

The University of Tokyo Studies on Asia

Jin Sato  
Soyeun Kim *Editors*

# The Semantics of Development in Asia

Exploring 'Untranslatable' Ideas  
Through Japan



The University of Tokyo  
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Jin Sato · Soyeun Kim  
Editors

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Japan

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# Contents

<b>Development: Which Ideas Now?</b> .....	1
Jin Sato	
<b><i>Doboku</i>: Changes in the Social Evaluation of Infrastructure Development in Japan</b> .....	15
Ryosuke Kuramoto	
<b><i>Kaizen</i>: Why is It so Difficult to Understand?</b> .....	29
Go Shimada	
<b><i>Genba-Shugi</i>: Understanding Through a Hands-On Approach</b> .....	45
Naoki Matsubara	
<b>Asianism: Continuity and Divergence in Japan's Foreign and International Cooperation Policy</b> .....	61
Lauren Nakasato and Kazuo Kuroda	
<b><i>Hito-zukuri</i>: It is Not Just Human Resources Development</b> .....	79
Noriyuki Hashimoto	
<b>Endogenous Development: Situating Kazuko Tsurumi's Work in International Development</b> .....	93
Kanako Omi	
<b><i>Yōsei-Shugi</i>: The Mystery of the Japanese Request-Based Aid</b> .....	113
Jin Sato	
<b><i>Jijodoryoku</i>: The Spirit of Self-Help in Development Cooperation</b> .....	129
Yu Oliver Maemura	
<b><i>Ōnā Shippu</i>: A Vestige of Japan's Ambition to Lead International Aid</b> .....	149
Kenichi Doi	

***Kokusai Kōken: Changing Perceptions of Japan’s Status  
in the International Society* ..... 165**  
Takatoshi Oyama

***From Goa to Angola: Exploring Ideas and Mechanisms in Japan’s  
Kaihatsu-Yunyū* ..... 179**  
Soyeun Kim

***Yen Loans: Between Norms and Heterodoxy* ..... 195**  
Hiroaki Shiga

***The Trinity of Aid, Trade, and Investment: The Reemergence  
of a Japanese-Style Development Term as China Rises* ..... 209**  
Muyun Wang

***Conclusion: Imagining Pluriversal Development Knowledge  
Production Via Japan as Method* ..... 225**  
Soyeun Kim and Muyun Wang



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# Development: Which Ideas Now?



Jin Sato

**Abstract** The practice of development and foreign aid inevitably involves numerous languages and thus requires translation to each the meaning of terms and concepts as all ideas and the words that convey them, are born in particular locations with contextual meanings attached to them. Yet terms are imported—often from West to East, and North to South—without consideration for these contexts. This introductory chapter argues for the need to recover how local actors reinterpret, frame, reconstruct, and reproduce, foreign concepts as they migrate. It also discusses why this is important, and why now. While shifts in thinking occur from time to time, we have been less imaginative in recognizing and overcoming the dominant sources of ideas and concepts that inform our development thinking. This is the reason we focus on the apparently “natural” concepts in Japan and how such concepts travel beyond their place of birth.

**Keywords** Development ideas · Japan · Translation · Vernacular concepts

## 1 Sources of Development Ideas

The practice of development and foreign aid inevitably involves numerous languages and thus requires translation in continuous attempts to communicate “the” meaning of terms and concepts. The movement of ideas requires some form of translation because all ideas are born in particular locations with contextual meanings attached to them. In the colonial context, the question of language and power has been addressed intensely. Forced assimilation through language imposition was an important way for the colonizers to exercise their influence (Caprio 2009). Even today, some authors problematize the hegemonic status of English and French in the context of foreign aid. Languages spoken in the Global North are often used when creating guidelines for development and humanitarian sectors without local translations, as a result

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often excluding certain locals from accessing aid privileges and burdening local implementers with the “impossible task of translating” (Vitantonio 2022).

What is “translation”? The Oxford English Dictionary provides a simple definition: “To convert or render (a word, a work, an author, a language, etc.) into another language; to express or convey the meaning of (a word or text) using equivalent words in a different language.” The editors of this book originally intended to do just that, i.e., to present key Japanese development concepts and investigate how they could be translated into English. We thought this was the sure way toward de-Westernizing development discourse, but we soon realized that the task was not so simple. Many English terms have long been naturalized into our daily conversation. The terms imported from abroad and now being used widely in development discussions include “governance,” “advocacy,” “accountability,” and “empowerment.”<sup>1</sup> In this circumstance, there is not much point in problematizing the dichotomy of foreign and domestic. New meanings are created as terms are imported without any awareness of a need to translate.

Also, we gradually discovered that most development concepts, regardless of their origins, could be understood only in their practice: semantic translation does not convey the full meaning of the term. A “translation” of development-related concepts, in other words, is a dynamic process of meaning transformation through practice, rather than a one-to-one interpretation of word meanings fixed at a particular time. Local actors reinterpret, frame, reconstruct, and reproduce foreign concepts to make them congruent with local contexts (Swangsilp 2018). While theorists and practitioners of development often talk about whether a lesson learned in one country can be applied to another, “replicability” ignores the process of translation, which can transform the very meaning of “lessons.”

The most foundational awareness that the authors came to share was not about the potential or quality of translation; it was the total *absence* of an effort to translate vernacular concepts back into the mainstream development discourse where many of them originated. Enriching our understanding of concepts is an important prerequisite to enriching the practice of development.

In the history of mainstream development thinking, Indian economist Amartya Sen is known as one of the most influential scholars who re-conceptualized the meaning of development. In his essay “Development: Which Way Now?”, Sen argued forcefully for shifting the analytical emphasis from aggregate economic growth and income to people’s entitlements and capabilities (what people can do or be) (Sen 1983). Sen offered a pivotal breakthrough at a time when the majority of economists assumed an automatic progression from the dominant means of development (economic growth and income) to the ideal ends of development (enhancing the quality of people’s lives). Sen and other proponents of human-oriented development introduced a major shift from emphasizing aggregate GDP to achieving human freedoms and security in societies. Sen won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998 as the first awardee from Asia, and the first from India.

While shifts in thinking occur from time to time, we have been less imaginative in recognizing and overcoming the dominant *sources* of ideas and concepts that inform our development thinking. Even for Sen, much of his empirical observations are

based in non-Western societies including China, India, and certain parts of Africa, yet his theoretical reference points had always been in Western literature, such as the political philosophy of Aristotle and John Rawls (Sen 1999).

People of non-Western communities themselves have been accustomed to using concepts that originated (or seem to have originated) in the West to explain and discuss the development trajectory of their own societies. For example, the “developmental state” (Johnson 1982) and the “East Asian miracle” (World Bank 1993) became fashionable concepts to characterize economic development in Asia in the 1980 and 1990s. While there has been some provocation, putting forward “Asian values” as something different from Western-style development (Cauquelin et al. 2014), subsequent development discourse has largely helped to gloss over the unidirectionality of this conceptualization, treating the Asian societies (and the “Rest”) solely as recipients of ideas from the West, with little agency attached to the vernacular concepts.

Inspired by Sen’s seminal article written over 40 years ago, we should now ask “Development: Which *Ideas* Now?” That is, from where do we obtain ideas about development, and to where do we apply them? From modernization theories in the 1950–60s to Marxist-inspired critiques in the 1970s, and then on to the search for alternatives that incorporate concerns for gender, the environment, and human well-being in general, the recent tendency is more toward a pluriverse of development (Khotari et al. 2020). Pluriverse development must accompany pluriverse ideas of how to understand and carry out development.

This book initiates this task by focusing on the apparently “natural” concepts that have been used widely in Japan. Many of the concepts we chose to include in this volume have been in use for a long time, such as *doboku* (civil engineering); some of them are more recent such as *kokusai-kōken* (international contribution). Certain concepts are exported abroad such as the Trinity, while others are imported such as *ōnāshippu* (ownership). Regardless of their historical and linguistic origins, we chose them because they characterize Japanese development and aid that can hardly be captured in the English concepts that are prevailing today. What we also found interesting was that there was a “translation” issue even among Japanese language speakers about what exactly these concepts mean. *Kaizen*, for example, is a Japanese term but its definition varies even among Japanese speakers.

Although we were initially preoccupied with challenging the Western dominance of the development discourse and how to uplift the significance of non-Western ideas, we came to a deeper appreciation of the ambiguity of the concepts that had been naturalized into Japanese society and culture. We realized that the question is not so much of attempting to overcome the West-to-East direction of the movement of ideas, nor a reverse effort to make the West understand “untranslatable” vernacular development concepts. The preoccupation with either importing or exporting development ideas has missed the essential aspect of self-understanding about the very meaning of development. In other words, local language users are not necessarily aware of the meaning of the concepts they use, and this realization came forward thanks to our efforts to translate and discuss them in English.

How can we communicate non-Western concepts to English-speaking readers if we ourselves hardly understand them? Before moving on to the discussion on Japan's own struggle with remaining Japanese concepts and their repercussions, let me discuss the general absence of interest in these vernacular development concepts.

## 2 How Did We Leave Behind Our Own Development Ideas?

The field of development studies is full of specialized terminology originating from the West. Empowerment, governance, gender, advocacy, and capacity development are just a few examples of such terms that are widely used. Thanks to the popularization of SDGs as major slogans that have gained recognition beyond the development industry, sustainability and sustainable development are perhaps the most recent concepts to have captured the minds of the general public who want to do “good” for the global community.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the uncritical popularity of imported ideas marginalizes the significance of vernacular concepts. Interestingly, many of those vernacular concepts continue to survive despite the continuous inflow of foreign concepts. We chose to highlight some of the key vernacular concepts in Japan to offer a more decolonial approach to understanding development and aid practices. What we aim to do is to seek pluriversal development alternatives (Demarica et al. 2023; Acharya 2016; Menon 2022) through the appreciation of vernacular concepts. An important step toward the pluriverse is to reject simple dichotomies. West–East and North–South dichotomies have been convenient but binding frameworks that constrain us from other possible development imaginaries. An additional step is to focus on the movement of those ideas in shaping development practices beyond the location of their birth. “Vernacular concepts” often transcend national and cultural boundaries. Interestingly, seemingly “vernacular concepts” may have originated abroad. The concept of *kaizen*, for example, pre-existed as a term to mean “improvement,” before another layer of meaning was added to imply an *approach* to improve production. This new meaning was brought to Japan from the US during the Occupation period after WWII. It was adopted and expanded by Toyota, and is now entering Africa as an important “Japanese” concept in the global development context. The discussion of “vernacular” concepts thus intended to invite their users on a journey of self-discovery by considering the movement of these untranslated terms.

The authors of this book are fully aware of the “ambiguous” dual status of Japan as both former colonial/imperial power and as a non-Western “Other”/the Rest. As Kim (2023) articulates, “locally-driven theorizing efforts in International Development Studies should be weary of the tendency to conflate decentering with diversification—i.e., shifting reference point to East Asia by stressing their difference from traditional donors” (Kim 2023, p. 88), thus simply reproducing the very inequality that the new discourse aimed to overcome. Words shape the world, and those words are always in motion (Gluck and Tsing 2009). By acknowledging *where* ideas come from and how they change their meaning in different locations, we attempt to recover the value of

those concepts that had been with us much longer than Western concepts that are now so dominant and popular.

One solution for respecting the vernacular concept is *not* to translate it and proffer the original term with explanations. The founding father of development studies in Japan, Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933), faced a similar problem when he wrote his book *Bushidō*, attempting to explain the spirit of the samurai to the English-speaking world. It is interesting to consider why he did not dare to translate the word “bushidō” as “samurai spirit” or “samurai code of conduct” but chose to use the original term in the title of his book. His own explanation is that “some words have a national *timbre* so expressive of race characteristics that the best of translators can do them but scant justice, not to say positive injustice and grievance” (Nitobe 1908, p. 4).

Bushidō, like many other local and peculiar concepts and words, must “wear the badge of its singularity on its face” (Nitobe 1908, p. 3). Some of these words and concepts are still circulating widely in Japan. In many cases, even the Japanese themselves may not recognize their historically situated nuances. In development studies, for example, the Japanese term *doboku* (discussed in Chap. 1)—made up of characters representing earth and wood—is often glossed as “civil engineering” in English. However, the English translation fails to capture its essence, which is centered on the local community’s collaborative efforts rather than the skills and techniques required in *doboku* works. Yet this aspect of *doboku* is critical as it has been the backbone of Japan’s infrastructure development cooperation with developing countries.

Japanese development ideas were never forgotten. They have been alive with their own ups and downs depending on the socio-cultural conditions of the time. Yet, they have never attracted the attention that they deserve from development scholars since they seem irrelevant to policy-making, implementing projects, and thus doing development. Perhaps more importantly they are not “fashionable” compared to highlighting popular Western concepts. This aspect should not be underestimated since the easiest way to establish a scholarly conversation with the Western community and to publish in English is to use the concepts the Westerners use.

Another possible reason for the absence of explicit and systematic reexamination of local concepts may be due to the emphasis, particularly in Japan, on praxis rather than ideas that are supposed to underpin such praxis. Praxis of development is constrained by local conditions which tends to go against the scholarly incentive to generalize. We claim that ideas matter in and of themselves as well as in their implication for policy and practice. To make this case, there needs to be a systematic and explicit treatment of “forgotten” concepts that have circulated only in certain regions, hidden in plain sight.

### 3 Why Japan Matters

Japan provides a powerful context through which questions can be posed about the flow and direction of local concepts. There are three reasons why Japan matters:

First, Japan provides interesting material for discussion that goes beyond the typical dichotomy of dividing up the world such as East and West. Japan's "success" in adopting the Western development model has allowed it to achieve an unprecedented level of economic growth, making it the first OECD member from the non-Western world. Japan's potential to look back at its own development trajectory and contribute to shaping other countries' development provides resources that can be leveraged to position to transcend a simple dichotomy of East/West, North/South. In times when development aid can easily be manipulated to meet ideological ends, the ambiguous (if not neutral) position of Japan should be considered as an asset (see Garon 2017).

Second, Japan became the first major development donor that did not belong to the West. Moreover, Japan is the first non-Western country to achieve the status of a "top donor" in the realm of Official Development Assistance (ODA) which serves as a visible revision to the more conventional treatment of Japan as a mere emulator of the West. Japan also assumed leadership in "East Asian modern" (Prasenjit 2003) initiatives such as effective hygiene programs, mass education, and state-led bureaucracy have been seen as. More recently, disaster recovery has become a key made-in-Japan model that has been applied abroad (Ranghieri and Ishiwatari 2014).

Finally, the wide spectrum of development-related concepts, spanning from ancient times to post-WW2, demonstrates Japan as fertile ground for concepts change as time goes by. The study of these evolving concepts deserves more attention than "shiny" ideas newly arriving from the West. Just as the concept of *kaizen* originally came from abroad, the translation of concepts from Chinese and Korean has a long history, from ancient times up to the Edo period (Maruyama and Kato 1998). Although some scholarly investigations have emerged to critically examine the hegemonic role of English in the field of development studies (e.g., Erling and Sergeant 2013), systematic studies of the international role of non-English development concepts are yet to be seen.

The concepts and lexicons we examine in this book are listed in some glossaries of development and aid-related handbooks and dictionaries published in Japanese. Such concepts grow and shift their meanings in response to the way they are used. Therefore, it is important to review the context in which those ideas have been translated into action in the field of development.

Japan's development assistance officially began in 1954, when Japan joined the Colombo Plan, an intergovernmental organization established in 1950 to promote technical assistance to South and Southeast Asia, as a donor. As described in Chap. 7 on the "request-based approach," Japanese development assistance began on a very different trajectory from that of the West. Most importantly, it was attached to war reparations—an international obligation to compensate for war damages. Unlike the proactive mode of "aid" fueled by the Christian mission to "civilize" underdeveloped pagan countries, Japan's assistance to other developing countries seemed passive and self-centered— "passive," because Japan had to portray itself as a humble country that learned a lesson from the consequences of its aggression, now becoming a modest and democratic country concerned with peaceful economic pursuits, and "self-centered" because Japan's paramount interest immediately after the war was its own economic



survival and reconstruction. Economic cooperation had to be linked to domestic economic interests if it was to be supported at all.

Japan strengthened its position as a global donor by joining DAC (the Development Assistance Committee) in the early 1960s. Even today, DAC serves as a central international platform to coordinate aid among US-led Western donors, and also defines what counts as ODA (Official Development Assistance). Gaining membership in DAC was a critical turning point. DAC also became a battlefield where Japan had to defend and justify its aid approaches, which often conflicted with those conducted by Western donors. As Japan's success and economic growth became obvious, so did the Western expectation for Japan to contribute more in aid. Yet Japan continued to emphasize loans as opposed to grant aid, without clearly identifying its own philosophy behind what development objectives should be pursued, and this attracted criticism from the Western community coming from the tradition of Christian "giving" (see Chap. 12).

By the 1980s, Japan had become the largest development donor in the world, and it was around this time that Japan began to face international pressures and expectations as the top donor (Shimomura 2022). There was a need to justify how it conducted its development assistance, particularly in comparison to Western aid donors. Ideas such as the "request-based principle" (Chap. 7) and "self-help support" (Chap. 8) were products of such circumstances. Academic conceptualizations of developmental experience also took place, resulting in the establishment of graduate programs on international development at major universities (Kim et al. 2023). Japan no longer had the luxury to give priority to its own development without offering a visible "contribution" to the world (see Chap. 10). While international circumstances, especially US policies, were always a key factor in Japan's navigation, it had to claim its own "philosophy" of development and aid. Our attempt is by no means to claim that Japanese concepts are unique. To the contrary, we believe that similar attempts can be made in almost all countries around the world, a movement which we wish to initiate with this publication. Japan as a method may be a powerful step toward this move.

## 4 Overview of the Book

This book considers development concepts and lexicons that emerged and evolved in Japan, and that had penetrating repercussions on both domestic and international scenes. We organize them according to the socio-political role given to them at specific times into the following four groupings: (1) Concepts and lexicons pertaining to technical assistance and how it should be conducted (*doboku, kaizen, genba-shugi*); (2) ideas related to self-identity and the perception of others (Asianism, *hitozukuri, naihatsuteki-hatten, kokusai-kōken*); (3) concepts and norms that characterize Japanese aid strategies (*yōsei-shugi*, ownership, *jijo doryoku*); and (4) Lexicons of practices attracting international criticism from the West and emulated later by China (*kaihatu-yunyu*, yen loans, the trinity approach).

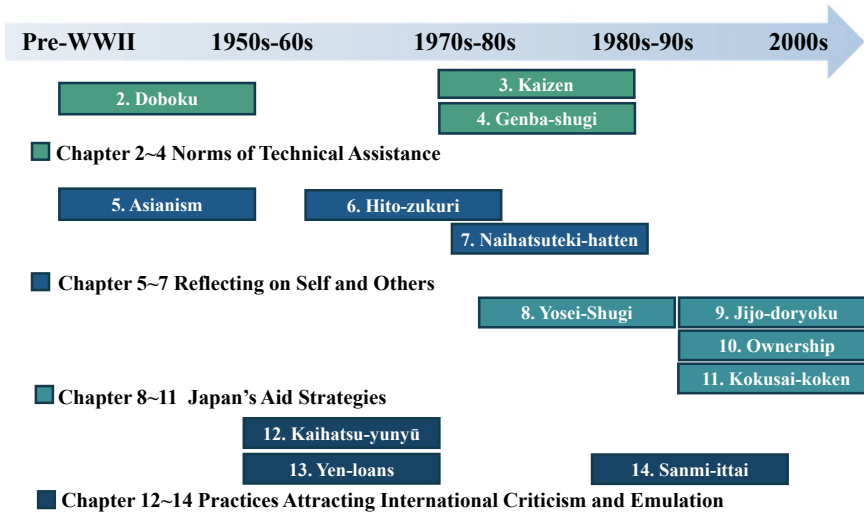


Fig. 1 Chapter organization. *Source* Authors

Simultaneously, contexts give “lives” to these ideas. Because all of these concepts are “living things” that change their meaning, we encourage readers to keep in mind their roles in particular places at particular times in the history of development and aid. Some ideas such as *naihatsuteki-hatten* (endogenous development) emerged out of self-reflection, while others such as *kokusai-kōken* (international contribution) became popular to meet global attention and expectations. Some ideas such as *kaizen* are adopted by foreign countries, giving them different meanings in those foreign contexts. Figure 1 provides a schematic overview of the socio-political groupings of chapters, in accordance with the time period each idea first appeared in policy vocabulary.

Our focus is not merely on the semantics of words but more on the different expectations and meanings attached to developmental terms which can invite international misunderstanding and conflict. To be clear, the list is by no means a glorification of alternative concepts from Japan. These concepts have their own problems, contradictions, and practical ramifications. Yet bringing these to the discussion of development ideas enlarges the debate, toward the pluriverse, through its recognition of new sources of ideas.

The chapters are organized as follows.

### Part 1: Norms of Technical Assistance

**Chapter 1, *Doboku*** (土木), discusses the evolution of ideas pertaining to infrastructure. *Doboku* is typically translated as “civil engineering.” But, as we shall see, it was initially a practice describing collective action in building temples and other local commons’ infrastructure by offering labor. The concept faded as development

transformed from on-site physical labor to more technical and knowledge-based activities.

**Chapter 2** focuses on *Kaizen* (カイゼン). Perhaps the most popular concept in this book, *kaizen* has been adopted and practiced in businesses around the globe. *Kaizen* is also rare in crossing over public–private sector boundaries. The Japanese word “*kaizen*” is commonly translated into English as “continuous improvement” or simply “improvement.” However, this literal translation obscures important connotations that are difficult to translate. This chapter discusses the meaning of *kaizen* and why this seemingly simple term is challenging to comprehend not only for non-native speakers but also for Japanese readers. This chapter also demonstrates the point that appreciating a concept in the local language does not necessarily mean that one really understands it.

**Chapter 3, *Genba-shugi*** (現場主義). Hands-on, field-based, grounded, bottom-up—these adjectives come close but do not quite capture the sum of their interactions. *Genba-shugi* has become a key principle of the Japanese approach to development projects that prioritize the on-site local context. It has gained the status of an aid policy of JICA for some time. Yet, what *genba-shugi* means still remains ambiguous. This chapter uncovers the practice of *genba-shugi* which has been portrayed as a Japanese approach to problem-solving.

## Part II: Reflecting on Self and Others

**Chapter 4** re-assesses one of the more notorious Japanese concepts in international relations: **Asianism** (アジア主義). This chapter traces the historical roots, development, and diffusion of Asianism from its origins in Meiji Japan as a vision of Asian solidarity in the face of Western encroachment to its current form as a driver of regional economic cooperation. By doing so, it demonstrates that Asianism in Japan can be understood, depending on the context, as Asian regionalism. Rather than a static concept rooted in wartime conceptualizations of Japan as the leader of Asia, Asianism is a term that has shifted over time, along both lexical and semantic axes. By delineating such transformations, the chapter illuminates the ways in which the concept has influenced Japan’s foreign policy stance and international cooperation development agenda.

**Chapter 5, *Hitozukuri*** (人づくり), is yet another term that cannot be translated in a straightforward manner. “Human resources development” is the most common translation but it misses the context to which this concept is relevant. *Hitozukuri* has been a key slogan of the Japanese aid agency along with *kuni-zukuri* (nation-building). One basic idea of Japanese development cooperation was that people needed to be “built” for the purpose of nation-building. The chapter explores the origin and political implications of this concept.

**Chapter 6, Endogenous Development** (内発的発展), discusses a concept that evolved as a fusion of Western and Japanese ideas about the ownership of development trajectories. By focusing on the contributions of US-trained sociologist Tsurumi Kazuko, the chapter presents the features of an endogenous development theory rooted in the Asian development experience. It then discusses how the theory might be applied in the contemporary development context and concludes by making a

case for Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* in international development research and practice.

### Part III: Japanese Aid Strategies

**Chapter 7, *Yōsei-Shugi* (要請主義)**, examines a less prominent concept in Japanese aid to consider what it might reveal about the Japanese style of development cooperation. This principle simply states that Japan offers aid based on requests from the recipient country, but gained the status of “aid principle” in the late 1980s particularly in contrast to Western donor approaches that give emphasis on norms of the aid providers such as human rights and freedom. Although the request-based principle no longer serves as a “selling point” for the Japanese government today, a similar approach is now adopted by emerging donors such as Thailand and China. By tracing the evolution of aid to the war reparation period in the 1950s, this paper explores how the principle was institutionalized as a mechanism to form a “Japanese style” of aid provision.

**Chapter 8** critically re-examines and attempts to refine the definition of *Jijodor-yoku* (自助努力) as a policy principle, by considering its evolution within Japanese and in international ODA policy. *Jijo doryoku*, which translates directly to “self-help effort,” is a concept that is utilized to encapsulate the principle that ODA should be utilized for supporting recipient countries to help themselves. The chapter argues that it is better to conceptualize the term as a highly general and abstract term denoting the social-psychological state (i.e., the “spirit”) of a recipient, which could be utilized to stipulate and evaluate general conditions for ODA recipients.

**Chapter 9** examines Japan's efforts to lead international development discourse through an idiosyncratic definition of *Ōnāshippu* (オーナーシップ) that emphasizes recipients' responsibility, such as self-help and agency. This chapter argues that the Japanese-style “*ōnāshippu*” (ownership) is a product created in conjunction with Japan's ambition to enhance its presence as a major donor in the aid community since the 1990s. Instead of using direct translations of self-help and autonomy, it deliberately applied the English loanword ownership because it was instrumental for Japan to take an initiative in the international aid community at that time. While the concept of ownership was widely accepted, the particularities of Japan's usage of the term were largely misunderstood. The term continued to be used by the international community as a vestige of Japan's attempts to lead.

**Chapter 10, *Kokusai-koken* (国際貢献)**, became popular only since the early 1990s. It is literally translated as “international contribution.” This concept is often used when the Japanese respond to an international situation calling for their assistance with certain monetary or human sacrifices. Appearing most often at the intersection of peacebuilding and development cooperation, this concept sheds light on an interesting gap between self-awareness and the actual expectations of the international community.

### Part IV: International Criticism and Emulation

**Chapter 11** highlights *Kaihatsu-yunyū* (開発輸入), yet another challenging concept to translate. Officially translated as the “development and import scheme,” it

combines resource development with economic cooperation. The origins of the scheme lie in Japan's lack of raw materials for postwar economic growth and the private sector's interest in expanding their projects through the postwar reparation scheme. The idea and practice were then adopted by China much later when it became a major donor. This concept raises questions about the economic and social conditions that allow such "transfer" to happen.

**Chapter 12** discusses **Yen Loans** (円借款), which were subjected to perennial criticism from the United States and European countries. Against the Western norm that development assistance is a form of charity by the rich countries for the sake of poor countries, Japan provided an alternative model not well understood by Western counterparts. While reconsidering yen loans from the position of Japan and recipient countries, the chapter questions the nature of heterodoxy in development discourse.

**Chapter 13** discusses the **Trinity** (三位一体), a concept of combining trade, aid, and investment to achieve a win-win relationship between the donors and recipients of development cooperation. This concept has now become popular in China. The chapter delves into the interpretation of the trinity in development practice in Japan and China and how it has changed over time. Though attracting little attention in Japan in the 1980s when it was first used as an economic cooperation-related concept, the trinity became a focus of debate with the rise of China as an emerging aid donor. In times when other non-Western development donors are rising, the discussion of the transferability of development concepts will provide readers with theoretical tools designed to pursue a global perspective on development through a local lens.

**The concluding chapter** reiterates the significance of this book along the organizing concepts of time and space, and explores the potential of "Japan as Method." By questioning the absence of decolonial debates and the "uniqueness myth," this final chapter argues for pluriverse knowledge production.

As we approached the completion of the book, we recalled the question posed by Sen 40 years ago: "Development which way now?" Our answer is that development should go in many directions against the homogenizing forces. We claim that pluralizing the sources of development ideas should be the first step toward this direction. This book is an effort to propose and begin to respond to the question: "Development: which ideas now?"

## Notes

1. These concepts, originated in English, are localized in the phonetic *katakana* script, used for the transcription of foreign-language words as loan words.
2. A survey conducted in 2022 on awareness of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in the US, Japan, and China demonstrated the Japanese and Chinese awareness of SDGs far exceeded that of North America (ASMARQ 2022).

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# *Doboku*: Changes in the Social Evaluation of Infrastructure Development in Japan



Ryosuke Kuramoto

**Abstract** This chapter discusses the emergence and significance of *doboku* as an essential concept of Japanese development assistance that emphasizes support for developing infrastructure. Through an analysis of historical processes, it shows how the meaning of *doboku* has changed from the construction or repair of large buildings to infrastructure development to a translation of the English “civil engineering,” which focuses on technology, without incorporating a philosophy of how or why technology should be built or used. On one hand, such a lack of philosophy leads to a negative image of *doboku* as “crude and muddy.” On the other hand, there have also been attempts to re-establish the philosophy of *doboku* through explanations of its historical origins adopted early in the Meiji era. Moreover, *doboku* redeems its negative image in the context of development assistance, since working “in the mud” together with local people is a way to gain their trust. By expanding our perspective on this Japanese doctrine to include development assistance, we can more fully evaluate the unique characteristics and potential of the practical knowledge embodied in *doboku*.

## 1 Introduction

A significant proportion of the official development assistance (ODA) provided by the Japanese government consists of support for the development of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, tunnels, ports, airports, railways, dams, irrigation, water supply, sewerage, and telecommunications. The Management Council for Infrastructure Strategy was established by the Japanese government in March 2013, and a policy was formulated to spread Japanese technology and systems—the “Japanese way”—through the use of ODA and related initiatives. The government went on to announce the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure in May 2015, demonstrating to the international community its commitment to promoting efforts to build “quality infrastructure” in collaboration with other countries and international organizations.

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This emphasis on support for developing infrastructure is anticipated to continue (Nakamura 2017).

What, then, does it mean to “build infrastructure” in a Japanese context? That is, what is seen as the purpose of building infrastructure, and what are the perceptions of how it should be done? Related to this issue, Aaron Stephen Moore (2013) reveals how important the “technological imaginary” was in the building of domestic and international infrastructure during and after the WWII. According to Moore, in the process of nation-building in Japan, intellectuals, bureaucrats, and engineers used the word “technology (技術)” as an ideology loaded with meanings such as rationality and efficiency in order to define “modernity (近代)” and to mobilize the population toward that goal. As a result, technology as a whole represented a system of power that dynamically incorporates people’s hopes and desires into mechanisms of social control. This ideological system of power, Moore argues, was carried over into the postwar period through such key institutions as Japan’s management system and the idea of a “construction state,” and formed the basis for Japan’s overseas development assistance.

On the other hand, if we move away from this policy aspect and look at the actual practice of building infrastructure, we find an inherent logic that cannot be fully understood by the “technological imaginary.” The concept of “doboku” is key when considering this logic. In Japan, “*doboku kōgaku*” (the discipline of civil engineering) refers to the techniques and knowledge used to build infrastructure and fundraising. The process of building infrastructure is referred to in terms of “*doboku jigyō*” (civil engineering projects) or “*doboku kōji*” (civil engineering works). The Japanese term *doboku* has been used since the Meiji era (1868–1912) as a translation of “civil engineering” in English. However, the historical background of *doboku* sets it apart from its closest English equivalent. Translating *doboku* merely as civil engineering, therefore, prevents a full understanding of its nuance and connotations. In this chapter, I will highlight the characteristics of the *doboku* concept through an analysis of the historical processes that led to its emergence and significance. Through this work, I aim to contribute to an understanding of both the distinctiveness and the universality of the Japanese approach to building infrastructure in the context of development assistance.

## 2 The Emergence of Doboku

The Japanese word *doboku* (土木) and its Chinese equivalent have been used since ancient times. For example, the use of the term *doboku* in Japan can be traced back to dictionaries and texts from the Heian period (794–1185). The mention of *doboku* in these texts generally refers to the construction or repair of large buildings, such as palaces or temples, or associated techniques. The term *doboku* subsequently fell out of use, however, between the Kamakura and the Edo periods (1185–1868), when

Japan was ruled by successive samurai governments. Instead, the term “*fushin*” (“construction” or “public works”)—which will be described later—was used to refer to infrastructure building (Fujita 1993; Komatsu 2018; Matsuura 2020).

*Doboku* reappeared from the Meiji era (1868–1912) onward, displacing the term *fushin* of the Edo period and becoming the more commonly used term. A search of the *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper database, for example, reveals 3,327 instances of the term *doboku* from 1875 to 1989. By contrast, there are 224 instances of *fushin*, with the term falling out of everyday use (except as an historical term) from 1941 onward. The Japanese term *doboku* (written in Chinese characters) was also adopted into the Chinese language in the twentieth century (Cheng 1997).

What led to this revival in the use of the term *doboku*? The Meiji government, formed in 1868, worked to solidify Japan’s centralized national system of government in order to resist external pressure from European countries and the United States. The government sought to build a new nation based on the ideals of enriching the nation, strengthening the military, and encouraging new industries. By enhancing Japan’s economic and military strength, the government aimed to build a modern nation. The encouragement of new industries was a means to achieve this aim, and was reflected in policies to protect and foster Japan’s industries. Specific policies were many and diverse, but one of the main pillars was the building of infrastructure nationwide. The government actively introduced technologies from Europe and the United States, where the industrial revolution had ushered in modernity, and pursued the building of social infrastructure, such as rivers, railways, and ports as public works. As a result, the modernization of Meiji Japan was accomplished over a short period of time, over a broad area, and in multiple fields simultaneously (Ishizuka 1973; Kitagawa 2020).

The *Minbukan Doboku-shi* (loosely translated as the Public Affairs Civil Engineering Office) was established in 1869 as a body to administer infrastructure under the Meiji government. Subsequently, after various permutations, the *Minbukan Doboku-shi* was restructured into the *Doboku-kyoku* (Civil Engineering Office) of the Ministry of Home Affairs, continuing to oversee the administration of infrastructure until 1941. The revival of the term *doboku* is attributable to its use in the names of these administrative bodies under the new Meiji government (Twenty Year History of the Ministry of Construction Editing Committee 1968).

Why, then, did the Meiji government adopt the term *doboku* from the Heian era, when *fushin* had been in general use throughout centuries of samurai governments? Regarding this point, Tatsuyuki Fujita (1993) cites the fact that the Meiji government was formed on the basis of the Decree for the Restoration of Imperial Rule, which abolished samurai government and ostensibly reestablished a political system revolving around the Japanese Emperor. He conjectures that the new government therefore avoided the term used during the era of samurai government, opting rather for “*doboku-shi*,” the term favored in the Ritsuryō system of the Heian period (Fujita 1993, p. 154), more readily associated with Imperial governance. *Doboku* thus became commonly adopted as the translation of “civil engineering” as a result of historical chance.

Another important factor leading to the term *doboku* taking root in the lexicon of modern Japanese society was the establishment of the Japan Society of Civil Engineers (*Doboku Gakkai*). This organization traces its roots back to the engineering society formed by the first graduates of the Imperial College of Engineering in 1879 with the aim of promoting engineering research and the exchange of knowledge. At the time, the Society covered all fields of engineering, including all seven disciplines taught in the Imperial College of Engineering: civil engineering (*doboku*), electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, construction (architecture), chemical engineering, mining, and metallurgy. With the subsequent trend toward more clearly delineated specializations, however, independent societies were progressively established in each engineering field: the Japan Mining Institute (1885), the Architectural Institute of Japan (1886), the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan (1888), the Society of Naval Architects of Japan, The Japan Society of Mechanical Engineers (1897), and the Chemical Society of Japan (1898). As a result, the remaining members of the engineering society mostly comprised those specializing in civil engineering. It was in this context that the Japan Society of Civil Engineers (JSCE) was established in 1914 (JSCE 2014).

The first Chairman of the JSCE, Koi Furuichi responded to this trend toward the clearer separation of specializations in his inaugural speech, arguing that “integration is the essence of civil engineering (*doboku kōgaku*).”

The Society must therefore not limit the scope of its research to civil engineering (*doboku*) alone, but must expand it to include all aspects of engineering. Unlike the previous engineering society, however, which undertook a balanced approach to research across all engineering disciplines, all of the Society’s research must focus on civil engineering (*doboku*). In other words, the Society’s research must expand outwards in all directions from the core of civil engineering (*doboku*). This is the method and degree of specialization that I advocate for the Society (Furuichi 1915, pp. 3–4).

The overall trend toward specialization was unstoppable, however, and the concept of *doboku* was shaped through differentiation with other engineering fields, especially the field of architecture that similarly emerged during the Meiji era. For example, as described above, under the Meiji government, the building of infrastructure was made the responsibility of administrative bodies with the term *doboku* in their titles, while the Ministry of Finance—a different body altogether—was made responsible for public architecture. Thus, the administration of infrastructure development was clearly separated from the construction of public buildings. As a result, “*doboku*” (civil engineering) and “*kenchiku*” (architecture) were framed as entirely separate concepts under Japanese law, referring to the construction of infrastructure and the construction of buildings, respectively. Specifically, Japanese *doboku* engineers design and build roads, dams, bridges, and the like, but not buildings. By contrast, the concept of civil engineering in English refers not only to infrastructure but buildings as well, a difference that indicates the misunderstandings that may arise from directly translating *doboku* as “civil engineering” (Yoshimi 2017).

### 3 The Lack of a Philosophy of “Doboku”

The concept of *doboku* emerged from the names given to administrative bodies in the Meiji government. What, then, was the philosophical and ideological base underpinning this concept? That is, what was seen as the purpose of building infrastructure, and what were the perceptions of how it should be done? I would like to consider this question through a comparison with the English term civil engineering, which also refers to the building of infrastructure, and the term *fushin*, used up until the Edo period.

Civil engineering is a relatively new concept, taking root in English only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. “Engineering” originally referred to “military engineering”—the manufacture of military equipment and facilities such as cannons, warships, assault towers, and the like. The term “civil engineering” was coined in England, the home of the industrial revolution, as a concept differentiated from previous military engineering.

The Englishman John Smeaton (1724–1792) is said to be the first person in the world to call himself a “civil engineer.” In 1771, Smeaton established The Society of Civil Engineers, making the role of civil engineers—building infrastructure associated with the lives of civilians, such as roads, water supply, canals—known to society. The Institution of Civil Engineers was subsequently established in 1818 and granted Royal Chartership in 1828, formally recognizing civil engineering as a profession. The definition of civil engineering presented in the Charter of the time—“the art of directing the great sources of power in nature for the use and convenience of man”—continues to inform the concept of civil engineering worldwide today (The Institution of Civil Engineers 1978; Takegami 2013; Watson 1988).

In this way, the idea of civilian engineering was at the heart of the concept of the “civil engineer” that emerged in eighteenth-century England. These were the civilian engineers that replaced the artisans and builders who had previously been directly contracted by business operators to build stone bridges and similar projects. Unlike their predecessors, civil engineers incorporated the latest technologies produced in the industrial revolution to undertake the construction of large-scale, complex projects, such as canals. Instead of being contracted directly by business operators, they acquired permits and certification from government administrative bodies, performing a role similar to that of a consultant by directing subcontractors in various trades and overseeing entire projects, from the planning and design stage to construction management (Kitagawa 2020).

Incidentally, “*mintaikei* (民大計),” a translation of civil engineer that appears in an English-Chinese dictionary from the late Edo period, roughly meant “civilian project manager” (Lobscheid 1886). This indicates the historical process whereby the work of measuring and cartography became independent of the military and shifted into the civilian domain, and hints at the extensive range of duties and authorities exercised by civil engineers. By contrast, English-Japanese dictionaries compiled after the start of the Meiji era translate civil engineering as “*dobokujutsu* (*doboku* techniques)” (Seki 1884) and “*doboku kōgaku* (*doboku* engineering)” (Nomura and

Shimoyama 1886). This change in translation is thought to result simply from the of the adoption of the term *doboku* in the names of government administrative bodies from the Meiji era onward, over and above any consideration given to the connotations of the word “civil” in English. In fact, *doboku* is variously translated in Japanese-English dictionaries of the time as “building” (Hashio 1887), and “engineering work” (Brinkley et al. 1896), with no reference at all to the concept of “civil.” In other words, the correspondence between *doboku* and civil engineering generally accepted today is but the result of historical chance.

Next, let us turn to the term *fushin*, which is used to denote the building infrastructure up to the end of the Edo period. *Fushin* is composed of the two characters “*fu* 普,” meaning common or general, and “*shin* 請,” meaning to beg or request. The term came from the Zen Buddhism of China’s Tang dynasty, when temples would request the general population to perform duties such as picking flowers for the Flower Festival (to celebrate Buddha’s birthday), airing books (to prevent insect infestation), picking tea leaves, and end-of-year cleaning, or where practitioners from Zen temples would enter the community *en masse* to engage in labor. Subsequently, in Japan, the term became linked to *ritagyō* (altruistic practices), one of the most important practices in Mahayana Buddhism for monks to attain the salvation of mankind.

For example, the monk Gyoki (668–749), active from the Asuka period to the Nara period, traveled on foot across Japan, collecting funds and labor far and wide through *fushin* to promote infrastructure projects around the country, in areas such as irrigation, water supply, reservoirs, roads, ports, and bridges. His achievements were recognized in 743 when he was appointed *Kanjin* (an official authorized to collect donations for a temple) by Emperor Shomu for the construction of the Great Buddha statue in Tōdai-ji Temple. He succeeded in collecting a massive amount of money and labor to complete the statue. The activities of Buddhist monks such as Gyoki were partly responsible for the adoption of the term *fushin* to refer to works such as the construction of temples and shrines, as well as roads, bridges, and other structures, through the communal labor of the local population, and thence, to infrastructure projects in general.

Consequently, the term *fushin* does not refer simply to the building of infrastructure; as a concept, it also connotes thoughts and beliefs regarding the purpose of infrastructure projects and the way that they should be carried out. In other words, *fushin* implies a form of social welfare activity based on the Buddhist idea of “*ritagyō*” (altruistic practices), and suggests the idea that infrastructure projects should be carried out through a joint effort by the local community. This ideology can also be observed in the book *Yumenoshiro (Instead of Dreams)* by the merchant-scholar Yamagata Banto, written in the late Edo period.

“Fushin” is composed of the characters meaning common and request. It means to ask for and receive help [...] When a carpenter or laborer is employed to build a building, this is called construction. It is not *fushin* (Quoted in Sakado 2008).

This comparison between the meanings of the two terms civil engineering and *fushin* is instructive in a number of ways. First, *doboku* refers to public works projects directed by governments and public administrative bodies: private-sector engineers

and local communities are not primarily responsible for their execution. In order to catch up with countries in Europe and the United States—the ultimate challenge for Meiji Japan—it was more effective for public administrative bodies to systematically absorb and implement the latest technologies. Thus, Matsumura (1985) glosses *doboku* as “engineering by bureaucrats.”

Second, *doboku* itself was therefore devoid of philosophy. According to Daijiro Kitagawa, the power of science and technology was limited in Japan until the end of the Edo period, due to the use of traditional materials such as earth, wood, and stone, as well as the application of only rudimentary mathematical analysis. As a result, people did not overly rely on technology, aiming instead for more inclusive solutions by mobilizing all of the wisdom and knowledge of nature and society that experience allowed them. These solutions were perhaps not perfect, but they represented the conceptual ability of people able to coexist with contradictions and inconsistencies. Modern engineering, by contrast, contains within it the aspiration to control nature through the power of science (Kitagawa 2020).

Of course, modern engineering technology has close associations with social thought, as illustrated by the involvement of Marxists and socialists such as William Morris and John Ruskin in town planning in England. In Japan, however, from the Meiji era onward, the introduction of modern engineering technology has been accompanied by the abandonment of traditional technologies and the philosophies attached to them. Ryotaro Shiba has characterized this attitude as “the exaltation of technology” (“*gijutsu sukōshugi* 技術崇高主義”—literally “technological sublimism”), describing Japan’s lack of philosophy or beliefs regarding how the massive power of *doboku* technology should be used, or how the country should be shaped (Shiba 1996, pp. 151–152). The philosophy and beliefs attached to “civil engineering” and *fushin* have been forced to fade into the background, at least to the extent that the building of infrastructure has become its own goal, as expressed in the *doboku* concept. In Japan today, building a house is referred to as *fushin*, and there are related terms as “*yasu bushin* 安普請” (to build a house cheaply) and “*fushin dōraku* 普請道楽” (to enjoy building and repairing a house), but they are no longer commonly used.

#### 4 Negative Images of “*Doboku*”

*Doboku* was a concept focused on technology, without incorporating a philosophy of how or why this technology should be used. Essentially, not enough effort was made to establish its social purpose. The question of “what is *doboku*?” was therefore a key issue from the start, especially for the JSCE. In the self-reflective process of addressing this question, the problem of negative connotations of *doboku* became a focus of attention. For example, in 1915, immediately after the JSCE was formed, its members expressed concern over the negative images of “scandal” and “impurity” that had become associated with the word *doboku*. In 1950, Haruo Matsuo conjectured that the crude and vulgar impression associated with *doboku* was due to the

meaning of the word in ancient Chinese and Japanese: “careless or unadorned in appearance.” He goes on to describe the people employed in *doboku* as follows:

Those employed in *doboku* simply provided labor and were as a whole devoid of culture, education, or refinement... This was not only the case in the distant past. Has it not also been the case until relatively recently? Building and civil engineering contractors are often described on the level as *pan-pan* girls [prostitutes mainly catering to Japanese and US military officers in the confusion of postwar Japan]. Until quite recently, *doboku* was regarded as the standard destination for engineering students who were more interested in drinking than study (Matsuo 1950, p. 1).

Why, then, did *doboku* become associated with these negative images? Satoshi Nakao addresses this question from an ethnological perspective, pointing out that historically, groups in Japanese society that were subject to discrimination, such as the “*hinin*,” “*sakanomono*,” and “*kawaramono*,” tended to be involved in infrastructure-building projects. He mentions the concept of “*bondo*” from the Heian period (794–1185), a term that refers to the idea that the act of changing the natural shape of the ground through human involvement would invoke the wrath of the local gods, as the background for this tendency. Nakao cites the historical association of groups subject to discrimination with sorcery and supernatural ability as a possible factor underlying their involvement in infrastructure projects. In other words, these groups had the ability to overcome the danger of *bondo* (Nakao et al. 2015; Nakao 2018). This idea also sheds light on the historical involvement of Buddhist monks in building infrastructure, separately from the concept of *fushin* originating in temple construction. Hideyuki Ichikawa, for example, suggests that the leading role played by Buddhist monks in infrastructure projects was attributable to their ability to negotiate with and appease the local gods (Ichikawa 2009).

Another source of the negative images associated with *doboku* is criticism toward public works. As described above, from the Meiji era onward, *doboku* projects came to refer to public works projects directed by administrative bodies. This trend continued during the postwar period from 1945 onward. Infrastructure projects, such as forest and river management, the construction of roads and expressways, ports and airports, the bullet trains and subways, electrical power, water supply, and sewerage were progressively implemented, based on blueprints included in the Comprehensive National Development Plan. This infrastructure helped drive Japan’s rapid economic growth in the 1960s.

At the same time, however, criticism of public works, beginning with the movement to oppose the construction of the Nagara River Estuary Weir, extended beyond the debate on individual perspectives such as “development” and the “environment,” and emerged as a social issue. This criticism of public works was not limited to technological aspects, but also included social issues, as well as criticism of aspects such as the high-cost structure of public works, the nature of the construction industry, and the public works decision-making process. Anticipating later movements, it became an opportunity to ask wide-ranging questions about how public works should be undertaken (JSCE 2014).

On this point, Kosuke Tanaka has conducted a quantitative analysis of the treatment of public works in newspapers in postwar Japan. According to this analysis,

public works emerged as the subject of newspaper reporting in the 1970s, around the time of the Kakuei Tanaka government. Newspapers initially presented a balance of critical and positive opinions, but critical opinions became dominant from the 1980s onward, reaching a peak during the 2000s (Tanaka 2016). These criticisms toward public works can be summarized as follows. The first type is criticism of vested interests associated with public works: specifically, criticism of the opaque systems that governed public works, including aspects such as the cozy relationship between politics and public works, collusion, and the movement of public officials into the private sector, which gave rise to the derogatory term “*dōken kokka*” (the “civil engineering state”). The second type is criticism related to the impact on the natural environment, which takes issue with the destruction of nature arising from projects such as estuary weirs, dams, and the reclamation of tidal flats. The third type is criticism related to public financing, which blames the reckless implementation of public works for a deterioration in Japan’s fiscal deficit and debt (Yamaoka 2014; Tanaka 2016).

In response to this critical trend, in 1987, the JSCE held a study group called “A Consideration of the Arguments for Renaming *Doboku*.” Those who advocated replacing the term *doboku* argued that, among other things, “the term has a bad image in general” and that “(therefore) promising young students do not choose to study in this field.” No conclusion was reached, however, regarding a new term that could replace *doboku* (Nakase and Kobayashi 1987, p. 24; Fujita 1993, p. 147). Changing tack, the JSCE designated November 18, 1987 “*Doboku Day*” as part of its efforts to improve the image associated with the term.

At the same time, university civil engineering (*doboku*) departments attempted to remedy the decline in the number of prospective students by changing their departmental names to various combinations of the words “environmental,” “social,” and “urban” (although the term “civil engineering” was retained in the English departmental names)—a trend that continued until around the turn of the millennium (Hitomi et al. 2018). There have also been attempts to renew the image associated with the Chinese characters for *doboku* in Japanese by rewriting them in a Japanese phonetic syllabary (*katakana*). In recent years, these efforts have developed into “*doboku* entertainment” aimed at the appreciation of massive (*doboku*/civil engineering) buildings and structures. The effectiveness of these efforts, however, has yet to be ascertained.

## 5 Attempts to Establish a Philosophy of “*Doboku*”

Even as the term *doboku* is plagued by negative images—so much so that an academic society and numerous university departments considered or actually proceeded in changing their names—there have also been attempts to establish a philosophy of *doboku*. These efforts take the form of an explanation of the historical origin of the concept of *doboku* adopted early in the Meiji era, accompanied by an attempt to



establish a new philosophy: an initiative that has no evidential basis and, in reality, amounts to the “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

For example, the *Civil Engineering Handbook (Doboku Kōgaku Handobukku)* compiled by the JSCE in 1989 cites the ancient Chinese theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements—wood, fire, earth, gold, and water—of which all things are composed, to expound the idea that earth (*do*) is the central element, while wood (*boku*) represents the season of spring. Thus, in the concept of *doboku*, “the two elements of earth (*do*) and wood (*boku*) were chosen to represent new, advanced technologies that would be crucial for humans and nature” (JSCE 1989, p. 5).

In 2002, Norihito Tambo, then Chairman of the JSCE, suggested that the origin of the term *doboku* lies in the expression “*chikudo kōboku*” (literally, construction from earth and wood), which appears in the ancient Chinese text *Huainanzi* (Tambo 2002). Satoshi Fujii has adopted this theory of “*chikudo kōboku*” in his attempt to create a systematic philosophy of *doboku*. According to Fujii, *chikudo kōboku* refers to the work of saints to improve living conditions by piling earth (*chikudo*) and building with wood (*kōboku*) to save the people struggling to survive in a harsh environment and enable them to live in safety and security. Based on this interpretation, Fujii refutes the explanation in the *Civil Engineering Handbook (Doboku Kōgaku Handobukku)*, as follows:

This suggests that not only is the work of *chikudo kōboku* (= *doboku*) completely different from the self-interested actions of businessmen only interested in their own welfare or the contemptible acts of politicians hungry for power: it is the exact opposite. It is, in fact, “*ritagyō*” (altruistic practices) itself, practiced by “saints” and “princes,” those who seek to ease the labors of the populace. From this, we can see that *doboku* is far from the concept imagined in the recent *Civil Engineering Handbook*, or by those who seem determined to denigrate it (Fujii 2014, p. 10).

Fujii goes on to interpret the English term civil engineering as the work of building civilization. “The work of gradually improving society—advancing it from a barbarian society where people steal from each other at will, and making it gradually more “civil”—is referred to as “civilization.” This, then, is the work of “civil engineering (*doboku*)” (Fujii 2014, p. 121). In this way, Fujii emphasizes the altruism and civilization associated with the concept of “*doboku*.” Others have also lauded the concept of “*doboku*” as implying the aspiration to coexist with nature that was lacking from the modern Western European concept of “civil engineering.” Mariko Takegami, for example, writes.

This word [“*doboku*”] brings forth primitive images of the work that humans have engaged in since the beginning of time: standing on the earth (“*do*”), the basis of all life, and using their ingenuity and skill to create useful things for everyday life. It anticipates the awareness of civil engineers today, as they face issues such as the global destruction resulting from human technologies and the bankruptcy of modernist perceptions of nature. Does it not represent another way forward in the relationship between human technology and nature: an alternative to conquest (Takegami 2013, p. 237)?

I am not concerned with the historical accuracy of these perceptions. Rather, the important point in the context of this paper is that members of the JSCE and others have continued to consider the question “what is *doboku*”—in other words, how

should it be pursued, and for what purpose? Even in recent years, the JSCE has established the “Roundtable on Public Peace Research” to consider initiatives aimed at achieving ideal *doboku*. These include: (1) the improvement and enhancement of communication with civic society; (2) the establishment of a broad and comprehensive perspective on the social contribution made by the study of *doboku*; and (3) a reevaluation of the relationship between *doboku* and society and the economy, and the recognition of new domains as the essence of the study of *doboku* (JSCE Roundtable on Public Peace Research 2018). Research into the concept of *doboku* will no doubt continue into the future, in terms of its involvement in politics, economics, society, and the environment.

## 6 Conclusion: “*Doboku*” Redeemed

In this paper, I have presented a summary of the emergence and development of the concept of *doboku*. What, then, are the implications of this concept in the context of development assistance? The interesting point here is that the negative image of *doboku* as “crude and muddy” is conversely perceived in a positive light on the front line of development assistance.

Technical cooperation to build infrastructure is one of the main pillars of Japan’s official development assistance (ODA). This is cooperation through the work of individuals aimed at increasing the comprehensive capabilities of people in developing countries to enable these countries to address the development challenges they face. JICA, the organization charged with implementing Japan’s ODA, has established programs to dispatch Japanese volunteer workers to engage in technical cooperation overseas, including the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs).

The concept of “*genba*” (“on-site” work or fieldwork “on the ground”) is emphasized in development assistance (see Chap. 3). Specifically, this refers to efforts to work together with the local communities that are the recipients of the assistance. For example, the JOCV volunteers are aimed at “working together with local communities in developing countries, cooperating to develop the local economy and society.” The idea of volunteers engaging in crude, unrefined labor—getting their hands dirty together with the locals—is a crucial part of these efforts to work together with local communities. For example, Hirokazu Ito, who worked on infrastructure development in Myanmar (Burma) during the 1950s as part of Japan’s postwar reparations, describes how Japanese engineers, unlike those from Europe or the United States, actually lived inside the local factories. He recalls the positive perception of Japanese engineers expressed by local laborers, as follows:

In the past, the British built roads here, but the British masters never worked with us together in the jungle. There was only a Burmese foreman there to oversee the work. We’re happy because the Japanese masters are working together with us. If the Japanese masters work together with us, we’re happy to do any amount of work. With the Japanese masters, we’re sure to complete the road we’re building now (Ito 1963, p. 155).

This is a good illustration of the doctrine of Japanese-style development assistance: working in the mud together with the local laborers is a way to gain their trust, and will lead to the successful completion of the development project. This doctrine is also shared by private-sector aid organizations. For example, according to Watanabe, who analyzed the assistance activities of the Japanese Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA) in Myanmar, many of the OISCA's Japanese staff described their assistance work as "crude and muddy." Based on this, Watanabe characterizes the OISCA's central ethical standpoint in terms of "muddy labor." She identifies "muddy labor" as an important way for Japanese staff and local people to come together across cultural, national, and personal boundaries (Watanabe 2019, Chap. 4).

In this way, development assistance work "on the ground" highlights the value of practical knowledge concerning *doboku*, and redeems its negative image as "crude and muddy." This practical knowledge of *doboku* has been thoroughly ignored by previous research on the image and philosophy of the term, examined above. Conversely, it is only by removing ourselves from specifically Japanese issues, such as the ethnological background and criticism of public works, that we can see a picture emerging of the unique characteristics and potential of the practical knowledge embodied in *doboku*. It is also a down-to-earth philosophy that developed in the shadow of the ideology of "technology." Development assistance is not only a policy or academic practice, but also a practice that involves local people and nature. In this sense, by taking into account the unique logic of "*doboku*," we can more fully understand the characteristics of Japan's development assistance.

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# *Kaizen*: Why is It so Difficult to Understand?



Go Shimada

**Abstract** Much existing research demonstrates the effectiveness of introducing *kaizen* to developing countries. The Japanese word “*kaizen*” is commonly translated into English as “continuous improvement” or simply “improvement.” However, its literal translation obscures important connotations that are difficult to translate. This chapter discusses the meaning of *kaizen* and why this seemingly simple term is challenging to comprehend not only for non-native speakers but also for Japanese readers. This chapter identified three reasons why *kaizen* is challenging to understand. First, there are two different origins of *kaizen*. One focuses on quality and productivity, and the other focuses on worker protection. In many cases, people often mix these two and make it difficult to understand. Second, the worker protection aspect of *kaizen* cannot be transferred directly to other countries as the management–labor relationship is different. Third, as the nature of *kaizen* is context specific, the entire logic is difficult to grasp. Improving the living standard of developing countries may require supplementing the implementation of the *kaizen* with additional assistance focused on safeguarding the well-being of workers.

**Keywords** Management capital · Kaizen · Workers · Labor union · SMEs

## 1 Introduction

*Kaizen*, a method of business management aiming for continuous operational improvements through a bottom-up, hands-on, participatory approach, has been adopted by many Japanese companies. For example, Toyota, one of Japan’s leading automobile manufacturers, has adopted *kaizen* and calls it the Toyota Production System (TPS). The Japanese word “*kaizen*” is generally translated into English as “continuous improvement” or just “improvement.” However, its literal translation loses important connotations which are challenging to translate. This chapter

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discusses the meaning of *kaizen*, its significance in the context of international cooperation, and why this seemingly simple term is difficult to understand, not just for foreigners but even for Japanese people. This chapter first discusses what *kaizen* is and how it became an important policy tool in Japan's ODA. Section 3 discusses why *kaizen* became an essential policy tool. Section 4 then identifies three reasons why it is challenging to understand *kaizen*. Section 5 provides a conclusion. Readers familiar with *kaizen* and its background may wish to skip Sects. 2 and 3 and directly go to Sect. 4.

## 2 What is *Kaizen*?—Continuous Operational Improvements Through a Bottom-Up, Hands-On, Participatory Approach

As described at the start of this chapter, *Kaizen* refers to “improvement” or “continuous improvement” and is also known as TPS. *Kaizen* originated from initiatives in Japan after the Second World War with strategic aid from the United States, as discussed later in Sect. 4.1.<sup>1</sup> After the *kaizen*'s success in Japan, it was popularized in the United States by Imai's (1986) English-language bestseller *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success*. It was received with interest, and the Japanese word “*kaizen*” became a commonly used term in Europe and the United States. The interest generated by *kaizen* in the United States was attributable to the historical background of the era. The 1980s was an era of economic stagnation in the United States, and there was a sense of urgency: if US companies could not improve on Fordism, which had been the dominant approach since the Second World War, then they would no longer be able to compete with Japanese companies. In this context, *kaizen* was introduced as the essence of “Japanese business management” and advocated as an improvement on Fordism.

*Kaizen* has been variously defined within Japan and in the context of international development (Hosono, Page, and Shimada 2020; Ohno and Bodek 2019; Sonobe and Otsuka 2014; Imai 1986, 2005; Ohno 1982). However, the concept of *kaizen* as “continuous operational improvements through a bottom-up, hands-on, participatory approach” is common to all these definitions. As illustrated in Fig. 1, this concept is more easily understood in contrast to the “top-down, specialist-led approach” common in Europe and the United States, of which Fordism is a representative example.

Fordism refers to a style of production introduced in the 1910s by the automobile maker Ford. Fordism arose from the management philosophy known as Taylorism. Its salient points include a top-down approach, with management making decisions that workers then implement. Fordism was first introduced in an era of intense labor union strikes. The factory would cease production whenever Ford's skilled workers went on strike. Fordism was devised to enable factories to continue operation by reducing the dependence on skilled workers. Specifically, work was deconstructed

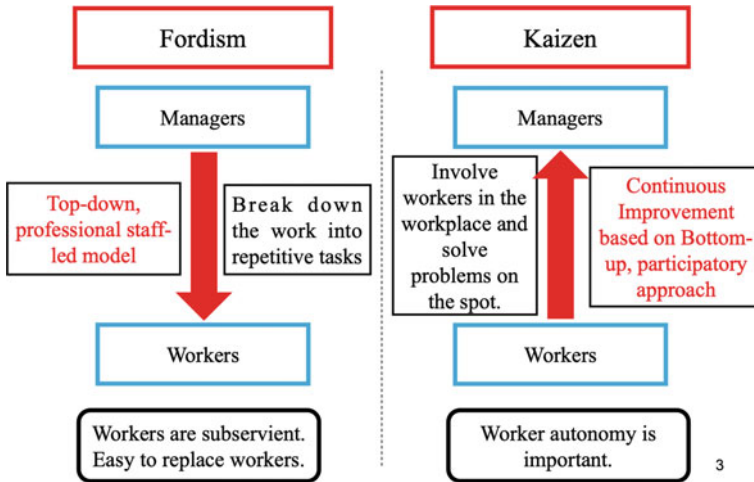


Fig. 1 Differences between Fordism and *Kaizen* (prepared by the author)

into “simple, repetitive tasks” that even relatively unskilled workers could perform in the following ways.

1. Each process was “standardized” or codified as a simple task that anybody could perform.
2. The time required and speed of each standardized task were measured.
3. A target time was set for each task. Ford was thus able to manage how many iterations each worker could perform within a designated time.

In this way, Fordism enabled factories to maintain efficient production by employing low-skilled labor without risking a broad group of skilled workers going on strike. The top-down approach is a feature of Fordism, with workers perceived not so much as autonomous actors but rather as subservient to the orders of their superiors. This aspect is very different from the *kaizen* approach.

Unlike in Fordism, workers in the *kaizen* approach are not units that can be replaced at will; instead, they participate in running the workplace through quality control circles (QCC), thereby raising their motivation. The QCCs are groups that voluntarily promote quality control activities on their own. Continuous, incremental improvements in work efficiency are achieved through a bottom-up approach to eliminating *muda*, processes or activities that do not add value (Ihara 2016; Shimada and Sonobe 2021; Hosono, Page, and Shimada 2020).<sup>2</sup>

The critical point here is to find ways to improve the “motivation (*yaruki*)” of workers on the factory floor (*genba*). The *genba* is seen not as the site of tension between management and workers but as a forum for obtaining workers’ agreement and encouraging autonomous work. This is quite different from Fordism’s approach of “segmenting and standardizing work to transform it into repetitive tasks.” Workers at the companies that inspired *kaizen* strive autonomously to find solutions



to their problems on the factory floor (*genba*), even amid ambiguity, uncertainty, and imperfection.

At the core of *kaizen* lies a *genba-centered* philosophy (see Chap. 3). Rather than perceiving workers as units that can be replaced, the idea of *kaizen* is to empower workers to improve the company's productivity rather than to replace them (Hosono et al. 2020; Shimada and Sonobe 2021; Shimada 2015). As Shimada (2017 and 2019) discussed, this approach is one response to the concept of "decent work" promoted by the International Labor Organization (ILO). *Kaizen* was influenced by the ILO's Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944, which rejected the view of labor as a commodity and emphasized the importance of cooperation between management and workers to achieve greater productivity. This sparked the movement in postwar Japan toward "productivity improvement," described later in this chapter.

### 3 Why Has *Kaizen* Become a Vital Development Policy in Recent Years?

*Kaizen* is also an important policy tool for the Japanese government's Official Development Assistance (ODA). The late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe mentioned the importance of *kaizen* when he addressed the opening sessions of the Fifth and Sixth Tokyo International Conferences on African Development (TICAD) held in 2013 and 2016, respectively. He identified *kaizen* as a crucial way of supporting Africa through ODA. Subsequently, private-sector projects have expanded to support *kaizen* in many African countries, such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Ghana. These efforts are not limited to Africa. Beginning with *kaizen* support in Singapore, cooperation on *kaizen* has also been implemented through ODA in other regions in Asia, the Middle and Near East, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere (Hosono et al. 2020; Shimada et al. 2013).

Neither is the use of *kaizen* in Japan's international development cooperation limited to support for companies. It has also been adopted in the context of occupational training, health care (the Better Hospital Services program, for example) (JICA 2022), and a movement for improving living conditions. Essentially, *kaizen* has been implemented across various regions and sectors, especially in the US and Europe, and is crucial to understanding Japan's international cooperation.

Two factors underpin the increased importance of *kaizen* as a policy for international development in recent years. The first factor is the reevaluation of industrial policy by international aid donors. Industrial policy is government policy intervening in a market, and *kaizen* is considered as one of a tool for industrial policy. In cases of international official aid, it is the government that introduces *kaizen* for private firms (Shimada 2015, 2017, 2019; Noman and Stiglitz 2015, 2017; Noman, Stiglitz and Kanbur 2019; Higuchi and Shimada 2019). There has been an increasing focus on guiding corporate managers in developing countries using *kaizen* as one aspect of industrial policy.

The reevaluation of industrial policy began with the World Bank's revision of market fundamentalism (a neo-classical standpoint in terms of economic theory, often referred to as "the Washington Consensus"). Since the 1980s, the World Bank has argued that governments should not interfere in markets. To this end, it directed policies aimed at reducing the role of governments, advocating "structural adjustment financing" and "business climate improvement." These approaches effectively disfavored policies aimed at introducing *kaizen* as a part of government industrial policy.

The debate on industrial policy between Justin Lin and Ha-Joon Chang provided the catalyst that changed this approach (Lin and Chang 2009). At the time, Justin Lin was Chief Economist at the World Bank. Ha-Joon Chang, a Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, is renowned for his research in economic history, showing that industrial policy was the key to economic development in countries such as the US and the UK. He argued that industrial policy does not necessarily follow the country's comparative advantage (Chang 2002). After their debate on the role of governments, Lin advocated a neo-structuralist economic approach, proposing a more proactive industrial policy in line with the comparative advantage of a country (Lin 2014), but this was met with intense resistance from the mainstream economists within the World Bank, which opposed such intervention. Eventually, Lin chose to leave the World Bank. This debate continued to influence the aid community even after Lin's departure from the World Bank. The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED), a major private-sector donor committee, also began discussing industrial policy following this debate.

At the same time, a series of research projects conducted by a group including Prof. Joseph Stiglitz (Columbia University), this author, and others began to discuss *kaizen* in contexts such as the revision of the approach to industrial policy and the consideration of approaches to development financing (Shimada 2015, 2017, 2019; Noman and Stiglitz 2015; Noman and Stiglitz 2017; Noman, Stiglitz, and Kanbur 2019).<sup>3</sup> As part of this trend, the UK Overseas Development Institute (ODI) also produced a paper considering the role of *kaizen* as a tool of industrial policy (Lemma 2018). The reassessment of the importance of support for companies in developing countries—in the context of this revival of industrial policy by donors—was an essential factor underlying Japan's more active implementation of *kaizen* support.

The second factor behind the increased importance of *kaizen* as a policy in recent years is the change in the tone of the development economics debate that coincided with the reevaluation of industrial policy. Until then, development economists had proposed that the economies of developing countries could not grow because of a lack of funding and technology (the gap approach). This approach changed with the spreading recognition of the greater importance of "management capital"—the ability to manage money, infrastructure, and technology and devise ways to generate profits from them (Bruhn et al. 2010; Shimada 2015; Shimada and Sonobe 2021; Mano et al. 2012; McKenzie and Woodruff 2014; Suzuki et al. 2014; Higuchi et al. 2019). The concept of management capital refers to the ability to manage a company. This could include *kaizen*.<sup>4</sup> The acceptance of management capital produced a great deal of research, with organizations such as the World Bank also launching studies, which continue to this day (Dinh et al. 2012).

In this way, donors' reassessment of industrial policy and the increased importance of management capital in development economics gave rise to the new focus on *kaizen* cooperation mentioned at the start of the chapter in contexts including Japan's international cooperation. However, it is sometimes difficult to understand what *kaizen* is. The following section will discuss why it is challenging.

## 4 The Difficulty of Translating *Kaizen*

### 4.1 *Can Kaizen Be Implemented Outside Japan?*

The concept of *kaizen* is sometimes considered deeply rooted in Japanese history and culture. Indeed, it has been argued that it is impossible to comprehend *kaizen* without an understanding of Japanese culture. For example, Taiichi Ohno, who codified TPS at Toyota, characterizes the concept of *kaizen* as “difficult to grasp.”

It started as part of an attempt to develop original methods suited to Japan's economic climate. Ideas that were practiced and emphasized in this context—like the “*kanban*” system<sup>5</sup> and “automation” written with the addition of the character for “human”—were explicitly **designed to prevent other companies, especially those in developed countries, from understanding them: to make it difficult even to guess at their meaning. In this respect, perhaps it is inevitable that they are challenging to grasp** (Ohno 1978, p. 9; emphasis added by the author).

That is to say, Ohno characterizes *kaizen* as challenging to understand because it was deliberately made to be so. Takahiro Fujimoto (2001) criticizes this ambiguity, arguing that *kaizen* is neither necessarily a new concept nor unique to Japan, so he believes the popularization of *kaizen* as “Japanese” was an obfuscation. Rather, Fujimoto argues that *kaizen* is nothing more than the basics of industrial engineering (IE). Meanwhile, Womack et al. (1991) refer to TPS as a Lean production system (or Lean method) and conceptualize it as a more universal management method, not limited to Toyota. In light of this discussion, *kaizen*, far from being a difficult concept to grasp, appears to be a remarkably coherent management technique.

In other words, *kaizen* has been discussed in two completely different ways: on the one hand, as a “distinctively” Japanese management method, and, on the other, as a “universal” management technique. Likewise, in the on-site (*genba*) implementation of Japan's international cooperation, there are two different approaches to the *kaizen* concept, depending on the project. For implementing some projects, it is considered necessary to teach about Japan's culture and other aspects, while for others, only universal methods such as the Lean production systems are taught. For this reason, there are often substantial differences between the content of projects, even among those referred to as “*kaizen* projects.” These differences also obfuscate the meaning of *kaizen*.

There are three reasons why these differences in content arose. The first reason is the dual origins of *kaizen*. The concept of *kaizen* has two separate origins. The

differences in origins are reflected in the differences in the content of *kaizen* projects. The second is the business management differences between Japanese-style and foreign companies. The third is its context-specific nature. The following three subsections discuss each reason in turn.

## 4.2 Why Did These Differences in Content Arise?

First, this section focuses on the first reason mentioned above: the issue of the dual origin of *kaizen*. Two organizations—the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) and the Japan Productivity Center (JPC)—played a significant role in introducing the concept of *kaizen* to Japan. The JUSE focused on “quality improvement,” inviting Dr. W. Edward Deming from the United States, who introduced the quality control circle (QCC: small group improvement activities) method to Japanese companies. To this day, Dr. Deming’s name is well known in Japan, and the prestigious Deming Prize is named after him, awarded to an organization for its implementation of TQM (total quality management).

By contrast, the JPC was established in 1955 to receive strategic assistance from the United States. The purpose of this assistance was not limited to “productivity improvement” but also explicitly incorporated “worker protection” to support labor unions. The aim of worker protection represents a significant difference between the JUSE’s “quality improvement” and the JPC’s “productivity improvement.” The following section will discuss the cause of this difference before examining how these *kaizen* concepts were implemented in international cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

The emergence of a strong worker protection theme in the JPC’s productivity improvement initiatives is attributable to their implementation as a part of the strategic assistance provided to Japan by the United States. This aid was provided in the Cold War context as an anti-communist policy. The United States aimed to keep Japan’s labor unions on side with the social-democratic “Western” side rather than with labor-friendly communist Soviet sympathizers. Rising wages were seen as one means to convince workers of the value of social-democratic capitalist principles rather than Marx’s communism (for detailed discussions of this point, see Shimada 2017, 2018a, b, c and Nakakita 2008).

From the end of the Second World War until the mid-1950s, Japanese companies were subject to antagonism between management and workers, with frequent strikes. The initial introduction of productivity improvement to Japan through US assistance in 1955 gave rise to a vehement backlash from labor unions, particularly the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (JCTU, commonly known as Sohyō). Unions were deeply concerned that productivity improvement would lead to reduced employment. To reduce these concerns, labor union leaders were also sent to the United States along with corporate managers such as Taiichi Ohno, who, as Toyota’s Vice President, introduced *kaizen* to the company from the US. This was intended to reinforce the idea that productivity increases would be clearly reflected in workers’ pay

and win over skeptical (“Soviet-leaning”) labor union leaders. As Japanese companies had an adversarial relationship with labor unions, they initially deeply opposed involving worker protection or labor unions in productivity improvement. However, at the insistence of the United States (especially the US Embassy in Tokyo), worker protection was included as an objective of US productivity improvement assistance to Japan.

Essentially, the differences between the JUSE and the JPC can be defined as a difference between the JUSE’s focus on quality and productivity from a management perspective and the JPC’s approach to productivity with consideration for labor unions.

These two original approaches are variously adopted in the implementation of *kaizen* projects. The *kaizen* initiatives currently implemented by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) and other organizations in locations such as hospitals emphasize worker protection to prevent the infection of healthcare workers. In contrast, little mention is made of worker protection or labor unions in JICA’s *kaizen* projects targeting companies, partly because labor issues are often delicate. Thus, the approach adopted by ODA *kaizen* projects targeting companies is close to that initially espoused by the JUSE.

In fact, *kaizen* did not appear in the names of JICA projects until after the second half of the 2000s. Previously, such projects were all characterized as quality or productivity improvement projects. These projects came to be called *kaizen* projects as a part of domestic publicity to make them easier to understand for Japanese people. However, they rarely incorporate worker protection.

### ***4.3 The Distinctiveness of Japan’s System of Business Management***

The second reason for the difference in *kaizen* comes from Japan’s distinctiveness in business management. To consider this, let us first examine if *kaizen* is easy to transfer overseas. The answer is “yes and no.” To begin with, *kaizen* was initially introduced to Japan from the US as a management method aimed at improving quality and productivity. In fact, it is not a peculiarly Japanese concept but rather a universal management technique, as discussed by Fujimoto (2001). Thus, it can be introduced and transferred from one country to another. In this sense, the answer is “yes.”

However, not all *kaizen* aspects can be easily transferred, especially worker protection. Worker protection includes raising workers’ wages, improving occupational safety, and, most importantly, encouraging labor unions to form. This is not easy to transfer because of the significant differences between Japan and other countries in employment practices and labor unions. That is why the answer is “yes and no.” What are the distinctive factors of Japan’s system?

The Japanese business management systems can be summarized under three headings: (1) company-based labor unions, (2) lifetime employment, and (3) seniority

systems. Unlike in many countries, where labor unions are formed across an industry or sector (industry-based labor unions), each labor union in Japan is formed in a single company (company-based labor unions). Many large companies in Japan have also incorporated a system of lifetime employment, where employees are expected to work at the same company from when they graduate from university until they reach the designated retirement age, often 60 years old. In addition, the compensation system is structured so that pay increases are based on seniority (age). These systems differ substantially, not only from those of Europe and the United States, but also from those used in developing countries. These are very different from other countries and make *kaizen* challenging to understand.

The relationship between employment and productivity is essential to understanding *kaizen*. An increase in productivity will lead to a reduction in the number of workers. *Kaizen* aims to increase productivity, which will result in fewer workers. Those who engage in *kaizen* will effectively put themselves out of a job. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, *kaizen* refers to “operational improvements through a bottom-up, hands-on, participatory approach.” Why, then, would workers be motivated to engage in this bottom-up, hands-on, participatory approach if it might lead to unemployment?

Japanese workers’ proactive engagement in productivity improvement is supported by systems such as lifetime employment (workers are guaranteed a job) and company-based—rather than industry-based—labor unions. Even if they have engaged in *kaizen* to improve productivity, their employment has been guaranteed. So they do not have to worry about their job even if they engage in *kaizen*. The nature of relations between employers and workers varies widely in developing countries where international cooperation projects are implemented. While some countries (such as South Africa and many countries in Latin America) have strong, organized labor unions, some do not. In some countries, workers are in a position to oppose management. In others, workers are at the mercy of overwhelmingly powerful employers. In this context, the worker protection aspect of *kaizen*, which is deeply rooted in the distinctive Japanese business management system, cannot be directly applied in a foreign context.

The description of the *kaizen* approach is often understood in Japan in relation to the existence of Japanese company-based labor unions, seniority systems, and lifetime employment. If a country does not guarantee continuous employment for workers, it is difficult for them to engage in *kaizen* because it might result in unemployment in the future. This is why the topic of *kaizen*, although it may appear simple to comprehend, requires an understanding of business management systems specific to Japan. In other words, even if *kaizen* has universal features, it also has distinctive Japanese features.

#### 4.4 *The Context-Specific Nature of Kaizen*

As discussed so far, even in the Japanese domestic context, two different perspectives on *kaizen* have long existed: the corporate perspective of *kaizen* in terms of quality and productivity and the perspective of workers. This duality is linked to the ambiguity of the term and the various meanings that it has taken on.

The third reason why *kaizen* is challenging to understand is its context-specific nature. There is a pervasive attitude within the basic *kaizen* approach that “important on-site (*genba*) matters must be considered on-site (*genba*).” This *genba-shugi* (a belief in the hands-on or on-site approach) further obscures the meaning of *kaizen* (see Chap. 3, this volume). As discussed in the previous section, *kaizen* refers to efforts to find appropriate “on-site” solutions to improve productivity, in contrast to production improvements based on Fordism, a top-down approach, or formal solutions prescribed by experts. The direction of *kaizen* improvements is, therefore, completely unpredictable. This makes it a very challenging method from an organizational management perspective. At the same time, *kaizen* does not seek a “definition” or “formula” for its solutions but instead seeks to find “solutions adapted to the specific situation (*genba*).” Solutions will differ depending on the company and specific context.

For this reason, in any discussion of *kaizen*, it is necessary to understand the “context” to comprehend the term’s meaning. In other words, *kaizen* is not the “application of a predefined methodology” but rather “the discovery of solutions in the context of each company or specific situation (*genba*)”—not “logic” but “context.” In Japan, it is often necessary to “read the room” or “read between the lines” according to TPO (time, place, and occasion). This is undoubtedly also linked to the emphasis on *genba* at Japanese companies.

However, this overemphasis on the search for *genba*-based solutions also produces scattered effects rather than an overall logic. Despite its simple definition, the content indicated by the term *kaizen* defies clear description and has taken on extremely broad connotations. Consequently, *kaizen* has become an enigmatic term. This is not simply an issue of translation: the substance of *kaizen* itself is also plural and context dependent.

#### 4.5 *Criticisms of Kaizen*

This chapter has identified three reasons for the challenging nature of translating *kaizen*. So far, this chapter has regarded *kaizen* as a useful management tool, but it also attracts severe criticisms in Japan. Though not issues of translation and definition, these conflicting perceptions also partly contribute to the ambiguity of the nature of *kaizen*.

*Kaizen* has been the target of criticism on two points: the intensification of labor and the bullying of subcontractors (Kamata 1973; Aoki 1978).<sup>7</sup> The latter

has become a social issue. Then Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda was even questioned about the matter at a meeting of the Budget Committee in Japan's House of Representatives (Ihara 2017). These discussions are based on workers' perspectives against *kaizen*, against the paternalistic tone of employers' perspectives. The involvement of workers, which is essential for *kaizen*, occurs *inside* a company (or its union) and mainly among its permanent employees under lifetime employment. However, though lifetime employment is a general feature of Japanese management, a great many workers are *not* employed under stable work conditions. The demands from companies toward subcontractors have sometimes been intense. Rather than management pressuring regular employees, permanent employees, encouraged to raise productivity by their stake in the company, may pile pressure on temporary employees and subcontractors, who often feel as though they can be more easily cut.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that labor unions themselves have assumed different approaches. In some cases, conflicting standpoints result from two competing labor unions established at the same company, one dominated by company management—called the “subservient union (*Goyō Kumiai*),” and the other union called the “second union (*Daini Kumiai*),” which is more combative and archetypically closer to the communist party of Japan. The “subservient” labor unions prioritize adherence to the interests of corporate management. In many companies, joining unions was a crucial step for employees to progress in their careers. In the past, those who chaired such unions—Ichiro Shioji, Secretary-General at Nissan Union, for example—could acquire substantial power inside companies. In the case of Ichiro Shioji, his power was so mighty that he was even called a “labor aristocrat.”

At the same time, those “second unions” engaged in combative activities quite distinct from this cooperative approach to industrial relations, taking positions antagonistic to corporate management. Their stance on *kaizen* is also critical because it is regarded as intensifying the workload for workers and bullying subcontractors. Thus, even among labor unions, there was a difference of opinion on the assessment of *kaizen* regarding how employees should be made to work.

## 5 Conclusion

As described in this chapter, *kaizen* refers to a management method to achieve continuous operational improvement through a bottom-up, hands-on, participatory approach. However, *kaizen* is sometimes extremely difficult not just to translate but to understand for foreigners and Japanese people alike. Three reasons were identified in this chapter. First are the dual origins of *kaizen*: Dr. Deming's “quality and productivity approach” articulated by the JUSE and the “worker approach” articulated by the JPC with strategic aid from the United States as an anti-communist policy. The existence of these two different streams has led to ambiguity in the term *kaizen*. The second reason relates to Japan's business management system (lifetime employment, company-based labor union, and seniority system). Employment practices, which are a prerequisite for understanding *kaizen*, have historically been very



different between Japan and other countries. The last reason is its context-specific nature. *Kaizen* seeks solutions adapted to the specific situation rather than predefined solutions. The term has multiple meanings but is frequently used without recognizing its ambiguity. Rather than being difficult to translate, it is difficult to understand the term unambiguously.

Though there is much-existing research demonstrating the effectiveness of introducing *kaizen* to developing countries, a few points must be considered regarding the transfer of *kaizen* through international cooperation. Japan is home to a characteristically Japanese style of business management centered on company-based labor unions, seniority systems, and lifetime employment. This differs substantially from business management systems in other countries. Worker protection in Japan has been premised on Japanese-style business management. Therefore, the worker protection aspect of *kaizen* cannot be transferred directly to other countries where conditions are different. Neither should *kaizen* in other countries be characterized in terms of how it is implemented in Japan. This is because of the inevitable difference in the level of commitment to, and by, the company between lifetime employees and other employees.

When introducing *kaizen* in a foreign country, it is vital to comprehend it in relation to differences in labor conditions and management practices. Cooperation based on the recognition of these differences will aid mutual understanding. Moreover, introducing *kaizen* overseas may not increase workers' pay as it has in Japan. It is also uncertain whether employment will grow as a result. To improve the living standard of developing countries, it would be necessary to complement *kaizen* with some additional support in the area of worker protection, depending on the country's situation. More research is needed on what kinds of worker protection are needed to support the *kaizen* approach.

## Notes

1. For a detailed discussion on the Cold War and US aid to Japan on productivity improvement, please also refer to Shimada (2017).
2. The Toyota Production System (TPS) is a well-known example of *kaizen*. TPS has been defined by Taiichi Ohno, who codified it as follows (Ohno 1982): (1) TPS is aimed at thoroughly eliminating waste through *kaizen*; (2) TPS promotes "just-in-time" and the automation of all processes (Toyota uses a unique way of writing automation (*jidōka*), which includes the character for "human"); (3) In this way, TPS enables the visualization of the entire production line, and the identification of weak sections; (4) TPS involves the workers in running the workplace and resolving issues on the factory floor (*genba*). In other words, it is clear that TPS, like *kaizen*, refers to "operational improvements through a bottom-up, hands-on, participatory approach."
3. Stiglitz and Greenwald (2015), for example, lauded the role of *kaizen* (which they referred to as "just in time") in creating a "learning society." Otsuka et al. (2017) provided a new perspective on new theories of industrial policy through progressive empirical research on micro-economic factors such as *kaizen*, advocating the Training-Infrastructure-Finance (TIF) strategy. The TIF strategy emphasizes a specific sequence (order) of implementation with sequential support from developing human capital to building infrastructure and supporting finance.

4. This ability was traditionally treated by economists such as Solow (1956) as a residual (not an important factor) in the production function. Now, however, management capital has been reassessed as an “important factor in economic growth.”
5. The *kanban* system is a method adopted by Toyota to manage production using blackboards and whiteboards (*kanban*). It is used to control the flow of products between processes to ensure just-in-time manufacturing.
6. *Kaizen* could be either labor-using technology or labor-saving technology depending how it is applied. Labor-using technology increases the productivity of labor but may not necessarily lead to unemployment. On the other hand, labor-saving technology reduces the number of labor once the technology applied.
7. Examples of the former include the reportage-style *Automobile Despair Factory (Jidōsha Zetsubō Kōjō)* by Satoshi Kamada (1973), who actually worked at a Toyota factory, and *The Real Toyota (Toyota Sono Jitsuzō)* by Satoshi Araki (1978). Examples of the latter include *The Tragedy of the Toyota Production System—The Lament of Employees and Subcontractors: The “Kanban” People (Toyota Seisan Hōshiki no Higeiki—“Kanban” Ningen ni Sareta Shain, Shitauke no Dokoku)* by Koji Tatezawa (1985).

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# *Genba-Shugi*: Understanding Through a Hands-On Approach



Naoki Matsubara

**Abstract** This chapter discusses the concept of *genba-shugi* by focusing on two contexts in which the term has been used: as an aspect of Japanese-style business management, and in technical cooperation and organizational reform at JICA. This focus on people close to the *genba* (on the ground, in the field, or at the locality) emphasizes the superiority of their know-how and initiative above those of imaginary rivals: Western-style organizations and domestic bureaucratic government bodies. Each of these contexts share a focus on feelings and experiences, against abstract “models” from developed countries or strategic plans of central government, respectively. They are also leveraged to further specific agendas by arguing against their supposed antitheses—Western engineers and business management in the better-known cases; and Japan’s centralized bureaucracy in the case of JICA.

**Keywords** Genba · Headquarters · Field offices · Japanese-style management

## 1 What Gave Rise to *Genba-Shugi*?

In Japan’s international development aid, the concept of *genba-shugi* (the hands-on approach) is widely used. At times, the recommendations of researchers and high-level bureaucrats can even be criticized as absurd opinions that have no understanding of what is happening at the *genba*—on the ground, in the field, or at the locality. This is reflected in everyday expressions, such as “*genba hyakkai*”, we should visit the *genba* as often as possible, or “everything starts from the *genba*”.

However, both constituent words of *genba-shugi*, “*genba*” and “*shugi*”, are polysemous. Their meaning depends on the context in which they are used. The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the various contributions to *genba-shugi* as a concept. Before entering the main discussion, I will begin by reviewing these terms.

In business management, an explanation of the word *genba* has been attempted in English. For example, the Cambridge Business Dictionary (2022) explains the *genba*

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as follows<sup>1</sup>: “In Japanese business theory, the place where things happen in manufacturing, used to say that people whose job is to manufacture products are in a good place to make improvements in the manufacturing process.” Rather than the place itself, it implies a space “where events happen, experiences are gained, knowledge is generated and shared, the intrinsic becomes explicit, and intangible becomes tangible” (Macpherson 2013, p. 16). Macpherson (2013), who studies Japanese manufacturing sites, points out *genba* is not limited to “just a physical place,” as portrayed in much of the “anglosphere literature.”

The term may be used in ways not explained by any of these. For example, the expression “*genba no koe*” (literally “the voice of the *genba*”) refers not only to the opinions and comments expressed by people in the *genba* but also feelings and emotions that cannot be conveyed through text. *Genba* is much more than just a place: it also encompasses the people in the place, their movements and interactions, and even physical sensations too subtle for words. Adding the suffix “*shugi*” (roughly equivalent to “-ism” in English) to this term makes its meaning even harder to grasp. This is because *shugi* denotes more than the policies or attitudes of individuals; it encompasses the principles and fundamental rules espoused by groups and organizations. Thus, in addition to defying easy translation into English, the term “*genba-shugi*” is a difficult concept to explain accurately even in Japanese.

Almost none of the previous research on *genba-shugi* provides a rigorous examination of the exact meaning of the term. Rather, it tends to provide hints at the meaning through individual case studies. The business history researcher Yamashita (2010), for example, describes existing research as “dependent on specific case studies and limited data, using *genba-shugi* as a concept to explore their various characteristics” (Yamashita 2010, p. 86). The tendency of the term *genba-shugi* to obfuscate the point being made and the resultant difficulty of using it for rigorous analysis have caused it to fall out of use among researchers. At the same time, however, it has been adopted by businesspeople and politicians as a convenient concept that “enables the user to express a variety of elements collectively” (Yamashita 2010, p. 87).<sup>2</sup>

The origin of these discussions on *genba-shugi* can be traced back to the time when Japanese companies were expanding their production bases around the world amid a trend toward globalization. When Japanese companies began to transfer their techniques and knowledge, they became aware of differences in attitudes between Japanese technical staff and local engineers at overseas production bases. These differences came to be explained through the use of the term *genba-shugi*. Today, the term is used by engineers and students of business management as well as by politicians and business administrators, especially those at the top of organizations, with the meaning left conveniently ambiguous.<sup>3</sup>

Questioning the various contributions to *genba-shugi* as a concept, I will specifically focus on three contexts. Section 2 discusses *genba-shugi* in the context of Japanese engineers and business management, where the term has been discussed most vigorously. Section 3 discusses *genba-shugi* as a specific characteristic of Japan’s development assistance, particularly technical cooperation. And Sect. 4 discusses *genba-shugi* as used by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the organization responsible for implementing development assistance

provided by the Japanese government. This last is studied because the examples presented in Sects. 2 and 3 no longer adequately explain the term, given its recent emergence in the context of politics, public administration, and organizations, as described above. Comparing the various contexts in which the term *genba-shugi* has been used will reveal their shared emphasis on the superiority and initiative of the user.

## 2 The Discovery of “Japanese-Style” Engineers and Companies in Manufacturing

The emergence of *genba-shugi*—particularly as it relates to engineers and technical staff—was related to the discovery of different local cultures of production and labor as Japanese companies expanded their production bases overseas from the second half of the 1970s through the 1980s. Until that time, overseas expansion by Japanese companies had consisted of the establishment of foreign sales bases aimed at enhancing sales networks. Subsequently, the dramatic rise in exports by Japanese companies from the era of rapid economic growth until the time of the oil crisis made it necessary to resolve trade frictions with countries in Southeast Asia and Europe, and with the United States (Ueno 1986, pp. 242–245). At around the same time, Japanese companies, facing the challenge of rising export product prices due to an appreciating yen, responded by moving production bases overseas (Ueno 1986, pp. 242–245; Cabinet Office 2012).

These companies attempted to introduce Japanese-style factory systems at these overseas production bases in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States by transferring technology to local employees (Ueno 1986, pp. 245–247). The Japanese-style factory systems refer to systems where engineers enter the production site to improve manufacturing processes and quality control through dialogue with on-site employees. The reluctance of locally hired engineers to personally engage with people and processes on the factory floor (*seisan genba*) became a subject of attention for Japanese researchers in fields such as business management and economic history (Yoneyama 1985; Dore 1987; Imano 1990). These differing attitudes provided ideal research material for academic fields concerned with the different developmental routes taken by Japan compared to those in Europe and the United States. A growing body of literature identified this engagement with the *genba* as a key success factor in Japanese-style business management.

*Genba-shugi* was already becoming widely accepted as a special feature of Japanese companies during the second half of the 1980s. For example, the Japan Economic Research Institute (1987) summarized its vision for the new industrial era as follows:

Ultimately, the distinctive features of Japanese business management, compared to that of foreign countries such as those in Europe and the United States, can be reduced to two points. The first point is “egalitarianism” or “humanism.” (...) The second point is “*genba-shugi*.” In contrast to American managers out of business school, who, it is said, only respect figures

and are uninterested in the factory floor, Japanese managers have the utmost respect for the factory floor, beginning everything there (Japan Economic Research Institute 1987, p. 19).

In a paper written during this period and recognized as a representative example of research on engineers' *genba-shugi*, Morikawa (1988)<sup>4</sup> referred to his own observations of factories in the United States and the comparative research into Japanese and British factories by Dore (1987), arguing as follows:

For Japanese engineers, the factory floor (*seisan genba*) is the most important workplace. The *genba* is an object of respect, from the time when engineers receive their training at the *genba*, through their unceasing work together with the factory workers. They are governed by a system of value norms under which those who devote themselves only to deskwork such as research, design, and the composition and amendment of operational manuals are, at least, not fit to be called engineers. In this sense, "*genba-shugi*" is an aspect unique to Japanese industry, and may even be seen as one factor underlying its technical prowess (Morikawa 1988, p. 29).

Both the Japan Economic Research Institute and Morikawa contrast Japanese engineers and business management with those of Europe and the United States, juxtaposing the physical experience gained from actually using one's eyes and hands on the factory floor with theoretical knowledge acquired from figures, logic, and research.

Considering the historical background of these arguments, they were not limited to a simple comparison. Rather, they were presented in the context of trying to demonstrate the superiority of Japanese-style business management over that of Europe and the United States. The arguments of both the Japan Economic Research Institute (1987) and Morikawa (1988) emerged in an era when the Japanese economy had recovered—most swiftly of all the developed countries—from the oil crisis, and Japanese-style business management had become a major focus of international attention. Many people in Japan were becoming increasingly self-confident about the "Japanese-style" approach. Hirano (2011), analyzing the historical formation of Japanese-style business management, notes the overwhelmingly positive attitude of researchers toward Japan's corporate management during the second half of the 1970s through the 1980s (Hirano 2011, p. 138). At the same time, almost all researchers broke with previous assumptions of the Japanese-style approach as consisting of "systems and customs aimed at avoiding competition." Rather, they came to assess it as "no less competitive and efficient than those of Europe or the United States" (*ibid.*).

Previously, it had been thought that the internal rotation of personnel to allow them to experience various divisions and roles, a feature of Japanese companies, was inefficient, as it failed to enhance the specialization of employees. In contrast, Koike (1997), comparing factories in Japan and the United States, discovered that when problems occurred at factory production lines in Japan, managers and employees who had experience in various internal roles could meet to discuss solutions, thereby facilitating the swift discovery of ways to solve problems, including those that resulted from a combination of factors. In contrast, factory production lines in the United States had few employees with experience in multiple roles. When problems arose,



there would be no discussion like those in Japan, and it would therefore take more time to discover the cause and get the line running again. Koike also found significant differences in personnel development, with the more talented employees in Japan rotated more quickly between different divisions and roles, allowing them to rise faster in the organization, while even talented employees find it difficult to achieve promotion in U.S. factories, where greater specialization limits the number of posts available (Koike 1997, 2005). Koike's and similar research by others suggested that Japanese-style business management was more efficient and competitive than that of Europe and the United States.

Japanese engineers' *genba-shugi* was thus used to explain differences between business practices in Japan and other countries, particularly European countries and the United States. In this context, *genba-shugi* became used with a sense of superiority, implying that the greater emphasis placed on the factory floor (*seisan genba*) by Japanese engineers and companies, compared to their counterparts in Europe and the United States, led to more efficient Japanese-style business management.

### 3 The Emphasis on Japanese Uniqueness

In this section, I will discuss *genba-shugi* in the context of Japan's technical cooperation. Official development assistance (ODA) by the Japanese government began in 1954 with its participation in the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific. Japan commenced technical cooperation, welcoming trainees and dispatching specialists, the following year.

The focus of Japan's technical cooperation up until the 2000s was "people": *hito-zukuri* (human-resource development), which is discussed in this chapter. In the Diplomatic Bluebooks published by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), phrases such as "implemented through human contacts (...) to deepen mutual understanding" and fostering those "who will shoulder the task of future nation-building (*kuni-zukuri*)" appear frequently (MOFA 1976, 1988, 1993). JICA also set forth the same policies as MOFA—human resources development (*hito-zukuri*), cooperation through human contact, and cultivating people for the task of nation-building (*kuni-zukuri*)—in an almost identical way (JICA 1995, p. i).<sup>5</sup> Likewise, in papers published in academic journals, the concept of human resources development (*hito-zukuri*) was emphasized more than *genba* (Saito 1992; Hayase 1989).

From the 2000s onward, however, arguments were again made linking *genba-shugi* to the traditional characteristics of Japan's technical cooperation. Discussing a revision of the Act of the Incorporated Administrative Agency-Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA Act), MOFA, which had previously used terms such as human resources development (*hito-zukuri*) and nation-building (*kuni-zukuri*), reviewed the previous three decades of technical cooperation projects by JICA as follows<sup>6</sup>:

We think that this technical cooperation represents a classic example of so-called “face-to-face” *genba*-based assistance. Basically speaking, the image of Japanese experts—technical experts—working up a sweat on hand and brow in the *genba* convincingly conveys the Japanese approach to work: the sense of virtue in all forms of labor and the hardworking attitude of the Japanese people. We regard this as the reason for our outstanding reception in India, for example.<sup>7</sup>

In this statement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs links *genba-shugi* in technical cooperation with the attitudes of the Japanese people, evaluating both highly.

At around the same time, academic research citing *genba-shugi* as a traditional feature of Japan’s technical cooperation began to appear. For example, Matsuoka (2008) describes the “great Japanese tradition” of *genba-shugi* as indispensable for a newly proposed approach to “capacity development” that had emerged during the 1990s (Matsuoka 2008, pp. 235–236). Other researchers similarly characterized *genba-shugi*. Nakahara (2009) identified *genba-shugi* as a characteristic of the development of Japanese systems of industrial education and occupational training, and Japan’s approach to international cooperation. Uotani (2012), in a case study on Ghana, portrayed *genba-shugi* as a special feature of Japanese-style technical cooperation.

These studies present *genba-shugi* as a traditional feature of technical cooperation by Japan, but provide no empirical verification of this claim. Each researcher assumes as if obvious the idea that *genba-shugi* is a feature of Japanese technical cooperation. Moreover, the meaning of the term “*genba-shugi*” is different in each study, and there is no common conception of the meaning of *genba-shugi* in the context of technical cooperation. Matsuoka uses the term to refer to the utilization of information from the *genba* in planning (Matsuoka 2008). According to Nakahara, it refers to an emphasis on on-site training in the context of industrial education and occupational training, and an emphasis on “people” over systems in Japanese policy in the context of international cooperation (Nakahara 2009). Meanwhile, Uotani uses the term to refer to the physical presence of experts on-site (at the *genba*) (Uotani 2012). In each case, however, *genba-shugi* is characterized as a feature of Japanese technical cooperation, in contrast to development assistance by European countries and the United States, which prioritizes concepts and ideals.

During the 2000s, while this idea of *genba-shugi* in technical cooperation was being expounded in Japan, aid donors in European countries and the United States were endeavoring to change their approach to technical cooperation. This represented a “significant turning point” for Japanese technical cooperation (Miyoshi 2008, p. 133) because Japan alone risked being left behind amid the emergence of a new worldwide trend in technical cooperation resulting from changes among European and U.S. aid donors and the previously mentioned appearance of the concept of “capacity development.” This trend in technical cooperation arose from the criticism of the project-based style of technical cooperation, favored by Japan and observed from the 1990s through the 2000s. Berg and UNDP (1993), a leading example of this type of criticism, cite the example of technical cooperation in Africa in the 1980s, pointing out that the technology that was supposed to have been transferred was not actually used sustainably in the recipient countries. The transfer of technologies

that could be overseen only by developed countries and the lack of an appropriate implementation environment for the use of transferred technologies were cited as the main causes of this failure. The focus of criticisms such as those presented by Berg and UNDP was the attempt at “capacity building” through the transfer of technology and knowledge from developed countries in total disregard for developing countries’ existing ownership and other structures and systems (Matsuoka 2008; Miwa 2008). “Capacity development” was suggested by Fukuda-Parr et al. (2002) as a new assistance concept acknowledging the impact on systems and societies in developing countries, in response to the issues that had emerged in conventional technical cooperation. Meanwhile, Japan, which perceived its technical cooperation in Asia as a “success,” rejected its inclusion among the developed nations criticized by Berg and UNDP, Fukuda-parr et al., and others for disregarding existing structures and systems in developing countries (Matsuoka 2008, p. 227). For example, JICA et al. (2003), in a 300-page-long report, *The Effectiveness and Challenges of Japanese-style International Cooperation*, uses specific examples to argue that this criticism does not apply to Japan.<sup>8</sup>

From the discussion above, it is clear that, in the context of technical cooperation, the concept of *genba-shugi* has been invoked to argue that Japan’s technical cooperation and those who implement it are closer to the situation on the ground (*genba*) than those of European and U.S. aid donors, thereby emphasizing Japan’s unique development assistance, which, it is argued, has been no less effective than that of Europe and the United States in achieving development.

#### 4 JICA’s Pursuit of Autonomy

Unlike the concepts of *genba-shugi* discussed in relation to engineers and technical cooperation, which implied comparison with outsiders, JICA’s discourse on *genba-shugi* emerged in a domestic Japanese context.

JICA’s status changed from that of a special public institution to an independent administrative institution in October 2003. Unlike a special public institution, which is subject to detailed restrictions in terms of budgets and personnel by central ministries, as an independent administrative institution, JICA was largely free to allocate its own budgets and projects, and was accountable mainly for its medium-term targets and their evaluations. With this change, Sadako Ogata (1927–2019) became the first President of JICA from outside the government. Ogata attempted to reform the organization of JICA, based on three principles: (1) *genba-shugi*, (2) guaranteeing human safety, and (3) effectiveness, efficiency, and speed. In this context, *genba-shugi* was translated into English as the “field-oriented approach,” and referred to the delegation of personnel and authority from its Tokyo headquarters to local offices (JICA 2004, 2005).<sup>9</sup> The reason why JICA adopted this policy of *genba-shugi* can be observed in the events leading up to its establishment. This following text overviews the events leading up to the election of Ogata as the first President of JICA and the path for its reform.

JICA was established in 1974 from the merging of several special public institutions under the auspices of MOFA, primarily the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA) and the Japan Emigration Service (JEMIS). Behind the decision to establish JICA lay tensions between the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)—both of which proposed the establishment of their own organizations to implement technical cooperation—on one hand, and MOFA and the Ministry of Finance—which hoped for integration—on the other. These tensions escalated into a political battle involving politicians and the financial world, which was eventually settled through the integration of functions into JICA (Araki 1984; Numata 1994; Hashimoto 1999; Sato 2021). Through a process of political compromise, the JICA Act was passed which, while making MOFA primarily responsible for JICA, also required the authorization of the Minister of International Trade and Industry for projects overseen by MITI and the authorization of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for projects overseen by MAFF. The government bureaucracy thereafter established systems to supervise and direct JICA's operations based on this general supervisory power. For example, not only was there an insufficient number of senior vice-president posts at JICA to incorporate the management staff from OTCA and JEMIS, but there were also few posts at the level of vice president or section head. All senior vice president posts and that of the president were filled by retired public officials, and JICA's operating sections were organized to correspond to the government bureaucracy. All section heads were dispatched from departments of the central government (Sugita 1999; Takashima and Miyoshi 2000).

Against this background, JICA was subject to aspects of bureaucratic stovepiping, with much of its development assistance carried out on a sector-by-sector basis. Essentially, the supply-side of development assistance—the convenience of the central government bureaucracy—was prioritized over demand-side information from the local areas where the development assistance was to be implemented. JICA's staff was aware of this issue, emphasizing an approach based on the recipient country and region from the time of JICA's establishment, and pushing ahead with organizational reforms while simultaneously giving consideration to the central bureaucracy (JICA 2019). JICA staff attempted to reform the organization—originally a miscellany of different sections answering to different bureaucracies—into an organization that could formulate assistance plans for each country and region, and implement assistance based on these plans.<sup>10</sup> From the second half of the 1980s, they had also embarked on organizational reform aimed at strengthening local offices in order to identify the needs of local areas (Tajima 1986; Nakamura 1991; Yanagiya 1991).

The strengthening of local offices continued to be an issue through the 1990s. The reform of JICA was supported by international pressure to decentralize assistance organizations by strengthening local personnel and delegating authority to local offices. The OECD (1985) insisted that greater localization of assistance organizations led to more effective and efficient assistance. Some countries, such as Canada, even undertook parliamentary initiatives to reform assistance organizations (OECD 1985; The Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade 1987). Cooperation between aid donors had become commonplace from the second half

of the 1990s (Miyoshi 2001), and the increasing importance of local negotiations between donors provided an additional reason for JICA to reinforce its local offices. However, these efforts to strengthen local offices met with obstacles, due to the internal issues within JICA described below.

While Japan's ODA budget increased five-fold from 1978 to 1997, the number of JICA staff grew by only approximately 20%.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, JICA was unable to transfer staff arbitrarily, as it was still closely controlled by the government bureaucracy. Each bureaucratic unit in central ministries, corresponding to each of JICA's various operating departments, had the authority to determine JICA's budget. JICA's operating departments were therefore required to discuss and negotiate with the central government bureaucracy on issues such as the number of personnel in each section, the number of specialists assigned to each project, the cost of purchasing materials, and even travel expenses incurred by JICA staff. These constraints meant that local offices were unable to take any action without first contacting and confirming with JICA headquarters in Tokyo, making it difficult to respond swiftly and flexibly to emerging issues.<sup>12</sup>

The announcement to convert JICA to an independent administrative institution was published in 2001, two years before it came into effect. Simultaneously, after decades of steadily increasing ODA budgets, it was announced that Japan's ODA budget would be substantially *reduced* with the stated goal of improving fiscal health,<sup>13</sup> and even greater efficiency was demanded from the development aid. In response to this political situation, some JICA staff, together with labor unions, conducted questionnaire surveys and other activities to develop a vision for JICA's ideal form and the ideal leader for the organization as an independent administrative institution. According to them, the local needs identified from these initiatives were incorporated into their ultimate vision for development assistance.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, Ogata, who had been an overwhelmingly popular choice for the ideal leader among survey respondents, went on to become the President of JICA, leading the organizational reforms described above.

The incorporation of *genba-shugi* into JICA's organizational reforms originated not only from JICA's internal staff. Tajima (1986), Yanagiya (1991), and Nakamura (1991) illustrate that MOFA managerial personnel also supported placing *genba-shugi* as a central pillar of JICA's ODA. When these texts were written, the authors were, respectively, General Manager of JICA's General Affairs Department, President of JICA, and Senior Vice-President of JICA. However, all were originally appointed from MOFA. MOFA had local diplomatic missions in developing countries. Boosting the importance of localization in ODA by advocating *genba-shugi* effectively facilitated an attempt to wrest control from other branches of the central government bureaucracy. The greater the importance placed on the local context, the more MOFA's embassies would become the core of Japan's ODA through their local networks. When ODA budgets shrank during the 2000s, MOFA had no choice but to aim for "efficient" ODA operations through "MOFA leadership," to continue to achieve the same diplomatic effect as before. For this reason, *genba-shugi* was a crucial concept for MOFA, enabling it to ensure that it kept the initiative and maintained leadership.

From the discussion above, it is clear that the *genba-shugi* that formed one of the three pillars of JICA's organizational reform was a policy aimed at the decentralization of development assistance by transferring authority, personnel, and budgets from the Tokyo headquarters (the supply side) to local offices (the demand side). At the same time, however, it was also intended to support the leadership and initiative of JICA and MOFA themselves. In other words, *genba-shugi* was used to argue for MOFA and against other branches of the central government bureaucracy, for JICA to better control development aid policies and their implementation on the basis that it better understood local conditions.

## 5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the events and circumstances that gave rise to the use of the concept of *genba-shugi* in three different contexts: business management, technical cooperation, and JICA's organizational reforms. The concept of *genba-shugi* examined in Sects. 2 and 3 was used to advocate the superiority and uniqueness of Japanese-style business management in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. These were attributed to close interaction with the *genba* by Japanese companies, engineers, and experts, compared to those of other countries. In Sect. 4, I described the background against which JICA's and MOFA's career staff used the expression *genba-shugi* to argue for their own leadership and initiative, and against control by other branches of the central government bureaucracy. JICA and MOFA possessed their own networks of local offices and embassies, leveraging the features of *genba-shugi* to argue for more effective and efficient assistance based on those networks. Despite these different contexts for the use of *genba-shugi*, they share an attempt by people and organizations close to the *genba* to assert their own value.

There were also common characteristics defined in contrast to *genba-shugi*. The European and U.S. engineers, business management, and development aid, as well as Japan's centralized bureaucracy, each cited as the antithesis of *genba-shugi* in the arguments examined in this paper, were seen to approach the *genba* based on abstract "theory." Here, abstract theory refers to logic based on ideals, and the pursuit of efficiency through the centralized organizational government. These have been rationalized based on existing authorities, such as abstract "models" from developed countries in Europe and the United States, or the interests of the central government bureaucracy. Such abstract theory disregards the context of the *genba*. The "rationality" of *genba-shugi*, by contrast, seeks to achieve justification by other means. *Genba-shugi* appeals to people's "intuition" by implying strong links to the *genba*, as seen in the contexts of manufacturing technology and development aid examined in this chapter. This intuition is informed by experiences common to us all: "there are some things you just have to be there to understand;" "you'll never find the solution buried in your own thoughts." The rationality of *genba-shugi* draws on these experiences for its justification.

In today's social science, where natural science methods are being actively introduced, using causal relationships between variables to create sophisticated replicable models of social phenomena is solidifying its position as the mainstream paradigm. International development is no exception. However, theories in social science cannot be as valid as those in natural science. As in the cases of self-denying prophecies or self-fulfilling prophecies, a theory about a social phenomenon, once disseminated in society, may distort social phenomena. Also, behavior, which is considered irrational in the majority of society, may be considered rational in some locality. We need to deal with theories and models carefully in the context of the phenomena at hand. Under these circumstances, *genba-shugi* focuses our attention on intuition that originates from physical and social experience.

## Notes

1. The word is romanized as “gemba” in the Cambridge Business Dictionary.
2. According to Yamashita (2010), a search of journal articles held by Japan's National Diet Library revealed that the use of the term in articles and academic papers increased from the second half of the 1990s, and thereafter spread to fields such as education, politics, and mass media from the 2000s onward in particular. From 2005, he indicates a characteristic increase in the number of articles discussing *genba-shugi* as an organizational problem-solving approach.
3. Based on the database of the Japanese Diet proceedings, the number of times *genba-shugi* was used rapidly increases from the 2000s onwards (seven times from 1985–1989, 31 times from 1990–1999, 245 times from 2000–2009, 429 times from 2010–2019). The same trend can be observed in *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper articles. The term appeared in 31 articles in 2020; in 29 of these, it was used in the context of politics or public administration (the attitudes and ideals of politicians or organizational direction).
4. This research by Morikawa (1988) sparked the popularization of the term “*genba-shugi*” (Odaka 2017; Ichihara 2015; Woo 2016).
5. Statements to the Diet by JICA management up to the year 1995, including statements by Keisuke Arita, then-President to the Committee on the Budget, March 30, 1985 and March 29, 1986; the statements by Taizo Nakamura, then-Senior Vice President to the Subcommittee on International Economy and Society, Committee on Foreign Affairs and Comprehensive Security, House of Councilors, May 18, 1987; etc.
6. Revisions concerning the yen-denominated loans department at the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and integration with JICA.
7. Statement by (then) Minister of Foreign Affairs Aso at the Diet. Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense, House of Councillors, 165th Plenary Session of the Diet, November 7, 2006.
8. It has been argued that JICA (2003) was compiled “for the purpose of presenting JICA's rebuttal” of the assertions presented in Fukuda-parr et al. (Miyoshi 2008, p. 135).
9. Specifically, it referred to the transfer of around 20% of JICA staff (200 people) to local offices and the introduction of an overseas project management system under which local offices were made responsible for the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of projects (JICA 2004, 2005).
10. A regional section was established under the Operations Strategy Department in 1981. The number of regional sections subsequently grew to three. Four regional departments were created in 1999. New sections were also established from the second half of the 1980s onward to address issues such as new development challenges, environmental issues, Women in Development, and peace-building (Takashima and Miyoshi 2000, pp. 132–133).

11. The ODA budgets and numbers of JICA staff were calculated by the author based on MOFA (2021) and JICA (1978 and 1997), respectively.
12. From an interview with a former JICA staff member. At the time, authorization was obtained by fax, requiring even more time than in the present day.
13. The general budget declined from its peak (in yen, here indexed at 100) in 1997 to 89.6 in 2000, 73.4 in 2003, and 65.0 in 2006. The budget was reduced by approximately one third over the space of a decade (calculated by the author in reference to MOFA 2021).
14. From an interview with a former JICA staff member.

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# Asianism: Continuity and Divergence in Japan's Foreign and International Cooperation Policy



Lauren Nakasato and Kazuo Kuroda

**Abstract** Asianism has often been discussed in Anglophone literature as rhetoric used to justify Japan's imperial expansion. Yet both the genesis of the concept prior to World War II and its evolution in the post-World War II era have received less attention. This chapter examines how shifting conceptions of Asianism have influenced Japan's foreign policy stance and international cooperation development agenda. By tracing the historical roots, development and diffusion of Asianism from its origins in early Meiji Japan to present, the chapter shows how Asianism, though its influence has declined over time, has endured in the post-war era through the concept of Asian regionalism.

## 1 Introduction

Despite the significance of Asianism (*Ajia shugi*, アジア主義) in Japan's international relations, there has been no consensus on how to define the term. Indeed, as Yoshimi Takeuchi (1963) warns, tracing the historical development of Asianism as a term may be impossible. This chapter recognizes Asianism as encompassing various meanings and lexical iterations including Pan-Asianism (*Han-Ajia shugi*, 汎アジア主義) and Greater Asianism (*Dai-Ajia shugi*, 大アジア主義) in the pre-war and wartime period. However, what interests the authors in this chapter is not the lexical history of the term but the concepts behind it and how they have been used to define Japan's foreign and international cooperation policy from the early Meiji period to the present.

The concept of Asianism is inextricably linked to the concept of Asia. While this may seem obvious, Asia was not defined by the kingdoms and territories in the region

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until first contact with the West in the 1600 s (Saaler and Szpilman 2011). Even then, it took 200 years and the threat of Western imperialism to solidify the concept of Asia amongst Asians (Matsuda 2011). *Asianism*, with its origins in Japan, grew out of the conundrum of how to deal with Western expansionism. The extent to which Asian solidarity could be employed to counter Western influence and Japan's role vis-à-vis Asia have defined the various approaches to Asianism over the course of history. The Asia in Asianism has been defined by various actors both conceptually and geographically based on combinations of geographic proximity, nationality, race, language, culture, religion, spirit, history, tradition, art and civilization for purposes economic, social and political. The authors align with Hotta (2007) who suggests two fundamental features of Asianism:

- (1) The existence/creation of a distinct Asia with shared characteristics (the characteristics themselves are debated).
- (2) The potential for Asia to resist/counter Western power.

While several typologies of Asianism have emerged, the authors utilize two types: Alliance-style and Leadership-style Asianism. A third ideological (Nakajima 2014) or teaist (Hotta 2007) type centers on the East–West philosophy of Tenshin Okakura and Rabindranath Tagore, promoting a spiritual, morally pure vision of Eastern high culture to counter the science- and rationality-based Western claims to higher civilization. While these spiritual-cultural conceptions of Asianism may underlie other iterations of Asianism, many of the writings of this genre were in English and were intended for an international audience and did not exert direct influence over Japan's pre- or post-war foreign policy or international cooperation policy. The following instead delineates Alliance style and Leadership style Asianism as two major types, then show how elements of each have influenced Japan's foreign policy and international cooperation policy over time, currently manifested through the concept of Asian regionalism.

Asianism has been discussed both *as* Asian regionalism and as a precursor to Asian regionalism. Yet if regionalism “involves the reorganization of political, economic, cultural and social lives along the lines of an imagined region rather than according to the standard political unit of the nation-state” (He 2017, p. 1), or “regional cooperation and integration based on a shared perception of the region's present, past, and future” (Saaler 2007, p. 1) then perhaps Asian regionalism does not exist. While Asian regional concepts, cooperation and institutions have grown in recent decades, none have attempted to transcend the nation. Indeed, a common denominator linking conceptions of Asian regionalism across Asian nations is nationalism (He 2017). Further, shared perceptions have been largely absent from Asian regionalism. Despite, or perhaps because of the heavily national character of Asian regionalism, Asianist ideas have been expressed through Japan's Asian regional concepts in the post-war era.

## 2 Alliance-Style Asianism and Japan–China Cooperation

Alliance-style Asianism advocating for a political alliance with China based on shared culture gained influence in academic and political circles during the early Meiji period. The East Asian Common Culture Association (*Tōa Dōbun Kai*), established in 1898, was an early proponent of Alliance-style Asianism, asserting that Japan is an Asian nation that must stand in solidarity with Asia. This represented the antithesis to the Meiji government's project of rapid modernization through emulation of Western powers. Faced with the Tripartite Intervention of Germany, France and Russia in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War, a profound sense of crisis contributed to this plea for solidarity. In the face of Western diplomatic pressure aiming to limit Japan's presence in China, the Association was established by leading Japanese politicians and thinkers who sought a political and cultural alliance with China, including Atsumaro Konoe, politician and first chairman of the House of Peers, philosopher Setsurei Mitake, former cabinet member Tsuyoshi Inukai and revolutionary Toten Miyazaki.

Konoe founded the Association based on his belief in "the Orient for Orientals" and a "racial alliance" of the "yellow race," establishing resolutions that included "protecting China," "aiding the development of China and Korea," "investigating and regulating the contemporary affairs of China and Korea" and "sparking national debate" (e.g., Kurita 2017; Fujita 2012). Thus, albeit with somewhat paternalistic overtones, the founding principle of the Association rested on the idea of a united Asia. According to Konoe, "the handling of Oriental affairs is the responsibility of Oriental people. Though the power of the Qing Dynasty has declined, this must be blamed on politics, not the people. Working hand in hand to preserve the Orient should not be a difficult task" (Takeuchi 1993, p. 423).

The rise of "Yellow Peril," the Western perception that a unified "yellow race" would threaten Western power, prompted fear of retaliation in Japan. Japanese intellectuals, politicians and educators increasingly gravitated toward Konoe's vision of establishing a partnership with China to counter the anticipated Western response to Yellow Peril. Konoe's vision necessitated support for China's modernization efforts, and there was a large, albeit temporary, swell of aid after the Sino-Japanese War from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, even as early as a few years following the Sino-Japanese War, Chinese reformers such as Youwei Kang and Qichao Liang began to turn toward Japan in the face of Russian encroachment (Smith 2022). Further, recruitment of Chinese intellectuals into the Raising Asia Society (*Kō A Kai*) and the later *Tōa Dōbun Kai* widened channels for Asianist thought to flow between Japan and China (Smith 2022). This lay the foundations for Yat-sen Sun's advocacy of Asianism in the 1910s, asserting that "after all, Asia belongs to Asia's people ... Asia's peace must be protected by Asia's people, and above all Japan and China must cooperate with each other" (Saga 2020, p. 135). While Japan's eventual descent into imperialism prompted China to dismiss Japan's Asianism as an emulation of Western imperialism, China never fully rejected Asianism, instead constructing a new Asianism with China at the center (Smith 2022).

The Idea of a Japan–China partnership to counter Western power was not limited to the political sphere. The above-mentioned Toten Miyazaki, a civil rights-oriented scholar of Asianism, supported the Chinese revolution and the restoration of human rights and freedom of the oppressed in other Asian countries such as Siam and India. Jigoro Kano, a leading scholar of Japan–China cooperation, expressed his vision of the Japan–China partnership when the first government-sponsored international students from China arrived in Japan. According to Kano,

In the first place, Japan and the Qing Dynasty are just across the ocean from one another. Through the import of systems and culture from China and subsequent creation of our own ancient civilization, we were able to become an advanced country in the Orient. The close relationship between our countries is incomparable with that of Western countries. Through the protection and development of Qing China, the movement toward peace in the Orient can be maintained. Considering the interests of Russia, we can afford nothing less than our best efforts to support Qing China (Kano 1903a, p. 5).

The historic and geopolitical significance of the newly established student mobility between China and Japan and Kano’s expectations for such mobility are readily apparent. Further, in his *Issues in Chinese Education* (1903b), Kano argues for the unification of the “yellow race,” asserting the significance of Asian regional cooperation for world peace from the perspective of the East–West power balance:

Today’s world is a racial world, a world of racial rivalry. The White race is the most powerful and the Yellow race cannot oppose it. Why is it that we, the Yellow race, must be so divided that we cannot cooperate with one another? ... Let us open our hearts to our own race. Japan, Korea and Siam should be regarded as one, united in confronting the White race. Our enemies claim they will not instigate war, but by demonstrating our mutual communication and spirit, we can maintain the momentum toward world peace (Kano 1903b).

Kano’s words capture the essence of Alliance-style Asianism based on Asian solidarity in the face of the Western Other.

Discussions of an Asian alliance to combat Western encroachment were not limited to Japan and China. In Korea, Asianism, together with nationalism, contributed to discussions of Korean national identity during the tumultuous period from the late 1880s to the early 1900s (Shin 2005). In line with Asianist discourse traveling from Japan and China, Korean Asianists envisioned a united China, Japan and Korea in the face of encroachment from Western imperialism. Such unity was not only considered in terms of geography but also along cultural and racial lines, with intellectuals such as Ch’iho Yun advocating for a common aim between the countries based on race, religion and writing systems, and Chunggun An calling for a “Theory of Eastern Peace” (Shin 2005). Yet such conceptions of Asianism would soon come to an end with Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910 (Shin 2005). Thus, while conceptions of Asianism in Japan during this period both influenced and were influenced by developments in other parts of Asia, the rise of the Japanese empire and the cooption of Asianism for imperial gains all but silenced calls for Asian unity based on Asian equality.

### 3 Leadership-Style Asianism and the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere

While the preceding discussion of Alliance-style Asianism depicts an egalitarian approach to Asia, this was not uniformly the case. A fluidity of ideas and thinkers supported Asianism in some form or another, and while most accepted the existence of Asia and the idea of Asian solidarity or cooperation in the face of Western encroachment, not all accepted the idea of Asian nations as equal entities. The solidification of Asianism from a loose set of ideas and ad hoc activities by disparate groups into a state ideology coincided with war. With a weakened China and Western powers encroaching, Japan was at a crossroads in its foreign relations. Is Japan a part of Asia? If so, what does this mean for Japan in the face of Western expansionism? Alliance-style Asianists may have supported Japan's equal participation in a unified struggle between Asia and Western powers, but these ideals did not play out. Neither did Japan "depart from Asia" (*Datsu-A-Ron*), breaking ties with Asia to follow the West (Iida 1997), as advocated by Yukichi Fukuzawa following Chinese defeat in the Sino-French War. Instead, Japan positioned itself as the only nation that could lead, protect and emancipate Asia in the face of Western aggression and colonization. This "Leadership-style Asianism" culminated in the unilateral creation of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

While Alliance-style Asianism and the spiritual-cultural Asianism of Okakura Tenshin were primarily discussed and enacted by politicians and intellectuals, the translation of Leadership-style Asianist thought into political action can be observed in the activities of the *Genyōsha* (Dark Ocean Society) founded in 1881 and led by Toyama Mitsuru, and its offshoot organization the *Kokuryūkai* (Black Dragon Society) founded in 1901 and led by Uchida Ryohei. Core organizations of Japan's ultra-nationalists leading up to World War II, the groups were influential in their promotion of Japanese expansionism based on Asianist thinking (Takeuchi 1963). Despite contributing little to the development of the term itself, the *Kokuryūkai* was instrumental in translating Asianism into foreign policy through various forms of pressure on the Japanese government (Saaler 2014). At the core of Toyama and Uchida's Asianism was the idea of a strong Asia to resist Western power, and the *Kokuryūkai* supported revolutionaries in Asia trying to overthrow Western imperial domination (Saaler 2014).

Even within these organizations, however, there were varying views of Japan's role in Asia. One example is the 1910 annexation of Korea and alignment with Tarui Tokichi's Union of the Great East (*Daitō-gappō-ron*). While most *Kokuryūkai* members supported the annexation, others had advocated for an equal union between Japan and Korea more in line with Alliance-style Asianism (Saaler 2014). Ultimately the *Kokuryūkai* came to define the annexation of Korea rhetorically as a "union" with Korea (Saaler 2014). Thus, in addition to Asian unity against Western power, Leadership-style Asianism encompassed a sense of Japanese superiority that was not present, or at least not central to Alliance-style Asianism, despite invoking in the same language. Indeed, Asia gave Japan a conceptual tool not only to combat



Western encroachment but also to imagine international relations outside of the existing Sinocentric order (Matsuda 2011).

Due in part to the influence of the Leadership-style Asianist-ideas of the Kokuryūkai, the Japanese government established colonies and territories across Asia from the late Meiji period. By the 1930s, Japan's imperialist ambitions to expand into the Asian continent could no longer be hidden. To counter intervention by the League of Nations, triggered by the Manchurian Incident, new Asianist ideas such as "The Asian Monroe Doctrine" emerged, asserting that issues in Asia should be solved in and by Asia. While this argument echoes Alliance-style Asianism, in practice it allowed for unilateral decision-making, justifying Japan's prewar foreign policy, including the "unification" of Japan and Manchuria and forceful "collaboration" with China. Such actions culminated in the formation of the "New Order in East Asia" by the second Konoe Cabinet in 1937. The New Order proclaimed:

The establishment of this new order shall be based on the foundation of a relationship of mutual assistance and *cooperation among the three countries* in all areas, including politics, economy and culture, and shall be aimed at the establishment of international justice in East Asia, the realization of joint defense, creation of a new culture and the realization of economic integration (Saga 2020, p. 211, emphasis added).

Thus, even during Japan's imperial expansion, Asianism continued to be framed by the government as "mutual assistance and cooperation" with a focus on "international justice in East Asia," in striking contrast to the realities on the ground.

In a final extension of Leadership-style Asianism, the "Imperial Way" was established based on Mitsuru Toyama's "Imperial Asia" principle. The principle is clearly expressed at the policy level in the "Education Policy for the Construction of Greater East Asia: Measures for the Nurturing of the Greater East Asian Nations" issued by the Greater East Asia Council during the Pacific War in the same year:

In accordance with the principle of "Eight Allies for One World" and in light of the fundamental principles of national governance and leadership, we shall establish measures for the development of the people of Greater East Asia, with the following objectives:

Thoroughly expound the world-historical significance of the construction of Greater East Asia with the Empire at its core and instill in the peoples of the world that the completion of this project is the joint responsibility of all.

Eliminate conventional notions of Western superiority and the Anglo-American view of the world, and promote the Imperial Way, while respecting the unique culture and traditions of each nation.

Strive to avoid generic blanket policies, instead making efforts to nurture those in Greater East Asia in their daily lives by through the leadership of the Yamato race (Ishii 1981, p. 8, Footnote 15).

Through this "proclamation of the Imperial Way," Leadership-style Asianism became explicit, and with the foreign policy philosophy of "imperialism at the core" and efforts toward the "leadership of the Yamato race," Japan upheld Leadership-style Asianism until its surrender at the end of the Pacific War.

In much of the Anglophone literature on Asianism and Japan, Alliance-style Asianism and Leadership-style Asianism are conflated under the umbrella term "Pan-Asianism" (*han Ajia shugi*, as in Duara 2001; He 2004; Saaler and Koschmann 2007;

Peters 2019; Campagnola 2022). Such discussions have tended to gloss over the early days of Alliance-style Asianism as lacking influence or as functioning simply as a basis for the later Leadership-style Asianism. Certainly, there is continuity between Alliance- and Leadership-style Asianism through the idea of a united region or race to counter the forces of Western imperialism based on common racial and cultural origins. Nonetheless, the idea of Japan as part of Asia as an equal member versus Japan as the leader of Asia, is a crucial difference between the two. Saaler (2007) recognizes this shift in his discussion of Pan-Asianism as a concept that “had developed from a vague romantic and idealistic feeling of solidarity into an ideology that could be applied to the sphere of *Realpolitik*,” (Saaler 2007, p. 7) while Morifumi (2007) advocates for a distinction between “early” and “late” Asianism based on Japan’s shifting attitude toward China as one of equality to one of nationalist expansion. However, as shown above, there was no linear transformation of Asianism from Alliance-style to Leadership-style. Instead, Japan’s position in relation to Asia, whether it be in, with or for, were discussed simultaneously, until the Japanese imperialist project silenced other sides of the debate. Yet Leadership-style Asianism, despite its prominence in the literature, was but one iteration, or perhaps more accurately a perversion, of a larger concept that neither began nor ended with Japan’s imperialism.

The above sections have shown that Japanese conceptions of Asianism shifted between the pre-Pacific War and wartime periods yet maintained two core elements of the existence of “Asia” as a concept and the potential for a united Asia to counter Western encroachment. The following sections will show how certain elements of Asianism have been maintained through the concept of Asian regionalism and reflected in Japan’s post-war foreign policy and international cooperation efforts. The authors will argue that Japan has kept Asia at the center of its foreign and international cooperation policy while simultaneously moving away from the idea of Asia as a challenge to Western power.

#### **4 Reparations and the Commencement of Japanese ODA**

Asianism as a term disappeared from public discourse after World War II as it had come to represent the ideology underlying the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Yet far from a desire to disengage with Asia, the post-war period saw a great deal of Japanese involvement in the region through the provision of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Roughly 90% of Japan’s ODA went to Asia in the 1970s (Kawai and Takagi 2004), and while this percentage has steadily declined since then, over 60% of bilateral aid was allocated to Asia in 2021 and Asia also topped the list of regional recipients of multilateral aid (OECD 2023). The start of Japanese ODA is officially recognized as Japan’s participation in the British-led Colombo Plan in 1954 (MOFA 2022). However Japan had been providing aid in the form of war reparations since the early 1950s (Kuramoto 2003). Reparations were paid to Myanmar, the Philippines, Indonesia and South Vietnam from 1955–1965

while “quasi reparations” were provided to Thailand, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia in the form of economic assistance tied to agreements to renounce claims for formal reparations (Kawai and Takagi 2004). While official reparations were never paid to China, the sizable amount of aid given to China since 1979 has been viewed as reparations from Japan’s perspective (Kawai and Takagi 2004).

Japan’s sustained engagement in Asian development through ODA provision can be viewed from several perspectives. An instrumentalist perspective can explain Japan’s eagerness to provide ODA as an investment in Asia for the growth of foreign markets for Japan’s post-war economic recovery. Indeed, the international community has criticized Japanese aid as overly opportunistic (Takamine 2006). Nonetheless, Japanese aid to Asia continued. Aside from economic rationales, there is some evidence of ideological continuity in aid provision between the pre- and post-war eras in terms of Japan’s relationship with Asia. While the term *Asianism* has never been explicit in Japan’s ODA policies past or present, Kuramoto (2003) points out the continuity between pre-war and wartime economic support to Japanese colonies and post-war provision of ODA. Not only were implementation strategies virtually the same, focusing on self-help, mutual interests and long-term, state-centered development plans; many of the people in charge of designing these strategies remained the same from the colonial to the post-war period (Kuramoto 2003). Notably, Kuramoto argues that such institutional continuity allowed for ideas to be carried over from the wartime to post-war periods, including the creation of an Asian economic bloc previously embodied by the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

When considering the creation of an Asian economic bloc in terms of He’s definition of Asian regionalism, “the organization of political, economic, cultural and social lives along the lines of an imagined region rather than according to the standard political unit of the nation-state” (He 2017, p. 1), Japan’s reinterpretation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in terms of Asian regionalism comes into focus. While Japan is not at the center as an imperial power, and though bloc economies have since fallen out of fashion, the idea of an Asia-centric economy became an anchor-point for Japan’s Asian regionalism.

## 5 The Bandung Conference and South-South Cooperation

In the year following Japan’s inaugural participation in the Colombo Plan, Japan sent a delegation to the “Asian-African Conference” in Bandung, Indonesia, after being invited (albeit controversially) as a member of the region. At the conference, led by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the “Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation” (the so-called Ten Principles for Peace) was adopted by 29 participating countries. Japan enthusiastically supported the Declaration, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mamoru Shigemitsu reiterated this support in a diplomatic speech in the same year, stating “it is Japan’s long-cherished desire to establish friendly relations with the liberated Asian countries” and “economic

and commercial relations with neighboring Asian countries are today a matter of life and death for Japan.” Further, he asserted that the Japanese delegation at the Bandung Conference “widely disseminated the aims of our peace diplomacy and made meaningful proposals for economic cooperation and cultural exchange within the region” (Japanese Politics and International Relations Database). At least rhetorically, these statements echo earlier calls for Asian unity and maintain a vision of an economically integrated region. Politically, they can be interpreted as an attempt for Japan to rebrand itself as a peaceful nation, appealing to other Asian nations based on common experience while downplaying Japan’s own imperialist past (Dennehy 2007).

The Bandung Conference, however, was not solely attended by countries in the Asian region as it also included newly independent African countries; however the subsequent Non-Aligned Movement Summit, which originated from ideas formed at the Bandung Conference, was not attended by Japan. Nevertheless, the Bandung Conference influenced the direction of Japanese diplomacy to a certain extent, which can be observed in the frequent references to the Conference and the “Bandung Spirit” in speeches and foreign policy documents by prime ministers and foreign ministers. Two years after the Conference, the Kishi Nobusuke administration formulated the “Three Principles of Diplomacy,” which, along with “UN-centeredness” and “cooperation with liberal countries,” stated that “Asia is bound to our country by deep geographical, historical, cultural and spiritual ties” and that Japan should “firmly maintain its position as a member of Asia” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1958, p. 6). This principle became the basis for Japan’s policy of putting Asia at the center of foreign cooperation and promoting South-South cooperation through ODA.

Thus, while again not explicit, Japanese participation in the Bandung Conference and subsequent promotion of South-South cooperation can be considered a re-engagement with some of the sentiments underlying Alliance-style Asianism while simultaneously taking a turn toward economic concerns, which would come to define Japan’s stance toward Asian regionalism.

## 6 The Fukuda Doctrine and Assistance for ASEAN

The anti-Japanese protests that confronted the Japanese delegation during Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka’s visit to Southeast Asia in 1974 triggered a fundamental rethinking of Japan’s policies in Southeast Asia. In 1977, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda visited six Southeast Asian countries, ending the diplomatic tour in Manila, the Philippines. There he laid out the basic policy of Japan’s new diplomatic approach in Southeast Asia in a speech which later became known as the Fukuda Doctrine:

First, Japan, a nation committed to peace, rejects the role of a military power, and on that basis is resolved to contribute to the peace and prosperity of Southeast Asia, and of the world community.

Second, Japan, as a true friend of the countries of Southeast Asia, will do its best for consolidating the relationship of mutual confidence and trust based on "heart-to-heart" understanding with these countries, in wide-ranging fields covering not only political and economic areas but also social and cultural areas.

Third, Japan will be an equal partner of ASEAN and its member countries, and cooperate positively with them in their own efforts to strengthen their solidarity and resilience, together with other nations of the like mind [sic] outside the region, while aiming at fostering a relationship based on mutual understanding with the nations of Indochina, and will thus contribute to the building of peace and prosperity throughout Southeast Asia (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1977).

Two observations can be made. First, while the existence of Asia and Japan's friendly relations with Asia are explicit, there is no indication of unity or solidarity between Japan and Southeast Asia. Instead, Japan vows to support ASEAN's own internal solidarity as an "equal partner." This differs from both Alliance- and Leadership-style Asianism as Alliance-style Asianism envisioned a united Asia with equal members and Leadership-style Asianism envisioned one Asia with Japan at the helm. Instead, in the Fukuda Doctrine Japan maintains distance from the region on the one hand while simultaneously pledging heavy support on the other. The Doctrine is regarded as the forerunner of Japan's diplomatic and international cooperation philosophies in Asia, delineating Japan's plan to double ODA to Southeast Asia over the subsequent five years. Indeed, support for ASEAN has become a priority of Japan's foreign policy and foreign cooperation policy in Asia.

Second, the inclusion of "other nations of the like mind outside the region" in the third pillar of the Doctrine reveals both a shift away from Asianism and a movement toward a more open interpretation of Asian regionalism. Whereas both Alliance- and Leadership-style Asianism promoted a united Asia in the face of Western encroachment, the inclusion of "other nations ... outside the region" in the Fukuda Doctrine leaves the door open for wider participation. Thus, while pledging support for a united Southeast Asia and the emerging Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Fukuda Doctrine also foreshadowed an increasingly open stance in Japanese regional conceptions.

## **7 The Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept and APEC**

From the late 1970s Japan began to form and disseminate its own Asian regional concepts. Proposed by Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira in 1978, the "Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept" was a regional framework based on the newly formed concept of the "Pacific Basin." This new concept was based on previous regional concepts such as Kojima Kiyoshi's "Pacific Free Trade Area" concept and Foreign Minister Takeo Miki's "Asia-Pacific Regional Cooperation" concept in the 1960s and refined through discussions at the Pacific Basin Cooperation Study Group chaired by Saburo Okita and attended by prominent researchers such as Seizaburo Sato and Tsuneo Iida. The purpose of the group was to distill the concept of Pacific Basin Cooperation

to its essence, which, as clearly stated in a report issued by the group, aimed for “open regionalism” to challenge the growing forces of bloc economies and regional protectionism. Specifically, it attempted to counter trends toward protectionism such as the single market strategy in Europe and negotiations of free trade agreements in North America (Tanaka 2007).

It is by no means an exclusive and closed regionalism vis-a-vis outside of the region. Seriously concerned over what appears to be a decline in the free and open international economic system grounded in the GATT and IMF arrangements, we sincerely hope that the Pacific countries can capitalize upon their characteristic vigor and dynamism to become globalism's new supporters (The Pacific Basin Cooperation Study Group 1980, “The Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept”).

The Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept led to the establishment of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) in Canberra, Australia in the late 1980s. Leading up to the establishment of the PECC, Asia–Pacific regional economic cooperation advanced against the backdrop of deepening economic interdependence and rapid economic development in the region, as well as the need for a coordinated response to trade friction with the United States. Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) later initiated a ministerial-level meeting in the region, elevating discussions beyond the PECC. The Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial Conference was subsequently formed in 1989 when Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke called for an Asia–Pacific ministerial meeting, including the United States. While the initiative was jointly led by Japan and Australia, Japan was hesitant to advocate directly for an Asian regional framework due to the not-so-distant memories of previous wars and control in the region, especially the promotion of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere (Tanaka 2007). Thus, Australia was asked to take on the role of core organizer of the initiative, extending official invitations to each country.

APEC is a forum for regional multilateral cooperation in Asia recognizing the potential of the Asia–Pacific region as a center for world economic growth. Designed to liberalize and facilitate trade and investment and economic and technological cooperation in the region, the guiding principle of APEC is “open regional cooperation,” a direct extension of the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept. Through such cooperation APEC aims to expand free trade in the region, eventually extending to the global stage.

APEC, which includes North America, has become the most important regional framework guiding Japan's economic diplomacy in the “Asia–Pacific,” including North America. After its establishment under the leadership of Australia and Japan, APEC gradually evolved from an economic ministerial meeting to a summit meeting, and the Japanese government's strategic priorities for the regional framework similarly expanded to include policy areas beyond the economy, including Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy. In the 1992 Official Development Assistance Charter, for example, APEC is mentioned explicitly: “In order to cope with transnational regional problems, Japan will cooperate more closely with international organizations and other frameworks for regional cooperation such as the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)” (Government of Japan 1992, Sect. 4).

While the Fukuda Doctrine foreshadowed a broader regional definition, Japan's participation in APEC further widened the scope of Japan's conception of the Asian region to include Australia and the United States. This stance was also evidenced by Japan's lack of support for Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's proposal for an "East Asian Economic Group" (EAEG) due to its exclusion of Western countries (Yunling 2005). Movement toward open regionalism diverges from the Asianisms discussed earlier in the chapter. The inclusion of Australia and the United States nullify the potential for a united Asia to counter Western power, while the idea of Asia as a region based on shared characteristics also falls out of reach. Viewed from another angle, however, the original impetus behind APEC was to protect against the threat of "Fortress Europe" or a single European market (Tanaka 2007). In this sense, although the definition of Asia was expanded to the Asia-Pacific, APEC was founded as a counterbalance to the threat of Western (in this case European) economic encroachment, in line with Asianism.

## 8 The East Asian Community Concept and ASEAN+3

As discussed above, until the 1990s Japan's conception of Asian regionalism was developed through two regional frameworks: Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific. Yet from the late 1990s, the simultaneous emergence of the ASEAN+3 framework, the East Asia Summit framework and the Trilateral Summit framework has, together with the existing frameworks of APEC and ASEAN, transformed Asia into a multilayered venue for regional cooperation.

The ASEAN+3 regional forum attended by the ASEAN member countries and Japan, China and Korea, was initiated in 1997 in response to the Asian currency crisis. The crisis has been viewed as a trigger for a "new" Asian regionalism that features a focus on economic interests, equal participation and consensus (Yunling 2005). This renewed solidarity and regional identity was built upon both a sense of shared crisis and growing disillusionment with the United States and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), largely seen as ineffective in resolving the crisis (Kim and Lee 2004). ASEAN has been at the center of the "new" regionalism, with ASEAN+3 prompting the leaders of the three East Asian countries to attend the ASEAN Summit later in the same year.

Later, in the 2000s, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi started to advocate for an "East Asian Community" concept based on the ASEAN+3 framework. In a policy speech titled "Japan and ASEAN in East Asia: A sincere and open partnership" given in Singapore during an official visit to ASEAN in January 2002, Koizumi shared his vision for a new regional framework based on ASEAN+3. The new framework, based on the concept of "community," notably included Australia and New Zealand, yet diverged from the APEC framework in that it did not seek the participation of the United States or other North American countries. Further, though the speech focused on economic cooperation, it also approached cooperation from a broader perspective: "While recognizing our historical, cultural, ethnic and traditional diversity, I would

like to see countries in the region become a group that works together in harmony.” The focus on regional cooperation is also apparent in the Second ODA Charter, revised in 2003, which calls for the strengthening of economic partnerships in East Asia through use of ODA:

Asia, a region with close relationship to Japan and which can have a major impact on Japan's stability and prosperity, is a priority region for Japan ... In particular, the East Asian region which includes ASEAN is expanding and deepening economic interdependency and has been making efforts to enhance its regional competitiveness by maintaining economic growth and strengthening integration in recent years. ODA will be utilized to forge stronger relations with this region and to rectify disparities in the region, fully considering such factors as the strengthening of economic partnership with East Asian countries (Government of Japan 2003, Sect. 4).

Following the developments observed in the Fukuda Doctrine and APEC, the East Asian Community concept viewed Japan as a “partner” with East Asian countries, rather than Asia as a unified whole with Japan as a member or leader. The strong focus on economic rationales and the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand further distance Japan's concept of Asian regionalism from previous Asianist thought.

Over the course of his tenure, Prime Minister Koizumi promoted the concept of the “East Asian Community,” introducing the concept in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2004. In the same year, the “Establishment of an East Asian Community” centered upon ASEAN+3 was included in the “Action Strategy on Trilateral Cooperation” adopted by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of China, Japan and Korea. The idea of establishing an East Asian Community gained further momentum in 2005 when the ASEAN and ASEAN+3 meetings were joined by Australia, New Zealand and India to form the “East Asia Summit.” Further, while Chinese, Japanese and Korean leaders have convened in the ASEAN region since the establishment of ASEAN+3, the first independent trilateral summit meeting was held in Fukuoka, Japan in 2008. The summit served as a venue for the deepening of the commitment to building an East Asian Community, with ASEAN+3 again at the center of such efforts. Such momentum was maintained and strengthened despite subsequent political change in Japan. When the Democratic Party of Japan came to power in 2009, the establishment of an East Asian Community became a top priority for Japanese diplomacy. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama was an avid supporter of the concept, incorporating his own idea of a “fraternal” spirit, and even began to advocate for the establishment of a collective security system in East Asia.

Thus, Japan's support for and participation in ASEAN+3, as well as the establishment of the East Asian Community concept, can be seen as further attempts to show solidarity with the region, although much of the spirit of Asianism has been lost. On the other hand, rising competition with China for regional leadership has been a major force driving the participation of both Japan and China in ASEAN+3 (Nabers 2010). However, such leadership is a far cry from that conceptualized as part of Leadership-style Asianism. Indeed, ASEAN+3 has been considered a key structure for ensuring that neither Japan nor China take sole leadership in the region (Nabers 2010). However, Japan–China relations rapidly deteriorated with the Senkaku Islands nationalization crisis in 2011; and relations between Japan and South Korea were



also strained due to disputes over interpretations of history. Thus, when political power was returned to the Liberal Democratic party in 2012, the second Abe Shinzo cabinet made no mention of the “East Asian Community” concept, and the efforts toward the establishment of an “East Asian Community” toward a policy of Asian regionalism were completely derailed.

## 9 The Asian Gateway Initiative and TPP/RCEP

While the Asian currency crisis of the late 1990s prompted a temporary slowdown of the regional economy, by the 2000s East and Southeast Asian economies were growing rapidly, led by China. Meanwhile, Japan was stuck in an economic slump following the bursting of the bubble economy in the 1990s. Faced with this situation, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (the first Abe Cabinet), who took office in 2006, proposed the “Asian Gateway Initiative” at the 165th session of the Diet. The initiative envisioned “Japan as a bridge between Asia and the world for the movement of people, goods, money culture and information” to “introduce the growth and dynamism of Asia and other foreign countries to Japan” (Office of the Prime Minister 2007). The following May 2007, the Cabinet Secretariat established the “Asian Gateway Strategy Council,” for which Abe appointed Tokyo University Professor Ito Motoshige as the Chair.

In the Council’s report, “The Asian Gateway Initiative” (Asian Gateway Strategy Council 2007), the Initiative recognizes that “Japan’s relationship with Asia was once viewed as a vertical one, emphasizing the difference between the two. The relation now becomes a horizontal and strategic one, with more emphasis on Japan’s place in the region” and states a core goal “to play a responsible role in the development of Asia and its regional order” (Asian Gateway Strategy Council 2008, pp. 2–4). The Initiative is anchored by three basic philosophies: “To make Japan a country that people want to visit, study, work and live in;” “To maintain and further deepen an open regional order with an emphasis on the economy” and “To establish relations of mutual understanding and trust while respecting the region’s diversity” (Asian Gateway Strategy Council 2008, p. 4). By creating an open Japan, horizontal relations between Asia and Japan can be formed, leading to the further development of Asia (Asian Gateway Strategy Council 2008, pp. 2–4). Here too, equal partnership between Japan and Asia, the inclusion of the Pacific West and a focus on economic goals can be observed in Japan’s approach to Asian regionalism.

This philosophy was maintained and carried over to the second Abe administration when Prime Minister Abe took office again in 2012. In 2015, during Prime Minister Abe’s tenure, Japan’s ODA Charter was revised, with the new Charter delineating Asia’s importance for the Japanese economy:

In Asia, hard (physical) and soft (non-physical) basic infrastructure built with development cooperation has contributed to improving the investment climate. Development cooperation’s role as a catalyst promoted private investment, which in turn has led to economic growth and poverty reduction in the recipient countries. It is important to recognize that, through

these processes, Asia has developed into an important market and investment destination for Japanese private companies, and therefore, an extremely important region for the Japanese economy (Government of Japan 2015, p.12).

Further, the 2016 Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and 2022 Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), strongly promoted by the second Abe administration and achieved through Japan's leadership efforts, were the very embodiment of the Asia Gateway concept based on horizontal relations between Asia and Japan.

## 10 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have shown how Asianism has developed historically as a concept influencing and influenced by Japanese diplomacy and international cooperation, and how it has appeared in and disappeared from Japan's Asian regionalism. In its modern history, Japan has proposed a diverse range of regional concepts, initiatives and policies including Japan–China cooperation, the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, South-South cooperation, support for ASEAN, the Pacific Basin solidarity concept, the East Asian Community concept, the Asian Gateway concept and the strategy for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. These concepts have varied in their definition of the term “region” and have covered a wide range of goals, philosophies and sectors. Further, Japan's positioning within the Asian “region” and its relationship to regions outside of Asia (e.g., Europe) have likewise been diverse. What has held true throughout such shifts in terminology and meanings, however, is Japan's focus on Asia as the primary region of its foreign policy and international cooperation efforts.

Further, currents of Asianism run through many of these concepts, initiatives and policies, although weakened over time. At the beginning of the chapter, Hotta's (2007) fundamental elements of Asianism were introduced. They are:

- (1) The existence/creation of a distinct Asia with shared characteristics.
- (2) The potential for Asia to resist/counter Western power.

During the pre-war and wartime periods, both elements were visible in Japan's foreign policy while in the post-war period both elements have slowly been eroded over time with the increased involvement of the US and other Western states in economic and security policy. This shift from closed to open regionalism signifies a move from regionalism based on inter-regional competition to regionalism supporting the transition to globalization, including cooperation and partnership with the social economies of Europe and the United States. Adherence to the existence/creation of a distinct Asia with shared characteristics has also weakened over time. At the Japanese government-sponsored Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Kenya in 2016, Prime Minister Abe announced the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy,” a direct response to Chinese President Jinping Xi's “One Belt, One Road” Strategy. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy advocates for regional cooperation linking Africa and Asia across the Indian and

Pacific Oceans to ensure the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade and economic partnerships. While the FOIP does not explicitly exclude China, it is seen as a US-Japan-led attempt to challenge China's economic and political rise through the redefinition of Asia based on democratic principles and has overshadowed previous regional concepts influencing Japan's foreign policy. Further, the concept of the "Indo-Pacific" has been promoted by Japan at international conferences since 2017 and has begun to permeate the foreign policy of the United States and Australia. Though tentatively accepted by some other nations in the region, it has also been eyed with suspicion by ASEAN nations wary of the US's confrontational stance toward China (Shoji 2021).

While Asianism has informed Japanese conceptions of Asian regionalism in the post-war period, recent developments and redefinitions of Asian regionalism have weakened the influence of Asianism on Japanese foreign and international development policy. In the recently revised ODA Charter (MOFA 2023), the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" has replaced any mention of Asia; indeed, the term does not appear in the Charter. This idea of a new, "Asia-less" Pacific region can perhaps be seen as a step away from Asian regionalism and toward internationalism.

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# *Hito-zukuri*: It is Not Just Human Resources Development



Noriyuki Hashimoto

**Abstract** This chapter aims to examine and clarify the Japanese concept of *hito-zukuri*, paying attention to international and internal development policies of the Japanese government. *Hito-zukuri* has been generally translated as “human resources development” related to technical cooperation in the context of international development. However, *hito-zukuri* also includes an element of formal and nonformal moral education to nurture “Japaneseness” both for Japanese youth, especially historically in the postwar high economic growth period, and for people in developing countries through international development and cooperation. *Hito-zukuri* holds two types education: technological and moral. In *hito-zukuri*, practitioners see its targets for education not only as technologically but also as morally developing people. Therefore *hito-zukuri* cannot be translated directly as human resources development without extensive qualification. Moreover, the restriction of *hito-zukuri* operations to the developing world betrays a stratified perspective on who is in need of moral development, which is problematic given the particular aim of moral education to promote “Japaneseness.”

**Keywords** *Hito-zukuri* · Education · Japaneseness · Morality · Stratification

Those who demand that others keep the social order should, if they are grateful for this order, aspire to improve and develop it (Watanabe 1993, p. 198)

*Hito-zukuri*: Fostering people useful for society (Matsumura et al. 1992, p. 1090).

## 1 The Concept of *Hito-zukuri*

The term *hito-zukuri* can be broken down into *hito* and *zukuri*; *hito* means people or human, and *zukuri* suggests making, forming, building. *Hito-zukuri* is often translated as “human resources development” in English, and is used in the context of

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79

international development, assistance and cooperation in Japanese. The term itself conveys a sense of action aimed at bringing about some form of change in a population or class of people. Some people may perceive *hito-zukuri* as desirable, with its implied associations with *mono-zukuri* [craftsmanship] and *machi-zukuri* [community design]. However, if we stop and think for a moment about the actual meaning of *hito-zukuri*, we realize that the term is not so clearly defined. It is therefore far from certain whether *hito-zukuri* can actually be translated directly into English as “human resources development.” In this chapter, I aim to examine and clarify the meaning and structure of *hito-zukuri* as a concept, paying attention to foreign and domestic development policies of the Japanese government.<sup>1</sup>

This effort to uncover the reality of the *hito-zukuri* concept reflects a focus on the Japanese government’s basic approach to international assistance and cooperation. This is because *hito-zukuri*, together with concepts such as “self-help,” the “request-based principle,” and “human security,” is an ideal pursued by the Japanese government in its assistance and cooperation efforts. Japan’s 1992 Official Development Assistance Charter sets forth a policy of extensive *hito-zukuri* predicated on the basic approach of supporting self-help efforts by developing countries to achieve socioeconomic development (MOFA 1999). The Charter states that “A priority of Japan’s ODA will be placed on assistance to human resources development [*hito-zukuri*] which, in the long term, is the most significant element of self-help efforts towards socioeconomic development and is a basic factor for the nation-building [*kuni-zukuri*] of developing countries” (MOFA 1999). Likewise, the 2003 Official Development Assistance Charter states that “The most important philosophy of Japan’s ODA is to support the self-help efforts of developing countries based on good governance, by extending cooperation for their human resource development [*hito-zukuri*], institution building including development of legal systems, and economic and social infrastructure building, which constitute the basis for these countries’ development” (MOFA 2004). This emphasis on human resources development [*hito-zukuri*] is reaffirmed as one of the “foundations of self-help efforts and self-reliant development” under the latest 2015 Development Cooperation Charter (MOFA 2015). The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Japanese government’s international assistance and cooperation implementation agency, concentrating on technical cooperation, has also characterized its own stance in terms of “*kuni-zukuri*, *hito-zukuri*, and interpersonal connections,” hoping to build trust with people in developing countries (JICA 1994). When the appropriateness and consistency of the Japanese government’s assistance and cooperation ideals are criticized (Udagawa 2017), only *hito-zukuri* is defended as consistent with the global dominant trend in international assistance and cooperation (Shimomura 2018, p. 502). This championing of *hito-zukuri* seems to indicate that it will continue to be one of the ideals for the Japanese government in the future.

The inclusion of human development in aid and cooperation ideals publicly communicates the importance of people in development. It sounds attractive. However, the brightness of an ideal does not guarantee the consistency of its underpinning concepts. Sometimes a dazzling ideal can obscure the substance of the concept. Even JICA, which characterizes its own initiatives as *hito-zukuri*, has pointed out the

ambiguity of the term and has persistently engaged in efforts to clarify the concept, focusing on such aspects as its relationship with the concept of human resources development (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 1987, 1989, 1997, 1999). However, this fails to shed light on some aspects of *hito-zukuri*, such as its propensity toward moral education based on the Japaneseness and the stratified limitation of its object as discussed in the main part of this paper. Moreover, while these other aspects have been discussed elsewhere, existing studies have not sufficiently referred to the Japanese context. That is, efforts to define *hito-zukuri* in the existing literature have been far from systematic. In this chapter, I define *hito-zukuri* in the context not only of international development but also that of domestic development, which is more firmly structured in the Japanese society, and illuminate the unique characteristics of this concept. In Sect. 2, I trace *hito-zukuri* in Japanese government foreign policy, and in Sect. 3 I track it in its domestic policy. In Sect. 4, I synthesize these two aspects to further clarify what *hito-zukuri* is. Finally, in Sect. 5, I discuss what *hito-zukuri* should be.

## 2 The Popularization of *Hito-zukuri*

The first official use of *hito-zukuri* by the Japanese government in foreign affairs is said to have been at the fifth meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in May 1979 (Yamada et al. 2019, p. 169), when then Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) advocated the need for "international cooperation for the purpose of *hito-zukuri*," as follows.

I want to emphasize that "*hito-zukuri*" is the foundation of "*kuni-zukuri* [nation building or national development]." Looking back over the history of Japan, during the past century our efforts to achieve modernization have focused on education amid scarce natural resources. We have made *the development of human resources* the pillar of Japan's "*kuni-zukuri*." [...] When attempting to transfer technologies to developing countries and ensure that they take root there [...] we consider it a priority *to enhance basic school education and train specialist technical personnel who can directly undertake development* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA 1980); author's emphasis).

Three points can be discerned from Ohira's speech. First, *hito-zukuri* is not a goal in itself, but rather a means to accomplish *kuni-zukuri* [nation building or national development]. Second, the Japanese government is attempting to rely on Japan's own experience of development to guide its international cooperation. It could be said that Ohira presents a theory of modernization, of sorts, where Japan's experience is considered the model of development. Third, *hito-zukuri* carries two connotations: enhancing basic school education and training specialist technical personnel.

The first two points formed the baseline for the subsequent development of the *hito-zukuri* concept. In the case of the third point, however, the emphasis on basic



school education faded in foreign policy discourse, and *hito-zukuri* became synonymous with the training of specialist technical personnel with scientific and technological education. In the ASEAN *hito-zukuri* cooperation project proposed by the Japanese government in 1981, for example, the perception that economic development depended on human resources development in fields such as agriculture, industry, and energy was used as a reason to advocate the *gratis* provision of funding and technical cooperation to promote *hito-zukuri* (MOFA 1981).

According to JICA, *hito-zukuri* was already being implemented in the form of scientific and technological education even prior to the speech by Prime Minister Ohira in 1979 (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 1999, pp. 23–26). The Japanese government became directly involved in developing technical personnel after joining the Colombo Plan in 1954.<sup>2</sup> It subsequently implemented systematic local personnel development initiatives, such as the ASEAN Human Resources Development Center. From around 1990 onward, it became necessary to “diversify” *hito-zukuri* from a concept targeting purely economic development into one that included basic education development<sup>3</sup> and social development, in view of the “worldwide trend towards emphasizing basic education” (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 1999, p. 27). It was as if Ohira’s ideals had been reinstated.

Since the 1990s, the profile of the *hito-zukuri* concept has grown and shrunk in accordance with the political standpoint of those using it. At a social development summit in 1995, for example, then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama of the Japanese Socialist Party called for “social development that prioritizes human beings” over the economy and emphasized “the importance of *hito-zukuri* to develop the abilities of each individual citizen, including the socially disadvantaged such as those with disabilities, in the context of *kuni-zukuri*” (National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies and The University of Tokyo Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia 2023).

In general, Ohira’s political stance is regarded as conservative, and Murayama’s as liberal. They both make use of the *hito-zukuri* concept, but with different connotations. Certainly, both politicians use *hito-zukuri* as a means to achieve the greater goal of *kuni-zukuri*. However, Murayama shifts the focus of *hito-zukuri* onto people themselves, encouraged by the “worldwide movement” towards “human development” advocated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990 (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 1999, p. 32).

In 2001, however, then LDP Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi advocated “the importance of education in *kuni-zukuri*” at the Genoa Summit, which led to the emergence within the Japanese government of “the perception that investment in education based on self-help was the most effective way to reduce poverty and promote economic growth in developing countries” (MOFA 2002). The Japanese government announced its policy of *Basic Education for Growth Initiative (BEGIN)* in the following year, emphasizing its focus on basic education from the perspective of “*hito-zukuri* for the sake of *kuni-zukuri*” (MOFA 2002).

In the context of *BEGIN*, “*hito-zukuri* for the sake of *kuni-zukuri*” is contrasted with the human development concept. Here, human development is understood as “the acquisition by each individual member of society of the knowledge and skills

needed to live a fitting life for a human and autonomously choose their own future (empowerment)” (MOFA 2002). Human development, which emphasizes people rather than countries, recalls Murayama’s concept of “*hito-zukuri* to develop the abilities of each individual citizen,” and suggests that Murayama and Koizumi used *hito-zukuri* with more or less opposite connotations. The *hito-zukuri* concept allows for a certain fluidity of meaning.

From 2000 onward, the “human security” perspective, introduced partly through the involvement of the Japanese government, also became a point of reference in the context of *hito-zukuri*. “Japanese aid to the African region increased swiftly from 2010 onward, partly as a result of the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), with the implementation of vocational training for discharged soldiers in countries that had experienced conflict, and basic vocational training for socially disadvantaged people” (Shimazu and Tsujimoto 2021, p. 115).

In this way, the features of *hito-zukuri* have changed in line with global policy movements and political standpoints. It is a very malleable concept that can be adjusted to suit the intentions of the speaker. This adjustment has led to a proliferation of different meanings for the *hito-zukuri* concept. *Hito-zukuri* not only implies basic school education and vocational training but is also used to refer to concepts such as human development and human security. However, the more meanings are attributed to a concept, the weaker its fundamental essence becomes—reduced, in the extreme case, to a common theme of being “related to humans” in the case of *hito-zukuri*—and the more ambiguous it becomes.

The increasingly enigmatic tendency of *hito-zukuri* is also partially attributable to the fact that it is used to refer not only to the object of assistance and cooperation but also to the method employed. “*Hito-zukuri* as an object” refers to assistance and cooperation directly aimed at developing various human abilities, through education and vocational training, for example. On the other hand, “*hito-zukuri* as a method” refers to the transfer of skills and techniques considered necessary for the purpose of assistance or cooperation, whether it be in the medical field, the media, or elsewhere (Yamada et al. 2019, pp. 167–168). From the perspective of “*hito-zukuri* as a method,” any involvement in development by the Japanese government could be called *hito-zukuri* (Kayashima and Kuroda 2019, p. 401). If everything can be referred to as *hito-zukuri*, however, then it becomes unserviceable as a concept. Is *hito-zukuri* a floating signifier? Or does it have a hidden and common meaning?

### 3 The Domestic Origin of *Hito-zukuri*

Japan was defeated in World War II in 1945, and regained independence in 1952. In the 1956 Economic White Paper, the Japanese government stated that “the ‘postwar’ period is over” with the completion of rebuilding and revival after defeat in 1945, and proclaimed the launch of development under the name of “modernization” pivoting to economic growth (Economic Planning Agency 1956). Japan was a “developing country.”

The LDP's Hayato Ikeda, who became Prime Minister in 1960, initiated a plan aimed at economic growth, referred to as the Income Doubling Plan. To achieve this plan, he also focused on measures such as the training of personnel to undertake industrialization. In August 1962, Prime Minister Ikeda used the word *hito-zukuri* for the first time in an official context in his general policy speech at the Diet (Ito 1962, p. 119). This was approximately 17 years before Prime Minister Ohira used it in a foreign relations context.

I am determined to strive to *promote and renew education*, and to make every effort for *hito-zukuri*, which is the foundation of *kuni-zukuri*. [...] I intend to implement education for our children that cultivates *moral virtues*, fosters *a sentiment of love for the motherland*, gives them the knowledge necessary for the progress of the times, and *builds even finer and more outstanding Japanese nationals*, able to contribute to Japan's prosperity and promote world peace (National Diet Library 2022a; author's emphasis).

After use by Ikeda, *hito-zukuri* became a popular term. While it succeeded as “a catch-phrase” (Itō 1962, p. 117), it also conveyed a nuance of “molding people into the desired shape” (Nagasu 1962, p. 101), probably associated with the underlined sections in the quote above. The people were to be strongly positioned as a means for *kuni-zukuri* [nation building or national development].<sup>4</sup>

In his policy speech of January 1963, Ikeda went on to attribute the “success” of Japan's economic growth to “the ingenuity and innovation of the Japanese nationals,” arguing that “we have proven that the fate of a nation is determined not by the size of its territory or how much money it possesses but rather by our determination and diligence as Japanese nationals.” This, he claimed, “gives clear hope to the emerging countries still at early stages of development.” At the same time, however, he cited issues within Japan, such as income inequality and delays in the completion of social infrastructure, as well as a lack of “respect and affection for the Japanese nation, race, and tradition” and a lack of “public spirit,” advocating further efforts not only aimed at “promoting scientific and technological education” but also “enhancing moral education” (National Diet Library 2022b). On the one hand, Ikeda's vision demands scientific and technological education to provide the knowledge and technology to contribute to economic growth and promote ingenuity and innovation. On the other, it demands moral education to encourage moral virtues such as determination, diligence, public spirit, and respect for the nation.

This relationship between *hito-zukuri* and education becomes even clearer when Ikeda's *hito-zukuri* policies are considered in conjunction with his cabinet's education plan. This education plan is presented in “The Ideal Image of the Japanese [*Kitaisareru Ningenjō*],” an appendix to the Central Council for Education's report “Expanding and Enhancing Upper Secondary Education,” dated October 1966. The council bemoans the emergence of “egoism” and “hedonism” among “the Japanese people”—“a situation where only material desire grows without spiritual ideals”—precipitated by economic growth and technological innovation (Central Council for Education 1966). Not just compulsory skills development for individuals but also the promotion of moral or collective virtues such as “public spirit” and “authentic patriotism” are proposed as means to overcome this situation (Central Council for Education 1966). The goal of economic growth itself is left unchanged. Instead, the

council prescribes the medicine of moral education to correct its perceived ailments. This can be described as “Japaneseness”, a morality that aims to recover spiritual ideals.

The logical structure of *hito-zukuri* becomes clearer when viewed against “The Expected Product of Education.” In other words, in order to achieve *kuni-zukuri*, including economic growth and industrialization, more was required of *hito-zukuri* than simply training industrial personnel. Ikeda’s concept of education that “cultivates moral virtues” and “fosters a sentiment of love for the motherland” was also indispensable (cf. Lee 2002). Scientific and technological education was an effective way to develop human resources to contribute to the economy and industry in the first case, while moral education was effective to cultivate moral virtues and sentiment—“Japaneseness”—in the second.<sup>5</sup> The structure of the *hito-zukuri* concept can be presented in diagrammatic form, as shown below (Fig. 1).

However, *hito-zukuri* is still used as a catchphrase even today, without any clear, systematic explanation from those who use it. For example, in the Technical Intern Training Program for foreign nationals launched in 2016 under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), *hito-zukuri* is used in the following way.

The Technical Intern Training Program is aimed at transferring skills, technology, and knowledge to developing countries and cooperating in the *hito-zukuri* of those who will undertake economic development in developing countries, to fulfill Japan’s role as an advanced country and facilitate the harmonious development of international society (MHLW 2022).

No more explicit explanation of *hito-zukuri* is provided.<sup>6</sup> The Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees, which formed the legal basis for the Technical Intern Training Program, does not use the word *hito-zukuri*. Article 1 states the purpose of the Act as follows: “promoting international cooperation through the transfer of skills, technique, and knowledge [...] to developing countries and other regions through human resource development.”

*Hito-zukuri* could be expected to refer to moral education as well as scientific and technological education. However, whether intentionally or otherwise, the Act contains no mention of morality. This phenomenon—the omission of moral education—also occurs in the context of international development. Given Japan’s history

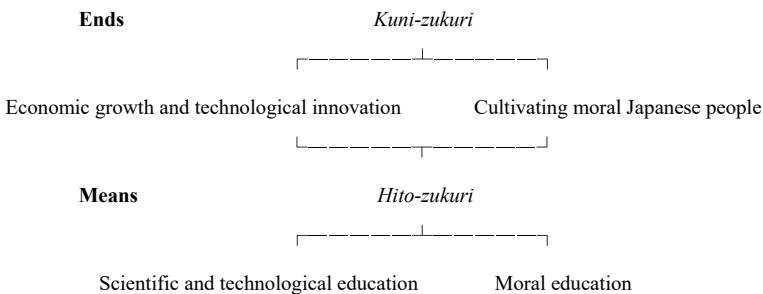


Fig. 1 Structure of the concept of *hito-zukuri* (prepared by the author)

as a colonial power, Japan is not in a position to openly advocate education in morality for other countries, precisely because of its links with culture and value perceptions.

#### 4 The Distinctiveness of *Hito-zukuri*

If *hito-zukuri* were synonymous with personnel training limited to skills, techniques, and knowledge, then it would overlap with the concept of human resources development. Human resources development, with its background in human capital theory, is generally explained as “both the aim and specific methods used to grow human resources, including the development of human abilities, skills, and techniques, and the fostering of leadership” (International Development Journal 2014, p. 165). Human resources development is the same as *hito-zukuri* in terms of its involvement in human skills and techniques, and in the way it perceives humans as resources for development. It is also possible to regard *hito-zukuri* as identical to the concept of capacity development (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 1995, p. 48). Certainly, recalling the case of the ASEAN Human Resources Development Center (the “ASEAN *Hito-zukuri* Center” in Japanese), both *hito-zukuri* and capacity development share the feature of “including not only personnel training but also the development of organizations and systems” (JICA et al. 2013, p. 2).

Regarding Japan’s domestic development, however, *hito-zukuri* has a different meaning from terms such as human resources development and capacity development. *Hito-zukuri* contains an element of moral education that is absent from human resources development and capacity development. In fact, this difference has been pointed out before in the context of practice and research on international development. *Hito-zukuri* “cannot necessarily be fully understood in terms of human resources development from an economics standpoint. It is a uniquely Japanese concept, connoting multi-faceted elements;” it emphasizes personal interaction and mutual understanding in assistance and cooperation activities (Kanda and Kuwajima 2005, pp. 3–6). Moreover, *hito-zukuri* embodies “Japan’s traditional techniques and spirit” or “the experiences and feeling of pride in history that Japan has fostered” (JICA et al. 2013, p. 163). This spirit and feeling can be conveyed only through personal interaction. *Hito-zukuri* is further characterized as “the integration of *practical learning*, linked directly to work and life, with *moral education* as a member of the nation and society” (Yamada et al. 2019, p. 167; author’s emphasis). Its aim is summarized as “the *acquisition of practical knowledge and techniques* as well as *character building*” (Yamada et al. 2019, p. 167; author’s emphasis). *Hito-zukuri* aims to improve the recipients of assistance and cooperation, not only technically but also “morally” (Yamada 2016, p. 194).

The international development debate was not, in fact, based on the historical background of *hito-zukuri* in the context of Japan’s domestic development. Nevertheless, the international and domestic development debates concur on two points. First, they both emphasize involvement in the internal, or psychological, life of recipients—including spirit, morality, and character—in addition to skills, techniques, and

knowledge, and both summarize *hito-zukuri* in terms of education, using Japan's experience as a model. As far as "models" are concerned, it is also possible to view *hito-zukuri* as the transmission of case studies in the "failure" of Japanese domestic development. Within Japan, *hito-zukuri* was glorified in hindsight to make up for development "problems." Therefore, internationally, it could be proposed to avoid these "problems" before they arose.<sup>7</sup>

Second, in both cases, *hito-zukuri* does not simply target people in general but, specifically, those seen as undeveloped or uncivilized. In the context of domestic development, this term was attached to children, youths, and others who fell below certain threshold of independence. In the context of international development, *hito-zukuri* targets so-called developing countries, not G7 nations. In 1964, *hito-zukuri* was used in the context of policies for foreign students (Saitō 2011, p. 7), but in this case, it was students from Asian countries, not the United States, that the policy-makers had in mind. The Technical Intern Training Program, although ostensibly targeting all foreigners, is in fact an international cooperation policy targeting developing regions. French nationals, for example, are not the "foreigners" envisaged by the program's authors. Yet nobody would suggest that developed countries no longer engage in economic growth and technological innovation. One can only conclude that, in terms of the selection of targets, a system of stratification is at work in *hito-zukuri*.

Recalling the fact that *hito-zukuri* comprises both scientific and technological education and moral education, it is therefore implied that the Other at whom *hito-zukuri* is targeting not only has an insufficient level of skills, techniques, and knowledge but is also considered to be morally insufficient. At the same time, *hito-zukuri* is predicated on the assumption that the initiator is able to improve the target, not only in terms of skills, techniques, and knowledge but also in terms of morality. The content of the skills, techniques, and knowledge, and also of the morality—the "Japaneseness"—is derived from Japan's own experience of development. It is expected, then, that *hito-zukuri* based on this content will be implemented not only through school education and vocational training but through all aspects of the Japanese government's assistance and cooperation efforts. If one were to rephrase this in the form of an implicit *hito-zukuri* ideal, then it would be something along the lines of "become like a Japanese person."

## 5 When the *Hito-zukuri* is Justified: An Ethics of Development

The meaning of *hito-zukuri* in Japanese boils down to the combination of education in science and technology and education in morality. However, the term "*hito-zukuri*" is not used interchangeably with "education." Given Japan's history as a colonial power, education is not something that can be openly promoted in other countries. Moreover, the moral education incorporated into *hito-zukuri* is rooted in

specific culture and value perceptions. The substance of this morality is “Japaneseness,” which means not only valuing private exchange and mutual understanding in development activities and respecting Japanese experiences and technology, but also paying homage to the Japanese collectivist spirit.<sup>8</sup> This is not something that Japan can advertise as its guiding motivation. It is for this reason that the moral education aspect of *hito-zukuri* is not openly explained in the context of international development and international cooperation. The difficulty in translating the term *hito-zukuri* lies precisely in this enigmatic, two-sided nature: the blending of education in science and technology and education in morality, with the morality aspect obscured. *Hito-zukuri* is not simply human resources development; nor is it capacity development. Translating *hito-zukuri* as such further obscures its morality aspect. Morality is the semantic condition that defines the term *hito-zukuri* against alternatives such as human resources development.

The target of *hito-zukuri* could be added as an objective condition. Although *hito-zukuri* contains the word *hito*—people in general—in the international context it actually refers specifically to people in *developing* countries. The adult populations of *developed* countries—including Japan—are excluded. A tacit limitation exists on who is eligible to receive *hito-zukuri*. In this chapter, I have called this limitation a “stratification.” People in developing countries lack not only skills, techniques, and knowledge, but also morality, and the Japanese government can supplement this lack—this is the premise on which *hito-zukuri*, with its morality and stratification, is established.

Based on these two empirical conditions, semantic and objective, I would like, in conclusion, to propose one more normative condition for *hito-zukuri*: an ethical one. If one understands “morality” as a term used by the group to force individuals to adapt to its dominant behavior, and “ethics” as resistance by individuals to group morality (Ebisaka 1997; Tsurumi 1997), then *hito-zukuri* is indeed moral. It is not, however, ethical. Of course, neither development nor education is ethical per se: both, to a greater or lesser extent, look at the other by one’s own standard, and seek to bring the other up to that standard (Hashimoto 2018). *Hito-zukuri* is not unique in this sense. However, *hito-zukuri*’s morality and stratification make it prone to a heightened attitude of self-righteousness originally found in development and education. It is precisely because of this fact that, when targeting others with assistance and cooperation in the name of *hito-zukuri*, it is vital to constantly review the desirability of one’s own standards. We must question the ethics of *hito-zukuri*: not of those who receive it but of those who deliver it. When we discuss and practice *hito-zukuri*, we should not be satisfied with pointing empirically that *hito-zukuri* has morality and stratification; each of us must normatively reflect what the ethics of *hito-zukuri* is for oneself.

## Notes

1. There is an expression “*hito-zukuri kyōryoku*” in Japanese, meaning “*hito-zukuri* cooperation.” This expression suggests indirect involvement in *hito-zukuri* in another place. In this chapter, I refer only to *hito-zukuri*, and seek to elucidate the *hito-zukuri* concept. This is because in order to clarify *hito-zukuri* cooperation, it is first necessary to clarify *hito-zukuri* itself.
2. The Japanese government embarked on *hito-zukuri* in an era when human capital theory was becoming a focus of worldwide attention and when the importance of the role played by education in economic development was gaining recognition.
3. The Japanese government’s increased focus on “basic education” did not necessarily imply a focus on the human rights of individuals or individuals as the purpose of development. “Education is by no means simply a tool for economic development. Education is concerned with the formation of ‘knowledge, skills, and values,’ and in that sense is deeply entwined with national cultures. Schools are not simply places that teach ‘reading, writing, and arithmetic.’ What is important is to nurture the qualities needed by members of modern society. Training within the school organization—taking part in progressive lessons from the appointed starting time to the appointed finishing time, while remaining attentive to the directions of the teacher and the rest of the class—is largely responsible for teaching students judgment as members of an organization: an understanding of aspects of work such as preparations, planning, and procedure. In other words, schools are places where, in addition to learning reading, writing, and arithmetic, students engage in group training. Schools are irreplaceable as modern organizations in developing countries, where there is a lack of such organizations” (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 1989, p. 2). This passage shows a collectivist understanding of schools. Likewise, it has been pointed out that “human security,” which was subsequently proposed with the aim of respecting individuality, was subject to a collectivist interpretation in Japan, far removed from its original meaning (Kaldor 2011).
4. This chapter examines the Japanese government’s use of *hito-zukuri*. It does not go into detail on how Japanese citizens accepted or resisted it and how the private sector utilized it. To give just one example, a contemporary of Hayato Ikeda, Yasuzaemon Matsunaga, who was involved in the electric power business, developed a discussion of the “excellence of the Japanese people” in a book entitled *Hito-zukuri* (Matsunaga 1965).
5. Ikeda’s *hito-zukuri* has been assessed as a “duality of economics and spirit” or “a two-horse cart pulled by education in science and technology on the one hand, and moral education on the other” (Nagasu 1962, p. 101).
6. The Keidanren Japan Business Federation (2013) also uses the term *hito-zukuri* without any explanation.
7. There is an apparent tendency in the education and development fields to engage in the international transmission of recent ostensible successes of schools, universities, and corporations in one’s own country, and to link this with opening up markets in developing countries. In Japan too, bodies including the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) are promoting EDU-Port Japan, a public–private initiative “to proactively introduce Japanese-style education overseas.” There is no clear indication of the criteria for assessing the success of this initiative, however, and its design and operation remain somewhat arbitrary (Hashimoto 2019). In order to learn from *hito-zukuri*, not only its successes but also, equally, its “failures” should be disclosed. Of course, as argued later in this chapter, pressuring others to accept these experiences as models, either of success or failure, should be avoided.
8. *Hito-zukuri* is sometimes characterized as collectivism (Sato 2021, pp. 189–216).



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# Endogenous Development: Situating Kazuko Tsurumi's Work in International Development



Kanako Omi

**Abstract** Endogenous development theory (*naihatsuteki hattenron*) by Kazuko Tsurumi frequently appears in Japanese development discourse. However, although the idea of endogenous development has been discussed in international development discourse as well, the specifics of Tsurumi's theory have not been widely adopted. This chapter reviews the genealogy of endogenous development both in the West and Japan. Through its comparison, the chapter presents the features of Tsurumi's endogenous development theory rooted in the Asian development experience. It then discusses how the theory might be applied in the contemporary development context and concludes by making a case for Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* in international development research and practice.

**Keywords** Endogenous development · Another development · Modernization · Social change · International development

## 1 Introduction

The concept of endogenous development, or development from within, frequently appears in Japanese discourse on development. Endogenous development, as used in Japan, is usually traced to the work of sociologist Kazuko Tsurumi, who theorized it as *naihatsuteki hattenron* (endogenous development theory, 内発的発展論). Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* has been applied in a wide range of fields in Japan, including economics and rural studies, and has served as a reference point for carrying out international development cooperation and community development in Japan (Inui 2017; Matsumoto 2017).

Conversely, this theory is little known internationally (Sato 2011). This is also the realization of the author, who studied development at a graduate school in England. Needless to say, concepts and ideas similar to endogenous development have often been discussed in Western development theory. Most symbolic, for example, was

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the criticism of modern industrialization under the idea of “another development” proposed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (1975). Although not referring to the works of Tsurumi, Holcombe (2014) has called for an endogenous development approach in development assistance projects in Africa, defining endogenous development as a process in which the regions and people of developing countries take the initiative in their development. Moreover, this perspective has similarities with other concepts of development approaches such as participatory development approaches, which emphasize and place importance on local residents taking the initiative in development projects. While it may seem difficult to recognize clear differences between these existing development concepts and theories, Miller (2014) suggests that endogenous development is unique in that it emphasizes consideration for the natural environment and the use of local traditional culture and traditional knowledge.

During the 1970s, adverse effects of modern industrialization, such as environmental pollution and human rights violations, were becoming evident throughout the world. Criticism towards development policies that focused solely on economic growth was becoming increasingly strident in international discourse. Under such circumstances, Tsurumi proposed *naihatsuteki hattenron* as a theory of social change, seeking a third path, separate from both modernization theory born in the West and the dependency theory that critiqued it (Tsurumi 1989). The theory was based on the idea that communities should be able to seek diverse development paths in line with their natural ecosystems and traditional cultures and lifestyles. While the meaning of development was often recognized as synonymous to Western modernization in those days, the development (*hatten*) in Tsurumi’s *naihatsuteki hattenron* does not hold such a connotation. Tsurumi explains that in her theory, development does not refer solely to Western modernization, but should be based on the presumption of multiple systems on a global scale (Tsurumi 1989). Today, more than half a century later, the significance of Tsurumi’s *naihatsuteki hattenron* seems even more relevant.

This chapter organizes and compares Tsurumi’s *naihatsuteki hattenron* in terms of how it is rooted in the Asian experience, how it differs from similar Western ideas on endogenous development, and in what ways it offers a new perspective. It also discusses considerations for applying the theory in contemporary development context and concludes by making a case for “translating” and “updating” Tsurumi’s *naihatsuteki hattenron* to build on her work in international development research and practice.

## 2 A History of Endogenous Development

### 2.1 *Endogenous Development in International Development History*

The usage of the term “endogenous” can be traced to the work of American sociologist Talcott Parsons in *An Outline of the Social System* (1961), where he presented a typology consisting of endogenous and exogenous changes as a conceptual tool for analyzing social change. Drawing on Parsons’s work, sociologists—particularly those based in the West—began classifying societies into two types based on whether industrialization in a given society was instigated domestically (endogenous change) or in imitation of a process elsewhere (exogenous change). Britain, the cradle of the industrial revolution, the United States, and Western European countries, which followed in Britain’s footsteps, were placed in the endogenous development category and labeled as developed nations. Other nations were classified under the rubric of exogenous development and were assumed to be able to catch up with the West by imitating the Western development model.

This typology of social change was influenced by the modernization ideology widespread in the West at that time. Modernization theory was proposed by various Western researchers. A particularly well-known example was Rostow’s (1959) social development model, which proposed five stages of economic growth: (1) the traditional society, (2) the preconditions for take-off, (3) take-off, (4) the drive to maturity, and (5) the age of high mass consumption. These stage development models to social change served as reference points to view Western modernization as the sole model of development.

The emergence of endogenous development ideas could also be traced back to the nineteenth century. When Britain became the “factory of the world” in the nineteenth century, the liberalism and universalism of British political economics began to engulf the world, Nishikawa articulates that endogenous thinking emerged as an opposing ideology in areas such as Germany, France, and the United States (Nishikawa 1989). Samuel Smiles’ work *Self-Help* (1859) is also considered influential in promoting endogenous thinking in the nineteenth century. Smiles’ idea of self-help suggested that one’s progress is not dependent on laws and institutions but on the independent and self-reliant actions and efforts of each individual.

Furthermore, ideas that forged endogenous development thinking are found in the movements of the “third world” countries in the early twentieth century, in particular in Zedong Mao’s slogan of “self-reliance” in China and Gandhi’s philosophy of “Swaraj” in India. Mao adopted the thought of socialist revolution, which has its origins in and against Western societies, and translated the idea to fit to China’s indigenous conditions using the Buddhist term “self-reliance” (Nishikawa 1989). In India, Gandhi critiqued the Western modernization process critically in 1908 for not expanding people’s well-being but as exaggerating people’s thirst for materialistic needs. He talks of “Swaraj,” meaning “self-rule,” as the foundation for India’s freedom from British colonial rule.

It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands [...] But such Swaraj has to be experienced, by each one for himself (Gandhi 1908, pp. 68–69).

Regardless of the emergence of ideas related to endogenous development as stated above, the presumption that development is synonymous to Western modernization was strengthened further after World War II due to the international situation, which directly influenced international development policy. The establishment of U.S. hegemony, the Cold War structure, and the independence of Asian and African former colonies led Western countries in the 1950 and 1960s to emphasize development assistance as a “containment” strategy to prevent the expansion of communist power in emerging countries (Suzuki 2001). The modernization theory supported this strategy. The development strategies based on the modernization theory established along these lines were dominated by an approach that transplanted the Western experience of modernization directly to developing countries. It was claimed that if developing countries succeed in modernization through development, they would be able to “catch up” with the advanced societies of the West (Suzuki 2001). Therefore, development projects took the approach of technology transfer under the assumption that developed countries had advanced technology and knowledge. This approach often lacked consideration for local communities’ point of view and natural ecosystems.

Aid recipient nations were critical of this approach, and post-development theorists were vociferous in their criticism. In the midst of this discourse, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation<sup>1</sup> presented a report, *What Now*, on the occasion of the Seventh Special Session on Economics of the United Nations General Assembly in 1975 (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 1975). According to Nishikawa (1989), this report was the first to frame endogenous development in the context of international development cooperation. It defined endogenous development as follows:

If development is the development of man, [...] it cannot but stem from the inner core of each society. It relies on what a human group has: its natural environment, its cultural heritage, the creativity of the men and women who constitute it, becoming richer through exchange between them and with other groups. It entails the autonomous definition of development styles and of lifestyles. This is the meaning of an endogenous and self-reliant development (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 1975, p. 34).

The Foundation’s report referred to development that is endogenous and based on self-reliance as “another development,”<sup>2</sup> and advocated seeking alternatives to conventional approaches to development. This was consistent with trends in discourse on development, such as Seers’ *The Meaning of Development* (1969) and the *Limits to Growth* report by the Club of Rome (1972). Behind this “another development” also lay the fact that colonized nations such as Tanzania and Indonesia had begun to take steps toward independence under the banner of self-reliance, seeking to take the lead in developing their countries (Sato 2021). The initial concept of endogenous development, which was regarded as virtually synonymous with self-reliance, strongly implied a situation in which developing nations became independent from their dependency on advanced countries and development aid institutions.

Since the publication of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation report, the concept of endogenous development attracted greater attention in the international development

community, particularly at the United Nations University (UNU) and UNESCO. At UNESCO, research projects on issues regarding cultural aspects in endogenous development took form in the late 1970s and published various reports on the issue<sup>3</sup> (Nishikawa 1989). Similarly, at the UNU, an international symposium “Asian Symposium on Intellectual Creativity of Endogenous Culture” was held in 1978 (Mushakoji and Tsurumi 2004). In 1979, the research project *Endogenous Intellectual Creativity and the New International Order: with Special Reference to East Asia* was launched in UNU (Nishikawa 1989). However, despite the shared interest by academia, especially from the developing countries, the endogenous development concept did not take root or become widely accepted as an international development strategy in the following years (Mushakoji and Tsurumi 2004).

Esteva attributes this to the fact that its emphasis on recipients' autonomy runs counter to the premise of the need for outside intervention upon which international development is based (Esteva 1992). Furthermore, in response to the deteriorating global economic outlook beginning in the late 1970s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment policy began that adopted strict conditionalities on financial aid to developing nations (Suzuki 2001). Inevitably, the very limited scope left for autonomous initiatives by developing nations also stymied the mainstream debate of endogenous development.

Nevertheless, the concept of endogenous development was not entirely forgotten. In early 1990s, a joint platform known as the COMPAS network was created, with endogenous development as its main focus. Universities, non-governmental organizations, and community organizations from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America participated in the COMPAS network (COMAPS 2007). Each project engaged in research and conducted a broad spectrum of rural development and community development projects worldwide reflecting the endogenous development approach.

Building on existing initiatives and programmes of these organisations, the Compas network and its partners have been experimenting since the mid 1990s with ways to develop effective approaches and methods to support endogenous development in interaction with local communities and their leaders (COMPAS 2007, p. 2).

Endogenous means ‘growing from within’. Endogenous development is, therefore, development based on people's own resources, strategies and initiatives. The available resources and solutions developed at the grassroots include material, socio-cultural and spiritual dimensions. It is local people with their own resources, values, knowledge and organisations who drive local development. Support to endogenous development aims at strengthening the resource base of the local population, enhancing their ability to integrate selected external elements into local practices and to broaden the options available to the people, without romanticising their local views and practices (COMPAS 2007, p. 1).

Their endogenous development projects formulated various community based activities. For example, there were projects to create manuals compiling traditional knowledge aimed at preserving the local environment. Another was a governance-strengthening initiative that respected a region's traditional feudal system. As its rationale for undertaking this kind of endogenous development, COMPAS cited the lack of respect for traditional customs, culture, and knowledge exhibited by many conventional international development cooperation projects



(COMPAS 2007). In order for local regions to achieve development by capitalizing on their own resources, COMPAS called for policy dialogue and skills development on the adoption of an endogenous development approach (Boonzaaijer and Apusigah 2008).

The COMPAS network as a program ended in 2011. The accumulated knowledge from their community-based activities across the globe has contributed to spreading the idea of endogenous development especially in certain community-based international NGOs and universities.<sup>4</sup> Holcombe (2014) has utilized this lineage to advocate endogenous development in Africa. Her work highlights the effectiveness of the endogenous development approach in international development practice and emphasizes its potential in the African context.

Voices from Africa may call for endogenous approaches to development, meaning variously African-defined and led development or more specifically development, particularly at the community level, that is based on community values and customs. There are multiple barriers within the African environment to moving towards any of these dimensions of endogenous development. Key among these are weak governance at all levels, and the focus of endogenous development on the local as opposed to the national (Holcombe 2014, p. 757).

## ***2.2 The Concept of Endogenous Development in Japan: Tsurumi's Contribution and Its Impact***

“*Wa-kon yō-sai*” is a phrase used in Japan, which means “Japanese spirit with Western learning.” It means learning technologies and knowledge from Western countries, while maintaining the spirit and value system inherent in its own Japanese society. The phrase was popularized as a slogan by the Meiji Japan government (1868–1912) to contain risk inherent in modernization after more than two centuries of national isolation. The slogan was intended so that Japan might modernize without losing its own identity. This slogan was modified from the phrase “*wa-kon kan-sai*,” meaning “Japanese spirit with Chinese learning.” Before the Western influence, Japan received influences from China in various aspects of nation-building. Looking back at this long history from “*wa-kon kan-sai*” to “*wa-kon yō-sai*” and beyond, Hirakawa (1971) argues that this history of encounter with foreign influence over time has created a common psychological pattern among Japanese people to unconsciously think in terms of what is from “within” and what is from “outside.”

More than half a century before Parsons presented his typology consisting of endogenous and exogenous development, the literary giant Sōseki Natsume stated in a lecture he delivered titled “Modern Japan’s Civilization (*Gendai Nihon no Kaika*)” in 1907 that Western civilization was endogenous in nature, whereas civilization in Meiji Japan was exogenous (Natsume 1986, p. 26). Many scholars, including Tsurumi, see this as the first usage of the term “endogenous.”

The Meiji government was dismayed by the gap between the technological capacities of Japanese and Western civilizations. They were desperate to catch up with the West. The race to do so through modernization led to prosperity, but much of Japan’s

social system, culture, and customs disappeared as a result of the rapid industrialization and centralization of power. Many intellectuals shared the concerns of Natsume.<sup>5</sup> One of them was Kunio Yanagita,<sup>6</sup> who is said to be the father of Japanese folklore studies. Yanagita's work documented the un-written stories and folklores that tell indigenous beliefs and the lived experiences of the "common man (*jō-min*)" in rural Japan. While the Japanese government and majority of Japanese citizens were busy transplanting technology, knowledge, and lifestyles from Western countries to accelerate Japan's industrial modernization, Yanagita feared that the perspectives of common man would be forgotten. For Yanagita, leaving out the common man's perspective meant a loss of values that were inherited in each locality based on their own beliefs and lifestyles. Tsurumi was inspired by his work and interpreted his approach as a method to understand organic forms of social change process, which she later termed endogenous development.

Having explained the roots of the Japanese concept of endogenous development, we will now turn to briefly introduce Tsurumi's history. Tsurumi studied comparative modernization theory under Professor Marion Levy at Princeton University, receiving her doctorate in the United States in 1966. Her doctoral research analyzed the relationship between social change and the individual before and after the Pacific War in Japan. By researching Japan's social change, Tsurumi questioned the applicability of the established modernization theory to non-Western countries. She came to think that modernization theory was constructed on the basis of development in the developed nations, particularly those of the United States and Britain, and that a different path of development and process of social change should exist for other regions and nations.

After returning to Japan, Tsurumi established a research group named "Study Group for Rethinking Modernization Theory." She and her colleagues began to explore approaches to endogenous development in Japan during its period of rapid economic growth. This was when Tsurumi discovered Yanagita's work and interpreted his folklore studies as a theory of social change grounded in Japanese experiences. Based on this interpretation of Yanagita's work, Tsurumi published a paper titled "Kunio Yanagita's Work as a Model of Endogenous Development" (1975), in which she first adopted the term "endogenous development."

The implication of Yanagita's approach for a theory of modernization of latecomers is that we should study their development not through the concepts of a single model, but through diverse models, proving endogenously oriented development among the common people as well as the exogenously oriented course of modernization likely to be led by industrializing elites (Tsurumi 1975, p. 236).

Around 1976, when Tsurumi's framework of endogenous development theory had begun to *coalesce around* the study of Yanagita's work, Tsurumi joined the Shiranui Sea Comprehensive Academic Research Team<sup>7</sup> and commenced fieldwork in Minamata, a site of severe mercury poisoning in Japan. Tsurumi later related that the idea of endogenous development was further inspired by this fieldwork experience, which illustrates the immense impact of what she saw and heard in Minamata (Tsurumi 1998). Tsurumi's fieldwork there added a tangible human element to the

theory of endogenous development that had begun to emerge based on Yanagita's folklore studies. With more confidence that there needs to be a theory to explain social change from a non-Western perspective, Tsurumi further expanded her case study of endogenous development in Thailand's and Sri Lanka's self-help movements, and China's rural town industrialization processes. Each of these case studies illustrates that interaction between drifters, temporary drifters, and settlers is essential to create opportunities for acquiring new knowledge that induce endogenous social change. By articulating autonomous forms of social change in these three case studies utilizing Yanagita's work, Tsurumi proposed her endogenous development theory—*naihatsuteki hattenron*. In her theory, she defines endogenous development as follows:

Endogenous development [...] is a process of social change that is rich in diversity. ... It involves the creation of conditions whereby all people and nations on earth can meet their basic needs in terms of food, clothing, shelter, and health care and can each achieve their full individual potential. [...] Based on their cultural heritage (tradition), people and groups in each region create their autonomous path to that goal and society and lifestyle that allow these aims to be achieved, in line with their unique natural ecosystem while also drawing on imported knowledge, technologies, systems and so on (Tsurumi 1989, p. 49).

The analytical framework used to understand the process of endogenous development proposed in the theory could be summarized in three points. First, Tsurumi clearly states that the unit of analysis shall be that of the local community. Second, by building on Yanagita's work, the analysis will focus on the interactions between drifters, temporary drifters, and settlers to understand the flow of knowledge transmitted and created in the community. When analyzing the individuals who make up the community, Tsurumi proposes to use these three categories to understand human interactions in the local community in order to identify opportunities for endogenous knowledge creation (Tsurumi 1993). Referring to a story of a Minamata disease patient's interaction with a Canadian Indian who had the same disease, Tsurumi realized that, "By cross-checking our mutual experiences, we became aware of the contextuality and commonality of our experiences" (Tsurumi 1983, p. 235). Tsurumi believes that the exchange between settlers and drifters is the key to achieve contextualization and universalization of what people in the local community experience, of matters that would be difficult to recognize if the community were only inward looking and not interacting with the outer world (Tsurumi 1983). This understanding of the state of a community becomes especially important as Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* encourages local communities' eco-system to be in the state of an open system, rather than a closed eco-system, in order to realize endogenous development. In other words, being endogenous does not mean turning inward in a closed way, rejecting influence from others. Rather, it places importance on the openness of the local community for endogenous development. Because the etymology of the theory's name gives the impression that it rejects local communities' engagement with others in order to be endogenous. Even in Japan, there seems to be confusion whether the theory encourages interaction with the outer world or not.

Finally, Tsurumi's emphasis is placed on recreating local traditions as a key process in realizing endogenous development. Tradition is defined here as "a pattern

(structure) that has been passed down from generation to generation in a given region” (Tsurumi 1989, p. 58). Therefore, she states the need to identify and analyze the personal history of “key persons” who initiate endogenous development processes (Tsurumi 1989). Understanding who, in what circumstances, has the potential to create and update local traditions and how they initiate the process is articulated in detail. What becomes important, then, is the “key person” theory that Tsurumi borrowed from Saburo Ichii. Tsurumi uses Ichii’s definition of a “key person” who is rooted in the community and practices re-creation of traditions. Ichii conceptualized key persons as those people who are able to choose his or her own creative suffering and take on that suffering for himself or herself, in order to alleviate suffering from unjust in a society (Ichii 1963).

It is important to note that Tsurumi did not propose endogenous development theory as a definitive one, but as a work-in-progress theory that requires further research. She provided constant reminders that to achieve the vision of endogenous development happening spontaneously in different communities across the globe, the theory needs to be challenged and updated with more case studies from different localities (Tsurumi 1989).

After she had independently devised the idea of endogenous development, Tsurumi learned of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation report. She stated that her concept of endogenous development and the “another development” described in that report could be considered virtually synonymous. As reasons for this, she cited the fact that the definition of “another development” in the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation report was based on communities (groups) as the unit of change and the fact that the report mentioned a harmonious relationship with the natural environment, local cultural heritage (tradition), and the creativity of people (Tsurumi 1989). Nevertheless, Tsurumi remained committed to continue to use the term “endogenous” development. For the rest of her life, she sought to formulate an endogenous development theory distinct from that of “another development.” Her work continued to emphasize the point that not only advanced nations but also less developed nations and regions have their distinct endogenous modes of development, which exist independently rather than in reference to that based on Western modernization theory. From this perspective, the phrase “another development” falls into a dualism of modernization theory or an alternative. Tsurumi (1999) argued that “endogenous” refers to development not based on “*an* other development,” but on pluralistic advocacy of multiple developmental trajectories.

Tsurumi’s endogenous development formulated a theory of social change that explores different modes of development in forms compatible with each community’s unique ecosystem (the complex of culture, nature, and lifestyle). Today, many researchers use her theory as an analytical framework for conducting case studies of community development inside and outside of Japan. In Japan in particular, Tsurumi’s *naihatsuteki hattenron* continues to attract interest today, for example in relation to rural revitalization in face of rural depopulation.

Nevertheless, Tsurumi’s theory has also been criticized for failing to incorporate clear implications for policy and for lacking a frame of reference for analyzing power structures (Matsumoto 2017). Cross-disciplinary efforts have been made to

overcome these drawbacks. For example, the economist Ken'ichi Miyamoto has presented principles of endogenous development that incorporated a more practical perspective,<sup>8</sup> and the development economist Jun Nishikawa has researched the endogenous development of developing nations.<sup>9</sup> The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which is responsible for Japan's development cooperation, often conducts research and training aimed at drawing on Japan's experience in community-building to strengthen agricultural communities in developing nations and to develop the capacities of local governments (Kano 2003). Nearly half a century after Tsurumi proposed her endogenous development theory, its impact remains.

### 2.3 *Similarities and Differences*

Analyzing the historical discourse on endogenous development concepts proposed in the Western context and Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* reveals both similarities and differences. Let us first examine the shared features. As is evident from Tsurumi's statement that the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation's definition of endogenous development resembled her notion, the definitions of Tsurumi's endogenous development in Japan; and that of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, used in development practice such as the COMPAS network community development projects, are in some ways commensurate. It is also clear that both theories stem from a similar concern—a critique of development policies that view Western-style modernization as the sole goal of development. Moreover, both are motivated by movements of people in developing countries trying to initiate change. It could also be said that both perspectives recognize the meaning of endogenous as some form of “creativity,” rather than the literal meaning “from within” (*nai* in Japanese; *endo-* in Latin).

One difference between the two is that whereas the Western concept of endogenous development has been discussed in terms of a principle and approach within the framework of development aid and community-building, Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* has been theorized as a matter of social change, as described above. It is not intended as a means of or research method for carrying out development projects. Instead, based on value pluralism, her theory views the process whereby communities undergo autonomous change as a creative phenomenon. Focusing on such phenomena, Tsurumi's theory highlights the efforts made by the local people to achieve social change in diverse communities. Since it drew theoretical support from research by Yanagita, the father of Japanese folklore studies, and was inspired by interactions with local people through fieldwork in Minamata, this theory is firmly rooted in Japanese experiences. Furthermore, as emphasized earlier, Tsurumi attached a strong emphasis on using the term “endogenous” instead of using “another development,” which was more impactful in global discourse. Her motivation strongly lies in the advocacy of diverse paths and models of development, by using the term “endogenous.”

In the following sections, I outline the elements of Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* from four perspectives: its value premises, epistemology, ideology, and analytical perspective.

### 3 The Uniqueness of Tsurumi's Endogenous Development Theory

The characteristics of Tsurumi's endogenous development theory as a theory on development based on Japanese experience could be articulated from four perspectives: (1) compatibility between value pluralism and normativity, (2) the relationship between changes in the lives of ordinary people and social change, (3) the philosophy that humans are a part of nature, and (4) the analytical perspective of endogeneity as creativity.

#### 3.1 *Balancing Value Pluralism and Normativity*

Rather than navigating social change based on a single value standard, Tsurumi's theory of endogenous development is premised on value pluralism. Yet she is not arguing that any change is beneficial. Tsurumi clearly states that endogenous development theory aspires to eliminate unjust aspects of society and the destruction of nature and seeks sustainable social development. Therefore, the theory is value-normative, not value-neutral. This tension between value pluralism and normativity is a feature of Tsurumi's theory.

Tsurumi said that modernization theory, which treats Western experiences as universal, can be supplemented from the views of non-Western societies. Referring to Talcott Parsons's classification of societies into primitive, pre-industrial, and modern in line with their developmental stage, Tsurumi noted that modernization theory is epistemologically premised on a linear "staged model." By contrast, Tsurumi's proposal in endogenous development theory is to view the world as portrayed in Yanagita's folklore studies, where the primitive, ancient, medieval, and modern value systems simultaneously coexist within a society, like a "nest of boxes." This understanding of time seems to refute the superiority or inferiority of any set of values (Tsurumi 1993). Thus, no judgments can be made to say which societies are superior or inferior to another. It is clear from these explanations that Tsurumi's theory is based on value pluralism and that she believes different value systems can coexist.

However, when value pluralism is praised, the risk is to fall into cultural relativism where no criticisms to the other culture can be made. Nevertheless, for Tsurumi, value pluralism does not mean indiscriminately accepting any cultural practices or customs. For example, Tsurumi's theory opposes unjust practices such as discrimination against women and racial discrimination, which is value-explicit and normative.

So how can value pluralism and value-explicit thinking (normativity) be balanced? In response to this question, Tsurumi proposes the idea of setting coexistence as a common value for all beings. In order to achieve this value of coexistence across various layers of difference, Tsurumi believes that animism<sup>10</sup> should be revisited as a motivational structure for endogenous development. She viewed animism as a foundational belief in humans' search for coexistence (Tsurumi 1999).

### ***3.2 The Relationship Between Changes in People's Lives and Social Change***

The second aspect that is particular to Tsurumi's theory of endogenous development is that it seeks to understand social change by analyzing changes in ordinary people's lives. Tsurumi adopted methodological insights from Yanagita's folklore studies and incorporated them into her theory.

An example of the benefits of analyzing changes in people's lives is the way in which accumulating empirical case studies makes it possible to present from non-Western perspectives values that are absent in Western modernization. Yanagita provides an example in relation to marriage in rural Japan. Where marriages arranged by one's parents were the norm, it was possible for young people who belonged to organizations such as local youth activity groups or young women's groups to collectively resist absolute authority in a way that an individual could not. In contrast to individualism regarded as a universal value in Western modernization theory, this case offers a counterexample where continuance of the collective is viewed as beneficial for the protection of the individual. In this way, Tsurumi learned from Yanagita's folklore studies that people's individual histories can reveal ways of thinking that, in Western modernization theory, seem simply contradictory. Tsurumi incorporated this into her concept of endogenous development (1993). The originality of Tsurumi's theory, which emerged by drawing on Yanagita's folklore studies, lies in this attempt to understand changes in society on the basis of people's lives.

### ***3.3 The Philosophy that Humans are a Part of Nature***

The pursuit of development that is in harmony with, rather than destructive of, the natural ecosystem of each society is not unique to Tsurumi's theory of endogenous development. What is distinctive in her theory is the declaration that it is based on an epistemology of human beings as part of nature, instead of regarding the natural ecosystem as subject to human custody and control.

Tsurumi visited Minamata in 1976 and, over the next 5 years, she conducted oral history interviews with 32 people about their personal experiences, focusing on villages with a high incidence of Minamata disease (mercury poisoning) (Tsurumi

1983). In the process, she noticed how Minamata patients, although suffering from poisoning and discrimination, were determined to regenerate. Tsurumi viewed their resolve as a form of endogenous development that emerged from the profound destruction of nature (1998, p. 153). Minamata patients told her they became ill due to the human destruction of nature, so recovery had to begin with restoring their ties to nature (Tsurumi 1998). Tsurumi became firmly convinced that humans were a part of nature after encountering the stories and practices of these Minamata patients (1998). Western modernization theory—and most likely the Western concept of endogenous development—regards humans and nature as separate entities, viewing nature as a resource for development that people monitor, control, and utilize. By contrast, Tsurumi's theory stressed the importance of a sensitivity that learns from personal experience that humans are also a part of nature.

For nature and human beings to coexist, empathy with nature and a sense of unity between nature and humankind are vital. Current knowledge has lost sight of sensitivity. ... I would like to incorporate within knowledge the sensitivity that Minamata patients have toward nature. Only then can we create knowledge that does not involve pollution or the destruction of nature (Tsurumi 1998, pp. 91–92).

The philosophy underpinning Tsurumi's endogenous development theory held that moving toward the desired social change required re-examining the relationship between humans and nature and creating a society where all beings can coexist.

### ***3.4 The Analytical View of Endogeneity as Creativity***

The fourth perspective on Tsurumi's theory is the perception of local endogeneity as autonomous creativity. Her theory is one of creativity based on the community unit.

Taking a clue from the analysis of interactions among newcomers, temporary residents, and long-term residents in Yanagita's folklore studies, Tsurumi argued that incidental encounters between actors trigger creation. This perspective has similarities with the focus of neo-endogenous development theory on networks in and outside a community as social capital. Tsurumi, however, took the view not only that creativity involves diverse ties internally and externally, but also that processes of long-term residents passing on the community's traditions and culture are essential. She argued (1993) that recreating traditions is possible only when there are interactions among settlers, who know the local natural ecosystem well and pass down local traditions; drifters, who have moved to the area from elsewhere; and temporary drifters such as travelers. If knowledge and information do not flow in from outside and a community becomes isolated, it will fall behind the times. Conversely, without long-term residents, there is a one-way influx of knowledge and technologies, which differs in nature from local autonomous creativity. For endogenous development, it is therefore vital to have venues where newcomers and long-term residents can interact, such as festivals that have been traditionally celebrated in the community (Tsurumi 1993). Tsurumi's theory of endogenous development holds that the foundation for



endogenous creation is keeping the community both grounded in local life and open to the outer world.

#### **4 Revisiting Tsurumi's Endogenous Development Theory in a Contemporary Context**

The possibility that Tsurumi's endogenous development theory can further enrich the foundation of international development theory is worth pursuing. However, the world we live in has undergone a major transformation between the 1970s and now. Because the theory is not value-neutral but value-normative, it will be necessary to reexamine its theoretical framework in light of the contemporary context. In addition, because the theory is rooted in the Japanese experiences and some case studies from Asia, it is necessary to consider whether the theoretical framework is appropriate to be applied in other regions as well. This need for reconsideration is also something Tsurumi mentioned before her passing.

It is a challenge for the future to consider how to gradually link various local endogenous development attempts on a global scale, beyond national borders, through the accumulation of case studies on endogenous development (Tsurumi 1989, p. 59).

The first issue to be considered is the framework for analyzing the opportunities for creativity found in Yanagita's folklore of drifters, temporary drifters and settlers. The nature of local communities in Japan has changed dramatically since the time Yanagita and Tsurumi discovered this mechanism. Not only in Japan, but in most countries across the globe, young people from rural villages continue to migrate to cities in search of education and job opportunities, and the various socio-cultural functions that supported rural communities are disappearing. Tsurumi frequently refers to the example of how local festivals function as a meeting place for drifters, temporary drifters, and settlers, and serve as an opportunity for creativity, but the decline in the social function of local communities means that in many cases, these sites have lost their function as well.

For example, in a rural town in Northern Japan, where I have often conducted field-work, I frequently heard stories of local people's dwindling participation at festivals that had originally existed in the community, and that such traditional events had become a mere skeleton, or were not being continued due to lack of bearers. In such circumstances, it is not likely for settlers, drifters and temporary drifters to interact, and foster creativity for social change. For this reason, what was happening in the town was that in-migrants were initiating new events to design a space where newcomers and locals could meet, like what festivals used to do. When considering endogenous development of a community, it will be important for the local community to have some capacity to make change. For many communities, especially those who have inherited traditional ways of doing things over time, finds difficulty in being open to make adjustments or change.

In addition, the increasing mobility of people has recently given rise to the concept of the “related population” (*kankei-jinkō*) in Japan. This is a concept that places value on relationships with people who do not live in the area but visit several times a year. In order to incorporate these new relationships between people and communities into the framework of endogenous development theory, I believe it is necessary to clarify the nature of the connections between each actor and the community in more detail, rather than categorizing the people involved into 3 uniform categories such as drifters, temporary drifters, and permanent residents.

Next, while the main feature of Tsurumi's endogenous development theory lies in defining community as the unit of analysis, defining and setting the boundaries of a community could be difficult especially in the context of developing countries. As we have seen, the case studies that Tsurumi referred to when conceiving her *naihatsuteki hattenron* were not limited to but mainly the cases of Minamata and Yanagita's folklore studies in the Tohoku region of Japan. In Tsurumi's definition, communities are “A place with the potential to create new common bonds through the interaction of settlers, drifters, and temporary drifters” (Tsurumi 1989, p. 53). From this definition, we understand that the meaning of community is not defined by geographical administrative boundaries. However, it is undeniable that such a definition of “community” has its origins in the context of Japan, where communities have not experienced colonial rule by foreign power. On the other hand, in the contexts of most developing countries, foreign powers through colonization or even industrialization had immense impact, such as setting artificial geographical boundaries or demolishing local ethnic groups, its culture, language and traditions. In addition, newly established communities such as those in refugee camps may not fall into the definition of “community” defined by Tsurumi. However, in light of the principles of the *naihatsuteki hattenron*, it is precisely in such areas that we need to capture and understand how endogenous forms of creativity can occur. In this sense, a more context-specific and careful framing of the definition of the “community” might be necessary.

Finally, in keeping with the above problematics, although Tsurumi has put certain emphasis to the notion of the “recreation of traditions” as a critical factor for endogenous development, it must be noted that it would be difficult to do the same in some developing country context for the reasons raised above. Where “organic” forms of communities have been demolished and were strongly influenced by exogenous forces and foreign cultures under colonial rule, identifying “traditions” for endogenous community development would be challenging. No matter the context, what is more important is to explore the creative activities that are emerging among the people who live there today, and to discover the relationships and enabling factors that make it possible. In doing so, if we get too caught up in the idea of recreating “traditions,” we may overlook the opportunities for creativity that are already happening there.

## 5 Conclusion: Situating Tsurumi's Theory in International Development Studies

This chapter reviewed the genealogy of endogenous development thinking in the West and Japan, particularly that of Tsurumi's theory. Both streams of endogenous development thinking were motivated by their critique of the stage-development model view towards development that assumed Western modernization as the sole model, and the rise of former colonized countries seeking their own development path under the slogan of self-reliance. While they share many commonalities, not limited to the points raised here, Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* differs, having its foundation in the Japanese experiences and case studies from other Asian countries.

As we have seen, ideas of development based on self-reliance, and the call for alternative development paradigms, existed long before Tsurumi. Today, the need for development projects to learn from local knowledge, traditions, and to respect natural environment when implementing community development projects, has become the norm in the international development sphere. With that in mind, I would like to conclude this chapter by asking: what does Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* bring to us in the field of development studies?

Tsurumi's biggest contribution is that she theorized the idea of endogenous development as a theory of social change, and articulated the meanings, values and epistemology of what endogenous development means. She successfully presented an analytical framework to understand the process of endogenous development, which will assist our analysis of endogenous development processes when conducting case studies.

Another major contribution is that her theory focuses on people's creativity as a source of social change and highlights encounters with "others" as essential stimuli in unleashing creativity (in her words, the interaction between settlers, drifters, and temporary drifters). From this understanding, we as development researchers or practitioners could reflect on our own positionality, and, further, we could rethink our role in designing encounters that may induce the autonomous agency inherent in the community. In doing so, Tsurumi's analytical framework should be useful.

Finally, I would like to mention that Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* requires us to ask ourselves: what does it mean for communities or people to be endogenous? The development industry has almost unquestionably valued the state of independence or self-sufficiency as an ideal state of human being (Sato 2021). Tsurumi's perspective is to the contrary. She recognizes that people are situated in various kinds of relationships, among and beyond community members. Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* invites us to view a person's autonomy not through their degree of self-sufficiency, but through the person's agency to act according to his or her own values, which are also influenced by the surrounding socio-cultural and natural environments. From this point of view, setting self-sufficiency as an indicator of human development becomes inadequate. It challenges us to think how we could construct a more relational view to understanding human agency. This is something Tsurumi has left for our generation to think about.

One response to this understanding of human agency would be to question how Tsurumi's *naihatsuteki hattenron* would react to communities that are systematizing the oppression of certain members of the community (such as gender discrimination, and other minority issues). The author believes that this is exactly why it was important for Tsurumi to emphasize that communities should be open systems, welcoming interactions, and learning new ways of thinking and doing things, so as to obtain opportunities for self-reflection and social change. There is much to do in development studies to study and facilitate learning among various communities across the globe and to validate the importance of a facilitator's role in the international development community.

## Notes

1. The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation is a non-governmental organization that was established in 1962. The organization aims to accelerate dialogue and policy that contributes to the sustainable development and peace.
2. In my view, endogeneity and self-reliance are, strictly speaking, different concepts. Self-reliance was an idea originally formulated by colonized countries in an effort to spearhead their own development to resist domination by advanced nations. The concept of self-reliance extols the process of not depending on advanced nations or aid institutions, whereas endogenous development does not necessarily reject external ties.
3. For example, Ribes et al. (1981), Reiffers et al. (1982), and Tri et al. (1986).
4. Although removed from the context of international development cooperation, neo-endogenous development theory is now being advocated in the context of rural studies in Europe. For reference, the following studies provide a comprehensive overview: (Ray 2000; Gkartziou and Lowe 2019).
5. Other thinkers of the time who shared the sense of crisis about the excessive Westernization of the early Meiji period are, to name a few, Soho Tokutomi, Setsurei Miyake, Shigetaka Shiga, Katsunan Kuga, etc.
6. The folklore scholar Kunio Yanagita (1875–1962) is known as the founder of folklore studies in Japan. Setting out from the question of why Japanese farmers were poor, he studied agricultural administration and then worked as a government official handling agricultural matters. While visiting villages around Japan and conducting surveys, he came to believe that the culture of everyday life in agricultural villages and these people's folk beliefs and folklore contained hints for considering Japan's modernization, and he switched careers to become a folklorist. Yanagita's house in Tokyo was across the road from Kazuko Tsurumi's family home, and she was on friendly terms with him from when she was about 29 years old.
7. The Shiranui Sea Comprehensive Academic *Research* Team was a team of 12 people, including researchers, doctors, and teachers, that was formed to carry out investigations over a 5-year period between 1976 and 1981 in Minamata in Kumamoto Prefecture, the site of Minamata disease. Minamata disease is known as one of Japan's four major diseases caused by industrial pollution.
8. As his principles of endogenous development, Miyamoto cited (1) endogeneity, (2) synthesis of aims, (3) industrial development, and (4) the participation of local residents. After developing an argument that incorporated the role of administration, which does not appear in Tsurumi's theory, he focused on the practical question of how to ensure that community-building activities are not short-lived but are sustainable (Miyamoto 2010).
9. See, for example, (Nishikawa 2001, 2014).

10. Animism was originally a term coined by an English anthropologist. It refers to the belief that all things, even abstract concepts, have their own distinct spiritual essence (Tsurumi 1998). This means that people who believe in animism can respond to nature and things, as well as phenomena.

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# *Yōsei-Shugi*: The Mystery of the Japanese Request-Based Aid



Jin Sato

**Abstract** It is intriguing how the request-based principle, which started as little more than a name for project formulation procedures, has come to attain a philosophy-like status in Japanese aid.<sup>1</sup> This chapter examines three aspects of this mystery: (1) the context that elevated this practice to the status of a principle (*shugi*), (2) the basic logic used by the Japanese government to substantiate such a principle, and (3) the effects it had on recipient countries. This chapter argues that the request-based principle is a historical vestige that reveals the peculiarity of Japan as a latecomer to the field of foreign aid. The request-based principle has endured as a consistent undercurrent of Japanese aid since the end of the war, but it only attained the status of a principle in the late 1980s. By tracing the evolution of aid to practices of the war reparations period in the 1950s, this chapter explores how this principle became institutionalized as a defining feature of the “Japanese style” of aid provision.

**Keywords** Request-based principle · Tied aid · War reparations · Procedure-led system

## 1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to clarify an important aspect of Japan’s approach to aid provision by examining *yōsei-shugi* (the “request-based” principle, 要請主義), which has been an enduring undercurrent in Japanese aid practice. Although providing development assistance in response to recipient requests is a logical and principled approach that many donor countries follow, this chapter examines how the practice of request-based procedures has been elevated to philosophy-like status in Japan.

*Yōsei-shugi* demands scholarly attention not only because of its lack of prominence even in Japanese literature but also because of its ambiguity as a policy concept. Exploring the ambiguity of *yōsei-shugi* may help crystalize the essence of Japan’s

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ODA (Official Development Assistance), highlighting what this approach can offer to the global discussion on international development.

I refer to it as “less prominent” because it has hitherto attracted little scholarly attention. Murai (1986) is the only published article in Japanese with the term *yōsei-shugi* in the main title, making it a strikingly understudied subject. However, I consider this concept to be an important undercurrent that exemplifies Japan’s development philosophy since the 1950s. I refer to it as “ambiguous” because it is situated in the actual practice of implementation processes, involving not only a variety of actors from the donor side (i.e., Japan) but also counterpart officers and recipient ministries who jointly decide what is to be “requested.”

Japanese aid gained notoriety among Western donors for its perceived lack of philosophical underpinnings (Rix 1993; Asplund 2017). This criticism was amplified in the 1980s when Japan became one of the world’s top donors. Western donors were particularly critical of “tied aid,” pointing out that Japan was tying the procurements of goods and services funded by aid to purchases in the aid-giving country. While most aid-giving countries offered some form of tied aid, the prominence of commercialism in Japan’s approach was the target of sustained criticism (Lancaster 2007, p. 15).

Upon closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that a foundational procedure has hindered Japan’s ability to assert its “philosophy.” This procedural obstacle lies in the request-based approach itself, whereby economic cooperation<sup>2</sup> is planned and implemented “in response to the needs of the recipient countries” (Asian Economic Council 1953).

While “aid philosophies” (*enjo rinen*) in Japan have shifted in emphasis over the past 30 years from economic security and interdependence to human security and the environment, the way that cooperation projects are formulated has remained rather constant.<sup>3</sup> The request-based approach began not as a philosophy per se but came to be used as a principle to explain and justify why Japan provides aid in the way it does.

The chapter examines (1) the context that elevated *yōsei-shugi* to the status of a principle, (2) the basic logic that was used by the Japanese government to substantiate such a principle, and (3) the effects it had on recipient countries. My response to the third question will not cover evaluations of projects, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, I will address the criticisms against Japan’s ODA that emerged when Japan was on its way to becoming the top donor in the 1980s.

I attempt to respond to these questions in the following ways. First, I conduct a content analysis of government publications on economic cooperation, particularly *Keizai Kyōryokuno Genjō to Kadai* (*Current Situations and Problems with Economic Cooperation*, published from 1958) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ODA White Papers (published from 1988) to determine the evolution and change that these publications engendered in the idea of “requests” (*yōsei*).

Second, I trace the origin of the request-based procedure to the postwar reparation scheme. I do this because much of the original substance that evolved into the principles of aid is, I argue, an afterthought based on the practices utilized by each recipient country since the time when the reparation mechanism was established.

Finally, to assess the effects of *yōsei-shugi* on recipient countries, I highlight domestic and global complaints against Japanese ODA, which will help elucidate the distinctive characteristics of Japan's aid as they have evolved over the past 50 years. Observers of development aid have focused too narrowly on the impact and results of aid rather than the long-term drivers that produce such results.

My argument, in short, is that the request-based procedure evolved into a key principle of Japan's aid largely as a secondary "attachment" to the practical delivery mechanism stipulated by the postwar reparation mechanism. The request basis was viewed as a vital element that helped Japan's aid distinguish itself from that of the Western donors while it resonated well with the "self-help effort" emphasized in Japan's broader aid philosophy (see Chap. 13). Although the government was increasingly under pressure to clarify its aid objectives to the international community (especially the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)), the request-based delivery mechanism continued to dictate how Japan's aid philosophy has been framed, leaving enough space and flexibility to include a variety of stakeholders in the ODA system.

## 2 What is Yōsei-Shugi?

In a standard textbook on the Japanese aid system, Sakurai explains *yōsei-shugi* as follows:

Official Development Assistance from Japan operates under the request-based principle, in which the donor waits for the request from the recipient country. Such requests for project cooperation from the prospective recipient are discussed in coordination with relevant agencies of the recipient country and then reported to the Japanese government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) through the local embassies. In countries where there is no diplomatic establishment, which have no cooperation experience, or which do not have enough capacities to formulate projects, Japan sends a governmental survey mission to assist the project-finding process (Masao 1985, p. 47, translated by the author).

In this process, the prospective recipient identifies the project or is otherwise closely involved with project selection. Sakurai explains that this principle applies mainly to grant aid and technical cooperation but also pertains to loan projects that the Japanese government determines as fitting within the objectives of aid—those that have no implications for military spending, no sustainable commercial alternatives, and are not used for the production of luxury goods (Masao 1985, p. 92).

At first glance, the request-based principle seems like a passive idea, undeserving of the status of a philosophy. But as we shall see, Japan's development cooperation was strongly bound by its postwar diplomatic circumstances and the weak economic conditions under which domestic private companies were trying to recover. The process was also conditioned by both the major recipients in Asia as well as Japan's most important strategic partner, the United States. Understanding why *yōsei-shugi* became an aid principle requires a deeper understanding of its historical context.<sup>4</sup>

While the more pro-active “philosophies” of Western counterparts, such as “humanitarianism,” “democracy,” and “human rights,” do face occasional challenges from recipient countries, critiques of Japan’s ODA have tended to focus more on project impact and implementation rather than the project formulation processes that generated such impact. Thus, the request-based approach has remained largely unscrutinized. This is precisely why I suggest that this principle warrants a more systematic focus.

Criticisms against the request-based principle stem mostly from donor countries of the West, regarding it as “too passive” and lacking a sufficiently proactive attitude toward the needy (Arase 1995, 2005). Sakurai defends the system by asserting that “aid should supply things that recipient countries truly need; [whereas] imposing what they do not need is not aid” (Masao 1985, p. 97). The Japanese government employs a similar logic. For example, the English version of the MOFA report on ODA, published at a time when criticisms of Japan’s aid approach were on the rise, states the philosophical foundation of the request-based approach as follows:

...Japan has tried to avoid exercising political influence in developing countries especially because of the unfortunate history of Japan’s colonial management. Plus, Japan itself was a developing country until recently. It can also be pointed out that Japan has fully realized the importance of self-help efforts from its history of development after World War II. ...*The principle of “request basis” is a vivid reflection of Japan’s stance of paying respect to the self-help efforts of developing countries.* In supporting the self-help efforts of the recipient country, the true style of extending Japan’s aid is oriented toward assisting the particular projects under the development program planned by each developing country (MOFA 1989, p. 21, *emphasis added*).

As noted by Sakurai, Japan’s postwar economic cooperation began with a strong emphasis on avoiding any appearance of economic aggression. It was for this reason that the Japanese government chose to use “economic cooperation” rather than “foreign aid” or “development assistance” (Sato et al. 2022, p. 52). The request-based procedure fitted well with this attitude since it gave the initiative—or at least the appearance of an initiative—to the recipients in forming projects.

However, awareness of the risks that accompanied the use of the request-based procedure emerged in the 1970s—or even before. For example, in the roundtable discussion among infrastructure specialists titled “The Current Situation of Technical Cooperation and Future Directions,” then President of the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund<sup>5</sup> Okita Saburō commented as follows:

We find cases where the activities of trading companies dictate the direction of government policies. As you know, many projects are selected and brought in initially by the trading companies.<sup>6</sup> They bring those projects to the embassy and then the proposal will be sent to MOFA. We can’t say that this practice is necessarily wrong though (Okita et al. 1976, p. 26).

As hinted at in Okita’s remarks above, ambiguous feelings were present even on the Japanese side. Yet there was no strong incentive for Tokyo to change the system. This was partly because the loan portion of the ODA system was built on the delicate balance of the so-called “four ministry system” (四省庁体制 *yon shōchō taisei*), under which the ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Trade and Industries,

and the Economic Planning Agency were jointly responsible for decisions.<sup>7</sup> This consensus-based system made it difficult to introduce any radical changes to the status quo.

Of course, domestic repercussions occasionally upset the status quo of such practices, especially when the proposal was made to consolidate the ODA-related mandates into a new agency (Sato 2021, pp. 34–35). The creation of a dedicated implementing agency—the establishment of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1974—provoked “politicking” among the various ministries, each of which had its own stake in ODA (Araki 1984).

While such domestic politics were typical turf battles between ministries over budget and posts, pressure on aid philosophy and principles was applied by DAC. As one of the founding members of this essentially Western aid organization, Japan had to explain to DAC members why and how Japan was providing aid. In response to a question on Japan’s process in project identification, the Japanese government replied by saying:

Recipient countries usually identify projects which are to be objects of Japan’s aid, by themselves on a “Request Basis” in the process of making economic and development plans (DAC 1986, p. 42).

This was the first explicit reference to the concept of the request basis in DAC memoranda.

While it is not clear why the request basis appears suddenly as a principle of Japanese aid in 1986, this was around the time that Japan’s ODA started to face criticisms from abroad as well as from the people of Japan. Before investigating the nature of these criticisms, we need to assess the way Japanese aid has evolved. This step is critical in understanding why Japan came to emphasize “requests,” however complicated the process may seem, in the practice of foreign aid.

### 3 Institutionalization of *Yōsei-Shugi*

#### Post-WW2 reparations

It is not easy to pinpoint the exact origin of the request-based principle in the history of Japanese aid. Frequent mentions of “requests” from recipient countries as a basic requirement of aid provisions can be found in a variety of publications in the late 1970s. Takeuchi Yoshio, a former bureaucrat at the Ministry of Transportation, stated in 1976 that “technical assistance is conducted, in principle, based on request. Thus, assistance will not be provided if there is no such request” (Takeuchi 1976).

Perhaps a better approach to finding the origin is not so much in the use of the term “request” but rather by examining the actual mechanisms of aid delivery from which the idea of requests arose. *The Treaty of Peace with Japan*, signed in San Francisco in 1952, required that Japan make available “the services of the Japanese people in production, salvaging and other work for the Allied Powers in question,” thereby stipulating that reparations take the form of “services” (Okano 1958). This

policy was based on the lessons learned after the German economy was devastated following World War I. The demands by Allied powers for monetary and material reparations did not adequately take into account the defeated nations' ability to pay, leading to the Great Depression and World War II while fueling popular support for radical forces such as the Nazis (Baishō Mondai Kenkyūkai [Reparations Research Group] 1963, p. 22).<sup>8</sup> Regret over how these reparations methods had been imposed on the nations defeated in World War I led to the post-World War II stipulation that Japan should provide goods and services, typically in the form of equipment and technical assistance, rather than monetary reparations (Okano 1958, p. 263).

Following this directive, Japan concluded successive reparations agreements with Burma (November 1954), the Philippines (May 1956), Indonesia (January 1958), and Vietnam (May 1959) (Shimomura 2020, pp. 44–47).<sup>9</sup> Unlike earlier research, which has focused on the processes involved in this series of reparations negotiations, here I would like to focus on the official procedures at the time of the actual discharge of reparations because it was these procedures that formed the prototype for how subsequent development cooperation would be implemented.

The first step was for each country seeking reparations to establish a permanent delegation in Tokyo to centralize their reparations affairs. The contact point on the Japanese side was the reparations section of MOFA's Asia Bureau. This unit served as the interface for negotiations with the Japanese government. Hayashi Yuichi, who was part of MOFA's reparations section, explained the general procedural sequence as follows (Hayashi 1959, pp. 13–14):

1. Each year, the countries seeking reparations *make a list of the equipment and capital they wish to procure and consult with the Japanese side*. This is called the annual implementation plan.
2. The upper limit of funds to be disbursed each year is determined separately for each nation seeking reparations, so in principle, the estimate for capital goods such as construction materials is written into the implementation plan within that limit.
3. Once the implementation plan is agreed on with the Japanese government, the delegation from the country seeking reparations negotiates directly with Japanese businesses on that basis and enters into materials procurement contracts and services agreements. However, *when delegations do not know which company to choose, they often seek recommendations from the Japanese government*. Unlike normal trade contracts, the Japanese government approves these contracts and the payment of the contract money is made from the treasury.
4. Once the reparation agreement has been approved by the Japanese government and implemented, the government pays the contract money to a *Japanese bank* designated by the delegation, in line with the payment terms in the contract. This payment signifies that Japan has fulfilled its obligation to make reparations.

The underlined sections in these procedures are the points to note here. Requests often included capital goods. Though purchased by the Japanese government and given to recipient countries as reparations, these goods were purchased from Japanese companies, thereby stimulating domestic growth and propping up major manufacturers and

their supporting sectors in Japan. This is the origin of the so-called “tied aid,” which would become the target of criticism from the 1970s onward. Yet tied aid must be understood within this overall procedure of the “request-basis,” since, in the early years, virtually all of the requests came not from recipient countries but from the private sector in Japan.

Although the nations seeking reparations applied to the Japanese government for their desired items, Japanese companies would engage *in advance* in sales tactics aimed at the governments of those countries. Some companies seem to have shared tips on obtaining Japanese government approval or acted as agents in preparing the reparation plans. This role of Japanese businesses in the formative stage of projects was inherited by subsequent loan projects (Andō 1992, p. 31).

The Japanese perspective at that time was well expressed in the quote of a pioneering consultant who carried out many of the early reparation projects in Asia, Kubota Yutaka, who stated that:

Some believe that reparations are a free giveaway but I think this is kind of an advanced payment in international trade to introduce Japanese industry abroad. If we need to pay this anyway, why don't we pay it with our manufactured goods and technologies? It can be a showcase for Japan's industry and technologies (Nagatsuka 1966, pp. 325–326).

The request-based system “worked to induce Japanese business activities in recipient economies and gave the Japanese government the ability to approve only the projects that would subsidize targeted Japanese industries” (Arase 1995, p. 31). This scheme was beneficial for the recipient government, despite the key initiatives coming from the private sector of the donor country. In the early years of post-WW2 reconstruction in many parts of Asia, the request-based approach allowed capital-intensive projects to be funded by Japan, without requiring any great sacrifice by the recipient government.

### **Tied aid**

Although Japan is one of the founding members of DAC, it has always been perceived as an “odd man out in this (DAC) community of donors” (Söderberg 2010, p. 107). This was especially the case after the Pearson Commission on International Development published *Partners in Development* in 1969, which provoked a discussion about the quality of aid, which by this time had become an intensive topic for debate (Pearson et al. 1969). This shift in the emphasis from quantity to quality posed a variety of challenges to Japan's approach to ODA.

With its name changed to the “request-based principle,” this mechanism from the reparations period was adopted as grant aid, whereby aid is tied to goods and services provided by Japan. In the reparations period, Japan *had to* give priority to the procedures because reparations were an international obligation, not an act of goodwill. It was a useful condition for Japan since the government's intention was not to impose any philosophy on Asian countries that might only be taken as another excuse for Japan to encroach into the region. In the following years, when economic cooperation was no longer an obligation, the procedure continued, transforming itself naturally into a request-based system of development cooperation.

The system of co-creating the “requests” with recipient governments helped Japan to indirectly recommend not only the goods that were actually requested but also to provide the maintenance services for those goods. This allowed Japan to continue its engagement, supplying materials to the recipient countries through continued economic cooperation. The request-based principle also created room for private consulting companies to prepare projects from which they could later receive orders from the recipient side, thereby expanding the aid-providing capacity of Japan as a whole. In fact, at the initial stage of project formulation in the postwar period, many of the reparation items, such as the Baluchaung Hydropower Dam in Myanmar and Brantus River development project in Indonesia were already being planned on a commercial basis by the consultants ahead of involvement by the Japanese government. Many of the early reparation projects were later relabeled as development projects (Koei 1981). The critical role of trading companies and consultants in response to the need to gather diverse local information that leads to “requests” was a feature of Japan’s aid in the 70 and 80 s.

Though Japan’s aid started as economic cooperation attached to reparations, it was heavily driven by the interests of the domestic private sectors trying to recover “their” markets in Asia after the war.

#### **4 Emerging Challenges to the Request-Based Principle**

In the 1980s, the Japanese approach to aid faced even more severe criticism from its domestic constituents. Japan was on its way to the status of becoming the top donor worldwide, and it was no longer easy to defend its conventions based only on Japan’s internal logic. Ando (1992) highlights two reasons why the request-based principle started to be questioned in the 1980s. The first was the increasing incidence of environmental problems related to development projects. The projects proposed by recipient countries tended to emphasize economic development over environmental sustainability. This concern shifted the weight of the project planning initiative more toward the donor, i.e., Japan.

The second aspect was the growth of loan aid, devised in response to international pressure to increase the total volume of Japan’s ODA, which resulted in the increased need to find new projects. The effort of the Japanese government in increasing the total aid volume went hand in hand with the emphasis on “self-help,” which was technically necessary to have those loans paid back. Limited staff and increased volume created an environment where the aid industry relied heavily on trading companies and consultants for project formulation and implementation. These circumstances created a breeding ground for corruption in Southeast Asia where Japan’s infrastructure project concentrated.

The so-called “Marcos Scandal” in the Philippines is a case in point. In 1986, it was discovered that large sums of aid had been siphoned off into the hands of the President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos. In 1986, the Marcos regime’s corruption in connection with ODA was revealed, with clear evidence indicating

behind-the-scenes connections between Japanese companies and the Filipino regime. It was reported that “10 to 15% of the value of loan aid contracts won by Japanese firms was kicked back to Philippine government officials” (*Shinbun* 1987).

As a result of this scandal, there was a sudden upsurge in domestic criticism of ODA, which greatly affected the public’s views of aid. The fact that Marcos had cannily diverted foreign funds to line his own pockets emerged through rigorous investigations instigated by President Corazon Aquino, who took power after Marcos’ downfall. According to one source, the wealth that Marcos illegally amassed during his presidency totaled somewhere between 11.6 and 22.3 billion dollars (Hunt 2013).

Unlike in the United States, where the donor determines the projects to be implemented, the request-based principle gave aid recipients room for flexible negotiation. In particular, product loans were provided to help cover shortages in the foreign currency needed to purchase imports. In addition, the lack of any conditionality (aid conditions) whatsoever, including no negotiations over the schedule for discharging the debt, effectively gave a free hand to corrupt officials such as Marcos (Rivera 2003, p. 525).

How is this arrangement related to the request-based principle? According to a critical biography by Cesar Virata, Marcos’ long-serving finance minister and right-hand man, Japanese yen loans—of which product loans constituted the bulk—were superior in terms of the speed of the procedures necessary before the loan could be used (Sicat 2014, p. 285). These loans were not tied to specific projects, the procedures were straightforward, and the loans could be approved quickly.<sup>10</sup> Amidst the decline in US aid to the Philippines in the 1980s, yen loans—whose lending criteria were less stringent than those of institutions such as the World Bank and which were on a larger scale—were embraced by the Marcos regime. The mechanism of direct negotiations between recipient governments and Japanese businesses that commenced in the reparations period created convenient precedents, following which it was easy to collect a “handling fee” from businesses seeking a contract for a project (Rivera 2003, p. 525).<sup>11</sup>

Triggered by this groundswell of criticism, ODA also began to attract attention from members of the Japanese parliament, and a monitoring system was established. The process of opposition—for example, failed movements against dam construction—roused a sense of injustice among people and gave them the opportunity to learn how to work in solidarity with external organizations.

Although the explicit term *yōsei-shugi* had almost disappeared from official documents by the late 1990s,<sup>12</sup> the practice seems to have continued, as this key feature of Japan’s aid was identified in a comparative report of Japan and the Western donors:

What we found through the international comparison of project formulation processes is that most donors have formulated their country-based aid policies under the more general aid policy of the higher level. From there, they form a multi-year aid program in consultation with the recipient governments and other donors... (Nikken Sekkei and Association for International Cooperation of Agriculture and Forestry 2003, p. 10).

It is possible that the request-based principle, which allowed the recipient to control the project, led to delays in taking the necessary actions from the Japanese side to deal with the problem—thus contributing to the escalating criticism.



The request-based approach relies heavily on the project formulation step within the recipient country. When there is sufficient planning capacity in the recipient government, this system should work in favor of the recipients. Where the capacity to formulate projects and allow key stakeholders to participate is low, the possibility remains that Japan can seek to impose projects that work toward its own interests. On the other hand, even when the planning capacity is high, it does not guarantee that the project will be beneficial for the public—nor that it avoids corruption. The request-based principle, by its nature, places the responsibilities of such implementation complexities into the hands of the recipient governments.

## 5 Reflecting on the Impact of the “Request-Based” Principle

The request-based principle has been criticized as a passive and defensive system that mainly serves Japan’s commercial interests. It is true that passiveness has been a constant feature since the 1950s. However, there is the question of *why* the request-based principle became so prominent, which reveals more general undercurrents of Japan’s ODA. Maemura (2019) finds from the DAC archive that it was Western donors who pushed Japan to promote self-help, purportedly a philosophy unique to Japan, in the 1960s.

The fact that Japan’s development assistance was pushed into presenting itself as promoting self-help posed an interesting dilemma for Japan. Japan had to combine philosophies that were more acceptable to the West and emphasize the conditions of the recipient countries while implementing a principle that works more in favor of Japanese economic interests. The request-based principle fits the requirements. The economic realities and the philosophical undercurrents prevalent among policy-makers in post-War Japan took on the mindset of a “developing country” that needed to *depend* on Asia and grow together *with* it. This approach differed from aid by the Western donors, which tends to separate the subject and object of aid, i.e., the developed donor and developing recipient. Japan was both a recipient and a donor in a very short space of time and acted accordingly.

The term “request-based” became a principle only when Japan faced severe criticism of mercantilist practices in aid in the 1980s. Before this, it was an implicit practice. DAC’s ODA peer review, which is usually a non-political ritual of monitoring donor performance, explicitly commented on “Japanese-style” ODA in the form of “questions” that can be taken as an indirect criticism (DAC 1991, p. 6).

Do the Japanese authorities consider that the Japanese style of aid giving has significant distinctive features (such as the emphasis on extending aid on a request basis, self-help effort, emphasis on building economic infrastructure and programme assistance) from that of other donors? How do they see the applicability of their experience on a global basis?

It is worth noting that most such criticisms came from NGOs and the West, not from the recipient governments. While there is no guarantee that governments will

represent the interests of the people, the fact that the request-based principle has continued to operate suggests that there were benefits from this system.

Admitting the disadvantage of ambiguity, I wish to highlight two positive impacts of the passive practice of the request-based principle: one on Japan's side and the other on the recipient's side. Firstly, in Japan, supporting projects in response to country requests benefited various players from the private sector by encouraging them to participate in the project formulation processes while also allowing the implementing agency to attribute the consequence to the counterpart agencies in the recipient governments, an approach that can easily be justified by the "self-help" philosophy. This public-private partnership did invite corruption in certain cases but, overall, it had the effect of expanding the range of constituents within Japan that helped to sustain the volume and practice of development assistance (Sato 2017).

Secondly, on the recipient side, after 30 years of operation, 14 of the 16 heavily criticized projects in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines initiated in the 1980s and early 1990s are still functioning and continue to serve their purposes at least at the local level (Sato 2021). Of course, this does not necessarily mean that all stakeholders have been satisfied with the project outcomes throughout their implementation processes, nor the fairness of the implementation processes. However, the long-term functioning of infrastructure based on requests suggests that the principle nurtured a sense of responsibility that was essential for the long-term maintenance of the infrastructure.

These positives come with certain negatives that must be addressed if the request-based principle is to continue being used in the future.<sup>13</sup> The central issue is that of accountability. As Arase cogently pointed out long ago, the request-based system "allows the Japanese government to keep at arm's length any unsavory practices of [both] recipient governments and Japanese firms overseas" (Arase 1995, p. 159). On top of the project impact, the request-based principle helps to reaffirm that the major responsibility for awarding contracts and monitoring the legality of procedures rests on the recipient. While the practice of giving control to recipient governments is a sound policy, evading responsibility for any related consequences is questionable. It is here that the request-based approach must search for ways to incorporate a long-term follow-up process.

It is interesting to find an East Asian parallel to the Golden Rule of Matthew, to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Analects of Confucius advise, "do not do unto others what you would not have done unto you." While the Christian teaching emphasizes "doing," that of Confucius teaches "not doing."

Looking back, the Japanese approach based on requests was often the approach found to be most effective for developing countries. Aid philosophy in the West assumes a proactive principle that reflects the agency (the "doing") of the donor. The request-based principle did not have agency itself but worked more at the implementation level, where it was less visible and less systematic. This explains the awkward feelings DAC donors had over Japan's aid. Thus, the criticism suggesting an absence of philosophy is inaccurate. The problem is rather the lack of an adequate presentation of aid that is *acceptable* to the Western aid community. Implicit understanding of non-interference (the "not doing") among the Japanese aid community made its

aid principle and philosophy even less visible (Kato 1980, p. 59). The conclusion will touch upon the contemporary significance of this finding to a broader practice of foreign aid (see Chap. 9).

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored three aspects of the request-based principle: (1) the context that elevated this idea to the status of a principle, (2) the basic logic that was used by the Japanese government to substantiate such a principle, and (3) the actual practice and effects of employing such principle.

Let me conclude by offering some commentary on each of these aspects. First, the request-based approach was a by-product of the reparation procedures rather than a purposeful invention. The primacy of practical procedures resonates with the tendency of Japanese culture to act on the basis of relative values in relation to the surrounding people rather than appealing to absolute values (Nakane 1967).

Second, because of such a passive lineage, it was difficult for the Japanese government to continue using *yōsei-shugi* in international fora, which tend to be dominated by more affirmative norms. Japan had its own logic to justify why such a principle was relevant and important, yet its emphasis on bottom-up procedures for project formulation did not hold enough credence to stand as an acceptable philosophy from the Western perspective partly because it tends toward non-interventionism, leaving project responsibility with the recipients, and also the “requests” are often not genuinely derived from the recipient themselves.

Third, the request-based approach had mixed outcomes. On the one hand, it fitted the growing needs of the Asian economies in the 70 and 80 s. Yet in countries where the capacity to form suitable or appropriate proposals was lacking, space was created for Japanese consultants, trading companies, and the recipient governments to collude. The lower visibility of transactions that took place in other countries also made it difficult to detect. This was later addressed by modifying and strengthening the auditing and legal system for projects implemented abroad.

The history of Japan’s aid, at least at the conceptual level, has been a struggle to locate its own practice in the aid community, which has been dominated by the West. Yet, the struggle has been valuable. I argue that the request-based principle has helped Japan to recover its place as a regular partner in trade and investment in Asia assisted by the moral justification of aid.

I would further argue that the request-based principle has great potential as a guideline—if not as a philosophy—that can provide lessons for emerging donors if aid is truly intended for the benefit of recipient countries. Unlike paternalistic attitudes toward recipient countries, the request-based approach, if implemented in the right spirit, respects the agency of the recipients who are developing toward being equal partners in the international community.

Although originally conceived as a by-product of delivery procedures mandated by reparation treaties, the request-based principle has proved to be a useful complement to another, more explicit, aid philosophy of Japan: self-help support (see Chap. 8). With a strong emphasis on avoiding imposition, encouraging recipients toward self-help efforts becomes the only viable approach for Japan's aid.

The system of co-creating "requests" with recipient governments has allowed Japan to guide not only the goods that are actually requested but also the *know-how* of using those goods. Thus, Japan could claim that its aid and cooperation went beyond the transfer of goods as reparations, creating room for private sector participants to play roles in project preparation, implementation, and monitoring. This public-private collaboration was an important driver of Japanese ODA expansion. As suggested above, the request-based system began as a procedure. This procedure-led system came into conflict with aid practices of Western countries. The Western-led international systems tended to believe that universal principles should guide procedure rather than other way around. From the Western perspective, the procedure-led system looked arbitrary, while working to the economic advantage of Japan.

*Yōsei-shugi* is a historical vestige of Japanese economic cooperation from the time when Japan was still in a middle-income country. The procedure, which started out as a war reparations scheme, turned out to be a useful mechanism for both Japan and recipient countries to achieve mutual economic development. It aligns well with the concept of non-interference, providing a useful distinction with the aid policies of the West. Yet despite these benefits, it became increasingly difficult to retain as a justification for aid.

While the practice continues, the philosophies of self-help and emphasis on human security have become the new face of Japanese ODA from the 2000s onward. The changing justification of aid reflects the fact that principles and philosophies are not so much fixed objectives but are rather dictated by the economic and political stages of the aid provider.

## Notes

1. This chapter is a substantially revised version of Working Paper No.12 published by JICA Ogata Research Institute. I am grateful for the permission of the institute to reproduce the material here. I am also grateful for the comments by Kenichi Doi and Yu Maemura as well as the research assistance of Wu Jingyuan, Cailemoge, and the editorial support of Sam Bamkin.
2. There was an explicit intention on the Japanese side to avoid using the term "aid" (*enjo*) in the postwar period for fear of an aggressive response if Japan were seen as moving toward economic hegemony in the region (Sato 2021, pp. 29–30).
3. As I shall discuss in the latter part of the chapter, "aid philosophy" (*enjo tetsugaku, enjo rinen*) was not a familiar term for many aid practitioners in Japan. It was only in the 1980s that the Japanese government first published systematic aid objectives (MOFA 1980).
4. Rix (1993) offers the alternative translation, the "request-first principle." The "on-request principle" is another possible translation. I use "request-based" simply because it is the term used by the Japanese government. It also clearly expresses the foundational procedure from which all cooperation activities emerge.

5. OECF was established in 1961 to provide project loans to developing countries. The organization, along with the Export–Import Bank of Japan, merged into JBIC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation) in 1999. Loans for development purposes were then transferred to the newly reformed JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) in 2008.
6. In this round table discussion, there was already an awareness of the issue regarding “heated competition among the trading companies for projects,” which is an early indication of the large-scale corruption that was to emerge in the 1980s.
7. This practice changed, gradually concentrating power toward MOFA through a series of ODA reforms in the 2000s.
8. It should be noted, however, that Japan’s emphasis on capital equipment as the foundation of World War II reparations was not solely because of Japan’s tight financial situation. To improve recipient countries’ attitudes toward Japan, capital goods—which provide a long-lasting impression of reparations—were preferable to consumable goods that soon disappear (Baishō Mondai Kenkyūkai 1963, p. 96).
9. Notably, however, in actual negotiations with individual countries seeking reparations, there was a gradual increase in demands for material reparations, and the scope of reparations broadened to include payment in the form of capital equipment. This was the origin of Japan’s international yen loans.
10. These three specific factors are precisely why product loans were criticized as a breeding ground for corruption (Sumi 1989, p. 19).
11. Mendoza (2001, p. 47) states that unless private businesses paid this fee, they could not receive contracts for projects.
12. The MOFA White Paper on ODA in 1997 explicitly states that the request-based approach would be transformed into co-formative approach (*kyōdō keisei shugi*共同形成主義), creating “project formulation officers” to facilitate project identification, giving more initiative to the Japanese side (MOFA 1997). However, the basic tenet of the procedure has not changed.
13. In the most recent ODA Charter, this direction has been explicitly endorsed as an “offering style” project formulation.

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# *Jijodoryoku*: The Spirit of Self-Help in Development Cooperation



Yu Oliver Maemura

**Abstract** *Jijodoryoku* “self-help effort” is a central and prominent ODA policy concept that undoubtedly resonates amongst policymakers and industry stakeholders in Japan. However, attempts to systematically define and operationalize the concept are noticeably lacking within the development assistance literature. What such a policy principle entails in terms of its impact on, or coherence with, institutional practice, program design, or project logic, is worthy of critical examination. This chapter critically re-examines and attempts to refine the definition of *jijodoryoku* as a policy principle, by considering how the conceptualization of “self-help” in Japanese and international ODA policy has evolved over time. The chapter illustrates how current Japanese policy conceptualizes the term as an *approach* to ODA by examining the logical structure of high-level Japanese ODA policy, while distinguishing it from “self-reliance”, which can also be observed in global development policy. The historical and comparative examination of ODA policies presented in this chapter reveals how the policy principle of “support for self-help efforts” can be traced back to discussions among DAC countries regarding the sharing of the financial burden of assistance, which contrasts starkly to its current vernacular usage as an a priori condition of the approach to Japanese ODA. The chapter ends by considering the roots of “self-help” in Japan to argue that, rather than a concept denoting praxis, it would be more accurate to conceptualize *jijodoryoku* as a highly general and abstract term denoting the social-psychological state (*i.e.*, the “spirit”) of a recipient, which could then be utilized to stipulate and evaluate general conditions for ODA recipients.

**Keywords** Aid approaches · ODA charter · OECD-DAC policy · Policy logic · Logical structure

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## 1 Introduction: De-Constructing *Jijodoryoku* “Self-Help Efforts”

*Jijodoryoku* (自助努力), or “self-help effort”, is a central and important concept that has been mentioned perennially in official Japanese government policy language to describe the “philosophy” of Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA). From a purely semantic perspective, *jijodoryoku* is a combination of two compound characters, *jijo* and *doryoku*. Although *jijo* can be read on its own as “self-help”, in this case, it functions as a grammatical modifier rather than an independent concept. *Doryoku* is the compound Japanese character and independent concept denoting “effort”. Together, the term translates directly as “self-help effort”, but is also defined within various dictionaries as a state in which one does “not rely on others”, or a state of self-sufficiency. The term can thus be interpreted semantically as a contractarian, Scanlon-esque concept rather than a virtue principle, where the principle of “taking self-help efforts” is perceived as contrary to the excessive or perpetual state of dependency, which is framed or perceived as an immoral or unethical state of being.

Within Japanese ODA policy language, *jijodoryoku* is then used to grammatically modify the word *shien* (支援), which means “support” or “aid”, to produce *jijodoryoku shien* “support for self-help efforts”. High-level Japanese government policy invokes the term *jijodoryoku shien* within the basic policies of Japanese ODA published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). While it is intuitively quite easy to agree with the argument that publicly funded programs and initiatives should go to “support self-help efforts”, what such a policy principle entails in terms of its impact on, or coherence with, institutional practice, program design, or project logic, is worthy of critical examination. Although *jijodoryoku* is a central and prominent ODA policy concept that undoubtedly resonates amongst policymakers and industry stakeholders in Japan, attempts to operationalize the concept are noticeably lacking within literature on development assistance. The lack of such definitions makes systematic and theoretically sound policy coherence and coordination between development stakeholders practically infeasible. To contribute to critical discussions on how policy coherence and coordination can be enhanced among ODA stakeholders, this chapter attempts to re-examine and refine the definition of *jijodoryoku* “self-help efforts” as a policy principle, by considering the following question—how has the conceptualization of “self-help” within Japanese and international ODA policy evolved over time?

The next section outlines the current conceptualization of “self-help” in the basic policies of the Japanese Government’s ODA programs. These basic policies are listed in the ODA Charter, as well as the white paper for development cooperation—both published by MOFA.<sup>1</sup> Section 3 then describes the important distinctions that must be made between *jijodoryoku* as self-help efforts in Japan, and “self-reliance” in international policy discourse. The conceptual evolution of “self-help efforts” within Japan’s ODA policy will then be described in Sect. 4, by tracing back the different ways in which the term “self-help effort” has been invoked within domestic policy.

Section 5 goes further back in time to outline the various ways in which “self-help” was utilized within international policy discourse via the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), before publication of the first ODA Charter in Japan. Section 6 provides a critical discussion on the current conceptualization of *jijodoryoku*, which I argue to be restrictive; and the policy implications of re-conceptualizing *jijodoryoku* as a more general term. The chapter concludes with a summary and synthesis of the contents.

## 2 *Jijodoryoku Shien as an Approach to Japan’s ODA*

The Japanese government announced and released a revision to the Development Cooperation Charter, also referred to as the ODA Charter, in August of 2023. The ODA Charter is a cabinet-approved document that outlines the high-level policy of Japan’s development cooperation initiatives. The Charter’s contents are drafted by an advisory panel established by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, consisting of academics and representatives from the private sector and NGOs. The Panel convened with relevant stakeholders and gathered public comments concerning ODA priorities to draft a Charter that was ratified by cabinet decision in June of 2023. Within this ODA Charter, “self-help” is first mentioned in the following manner.

Japan’s development cooperation aims for self-reliant development through support for **self-help efforts** by developing countries, with the spirit of working together to persistently create what suits partner countries through dialogue and collaboration based on a field-oriented approach (2023 ODA Charter, Section I-3-(3)-A).

and once more in the same sub-section:

...Japan aims to generate new value through such “co-creation” by leveraging its traditions of supporting **self-help efforts**, dialogue, and collaboration (2023 ODA Charter, Section I-3-(3)-B).

The placement of the above mentions of “self-help efforts” within hierarchical sections of the ODA Charter illustrates how self-help is conceptualized by the Japanese government as a general approach to aid, rather than a specific policy goal. To make this distinction, English readers must decipher the difference between “Basic Policies” and “Priority Policies” mentioned in the provisional English translation of the Charter. The Charter outlines the Japanese Government’s ODA activities in three main sections: (I) Basic Concept, (II) Priority policies, and (III) Implementation. The two passages above that mention “self-help efforts” are located in the first section under the Basic Concept, in a sub-section translated as “*Basic Policies*”:

### I. Basic Concept

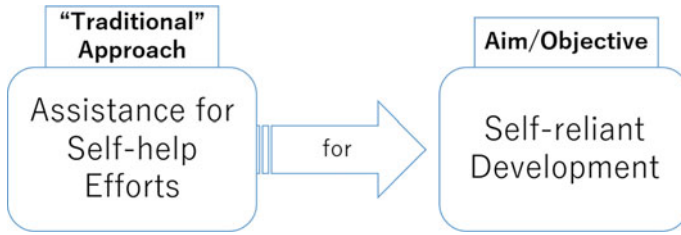
- (1) Purpose and background of formulation of the Charter
- (2) Objectives of development cooperation
- (3) **Basic policies** (基本方針)

- (1) Contributing to peace and prosperity
  - (2) Human security in the new era
  - (3) Co-creation of social values through dialogue and cooperation with developing countries
    - A. ...“*Self-help efforts*”
  - (4) Leading the dissemination and implementation of international rules and guidelines based on inclusiveness, transparency, and fairness
- II. Priority Policies (重点政策)  
[...]
- III. Implementation  
[...]

As outlined above, the provisional English translation of the Charter uses the word “policies” twice—once in Section I-(3), and again in the title of Section II. In order to properly distinguish the “policies” mentioned in both the “Basic Policies” and “Priority Policies”, we refer to the original Japanese document. By doing so, we can see that “Basic Policies” is used to translate the Japanese word *kihon hōshin* (基本方針), and “Priority Policies” listed in Section II of the Charter is used to translate *jūten seisaku* (重点政策), resulting in both “*hōshin*” and “*seisaku*” being translated as “policies.” In this public policy context, *seisaku* is a specific and relatively more direct translation of the word “policy.” *Hōshin*, on the other hand, is a more abstract concept that encapsulates interrelated concepts such as “direction”, “guidelines”, or “plan”. For the purposes of this chapter, we will refer to the “basic policies” as the *approach* to aid.

With this assumption in place, the structure of the Charter reveals how the Japanese government separates the description of its Basic Concept, into Objectives (Section I-2), and Basic Approaches (Section I-3). It is within this description of basic approaches that “self-help” is mentioned twice. In other words, ODA has various objectives, and various ways of achieving these objectives. Supporting “self-help efforts” is thus one of the ways in which the Japanese government achieves separately stated development objectives, such as contributing “actively to the formation of a peaceful, stable, and prosperous international community under a free and open international order based on the rule of law” (ibid., p. 4) as well as “to contribute to the realization of Japan’s national interests, such as securing peace and security for Japan and its people and achieving further prosperity through economic growth” (ibid.). Furthermore, looking once again at statement I-(3)-C) of the ODA Charter, the language clearly states that “Japan’s development cooperation aims for self-reliant development *through* support for self-help efforts by developing countries” (ibid.), and specifies that “self-reliant development” is a sub-objective that is to be achieved *through* self-help efforts.

As a concept, “self-help” is thus fundamentally framed as a praxis, rather than a consequential motivation or objective behind aid within current Japanese ODA policy. While there is no description within the Charter to explain how self-help efforts effectively contribute to the attainment of specific ODA objectives, it is stated that the approach represents “traditions” that can be leveraged to create “new value”



**Fig. 1** A structural representation of the role of “Self-help effort” in the 2023 Japanese ODA charter (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023)

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023, p. 5). Various narratives can be found in the policy-making and academic community regarding these traditional experiences. MOFA representatives and foreign policy have claimed that this experience generally alludes to the post-war reconstruction of Japan, which is what distinguishes “self-help” from the closely related concept of “ownership” (Sawamura 2004; Sunaga 2004; see also Chap. 9). The narrative of Japan’s successful post-war recovery is also often centered on the utilization of World Bank loans, rather than grants, which is part of the experience that is leveraged to justify the relatively high proportion of loans within Japanese ODA disbursements in comparison to other top OECD donor countries (Kawai and Takagi 2001) (Fig. 1).

### 3 Distinguishing *Jijodoryoku* as Praxis in Japanese ODA Policy, from “Self-Reliance” as a Common International Development Goal

In English, the term “self-help” is quite similar, and often used interchangeably, with the term “self-reliance” within development assistance discourse. However, a closer examination and comparison of the previous examples of “self-help” in English translations of Japanese government policy, with international or “Western” discourse on “self-reliance” in the context of development assistance, illustrates that there are fundamental differences in how the terms are conceptualized. For example, certain strands of research concerning the concept of “self-reliant development” (Galtung 1976a, b; Stöhr 1984) gained traction in the international community through publications supported and sponsored by the UN in the 1980s. This area of research appears to aim for prescriptive policy implications, while also contributing to a critical normative discussion on the fundamental role of the state for development. For example, while self-reliant development is defined as “self-determined development of territorial communities based essentially on endogenous resources” (Stöhr 1984, p. 4), it is also prescriptively clarified that such development can occur at three scales: the local, regional and national. However, it is also claimed quite strongly that self-reliance “is profoundly anti-capitalist” (Galtung 1976a, b, p. 209), by the

nature of the implications that endogenous growth represents, against the idea that excess labor and materials produced by regional competitive advantages should be traded in a global marketplace.

Putting aside such fundamental, ongoing, and unresolved debates concerning the role of the state (capitalist or otherwise) in international development, self-reliance can be considered to be a globally accepted value concept that underpins the objectives of development cooperation. For example, the U.S. Department of State's Joint Strategic Plan for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) describes the US Government's aims to provide support that promotes a path to self-reliance. Self-reliance is mentioned explicitly as a performance goal to "...strengthen partner country capacity to further its self-reliance" (US Department of State 2022, Performance Goal 3.1.1).

These references to self-reliance, and the American strategic plan in its entirety, however, do not use the words "self-help". Similarly, Britain's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development office invokes self-reliance specifically for regional security in the Gulf and Middle East (British GOV.UK 2022), while the New EU Consensus on Development mentions self-reliance in their Framework for Action, which describes the need to implement development cooperation for "building self-reliance" (European Commission 2017, DG-C-1, p. 34, para. 69). Again, neither document mentions "self-help" specifically.

Additional evidence to suggest that "self-help" as emphasized in formal Japanese ODA policy is a separate and distinct concept from "self-reliant development" within the international development community can be found by examining English translations of Japanese government policy in documents published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In the most recent OECD *Development Co-operation Peer Review of Japan* (2020), Japan's ODA charter is described as follows:

The charter outlines three basic policies: contributing to peace and prosperity, promoting human security, and self-reliant development and collaboration based on Japan's strengths (OECD 2020).

The above summary *removes* the explanation that the Japanese government provides aid for self-reliant development "through assistance for self-help efforts". Although we are unable to make any claims about whether removing self-help from the English translation was deliberate, strategic, or even conscious; the clear differences between English translations published by the Japanese government, and English translations published by the OECD, provide some basis to suggest that self-help and self-reliance are competing discourses within the international development aid community.

The paucity of "self-help" in development assistance policy outside of Japan is further highlighted by examining the OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews of the donor community. OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews are periodic reviews of the aid policies and programs of DAC (OECD Development Assistance Committee) member countries, which are publicly released on the OECD website.<sup>2</sup> A content analysis of 54 Peer Reviews of the aid policies and programs of

23 DAC donors dating back to 1996 reveals that almost all mentions of “self-help” occur in reviews involving Japan. Over half (33/54) of the total mentions of “self-help” are contained within the reports reviewing Japan’s aid policies. Germany is the only other country to have consistently mentioned “self-help” within Peer Reviews published in 1998 and 2001, but both Reviews included examiners from Japan. None of the other DAC donors were found to use the term “self-help efforts” in describing policies or approaches to aid within the reviews.<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between distinct concepts such as “self-help efforts” and “self-reliant development” in international development aid policy discourse could be hypothesized through various mechanisms. For example, the removal of “self-help efforts” from OECD translations of Japanese ODA policy descriptions could be evidence that the notion has failed to gain traction and establish itself as a key concept in international development policy agendas; or that a level of convergence is being achieved in which “self-help” elements are encapsulated by a growing and more prominent concept of “self-reliant development”. While there are many such hypothetical mechanisms that could explain differences in international policy agendas, we should first attempt to better define and understand what exactly is meant by the Japanese government when espousing “self-help efforts” in the context of international development. The next section attempts to address this issue by describing how the role of self-help effort has changed in Japanese ODA policy over time.

#### **4 The Shifting Policy Logic of *Jijodoryoku Shien* as an Approach to Japan’s ODA**

As mentioned briefly earlier, various claims and narratives can be found in the literature specifying the role of self-help efforts within Japan’s ODA policy. Some examples include basic assumptions that Japan’s focus on infrastructure development is consistent with, and an embodiment of support for self-help efforts (Yamada 2021); or claims that Japan’s development community has come to recognize the importance of self-help efforts based on its experiences as a recipient of external aid (Shinozaki 2007) for its post-war re-construction and development (Sunaga 2004; Kawai and Takagi 2001). Others also invoke the term to describe an even longer historical legacy of Japan’s journey before its post-war recovery, as an island nation that exercised self-help effort in its aspiration to become a global power and protect itself from colonization around the Meiji Restoration period (Udagawa 2017). As we can see, “self-help effort” appears to be a very general concept that can be applied to various contexts, making it a challenge to define within specific policy settings such as development assistance.

This section attempts to highlight the multi-dimensional nature of “self-help efforts” by illustrating how central claims surrounding the role of self-help efforts in ODA has changed over time within previous versions of Japan’s ODA Charter. The Japanese Government released its first ODA Charter in 1992 and has since updated

the document in 2003, 2015, and most recently in 2023. This section will begin at the most recent ODA Charter and trace back the differences in how each preceding ODA Charter invoked the concept of “self-help efforts”.

### 4.1 Self-Help in the ODA Charter, from 2023→2015

As stated previously, the most recent version of the ODA Charter published in 2023 conceptualizes “cooperation for self-help efforts” as an “approach” or *means* by which conceptually independent development objectives can be achieved. That is, “Cooperation aimed at self-reliant development **through** assistance for self-help efforts...” (2023 ODA Charter, Section I-3-(3)-A, emphasis added). A noticeable difference between the most recent Charter and the previous version published in 2015, is that “self-help” appears to have lost some prominence, by being removed from the heading titles of the “Basic Policies”. As can be seen below, the 2015 Charter emphasized self-help efforts more prominently by including it in the heading title of the third “Basic Policy” of Japan’s ODA.

<p>2015 ODA charter Development cooperation charter: For peace, prosperity, and a better future for everyone I. Philosophy     (1) Objectives of development cooperation     (2) Basic policies         A. Contributing to peace and prosperity through cooperation for non-military purposes         B. Promoting human security         C. Cooperation aimed at self-reliant development through assistance for <b>self-help efforts</b> as well as dialogue and collaboration based on Japanese experience and expertise (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015)</p>	<p>2023 ODA charter Development cooperation charter: Japan’s contributions to the sustainable development of a free and open World I. Basic concept     1. Purpose and background of formulation the charter     2. Objectives of development cooperation     3. Basic policies         (1) Contributing to peace and prosperity         (2) Human security in the new era         (3) Co-creation of social values through dialogue and cooperation with developing countries             A. ...cooperation aims for self-reliant development through support for <b>self-help efforts</b> (Ministry of foreign Affairs 2023)</p>
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Whereas “assistance for self-help efforts” was one of three basic approaches to Japan’s ODA in 2015, the 2023 version mentions self-help efforts only as part of an explanation for the third basic policy of “co-creating social values through dialogue and cooperation”. Going further back we will observe that “self-help effort” does appear to be continuously losing prominence in recent decades, and that previous versions of the Charter were also more specific about providing examples of “self-help efforts”.

### 4.2 Self-Help in the ODA Charter, from 2015→2003

While “self-help efforts” was removed from the third “Basic Policy” of the 2015 ODA Charter, the role of “self-help efforts” appears to have been relegated similarly in 2015, in comparison to the 2003 Charter. The 2003 ODA Charter lists “Supporting self-help efforts of developing countries” as the *First* basic policy of the Japanese Government (2003, Section I-2-(1)) and presents a strong and prominent argument for the role of self-help efforts in Japanese aid:

The **most important philosophy** of Japan’s ODA is to **support the self-help efforts** of developing countries based on good governance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan 2003, emphasis added).

Here we see that “supporting self-help efforts” was not only “the most important philosophy” but also linked to good governance. Although the logic of this statement is difficult to decipher intuitively, the surface-level interpretation of this statement can be understood to mean that “good governance” is a criterion for selection used by the Japanese government (see also Chap. 5), to provide assistance to various developing countries; and that this assistance that is provided will be for “self-help efforts” (see Fig. 2). Further reading into the 2003 charter provides specific examples of aid that are considered to strengthen good governance, which are: human resources development, institution building including development of legal systems, and economic and social infrastructure building. The policy language, thus, implies that it can be assumed a priori that these examples are also representative of self-help efforts.

In this manner, by comparing the 2015 Charter to the 2003 Charter, we can observe how claims regarding the role of self-help efforts within development aid changed to, (a) support for self-help efforts as an approach to achieving self-reliant development



**Fig. 2** The logical structure of ODA for Self-help in the 2003 ODA charter (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003)



(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015), from (b) support for self-help efforts as a philosophy that is linked to aid that is distributed based on criteria of good governance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003). While the incorporation of good governance distinguishes one claim from the other, the more recent Charters clarify that aid for “self-help efforts” represents traditional practices, and that the Japanese government has gained expertise and experience to support this approach. On the other hand, the 2003 Charter clearly presents support for “self-help efforts” as an a priori assumption—there is no additional explanation as to understand how self-help efforts are appropriate or effective for enhancing good governance initiatives.

### 4.3 *Self-Help in the First ODA Charter in 1992*

The first ODA Charter represents a significant effort by the Japanese government to present a clear and coherent vision describing the principles of its ODA program. In response to internal and external criticism against its ODA program, we can identify the central role of “self-help efforts” in the first ODA Charter. However, once again we can observe differences in how the concept is invoked through its utilization in policy language. The 1992 Official Development Assistance Charter mentions “self-help efforts” in its “Basic Philosophy” as follows:

...Japan attaches central importance to the support for the **self-help efforts** of developing countries **towards economic take-off** (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1992, Sect. 1, emphasis added).

In contrast to the 2003 Charter that mentions “good governance” in relation to self-help efforts, the 1992 Charter mentions self-help efforts for its role in supporting developing countries “towards economic take-off”. The argument here is, therefore, that “economic take-off” is a goal that should be attained through “support for self-help efforts”. The basic structure of this argument is thus the same as the 2015 Charter, in that the goal of “self-reliant development” from 2015 onwards can be replaced with “economic take-off” in 1992 (Fig. 3).

It should perhaps be noted here that “economic take-off” is not mentioned in the revisions of 2003 onwards and is replaced with priority issues of “poverty reduction” or “poverty eradication”.

In the first Charter, “self-help effort” is mentioned once more, in a description of priority issues. This section subsequently linked self-help efforts to human resources development, as follows:

A priority of Japan’s ODA will be placed on assistance to **human resources development which**, in the long term, is **the most significant element of self-help effort** towards socio-economic development and is a basic factor for the nation-building of developing countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1992, Section 3-(2)-(c), emphasis added).

Here, we at last identify an explicit description of the nature of “self-help efforts”, conceptualized as a higher-level concept in relation to human resources development.

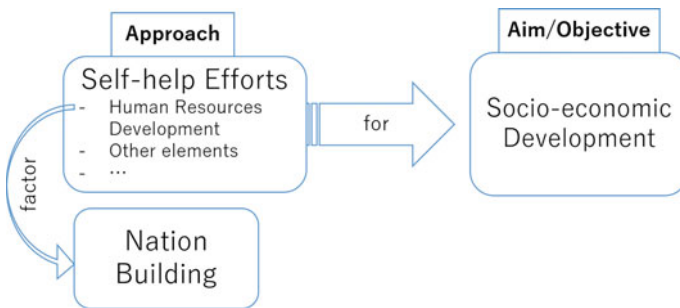
**Fig. 3** Comparison of structural representations of the role of Self-help in 2015 versus 1992



Although similar to the argument being made in the 2003 Charter (Fig. 2), this argument explicitly defines human resources development as a specific element or example of self-help efforts (Fig. 4).

In this manner, the first ODA Charter specifically claimed that human resources development is an element of self-help efforts. However, we can again observe some differences between Japanese and international policy documents. The OECD’s Development Co-operation Review of Japan published in 1996 states that “self-help” was one of the indicators utilized by the Japanese government to provide regular ODA disbursements to recipient countries, as follows:

Japan...attempted to **match self-help** and good governance on the recipient side **by a predictable flow of resources** on the Japanese side, guided by ODA spending targets (OECD 1996, emphasis added).



**Fig. 4** Human resources development as an element of self-help effort in the 1992 ODA charter

As was illustrated in Sect. 2, such noticeable differences between provisional translations of official Japanese government policy and OECD documents that interpret Japanese policy can provide an alternate lens to critically examine international development policy concepts. The next section will focus specifically on OECD documents, to uncover how the concept of self-help was discussed and described in the international community, prior to the first ODA Charter.

## 5 Before the ODA Charters: “Self-Help” in OECD Policy Discourse

The previous section illustrated how the conceptualization and logical structure of claims invoking “self-help efforts” in Japanese ODA policy shifted over three decades since 1992. Again, while the first Charter was published partly in response to pressure from the international donor community, within the government and amongst international donors, there were regular discussions, debates, and reports of ODA policies and practices much earlier than the 1990s, via the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. In particular, DAC Peer Reviews provide useful material to observe interactions between donor countries and the DAC Secretariat regarding ODA policies. While the earliest DAC Peer Review that is available online dates back to 1996, the current DAC Peer Review system has evolved from its beginnings in 1962, when the DAC established the practice of Annual Reviews of the development assistance efforts and policies of its member countries. Although unavailable online, these documents can be accessed through the archives of OECD headquarters in Paris.<sup>4</sup>

For example, in a review of Japan’s aid policies published in 1988, only 4 years before releasing its first ODA Charter, the DAC Secretariat describes how Japan invoked the principle of self-help during a discussion on the request-based principle (Chap. 7). In response to questions regarding Japan’s stance regarding the “conduct of bilateral policy dialogues” (OECD 1988, Section B-19), the Secretariat notes the high caution exercised by Japan in “not being viewed as interfering in the internal affairs of the recipient” (ibid.). The discussion goes on to mention self-help as a higher-level concept that encapsulates the request-based principle and non-interference. It stated that, because Japan’s aid is “intended to assist the self-help efforts of its recipients [,] it is appropriate to adopt an attitude of being receptive to requests” (ibid.). In other years throughout the 1980s, self-help was mostly mentioned in a manner closely resembling the “self-help as an approach to aid”, with repeated claims of the need to strengthen the political, economic, and social resilience of developing countries by supporting self-help efforts *for* development.

In contrast, some noticeably distinct and specific claims regarding the role of the self-help effort can be seen in various aid reviews, such as the review from 1984:

Food problems of developing countries should be solved primarily by their **increasing food production through their self-help effort** (OECD 1984, emphasis added).

In this example, the Japanese government is describing the sectoral allocation of their aid in response to a question that mentions the importance of self-sufficiency in food production, presumably to highlight and justify aid to the agricultural sector. This is an example of “self-help efforts” being conceptualized specifically as endogenous food production capacity, to address food insecurity and dependency on external food supply.

Another distinct argument for self-help efforts can be observed about a decade earlier in the 1975 Annual Review, which uses the term while describing financing challenges associated with inflation:

Japan has been experiencing...difficult[ies] on account of far higher costs resulting from price increase than those estimated at the time of aid commitment and additional assistance is requested. Japan has been dealing, with such cases, in principle, by requesting the recipient country to **take self-help efforts**, and there is a limited number of cases where settlements have been obtained (OECD 1975, emphasis added).

It is within this context of financial risks and burden-sharing that the earliest discussions surrounding self-help efforts are mentioned within DAC documents. The 1968 Aid Review describes how the Japanese government identified self-help effort as an issue that resonated with their own priorities after participating in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), stating that:

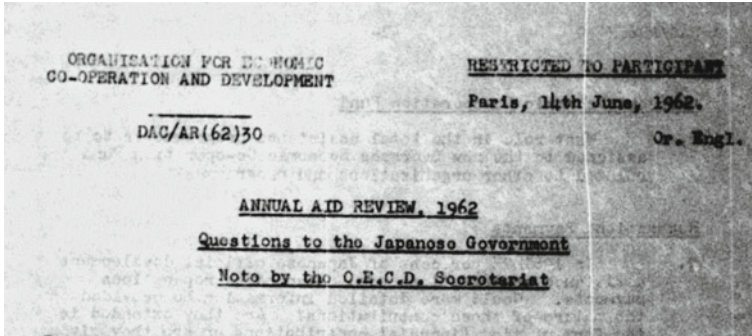
Particularly taking into account the conclusions reached at the second UNCTAD on the problem of **self-help**, Japan would strongly request recipient countries to attain concrete achievements in its **self-help effort** (OECD 1968, emphasis added).

Hynes and Scott have provided additional context for the “conclusions” being mentioned above that were made during the 2nd UNCTAD held in New Delhi (1968). Their working paper explains how UNCTAD participants agreed upon the need to improve the terms and conditions of aid, in response to pressure for increased concessional financing, as well as a general motivation from US-inspired attempts to share the burden of development assistance (Hynes and Scott 2013).

Early OECD policy documents from the 1960s thus invoke the concept of self-help to argue for the need for increased financial commitments (improved terms and conditions of aid financing) and burden-sharing (covering local costs) by recipient countries. The motive for presenting such notions in DAC aid reviews can also be interpreted as a response to early criticisms of the Japanese Government. The first-ever mention of “self-help” in the DAC annual aid review drafted in 1962 (Fig. 5) reveals what appears to be implicit criticism of Japanese aid approaches.

In the first aid review, the Secretariat questioned Japanese representatives about problems associated with the “project approach” to aid financing. The Japanese government is questioned for its use of project financing as the exclusive means for providing relatively longer-term financing to recipient countries. The question implies that project financing may not be able to account for broader self-help requirements as follows:

#### Problems of Project Approach



**Fig. 5** An image of the cover page of the first ever DAC annual aid review of Japan (OECD 1962), archived at OECD Headquarters in Paris

10. Over 65% of Japanese official lending of more than one year maturity is extended for project financing. Do the Japanese authorities feel that the project approach permits full consideration to be given to the overall needs and development priorities of the recipient country? Does the project approach permit taking full account of the broader **self-help requirements** such as proper fiscal and monetary policies and the stimulation of local initiative? Could examples be given? (1962 DAC Annual Aid Review of Japan, emphasis added)

These implications set the stage for what would evolve to become more pointed and explicit criticism of the Japanese approach to aid via project financing in the following years. Previous work that analyzes the policy dialogue within the DAC (Maemura 2019) revealed that during this time, the Japanese government was in fact criticized explicitly for possibly neglecting the self-help efforts of developing countries.

We can thus observe multiple conceptualizations and claims regarding examples of self-help within the international community via policy discussions within DAC. This includes claims that self-help efforts are consistent with Japan's emphasis on the request-based principle and non-interference; self-help effort as domestic food production capacity; self-help effort as the burden sharing of financial risks by recipient countries; self-help as strong fiscal and monetary policy; and self-help as local initiative within recipient countries.

## 6 Back to Its Roots: Advocating Self-Help “Spirit”

As we traced back the numerous and varied claims invoking “self-help efforts” by DAC and Japanese policymakers, the question remains: how can we make better sense of what “self-help effort” entails in the context of development assistance? This chapter began with a description of how present-day Japanese ODA policy utilizes “self-help efforts” as an a priori claim justifying its *approach* to ODA. Going back

in time, we observed multiple claims and contexts in which “self-help” was invoked, indicating that the concept of *jijodoryoku* may have been poorly translated. With such a variety of different claims and arguments utilizing the same term, policy coherence and coordination regarding what constitutes self-help efforts is at best infeasible, and, at worst, unattainable. At the very least, Japan’s current conceptualization of *jijodoryoku shien* as an a priori assumption justifying its approach to aid is unable to produce any systematic understanding of what it actually means to “support self-help efforts”.

It is suggested here that *jijodoryoku* is not necessarily a poorly translated, or untranslatable concept per se, but is a highly abstract and general concept denoting the “state of being” or social-psychological attitude of a subject. From a historical perspective, *jijodoryoku* is commonly argued to have entered the modern Japanese lexicon as an educational and developmental philosophy in the mid-nineteenth century, through the best-selling book “*Jijoron*”, which was a translation of the book by Samuel Smiles entitled *Self-help: with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (1859). Smiles’ book provides various descriptions and examples of successful industrialists from the British Empire, to build a staunch argument advocating for the central role of individualism as the driving force of national prosperity. In this book, he qualifies that self-help is a “spirit” (Smiles 1859, p. 18) that encapsulates the actions, experiences, and narratives that he describes. Although defining one’s “spirit” is a challenging task, classical social psychology can provide some useful definitions through the concept of “attitudes”. Attitudes refer to the cognitive state or belief about how particular actions lead to certain results, based on life experiences (Allport 1935), which is consistent with how arguments espousing the importance of self-help efforts are structured in Japanese ODA policy, as well as in literature (Shinozaki 2007). *Jijodoryoku* can thus be similarly interpreted as the attitude or social psychological state in which a subject is engaged in the act of helping itself.

Therefore, in contrast to the current conceptualization of “support for self-help efforts” which restricts the term to represent a specific *approach* to aid within Japanese ODA policy, *jijodoryoku* could be conceptualized more generally as one’s “spirit”. Logical congruency and policy coherence would in fact be more feasible by embracing this original conceptualization. By conceptualizing *jijodoryoku* as an attitude, the term can be applied as a policy principle that represents the *conditions* for aid, rather than an approach to aid—i.e., donor countries like Japan only wish to aid recipient countries that display or commit to self-help efforts. Donors would then be required to define or evaluate the various ways in which a recipient country can exercise self-help efforts.

To address the challenges of systematically defining the situations in which stakeholders could be acknowledged for their attitude of *jijodoryoku*, we can again take a semantic perspective and deconstruct the concept into its morphological components. By acknowledging that each component can take various forms or dimensions, numerous combinations can be conceived. In other words, *jijodoryoku* can be understood as the attitude, or state of being when a subject, the “self” (e.g., recipient countries, individuals, governing organizations, or specific sectors), engages in “effort” (e.g., commits or invests resources) towards a problem or issue that requires

“help” (e.g., autonomously defined development goals, human resources development, domestic production capacity, financial burden sharing, improved fiscal and monetary policy, etc.).

Conceptualizing *jijodoryoku* as an attitude would allow policymakers to incorporate various contexts and conditions that represent self-help efforts, which do not refer to any specific aid delivery mechanism. For example, request-based processes that generate autonomously defined projects and proposals would be in line with the attitude of *self-help*. Exogenously defined multilateral policy agendas, or mutually beneficial bilateral and/or regional strategies could also be consistent with the spirit of self-help efforts, by acknowledging the level of recipient “efforts” through ownership and accountability requirements, financing commitments, repayment agreements, or evidence of past efforts through previous or existing partnerships. In this manner, conceptualizing the spirit of *jijodoryoku* as a general condition for aid would enable policymakers to incorporate both normative arguments regarding the importance of self-help efforts in domestic or international policy agendas, as well as context-specific prescriptive arguments that outline how self-help efforts can or should be strengthened through cooperation with donor countries.

## 7 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter began by illustrating how Japan’s current ODA policy conceptualizes “self-help effort” as an a priori assumption characterizing the Japanese government’s *approach* to achieving separately defined development goals, such as “economic take-off”, or “self-reliant development”. The lack of a theoretical, or systematic definition of “self-help effort” was highlighted by tracing back the various conceptualizations of “self-help efforts” within Japanese and international ODA policy over time. Where definitions within earlier ODA Charters conceptualize *jijodoryoku* to be explicitly composed of human resources development, policymakers, and existing literature on Japanese ODA policy frame “support for self-help efforts” as a traditional approach that has established itself through Japan’s own development experiences. Although the terms “self-help” and “self-reliance” are often used interchangeably, a comparison of Japanese and international ODA policies reveals that while “self-reliance” is a common global development policy principle, “self-help efforts” as a specific principle is rarely mentioned, if at all, in high-level ODA policy discourse outside of Japan.

Although such findings suggest that self-help efforts are a uniquely Japanese ODA policy principle, further examination of OECD DAC aid reviews revealed how the current conceptualizations of self-help effort are the result of at least six decades of international policy dialogue between DAC donor countries. DAC aid evaluations dating back to the 1960s also contained various conceptualizations concerning the role of self-help efforts in development, such as the justification of the request-based principle and non-interference being consistent with self-help efforts; self-help effort

as domestic food production capacity; self-help effort as the burden sharing of financial risks by recipient countries; self-help as strong fiscal and monetary policy; and self-help as local initiative. Notably, within discussions of international development aid policy at the OECD, the DAC Secretariat was in fact the first to mention “self-help” in its questions to the Japanese Government, in order to raise concerns regarding the impact of Japan’s project-based aid on the fiscal and monetary policies of developing countries.

With such a diverse set of claims invoking “self-help efforts” in ODA policy in Japan and in the international community, this chapter suggests that the concept has not necessarily been poorly translated but that it is more accurate to understand *jijodoryoku* as a highly abstract and general concept denoting the social-psychological attitude or “state of being” of a subject. Conceptualizing *jijodoryoku* as an attitude would be consistent with the historical origins of self-help within a modernizing Japan, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, when Samuel Smiles described self-help as one’s “Spirit”. While it is admittedly difficult to define one’s “spirit” or attitude, the extensive scope within which a recipient country can be perceived to be taking “self-help efforts”, can be structured by acknowledging the multi-dimensional nature of the individual morphological components: which subject (“self”), requires or is committing resources (“effort”), for a development issue that requires assistance (“help”)?) Logical congruency and coherence under a wider scope of policy could thus be attained by arguing that “committing to self-help efforts” represents a general condition for aid, rather than “support for self-help efforts” representing a specific approach to aid. Self-help effort as a condition to aid can allow donor countries to produce normative policy arguments concerning the role of self-help efforts in development, as well as context-specific prescriptive policy arguments outlining how recipient countries can achieve development goals through self-help efforts.

This chapter aspires to be part of an important theoretical and practical discussion that should continue to try and systematically define principles such as “self-help effort” in the context of development cooperation. Theoretical and systematic definitions are crucial for strengthening policy coordination and coherence among the various stakeholders in an increasingly inter-connected, complex, and rapidly evolving international development assistance community.

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## Notes

1. The institutional arrangement of Official Development Assistance in Japan includes three major stakeholders: (i) MOFA is in charge of policy formulation and implementation of Official Development Assistance through the International Cooperation Bureau; (ii) the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is an Incorporated Administrative Agency (also referred to as an Incorporated Public Entity) mandated to implement international cooperation; (iii) JICA then commissions projects to the private sector or NGOs to execute aid initiatives with partners in developing countries. MOFA policy thus becomes a natural focal point to analyze high-level Japanese ODA policy.
2. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/>.
3. Other minor examples of “self-help” include two mentions of an NGO called “Self Help Development International” by Ireland, and one mention of self-help in the context of a specific food security project by the UK’s DFID.
4. DAC Annual reviews published between 1962 and 1996 have been compiled and examined for this chapter through previous work by the author.

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# *Ōnā Shippu*: A Vestige of Japan's Ambition to Lead International Aid



Kenichi Doi

**Abstract** Ownership is a concept that the international aid community has emphasized since the 1990s, and Japan has been an enthusiastic practitioner and promoter of ownership. However, Japan's view of ownership, or "*ōnā shippu*," emphasizes the aspect of responsibility imposed on the recipient, compared with "ownership" used in the international aid community. In Japan, "*ōnā shippu*" is a loanword, which places less emphasis on the aspect of control by the recipient itself and is conscious of the power asymmetry between donor and recipient. This chapter argues that the Japanese-style "*ōnā shippu*" is a product created in conjunction with Japan's ambition to enhance its presence as a major donor in the aid community since the 1990s. Instead of using direct translations of self-help and autonomy, values that Japan's aid emphasizes, it adopted the English word ownership because it was instrumental for Japan to take an initiative in the international aid community at that time. Japan led the conceptualization and promotion of ownership as a top donor until the mid-1990s. However, after that, differences with other DAC donors became apparent when "*ōnā shippu*" failed to translate into "ownership": a concept that is commonly understood and accepted internationally. As the Japanese government has lost the need to emphasize ownership, the Japanese-style "*ōnā shippu*" is becoming a fading vestige in the Japanese government's development cooperation strategy, but its connotation still remains among the Japanese aid workers and researchers.

## 1 Introduction

Ownership is a concept that the international aid community has emphasized since the 1990s, and Japan has been an enthusiastic practitioner and promoter of ownership. However, Japan's view of ownership, or "*ōnā shippu* (オーナーシップ)," is a

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149

loanword which emphasizes the responsibility aspect of ownership, reflecting its own history of development and foreign aid experiences that embrace self-help virtue. In Japan, “*ōnā shippu*” is still often translated into Japanese words, such as “自助努力 (*jijo doryoku*, self-help)” and “主体性 (*shutaisei*, subjectivity)” in dictionaries and official documents. These Japanese words connote the meaning of “ownership” internationally used in aid community, but still have distinctive nuances from it. Why has the Japanese government (and a considerable number of researchers) used the loan word, “*ōnā shippu*,” in many instances, rather than using these existing Japanese conclsightly broader spectrum of actionepts?

Because of its uniqueness, the recipient side also questioned the view of “*ōnā shippu*” at least initially, when Japan first proposed “*ōnā shippu*” as a new concept of development. The former high-ranked Japanese diplomat to Africa, Kurokochi Yasushi, introduced the conversation regarding “*ōnā shippu*” with African ambassadors to Japan in Tokyo in the early 1990s:

I said, “Let’s cultivate substantive *ōnā shippu* of development. Then, many development plans based on *ōnā shippu* will emerge. Only then will donors who work together based on partnership for development come out.” An ambassador objected, saying, “Isn’t it obvious that we, who live in Africa, originally have ownership?” So, I tried to convince them by saying, “Just possessing “*ōnā shippu*” doesn’t necessarily mean it is really effective” (Shirato 2020a).

This discussion between the African and Japanese diplomats revealed the difference in their views on ownership. While the African side regarded ownership as an inherent right or entitlement that the recipient side had, the Japanese side spoke on the basis that a threshold of responsibility and capacity that should be met. Here, too, the Japanese view of Africa was evident, which claimed that in Africa, where Western donor aid was prevalent, the recipients were still aid-dependent, making it hard to affirm that the spirit of self-help was being reached.

In the 1990s, Japan had a significant presence as the top donor and it held an ambition to lead the international aid community. Besides, it was becoming recognized internationally that Western donors had intervened excessively in recipients’ affairs. Japan “invented” “*ōnā shippu*” as a product of Japan’s ambition and a response to the past failure of international aid with the aspiration to promote it as “ownership.” However, the gap between “*ōnā shippu*” and “ownership” became apparent, as ownership emerged as a core concept in the “aid-effectiveness” modality throughout the late 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. Finally, the Japanese government lost interest in “*ōnā shippu*” and stopped using it in key development cooperation documents.

This chapter traces how Japan projected its own concepts onto ownership as a critical policy idea in Japan’s development cooperation and the rise and fall of “*ōnā shippu*.” The following section reviews the “ownership” argument, while introducing “*ōnā shippu*.” Then, the following sections articulate the trajectory of “*ōnā shippu*.” Sect. 3 introduces the birth and rise of “*ōnā shippu*.” Next, Sect. 4 argues that the Japanese government struggled to promote “*ōnā shippu*” as “ownership” in the age of “aid effectiveness.” Subsequently, Sect. 5 explores the process of the fadeout of

“*ōnā shippu*” along with the decline of the “aid-effectiveness” trend and “ownership.” Finally, Sect. 6 provides a conclusion.

## 2 “*Ōnā Shippu*” as a Japanese Product Reflecting Its Development Experience and Aid Model

The rise of “*ōnā shippu*” was parallel to the rise of “ownership” in international development discourse. This section first presents the review of the “ownership” argument, and then introduces the contents of “*ōnā shippu*.” The conditionality imposed on aid by the structural adjustment approach taken from the 1980s to the 1990s led to international donors’ excessive intervention in recipient countries’ policies and insufficient development effectiveness (Graham 2017). In response, the international community started to take developing countries’ ownership as a critical concept in international development assistance. Whitfield (2009) states that ownership is “a vague term that appeals to people for different reasons.” However, she defines ownership as the degree of control recipient governments are able to secure over policy, design and implementation (ibid., p. 5). “Control” is an instrumental word that encompasses both the responsibility and right aspects of ownership.

The discussion of ownership in international fora concerns the unequal power relation among stakeholders, particularly between aid donors and recipient countries (Keijzer and Black 2020; Hasselskog 2022; De Renzio et al. 2008; Black 2020). Some European donor countries have started adopting new aid modalities, such as general budget support, to promote the ownership of developing countries, avoiding donors’ frequent and extensive interventions in aid activities. The European donors have moved away from project-type interventions, which they believe can limit the recipient country’s ability to manage aid administration. Its proponents argued that budget support can foster greater recipient country ownership by allowing recipients to use their own financial management systems and budget procedures, which gives them more control over how aid is spent (Swedlund 2013; Armon 2007).

International development research on ownership points out the selectivity argument “—i.e., that donors should select the ‘right’ recipients, which in this case means strong owners, however defined (Jerve and Hansen 2008, p. 8).” Some donors impose conditions on their aid to recipient countries under the name of ownership (Hasselskog and Schierenbeck 2017). In other words, “ownership” became a pretext for donors to choose their recipients and aid projects they liked, given the ambiguity and discretion of the donors to define the term.

The debate on ownership also intensified regarding the question of who should possess ownership. The scope of the ownership argument extended to cover the domestic stakeholder relationship within recipient countries. The leadership of recipient governments was regarded as a prime actor for effectively formulating and implementing policies at the national level (Jerve et al. 2007). Furthermore, the discussion extended to encompass the involvement of various stakeholders within

recipient countries, such as parliamentarians and civil society, in the decision-making processes of development policies, known as “democratic ownership” or “comprehensive ownership” (OECD 2011a, b; Hori 2014; Smith 2005). As the discourse on effectiveness dwindled, ownership passed its peak, and the fervor seen in the past is no longer as prominent, albeit remaining one of the important principles in development cooperation (Hasselskog 2022; Hasselskog and Schierenbeck 2017).

The formation of “*ōnā shippu*” coincided with a period of international interest in reducing donors’ interventions in recipient countries’ affairs. Japan was exploring its potential to shape its own aid philosophy and seeking to promote it internationally. The notion that recipients should strive for self-reliance by avoiding excessive dependence on international aid aligned well with Japan’s aid philosophy of “self-help” (see Chap. 8). The *Lexicon of international cooperation* (4th edition) compiled by the Japan Society for International Development treats “*ōnā shippu*” as a synonym of *jijo doryoku* (self-help efforts). The Lexicon introduces “*jijo doryoku*” as the principle of Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) “based on the idea that developing countries’ efforts make their own development possible,” stating that “assistance from outside is supposed to be supportive in facilitating the realization of those efforts. Japan has respected self-help effort based on its own experience as an aid recipient (The Japan Society for International Development 2014). Likewise, official documents by the Japanese government repeatedly used *jijo doryoku* (self-help efforts) as a synonym of “*ōnā shippu*” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2004, 2007).

Besides self-help efforts, Japanese concepts such as *jishusei* (autonomy) and *shutaisei* (subjectivity or agency) were applied to “*ōnā shippu*” in some cases. As mentioned later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents sometimes treated “*jishusei*” (autonomy) as a synonym for “*ōnā shippu*” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2004). The National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL) proposes the term “*shutaisei* (subjectivity or agency)” as a translation of the loanword, “*ōnā shippu*.” NINJAL explains that the term is often used in the international development cooperation context, where it refers to recipient countries’ awareness of their own development needs and their active participation in addressing them. When referring to an issue as the recipient’s own problem, the institute proposes to replace “*ōnā shippu*” with the term “当事者意識 (*tōjisha ishiki*, stakeholder awareness)” (The National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics 2006).

Many researchers and aid implementing agencies, such as JICA, use the term “*shutaisei*” to explain “*ōnā shippu*” (JICA 2006; Ohno and Ohno 2006; Shinozaki 2007; Hori 2014). “*Jishu (sei)*” means “to act independently without interference or protection from others (Daijisen)” and also conveys the idea of self-reliance and autonomy. “*Shutaisei*” means “the attitude of acting according to one’s own will and judgment (Daijisen)” and suggests that a country or community is actively participating and driving its own development process. It emphasizes a sense of agency and engagement in shaping one’s own future. While both terms highlight the importance of self-determination and independence, they still have differences in nuance. “*Shutaisei*” emphasizes active leadership and engagement, whereas “*jishusei*” focuses more on autonomy and freedom to make decisions.

These Japanese concepts synonymous with “*ōnā shippu*” reflect the individual autonomy and self-reliance commonly present in “ownership” but also encompass Japan’s collectivist tendencies. “*Ōnā shippu*” emphasized the aspect of responsibility imposed on the recipient, compared with ‘ownership’ used in the aid community outside of Japan. This perspective of “*ōnā shippu*” pays less attention to the aspect of control by the recipient, which is aware of the power asymmetry between the donor and the recipient. Under “*ōnā shippu*,” the recipient country was considered the prime focus, and its leadership was emphasized. In other words, “*ōnā shippu*” primarily focused on the government, with limited consideration of the various domestic stakeholders. In the late 1990s, Japanese aid was criticized for supporting the self-help efforts of recipient governments but neglecting the development of self-help capabilities among the populations of recipient countries (Matsuda 1999, p. 450). Throughout the 2000s, a participatory approach was taken in Japan’s international development projects, but it remains unclear whether the involvement of citizens in national development decision-making was consciously addressed in the context of “*ōnā shippu*.”

Rather, the view of “*ōnā shippu*” expects appropriate responsibility from the recipient side, such as imposing their own burden on the residents as members of the state or community. For example, Japanese aid agencies appreciate that local people are paying out of their own resources for their aid projects as an expression of “*ōnā shippu*,” under the understanding of “self-help,” instead of relying entirely on aid (JICA 2006). This view of “*ōnā shippu*” was compatible with the normative consciousness prevalent in Japan, which does not favor dependence on others, exhibits agency and subjectivity, and values self-help: thus, it was an easy-to-understand concept for the Japanese people, including Japanese policymakers. The discourse prevalent among high-ranked aid officials pointed out the contrasts between foreign aid by Western donors and Japan, saying that while Western aid was often characterized as “noblesse oblige” or charity toward less fortunate countries, Japanese aid supports self-help efforts. Such voices meant Japan’s support for the efforts of people in developing countries improved their situation through emphasizing their own responsibility (Nishigaki et al. 2009, pp. 178–188). Hayashi (2021, p. 25) states that such discourse comparing Western and Japanese aid was frequently discussed and amplified within the practical realm of Japan’s ODA.

This issue is closely related to the Japanese aid philosophy, which stems from its own experiences in catching up with the West since the Meiji era, reconstructing the nation after World War II, and supporting East Asia’s successful economic take-off (Shinozaki 2007). Accordingly, the concept of self-help effort includes the aspiration for growth with eventual graduation from aid. As such, while sharing much in common with what is advocated by today’s international development community, the Japanese concept connotes a slightly broader spectrum of action than “ownership” (Ohno and Ohno 2006; Shinozaki 2007).

Moreover, Japanese officials thought that “*ōnā shippu*,” based on *self-help efforts*, *agency*, and *autonomy*, was consistent with the characteristics of Japan’s foreign aid, such as “*yōsei shugi*” and *yen loans*. The emphasis on one’s own subjectivity, self-help, and responsibility as a condition for aid provision is a distinctive feature of the



Japanese understanding of “*ōnā shippu*.” Due to its historical background, Japan’s ODA has been less involved in the recipient country’s policies than Western donors, thereby respecting their sense of ownership. *Yōsei-shugi*, the request-based principle in the ODA project formulation, exemplifies Japan’s respect for recipients’ “*ōnā shippu*” regarding request-based project selection (see Chap. 7). Also, *yen loans* were considered as an aid scheme to respect “*ōnā shippu*” to promote recipients’ self-help efforts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2004; JICA 2019). Regarding the amount of financial assistance provided, ODA loans have accounted for the majority of Japan’s aid. Shinozaki (2007) explains that loans, unlike grants, impose a repayment obligation, forcing recipient countries to consider more seriously the use of funds, project priorities, and costs. He further argues that this leads to the development of effective ways to utilize aid and, in turn, clarifies the responsibility and agency of developing countries, thereby helping recipient countries exercise “*ōnā shippu*” (Shinozaki 2007, p. 61). Therefore, for the Japanese government, “*ōnā shippu*” was a convenient concept that could legitimize aid practices with Japanese characteristics, such as the request-based principle and *yen loans*.

### 3 Japan’s Ambition to Lead the International Aid Community

This chapter argues that the Japanese-style “*ōnā shippu*” is a product created for Japan’s ambition to enhance its presence as a major donor in the aid community since the 1990s. This section examines the historical background of Japan’s version of “*ōnā shippu*” based on respect for recipients’ self-help effort and agency. Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs positioned the decade between 1992 and 2002 as a “Philosophy Shaping Period” of its foreign aid (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2004, p. 44). In the 1990s, as other DAC countries reduced their ODA due to donor fatigue, Japan became the top donor in terms of the amount of aid provided and began to influence the international aid landscape. Then, the Japanese government started to formalize its aid idea. In 1992, the first ODA Charter was approved by the cabinet to consolidate the basic idea and strategy of Japan’s foreign aid. In the Charter, Japan proposed its new concept of “support for self-help efforts” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1992; Chap. 8). Later, self-help efforts became the main ingredient of “*ōnā shippu*,” along with ownership, which was then a trendy concept in the international aid community.

In this context, Japan introduced the concept of “*ōnā shippu*” for the first time through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). TICAD is an international conference on African development initiated by Japan in 1993. Even today, TICAD is described as “an embodiment of the idea of ‘*ōnā shippu*’ by African countries and ‘partnership’ with the international community in African development, co-hosted by the United Nations, UNDP, the World Bank, and the African Union Commission” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2022).

“Ōnā shippu” emerged as a critical concept in Japanese aid policy when the Japanese government was preparing for the launch of TICAD. Owada Hisashi, who was involved in establishing TICAD while serving as Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, had questioned Japan's approach to developing countries during the Cold War. Facing the end of the Cold War, he was concerned about how Japan could transform its “passive diplomacy,” which had been careful to avoid causing trouble as a defeated country in World War II, into a “proactive diplomacy” that corresponded with the nation's strength. TICAD I, launched in October 1993, upheld the basic concepts of “ōnā shippu” and “partnership” developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While these terms are now commonly used in international development, TICAD I was instrumental in establishing them as international concepts. According to Shirato (2020a), Japanese officials thought that many African countries lacked a sense of responsibility for their own development at the time.

In the formation process of “ōnā shippu,” the Japanese officials had an awareness of its distinctiveness or superiority in contrast to Western aid. Okamura Yoshifumi, a former TICAD ambassador and a diplomat deeply involved in Japan's diplomacy with Africa, asserts that “ōnā shippu” refers to promoting self-help effort, where the recipient country must carefully consider and take responsibility for promoting economic and social development (Okamura 2019, p. 4). Furthermore, he goes on to say the following:

First, when addressing various African problems, Western countries tend to show their colonial past and Christian sentiments. This attitude is succinctly summarized as “charity” and “missionary work.” They give aid because the people are poor, and they teach because they are ignorant. This attitude is discernible. Of course, African countries also value democracy, human rights, and good governance. However, when Western countries speak of these values, African countries see them as imposing or reflecting colonialism. They don't feel such resistance against Japan. Instead, Japan denies the recipients' attitude of waiting to receive and waiting to be taught, which we see as “*amae* (dependency).” If you do not make effort yourself, giving you aid or teaching you is useless. This superficially appears to be a distant attitude. However, Africa welcomed it. This is because there is a premise that they can do it themselves. The attitude of believing in Africa's ability resonated with the self-esteem of Africans (Okamura 2019, p. 5).

Here, “ōnā shippu” was seen not just as recipient autonomy in aid activities but as representing the recipient country's responsibility over the entire development process. The term “partnership” refers to external aid contributions to facilitate this (Okamura 2019, p. 4). In the “ōnā shippu” perspective, Western aid is often viewed as fostering the recipients' excessive dependence on aid, while Japanese aid is seen as genuinely supporting the development rooted in the self-help efforts of developing countries.

The Japanese government was trying to use “ōnā shippu” as a tool for the selectivity of Japanese aid recipients to ensure the fulfillment of the responsibility of the recipient side for self-reliant development. The sixth article of the Tokyo Declaration includes the following statement: “We, Africa's development partners, reaffirm our commitment to providing priority support to countries undertaking effective and efficient political and economic reforms (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1993).”

Shirato (2020b) highlights a conversation between two former MOFA officials in the oral history record of this article:

This (the sixth article of the Declaration) is exactly about “*ōnā shippu*” and partnership. The key point of this declaration is the *ōnā shippu* of Africa and the partnership of aid towards it. In other words, it is a declaration that says Japan will prioritize assistance to countries that have *ōnā shippu*. To put it the other way around, it means ‘We will not provide aid to those who do not have *ōnā shippu*. Do whatever, we don’t care.’ In a sense, it is all your responsibility. This is a very revolutionary or clear statement of our position (Shirato 2020b).

The MOFA veterans meant that “*ōnā shippu*” became a selection criterion for Japan’s ODA. Ambassador Okamura also stated recipients’ own determination to conduct self-help effort is a prerequisite for Japan’s aid provision or partnership (Okamura 2019, p. 4).

The international aid donor community officially introduced “ownership” in the new development strategy: “Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation” adopted during the DAC High-level Meeting in May 1996. The document emphasizes ownership, proposing to respect participation and that which is “locally-owned.” Furthermore, the concept of ownership in the document reflects the Japanese perspective of “*ōnā shippu*”, namely, “self-reliance” and “self-efforts” (OECD 1996b). The Japanese government admitted that “Japan played a key role in the preparation process of this document (Economic Cooperation Bureau of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1997).” Other donors also acknowledged Japan’s leading role in formulating the strategy (OECD 1999). At the time, Japan placed a great deal of importance on this document. To implement effective aid drawing on the new development strategy endorsed in the DAC high-level meeting in 2016, Fujita Kimio, then JICA president, stated that it is essential to support the improvement of “*ōnā shippu*” in each developing country and promote cooperation among aid agencies to maximize limited aid resources (JICA 1998, p. 67).

During the 1990s to 2000s, when Japan’s presence as a major aid donor country was firmly established, it strongly emphasized the concept of “*ōnā shippu*.” In 2003, Japan revised its ODA Charter to include a reference to “*ōnā shippu*” synonymized with *jishusei* (autonomy) (Economic Cooperation Bureau of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2003, p. 3). The revised Charter was the first basic policy document of Japan’s ODA that enshrined “*ōnā shippu*.”

#### **4 Struggle to Translate “*Ōnā Shippu*” into “Ownership” Under the Aid-Effectiveness Era**

The Japanese government attempted to elevate its “*ōnā shippu*” into an international concept of ownership, and this Japanese leadership reached its culmination at the 1996 DAC strategy. However, Western donors did not agree to the specific content of this concept. Whereas the Japanese government sought agreement from other DAC donors, the Western donors continued to adhere to their deep involvement in

recipients' development policies, assertion of mutual accountability on aid and "partnership" together with "ownership" (Takahashi 2018, p. 231). The word "ownership" does not typically connote "self-help efforts." As the aid-effectiveness era dawned and other donors, mainly European donors, shifted to program approaches. With ownership gradually emerging as a core international theme for evaluating aid effectiveness, differences between Japan and other donors widened, and Japan's approach grew less comprehensible to them.

From the 1990s to the 2000s, when Japan promoted its unique concept of "*ōnā shippu*," several other donors criticized Japan for *not* respecting the "ownership" principle. Such donors claim that Japan was fully committing on aid effectiveness only because it emphasized project-type cooperation (Hayashi 2021). In turn, some voices in Japan did not understand why fiscal support, the alternative to project-type cooperation, would lead to the respect of "*ōnā shippu*." They believed that Japan's aid was precisely what enhanced the "*ōnā shippu*" of developing countries.

While DAC and other major donors during this period were working to harmonize the principles and modalities of aid, Japan sometimes saw this as an issue that did not concern them. The differences in understanding various concepts, such as "ownership," may have made communication difficult between Japan and Western donors, so communication with other donors was not always smooth (Hayashi 2021, pp. 17–23). The "ownership" issues of aid undermining recipients' political or economic control are not as prevalent in Japan's ODA debates due to Japan's initially limited intervention in the policy-making of developing countries and the establishment of special government agencies for aid implementation. This background may have reinforced the Japanese understanding of "*ōnā shippu*," which is distinctive from the understanding in the international arena.

The Japanese government has taken the position that yen loans are a form of aid that respects "*ōnā shippu*," which encourages the self-help efforts of developing countries by giving them an incentive to plan and operate aid projects more seriously by imposing a burden on the recipients in the form of debt repayment (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2004). However, this idea may be incomprehensible when interpreted as "ownership as the degree of control recipient governments are able to secure over policy, design and implementation" (Whitfield 2009, p. 5). Rather, in some other donors' views, *yen loans* do not provide greater discretion for recipient countries in project implementation due to restrictions on borrowing currencies and localizing procurement procedures compared to other donors' aid. This perception gap on loans was caused by divergent views between "*ōnā shippu*" which considers the bearing some burden for aid projects to demonstrate self-help efforts.

Japan's "*ōnā shippu*" approach has yet to address the power relation among the recipients' domestic stakeholders. Japan has been indifferent and unconcerned about the power asymmetry issues between donors and recipients, which have been discussed in the ownership debate (Whitfield 2009; Keijzer and Black 2020; Hasselkog 2022; De Renzio et al. 2008). The request-based project selection system is supposed to embody "*ōnā shippu*" by respecting the recipient governments' preferences for aid projects. It involves the political elite in recipient governments, thereby sometimes neglecting other stakeholders' input in recipient countries (see Chap. 7).

As such, this system fails to address “inclusive ownership,” which means giving control to a wide range of domestic stakeholders in a recipient country (OECD 2011a, b; Hori 2014; Smith 2005).

A later series of efforts to improve the effectiveness of international aid culminated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005. The Paris Declaration was adopted at the Ministerial-Level Meeting on Aid Effectiveness held in Paris in March 2005 under the auspices of DAC. The meeting intended to consolidate concrete measures for improving aid effectiveness and agree on implementation measures for the Paris Declaration as an international commitment. The Paris Declaration identifies ownership as the first of the five principles for improving aid effectiveness. The declaration enshrines ownership, stating that “partner (recipient) countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and coordinate development actions.” The declaration emphasizes that donors must “commit to respecting partner country leadership and helping to strengthen their capacity to exercise it” (OECD 2005), though the term “self-help effort” was not used. The phrase “respect partner country leadership” corresponds to the concept of ownership as owners’ rights, while the phrase “help strengthen their capacity to exercise it” encompasses capacity development support. In its 2007 “ODA White Paper,” the Japanese government introduced ownership in parentheses as “self-help effort (ownership)” as the first of the five principles of the Paris Declaration. The white paper highlighted that “the Paris Declaration incorporates the principle of self-help effort, which was proposed by Japan’s leadership in 1996 and is based on the new development strategy of the OECD-DAC, as well as the results-oriented approach, reflecting Japan’s aid philosophy in its basic ideas” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2007). The Japanese government domestically endorsed the “ownership” in these international outcomes as “*ōnā shippu*” and Japan successfully led the dissemination of this concept, internationally.

The view of “*ōnā shippu*” based on the principle of supporting self-help efforts helped to compensate for the shortcomings of the budget support aid approach taken by European donors in the aid-effectiveness era by working to improve the capacity building of recipients. Japan’s other major aid scheme is technical cooperation, which was criticized from aid-effectiveness perspectives by European donors during the aid coordination era. However, many studies have pointed out that budget support type aid also amplified the donor’s superiority over the recipient and hindered the recipient’s ownership (Swedlund 2013; Smith 2005; Whitfield 2009; De Renzio et al. 2008). Furthermore, given the recipient’s lack of capacity, hasty budget support by donors has often undermined the recipient’s ownership, so that capacity building was recognized as essential for recipients’ ownership (Smith 2005). In contrast, Japan attempted to evolve its technical cooperation to enhance recipient “*ōnā shippu*,” beginning with an approach to capacity development. JICA has actively promoted this new approach to technical cooperation for improving “*ōnā shippu*” through capacity development in international forums in the early 2000s (Smith 2005, p. 446; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2005).

JICA (2006b) defines capacity development as “the ongoing process of enhancing the problem-solving abilities of developing countries by taking into account all the

factors at the individual, organizational, and societal levels.” The “Report toward Capacity Development (CD) of Developing Countries based on their *ōnā shippu*,” published by the JICA Institute for International Cooperation in 2006, articulates JICA’s concept and practice of capacity development and its relationship with the Japanese-style “*ōnā shippu*” (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 2006a). The report states that “defining capacity as the ability of developing countries to solve problems on their own and considering it as a complex of elements including institutions, policies, and social systems, the concept of CD attaches great importance to proactive and endogenous efforts on the part of the developing countries.” However, *naihatsusei* (endogeneity, see Chap. 6) is translated as “ownership” in the English report summary. While endogeneity and ownership are not always interchangeable (JICA Institute for International Cooperation 2006b), “*ōnā shippu*” as “agency for self-help effort” can be used interchangeably for endogeneity. Japan’s technical cooperation projects taking CD approach addressed recipients’ capacity challenges, which were the bottleneck of the budget support approach by the European donors, so as to enhance recipients’ “*ōnā shippu*” (and ownership).

## 5 Fading Attempt to Promote “*Ōnā Shippu*”

The concept of “*ōnā shippu*” gradually lost prominence through the mid-2010s, as “ownership” has passed its peak along with “aid-effectiveness” modality in the international community. The several factors, such as persistent donors’ explicit conditionality and donor self-interests, contributed to the decline in prominence of “ownership” in international development discourse and practice (Hasselskog 2022; Fisher and Marquette 2016). Moreover, the emergence of “new donors,” such as China and South Korea, and the proliferation of public–private partnerships and philanthropic aid have also eroded the former influence of DAC, which was epitomized in the Paris Declaration (Hasselskog and Schierenbeck 2017, p. 325).

In 2015, the Japanese government revised its ODA Charter and introduced the new Development Cooperation Charter. The new charter includes the basic principle of “Cooperation aimed at self-reliant development through assistance for self-help effort” but does not use the term “*ōnā shippu*.” Instead, the Japanese term “*jishusei*” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015b) is used, and the foreign loanwords that are conscious of the international context have been eliminated. In the English provisional translation version of the charter, “*jishusei*” is translated as “ownership,” and it is used when looking back on the past by stating that “Japan has maintained the spirit of jointly creating things that suit partner countries while respecting *ownership*, intentions and intrinsic characteristics of the country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015a).”

Even in the latest Development Cooperation Charter revised in June 2023, while self-help efforts remained, “*ōnā shippu*” was absent. In this version, “*jishusei* (autonomy)” also disappeared. Thus, “*ōnā shippu*” vanished from the basic policy documents of foreign aid. It may be because the increasing agency derived from the

rise of the presence of developing countries since around the mid-2010s has largely achieved what Japan's ownership advocates as "self-help efforts." Thus, Japan may have lost the need to emphasize "*ōnā shippu*" that embodies it. Moreover, in the 2023 version of the Development Cooperation Charter, "offer-type" cooperation was launched. In the aid project selection under "offer-type" cooperation, the Japanese government considers "a foreign policy perspective" and "development scenarios," and Japan actively proposes and forms projects without waiting for requests from recipient countries. This amounts to a movement to revise even the conventional request-based principle.

In these decades, Japan has stepped down from its position as a top donor due to its fiscal challenges. The resultant criticisms from Western donors attenuated Japan's motivation to lead the aid discourse based on ownership. The influence of traditional donors such as DAC on aid architecture has also declined (Hayashi 2021, pp. 14–15). Under the "post-aid effectiveness era," the concept of ownership in the international arena has been transforming (Hasselskog 2020). Although Japan has suffered from domestic economic challenges, its government actively advocated new development cooperation initiatives, such as Universal Health Coverage and Quality Infrastructure Investment. Meanwhile, "*ōnā shippu*" lost its value for the Japanese government. The increasing presence of emerging donors, including Korea and other Asian countries obscures the "Japan brand" as the only advanced donor in Asia that can represent its own "self-effort efforts" for success, which had bolstered Japan's incentives to advocate "*ōnā shippu*" in the international arena.

## 6 Conclusion

From the deadlock of Western-led aid, Japan, the then-largest donor in the 1990s, created "*ōnā shippu*" based on its own experience of late development and promoted it internationally. Japan proposed the concept of "*ōnā shippu*" as a key concept in international aid, confident of its status as a major donor. In the process of promoting this concept on the international stage using language that would be widely understood, Japan linked "self-help efforts" and "agency" to the loanword "*ōnā shippu*." Since Japan's promotion of "*ōnā shippu*" in the mid-1990s, the term "ownership" came to be widely accepted in the international aid community in the historical contexts of the challenges caused by excessive "donorship." In this new environment, the Japanese government pursued international leadership in its own way and asserted itself, which contributed to the evolution of Japan's aid (Takahashi 2018, p. 241). However, Japan faced a challenge from European donors in the aid-effectiveness era, as they had different understandings of ownership. While Japan views the lack of ownership as the recipient countries' failure to pursue self-reliance, others see the lack of ownership as stemming from the deprivation of recipient countries' rights to control their own development. This gap made it hard for Japan to communicate and cooperate with other donors.

Meanwhile, Japan's practices based on “*ōnā shippu*” provided the capacity development approach that offset recipients' capacity issues, insufficiently addressed by the European donors' “ownership” approach. Replacing the former mainstream of providing aid through grants, loans are increasing in the current trend in the Western donors. This may represent a silent victory for the “*ōnā shippu*” idea that favors loan aid to enhance recipients' self-help.

Over time, Japan became less interested in leading the international aid movement as international development cooperation was no longer dominated by traditional donors due to the increasing presence of diverse actors, such as emerging donors, private foundations, and business sectors. The concept of “ownership” became less prominent in discussions on international aid with the decline of the aid-effectiveness trend. As a result, Japan's attachment to the term “*ōnā shippu*” has attenuated, and it has vanished from the key development cooperation document. However, the notion of “*ōnā shippu*” as a concept that stresses responsibility, self-help, subjectivity, and autonomy in its Japanese translations has become entrenched in the discourse of Japan's international development officials and researchers through the reproduction of knowledge in official documents and research publications. “*Onā shippu*” as self-help efforts was produced in an attempt by Japan to lead the international aid modality as a significant donor, and it remains a vestige of that dream today.

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# *Kokusai Kōken*: Changing Perceptions of Japan's Status in the International Society



Takatoshi Oyama

**Abstract** In Japan, the concept of *kokusai kōken* refers to positive means of international engagement that ought to be pursued by the Japanese government and the public. Rendering it literally as *international contribution* lacks nuance in English, while an ideological translation as *contributions to the international society* would be too vague in terms of its object and the underlying values. This chapter first seeks to provide a deeper understanding of *kokusai kōken* by tracing its genealogy. The concept emerged from a discursive framework that developed from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, through attempts to position Japan, which had grown into an economic superpower, within a hierarchical international order. Secondly, the chapter considers how the concept has justified Japan's focus on international development based on the Japanese view of international society, with the aim to gain recognition as an economic superpower by advanced Western countries and international organizations without posing a threat to Asian countries.

## 1 A Transient Buzzword

The concept of *kokusai kōken* (国際貢献) revolves around a discourse that promotes Japan's increased engagement in international development cooperation. Word-for-word, the *kokusai* means *international*, and *kōken* means *contribution*. In a broad sense, *kokusai kōken* refers to positive ways of international engagement that should be undertaken by the Japanese government and the Japanese public. The Japanese government might, for example, request more *kokusai kōken*, or request participation in undertaking *kokusai kōken*.

However, a search on the Internet for the term *international contribution* yields numerous English translations of Japanese websites. This implies that the term *international contribution* does not fit well into English. Even though *kokusai kōken* is idiomatically translated into English as *Japanese contribution to international*

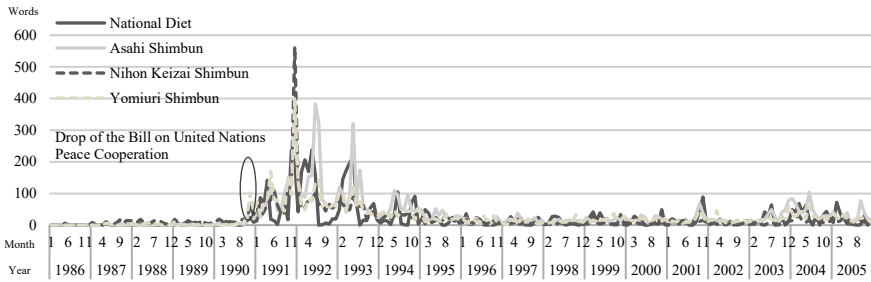
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**Fig. 1** Frequency of the use of *kokusai kōken* in Japan (1986–2005). *Source* Oyama (2021). Compiled from the National Diet Record (National Diet Record Search System), Asahi Shinbun (Kikuo II Visual), Nihon Keizai Shinbun (Nikkei Telecom), and Yomiuri Shinbun (Yomiuri Database Service).

*society*, it is unclear who or what *international society* is—the object lacks specificity—making it unclear what values are being promoted through its *contribution*. In order to comprehend such an untranslatable concept, it is necessary to contextualize the concept of *kokusai kōken* historically and regionally.

The prevalence of discourse promoting *kokusai kōken* in Japan extends beyond government agencies, encompassing the private sector and the public. This is similar to the way in which actors have justified their actions in reference to Sustainable Development Goals discourse in recent years. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of the use of *kokusai kōken* in the National Diet and in popular national newspapers. The frequency of use of *kokusai kōken* increased considerably in the early 1990s, but enthusiasm cooled rapidly from the mid-1990s onwards.

This chapter explores what prompted the fervent search for *kokusai kōken*. How did it emerge, and what impact did it have on Japan’s involvement in international development cooperation? The discursive framework that shaped this concept emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, and gained popularity during the early 1990s. This coincided with a time when Japanese participation in international development cooperation had significantly increased. Japan’s official development assistance (ODA) being recognized as the largest in the world (1991); the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) were deployed for the first time in peacekeeping operations under the United Nations (1992); and the number of Japanese overseas volunteers grew substantially. Analyzing the rise and fall of the concept of *kokusai kōken* serves as an attempt to clarify the discursive foundation on which Japan’s involvement in international development was based.

In the following section, I will trace the genealogy of *kokusai kōken* and its impact on Japan’s international development cooperation. After reviewing the historical context in which the term was coined, I will identify the impact of *kokusai kōken* in Japan, and examine the process through which this enthusiasm has waned since the mid-1990s. Through this analysis, I will position *kokusai kōken* as a “buzzword as fuzzword” (Cornwall 2010) that has guided the involvement of Japan in international

development and highlight the changing perspective on international development that prevailed in the Japanese society.

## 2 Emergence of the Concept of *Kokusai Kōken*

The section begins by discussing the emergence of the concept of *kokusai kōken* against the background of the following historical developments: (1) Japan's international *status* increased due to its economic growth after World War II, (2) greater international *responsibilities* were expected of Japan, especially by Western countries, and (3) Japan took measures to ensure its fair participation in *kokusai kōken* (Oyama 2015, 2021). This historical overview illustrates that the concept of *kokusai kōken* evolved as Japan endeavored to position itself within a hierarchical framework of the international order.

### 2.1 Awareness of Growing International Status

During the Eisaku Sato administration (1964–1972), Japan's growing international *status* began to be discussed in Japan. Throughout this period, there was a growing awareness that Japan had emerged from the post-World War II reconstruction phase and had entered a period of rapid economic expansion. In 1964, Japan became a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and also held Article VIII membership of the International Monetary Fund. In Japan, these achievements were seen to confirm that Japan had joined the ranks of *developed countries*. By 1968, Japan had become the world's second largest economy after the United States. Recognizing these shifts in power, Prime Minister Sato articulated the following in his policy speech upon assuming office: "I aim to actively *contribute* to the maintenance of world peace while simultaneously taking prompt action to enhance Japan's *international status*" (Sato 1964, emphasis added).

In the latter half of the Sato administration, it was acknowledged that "Japan was entering an era in which its national power would carry unprecedented weight with respect to the rest of the world" (Sato 1970a). Building on this recognition, Sato declared the following in his general address during the 25th session of the United Nations General Assembly in October 1970:

World history has shown us that countries with significant economic power have been tempted to possess commensurate military forces. However, I wish to emphasize that my country is committed to utilizing its economic prowess for the promotion of world peace, with no intention whatsoever to allocate a substantial portion of it for military purposes (Sato 1970c).

The stated policy aimed to increase Japan's ODA to 1% of its GNP by 1975. In response to concerns from foreign nations about Japan's growing economic influence potentially transitioning into military domination, the Japanese government sought

to clarify its foreign aid commitments. Based on his international statements, Prime Minister Sato declared to the Japanese public that the Japanese government was determined to *contribute* to the building of peace in the world (Sato 1970b, emphasis added).

## 2.2 *Awareness of Growing International Responsibility*

Rising *status* necessitated the shouldering of greater *responsibility*. Only in the late 1970s did Japan formally prioritize its allocation of ODA as a strategy for fulfilling international *responsibilities* that came with its elevated international *status*. Japanese diplomats began to realize that they were required to fulfill their *responsibilities* in building a stable international order, as both developed and developing nations regarded Japan as a *great power* (Nishiyama 1977, p. 8, p. 4). The Takeo Fukuda administration's five-year plan to double ODA, introduced in 1977, reflected this acknowledgement and demonstrated Japan's commitment to circulate its current account surpluses back into the international community. During Yasuhiro Nakasone's administration from 1982 to 1987, the prime minister re-affirmed in the Diet that the expectations and demands placed on Japan by various countries were proportional to the nation's enhanced *status* in the international community. Furthermore, he stressed that fulfilling international *responsibilities* might require citizens to shoulder occasional burdens (Nakasone 1984).

After the Tokyo Summit in 1986, Prime Minister Nakasone was acutely aware that "Japan's status in the international community, not only economically but also politically, has risen significantly." Furthermore, he emphasized the need for further foreign engagement and asserted that Japan should move away from being "a unilateral beneficiary of world peace and prosperity" to "shouldering its fair share of the burden and actively contributing to the international community" (Nakasone 1986). The subsequent administration under Noboru Takeshita inherited recognition that as "one of the major leaders in the international order ... Japan itself must sweat hard and willingly bear the ... cost," and adopted the concept of "Japan contributing to the world" as the guiding principle of the administration (Takeshita 1987). In response to the growing criticism of the economic egoism of Japan, particularly from the United States, and to mitigate these concerns, discourse on *kokusai kōken* came to the forefront.

In the post-World War II era, Japan refrained from political and military involvement in foreign affairs and cultivated its national image based on postwar pacifism to distinguish itself from the belligerent empire of Japan. Thus, as the Japanese government deepened its commitment to the maintenance and management of international order, especially in the political and military spheres, it was required to justify its increased engagement in foreign affairs in a manner aligning with these national images. The discourse of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in these circumstances focused on Japan's international *status*, *responsibilities*, and *contributions* as a great

power or a major leader in the international order. It was crucial for both the government and the LDP to construct a discourse that encouraged civic society to supply international public goods as an economic superpower. In this regard, participation in international development was considered as an area that aligned with Japan's desires for pacifism and its reputation as a great power. This historical background gave rise to the concept of *kokusai kōken* and its associated discursive framework.

### 2.3 *Disseminating the Concept of Kokusai Kōken in Political Circles*

References to *kokusai kōken* rose in November 1990 (Fig. 1). In August of that year, the United Nations imposed economic sanctions and deployed coalition forces in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Faced with this situation, the Japanese government deliberated on the type of cooperation it could offer as an economic superpower. The Japanese government, however, was tied to its commitment to postwar pacifism and could only provide financial assistance. This led to increased criticism of Japan in the U.S. Congress. President George W. Bush demanded Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu allow the JSDF to join the multinational force (Bush 1990). In October, the Japanese government proposed the United Nations Peace Cooperation Bill to the country's House of Representatives, which was intended to provide a framework for the JSDF's first overseas deployment. Nevertheless, because of the growing pacifist sentiment in Japanese society against overseas military deployments, the bill was withdrawn on November 9.

Although the bill, which included the deployment of the JSDF to overseas operations, was premature, it created a sense of urgency in Japanese public discourse. It underscored the idea that Japan needed to demonstrate its commitment to restoring international order not only through financial assistance but also through the deployment of personnel. After the bill was withdrawn, the ruling LDP, the opposition Komeito party, and the Democratic Socialist Party signed the "Memorandum of Agreement on International Peace Cooperation" on November 8, 1990. Subsequently, major newspapers began using the concept of *kokusai kōken* to report on this political movement (Asahi 1990; Yomiuri 1990). Notably, neither the government nor the ruling LDP officially promoted the term, and it was not used in the tripartite agreement. The origin of the concept of *kokusai kōken* can be traced to Komeito, which held the decisive vote in the Diet and had anticipated the failure of the bill since the end of October. Komeito had advocated a compromise bill, tentatively named the "Basic Bill on *Kokusai Kōken*," to bridge the gap between the ruling and opposition parties. The concept of *kokusai kōken* was accepted and used in accordance with Komeito's objectives.



### 3 The Dissemination of *Kokusai Kōken* to a Wider Japanese Society

The term *kokusai kōken*, initially coined by Komeito, resonated with popular sentiment and spread rapidly. This allowed a wide range of foreign policies and practices that transcended, or reshaped, the left–right ideological divide. This section highlights two examples of novel policies and practices fostered by the discursive framework associated with this concept: (1) the overseas deployment of the JSDF and (2) the engagement of Japanese citizens in international cooperation.

#### 3.1 *The Overseas Deployment of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces*

The deployment of the JSDF overseas for the first time took place in April 1991, less than six months after the withdrawal of the UN Peace Cooperation Bill. Following the Gulf War’s stable armistice in March, the administration considered JSDF minesweepers for clearing floating mines in the Persian Gulf. Surprisingly, despite striking public opposition to the deployment of military personnel overseas approximately six months earlier, contemporaneous public opinion polls in March and April showed support for the JSDF’s deployment. The previously established anti-military sentiment in Japanese society rapidly changed amidst the widespread adoption of the concept of *kokusai kōken* (Oyama 2017).

The Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office (CIRO) commissioned the Council for Public Policy Foundation to conduct a public opinion poll in late March 1991. Although the details of the questions asked in the poll were not disclosed, 62% of the respondents were in favor of deploying the JSDF minesweepers, while 29% were opposed, marking the first time that a majority was in favor of deployment (Asahi 1991b). Yukihiro Ikeda, then Director-General of the Defense Agency, argued in the House of Councilors that “the public’s view of the role of the JSDF and the thinking of *kokusai kōken*” was increasing, citing the opinion poll (Ikeda 1991). Furthermore, Ikeda pressed Prime Minister Kaifu, who was reluctant to deploy the JSDF overseas, by pointing out, “You emphasize the importance of public opinion, but the poll results show that a significant number of people agree with the deployment” (Asahi 1991b).

In mid-April, CIRO commissioned the company Central Research Services to conduct another poll. A CIRO insider explained that the reason for conducting a second poll was that “the numbers are better than expected. We want to reaffirm the will of the people” (Asahi 1991a). While the exact details of the questions in the second poll also remained unclear, the percentage of the responses reported as “should be deployed overseas” appeared to be even higher than that in the first survey. In response to these poll results, Komeito’s Natsuo Yamaguchi cautioned against unquestioningly accepting the interpretation put forward by the government and the LDP, emphasizing that it is difficult to ascertain the underlying assumptions of this

public opinion and the information on which people base their views (Yamaguchi 1991). In particular, he pointed out that the premise of the question might be more nuanced, possibly framing the deployment as *kokusai kōken*, which is not justified by the Japan Self-Defense Forces Law, rather than ensuring the safety of the nation's ships, which is justified by that law.

As can be inferred from Yamaguchi's statement, these polls have produced results that seemingly overturned the prevailing public opinion by positioning the overseas deployment of the JSDF as a vital component of *kokusai kōken* and by relegating military and security aspects that are likely to provoke protest. This represents a significant shift in the axis of confrontation in the debate over Japan's foreign policy. The political confrontation was initially conservative (emphasis on military defense policy centered on Japan-United States relations) versus progressive (pursuit of international neutrality and anti-militarism), a confrontation that formed shortly after Japan's defeat in WWII. It also shows the appeal of *kokusai kōken*. It was the spread of the concept of *kokusai kōken*, stemming from Japan's increased economic power and international status that engendered a new political cleavage between those who allocate more resources to international public policy, including human resources (*kokusai kōken* beyond conventional frameworks), and those who only provide financial contributions to international affairs (*kokusai kōken* within conventional frameworks). The stance focused solely on providing economic aid was scorned as *one-country pacifism* (*ikkoku heiwashugi*), and the perspective advocating political and military *kokusai kōken* gradually became the dominant discourse in Japanese society.

In this context, Prime Minister Kaifu made the decision to deploy the JSDF minesweepers, who departed for the Persian Gulf on April 26, 1991. The fact that the JSDF was described as "deploying the Hinomaru [national flag] under the banner of 'contribution'" (Asahi 1991c) indicates that the JSDF was perceived as an entity actively engaged in *kokusai kōken* on behalf of Japan. It also suggests that the JSDF had assumed a new role beyond that of a military organization dedicated solely to national defense. Subsequently, the Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (Act No. 79 of June 19, 1992) provided the legal framework for the JSDF to participate in UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia (the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) and East Timor (the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, and the United Nations Mission of Support to East Timor) to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. During these operations, the role of the JSDF expanded to include reconstruction and development assistance in post-conflict areas, with a particular focus on repairing infrastructure such as roads and bridges (Fujishige et al. 2022, pp. 85–122). This form of *kokusai kōken* allowed the JSDF to engage in overseas reconstruction and development assistance, which was consistent with the anti-military norms that had become entrenched in Japanese society.

### 3.2 *The Growing Involvement of Japanese Citizens in International Cooperation*

The widespread use of the concept of *kokusai kōken* in the Japanese media has led to a change in the perception of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In contrast to the situation before the Gulf Crisis, when NGOs were regarded as unattractive in Japan, they have become essential participants in international development in Japan, operating in areas beyond the reach of government. This section provides an overview of the political, economic, and social changes that have influenced the development of NGOs in Japan.

First, the growing interest in *kokusai kōken* made Japanese politicians increasingly aware of the underdeveloped state of NGOs in Japan. In light of Japanese growing interest in participating in UN peacekeeping operations, a cross-party Diet group participated in the monitoring of the national elections in Bangladesh in late February and early March 1991. Here, they observed Western NGOs playing active roles in various fields. After a cyclone hit Bangladesh in April 1991, a member of the Diet observed that “NGOs from Western countries played a very central role” in the distribution of relief supplies and other activities (Kitagawa 1992). The Diet members who visited the region expressed “sadness” at the lack of Japanese NGOs that could have participated in UN-led peace operations (Taneda 1991a). Thus, they advocated for the creation of “a mechanism that would enable the citizens and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work together for *kokusai kōken*” (Taneda 1991b).

Second, the Japanese government increased financial allocation to support NGOs, which until then had encountered funding constraints when attempting to carry out their operations. In January 1991, the Japanese government launched a new system called the Postal Saving for International Voluntary Aid (POSIVA) in conjunction with efforts to expand support for NGOs within framework of NGO project subsidies and small-scale grant aid initiated under the banner of *Japan Contributing to the World* during the Takeshita administration. POSIVA is a voluntary program that collects the interest on regular savings deposited in post office saving accounts. These donations are then allocated to support funds for NGOs operating abroad. This program was conceived even before the Gulf War and against the background of Japan’s rise to economic superpower status. It aimed to stimulate “such contributions that every Japanese citizen [and not just the government] would also participate in the international community” (Fukaya 1990). Over the years, donations from depositors increased, and the number of depositors reached over 20 million by the end of June 1996. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications felt that “the program was widely accepted as a convenient means of *kokusai kōken*” (Nikkei Kinyu 1996), and post office tellers also felt that many people said, “I can do something useful by simply saving money” (Nikkei 1997). As the concept of *kokusai kōken* gained popularity, systems and practices for supporting NGO were enhanced.

The third change, marked by the heightened interest of the public in international philanthropic activities, stands out as the most significant. Although the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had previously hired only around 30 new

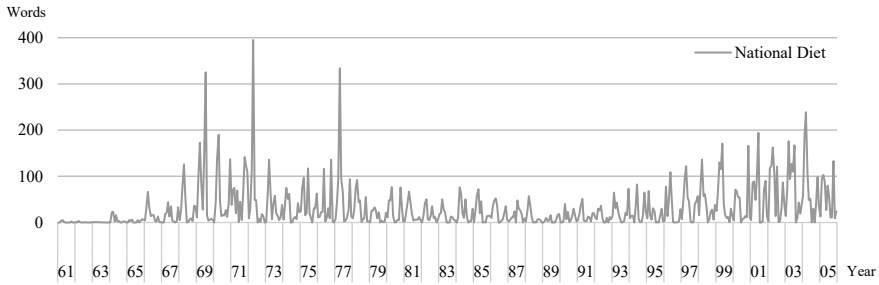
graduates each year, the number of requests for information materials surpassed the number of recruits, reaching 2,300, 5,000, and 9,000 for the 1992, 1993, and 1994 editions, respectively. In May 1995, it was reported that the number of people requesting information in 1995 was “close to 20,000” (Asahi 1994a). JICA officials attributed the reason for this change to the increasing debate on *kokusai kōken*. It was observed that there was an increasing awareness among the public about the need for *kokusai kōken*, and the desire of the public to be involved in such contributions was escalating (Asahi 1994b). One NPO stated that “Citizens have become aware of ‘*kokusai kōken*’ as if they ‘must do something’” (Asahi 1994a).

Thus, the growing awareness of issues related to *kokusai kōken* prompted the public in Japan to act. Once viewed as eccentric (Asahi 1992) and anti-establishment (Homma 1994), NGOs began to engage in foreign aid activities in cooperation with the government during this transition. In 1994, amid the turmoil of Rwandan civil war and the consequent displacement of refugees, Japanese NGOs offered assistance on the ground ahead of the government's deployment. Furthermore, the Japanese government aimed to bolster its support for NGOs by offering financial aid, equipment, and other forms of assistance, thereby enhancing the presence of Japan in the region. As *kokusai kōken* gained momentum, Japanese NGOs transformed themselves into international development actors.

#### 4 Subsiding Enthusiasm for *Kokusai Kōken*

The concept of *kokusai kōken* has significantly expanded Japanese participation in international development efforts. This started with a remarkable increase in ODA, then led to the deployment of the JSDF abroad, and the promotion of international volunteerism. Although these attempts provided the Japanese people a sense of pride in *contributing* to the international society, Fig. 1 indicates that the utilization of the term *kokusai kōken* then rapidly diminished. This section offers an outline of the factors that contributed to the short-lived nature of the term and practice of *kokusai kōken*.

The bursting of the bubble economy, which decimated disposable income, and a growing sense of economic stagnation were the primary factors that led to the shift away from *kokusai kōken* in Japanese society. In the official journal of the Democratic Socialist Party, which had previously touted Japan's economic superiority, an essay appeared with headline “Removing the ‘Economic Superpower’ Mentality,” which argued that “we must not be smug” and that “the era of chasing the dream of an economic superpower has ended” (Yajima 1994). By the mid-1990s, Japanese society came to “dislike the term ‘*kōken*’” because “as taxpayers, we tended to think in terms of ‘our money’” (Asahi 1996). Consequently, “the debate on *kōken* in Japan has lost some of the enthusiasm it once had,” and attitudes began to “think less about *responsibility* and more about ‘how will this benefit Japan’” (*ibid.*). The latter attitude centers the concept of *kokueki* (national interest/benefit).



**Fig. 2** Frequency of the use of *kokueki* (national interest/benefit) in Japan (1961–2005). Source Oyama (2021). Compiled monthly by the author from the National Diet Proceeding (National Diet Proceedings Search System).

Figure 2 depicts the frequency of *kokueki* in the Diet debate. Its frequency was relatively low from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, which coincided with a dominant discourse emphasizing the need to fulfill *responsibilities* based on international *status*. Since the mid-1990s, the frequency of *kokueki* gradually increased as *kokusai kōken* declined. Although the concept of *kokueki*, the opposite of *kokusai kōken*, is positioned as a translation of the English concept of national interest, it is also used with a meaning that is relatively similar to that of economic benefit. As early as the mid-1980s, the plant industry, which was suffering from a slump in exports, began to emphasize *kokueki*-oriented aid, that is, tied aid that would encourage Japanese companies to expand overseas, which gradually came to dominate as the Japanese economy became notably stagnated in the mid-1990s. This phenomenon exemplifies the shift from altruistic to self-interested discourse (Oyama 2021).

This shift in discourse was widely adopted in the realm of Japanese foreign aid in 1997. The impetus was Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto’s directive for a comprehensive reform to reduce the ODA budget, in light of the shrinking national budget and economy. In reaction, the Economic Planning Agency, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which were responsible for ODA, as well as several stakeholder industry associations, submitted policy recommendations based on the concept of *kokueki*. Their recommendations emphasized the concept of face-to-face assistance, that is, aid that would clearly demonstrate Japan’s presence as a donor to the recipient country and earn the gratitude of the recipient country. This initiative to bolster Japan’s presence contrasted with the trend since the 1970s, exemplified by the triangular development cooperation project, which had rendered Japan invisible as an aid donor, careful not to antagonize the Southeast Asian recipient countries with which Japan had once fought during World War II (Kim 2022).

By the late 1990s, it was said that “*kokusai kōken* and aid were clearly no longer ‘in season’” (Shimomura 1997). After the economic recession hit and international pressure, particularly from the United States, lessened, the Japanese populace lost interest in foreign aid. Japanese foreign aid was not motivated by internal factors,

but instead by external factors based on the concepts of international *status*, *responsibility*, and *contribution* that were formed through symbolic interactions with other nations. Furthermore, the concept of aid for *kokueki* came to be used in the context of defending the interests of aid stakeholders against declining national budgets, but it never generated widespread public interest.

## 5 Conclusion: What Was *Kokusai Kōken*?

The concept of *kokusai kōken* generated a discursive framework, composed alongside the following discussions: (1) improvement of international *status* associated with economic growth, (2) international *responsibility* as an economic superpower, and (3) *contribution* to bridging the gap between the ought-self and the actual-self as an economic superpower. In the process of generating and disseminating this concept in Japanese society, the involvement of Japan in international development was increased by a greater ODA budget, the overseas deployment of the JSDF, and international cooperation by civilians through NGOs. Thus, one can infer that this concept played an indispensable role in framing Japan as a major actor in international development. Although this discursive order was cultivated particularly from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, it collapsed in one fell swoop in the mid-1990s in the wake of Japan's economic downturn.

What is the reason for the untranslatability of the concept of *kokusai kōken* or the *Japanese contribution to the international society*? After rebuilding relations with former enemies in the post-World War II era, colonies, and occupied territories as a defeated nation, Japan's national pride lay in being recognized as one of the world's responsible powers, particularly by western industrialized nations and international organizations, without posing a threat to Asian nations. Especially after becoming an economic superpower, Japan has sailed between the Scylla of appearing too passive and the Charybdis of appearing too proactive in its foreign policy. Japan placed high value on gaining international recognition and *status* in terms of its national identity. This historical sense is not shared by English-speaking countries. Wanting to be recognized as a prominent non-Western economic power by Western industrialized countries, although it is geographically a part of Asia, render the concepts of the international society in Japan and *kokusai kōken* difficult to translate. It was within this historical context that Japan's international development cooperation experienced rapid growth. The lack of a shared historical context was why "foreign observers, even aid experts" found it "difficult to understand why Japanese ODA, of all foreign policy instruments, was the first to gain international attention" (Yasutomo 1989, p. 38).

Simultaneously, particular nuances in the conceptualization of the international society have been rendered invisible in Japanese. The extent to which the concept of the international has changed since the late 1990s, when *kokusai kōken* lost its momentum, and how it is used in Japanese discourse, remains to be seen.

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# From Goa to Angola: Exploring Ideas and Mechanisms in Japan's *Kaihatsu-Yunyū*



Soyeun Kim

**Abstract** The chapter investigates the evolution, ideational background, and implementation mechanisms of *kaihatsu-yunyū* (the “develop-and-import” scheme). In exploring and historicising this little studied topic, the chapter first examines the earliest form of *kaihatsu-yunyū* as seen in the Goa formula first appeared in 1951. The Goa formula was essentially a long-term resource-backed credit agreement in which Japan exported the necessary capital goods and technology to India—formerly considered as part of Southeast Asia—in exchange for iron ore as repayment. The chapter then surveys *kaihatsu-yunyū* in the context of Japan’s economic cooperation during the 1950s and 1960s as a dual-purpose policy tool to rebuild trade relations with Southeast Asia by securing raw materials from it, and expanding exports to the region. It also examines *kaihatsu-yunyū*-style aid that was designed to promote trade with Southeast Asia. To conclude, the chapter briefly discusses the legacy and significance of *kaihatsu-yunyū*—particularly the influence of Goa on the “Aid for Trade” agenda and China’s contemporary large-scale resource-for-infrastructure swap agreements under its Angola model.

## 1 Introduction

*Kaihatsu-yunyū* (開発輸入, literally translated as “develop-and-import”) was once a widely used policy instrument and financing mechanism that characterised the early years of Japan’s post-war “aid” to and economic cooperation with developing countries.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of an official definition and clear criteria, *kaihatsu-yunyū* has been used to refer to a mechanism—particularly during the 1960s and 1970s—by which Japanese companies invest capital and export technology overseas to develop and import raw materials vital to the Japanese economy (Uraki 1969). Yet, the initial form and idea of *kaihatsu-yunyū* appeared in the 1950s as a dual-purpose tool of Japan’s economic cooperation with the developing world to secure resources (largely

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in minerals and energy) and to promote the export of Japanese plants and machineries needed by those industries (Hara 1966; JBIC 2003, p. 232; JEXIM 1961).<sup>2</sup>

Despite its significance and wide usage in Japan, *kaihatsu-yunyū* remains little known outside of Japan. As a Japanese policy tool, its “translatability” was of little concern to Japanese actors involved. As such, it remained untranslated. Yet, the rapid increase of China’s South-South Cooperation (SSC) since the 2000s brought about changes. *Kaihatsu-yunyū* attracted the attention of academics and media due to its mounting presence and visibility in Africa (see below). And, Japan’s Goa formula—the earliest form of *kaihatsu-yunyū*—gained interest when it was recognised as the archetype of China’s Angola model (see Brautigam 2009). The Angola model consists of large-scale resource-for-infrastructure swap agreements, which initially emerged in Angola (Alves 2013; Brautigam and Gallagher 2014). In explaining such traits of China’s SSC in Africa, Brautigam discusses how China learned the essential idea of Japan’s *kaihatsu-yunyū* as seen in the Goa formula—a long-term resource-backed financing arrangement in which India exported two million tonnes of iron ore annually to Japan as repayment (Brautigam 2009).<sup>3</sup> There are indeed some striking resemblances between Japan’s Goa formula and China’s Angola model—especially their basic mechanisms and the Western criticism towards both.

Notwithstanding its strategic significance for Japan’s post-war development and some recent interest through China’s SSC in Africa, there are very few studies solely dedicated to *kaihatsu-yunyū* in Japanese—and far fewer in English. Even when *kaihatsu-yunyū* is mentioned, it is largely done so as a passing remark to state its role in importing vital raw materials (including minerals or oil) with no further elaboration. Moreover, some of the studies that included a brief analysis of *kaihatsu-yunyū* contain partly inaccurate or mutually contradictory data. This requires that its emergence, evolution, ideational background, and implementation mechanisms be explained afresh.

In order to address this knowledge gap and its related misconceptions, the chapter does three things. First, it examines the mechanisms and operation of *kaihatsu-yunyū* as it emerged in the archetypal case of the Goa formula, simultaneously historicising the policy tool in the context of Japan’s economic cooperation between the 1950s and 1960s. Second, the chapter contextualises *kaihatsu-yunyū*, and particularly its later development *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo*, as a dual-purpose policy tool that facilitated Japan’s post-war economic cooperation. In doing so, the chapter further considers its significance through the notion of aid for trade. Finally, rather than repeating what is already said, the concluding remarks briefly discuss the legacy and significance of *kaihatsu-yunyū* in Japan and beyond.

## 2 Understanding Japan’s Goa Formula

The basic financing arrangement of the Goa formula was essentially a long-term resource-backed credit agreement in which Japan provided (exported) the necessary machinery, equipment, and technology in exchange for Goa’s iron ore as repayment

(Arase 1995, pp. 39–40). In many well-known studies, the Goa formula is noted as Japan's first official concessional yen loan (see Chapter 12) to India in 1958 (Arase 1995; Brautigam 2009, pp. 46–47; Lancaster 2010, p. 35). However, the origin of the formula goes further back to October 1951 when the Japanese mining corporation Kōkan Mining Company and the local shipper Chowgule and Company, Ltd. in Goa signed the first resource-backed credit agreement to modernise infrastructure to accelerate and increase mining production in Sirigao mine (Ozawa 1986; Jain 2017).

Then, how did the 1951 project come about? Moreover, what gave rise to this particular formula of long-term resource-backed credit agreement that essentially secured a seemingly “mutually beneficial” trade deal between Japan (i.e. export of the plant facility in exchange for the import of vital resource) and Portuguese Goa (i.e. improved means of production for export and guaranteed access to a market)? To answer these questions, let us first look at the mechanism of the Goa formula more closely.

## 2.1 The Goa Formula as *Kaihatsu-Yunyū*

Japan's iron import from Goa began in the 1920s through *Nichi-in-Tūshō* (日印通商)—a trading company that was a subsidiary of *Kishimoto Shōten* (岸本商店), a major iron and steel trading/wholesale company based in Osaka.<sup>4</sup> Since the end of the war, Japan became increasingly reliant on imported iron ore. In the early post-war years, Japan's steel industry mainly purchased iron ore at market prices from foreign resource companies. Yet, such a method and its cost were not sustainable in the face of Japan's growing industrial needs. As shown in the former Fuji Iron and Steel Company president's enthusiasm over economic cooperation (see footnote 2), Japan's steel industry was keen to “assist” Southeast Asian countries with development of their mines in terms of capital, equipment/machinery, and technology in exchange for better trade deals (Hara 1966). Amidst the search for cheaper and more stable supplies of iron ore, the Korean War broke out. The US' emergency supplies procurement from Japan further strengthen the US-Japan economic cooperation via the development of Southeast Asia (Okita 1951; JEXIM 1961, p. 33, pp. 70–71; also see Marquat's statement below). Particularly in light of US procurement, securing a stable iron ore supply for Japan received the foremost attention from both sides (JEXIM 1971, p. 29). To address the issue, the General Headquarters of the US-led Allied Powers (GHQ) suggested “development issues” in Goa (JEXIM 1961, p. 33, pp. 70–71). During this period, Japan categorised South Asian countries including India as part of Southeast Asia in Japan. With *Kishimoto Shōten* serving as an agent to facilitate the process of the credit agreement between the exporter and importer of iron ore (Tanaka 1994, p. 69), Japan's steel industry (with a nudge from the GHQ) shaped the course for *kaihatsu-yunyū* at the dawn of 1950s (Tanaka 1994).

The 1951 Goa project was essentially a resource-backed credit agreement between the Japanese mining corporation Kōkan Mining and the local shipper Chowgule to modernise production measure to accelerate and increase mining outputs in Sirigao

mine (Ozawa 1986; Jain 2017). In exchange for 1.5 million tonnes of Goa's iron ore over a three-year period, the contract included the provision of JPY 580 million in loan credit—co-financed by Japan Bank for Export and Import (JEXIM) and three Japanese commercial banks—to support Kōkan Mining's export of the mining-plant facility (National Diet 1951; Takehara 2001, pp. 290–291). JEXIM's export credit for the Goa project was its first and most iconic financing arrangement for *Kaihatsu-yunyū*, which was later officially called resource development-import finance (*shigen kaihatsu-yunyū kin'yū*) (JEXIM 1971, pp. 256–269), or, more colloquially, as the “Goa (or Chowgule) formula” (Kobayashi 2000, p. 55). The system emerged to develop raw materials overseas by modernising the iron ore mining production to increase outputs in Shirigao mine through providing the mining-plant facility, technical training, and access to the Japanese market (JEXIM 1961; Hara 1966).<sup>5</sup>

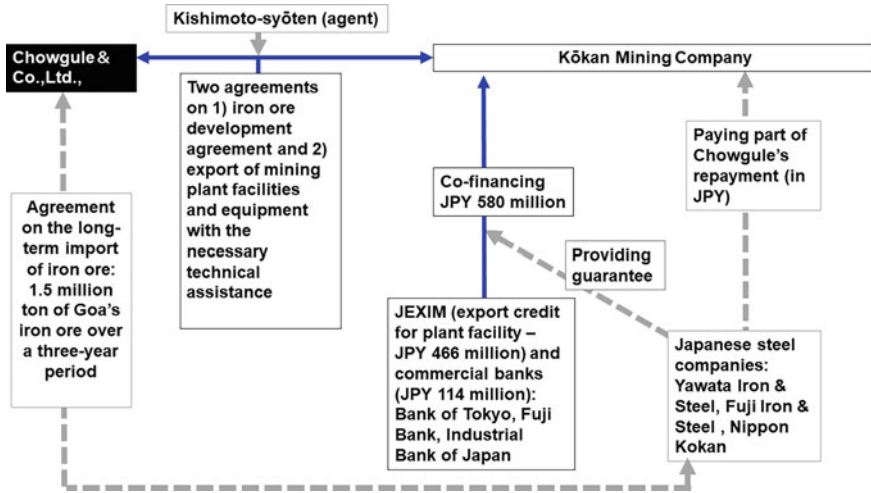
Further, it is also important to appreciate how the Goa formula emerged from the geopolitically specific context of Portuguese Goa. While mines in the rest of India were state-owned, Portuguese Goa was the only state where mines were privately owned by local business men and traditional land owners (Routledge 2000, p. 2649). Licences to mine and ship iron ore were granted to a small group of families including Chowgule by the Portuguese before their ouster in 1961 (Routledge 2000, p. 2649). Thus, other iron ore *kaihatsu-yunyū* agreements in India during the 1950s were based on the so-called “Kiriburu formula” of which the Indian counterpart was an official government body—e.g. the National Mineral Development Corporation—due to the state-ownership of mines (Hara 1966, p. 72).

### 2.1.1 The Mechanism

The 1951 Goa project was based on the Japanese mining corporation Kōkan Mining Company's contract with Chowgule and Company, Ltd., which had the license to mine and ship extracted ore from Sirigao mine to Japan. Although the agreement seems a straightforward one between two business partners, its financing-related mechanism tells a more complicated story.

As Fig. 1 shows, two groups of actors played equally important parts to constitute this formula. The first group is the Japanese steel industry that played the role of both a credit guarantor and iron ore consumer. Also, as Chowgule's repayment for the mining equipment/machinery was deferred (over the three-year period), three Japanese steel companies paid part of the iron ore import price in Japanese yen (JPY) to Kōkan Mining to ease its financial burden on Chowgule's behalf (Hara 1966).<sup>6</sup> The second group consists of the financiers including JEXIM and the three commercial banks. JEXIM played a crucial role by extending a large sum of export credits totalling JPY 466 million—the initial loan of JPY 416 million in 1951 was followed by additional loans of JPY 12 million in 1952 and JPY 38 million in 1954 (JEXIM 1961, p. 33). Additionally, the three commercial banks provided funds of JPY 114 million to Kōkan Mining (JEXIM 1961, p. 33; Takehara 2001, pp. 290–291).

The co-financing arrangement also emerged from the geopolitically specific context of occupied Japan under the US-led GHQ. In the process leading up to



**Fig.1** The original Goa formula. *Source* Adapted from Hara (1966, p. 72, pp. 86–88), JEXIM (1971, p. 39), National Diet (1951), Takehara (2001, pp. 290–291), and Tanaka (1994, p. 69)

the birth of JEXIM in 1951, Joseph Morrell Dodge—an economic advisor to the GHQ—stressed two grounds for the co-financing with private banks as JEXIM’s main lending method (JEXIM 1961, pp. 25–26). The first reason concerns “[t]he principal function and first responsibility” of JEXIM’s financing that was to supplement the commercial finance (and the lack of it) by extending “necessary long-term credits for *financing the production of capital goods in Japan for export and their export in Japan*” (Dodge 1950, cited in JEXIM 1961, p. 21, emphasis added). Thus, JEXIM was “not [to] compete with the Japanese Commercial Banks” (ibid.), but to address Japanese companies’ hardship in obtaining the necessary commercial funds for the production of plant facilities for export. As the plant export was one of the most effective tools for hard currency acquisition, JEXIM’s funds were mainly provided to the Japanese companies facing difficulties in securing their production costs, which ultimately hindered their exports (JEXIM 1961, p. 25). The second reason stems from JEXIM being set up as “a minimum operating organisation” with “the simplest possible structure” (Dodge 1950, cited in JEXIM 1961, p. 20).<sup>7</sup> Thus, for the first few years since its establishment in 1950, JEXIM was rather small and understaffed, so there was a need to commission/contract some of its works out to private banks for smoother operation (JEXIM 1961, p. 26).

The Goa formula—essentially a long-term resource-backed credit agreement method—was the prevalent form of iron ore *kaihatsu-yunyū* until the early 1960s, and was better known as *yūshi-baikō* (融資買鉱) in Japan’s mineral resource industry (JOMEG n.d.; Tanaka 1994).<sup>8</sup> The method enabled Japanese companies to directly participate in local production without equity ownership (Hara 1966, p. 72). This non-equity contractual arrangement was designed to address not only strong nationalist sentiments in India against foreign equity ownership (JEXIM 1971, p. 29), but

also Japan's own anxiety over heightening anti-Japanese sentiments in Asia (Kim 2022). Thus, the Goa formula constituted a sharp departure from "the traditional type of investment in which all services are offered, along with equity capital, in one package" (Ozawa 1986, p. 605). Ultimately, as Ozawa highlights, the 1951 Goa project clearly set a precedent for newer forms of investment-like non-equity contractual arrangements (Ozawa 1986, p. 605). Through the Goa formula, Japan secured "mutually beneficial" trade deals that "help[ed] India/Portuguese Goa to help itself" (Kato 1996). Japan exported the plant facility in exchange for the import of vital resource while India modernised its production infrastructure (hence, increased outputs) and guaranteed access to the Japanese market (Ozawa 1986, p. 605).<sup>9</sup>

### 3 "Trade or Die": Contextualising the Idea of *Kaihatsu-Yunyū*

Japan must fully engage with development in Southeast Asia to increase resource supply that are in shortage for the world. We, the US, are willing to provide necessary finance [...] for Japan to develop Southeast Asia [...] [Thus, t]he region contributes raw materials, Japan provides equipment, skills, [and] effort/labour, the US provides finance. It is ideal for three counterparts to contribute but cooperate as one in proceeding with development.

16 May 1951, William Frederic Marquat,

Head of the Economics and Science Section, the GHQ

"To a very large degree, the future of Japan, its progress and ultimate improvement in living standards, will depend on the continuous aggressive expansion of exports."

9 November 1951, Joseph Morrell Dodge,

economic advisor to the GHQ

#### 3.1 *Kaihatsu-Yunyū as a Dual-Purpose Policy Tool for Japan's Post-War Economic Cooperation*

*Kaihatsu-yunyū* was indeed a vital policy instrument of Japan's economic cooperation in the early post-war years. But it was also a reflection of widely shared "mentality" in Japan, "Trade or Die"—derived from Japan's own understanding of its international position since the opening of its economic and diplomatic relations with the world in the late nineteenth century (Bullard 1974, p. 846; Kotabe 1984, p. 33). Basic ideas underpinning *kaihatsu-yunyū* were also clearly reflected in the statements by Marquat and Dodge above. Therefore, Tokyo began economic cooperation with, or "aid" to, Southeast Asian nations in efforts to rebuild trade relations for Japan's own economic reconstruction since the beginning of 1950s (Caldwell 1972; JEXIM 1961). "Aid giving" sounds rather "irrational," or something of luxury, for the war-devastated economy of Japan at the time. Its GNP per capita (USD 190) was either far lower than or comparable to some of its recipient countries in Southeast Asia (Shimomura 2014, p. 117).<sup>10</sup> Yet, as a resource-impooverished "semi-developed

country (*chūshinkoku*, 中進国)” (Sato 2016a), policymakers in Tokyo understood the gravity of recovering trade via aid to and economic cooperation with Southeast Asia amidst heightening anti-Japanese sentiments (Shimomura 2014; Sato 2016b).

To rebuild trade, Japan needed to secure raw material supplies from the region to expand its exports. And, the Korean War-induced demands—particularly, on some iron and steel products—further compelled Japan’s search for cheap and stable supplies of iron ore in Southeast Asia (Asai 2002, pp. 256–258). Such development thinking was also clearly presented in the Yoshida Cabinet’s “New Economic Policy” (1951) and the “Outline of Important Economic Measures for the Future” (1951) that detailed the basic economic policy for post-Occupation Japan. Both documents stressed (1) Japan’s determination to actively partake in international economic cooperation in the development of Southeast Asia and to strive to strengthen trade relations with the region; (2) the necessity of export expansion and raw material import security—hence, to provide (export) the necessary capital/consumer goods and technology while increasing Japan’s import of raw materials from the region (Shimomura 2014, pp. 120–122).<sup>11</sup> To put these ideas to work, as in the case of Goa project, Japanese businesses, with the help of JEXIM’s credits, promoted their capital goods exports via deferred payment that took the form of long-term import agreements of vital mineral resources (Ishikawa 2002, p. 46). This arrangement was fitting for both partners, who were mutually suffering from severe shortages of hard currency. Thus, *kaihatsu-yunyū* in the 1950s was an epitome of Japan’s efforts to trade (hence, to not “die”) through economic cooperation with and aid to Southeast Asia by mitigating obstacles to trade.

As Japan entered the 1960s, Japanese policy and business circles showed greater interest in *kaihatsu-yunyū* for stable and lower-cost raw materials in response to rising resource needs (Uraki 1969; Rix 1979; Fukushima 2008; Hall 2020). Hence, Japanese companies increased their *kaihatsu-yunyū* Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to strengthen control of their resource supply (Ikenoue and Ono 1998). Unlike the non-equity contractual agreement of the 1950s’ Goa formula, *kaihatsu-yunyū* FDI in the 1960s sought equity ownership. This form of *kaihatsu-yunyū* FDI aimed to secure and expand “Japanese-owned-or-produced (*kokusan* 国産)” resources—and, in doing so, ultimately contributed to the stabilisation of domestic prices (Uraki 1969; JEXIM 1971). Further to this shift in *kaihatsu-yunyū* methods, some important changes in Japan’s political economy gave rise to the so-called *kaihatsu-yunyū*-style aid (hereafter *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo*). This type of aid was devised to assist developing countries by building (1) basic infrastructure and (2) local capacities for development and export of their raw materials. Hence, *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* responded to two particular issues that became essential for Japan’s economic growth and trade expansion in the 1960s.

The first issue concerned Japan’s need to adjust its mounting trade surpluses with Southeast Asian countries (MITI 1965; Uraki 1969). With trade normalisation, Japan’s trade volume as well as trade surpluses with Southeast Asian countries swelled rapidly from the 1960s (Kim 2022). In order to resolve the lopsided trade relation and subsequent import restrictions on Japanese goods, *kaihatsu-yunyū* was identified as a key measure in Japan’s strategy towards promoting/increasing



raw material imports from Southeast Asia. For example, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI)'s white paper emphasised the utility of *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* to improve the quality of primary commodities from Southeast Asian countries and to reduce their production costs via financial and technical assistance (MITI 1965, p. 178). While MITI's white paper emphasised the economic growth of Southeast Asia—then the second-largest export market of Japan—would ultimately lead to the growth of Japan's trade, it exhibited how *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* contributed to the diversification of export commodities as well as the expansion/promotion of exports from Southeast Asian countries (MITI 1965, pp. 180–181). Further, the white paper stated that capital and technology assistance via *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* was not solely confined to activities at the production stage (i.e. the development of raw materials) but also those to improve quality and price of primary commodities. In doing so, *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* provided necessary support to promote Japan's purchase/imports of those primary commodities with improved quality and price (MITI 1965, pp. 180–181).

The second issue centred on the international call for increasing aid to resolve the issue of “underdevelopment” in the global South. Along with aforementioned assistance to promote Southeast Asia's primary commodity export, the Japanese government provided Official Development Assistance (ODA) for local infrastructure development to better facilitate *kaihatsu-yunyū* (Hara 1966, p. 14, p. 25; Uraki 1969). In doing so, *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* helped Japan address (1) “underdevelopment” issues in Southeast Asia by improving local infrastructure and production measures, (2) trade deficits by importing primary commodities developed through such aid—which also reduced the foreign currency burden of Southeast Asian countries (Hara 1966, p. 14, p. 25).

### 3.2 *Kaihatsu-Yunyū Enjo as “Aid for Trade”*

*Kaihatsu-yunyū enjo*, which emerged in the 1960s, envisioned aid that promoted trade. For Japan, *kaihatsu-yunyū* helped to (1) secure stable and sustainable raw material supplies by exporting Japanese plant facilities or equipment and (2) improve production measures of raw material development and import these products from Southeast Asia. For Southeast Asian countries suffering from severe shortages of hard currency, Japan's *kaihatsu-yunyū* and *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* provided much needed capital goods, infrastructure, and technology (hence, saving their foreign currency for industrial development) to develop the region's natural resources to increase their exports (Hara 1966, p. i). While *kaihatsu-yunyū* in the 1950s was largely conducted on a non-concessional commercial basis, *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* in the 1960s had a stronger element of aid and ODA (and was therefore concessional) to address the issue of “underdevelopment” in Southeast Asia (Hara 1966, p. 23, p. 25; Uraki 1969).

Yet, a report on Japan's *kaihatsu-yunyū* in India published by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)<sup>12</sup> discussed how the ideas of *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* (aid to

promote trade) were ill-fitted to an international forum like United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its 1960s state (Hara 1966). At the first session of UNCTAD in 1964, developing countries—particularly India—made undeniably strong demands for the rich economies of the North to increase purchases of their raw materials. In response, the authors of the JETRO report stressed the importance of Japan as an OECD-DAC member<sup>13</sup> expanding its *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo*—not only to increase primary commodity purchase but also to assist developing countries' economic development to resolve underdevelopment issues (Hara 1966, p. 64). However, the idea of *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* (or anything similar) was rather ill-fitted at a multilateral trade forum like the UNCTAD because, as the authors conjectured, developing countries would likely shun *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* as another form of colonial exploitation (Hara 1966, pp. 9–10). The authors, however, emphasised the importance of respecting the will of developing countries' by responding to their requests for *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* when they arise. This request-based approach allowed Japan to tackle distrust and suspicion amongst developing countries (Hara 1966, p. 11; see also Chap. 7).

The authors raised two explanations for the failure of *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* to gain traction in international fora. The first point concerned the fact that the forum made too sharp a distinction between aid and trade—thus, it placed a great emphasis on trade rather than on aid (Hara 1966, p. 11). The opposite was true of the international aid circle then—but here, its great emphasis was on aid and economic development was detached from discussions on trade (see King et al. 2012). There were few linkages between aid and trade, which were ostensibly distinct areas of policy. The second point raised the low-quality high-cost production problem in developing countries. For this point, the authors maintained the importance of Japan's assistance for developing countries' self-help efforts: “[Since] simply leaving it to [developing countries themselves] would not improve the situation, Japan's financial and technical assistance is essential. Many products in their current forms are not fit for sale on a commercial basis. Thus, *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* would provide concrete measures to improve quality and price by assisting to rationalise production and distribution” (Hara 1966, pp. 61–62; see also Chap. 8).

Both *kaihatsu-yunyū* and *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* were inherently about the development of Southeast Asia as a stable source of raw material supply and its position as Japan's second-largest export market. They were indispensable parts of Japan's economic cooperation in the form of capital, technology, and trade in the 1950s and the 1960s.

## 4 Concluding Remarks: The Legacy and Significance of *Kaihatsu-Yunyū*

*Kaihatsu-yunyū* and *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* are both Japanese policy tools built around the contemporaneous needs of Japan (and of the US and Southeast Asian counterparts). The Goa formula emerged out of the geopolitical contexts of the 1950s in which Japan's economic cooperation began its life. In the 1960s, *kaihatsu-yunyū enjo* also increased to better respond to the changing international political economy—including the issue of underdevelopment in the global South and growing appetite for *kaihatsu-yunyū* FDI by Japanese business. Such a rapid increase of *kaihatsu-yunyū* FDI along with growing trade imbalance was not without its consequences, as it attracted severe criticism positing Japan's neo-colonial economic dominance in Southeast Asia (Shimomura, 2018, p. 361). And, it caused a growing backlash in the region through outbreaks of fierce anti-Japanese protests in the 1970s and 1980s (Yano 1978; Iwaki 1985; Tsurumi 1974). Recognising the impact of business-led economic cooperation and its discontents particularly in Southeast Asia, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) reflected upon how to remedy such problems caused by *kaihatsu-yunyū* FDI in Southeast Asia: “we—as part of Japanese government—aim to guide Japanese business not only to rectify imbalance and inequality caused by business-led economic cooperation but also to prevent subsequent criticism on Japanese economic expansion. In doing so, Japanese business can truly contribute to the economic development and stability of local people's lives/livelihood in the partner country—based on cooperation and reciprocity with the partner country” (JICA 1999, p. 56).

Some commentators further noted how *kaihatsu-yunyū* FDI by Japanese business was seen to plunder local resources and devastate the local environment and livelihood (Ikenoue and Ono 1998; Murai 1988; Tsurumi 1974, 1982; Shimomura 2022).<sup>14</sup> Political economic impacts on the local community were also noted by Indian researchers on Japan's *kaihatsu-yunyū* activities in Goa. For example, Murthy (1978, p. 618) commented that “Japan's failure to denounce Portuguese colonialism left a sense of disappointment amongst the Indian intelligentsia.” Further, Routledge (2000) observed possible political economic impact of Japan's *kaihatsu-yunyū* projects in Portuguese Goa. Goa's state economy has been largely dominated by six major families of businessmen and traditional land owners.<sup>15</sup> Their power was strengthened by the Portuguese colonialist who attempted to “buy” Goan families allegiance with private mine ownership (Routledge 2000, p. 2649). Between 1951 and 1961 (during the Portuguese rule), Japan's *kaihatsu-yunyū* projects in Goa accounted for 66% of all its *kaihatsu-yunyū* projects in India. Hence, Japan's *kaihatsu-yunyū* projects in Portuguese Goa further strengthened both the power and profitability of these families' business, which exacerbated inequality and left an enduring legacy.

Since the 1970s, in response to the anti-Japanese riots and international criticism/pressure, Japan's *kaihatsu-yunyū* seemed to quietly dissolve into the supply chains of the Japanese economy (JICA 2009, 2013; Murai 2007). The word *kaihatsu-yunyū* ceased to appear in MITI's white papers after 1977. The fading of *kaihatsu-yunyū* in

official discourses partly stemmed from the changing interests of Japanese business, which became internationally competitive with stronger networks of suppliers. Thus, they no longer looked for new opportunities for the old-style *kaihatsu-yunyū* using the Goa formula in the 1990s. At JEXIM, the number of new credit lines extended to exports and imports drastically dropped (close to zero), to the point where some even proposed abandoning the words “export and import” from JEXIM’s name (Ishikawa 2006, pp. 144–145; Kusano 2006). JETRO’s Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO) library includes a total of 84 studies or reports on *kaihatsu-yunyū*, all of which were published between 1964 and 1990, with nothing appearing after 1990 (IDE-JETRO Library Catalogue 2022).

*Kaihatsu-yunyū* is a Japanese tool for economic cooperation that was built upon an intricate nexus between aid, trade and investment (see Chap. 13). Both aid and investment were instrumental in establishing, expanding, and promoting trade for Japan as a resource-impooverished, semi-developed country that needed to “trade or die.” The features of *kaihatsu-yunyū* helped semi-developed countries better navigate their integration into the global economy (Sato 2013; Kim 2016). Two contemporary examples highlight the continuation of *kaihatsu-yunyū* *enjo*-like development cooperation, and its potential benefit to semi-developed countries.

Firstly, “Aid for Trade” (AfT) launched in 2005 at Hong Kong World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference, has some features that share striking resemblance with *kaihatsu-yunyū* *enjo*. AfT, like *kaihatsu-yunyū* *enjo*, provides both the financial and technical assistance to reduce transaction costs and enhance productivity in order to expand trade and alleviate inequality in developing countries (Berritella and Zhang 2012, p. 2, see also Stiglitz and Charlton. 2006; Cali and Velde. 2011; Cadot et al 2014; Hühne et al. 2013). Thus, AfT includes assistance for (1) trade policy and regulation; (2) trade development; (3) trade-related infrastructure; (4) building productive capacity; (5) trade-related adjustment; (6) other trade-related needs (OECD 2011, p. 15). One noteworthy difference between *kaihatsu-yunyū* *enjo* and AfT is that the former was “amiss” in the 1960s, whilst the latter enjoys a popular reception today.

Finally, *kaihatsu-yunyū* and *kaihatsu-yunyū* *enjo*—amongst Japan’s key developing strategies of the 1950s and 1960s—were seen to provide some “useful” ideas for other semi-developed countries (see Zhu et al. 1986; Korea Economic Research Center 1974). Some of the essential features in *kaihatsu-yunyū* have been learned and adapted by the semi-developed country China in its Angola model. The Angola model is a financing arrangement in which the Export–Import Bank of China extends soft loans for infrastructure development in African countries (and beyond) in exchange for natural resources as collateral (Corkin 2011, 2016; Sato 2020). The main objectives of China’s resource-backed concessional credits were, like Japan’s *kaihatsu-yunyū*, not solely confined to securing Africa’s raw materials—but designed to pursue more comprehensive economic and resource security through diplomatic and trade expansion (Inada 2012, pp. 39–40).

## Notes

1. At that time, the term ‘aid (*enjo*)’ was used synonymously with ‘economic cooperation’ that combined the flows of capital, technology and trade.
2. The term was coined by Shigeo Nagano, then president of Fuji Iron and Steel Company, who advocated its strategic value for Japan’s reconstruction (Caldwell 1972, p. 25). This context-specific term encompasses reparation, direct private investment, yen credits, deferred payments and technical cooperation (Caldwell 1972, p. 27). It showcases how Japan then envisaged its position in relation to/with the developing world (see JEXIM 1961).
3. In *Dragon’s Gift* (Brautigam 2009)—a study of China’s growing SSC engagement with African countries, the word Japan appears more than 100 times.
4. Nichi-in-Tūshō was specifically set up to import pig iron from the India-UK-Japan joint venture company, Indian Iron & Steel Co., Ltd that was established in 1918 (Nagashima 2021).
5. For example, the case of the 1951 Goa project provided mining equipment (electric shovels, dump trucks, drills, compressors, etc.); processing equipment (crusher, belt conveyor, picking conveyor, etc.); operation equipment (self-propelled barges, grab cranes); power generation equipment (diesel generators), and others (repair shop, water supply system, motor boats, etc.) (Hara 1966, p. 87).
6. Then chief of the Trade Promotion Bureau at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI) explained how MITI and Ministry of Finance were in close communication on an ad hoc basis to better support Japanese companies through JEXIM’s loans (National Diet 1951).
7. See JEXIM (1961, pp. 192–193) for how the once simple and small JEXIM’s organisational structure became larger and more complex between 1951 and 1963 with overseas offices in Karachi (1954–1957), Bangkok (1957), New York/Washington D.C. (1957/1960), Rio de Janeiro (1958), New Delhi (1959), and West Germany/Dusseldorf (1961/1962).
8. Yūshi-baikō was soon overtaken by other forms of overseas resource investment—particularly the equity participation.
9. However, since the late 1960s, the traditional method of equity ownership has become the more dominant one, which overtook that of the Goa formula.
10. For example, between 1952 and 1954, the GNP per capita in Malaysia was USD 310 and the Philippines was USD 150.
11. Moreover, there was a structural shift in Southeast Asian countries’ import needs toward capital goods as they endeavoured to spur industrialisation and the export of light industry goods (Asai 1997). Such a shift in the region accelerated Japan’s heavy-chemical industry drive even if its capital goods and related technology were not on par with that of the West (Caldwell 1972, p. 26).
12. Under MITI’s jurisdiction.
13. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is an international forum to discuss/promote development assistance and to increase the quantity and quality of such aid. Japan has been a member since 1961.
14. Interview with Professor Yasutami Shimomura, 20 July 2022, Tokyo, Japan.
15. They include Dempo, Chowgule, Salgaonkar, Timblo, Bandodkar, and Menezes.

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# Yen Loans: Between Norms and Heterodoxy



Hiroaki Shiga

**Abstract** Yen loans are long-term, low-interest loans provided to developing countries as part of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA), mainly for infrastructure development as a foundation for the economic growth of recipient countries. They have been a continuing object of criticism based on dominant norms, championed by the United States and European countries, that development assistance is a form of charity by rich countries for the sake of poor countries, and thus should take the form of grants and technical assistance. Yen loans have become symbolic of the heterodoxy that flows through the history of Japan's ODA, and was adapted for assistance to less developed countries in Southeast Asia. This chapter questions the nature of this heterodoxy and examines how discord has been navigated between Japan as norm-taker and norm-makers—the United States and European countries—who generally lack flexibility with respect to different ways of providing development assistance.

**Keywords** Japan · Development assistance · Infrastructure · Loan · Norm

## 1 Yen Loans as a Symbol of Heterodoxy

Development assistance norms—the dominant values and institutions dictating what development assistance should be—were shaped in the period after the Second World War, mostly under the initiative of the United States and European countries. These norms are based on the premise that development assistance is a form of charity undertaken by rich countries for the sake of poor countries. Because charity is “help, especially in the form of money, given freely to people who are in need,”<sup>1</sup> it is only natural that grants and technical assistance—the transfer of money, goods, and services to developing countries for no return or consideration—are seen as the ideal modes of assistance. Under these norms, loans, although not rejected outright, have

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195

been characterized as “lower quality” assistance than grants and technical assistance.<sup>2</sup> The development assistance provided by Japan, mainly in the form of concessional loans, often referred to as “yen loans,” has been a continuing object of criticism based on these “international” norms.

Yen loans are long-term, low-interest loans provided to developing countries as part of the Japanese government’s Official Development Assistance (ODA). The loans are administered by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in accordance with diplomatic agreements between the Japanese government and the government of the country receiving assistance. Loans are mainly allocated to infrastructure development, a purpose for which commercial loans are unsuitable. Yen loans have been characterized as typical of Japanese development assistance for two reasons. First, they have accounted for the largest monetary component of Japan’s development assistance throughout its history stretching back more than 60 years (Yamada 2021, p. 5). This contrasts sharply with the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, which have rarely used loans as a means of development assistance, and with the United Kingdom, which provided loans in the past but cut back dramatically from the 1970s onward. Even compared with countries such as Germany and France, which also provide loans, Japan is notable for providing a significantly larger proportion of its total monetary assistance in this form.<sup>3</sup> Second, yen loans are closely associated with other elements considered characteristic of “Japanese-style assistance.” Yen loans play a pivotal role in Japan’s approach to development assistance, based on the so-called “Trinity” of assistance, investment, and trade. Specifically, yen loans have functioned to facilitate the building of core infrastructures such as electric power stations, communications, and transport, and have thus worked to stimulate and encourage foreign direct investment by Japanese companies. Yen loans not only embody the nature of Japan’s approach to assistance—its focus on infrastructure and economic growth—but are also associated with Japan’s ideal of “assistance for self-help efforts” (Shimomura 2020, p. 180; Yamada 2021, p. 3).

Yen loans are symbolic of “the heterodoxy that flows through the history of Japan’s development assistance policy” (Shimomura 2020, pp. 1–2). This chapter questions the nature of this heterodoxy, and how discord is navigated between Japan, which is normally regarded as *norm-taker*, and the *norm-makers*—the United States and European countries—who generally “lack flexibility with respect to difference” (Shimomura 2020, p. 17). The chapter begins by presenting an overview of Japan’s history of providing loans and examines why Japan adopted yen loans as a method of assistance, how this approach was unique, and developments to the present day. Section 3 outlines how Japanese-style assistance was and is assessed from the perspective of dominant development assistance norms. Section 4 examines how Japan has responded to this assessment. Finally, Sect. 5 touches on changes in these norms in the context of significant changes in the international political and economic order in recent years.

## 2 Japan's History of Providing Loans

In this context, “loans” refer to the long-term provision of credit between the governments or public institutions of sovereign nations.<sup>4</sup> From the nineteenth century onward, loans were used extensively by the great imperial powers. Japan’s first experience came as a borrower, at the end of the Edo period. In 1865, Japan accepted a loan of 2.4 million US dollars from France’s *Société Générale* for the construction of the Yokosuka Ironworks. These ironworks were later to become the Yokosuka Naval Arsenal, which provided warships to the Imperial Japanese Navy, which in turn played a leading role in Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War.

Japan successfully used its borrowing as a foothold for reaching national prosperity and strengthening its military to gain a place among the great powers. With this, by the early twentieth century, it had transformed from a borrower to a lender. Now the borrower was China (the Qing dynasty and, later, the Republic of China), where the great powers were engaged in a power struggle.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, a framework reminiscent of the discord between dominant norms and heterodoxy concerning postwar yen loans can be observed in prewar lending to China. At the time, China was seen as “the only remaining giant undeveloped market in the world” (Sakai 2001, p. 100), and the great powers, comprising the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, France, Russia, and subsequently Japan, jointly provided it with loans to prevent any single one of them gaining a particularly advantageous position. Japan, while ostensibly adopting an attitude of international cooperation through participation in the consortium formed for the purpose of mutual containment, attempted to secure “special interests in Manchuria.” However, this attempted “heterogeneous” behavior by Japan was forced into compliance by the prevailing norms of international finance, led by the United Kingdom, under the rubric of “standards of a civilized country” (Sakai 2001).

After the Second World War, advanced countries endeavored to support the economic and social development of “developing countries” newly freed from colonial rule, in order to bring as many of these countries as possible into the capitalist camp. Loans, which had previously been used as a means of achieving imperial ambitions, were now transformed into a way of supporting developing countries.<sup>6</sup> The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) was established in 1945 with the mission of providing loans for development. From the 1950s through the early 1960s, the United States, the United Kingdom, West Germany, and the USSR actively provided loans to India and other developing countries. It was in this context that Japan joined the ranks of loan providers, making its first yen loan in 1958 for a steelworks construction project in India.<sup>7</sup>

Specific circumstances led to Japan’s adoption of yen loans as its primary mode of providing development assistance. Almost all major cities in Japan were reduced to rubble in the Second World War, and conditions were so dire that people were dying of starvation in the streets. Nevertheless, immediately after the Pacific War, there was already consensus among Japan’s policy circles, including members of the ruling party and government officials, concerning the critical importance of “economic

cooperation (*Keizai kyōryoku*).” There was a perception that economic autonomy was vital for Japan’s political independence, and that “economic cooperation”—the injection of Japanese money and technology and the strengthening of trade and investment relationships with Asian countries—was needed to achieve Japan’s economic autonomy. The problem was finding the necessary financial resources. Thus arose the idea of combining war reparations to Asian countries with economic cooperation. This meant using Japanese materials, equipment, and technology, provided in the name of reparation, to build infrastructure in developing countries, effectively incorporating economic cooperation into Japan’s fulfillment of its duty of compensation (Shimomura 2020, pp. 40–47; Sato 2021, pp. 19–22, p. 191). The resulting projects included the construction of core infrastructure still in use today, such as the Baluchaung Hydropower Plant in Burma (now Myanmar), and projects that later developed into large-scale yen loans, such as the projects to develop the Brantas River basin in Indonesia. Japan’s development assistance thus began with war reparations. It was certainly not assistance as charity provided by a rich country to poor countries.

When Japan’s rapid economic growth began in earnest in the 1960s, the country’s policymakers began to adopt the optimistic view that Japan was now firmly on “the road to becoming an advanced country.” The volume of yen loans was increased to take the place of fulfilled war reparations in funding infrastructure development in Asia. In 1961, Japan established its Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) as an aid organization, especially for providing yen loans. The policy of the Ministry of Finance at the time was one factor behind Japan’s adoption of yen loans as its main method of development assistance. Concerned over increases in the assistance budget in response to pressure from the United States and Europe, the Ministry of Finance promoted yen loans as a form of assistance with less impact on the general account budget (Shimomura 2020, pp. 80–82).<sup>8</sup>

The design of the yen loan system and its features reflected Japan’s so-called Trinity approach to development assistance, with the aim of supporting overseas expansion by Japanese companies. In particular, yen loans were “tied aid.” Only Japanese companies could be contracted to carry out infrastructure construction works funded by yen loans. Tied aid accounted for almost 100% of all yen loans up to the mid-1970s (Yamada 2021, p. 24). Moreover, the major recipients of yen loans were countries in Asia in which Japanese companies had an interest, such as South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Burma.

The Japanese approach to development assistance did not just reflect circumstances on the Japanese side, however. The focused injection of yen loans into infrastructure projects was also consistent with the national development plans of the recipient countries. Asian countries were desperate to improve their investment environments through infrastructure improvement so that they could attract foreign direct investment, strengthen their international competitiveness, and promote exports. In other words, both Japan and its recipient countries in Asia shared a tacit understanding of the importance of linking assistance, investment, and trade. This approach was distinct from that adopted by the United States and European countries, which perceived assistance as charity and rejected the pursuit of profit by the assistance provider. This approach, however, was not clearly articulated by Japan until 1987,

when the Ministry of International Trade and Industry announced the New AID Plan (New Asian Industrial Development Plan). As examined below, this lack of clarity about the intent of ODA provision led to criticism of the Japanese assistance ideal from the United States and European countries.

The geographical spread of the recipients of yen loans expanded greatly from the 1980s onward. The People's Republic of China, already a recipient of yen loans in 1979, was joined by Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey and Jordan, and African countries such as Kenya and Ghana. In the 1990s, immediately after the end of the Cold War, yen loans were also provided to formerly socialist countries, including members of the former Soviet Union, Eastern European countries, Mongolia, and Vietnam. The range of projects targeted under yen loans also became more diverse, including peace building, support for small- and medium-sized enterprises, human resources development, and, recently, the construction of patrol boats to strengthen the maritime law enforcement capabilities of developing countries concerned about China's maritime expansion. However, the fundamental characteristic of yen loans—their focus on support for infrastructure development in Asian countries in cooperation with Japanese private sector companies—remains unchanged today.

### 3 Criticism of Yen Loans from the Perspective of the *Norm-Makers*

How, then, have yen loans, and the Japanese-style approach, been perceived and criticized from the perspective of the *norm-makers*?

Critics of Japan's development assistance included journalists, researchers of assistance policy, and international NGOs. From the 1960s to the early 1970s, journalists criticized Japan's development assistance as serving Japan's own interest in promoting exports, rather than the interests of developing countries. For example, Håkan Hedberg, a Swedish journalist, disparaged Japanese assistance as implemented not to benefit developing countries in Asia and Africa, but rather "for Japan, or for Japanese industry" (Hedberg 1970, p. 257). In the 1980s, Japanese ODA came under severe criticism for supporting corrupt dictatorships such as the Marcos and Suharto regimes.

Meanwhile, the main forum for discord between the dominant norms championed by the United States and European countries and Japanese heterodoxy was the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) established by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1961.<sup>9</sup> This coincided with an era of escalating tension in the Cold War, with the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Competition between the United States and the Soviet Union over assistance to newly emerging developing countries, mostly on the African continent, also intensified during the 1960s. DAC's system of peer review, whereby member states assessed each other's assistance programs, was aimed at

achieving effective, closely coordinated assistance to counter the assistance being aggressively provided by the Soviet Union.

In the 1970s, styles of assistance quite different from Japan's approach were becoming mainstream. One of these was grant assistance. The United Kingdom, for example, established a policy of mainstreaming grant assistance in the 1970s and drastically reduced the volume of its loans (Iijima and Sakuma 2004, p. 127, p. 156). Moreover, through the advocacy of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), support for the fulfillment of basic human needs (BHN) such as food, health and medical services, and basic education became the norm for development assistance. In this context, the "heterodoxy" of Japan's development assistance, which focused on infrastructure development through loans, became yet more marked. For example, the report from a 1995 peer review of Japanese development assistance carried out by DAC criticizes Japan for having the lowest quality assistance of any DAC member in 1993, measured on the basis of its grant element, as a result of the fact that "Japan relies more on loans and less on grants than most donors" (OECD 1996, p. 7, p. 44).

The gap between dominant development assistance norms and Japan's approach to assistance widened even further in the second half of the 1990s. This time, the formation of norms was again led by the United Kingdom, under the Blair administration which came to power in 1997 (Iijima and Sakuma 2004, p. 124). The United Kingdom advocated poverty reduction as the goal of aid and attempted to bring it to the center of international assistance efforts. In this context, criticism was leveled at Japan's focus on economic growth: "Japan needs to more fully mainstream poverty reduction" (OECD 2004, p. 101). The United Kingdom also proposed common funds to which donors would make joint contributions, and general budget support where funds are provided into the recipient country's general account budget, to replace traditional project-based assistance, in which each donor country funds its own individual projects. The Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries sympathized with this approach, and it came to dominate the mainstream of development assistance. In the second half of the 2000s and the first half of the 2010s, with the major developed nations increasingly focused on closely coordinated efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the assistance they provided, Japan's assistance efforts, which emphasized support for individual projects, became subject to new criticism by other DAC member countries that they were uncooperative with the trend of closer aid coordination.

In the 2000s, yen loans faced significant adversity. Debt relief measures for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) became a focus of international attention, and Japan, a major lender, was left with no alternative but to substantially reduce or exempt these borrowers from the repayment of yen loans. The assertion that loans are not an appropriate method of assistance, to begin with, was echoed among international NGOs and in academic circles. In the DAC peer review conducted in 2004, it was recommended that Japan should raise its proportion of grant assistance. In the 2010 peer review, Japan's economic growth-centered approach, with its focus on supporting infrastructure development, was again subject to criticism, and Japan was yet more bluntly advised to strengthen its assistance linked to poverty reduction.

## 4 Japan's Reaction

Faced with mounting pressure from *norm-makers*, Japan was left with no option but to begin a process of “reform.” A representative example of this was the tied aid conditions attached to yen loans, which had been criticized as unprincipled commercialist assistance. As a result of the progressive shift to untied aid since the mid-1970s, allowing European and US companies to bid for infrastructure projects funded by yen loans, the proportion of tied yen loans had fallen to 32% in 1983. By 1996, no yen loans were delivered as tied aid (Yamada 2021, p. 24).<sup>10</sup>

However, Japan made no attempt to change its loan-centered, infrastructure-focused assistance approach, which had consistently been the target of criticism. Faced with the need to justify this approach, Japan put forward the principle of “assistance for self-help efforts” (see Chap. 8, this volume).<sup>11</sup> Assistance for self-help efforts was listed as part of Japan’s assistance philosophy in its ODA Charter established in 1992. It stated that making developing countries responsible for repayment would encourage autonomous efforts to ensure repayment in the future, including efforts to use funds efficiently. This was not only a response to criticism of Japan’s assistance efforts as unprincipled but also aimed at justifying yen loans as a method of assistance.

An important factor in Japan’s persistent implementation of loan-based assistance, apart from fiscal reasons, was the massive demand for infrastructure funding among developing countries in Asia. With Europe and the United States intent on positioning BHN and poverty reduction as the main focus of assistance and steering toward an emphasis on the social sector through grants and technical cooperation, Japan’s “rarity value” increased, as a bilateral donor willing to provide long-term, low-interest loans to meet the demand for infrastructure development. Even as it was being criticized as an “unprincipled donor,” Japan continued to respond conscientiously to the demands of recipient countries as a “sensible donor” (Shimomura 2020, p. 176).

One of the rare instances in which Japan showed interest in the creation of development assistance norms was “The East Asian Miracle” research carried out by the World Bank in the first half of the 1990s by the request of Japan, in which Japan aimed to gain international recognition for the role of government in stimulating economic growth as aid, as well as to provide an indirect justification for its own infrastructure-centered assistance policy.<sup>12</sup> By 1989, Japan had overtaken the United States to become the largest assistance donor in the world. Moreover, many of the main recipients of Japanese assistance in Asia had achieved rapid economic growth with some, such as South Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia, becoming donors in their own right. With deepening confidence in its own assistance policy, Japan (and specifically the Ministry of Finance and OECF) expressed disagreement with the policies adopted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which were based on the neoclassical economic theory in vogue at the time. The report, *The East Asian Miracle—Economic Growth and Public Policy*, published by the World Bank in 1993, concluded that it was the establishment of basic conditions by East



and Southeast Asian governments, such as appropriate infrastructure development, together with macroeconomic stabilization and human resources development, that had enabled them to sustain rapid economic growth.

However, Japan never again took the initiative in the establishment of development assistance norms. The norms championed by the vocal member countries of DAC became increasingly dominated by the perception of assistance as “charity,”<sup>13</sup> which gained traction after the end of the Cold War, and by an ideology focused on poverty reduction. Even while it was the largest assistance donor in the world, Japan was unable to become a *norm-maker*.

## **5 An Example of the Successful Establishment of Norms?—The Proposal of “Principles for Promoting Quality Infrastructure Investment”**

Ironically, it was not until the second half of the 2010s, long after its glory as the top donor in the 1990s had faded<sup>14</sup> and it had fallen behind the United States, Germany, and France in terms of the amount of assistance it provided, that Japan began to exert an influence on the formation of development assistance norms. Faced with the need to differentiate its own approach from assistance efforts by China, which had become the target of harsh criticism from the international community, Japan embarked on the formation of assistance norms supporting infrastructure development. China, which had ramped up its assistance efforts in the 2000s in the context of continuing rapid economic growth, was criticized by Europe and the United States for using these efforts to secure resources and gain overseas markets. Some in the United States even denounced Chinese assistance efforts as “rogue aid,” recklessly supporting “rogue states” such as North Korea, Iran, and Venezuela (Naím 2007).

Wariness and criticism of Chinese development cooperation became more pronounced with the appearance of the Xi Jinping administration, which strengthened self-assertion under the banner of the “Chinese Dream.” The Belt and Road Initiative of 2013 was perceived as a clear indication of China’s will and ability to meet the enormous infrastructure demand across both the land and sea routes between China and Europe. It was in this context that an event occurred in 2016 that became known in the international assistance community as the Hambantota Shock. In return for complying with the Sri Lankan government’s request for debt relief concerning the money it had borrowed from the Export–Import Bank of China to fund the construction of Hambantota Port, Chinese authorities forced the Sri Lankan government to agree to a 99-year lease of the port. This action gave rise to criticism from those who claimed China was setting “debt trap.” They argued that China was providing massive loans to poor countries to fund unprofitable infrastructure projects, leaving these countries unable to repay their debt, then using this situation to secure key strategic bases (Chellaney 2017).

The issue for Japan was that China's approach to assistance was similar to its own. China not only made extensive use of loans to support infrastructure projects in developing countries but also used this assistance to support the overseas expansion of its domestic companies—a method of assistance reminiscent of Japan's Trinity approach (see Chap. 13, this volume).<sup>15</sup> This was deeply concerning for Japan. Struggling against the worst fiscal conditions of any advanced country, Japan had no option but to place increasing reliance on yen loans, which carry a relatively light fiscal burden, to combat China's aid offensive. At the time, Japan was in the process of responding to calls from business circles to increase yen loans delivered as tied aid in order to bolster the domestic economy, which was suffering from long-term stagnation. Yen loans were fast becoming Japan's "flagship product." Chinese assistance, however, was a "similar product," and Japan had to avoid becoming caught up in the international criticism that this "similar product" was attracting. Diplomatically, therefore, Japan needed to distinguish its approach from Chinese assistance. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and JICA, concerned about the state of Chinese assistance, carefully considered differentiation strategies. They came to the conclusion that Japan should emphasize the difference in "quality" between its approach and the Chinese one.

The concept of "quality infrastructure" was a concrete expression of this. Quality infrastructure was defined as the infrastructure which would be "easy to use and durable, as well as environmentally friendly and disaster resilient," and although it "may first appear costly," it is "indeed cost-effective in the long run" (MOFA 2015). This definition was aimed at striking a contrast with the infrastructure produced through China's assistance, which was criticized as being low-price but poor quality infrastructure with little development benefit and a negative environmental impact (Naïm 2007). However, in order to articulate a normative concept of infrastructure, this definition was too long and too intuitive. "Quality infrastructure" was therefore redefined using three standards: "resilient," against natural disasters and other risks, "inclusive," leaving no one behind, and "sustainable," taking into account its impact on society and the environment (MOFA 2021).

Moreover, as China came under increasing criticism for using excessive loans to set "debt traps," Japan was pressured to lead the establishment, not only of norms concerning infrastructure but also of norms for the conduct of creditor nations. Its first attempt to do this was the "G7 Ise-Shima Principles for Promoting Quality Infrastructure Investment," endorsed at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in 2016. At the G20 Osaka Summit in 2019, Japan went on to propose the "G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment." These principles require countries providing loans for infrastructure projects in developing countries to consider factors including transparency, openness, economic efficiency, and debt sustainability. According to the Japanese government, the principles are aimed at preventing "poor quality" infrastructure investment (assistance) impeding growth in developing countries. The principles of "transparency" and "openness," which require that completed infrastructure is operated in a transparent manner with all users allowed equal access, and the principle of "debt sustainability," which requires the lender to consider whether the borrower

is able to sustain the debt, were, of course, formulated with the criticism of Chinese assistance efforts in mind.

What is important here is that the Japanese government clearly aimed for the “international standardization of quality infrastructure” and succeeded in gaining the endorsement not only of developed countries, but also of emerging countries such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia. China undoubtedly understood that its country was the target of Japan’s actions, but the framing of the principles—as a code of conduct to which responsible lenders should adhere for the sake of developing countries—left it unable to refute them. This can be regarded as a successful attempt to establish development assistance norms.

There were specific reasons why Japan, which had not previously taken a leadership role in establishing development assistance norms, was able to succeed this time. The first was the rise in demand for infrastructure development. With numerous developing countries incorporated into value chains as a result of economic globalization, demand for logistics infrastructure had grown phenomenally.<sup>16</sup> Private sector investment in infrastructure through private–public partnership (PPP), however, had not progressed as originally anticipated. Another important reason was the growing influence of developing countries in the establishment of international norms. In contrast to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were created mainly through the leadership of developed countries and international institutions, and which leaned heavily toward poverty reduction and BHN, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated to reflect a wide range of development needs, including infrastructure development. Behind this change lay the increased influence of developing countries. Japan obtained the support of developing countries such as Indonesia, which demanded stronger infrastructure development, and used this support as a tailwind to promote the adoption of the Infrastructure Principles at the G20 Summit in 2019.

Even the developed countries that had persistently criticized Japanese-style assistance could no longer deny the enormous need for infrastructure development loans. This was because Europe and the United States were also left with no option but to resist the swift response of Chinese lenders to the vigorous demand for infrastructure in developing countries. Even the United States and the United Kingdom, which had been critical of loans, each recommenced the provision of loans for infrastructure development support. The United States, for example, established the International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) in 2019 and began to provide loans for infrastructure projects in developing countries. The DFC website clearly states that its purposes include providing “the developing world with financially sound alternatives to unsustainable and irresponsible state-directed initiatives” and making “America a stronger and more competitive leader on the global development stage” (DFC 2022). Loans are no longer simply a way to promote development. They are increasingly recognized as a tool of strategic competition between great powers, and a tool for the pursuit of the national interests of the lender.

## 6 Conclusion: The Significance of the Discord Between Norms and Heterodoxy

An overview of the discord between norms and heterodoxy regarding yen loans reveals anew the tenacity of the development assistance norms championed by Europe and the United States. As indicated in *The East Asian Miracle*, the three decades of growth experienced by countries in East and Southeast Asia from the 1960s to the 1980s was, when compared to other regions, nothing short of “miraculous.” Japan was the main donor to these countries. Since yen loans formed the backbone of Japan’s development assistance policy, it could be argued that Japan’s development assistance policy should be given more credit than it has received. As it turned out, however, displacing the dominant norms in place would have been next to impossible, supported as they were by the unassailable principle that assistance should be charity under the overpowering influence of universities, think tanks, and others.<sup>17</sup>

That is not to say that Japan has capitulated to dominant norms. Infrastructure support through yen loans remains a characteristic of Japan’s development assistance, and the Trinity-style approach has been adopted by emerging donors such as China, South Korea, and Thailand, and adapted for assistance to less developed countries in Southeast Asia, such as Laos and Vietnam. China, in particular, is challenging the development assistance norms championed by Europe and the United States by providing huge amounts of loans, effectively positioning loans as the new standard for development assistance. Confronted with the power of Chinese cash, the United States and European countries, too, have begun to provide loans, which reverses the principles they championed with such vigor. The decision by the United Kingdom and the United States to recommence development assistance loans was made for the sake of resisting China—in other words, geopolitical national interests. This is not a reason that can be justified in terms of the norms that they had previously emphasized, such as assistance as charity and “noblesse oblige.” The hypocrisy of the norms dictated by the great powers has been laid bare.

So, what should Japan learn from its many years of being unable to join the ranks of the *norm-makers*? Simply speaking, Japan was unable to present the convincing principles or generally applicable theories needed to refute the dominant norms. This includes, for example, Japan’s experience of using postwar loans from the World Bank to build the foundations for the economy and society, becoming one of the world’s great economic powers through the resulting period of rapid economic growth, which was presented to DAC by MOFA to justify loans as “assistance for self-help efforts” (MOFA 2003). DAC’s report on the 2003 peer review pointed out the danger of applying Japan’s postwar experience to the rest of Asia, which faces quite different conditions (Shimomura 2020, p. 195). Nevertheless, Japan persisted in trying to justify its approach to development assistance in terms of “Japan’s experience.” It would be difficult to claim that sufficient effort has been made to explain why Japan’s experience is applicable to developing countries with different political, economic, historical, and cultural backgrounds, by transforming the individual

anecdotes that make up Japan's experience into a theory that can be applied to other countries.

Perhaps Japan never really aspired to be a *norm-maker*. This may be because Japan had become used to being regarded as heterogeneous since the time of the Meiji Restoration. Historically, Japan has prided itself on the *wakon-yōsai* approach (Japanese spirit with Western learning), molding "advanced" systems and technologies from the West to fit its own political, social, and cultural conditions. The unique Japanese derivatives that resulted were perceived and criticized by Europe and America as heterogeneous, or even heretic. Japan has had many such experiences. When Japan became a member of DAC, it was aware of the fact that "development assistance," and its Japanese translation "*kaihatsu-enjo*," would be evaluated on the basis of the norm of "charity" and that, although superficially similar, this was in substance quite different from Japan's concept and practice of "*keizai-kyōryoku* (economic cooperation)" based on yen loans, which had originated from war reparations.

If Japan had expressed compelling opposition to the dominant norms, then it might have been able to ignite a fruitful debate about the diverse range of approaches to development assistance. Today, with loan aid for infrastructure development no longer perceived as "heterodoxy," perhaps Japan has the opportunity to seize the initiative to discuss its vision of development assistance.

## Notes

1. Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/charity>).
2. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) collects data on the assistance provided by its member countries, and measures and compares the quality of this assistance on the basis of its "grant element." This index measures how close the assistance is to a grant, with pure grants receiving a score of 100%. The higher the score, the higher the "quality of assistance" is assessed to be.
3. For example, loans accounted for 51% of Japan's ODA in fiscal 2008. This is much higher than the DAC as a whole, where grants accounted for 89.4% of aid last year.
4. International institutions and private sector financial institutions with close ties to their national government sometimes act as lenders or borrowers in place of the government.
5. The series of Nishihara Loans, made by Japan's Terauchi Masatake administration through the Prime Minister's secretary Nishihara Kamezo to the Republic of China's Duan Qirui government from 1917 to 1918, is a famous example. The possible impact of Japan's experience of prewar loans to China on postwar yen loans is a topic for future research.
6. However, until the OECD defined ODA, there was no clear distinction between development loans and export credit provided to support domestic companies.
7. The joint declaration on this loan by Japan and India was the first official document to use the term "yen loan" (Yamada 2021, p. 173).
8. Funding for yen loans comes from fiscal investment and loan funds of the Japanese government, which are sourced from postal savings deposited by the general population rather than from the general account budget.
9. The predecessor of DAC was the Development Assistance Group (DAG) established in 1960 in response to pleas from the US.

10. The shift to untied aid was partly an effort to address criticism by the United States, made in the context of intensifying US–Japan trade frictions in the 1980s, but also as a response to resistance among Southeast Asian countries to Japan’s economic expansion. In the 2000s, tied loans began to increase again in response to requests from the business community against the backdrop of Japan’s prolonged economic stagnation.
11. It is necessary to remember that Japan began to emphasize assistance for self-help efforts only in the 1980s (Shimomura 2020, p. 180). It was not always put forward as Japan’s development assistance ideal. In fact, in the 1960s, DAC peer review of Japan’s development assistance actually pointed out a lack of consideration for self-help efforts (Sato 2021, pp. 192–193).
12. Another example is Japan’s efforts, at around the same time, to introduce the “human security” concept into the mainstream. Also, Japan was active in an endeavor to mainstream the agenda of Universal Health Coverage in the 2010s. These concepts are not directly related to yen loans however, and are thus beyond the scope of the current paper.
13. Clare Short, who served as the United Kingdom’s Secretary of State for International Development from 1997 to 2003, wrote that “we all have a moral duty to reach out to the poor and needy” (UK Government 1997).
14. Japan became the largest aid donor in the world in for the first time in 1989, surpassing the United States, and remained the largest donor for a decade (with the exception of 1990), until the United States reclaimed the top spot in 2001.
15. According to Shimomura, China combined Japan’s Trinity approach with its own economic development strategy, the “grand economic and trade strategy” (Shimomura 2020, p. 196–197).
16. According to a forecast by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as much as USD 26.2 trillion in infrastructure development will be needed between 2016 and 2030 in the four areas of electric power, transport, communications, and water and sanitation, for developing countries in Asia to maintain their current economic growth (ADB 2017). Recent estimations also point to a USD 15 trillion supply–demand gap by 2040 (G20 Global Infrastructure Hub).
17. For example, the Commitment to Development Index published by the Center for Global Development, a US think tank every year since 2003, adopts assistance assessment criteria that disadvantage loans, leading to an objection from Japan’s MOFA.

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# The *Trinity* of Aid, Trade, and Investment: The Reemergence of a Japanese-Style Development Term as China Rises



Muyun Wang

**Abstract** This chapter analyzes the historical roots of the term “the *trinity*” (*sanmi-ittai*) in the context of development cooperation, which refers to the combined implementation of aid, investment, and trade. Specifically, it examines how the interpretation of the *trinity* in development practice has evolved over time. While the *trinity* received little attention in Japan during the 1980s when it was first introduced as an economic cooperation policy, it became a subject of considerable debate due to China’s emergence as a prominent aid donor. This chapter examines the chronology of how the term emerged in the 1980s in Japan, how it was transmitted to China during the same period, and how it is currently being discussed today, to reveal the issues and perspectives within its current meaning, which is increasingly centered around the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships.

**Keywords** The trinity · Development cooperation · Japan · China · Mutually beneficial

## 1 A Term Transcending Borders Between China and Japan

The four-character expression “三位一体”, in both Japanese (*san-mi-it-tai*) and Chinese (*san-wei-yi-ti*), was originally a translation of the English term “the *Trinity*.”<sup>1</sup> This term was coined by foreign missionaries proficient in Chinese characters and is believed to have been introduced from China to Japan in the context of Christian theology.<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary Japan and China, the term *trinity* is often used in fields unrelated to religion, one of which is development cooperation, the subject of this chapter. The *trinity*, in the context of Japan’s development cooperation, is a policy originally developed by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI; now

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209



renamed the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry: METI) in 1987 to promote industrialization in developing countries. It refers to comprehensive economic cooperation through three measures: technological and financial aid, direct investment, and imports into Japan; and their interrelations (MITI 1987).

Since the 2000s, the *trinity* has been used to describe similarities and connections in the development cooperation provided by Japan and China. For example, the international political scientist Ping Wang argues that China's development cooperation today is accomplished through the same linkage of aid, trade, and investment as found in Japan's *trinity* decades earlier (Wang 2012, p. 89). Moreover, it has been pointed out that, as the scale of China's development cooperation grows, the *trinity* may come to be seen as the "Asian aid model" (Shimomura et al. 2013, p. 270). This is because the combination of government and private sector funding represented by the *trinity*, now implemented not only by Japan and China but also by emerging aid donors such as India, has already proven to be an effective policy for encouraging the autonomy of recipient countries. This approach contrasts with the approach of donors in Europe and the U.S. that clearly distinguishes between government assistance and private investment (Shimomura et al. 2013; Saidi and Wolf 2011).<sup>3</sup>

However, in focusing on similarities and connections, existing research has failed to appreciate how the *trinity* has evolved since it was coined in 1987. This chapter questions how the meaning of the *trinity* emerged and how it has changed over time. It endeavors to illuminate the often-neglected semantic shifts of the *trinity* and the politico-economic changes that prompted them. Through this examination, the chapter aims to gain a deeper understanding of development cooperation offered by Japan and China, respectively, which has given rise to diverse interpretations of the same term, and to illuminate the contemporary significance of the *trinity*.

The analysis in this chapter proceeds in the following sequence. Firstly, it overviews government statements and official documents to describe the nature of *trinity* policies formulated in Japan at the end of the 1980s. Secondly, it surveys the literature in Chinese to reveal when and how the *trinity* was introduced from Japan into China. Thirdly, it explores the process by which researchers came to focus on the *trinity* and use it to describe Japan's and China's development cooperation approaches. While attracting little attention in Japan during the 1980s even while it was being implemented in practice, the *trinity* became a focus for debate with the rise of China as an emerging aid donor. In the process, the *trinity* has changed from a policy for mitigating the dissatisfaction of developing countries in the Japanese context to a set of measures for achieving a win-win relationship of development cooperation in the Chinese context.

## 2 The Birth and Decline of *Trinity* in Japan

### 2.1 *The Trinity of MITI: A Declaration of Intent to Change Trade Relations*

In March 1987, Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) released *The Present Status and Issues in Economic Cooperation (1986)*,<sup>4</sup> presenting the *Trinity* as a policy for comprehensive economic cooperation comprising “aid, investment, and trade” (MITI 1987, p. 2). This document (the “1987 White Paper”) is considered the first official document related to the term the *trinity* (Shimomura 2020, p. 137; Maruyama 2018). Since there is no clear definition for the *trinity*, this section will unravel its formation from the related historical background and policies.

The meanings underlying the *trinity* did not suddenly appear in 1987. In editions of *The Present Status and Issues in Economic Cooperation* published before 1987, trade involving the government, private sector, and partner country was a frequent component of the economic development presented by MITI.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the policy of “comprehensive economic cooperation,” organically integrating multiple forms of economic cooperation, such as government development assistance, trade, and investment, had been emphasized from the late 1970s (MITI 1976–1986, pp. 1–2). It is clear from the similarities in language that the *trinity* is an extension of established policy discussing “comprehensive economic cooperation.”

The core meaning of the *trinity* changed in 1987, however, with the scope of “trade” limited to “imports” from the partner country (MITI 1988, p. 2; 1990, p. 148; 1992, p. 127). The background that brought about such changes can be traced back to the “Plaza Accord” of September 1985. The appreciation of the yen served as a catalyst for Japanese manufacturing industries to actively engage in foreign production. Concurrently, there was a significant increase in imports from overseas (MITI 1987, p. 127).

In addition to the overseas expansion of Japanese companies, another pivotal factor in the mid-1980s was the requests from developing countries—especially ASEAN countries—from the second half of the 1980s. At the time, countries such as South Korea and Taiwan were actively participating in the international division of labor. ASEAN countries, meanwhile, were facing not only a temporary slump in product prices and the burden of accumulated debt, which had been exacerbated due to oil shocks from the late 1970s onward but also a persistently unfavorable trade balance with Japan (Shimomura 2020; MITI 1986). In this context, Thailand and other ASEAN countries demanded a radical revision of Japan's industrialization support and trade relationships. These demands were focused on the three fields of “exports to Japan, including improved market access,” “direct foreign investment,” and “technology transfer” (MITI 1986, pp. 87–90), and prompted the prototype for the *trinity*.

MITI responded to these demands from the ASEAN countries with internal deliberations about the New Asian Industrial Development Plan (hereinafter, the “New AID Plan”)<sup>6</sup> aimed at fostering export-based industries in developing countries that

could attract foreign capital.<sup>7</sup> In January 1987, Hajime Tamura, the Minister of International Trade and Industry, embarked on a tour of the ASEAN countries. He concluded that conventional economic cooperation prioritizing development (irrigation facilities, power plants, and the like) was not adequately contributing to progress in the ASEAN region. On his final stop of the tour in Thailand, he announced the New AID Plan, reportedly “in splendid style, greeted with great anticipation from each country” (Yomiuri Shimbun 1987a, b).

In the 1987 White Paper mentioned above, Tamura characterized this New AID Plan as “designed to achieve cooperation in the *trinity* of aid, investment, and trade.” This represented the first appearance of the term *trinity* in the development context (MITI 1987, p. 2). Apparently, Tamura was largely responsible for this choice of expression.<sup>8</sup>

The New AID Plan designated three phases for achieving the *trinity*: (1) the selection of suitable regions and promising industries based on industrialization strategies appropriate to the characteristics of each country; (2) surveys of the selected regions or industries and proposals for specific cooperation measures involving factors such as the industry base, locations, markets, and the investment and loan environment; and (3) the implementation of multifaceted, concrete cooperation across a range of elements, including infrastructure, human capital and financial capital. This was the original definition of the *trinity* in the Japanese context. These steps aimed to develop local industries that could attract foreign currency and to encourage direct Japanese investment in supporting growth in local export industries in anticipation of future imports into Japan. The underlying premise was that the partner country would make autonomous efforts to establish and improve its investment environment (MITI 1988, 165–166). This background indicates that the *trinity* was an initiative aimed at supporting efficient industrialization in developing countries by applying Official Development Assistance (ODA) initiatives to achieve economic growth by implementing measures to support potential export industries. This was also a transfer of the experience Japan itself had gained in achieving economic growth (Abe 2013, p. 781).

## 2.2 Challenges Faced by the Trinity in Practice

However, the *trinity* formulated in 1987 had gradually disappeared from development cooperation-related policy debate in Japan by the early 1990s, possibly because the *trinity* had proven extremely difficult to achieve as scheduled. Thailand (1987), Indonesia (1988), the Philippines (1988), and China (1989) became recipient countries under the *trinity* policy. However, the actual implementation in those countries was limited to technological cooperation, such as surveys of industrial sites and development plans, and dispatching and training specialists (MITI 1989, p. 81).

According to the explanation given by MITI, these difficulties arose from the system used to manage financial aid—yen loans (See Chap. 12)—from the Japanese government (Abe 2013). Yen loans were presented as necessary to establish and

improve the investment environment in the partner country as part of the implementation of New AID Plan. Through yen loans, economic and social infrastructure (power, transport, communications, etc.) can be built, which will also encourage direct investment by Japanese companies. However, at the time, yen loans were discussed mainly through the so-called “four ministry/agency structure” comprising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, MITI, and the Economic Planning Agency. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly objected to “the use of yen loans to encourage investment by Japanese companies being publicly proclaimed as Japanese government policy” because of bilateral trade conflicts between Japan and the U.S., which continued through the 1980s. While the rapid increase in Japan’s exports to the U.S. had already been raised as a problem, the U.S. had expressed concerns that its domestic markets might effectively be left with the burden of importing products after production increases resulting from Japan’s New AID Plan, because Japan, as of the late 1980s, had not yet opened its domestic markets to products from developing countries (Orr 1990). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs feared that the *trinity* would be perceived as a Japanese government policy to promote the foreign expansion of its private sector companies, and further fan the flames of U.S. discontent (Shimomura and Wang 2012, pp. 124–125).

For this reason, the focus of the *trinity* formulated by MITI eventually shifted to technological cooperation with maximum utilization of agencies and associations under MITI control, such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS) (Abe 2013, pp. 808–809).<sup>9</sup> In 1992, MITI attempted to promote industrialization in Asia primarily through “policy cooperation” rather than cooperation measures centered on ODA. Policy cooperation refers to measures designed to enhance the ability of the government of a developing country to formulate and implement medium- and long-term development strategies through continuous dialogue between MITI and the developing country government (Abe 2013, p. 782).

With the phasing out of the New AID Plan since 1992, the policy of the *trinity* outlined in the 1987 White Paper virtually vanished from Japan’s official documents (Trinidad 2013, p. 58; Shimomura and Wang 2012, p. 122). Moreover, MITI began to discuss the environmental issues associated with industrialization (MITI 1991, 1992), frequently advocating a completely different kind of *trinity*: “environment, energy, and economic growth.”<sup>10</sup> In this way, the *trinity* fell into disuse as a term to describe development cooperation policies.

### 3 “The *Trinity*” in 1980s China: Limited Presence

#### 3.1 *Development Projects During the Diplomatic “Honeymoon” Period*

After the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China in 1972, there was frequent correspondence between public officials in each country’s central governments, as well as among intellectuals and businesspeople. At the end of the 1970s, the Chinese government switched to an agenda of “reform and opening-up.” Following such a change, the experience of Japan—belonging to the Eastern cultural sphere, with many common cultural similarities—was regarded as a valuable point of reference for the further development of China (Ito 2022). Thus, during this 1980s “honeymoon” period of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations, Japan, having just experienced a period of rapid economic growth, became a benchmark for policymaking across numerous aspects of economic growth and industrial development within China.

At the end of January 1987, in the context of this active exchange between the two countries, Japan introduced the New AID Plan to China. At this time, the Chinese government was in the process of introducing foreign capital into the 14 coastal cities that had been designated for stage one National Economic and Technological Development Zones in 1984. Of these, Qingdao City in Shandong Province, where construction of one such zone had begun in 1985, was selected as the location for the New AID Plan in April 1987 through discussions between Japan and China at the senior official level (Nihon Keizai Shimbun 1987). In March 1989, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) announced the results of the Survey of the Development Plans for the Qingdao Export Processing Zone. The agency assessed Qingdao City as having conditions suitable for investment by foreign companies and approved efforts by the Qingdao City government to further improve aspects such as communications and transport (JICA 1989, p. 39). As already mentioned, the implementation of the *trinity* policy in China focused mostly on surveys of the investment environment.

#### 3.2 *A Swift Policy Introduction and Its Lack of Impact*

The *trinity* of the 1987 White Paper was promptly introduced into China in a paper, “The New State of Japanese Foreign Direct Investment” (Ling 1988), describing the context and characteristics of the spread of Japan’s foreign direct investment, and introducing the *trinity* as an approach and a policy. This paper summarizes the content of the *trinity* as measures to improve the quality and increase the quantity of economic cooperation by the Japanese government, increase the amount of foreign direct investment, increase the amount of industrial products imported from developing countries, and related measures. It also singled out direct investment as the

core of the *trinity*, arguing that it boosts productivity and technical and management capabilities in developing countries, increases the effectiveness of economic aid, and is a necessary condition for Japanese consumers to accept industrial products manufactured in developing countries (Ling 1988, p. 24).

In July 1988, the *trinity* was also presented in the *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of China. In the article, the *trinity* is characterized as a new foreign economic cooperation strategy implemented by Japan to promote economic growth in developing countries, especially in the Asia Pacific region. The specific components of the strategy are described as (1) the quantitative increase and qualitative improvement of Japan's ODA; (2) the establishment of investment and insurance schemes to promote foreign direct investment by Japanese private-sector companies; (3) support for developing countries to export and capture foreign currency through trade surpluses; and (4) support for developing countries to formulate industrialization strategies focused on export. This description by the *People's Daily* is not so much an explanation of the *trinity* itself, but rather a summary of the contents of the 1987 White Paper.

What is especially noteworthy is that both the paper mentioned above and the *People's Daily* article were authored by the same person: Professor Emeritus of Fukui Prefectural University Xingguang Ling. Ling, born in Japan in 1933, worked as an academic interpreter and Japanese economic specialist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Institute of World Economy during the 1980s. He also participated in meetings of the Japan–China Working Group for the Exchange of Economic Information (1981–present), an organization that significantly influenced China's "reform and opening-up" program from the time of its inauguration (Ito 2020). According to Ling, the interaction between Japan and China in the 1980s, while balancing the roles of the government and market economy, was focused on policies to promote the domestic development of China's trade, corporate management, and industry. He recalls that, despite writing several academic papers and newspaper articles discussing the *trinity*, he never regarded it as an important concept in international cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

### **3.3 *The Mismatch Between China's Interest and Japan's Approach***

The *trinity*, as a policy of "aid, investment, and trade" made very little impression on China in the 1980s. The reason for this becomes clearer when considering the historical backdrop. First, there was a low level of direct investment in China by Japan. While the levels of Japanese foreign direct investment increased rapidly during the 1980s, it was directed mainly toward the Newly Industrializing Economies (NIEs) and ASEAN countries. From 1979 to 1990, direct investment in China accounted for no more than 1.1% of all Japanese direct foreign investment (Guo 1999, p. 84). Direct investment in China from countries around the world, including Japan, began

to rise rapidly only from the 1990s onward, encouraged by policies to promote the introduction of foreign capital and economic reform beginning with Deng Xiaoping's 1992 southern tour. As a result, only in the 1990s, long after the arrival of the policy of the *trinity* in 1987, did China begin to profit significantly from Japanese direct investment and expand imports into Japan.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, learning from the development cooperation experience of foreign countries was not a priority for the Chinese government at the time. From the 1960s to the 2010s, China's development cooperation was invariably directed by government departments related to the economy and trade, with a policy formulation perspective similar in some respects to that of Japan's MITI (Huang and Hu 2009; Zhou 2008). In that sense, it would have been structurally possible for China to adopt the policy of the *trinity* presented in the 1987 White Paper for its own development cooperation initiatives. However, during the 1980s, the Chinese government, in response to what it considered the over-expansion of Chinese foreign assistance during the previous decade, had shifted its direction to balance the demands of internationalism with its domestic capacity. As part of this effort, the Chinese government had diminished the scope of the foreign assistance it provided, while emphasizing equality and reciprocity with its partners. Moreover, in 1982, it had downgraded the Ministry of Foreign Economic Liaison, responsible for foreign assistance, to the level of a bureau (Xue and Xiao 2011; Ma 2007). As a result, although the policy of the *trinity* was introduced to China soon after it first appeared in Japan in 1987, it garnered little attention there.

However, renewed attention to the *trinity* was sparked by the series of development cooperation reforms carried out in China from the mid-1990s, along with an increase in interest in Japan's development cooperation among Chinese researchers. The *trinity* has now become discussed as a common thread in Japan and China's development cooperation policies (see, for example, Shimomura and Wang 2015; Wang 2013). The next section describes how this attention from researchers breathed new life into the *trinity* in the context of historical change.

## 4 Reevaluation of the *Trinity* as China Rises

### 4.1 Attention to Japan's Experiences in Light of China's Overseas Expansion

The 1990s was a decade of transition for China's foreign trade and development cooperation. The Chinese government engaged in various structural reforms, including the privatization of state-run enterprises (1993) and the establishment of the Export-Import Bank of China (1994). At the end of 1994, Wu Yi, China's Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, developed the Grand Strategy of Economy and Trade. This strategy indicated the direction of China's economic relations and growth

based on foreign trade for the second half of the 1990s (Li 1995). A system of preferential loans, introduced in 1995 as an extension of this series of reforms, became an important component of China's development cooperation. Consequently, China emerged from the structural reforms with stronger links between aid, investment, and trade. In such a process, development cooperation had mainly been regarded as a means for promoting economic growth.

In this context, the 1990s saw an increase in Chinese researchers' investigations into Japan's ODA. According to Ping Wang, who has reviewed several representative research papers of this type, Chinese researchers regarded the *trinity* as an important characteristic of Japan's ODA, distinguishing Japan from European countries and the U.S., which clearly differentiated aid and trade (Wang 2013).

However, most Chinese researchers do not refer to the 1987 White Paper and have different explanations regarding the origin of the *trinity*.<sup>13</sup> While the definition is ambiguous, the *trinity* is generally recognized as a government policy in Japan's traditional development cooperation, prioritizing economic benefits. Essentially, for Chinese scholars, the *trinity* referred to the use of yen-denominated loans by Japan to build economic infrastructure in developing countries and target cheap labor at a time when Japanese companies were investing in high-profit manufacturing industries (Zhou 2010a, p. 53). In contrast, Japan's development cooperation since 1990 is seen to have abandoned such a tradition by leaning toward the cultivation of political rather than economic power (see, for example, Zhou 2010b; Zhang 2012, p. 80).

In this way, the meaning of the *trinity* was redefined by Chinese researchers to refer to the promotion of economic growth through the simultaneous implementation of aid, investment, and trade. Due to the absence of a historical conceptual examination, this understanding overlooks the fact that in the context of Japan in 1987, "trade" referred "imports into Japan". The opinions of Chinese researchers are divided regarding this redefinition of the meaning of the *trinity*. Some (for example, Lin 1993) criticize it as excessively focused on Japan's own national interests. This is similar to the criticism leveled at the commercial characteristics of Japan's development cooperation by European and U.S. researchers (Shimomura and Wang 2012).

In contrast, some researchers perceive the effects of the *trinity* in a positive light, focusing on the similarities between Japan's and China's development cooperation since the 1990s. Wang (2013, p. 169) points out that present-day China "is engaged in securing the supply of resources and actively pursuing trade and investment to open-up markets for Chinese goods even as it provides economic assistance, in an identical approach" to Japan's policy of the *trinity*. Wang characterizes the policies of the *trinity* as the "priming" that eventually led to win-win relationships between Japan and the recipient countries, with financial assistance from the Japanese government encouraging direct investment by private sector companies (Wang 2012, p. 85). Based on this perception, the experience of the *trinity* is seen as a valuable basis for justifying China's overseas expansion by Chinese companies as it furthers not only its own interests but also those of its partners (Huang and Zhang 2016).



## 4.2 *Revisiting the Trinity in Japan and Discovering Its Universal Value*

This debate regarding the similarities between Japanese and Chinese development cooperation was not limited to China. Since the 2000s, an increasing body of research has sought to compare China's expanding development cooperation with that of traditional donor countries. One widely discussed topic is the characteristics shared by the Japanese and Chinese approaches. Specifically, the policy of the *trinity*, while characteristic of Japan's development assistance, has been used to help understand the development cooperation of China in the present day (see, for example, Johnston and Rudyak 2017; Bräutigam 2011).

In fact, the rise of China as an emerging donor is thought to be the catalyst responsible for the reemergence of discussion on the *trinity* in Japan.<sup>14</sup> Japanese researchers studying the *trinity* generally make a comparison with China. While some researchers discuss the differences between Chinese and Japanese development cooperation based on the *trinity*, others focus on common characteristics. The former includes researchers who claim that China's development cooperation is based not on "the *trinity*" but rather on a "quaternity," adding various fourth principles.<sup>15</sup>

A representative example of researchers exploring the universal value of the *trinity* can be found in the work of Yasutami Shimomura (Shimomura 2020; Shimomura and Wang 2015; Shimomura et al. 2013; Shimomura and Wang 2012). In these studies, the focus of the *trinity* changes over time. For example, while Shimomura et al. (2013) emphasize common aspects between Japanese and Chinese approaches of the *trinity*, Shimomura and Wang (2015) highlight the creation of knowledge based on the experience of China. The latter claims that the significance of Japan's policy of the *trinity* is not to propose a perfect model, but to furnish "Chinese foreign aid experts with opportunities to reexamine and improve China's own economic cooperation strategy" (Shimomura and Wang 2015, 15). Furthermore, Shimomura (2020) analyzes the "external pressures" that forced MITI to formulate the policy of the *trinity*. This study suggests that such external pressures, including the aforementioned demands by ASEAN countries to expand imports into Japan, contribute to the universality of the *trinity* as a model (Shimomura 2020, pp. 130–141). In other words, the *trinity* in the 1987 White Paper—providing a model for progressively moving from "infrastructure construction," to "attracting direct investment," then to "export-based industrialization"—was a reflection of the concerns of ASEAN countries. Thus, the perspectives of developing countries were incorporated into the *trinity*, which makes it an approach that later resonated with China and other Asian countries (Shimomura 2020).

As mentioned above, while the research interests of Chinese scholars differ, the meaning of the *trinity* has also been explored in Japan as a characteristic feature of development cooperation. Japanese researchers, while harboring concerns about China's rise, can be observed reassessing the value of their own development cooperation efforts. Looking at the trends of the 1980s, the evaluation of Japan's *trinity* has changed with the times. In the 1987 White Paper, the *trinity* served as a means

for Japan to fulfill its responsibility for the economic growth of developing countries. However, today, the *trinity* is seen as an effective mechanism for pursuing economic benefit, which is a distinctive feature of Japan and China in the context of development cooperation. This shift is not only a response to ongoing discussions in China but also a consequence of changes in Japan's position brought about by a period of economic downturn and the critical assessment of ODA during the 1990s (see Chapter XX, this volume). These factors have reshaped the discourse in Japan over the past two decades, giving priority to the efficiency of development cooperation and the protection of national interests. Consequently, this shift has established a common ground for discussions between Japan and China concerning the *trinity*.

## 5 Development Cooperation as Seen Through the Changing Concept of the *Trinity*

This chapter has elucidated the processes whereby the policy of the *trinity* set forth in the 1987 White Paper changed over time and was utilized in the different contexts of Japanese and Chinese research from a policy for mitigating the dissatisfaction of developing countries to a set of measures for achieving a win–win relationship of development cooperation. The reemergence of debate on the *trinity* in the context of Japan's development cooperation was due to a renewed focus by researchers on the relationship between aid, investment, and trade within the context of the rise of China.

Unlike other Japanese lexicons such as “*kaizen*” and “*hito-zukuri*,” the *trinity* had a short “expiration date” as a policy but still improved Japan's development cooperation. During the second half of the 1980s, the prominent increase in Japanese direct investment and the transfer of production bases to Thailand and Malaysia significantly eased local discontent in those countries (Shimomura 2020). In this sense, even if the policies of the *trinity* were not implemented as originally planned, they may have actually performed their intended role of resolving issues in developing countries by communicating the Japanese government's policies to Japanese companies.

The semantic transformation of the *trinity* illustrates the potential function of meanings that have fallen out of usage. The relationship between the *trinity* and the measures it evaluates is like that between a container and its contents: the shape of the container has not changed, but different contents have been poured into it with each changing era. Reviewing the contents of the *trinity* in each era enables us to discover the overlooked issues and ways of thinking about development cooperation.

Today, the *trinity* has become a term used to advocate the effectiveness of development cooperation by integrating “aid, investment, and trade,” leading to resulting win–win relationships. However, emphasizing the significance of mutual benefit may obscure the potential conflict of interest in development cooperation. In contrast, the *trinity* presented in the 1987 White Paper was not primarily aimed at actively

pursuing mutual interests but represented the outcome of a response to the demands of developing countries, including the opening of Japanese markets. Despite its passive formation process, its implementation effectively promoted Japan's development cooperation at that time and benefited Japan's national interests in terms of results. In today's context, where actively pursuing national interests is commonplace, the 1987 *trinity* can be seen as a reference point when considering the uncertainty of outcomes resulting from a profit-seeking stance.

## Notes

1. A well-known Christian expression describing the manifestation of a single god in three forms: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.
2. The first record of this translation can be traced back to 1623, when Giulio Aleni, an Italian missionary active around the end of China's Ming dynasty, used the term in his work *The General Outline of Western Knowledge (Xixuefan)*, written in Chinese (Database of Chinese Classic Ancient Books 2023). Such works on Christianity written in Chinese had a profound impact on the Japanese language from the nineteenth century onward (Suzuki 2006). Though *The General Outline of Western Knowledge* was banned by the Edo Shogunate (1603–1868), it was circulated widely enough to expose Japanese intellectuals to Western thought and knowledge (Koso 1974). This context gives rise to the inference that the term the *trinity* arrived in Japan via the works of missionaries written in Chinese. Other evidence also suggests that the Japanese expression *san-mi-it-tai*, used, as in Chinese, to describe Christian doctrine, first appeared in Masanao Nakamura's Japanese translation of *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill, published in 1872 under the title *Jiyūno Kotowari* (De Wolf 2010, p. 114).
3. Also see Dole et al. (2021), Kobayashi (2007), Marukawa (2007). However, the difference between Japan and the West in this context is seen as an analysis focusing on the inception of untied aid in the 1970s and the efforts of Western countries that led to its mainstreaming and institutionalization since the 1990s. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Western development cooperation initiatives didn't solely involve government assistance but also included various policies aimed at promoting private investment through the former. For instance, there were numerous efforts to enhance the competitiveness of domestic companies through foreign aid funds, such as the UK government's "Aid and Trade Provision" (1977) or the "Tied Aid War Chest" (1985) introduced by US President Ronald W. Reagan.
4. *Keizai Kyoryoku no Genjo to Mondaiten*, commonly known as the *White Paper on Economic Cooperation*, was one of a series published every year from 1958 to 2001. Without the official status of White Papers reported to cabinet meetings, they were used as PR materials to announce approaches taken by MITI officials (Abe 2013, p. 771).
5. In editions of *The Present Status and Issues in Economic Cooperation* published from 1970 onward, the status of Japan's economic cooperation was described in terms of three general categories: "economic cooperation directed at the capital base (both government and private sector)," "economic cooperation through technology," and "economic cooperation through trade."
6. In negotiations to revive the budget for the fiscal year 1986, the New AID Plan was allotted a total of nine trillion yen in research project expenses (Asahi Shimbun, 1986).
7. The importance of fostering export industries in developing countries was recognized by MITI from the mid-1980s (MITI 1985, p. 211). The awareness of dissatisfaction and pressure from ASEAN countries can be seen as responsible for the formulation of specific measures in the New AID Plan.
8. Records of debate in the Diet around 1987 indicate that "the trinity" was a favorite expression of Hajime Tamura across several different contexts, including "the trinity of the Ministry of

- Finance, MITI, and the Ministry of Labor” (1986) and “the trinity of the ruling party, the opposition, and the government” (1988).
9. Actually, transforming the results of surveys conducted under the New AID Plan into reality in the investment environment proved to be a long and arduous task, as exemplified in the case of Malaysia’s high-tech industrial zone, which did not begin production until 1996 (Nikkei Sangyō Shinbun 1996).
  10. No. 16, Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, 120th Plenary Session of the Diet, February 22, 1991.
  11. Interview with Xingguang Ling (October 22, 2021, at the Japan China Science, Technology and Culture Center, Tokyo).
  12. That being said, the role of Japan’s suggestions on industrial policy in the 1980s cannot be disregarded. For example, at the Japan–China Working Group for Exchange of Economic Information in 1988, Japanese industry specialists and businesspersons explained that it was a cycle of capital investment, profit retention and reinvestment that had supported Japan’s remarkable development. They further urged the Chinese government to utilize the advantages of a planned economy to focus on textiles, light industrial products, and the food industry, while actively fostering industries with the potential to provide the next generation of export products (Ito 2020, pp. 69–70). These policy proposals likely contributed to the development of China’s manufacturing industries from the 1990s onward.
  13. For example, Xide Jin, a pioneering Chinese researcher into Japan’s ODA, defined the *trinity* as “an official Japanese concept used up to the mid-1980s, referring to economic cooperation integrating trade, investment, and aid” (Jin 2000, p. 85). Baogen Zhou, a well-known economist at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, indicated that the *trinity* of “aid, investment, and trade” was the key that enabled post-war Japan to achieve rapid economic growth, particularly in the years from 1954 to 1972.
  14. Yasutami Shimomura, a leading researcher on the *trinity*, describes how he first became interested in related policies in the 1980s, when he was working in Thailand as a member of the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF). He experienced for himself how the proposal of the *trinity* had sparked an increase in direct investment in Thailand by Japanese companies, leading to the amelioration of diplomatic tensions between Japan and Thailand. However, it was not until the 2000s, when the trinity had become a focus of attention in China as well, that Shimomura commenced dedicated research into the *trinity* (from an interview with Yasutami Shimomura on February 8, 2022, at the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development).
  15. For example, Inada (2013, p. 108) sees this as the existing contents of the trinity with the addition of the “dispatch of laborers,” while Enomoto adds “economic cooperation”—comprising “construction contracting, the provision of labor, and design consulting services” (Enomoto 2017, p. 24).

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# Conclusion: Imagining Pluriversal Development Knowledge Production Via Japan as Method



Soyeun Kim and Muyun Wang

**Abstract** In this conclusion, we consider the broader contribution of this edited volume to expand thinking via Japan as method towards more decentred and pluriversal approaches to knowledge production in Japanese international development studies (IDS). In order to highlight this broader contribution, we do two things. First, we synthesise findings from each chapter through the dimensions of time and space, in which the selected Japanese terms in the field of development cooperation were constructed, popularised, or spread. In doing so, we demonstrate how intricately the semantics of those terms change through the latter's connection with many other—temporally and spatially different—worlds and their experiences, and highlight the risk of boasting Japan's uniqueness in development knowledge production. Second, we then consider Japan as method to elucidate the case for engaging with decolonial and pluriversal approaches in Japanese IDS by exploring Japan's ambiguous positionality and the post-war depoliticisation of Japanese IDS. Finally, we consider the potential of relativising Japan's position in the (many) world(s) and to critically engage with the trend of instrumentalising ODA to serve geopolitical interests through active collaboration and co-creation of decolonial or pluriversal development knowledges that 'leave no one behind'.

**Keywords** Pluriversal approach · Japan as method · Development knowledge · De/postcolonial · Positionality

During a series of online meetings for a co-authored paper in early 2022, Professor Jin Sato (Jin sensei) shared his idea for an edited volume on 'untranslatable' Japanese specialised terms in the field of development cooperation. His idea was prompted by the book *Lost in Translation: An Illustrated Compendium of Untranslatable Words*

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225



from *Around the World* (Sanders 2016). We<sup>1</sup> were fascinated by Jin sensei's idea since, to our knowledge, no such previous study existed in Japanese development studies.<sup>2</sup> With suggestions from his postgraduate students, Jin sensei and I began to list some of the (domestically) well-known Japanese terms considered to be 'untranslatable'. The entries in this edited volume were initially selected for their 'untranslatability'. Yet, as our work progressed, the notion of 'untranslatability' became not only redundant but also problematic. Most of them were found not strictly 'untranslatable' but 'untranslated' since they were meant for 'internal use only' (thus, not for the non-Japanese audience). Although the 'untranslatability' issue is shared by all languages, a particularly 'Orientalist' view was found in the case of Japanese development lexicon, highlighting the supposed uniqueness. Indeed, considering the historical popularity, usage and utility of development lexicon, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to them in Japanese, let alone in English. As scholars, we all struggled due to this, and the lack of clear official definitions.<sup>3</sup> And, as our work progressed, our efforts to study some words that entered the Japanese development lexicon and the related ideas behind them, were complicated in three ways.

Firstly, we found certain assumptions at the heart of many of the Japanese terms including *yōsei-shugi* (the request-based principle), *ōnā shippu* (ownership), *genba-shugi* (the hands-on approach). During the conversations and interviews (Interviews 2022a, b, c, d; Personal Communication 2022), practitioners and researchers questioned the point of our enquiry—as they believe these terms already possess consistent and well-established meanings.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to their attestation, most of them were not able to fully verbalise such 'common knowledge' about the terms. Secondly, we became increasingly aware that those assumptions—particularly, in the absence of clear official definitions—reduce the complex semantics of those terms that change over time and space to one-dimensional and simplistic ones. As cases of *kaihatsu-yunyu* (the development-import scheme), *sanmi-ittai* (the trinity) highlight, the complexity and diversity of semantic changes were key to better understand respective Japanese and Chinese actors' vested interests, motivations, and priorities in their usage and adaptation/localisation. Thirdly, we consider the above two traits to be problematic because they not only cause us to overlook complex and 'under-explored' semantics of those words but also because some of them have become 'buzzwords' (Cornwall and Brock 2005; Cornwall 2007), which perpetuates simplistic assumptions to promote Japan's 'unique' development experience. For instance, they are used to refer obliquely to Japan's 'successful' modernisation and industrialisation experience in its development cooperation policy initiatives (Kim et al. 2023; Matsumoto 2023; Oyama 2024).

As such, it becomes clearer that the significance of exploring the lexicon of Japanese development is not entirely limited to their 'novelty'—i.e. addressing the knowledge gap through in-depth analyses of locally specific phenomena in Japan as well as its connections with the world. More importantly, we realised that this project may be able to expand thinking via Japan as method (Craig et al. 2017; see also Chen 2010; Mizoguchi 1989; Takeuchi 1978) towards a more decentred and pluriversal approaches to knowledge production in development studies. In order

to highlight this broader contribution, we do two things. First, we synthesise findings from each chapter through dimensions of time and space in which the selected Japanese terms were constructed, popularised or spread. In doing so, we demonstrate how intricately the semantics of terms change through the latter's connection with many other—temporally and spatially different—worlds and their experiences, which in turn highlights the risk of boasting Japan's uniqueness in development knowledge production. Second, we then consider Japan as method to take the discussion further. Our intention here is to demonstrate how and what development and related activities mean in different contexts (van Wessel and Kontinen 2023, p. 20) through a pluriversal approach, using Japan as method. It seeks to contribute to efforts towards decentring and toward pluriversal approaches to knowledge production in development studies by exploring little-studied Japanese development lexicon.

## 1 Exploring the Semantics of Development Through Time and Space

In order to better synthesise findings from each chapter by moving beyond the 'untranslatability' angle, we take a contextual approach to explore intricate semantics of development through 'time and space' by capturing such changes (both diversity and complexity) in different times and spaces most fruitfully.

### 1.1 A Contextual Approach to Changing Semantics

#### *Time*

Most of the terms in this volume highlighted both the 'natural' progress of semantic change throughout their life course and inevitable adapting and localising through time. Also, the time dimension accentuates the significant impact of domestic and international political economy. As we consider such complexity and diversity of semantic changes through time, three types of semantic changes are most notable. The first type concerns 'philosophicalisation'. Some of those terms—initially vague or unclear in their meanings—have evolved over time to rationalise Japan's differentiated 'aid philosophy'. A prime example is the request-based principle (*yōsei-shugi*). The request-based principle began to circulate in 1986 in order to clarify Japan's aid delivery method responding to criticism from the OECD-DAC. Initially, it referred to a technical procedure during project formulation, which then gradually evolved into a guiding principle or philosophy of Japan's aid. Similarly, *jijo doryoku* and *ōnā shippu* also fall into this category. The former has been promoted as a distinct philosophy within Japan's aid policies despite not being unique to Japan. The latter was integrated into Japan's aid philosophy as in the first ODA Charter approved in 1992 and was introduced as a pivotal approach of the Japanese aid policy at the first

Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993 (see *ōnā shippu*).

The second category concerns the rise and fall of their strategic utility. For instance, despite their importance as Japan's aid methods, *kaihatsu-yunyū*, *sanmi-ittai* and yen loans, have not been widely publicised due to external criticisms towards Japan's mercantilist aid practices in the 1970s and 1980s. However, changes in the international development landscape (including the emergence of the Aid for Trade agenda and the rise of China's South-South Cooperation in the 2000s) have led Western countries to reevaluate and even adopt the ideas and practices they once criticised (Mawdsley 2018). For other terms like *kokusai-kōken*, their strategic utility peaked in the early 1990s along with Japan's top donorship. Yet, prolonged recessions since the burst of 'bubble' economy in the mid-1990s led to a decline in public enthusiasm for foreign aid and eventually a decrease in discussions promoting *kokusai-kōken*.

The third type consists of terms for which semantics evolved over time through the accumulation of practical application and intellectual reflection. For example, *kaizen* was significantly influenced by the American industrial engineering and the International Labour Organisation's Declaration of Philadelphia. Born out of these external stimuli, *kaizen* evolved over time to become associated with historical practices of labour-management relations at large Japanese companies, and which later gained international recognition. Another example is *naihatsuteki-hatten* (endogenous development), for which roots can be traced back to a reaction by some critical Japanese scholars against Western modernisation theories of development. *Naihatsuteki-hatten* has influenced various forms of international development practice—particularly, with the contribution of scholars like Kazuko Tsurumi over time.

### *Space*

With the space dimension, determinants of semantic changes are found at two levels. The first is at the international level, for example, contrasting reception of some Japanese terms between the Global North and the South due to the structural inequality/unevenness in the global political economy. The second is at the national level (within Japan) where different perceptions are formed and circulated by the 'producers' and 'users' of terms across sectors and society. As various spatial elements intersect, they have been reshaping what are seen as 'good' methods and principles for Japan's development cooperation. Key traits of semantic changes through space can be broadly summarised into the following two groups.

The first category encompasses terms of foreign origin. Illustrative instances include the terms *ōnā shippu* and *sanmi-ittai*. The former constitutes a loanword derived from its pronunciation in katakana script, while the latter represents a Chinese rendition crafted by an Italian missionary. In contemporary usage, they serve as translations for 'ownership' and 'the Trinity', respectively. Nevertheless, it is imperative to underscore that these translations carry distinct nuances and meanings compared to their English counterparts. The phenomenon of such translational disparities has been extensively examined in scholarly literature (Yuk 2016, Wang 2020), highlighting the

multifaceted asymmetries inherent in linguistic expressions across different cultural and geographical contexts.

The second category includes terms for which meanings are place (or field)-dependent or place-specific. For instance, *genba-shugi* represents a development principle in Japan that emphasises locally driven practical methods when discussing Japanese overseas business activities and technical assistance projects in developing countries. However, in the context of organisational reforms at the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Tokyo during the 2000s, *genba-shugi* advocates the significance of on-site strategies in Official Development Assistance (ODA), promoting an approach that seeks to shift control away from other branches of the central government bureaucracy. *Doboku*, in the field of construction (including infrastructure) in Japan, has become mainly associated with ‘negative’ features of ‘physical labour’—i.e. crude, dirty, muddy and sweaty. Yet, in the field of development cooperation, such images of *doboku* have become an essential component of Japanese-styled aid works that accentuate hard works in mud together with the local communities in developing countries. Another example is the trinity, which was designed to rectify trade imbalance with developing countries by strengthening the nexus between aid, investment and imports in the field of Japan’s development cooperation. However, when adopted by China, the Trinity came to justify mutually beneficial cooperation in which Beijing secures the supply of resources while actively pursuing investment and trade for Chinese goods to open up markets.

The characteristic of the third group pertains to changes (expansions or contractions) in the geographical scope implied in some terms. For example, the geographical scope of Asianism shifted from that of imperial Pan-Asianism (e.g. Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere) to a principle of the ‘heart-to-heart’ diplomacy with South-east Asian countries in the face of mounting anti-Japanese sentiments. Nevertheless, there is a concern that these alterations in the term’s geographical scope are intended to depoliticise it and conceal contentious ideas.

In summary, our analysis through time and space provides insights into the complexity and diversity of semantic changes that reflect the changing needs of times and places. This complexity and diversity highlight how risky a simplistic representation of uniqueness is in the development knowledge production.

## **2 Beyond the ‘Myth’ of Uniqueness: Development Knowledge Production in the Increasingly Polycentric Global Development Landscape**

Intensifying aid competition and geopolitical tensions indeed pose a great challenge to the efforts for expanding pathways towards pluriversal knowledge production in Japanese international development studies (IDS). Two particular challenges are noteworthy. One is the Japanese government’s growing efforts to promote the ‘uniqueness’ of the country’s development experience and knowledge, partially in

response to mounting geopolitical tensions and aid competition (Kim et al. 2023). JICA's Development Studies Program is a prime example of such an initiative that provides lectures and training courses to personnel from partner countries to learn about Japan's modernisation and industrialisation experiences beginning with the Meiji restoration in the late nineteenth century (see below). The other is how such 'uniqueness' is fully expected by non-Japanese audiences, who come to such training sessions, and day-to-day interactions, with preconceptions forged in a world of discrete nations and myths. However, none of the chapters claim their findings to be 'uniquely Japanese'. In contrast, rather than focusing on 'novelty value', our findings underscore how selected Japanese development lexemes are products of a broad range of international connections and exchanges.

Hence, in order to address these 'forces' that continue to paint the Japanese development experience and knowledge as 'unique,' we situate such a 'myth' of uniqueness (see Dale 1988) within recent debates on decolonial/postcolonial and pluriversal knowledge in Anglophone development studies (hereafter ADS, see Kim 2023). Instead of covering the wide range of decolonial/postcolonial and pluriversal debates in ADS, we focus on two particular debates that are essential in our endeavour to move beyond the myth of uniqueness. First is the relative absence of decolonial debates in Japanese IDS, in reference to Japan's self-positionality. Second is how such self-positioning in turn allows the (re-)production of the uniqueness myth.

## 2.1 *'Japan, the Ambiguous' and a Relative Absence of Decolonial Debates in Japanese IDS*

I am a white British-Australian academic, who has always learned and worked in 'privileged' institutions. Cambridge University, my current professional home, is intimately intertwined with, and still benefits from the profits of, enslavement, colonialism and ongoing structural injustices in national and international academia. As a Geographer and one who specialises in 'development', I am caught up in disciplinary lineages and legacies fraught with complicity in colonial and post-colonial power structures. I do not believe I can fully decolonise my thinking, practices or being. But I can commit to the journey of listening and changing while trying to stay attentive to the dangers of complacency and tokenistic virtue-signalling (Mawdsley 2024, p. 205).

The above personal statement by Emma Mawdsley in her recent publication clearly epitomises the significant increase in efforts towards decolonial/postcolonial and pluriversal knowledge production in ADS in recent years (see Melber et al. 2024; Sumner 2022). This trend has been the result of scholarship since the 1990s that pushed for the decentring of 'Western-centric' knowledge production from both epistemic and ethical positions (Orbie 2021; McEwan 2019; Escobar 1995; Sachs 1992). Drawing upon anti- or decolonial, post-developmental and pluriverse thinking, critical debates in ADS engage with the power of development ideas, knowledge and institutions as well as their consequences—i.e. ever-growing inequality and poverty in the global South (Melber et al. 2024; McEwan 2019). More importantly, those debates challenge colonial legacies and 'hegemonising, unidirectional,

western-centricism of modernity' that dominate the processes of global development (Demaria et al. 2023, p. 62) and related knowledge production (Escobar 2020). Thus, those debates accentuate the importance of the 'pluriversity' of knowledges by shifting reference point from the West (and its 'universal knowledge' in the singular, see Mignolo 2014) to the Global South, 'Global East' (Müller 2020) or Asia (Chen 2010) as method to transform knowledge production. And, some calls for '(re)centr[ing] the global South [by using] ... global South experiences, theories and lenses ... to understand capitalist development globally, foregrounding historical and contemporary hierarchies' (Wiegatz et al. 2023, p. 25). Such scholarly efforts have gained further traction in ADS with the growing contributions from activists, researchers and practitioners with African, South Asian, Middle Eastern or Latin American origins (see DSA 2023; EADI 2022; Patel and Shehabi 2022; LIDC 2020; Pailey 2019; Reiter 2018).

As decoloniality 'can only be achieved with the acknowledgement of historical wrongdoings and with the recognition of the ongoing coloniality of knowledge' (Biekart et al. 2024, p. 9), emergent de-/postcolonial and pluriversal approaches and thinking within ADS naturally led to a call for more theorising about and with these societies in their own right (see also Kothari et al. 2019) and more critical research and pedagogical efforts to break from the colonial foundation (Brissett 2020; Cummings et al. 2021; Langdon 2013; McEwan 2019; White 2002). These efforts endeavour to challenge how mainstream development persists dichotomies of 'developed North' and 'developing/underdeveloped South' that reinforce 'identifications, classifications, and categorisations of people and places using racialised, gendered, pseudo-cultural, and ethnic binaries' (Biekart et al. 2024, p. 4). Such critical works accentuate how those binaries are 'not only reductive but also lack any reflection on how and why the world came to be understood as divided in this way in the first place' (Narayanaswamy 2024, p. 227). As the global development landscape has become increasingly polycentric—particularly through the rise of powerful South-South Cooperation (SSC) partners like China and India, such critical efforts are extended to interrogate the blurring of the very dichotomies (Sud and Sánchez-Ancochea 2022; Mawdsley 2017) and the complex, fluid and ambivalent positions of SSC partners vis-à-vis 'the Rest' (Haug et al. 2021; Mohan 2021; Waisbich et al. 2021).

In the midst of the aforementioned 'decolonial momentum' in ADS (and beyond) that seeks to better understand an increasingly polycentric development landscape (Kothari et al. 2019), Japanese IDS has been rather slow and 'passive' on this academic endeavour toward decolonial and pluriversal thinking (see Young 2005). Along with very few published works in ADS drawing explicitly on decolonial and pluriversal thinking in and on Japan (see Kim 2023; Masaki and Aizawa 2021), the aforementioned 'decolonial momentum' has received very little attention in Japanese IDS. Such 'silence' is rather selective as most fads in ADS have been introduced to Japan under the banner of 'advanced' or 'transformational' ideas. In the relative absence of decolonial and pluriverse debates concerning Japan's development cooperation and related knowledge production, this silence on decolonial and pluriversal debates in itself is noteworthy for two reasons. The first case is the plethora of

works devoted to critiquing Japan's economic/development cooperation for its neo-colonial economic dominance in neighbouring Asia (Shimomura, 2018, p. 362, see also Iwaki 1985; Tsurumi 1974; Yano 1978) and the asymmetrical power structure in Japan's development cooperation relationships with the Global South (Sumi 2004, 1990, 1990; Fujibayashi and Nagase 2002; Fuke and Fujibayashi 1999; Murai 1992; Nagai, 1983). The second reason is based on concrete evidence of decentring efforts among some Japanese policymakers and researchers between the late 1980s and the 1990s through East and Southeast Asia as method. In particular, Professor Yasutami Shimomura—a former Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund<sup>5</sup> official who authored the OECF Occasional Paper (OECF 1991) that prompted a series of discussions and events leading up to the production of the East Asian Miracle report—reflected that those few Japanese researchers and policymakers' efforts then could be considered as their attempts to promote pluriversal knowledges and understanding of development (Interview 2023).<sup>6</sup> Their efforts were particularly evident during the preparation, production and aftermath of the World Bank's 1993 East Asian Miracle report that questioned the 'normalcy' of neoliberal reformist ideas (i.e. the structural adjustment programmes by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) as the 'universal knowledge' in the singular in international development (see Shimomura 2022, esp. Chapter 8, for details; Interview 2023).<sup>7</sup> Yet, unfortunately, these two strands of research have been rarely explored in terms of decolonial and pluriversal thinking—i.e. whether Japan's relationship with the Global South and related processes of knowledge production perpetuate and reproduce colonial power relations, hence obstructing possibilities for pluriversal knowledge making.

We are keenly aware of the 'ambivalence' in Japan's self-positionality as both aggressor/coloniser and (nuclear) victim (Asada 1998)—and, even a sentiment of being 'colonised' under the US occupation (see Fujiwara and Nagano 2011; Grave 2004)—that in turn has an impact on possibilities of decoloniality and pluriverse debates.<sup>8</sup> This particular self-positioning was enhanced by the fact that the post-war IDS-related knowledge production deliberately muted the legacy of the pre-war and war-time 'colonial policy studies'<sup>9</sup> to address anti-Japanese sentiments in neighbouring Asia (Kim et al. 2023). This selective mutism was also a strategic effort to pave the way for Japan's (more welcomed) post-war re-entry into international society (Interview, 2022e). Further, the Nobel Prize in Literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe elucidated Japan's 'split' positionality as both the first non-Western country that achieved successful modernisation by imitating the West and a country 'situated in Asia and has firmly maintained its traditional culture' (Oe 1995, p. 6). The particular preoccupation with the West–East and developed–developing binaries is evident in the remarks by one of the former presidents of the Japan Society for International Development (JASID). He emphasised, while 'for Westerners' development is intended for Others, 'for Easterners, development is more about ourselves' (Sato, 2014). This remark accentuates development as the critical task for both Easterners' and Southern partners to catch up with Western advanced economies through mutual help (Kim et al. 2023, p. 277). Such ambiguous positionality indeed complicates possible efforts towards decolonial and pluriversal knowledge making as it not

only is founded upon but also reinforces dichotomies of the ‘developed North’ and ‘developing/underdeveloped South’.

Hence, in order to critically reflect upon the politics and processes of its own knowledge production—and more importantly its positionality, Japanese IDS needs to build decolonial/postcolonial efforts that are sensitive to ‘the relationship between power, authority, positionality and knowledge... [and alert] to the different kinds of knowledge and spatialities produced by different actors, and the ways in which some of these become dominant while others are marginalized or abandoned’ (McEwan 2019, p. 259). This conclusion aims to serve as one of the first steps towards such efforts for decolonial and pluriversal possibilities in Japanese IDS by exploring the uniqueness myth in development knowledge sharing. We do this by problematising the conflation of decentring and pluriversal knowledge production with diversification—i.e. shifting reference point away from the West by stressing its ‘uniqueness’ differentiated from Western donors (Kim 2023).

## 2.2 *A Decolonial Approach to the Uniqueness Myth*

In order to understand the uniqueness myth, it is important to situate processes of related knowledge production in the ‘Eastern’ donor Japan within the postcolonial debates on SSC partners that often differentiate their approaches and practices from those of Western donors. In order to address the different ideas, histories and positionalities of SSC partners and their impacts on development cooperation, two strands of critical research emerged. The first group aims to challenge the ‘biased’ views of these partners, which essentially amounts to Western-centricism—for example, in relation to ‘rogue aid’ (Naím 2007). Such a view was largely drawn from the assessment of ‘what SSC is essentially not’ (thus, focusing on deviances or ‘otherness’) against the criteria of Official Development Assistance (ODA)—that consists of narrowly defined norms and principles for DAC members—hence, SSC partners are not subject to compliance (Davies, 2008; Paulo and Reisen 2010). Those critical scholars also pursued rigorous empirical research to see material effects of SSC on the ground (Dreher and Fuchs 2015; China Africa Research Initiative 2016; Dreher et al. 2018; SAIS-CARI 2022). These studies not only debunked the misleading commentaries but also highlighted how SSC partners share similar challenges in their development projects with traditional donors (Carey 2011; Kragelund, 2015) including negative political, economic, social and ecological impacts on developing countries (Kenney-Lazar 2019; Lu and Oliver 2019; Mawdsley 2019; Mostafanezhad et al. 2022; Waisbich 2020).

The second strand of research explores the significance and impacts of ‘post-colonial donors’ in the existing paradigm of development cooperation and their positionality and relationship with fellow Southern countries. Initially, research in this group made particular efforts towards decentring and pluriversal approaches by expanding conceptual and theoretical frameworks to better fit ‘postcolonial donors’ (Bräutigam 2011; Mawdsley 2012; Mohan et al. 2014; Six 2009; Tan-Mullin et al.



2010). These approaches then extended to critical engagement with positions of SSC partners vis-à-vis ‘the Rest’ that are not only complex and fluid but also ambivalent (Haug et al. 2021; Mohan 2021; Waisbich et al. 2021). For example, in contrast to the official rhetoric championing horizontality, solidarity and shared interests with fellow Southern countries, critical researchers find how powerful SSC partners like China and India in reality ‘seek to follow (and even, to some extent, emulate) the status-seeking practices of the incumbent powers’ (Cooper 2021, 1956). More recent research further highlights rifts between the rhetoric and actual practices of some powerful SSC partners that contradict their own principles of respecting the sovereign autonomy and integrity of all nations and the equality of all races and nations (Kim 2023). Indeed, those SSC partners, whilst adopting co-opted decolonial thinking, ideas and arguments, simultaneously perpetuated unequal power structures built upon the forces of prejudice, hate and extreme nationalism (for example, Hindutva in India, Chacko 2023; Mawdsley 2023). In their actions, critically observed, they have even shown ‘hostility’ to many examples of decolonial and pluriversal ways of being and knowing (Mawdsley 2024, p. 212).

Among those debates concerning SSC partners, the most critical point for our discussion here is the way in which those powerful SSC partners reject the Western development knowledge as ‘a product of hierarchical, imagined or technocratic constructs’ (Cheng 2019, p. 94). In doing so, they often emphasise the uniqueness of their development knowledge that is presented as better than Western knowledge. This particular ‘alternative “world theorizing”’ (Cheng 2019, p. 94) is seemingly influenced by an ‘anti-Western’ subjectivity that is formed through the propaganda and politics of the Cold War era, nationalism and anti-imperialism or anti-US sentiments (Chen 2010). Yet, by focusing on their difference or uniqueness from the West, those SSC partners not only perpetuate but also affirms the hierarchical and unequal structure that they are criticising (Kang 2023; Wallerstein 2006). Thus, shifting the reference point away from the West with an ‘anti-Western’ epistemological position alone would not automatically materialise more decolonial or pluriversal theorising. It rather turns into a form of ‘anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism’ (Wallerstein 1997). As Chen stresses, instead of ‘being constantly anxious about the question of the West, we can actively acknowledge it as a part of the formation of our subjectivity. In the form of fragmented pieces, the West has entered our history and become part of it, but not in a totalising manner. The task for [more explicitly postcolonial endeavours in IDS] is to multiply frames of reference in our subjectivity and worldview, so that our anxiety over the West can be diluted, and productive critical work can move forward’ (Chen, 2010, p. 223). Chen’s argument in turn echoes the importance of ‘relational ontology’—how we ‘inter-are’ (Escobar 2018, p. 101)—and pluriversal approaches that ‘is not really anti-European or anti-West but ... between, with, and from multiple worlds’ (Escobar 2020, p. 115).

Recently, there has been a more explicit propensity to conflate decentring with diversification in Japanese IDS—i.e. shifting the reference point to Japan by stressing its ‘uniqueness’ when compared with the Western donors (Kim 2023). This tendency

is commonly observed in Japan's recent knowledge-sharing programmes that accentuate its 'exceptional' and 'unique' development experience and pack them as 'alternative development models' to those of Western donors. Japan's case of the 'uniqueness myth' takes the centre stage in the aforementioned JICA's Development Studies Program (JICA-DSP) that emerged during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration (Oyama 2024). The primary objective of the JICA-DSP is to provide learning materials and training to personnel from developing nations, elucidating the uniquely successful development trajectory of Japan. Approaches and discourses of the JICA-DSP portray Japan as an exemplar, representing 'the foremost and preeminent case of successful modernization from a non-Western vantage point' (Kitaoka 2019, p. 33). Nevertheless, this perspective tends to omit the complex processes and effects of the Meiji restoration (Nara 2018, pp. 3–5) and Japan's economic challenges and stagnation since the bursting of the bubble and the end of high-speed growth that began in the late 1980s. More importantly, it lacks the critical examination required to reflect on and re-evaluate existing paradigms and structural issues related to Japan's own colonial and imperial legacy. Therefore, the JICA-DSP fails to critically reflect upon Japan's own ambiguous self-positionality. It also fails to help both Japanese and international participants to imagine more decentred and pluriversal ways of development through which they are able to deconstruct the unequal and imperial order of things (Chen 2010, p. 253).

### **3 Concluding Remarks: Towards Pluriversal Knowledge Production**

In this conclusion, we presented the studies in this book as a means of engaging with decolonial and pluriversal approaches via Japan as method. Through this process, three key insights to development knowledge making in Japanese IDS have emerged. The first insight stems from the diverse (both Western and non-Western) roots of Japanese terms in the field of development cooperation and their changing semantics over time and space. This insight helps us to see how Japan's myth of uniqueness has historically been built as Japan's responses or resistance to mainstream development norms and Western development knowledge. The second insight pertains to the tendency to turn those lexemes encapsulating the value of locally grounded methods (i.e. the effective technique of development cooperation) into philosophies and principles of Japan's ODA. It is crucial to acknowledge that this particular 'philosophicalisation' in Japanese ODA has often been politically motivated. It has been largely driven by the needs of time and space, moulded by the ever-changing geopolitics and prevalent development thinking of different eras. The third concerns a relative absence of reflective and relational thinking in Japanese IDS. As some key figures in Japanese IDS have recently warned about the risks inherent in failing to relativise Japan and its development experience to the many other—temporally and spatially different—worlds and their experiences (Kodera 2023; Shimomura 2023).

All three insights are clearly showcased in the recent trend of knowledge production in Japanese IDS, which further highlights the importance of decolonial and pluriversal thinking on Japan's ambiguous self-positionality and the depoliticisation of Japanese IDS in the post-war Japan. For example, JICA-DSP (from an Eastern positionality) appears ready to challenge the dominant status of Western modernity and knowledge. However, it inadvertently perpetuates binary dichotomies of 'West–East' and 'developed–developing/underdeveloped' by asserting the 'uniqueness' of Japanese development experiences and knowledge (Oyama, 2024; Wang, 2024). Japan's ambiguous positionality seeks solidarity with 'Easterners and Southerners' while simultaneously attempting to differentiate from the latter (see Japan's response to China's appropriation of *sanmi-ittai*). One of the critical reasons for such ambiguous and 'anti-Western' epistemological position was partly due to the depoliticisation of Japan's approach to IDS in the aftermath of World War II. The depoliticisation process deliberately silenced the legacy of the pre-war and war-time colonial policy studies in order to seek acceptance from neighbouring Asian countries. In doing so, Japan's approaches and methods of development cooperation (and related knowledge production in IDS) have been presented in relation to the agency of recipient governments. This is exemplified in the Japanese government's promotion of its ODA, when compared with Western donors, as having greater 'respect for partner countries' and foci on 'locally-groundedness' and 'practice-centrism' (as shown in *yōsei-shugi* and *genba-shugi*). Such depoliticisation efforts have set a distinct pathway for Japanese IDS that is largely detached from political discussions and engagement. However, the downside of this detachment has been the difficulty for Japanese IDS to critically engage with Japanese ODA, which in fact has been increasingly politicised to serve Japan's national interests and security amidst aid competition and geopolitical tensions.

In the increasingly polycentric global development landscape, we hope to make the case for decolonial and pluriversal thinking in Japanese IDS. These approaches were initially conceived as both an alternative and resistance to Western modernity—alternatives that highlight the significance of diversity, multiplicity and relationality. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to navigate worlds that 'do not want relate [with others, for example, the]...ethno-nationalist and imperializing worlds', while staying true to the core principles of the pluriverse (Demaria et al. 2023, p. 67). Hence, reflective and relative thinking in Japanese IDS would serve as a critical first step to instilling diversity, multiplicity and relationality. Such thinking not only helps to move beyond the myth of uniqueness but also critically engages with related dichotomies engrained in Japan's ambiguous self-positionality by reflecting upon the historical legacy of rapid westernisation, colonialism and empire. Japan's 'political depoliticisation' has hindered possibilities for Japanese IDS to reflect and re-examine ambivalence and to overcome binary oppositions of 'West–East' and 'developed/North-developing/underdeveloped/South'. This task of decolonial and pluriversal thinking in Japanese IDS can foster engagement with ongoing debates and efforts in many worlds to create more critical, dynamic, relational and transformative perspectives. This requires first to relativise Japan's own position in the (many) world(s)

and to critically engage with the trend of instrumentalising ODA to serve geopolitical interests through active collaboration and co-creation of pluriversal development knowledges that ‘leave no one behind’.

We hope this conclusion serves as a first of many more works in IDS to actively engage with decolonial and pluriversal thinking of which the ‘core theoretical and political agenda is to transform our subjectivities. Through imaginings of [decolonial and pluriversal worlds]..., diverse frames of reference cross our horizon, multiply our perspectives, and enrich our subjectivity’ (Chen 2010, p. 255). Such imagining enables us to find and build concrete methods to embrace a broader spectrum of developmental experiences for self-transformation (Chen 2010, p. 255). We also hope for this edited volume to serve as a modest stride in forging a connection between Japan and pluriversal development knowledge making, enriching both in the process.

## Notes

1. We in this chapter refer to authors of Conclusion—Soyeun Kim and Muyun Wang.
2. The *Lexicon of International Cooperation* (IDJ 1989, 1998, 2004, 2014) could be considered to be an exception. However, it takes the form of a development dictionary and does not focus on untranslatability.
3. The lack of clear official definitions was largely because those lexemes either 1) stemmed initially from practical needs (as in *kaihatsu-yunyu*, *kaizen*, *genba-shugi*), or 2) were products of post hoc inventions to respond to and debunk external criticism (as in *yōsei-shugi*, *ōnā shippu*, *jijyo-doryoku*).
4. These presumably ‘established’ meanings are (for e.g. securing overseas resource for Japan’s economic development) in the case of *kaihatsu-yunyu*.
5. OECF was a Japanese ODA loan institution operated between 1961 and 1999.
6. More recent critique has been provided by some key figures in Japanese IDS that laments the lack of efforts to reflect upon and relativise Japan and its development experience in relation to other parts of the world (Kodera 2023; Shimomura 2023).
7. Their central criticism of structural adjustment programmes was directed at the neoclassical development economics that does not take sufficient account of the diverse reality of developing country (Ohno and Ohno 1998, pp. 3–7)—particularly, its failure to address such realities of developing countries characterised as varied states of underdeveloped market economies (Shimomura 1997). Thus, Japanese researchers accentuated how such programmes’ one-size-fits-all policy prescriptions were inadequate as they ignore the very fact that each country was at different stages of economic development with various forms of market mechanisms (Hara 1992, pp. 32–36, Ishikawa 1996, pp. 7–10, Ohno 1996, pp. 92–96). Also, the lack of attention to social and cultural aspects of different regions, i.e. non-economic variables, was also pointed out as an underlying factor for uniform prescriptions (Hara 1992, pp. 45–54, Ishikawa 1996, pp. 13–18, Ohno 1996, pp. 94–95). Such concerns were in turn shared with senior finance bureaucrats and aid officials (Shimomura 2022).
8. Oe explored such ambivalence in his speech titled ‘Japan, the Ambiguous’ by commenting that the ‘ambiguous orientation of Japan drove the country into the position of an invader in Asia ...[and] isolation from other Asian countries, not only politically but also socially and culturally’ (Oe 1995, p. 6).
9. Related knowledge production began in the early twentieth century to govern ‘natives’ in colonised territories. Japanese colonial policy studies were first taught at Kyoto Imperial College in 1903 and later at Tokyo Imperial College in 1909 (Kitaoka 1993).

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## ***Interviews and Personal Communication***

- Interview (2022a) Hiroshi Sato on kaihatsu yunyu, July
- Interview (2022b) Yasutami Shimomura on kaihatsu-yunyu, July
- Interview (2022c) Hiroaki Shiga on kaihatsu-yunyu, July
- Interview (2022d) Hiroaki Hamada on development finance, August
- Interview. (2022e) Interview with Hiroshi Sato regarding the development of IDS research institution in Japan, December, Tokyo, Japan

Interview (2023) Interview with Yasutami Shimomura regarding the events and processes towards the production of 1993 World Bank East Asian Miracle report, April  
Personal Communication (2022) JICA officials on kaihtsu-yunyu, December

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