開発途上国政府の人材育成計画を支援するため、今後とも、ODAを活用した留学生の受け入れに積極的に取り組んでいきたいと考えております”。My translation.

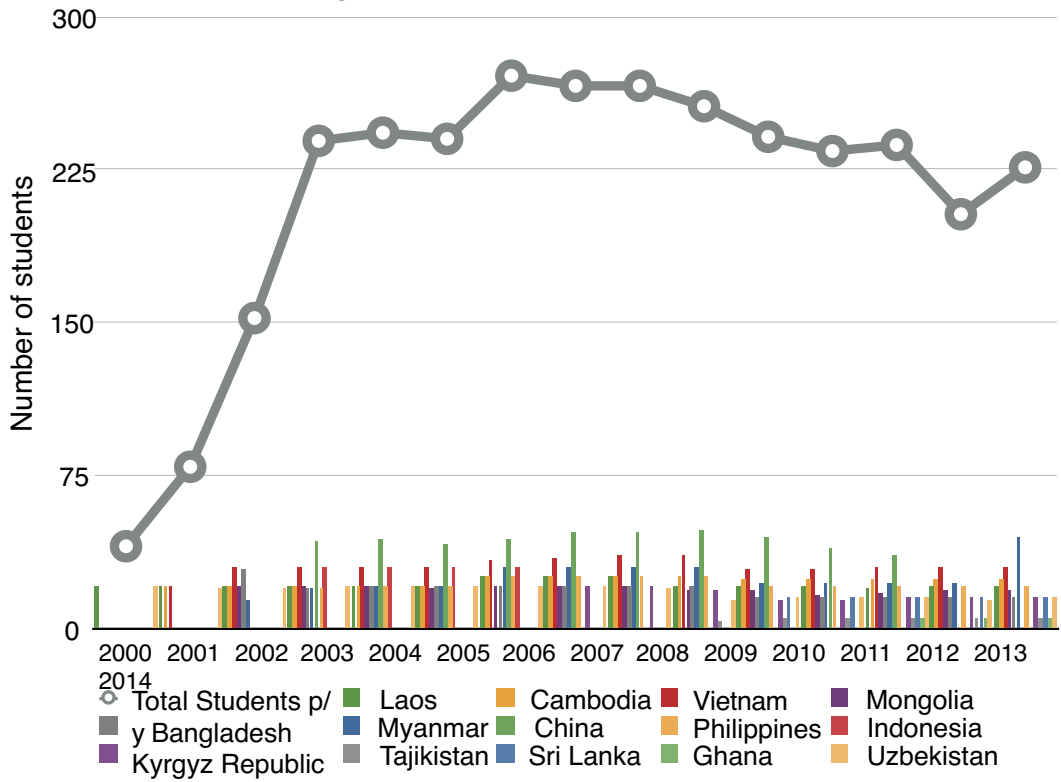


Such a philosophy seems to be at the foundations of the JDS program too. In particular, it might be argued that with this program the GOJ aims at strengthening its relations with developing countries in Southeast and Central Asia.

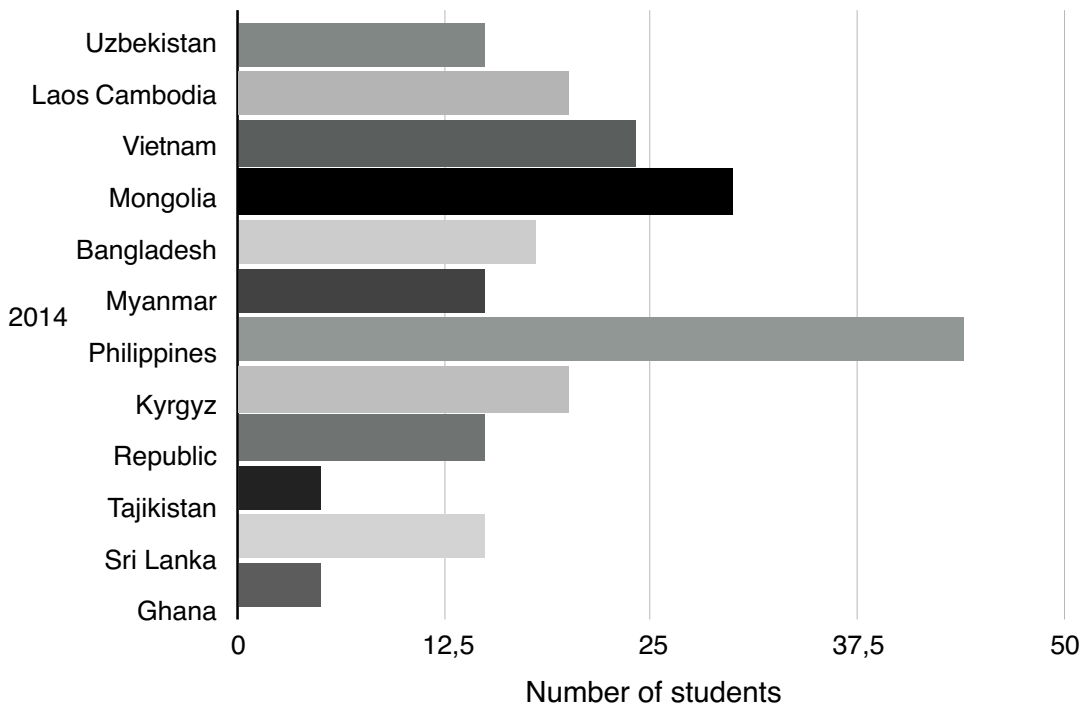
In order to offer a better understanding of the strategical character of the JDS program, it might be worth looking at how the program evolved in terms of funding and number of incoming students. Figure 6.4 shows the distribution per country of the JDS from 2000 and 2014. As discussed above, the program was expanded in 2001. The first batch of the program involved only 40 students from Laos and Uzbekistan. The following year, the GOJ decided to expand it to Cambodia and Vietnam. In 2002, the program was extended to Bangladesh, Mongolia and Myanmar while the number of students from Vietnam was increased from 20 to 30. In 2003 the number of students involved in the program was increased by 87 as the program was opened to students from China (42) and Indonesia (30) and the Philippines. Since 2003 the number of incoming JDS students has been pretty stable at around 240 people per year, even with the end of the cooperation with Indonesia (2006) and China (2012). In 2006 the Program reached its peak with 271 students. A few years later, in 2013, the number dropped to 206 as a consequence of a general drop in grant aid allocations (s. Fig. 6.4). In 2014, however, the number of students enrolled has bounced back at 226 people. In Figure 6.5, the distribution of JDS per country and number of scholarships in 2014 is presented in detail (Source: JICA 2015).

The expansion of the program in the mid-2000s is remarkable. In particular, it is striking to note that China was the largest recipient of the program, with 43 students, followed only by Vietnam with 33. Despite internal criticism and a review of the GOJ's assistant policies toward China (s. Masuda

**Fig. 6.4: Trends of the JDS since 2000**



**Fig. 6.5: JDS in 2014: distribution per country**



2003)<sup>8</sup>, cooperation between the two countries was still thriving. At the same time, the interest for Vietnam is notable. Japanese policymakers have been keen to promote good relations with Vietnam since the early 2000s. Strategically located in the Mekong subregion, Vietnam (re-)started attracting Tokyo's attention. Borrowing from the business jargon, Vietnam became the target of what might be called a *China plus one strategy*: this locution refers to a strategy adopted by many international business leaders and investors aiming to find a country where to invest without losing the competitive advantage guaranteed by China with its low production costs and highly available workforce. The growth of the JDS might be explained also in terms of foreign policy.

In 2005 by the then Foreign Minister Asō Tarō gave a fundamental policy speech in Tokyo. According to his vision, Japan needed to assume the role of Asia's "thought leader", as well as Asia's "stabilizer", always keeping its relations with other Asian countries at a peer level (*dōhai dōshi no kankei*).

Asō maintained that XIX century Japan had faced severe problems (due to the economic transition to the market economy the growth of nationalism, or environmental destruction) before other Asian countries did and found solutions to solve them. Japan was the "trailblazer learning from its own errors" (*jissenteki senkusha*). In an age of "unconventional" and "border crossing" threats, Japanese experience, "unmatched" (*hirui naku*) by other countries in the region) might benefit all Asia and thus become a source of leadership for Japan. In conclusion, Asō cited the major threats to its national security: North Korea, international terrorism, piracy or pandemics and stressed the importance of "preemptive diplomacy". This strategy is however not feasible without knowledge and know-how.

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<sup>8</sup> According to authors like Takamine (2006) Japanese aid to China served above all to promote China's integration in the global economy and favor the attraction of Japanese and international investments in the country. Moreover it has helped to reduce the impact of a rapid development on the environment of the country and of the region. The MOFA estimates that cooperation with China amounted at more than 3.3 trillion yen in loans, 157 billion yen in grants and nearly 182 billion yen in technical cooperation from 1979 to present. However, since the early 2000s, in light of severe fiscal restraints, ODA to China has become a debated issues. Allegations made by conservative Japanese lawmakers and media have it that the one according to which China was using Japanese aid for military and that Beijing was not showing enough gratitude towards Japan. A major turning point happened in 2005, when the government decided to end its ODA-loans to China by 2008, the year of the Beijing summer Olympic Games. S. Masuda (2003) and Drifte (2006).

Japan needs to contribute to dispute prevention. However, it is all a matter of “who” is available. Asia needs more specialists (*senmonteki jinzai*) who can carry on activities of peacekeeping, reconstruction and prevention against conflict recurrence. Japan is willing to contribute proactively in the near future continuously training human resources with the necessary knowledge and capacities to cope with these activities.<sup>9</sup>

### 6.2.2. Taking the “Asian model” to Africa

The program was extended to Africa in 2012. That year, a first batch of students (5) from Ghana was accepted. The following year, China, who had been the JDS top recipient since 2003, ceased to participate in the program. Since then, the role of top recipient of the JDS program has been occupied by Myanmar, who sent 44 government officials to Japan in 2014. In 2015, Vietnam has overcome the total number of Chinese JDS students enrolled in Japanese universities with 454 students dispatched to Japan since 2002. In 2015, the number of students from Ghana being accepted to the JDS has doubled (JICA 2016). The increase of Ghanaian students accepted into the program in 2014 (10) might be a reflection of the strengthened GOJ’s effort toward Africa. In 1993, the GOJ launched the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), spurring a “refocusing” on Africa’s “development needs” in a moment of stalemate for international aid in the continent (OSAA 2016).<sup>10</sup> The conference which has been held in Japan every five years since 1993, will be held every three years from 2016, alternatively in Africa and Japan. The 2016

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<sup>9</sup> In Asō (2005). Translation is mine. “無論わが国も、紛争予防へ向けできる限りの貢献をしなくてはなりません。けれどもすべては、「人」あつてのこと。アジアにおいては、平和の維持と構築、復興と再発防止といった一連の活動を担う専門的人材がもっと必要です。日本は、こうした活動に必要な知識・能力をもつ人材をどしどし育成するよう、今後積極的に努めていきたいと思っています”。

<sup>10</sup> For more details, see the UN’s Office of the Special Adviser on Africa’s TICAD page: <http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/partnerships/ticad.shtml> and the Japanese MOFA’s page on the TICAD process: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad/what.html>

TICAD VI will be symbolically held in Kenya (MOFA 2016). In recent years, under the second Abe administration, the GOJ has shown a proactive approach toward aid to Africa, further enlarging the scope of its ODA effort, and trying to establish itself as a reliable donor (s. Ohno 2007). In 2014, the GOJ launched a program of academic training and internships in Japanese enterprises, the African Business Education (ABE) Initiative with the aim to contribute to the economic development of the African continent. In 2015, 350 African students were invited to study in Japanese universities.

On the other hand, Another important factor of JDS expansion toward Africa might be found in the 2008 JICA reform. The new JICA (*shin JICA*) was launched to favor “Inclusive and Dynamic Development” and provide recipient countries with efficient solutions to face the challenges of globalization. More importantly, the new JICA stressed the importance of nurturing “governance” through human resource development and institution building, as a way to curb poverty and inequalities in developing countries (JICA 2010, 10).

However, before proceeding with the analysis, it might be worth summarizing the main points discussed in the first section of this chapter. It might be argued that the creation of the JDS program was aimed to address the following issues: a) a response to capacity building demands by recipients (especially LDCs) in need to comply with international guidelines on trade and law (MOFA 2001; JICA 2016);<sup>11</sup> and b) the internationalization of Japanese higher education (MEXT 1999; MOFA 1998).<sup>12</sup> In addition, c) it signaled GOJ’s interest towards boosting knowledge-based aid that had been until then promoted mainly through loans and technical cooperation. This interest might be reflect the general orientations in international aid towards the support of institution building and poverty reduction through good governance. However, apart from these *tsukiai* kind of

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<sup>11</sup> The program was specifically conceived to help Asian developing countries in “their transition toward a market-economy” (MOFA 2001, 15). See JICA (2016) *Jinzai ikusei shōgaku keikaku* (Japanese Grant for Human Resource Development Scholarship).

<sup>12</sup> See MEXT (1999) *Kaihatsu tojō koku he no kyōiku kyōryoku ni tsuite* [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/kokusai/kyouiku/mokuji.htm#6](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/kyouiku/mokuji.htm#6) (accessed May 1, 2016) and MOFA (1998), *21 seki ni mukete no ODA kaikaku kondankai (saishū hōkoku yōshi)* [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/jisseki/kuni/j\\_00/siryou/siryou\\_24.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/jisseki/kuni/j_00/siryou/siryou_24.html) (Accessed May 6, 2016).

preoccupations, as shown above, the JDS program shows a degree of a *kokueki*-driven character. In the following paragraphs, how the two “modes of thought” (s. Mannheim 1936) and their respective discourses have been shaped and adapted to the institutional framework of the different GOJ’s actor involved in aid-giving will be presented.

### **6.3. The donor’s view on the JDS: negotiating national interest with the recipient’s needs**

In the previous section of this chapter, the scope and main features of the JDS program have been presented. It has been argued that as part of both ODA and the GOJ foreign student policy, it has an undeniably strategic character. At the same time, as it has been argued in the previous chapter, it might be considered as the product of a refocusing of Japanese aid on “human resource development”. This shift may be considered a consequence of the general reshaping of international aid after the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, and, at a local level, a consequence of the success of more liberal/humanitarian “ideas” of aid put forward by intellectual entrepreneurs such as the former JICA President Ogata Sadako.

In this section, the “conceptualization” of the JDS at the level of ideas and discourse will be discussed. The analysis will take into account the results of a dozen qualitative in-depth interviews conducted during a 7-month fieldwork in Tokyo in 2015 and an additional 10-day fieldwork in Hanoi in early 2016. The interest in this topic lies in the following assumption: institutional complexity, i.e., the presence of diverse institutions and relative officials with a specific set of socially constructed knowledge, bears “ideational” complexity.

Despite recent reforms, aid giving remains a process involving several institutional actors, and at least four ministries excluding the MOFA – the Ministry of Finance (MOF)<sup>13</sup>; the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI); the Ministry of Education (MEXT); and the Ministry of

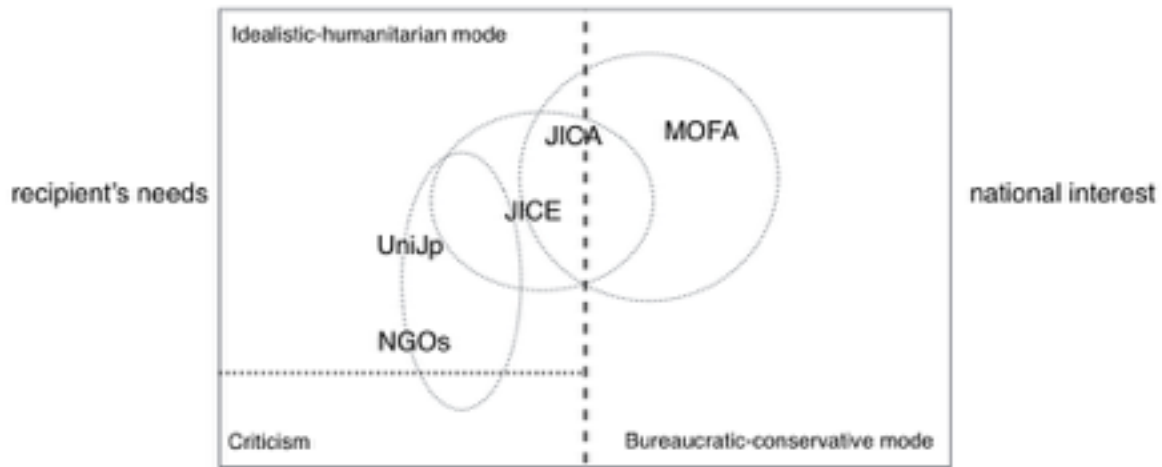
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<sup>13</sup> In this context, the MOF is usually considered the most influent, as the provider of the financial resources, through postal savings and taxes, for the ODA budget (Mori 1995).

Defense (MOD) – are involved, each of which with a specific agenda and specific interests in limiting ODA allocation (for ex., MOF) or appropriating quota of ODA funds (for ex., MOFA, MEXT, and more recently MOD). Previous studies of Japan’s ODA (for instance, Arase 2005; King & McGrath 2004; Söderberg 1996) estimated in fact that at least 16 ministries and governmental agencies are involved in aid policymaking. After parts of the ODA decision-making and implementation apparatuses were involved in subsequent scandals during the late 1990s and early 2000s, it underwent reconsideration and reforms. Recently, with the 2008 JICA reform, the GOJ further attempted to rationalize the aid giving process. JICA merged with the overseas operations department of the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) getting control of the cooperation projects (loans) managed by the bank. It was also given authority over grant projects previously managed by the MOFA (MOFA 2010). JICA has also established itself as a think tank in the field of development through its Research institute (JICA-RI) (JICA-RI 2008).

In light of these facts, it might be argued that every institution involved in the GOJ’s aid-giving process has its own agenda (s. Mori 1995) and articulates the official discourse on ODA accordingly. In other words, this agenda can be considered part of a “crystalized knowledge” shared by the individual officials and is reflected in the latter’s “modes of thought”. The focus on a specific program, the JDS, and on HRD of the present research has facilitated the analysis and identification of “conflicts” and “juxtapositions” in the official discourse. In the following paragraphs, the dominant MOFA mode of thought will be presented along with those of JICA and a main contractor for the JDS, JICE, and, finally, of academic personnel, professors and administrative staff in charge of incoming JDS students in three major public universities in Japan. These institutional actors and their respective “modes of thought” will be discussed further on in the chapter. Here it might be useful to roughly present the results of the research that has been conducted through qualitative interviews with Japanese government officials, experts and practitioners. The results are summarized in figure 6.6 below.

**Fig. 6.6: Modes of thought in the JDS**



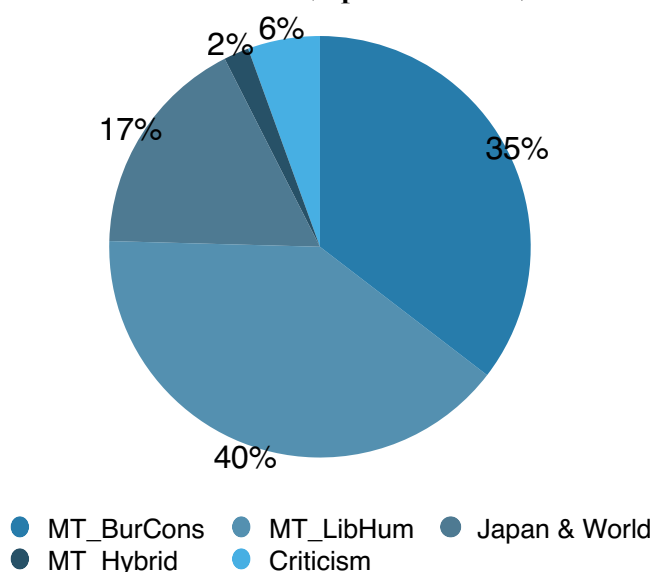
In the figure, the different institutional actors involved in the JDS program have been represented with their respective modes of thought. At the two opposite sides of the rectangle, one might see the two ideational extremes of Japanese foreign policy and aid – national interest and affiliation, in particular the recipients’ needs – which have been discussed in the preceding chapters. At the two opposite sides of the schema, bureaucratic-conservative mode and the liberal-humanitarian idea are illustrated (See Mannheim 1936). The median line represents the possible compromise-juxtaposition between these two seemingly contrasting positions. The spheres roughly represent the tendencies observed during the interviews with officials of the institutions involved in the program (MOFA, JICA, JICE, Japanese Universities, and NGOs). The radius of the spheres is designed in order to give account of the influence of the single institution’s intellectual position in the policy-making process (s. figure 6.3). As the figure shows, MOFA’s spheres appears to be larger than the other institutions. It lies in the national interest section for its largest part but crosses the median line as it has embraced the dominant discourse on aid which prioritizes the recipient’s needs over the donor’s interests. In addition, policy is in fact drafted at the Ministry level and the ministerial guidelines are passed down to JICA and to JICE which acts as a contractor of the GOJ for the JDS program. As shown in the figure, JICA and JICE’s sphere, instead, appears to be more inclined toward the recipient’s need side,



**Table 6.1 Codes and occurrences in JDS program (Japanese officials)**

Upper Code	Codice	% in analyzed documents
	MT_BurCons	5,26
MT_BurCons	Strategic use of ODA	3,07
MT_BurCons	Strategic use of ODA\National Interest	16,02
MT_BurCons	Promoting (Market) Reform	3,51
MT_BurCons	Involvement of different Ministries, Agencies & Bureaus	1,32
MT_BurCons	Infrastructures	0,88
MT_BurCons	Promotion of investment from Japan	0,88
MT_BurCons	Preparation of JP officials	0,66
MT_BurCons	Internationalization JP Universities	0,66
MT_BurCons	Role of MOFA	0,22
MT_BurCons	Non democratic gvt.s	0,22
Tot.		32,25
	MT_LibHum	3,51
MT_LibHum	Capacity building	10,53
MT_LibHum	Institution Building - Seidozukuri	9,44
MT_LibHum	Contribution to Intl Community	3,29
MT_LibHum	Recipient as Client	2,41
MT_LibHum	Fight Corruption	1,54
MT_LibHum	peace&democracy	1,98
MT_LibHum	Poverty reduction	0,88
MT_LibHum	Boost competitiveness	0,88
MT_LibHum	Recipient's self-help	0,66
MT_LibHum	Sustainable Growth	0,66
MT_LibHum	equality	0,44
MT_LibHum	People-to-people	0,22
Tot.		36,42
	Japan & World	15,57
	Criticism	5,04
MT_Hybrid	Coop&Competition w Other Donors	1,10
MT_Hybrid	Contribution to Intl Community\Japan as leader/proactive	0,66
Tot.		1,75

**Figure 6.7: Modes of thought, codes and occurrences (Japanese officials)**



as both work alongside the recipients and act as their representatives in Tokyo. It is anyway dependent and encircled in the MOFA's one on the one hand and on the other it is open to more idealistic-humanitarian, and even critical, influxes coming from experts and consultants (usually employed in universities) and NGOs.

In general, though, discussing ODA for HRD, and specifically, the JDS program, with experts and government officials has shown that the idea of defending Japan's national interest is predominant. In the table below the occurrence of themes, with their respective modes of thought, are presented in form of percentage of segments of interviews codified with MaxQDA. In the table it is also shown that the thematic category of "national interest" ranks high. At the same time, the thematic category representing the liberal-humanitarian mode of thought – such as the image of the recipient of foreign aid as a client and the donor as a provider of services; or elements of institution building and governance-strengthening – has the highest aggregate number of occurrences (s. Table 6.1 and figure 6.7 below).

Therefore, what appears from the analysis of interviews is that liberal-humanitarian considerations are generally present in the Japanese official discourse on ODA and so is the national interest rationale. It might be said that ODA in HRD is conceptualized on the basis of this juxtaposition. In fact, it might also be noted that these two seemingly conflicting themes have been retrieved in single interviews.

In light of these facts, it might be said that this juxtaposition of themes and modes of thought is at the foundations of the construction and reproduction of Japanese official discourse on ODA in HRD. At the basis of this juxtaposition is the involvement of different institutions each with its own horizon of action affecting the individual official's *Weltanschauung*.

### 6.3.1. *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs is located in Kasumigaseki, in Tokyo's Chiyoda district, the political and administrative center of the Japanese archipelago. Its premises are not faraway from the Diet Building and looks out on Sakurada-dori, an alley connecting the Southern side of the Imperial Palace to the Toranomon juncture. Leaving the Imperial Gardens at one's back, the alley passes through key ministerial buildings, such as the National Police Agency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the MOFA and the MOF on one side, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Economy on the other. The ministry building is a 7-floor complex built in concrete and glass. It hosts the Minister's and Vice-Ministers' offices, the general secretariat which is in charge of coordination, inspection, public relations and cultural affairs, the intelligence service, and ten bureaus divided per function or geographic area of competence. The entrance to the Ministry is surveilled by guards and metal detectors. Every visitor has to be registered and is put on a waiting list. The visitor is then picked up in the main lobby by the person with whom the visitor has arranged an appointment in advance or by another designated person. Apart from the main entrance, wide and with high ceilings, upstairs floors are cut by narrow corridors and covered by low ceilings. Spaces appear to be quite exiguous in relation to the number of employees.

### 6.3.2. *The organization of the MOFA*

At the organizational level, historically MOFA has been dominated by “verticality” (*tatewari*) and “sectionality” (*nawabari*). The Minister is at the top of this structure, followed by a number of Vice-Ministers (*fukudaijin*) and Parliamentary Secretaries (*seimukan*) (usually five). These posts are occupied by political figures chosen from the majority bloc. Currently, at the time of writing, under Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio, leader of the moderate faction of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Kishi Nobuo and Sonoura Kentarō serve as Vice-Ministers; Odawara Kiyoshi, Takei

Shunsuke e Takiwara Motome as Parliamentary Secretaries. All five MOFA senior officials belong to the LDP. Following, an Administrative Vice-Minister (*jimujikan*) is appointed to overview the administration of the Ministry. This position is usually held by a career diplomat. Currently, MOFA's jimujikan is Sugiyama Shinsuke, director of the Asia Regional Bureau. At the bottom of this structure, there is the Ministry Secretariat (*kambō*), the General Foreign Affairs Office, the Economic Affairs Office, the International Cooperation Office, five Regional Bureaus (Asia, North America, Central and South America, Europe, Middle East and Africa), the International Laws Office, the Consular Office, the Intelligence and Analysis Service and the Training Institute (S. Yakushiji 2003; MOFA 2016)<sup>14</sup>.

Beside verticality, the MOFA has been historically dominated by factions (for ex. career vs non-career officials) and “schools” (for instance the China school, or the influential Russia school). For its internal divisions, since the early postwar, MOFA policies have often been incoherent and drafted in secrecy (Yakushiji, 2003).

### *6.3.3. The (mostly) bureaucratic view*

In this setting, an interview has been conducted with a senior official in the ministry appointed to a bureau in charge of defining international cooperation strategies. In 2015, following a review of the ODA Charter, Japan's cooperation strategy has been partly reformulated. The MOFA has identified four key areas: a) cooperation to share universal values and promote international peace and stability; b) enhancing strategic cooperation; c) promoting human security; d) building strategic partnerships with recipient countries (2015).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The structure of the MOFA can be found at MOFA (2016) *Kambu meibo*, Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/honsho/meibo/list.html>, accessed October 2, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> MOFA, International Cooperation Bureau (2015) *Priority Policy for Development Cooperation FY 2015*. Tokyo: MOFA.

Especially with regards to Japanese cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, the MOFA priorities the enhancement of the cooperation with energy-producing regions in Central Asia, the upholding of the rule of law in Southeast Asia, in order to secure international trade routes, and the assistance to the regional stability and peace-building in South-central Asia. Against this background, it might be said that the two major intellectual currents of Japanese foreign aid (*tsukiai* and *kokueki*) are intertwined at this level of aid policymaking. However, “conservative/bureaucratic” considerations seem to prevail over more humanitarian/liberal views. ODA appears to be seen as a matter of cost-efficiency and responsibility towards the Japanese taxpayers. The recognition of Japan’s burgeoning public debt and a two decade-long economic stagnation plays a central role. As shown by the four key areas, priority is given to “strategic” cooperation and to the maximization of “the efficiency or the result of the project”. “ODA policy must”, in fact “go along (sic) with the Japanese foreign strategy or Japanese interest”.<sup>16</sup>

There are of course very severe limitations of resources in the state budget. Unfortunately, those restraints are becoming more and more severe. Twenty or thirty years ago, if my bureau received any request from other bureaus or other ministries, a good agenda, or a good project for the ODA, we kept accepting them. But this is [no longer] the case<sup>17</sup>.

After a series of scandals in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, involving ODA funds, criticism against the MOFA by both political and public opinion grew. In the early 2000’s, the major political party, the LDP’s influence on the ministry grew. In this period, due to the rise of the so-called “MPs of the Forestry and Agriculture faction” (*nōrin zoku giin*) Japanese diplomacy experienced a crisis (Yakushiji 2003). The idea that ODA had to be curbed and to represent Japanese “national interest” (*kokueki*) abroad grew stronger and caused the revision of the ODA charter (2003).

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with a MOFA international cooperation bureau official. Tokyo, October 2015. In English.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Yakushiji (2003) called the *naikō* (*domestic* diplomacy, in contrast to *gaikō*, foreign diplomacy) period: foreign ministry officials were exposed to an unprecedented political pressure and had to produce new efforts lobbying political leaders and members of Parliament.

On the other hand, affiliation (*tsukiai*) with other UN and OECD countries is perceived as negotiable.

Coordinate our regional foreign policy with international aid agenda and discussion is primary in our portfolio, and in our responsibility within the Ministry. Sometimes it is difficult, sometimes not so hard, because usually the international agenda is so comprehensive that we are able to interpret in any way. We can adjust in any region or in any single area of cooperation.<sup>18</sup>

Inside the MOFA, ODA policy is seen as a constant process of negotiation that has to take all its stakeholders into account: on the one hand, political parties and the civil society; on the other, ministries and bureaus inside the MOFA itself. According to the official not much competition arises between different ministries. Rather competition seems to arise inside the MOFA among the Ministry's regional bureaus after the ODA budget is approved in the Diet. When the ODA budget is allocated to the MOFA, these have to present specific aid projects to the international cooperation bureau and get their "slice of the pie".<sup>19</sup> In fact,

The Ministry which drafts the overall policy is the Foreign Ministry. But [...] other Ministries also request budget for ODA projects, and secure their own funds. As long as other Ministries [...] implement their ODA projects or programs, within their own budgets, it is not easy for the Foreign Ministry, the control tower of the ODA policy, to intervene in the decision-making

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

process. Of course, at least we try to secure that the agenda or project [...] will not be controversial against Japanese overall foreign policy or overall ODA policy [...]. Usually each Ministry implements its own agenda within the given budget. However, sometimes they try to coordinate with our Ministry's program or project, implemented by our budget, in order to maximize efficiency or the result of the project. In such scenarios we coordinate with each other and if both sides agree, we make good collaboration under the single umbrella of a certain project or program. Between Ministries there are not necessarily severe rivalries. However, within the Ministry especially among the bureaus in charge of specific regions, such as Asia, Africa, Latin America, they don't have money. [My bureau manages] the money. So they need to come [here] and try to get their allocations [...] because the ODA is primary too for Japanese diplomacy so between the bureaus or regional bureaus within the Ministry there is always a big rivalry.

Another important factor that influences the “mode of thought” at the ministerial level, is the public opinion. This concern is still present today. As a MOFA official puts it,

As I think it is the case for all sovereign states as long as we use people's money, we need to explain how this or that policy can contribute to the national interest [...] We are the government: we need to respond to a lot of stakeholders. Some stakeholders always criticize ODA itself under these fiscal difficulties or difficulties in local areas such as Hokkaido, Kyūshū, Okinawa; some small- medium-size enterprises are still in a very difficult economic situation [...]. As the government we need to strike a good balance between these various opinions.<sup>20</sup>

When asked about the importance of HRD projects, and specifically of the JDS, the ministry official appeared to attach them much importance, even though since the early 2000's ODA budget

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

has been on a downward trend (s. Potter 2012). [...] He maintained that the GOJ has promoted and is promoting projects in various areas of cooperation abroad, but that it has never lessened the importance of cooperation in this area, HRD. The reasons for this might be found in a combination of considerations both over “national interest” and the recipient’s needs (with a relative preeminence of the first over the latter).

Not only for the development of the recipient country, but also for the establishing of good ties, relations, with them. We have good friends in the public administrations of developing countries with good memories of training experience in Japan.

In this regard, the official underscored the “traditional” character of the Japanese cooperation in HRD, which contrasts with the assumption made for instance by Furukawa, Oishi and Kato (2010) that human resource development is a relatively “new” priority in Japanese ODA. The ministry official added that endeavoring in HRD was “natural” for the MOFA: in fact already his senior officials had already drafted earlier policies to promote HRD abroad in the past few decades.

I think it was natural for them to receive a lot of potential leaders from developing countries to Japanese universities, in order to train them and make them contribute to their national development. Which, in turn, contributes to giving good opportunities for Japanese private companies to make business in those countries and, as I said, coming out of such exchanges between the public and the private sector, we can establish good relations between countries and countries, people and people, which really contribute to our diplomacy.

This position well reflects the view shared at the GOJ level and clearly expressed by a report compiled in 2000 by a MEXT commission on international education (*kokusai kyōiku kondankai*). The report states that HRD has been considered the basis of state-building by the Japanese



(*kunizukuri no kihon*), given the scarcity of natural resources since very early in the history of the country (*furukukara*) (MEXT 1999, 1). On the other hand, it is worth noting that with regards to the JDS “geostrategic” character – i.e., the focus on countries in the Asia-Pacific region – the ministry official admitted that this too is a matter of efficient use of the ODA budget.

For reasons of budget, it is easier for us to receive students and trainees from neighboring countries. African countries and Lat-Am countries it is simply a matter of the cost of flights (laughs). And domestically, politically speaking, it is easier for us to explain why we make good contributions to the development of Asian and Southeast Asian countries than other regions of the world. Economic ties are quite strong between Japan and Southeast Asia. If people in Southeast Asia are well trained and understand the way of thinking of Japan quite well, that would be a great beneficial asset or fundamental for Japanese business people to do business abroad. [...] under the national trend or international trend of aid policies we [reached] consensus to prioritize LDC more than middle-income countries. In order to respond to such international agenda, in the case of Japan, Africa is quite an important area under the important initiative that is TICAD. Africa is kind of the frontier for Japanese ODA. Despite the distance and relatively alienated relations in terms of business, historically we have been putting great attachment [emphasis] to the aid assistance to the African region. If you look at the chart we discussed (takes the chart), Latin America is relatively less allocated compared to SEA and Africa. Diplomatically speaking it might be ideal to allocate our resources equally, but then the national State budget [would be out] of balance between domestic and international policies [...] I think this is the case for all the other developed country also.

From this latter excerpt, the *kokueki* and *tsukiai* factors appear to be intertwined. On the one hand, the ministry official admits that Japanese cooperation policies prioritize the Asia-Pacific macroregion rather than Africa or Latin America because it is more cost-efficient. In addition, economic and political relations between Japan and specific areas of the macro-region such as

Southeast Asia are well-established. In light of this the official argues that better cooperation with established ODA recipient, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, might be beneficial for Japanese businesses investing abroad and, broadly speaking, to the Japanese public as well.

On the other hand, the *tsukiai* factor emerges, when the ministry official refers to the “international trend” in aid policies prioritizing least developed countries (LDCs) or when it refers to state administration’s “balancing” practices between domestic and foreign policies. The ministry official’s perception, which might have commonalities with that of other high-ranking officials in the ministry, is in fact that Japan is part of an international community of developed countries not only in terms of intellectual positions on international cooperation, but also in terms of the practices.

In conclusion, ideas and practices appear here to be the levers on which the MOFA (and through it the GOJ) negotiates its national interest and its affiliation with the US-led international community: on the one hand, it defends its *kokueki-driven* policy formulation in light of fiscal restraints, economic stagnation and demands of transparency from the general public; on the other, it defends its affiliation to a community of developed countries and aid donors unified by the same ideas and practices – including the prioritization of the pursue of national targets, such as economic growth or the control of the state’s expense, over, for instance, humanitarian and philanthropic motives.

#### *6.3.4. A client-oriented approach to ODA: how JICA and JICE interpret the JDS*

In the previous paragraph, the ministry view on ODA, and specifically on ODA HRD programs, have been discussed. It has been argued that the at the policymaking level (MOFA), HRD aid is conceptualized discursively in bureaucratic/conservative terms. In other words, what seems to be preeminent here is the *kokueki* factor.

On the contrary, at the implementation level, there appears to be a more liberal and “client-oriented” perspective on aid-giving policies. Bureaucratic preoccupations with cost-efficiency of aid or references to Japanese “national interest” appears to be concealed, but not completely removed.

The recipient's needs are put at the center of the action. In this regard, development assistance is often described as the product of discussions between the donor and the recipient. As one high level official in a regional bureau puts it, the donor, through its implementing agency, provides its recipient with "alternatives", "choices", "as if it were a restaurant menu"<sup>21</sup>. However, JICA and JICE's close relations with the MOFA and the necessary coordination of their action greatly reduce the room for thinking out of the "policy box". At this level of the program's implementation, the need for coordination, not just with the recipient's demands but with the interest of the Japanese public has been observed. References on an "efficient use" of the human resources trained in Japan when they are back to their country have also been taken into account.

In the following paragraph, the findings of four qualitative in-depth interviews with officials from the major Japanese ODA implementing agency, JICA, and the government's main contractor for the implementation of JDS program, JICE, will be presented and discussed.

Before proceeding to the discussion, it might be worth providing some context. First, JICA and JICE let us present the main features of the two organizations and briefly introduce their history.

### *6.3.5. JICA*

JICA was first established in 1962 as the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA), and then after incorporating other governmental agencies for emigration service and volunteer-dispatching, was renamed JICA in 1974. The agency was semi-governmental as it was placed under the jurisdiction of the MOFA. In the first three decades the activities of the agency regarded mostly grant cooperation, technical cooperation and the dispatch of volunteers and experts abroad. In 2003, the Agency was reorganized into an independent administrative institution (*dokuritsu gyōsei hōjin*). A few years after, the Agency was further reorganized under the 2006 Amendment to the Japan International Cooperation Agency Law assuming the management of loan-based cooperation. JICA

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with JICA official, July 13, 2015.

incorporated the Overseas Operation Department of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (formerly Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) and Japan Export-Import Bank (JEXIM)). Upon the implementation of the Law in 2008, JICA became the only ODA implementing agency of the GOJ (s. JICA 2016)<sup>22</sup>.

Ultimately JICA has the duty to promote understanding and dialogue between Japan and, in general, civilizations in a “increasingly chaotic” world. This view is promoted by JICA’s current President Kitaoka Shinichi that in his inaugural address clarifies the vision and the mission of the organization:

For Japan, which largely depends upon its relationships with the rest of the world, it is a matter of national interest for the world to be peaceful, stable and prosperous. If Japan can put its experience and expertise to work for world poverty reduction and economic growth, Japan’s presence will grow. JICA thinks it is important to promote international cooperation that contributes to Japan’s own growth and development by implementing development cooperation that encompasses various actors, including the Japanese government, local governments, private companies, civil society, universities and research institutes. Recognizing this, JICA will work to strengthen the strategic aspect and comprehensiveness of its cooperation. Specifically, we will mainly develop the following themes based on the 2015 Development Cooperation Charter: 1) quality growth and mitigating disparities, 2) promoting peace-building and the sharing of universal values, 3) strengthening operational engagement on global issues and the international aid agenda, 4) expanding and deepening strategic partnerships, and 5) supporting an active role for women and their empowerment in developing countries (Kitaoka 2015)

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<sup>22</sup> See JICA (2016) About JICA: History. Retrieved online at: <http://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/history/index.html> Accessed September 19, 2016.

It might be also worth noting that with the 2008 reform, the JICA Research Institute (JICA-RI) was established. JICA-RI plays a relevant role in the creation and dissemination of ideas along the process of creating aid policies for it acts as a research center and a think tank enjoying the contribution of major Japanese and foreign scholars of international aid.

Regarding the location of their headquarters (HQ), JICA and JICE are both based in Tokyo, respectively in the Chiyoda and Shinjuku districts. JICA is located in its brand new headquarters near Kojimachi, nearby the Embassy of Belgium. The six-floor building has ample windows and white columns giving the building a sense of lightness and luminosity. The visitor is welcomed in a lobby which is separated from the area adhibited to the access to the offices upstairs where only accredited persons and employees are allowed. The interviews which were carried out in these premises have been conducted in meeting rooms in an upper story from the lobby.

#### *6.3.6. JICE*

JICE, instead, was established in 1977 as a public no-profit organization (*zaidan hōjin*). It has now more than 260 regular employees and manages projects for a total of 8 billion JPY. Before 1977, it was under the jurisdiction of the MOFA. In 2003 it was reorganized following a reform of Japanese public interest corporations. JICE now acts as a contractor for the MOFA and JICA: the Japanese government is in fact JICE's major client, accounting for a 30 per cent of the total contracted projects. The organization's activities are centered on HRD. JICE aims, in fact, at "making a contribution" through training human resources. Therefore, JICE is primarily engaged in the management of foreign student programs providing support to international students helping them to carry out the administrative procedures for their arrival and their housing and promoting Japanese language education. Furthermore, JICE provides support for technical cooperation and education development programs. In addition, JICE provides also conference services like translation and

interpretation. “*Tsunagu*” (to link, to tie, in Japanese) is the groups’ catchword. President Yamano Sachiko describes JICE’s scope as follows:

JICE will keep in mind the notion of “creating support with an added value” to provide effective and high-quality services for human resources development. [...] JICE is determined to further promote international cooperation and exchanges for human resource development.

Regarding the location, JICE main office is located in an upper floor of the Odakyu Building, not far from the Building of the Metropolitan Government in Shinjuku. Upon reaching the floor, the visitor has to fill in a form declaring the purpose of his/her visit and dial an internal line to reach out to the person with whom he/she desires to meet. The meeting with JICE officials arranged for this research had place in an upscale meeting room with two sofas, a small table in the middle and cupboards with prizes and awards.

### *6.3.7. The JICA approach*

The main features of the JICA and consequently JICE’s approach to aid in HRD are the “recipients-oriented” and the “holistic” perspective.

Contrary to officials at MOFA, who possess a more donor-centered approach to aid, officials at JICA and JICE appear to be keen to promote a recipient-oriented approach. This approach is clear at JICA.

ODA is defined as an instrument through which the Japanese public sector builds a close relationship with developing countries, in particular in economy. Accordingly, our work is to

be able to provide diverse values that might fit the changes in the national economies of the developing countries, that is, to the changes of our customers<sup>23</sup>

The first step of JICA's work is in fact that of investigating the needs of the recipient country and identifying an area of intervention where different stakeholders could potentially form a consensus. Upon receiving the recipient's requests, in fact, JICA officials assess the recipient's needs. In this phase, much importance is attached to the expertise involved in the process. It is fundamental that the coordinator of a JICA office in a specific countries or the person in charge of a specific region, has a "global perspective" on the recipient country. These officials have to be able to analyze the country's economic and political situation, be aware of the specificities of the country's political system, and be able to implement the projects, i.e., to coordinate actual operations.

A common perception is that development cooperation involves different stakeholders and reach a consensus among them. Themes such as the *ownership* of a development cooperation project or program by the recipient countries are recurrent in JICA's documents and are referred to often by officials with the agency. According to the latter, JICA gives priority to those projects that may favor, not just the public sector, but a sound public-private partnership. Since the late 1990's, due to the Asian crisis, the GOJ's approach to aid slightly changed. In a following phase, the agency carries out "implementability studies" in order to understand if the project or program might have a positive effect on the recipient country. This requires that those officials who are in charge of supervising the realization of cooperation projects and programs in a single country or region are prepared on the economic, political and social situation of the country he is appointed to. However there are a few general guidelines on the policies that should be a priority of the practitioners. Among these are: a) boosting the recipient's economic competitiveness with the realization of big-scale infrastructural

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with JICA official, Tokyo, June 2015. Translation is mine. 日本ODAを、日本のパブリックセクターが、途上国との、特に経済において、深い関係を作っていくための手段だと定義すれば、途上国の経済の変遷に応じて顧客の変化に応じて、私たちもそれに応じていろんなちがう価値を提供できるようにならなければならないと思う

projects; b) building capacities in local communities; c) building sound institutions; and d) fighting corruption.

Lastly, the implementing agency provides its counterparts in the recipient country with “alternative” path towards the satisfaction of the recipient’s major development needs. In very few circumstances (only in case of technical problems) solutions are imposed by the donor. A major concept is to arrive at what one JICA high-ranking official in a regional office called a “*jasuto miiro*” (just meet) or perfect fit.

HRD projects, like other forms of cooperation are based on the needs of the recipient country. One JICA official responsible of the agency’s cooperation programs in the HRD sector, was confident about the role of HRD projects in the general ODA framework.

Japanese projects in Asia are based on the recipients’ needs. Health and Education are among the top priorities of the governments in the region. The latter is especially important because it helps a) operation and maintenance of the infrastructures; b) industrial development; c) environment disaster management. For this reason, it is important to improve higher education, through the strengthening of universities, polytechnics and professional colleges. These are crucial in *hitozukuri*. Against this background, Japanese universities professors are sent to developing countries to foster academic exchange. Especially in fields like engineering and law (*hōritsu seibi shien*) (in countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, Mongolia). Nagoya University supports this endeavor. The government of Japan receives requests from developing countries to support their effort to develop their human resources. Japan is often seen as a model. Moreover one of the targets of the MDGs is to reinforce higher education beside basic education.

As already shown in the previous chapter, Japan has been supporting HRD in Asia since the 1950s. Especially since the early 1990s they became crucial in the international community’s



endeavor to provide assistance to former socialist-bloc countries attempting at converting their economies from collectivism to free market. At the time, in fact,

Western countries tried to promote democratization (*minshuka*) and free market in former Soviet-bloc countries. Those initiatives were initially targeted at central Asia (former USSR) and socialist countries in Asia. Japan provides scholarships to developing countries and former Soviet bloc countries in different forms, through yen loans, grant aid and technical cooperation.

However, in more recent years the issue of HRD has become more urgent regarding Africa. According to another JICA official responsible for the coordination of HR-related technical projects, HRD is deemed necessary in order to assist those Japanese business leaders that are seeking “information, skilled workforce, and markets” in African countries.

In JICA perspective, good *hitozukuri*, the Japanese term for HRD, is attainable only through investments and cooperation in the educational sector. The JDS is seen by JICA officials only as a part of a larger HRD endeavor. This endeavor involves both Japan-based and *in-situ* projects. Since the late 2000’s, along with JDS-like scholarships, the GOJ has launched projects like the AUN-SEED or the ABE initiative in order to favor academic exchanges through technical cooperation between Japan and ASEAN countries and Japan and Africa. These projects are aimed at the strengthening of universities, polytechnics and professional colleges in the recipient countries.

HRD programs, in fact,

Are a form of support for Japanese companies which invest abroad. When they invest in foreign countries, they need infrastructures, skilled labor, and a positive business environment.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Personal contact with JICA-RI high ranking official, September 4, 2015.

According to one official appointed in a managerial position at one of JICA's regional bureaus in JICA's HQ in Tokyo, single projects such as the JDS have no specific value if they are not put into a larger context of cooperation. This might be interpreted as an "holistic" vision of aid. HRD, in fact, cannot sensitively contribute to one country's development if it is not accompanied by initiatives in other sectors such as infrastructural projects. All the components of aid (software + hardware) must be nurtured in order to make cooperation work.

What counts is the coordination between infrastructural projects, institution building and HRD. Projects like the JDS are really just one of the many voices on the menu. The JDS, taken by itself, has no great effect on the single country's development. If the above mentioned three components are established, then one might think that the investments in that very country increase.<sup>25</sup>

#### *6.3.8. The JICE perspective*

Being one of the most important ODA-related programs managed by the organization, officials with JICE attach great importance to HRD, specifically to the JDS (of which they are in charge). As it has already been discussed, JICE's officials depict their job as a one of "connecting" (*tsunagu*) communities in different countries. In light of this, JICE's work not only entangles training, welcoming and accommodating foreign students when they come to Japan, but it also involves public relations, for example providing information about the JDS, in the recipient countries. JICE officials' main task is to provide assistance to the JDS candidates before their departure and when in Japan. In particular, they take care of the necessary paperwork for visa applications, university enrollment and

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<sup>25</sup> Translated from Japanese: "JDSなどはほんとうそういう大きな流れのなかのほんの一つのメニューであってjdsそれ自体で単体で大きな効果が出るとは考えていない。さっきの3点が大きく重なってはじめてその国に投資が増えると思っています".

housing. JICE also provides follow-ups, and organizes events with JDS alumni in order to favor cultural exchanges between Japanese nationals and foreigners.

In particular, in the recipient country, JICE acts as a “facilitator” between the Japanese government (MOFA, JICA and the Japanese embassy) and the local institutions and community. Another major task for JICE is in fact to convince foreign student and most importantly, their employees and supervisors in the recipient’s public institutions, to come, to Japan and do a certain study without having the obligation of studying Japanese. In cooperation with Japanese universities representative JICE organizes meetings between

In spite of the fact that it is only a contractor and not a group involved in policymaking, JICE promotes its own development vision centered around HRD. This vision is peculiar to JICE and somehow contrasting with those of MOFA and JICA. It is in fact highly influenced by the organization’s position in the Japanese aid giving chain – it is in fact directly involved on the field working side by side with the aid recipients – and partially detached from the Japanese central government’s influence. One of JICE’s international student programs coordinator puts it as follows:

From JICE perspective, in fact, even in countries which have graduated from the role of ODA recipient, for example in the Middle East or in China, where Japan has already contributed much with its international cooperation, there still are needs for human resource development in diverse fields [...] Ultimately our job is to connect educational institutions with developing countries, highly skilled people and those who request them, responding to the desires and necessities of central ministries in developing countries

The major preoccupation of JICE officials seems to lie with the organization’s possible contribution to the single country’s and global international development. In fact,

Once a school is built, one has to tell the teacher what to do. This is what we do through the JDS. The people [in the recipient country] do not only receive food, we teach them how to cook. It might take a hundred or a thousand years. But in the end, we consider such projects very important for international cooperation. This is why, for us, one merit of the JDS is that it looks at one country development on the long run.<sup>26</sup>

Put this way, JICE work is presented as a disinterested and certainly detached from bureaucratic and political considerations. In other words, JICE might be identified as the “human face” of the HRD aid giving process. JICE’s perspective appears in fact that of an organization mostly involved in the implementation of the ODA HRD programs on the field. In this sense, it is also possible for JICE officials to foster closer relations with the students involved in HRD programs managed by JICE. This is the case, for example, of the JDS. Upon their return to their home countries, JDS alumni are involved in events to publicize the program and present it to perspective students. In addition, when they happen to be back in Japan they often contact JICE to re-establish a communication with their former guardians.

Nevertheless, JICE officials too look aware of the strategic character attached by the central government to HRD programs such as the JDS. In particular, even though it attaches much importance to the recipient’s needs and request, JICE admits that with regards to the use of Japanese taxpayers money and the geographic distribution of the scholarships, the JDS is not devoid of strategic connotations.

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<sup>26</sup> Translated from Japanese: “学校を作ったらその先生はどうするのかと言ったら、我々の仕事ですし、そういったものを我々は提供している、JDSを通して提供しているんじゃないか。そこにひとがずっと、[...]国際協力の基本だと思いますが、食料を与えるんじゃなくて、食料の作り方はやっぱり教えるんだ。それが100年、1000年続いていくというところが非常に我々は国際協力で大事だと思っていますので、そういったその息の長いその国の発展を見据えたものを提供できているというのがJDSの強みで [す] ”. Interview with two JICE officials, Tokyo, June 2015.

For this project, taxpayers' money is used. Therefore it is normal to expect some gain (*rieki*) in return. However our mission is primarily to help that country's development.<sup>27</sup>

[...]The JDS is a program in which Japanese taxes are invested. We want that all the students keep having as many good memories as possible. In light of this, the follow-up process is extraordinarily important [...] In Southeast Asian, at least in countries such as Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar, and the Philippines and in countries like Mongolia, there is a certain sense of proximity to Japan. In other words, there are many students coming from those countries who have ambition [to learn]. Nowadays there are many choices for them and the competition is harsh for us. Australia too for example is providing scholarships. In this situation we have to make them pick Japan instead of other countries. There are many people wanting to go to Japan and at the same time they want to study in English in Japan even if we are not native speakers of English. Japan and Southeast Asia have a shared history. But more than anything else there are many people who highly appreciate Japanese technology and culture.

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<sup>27</sup> “税金を使うだけのやはり、我々にもたらされる利益というのはかなりあるのだと思います。ただ目的はやはりその発展は第一になると思います [...]やはり日本の税金が投入されている事業だし、できるだけやっぱりみんないい思い出をずっと持ち続けて欲しいなということではそのフォローアップがすごい大事になるかなと [...]多分、国ごとに大きく違うと思うのですけれども、少なくとも、東南アジア、こういったラオスなど、モンゴル、ベトナム、カンボジア、ミャンマーあたり、フィリピンもそうですかね、やはり非常にその日本に対する親近感というか、憧れを持ってくるひとが、東南アジアのひとは多いと思います。ですので、あの～、今、先ほど「JDSという日本の奨学金がありますよ」ということでリクルーティングするという話をしましたが、やはり各国で今非常にその競争が激しくなっていて、特にオーストラリアの奨学金もあつたりとか、やっぱり選択肢いっぱいあるのですね。そのなかで、我々は日本を選んでもらわなければいけないのですが、そのなかで、東南アジアに関しては、その彼らは日本に行きたい、英語も我々、英語のネイティブじゃないですが、日本で英語も勉強したいし日本でこういった勉強もしたい。そういった憧れをもってくるひとが非常に多いのかなという風に印象がありますね。それはやはり、日本とその国の歴史もありますが、やはりその何ですかね～日本の文化というかそのテクノロジーとか、そういったその部分がやはり高く評価されている部分もあるのだろうかと思います”。 Interview with two JICE officials, Tokyo, June 9, 2015.

According to JICE's officials, the main reward for Japan is at the bilateral diplomatic level. JDS alumni have many probabilities to rise to relevant positions in their country's state administration and bureaucracy.

When they come to Japan to study, the leaders of those countries [involved in the JDS program] develop a certain affection for Japan. In this sense they can develop their own network with our country. The development of the recipient country is of course our primary target. As a consequence, Japan might get some advantage from a bilateral diplomatic point of view.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, the JDS favors the fostering of positive relations, and valuable "networks" both between Japan and the recipient countries, and among the recipients themselves. Firstly, from JICE officials' viewpoint, the JDS is an important project in the GOJ's ODA portfolio. In fact, foreign students/public officials are considered a kind of Japanese "asset" (*zaisan*) that need to be nurtured, taken care, and be aware of. Such HRD projects cannot be compared with "more immediately assessable" infrastructural projects. The benefit for the donor might come in the long run.

#### *6.3.9. The liberal view: Japanese universities staff*

Japanese universities are chosen by the GOJ and JICA for accepting JDS students according to "areas of admission" (*ukeire bun'ya*), that are decided at the policymaking level between the donor and the recipient<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> "その国のリーダーがやっぱり日本に留学をしているとやはり日本のことが好きになりますし、そういう意味では日本とのネットワークも作れる。ですので、日本がやっぱり二国間の外交上やっぱり有利になるということです。" Interview with two JICE officials, Tokyo, June 9, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed list of the areas of admission, see the scholarship's official website in English: <http://jds-scholarship.org/>

Given the wide range of programs, this research has focused on those universities accepting students in areas relating to “governance” or to the strengthening of market-economy in transitional economies. At this level implementation of the JDS program there seems to be a higher degree of liberal style of thought, as opposed to the ministry and the governmental agencies. The style of thought observed in university professors and administrative staff in charge of the JDS students at their institution might be linked to that of JICE, which serves as an intermediary between JICA, the recipient country, and the universities, but for the fact that they enjoy a greater degree of independence from MOFA (s. Fig. 6).

Data have thus been collected through interviews in three major Japanese public universities, in Tokyo, Nagoya and Fukuoka. In addition, interviews with Japanese universities professors have been arranged in Hanoi.

Universities staff generally recognize the importance of accepting students from developing countries as a contribution to the recipient country’s development. They also recognize the importance of the JDS program in terms of internationalization of the institution they are employed at. On the other hand, however, some university professors with experience in the national or international development agencies or NGOs, are critical towards the bureaucratic aspects of the JDS and with the management of JICA. Universities staff tend to present the institution they are part of as well connected with the rest of the world. What is stressed are especially the links with the working dimension (professors come from both the public and the private sector) and the international (mostly Anglo-American) dimension. Programs targeted at JDS students are presented as “elite” ones: students can receive expertise and know-how directly from experts of their field, whose international experience is often stressed.

A professor from a major private university in Tokyo, presented his university before Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics officials in Hanoi as follows:

We train professional economist with a solid technical knowledge that might work in economic agencies and central banks. After the Masters, some students go on studying for their PhD in the UK and the US or work for international institutions. They get a solid expertise in economic policy and analysis.

The case of a program for public policy and macroeconomics targeted at young public officials from Asian developing countries, hosted by a public university in Tokyo, is elucidatory.

Mr S., the founder of the A. program, was a former World Bank official and worked for a long time on developing countries. Teachers in the program all come from the Minister of Finance of Japan, or from international organizations as the IMF and the IMF-Office for Asia Pacific (OAP).

Such a discourse appears to be reflecting the drive to make Japanese universities more attractive to the perspective students. University staff seem, in fact, to be aware of the global competition to attract foreign students. The “inward tendencies” of Japanese universities and the move downwards in the global rankings, have called the GOJ into action (s. Yonezawa 2009). Slightly less than 30 years after the 1983 Plan to Accept 100k students, the GOJ revised its policy of academic internationalization promoting the Global 30 Project (MEXT 2013). This plan was originally conceived under the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration in 2010 in order to accept 300 thousand students by 2030. The new LDP administration launched in 2014 a new program, the Super Global University Project, of financial support to the country’s top universities in order to boost their competitiveness (The Japan Times 2014). The JDS 15-year long history might be read also in terms of promoting the internationalization of Japanese universities. As another professor in a



public university in the Southern city of Fukuoka put it, through the JDS Japanese universities contribute to training people that might be part, one day, of the “global workforce”.<sup>30</sup>

Universities’ staff appear also aware of the fact that their programs might benefit both the donor and the recipient of the aid program. Training is not just desirable for the development of the recipient countries. It has also an impact on the donor-recipient relations, as it might contribute to smoothening the procedures for aid-giving, and to prevent corruption and misuse of the said funds. Human resource development is seen as a major factor in the process of modernizing and rationalizing those parts of the state administration involved in the management of public funds. Japan might thus be a model of “best practices” for the students/public officials.

One of the aim of the program is to improve the management of public funds and aid funds as well in developing countries through human resource development. Without any knowledge of modern economics, it is impossible for government officials in the financial sector to know how to use funds properly [...]. Academically we have to start from square one.<sup>31</sup>

The “national interest factor” observed at the policy-making and at the implementation level is not openly recognized. However, due to the experience as practitioners or consultants with implementing agencies and multilateral donors of a few professor, it is recognized though that programs such as the JDS might contribute to a “long-term national interest” for the GOJ.

My personal view is that these programs aim at fostering good relationship between Japan and Asia and creating a Japan-friendly environment in the region (*shin nichi-A*). For instance, JDS

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with a director of exchange programs and former JICA staff, Fukuoka, June 22, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with the coordinator of an MA program in public policy and macroeconomics at a public university in Tokyo, June 1, 2015 (in Japanese).

students might be appointed in ministerial positions in a few years or occupy high ranking positions in their country's national administrations.<sup>32</sup>

Evidence that universities enjoy a larger independence from the influence of the ODA policy-making layer might be found in the criticism that is often moved against bureaucratic aspects of the Japanese approach to ODA. Open criticism is directed to the “national interest factor”: accountability is described by one professor as an excuse to “brand” aid, and to implement a sort of politically driven assistance helping to advance the Japanese diplomatic agenda in developing countries.

Japanese government officials and bureaucrats are narrow minded. They want to show Japanese assistance is there; they want to put a logo on aid, they want to brand it. However, my idea is that development is not putting logo things. The excuse is that they have to make aid accountable confronting the taxpayers [...] Moreover, JICA staff are bureaucrat. They have to follow the GOJ policies and consequently, act in the name of national interest.<sup>33</sup>

From the university staff's viewpoint, the JDS program suffers from the same problem as other forms of public assistance: it is fundamentally bureaucratic in its conception. The problem lies in the fact that the GOJ aims at defending national interest and JICA, as part of the Japanese institutional fabric and directly linked to the governmental bureaucracy acts consequently. This is perceived as a hindrance to a truly gratuitous development assistance effort by experts and practitioners. For instance, during an opinion-exchange with JICA at JICA Hanoi Office, professors were critical of the rule according to which JDS students have to go back to their country after they get a degree. Professors would like them to stay and be able to pursue further studies (usually a PhD). However,

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with a director of exchange programs and former JICA staff, Fukuoka, June 22, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with a full professor and coordinator of international programs at a private university in Tokyo, September 17, 2015 (in English).

according to the agreements between Japan and the recipient countries, JDS graduates cannot be granted further leaves from their governments and have to return to their occupation in the public sector.

Furthermore, another professor criticized JDS-like scholarships for not being based on truly “humanitarian motives” and being *de facto* bound to Japanese interests (diplomatic and economic).

Most of ODA should be based on humanitarian reasons. They should not be a bilateral diplomatic tool or a way to attain national interest [...] In my opinion, students from developing countries should be able to study abroad with Japanese ODA funds, not forcibly in Japan.<sup>34</sup>

This position reflects the professor’s affiliation with a network of NGOs active in the sector of international cooperation. At one point, he further stressed his “antagonism” with the dominant strategic and bureaucratic approach to ODA, which, in turn, is a reflection of the hegemonic position of the conservative LDP in the policy-making process.

At [a] meeting [...], I criticized both the MOFA and the LDP approach to the [ODA] Charter. I was attacked by a young LDP member, who told me: “Don’t you see? China is rising [and we have to do something]!”<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, it appears that, at the level of the JDS program, the universities staff (including instructors) are more detached from considerations on Japan’s “national interest”, and rather preoccupied, on the one hand, with the academic needs of their students, and their performance; while, on the other hand, they are concerned with the attractiveness of the university at which they are

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with a full professor at a private University in Tokyo and executive member of a network of Japanese NGOs, September 24, 2015 (in English).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

employed. Their relative degree of independence from bureaucratic considerations allows for recognition of and criticism over the rigidities of the ODA structure, and, specifically, of the JDS program.

#### **6.4. Japan as Vietnam's "favorite development partner? A Recipient's Perspectives on the JDS and HRD cooperation**

After surveying the modes of thought involved in policy-making on the donor's end, it might be worth analyzing the intellectual position of the recipient. As maintained in the previous chapter, it might be a mistake to consider Japanese "intellectual leadership" as just a "projection" of the Japanese power on a "subordinate" passive country. The Vietnamese political leadership has in fact exploited Japanese aid in order to address development issues and maintain its political power. At the same time, in the case of the JDS program, the actual recipients of the Japanese aid (i.e., public officials) see in Japanese aid an opportunity for their personal and professional advance.

##### *6.4.1. Utility of Japanese aid in the legal sector: a Vietnamese leadership perspective*

With the normalization of its diplomatic ties and its progressive inclusion into global markets, the SRV accelerated its economic and legal reform. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, in order to do this, the CPV leadership asked for assistance abroad. Since the mid-1990s Japan has emerged as one of the SRV's major aid donors. In this paragraph, the position of the recipient will be surveyed through the analysis of official documents and interviews with Vietnamese students and experts involved in the aid process. Above we discussed some of the pillars of the Ishikawa Project conducted in Vietnam from 1996 to 2001. In his reports Ishikawa underscored that the creation of a market economy was the duty of the state that needed to act as rule maker. It might be said that in the intentions of the CPV leadership, the objective of the market-oriented turn the country took in the

late 1980s was twofold: attracting international investors and favoring the country's economic growth, without renouncing to the party's control on the country's affairs (s. Fforde 2009).

Therefore, it might not be a coincidence that Japan emerged as a model of governance for certain members of the Vietnamese leadership. In the 1960s Japan emerged in the global economy thanks to the success of its state-led capitalism (Pempel 1982, 46), or "proactive regulatory model" (Gillespie 2005, 58). The origins of this model might be found in the GOJ's 1960 Plan to Double the National Income in Ten Years, that clearly stressed the importance of the role of the government in Japan's development path. According to the plan:

The Government is at all times responsible for positively cultivating factors for economic growth and eliminating adverse elements while maintaining a correct appraisal of the latent growth potential of the Japanese economy. (in Pempel 1982, 75-89)

In the immediate postwar year, the role of the government was initially considered crucial to the promotion of economic reconstruction, structural development and high growth. Subsequently, it was seen as essential in order to nurture key industries, favoring oligopolies, to secure the supply of raw materials from abroad, and develop foreign markets for manufactured products. The agenda was the product of a coordination among the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), central economic ministries and major private companies (Pempel 198, 53-5). In more recent years, Vietnamese leaders have shown appreciation for the aggressive economic policies implemented by the GOJ under the second Abe administration and the Bank of Japan promoting fiscal stimuli and public investments that have produced positive, although short-lived, results in terms of growth after decade of economic stagnation (s. Uchida 2014; Truong Tan Sang 2014).

From the early 1990s, Vietnam had grown steadily by an average 7 percent, succeeding in a drastic poverty reduction. In 2008, Vietnam was promoted to a "middle-income country", according to the WB's classification (Quang Truong 2013, 1). Vietnam's accession to the WTO was

instrumental to accelerating the inflow of investments in the country, which amounted at a total 61,7 billion USD. Japan's FDI to Vietnam in 2008 amounted at more than 6 billion USD (JETRO 2016, 34-5). Reforms of the state-owned enterprises and a new investment law in 2005, spurred the inflow of FDI to Vietnam and further growth in GDP terms (Beresford 2008, 234-5). Vietnam became a target country of the *China plus one* strategy, used by multinational groups investing in the PRC's manufacturing sector to diversify their investments thus reducing their reliance on the Chinese labor market (Yanagida 2014; Quang Hoang Vuong 2014, 10). Japan emerged becoming Vietnam's top ODA donor and one of its largest FDI providers with South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan (Ohno, 2010, 87; JETRO 2016, 32). Reforms of enterprises in the public sector decelerated and the total economic growth decreased to 5,7 in 2008, only to recover two years after at 6,4 percent. Problems of corruption and speculation emerged especially in the banking and financial sector. The cases of the Vinashin (State-owned ship-building company)'s default in 2010, and that of Nguyen Duc Kien, a tycoon who allegedly manipulated the banking industry and gold market for personal gains, and got arrested in 2012, were exemplary (BBC 2012; Quang Hoang Vuong 2014, 11-2; JETRO 2016, 6).

This transition has presented the CPV leadership with new challenges. Namely, renounce to a part of its power on the national economy without completely renouncing to its overall control on state affairs. Defining "law", and its relations with the one party-state apparatus in a period of transition from a socialist to a market-oriented economy, appears to be among the most urgent needs for the CPV leadership.

The idea of a "socialist law-governed state" emerged in 1991 at the second plenum of the CPV's Central Committee, 8th tenure. Under this concept lay the idea of a socialist state "of the people, by the people and for the people, with an alliance of the working class and the peasantry and the intelligentsia as the foundation and led by the Communist Party" (Nguyen Viet Thong 2011). In an article, the General Secretary of the Central Theory Council Nguyen Viet Thong (2011) described the need to achieve a law governed state as a "traditional" feature of Vietnam and already part of Ho Chi Minh's thought. "*Tram dieu phai co than linh phap quyen*" ("All must be reigned by law"), wrote

the leader of the Viet Minh, as reported by the leader of the CPV theoretical think tank. However, as Gillespie (2005) maintains, the 1991 revised concept of socialist law was very different from earlier views of “legality” (*phap che*). Before 1986, this term indicated the compliance with the socialist canon of “socialist legality”, “democratic centralism” and “collective mastery” (pp. 47-8). However, these principles did not imply specific legal procedures but can be described as comprehensive guiding ideas initially imported to North Vietnam from the Soviet Union and China, centered around the CPV’s political and legal leadership. These guidelines were in the practice often merged with the Vietnamese Confucian social and moral tradition.

With the launch of the *doi moi* at the 6th CPV Congress in 1986, the idea that “the management of the country should be performed through laws rather than moral concepts” (Gillespie 2005, 54) gained significance. This new legal paradigm was articulated in the expression “socialist law-based state” (*nha nuoc phap quyen xa hoi chu nghia*) which fundamentally implied a rational-scientific “procedural” mechanism beyond the moral and political rules of the socialist canon. This paradigm tried to merge the “Western” rule of law with the formerly adopted Soviet model of the “law-based state” (*pravovoe gosudarstvo*) in order to respond to the emerging need to balance “the rule of law” with “the rule of the Party” (Thiem H. Bui 2014, 83). In fact, the 1991 concept promoted “stable, authoritative and compulsory law; equality before the law; and the use of law to constrain and supervise enforcement of the administration” (Gillespie 2005, 54-5), which in addition formulated a separation of Party and state functions. The contemporary Vietnamese legal discourse has been affected by the market-oriented economic reforms undertaken by the Vietnamese government from the early 1990s, and by the gradual international integration. The inflow of neoliberal legal concepts, such as private property, has in some cases produced theoretical conundrums. As Gillespie (2005, 59) puts it:

shifts in Marxist economic thinking have made legal borrowing from capitalist countries theoretically respectable, but at the same time the role of ‘state economic management’ in the

mixed-market economy is unresolved. Legal discourse reflects this uncertainty. It oscillates between the neoliberal legal language that permeates foreign donor discourse and the ambiguous messages in Party and government writings about ‘Party leadership’ over the economy.

Creating a legal system that could conciliate a market-oriented economy and a single party political and economic dominance appears to be key to pursuing the CVP objectives which can be summarized as follows:

- 13) the achievement of a market-based economy;
- 14) the promotion of a different market model for specific national situations;
- 15) maintaining the country’s territorial integrity, independence, and regional integration.

In the SRV’s 2006-2010 Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, for example, the government pledged:

2. To take initiative in integrating into the regional and world economies more intensively and extensively. To efficiently realize Vietnam’s commitments regarding trade, investment, services and so on with foreign countries and international organizations. To prepare itself to carry out commitments upon Vietnam’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). To make the best of favorable conditions, bringing into full play the advantages and limiting the negative impacts resulted from the integration process, with a view to further attracting capital, state-of-art technologies and managerial experience.

3. To create a favorable environment for development of enterprises, with the focus being made on raising the quality and efficiency of their production and business operations; to



rapidly increase exports, attract capital and technology, especially high technology, in order to reduce production costs and improve competitiveness of enterprises. To accomplish the restructuring, renewal and equitization of state enterprises under the provisions of the Enterprise Law. To strongly develop without any restriction on the scale of enterprises of various economic sectors, bringing the number of enterprises operating in Vietnam to around 500,000 by 2010.

4. To further renew and perfect institutions and regard the objective requirements of the market economy in economic activities. To concentrate on perfecting the institutions on development of markets for goods, services, real estate, labor, finance and science and technology. To renew planning on socio-economic development along the direction of bringing the positive impacts of markets to the fullest. [...]

In line with these arguments, in a 2015 address, the current SRV Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc stressed that the development of a market economy with Vietnamese characteristics was a necessary step toward the continuation and reinforcement of the country's economic and social growth. The adoption of market oriented institutions in the SRV, however, is thought of by the CPV leadership as a state-led process, which has been constructed and conceived through years of research, and exploration. This process has led to the formulation of a peculiar “socialist oriented market economy” (*Kinh te thị trường định hướng xã hội chủ nghĩa*). In Phuc's words, this economic orientation might be defined as follows:

The socialist oriented market economy of our country both abides by the market economy rules and is based, led and governed by the principles and nature of socialism, in which the institutions, tools and principles of operation of the market economy are created and used to liberalize the production force, mobilize every resource for national development, industrialization and modernization, raise the people's living standards and ensure social

security toward the goal of “a prosperous people and a strong, democratic, equitable and civilized country.”

The state has to lead this process in particular through the drafting and implementation of laws and rules and through the promotion of the people’s involvement. As the Secretary General of the CPV Nguyen Phu Trong stated in a 2010 address, the laws are a fundamental means for the state in its management of the economy. For, on the one hand, laws and regulations along with strategies, master plans and socio-economic policies constitute the rational and modern structure of the national economy. On the other hand, law is at the foundation of a “democratic” state, insofar as it “prescribes and protects civic rights and human rights, associated with obligations and responsibilities, and cares for the happiness and free development of every person”. Furthermore, laws are the source of “social discipline” and the defenders of the “interests of the Fatherland and the people” (Nguyen Phu Trong 2010).

At the same time, the development of human resources remains central to the mid- and long-term development plans of the SRV’s leadership. Particularly, this view is expressed in the Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020.

By 2020, The SRV leadership projected to transform the country into an modern, industrialized one (*nuoc cong nghiep hien dai*). Even if the possibilities to achieve the plan has been debated recently (s. Vietnam News 2014)<sup>36</sup>, the leadership has reaffirmed the targets set in 2010 at the 12th Conference of the CPV Central Committee (s. Bao Nguoi Lao Dong 2010<sup>37</sup>, Tuoi Tre 2014<sup>38</sup>).

In the document, the need for implementing measures in the area of high-skilled workforce in different sectors of the society is underscored already in the preamble.

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<sup>36</sup> Available online at: <http://vietnamnews.vn/opinion/255590/will-viet-nam-become-industrialised-by-2020.html#6rJlXgxTrgYZbcv6.97>. Accessed July 13, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Available online at: <http://nld.com.vn/thoi-su-trong-nuoc/nam-2020--vn-tro-thanh-nuoc-cong-nghiep--hien-dai-2010032810400848.htm>. Accessed July 15, 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Tuoi Tre News (2014). Available online at: <http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/18711/vietnam-sticks-to-goal-of-becoming-industrialized-country-by-2020>. Accessed July 14, 2016.

Human beings are the center of sustainable development. Promote the role of people as the key subject, resources and targets of sustainable development; increasingly meet the material and spiritual demand of people of all strata; build a wealthy and strong country, democratic, equal and civilized society; develop an independent and self-reliant economy with active international integration for sustainable development.

Following, healthcare, waste management and climate change are mentioned as sectors where human resource development is desirable. In sum, however, human resource development emerges as the “crux for growth model transformation and sustainable development”, and as a crucial factor in order to “restructure the economy, transform growth model, contributing to increase productivity, quality, efficiency and competitiveness of the economy” (GOSRV 2012)<sup>39</sup>.

In 2010, the MPI Deputy Director General Hoang Viet Khang during an address in Tokyo, stressed the importance of ODA in human resource development as a “priority sector” for Vietnam. As he put it,

ODA shall be concentrated on large-scale, modern and comprehensive social, economic infrastructure like highways; sea ports; international airport and irrigation system; power plants; universities, high tech parks; modern hospitals [...] and other urban infrastructures [...]. ODA fund shall also be focused on supporting the implementation of national targeted programs, particularly the hunger eradication and poverty alleviation program, social security and institution and human resource development (Hoang Viet Khang 2010, 19).

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<sup>39</sup> See the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2012). Vietnam Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020. Available online at <http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/strategies/strategiesdetails?categoryId=30&articleId=10050825>. Accessed July 14, 2016.

This view is reflected at the level of the official Socio-economic development plans and reflected at every level of the Vietnamese state.

For example, one high official with the Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics, the school for the elite of the CPV, recognized that it is involved in the national effort to develop new skilled human resources that might be employed both in the Academy and in the Party rankings. The official made explicit reference to the HRD Strategy 2020 Specifically, the focus is on areas such as public policy, law and international and development economy, culture and communication. To this end, the school is sending dozens of students and staff members abroad (mostly the US, France and Australia) to pursue MAs or PhDs.<sup>40</sup>

Another high-level official with the MPI told that at least five member of the Ministry staff are sent abroad for training every year. He appreciated the contribution these officials have brought to the Ministry, and defended the urgency for the Ministry to make up for the retiring officials with a new generation of employees. Specifically, they are needed especially in order to develop strategies in areas such as public-private partnerships (PPPs), procurement and policies to promote entrepreneurship. The official recognized however the urgent need for “targeted training” that can reduce the burden on the Ministry in the case that one official has to be substituted by a colleague in her/his duties.

Bosses in the Dept. want to keep their employees. After they go abroad and they get MA they might come back to VN and resign and go abroad once more to pursue higher studies. The government tries to get Vietnamese universities better and develop joint programs. We are trying to strike a balance. For example, in Australia students can move with the families and have other benefits from the government [for a long-term study program]. We would risk a reduction of the Ministry staff.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> In-presence address, Hanoi, January 2016.

<sup>41</sup> In-presence address, Hanoi, January 2016.

At the same time, a sense of urgency to accomplish the previously set development goals seems to be in place: “time now flies faster than ever”, admitted the MPI official. This statement might indicate the fact that the Vietnamese leadership is striving to boost the country’s competitiveness in order to continue attracting capitals and sustaining the country’s growth. Since the opening of the country, its universities have not, however, developed enough to sustain the government’s demand of highly trained and skilled manpower. According to a Vietnamese researcher and JDS alumnus in Hanoi, scholarships from foreign countries offer a solid alternative to the ones offered by the SRV which are smaller and often paid late. The Vietnamese government appreciates this kind of cooperation because it might result in bringing into the country new expertise, know-how and knowledge, but, at the same time, is afraid that his officials might leave the job and resettle abroad. As a result, the CPV exerts control on them.

The main aim is to acquire new expertise and knowledge. The Vietnamese education system is not good enough. The *doi moi* started at the end of the 1980’s, however only in 2000s people started to travel abroad freely. The CPV still exerts strong control on public officials [and the administrative system is still very corrupted]<sup>42</sup>

In light of these facts, it is possible to argue that on the one hand the Vietnamese leadership welcomes international cooperation desiring that the SRV continues on the path toward integration in the international community. In order to do this, the CPV leadership aims at improving the quality of the employees in the public sector in key areas as economic planning, training of party cadres and justice. On the other hand, the CPV leadership appears eager to keep its resources in the country avoiding “brain drain”. Ministry officials as the one quoted express the concern that going abroad for a long time ministry officials might not want to go back to their previous occupation and seek a career

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with a former JDS student and university researcher. Hanoi, January 2016.

advance away from Vietnam. As in the case of the interviewee above, some of the students who go abroad to study – and have sufficiently influent political connections at home – might be actively involved in politics upon their return and have an actual impact on their country’s lawmaking arena.

I might have some impact on the process of policy-making. I am researcher at the National Assembly Research Center. I was called to draft the public law on public administration because of my experience in the field of comparative law. I also work as a national consultant. [Part of my job] is to review the Vietnamese legal system in comparison with the international system.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion, it might be said that certainly Japan provides useful governance and legal models for the Vietnamese leadership. However, the role-model of Japan as an advanced country, and therefore Japanese intellectual leadership, is reduced to what is deemed to be in the interest of the country by the SRV’s leadership. This might also explain the controls the CPV reportedly exerts on the students sent to Japan and why JDS students are not encouraged to pursue further education in Japan unless they renounce to their primary occupation as public officials.

#### *6.4.2. A grassroots perspective on Vietnam-Japan relations from Vietnam - opinion polls*

In the previous paragraphs, the analysis has been focused on the Japan-Vietnam relations at the official level. It has been clarified that international student and HRD programs such as the JDS have a certain degree of utility from the perspective of the Vietnamese political elite. On the other hand, though, it seems worth investigating the success of the program from another perspective: that of the students involved.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibidem

It is argued that students choosing to apply for the JDS program might have a perspective on the relationship between their own country and Japan independently of strategic considerations attributable to political and bureaucratic elites.

For instance, recent opinion polls conducted by the Japanese government and private organizations have shown that positive appreciation of Japan is widespread at the grassroots level. Generally speaking, Japan ranks amongst the most appreciated countries in the world in the last five years. According to 2014 Globescan-PIPA country reputation survey commissioned by the Bbc, “global views of Japan have continued to follow a downward movement” (GlobeScan/PIPA: 2014, 21). However, out of 23 countries surveyed, 19 leaned positive towards Japan. Consequently, Japan appears to be among the top 5 positively ranked countries. In 2012, it ranked first (GlobeScan/PIPA: 2014).

Country reputation surveys targeted at an Asian audience have shown similar results. Among the respondents from the Asia-Pacific region, the Vietnamese show the highest rate of appreciation toward Japan. In 2012 AUN Consulting Inc., a Japanese marketing consultancy agency, conducted a survey among the top 10 Asian countries by GDP (Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines) on their people’s degree of fondness of Japan.<sup>44</sup> The results showed that the country where Japan is appreciated the most is Vietnam. Nearly 97 percent of the interviewed responded positively, confirming the good reputation Japanese enjoys in the country (AUN Consulting, 2012). As shown by the survey, the Vietnamese’s fondness of Japan was higher than that of Thai and Filipino. 45 per cent of Vietnamese responders told AUN

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<sup>44</sup> According to AUN Consulting Inc., answers from 100 male individuals for each country, aged 18 on, were collected. The survey was articulated in five questions: 1. Do you like Japan? 2. Do you like Japanese people? 3. Would you go to Japan on a trip? 4. Do you like Japanese goods and services? The possible answers were: “Very much” (*daisuki*); “yes” (*suki*) “no” (*kirai*); “Not at all” (*daikirai*). The majority (97 per cent) of Vietnamese respondents declared that they like (*suki*) Japan or they like it very much (*daisuki*); 98 per cent of them answered positively to the second question as well. The third question presents slightly different outcomes, as respondents from Philippines (95 per cent) and Singapore (94 per cent) showed more interest in tourism to Japan. Finally, 62 per cent of Vietnamese respondents said they “like very much” Japanese products and services. Retrieved February 10, 2014 from <http://www.globalmarketingchannel.com/press/2012110602>

Consulting that they “like Japan very much”, while 52 per cent told that they “like Japan”. This survey gave however only a general hint on Vietnamese public’s appreciation of Japan.

Another survey, conducted by Ipsos Hong Kong for the Japanese government was more specific in its targets (MOFA/Ipsos: 2014). The survey was directed to ASEAN countries (in particular: Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia). The general “fondness” in Japan, Japanese culture and Japanese products appears to have political consequences.<sup>45</sup> In particular, the survey showed that Japan is the “most reliable ally for ASEAN countries” (*mottomo shinrai dekiru kuni*).<sup>46</sup>

It might be said that economic relations are very important in determining such results. On the other hand, popular appreciation of Japan in Vietnam seems to be influenced by perceived cultural commonalities (Asianness, Confucianism), and diplomatic relations with neighboring countries (China). As already discussed in the previous chapters, Japan and Vietnam have been strengthening their ties since the mid-2000s. However, major agreement on aid and security cooperation have been signed by the two parties since 2012, a year in which historical territorial controversies (the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute between China and Japan, and the Spratly Islands dispute between China and Vietnam) re-emerged. Such events might have affected the popular perception of China, and consequently Japan, in Vietnam.

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<sup>45</sup> Answers from 2,144 respondents were collected by Ipsos Hong Kong. In particular, 302 Indonesia, 317 in Malaysia, 309 in Myanmar, 307 in the Philippines, 305 in Singapore, 300 in Thailand and 304 in Vietnam. Further details about age or sex of the respondents were not provided (MOFA/Ipsos: 2014).

<sup>46</sup> The original question was: “To what extent the Japanese economic and technical cooperation (Official development aid, ODA, etc.) has favoured the development of your country?” (日本の経済技術協力（政府開発援助-ODAなど）は自国の発展にどの程度役立ったと考えますか？）(MOFA/Ipsos: 2014)



*6.4.3. A grassroots perspective on Vietnam-Japan relations from Vietnam - interviews with JDS students and alumni in the legal sector*

JDS students are the actors most directly involved in the JDS program. Every year more than 200 of them are enrolled in MA-courses in universities across Japan. They come predominantly from mainland Southeast Asia, namely Myanmar and Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and the Philippines. Dozens of students from other countries in Asia, such as Bangladesh in South Asia; Mongolia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia, are enrolled every year too. In 2013, the JDS has been extended to Ghana, the first non-Asian country. Assistance will be extended to Nepal starting f.y. 2016 (JICA 2016).

In this section of the chapter the JDS students' modes of thought and perception of Japan will be analyzed. This section of the chapter is based on fifteen qualitative in-depth interviews<sup>47</sup> conducted in Japan and in Vietnam between April 2015 and January 2016. For the purpose of this research, all the selected participants from two major public universities in Japan were enrolled in courses in the area of legal training and governance between the first and second year of their MA course. The participants' professional backgrounds were diverse: in general, they were employed in mid- and low-ranking positions in the public administration. The interviewees were mostly male, while only four out of fifteen participants were female. One student from Cambodia reported to be the only female student in her course. Participants from other countries were even diverse backgrounds: from police

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<sup>47</sup> The low number of participants prevents from drawing too general conclusions. However, data collected through qualitative interviews with JDS students might shed light on the motives leading young people from different parts of Asia to go study in Japan. The small number of participants fundamentally depends on the low degree of accessibility of the students to an "external" researcher. The interviews were in fact the product of weeks of e-mail and telephonic exchanges with supervisors and tutors of the students and university staff with duties of management and coordination of the JDS program in their respective departments. Building ties with the student's instructors has been deemed a necessary step toward trust-building between the researcher and the participants. The interviews were semi-structured and focused around the following points: 1. Personal Background; 2. What do you study in Japan?; 3. Your experience before coming to Japan; 4. What image did you have of Japan before and now; 5. Any difficulties in your life and work in Japan; 6. What did you get from your experience in Jp and what will you bring back home?

officers to university lecturers and employees in central ministries and cabinet offices. Regarding their age, it spanned between the early 20s to the mid-40s.

The majority of the interviewees were at their first experience in Japan. Nearly all of them admitted knowing Japan only through indirect experience (senior colleagues, relatives or friends who were JDS alumni; popular culture). Among the interviewees contacted for this research, only one had previous experience of training in Japanese language and Japanese studies. Most of the participants, however, were advised to pursue their MA in Japan by elder colleagues, while only a few of them admitted to choosing Japan independently. A majority of interviewees admitted to choosing Japan over other possibilities to study abroad because of the higher number of scholarships available in comparison with other donors such as Australia and South Korea (s. Okuda 2012). Nevertheless, the interviewees appreciated their academic curriculum and the “higher level” of development, institutional organization, and even “national character” (ex: Japanese are always on time; people in my country are not) they could perceive around them in Japan. They also tended to perceive “Japan” as a “safe” country, and as a model for reform. All of the interviewees appeared confident in their possibilities to acquire new knowledge and know-how that they could apply in their professions back home sometime in the near future.

Nearly a third of the interviewees were Vietnamese nationals. Specifically, three students enrolled in the JDS and one alumna. Regarding their professional backgrounds, as for the other participants, they were diverse: one employee of the Vietnamese customs, one prosecutor at a Local Court in Central Vietnam, one official with the MPI, one lecturer in Law at a public university in Hanoi. Specifically, all the Vietnamese JDS students contacted for this research were aged between the late 20s and the early 40s. Three of them were female, while only one male. Their insights were useful to uncover the perception at a grassroots level of the diplomatic and strategic agreements that are being signed by the governments of Japan and Vietnam.

As university graduates employed in the public sector, Vietnamese JDS students are part of a minority of the Vietnamese population. Even if the number of people enrolling in a university and the

number of graduates per year are growing (according to the General Statistics Office in 2015, there were 385 thousand new graduates), slightly less than the 13 percent of the Vietnamese population hold a degree. Specifically, in relation with the total workforce, university graduates in Vietnam account for the 7 per cent of the total (Than Nien News 2016).<sup>48</sup>

JDS students are also among the small minority of university graduates that are able to go abroad to pursue or complete their studies. Since the early 1990s, knowledge has been recognized by the government of the SRV as a key factor toward a comprehensive modernization of the country (Phuong An Nguyen 2004, 165). However severe limitations remain in the Vietnamese educational system and the government is struggling, also with the cooperation of international partners, to modernize its universities and make them more competitive and attractive (s. Doan Hue Dung 2004; personal interview with a faculty dean in a public university in Hanoi, 2016). The perceived backwardness of the Vietnamese education, and the emergence of an affluent middle class coupled with the desire for individual success and personal wealth, a common feature in post-*doi moi* youth (Phuong An Nguyen 2004, 168-9), have driven hundreds of Vietnamese students abroad. In 2013, an estimated 125,000 Vietnamese students studied abroad (ICEF 2014).<sup>49</sup> According to data provided by ICEF Monitor, an organization monitoring trends on the global educational market, in 2013 Australia topped the rank of favorite destinations for secondary and post-secondary education for Vietnamese students with 26,015 students, ahead of the US (19,591 students). Japan came third with 13,328 students, ahead of China (13,000) and Singapore (10,000). Among the Asian students studying in the US, Vietnamese are second in number only to the Chinese. A report by ICEF also revealed that around the 90 per cent of Vietnamese students going to study abroad are self-funded and do not apply or

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<sup>48</sup> According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, more than the 30% of the Vietnamese population aged 18-22 (nearly 3 million out of a total 9 million people) enroll in a university. See UIS (2016) Country profile: Vietnam. Available online at: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=VNM&regioncode=40515>. Accessed November 3, 2016.

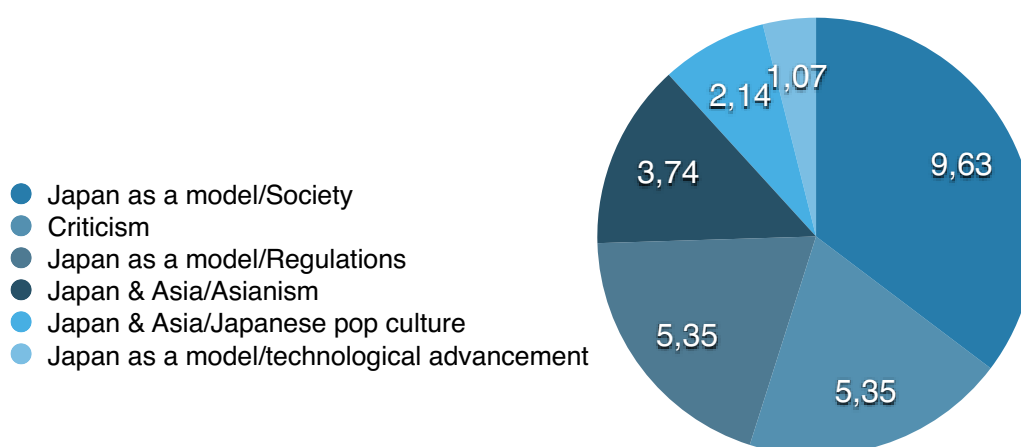
<sup>49</sup> For further details, see: <http://monitor.icef.com/2014/11/number-vietnamese-students-abroad-15-2013/>

receive any scholarship. In sum, in the last decade, Vietnam has become a major market for education and international universities are trying to lure more Vietnamese students every year.

As shown in the previous paragraph, Japan is among the top-3 destinations for Vietnamese students. At the foundations of Japan's popularity are several reasons. Broadly, though, they can be summarized in a few main rationales: first, opportunity (number of scholarship, career opportunities, third person's advice, etc.); second, geographical and (at least perceived) cultural proximity; third, institutional advancement and cultural allure. As already demonstrated (s. Okuda 2012), the first rationale seems however to be a stronger drive toward Japan than the other two.

**Table 6.2 and Figure 6.8: Codes and occurrences (JDS students)**

Upper Code	Code	% in analyzed documents
Japan & World	Japan as a model	12,83
Japan as a model	Society	9,63
	MT_BurCons	6,48
Japan & World	Japan & Asia	5,88
Students' profile	Public officials	5,88
	Criticism	5,35
Japan as a model	Regulations	5,35
	International discourse	3,74
Japan & Asia	Asianism	3,74
Students' profile	Inter-country differences	3,74
	International experience interviewees	3,21
Japan & Asia	Japanese pop culture	2,14
Students' profile	Lack of training	1,07
Japan as a model	technological advancement	1,07



Similarly to their colleagues from other developing countries in Asia, Vietnamese students enrolled in the JDS seemed eager to acquire new knowledge and new skills that they might apply once they are back to their country. A Vietnamese student in her late 20s puts it as follows,

I have worked for a Provincial People's Court (PPC) since 2007. There I found out about the JDS program. I received a JICE pamphlet that encouraged all the staff of the PPC to apply. Japan offered a good chance to study abroad. I opted for Japan as it has a court system which is more suitable to that of Vietnam. Japan and Vietnam in fact share common traditions and there is a mutual understanding between the two countries. [Moreover] Japan offered a modern model of civil law integrating elements of the German tradition with that of the US. When I am back in Vietnam I will continue my training as a judge for one year. Then I want to become a judge. In order to do this I needed to get more knowledge and improve my research skills.<sup>50</sup>

Another student in her late 20s shares the thought that studying in Japan may help her acquire new knowledge to be put into practice upon her return to Vietnam.

Before coming to Japan I had a low degree of knowledge about International Law: I bring new expertise back to my country. When I'm back to Vietnam I hope I can transfer the knowledge I acquired here in Japan to my students. I also acquired knowledge of Japan and its culture – especially about contemporary society; the attitude of people; their customs at work and with their colleagues; their daily life. I will also bring back home a new attitude at work. For example, here in Japan people are always on time.

Another student in her early 30s explained her choice as follows:

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with JDS student (Vietnam), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.

I am a student of Intellectual Property. I applied for the JDS here at X University for two reasons: one is the recommendation of my friends; the second is that I have been working for the Vietnamese customs and I am interested in how the Japanese customs work. I have been working for the Vietnamese customs since 2008, after graduating in Law. In Japan I have friends, colleagues and [I enjoy watching/reading] the local media.[...] Japan is a developed country for me. In 1945, after the war, it was destroyed. Nonetheless it could develop very quickly. [...] Beside academic knowledge, I learnt much that I want to apply to my daily life: for example organizing skills.<sup>51</sup>

From the quotes above, it might be possible to argue that JDS students see their experience in Japan as an occasion to acquire knowledge and personal skills. As public servants, they also recognized the importance of “transferring” what they got in Japan in terms of know-how and skills to their fellow countrymen. This process of learning from Japan involves not only academic knowledge. In fact, JDS students are not only faced with academic practices that they might perceive as more advanced than those they are used to at home. They also find themselves living in a different social landscape. In this environment, JDS students are exposed to cultural and social arrangements specific of the Japanese society. Some of them appear to be highly appreciated by Vietnamese JDS student. As one of them explained, there are perceived customs (as the respect for the laws, hard work and timeliness) that are deemed desirable to learn and be spread at home.

The Japanese people are patient, nice, hard working. When I am back in Vietnam I would like to change the awareness of the people about hard working and timeliness. Then I would like to change the awareness of law.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with JDS student (Vietnam), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with JDS student (Vietnam), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.

In this quote it seems clear that a common perception among JDS students in law and governance is that Japan is a country where law is fully respected and where people have a solid “awareness” of what law is. According to the student, this helps the correct functioning of the rule of law. Furthermore, Japan’s rapid development in the postwar era, Japan’s diplomatic relations, and history of cooperation with their countries is appreciated and appear to be a factor in the opinions of JDS students about their host country. However, a third person (a relative, an acquaintance or a colleague)’s suggestion might be crucial in the students’ final decision. A student in her late 20s has cited her cousin’s experience as JDS student as an important factor in her decision to move to Japan to study. At the same time, the student also mentioned deciding to apply for the JDS instead of a scholarship offered by the German government because of the specific subjects of instruction offered by the Japanese university she ultimately enrolled in.

My cousin is a JDS alumni. She studied at Y University. About her experience she always told me that she liked Japan very much. I knew from her that the environment was good, it was clean and healthy. In addition, she told me about Japanese society. She said that they are friendly, polite and kind. [...] People here is willing to help in the limits of their capabilities. I learnt this after two days of homestay program. [...] I had the chance to get a scholarship by the German government but the major of the JDS program were closer to my interests.

Japan, in fact, offers A JDS alumnus has stressed the fact that he had chosen Japan for his studies because of the international ranking of the university he applied to and of the possible skills he could acquire. In addition, he seemed to believe that his lack of training may be culturally determined: contrarily to Japan, in Vietnam, some legal professions, such as the lawyer, are hardly accepted in Vietnamese society.



I applied in 2011 and entered X University. It had a good ranking. Plus, Japan is a safe country. Even when the earthquake struck, everyone stayed calm and no one got nervous because of the earthquake. I am satisfied with what I learnt [in Japan]. There I learnt how to be a good lawyer and [provide] good reports. How to interact with clients was at the core of the teaching. However, in Vietnam it is difficult to work as a lawyer. This profession has not a good image in Vietnam. People say that lawyers are not good men (smiles).<sup>53</sup>

As already mentioned above, JDS students are willing to learn specific knowledge that is not available in their home country and implement reforms in their own sectors. With this, another attractiveness of Japan is its natural and city environments. In contrast with developing countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh suffering from air-pollution and heavy traffic in its biggest cities, Japan represents an ideal model for air-pollution control and public transport development. As one student admitted, “Life in Japan is good in terms of natural environment and society”.

During the interviews, some of the participants have expressed their criticism toward specific flaws of the system. Referring to the appointment of judges, one Vietnamese JDS student admitted that:

There are still some problems. However, I believe that with the new reforms things will change. In VN judges are appointed only for short terms, are underpaid and their clearance and/or removal is not clear. Political elites influence judges at all level. Judges have relations with the government and the Vietnamese Communist Party. We must separate the work of judges and the party. The leadership of the Party in the country is not in discussion. However, the judges want [need] to be more independent.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with JDS alumnus (Vietnam), Hanoi, January 25, 2016.

Therefore, it might be argued that one of the reasons for the JDS students to study abroad is that they can get a more detached perspective on the problems they face at home. In the case of Vietnamese students, as the one quoted above, criticism is limited. In fact, as public officials, they might have ties with the VCP. For instance, the student quoted above is explicit in her critique toward the flaws of the judicial system in Vietnam, such as the lack of independence from the VCP organs. At the same time, though, she recognized the unquestionability of the Communist rule. It might be added that the decision to go to study in Japan is also consistent with the VCP leadership. As previously discussed, the Japanese and the Vietnamese governments have been strengthening their diplomatic ties since the early 2000s. Japan has been providing economic assistance in diverse fields, establishing itself as the SRV's major bilateral donor. During the interviews, Vietnamese JDS students have shown awareness of their country's ties with Japan. As shown in the opinion polls discussed above, Japan is perceived as a reliable ally in the international arena. As one student put it, "Japan-Vietnam relations are closer day after day. I can trust my Japanese friends. By the same token, I think the Vietnamese government can trust Japan".

Furthermore, some Vietnamese students, have acknowledged that their choice to go study to Japan was partly influenced by their passion for Japanese popular culture and cultural products.

One student admitted that in Vietnam "Japan is also famous for its cherry blossoms, kimonos" and that she were "fascinated by the Japanese culture". Another admitted that:

I admire the Japanese people since I was young. I grew up with anime (as Doraemon, Sailor Moon and Pokémon). I want to learn more about Japanese culture and language. I studied Japanese here for three months. However I had to stop because the course was too demanding.

In this quote it is possible to see that this produces a sort of frustration for foreign students in Japan. Their passion for Japanese traditional and popular culture encourages some of them to study Japanese. According to Japanese scholar Koichi Iwabuchi (2002), since the 1970s, and more

importantly in the 1990s, media and cultural flows in Asian markets have intensified against the background of expanding media globalization and strengthening economic power of Asian countries in East and Southeast Asia. Before the early 2000, the direction of such flows has mostly been from Japan to Asia, reflecting “asymmetrical relations” between Japan and other countries in the region. Profiting of Asian economic development and the consequent increase in demand of tv entertainment, the Japanese domestic market, the second largest in the world in early 1990s, expanded beyond national boundaries across the Asia-Pacific region. The total of exported “tv hours” from Japan to Asia had almost quintuplicated between 1971 and 1992. Such a phenomenon – labeled by Iwabuchi a “return to Asia” – has profoundly affected the way the Asian public started perceiving Japan, and the way Japan, more precisely, its ruling elite, has reconstructed a Japanese national/cultural identity. The success of the animated series *Doraemon* and of the drama *Oshin* outside Japan is exemplary. The first has become part of the everyday life of many young people in Asia, America and even Europe to the point that the GOJ nominated it “ambassador”<sup>54</sup>; while the second has been broadcasted in more than fifty countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Iwabuchi 2002, 3-5).

It might be argued that the popularity of such cultural products has projected a friendly and even “cute” image of Japan in the students. This, combined with the students’ necessities of the daily life in Japan might have led some of them to pursue structured studies in Japanese language and culture. However their academic programs or, alternatively, Japanese language courses were reportedly too demanding for them to continue studying Japanese. Therefore, Vietnamese JDS students, as other colleagues from other JDS countries, do not reach a satisfying level of proficiency in Japanese.

At any rate, the “opportunity” rationale seems to be dominant. Beside the country’s cultural allure, it might be said that Japan’s attractiveness lies in the increased economic exchanges between the two countries. In today’s Vietnam, a study period abroad might contribute to enlarging the future

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<sup>54</sup> In 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Masahiko Kōmura appointed the animated character, a blue robotic cat with magical powers as the first “animation ambassador”. Among the character’s new tasks there was the promotion of Japanese popular culture overseas. S. The Guardian (2008). Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/20/japan>

graduate's perspectives of career advancement. Specifically, because of the enhanced economic relations causing a boom of Japanese investments between 2006 and 2014 (s. previous chapter), enrolling in Japanese studies in one of the major national universities and studying in Japan might be decisive. One professor at a public university in Hanoi, maintained that:

Students who graduate from Japanese Studies can find job before finishing University. Only the best students study Japanese in VN: we only take 24 students in our Japanese studies course [...] People who studied in Japan are getting important roles in businesses and important roles in research institutes.<sup>55</sup>

From the students' perspective, studying abroad is however important from another point of view: it is an occasion to acquire international experience and enlarge their own personal and professional networks. In fact, as one student admitted, "studying abroad is stimulating because you can meet international friends and exchange information". At the same time, another factor can contribute in the choice of Japan as the preferred destination for a period of study abroad, namely a perceived "cultural" proximity.

In my opinion, Japan and Vietnam share some commonalities. They both are in East Asia; they have a common cultural (confucian) features; they value peace and prosperity; they are worried of the rise of a China threat and of a possible damage to their sovereignty (for example in East China Sea and South China Sea). For both Japan and Vietnam China represents both an opportunity (trade) and a threat (national security). Your enemy is my enemy also. Japan and Vietnam are thus linked by a mutual support, in bilateral relations as in multilateral meetings as EAD, ASEAN+3.

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with a Vietnamese national university's faculty dean. Hanoi, January 2016.

As the quote above demonstrates, shared interests at the level of international politics – “your enemy is my enemy” – could also be taken into consideration as a factor contributing in the students’ decision to study in Japan.<sup>56</sup>

#### *6.4.3. Interviews with other non-Vietnamese JDS students*

In the final section of this chapter, the discussion will be focused on the data retrieved through qualitative interviews with other non-Vietnamese JDS students. Surveying their perspectives has been deemed necessary in order to get a broader view of the JDS program and trace possible similarities with the ones offered by Vietnamese students. The majority of non-Vietnamese JDS students was Bangladeshi. Other students reached for this research were from Cambodia, Myanmar, Mongolia and Uzbekistan.

For instance, it could be observed that students from both South and Southeast Asia showed appreciation for specific historical and political features of contemporary Japan. Japan’s development in the immediate postwar, is often taken as an example of economic and social development. According to a Bangladeshi student, in fact:

I had the possibility to go to Australia to study, but in the end, I chose Japan because it is an “oriental” [sic] country and it is a more suitable model for Bangladesh. Bangladesh is developing: people’s interest is shifting from money-making to reform. And Japan can be a model for reforms in Bangladesh. People need emotions and solidarity to attain development. A compact society is important. And in Bangladesh as in Japan society is compact. During WWII Japan developed because of its social capital.

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<sup>56</sup> This last factor seems however to affect only marginally the decision of the individual students. In this case, the position of the interviewee (professor and faculty dean at a national university) is relevant insofar as it seems to represent the position of the Vietnamese ruling elite rather than the one of a low- or mid-ranking public servant as the JDS student. During the interviews with JDS Vietnamese students rivalries between China and Vietnam or between China and Japan were not mentioned.

In this quote, it is possible to note that the student's perception of Japan is that it is an "oriental" country, an "Asian" country, as Bangladesh and that it can offer models for economic reform and development. The stress is posed on the creation of a sound "social capital" that could lead Bangladeshi reforms and economic development. In a sense this represents a widespread view in the international academic community that sees HRD as key to the Japanese economic development in the Meiji period (1868-1912), and in the post-WWII, in some ways downsizing the role of oligarchic command, central economic planning, cultural and ethnic homogenization and social control (Garon 1998<sup>57</sup>; Oguma 1995; 2002).

According to another Bangladeshi student in his early 30s, the most visible difference between his country and Japan is the high degree of organization regulating public life in the country. Such aspects have been stressed by most students interviewed, but as a recurrent theme it is worth considering once more. The functioning of bureaucracy and public transportation is perceived as smooth and a model of efficiency.

Here everything is predictable. Time is easily manageable in Japan, not in Bangladesh. Bureaucracy is another example. Here, in Japan, bureaucracy works. In the case of the money allowance for my daughter I had it when I was entitled to have it and when she went back to Bangladesh I stopped receiving it.<sup>58</sup>

The same student however stresses that if on the one hand such a "pervasive" organization reduces risks and inconveniences in everyday life, on the other it might have some drawbacks. The student in fact admitted to being disoriented sometimes because of the lack of certain "informal" habits and customs, that make life more "varied".

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<sup>57</sup> See for example Garon, Sheldon (1998).

<sup>58</sup> Interview with JDS Student, Fukuoka, June 2015.

My idea of Japan was that of a peaceful and developed country, very disciplined. When I arrived I found cooperation, friendliness and respect for the law. It was better than I expected. However, I found that people are too busy working. They have a routine-bound life. They sometimes seem robotic. In Bangladesh you have your pack of cigarettes, your cup of coffee... I like disciplined life but provided that there's a little bit of variety.<sup>59</sup>

In this quote, it might be observed a sort of nostalgic attitude with the lack of regulation involved in daily life in Bangladesh, as opposed to the “routine-bound” life of the average Japanese as perceived by the JDS student.

Asiannes and legislative models are two factors attracting students from all over Asia. A student, male, from Uzbekistan in his early 30s maintained that apart from his personal fascination with the Japanese culture, the Japanese university he enrolled in (X University in the quote below) offered him with experts in the field of Intellectual property (IP) and literature he could not access in his home country.

Japan is close. It is an Asian country, as Uzbekistan which is more Asian than European. I was interested in studying in Japan since when I was a student. I went to the Japanese language center in my University in Tashkent. There I met a Japanese teacher from Nagoya. I was fascinated by the Japanese behavior, their family ties, their knowledge, their food based on rice. [...] [I came to Japan] because I could study Intellectual Property with eminent professors and scholars. X University has one of the most important scholar in IP in the world. Second, for my bibliography: here I could find sources in English. Then, for the hands-on approach of the study. Professors are inviting people from the practices to teach lectures. Lastly, Japan is an IP nation. Protection of the IP is one of the Japanese government's signature policy. After

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

independence, Uzbekistan's laws still lag behind. [...] There is a need to adopt quickly new laws regarding IP issues.<sup>60</sup>

From this quote the sense of haste of public servants in developing countries might be noted. This urgency might be explained in terms of uneven capitalist development that has forced countries in the former Soviet Union or with collectivist economic arrangements to readily adopt new legal standards and institutional arrangements in the last two decades in order to attract investors and sustain their national economies. As previously discussed, and as shown also by this last quote, students are however mostly impressed by Japanese history and institutional development. Two JDS students from Cambodia, one, male, in his early 30s, and one, female, in her late 20s, mention Japanese history as something they have learnt much from since they moved to Japan. Japan's "Asianness" and the cultural proximity to their homeland are primary factors in their choice to apply for a Japanese governmental scholarship. As many JDS students coming from Southeast Asia Cambodian students perceived some features of the Japanese culture (for instance buddhist and confucian influences) as shared with their country of origin. Therefore, for those students, Japan represents a "developed" country where they might have access to expertise and academic sources that are not available in their home countries in a relatively familiar environment.<sup>61</sup>

Specifically, both the Cambodian students interviewed answered that their country can draw lessons from Japanese history, especially in the field of legal development. Official cooperation is under way, but, as one student insisted, promoting the study of Japanese history and legal education on the Japanese model at the grassroots level might be useful in terms of Cambodia's institutional advancement.

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with JDS student (Uzbekistan), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with JDS student (Myanmar), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.



I came to Japan knowing that it is one of the most industrialized countries in the world. In terms of academic research, one might find many sources in English in libraries and universities, but still remains in Asia. Japan has a very important role in our legal system, because it is sending legal experts to help draft the civil procedure code. After my experience in Japan, I will encourage other students to come here. I will also try to push legal reforms in the field of criminal law. Cambodia has a still underdeveloped legal system. Moreover I would like that in high school in Cambodia people study Japanese history and somehow adopt the Japanese system of legal education. The Japanese model of development is in fact based on education. Lastly I would like to engage in research about underdevelopment in law. My primary concern however is education.<sup>62</sup>

I chose Japan to learn more. Japan is a developed country, more than Cambodia. Japan is a model for ownership and property legislation and helped Cambodia drafting a new Land Law and the Civil Code (2007). [...] I first came to Japan in 2010, with the Training Program for Young Leaders. We stayed in Japan for 18 days, during which we also visited the Ministry of Justice in Tokyo. I am very impressed by the Japanese society, by their legal consciousness and their respect for laws and regulations. Japan has developed its law with a compromise between Asian and European traditions. It is a mix of domestic and foreign law.<sup>63</sup>

Another factor that might be noted is again the perception of Japan as developed “Asian” nation. Studying in the US or in the UK, for example, might positively contribute to the individual’s educational and professional development, however, it could favor the import of “Western” models that cannot be enhanced in an “Asian” country as Cambodia. Some observation then seem to reflect an official narrative on Japanese “experience” and “education-based development” that can be traced back to JICA (s. King & McGrath 2004).

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with JDS student (Cambodia), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with JDS student (Cambodia), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.

Other JDS offered a positive assessment of Japan as a reliable ally of their country. A JDS student from Mongolia, male in his late 20s, previously employed at the Mongolian President's Office, expressed appreciation for the consolidated bilateral ties his country entertains with Japan. Most notably, in the 1930s and 1940s parts of contemporary Mongolia were invaded by the Japanese military. The memory of the war has however been substituted by a more recent memory of peaceful relations based on international cooperation.

The Mongolians trust Japan. In 1937 we were at war the ones against the others. But in 1990's when after the demise of Communism the Mongolian State went default, the Japanese helped out a lot. Mongolians now trust more the Japanese than the Korean. We may put it like this: culturally, Mongolian people are not so close with Japanese people, however they trust the Japanese government. The Mongolian government too trusts the Japanese government. On the other hand, Mongolian people are more familiar to the Koreans – for example in terms of pop culture –. Koreans are similar to Mongolians. But Mongolians don't know much about Korea's government.<sup>64</sup>

Another notable issue here is the competition that might arise in developing Asia between the regional powers (namely China, Japan and South Korea). As the Mongolian student clearly assessed, if on the one hand in Mongolia South Korean popular culture is highly available and consumed, at the official level, the government seems to prefer cooperation with Japan rather than with South Korea. The cooperation with Japan also appears to be publicized by the government thus contributing to a popular perception of “Japan as a reliable ally”, as stated by the JDS student.

A similar view was offered by a Burmese student, male, mid-30s, judicial officer.

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with JDS student (Mongolia), Fukuoka, June 22, 2015.

When I applied there were not many opportunities for Burmese people to study abroad in developed countries like Japan. Japan offered more scholarships and more regularly than other countries like Thailand, India and South Korea. [...] However, my first aim was to learn from the Japanese experience. [...] Japan was the only developed country not to impose sanctions on Myanmar in the educational sector. It is a specific policy of the Japanese government. Japan needs intellectual power. The director and the deputy director at my department were both trained in Japan. They made a good publicity of the country [...] If they had to go abroad to study Burmese students would of course choose to go to the US or to the UK, as we do not have problems with English. However, they would not go for ex., to Germany or France. Many choose Japan because it is Asian.<sup>65</sup>

Apart from showing that Japan is considered the availability of scholarships and its “Asianness”, this quote reminds of a controversy regarding Japanese aid: its lack of political “conditionality” on issues such as democracy and human rights. It has been proven in fact that Japanese aid has been flowing to Myanmar – mostly in form of humanitarian aid since 2003, the year of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s arrest – despite the sanctions imposed by the international community on the country’s military regime accused of human rights abuses (s. Seekins 1992 and 2007; Strefford 2005). Recently however, with the 2011-12 “opening” of Myanmar that followed a period of political reforms and economic reforms culminated in the victory of the National Democratic League at the April 2012 parliamentary elections, bilateral cooperation has been extended to areas such as law and economic reform and legal capacity building and enhanced (Khen Suan Khai 2015). In F.Y. 2012, the GOJ disbursed nearly 200 billion yen in loans, and nearly 28 billion yen in grants to Myanmar in infrastructural and knowledge-based aid (MOFA 2014).<sup>66</sup> In recent years, criticism has

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with JDS student (Myanmar), Nagoya, August 12, 2015.

<sup>66</sup> The timing of the enhancement of the bilateral cooperation is then worth noting because the US lifted their sanctions against Myanmar only in October 2016. See US Department of Treasury (2016) Executive Order: Termination of Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of the Government of Burma.” Available online at: [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/burma\\_co\\_termination.pdf](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/burma_co_termination.pdf)

been raised nonetheless because after the initial pledge to contribute to Myanmar's ongoing democratization process, the GOJ has privileged "indirect" and "long-term" aid policies mostly directed at implementing the rule of law in the economic sector rather than promoting reforms in political sphere of the country (like the constitutional and parliamentary), where the military is still influent. According to Ichihara (2015) the GOJ might be willing to provide more economic aid but reluctant to apply further pressure on the Burmese government on democracy on the grounds of geopolitical considerations.

Put simply, Japan competes with China for influence in Burma. After Japan and Western countries suspended a substantial amount of ODA to Burma in 1988, China increased its presence as a major investor in Burma. Until 1988, Japan exerted the greatest influence in Burma; this position has since been assumed by China. Burma's appeal to China is its abundant natural resources such as oil, natural gas, and minerals [...] This prioritization also means that Japan is unwilling to risk losing influence by pressing hard for reforms when the Burmese regime resists change. In fact, to maintain influence over Burma without driving the country closer to China, Japan has offered inducements rather than sanctions.

One aspect the GOJ can count on in drafting its aid and international students policies is the regional reach of Japanese popular culture. As discussed above, in particular for JDS students coming from Southeast Asia, fascination and fondness for Japan seem to be commercially driven. The Burmese student quoted above admitted to having known Japan because of its cultural exports. He went on saying that in Myanmar, the success of Japanese popular culture has been recently challenged by the spread of South Korean cultural products.

I knew Japan also because of its popular culture. In the 2000s in Myanmar we had a Japanese drama called Oshin. Of course the Burmese are fascinated by samurai and ninja movies. However these days South Korean pop culture is more widespread.

In conclusion, it might be said that from the JDS students' perspective, Japan is an attractive country because of its history and institutional models. Japan's history of economic success and of successfully borrowing from the "West" is considered an asset and an attitude to be reproduced locally in developing Asia. It is also attractive because of the high number of scholarships it provides. To some students this adds up to the friendly relations the government he or she works for entertains with the GOJ. Japan is often referred at as a "reliable ally" and this factor might have its own attractiveness on a perspective JDS student. Moreover, this might have effects on the approach of the JDS-graduate public servant to Japan, once he or she is back to his/her home country. At any rate, the role of the diffusion in the Asia-Pacific of the Japanese popular culture ought not to be underestimated since, as Iwabuchi effectively showed, it has contributed to the perception of Japan as a "friendly" and, above all, an "Asian" country. All these factors contribute to the creation of expectations with regards to Japan, and thus shape its image as a reliable partner for public servants from developing Asia.

## **6.5. Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that human resources development is not a "new" direction in Japan's ODA since 2000s. It has been proven, in fact, that programs for HRD have been in place since the 1950s. Furthermore, they have shaped in compliance with the ODA philosophy developed in those years by the Japanese political leadership: on the one hand, they had to serve the Japanese national interest, while on the other hand, they had to promote Japanese affiliation with the US-led international community.

Upon identifying the major actors involved in the decision and implementation of the JDS program (MOFA, JICA and JICE, Japanese universities, public officials and students from recipient countries), it has been shown that different institutional actors involved in the program have a different “view” on the program itself. It has been argued that these – often substantial – differences depend on the position of the single institutional actor along the aid giving chain.

In detail, the MOFA is in charge of drafting the policy. Here is the “control tower” of the ODA process:<sup>67</sup> its role is to draft aid policies that are consistent with the global strategy of the GOJ, and its relations with the single recipient country. The Ministry is responsible for the the coordination of the entire ODA and has to strike a balance between the Japanese government, recipient countries and most importantly, Japanese lawmakers (those who vote the ODA budget in the Diet) and the Japanese public. Hence, the constant preoccupation of the officials at the Ministry with the responsible use of the Japanese taxpayers money. At this level of the aid-giving process, a “conservative-bureaucratic” mode of thought seems to be dominant. The MOFA official who has agreed to participate to this research made numerous references to the need for “accountability” of the entire ODA process, and to the “responsibility” of the MOFA, as part of the GOJ, to act in compliance with the interests of different national stakeholders. However, this mode of thought is integrated with a more liberal-humanitarian rationale stressing Japanese affiliation to the international community of donors. While national interest is seen as non negotiable, affiliation is seen instead as a negotiable and flexible feature.

On the other hand, the ODA-implementing agency, JICA, and its main contractor for the JDS program, JICE, work closely with and are able to get direct access to the recipient countries administrations, assess their development needs, and eventually serve as mediators with the GOJ and MOFA. It might be argued that their proximity to the recipient countries influences the adoption of a more client-oriented attitude and language over a more national interest-driven one. This attitude might also be affected by the competition that Japan has been facing in international cooperation,

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with MOFA official, October 23, 2015.

from other international OECD-DAC donors and emerging donors too, in the last decade in Asia and elsewhere. As it has been shown above, JICA sees HRD as only one component of the GOJ's international cooperation entangling infrastructural projects and other forms of economic cooperation. Needless to say, HRD acquires more relevance for JICE which is a contractor engaged in the promotion and implementation of HRD programs.

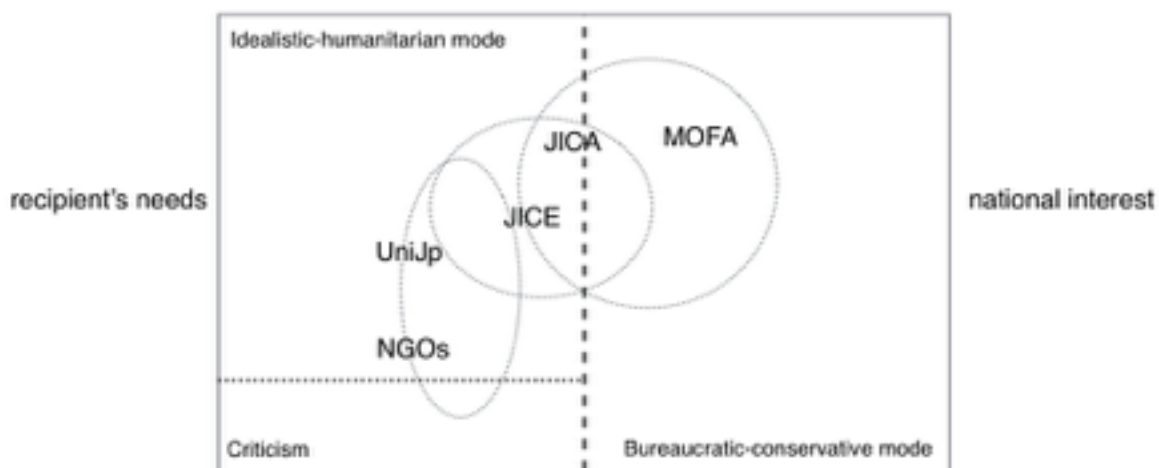
The result of the thematic codification of the interviews conducted with MOFA and JICA officials and JICE employees have been summarized in table 6.1 and figure 6.6. In these figures, the occurrence of the major themes and their respective modes of thought are represented.

Moreover, it might be noted that the preoccupation with the national interest is common in the interviewees especially with those directly employed in the government. It is less recurrent in interviews with people outside the government. As mentioned previously, JICE staff seemed to be aware of the national interest rationale involved in ODA-HRD programs, but would stress the importance of the recipient's and the international community's welfare over it. Beside the bureaucratic-conservative mode, the liberal-humanitarian occupies a major section of the graph in figure 6. In particular, MOFA, JICA and JICE employees all recognize the importance of prioritizing the recipient's needs and maintaining a client-oriented approach. Much attention is thus paid to institution and capacity building, two pillars of the traditional Japanese ODA focus on nurturing the recipient's self-help.

At the same time, in-depth interviews with professors and other actors involved in the JDS, have shown the existence of critical stances toward the GOJ's policymaking in ODA and, specifically, with regards to HRD and international students policies. In particular, the government's and its implementing agencies' bureaucratic attitude and the fundamentally instrumental character of the JDS program has been stressed. According to some participants in the research, HRD programs should be detached from a strategic rationale. Figure 6.8 might help to further clarify the different modes of thought and the respective actors. In the figure below, the juxtaposition of modes of thinking the JDS are represented with reference to the study by Karl Mannheim (Mannheim 1936,

118). On the one hand, an idealistic-humanitarian mode of thought might be associated with a liberal and neoliberal stance. In fact, this style of thought is recognizable by its emphasis on universal values as democracy, justice, and freedom, which provide the philosophical foundations to cooperative initiatives between states. On the other, the bureaucratic-conservative can be associated with a “realist” point of view, concerned with the survival and welfare of the state in one country (s. Dunne 2011). Along with these two intellectual orientations in fig. 6.6, a “critical” idealistic-humanitarian mode of thought has been added in order to represent the views expressed by mostly non-state or non-governmental actors such as public and private university professors and administrative staff, and NGO activists.

**Figure 6.9: Modes of Thought in the JDS**



In the second part of the chapter, it has been attempted to provide evidence of the strategical character of the JDS from a recipient’s perspective. In previous chapters the discussion has focused on the official and diplomatic ties the Japanese and Vietnamese governments have consolidated through the postwar. It has been noted how these ties have become strategic particularly at the end of the 1980s, when the SRV entered in the “renovation” (*doi moi*) era. Furthermore, it has been shown that since 2006 bilateral ties have improved to the point that the two countries have signed multiple



cooperation agreements. Finally it has been shown that the Vietnam's strategic position in GOJ's diplomatic strategy toward the Asia-Pacific region has not been affected by the 2009 and 2012 historic government changes (*seiken kōtai*). As previously argued, for Japan, Vietnam's strategic value is to be found in its richness in raw materials and in its potential as a destination for Japanese investments and consumer products. In addition, from a Japanese policymaker's perspective, Vietnam is valuable insofar as it cooperates with Japan and the US in the military containment of China in the Pacific, and, at the same time, supports the GOJ's plan to reform the UN's Security Council. On the other hand, from a Vietnamese policymaker's perspective, Japan is a valuable donor and ally. Japanese investments in Vietnam have boomed from 2006 to 2013 creating jobs for tens of thousands Vietnamese. At the same time, aid has been generously provided in various sectors, such as infrastructures and HRD.

In this chapter, instead, light has been shed in detail on the perceived utility of "software" cooperation from a recipient's perspective, not only considering the official position of the government or the ruling party. Through in-depth interviews with JDS students from Vietnam, it has been attempted to clarify that the perception of Japan as a reliable country and partner in Asia is spread at lower ranks in the public administration of the recipient countries. According to the majority of the interviewees who agreed to participate in this research, Japan offers models of economic governance, legal reform and social organization. Japan is perceived as an efficient country, in contrast with Vietnam described as lagging behind in areas such as the judiciary or, even more generally, in social organization. Specifically, with regards to the judicial sector in which several participants were professionally and academically involved, Japan is perceived as an exporter of legal standards for transitional economies. Japan was often described by the participants in this research as a nation which was able to adopt "Western" legal traditions to an "Asian" dimension creating its own legal standards. These standards might in turn better serve the interest of the leadership of a developing Asian country. At the same time, JDS students from Vietnam seemed fascinated with

Japanese traditions, language and popular culture. These factors served as supplementary traction drives toward Japan. Japan was often perceived as “Asian” and thus culturally similar to Vietnam.

In conclusion, it might be worth stressing the following points: a) Through programs like the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS), specifically targeted at young leaders and public officials in LDCs in Asia and Africa, the GOJ has tried to pursue a form of intellectual leadership over countries in the same region and even farther; b) through such programs, the GOJ aims to foster good relations with geographically, politically and economically strategic LDCs’ administrators and mid-level bureaucrats; at the same time, especially in Southeast and Central Asia it aims to limit China’s political and economic assertiveness in the region; c) through programs like the JDS, targeted at LDCs public sectors and institutions, the GOJ complies with the international aid discourse on “good governance” and institution building as key for poverty reduction; d) helps finalizing the transition toward market-based economic arrangements in the recipient countries. The existence, however, of different modes of thinking the JDS program and, more in general, cooperation in the field of HRD, shows the limitations of implementing a single consistent discourse. In addition, it might be considered as a hindrance to further development of programs in the field of HRD and, most importantly their detachment from strategic considerations.

On the other hand, regarding the recipient’s end, it might be possible to argue that ODA-funded HRD programs serve not only the interest of the GOJ, but also that of the government in the recipient country. Through programs as the JDS, the *etatization* of development (s Ferguson 1990) is brought forward. A better trained bureaucratic class is instrumental for developing countries to enhance their competitiveness on a global scale and their reliability facing the industrialized world. Such an effort depends on the uneven levels of development that the global neoliberal arrangement has contributed enlarging in the last three decades. In the current situation, developing countries depend on foreign capitals from industrialized and economically advanced countries. In order to attract investors, though, transitional economies such as Vietnam need to show their partners that uncertainties are reduced and that guarantees are there protecting the investments. In the case that has been discussed

in previous paragraphs, aid serves as a tool for a government of an industrialized country such as Japan to help reduce the hindrances that might bar Japanese investors from investing in a developing country such as Vietnam. Training in law for public officials, and eventually the enhancement of reforms at the policymaking level, is a primary tool in this effort. Therefore, the strategic character of “software” aid programs such as the JDS is twofold. On the one hand, the national interest factor in ODA-funded HRD programs directed at Vietnam cannot be renounced by Japanese policymakers. On the other, however, these programs are needed by the political leadership of the developing countries in order to attract capitals sustaining the national economy of their country and, ultimately, consolidating its power in the public administration.





## 7. Conclusion

Focusing on discourse and its internal variety, this study has shown that discourse on Japanese ODA is dominated by two major modes of thought: one bureaucratic – preserving the country’s national interest; the second, liberal-humanitarian – aspiring at contributing to the welfare and stability of the international community. The Japanese government’s JDS scholarship program and its contribution to the enhancement of Japan-Viet Nam relations have been selected as a relevant case study.

### *Neoliberal and Japanese discursive hegemony in Asia*

The diffusion of neoliberalism since the 1980s has shaped the dominant paradigm of foreign aid. Discourses and narratives suggest changes in this sense. Historical features of the Japanese government’s attitude in foreign aid have been accentuated. Drawing upon studies on discourse, hegemony and sociology of knowledge, this study has identified divergences and juxtapositions. In detail, it could be noted that in the official discourse on Japanese Official Development Aid (ODA) a bureaucratic/conservative strain of ideas is juxtaposed to a more liberal/humanitarian one. With Mannheim, they have been called “modes of thought”. The global neoliberal arrangement has favored the integration of these two intellectual conceptions. Amidst growing political and economic interdependence on a global scale, national states have forcibly given up parts of their individual interest in the name of common prosperity guaranteed by the respect of a set of shared rules.

These shared rules are embodied in major financial and political institutions (such as the UN-system and the World Bank) around which much of the life of the international community is articulated. In this context, the relations among developed and developing countries have been articulated. Imbalances between developed countries (the U.S., Western Europe and Japan) and the developing world have provided the background for such an articulation. In order to understand it, the paradigm of hegemony, as identified by Gramsci and followers, has been considered valuable for

this study. Hegemony is described as a political phenomenon where the dominant exerts its power over the dominated through coercion and consent. This situation can be identified in the voluntary adherence to international cooperation programs aiming at enhancing features of neoliberal governance (such as developing legal frameworks that might help the “unhindered circulation” of capitals) in transitional economies.

Documentary research and qualitative interviews made possible the collection of data in order to conduct a thorough textual and thematic analysis showing the presence (and juxtaposition) of modes of thought related to both a national and an supranational dimension.

### *The construction of a strategic partnership*

In the first part of the thesis an overview of the developments in Japan-Viet Nam relations has been offered. In particular, the changes happened since the early 2000s have been considered. Formal and informal initiatives since the aftermath of World War II have laid the groundwork for the enhancement of the bilateral relations in the early 2000s. Through these, the two countries have built a strategic partnership based on economic and cultural exchange and, more importantly, common strategic interests. In the next chapter, another aspect of the bilateral cooperation: trade, investments and HRD.

It has been noted how these ties have become strategic particularly at the end of the 1980s, when the SRVN entered in the “renovation” (doi moi) era. Furthermore, it has been shown that since 2006 bilateral ties have improved to the point that the two countries have signed multiple cooperation agreements. Such a strategic significance is more apparent when one considers that despite the 2009 and 2012 government changes (seiken kōtai), Viet Nam has remained central in Japanese Asian policy. The reasons are diverse. In detail, for Japan, Viet Nam’s strategic value is to be found in its richness in raw materials and in its potential as a destination for Japanese investments and consumer products. In addition, from a Japanese policymaker’s perspective, Viet Nam is a valuable ally insofar as it cooperates with Japan and the US in the military containment of China in the Pacific, and, at the

same time, supports the Government of Japan (GOJ)'s plan to reform the UN's Security Council. On the other hand, from a Vietnamese policymaker's perspective, Japan is a major donor and important diplomatic partner. Japanese investments in Viet Nam have boomed from 2006 to 2013 creating jobs for thousands of Vietnamese. At the same time, aid has been generously provided in various sectors, such as infrastructures, HRD and national security. Japan has also provided assistance to Viet Nam as a mediator between the country and the international community, easing tensions between the SRVN and international institutions. Finally, Tokyo has favored the SRVN's membership in the WTO.

Japanese policymakers and aid practitioners have been able to adapt their policies to the needs of their counterparts without imposing conditionalities that would have put the CPV's leadership at risk. Rather, for example in the case of aid for human resource development in the public sector, it might be argued that programs like the JDS have enhanced the capacities of the Vietnamese state administration. The recent appointment of Japan-trained officials to ministerial positions validates this hypothesis.

Simultaneously, the image of Japan as a model for development and the threat posed by China's assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific have played an important role in bringing Hanoi and Tokyo closer to each other. The Japanese government has been keen to establish a form of leadership in Asia. In the mid-2000s it has pledged to enhance its intellectual dominance. For these reasons, the national interest factor in ODA-funded HRD programs directed at Viet Nam cannot be renounced by Japanese policymakers.

However, in the case here analyzed, Japanese intellectual hegemony in Viet Nam has been "negotiated" with the Vietnamese leadership and "rescaled" in consideration of the regional and global political and economic arrangements.

#### *A history of ideas of Japanese ODA in the 2000s*

Further on, a history of ideas related to Japanese ODA in the 2000s has been discussed. The evolution of the conception of ODA in different layers of the Japanese public administration has been



put in the context of changes at a broader level in the field of international aid. In the aftermath of WWII, Japan received loans for the reconstruction from the U.S. and the World Bank (WB). Japanese ODA program was stemmed out of the perception of the duty to repay the international community for the assistance received in the early postwar. At the same time, it needed to restore its international image and foster good business environments abroad to spur the growth of Japanese economy.

In other words, Japan had to integrate into the new global order founded on the U.S.-led liberal international community and work for the integration of its developing partners too. Particularly in the 1970s the Japanese leadership came to see it as a strategical tool to ensure comprehensive national security. At the end of the 1980s Japan emerged as the world's number one aid donor. Catalyst figures such as Ogata Sadako have accelerated the process of reform and the integration of “new” ideas – usually reflecting those dominant at the international level – into the official discourse on ODA. Bureaucratic/conservative ideas, though, have always dominated the Japanese policymaking camp. The emergence of conservative “intellectual entrepreneurs” as Prime Minister Abe Shinzō has favored a periodical reassessment of the idea of national interest over affiliation. After a decade of integration and juxtaposition, the resulting discourse appears in its internal variety. In fact, such a juxtaposition has enabled 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.

#### *Human Resource Development programs and the traditional kokueki/tsukiai juxtaposition*

In the last chapter of this study, light has been shed on the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) program and its role on the fostering of good relations between Japan and Vietnam. In particular, as other ODA programs, the JDS was shaped in order to serve the Japanese national interest, and to promote Japanese affiliation with the US-led international community. On the one hand, the bureaucratic-conservative can be associated with a “realist” point

of view, concerned with the survival and welfare of the state in one country. On the other, an idealistic-humanitarian mode of thought might be associated with a liberal and neoliberal stance. In fact, this style of thought is recognizable by its emphasis on universal values as democracy, justice, and freedom, which provide the philosophical foundations to cooperative initiatives between states.

As argued above, different institutional actors are involved in the program. The JDS involves different actors: MOFA, JICA, JICE, universities and the recipient's end. Naturally, these actors have a different "view" on the program itself. Through qualitative interviews, the existence of substantial differences have been noted. They might depend on the position of the single institutional actor along the aid giving chain.

At the ministerial level, a "conservative-bureaucratic" mode of thought regarding HRD-ODA seems to be dominant. The need for "accountability" and the "responsibility" of the MOFA facing the Japanese public seems to play a major role in the ministerial view of the JDS program. However, even at this level, such a mode of thought is integrated with elements that can be attributed to a more liberal-humanitarian rationale. This set of ideas assesses Japanese affiliation to the international community of donors. But while national interest is seen as non negotiable, affiliation is seen instead as a negotiable and more flexible feature.

On the other hand, practitioners working in closer contact with the recipient (JICA and JICE above all) appear to adopt a more client-based approach leaving realist considerations (dominant at the ministerial level) on the background. The liberal-humanitarian mode of thought has here a major stake in how the JDS program is conceived. In-depth interviews with professors and other actors involved in the JDS, then, have also shown the existence of critical stances toward the GOJ's policymaking in ODA and, specifically, with regards to HRD and international students policies.

### *Rescaling intellectual hegemony*

In the concluding part of the study, it has been attempted to provide evidence of the strategical character of the JDS from a recipient's perspective. This section of the study has been written on the basis of several interviews with JDS students and a fieldwork in Hanoi in 2015 and 2016.

Through in-depth interviews with JDS students from Viet Nam, it has been attempted to clarify that the perception of Japan as a reliable country and partner in Asia is widespread at lower ranks in the Vietnamese public administration. According to the majority of the interviewees who agreed to participate in this research, Japan offers models of economic governance, legal reform and social organization.

Japan is perceived as an efficient country, in contrast with Viet Nam described as lagging behind in areas such as the judiciary or, even more generally, in social organization. Specifically, with regards to the judicial sector in which several participants were professionally and academically involved, Japan is perceived as an exporter of up-to-date standards. Knowledge of this kind is deemed crucial for a transitional economy as that of Viet Nam.

In conclusion, it might be worth stressing the following points: a) Through programs like the JDS, specifically targeted at young leaders and public officials in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Asia and Africa, the GOJ has tried to pursue a form of intellectual leadership over countries in the same region and even farther; b) through such programs, the GOJ aims to foster good relations with geographically, politically and economically strategic LDCs' administrators and mid-level bureaucrats; at the same time, especially in Southeast and Central Asia it aims to limit China's political and economic assertiveness in the region; c) through programs like the JDS, targeted at LDCs public sectors and institutions, the GOJ complies with the international aid discourse on "good governance" and institution building as key for poverty reduction; d) helps finalizing the transition toward market-based economic arrangements in the recipient countries. However, the existence of different modes of thinking the JDS program and, more in general, cooperation in the field of HRD, shows the limitations of implementing a single consistent discourse. In addition, it might be

considered as a hindrance to further development of programs in the field of HRD and, most importantly their detachment from strategic considerations.

Regarding the recipient's end, it might be possible to argue that ODA-funded HRD programs serve not only the interest of the GOJ, but also that of the government in the recipient country. Through programs as the JDS, the recipient country's government enhances its capacities to exert state power on the territory while enhancing the perceived competitiveness of the country. Global imbalances and uneven levels of development have put transitional countries like Viet Nam in the condition of being always keen on attracting foreign capitals from industrialized and economically advanced countries. To this end, the country's leadership has to adopt laws and regulations guaranteeing the investors. In other words, it has to comply with standards that have been established under the guidance of major international financial institutions and donors.

Therefore, it might be argued that the strategical character of "software" aid programs resides in these factors. In the dominant neoliberal paradigm of governance, legal development is the fundamental step to the development of a favorable business environment. From the recipient's perspective cooperation with developed nations can guarantee the attainment of this target. From the donor's perspective, instead, programs aimed at developing human resources in the administration of developing countries can help to protect the national interest in the long run. In Japan's diplomacy's view, fostering positive relations with foreign administrations is a top priority. A Japan-friendly Asia (and international community) can ease the trail of the Japanese government to realize its aims.

#### *Contributions and limitations of the present study*

The present study has offered its contribution to the literature on Japanese ODA. In particular, it has contributed to the discussion on Japanese knowledge-based aid and processes of policymaking. The focus on discourse and ideas has offered an innovative perspective on the matter. This research has not, in fact, been limited to the analysis of official documents and to a general policy analysis. In addition to these facts, this research has given voice to actors "in the flesh". In the course of this

work, this researcher has been given access to first-hand sources directly involved in the JDS program which constitutes the core case-study of the present work. The combination of sources (documents, parliamentary records, qualitative interviews) have given depth to the study in its whole.

However, this factor, which arguably constitutes the main asset of the present study, is also the origin of its limitations. Gaining access to participants in a program of international cooperation has been time-consuming and has not prevented difficulties. Gaining access to the high ranks of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to JDS students in Japan has been particularly challenging. Through personal connections it has however been possible to partially overcome some of the major hindrances. This method has inevitably restricted the scope of the research to a limited number of participants. Perhaps to obtain a more complete view on the issue, other HRD programs similar to the JDS should have been analyzed. A larger number of participants should also have been included. Considerations on the manageability of the data set have however prevailed over those on the collection of more extensive information. In addition the relative time limitations imposed by the doctoral program on the administration of the research and the presentation of its results have led to cautious choices.



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