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# Normative Framing of Development Cooperation: Japanese Bilateral Aid between the DAC and Southern Donors

Sakiko Fukuda-Parr\* and Hiroaki Shiga†

## Abstract

In the context of current debates about the future of North-South aid in the changing landscape of development cooperation, this paper explores normative frameworks and alternative conceptions of aid, focusing particularly on the case of Japanese bilateral aid in comparison with Southern and DAC donors. Our analysis departs from the conventional approach in aid research which considers the purpose of aid as an economic transfer of resources, and the motivation of donors as an instrument for pursuit of geopolitical or economic interests. We draw on recent social science literature, and explore how donors' conception of aid is shaped by their identity within the international community and concerned with the type of hierarchical relationship it wishes to create with the recipient. The paper finds that while Japan follows DAC norms, it has attempted to accommodate them within a distinctive paradigm of aid that has roots in post-war reconstruction efforts. Like the norms of Southern donors, many of core norms of Japanese aid lie outside of the consensus DAC paradigm while overlapping with those of South-South cooperation. Drawing on anthropological theory of the gift, the paper argues that the normative framing of Southern donors and Japan contrast with that of the DAC donors particularly in attempting to neutralize the power asymmetry that characterizes donor-recipient relationships. While Southern donors are seeking to create a relationship of solidarity, Japan has over the years sought to create a cooperative relationship necessary for mutually beneficial economic ties of trade and investment, and both contrasting with the charitable relationship created by North-South aid. We argue that these values shape policy approaches in aid models. In showing that the values that inform southern and Japanese donors lie outside of the DAC framework, we highlight the limitations of the DAC paradigm.

**Keywords:** Japan, DAC, South-South Cooperation, aid norms, economic cooperation

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The rise of South-South (S-S) cooperation is not only shifting the geography of resources, power and influence, but introducing greater diversity in aid models and opening up debates about aid paradigms in the multi-polar world of the 21st century. Current debates are beginning to question the relevance and effectiveness of charity model of North-South (N-S) aid (see for example Glennie and Sumner, 2015). The growing literature on ‘emerging donors’ – which we refer to in this paper as Southern donors<sup>2</sup> since they are not members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and self identify as members of the Global South - has focused on the material characteristics of these programs. Much has been learned about the magnitude, direction, policy approaches and instruments of these programs. They have also been critically assessed according to the norms of the DAC. However, it has become increasingly acknowledged that Southern donors are not engaging in the DAC defined project of ‘aid’ but have their own conception of development cooperation and normative standards. These models – while heterogeneous - differ from the DAC model not only in their policy priorities and instruments but also in their normative frameworks.

Recent debates have characterized Southern donors as conceptualizing ‘aid as investment’, in contrast to the DAC donors’ ‘aid as charity’ (see for example [Saidi & Wolf, 2011] [Rowlands, 2008] ). There are other ways of conceptualizing aid such as ‘enlightened self interest’ in an inter-dependent world, or solidarity with peoples and countries with

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to documentary sources cited, this paper draws: (i) on interviews with over 30 members of the aid community, including current and former senior officials, legislators, academia and civil society. These individuals prefer not to be quoted directly but are listed in the appendix; (ii) opinion survey of aid personnel; and (iii) the two authors’ working experience as staff of development agencies including Japanese bilateral programs and multilateral organizations.

<sup>2</sup> Often referred to as ‘emerging’ or ‘non-traditional’ donors, this paper refers to the non-DAC donors as ‘Southern’ donors since one common element amongst them is that they self-identify as ‘developing countries’ and members of the Third World. These donors share a common identity in the North-South alignments in international economic and political relations. They are part of the G-77 political alliance, and cohere to these positions in UN negotiations such as the post-2015 development agenda and Financing for Development. Many explicitly differentiate their development cooperation from DAC aid and characterize their programs as South-South cooperation. While some of these countries reject the label of ‘donor’, and prefer ‘development partners’, we use this term in this analysis of aid which involves an element of concessional transfer of resources.

common identity. Recipient countries have historically conceptualized 'aid as justice', as just restitution for past wrongs of colonial occupation or wartime transgressions. For Western donors, the conception of 'aid as charity' motivated by moral commitments to help the less fortunate is relatively recent, articulated since 2000 in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that dominated the narrative of development and global commitment to ending abject poverty as an ethical imperative. The purpose of this paper is to explore alternative normative frameworks of development cooperation, focusing particularly on the case of Japanese bilateral aid. Japan is a member of the DAC but has a distinctive philosophy and practices that appear to share characteristics with the approach of Southern donors. As the paper will argue, the normative framing of Japanese aid is unique and neither fits the conception of 'aid as solidarity, 'aid as charity' nor 'aid as investment'.

Emma Mawdsley (2012) argues that despite their diversity, Southern donors share commitments to some core normative principles. These include solidarity with fellow Third World countries, sharing knowledge based on experience, and the virtues of mutual benefit and recognition of reciprocity. These values contrast with the current discourse of traditional Western donors that emphasizes charity and moral obligation for the less fortunate, transfer of knowledge based on superior mastery of technology, and the virtues of suspending recipients' obligation to reciprocate. Moreover, departing from the conventional analysis of aid as motivated by geo-political and commercial interests, she draws on critical social science literature on aid and constructivist International Relations theories to explore donor motives as creating a long-term relationship with the recipient that has multiple and complex motivations, including but not limited to material interests (Mawdsley, 2012).

What is clear from this analysis is that the Southern conception of development cooperation is defined by the donor's identity and relationship with the recipient. These are not factors that have been considered in conventional studies of aid. Analyses of development aid has been dominated either by one of two theoretical perspectives. The mainstream economic perspective sees aid as a resource transfer and assesses its impact on the recipient country's

economic growth and development. The realist political science perspective assesses aid as a political instrument of the donor in pursuit of geostrategic interests. Much of the literature on ‘emerging donors’ evaluates the model of ‘aid as investment’ in the two dominant perspectives combined, and attributes the economic self interest as the motivation for ‘aid as investment’, and humanitarianism as the motivation for ‘aid as charity’ (Saidi & Wolf, 2011). These perspectives do not take account of the broader international political economy of North-South relationships within which governments use aid as a policy tool. These perspectives do not consider aid as a two-way relationship between the donor and recipient, and embedded in a relationship with marked asymmetry of power. The assessments do not consider the political and economic gains of donors in providing ‘aid as charity’ that reinforces the hierarchy of power. This paper attempts to take a broader perspective in understanding aid models and normative frameworks. We analyse the principles articulated by the donors themselves to explain their objectives and policies. We make use of social science theories of gift exchange to gain insights into the relationship between the donor and recipient that is created by aid.

In analyzing Japan’s aid model this paper pursues the contrasts in normative framing formulated by Mawdsley (Mawdsley, 2012) and explores their implications for policy priorities. Norms create a broad framework that communicate a narrative that define and communicate the problem of development in a particular way, identify key problems, and justify a specific policy approach and set of interventions being financed.

We compare the normative framework of Japanese aid with that of the DAC and Southern donors. Japan is one of the largest DAC member donors and coheres to its principles and standards. Yet its aid philosophy has much in common with the core norms that characterize South-South cooperation today. Moreover, history sets Japan apart from the rest of DAC members; at the origins of the aid programs in the aftermath of the Second World War, Japan was a politically subaltern country seeking re-integration into the international community and re-establish economic cooperation (*keizai-kyoryoku*) with its developing country neighbors. Moreover, Japan was a ‘late industrializer’ aware of the struggles for

developing countries to ‘catch up’ with the industrialized powers.

After clarifying the meaning of ‘norms’, the paper contrasts key elements where the norms of Southern donors depart from or fall outside of the normative framing of DAC aid. We then provide a historical overview of the evolution of Japanese bilateral aid norms, and contrast them with Southern and DAC models before concluding with comments on the implications of our findings.

## **2. Norms and normative framing of aid models**

Norms are ideas, ones that are widely shared and/or projected, and often distinctive for being largely unquestioned, or assumed to be ‘common sense’. They are not what is reflected in behavior – more what organizations ‘say’ rather than ‘do’. A working definition of a norm in the International Relations literature is ‘a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity’ (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 891). They can be formalized in institutionalized texts or can be informal standards that are widely held and influence behavior. There are three types of norms: regulatory; constitutive; and evaluative or prescriptive (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Normative discourses are not to be confused with actual behavior. After all, the core feature of a norm is an ‘oughtness’ (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Norms may be aspirational and may deliberately obscure motives that drive behavior – such as the promotion of national interest in much aid discourses (Mawdsley, 2012). For example, all donors emphasize benefits to the recipient country as the key objective, obscuring their own national geo-political, commercial, and diplomatic interests. Normative frameworks in development aid serve to create a narrative that define and communicate the problem of development in a particular way, identify key problems, and justify a specific policy approach and set of interventions being financed.

Each donor sets its own principles but must also adhere to the agreed norms of the DAC, an institution that was created for the purpose of achieving consensus on a common set

of standards. Membership is predicated on adherence to these rules, as a condition of entry, while their continued commitment is monitored through a process of peer review.<sup>3</sup> There are few regulatory norms because the DAC does not have powers of enforcement other than through peer pressure. DAC norms are therefore mostly constitutive, such as the principles set out in the principles enunciated in the Paris Declaration (OECD DAC, 2005), such as ownership and mutual accountability, and are applied as evaluative norms in peer reviews such as the proportion of resources allocated to grants, untied aid, and to provide 0.7% of GNI.

Important norms in the practice and policy of aid are those that define its essential purpose, and outline principles that guide operational practices. Normative frameworks create a broader narrative about the vision of development as progress and the best means to achieve it. Aid norms are underpinned by assumptions about a theory of development – what that is and the best means to promote it. The narrative provides a justification for particular set of instruments and policy priorities of a donor. Normative frameworks – such as ‘aid as charity’ - are used to frame a consensus narrative about the purpose of aid and justify standards. Normative frameworks are thus used not only for guiding the donor’s own behavior but in influencing consensus discourse in the international community. As Boas and McNeill (2004) explain, institutions and states exercise hegemonic power by framing that defines how a problem should be viewed. “An effective ‘frame’ is one which makes favoured ideas seem like common sense, and unfavored ideas as unthinkable.” thus discouraging new ideas by making them look radical (Boas and McNeill, 2004, p. 1). This is all the more so because norms do not remain static but evolve, and migrate from one organization or community to another.

DAC norms reflect a consensus amongst members. Member states champion norms in a market place of ideas seeking to influence the views of others. Norms evolve as new ideas

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<sup>3</sup> The OECD website explains: “As members of the DAC, countries pledge to implement forthwith the Recommendations adopted by the DAC since its inception and to commit to use DAC guidelines and reference documents in formulating national development co-operation policies” <http://www.oecd.org/dac/dacmembers.htm>. Accessed July 9, 2015.



gain momentum and become taken up by key actors. When they gain enough support, especially by influential organizations, they reach a ‘tipping point’, and become institutionalized and accepted as ‘normal’ (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

### *The DAC and Southern donors*

How do DAC and Southern donors differ in their normative frameworks? Neither the DAC donors nor Southern donors constitute a homogeneous group.<sup>4</sup> And unlike DAC donors, the Southern donors have not created a coordinated international project. We therefore do not compare DAC norms with ‘Southern norms’. Rather, we identify elements often emphasized by Southern donors that fall outside of the DAC frame, and that are a source of controversy. We focus on the DAC’s consensus norms as articulated in their guidelines, particularly such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD DAC, 2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD DAC, 2008) and Busan Partnership Agreement for Effective Development Cooperation (OECD DAC, 2011).<sup>5</sup> We then contrast them with important elements of Southern donor aid norms with respect to their purpose, ethical motivation, instruments, program priorities, and the nature of the donor-recipient relationship that is created.

Purpose and motivation: A core norm is the definition of aid as “the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries”. Since the mid 1990s, a strong consensus has emerged on ending absolute poverty as the evaluative norm of development cooperation, driven by the adoption of the International Development Goals (IDGs) in 1996,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Southern donors have diverse histories and do not share a common agenda, priorities and instruments (Sato, Shiga, Kobayashi, & Kondoh, 2011) (Kondoh, 2015). As their practices evolve, some are converging with and even joining the DAC as Korea did in 2010. Others are pursuing their distinct strategies without much reference to the DAC norms (Kondoh, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Kondoh (2015) argues that the DAC norms are initiated by and reflect the views of the ‘like minded group’ (UK, Netherlands, and the Nordic countries) while others (e.g. US, Germany, Japan) hold diverse norms.

<sup>6</sup> Ironically, even while ending poverty is articulated as the objective of development, policies of development agencies emphasize growth at the expense of poverty reduction on the assumption that growth will automatically reduce poverty. It reflects the neoliberal scheme where public sector intervention is for poverty reduction while growth would be generated by the private sector. The emphasis on poverty may shift with the end of the MDGs and the adoption of SDGs that has a broader agenda.

followed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, aid programs are ‘evaluated on the sole basis of improvements on targeted basic standards of living and not on the basis of prospects to foster the recipient’s economic growth and ability to emancipate from international transfers’ (Saidi & Wolf, 2011, p. 9)

This way of defining the purpose of aid is part of a broader trend – starting in the late 1990s - of increasing concern in the Global North with absolute poverty as a matter of urgent ethical imperative particularly in the context of the uneven benefits of globalization (Fukuda-Parr & Hume, 2011). Aid came to be justified on moral grounds, as the obligation to help those who are unfortunate. Clare Short, the then Secretary of State for International Development encapsulates this positioning in The 1997 White Paper of the UK government: ‘It is our duty to care about other people, in particular those less well off than ourselves. It is our moral duty to reach out to the poor and needy’ (UK Government, 1997). The motivating sentiment is one of sympathy, and the recipient is viewed as ‘other’, and distant from the donor’s community, or ‘aid as charity’ as articulated by Saidi and Wolff (Saidi & Wolf, 2011). This term is problematic for two reasons. It is not part of the official DAC discourse; the DAC has long characterizes aid as development cooperation and emphasized its relationship with the recipient as ‘partnership’, but this merely begs the question ‘what kind of partnership’ while ‘partnership’ obscures the hierarchical relationship created by N-S aid. Secondly, with the expiry of the MDGs in 2015 and the adoption of UN2030 agenda, as well as the competition from South-South cooperation, DAC donors may also be shifting its paradigm to greater emphasis on investment, growth, and enlightened self interest (Mawdsley, 2015). Nonetheless, we use this term ‘aid as charity’ to reflect the dominant value used to justify DAC aid in contrast to ‘aid as solidarity’ and ‘aid as mutually beneficial economic cooperation’.

*Out of frame* are other motivations for aid such as the moral obligations to repay past

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<sup>7</sup> The MDGs were based on the IDGs. The IDGs were part of an effort by the DAC to mobilize greater political support for aid allocations in national budgets which had begun to stagnate or decline in the late 1980s. Their success motivated the UN to include them in a modified form in the 2000 Millennium Declaration (Fukuda-Parr & Hume, 2011).

debt such as past misdeeds including colonization, invasion, or exploitation. Southern donors on the other hand, emphasize solidarity with countries experiencing challenges similar to those they had face or faced in the recent past.

Program priorities: Since the late 1990s, bilateral aid programs have increasingly shifted to financing the social sectors (even if this does not necessarily mean favoring pro-poor social investment), and policy advocacy for governance and institutional reforms while downplaying economic growth (even when it is pro-poor).<sup>8</sup> DAC norms also emphasize priority allocations to countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, social investments, and institutional reform for good governance (Saidi & Wolf, 2011). Allocations to these priorities have risen while support to the productive sectors stagnated (Fukuda-Parr, 2012). DAC donors have become increasingly softer on the financial terms and harder on governance or political conditionality (Saidi & Wolf, 2011).

Ending poverty as the purpose of aid that emerged in the late 1990s and became entrenched with the MDGs is relatively new and departs from earlier conceptions that focused on economic growth and development, and contrasts with other perspectives such as aid as justice, or as compensation for the wrongs committed through colonization. It is a narrow conception that pushes out of the framework objectives such as enhancing the productive capacity and structural transformation – objectives that are central to the concept of development that has been in place for decades, and the very idea of development itself. It should be noted that *de facto*, economic growth is a dominant objective for the international community and an important objective of most donor programs. But the current normative discourse heavily emphasizes ending poverty as the goal of international development cooperation.

The poverty framework leaves out priorities such as economic infrastructure, are often emphasized by recipient countries (Sato et al, 2010), and by several Southern donors (Kondoh, 2015). Many low income countries face constraints in accessing financing for their economic

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<sup>8</sup> For analysis of these trends, see (Fukuda-Parr, 2012)

infrastructure needs (Woods, 2008). Southern donors however do not emphasize institutional reform since they involve interference in domestic governance of the country. It should be noted that the governance agenda is also new for the DAC donors and there was strict avoidance of discussing corruption and democracy with recipient governments until the mid 1990s.

Underlying theory of development: The DAC framework is consistent with the neo-liberal approach to development in which the role of the state in promoting growth is not in productive investments but in creating a institutions conducive to private investments and in compensating for the unequal distributive consequences of market led growth. The role of the private sector is increasingly promoted through mechanisms such as private-public partnerships. Technocratic analysis about what works in development, drawing on economics, plays a major role in developing and justifying DAC norms.

*Out of the frame* are heterodox theories and approaches in growth and development such as structuralism, Keynesianism, Capabilities, Human Rights and Feminism. State led economic growth through strategies such as industrial policy has been contested, and has led to neglect of priorities such as infrastructure investments. While Southern donors follow diverse approaches, many, starting with China and Brazil, have not followed orthodox neoliberal economic strategies.

Southern donors emphasize knowledge and expertise drawn from historical experience rather than from development economics theory. For many developing countries, Western aid has come with policy prescriptions that have been controversial. Lessons of development successes in China, Korea, Brazil and other countries have strong legitimacy and credibility.

Donor-recipient relationship: Fostering effective relationship with recipient has been a major issue for DAC donors. As promulgated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD DAC, 2005) adopted in 2005, supplemented by the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (OECD DAC, 2008) and the 2012 Busan Partnership Agreement (OECD DAC, 2011) (OECD DAC, 2011) the central principle in this 'partnership' is 'ownership'; the recipient government

must fully embrace and ‘own’ the cooperation agreement, including the need to undertake necessary policy and institutional reforms to ensure effective impact of donor financing. The Busan agenda emphasizes governance principles of participation, transparency and accountability to citizens.

*Out of the frame* are issues of power asymmetry in the donor-recipients relationships and sovereignty of recipient countries. Southern donors, on the other hand, emphasize ‘partnership’ as between equal states in a horizontal South-South relationship, and several (such as China and India) explicitly reject the DAC aid model for that reason (Mawdsley, 2012) (Rowlands, 2008) (Saidi & Wolf, 2011).

Instruments: DAC norms currently favor grants over loans, particularly for their program priorities, namely least developed countries and for social investments. Grants are favored because of concerns for debt sustainability. But in addition, grants are consistent with the norm that the main purpose of aid is to contribute to recipient country’s progress, for which the recipient is not expected to repay. Any benefits to the donor in forms such as investment opportunities or procurement contracts (tied aid) are strictly discouraged (Saidi & Wolf, 2011).

*Out of the frame* are the relationships of power and hierarchy created by grants that require no repayment from the recipient – a point we shall elaborate later in this article. Southern donors eschew the term ‘aid’ and many explicitly reject the notion of a hierarchical aid relationship.<sup>9</sup> Also out of the frame are mutually beneficial arrangements that provide economic returns to the donor as well as recipient which are emphasized by many Southern donors.

These contrasts can be summarized as conceptual differences between aid as charitable assistance to end poverty and aid as mutually beneficial economic cooperation for economic

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri of India remarked: “our cooperation with fellow developing countries is premised on the principles of voluntary partnership and are based on national ownership and in line with national priorities of our partners. This is in contrast to ODA, with its attached conditionalities. South-South cooperation is a partnership in solidarity between developing countries involving sharing of experiences, expertise, knowledge and provision of assistance based on capacity of partner. Its paradigm, therefore, is distinct from that of North-South development cooperation (MEA, 2012. p. 1902).”

transformation. Cooperation is not the same as investment motivated by self-interest that commentators have identified with Southern donors since it creates a very different relationship with the recipient (Saidi & Wolf, 2011; Glennie & Sumner, 2015). DAC aid is a gift that (purportedly) denies any reciprocity from the recipient, and the ethical value of aid requires denial of any benefit that the donor may be able to enjoy for its own national development. The logic of this aid leaves out of the frame many of the key elements that are highlighted by studies of southern aid models: peer relationship between equals who respect each other's sovereignty and dignity, for the purposes of economic transformation necessary for development. Some of them are so clearly out of the frame that they appear 'unthinkable' in the words of Boas and McNeill, such as mutual benefit and power asymmetry.

The Southern models are informed by different set of constitutive norms - understandings of the process of development that do not always embrace wholeheartedly the technocratic view of mainstream development economics, the critical goals and obstacles, ideologies, and knowledge base. They seek to establish a different – South-South – relationship with the recipients. Their instruments and practices are not only shaped by different political and economic aims but by a different vision of development and analysis of policy effectiveness. The evaluative norms used in DAC peer reviews and more generalized critique of Southern aid modalities contradict the overall framing of aid as economic cooperation rather than as charity, a contrast that is consistently identified in studies of Southern aid (Mawdsley, 2012) (Saidi & Wolf, 2011) (Rowlands, 2008).

#### *Aid as charity or economic cooperation: insights from Gift Theory*

Anthropologists have long theorized the nature of relationships that gifts establish, particularly related to reciprocity and power hierarchy. In his 1924 classic 'Essai sur le don', Marcel Mauss (Mauss, 1954) shows how gifts create economic and social relationships of a particular kind.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In his 1924 classic on the gift, Marcel Mauss explored the social function of what is seemingly a 'free gift'. He pointed out that all gifts require some form of repayment or reciprocity. Applied to aid which is not a commercial transaction, reciprocity takes various forms. This literature emphasizes the power relation that is created; gifts render the giver superior and the recipient inferior, until the gift can be

Gifts are seemingly 'free' but in fact impose a social obligation to extend return gifts. Gifts involve three types of obligations: to give, to receive and to repay or reciprocate. Denying the obligation to give or to receive is a rejection of a social relationship.

Gift giving is also an act of creating hierarchy as Malinowski (1922) observes: 'handing over of wealth is the expression of the superiority of the giver over the recipient'. When the obligation to receive is denied, it is a refusal of a social relationship or a particular relationship of donor/recipient. When the obligation to repay is suspended, it reinforces the subordination of the recipient to the giver (Sahlins, 1972).

Scholars who have deployed anthropological theory in the analysis of aid point out several problematic aspects of the relationship created. Hattori (2001, 2003) sees aid as a form of symbolic domination and argues that aid transforms material dominance into gestures of generosity and gratitude that in turn provides a way for recipients to 'become complicit in the existing structures of power that enables donors to give in the first place' (p. 633). Similarly Stirrat and Henkel show that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) start as a 'free' gift but become transformed into a contract laden with conditionalities that impose obligations for the recipient. Dillon (2003) argues that the absence of institutionalized mechanisms for reciprocity is a core problem, robbing the recipient of the means to fulfill its obligation to repay. In the detailed study of the Marshal Plan, Dillon argues that Mauss's theory is generalizable to human societies and interactions, applying not only to small non-market societies but to aid relations of industrialized monetized economies (Dillon W. , 2003). Kapoor shows that the aid regime is 'highly invested in its material and symbolic returns' and goes further to argue that it is more 'grift' than 'gift' (Kapoor, 2008, p. 90).

Mawdsley (2012) argues that Southern donors construct aid as a 'horizontal peer relations' (p. 145) that is built around: (i) solidarity between marginalized states; (ii) sharing of experience; (iii) principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference; (iv) 'win-win'

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reciprocated. For literature on the analysis of aid (DAC donor aid) as gift, see Hattori 2003; Dillon 2003; Kapoor 2008; da Silva 2008; Stirrat and Henkel 1997. For gift theory see Mauss 1924; Sahlins 1972.

cooperation that brings mutual benefit. (p. 152). This construct contrasts with the DAC aid which is a vertical and hierarchical relationship; the essential element of the hierarchy derives from the fact that the recipient is subordinated by the very condition of a gift that claims to suspend the obligation to reciprocate.

Critical analyses of aid as gift exchange highlights the major problem with the dominant DAC paradigm of aid as charity, and why being ‘treated as equals’ is a major reason why recipients prefer aid from Southern donors despite the greater financial burden that is imposed than DAC grants. Without the mechanism to repay financially, the recipients are subjected to other forms of reciprocity that takes increasingly the form of adopting an increasingly prescriptive set of principles that should govern their societies as demanded by DAC donors.

### **3. Japan’s aid norms and practices in historical perspective<sup>11</sup>**

Asked about its positioning among DAC donors, one senior Japanese government official replied that Japan has been trying to be a ‘good boy’ in the DAC, but has been ‘feeling somewhat uncomfortable’.<sup>12</sup> This reflects a sentiment expressed by many other current and former policy makers interviewed in our research who all emphatically affirmed Japanese government’s commitment to DAC membership and adherence to its norms, but that Japan’s aid philosophy and practices were distinctive.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Japan has been an outlier among DAC donors in its norms, policies and instruments. Moreover, Japan did not challenge the normative framework of DAC but did its best to within the confines of its principles while pursuing its own philosophy; in other words, Japan has positioned itself as a ‘norm taker’ and desisted from acting as a ‘norm maker’.

This section reviews the historical evolution of Japanese aid philosophy as evidenced in official policy statements, debates in the Diet, and research literature in Japanese and

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<sup>11</sup> For the history of Japan’s ODA from various perspectives, refer to Kato et al, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Interview on July 31, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews between June 4 and August 5, 2015.



English languages, interviews with present and past policy makers and practitioners, and an opinion survey of practitioners. What emerges is a marked evolution in thinking over the six decades but the persistence of conceptualization of aid as ‘economic cooperation’ that has been a consistent theme since its origins. This conception has shaped Japanese aid practices including emphasis on ‘Yen loans’(ODA Loans), and a particular programmatic approach that sees aid as an element of a broader strategy for a synergistic economic development with the partner country that encompasses private investment and trade, referred to in the literature as the ‘trinity’(*sanmi-ittai*) of aid, investment and trade, or as “*yukiteki renkan* (organic linkage)” of aid, trade and investment in the ODA Charter in 1992 and revised ODA Charter in 2003 by the Japanese Government (GoJ, 1992; GoJ, 2003).

Thus Japanese aid would seem to overlap considerably with Southern norms. Yet a more holistic view of the normative framework and its historic evolution would show that it is quite distinctive while straddling both the DAC and Southern norms.

#### *From the 1950s to the mid-1960s*

According to official government documents, the starting point of Japan’s development assistance was its accession to the Colombo Plan and the commencement of technical assistance under this program in 1954 (MoFA, 2015, p. 2). However, in reality, the origins trace back to the war reparation payments to Southeast Asian countries in the mid-1950s that became a prototype of Japanese development assistance. Reparation was an obligation stipulated in the Peace Treaty signed in San Francisco in 1951, and various agreements on economic cooperation were signed with Asian countries simultaneously when bilateral peace treaties and reparation agreements were concluded (Takatsuka, 2006).<sup>14</sup> There was virtually no distinction between reparation and economic cooperation in their purpose,<sup>15</sup> and they were

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Agreement on Reparations and Economic Cooperation was signed with Burma in 1954, and Agreement on Loans (Accord sur les prêts) was signed with Vietnam in 1960.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Agreement on Reparations and Economic Cooperation signed between Japan and Burma in 1954 stipulated that the purpose of reparation was to contribute to the economic recovery and development and to the enhancement of social welfare in Burmese Federation (Hirakawa, 2006, p. 450).

designed in such a manner that the recipient governments procured goods and services for development purpose from Japanese companies, and Japanese government bore the cost in the form of concessional loans and grants. Southeast Asian countries after independence formulated their own economic development plans with the aim of achieving economic self-reliance, and sought to enhance productive capacity by building infrastructures and plants, and Japanese economic cooperation and reparation were utilized in accordance with such plans.<sup>16</sup> Needless to say, this was the prototype of tied Yen loans for infrastructure development which later became the dominant form of Japanese development assistance up until the mid-1980s.

The concept of economic cooperation in the 1950s and 60s was based on the idea - shared by politicians, technocrats and economic advisers alike - that Japan's recovery was inextricably intertwined with development of East and Southeast Asia (Shimomura, 2014). Japan was a war-ravaged nation, with much of its infrastructure destroyed, GDP per capita at the level of its Asian neighbors, and a population unable to meet its basic needs. How could the economy recover without accessing natural resources and export markets in neighboring countries?<sup>17</sup> The 1956 Annual Economic Report of the Economic Planning Agency, widely known today as heralding the start of rapid growth era by the famous phrase that 'the post-war (recovery) period has come to an end (*Mohaya sengo deha nai*),' was in fact full of anxiety over the sustainability of high growth rate. It advocated the necessity for "the modernization of economic structure" of Japan, and referred to "development assistance to the underdeveloped countries" as one of the important components of that transformation process (EPA, 1956). Here, we can see the often neglected historical fact that Japan's aid provision was not a fruit of self-confidence in its own economic power, but rather a manifestation of keen awareness of its

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<sup>16</sup> John F. Dulles, the special envoy for peace treaty with Japan, was keenly aware of the danger of imposing monetary reparation claims on Japan, drawing lessons from the experience of Germany after the World War I (Dulles, 1951; Hirakawa, 2006, p. 445)

<sup>17</sup> The first white paper on economic cooperation issued by MITI in 1958 stated that "Promotion of economic development of underdeveloped countries would facilitate export from Japan by stimulating import-demand of underdeveloped countries, and also contribute to the security of important raw materials for Japan (MITI, 1958, p. 22)."

economic vulnerability. Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida was more explicit on the nature of mutual benefit gained from economic cooperation:

“Regarding the reparation agreement with Burma, we used the term ‘reparation’ in accordance with the request from them. For us, it is rather an investment. Our investment would facilitate the development of Burma, and Burma would become a market for Japan. It is vitally important for Japan to find market in Southeast Asia, after the loss of Chinese market (Yoshida, 1955).”

Implementation of this economic strategy intended for mutual benefit required careful diplomacy; Southeast Asian countries continued to eye with suspicion Japan’s motives in re-establishing its economic presence in the region.<sup>18</sup> To dispel doubt that Japan was again embarking on the pre-war project of “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” the government emphasized its rebirth as a peaceful nation and presented itself as “fellow Asians (*Ajia no ichiin*),” or as an equal partner for economic development based on the “deep interest and empathy for Asia” (Kishi, 1957) and “sense of affinity as neighbors in Asia (Ikeda, 1961).” Japan was also cautious in its actual behavior, paying due respect to the autonomy of newly-independent Asian countries which embarked on the project of building economically self-reliant country as an indispensable foundation of political independence. Since Asian countries had long lists of infrastructure projects for their industrial take-off, and Japan wanted to enter that promising market, infrastructure building became the point where both Japanese and Asian countries’ interests coincided.<sup>19</sup>

However, frequent reference to “*Asia no ichiin*” should not be interpreted to mean that

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<sup>18</sup> For example, a joint 1953 MoFA and MoF document pointed out the prevailing suspicion among Asian countries for Japan’s economic advancement into the region, and called for the measures to avoid the impression that Japan’s economic cooperation would be tantamount to economic invasion (MoFA and MoF, 1953).

<sup>19</sup> The first whitepaper on economic cooperation by MITI in 1958 pointed out that almost all Asian countries had their own economic development plans that aimed at rapid industrialization and infrastructure development. It also emphasized that Japan’s economic cooperation must be conducted in such a manner to respect the “*shutaisei* (ownership)” of the recipient countries (MITI, 1958, p. 5, pp. 230-238).

Japan identified itself with developing countries. Quite the contrary, Japan regarded itself as an advanced industrialized nation (*senshin kogyo koku*),<sup>20</sup> even in the early 1950s when per capita GNP was no higher than that of other Asian countries,<sup>21</sup> and presented itself as “the only advanced country in Asia” which was capable of providing other Asian countries with the capital and technologies needed for development.

Japanese policymakers were increasingly aware of the inherently contradictory nature of these two identities. A comment in a 1957 Diet debate illustrates this tension well. Eki Sone, a member of the Lower House, questions the Foreign Minister:

“Japanese people are concerned that Japan would find itself in an awkward position like a bat which belongs neither to birds nor to mammals, by giving lip-services to both groups and thus breeding mistrust from both sides (Sone, 1957).”

Norms and practices of economic cooperation played a role in coping with this cumbersome problem, by presenting Japan as capable and reliable aid provider but at the same time as something different from Western donors in the sense that it would not construct asymmetrical power relationships. Explicit recognition of *mutual* benefit, without concealing donor’s benefit under the guise of aid as charity, is one of such efforts.

Furthermore, Japan eschewed attaching any political and economic conditionality. It developed a policy of ‘demand based’ assistance as a central narrative of its aid philosophy. In practice Japanese aid aimed to align to the development strategy of the recipients in selecting priority sectors and projects. This norm came from the experience of Japan as being a recipient of Western aid. Kiichi Miyazawa, the Minister of Economic Planning Agency, expressed his impression of foreign aid in the Diet as follows:

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<sup>20</sup> From the 1950s to the early 1960s, the term “*Chushinkoku* (semi-developed country)” was used to describe Japan’s position as being between Western advanced countries and developing countries. This term also reflected a sense of superiority over developing countries. This is a notable difference from the Southern donors who clearly identify as developing countries; for example, China often presents itself as “the largest developing country in the world.”

<sup>21</sup> Japan’s GNP per capita from 1952 to 1954 was 190 USD, which was higher than that of the Philippine’s (150 USD) but lower than that of Malaya (310 USD) (Shimomura, 2014, p. 117).

“Unfortunately, Japan also received foreign aid after the defeat in the War, and we still remember that we experienced a rather bitter feeling about imposed conditionalities and preaching (Miyazawa, 1968).”

Japan tried to play substantially the role of advanced country, but at the same time tried to avoid the impression that Japanese aid created hierarchical political relationship between donor and recipient, or between advanced and developing country. A set of principles was established that continued to be emphasized in official aid policy for the decades to come: aid conceptualized as mutually beneficial economic cooperation; demand based assistance and respect for recipient autonomy; aid as support to ‘self help’ (*jiritsu*);<sup>22</sup> and programmatic priority to investments in human capital and economic infrastructure. These approaches were based on Japan’s own post-war recovery strategy that seemed to be working well, as well as on a particular theory of economic development widely shared amongst scholars and policy makers led by Shigeru Ishikawa (see Ohno and Ohno, 1998). These norms and practices of economic cooperation under reparation payments thus continued to be a defining features of Japanese aid model.

#### *From the mid 1960s to the early 1980*

By the mid-1960s, Japan had successfully reconstructed its war-torn economy, and rose to the status of an advanced industrialized country and re-established itself as one of the leading members of the international community.<sup>23</sup> In line with the growth of economic power, Japan became a full-fledged donor in the early 1960’s by establishing aid institutions,<sup>24</sup> and by becoming the member of Development Assistance Group of OECD.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> In JICA, the phrase “we should teach how to catch fish, instead of giving fish for free” was frequently used.

<sup>23</sup> Japan became the world’s second richest country in 1968, four years after its accession to the OECD in 1964. (Yoshikawa, 2012, p. 70).

<sup>24</sup> The Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) and Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA) were established in 1961 and 1962 respectively. OCTA was reorganized as Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1974.

<sup>25</sup> Development Assistance Group was renamed as DAC (Development Assistance Committee) in 1961.

Success in achieving the status of advanced country through rapid and sustainable economic growth gave Japan a sense of self confidence as a major economic power and international player (*Taikoku ishiki*). Aid was an important part of this new status. In the first policy speech to the Diet, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato emphasized this identity as *taikoku* and the importance of expanding economic cooperation “in accordance with the rise of Japan’s international status” (Oyama, 2015, p. 2). However, it soon became clear that the country had to reflect on the use of its rapidly expanding economic muscle. In many Southeast Asian countries, popular opposition arose against mounting trade imbalances with Japan, as vividly manifested in anti-Japanese riots at the time of the Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka’s visit to ASEAN countries in 1974. In response, succeeding Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda enunciated a comprehensive principle for Japan’s diplomacy toward ASEAN region called “Fukuda Doctrine,” where he emphasized the norms of “economic cooperation” and Japan’s identity as “fellow Asians(*ajia no ichiin*)” that wanted to cooperate with Asian countries with equal status, and pledged the major increases in ODA (Fukuda, 1977).

Implementation of ‘aid as mutually beneficial economic cooperation’ continued to operate with the principles of ‘self help’, ‘demand based’ programming, and non-interference. In substance, it was part of a specific economic strategy that worked on the complementarity of Japanese economy with those of its Asian neighbors. It was implemented through a specific form of ‘industrial policy’ involving aid, trade and investment as a package, referred to as ‘the trinity approach’ (*sanmi-ittai*), a hallmark of Japan’s development assistance to East and Southeast Asia. Bilateral aid helped develop economic infrastructure and human capital that would lay the conditions necessary for private investment. Japanese government used domestic industrial policy incentives to facilitate investment by Japanese companies. Trade then followed, with the manufactured outputs such as intermediate parts, being exported back to Japan. This contributed to industrialization and export-led growth of the Southeast Asian countries. This strategy was negotiated with the recipient government in the framework of the ‘demand based’ programming, and focused on development of specific areas and industries,

such as in the Eastern seaboard of Thailand. It was an important input to the economic transformation during the 1970s and 80s of Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia which receive massive amounts of aid, over half of which was from Japan. It is important to note that the coordination of aid, trade and investment during the 1970s up to the 1990s was facilitated by the fact that Japanese Yen loan financing was managed by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), in tandem with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), and the Economic Planning Agency (EPA), through the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), while MITI managed industrial policy.<sup>26</sup>

In its practice, “economic cooperation” was implemented in close collaboration with Japanese private companies. They have been indispensable providers of equipment, human resources, technologies and experiences required for the implementation of projects financed. In the heyday of tied aid, Japanese companies were deeply involved in every stages of the project cycle: namely, from fact-finding, project design to the implementation (construction). Furthermore, Japanese companies were contractors for infrastructures investments, accelerating its trade with and investment in the recipient countries.

#### *From the mid 1980s to the present*

Becoming a major donor by the early 1980s and gaining greater profile as the largest donor by 1989, Japanese aid broadened its focus regionally and programmatically, and revised its policy instruments. Its normative framework also broadened, evolving along with DAC trends, but did not lose its core principles. External pressure from the international community was an important factor behind these shifts.

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<sup>26</sup> In contrast, technical cooperation and grant aid were handled by MoFA and JICA. System of Japan’s aid administration and the formation of executing agencies experienced significant changes. For example, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) was established by the merger of OECF and the Export-Import Bank of Japan in 1999. In 2008, ODA-wing of JBIC was separated and incorporated to JICA. For more detail, refer to Kato et al, 2016.

The initial increase in aid volume was a fiscal response to the need to manage rising trade surpluses and external pressures. In the early 1980s the United States demanded an increase in aid volume as well as the expansion of geographical scope of assistance beyond East and Southeast Asia (Yasutomo, 1986 [1989], p.102). But this expansion raised a problem; the traditional notion of mutually beneficial economic cooperation was applicable to East and Southeast Asia where Japan had close political, economic and cultural relationships but not necessarily elsewhere. In order to respond to the pressure from the United States to extend assistance to its strategic allies in the context of Cold War (such as to Turkey, Pakistan and Egypt), Japan was obliged to revise the traditional notion of mutual benefit in such a manner to justify its aid provision to countries outside of its traditional partners. Thus, in spite of the dissenting opinion within the government,<sup>27</sup> aid policies were revised in a number of ways.

One initiative was to introduce the concept of Comprehensive Security (*Sougou Anzen hoshō*) adopted by the Cabinet of Zenkō Suzuki and actively pursued by the Cabinet of Masayoshi Ohira (Yasutomo, 1986 [1989], p. 104). Under this concept, economic cooperation was given the role of deterring threats to Japan's security by creating "stable and preferable international environment." Here, the relationship of mutual benefit was expanded from traditional one of between Japan and Asian neighbors to one between Japan and "international community." Another response was to increase its aid volume. The economic crises in Africa and Latin America led to large-scale policy based lending and support to structural adjustment programs cofinanced with the World Bank. Throughout the 1980s, Japan had continuously increased its aid budget under pressure from DAC members.

However, soon after becoming the largest donor in 1989, Japanese aid policy had to adjust to a new the international environment for development cooperation. The end of the Cold War opened the way for new agendas such as the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance, support to economic liberalization policies, and the

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<sup>27</sup> One official of the Ministry of Finance was quoted as saying that Japanese aid should concentrate on Asia, as France concentrated its aid to Africa and the United Kingdom to the Commonwealth (Yasutomo, 1986 [1989], p. 175).



reconstruction of post-conflict countries. As a leading donor, Japan was brought under ever-mounting pressure to further increase aid volume, to decrease tied aid, to strengthen engagement with non-Asian regions, and to broaden its sectoral engagement. In response, Japan significantly cut tied Yen loans, expanded engagement with Africa and former-socialist countries.<sup>28</sup>

There was also engagement with global debates about the purpose of development and promotion of human centered development in a shift away from the exclusive focus on economic growth. Japan responded by expressing its commitment to the promotion of “universal values” (GoJ, 1992) and introduction of a new concept, “human security”, as a central objective of bilateral aid. Promotion of ‘human security’ as a concept became a major diplomatic initiative in the UN. Moreover, Japan began to take initiatives to lead global debates on specific issues, such as on global health at the 2000 G-8 summit, universal health coverage in the Sustainable Development Goals, and on disaster resilience. These constituted a significant broadening of ODA policy in response to adapt to evolving DAC norms.

In this context, the term “*economic cooperation*” was too narrow and was gradually replaced by the terms such as “*international cooperation (Kokusai Kyoryoku)*” or “*development cooperation (kaihatsu kyoryoku)*.” However, it is important to note that the concept of mutually beneficial economic cooperation remains a central and defining feature of the Japanese aid model, together with other core principles. Firstly, recognition of mutual benefit, which was originally limited to Asia and to creating tightly inter-dependent economic ties, was expanded and transformed into the notion of global interdependence that Japan’s peace, stability and prosperity was dependent upon that of *Kokusai-shakai* (international community). Secondly, Japanese official discourse put an ever greater emphasis on ‘demand based policy and its respect for recipient autonomy’. For example, the Official Development Charter of 1992, the first official document that explicitly articulated the normative framework

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<sup>28</sup> The share of aid to Sub-Saharan Africa grew from 1.9% in 1970 to 8.5% in 2001 (commitment basis). Likewise, 96.4% of Japanese aid was untied in 1999, the 4th among 22 DAC member countries (commitment basis).

and strategy of Japan's development cooperation, declared that the basic idea of Japan's ODA was to assist the self-help effort of developing countries, and that Japan should pay due attention to the request of the recipient governments. This was due to the fact that Japan was cautious in stepping out from "economic" cooperation and in entering the new field of good governance or conflict resolution which inevitably entailed involvement with domestic political issues.<sup>29</sup> Renewed emphasis on the ownership constituted an approach to non-interference.

Japanese aid programs evolved significantly from the late 1990s. The ODA budget declined precipitously from 1998, and by 2013 Japan dropped to 5th place among DAC countries (MoFA, 2015, p. 248). The ODA Charter was revised in 2003 and again in 2015 with the new name of Development Cooperation Charter (hereinafter referred to as '2015 Charter.')

These new documents emphasize new directions including the expansion of aid to sub-Saharan Africa,<sup>30</sup> and broadening the range of actors, including NGOs, local authorities, and the private sector. Special provisions were made to extend the Asian experience with the 'trinity' approach to Africa.<sup>31</sup> The concept of human security and commitment to people centered development continued to be emphasized. These trends were already introduced in the early 1990s, and follow trends in global discourse on development that increasingly focused on human well being and governance starting in the mid 1990s, and since as late 2000's, increasingly the role of private sector.<sup>32</sup>

While incorporating new elements and following the evolution of DAC norms, Japan's traditional aid principles persist and may even be more assertively stated. This renewed

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<sup>29</sup> Civil society organizations and some academics advocated that Japan's aid should be more aligned to DAC norms by incorporating the "universal values" such as democracy, human rights, accountability, and transparency.

<sup>30</sup> The share of aid to Sub-Sahara Africa in 2010 was 16.7% (commitment basis). Japan hosted Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) for five times since 1993.

<sup>31</sup> It was stated in the 2015 Charter that "Japan will provide assistance through joint efforts of the public and the private sector... so that Africa's remarkable growth in recent years based on expanding trade, investment and consumption will lead to further development for both Japan and Africa".

<sup>32</sup> These trends are reflected, for example, in the MDGs launched in 2001 that focus on human well being and poverty, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched in 2015 for which the private sector played an increasingly active role in the process of formulation.

assertiveness may be interpreted as the indication of confidence that Japanese policymakers and practitioners have on the success of the model of Japan's own economic development as well as the model of successfully promoting the transformation of East and Southeast Asian countries, many of which are now rising as emerging economies. At the same time, it can also be interpreted as a manifestation of Japan's growing suspicion that China, which shares many elements of normative framework of aid with Japan, would embark on the endeavor to be a norm maker. In this sense, Japan's recent assertiveness of its own aid norms is an act to preempt China's possible ambitions. For example, the 2015 Charter is particularly emphatic in promoting the Japanese model of economic growth; the 2015 Charter introduces an explicit strategy to promote economic development in the recipient country through investing in economic infrastructure and human resources as a way to lay the conditions for private investment, notably but not exclusively, Japanese investment.<sup>33</sup> These Charters also reiterate Japan's commitment to its traditional norms including: respect for ownership and recipient autonomy (*shutaisei*);<sup>34</sup> the demand based system; and the philosophy of supporting self-reliance and 'self-help' as reflected in the following extract.

In its development cooperation, Japan has maintained the spirit of jointly creating things that suit partner countries while respecting ownership, intentions and intrinsic characteristics of the country concerned based on a field-oriented approach through dialogue and collaboration. It has also maintained the approach of building reciprocal relationships with developing countries in which both sides learn from each other and grow and develop together. These are some of the good traditions of Japan's cooperation which have supported self-help efforts of developing countries and aimed at future self-reliant development (GoJ, 2015).

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<sup>33</sup> Since the 1980s, the share of infrastructure building has been consistently within the range of 30-50% (commitment basis), which has been significantly higher than the DAC average.

<sup>34</sup> At the same time, in the 2000s Japan came to emphasize the importance of policy dialogue with recipients, saying that "it is essential to fully grasp the development policies and assistance needs of developing countries by engaging actively in policy consultation before requests are made by developing countries (GoJ, 2003)." This point is reiterated in 2015 Charter (GoJ, 2015).

Both Charters continue to conceptualize “aid as mutually beneficial economic cooperation”. They emphasize the interdependence of Japan’s peace and prosperity and those of “international community,”<sup>35</sup> and declared that the “objectives of Japan's ODA are to contribute to the peace and development of the international community, and thereby to help ensure Japan's own security and prosperity (GoJ, 2003).”

Japanese aid policy has been underpinned by its own theorizing about development, drawing notably on works of economists such as Shigeru Ishikawa. It is a theoretical approach that conceptualized economic transformation involving industrialization, human capital building and economic infrastructure development as essential ingredients. Another important part of this model was ‘industrial policy’ in which the state played a significant role in managing the process of structural change (Shimomura Y. , 2013) (Ohno & Ohno, 1998). This was the strategy that was implemented in Japan historically and pursued in the post war recovery. Aid was part of a process of exporting this development model. Yet Japanese officials and economists kept a low profile in international policy debates. One notable exception is Japan’s effort to urge the World Bank to study “East Asian Miracle” in the early 1990s, hoping to challenge prevailing view on the role of the state in facilitating development. This produced a mixed result, with compromises made regarding the role of industrial policy (Wade, 1996).

This brief historical account has shown important evolution in policies and practices over the decades with changing domestic and international contexts. Two striking trends characterize this evolution. First, a distinctive set of principles and themes have been sustained throughout this history in spite of shifts in policy tools, reflecting a particular aid philosophy articulated in official documents, and an understanding of economic development model. Second, neither the government, nor the academic community made effort to influence the

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<sup>35</sup> The importance of the international community is striking. From its origins as reparation payments in the 1950s to the use of aid in lieu of military contributions for international peacekeeping, Japanese government used aid in maintaining its standing in the international community as a major power. As experts such as Shimomura and Oshima observed in interviews, the aims of Japanese aid policy were threefold: economic or commercial, political, and contribution to global public goods.

wider international community by challenging the dominant thinking in the DAC with alternative models of development and conceptions of aid. For sure, Japan made important contributions in some debates, such as in championing the importance of capacity development in recent DAC principles, and in launching major initiatives such as the Asian Development Bank or financing global health. Yet what is striking is that Japan remained a silent ‘outlier’ rather than attempt to lead policy debates. In that sense, Japanese government position in the DAC has not aimed to play the role of a ‘norm maker’ within the international community even though it was confident that its approach was effective in fostering development in the recipient countries.

#### **4. Japan’s aid norms in comparative perspective**

In this section we explore the core norms of Japanese aid in comparison with those of the DAC and South-South cooperation. These include: the conception of aid as economic cooperation for mutual interest; the relationship between donor and recipient as one of equal partnership, explicitly eschewing hierarchy and dependence, purpose of aid as support to ‘self help’; and programmatic focus on investing in human and economic infrastructure that is based on a development model that draws on Japan’s own experience with industrialization and reconstruction. These features can in turn be explained by the historical origins of Japanese aid, and by the use of aid as a diplomatic tool to situate itself within the international community. These distinctive features of Japanese aid philosophy appears to overlap with elements with the norms of Southern aid described in an earlier section of this paper, especially those that fall outside of the DAC framework. But they also diverge in some important ways.

##### *Aid as mutually beneficial economic cooperation*

At the core of the Japanese model is the conception of aid as ‘economic cooperation’ coupled with its expressed purpose for mutual benefit. Japanese language texts use the term economic cooperation – *‘keizai kyoryoku’* – to refer to aid, synonymously with “Official Development

Assistance” (ODA) that is used in Japanese publications in the English language. This term has particular meaning implying joint work among equals towards a common end. When used in the context of development assistance, it implies a donor-recipient relationship based on equality and respect for recipient’s autonomy by the donor, and a two-way relationship of reciprocity and mutual benefit. Aid is therefore a gift that creates a relationship of reciprocity, not suspended reciprocity as in charitable gift.

The concept of mutual benefit is out of framework of DAC norms that conceptualize aid as charity and a one way flow of resources. In that framework, mutual benefit might well be dismissed as a cover up for self-interest. But cooperation could not be taken for granted in the context of a country that was politically excluded from the international community in the aftermath of the Second World War. Originating in the 1950s as a vanquished state and a war torn economy, aid could not be used as ‘symbolic domination’ but rather as restitution and reintegration into the international community. Economically, the reinsertion into international markets was a necessity. As a struggling economy in the 1950s and 1960s, Japan did not have the luxury of developing aid programs that would merely be a drain on its own economy. The idea that the country’s prosperity and stability was inextricably connected that of in developing countries, continued to be an essential part of Japanese official aid discourse (Ikeda, 1961; MoFA, 1967; Fukuda, 1977), emphasized in three successive Charters to the present (GoJ, 1992; GoJ, 2003; GoJ, 2015).

Southern donors, too, emphasize ‘win-win’ and mutual benefit, often articulated in relation to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, a key guiding text amongst Third World countries adopted at the Bandung Conference in 1955.<sup>36</sup> Like Japan in the 1950s to the 1980s, Southern donors recognize economic interdependence with other developing countries as a precondition of their own development. They have interest in mutual benefit necessary to

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<sup>36</sup> The five principles include: peaceful co-existence, mutual non-aggression, mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, and equality and mutual benefit.

create and access expanding markets for exports and to build good relations to procure raw materials for national development.

*Donor-recipient relationship: autonomy, sovereignty and policy conditionality*

A second consistent theme of Japanese aid policy has been defining the purpose of aid as facilitator to ‘self-help’, and a policy approach that respects the country’s autonomy - *‘jishusei’* – with priorities set by ‘demand based’ programming. This has also an approach to political and economic conditionality that is quite distinctive that can be explained by the desire to create a relationship of equal partnership with the recipient and avoiding hierarchy in order to achieve the diplomatic goals of facilitating economic and political positioning. Japanese discourse deftly complies with DAC norms by emphasizing commitment to ‘universal values’ without engaging actively in whatever controversies might arise between Southern donors and the DAC. The respect for recipient’s ownership and support for its economic self-reliance may seem to align with the norms the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and mutual respects for sovereignty that are core norms of many Southern donors (Kondoh et al, 2010). However, Japanese official discourse rarely refers to such terms as “sovereignty” and do not align with Southern donors to challenge positions of some DAC members with ‘governance’ and human rights issues that promote liberal democracy.

Japanese aid policy emphasizes full commitment to human rights and good governance (GoJ, 1994; GoJ, 2003; GoJ, 2015). The government joins in raising concerns about social and environmental standards of the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The commitment to such standards and the framework of ‘universal values’ was consistently emphasized in our interviews with senior officials and reflected in the opinion survey of operational staff. Nonetheless, there is tension between these values and the commitment to recipient autonomy and the practice of abstaining from ‘preaching. Japanese civil society critics allege that this is to merely ‘accompany’ (*‘otsukiai’*) international norms<sup>37</sup> while international NGOs criticize

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<sup>37</sup> Interviews with several academics and civil society stakeholders in July 2015.

Japan for not taking proactive positions (Watch, 2015).<sup>38</sup>

Japan has been a major partner in financing program loans with MDGs conditioned on policy change. Guidelines for environmental and social sustainability are similar to those of the World Bank and the ADB. However, Japan's bilateral aid practice has historically been relatively weak on conditionality compared to other DAC donors and Multilateral Development Banks. On political conditionality, Japan rarely used aid to sanction illegal political regime change or human rights violations,<sup>39</sup> and argues that 'constructive engagement' is better than driving the country into international isolation by imposing sanctions. Japan thus continued to provide (limited humanitarian) aid to Myanmar under military rule.

The Japanese approach diverges from the DAC whose normative framework does not include issues of national autonomy or sovereignty. Rather, the DAC identifies 'ownership' to be essential for 'aid effectiveness', identified as one of the five 'partnership principles' in the Paris Declaration along with alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability (OECD DAC, 2005), and one of the four principles of the 2011 Busan statement that addressed S-S along with N-S cooperation. The concept emphasizes alignment of aid resources with national priorities, but also the embrace by the recipient of the conditionalities included in the financing agreement. It is very different then, from a notion of 'sovereignty' or 'autonomy' of the recipient countries, and incorporates the donor agenda in the partnership pact. In reality, the asymmetry of power between the donor and recipient and the terms of partnership unavoidably leaves the recipient in a weak negotiating position over conditionality.

Another aspect of conditionality is the discomfort with the epistemic justification for policy conditionality; that superior scientific and technical knowledge has answers to development challenges that work everywhere. Development thinking amongst Japanese

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<sup>38</sup> See for example a criticism by Human Rights Watch that argues Japan as a major source of ODA should 'prioritize rights' and points out "JICA rarely intervenes on behalf of communities or individuals facing intimidation, violence, or legal action from governments that receive its aid." <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/24/japan-aid-agency-should-prioritize-rights> (accessed August 18, 2015)

<sup>39</sup> The notable exceptions are the suspension of new assistance in the face of Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 and nuclear weapons tests by India and Pakistan in 1998.



scholars and technocrats base claims on ‘experience’ rather than on science.<sup>40</sup> What Japan can export therefore is experience, notably the successes of its transformation as an advanced economy over the last century. Though Japanese economists have articulated their models of economic development, the formula of investing in human and economic infrastructure is always defended as the proven model that worked in the postwar recovery of Japan and in the development of East and Southeast Asia. This too echoes the sentiments of the Southern donors who are skeptical of or reject Western claims to superior knowledge in economic development and in social progress.

*Donor-recipient relationship: nature and terms of exchange*

The financing terms of aid instruments have also been controversial in the DAC; peer reviews have raised issue with the tied procurement and the low level of grant element. In spite of the continuous criticism from DAC peer reviews to increase the grant portion since the 1960s, Japan continued the massive provision of concessional loans up until today, which resulted in the continuous low grant rate of Japan’s development assistance.<sup>41</sup> In the context of ‘aid as charity’ framework, counter payment would be a burden to the recipient. This is also an issue for Southern donors whose main policy instruments are concessional and tied loan for infrastructure building.<sup>42</sup> Yet in the framework of ‘cooperation’, reciprocity creates a relationship of respect for the recipient as an equal partner. Thus the government explains the benefit of loans as a relationship that is more compatible with the purpose of aid to facilitate ‘self-help’ rather than a charitable give away.<sup>43</sup> The norms of reciprocity and self-reliance are

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<sup>40</sup> Interviews and opinion survey conducted for this research.

<sup>41</sup> Japan’s grant rate gradually increased from around 30% in the 1970s to over 50% in the 2000s (OECD, 2015). In 2010/11, it is 54.7%, the 26th among 27 DAC members (MoFA, 2015, p. 250). This figure is still remarkably low, compared to the average rate of 85.8%.

<sup>42</sup> In China and India, the main providers of loans are Export-Import Bank, which is reminiscent of the fact that EXIM Bank of Japan was originally a provider of Yen loans. This also suggests that the export promotion of the donor and contribution to the development of the recipient are inextricably intertwined in Southern aid.

<sup>43</sup> According to MoFA, Yen loans which obligate the recipient to repay can facilitate the self-help effort of the recipients to assure the repayment by utilizing the effective use of borrowed money (Homepage of MoFA).

widely held by individuals in the development community in Japan, across the board from policy makers to operational staff in government, NGO sector and academia.<sup>44</sup> They were repeatedly affirmed in interviews conducted in this research. Yet the argument has little merit in the DAC debates that are about ‘aid effectiveness’, narrowly defined, focusing on a technical calculus of aid as a money-metric input, rather than in the broader framework of an exchange that establishes social bonds and involves different types of obligations including that of reciprocity. Indeed, if we refer to gift theory, loans encompass an institutionalized means for the recipient to reciprocate, leaving a better social bond and relationship between the recipient and donor. These arguments are out of the DAC’s normative framework whose aid effectiveness paradigm does not consider the problems associated with grants that suspend the obligations of reciprocity, leaving the recipient with no alternative but to accept policy conditionalities, and remain subordinate to the donor.

Tied procurement was a part of Japanese aid policy during the 1950s to the early 1980s. It was a useful complement to the ‘trinity’ approach. But tied aid has dramatically decreased and policy makers emphasize currently that ODA financing of human and economic infrastructure can be complementary to private investment regardless of source. Japan substantially reduced the level of tied aid in the 1990s, though it has increased again in the 2000s in response to domestic pressures to use aid for Japan’s own economic revival. Tied aid has another significance, particularly when it involves technical cooperation and sharing of knowledge. The concept of knowledge in Japanese cooperation is embedded in the belief that Japan’s own experience is what the country has to offer. An assumption held by practitioners and policy makers interviewed places greater confidence in ‘experience’ than on technocratic analyses. Thus some officials interviewed pointed out that technical cooperation from Japan that is procured from outside of Japan does not make sense.<sup>45</sup> It is outside the normative

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[http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/hakusyo/03\\_hakusho/ODA2003/html/column/cl01002.htm](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/hakusyo/03_hakusho/ODA2003/html/column/cl01002.htm) (Accessed on September 1, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Interviews and opinion survey conducted for this research.

<sup>45</sup> Interviews conducted in July 2015.

framework of Japanese aid model that is about building a relationship of cooperation between Japan and the recipient countries.

*Identity and the international community*

The Japanese aid norms fall somewhere between those of the DAC and the Southern donors. This reflects the identity of Japan as a DAC member whose aid originated when the country was a recipient, and uses aid as a diplomatic tool to create a favorable relationship with recipients for the purposes of economic cooperation. The norms of economic cooperation that have historical origins are deeply embedded in development practice, reflected in views of practitioners working in bilateral programs.

Summarizing, the following table contrasts Japan’s evolving norms with those of present day DAC and Southern donors, as proposed by Mawdsley (2012).

Comparing ‘symbolic values’ articulated by DAC donors, Southern donors and Japan  
(adapted from (Mawdsley, 2012))

	DAC donors (2000’s)	Southern donors (2000’s)	Japan 1950’s -80’s	Japan 1990s/2000’s
Purpose	Charity	Opportunity	Cooperation	Cooperation; Responsibility; Leadership. <sup>46</sup>
Moral motivation	Moral obligation to the less fortunate	Solidarity with other Third World countries	Obligation to the international community.	Obligation to international community. Moral obligation to the less fortunate. <sup>47</sup>
Epistemology	Expertise based on superior knowledge, science and institutions. Development knowledge based on science and universally applicable.	Expertise based on experience. Development knowledge is specific to level of development.	Expertise based on experience of Japan. Development knowledge based on historical success.	Expertise based on experience of Japan and of developing countries. <sup>48</sup> Development knowledge based on historical success.

<sup>46</sup> Survey results emphasized cooperation but also equally ending poverty and promotion of values such as human security, human rights and equality.

<sup>47</sup> 11% of the respondents in the survey responded that the obligation to contribute to the international community was the *only* motivation for aid, while 65% responded that this was more important than the moral obligation to help the less fortunate. None responded that the moral obligation to help the needy was the *only* motivation for aid.

<sup>48</sup> 73% responded expertise was based on experience more than science and institutions. 13% on experience only. Experience includes that of ‘partner’ countries of Japan’s aid such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Brazil.

Identity	Sympathy for different and distant others	Empathy based on shared identity	Empathy based on membership in regional (Asian) or international community.	Empathy based on membership in regional (Asian) or international community. Sympathy for distant others. <sup>49</sup>
Obligations of reciprocity	Virtue of suspended obligation. No reciprocity.	Virtue of mutual benefit. Reciprocity.	Virtue of mutual benefit. Reciprocity. Self reliance.	Virtue of mutual benefit. Reciprocity. Self reliance.
Hierarchy	Reinforces N-S hierarchy	Reinforces S-S solidarity	Neutralizes N-S hierarchy. "Respect for autonomy"	Neutralizes N-S hierarchy. "Respect for autonomy"

## 5. Concluding remarks

Aid cannot be understood purely as a resource input to development, disembodied from the political relationship that it establishes between the donor and recipient.<sup>50</sup> DAC aid originated in the context of decolonisation and continues to be a major element of N-S relationships. This study of norms focusing on comparing Japan with the DAC and Southern donors highlights the importance donors attach to the nature of relationships that aid creates. Both Japan and Southern donors are careful to neutralize the subordination implicit in the act of giving. It exposes a downside of DAC's concept of aid as charity when viewed in a broader political economy context, and in the light of the anthropology of aid as gift exchange.

DAC norms frame aid as a one way, non-market transfer, based on ethical engagement. In this act, donors acquire moral superiority which is then reinforced by suspending the recipient's obligation to repay. Instead the gift exchange negotiates reciprocity of a different kind, in form of 'partnership' and 'ownership' that embraces the donor's vision of development and the strategies to make progress. The recipient gives up 'sovereignty' or 'autonomy'. In an inter-dependent but an unequal world, donors have an obligation to give to the less fortunate

<sup>49</sup> 68% responded empathy was more important than sympathy, and 5% empathy only.

<sup>50</sup> Donors project a particular identity within international relations, as seen in such events as donor conferences where the roles of donors by their influence become captured in the ritualistic procedures of the day (da Silva, 2008). Such projections are evident in the discursive elements of Southern donor discourses of aid as a part of Third World solidarity.

but use it as an instrument of ‘symbolic power’ (Hattori, 2001) or for demanding ideological alignment with globalisation.

This compact in N-S aid does not work well. Quite apart from the huge political cost in surrendering autonomy, charitable giving does not deliver aid effectiveness as defined by the DAC, as it is inherently contradictory to ‘ownership’. Since the 1990s, donors have consistently identified ‘ownership’ as a core problem. Recipient countries and donors have difficulty, more often than not, in reaching agreement on priorities and strategies. This is one reason why empirical studies of aid have repeatedly shown that policy reform programs do not get implemented, and that donor funded projects are not sustainable and do not continue after the donor leaves. An abiding lesson of the 1980s structural adjustment programs is that the majority did not get implemented because the policy conditionalities were not in line with what recipient governments wanted or could implement.

The framing of aid as cooperation gets over some of these problems, and it is no wonder that recipient countries welcome Southern aid (Woods, 2008; Sato et al, 2010); even if these gifts are offered as loans and demand for financial repayment, it requires less reciprocity in political and diplomatic positioning. Can economic cooperation for development be mutually beneficial?<sup>51</sup> The idea is out of frame of aid as charity and most DAC donors would reject it out of hand as a form of exploitation, as evident in the drumbeat of criticism by Western commentators on Chinese aid to Africa. But in principle, development in an inter-dependent market economy works through mutual benefit, not through a zero sum game. If the normative framework in Japan persisted, it is because Japanese policy makers and practitioners are confident of the success of the model in promoting the transformation of East and Southeast Asia, coupled with the success of the core strategy of investing in physical and human infrastructure in Japan’s own reconstruction.

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<sup>51</sup> The best way to answer this question is to consult with the people in the recipient countries. In this regard, post-evaluation of Japan’s ODA projects by the specialists of recipient countries as advocated by Japanese academics is worth consideration (Hirono, 2006, p. 28).

As Ngaire Woods observes, the surge of development finance from non-DAC members is exerting a “competitive pressure into the existing system... the competition exposes standards that are either out of date or ineffectual.” (2008 p.1221). Norms of development cooperation will no doubt evolve into the twenty first century. Already, the era of the poverty focused aid justified on moral grounds may be weakening as DAC donors reposition themselves in the new landscape of development cooperation (Mawdsley, 2015). The paradigm of aid as ‘charity’ is already outdated by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals that go beyond meeting basic needs as the global aspiration. The Japanese government has been a passive rather than active in debates about aid norms for half a century, yet feeling uncomfortable as an outlier. The Japanese model has many elements that could offer some radical reconsideration of the present DAC model.

## Appendix

### List of persons interviewed

#### Diet Members

- Mr. Keizo Takemi Member, House of Councilors (Liberal Democratic Party).  
Former Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Mr. Kiyohiko Toyama House of Representatives (Komeito-Party).  
Former Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

#### Ministries

- Mr. Ken Okaniwa Deputy Director-General, International Cooperation Bureau, Ambassador for Civil Society, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).
- Mr. Keiichi Muraoka Director, ODA Evaluation Division, Minister's Secretariat, MoFA.
- Mr. Koichiro Matsuura Former Director-General, Economic Cooperation Bureau, MoFA.  
Former Director-General, UNESCO.
- Mr. Kenzo Oshima Former Director-General, Economic Cooperation Bureau, MoFA.  
Former Senior Vice President, JICA.
- Mr. Masato Kanda Deputy Commissioner for International Affairs, Financial Services Agency.  
Former Director, Development Policy Division, Bureau of International Finance, Ministry of Finance.
- Mr. Mitsuhiro Maeda Professor, Advanced Institute of Industrial Technology.  
Former Director, Financial Cooperation Division, Trade and Economic Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.
- Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi Professor, Meiji University.  
Former Member, House of Representative.  
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs.  
Former Minister of Environment.

#### Civil Society

- Mr. Mitsuya Araki Chairman and Executive Director, The International Development Journal Co.,Ltd.
- Mr. Katsuji Imata Executive Director, Japan NPO Center.  
Senior Advisor, CIVICUS.
- Mr. Masaaki Ohashi Professor, Department of International Social Studies, Keisen University.  
Former President, Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC).
- Ms. Akiko Mera Hunger Free World.

Mr. Kiyotaka Takahashi	Professor, Department of International Social Studies, Keisen University. Japan Volunteer Center (JVC).
Mr. Takeshi Tomino	Deputy Secretary General, JANIC.
Mr. Kazumi Yamaoka	Research Coordinator, Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS).
Mr. Yukimasa Fukuda	Senior Economist, Emerging Economy Research Department, Institute for International Monetary Affairs.
Mr. Shinsuke Horiuchi	Advisor, The Africa Society of Japan
Mr. Tatsuo Fujimura	Chairman, Society of Researchers for International Development (SRID)

### **Academics**

Mr. Ryokichi Hirono	Professor Emeritus, Seikei University.
Mr. Hisahiro Kondoh	Associate Professor, Saitama University.
Ms. Izumi Ohno	Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS).
Ms. Mine Sato	Associate Professor, Yokohama National University.
Mr. Yasutami Shimomura	Professor Emeritus, Hosei University.
Mr. Keiichi Tsunekawa	Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS).
Mr. Toru Yanagihara	Professor, Faculty of International Studies, Takushoku University.
Mr. Kiyoshi Shiratori	Professor, Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University.
Ms. Machiko Tsubura	Part-time Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Keio University.

### **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)**

Ms. Sadako Ogata	Former President, JICA. Former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
Mr. Kato Hiroshi	Vice President, JICA.
Mr. Kiyoshi Kodera	Vice President, JICA.
Mr. Ichiro Tambo	Director, JICA Research Institute.
Mr. Akio Hosono	Senior Research Advisor, JICA Research Institute.
Mr. Naohiro Kitano	Deputy Director, JICA Research Institute.
Mr. Yukinori Harada	Research Assistant, JICA Research Institute.
Mr. Ken Inoue	Senior Advisor, Industrial Development and Public Policy Department.

Titles are those at the time of the interview.



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## Abstract (in Japanese)

### 要約

援助のあるべき姿に関する理念や判断基準（援助規範）は長らく西側先進諸国、なかんづく DAC 主導のもとで形成されてきた。しかし、中国やインドをはじめとする新興国援助の台頭に伴い、DAC 援助規範とは異なる「南南協力の援助規範」が注目されるようになってきている。

本稿は、日本が DAC の一員でありながら、独自の援助規範を形成し維持してきた事実に注目し、DAC 援助規範および「南南協力の援助規範」と比較しながらその特徴を明らかにした。日本は、援助を富める者の道義的義務とみなす立場（援助＝慈善観）から援助のあるべき姿を規定する DAC 援助規範とは異なり、援助を対等な者の互恵的協力関係とみなす立場（援助＝協力観）から独自の援助規範を形成・維持してきている。具体的には、人材育成支援や借款を通じた被援助国の自助努力支援を重視すること、日本企業との緊密な連携のもとで援助・貿易・投資の「三位一体」を重視することなどが挙げられる。

援助を慈善ではなく協力とみなし、互恵平等や自助努力を重視する日本の援助規範は中国をはじめとする「南南協力の援助規範」と類似するが、自国を途上国とみなす中国やインド等とは異なり、日本は援助供与開始当初から一貫して自国を先進国と位置付けている点が決定的に異なる。

日本は、DAC 規範が重視する民主主義や人権、法の支配等の「普遍的理念」を取り入れつつも、上記のような独自の援助理念を一貫して維持してきた。そして、そうした日本独自の援助規範は、日本を取り巻く国際環境と国際社会における日本のアイデンティティの変化に応じて形成されてきた。「南南協力の援助規範」の台頭に伴って DAC 主導の援助規範が相対化されつつある昨今、両者のいずれにも属さない日本独自の援助理念は、より注目を浴びてしかるべきである。