COMPARATIVE STUDY ON “ASIAN” APPROACHES TO AFRICA: AN INTRODUCTORY REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT During the last decade, Asian countries have become more noticeable in Africa. “China in Africa,” and then “India in Africa,” have been talked about as hot topics in academia and journalism. We have already seen an enormous amount of research about “China in Africa.” Before China and India, the issue of “Japan in Africa” was focused on in the 1990s. “South Korea in Africa” is the next issue. This article aims to understand the “Asian” character of African policy through a comparative study of four major Asian countries: China, India, Japan, and South Korea. This article firstly summarizes the history of relations between these four Asian countries and Africa. Secondly, it analyzes principal features of the African policies of the four Asian countries. Finally this article compares the four countries’ approaches to Africa to consider the Asian character of African policy and Asia-Africa relations for the coming decades.

Key Words: African policy; China; India; Japan; South Korea.

“China has an African policy. Africa doesn’t have a China policy.”(1)

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Asian approaches to Africa became a very hot topic in African studies as emerging actors in Africa. Besides Western traditional donors or partners, BRICS(2) in Africa are starting to talk. We have already seen an enormous amount of research about “China in Africa,” from scandalous articles to analytical works. Now we see many studies about “India in Africa.” Brazil,3) Russia, South Korea (Republic of Korea), and Turkey in Africa are now being discussed as coming topics.

This article aims to consider the character of the African policy of four major Asian countries (China, India, Japan, and South Korea) through a comparative study. These four Asian countries are not only influential partners with Africa, but also the most influential countries in Asia. It is reasonable to analyze and compare these countries’ approaches to Africa in order to better grasp Asia-Africa relations. However, I should point out that I am aware of the ambiguity of the concept “Asia.”(4) It often refers to geography. This concept does not necessarily influence the identity of the more than 3 billion people who live in this region.

During the last two decades, we have seen many forums for Africa’s development, which were held in Asian countries.(5) There seems to be an inflation of African forums in Asian countries. Recently, the need for African studies in Asian countries is growing rapidly. While we found an enormous number of studies on
specific Asian countries’ approaches to Africa, we have not found sufficient comparative works that seek the “Asia-ness” of African policy.

This article is a preparatory reflection on the “Asian” character of African policy. This article will compare the African policy of the four major Asian partners of Africa, in terms of historical context, diplomatic and economic interest, international cooperation, and African forums.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ASIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

The historical context of Asian countries should not be underestimated when analyzing contemporary Asian approaches to Africa. First, we need to focus on the history of the rivalries among the Asian countries. This point has not been sufficiently considered in previous studies on Asia-Africa relations.

Rivalry among these four Asian countries has often been reflected in the African policy of each country. We have seen disputes between China and India, China and Japan, China and South Korea, and Japan and South Korea on territorial and other issues. Outside these four countries, Taiwan issues have influenced China’s African policy, and North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) issues have influenced South Korea’s African policy. Unlike European international relations after the European Union process started, a strong framework for consensus in Asian international relations does not exist yet.

Among Asian countries, the memory of colonialism is not in the past. European and Japanese colonialisms have brought problematic issues to Asian international relations. Anti-colonialism and nonaligned liaisons between Asia and Africa have existed as a traditional tie ever since the Bandung Conference in 1955. After the cold war was over, Asian countries started rapid economic development. Asian countries that were former recipients of development aid became donor actors, which began to change the concept of “donor.” Donor countries no longer mean Western industrialized countries (including Japan) in this second decade of the 21st century. We should consider this transformation of the world’s situation in analyzing Asia and Africa relations.

I. Brief History of China and Africa

China has never been a “new” actor in Africa. The Chinese government began its history with Africa during the Ming Dynasty (René, 2010: 15). China’s communist regime has established relations with African countries. China’s cooperation with Africa started before the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s–1970s. China joined the United Nations, thanks to the African countries’ diplomatic support. China offered aid to African countries, despite its difficult economic condition. The most symbolic Chinese cooperation to Africa in those days was the Tanzania-Zambia Railway construction. China’s cooperation had been guided by eight principles, presented by Zhou Enlai in 1964.

Economic development after Deng Xiaoping’s reform transformed China into a huge donor. In the 21st century, “China in Africa” became a very hot topic in
African studies and international relations studies. China became the second largest trade partner with Africa, after the United States. The increase of China’s presence in Africa created fear in the Western world (Alden, 2007: 19). For example, China increased its influence in Francophone Africa, while France has decreased its influence in its former African colonies. 

China’s first principle of cooperation is non-interference in the internal affairs of the partner countries. China has accused the Western donors of political conditionality on aid, such as democratization, good governance, and human rights. Nevertheless, China’s presence has also influenced crucial political issues in African countries, for example, the Zambian Presidential election in 2006.

II. Brief History of India and Africa

India is a former British colony. India shared with African countries the experience of colonization by European countries. Mahatma Gandhi is to this day recognized as the symbolic person that bridges India and Africa. Gandhi was devoted to the civil rights of Indian Diasporas in South Africa as a lawyer for two decades. His experiences in South Africa made him the great political leader for the independence movement of India. After independence, Nehru’s non-interference principle, nonaligned, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism had been retained for decades in India’s African policy (Beri, 2011: 5; Vines, 2010: 3). India has claimed to be the leader of third world.

However, this tradition was modified pragmatically after India started its rapid economic growth in the 1990s (Beri, 2011: 5; Cheru & Obi, 2011: 14). India needs Africa for energy, food security, and as a market for Indian products. India estimated that it would become the third largest energy consuming country in 2030. India is relying on Africa to continue its economic development. During colonial time, Indian Diasporas became rooted in African society (Dubey, 2010). The established networks of Indian Diasporas is an advantage for India in conducting cooperation and business in Africa (Cheru & Obi, 2010: 4).

III. Brief History of Japan and Africa

Compared to China and India, Japan is a relatively new actor in Africa. Until the 1960s, African countries were important trade partners for cotton products in developing the Japanese economy. After the industrial structure changed, Japan reduced economic interests in Africa, except during the two oil crisis moments in the 1970s. In the 1990s, Japan became the top donor country in the world and a massive Asian donor to Africa throughout the decade.

Japan showed its diplomatic ambition in its involvements in Africa. Japan increased its ODA for Africa and dispatched troops for PKO in Mozambique and Rwanda. Japan was the first to start the African forum among the Asian countries. But African policy never occupied an important place in Japan’s diplomacy. Japan’s originality in terms of African policy has not been made apparent. In the 21st century, Japan fell into aid fatigue due to its economic crisis. Japan radically reduced its ODA and presence in Africa.
IV. Brief History of South Korea and Africa

South Korea is aware that they had undergone a typical process as a developing country (Rhee, 1993: 15). South Korea’s engagement with Africa aims to promote the Korean development model for Africa’s economic development and industrialization (Shelton, 2009: 7). Due to the Korean War, South Korea’s income per capita was almost equal to Ghana at its independence in 1957. South Korea’s rivalry with North Korea was a crucial concern in the 1960s and 1970s for their African policy.

Table 1 shows the diplomatic struggle between South and North Korea in the 1960s. The Park administration refused the co-existence of two sovereign Koreas in diplomacy until the beginning of the 1970s. South Korea broke diplomatic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Establishment of diplomatic relation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>September 25, 1958</td>
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<td>Benin</td>
<td>August 1, 1961</td>
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<td>Botswana</td>
<td>April 18, 1968</td>
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<td>Burundi</td>
<td>March 11, 1967</td>
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<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>August 10, 1961</td>
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<td>CAR</td>
<td>September 5, 1963</td>
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<td>Chad</td>
<td>August 6, 1961</td>
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<td>Congo (Brazaville)</td>
<td>August 18, 1961 (closed in 1965)</td>
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<td>Congo (Leopoldville)</td>
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<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>December 23, 1963</td>
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<td>Gabon</td>
<td>October 1, 1962</td>
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<td>The Gambia</td>
<td>April 21, 1965</td>
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<td>Ghana</td>
<td>December 8, 1964</td>
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<td>Guinea</td>
<td>June 15, 1960</td>
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<td>Cote d’Ivoire</td>
<td>July 23, 1961</td>
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<td>Upper Volta</td>
<td>April 20, 1962</td>
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<td>Kenya</td>
<td>February 7, 1964</td>
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<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>December 7, 1966</td>
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<td>Liberia</td>
<td>March 18, 1964</td>
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<td>Madagascar</td>
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<td>Malawi</td>
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<td>Mali</td>
<td>October 31, 1960</td>
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<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>(closed in 1964)</td>
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<td>Morocco</td>
<td>July 6, 1962</td>
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<td>Niger</td>
<td>July 27, 1961</td>
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<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>March 21, 1963</td>
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<td>Senegal</td>
<td>October 19, 1962</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
<td>April 13, 1967</td>
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<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>November 10, 1968</td>
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<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>January 13, 1965</td>
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<td>Togo</td>
<td>July 26, 1963</td>
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<td>Uganda</td>
<td>March 26, 1963</td>
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Source: Rhee (1993: 6), modified by the author.
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relations with the African countries that recognized North Korea. But South Korea had to pragmatically modify its diplomatic principles with Africa (Rhee, 1993: 4–5). The Park government officially abandoned the Hallstein Doctrine in 1973 (Rhee, 1993: 5) and restored diplomatic relations with African countries that had diplomatic relations with North Korea.

After the 1990s, South Korea’s diplomatic concerns decreased in Africa. Economic interests and humanitarian motives increased. South Korea joined the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD in 2009. South Korea is recognized as a developed and “northern” donor country.

PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF THE AFRICAN POLICIES OF FOUR ASIAN COUNTRIES

I have surveyed the principal features of the four Asian countries’ approaches to Africa.

I. China

1. General character

The year 2006 was a threshold of China-Africa relations. The Chinese government published a document entitled “China’s African Policy” in this year. China’s general feature of their approaches to Africa is a composition of cooperation, investment, and trade under strong state ownership, led by the communist party. China has claimed itself as the largest “developing” country. China’s guiding rule of international cooperation is clearly different from Western donors. The Chinese “win-win” model of cooperation does not derive from the idea of charity. Aid and business are closely intertwined. Like India, China has a huge poor population. It is not easy for the Chinese government to persuade the nation about why it continues international cooperation (Pehnelt & Abel, 2007: 3). After China has become a giant actor in Africa, the concept of the “donor” becomes more relative, while China does not accept to be called a “donor.”

Aggressive involvement by Chinese local governments in African policy is a remarkable feature of the Chinese approach when compared to the other three Asian countries. Provinces are the main actors of China’s local government cooperation in Africa (Brown & Chun, 2009: 10). They are not only local governments, but also sometimes traders, project builders, investors, aid providers, and inter-governmental actors (Chen & Junbo, 2009: 1). The Chinese-African People’s Friendship Association (CAPFA) is the coordinator organization for local cooperation between China and Africa. Executive members of CAPFA have regularly visited African countries. CAPFA has also received frequent local and national delegations from African countries. CAPFA has organized seminars in Africa and China. China has established more than 100 sister city agreements with African local governments. These local networks promote Chinese local industries and investments in Africa. Chinese local governments have frequently sent their delegations to African countries with local companies. At the fifth
Conference of Africities (Africité) held in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2009, a tripartite cooperation by the local governments of China, Africa, and France was announced.\(^{(17)}\) Many participants at this conference were impressed by how China could have local influence in Africa.

2. **Interests in Africa**

Africa has been diplomatically and economically important to China. China needed Africa’s diplomatic support to return to the United Nations (Li, 2007: 78), to struggle against Taiwan, to protect itself from accusations of human rights violation, most notably the Tiananmen incident (Taylor, 2009: 13) by the Western world (Liu Hongwu, 2009: 34–36; Li, 2007: 75), to hold the Beijing Olympic games (Alden, 2007: 22), and to block the UN Security Council (UNSC) reform, particularly against Japan’s new permanent membership. Chinese national leaders have frequently visited Africa, which is China’s traditional eminent feature in policy, and has brought about diplomatic advantages.

China’s principal feature of its African policy is non-interference with African countries’ internal affairs. But there is one pre-condition for this approach: the “one China principle.” African countries must establish diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China as the only legitimate authority in China in order to receive China’s cooperation.\(^{(18)}\) China never works for any country with diplomatic ties to Taiwan.\(^{(19)}\) The Hallstein doctrine is strictly adhered to between China and Taiwan (Brautigam, 2009: 67). The one China principle works practically as a diplomatic conditionality for African countries.

Democratization (“political reform” in Chinese expression) in Africa in the 1990s was a very sensitive issue for China (Liu Hongwu, 2009: 38–39; Li, 2005: 69),\(^{(20)}\) because in the beginning of the 1990s some “democratically” elected African regimes recognized Taiwan. Needless to say, Africa is also economically important for China. Africa is a large trade and investment market, and a partner of Chinese companies and the state in securing energy and food. China needs Africa to further advance its economic development and to satisfy its people in order to legitimize its regime.

3. **ODA**

China claims itself the leader of non OECD-DAC partners. China calls its cooperation “South-South cooperation.” China does not use the word “aid” or “donor” in its cooperation. South-South cooperation implies that China helps other developing countries as a developing country itself.\(^{(21)}\) China’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been veiled. China had not published any reports on cooperation (Brautigam, 2009: 20). China’s aid system is different from the OECD’s norm. China has no duty of peer review by OECD members. A market rate loan is included in cooperation. However, China did present a whitepaper on China’s ODA in April 2011,\(^{(22)}\) which was the first official report on the ODA. China is not a new actor, but an emergent and “different” actor in terms of international cooperation.

China’s aid does not derive from missionary charity. China clearly insists that they support Africa in order to be supported by Africa. Despite its non-interference
principle, China’s cooperation has “politically” organized in Africa, for example, they have assisted with the construction of a Presidential palace, Foreign Ministry building, and national stadium, according to the African leaders’ requirements. These showy projects were “diplomatically” successful, but sometimes implicated in corruption and political disputes in the recipient countries. However, China’s entrance as an influential donor in Africa might be a good opportunity to question development aid, after an unnecessarily successful history of a half century.

China has no specific aid agency. The main organizer of China’s ODA is not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but of Commerce (Berger & Wissenbach, 2007: 14). China’s cooperation is naturally oriented toward economic interests. The Ministry of Commerce has small staff in the division of international cooperation (Brautigam, 2009: 109). Eximbank was established in 1994, and is the main engine of cooperation, through concession loans. The local governments are also important actors of international cooperation. It is China’s character and advantage to establish relations in Africa.

China’s ODA has remarkably increased during the last decade, particularly with budgets from the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Commerce. China prefers to work with other “developing countries” for Africa, like BRICS and the G20 framework. South Africa joined BRICS as a new member at the Sanya conference held in China in April 2011.

In terms of China’s style of ODA, we find similarities with Japan’s cooperation. Before China and India, “Japan in Africa” was focused on during the 1990s in the Western world with some fears. The similarities of cooperation between China and Japan were very naturally formed. China had been the biggest recipient country of Japan’s ODA for decades. Infrastructure biased turn-key systems, helping dictatorial regimes, the destruction of the environment, ties to domestic companies, repayment of loans by natural resources, request-based systems, land tenure, and low grant loans had already been criticized as problems with Japan’s ODA, although no country is innocent, more or less, in terms of these points.

4. Trade and investment

China’s ODA is strongly intertwined with trade and investment in Africa. This is a conglomerate of state and local governments, plus private or state-owned companies. China’s affiliation with the WTO in 2001 was the big turning point on the issue of “China in Africa.” Trade between China and Africa expanded six times, from US$20 billion in 2001 to US$120 billion in 2009 (Cheru & Obi, 2011: 13). China aggressively entered into Africa after affiliation to the WTO. State-owned and private companies were pushed by government financial support. The Chinese government is politically and diplomatically dominant, but not in trade and investment (Taylor, 2009: 58). The Chinese local governments have worked for local companies to invest in Africa (Alden, 2007: 29–30, 133).

5. Forum framework

The forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has been held every three years since 2000. FOCAC2 in 2003 is known for the Beijing consensus (Alden, 2007: 105), an appeal which criticized the political conditionality of Western
countries for aid. China recognizes FOCAC3 (2006) as the memorial event of China-Africa relations. From this year on, “China in Africa” gained a worldwide spotlight. This forum impressed the world because the diplomatic war against Taiwan was practically over in Africa. In 2006, before FOCAC3, Senegal and Chad broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan to re-establish relations with China. In particular, the loss of ties to Chad brought definitive damage to Taiwan. Taiwan lost not only the diplomatic support, but also oil resources in Africa. China started to work more comfortably in Africa. However, the “Taiwan card” has not lost its meaning in Africa yet (Brautigam, 2009: 125).

II. India

1. General character

In the 21st century, India clearly is in a strong rivalry with China in Africa (Vines, 2010: 2). India faces competition with China in pursuing and realizing its interests in Africa. India’s leading actors in Africa are the private companies such as Tata, Mittal, and Airtel. Besides this competition against China, India is also eager to achieve permanent membership in the UN Security Council. One motive is to be equal with China in the international community. China has not supported India’s permanent membership (Carmody, 2011: 41). India has called African partners to encourage the reform (democratization) of the United Nations and international organizations. The India is conscious of China in Africa, economically, diplomatically, and on security affairs. Indian Diasporas increased their importance in India’s African policy. India profits maximally from the established network of Indian Diasporas in Africa. Indian Diasporas are rooted in African society, particularly in eastern and southern Africa. India recovered from the trauma of the exile of Indian Diasporas from Uganda in the 1970s under the Amin regime.

2. Interests in Africa

After having failed at their UN reform attempt in 2006 with Brazil, Germany, and Japan, India chose to work with emergent developing countries to achieve its diplomatic goal in the IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa) framework. India expects IBSA, under Indian initiative, to be outside of China’s influence. Defense of the sea lane in the Indian ocean is crucial for India (van Rooyen, 2011: 17–18; Bhattacharya, 2010: 72; Carmody, 2011: 43; Vines, 2011: 191). India is very conscious of the Chinese naval operations in the Indian Ocean (van Rooyen, 2011: 13).

Economic interest is a vital issue for India. Africa provides 18% of India’s crude oil imports. In 2030, India estimates that it will be the third highest energy consuming country in the world, and that its domestic coal resources will dry up in 40 years (Naidu, 2011: 53). Energy security is India’s first concern. Besides oil, Indian companies have increased their investments in other natural resources, agriculture and ICT. Telecommunication companies such as Airtel and Essar, thirst for the African market.
3. ODA

India is not an OECD donor. So it is difficult to know the exact amount of aid that India distributes (Cheru & Obi, 2011: 17). Like China, India prefers the concept of South-South cooperation, rather than that of aid or donor. India does not question tied aid. But at present, India cannot compete against China in diplomacy or the amount of aid and investment to Africa (Cheru & Obi, 2011: 13; René, 2010: 34). India should show its advantage to African partners (see Table 2). One remarkable point is low technology (low capital intensity) cooperation.

Will India’s development with “democracy” be a model for Africa? (Vittorini & Harris, 2011: 212) India claims itself as the largest democracy, but it is not active in providing democracy support to African countries. India doubts the double standard of Western donors on political conditionality for aid (Price, 2011: 19). India has tried to show difference from Western donors’ approach.

India has no particular aid agency (Sinha, 2010: 79), but is planning to establish its cooperation agency (Carmody, 2011: 40–41). India has shouldered military cooperation in Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) and military training.

4. Trade and investment

India-Africa trade has increased 30 times from 1991 to 2009, from US$914 million to US$25 billion (Cheru & Obi, 2011: 13). Investment by private companies is also expected to rise rapidly from US$479 million (2008) to US$5.4 billion (2013) (Cheru & Obi, 2011: 22). Besides vying for natural resources, agriculture, pharmacy, and telecommunication companies are aggressively entering Africa.

As a former British colony, India lacks networks in Francophone West Africa (Vittorini & Harris, 2011: 204). Recently, India is very eager to enter into Francophone Africa (Dubey, 2009: i–ii). The Indian government has set up the “Team 9” project in 2003 to promote Indian business, mainly in the Francophone and Lusophone West African countries. The Indian government is also trying to increase Indian embassies in African countries (Vines, 2010: 8).
5. Forum framework

India started its African forum in 2008. The second India-Africa Forum Summit was held in Addis Ababa, in May 2011. Like China, India organizes it in Indian and African countries, one after the other. In these forums, India has repeatedly and so clearly asked for Africa’s support toward India’s membership of a permanent seat on the UNSC.

The remarkable arguments of the Delhi Declaration (April 9, 2008) at the first forum were the clear support for democracy in Africa and demand for the democratic reform of international organizations, such as the UN, Bretton Woods Institutions, and the WTO. Permanent membership in the UNSC for India is couched in this demand for reform. India depends much on the goodwill of the African elite class for its diplomatic ambition (Carmody, 2011: 42). Three years after the first forum, the Addis Ababa Declaration (May 25, 2011) at the second forum strongly advanced the South-South cooperation idea, and demanded the achieving of an ODA amount to 0.7% of the GNI to OECD donor countries. India again asked for Africa’s support for India to achieve permanent membership in the UNSC.

III. Japan

1. General character

Japan’s leading actors for African policy are the bureaucrats of the Foreign Ministry with weak interests from the politicians and the people (Morikawa, 2000: 144). In contrast to China and India, Japanese companies became less aggressive in Africa after the industrial structural change in the 1970s. Traditionally, the Japanese government does not have any particular African policy. Japan’s involvement in Africa’s development has been reactive to the requirements from the United States and European countries (Morikawa, 2000: 143–144, 155). Japan’s ODA to Africa in the 1980s increased to avoid trade conflict with the US (Sato & Alden, 2004: 28). Political level communication with Africa has not been sufficient. The first visit of the incumbent Prime Minister, Yoshiro Mori, to sub-Saharan Africa was in 2000. Japan finds little crucial economic interests in Africa, except for natural resources. The sea lane security is important for Japan. In June 2011, Japan constructed a base for its Maritime Self-Defense Force (Kaijo Jieitai) in Djibouti for antipiracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden region (van Rooyen, 2011: 20).

2. Interests in Africa

Japan’s biggest interest in Africa is a diplomatic one. It is similar to India to achieve permanent membership in the UNSC. The beginning of the 1990s was the most noticeable period for Japan’s activities in Africa. Japan sent troops for PKO to Mozambique in 1993–1995 (ONUMOZ) (Carvalho, 2011) and Rwanda in 1994 (with a base in Zaire). Among Asian countries, Japan was the first to organize an African forum, the Tokyo International Conference for Africa’s Development (TICAD) in 1993. Japan was the biggest donor country throughout the 1990s. However, Japan’s ambition to achieve UN reform with India, Brazil, and Germany was not fulfilled as the motion failed in 2006.
3. ODA

Nowadays, Japan is generally considered to be a “Western” type donor. But we can find some aspects of a prototype of Asian countries’ cooperation for Africa’s development. For example, Japan has not actively required any political conditionality for aid. Now we talk “Beijing consensus.” But on political conditionality for aid, China’s approach is not so different to Japan’s one. The Japanese “request based” (yoseishugi) and “self-help effort” (jiyo doryoku) principles are used for highly tied projects of Japan’s own economic promotion. The “Miracle of East Asia (Japan)” has been repeatedly referred to African countries by the Japanese government. But Japan does not have any particular African policy or philosophy, while the ODA amount had increased by requirement of the Western donor countries. “Soft-power” and “human security”(38) ideas have been touted as the principal axes in Japan’s cooperation to Africa.

It is very natural to find similarities between Japan’s and China’s cooperation, because China had been the biggest recipient country of Japan’s ODA for decades (Li, 2009: 88), for war reparations and, in particular, the economic interests of Japan. China had been familiar with Japan’s cooperation (Brautigam, 2009: 80, 161), for example, using very large credits, tied to Chinese machinery equipment and construction services, for the repayment of loans in oil or other resources. This is the essence of the Chinese “win-win” approach (Brautigam, 2009: 307). China is now criticized of repayment in natural resources and agriculture products.(39) But this natural resource repayment scheme was practiced with Japan’s cooperation to China for a long time (Brautigam, 2009: 46–47). Japan was the top donor for a decade in the 1990s, while Western countries had in aid fatigue. But now Japan is really tired, and has radically reduced its ODA for more than ten years. For example, in 2001, Japan reduced by 30% its aid budget compared to the previous year.

4. Trade and investment

While trade with Africa increased from US$10.6 billion in 2002 to US$26.4 billion in 2007, Japanese companies have been reluctant to enlarge their trade and investment in Africa due to political risks and instability. Trade with Africa remains small, accounting for 1.5% of Japan’s total trade. Investment into Africa also remains inactive, accounting for 0.7% of Japan’s direct foreign investment (JETRO, 2006: 17–20). TICAD repeatedly pledges the promotion of trade and investment in Africa. Japanese companies have not been eager to accelerate their business in Africa (Morikawa, 2000: 148).

However, this trend in Japanese business in Africa began to change, as economic situations fluctuated in Japan and the world. The Western markets declined with economic crisis, while African countries have kept up economic development in 21st century.

5. Forum framework

Japan organized TICAD in 1993. It was the first and only African forum organized in Asian countries at that time. TICAD is held every 5 years with follow-up meetings. Japan had been very eager to show its capacity for permanent member-
ship in the UNSC. So far, it was the only moment that Japan’s diplomatic goal seemed close to achievement. It was the golden age of Japan’s presence in Africa. Several months before TICAD3 (2003), a Japanese diplomat argued that “NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa’s Development) was born from the TICAD process,” but this idea has not been accepted in the international community and African countries.

Japan has also referred to “South-South” cooperation at TICAD3 in 2003 (Ogasawara, 2004: 68–70). But it is not similar to China’s and India’s South-South cooperation. Japan does not recognize itself as a developing country. So, Japan is not a direct actor of South-South cooperation. This South-South cooperation is coordinated by northern country (Japan). In this “South-South” cooperation framework, Japan coordinates and financially supports cooperation between South-East Asian countries and African countries. Japan expected to promote investment and trade from South-East Asia to Africa, because Japanese companies have not been active in Africa, despite TICAD’s repeated pledges. Japan needs South-East Asian countries’ support to realize its pledge of TICAD. Technically, it is more effective to transfer a development model from south to south. However, this cooperation scheme had no remarkable impacts in Africa. One reason was the economic crisis in Asian countries at the end of the 1990s (Morikawa, 2000: 157). Japan could no longer show its capacity as a giant donor and needed additional cooperation tools to keep its influence in Africa. Japan started TICAD to achieve permanent membership in the UNSC (Morikawa, 2000: 155). However, its activities slowed down with its decreasing ODA, while China has rapidly increased its influence in Africa (Alden, 2007: 110).

Japan has hardly changed their African policy through the TICAD process. The TICAD declarations did not show originality, as other declarations have done for decades. The emphasis has been on the amount of aid pledged. TICAD’s core ideas, “ownership” and “partnership,” are not truly Japan’s original ideas, as they had already been touted in the OECD-DAC (Kamo, 2004: 60). The sole original idea presented at TICAD was the above-mentioned “South-South” cooperation (Obayashi, 2004: 79). TICAD4 (2008) showed a return to traditional mode of cooperation, such as infrastructure building and tied aid. After the entrance of Asian emergent partners into Africa, Japan’s South-South cooperation is questionable.

IV. South Korea

1. General character

“South Korea in Africa” issue has not yet attracted the limelight in the way that “Japan, China, and India in Africa” are. South Korea is the latest DAC member. Korea became a northern donor country, no longer a southern actor. It is very interesting to consider South Korea’s membership in DAC and its influence over African policy. However, we need time to analyze it. Among the four countries, South Korea’s position is characteristic. South Korea emphasizes the G20 framework. Like other major Asian countries, South Korea seeks energy and food security in Africa. Huge Korean companies have increased their agro-investment in Africa.
2. Interests in Africa

Joining the DAC was the condition for South Korea to show its capacity as a “developed” country and northern donor. Since 2000, South Korea has challenged to join DAC, as membership was the symbolic status of a developed country. Korea’s DAC membership was approved in November 2009. Korean researchers have pointed out the problems, or insufficiency, of Korean ODA in terms of quantity, quality, and policy (Kim, 2012: 37).

3. ODA

Korea’s ODA volume is still very small in comparison to its economic power. Their ODA amount was US$673 million in 2007, only US$16/person, 0.07% of GNI, the lowest level in all DAC member countries. In 2005, the Korean government announced that it will increase their ODA amount to 0.1% of GNI by 2009 and 0.25% by 2015 (Kim, 2012: 44). The incumbent UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, had once been the Korean Foreign Minister. The international community expects to see a radical ODA increase from Korea.

South Korea has a cooperation agency. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) was established in 1991. Korea’s main ODA organizer is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Economic Development Cooperation Fund (ECDF) was founded in 1987 under the Ministry of Finance and Economy to provide financial cooperation (Kim, 2012: 41). Like other countries, Korea’s ODA is noticed as highly tied aid. Korean conglomerate group companies (chaebol), such as Samsung, Daewoo, Hyundai, and LG, have been procured in Korean ODA projects (Kim, 2012: 46). The Korean government has tried to reduce the proportion of tied projects. The “Saemaeul Movement” has sometimes been shown as a development model for Africa. Despite such efforts, the Korean ODA model for sharing Korean development experience still is not sufficiently established (Kim, 2012: 56).

South Korea is presently expanding its capacity to engage in PKO, with a view to facilitating rapid deployment to troubled areas worldwide, including Africa. Rapid response PKO forces are to be increased to 2,000 by 2012 (Shelton, 2009: 41).

4. Trade and investment

South Korea’s commercial relations with Africa have rapidly grown. Korea-Africa trade tripled from US$5.1 billion in 2003 to US$14.2 billion in 2010. Just as Chinese and Indian companies, Korean companies are also eager to invest in agriculture. Daewoo’s land tenure seeking in Madagascar caused a dispute with the local people.

The Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference (KOAFEC, 2006, 2008) and the Korea-Africa Industry Cooperation Forum (2008, 2009) were organized to help foster relations between Korea and Africa.

5. Forum framework

South Korea started its African forum in 2006. The Korea-Africa Forum (KAF) welcomed the participation of 5 African Presidents and 15 Foreign Ministers. At the second forum in 2009, South Korea pledged to double its ODA for Africa

China, Japan, and South Korea have held a government official level (Director of Africa division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) meeting to talk African policy every year since 2008. This meeting aims to analyze FOCAC, KAF, and TICAD processes and coordinate the cooperation of the East Asian partners in Africa’s development.

**COMPARISON OF POLICIES AMONG THE FOUR MAJOR ASIAN COUNTRIES**

I. Approaches to Africa

What differences or similarities exist in African policies among the four countries? I have compared the declarations, which were presented in the African forums held in Asian countries. These declarations, or action plans, were named after the host city of each forum, such as Beijing, Delhi, Seoul, and Tokyo (plus Addis Ababa, Sharm El Sheikh, and Yokohama). Principally, these declarations have touted all-purpose such as development plans. These declarations have remarked crucial issues for Africa’s development, including agriculture, education, environment, health care, infrastructure, ICT, investment, and trade. But they present no priority in their cooperation with Africa. With similar development plans, the amount of pledges and the practices of cooperation project without reductions and delays, have been the only concern for African leaders. On the one hand, it is pretty important for the four Asian governments to organize, host, and follow African forums to show their capacity and diplomatic influence. On the other hand, these forums are just ceremonies for the participants from African countries, because the individual negotiations do not take place there.

In studying the four countries’ approaches to Africa, I found more similarities than differences among the Asian major partners of Africa. They are former recipient countries. Their cooperation is biased toward tied aid and infrastructure projects for domestic industry promotion. They consider Africa as important for their energy security issues. The symbolic expression “Beijing consensus” exemplifies the Asian major partners’ reluctance toward political conditionality in aiding the African countries. Could the Beijing consensus be understood as the “Asian” approach to Africa?

I argue that the international positions bring about the characteristics of each country regarding African policy. As Table 3 shows, Japan and South Korea are OECD-DAC members within the Western framework. China and India are outside OECD and pursue South-South cooperation. Their international positions are contrasted, but intertwined. China is not a G8 member, but is recognized as a very influential actor in the G8. South Korea adheres to the G20 as a northern country, while Japan persists in the G8 framework.
II. Economic Interests

The economic interests of Asian countries in Africa are basically similar. These countries seek principally economic interests in Africa for energy, natural resources, and agricultural products. Some aggressive land tenure attempts have been accused of “land grabbing” (Naidu, 2011: 63). The international community is critical of the emergent countries’ aggressively seeking natural resources in Africa. However, it has been a pattern with the Western companies in Africa (Chatham House, 2010: 2; Obi, 2010: 190–191). Telecommunication is now an important investment field for Chinese and Indian companies such as ZTE, Huawei, and Airtel. Huge infrastructure projects with Chinese ODA have created business chances for Chinese companies. Sometimes, there has been conflict with the local people because the Chinese companies do not employ or employ under severe conditions for local workers. However this accusation is sometimes based on misunderstanding. In fact, almost every worker in Chinese companies in Africa is African people (Brautigam, 2009: 229). African workers are not only employed as simple labor, but occasionally in managerial posts (Taylor, 2009: 179–180). China’s situation is also changing. Labor fees are increasing when employing Chinese labor. It has become more difficult to employ Chinese labor for construction projects in Africa.

III. International Relations Related to Africa

International relations and Asian rivalry have influenced the four Asian countries’ approaches to Africa. These four countries have often been tense with each other for historical, geopolitical, economic, and security reasons. Rivalry between Asian countries has reflected onto their African policy. The issue of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council is a big concern in the Asian approaches to Africa, particularly for China, India, and Japan. The reason is very simple. African countries possess more than a quarter of the votes in the UN General Assembly. Insofar as Japan and India seek to gain a permanent seat, China can keep its diplomatic card in Africa to destabilize the African countries’ diplomatic support for Japan and India by proposing permanent seats to African countries. This strategy is available only for the already permanent member with veto power in the UN Security Council.

Western countries are still the dominant power, but no longer a monopolistic actor in Africa (Cheru & Obi, 2010: 1; Berger & Wissenbach, 2007: 1).
After China and India became influential emergent powers in the beginning of the 21st century, the “donor” is no longer limited to Western countries. Has a “post-Washington consensus” been achieved? The European Union has offered partnership with China as donor in the form of a EU-China-Africa triangle (Aning, 2010: 153). Western donors can no longer ignore the Asian emergent powers in Africa, but rather need them as partners for development.

The traditional donor-recipient relationship will be transformed into a new kind of partnership. This new kind of partnership is designed to respond to common global and regional challenges and no longer focuses on a unidirectional—primarily charity-based—approach to development cooperation. (Berger & Wissenbach, 2007: 4)

For the past 20 years, the world’s hegemonic balance is changing (Cheru & Calais, 2010: 221). While the G8 framework became more relative (Cheru & Calais, 2010: 231), other frameworks, such as those of the G20 and BRICS, have gained importance. The presence of emergent countries in Africa has awoken questions about the former modes of aid (Brautigam, 2009: 17). China and India criticize the double standard and contradictions of the political conditionality which has been imposed by Western donors.

China is very conscious of accusations of human rights issues in Africa. China and South Korea’s African policies are closely related to their own national integration issues. Despite the economic changing, China and India maintain their ideology of leaders of the third world. Is the cooperation a charity or a mutual development opportunity? (Mawdsley, 2011: 167) This issue is closer now that emergent non-OECD partners have increased their influence in Africa.

At the present moment, only China has broadly established international relations with local governments in Africa. This local network is quite advantageous to China. After its own economic development, India tried to advance outside of the commonwealth countries. It is a new and important frontier for India to compete with China in Africa.

IV. Stakeholders of African Affairs

Each of four countries has different compositions in the stakeholders involved with African affairs. This determines who the principal characters are in their approaches to Africa. Needless to say, the government is the essential actor in all four countries. Private companies are aggressive actors in China, India, and South Korea, but not in Japan. In terms of political institutions, the Chinese communist party has held the initiatives for a long time in China’s African policy. The political parties in India, South Korea, and Japan have not played much role in African policy, but the attitudes may change. The Korean and Japanese religious organizations, such as The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, Soka Gakkai International, and Sukyo Mahikari and NGOs have been more active in Africa. The Chinese local governments are active in Africa, with no parallel in the other three countries.
CONCLUSION: ASIAN APPROACHES TO AFRICA

In conclusion, this article analyzed four major Asian countries’ approaches to Africa. It remains an introductory reflection, and there are many insufficient points to complete. It needs continued searching for detailed information on the African policy of each Asian country.

This article found more similarities than differences of the four Asian countries’ approaches to Africa. There cannot be a definitive conclusion about Asian approaches to Africa through this work only. However, I did present some signs of the “Asia-ness” in the African policy in this article, while they are not necessarily character of Asian countries only.

All four Asian countries have sought “their model” for Africa’s development through their own development experiences. But I question whether these models, which are based on strong developmental states (Taylor, 2009: 25), are really applicable to the African countries. While the political systems are very different in the four countries, one point is surely common, in that the state is strong and “public” in these countries. However, this “public-ness” of the state cannot necessarily be a precondition in considering the African state.

The coming of age for Asia and Africa will arrive over the next few decades. It is necessary to study more the African policy of Asian partners. The major Asian countries also need to learn from other Asian approaches to Africa in order to improve their African policies. I expect that a common framework of African policies and academic platforms of African studies will emerge in Asia. After these four countries, we naturally expect that the other Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam to be the next Asian emergent actors in Africa.

In contrast, African countries have shown no strategy toward Asian countries (Obi, 2010: 192). Their attitudes remain reactive and passive with Asian partners. What strategies will the African countries apply in order to face these aggressive Asian approaches?

NOTES

(3) See Cooper (2011) and Seibert (2011).
(4) The concept of Asia is more ambiguous geographically and psychologically than that of Africa. Geographical adjectives such as “East,” “South-East,” “South” and “Central” are used for better cognizance. While the concept of Africa is not unitary, the boundary as a continent is apparent.
A typical case was Niger. A Chinese company threatened a French nuclear company Areva’s monopoly in the mining of uranium in Niger (Michel & Beuret, 2008: 180–181).

Opposition candidate Michael Sata declared that he would establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan after his election as President. He visited Taiwan before the presidential election (Brautigam, 2009: 6; Michel & Beuret, 2008: 321). China threatened to suspend relations with Zambia if he was elected. Sata ended up in third place, but was elected during the next election. He did not talk about Taiwan during the 2011 electoral campaign.


In the beginning of the 1960s, exports to Africa accounted for about 10% of Japan’s total trade. But it decreased to less than 1% at the end of the 1980s (Morikawa, 2000: 148).

During the Vietnam War, South Korea supported the United States, which was criticized by the nonaligned countries (Rhee, 1993: 7). For example, the Congo (Brazzaville) and Mauritania broke relations with South Korea in order to establish a relationship with North Korea. South Korea then worried whether North Korea may increase influence in Africa through this diplomatic rupture.


In China, there are 33 province-level divisions, including 22 provinces, five autonomous regions (Guangxi Zhuang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia Hui, Xinjiang Uyghur, and Tibet Autonomous Regions), four municipalities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Chongqing), and two special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau) (Chen & Junbo, 2009: 2).

In February 2000, President Jiang Zemin, visiting Guangdong province, told the local leadership that in order to promote socialist modernization, China must adopt a “Going Out Strategy” to encourage Chinese companies to invest in overseas markets. Aid is one of the key components of China’s African policy. For decades, the provinces have acted as agents of the central government in the implementation of this aid policy. Often the central government decides the policy and provides the funding, while the provincial governments or related parties deliver the aid, sending medical teams, building structure, sponsoring training programs, etc. (Chen & Junbo, 2009: 12–13).


Through these sister-city channels, Chinese provincial politicians and officers frequently visited Africa. In general, they traveled mostly to search for economic cooperation opportunities, such as trade and investment (Chen & Junbo, 2009: 14).


(20) China evaluated that the 1990s had been a “lost decade” for Africa due to democratization (Hu, 2009: 350).

(21) China-Africa aid relations were initially defined in terms of mutual cooperation rather than one-way alms-giving. Instead of using the language of donor and recipient, China strongly prefers to present its activities in terms of two-way exchanges and two-sided cooperation (Jin, 2010: 8).


(23) China’s ODA Whitepaper, 2011.


(25) Promotion for foreign business was announced after China joined the WTO. International cooperation backed up Chinese business abroad. China’s ODA Whitepaper, 2011.

(26) See Li et al. (2012) for the details of the FOCAC process.

(27) The current Ma administration practically abandoned the Hallstein doctrine against China in Africa. Taiwan’s attitude toward China is more ambiguous in foreign policy (Taylor, 2009: 29).

(28) After Malawi recognized China in 2008, only four African countries (Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Swaziland) have kept diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

(29) “For Americans, Africa is mostly about poverty, aid, terrorism and sometimes sanctions against rogue regimes. For China, the vast landmass with millions of the world’s poorest is about digging for precious metals and sucking out the oil so desperately needed to fuel its roaring economy. For India, which has had a long history with the continent, it should be about long-term business and strategic interest that would give New Delhi a strong foothold to expand its influence in the years to come. It’s a slow, hard grind. But one that can spell big success” (Hindustan Times, Delhi, April 9, 2008).

(30) India concluded a defense agreement with Mauritius to assure its own sea lane security.


(32) Assistance to African countries falls under two Commonwealth initiatives, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program launched in 1964, and the Special Commonwealth Africa Assistance Plan. India spends about $12 million annually on ITEC activities. As the ITEC division explains: “India is not a rich country and cannot offer grants-in-aid to match those of the developed countries. It does, however, possess skills of manpower and technology more appropriate to the geographical and ecological conditions and the stage of technological development of several developing countries” (Beri, 2011: 9).

(33) In 2008–2009, South Africa remained the leading destination for India’s exports to Africa, accounting for 13.5%. Other major export destinations included Egypt (11.2%), Nigeria (10.3%), Kenya (9.1%), Tanzania (7%), Mauritius (6.5%), and Algeria (4.5%). Around 35.8% of India’s imports from Africa were sourced from Nigeria in 2008–2009, reflecting the significant imports of crude petroleum from that country. South Africa is the second-largest import source with a share of 22.4%, followed by Egypt (8.7%), Angola (5.6%), Algeria (4%), and Morocco (3.8%) during 2008–2009. Petroleum products have become the largest items in India’s export basket in recent years (Beri, 2011: 6).


(38) This idea was proposed in the UNDP’s Human Development Report 1994 by Amartya Sen (Nobel Prize economics recipient) and Sadako Ogata (then UN High Commissioner for Refugees).

(39) For example, oil (Angola), minerals (DR Congo), peanuts (Senegal), and cocoa (Ghana) (Brautigam, 2009: 56). China required repayment by cocoa for a hydraulic power dam construction project in Ghana (Brautigam, 2009: 280). Western commercial banks also required repayment by oil from Angola for their loans (Brautigam, 2009: 291; Taylor, 2009: 21). China is often scapegoated by western countries (Taylor, 2009: 164).


(43) See Note (42).

(44) OECD, http://www.oecd.org/document/50/0,3343,en_2649_33721_44141618_1_1_1_1,00.html (Accessed August 31, 2011).

(45) “Saemaeul Undong” is a movement for the development of rural communities, which was started in the 1970s under the Park administration.


(48) South Korea was the host country of the G20 conference held in 2010.


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(52) It means that state governance works correctly in expectation.

(53) So many concepts on the African states have been discussed and proposed in African political studies. For example, “Neo-Patrimonialism” and “Politique du ventre” are notable concepts regarding the public-ness of the state in Africa. See Bach & Gazibo eds. (2011) and Bayart (2006).

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