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—An Institutional Analysis of Foreign Aid in Cambodia—

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# How do “Emerging” Donors Differ from “Traditional” Donors?

## —An Institutional Analysis of Foreign Aid in Cambodia—

Jin SATO\*, Hiroaki SHIGA\*\*, Takaaki KOBAYASHI\*\*\*, and Hisahiro KONDOH\*\*\*\*

### Abstract

Debate about the role and impact of the so-called “emerging donors” is becoming increasingly heated. The common reaction to these new donors, distinct from that accorded traditional donors, has had the unfortunate effect of obscuring two important aspects of the evolving aid landscape: 1) commonalities between the emerging donors and traditional Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors; and 2) an evident diversity among the emerging donors. The biases at play are derived not only from a lack of sufficient information about how these new donors operate on the ground, but also from a lack of effort to integrate and analyze information that is available. This paper examines the impact of four emerging donors — China, India, the Republic of Korea (hereinafter referred to as “Korea”), and Thailand — on Cambodia’s development, with a specific focus on the processes of aid provision by these new donors. By accounting for the experiences of the recipient country, this paper also challenges the conventional view that aid fragmentation should be reduced *a priori*.

**Keywords:** emerging donors, Cambodia, harmonization, aid fragmentation, institution

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## **Introduction**

The global foreign aid landscape is changing rapidly (Woods 2008). In Asia, traditional donors such as Japan are no longer overwhelmingly dominant in terms of volume, and so-called “emerging donors” are becoming increasingly influential (see Figure 1). Among these latter, China, India, Korea and Thailand are emerging as key sources of foreign aid to poorer countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. Unlike earlier literature which has characterized emerging donors as monolithically distinct from their traditional counterparts, we examine their commonalities with the traditional donors by placing the various emerging donors in a timeline. To follow this approach, we focus on the above four donor countries because they not only provide full aid packages, including concessional loans, grants, and technical cooperation,<sup>1</sup> but also because their presence in Cambodian development has become increasingly prominent.

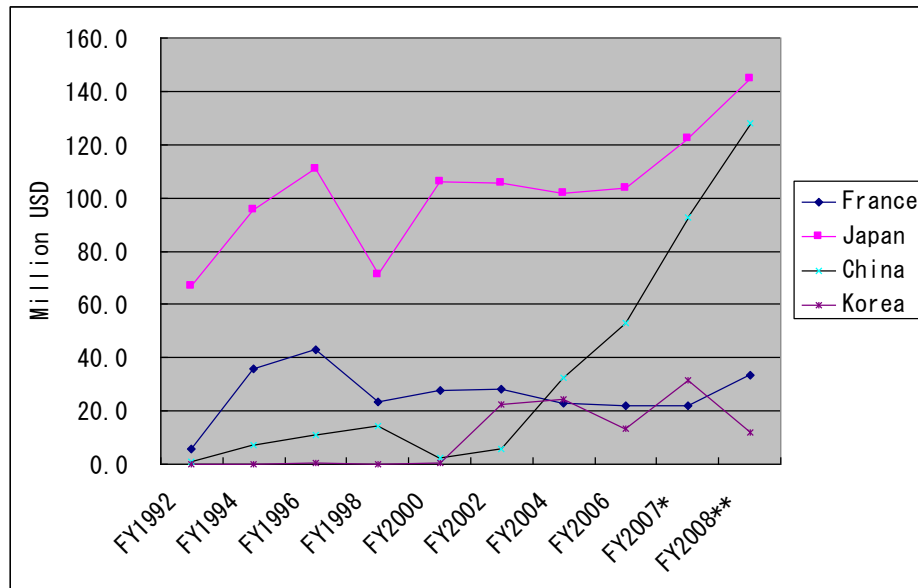
Many emerging donors have track records of providing aid for as long as have traditional donors: China, for example, has provided grants to less-developed countries (LDCs) almost since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, with programs in Africa beginning in the 1950s (Woods 2008; Lin 1996). Perhaps for this reason, some commentators refer to emerging donors as “non-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors”<sup>2</sup>. Regardless of when these countries actually initiated their aid-like activities, it is the recent impacts that we are considering as “emergent;” these countries are emerging not simply as providers of aid but as influential players in aid politics who can no longer be ignored by traditional donors.

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<sup>1</sup> Other emerging Asian donors, such as Singapore and Malaysia, do not provide concessional loans as part of their aid packages. See our definition of “aid” in comparison to the definition of ODA in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Informal Working Group (2008) on the question of labeling. That document criticizes the term “non-DAC donors” as defining the group by what it is not rather than what it is.

**Figure 1: Disbursement (gross) to Cambodia from Individual Donors (1992-2008)**



Note: Thailand, apparently a significant contributor, is not included.  
 \*Provisional, \*\*Planned.  
 Source: CDC (2008)

In this sense, the term “emerging donor” refers not only to the magnitude of the aid provided by these donors individually, but also to their impact collectively on the institutions built by traditional donors, as is discussed later<sup>3</sup>.

Alarmed by the increasing activities of the emerging donors, scholars and commentators have begun to pay serious attention to these new participants in the international “aid market.” Although a full-scale investigation of the subject of emerging donors has yet to be launched, there is already a spectrum of perspective on them, ranging from friendly to relatively hostile.

At the relatively hostile extreme, Moisés Naím, editor of *Foreign Policy* magazine, calls aid from China, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela “toxic” (Naím 2007). He argues that non-democratic countries like China “have begun to undermine development policy through their activist aid programs” (Naím 2007, 96) that seek only “money, access to raw materials, and international politics” (Naím 2007, 95) without regard to the environment or long-term

<sup>3</sup> Acknowledging its flaws and limitations, Rowlands (2008:3) provides another rationale for using the term: “its correspondence with the term ‘emerging market’ and because it serves as a challenge to some

concern for the well-being of the host country's inhabitants. In short, according to Naím, emerging donors represent a "threat to healthy, sustainable development" while "pricing responsible and well-meaning aid organizations out of the market in the very places where they are needed most" (Naím 2007, 95).

Other authors are much friendlier toward emerging donors. Reisen (2007) and Woods (2008) defend China by providing quantitative evidence on the issue of debt sustainability in Africa. Woods argues that Chinese aid has strengthened trade links in Africa, allowing improved growth and terms of trade, and increasing both the export volumes and public revenues of recipient African countries (Woods 2008). He argues also that China has not been deaf to international voices and has to some extent behaved in accordance with UN policies, as evidenced by its cooperative efforts with the United Nations and the African Union to end the Darfur Conflict in Sudan (Woods 2008, 1208). Woods further argues that the rise of emerging donors is a manifestation of the dissatisfaction of recipient countries with the traditional development assistance regime (Woods 2008, 1212).

Manning (2006), positioned between these two extremes, gives a pioneering overview on this issue, claiming that although emerging donors allow greater aid access and a wider range of options to poorer countries, the advent of new donors has introduced three risks: 1) that greater access to aid may once again condemn recipient countries to unsustainable debt; 2) that governance reform proposed by traditional donors in exchange for aid may be unduly postponed; and 3) that the absence of careful investment appraisals may result in the proliferation of over-ambitious or unproductive capital projects (Manning 2006, 381-82). Manning recommends that these risks be contained through heightened contact and dialogue with emerging donors, to bring their performances more or less to the same level as traditional donors.

A common thread in the literature is an emphasis on the *distinctiveness* of emerging

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of the more traditional notions of donor."

donors as compared to traditional donors in terms of the negative impact they are accused of having on such socio-economic aspects of their recipients as debt sustainability, governance and environmental quality. This is a narrow characterization, however, which often fails to give due consideration to the particular institutional arrangements which these donors make with each recipient. We propose that the recent characterization of emerging donors as *distinct* has had the unfortunate effect of obscuring two important features of the new aid landscape: 1) commonalities between emerging and traditional donors, and 2) diversity *among* emerging donors. The emphasis on the distinctiveness of emerging donors leads us to take a dichotomous approach of “one or the other” — emerging or traditional — in aid coordination efforts, as is manifest in questions such as “how should we involve *them*?” Failure to perceive their diversity forces us to lump emerging donors into a single group, and an emphasis on outcome as the sole means of judging the state of affairs limits our understanding of exactly how their aid projects are managed.

These biases are derived from a lack of information about how emerging donors formulate aid strategies, set priorities, and assist development projects. To overcome this, we look at the processes of aid provision to one particular recipient country to observe the individual arrangements these donors have managed to organize. This is in order to crystallize differences among the emerging donors and not treat them as monolithic.

This paper is based on original research and is focused on the perspective of the recipient — in this case, Cambodia. Many of the criticisms of emerging donors focus on their purported negative contributions to growth, debt burdens, human rights, and the environment without supporting evidence based on research grounded on the recipient. We chose Cambodia because as one of the world’s most aid-dependent countries (Chanboreth and Hach 2008, 3) it gives us an excellent vantage point for a comparative observation of the operations of both emerging and traditional donors. We collected data through interviews with aid officials in Cambodia and donor countries (for a list of our contacts in Cambodia, see Appendix 3). The





































































late to a game where the rules have already been set by traditional donors are playing in a different court. Cambodia, for one, has found this to be a court where the new donors fit quite well. With regard to the different *history* from which they come, emerging donors have attempted to find their place within an aid landscape that has been arranged primarily by traditional donors. Some emerging donors, such as Thailand, try to utilize their own experiences as former and current ODA recipients when they enter this aid landscape (interview at TICA, February 2008).

Some commentators may argue that the massive use of tied loans by emerging donors in pursuit of their own economic benefits is harmful to their recipients, depriving them of the opportunity to procure the best goods and services through international competitive bidding. We suggest an alternative view: Many of the present DAC members, particularly Japan, have been criticized by other DAC members for their tied aid, but they gradually evolved their programs into the present forms following long struggle and debate, both domestically and internationally. The same opportunity to “evolve” their aid institutions should be accorded emerging donors. Cambodian official documents, in fact, clearly state that tied loans are “not of concern and need not occupy excessive amounts of time in the Cambodia aid effectiveness dialogue” (CDC 2007, 31). This position may be based on the objective fact that the rate of tied aid in Cambodia is comparatively low (14%, while the average among 55 developing countries was 25% in 2005) (CDC 2007, 37, OECD 2009). Alternatively, the statement could be interpreted as a cover by the Cambodian government to protect a source of valuable financing for large-scale infrastructure projects. Whichever the case, we expect that just as traditional donors have evolved aid institutions over time, so too will emerging donors.

Our most important finding is that emerging donors are beginning to serve as real alternatives to traditional donors. Emerging donors offer recipients a choice, something which becomes critical in negotiations with other donors. The Cambodian Government has been able to widen its policy options thanks to availability of choices made possible by competition

*among* emerging donors. For example, recent participation by Kuwait in agricultural activities near the Thai-Cambodia border has freed Cambodia from a reliance on aid from Thailand, which had traditionally dominated the market for Cambodia's agricultural goods through infrastructure funding to border regions<sup>46</sup>. It is the upstream competition among the donors rather than the downstream competition among the contractors that has the potential to stimulate change beneficial to recipient governments.

Certain features of emerging donors, therefore, should be evaluated positively as enhancing the diversity of the aid market. By increasing the alternatives available to recipient countries, healthy competition and division of labor is facilitated among donors in countries previously dominated by DAC-oriented mindsets. China's focus on infrastructure, for example, allows other donors to concentrate their resources on areas in which they perceive the highest comparative advantage (Munro 2005). From the viewpoint of the Cambodian Government, Chinese aid is not "rogue," i.e., aid unacceptably deviant from the established normative standards of the traditional donor community. On the contrary, China seems to be a good performer in terms of harmonization, alignment with the needs of the Cambodian government and predictability. Based on our interviews, high-ranking Cambodian government officials seem satisfied with the amount, speed of delivery, cost, and responsiveness to Cambodian aspirations of aid from China.

In line with the traditional donors' emphasis on "ownership," we support the view that more weight should be given to how the recipient countries' governments actually value aid. This discussion does not, however, point to the complete abandonment of present efforts towards coordination under DAC principles; it simply questions the appropriate scope of aid coordination. Coordination efforts should extend beyond a concentration on coordination of donor interests and remain carefully tailored to meet the needs of recipients.

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<sup>46</sup> Kuwait, an oil-rich country, has recently extended its interest in securing food resources, not only through trade, but by obtaining agricultural land in other countries.

Although our argument has tended to support the emerging donors, that support is not unconditional. By no means is it our intention to defend emerging donors *carte blanche*. Rather, our aim is to explore current realities regarding the activities of emerging donors from the perspective of the recipient country government.

In order for emerging donors to function as fully favorable alternatives for developing countries, more transparency is required in their long-term investment portfolio. Healthy competition among diverse donors in the aid market is possible only under conditions of information disclosure which would help reduce transaction cost for recipient countries. In this regard, we hope China and India will formulate and disclose their comprehensive aid strategies for Cambodia, as Thailand and Korea have already done. It is particularly the responsibility of China, as a top donor to Cambodia<sup>47</sup>, to disclose its overall assistance strategy for that country.

What does this case study have to offer institutional theory? It confirms that the way institutions work depends on the specific context, and it attempts to identify this context in Cambodia. The nature of institutions varies according to the stage of development of a donor. With some limited exception, institutionalists have often underplayed the analysis of how donors make arrangements with individual recipients, focusing instead on the institutions among donors, such as DAC, or within recipient countries. We found in Cambodia that donors develop their own institutions according to their stage of development and to their individual relations with the recipient country. Perhaps what is needed further in Cambodia is not an arbitrary critique by outside experts, but an assessment by the people of Cambodia, themselves, of aid performances, whether funded by the emerging or the traditional donors.

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<sup>47</sup> China is projected to be a top donor in 2009 in gross disbursement basis (CDC 2008, 35).



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- Interview with the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, on 18 February 2009.
- Interview with the Embassy of India, on 18 February 2009.
- Interview with KOICA's Phnom Penh Office, on 18 February 2009.

## **Appendix 1: Aid and ODA**

In order to accommodate the activities of the emerging donors, in this paper we use the term “aid” in a broad sense, different from the well-established term “official development assistance” (ODA). In our usage, “aid” on a government-to-government basis refers to those resource transfers (grants, loans and technical cooperation) from donor countries to recipient countries that have some development impact, regardless of the level of concessionality.

Our inclusive definition of “aid” stems from the difficulty of applying to the activities of emerging donors the official OECD definition of ODA, which requires a grant element of at least 25% and a main objective of promoting economic development and welfare. This is difficult for the following two reasons:

- (1) There is a lack of the detailed information on the financial terms of individual loans by emerging donors which is indispensable for calculation of the grant element, and therefore for verification of the concessionality.
- (2) There is difficulty in confirming whether the main objective of each separate activity is the promotion of development and welfare.

Because loans by Chinese or Indian EXIM Banks are subsidized by their respective governments, making them more similar to ODA than to OOF (other official flows) with semi-commercial terms, and because government officials of the emerging donors repeatedly express commitment to developmental objectives (such as poverty reduction), we argue that the “aid” provided by emerging donors is not categorically different from ODA although we acknowledge that it does not qualify as ODA according to the formal definition of the term.

## Appendix 2: Aid Activities of Emerging Donors in Cambodia

	<b>China</b>	<b>South Korea</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>India</b>
<b>Loans</b>	Interest-free Loan (2000-2008, 960 mil. Yuan) Concessional Loan (2000-2008, 885 mil. Yuan) Preferential Buyer's Credit (2006-2008, 500 mil. Yuan)	160.2 Mil. USD 120 Mil. USD (2008-2011, pledged by EDCF)	Loans for construction of Road No.48,67,68 (2.29 bn.Bahts)	45.2 Mil.USD (2002-2008)
<b>Grants</b>	447.5 Mil. Yuan (2000-2008) 0.7 Mil. USD (2000-2008) 700 water pumps (provided by Guangxi Province) 50 electric cars (provided by Hubei Province)	39.5 Mil. USD (1991-2008) 20 ambulances to Ministry of Health 20 laptops, 20 printers and 20 fax machines for National Disaster Management Committee	Construction of Training Center in Phnom Penh Grant from H.R.H. Sirindhorn for Construction of Schools (0.2 Mil.B) Construction of 4 bridges on Road No. 48 Construction of Road No. 67 (18 km) Provision of 12 tons of medicine/medical equipment(2007) Construction of Health Center along Road	15 Mil.Rupee (1992) 6 Mil.USD (2004-2008) 8.5 Mil.USD (pledged in 2008) Establishment of English Language Center and Entrepreneurship Development Center
<b>Human Resources Development</b>	165 Cambodian Students (2004-8) 666 Cambodian Officials, Policemen, Army officers (2004-8)	1,384 Cambodian trainees (1994-2008) 181 Korean volunteers in Cambodia (1994-2008) 21 Korean experts in Cambodia (2001-2008)	Short-and long-term training for 1,340 participants (2000-2009) Youth volunteers under the program of "Friends from Thailand"	456 persons (2002-2008)

Source:Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, except for data regarding Thailand. TICA and NEDA for data regarding Thailand.

### Appendix 3:

#### List of Interviewees

##### **Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC)**

Vannden, Leaph	Deputy Secretary General
Courtnadge, Phillip	Senior Advisor, Multi Donor Support Program (MDSP)
Masaki, Mikio	Aid Coordination and Partnership Advisor

##### **Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)**

Chhon, Keat	Minister of Finance
Vissoth, Vongsey	Deputy Secretary General
Yutha, Por	Chief of Division, Bilateral Cooperation Division, Department of Investment and Cooperation

##### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC)**

Visalo, Long	Secretary of State
Chun, Thai	Director, Asia 2 Department
Sophearin, Chea	Deputy Director, Asia 1 Department
Vireak, Sim	Japan Desk Officer, Asia 2 Department

##### **Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)**

Borey, Kem	Director General, General Directorate of Public Works
Vaddhanak, Nou	Director, Road Infrastructure Department
Harada, Tatsuo	JICA Expert, Transport Policy Advisor
Kubota, Tsuyoshi	JICA Expert, Road Management Advisor

##### **Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy (MIME)**

Washizawa, Takeshi	JICA Expert, Power Sector Planning
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##### **Embassy of the People's Republic of China**

Lei Pengqin	Attache, Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office
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##### **Embassy of the Republic of Korea**

Kim Sang Hoon	Counsellor
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##### **Korea International Cooperation Agency**

Kim, Byung-Gwan	Representative, Cambodia Office
Son Sungil	Deputy Representative, Cambodia Office

##### **Embassy of India**

Ray, Saurav	First Secretary
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##### **Asian Development Bank**

Goswami, Arjun	Country Director, Cambodia Resident Mission
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##### **The World Bank**

Sann, Ratha	Infrastructure Operations Officer, Cambodia Country Office
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##### **Embassy of Japan**

Maruyama, Norio	Minister
Tamura, Misa	Aid Coordination Advisor

##### **Japan International Cooperation Agency**

Yoneda, Kazuhiro	Chief Representative, Cambodia Office
Hayashi, Eiichiro	Aid Coordination Advisor, Cambodia Office

## Abstract (in Japanese)

### 要約

昨今、いわゆる「新興ドナー」に関する議論が活発化している。しかし、既存研究の多くは伝統ドナーとの相違点を強調するあまり、新興ドナーを一枚岩的に捉える傾向があった。こうした研究の偏りは、伝統ドナーと新興ドナーが共有する類似点、そして、一括りにされがちな新興ドナー間の多様性を看過させる。確かに、新興ドナーに関して公開されている情報の不足は、さまざまな憶測を呼び、客観的な記述や分析を困難にしてきた。そこでわれわれは、カンボジアという援助の受け手に焦点を絞り、中国、インド、韓国、タイが、それぞれどのような援助活動を展開しているのかを現地調査に基づいて解明し、既存研究の偏りを修正するよう試みた。本研究が提起する重要な論点の1つは、既存研究の多くが援助ドナーの増加による援助の断片化を問題視している中で、受け入れ国政府側からみれば新興ドナーの台頭という「断片化」の要因がむしろ交渉の材料となり、彼らにとって開発事業の選択肢を広げる効果をもっている可能性である。