Africa-Japan Relations in the Context of Global Peace and Security: The Need for a Well-Tailored Policy

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Executive Summary

The seventh Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD VII) will be held in Yokohama, Japan from August 28 to 30, 2019. Two of the three specific agendas of the conference will directly and indirectly focus on issues of peace and security. In light of TICAD VII, therefore, it is high time to revisit Africa-Japan relations focusing on the peace and security agenda. In the last decade alone Japan has established its first-ever overseas military base in an African state, it has deployed hundreds of troops in South Sudan as part of the UN Mission in South Sudan from 2012-2017, and it has also taken part in the multilateral counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia. Regardless of the above, Japan's contribution to international peace and security is so far primarily oriented in a non-military direction, although the 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security aims to broaden Japan's engagement in other areas of international peace and security from which it has traditionally shied away from. This policy brief highlights the changes and continuities in Japan's engagement in Africa's peace and security. It argues that it is important for African counterparts to understand Japan's peculiar approach to international peace and security; one that is shaped by constitutional restrictions, entrenched domestic norms and public opinions. Hence, this policy brief calls for concrete and well-tailored African policies towards Japan.

Key Points

- Japan's role in African peace and security should be understood from the perspective of Japan's own approach to international peace and security which is shaped by its entrenched domestic norms and public opinions.

- The African Union and its Member States—in their efforts to promote African-centered Solutions to problems of peace and security in Africa—should maximize the gains of Africa-Japan relations by developing concrete and well-tailored policies towards Japan.

- Japan's 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security is expected to broaden the hitherto approach that Japan followed concerning its participation in international peace and security. For the time being, however, Japan's niche in the area of international peace and security is primarily, but not entirely, limited to non-military security issues. Hence, the AU and individual African states should direct their partnerships with Japan in the areas of human security, peace building, and responses to humanitarian emergencies.

- One of the most important agendas of global governace which Africa and Japan have common interest in is UN reform, particularly the reform of the Security Council. The Africa Union—and its Member States—should use TICAD and other avenues to collaborate with Japan for the earliest realization of UN Security Council reform.

Introduction

From August 28 to 30, 2019, the seventh edition of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) will be held in Yokohama under the theme "Advancing Africa's Development through People, Technology and Innovation". According to Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), under this theme "…Japan intends to strongly boost Africa's development through assistance that is unique to Japan." Additionally, it also "…hopes that there will be growing interest in Africa and TICAD 7 both domestically and internationally." In terms of specific agendas, MFA has announced that TICAD VII will focus on three areas, namely: *(a) economic transformation and improvements in business environment and institution through private investment and innovation; (b) promotion of resilient and sustainable society for human security; and (c) peace and stability (support for Africa's own proactive efforts).* [1]

Since its inception in 1993, agendas pertaining to development and conflict have been the preoccupation of TICAD. In fact, starting from its first edition, TICAD recognized the link between development and conflict, viewing the latter as a factor undermining Africa's progress. It is partly due to this recognition that economic development, conflict, and human security have been the recurring themes of Africa-Japan relations in general and the TICAD process in particular. [2] Hence, in trying to understand Africa-Japan relations in the context of the post-Cold War global order, one cannot ignore the important role of TICAD.

Thus, in light of the upcoming TICAD VII and from the perspective of proliferating partnerships for peace and security in Africa, this policy brief examines major policy issues in Africa-Japan relations. In particular, this policy brief discusses why it is essential for African states in general and the African Union (AU) in particular to have a concrete policy framework that matches the peculiarities of Japan's approach to international peace and security.

The scope of this policy brief is limited to Africa-Japan relations in the areas of peace and security. Accordingly, it is organized into five sections. The first section is the introduction. Section two highlights the evolution of Africa-Japan relations. The third section discusses major policy areas that characterize Africa-Japan relations. Section four explains why Africa needs to have a well-tailored policy toward Japan. The last section then provides concluding remarks and a list of pertinent recommendations.

The Evolution of Africa-Japan Relations

Africa-Japan relations can be divided into three periods. [3] The first period is between 1960 and 1973. This period, in Japan's Cold War international relations, is characterized by "separation of politics from economics". Thus, in Africa, Japan followed a similar policy. Its main trading partner was South Africa, albeit these bilateral relations were not without condemnations due to the Apartheid system governing South Africa at the time. The second period runs between 1973 and 1989 in which Japan tried to strengthen its relations with African states following the 1973 oil crisis. During this period, Japan had adopted what is termed as "comprehensive security"—a policy aimed at reducing Japan's reliance on energy and other natural resources from the Middle East. This period can be considered as a turning point in Africa-Japan relations due to certain symbolic measures taken by Japan, such as high-level visits by Japanese officials including the then Foreign Minister Toshio Kimura. Japan also supported sanctions over Southern Rhodesia and South Africa in a bid to improve its relations with the rest of the African states. It also increased its Official Development Assistance (ODA)—mainly to resource-rich countries—from $5 million in 1972 to $286.2 million in 1982,

which further increased to $909.7 million in 1991.[4]

The third and most important period came in 1989 and continues to the present. In this period, Africa-Japan relations have demonstrated major progress due mainly to concrete steps taken by Japan. This includes a significant increase in Japanese ODA to African states, making it one of the top ODA providers to Africa until its own economic challenges forced it to reduce thereof since the mid-1990s. It was during this period that Japan proposed to host the 1993 TICAD I as a "pioneer development forum on Africa". TICAD came to the forefront in the context of the post-Cold War global order of the early 1990s when Western interest shifted to Eastern Europe, and the so-called "aid fatigue" and "Afro-pessimism" prevailed. It was also the period when Japan was trying to determine its place in international relations. Therefore, Africa was seen as "a frontier for Japanese contribution to the international community".[5] Since then, Japan has been hosting the TICAD process as a summit-level conference that primarily focuses on Africa's development.

Japan and African Peace and Security

Over the last two decades, Africa-Japan relations have shown improvements in the areas of peace and security. As one of the primary sponsors or proponents of the Human Security approach, Japan's ODA focuses on addressing sources of human insecurity. This is because the human security approach sits well with Japan's peace and security norms which limit (constitutionally) Japan's international engagement to non-military cooperation. Therefore, JICA's (Japan International Cooperation Agency) activities in African states have been shaped by the human security approach.[6]

In recent years, however, Japan has entered into new areas—from the perspective of Japan's own tradition—of cooperation in Africa. The first pertains to its participation in the multinational counter-piracy operation in the Indian Ocean and the maritime security/safety training and capacity building it provides to Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia. It also provided terrorism surveillance equipments to Kenya.[7] The second relates to Japan's lease of a military base in Djibouti, the first of its kind for Japan since the end of the Second World War. These two developments should be seen in light of Japan's efforts to protect its economic and security interests in the Indian Ocean, which are threatened by the piracy off the coast of Somalia.[8] Thirdly, Japan had deployed members of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in South Sudan as part of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). This is considered to be Japan's longest and relatively 'robust' participation (2012-2017) in a UN peace support operation since its participation in the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in the early 1990s.[9] As of 2018, it also financed (with approximately 100 million US dollars) peace support training facilities in 16 African states including Benin, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.[10]

Observers of Africa-Japan relations cite at least five major factors for Japan's revitalized engagement in Africa.[11] Firstly, the piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean has been seen by Japan as a threat to its vital interest. Japan considers a "free and open sea" indispensable to its economic interests and national security. The second factor is related to the rise of terrorist incidents in some parts of Africa and Japan's interest in tackling the threat this may pose against Japanese nationals and businesses working in Africa.[12] One thing Japan learned from the 2013 terrorist attack in Algiers in which Japanese nationals were killed is that it

should no longer continue to rely on the help of other states to rescue its nationals and ensure their safety. Thus, in line with the 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security[13], proactively contributing to global efforts geared towards averting terrorism and readying its forces for rescue missions if and when an attack happens is something Japan has decided to do.[14]

Thirdly, Japan's increased engagement with Africa can also be viewed as an effort to catch up with the increasing influence of emerging powers, especially that of China and Chinese businesses, in Africa. In its vision "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" that seeks to preserve the status quo in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Japan considers Africa one of the two important continents—along with Asia. This from the perspective of Japan, is a "key for stability and prosperity of the international community". Hence, expanding engagement with African countries is an important element of Japan's efforts to counter China.[15] As such, the regional rivalry—in East Asia—between Japan and China has certain effects on Africa-Japan relations. That is, Japan's decision to enhance its relations with Africa; the decision to hold the Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD) alternating in Japan and Africa; and the decision to hold TICAD every three years instead of five are, in a way, reactions to the fast-paced Africa-China relations. Accordingly, the 2016 TICAD VI was held for the first time in an African state (i.e. Nairobi, Kenya).

Fourthly, Japan wants its businesses to invest and compete with businesses from elsewhere in Africa. Accordingly, its increased presence in Africa can be interpreted as an effort to reassure and encourage commonly risk-averse Japanese businesses. The last factor, certainly not the least, pertains to "demonstrating Japan's identity as a "proactive contributor to peace", and a responsible shareholder in international security".[16] This is perhaps a result of the recent efforts by the Government of Japan to change

the country's approach to international peace and security.

In all, Africa-Japan relations—especially in the area of peace and security—seem to have entered a new terrain. Apart from bilateral cooperation, ties with the AU and sub-regional organizations such as IGAD have been enhanced. For instance, Japan has been a member of the IGAD Partners' Forum (IPF) and financially assisted IGAD's effort in the South Sudan peace process. In 2018 alone, Japan supported the IGAD led HLRF (High Level Revitalization Forum) process with USD $3.6million.[17] Additionally, the AU Commission became a full partner of the TICAD process in 2010.[18] In 2015, for example, Japan has donated $3.2 million to support the AU's fight against Ebola.[19] This progress is mainly a result of the aforementioned factors.

Why an Africa-Japan Security Policy?

One of the recurring criticisms when it comes to Africa's relations or partnerships with major global powers (i.e., great and middle powers) is that the continent does not have a well thought-out and concrete policy framework. This policy vacuum is exposed by, for instance, Africa's relations with China.[20] Let alone individual African states, a cursory look at the AU instruments tells us little about the concrete policy frameworks concerning international partnerships. For instance, the AU's website ("partnerships" page) describes a list of partnerships, while it tells us almost nothing about the specific policies and principles guiding the AU's and its Member States' relations vis-a-vis each partner.[21] It was due to this gap that the Ten Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 called for a "…comprehensive AU policy framework" and "…articulation of a strategic partnership policy with respect to each of the key strategic partners".[22] According to the

latest progress report available, such specific and concrete policies are yet to be developed.[23] This applies to Africa-China, Africa-US, Africa-Japan, Africa-India relations, among many others. This criticism is particularly important when it comes to partnerships in the area of African peace and security.[24] Additionally, it is even more important for Africa-Japan relations.

In the areas of peace and security, Japan is not a typical international partner. Its engagement in international peace and security is constricted by constitutional restrictions, highly entrenched domestic norms and public opinions. From a legal perspective, Japan has been trying to overcome these restrictions. Cases in point are the introduction of new legislations that would enable it to deploy its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) for individual and collective self-defense including peace support operations authorized by the United Nations. Nevertheless, this is yet to be tested in practice. As a country that has been very cautious to deploy the SDF as combatants in other countries, to which the 2017 withdrawal of the SDF from South Sudan attests to, it may take a while for Japan to put the new legislation into practice. [25]

From the perspective of domestic norms and public opinion, there is strong resistance against the deployment of the SDF—and any Japanese personnel for that matter—in 'dangerous areas'. As stated above, new legislation and policies have been introduced by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government to address these issues and enhance Japan's "proactive contribution" to peace and security. Nevertheless, such efforts were still not able to avert the 2017 withdrawal of Japanese peacekeepers deployed in South Sudan. Nor did it prevent a significant reduction in JICA staff stationed in South Sudan. The domestic norms and public opinions are yet to align with the new laws and policies.[26]

Regardless, Japan has an excellent track record in supporting human security and peacebuilding as well as in responding to

natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. It has been at the forefront of the UN's human security initiatives and peacebuilding endeavors. Its development agency, JICA, has ample experience and an excellent track record of integrating and implementing these approaches while undertaking development cooperation. Where deployed, the SDF had also been an asset for peace support operations in the areas of engineering and infrastructure. Recognizing and clearly understanding these Japanese niches of engagement is, thus, very imperative.

In addition to the above, Japan has been one of the vocal proponents of UN reform, particularly of the UN Security Council.[27] As a member of the G4 (which includes Brazil, India and Germany) who have been vigorously advocating for reforming the Security Council, Japan seeks Africa's support, as African states also wish to be represented in the Security Council—both as permanent and non-permanent members. This makes Africa and Japan partners sharing mutually benefiting goals within one of the most important agendas of global security governance. Such common interests can serve as a stepping stone for widening cooperation in other realms of global governance.

Therefore, African states in general and the African Union in particular, should develop concrete policies that guide their partnership with Japan. In so doing, it is imperative that they take Japan's peculiar and evolving approach to international peace and security into careful consideration. Although it may be cumbersome for African actors to have tailored policies towards each of their partners, it can safely be argued that generic policies would not help maximize Africa's gains when it comes to partnerships with Japan. In the context of entrenched norms and new trends, a better approach would be one that focuses on Japan's niches in the areas of peace and security. These engagement niches, as mentioned above, are mainly related to human security, peace

building in post-conflict societies, non-military contributions to peace support operations and responses to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Africa-Japan relations have shown commendable progress over the last two decades. This progress is driven by a number of factors that are mainly related to important steps taken by the Japanese. As part of its effort to enhance its global standing, which pertains to protecting its economic and security interests, Japan considers Africa quite important though not necessarily indispensable. That is why its decision to lease a military base in Djibouti, its deployment of the SDF as peacekeepers in South Sudan, its ongoing financial and technical support to peace support training centers in Africa, and the revitalization of TICAD, etc. should not be taken lightly.

Unfortunately, the African Union and most of its Member States do not have concrete policies towards their partners, especially in the areas of peace and security. As a result, while most of Africa's partners have well-articulated policies and approaches in terms of maximizing their interests, the same cannot be said about the African side. This applies to Africa-Japan relations as well. Africa needs to have concrete and well-tailored policies towards Japan so that it can use and maximize the benefits of Africa-Japan relations to the fullest. Hence, this policy brief recommends that:

- Japan's niche in the area of international peace and security cooperation has been primarily, but not entirely, limited to non-military issues. Hence, the AU and

individual African states should direct their partnerships with Japan in the areas of human security, peace building, capacity building in the areas of rapid responses to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

- The African Union—in its effort to promote African-centered Solutions to African Problems (AfSol)—should maximize the gains of Africa-Japan relations by developing concrete and articulated policies toward Japan. That is, the African Union should have a well-tailored policy framework toward Japan so that it can benefit from the aforementioned niches of Japanese engagement. The African Union should also develop a continental policy framework vis-à-vis Japan so that individual African states can use it as a collective policy guideline.

- Individual African states—depending on the depth and nature of their bilateral relations—should at least be cognizant of Japan's niches in international relations and exploit the opportunities presented by Africa-Japan relations in the context of TICAD. One major area they should focus on is human security and peace building which Japan has been actively promoting for almost three decades.

- One of the most important agendas of global governace which Africa and Japan have common interest in is UN reform, particularly the reform of the Security Council. The Africa Union—and its Member States—should use TICAD and other avenues to collaborate with Japan for the earliest realization of reform of the UN Security Council.

About the Author

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End notes

[1] Announcement of the Theme of the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7) (https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002510.html); About the TCAD7 (https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000457039.pdf)

[2] TICAD VI Brochure, 2016 (https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/focus_on/ticad_vi/c8h0vm0000a0bw1c-att/ticad_vi_01.pdf)

[3] Takehiko Ochiai (2001). Beyond TICAD Diplomacy: Japan's African Policy and African Initiatives in Conflict Response. African Study Monographs, 22(1): 37-52

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid

[6] JICA (2010). JICA's Human Security Approach: Features and Cases (https://www.jica.go.jp/publication/pamph/issues/ku57pq00002iztxl-att/human_security_en.pdf)

[7] "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" (https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000407643.pdf)

[8] Therefore, its base and aid to Djibouti and the training of Somali personnel on maritime security cannot be construed as a military assistance. It should rather be seen from the perspective of the new legislation which allows the Japanese Government to proactively contribute to peace and security in promoting Japan's own security.

[9] Daisuke Akimoto (2017). Japan's International Peace Operations in South Sudan: Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection Dilemmas. African Journal of Conflict Resolution, 17(2), 143-167.

[10] Pajon 2017, p.24, op cit; MOFA (2016). TICAD V Progress Report (https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000170784.pdf) and Japan in Africa (2016). Providing Quality Education to Ensure Growth and Stability. Japan in Africa, Vol. 3 (August 15, 2016). (https://www.japan.go.jp/japaninafrica/articles/en_03.html). Additional information obtained from contacts at the Embassy of Japan to Ethiopia.

[11] Celine Pajon (2017). Japan's Security Policy in Africa: The Dawn of a Strategic Approach? Asie Visions, No. 93, Ifri, May 2017; Yuki Tatsumi (2016). Japan as a Peace Enabler: Views from the Next Generation. US: Stimson Center.

[12] An example being the one in Algeria in which Japanese nationals were killed, BBC (2013) Algeria hostage crisis: Japan confirms two more deaths (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21169174).

[13] "Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security: Seamless Responses for Peace and Security of Japan and the International Community" (https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000143304.pdf)

14 Pajon, 2017, op cit. This, however, is dependent on certain conditions such as the consent of the state concerned.

15 "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" (https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000407643.pdf)

16 Ibid.
17 Japanese Government Injects Usd 3.2 Million to Support South Sudan Peace Process (https://igad.int/divisions/peace-and-security/2061-japanese-government-injects-usd-3-2-million-to-support-south-sudan-peace-process)

18 African Union (AU) Handbook (https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/31829-file-au_handbook_2019_english.pdf)

19 http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/japan-donates-usd-3-2-million-to-au-peace-fund-to-support-fight-against-ebola-commissioner-chergui-expresses-appreciation-for-japan-s-strong-partnership
20 Africa needs a strategy for 'emerging partners', Africa Renewal, (https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2010/africa-needs-strategy-%E2%80%98emerging-partners%E2%80%99); China-Africa: high time for a common integrated African policy on China (https://www.tralac.org/news/article/12343-china-africa-high-time-for-a-common-integrated-african-policy-on-china.html)

21 African Union (AU), Africa's Strategic Partnership With Other Parts Of The World (https://au.int/en/partnerships/intro)

22 The First Ten Year Implementation Plan 2013-2023 (Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want), pp.27-28, p.104.

23 Progress Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan (https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/32150-wd-progress_rept_on_implemen_of_agenda_2063_first_ten_year_implementation_plan_e_original.docx)

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