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Evolution and Challenges

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# Objectives and Institutions for Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA): Evolution and Challenges

Keiichi Tsunekawa\*

## Abstract

The history of Japan's official development assistance can be divided into four distinct periods in which objectives have diversified and institutional arrangements have evolved. However, these objectives ranging, from Japan's own economic development, poverty reduction, the promotion of democracy and a market economy, to the solution of global issues such as environmental degeneration, have remained juxtaposed without being prioritized on the basis of a national philosophy of international cooperation. The diversity of the ODA goals has been perpetuated by the lack of a unified entity that manages ODA. At the same time, such diversity without clearly defined priorities has reinforced poor coordination among ministries and agencies involved in ODA. In recent years, the international trend of development assistance has shifted from a strong emphasis on poverty reduction and input-oriented "aid effectiveness" to a greater attention to economic growth and output-oriented "development effectiveness." This tendency fits the traditional approach of Japan. However, in order to lead the changing world of international assistance, the Japanese government will need to clarify its assistance philosophy, using the concept of human security to prioritize poverty reduction and the three interfaces between poverty reduction and private-sector activity—capacity development, governance reform, and infrastructure development. It will also need to establish an ODA control center under a national-strategy deliberation council independent of any ministries or agencies.

**Keywords:** ODA, Japan, aid effectiveness, development effectiveness, human security, JICA

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## **Introduction**

It has often been pointed out, particularly by foreign observers, that Japan's development assistance policies lack an underlying philosophy. For example, having studied Japan's ODA policies in the 1980s, Robert Orr (1990, 138) concluded that Japan's assistance policies were determined by bureaucratic politics and external pressure, and that there was no national consensus on the underlying purpose of assistance. Twenty years later, the peer review report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC 2010, 37-42) pointed out that one of the problems with Japan's official development assistance is that the government has set no clear policy objective and that the Committee for Foreign Economic Cooperation, chaired by the Prime Minister, did not fulfill its role of ensuring uniformity of policy.

During the past two decades, although the Japanese government has never enacted a law stipulating basic principles of or institutional mechanisms for ODA, the ODA Charter was adopted twice (in 1992 and 2003) by the Cabinet, and the Council of Ministries for Foreign Economic Cooperation chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and composed of 14 Ministers was set up to coordinate policies inside the government in 1988. In 2006 this Council was reorganized to improve coordination into the Committee for Foreign Economic Cooperation led by the Prime Minister and composed of four Ministers. In the developing countries, the Local ODA Task Force was set up starting in 2003 as a forum for discussion and coordination among members of Japanese organizations engaging in international cooperation, with each local Japanese Embassy serving as a hub. For better coordinated implementation of ODA, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the yen loan section of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, and part of the grant-in-aid function of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) were merged into a new organization, often called "new JICA" (MOFA 2009, 51 and 137; MOFA 2010, 174).

Despite such reform efforts, the concern over the lack of both philosophy and unified management has persisted. This paper attempts to explain why this is the case by analyzing the history of Japanese development assistance, focusing on continuity, and changes in objectives of and institutions for the ODA. The analysis shows that because the philosophy of Japan's development assistance contains a wide range of objectives, spanning from providing humanitarian relief and reducing poverty, to promoting economic growth through revitalizing the private sector, and has been fluctuating between national strategy and international contribution, it fails to provide consistent and persuasive reasoning. As a result, Japan appears to have passively responded to "international aid trends" promoted by the OECD-DAC or the World Bank. The weak unified management has hindered the systematic presentation of aid philosophy, while the slow process of philosophy integration hinders the establishment of a "government-wide approach." On the basis of a historical analysis of Japan's ODA policy, this paper will explore the direction of philosophical clarification and institutional reforms.

## **1. Historical evolution of ODA policies**

When we look at the history of Japan's development assistance policies in terms of philosophy (basic objectives and priorities) and institutional arrangements, we can discern three distinctive periods of change: the latter half of the 1970s, the early 1990s, and the beginning of the 21st century. In particular, the developments in the 1980s, which led to the drastic changes in the early 1990s, largely determined the subsequent direction of Japanese development assistance. The majority of assistance objectives were proposed, and the organizational structure for assistance that remains today was prepared at that time.

### ***Quest for Japan's own economic development***

Japan's official development assistance policies developed in 1954 when Japan participated in the Colombo Plan on technical cooperation and concurrently began post-war reparations to Southeast Asian countries. In the ensuing years until the early 1970s, neither the Japanese government nor the Diet decide and announce a clear philosophy of their development assistance policies. However, many studies point out that basic objective of these policies was to achieve the economic development of Japan itself by promoting production and export by private companies (Rix 1993, 19; Koppel and Orr 1993, 342; Lancaster 2007, 115-16). Post-war reparations were used to export products and machines from Japan, and the use of yen loans was mostly limited to the purchase of commodities and services from Japan. Japanese ODA recipients were concentrated in Asia, which was regarded as the key to the economic restoration and growth of Japan. Thus, the primary objective of development assistance policies was the economic development of Japan itself.

This stance of the Japanese government did not contradict the prevailing trend of international assistance. As symbolically analyzed in *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Rostow 1960), developing countries in those days tried to "take off" through economic growth, for which the government was regarded as an important player. The private sector, however, was crucial as evidenced by the 1964 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) slogan "Trade Rather Than Assistance" (Shimomura et al. 2009, 39). However, there was a major difference between what Japan wanted and what the developing countries wanted: the latter requested new international rules or preferential treatment which would help improve their terms of trade, whereas Japan aimed to promote its own production and export. However, both shared the belief that economic growth through trade could raise an entire country up from an underdeveloped state through the trickle-down effect.

Japan's original system of development assistance was founded during this time. The Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), whose role was to provide concessional loan

assistance (yen loans), was established in 1961, while the Overseas Technology Cooperation Agency (OTCA) was set up in 1962. Although the supervising agency of OECF was formally the Economic Planning Agency (EPA), the organization was actually governed by a “four-party regime” in which the Finance Ministry, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), in addition to EPA, were involved in operations and personnel management (Orr 1990, 20; Hashimoto 1999, 345).

OTCA, while being supervised by MOFA, depended on other ministries and agencies which had the technical expertise necessary to implement technical cooperation; consequently, various ministries, including MITI, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and the Ministry of Transport (MOT), were involved. When the decision was made to reinforce technology-cooperation functions in the 1970s, MITI and MAFF went as far as seeking to establish their own agencies separate from OTCA (Arase 1995, 71-72; Araki 1997, 244). The attempt of MITI and MOFA ultimately failed, and a new organization, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), was established in 1974 as a merger of OTCA and Japan Emigration Service (JEMIS). Nevertheless, the involvement of many ministries in the operation and personnel management of JICA continued as before (Arase 1995, 71-72).

As explained above, the policies on development assistance at that time were determined through consultation and compromise among the relevant ministries. In other words, the process perfectly reflected the classical image of bureaucratic politics described by Orr. The lack of coordination, however, did not cause major problems because the ministries all prioritized Japan’s own economic growth.

### ***Comprehensive security***

The era in which Japan was allowed to plan its development assistance policies around its own economic profits ended in the 1970s. One reason for this was that Japan became the world’s second largest economic power in 1968, and its economy continued to grow while the relative

power of the US declined. As a result, there was frequent economic friction between Japan and the US during the 1970s, and Japan's "security free ride" was severely criticized by the US Congress. When Japan became a founding member of the G-5 Summit Meeting in 1975, it was compelled to share costs with the US and other developed countries to make adequate contributions to the peace and development in the world, even though such contributions would not directly benefit Japan's own economy.

What made the problem compounded for Japan is that it needed to take immediate actions to deal with two simultaneously proposed aims of assistance: aid for basic human needs (BHN), a humanitarian aspect of assistance; and "strategic" assistance, which had military connotations. During the 1970s, the focus of international aids shifted from economic growth through production and trade to humanitarian considerations of poverty reduction, which came to be endorsed by the World Bank as BHN, since the trickle-down benefits of growth had not occurred as expected (Shimomura et al. 2009, 41). At the same time, the world was suddenly plunged into a new Cold War by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia and USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. As a result, development assistance became a token of cooperation with the West's world strategy, namely preventing expansion of the USSR's influence.

While addressing new proposals for BHN and strategic assistance, Japan did not abandoned the objective of its own economic development. The first oil shock in 1973 and the US's export ban of soybeans exposed a major vulnerability of the Japanese economy, namely its high dependence on energy and foodstuffs from overseas, and made Japan keenly aware of the need to cultivate amicable relations with resource-rich countries in order to reduce Japan's own economic risks. Japan subsequently maintained the goal of its own economic development, now with greater emphasis on the acquisition of resources and foodstuffs.

At the end of the 1970s, aid for strategic purposes, to secure resources and food, and for capacity enhancement for self-defense and against natural disasters were all integrated in the concept of "comprehensive security." Assistance for acquiring resources and food took the form



of greater development assistance to the Middle East as well as to Central and South America. Greater strategic assistance was exemplified in the increase in aid provided to Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and other countries, which could not necessarily be justified based on the original purpose of Japan's economic development (Yasutomo 1986, 42-45).

In practice, the phrase "strategic assistance" was not used in the final report issued by the Comprehensive Security Research Group,<sup>1</sup> which was commissioned by the then Prime Minister Ohira to examine Japan's security policy and which submitted its report after his death. Instead, the report argued that Japan should actively contribute in the fields of economic and technical cooperation, since it had difficulties in making military contributions. According to Yasutomo, the word "strategic" was avoided to parry the criticism from the opposition parties and the public that the government was following the strategy of the US (Yasutomo 1986, 14, 25 and 30). He also pointed out that MOFA was the only ministry willing to provide strategic assistance, while the economy-related agencies left it up to MOFA (Yasutomo 1986, 68). However, Miyashita, who analyzes the US influence on Japan's aid policies, concluded that the economy-related ministries also went along with the US strategy to alleviate economic frictions with the US (Miyashita 2003, 180-81).

There were people in the ruling party and the government who wanted to avoid antagonizing the public in general and opposition parties in particular who were allergic to Japan's military involvement overseas including any ODA with militaristic implications. For instance, Prime Minister Suzuki's emphasis on BHN assistance which he made in his 1981 statement at Bangkok (Orr 1990) reflected his desire to mitigate criticism against strategic assistance. Suzuki dared to endorse humanitarian aid although the Japanese government was not enthusiastic about shifting from production and trade promotion to BHN. Further evidence for the government's sensitivity to public opinion on the military issue is seen in the relative budget

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1. The entire text of this report is contained in the database on Japanese politics and international relations (The World and Japan), the database of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, the University of Tokyo (<http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/JPSC/19800702.O1J.html>).

allocations for international cooperation and for defense. These two were excluded from the fiscal discipline imposed during the 1980s, but the former always exceeded the latter, which was meant to alleviate the criticism that assistance tended to focus on military purposes (Yasutomo 1986, 65).

The objectives of Japan's development assistance thus multiplied in the early 1980s. International contributions toward economic and technological cooperation, and BHN assistance, which were in keeping with the strategy of Western countries, were added to the previous goal of Japan's own economic development (including the acquisition of resources and food).

Although the assistance philosophy became more diverse, the system of implementing it hardly changed. ODA policies were determined by consultation among relevant ministries as before, and these ministries continued to be closely involved with the assistance-implementing agencies such as JICA. The lack of an integrating mechanism meant that diverse assistance philosophies coexisted without coordination.

### ***International contributions and global issues***

Events from the 1980s to the early 1990s further diversified Japan's goals for international contributions, and triggered the reform of the ODA institutions. One of those events was a rapid increase in the absolute amount of ODA. After Prime Minister Fukuda declared his plan to double the amount of ODA in 1977, Japan continuously increased the ODA for the two subsequent decades (until 1997). Partly supported by the rising yen, Japan remained the world's top provider of aid, exceeding the US in the total amount of ODA in dollars from 1991 to 2000. However, the expanding ODA budget amid continuing budget austerity naturally drew the attention of the public and mass media, and the philosophy behind foreign aid was questioned as never before.

Several prominent cases of external aid were widely reported during the 1980s, which also led to greater interest in development assistance among the public and media. On the one hand, tragic scenes of famine in Ethiopia and Negros in the Philippines drew public attentions, heightening citizens' consciousness about the need of humanitarian aid. On the other hand, the yen-loan-related corruption of the Marcos government, construction of the roads to transport trees cut through the tropical forests of Sarawak in Malaysia, and the social dislocation in Narmada Dam of India similarly drew broad attentions but gave a negative impression of development assistance. These cases encouraged NGOs and scholars to take a stand against the government. They claimed that Japanese development assistance turned poor local residents into victims for the benefit of Japanese corporations and the local privileged class, while destroying the environment of developing countries (Rix 1993, 60-62; Hirata 2002, 98-100 and 105; Arase 2005, 11).

In the meantime, to mitigate economic friction with Western countries, Japan needed to succumb to their requests to increase their development assistance. In response, Japan rapidly increased the total amount of ODA as a sign of its commitment to greater international contribution. Such ODA money included funds to deal with various problems that required a global response in the 1980s, namely accumulated debts and environmental destruction. This type of "contribution" was inherited by the Japan-US Common Agenda that started in 1993 and continues to this day in the form of "contributions" to a wide range of "global issues," including the environment, health care, women's issues, drugs, and anti-terrorism. In addition, ensuing events such as the rise of the neoconservative trend in the US, reinforcement of the "structural adjustment" line in the World Bank and IMF, sanctions against Myanmar and China, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the Gulf War, all forced Japan to address new problems such as market-oriented economic reforms and democratization.

First, although the trend toward deregulation in the US had started under Carter's Democratic Administration, the Reagan Administration began in 1981 to further promote

economic liberalization by condemning the “failure of the state.” The policy of the US government was also reflected in the policies of the World Bank and IMF. The World Bank expanded its structural adjustment loans (SAL), which they had introduced in 1979, and the IMF established the Structural Adjustment Facility in 1986 (Shimomura et al. 2009, 42-43). This reflected a shift in the primary international assistance goal from poverty reduction back to economic growth. The renewed emphasis on growth, which focused on market mechanisms for growth, differed from the previous goal, which encouraged national governments to be involved in development.

Structural adjustment loans required borrowers to implement liberalization measures or to deregulate trade, finance, and investment as prerequisites for the loans. When requested to adopt such structural adjustment policy for ODA, Japan faced difficulties both domestically and internationally. Within Japan there were still strong calls for cautious handling of quick liberalization or deregulation, although the Second Provisional Commission on Administrative Reform had started advocating the virtues of a “small government” in the early 1980s. In its dealings with recipient countries, Japan had never requested the adoption of any specific policy in exchange for its development assistance, although general consultations with recipient governments were held. In particular, the government was careful not to interfere with recipient governments’ policies in Asia, where Japan’s development assistance was concentrated, as this could have been construed as high-handed action which may have carried historically negative connotations (Koppel and Orr 1993, 11). However, facing the catastrophic economic failure of Myanmar, to which Japan had provided development assistance for many years, and the quick departure of Central and East European countries away from socialism, Japan was compelled to modify its stance on the market economy-oriented reforms.

Second, a decision had to be made on whether or not to freeze assistance to politically oppressive governments following the military coup in Myanmar in 1988 and the Tiananmen Square Incident in China in 1989. Western countries pressed Japan to agree with their

pro-sanction views. Japan had already responded to US pressure and either reduced or frozen assistance to Nicaragua and Iran (Yasutomo 1986, 5, 43 and 122; Orr 1990, 93 and 123), but Japanese politicians as well as bureaucrats were reluctant to impose sanctions against Asian countries with which Japan had shared negative historical experiences and had since established close economic ties. But the collapse of the Soviet bloc and growing criticism within Japan of its past assistance to Marcos and Saddam Hussein forced the Japanese government to clarify its position on “democratization” and “human rights” in regards to its assistance policy. Past assistance to Saddam Hussein was criticized seriously when Iraq invaded Kuwait because it clearly demonstrated that even if an assistance project was limited to non-military projects, the money, which was fungible, could be used for military purposes (Shimomura et al. 1999, Chapter 2; Koppel and Orr 1993, 360).

As explained above, the series of events from the 1980s to the early 1990s compelled the Japanese government to greatly expand its assistance goals. Japan had to cope with new objectives such as market economy-oriented reforms, democratization, human rights, and the avoidance of the use of ODA money for military purposes, in addition to the expanding scope of international contribution to global issues including environment and gender. On the other hand, the focus on Japan’s own economic growth shifted throughout this process, but it never disappeared from among the objectives of development assistance. According to Arase (1995, 103-105 and 128-29), the project to develop the Eastern Seaboard of Thailand or the concept of New Asian Industries Development Plan initiated in the 1980s by MITI intended to simultaneously support Southeast Asian countries’ export-oriented industrialization and relocate the waning Japanese manufacturing sector to low-cost Southeast Asia in order to maintain the international competitiveness of the Japanese economy.

The above-mentioned expansion and diversification of the objectives of assistance was incorporated into Japan’s first ODA Charter approved by the Cabinet in 1992 (MOFA 1998, 325-27). This document lists various goals in the sections on Basic Philosophy, Principles, and

Priorities. For example, since stability and further development of the developing world are indispensable for the peace and prosperity of the entire world, Japan is to support the economic development of developing countries; in doing so, Japan should pay full attention to humanitarian viewpoints, environmental preservation, and good governance as well as democratization, introduction of a market-oriented economy, and basic human rights; should check recipient countries for military spending and the development, production and export of weapons; and should take special care of the least among less developed countries. The philosophy of Japanese development assistance was thus organized as a list of miscellaneous items, addressing all conceivable goals with no prioritization or elaboration.

According to Arase's observation, this was the result of the process of developing the document, which was prepared by consultation among staff of relevant ministries and agencies on loan to the Cabinet Secretariat (Arase 1995, 124). Depending on so many autonomous ministries and agencies, the process of the preparation of the Charter never contributed to achieving any institutional integration of the assistance system. Although the Council of Ministers for Foreign Economic Cooperation, composed of 15 ministers and agency heads with the Chief Cabinet Secretary as chairman, had been set up in 1988 (MOFA 1990, 242; Rix 1993, 74), it was clearly impossible for a ministerial meeting of so many members to make effective political decisions. In addition, development assistance was not a priority for the ministers amid worsening political and economic problems in Japan itself. Consequently, Japan's development assistance system remained to be one supported by joint consultations and decisions by a large number of bureaucrats of various ministerial organizations.

However, there were some institutional reform efforts during this period, such as the start of cooperation with NGOs. In 1989, the scheme for small-scale grant-in-aid cooperation and NGO project subsidies were launched; in 1994, the Non-Governmental Organizations Assistance Division was set up in the Economic Cooperation Bureau, MOFA; and in 1996, a regular meeting between NGOs and MOFA was started (Hirata 2002, 131 and 134).

Another effort was an attempt to restructure development assistance according to recipient countries. OECF, which was responsible for providing loan assistance, had several sections specialized in the aid to each region and country, but JICA, which was responsible for technical cooperation, organized aid according to the type of task (procurement, training, dispatch of specialists, etc.) and to issues (social development, medicine, agriculture, mining, etc.), but not by country. Furthermore, the administration of assistance was divided among various ministries and coordination inside the government for each recipient country was difficult. As the amount of Japanese ODA rapidly increased and its significance was questioned in and out of the country, the effect of assistance on each recipient country was debated.<sup>2</sup> As a result, country-focused research groups were set up in JICA. It is reported that research was conducted on 16 countries between 1986 and 1998 with the Philippines as the first target country (Hashimoto 1999, 362 and 365-66). OECF also started preparing “Country Papers” including implementation policies for each country in the 1990s (Japan Bank for International Cooperation 2003, 131).

### ***Human security***

In the late 1990s, while the trend of international assistance again shifted from economic growth to poverty reduction, Japan’s ODA budget began to shrink as domestic economic stagnation persisted. As a result, the philosophical underpinnings of assistance to developing countries were questioned again within the country.

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 made clear the emphasis on poverty reduction in international assistance. Behind this was the spread of military conflicts and economic crises in Africa in the 1990s and social disparity and growing poverty in the former USSR and Eastern Europe. People had

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2. Policies for individual nations and regions were formulated by the Bureau of Economic Cooperation of MOFA in the early 1960s, but there was concern that MOFA would be viewed as assessing specific countries and therefore the result could not be published (Araki 1992, 121).

come to realize that promoting democracy or a market economy alone does not achieve economic growth or poverty reduction; these could, in fact, exacerbate violent conflicts instead.

As early as 1996, DAC announced a new development strategy for reducing poverty, calling for numerical goals of poverty reduction in each issue area (OECD-DAC 1996). The World Bank launched a new policy in 1999 of writing off the debts of heavily indebted poor countries on the condition that they formulate a strategy for reducing poverty (Shimomura et al. 2009, 57). The MDGs were aligned with these policies.

Having increased the amount of ODA in five consecutive plans, Japan started to reduce it in 1998. The ODA budget in the general account halved from its peak of ¥1,167.7 billion in 1997 to ¥562.1 billion in 2012. Measured in dollars, the budget started to drastically decrease in 1996, and by 2006 Japan's ranking in net ODA disbursed among DAC members dropped from the top to fifth place (MOFA, each year). Japanese society also showed considerable "assistance fatigue" after the bursting of the bubble economy. According to the annual public opinion survey by the Cabinet Office, people who answered that Japan should "actively continue" economic cooperation decreased from the annual average of 38.8% in 1986-91 to 33.4% in 1992-97 and finally 23.9% in 1998-2003. Conversely, respondents who said that economic cooperation should be minimized increased from 8.2% to 12.5% and 21.1% over the same time periods.

Once the total amount of ODA was reduced, a new problem arose of how to effectively use the limited resources. To discuss the effectiveness of assistance, it was necessary to identify and prioritize the objectives of assistance from among an increasingly diverse list. The concept of "human security," which was proposed in Japan after 1998, could have become the core philosophy, but many people misunderstood this concept as they were swayed by discussions on peace building or the MDGs. Consequently, it fails even today to play a potentially promising role as a core philosophy of Japan's ODA policy.



Human security, proposed by UNDP in 1994 and elaborated by the report submitted by the Sen-Ogata Commission (Commission on Human Security 2003), focuses on the safety and security of people rather than on national security against foreign forces, and argues that the basic objective of international cooperation should be to free people from poverty and fear and help them to lead a life with dignity. The elimination of fear in addition to poverty was emphasized partly because of the need to respond to natural disasters, diseases, and transnational crimes, but mainly in response to many atrocities committed in armed conflicts in Africa and the Balkans in the 1990s.

Because of its goal of “freedom from poverty,” the concept of “human security” was considered to be consistent with the MDGs that had become mainstream concepts at DAC or the World Bank. This understanding of human security, however, was insufficient as it ignored the concept of empowerment and downside risk mentioned in the Sen-Ogata Report. The Japanese government’s failure to fully understand this point made it difficult to use the concept to formulate an integrated philosophy of foreign assistance.

According to the Sen-Ogata Report, both protection and empowerment are necessary to realize “human security.” The former aims to directly help people who fall into humanitarian crises, while the latter aims to help people gain the autonomous capacity to handle situations in which their daily lives are threatened. The concept of empowerment is also closely related to the Sen-Ogata Report’s selection of downside risk as the criterion for differentiating “human security” from “human development.” While “human development” aims to develop human capabilities to an upward direction, “human security” involves handling worsening situations for people. In this sense, “human security” problems can occur not only in the fragile countries but also in middle-income or developed countries. In fact, Foreign Minister Obuchi delivered a speech that mentioned “human security” during his visit to Southeast Asia in 1998 (Toda 200, 101) in emphasizing the need to support the large numbers of people who had suddenly fallen into poverty as a result of the Asian Financial Crisis. In other words, human security is not the

equivalent of the MDGs; it is a philosophy equally applicable to countries where MDGs have already been achieved. The concept of “human security” indicates the need to create resilience against downside risks not just by eliminating poverty but also by attaining sustained economic growth.

In August 2003, the Japanese government included “human security” as one of the five basic policies of development assistance in its new ODA Charter, demonstrating its support of the Sen-Ogata Report (MOFA 2011, 163-68). The problem, however, is that many “Basic Policies” and “Priority Issues” are simply listed in the new ODA Charter as well as in Japan’s Medium-Term Policy on Official Development Assistance that provides detailed policies for implementing the Charter (MOFA 2011, 169-81). Thus, the relationship between “human security,” listed as one of the five Basic Policies, and “sustained growth,” listed as one of the Priority Issues, remains unclear.

Meanwhile, since these documents discuss “sustained growth” in connection with stimulating trade and investment activities within the private sector, they were strongly criticized by the DAC mainstream, which saw Japan as prioritizing its own economic development and being unwilling to make sufficient contributions to achieve the MDGs (OECD-DAC 2004, 10). Japan’s focus on its own prosperity in the new ODA Charter only worsened the situation. In the previous ODA Charter Japan implied that assistance should be related to trade and investment, stating: “The stability and development of developing countries are indispensable for peace and prosperity of the entire world.” The new charter, however, made the case more explicit: “The objectives of Japan’s ODA are to contribute to the peace and development of the international community, and thereby to help ensure Japan’s own security and prosperity.” Pro-MDG people considered this change to go against the general trend in development assistance.

The Japanese government emphasized Japan’s own benefits again in the new ODA Charter likely because the government, trying to stop the reduction of ODA, wanted to

reassure the private sector of Japan amid growing criticism of the expansion of “untied” portion in ODA (Arase 2005, 271). In spite of the nationalistic rhetoric, however, the actual “untied” ratio did not worsen, remaining at 90% on average from 1991 to 2000 and 91% on average from 2001 to 2010. The grant element, which indicates the ratio of grant-aid of ODA, was 80% annually on average from 1990 to 1999, and increased to 88% from 2000 to 2010. The difference from Japan and DAC shrank as the DAC average was 92% and 97%, respectively (MOFA, each year).

Since Japan’s ODA includes a large percentage of loan assistance, it tends not to be provided to “least developed countries,” which generally have a low repayment capacity. However, when “low-income countries” are included in the list of recipients, there is almost no difference between Japan’s aid and the DAC average aid for lower income recipient countries: the DAC average from 1990 to 1999 was 45.8%, while Japan’s was 32.9%. For the period from 2000 to 2009, the DAC average was 51.2%, while Japan’s average was 53.9% (DCD-DAC 2011, Table B.7). The amount of ODA to Sub-Saharan Africa, where there are many lower income countries, has increased since 2006. Consequently, the ratio of ODA to Sub-Saharan Africa to the total amount of Japan’s bilateral ODA rose remarkably from an average of 10% from 2001 to 2005 (DAC average: 29%) to an average of 25% from 2006 to 2010 (DAC average: 31%).<sup>3</sup>

When the new ODA Charter was formulated in 2003, MOFA not only consulted with other ministries but also organized the ODA General Strategy Meeting, held public hearings, and solicited public comments to enhance “transparency” (Wakaeda 2005, 129). This attempt to listen to varying opinions, however, backfired, and the Charter ended up trying to please everybody. The newness of the 2003 Charter is its inclusion of the concept of “human security” as one of the Basic Policies, and “peace-building” as one of the Priority Issues. Otherwise, the

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3. Starting in 1993, Japan has held the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) every five years, to which leaders of African countries and representatives of international organizations are invited.

new ODA Charter is similar to the previous version in the respect that it simply cites almost every conceivable goal, including humanitarian problems, global issues, democratization, protection of human rights, poverty reduction, and sustained growth.

The Basic Act on Reforming Government Ministries enacted in 1998 specifies that MOFA play the central role of overall planning and adjustment of ODA policies (MOFA 1999, 7). However, to coordinate policies among ministries, the new ODA Charter advocates for the active use of personnel exchanges and consultations among bureaucrats, such as the Inter-Ministerial Meeting on ODA; this approach too is the same as in the past.

The Council for Overseas Economic Cooperation, led by the Prime Minister and including as members the Chief Cabinet Secretary, Foreign Minister, Finance Minister, and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, was established in place of the Council of Ministers for Foreign Economic Cooperation in 2006 to ensure quick and substantial deliberation on ODA policies (MOFA 2011, 98). However, this new council did not function effectively, and was disbanded in 2011 in accordance with the Democratic Party administration's policy of abolishing unnecessary committees.

Among the ODA implementing agencies, closer coordination had been actively sought for. First, a policy to set up and reinforce the local ODA task force was launched in 2003 to coordinate the activities of the offices of implementing organizations such as JICA and JBIC located in recipient countries.<sup>4</sup> In October 2008, the new JICA was formed through the integration of JICA and the yen loan division of JBIC (former OECF) as part of administrative reforms to restructure governmental organizations. During this process, part of the grant aid assistance function, originally supervised by MOFA, was transferred to the new JICA. This reorganization increased the possibility of coordinating the three schemes of ODA—grant aid, loan assistance and technical cooperation—under a single organization.

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4. By 2010, local task forces were set up in 80 out of 164 ODA recipient countries (MOFA 2012, 112).

Whether performed by the local task force or the new JICA, country-specific planning for development is essential to effectively combine the various means of assistance. As mentioned earlier, JICA tackled this problem as early as the late 1980s when they started to conduct studies on individual countries, and OECF also started preparing “Country Papers” in the 1990s. JICA applied its new concerns over country-specific planning to organizational reform and set up four regional departments in 1999 (JICA 2008, 137); the number increased to six in 2012.

MOFA also started drawing up country-specific assistance plans in response to a proposal in January 1998 by the Consultative Committee on ODA Reform toward the 21st Century set up by Foreign Minister. In 2003, MOFA officially decided to write five-year country assistance plans in accordance with the stipulation contained in the new ODA Charter that “country assistance programs” be prepared for major recipient countries. In 2010, MOFA began to prepare more concise and strategic “country assistance policies,” for all ODA recipients (MOFA 2012, 55).

However, such policy integration and country-specific planning was conducted in MOFA and MOFA-associated JICA, rather than with the entire government system. Although MOFA is supposed to listen to the opinions of other ministries and local ODA task forces during the process of preparing country-specific policies, there is no mechanism that ensures these country assistance programs or policies are endorsed by the entire government. Partly because of the dissolution of the control center function at the Cabinet level, it seems clear that the institutional arrangement for formulating and sharing assistance philosophies and country-specific assistance plans among the entire government is still fragile.

## **2. Problems in Japan's development assistance policies**

This analysis of goals and institutional arrangements for Japan's ODA during these four distinct periods reveals that almost all the goals we conceive today had been proposed by the third period, in which the first ODA Charter was issued. By that time, the focus on Japan's own economic development, which was the main objective of the first and second periods, had diminished as emphasis shifted to new objectives: poverty reduction in developing countries, humanitarian issues, peace, democratization, protection of human rights, sustained growth, and global issues such as the environment, health, medicine, women's issues, drugs, and anti-terrorism. This shift represented a great diversification of the goals of assistance. While all of these disparate objectives might have been integrated under the concept of "human security" proposed in the fourth period, Japan failed to systematically organize the purposes and tasks of assistance in this way. As a result, Japan was repeatedly criticized for its lack of consistency and for meekly following the mainstream trends of the DAC and the World Bank, which offered a simple but integrated message that matched each era including BHN, structural adjustment, or MDGs. A recent analysis of Japanese development assistance policies conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), a British think tank, concluded that although Japan has its own development assistance policies, it does not provide a systematic explanation of its philosophy to the international society (Wild and Denney 2011, 13).

Japan now has an opportunity to take the initiative to propose its own assistance philosophy, as the trend of international assistance appears to be changing again. While assistance has tended to focus on international cooperation to realize MDGs, there is renewed interest in economic growth and the diversification of assistance methods.

This new trend has emerged partly because the number of new participants, namely emerging government donors and private donors, has increased. It is estimated that private donors (foundations, funds, corporations, etc.) and emerging donors provided \$53 to 75 billion

and \$14 billion, respectively, compared with total assistance of \$122 billion by DAC countries in 2008 (Kharas et al. 2011, 7). Since these new donors, which are growing in importance, include countries like China that do not follow DAC policies and pursue their own development objectives through trade and investment, as Japan did, DAC is now compelled to accept a variety of assistance methods.

In addition, the recipient countries themselves are now focusing on growth through trade and investment. Private financial resources were traditionally greater than ODA in the flow of capital to developing countries. UNCTAD statistics show that the flow of direct investments to developing countries was \$616.7 billion in 2010 (UNCTAD 2012, Table I.1) and that, when limited to the flow from DAC countries to developing countries, it was \$329.4 billion including direct investments, securities investments, and export credits (OECD-DAC Statistics). However, 62% of direct investments go to Asia and only 5% to Sub-Saharan Africa, while 44% of ODA is directed to Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, ODA is still very important for Sub-Saharan Africa. However, demands by African leaders for growth through economic transformation are now increasing as violent conflicts have gradually subsided in recent years (World Bank 2011, 51-52) and their economic growth rate has exceeded the world average.

Reflecting those changes, the main outcome document (FHLF 2011) adopted by the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan from November to December 2011 is quite different from the Paris Declaration of the Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2005. The main purpose of the Paris Declaration was to determine methods of assistance implementation to be commonly used by recipients and donors toward achieving the MDGs. The methods determined include ownership (recipients taking the initiative), alignment (matching the policies and systems of recipients and improving the predictability of assistance provision), harmonization (donors standardizing the contents and procedures of assistance), and mutual accountability (Yanagihara 2008). The promotion of these methods was based on the (dubious) assumption that they would enhance the “aid effectiveness.” However, the risk

was that imposing assistance methods whose ultimate effect is not clear to all donors through “harmonization” could even obstruct long-term development of a recipient country.

In the Busan Forum, the participants declared that assistance must serve to catalyze development based on a clear understanding that aid as defined by DAC is “only part of the solution to development” (FHLF 2011, Item 28). Item 9 of the document states that recipient countries need to become independent from assistance and that the expansion of international trade and investment and the utilization of domestic capital markets is important to that end.

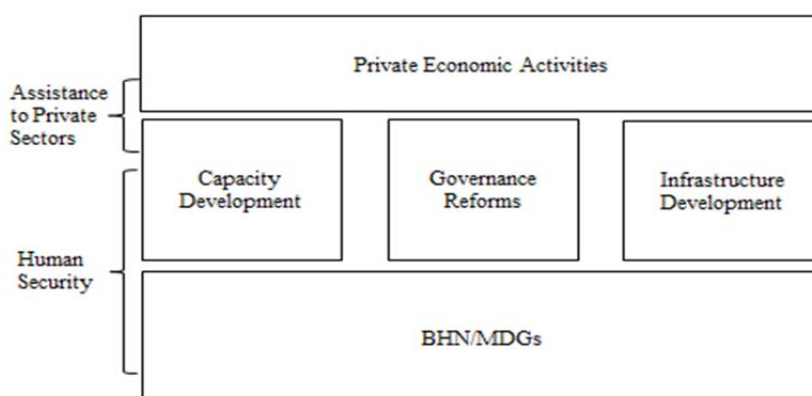
The Busan outcome document also favorably evaluated south-south cooperation and the participation of civil society and the private sector, in view of the growing importance of emerging and private donors. Furthermore, it mentions “differential commitments” and recognizes that “the ways in which these principles are applied differ across countries at various stages of development, and among the different types of public and private stakeholders involved” (FHLF 2011, Item 8).

Nevertheless, the DAC mainstream never abandoned their “aid effectiveness” approach or their focus on the MDGs at Busan. The document repeatedly states that many of the principles proposed in the past as in the Paris Declaration had contributed to “effective development cooperation” and should therefore be maintained. The document is a product of compromise between the “aid effectiveness” approach, focusing on monistic assistance methods (aid inputs), and the “development effectiveness” approach, focusing on aid outputs and recognizing more diverse methods of assistance. Controversies about the philosophy and methodology of development assistance did not, however, end at Busan.



### 3. Prospect of Japan's development assistance policies

When Japan establishes its own philosophy of development assistance and aims to lead the world amid such changing trends in international assistance, poverty reduction symbolized by the MDGs should be an essential first objective of assistance. If there were no poverty in the world, people's living conditions could be improved through ordinary economic activities, and subsequently sources of crimes and violent conflicts would decrease, thereby greatly reducing the need for development assistance. The importance of poverty reduction notwithstanding, both the original MDGs and the post-MDGs currently being formulated merely set target values to be achieved by a certain point in time. Even if they are achieved, the improvements may not last for long, or people's capacity to deal with future downside risks may not be developed. In order not only to attain numerical targets, but also to maintain achievements, further improve, and prepare for any downside risk, we need interfaces that can link the benefits of poverty reduction with the vitalization of private economic activities and continuous economic growth based thereon. There are three interfaces as shown in the figure below.



“Capacity development” is the effort made by individuals, local communities, local governments, the central government, and other organizations involved in development to

autonomously recognize and analyze required tasks, and devise and implement solutions (Hosono et al. 2011). Unlike MDGs, capacity development cannot be easily quantified and so is a difficult goal for development assistance, but at the same time it is necessary so that people living in developing countries can move beyond poverty reduction to achieve human development and long-term development and to become capable of dealing with downside risks.

The second interface is governance reform, which, as it's used here, does not mean the introduction of an administrative or financial management system or any specific democratic regime. It is defined instead as creating "fair" institutions that people can rely on for coordinating differences among their interests or opinions without resorting to violent means. These institutions are necessary because poverty reduction alone cannot eliminate violent conflict. Even in countries where the national average poverty level has improved, violent conflicts can happen. This is evident in South America in the 1960s and 1970s, former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and Tunisia or Bahrain during the "Arab Spring." Once a violent conflict intensifies, violence and poverty plunge into a vicious circle and impede development. Institutions to prevent conflict must therefore be established as a prerequisite for linking poverty reduction to long-term development. However, people's perception of a "fair" system varies depending on the historical experience and social structure of each country, and so applying a fixed model to every country is not the right approach.

The third interface that can link poverty reduction to long-term development is economic infrastructure development. Even if extreme poverty is eliminated, universal elementary education established, and the infant mortality rate or maternal death rate drastically reduced, a shortage of irrigation facilities necessary to raise agricultural productivity, underdevelopment of the roads necessary to transport products to cities or ports, or a shortage of power or power grids necessary to operate processing plants will hamper private economic

activity, making it impossible to enhance the benefits of poverty reduction into human development or improvement of the capability to handle downside risks.

Since these three interfaces are essential for effectively linking poverty reduction to long-term development, the goals of development assistance must include these in addition to poverty reduction. The resultant goals will then become overlapped with the philosophy of “human security” that advocates both assistance that directly saves people from poverty and fear (“protection”), and the fostering of self-reliance and coping with downside risks (“empowerment”).

Besides the three interfaces, there are other types of assistance to vitalize private economic activity such as low-interest business loans and manager training for small businesses and local industries. Another is the assistance of the BOP business as an indirect support for developing countries. However, there is no definitive method for ensuring that supports for individual corporations will lead to sustained economic growth of a nation. In this sense, this is a more complicated goal than, for example, boosting elementary school enrollment, which can be directly impacted by increasing the number of schools, teachers, or school lunch services; or reducing infectious diseases which can be accomplished through the use of preventive inoculation.

Today, few people advocate the validity of the “developmental state” (Chang 2002), and even those who appreciate the government’s role would not go beyond emphasizing the importance of information exchange with the private sector or the necessity of market-friendly public policies (Evans 1995; Bresser-Pereira 2010; Lin 2012). In other words, public policies including ODA can only lay the foundations and then wait for the private sector to take the initiative. Therefore, to vitalize private economic activity, public assistance must be directed first of all to the three interfaces that provide the foundations for private-sector activity rather than directly providing assistance to the private sector.

Although Japan has been blamed by the DAC mainstream for the inadequacy of its efforts to reduce poverty, in fact Japan has been pursuing the ideal form of ODA by focusing on both poverty reduction and the three interfaces. Nevertheless, Japan has not sufficiently asserted its philosophy through the concept of “human security.” Moreover, Japan has been eager to tackle two of the three interfaces, namely capacity development and economic infrastructure development, but is falling behind in the goal of governance reforms. Although JICA has provided legal and institutional development support since 1996 (Kaneko 2011, 26), those projects are mainly for economic purposes; few have contributed to political and judicial system reforms designed to prevent violent conflict.

Last but not least, let us consider the significance of “ensuring safety and prosperity” of Japan itself as a purpose of ODA. It is not wrong to argue that providing human security-oriented development assistance contributes to Japan’s own “safety and prosperity” through poverty reduction and economic growth within developing countries. However, there are many individual ODA projects and programs which do not immediately ensure Japan’s “safety and prosperity” and whose short-term effectiveness is unclear. Does this mean that those projects or programs are worthless? As long as the policy is called “assistance,” Japan should provide ODA to developing countries to ensure their “human security” regardless of how directly or swiftly such assistance will benefit Japan itself. As a result of such assistance, Japanese companies could be benefited by, for example, economic infrastructure development, but this is indeed a secondary result, and not the primary purpose of the assistance. We must recall that the inclusion of the goal “to ensure Japan’s safety and prosperity” in the new ODA Charter, which did not exist in the former Charter, generated unnecessary misunderstanding and criticism internationally surrounding Japan’s ODA policies.

In order to overcome such criticism and lead the changing world of international assistance, the Japanese government needs to clarify its assistance philosophy to emphasize poverty reduction and the three interfaces as the basic goals for “human security” and to make

all stakeholders in Japan share it. Although it is desirable to enact a basic law on international cooperation, the first step is to formulate a third version of the ODA Charter. To prevent it from becoming vague and inconsistent again as a result of compromise among the government organizations and stakeholders involved, this process should be led by a group of specialists who are independent of any ministry or agency and work under an organization whose purpose is to deliberate on national strategies. The same group should then monitor the implementation of the new charter. If a control center for development assistance policies is set up under a national-strategy organization as recommended above, it will ease policy coordination and division of labor with the entities in charge of diplomatic, defense and economic policies which more directly benefit Japan.

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## Abstract (in Japanese)

### 要約

4つの異なった時期に分けられる日本の政府開発援助の歴史は、理念や目的が次第に多様化し、制度が徐々に変化する歴史であった。ただ、日本自身の経済開発から、途上国の貧困削減、民主主義と市場経済の振興、そして環境問題のような地球規模課題の解決に至るまで、日本のODAの目標は、一つの理念に基づいた整理がなされず、多様な目標が並列的に提示される状態が今日まで続いてきた。ODA政策を司る司令塔がないことが、目標が雑多なまま存続することを許してきたが、同時に、目標が雑多で優先付けがなされないことが、省庁間の調整を難しくしてきた。近年、世界の開発援助潮流は、貧困削減とインプット重視の援助効果から、経済成長とアウトプット重視の開発効果へと変わりつつある。この傾向は日本の従来の方針に合致するものであるが、日本が国際援助界でイニシアティブを発揮するためには、「人間の安全保障」概念に基づいて、援助理念を貧困削減と、それを民間経済活動の活性化に結びつける3つのインターフェース―能力開発、統治改革、インフラ整備―に明確に整理し直す必要がある。また日本は、省庁から自立したODAの司令塔を、国家戦略を司る組織の下に設置する必要がある。