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Yosei-shugi (要請主義):

The Mystery of the Japanese Request-based Principle

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Abstract

It is intriguing how the request-based principle, which started as little more than a name for project formulation procedures, has come to attain a philosophy-like status in Japanese aid. This paper examines three aspects of this mystery: 1) the context that elevated this practice to the status of a principle (*shugi*), 2) the basic logic used by the Japanese government to substantiate such a principle, and 3) the effects it had on recipient countries. This paper argues that the request-based principle is a historical vestige that reveals the peculiarity of Japan as a latecomer to the field of foreign aid. The request-based principle has endured as a consistent undercurrent of Japanese aid since the end of the war, but it only attained the status of a principle in the late 1980s. Although the request-based principle no longer serves as a selling point for aid by the Japanese government today, a similar approach has now been adopted by emerging donors such as Thailand and China. By tracing the evolution of aid to practices of the war reparations period in the 1950s, this paper explores how this principle became institutionalized as a defining feature of the "Japanese style" of aid provision.

Keywords: request-based principle, Japanese style of aid provision, aid philosophies, tied aid

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1. Introduction

This paper seeks to clarify an important aspect of Japan's approach to aid provision by examining *yosei-shugi* (the "request-based" principle), which has been an enduring undercurrent in Japanese aid practice. Although providing development assistance in response to recipient requests is a logical and principled approach that many donor countries follow, this paper examines how the practice of request-based procedures has been elevated to philosophy-like status in Japan.

Yosei-shugi demands scholarly attention not only because of its lack of prominence in Japanese literature but also because of its ambiguity as a policy concept. Exploring the ambiguity of *yosei-shugi* may help crystalize the essence of Japan's ODA (Official Development Assistance), highlighting what this approach can offer to the global discussion on international development.

I refer to it as "less prominent" because it has hitherto attracted little scholarly attention. Murai (1986) is the only published article in Japanese with the term *yosei-shugi* in the main title, making it a strikingly understudied subject. However, I consider this concept to be an important undercurrent that exemplifies Japan's development philosophy since the 1950s. I refer to it as "ambiguous" because it is situated in the actual practice of the implementation processes, involving not only a variety of actors from the donor side (i.e., Japan) but also counterpart officers and recipient ministries who jointly decide what is to be "requested."

Japanese aid gained notoriety among Western donors for its perceived lack of philosophical underpinnings (Rix 1993; Asplund 2017). This criticism was amplified in the 1980s when Japan became one of the world's top donors. Western donors were particularly critical of "tied aid," saying that Japan was tying the procurements of goods and services funded by aid to purchases in the aid-giving country. While most aid-giving countries offered some form of tied aid, the prominence of commercialism in Japan's approach became the target of growing criticism (Lancaster 2007, 15).

Upon closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that a foundational procedure has hindered Japan's ability to assert its "philosophy." This procedural obstacle lies in the request-based approach itself, whereby economic cooperation[1] is planned and

[1] There was an explicit intention on the Japanese side to avoid using the term "aid" (enjo) in the postwar period for fear of an aggressive response if Japan were seen as moving toward economic hegemony in the region (Sato 2021, 29–30).

implemented "in response to the needs of the recipient countries" (Asian Economic Council 1953).

While "aid philosophies" (*enjo rinen*) in Japan have shifted in emphasis over the past 30 years from economic security and interdependence to human security and environment, the way that cooperation projects are formulated has remained rather constant.[2] The request-based approach is not a philosophy per se but came to be used as a principle to explain and justify why Japan provides aid in the way it does.

The paper examines 1) the context that elevated *yosei-shugi* to the status of a principle, 2) the basic logic that was used by the Japanese government to substantiate such a principle, and 3) the effects it had on recipient countries. My response to the third question will not cover evaluations of projects, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, I will address the criticisms against Japan's ODA that emerged when Japan was on its way to becoming the top donor in the 1980s.

I attempt to respond to these questions in the following ways. First, I conduct a content analysis of government publications on economic cooperation, particularly *Keizai Kyoryokuno Genjo to Kadai* (Current Situation and Problems with Economic Cooperation, published from 1958) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ODA White Paper (published from 1988) to determine the evolution and change that these publications engendered in the idea of "requests" (*yosei*).

Second, I trace the origin of the request-based procedure to the postwar reparation scheme. I do this because much of the original substance that evolved into the principles of aid is, I argue, an afterthought based on the practices utilized by each recipient country since the time when the reparation mechanism was established.

Finally, to assess the "effects on recipient countries," I highlight domestic and global complaints against Japanese ODA, which will help elucidate the distinctive characteristics of Japan's aid as they have evolved over the past 50 years. Observers of development aid have focused too narrowly on the impact and results of aid rather than the long-term drivers that produce such results.

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[2] As I shall discuss in the latter part of the paper, "aid philosophy" (enjo tetsugaku, enjo rinen) was not a familiar term for many aid practitioners in Japan. It was only in the 1980s that the Japanese government first published systematic aid objectives (MOFA 1980).

My argument, in short, is that the request-based procedure evolved into a key principle of Japan's aid largely as a secondary "attachment" to the practical delivery mechanism stipulated by the postwar reparation mechanism. The request basis was viewed as a vital element that helped Japan's aid distinguish itself from that of the Western donors while it resonated well with the "self-help effort" emphasized in Japan's broader aid philosophy. Although the government was increasingly under pressure to clarify its aid objectives from the international community (especially the OECD-DAC), the request-based delivery mechanism continued to dictate how aid philosophy has been framed, leaving enough space and flexibility to include a variety of stakeholders in the ODA system.

2. What is *Yosei-Shugi*?

In a standard textbook on the Japanese aid system, Sakurai explains *yosei-shugi* as follows:

> Official Development Assistance from Japan operates under the request-based principle, in which the donor waits for the request from the recipient country. Such requests for project cooperation from the prospective recipient are discussed in coordination with relevant agencies of the recipient country and then reported to the Japanese government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) through the local embassies. In countries where there is no diplomatic establishment, which have no cooperation experience, or which do not have enough capacities to formulate projects, Japan sends a governmental survey mission to assist the project-finding process (Sakurai 1985, 47, translated by the author).

In this process, the prospective recipient identifies the project or is otherwise closely involved with project selection. Sakurai explains that this principle applies mainly to grant aid and technical cooperation but also pertains to loan projects that the Japanese government determines as fitting within the objectives of aid—those that have no implications for military spending, no sustainable commercial alternatives, and are not used for the production of luxury goods (Sakurai 1985, 92).

Observed from the outside, the request-based principle seems like a passive idea, undeserving of the status of a philosophy. But as we shall see, Japan's development cooperation was strongly bound by its postwar diplomatic circumstances and the weak economic conditions under which domestic private companies were trying to recover. The process was also conditioned by both the major recipients in Asia as well as Japan's most important strategic partner, the United States. Understanding why *yosei-shugi* became an aid principle requires a deeper understanding of its historical context.[3] While the more pro-active "philosophies" of Western counterparts, such as "humanitarianism," "democracy," and "human rights," do face occasional challenges from recipient countries, criticisms against Japan's ODA have tended to focus more on project impact and implementation rather than the project formulation processes that generated such impact. Thus, the request-based approach has remained largely unscrutinized. This is precisely why I suggest that this principle warrants a more systematic focus.

Criticisms against the request-based principle stem mostly from donor countries of the West, regarding it as "too passive" and lacking a sufficiently proactive attitude toward the needy. Sakurai defends the system by asserting that "aid should supply things that recipient countries truly need; [whereas] imposing what they do not need is not aid" (Sakurai 1985, 97). The Japanese government employs a similar logic. For example, the English version of the MOFA report on ODA, published at a time when criticisms of Japan's aid approach were on the rise, states the philosophical foundation of the request-based approach as follows:

> …Japan has tried to avoid exercising political influence in developing countries especially because of the unfortunate history of Japan's colonial management. Plus, Japan itself was a developing country until recently. It can also be pointed out that Japan has fully realized the importance of self-help efforts from its history of development after World War II. …<u>The principle of "request basis" is a vivid reflection of Japan's stance of paying respect to the self-help efforts of developing countries</u>. In supporting the self-help efforts of the recipient country [sic], the true style of extending Japan's aid is oriented toward assisting the particular projects under the development program planned by each developing country (MOFA 1989, 21, *emphasis added*).

As noted by Sakurai, Japan's postwar economic cooperation began with a strong emphasis on avoiding any appearance of economic aggression. It was for this reason that the Japanese government chose to use "economic cooperation" rather than "foreign aid" or "development assistance" (Sato 2022, 52). The request-based procedure fitted well with

[3] Rix (1993) offers an alternative translation: "request-first principle." The "on-request principle" is another possible translation. I prefer to use "request-based" simply because it is the term used by the Japanese government. It also clearly expresses the foundational procedure from which all cooperation activities emerge.

this attitude since it gave the initiative—or at least the appearance of an initiative—to the recipients in forming projects.

However, awareness of the risks that accompanied the use of the request-based procedure emerged in the 1970s—or even before. For example, in the roundtable discussion among infrastructure specialists titled "The Current Situation of Technical Cooperation and Future Directions," OECF president Okita Saburō commented that:

> We find cases where activities of trading companies dictate the direction of government policies. As you know, many projects are selected and brought in initially by the trading companies.[4]
> They bring those projects to the embassy and then the proposal will be sent to MOFA. We can't say that this practice is necessarily wrong though (Okita, Takeuchi, and Aoyama 1976, 26).

As hinted at in Okita's remarks above, ambiguous feelings were present even on the Japanese side. Yet there was no strong incentive for Tokyo to change the system. This was partly because the loan portion of the ODA system was built on the delicate balance of the so-called "four ministry system" (四省庁体制 *yon shōchō taisei*), under which the ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Industries and Economic Planning Agency were jointly responsible for decisions.[5] This consensus-based system made it difficult to introduce any radical changes to the status quo.

Of course, domestic repercussions occasionally upset the status quo of such practices, especially when the proposal was made to consolidate the ODA-related mandates into a new agency (Sato 2021, 34–35). The creation of a dedicated implementing agency—most notably the establishment of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1974—provoked "politicking" among the various ministries, each of which had its own stake in ODA (Araki 1984).

While such domestic politics were typical turf battles between ministries over budget and posts, an important pressure with regard to the aid philosophy and principle came from the

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[4] In this round table discussion, there was already an awareness of the issue regarding "heated competition among the trading companies for projects," which is an early indication of the large-scale corruption that was to emerge in the 1980s.

[5] This practice changed, gradually concentrating power toward MOFA through a series of ODA reforms in the 2000s.

OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). As one of the founding members of this essentially Western aid organization, Japan had to explain to DAC members why and how Japan was providing aid. In response to a question on Japan's process in project identification, the Japanese government replied by saying:

> Recipient countries usually identify projects which are to be objects of Japan's aid, by themselves on a "Request Basis" in the process of making economic and development plans. … (DAC 1986, 42).

This was the first explicit reference to the concept of the request basis in DAC memoranda.

While it is not clear why the request basis appears suddenly as a principle of Japanese aid in 1986, this was around the time that Japan's ODA started to face criticisms from abroad as well as from the people of Japan. Before investigating the nature of these criticisms, we need to assess the way Japanese aid has evolved. This step is critical in understanding why Japan came to emphasize "requests," however awkward the process may have been, in the practice of foreign aid.

3. Institutionalization of *Yosei-Shugi*

Post-WW2 reparations

It is not easy to pinpoint the exact origin of the request-based principle in the history of Japanese aid. Frequent mentions of "requests" from recipient countries as a basic requirement of aid provisions can be found in a variety of publications in the late 1970s. Takeuchi Yoshio, a former bureaucrat of the Ministry of Transportation, stated in 1976 that "technical assistance is conducted, in principle, based on request. Thus, assistance will not be provided if there is no such request" (Takeuchi 1976).

Perhaps a better approach to finding the origin is not so much in the use of the term "requests" but rather by examining the actual mechanisms of aid delivery from which the idea of requests arose. *The Treaty of Peace with Japan*, signed in San Francisco in 1952, required that Japan make available "the services of the Japanese people in production, salvaging and other work for the Allied Powers in question," thereby stipulating that reparations take the form of "services" (Okano 1958). This policy was based on the lessons learned after the German economy was devastated following World War I. The demands by Allied powers for monetary and material reparations did not adequately take into account the defeated nations' ability to pay, leading to the Great Depression and World War II while fueling popular support for radical forces such as the Nazis (Baishō Mondai

Kenkyūkai [Reparations Research Group] 1963, 22).[6] Regret over how these reparations methods had been imposed on the nations defeated in World War I led to the post-World War II stipulation that Japan should provide goods and services, typically in the form of equipment and technical assistance, rather than monetary reparations (Okano 1958, 263).

Following this directive, Japan concluded successive reparations agreements with Burma (November 1954), the Philippines (May 1956), Indonesia (January 1958), and Vietnam (May 1959) (Shimomura 2020, 44–47).[7] Unlike earlier research, which has focused on the processes involved in this series of reparations negotiations, here I would like to focus on the official procedures at the time of the actual discharge of reparations, because it was these procedures that formed the prototype for how subsequent development cooperation would be implemented.

The first step was for each country seeking reparations to establish a permanent delegation in Tokyo to centralize their reparations affairs. The contact point on the Japanese side was the reparations section of MOFA's Asia Bureau. This unit served as the interface for negotiations with the Japanese government. Hayashi Yuichi, who was part of MOFA's reparations section, explained the general procedural sequence as follows (Hayashi 1959, 13–14):

1. Each year, the countries seeking reparations make a list of the equipment and capital they wish to procure and consult with the Japanese side. This is called the annual implementation plan.
2. The upper limit of funds to be disbursed each year is determined separately for each nation seeking reparations, so in principle, the estimate for capital goods such as construction materials is written into the implementation plan within that limit.
3. Once the implementation plan is agreed on with the Japanese government, the delegation from the country seeking reparations negotiates directly with Japanese businesses on that basis and enters into materials procurement contracts and services agreements. However, when delegations do not know which company to choose, they

[6] It should be noted, however, that Japan's emphasis on capital equipment as the foundation of World War II reparations was not solely because of Japan's tight financial situation. To improve recipient countries' attitudes toward Japan, capital goods—which provide a long-lasting impression of reparations—were preferable to consumable goods that soon disappear (Baishō Mondai Kenkyūkai 1963, 96).

[7] Notably, however, in actual negotiations with individual countries seeking reparations there was a gradual increase in demands for material reparations, and the scope of reparations broadened to include payment in the form of capital equipment. This was the origin of Japan's international yen loans.

often seek recommendations from the Japanese government. Unlike normal trade contracts, the Japanese government approves these contracts and the payment of the contract money is made from the treasury.

4. Once the reparations agreement has been approved by the Japanese government and implemented, the government pays the contract money to a Japanese bank designated by the delegation, in line with the payment terms in the contract. This payment signifies that Japan has fulfilled its obligation to make reparations.

The underlined sections in these procedures are the points to note here. Requests often included capital goods. Though purchased by the Japanese government and given to recipient countries as reparations, these goods were purchased from Japanese companies, thereby stimulating domestic growth and propping up major manufacturers and their supporting sectors in Japan. This is the origin of the so-called "tied aid," which will become the target of criticism from the 1970s onward. Yet tied aid must be understood within this overall procedure of "request-based", since, in the early years, virtually all of the requests were not from recipient countries but from the private sector in Japan.

Although the nations seeking reparations applied to the Japanese government for their desired items, Japanese companies would engage *in advance* in sales tactics aimed at the governments of those countries. Some companies seem to have shared tips on obtaining Japanese government approval or acted as proxies in preparing the reparation plans. This role of Japanese businesses in the formative stage of projects was inherited by subsequent loan projects (Andō 1992, 31).

The Japanese perspective at that time was well expressed in the quote of a pioneering consultant who carried out many of the early reparation projects in Asia, i.e., Kubota Yutaka, who stated that,

> Some believe that reparations are a free giveaway but I think this is kind of an advanced payment in international trade to introduce Japanese industry abroad. If we need to pay this anyway, why don't we pay it with our manufactured goods and technologies? It can be a showcase for Japan's industry and technologies (Nagatsuka 1966, 325–326).

The request-based system "worked to induce Japanese business activities in recipient economies and gave the Japanese government the ability to approve only the projects that would subsidize targeted Japanese industries" (Arase 1995, 31). This scheme was beneficial for the recipient government, especially in the early years since expensive projects could be funded by Japan but not by the recipient government.

Tied aid

Although Japan is one of the founding members of DAC, it has always been perceived as an "odd man out in this (DAC) community of donors" (Söderberg 2010, 107). This was especially the case after the publication of a report by Pearson Commission on International Development, *Partners in Development*, published in 1969 (known as the Pearson Report), based on discussions about the quality, and thus the philosophies, of aid, which had by this time become an intensive topic for debate (Pearson et al. 1969). This shift in the emphasis from quantity to quality posed a variety of challenges to Japan's approach to ODA.

With its name changed to the "request-based principle," this mechanism from the reparations period was adopted as grant aid, whereby aid is tied to goods and services provided by Japan. In the reparations period, Japan *had to* give priority to the procedures because reparations were an international obligation, not an act of goodwill. It was a useful condition for Japan since the government's intention was not to impose any philosophy on Asian countries that might only be taken as another excuse for Japan to encroach into the region. In the following years, when economic cooperation was no longer an obligation, this procedure continued, transforming itself naturally into a request-based system.

The system of co-creating the "requests" with recipient governments helped Japan to indirectly recommend not only the goods that were actually requested but also provide the maintenance services for those goods. This allowed Japan to continue its engagement, supplying materials to the recipient countries through continued economic cooperation. The request-based principle also created room for private consulting companies to prepare projects that they could later receive orders for from the recipient side, thereby expanding the aid-providing capacity of Japan as a whole. In fact, at the initial stage of project formulation in the postwar period, many of the reparation items, such as the Baluchaung Hydropower Dam in Myanmar and Brantus River development project in Indonesia were already being planned on a commercial basis by the consultants ahead of involvement by the Japanese government. Many of the early projects were later relabeled as reparation projects (Nihon Koei 1981). The critical role of trading companies and consultants in response to the need to gather diverse local information that leads to "requests" was a feature of Japan's aid in the 70s and 80s.

Though Japan's aid started as economic cooperation attached to reparations, it was heavily driven by the interests of the domestic private sectors trying to recover "their" markets in Asia after the war. For this reason, it was difficult for the government to establish a long-term cooperation policy.

4. Emerging Challenges to the Request-based Principle

In the 1980s, the Japanese approach to aid faced even more severe criticism from its domestic constituents. Japan was on its way to the status of becoming the top donor worldwide, and it was no longer easy to defend its conventions based only on Japan's internal logic. Ando highlights two reasons why the request-based principle started to be questioned in the 1980s (Andō 1992). The first was the increasing incidence of environmental problems related to development projects. The projects proposed by recipient countries tended to emphasize economic development over environmental sustainability. This concern shifted the weight of the project planning initiative more toward the donor, i.e., Japan.

The second aspect was the growth of loan aid as a proportion of Japan's ODA and the increased need to find new projects requiring careful economic and financial planning. The effort of the Japanese government in taking a greater leadership role went hand in hand with the emphasis on "self-help," which was technically necessary to have those loans paid back.

The crucial trigger for this domestic criticism came from the so-called "Marcos Scandal." In 1986, it was discovered that large sums of aid had been siphoned off into the hands of the President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos. In 1986, the Marcos regime's corruption in connection with ODA was revealed, with clear evidence indicating behind-the-scenes connections between Japanese companies and the Filipino regime. It was reported that "10 to 15 percent of the value of loan aid contracts won by Japanese firms was kicked back to Philippine government officials" (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, May 13, 1987).

As a result of this scandal, there was a sudden upsurge in domestic criticism of ODA, which greatly affected the public's views of aid. The fact that Marcos had cannily diverted foreign funds to line his own pockets emerged through rigorous investigations instigated by President Corazon Aquino, who took power after Marcos' downfall. According to one source, the wealth that Marcos illegally amassed during his presidency totaled somewhere between 11.6 and 22.3 billion dollars (Hunt 2013).

Unlike in the United States, where the donor determines the projects to be implemented, the request-based principle gave aid recipients room for flexible negotiation. In particular, product loans were provided to help cover shortages in the foreign currency needed to purchase imports. In addition, the lack of any conditionality (aid conditions) whatsoever, including no negotiations over the schedule for discharging the debt, effectively gave a free hand to corrupt officials such as Marcos (Rivera 2003, 525).

How is this arrangement related to the request-based principle? According to a critical biography by Cesar Virata, Marcos' long-serving finance minister and right-hand man, Japanese yen loans—of which product loans constituted the bulk—were superior in terms of the speed of the procedures necessary before the loan could be used (Sicat 2014, 285). These loans were not tied to specific projects, the procedures were straightforward, and the loans could be approved quickly.[8] Amidst the decline in US aid to the Philippines in the 1980s, yen loans—whose lending criteria were less stringent than those of institutions such as the World Bank and which were on a larger scale—were embraced by the Marcos regime. It is thought that the mechanism of direct negotiations between recipient governments and Japanese businesses that commenced in the reparations period created convenient precedents, following which it was easy to collect a "handling fee" from businesses seeking a contract for a project.[9]

Triggered by this groundswell of criticism, ODA also began to attract attention from members of the Japanese parliament, and a monitoring system was established. The process of opposition—for example, failed movements against dam construction—roused a sense of injustice among people and gave them the opportunity to learn how to work in solidarity with external organizations.

Although the explicit term *yosei-shugi* had almost disappeared from official documents by the late 1990s,[10] the practice seems to have continued, as this key feature of Japan's aid was identified in the comparative report of Japan and the Western donors:

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[8] These three specific factors are precisely why product loans were criticized as a breeding ground for corruption (Sumi 1989, 19).

[9] Mendoza (2001, 47) states that unless private businesses paid this fee, they could not receive contracts for projects.

[10] The MOFA White Paper on ODA in 1997 explicitly states that the request-based approach will now be transformed into co-formative approach (*kyōdō keisei shug*i 共同形成主義), creating "project formulation officers" to facilitate project identification, giving more initiatives to the Japanese side (MOFA 1997). With an increased capacity to propose projects with the initiatives from the recipient countries at the same time, I observe that the basic tenet of the procedure has not changed.

> What we found through the international comparison of project formulation processes is that most donors have formulated their country-based aid policies under the more general aid policy of the higher level. From there, they form a multi-year aid program in consultation with the recipient governments and other donors… (Nikken Sekkei and Association for International Cooperation of Agriculture and Forestry, 2003, 10).

It is possible that the request-based principle, which allowed the recipient to take ownership of the project, led to delays in taking the necessary actions from the Japanese side to deal with the problem—thus contributing to the escalating criticism.

The request-based approach relies heavily on the project formulation step within the recipient country. When there is sufficient planning capacity in the recipient government, this system should work in favor of the recipients. Where capacities are low, the possibility remains that Japan can seek to impose projects that work toward its own interests. On the other hand, even when the planning capacity is high, it does not guarantee that the project will be beneficial for the public—nor would it avoid corruption. The request-based principle, by definition, places the responsibilities of such implementation complexities into the hands of the recipient governments.

5. Reflecting on the Impact of the "Request-based" Principle

As an aid principle, the request-based principle has been criticized as a passive and defensive system that mainly serves Japan's commercial interests. It is true that passiveness has been a constant feature since the 1950s. However, there is the question of *why* the request-based principle became so prominent, along with the associated costs and benefits of revealing more general undercurrents of Japan's ODA. Maemura (2019) finds from the DAC archive that it was Western donors who pushed Japan to promote self-help, purportedly a philosophy unique to Japan, in the 1960s.

The fact that Japan's development assistance was pushed into presenting itself as promoting self-help posed an interesting dilemma for Japan. Japan had to combine philosophies that are more acceptable to the West and emphasize the conditions of the recipient countries, while implementing a principle that works more in favor of Japanese economic interests, i.e., the request-based principle. The economic realities and the philosophical undercurrents prevalent in Japan after the war took on the mindset of a developing country that needed to *depend* on Asia and grow together *with* it. This approach differed from aid, which separates the subject and object of aid, i.e., the donor and recipient. Japan was both a recipient and a donor in a very short space of time and acted accordingly.

Even the term “request-based” became a principle only when Japan faced severe criticism of mercantilist practices in aid in the 1980s, before which it was an implicit practice. DAC’s ODA peer review, which is usually a non-political ritual of monitoring donor performance, explicitly commented on “Japanese-style” ODA in the form of “questions” that can be taken as an indirect criticism (DAC 1991, 6):

> Do the Japanese authorities consider that the Japanese style of aid giving has significant distinctive features (such as the emphasis on extending aid on a request basis, self-help effort, emphasis on building economic infrastructure and programme assistance) from that of other donors? How do they see the applicability of their experience on a global basis?

It is worth noting that most such criticisms came from NGOs and the West, not from the recipient governments. While there is no guarantee that governments will represent the interests of the people, the fact that the request-based principle has continued to operate suggests that there were benefits from this system.

Admitting the disadvantage of ambiguity, I wish to highlight two positive impacts of the passive practice of the request-based principle: one on Japan’s side and the other on the recipient’s side. In Japan, supporting projects in response to country requests benefited various players from the private sector by encouraging them to participate in the project formulation processes while also allowing the implementing agency to attribute the consequence to the counterpart agencies in the recipient governments, an approach that can easily be justified by the “self-help” philosophy. This public-private partnership did invite corruption in certain cases but, overall, it had the effect of expanding the range of constituents within Japan that helped to sustain the volume and practice of development assistance (Sato 2017).

On the recipient side, after 30 years of operation, 14 of the 16 heavily criticized projects in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines initiated in the 1980s and early 1990s are still functioning and continue to serve their purposes. Of course, this does not mean that all stakeholders are satisfied with the project outcomes throughout their implementation processes. However, the long-term functioning of infrastructure based on requests suggests that the principle nurtured a sense of ownership that was essential for the long-term maintenance of the infrastructure.

These positives come with certain negatives that must be addressed if the request-based principle is to continue being used in the future. The central issue is that of accountability. As Arase cogently pointed out long ago, the request-based system "allows the Japanese government to keep at arm's length any unsavory practices of [both] recipient governments and Japanese firms overseas" (Arase 1995, 159). On top of the project impact, the request-based principle helps to reaffirm that the major responsibility for awarding contracts and monitoring the legality of all procedures rests on the recipient. The practice of giving ownership to recipient governments is a sound policy while evading responsibility for any related consequences is questionable. It is here that the request-based approach must search for ways to incorporate a less passive, long-term follow-up process.

It is interesting to find an East Asian parallel to the Golden Rule of Matthew, to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Analects of Confucius advise, "do not do unto others what you would not have done unto you." While the Christian teaching emphasizes "doing," that of Confucius teaches "not doing."

Looking back, the Japanese approach based on requests was often the approach found to be most effective for developing countries. Aid philosophy in the West assumes a proactive principle that reflects the agency of the donor. The request-based principle did not have agency itself but worked more at the implementation level, where it was less visible and less systematic. This explains the awkward feelings DAC donors had over Japan's aid. Thus, the criticism suggesting an absence of philosophy is inaccurate. The problem is rather the lack of an adequate presentation of aid that is *acceptable* to the Western aid community. Implicit understanding on non-interference among the Japanese aid community made its aid principle and philosophy even less visible (Kato 1980, 59). The conclusion will touch upon the contemporary significance of this finding to a broader practice of foreign aid.

6. Conclusion

The paper began by exploring three aspects of the request-based principle: 1) the context that elevated this idea to the status of a principle 2) the basic logic that was used by the Japanese government to substantiates such a principle, and 3) the actual practice and effects of employing such principle, especially its effects on the recipient countries.

Let me conclude by offering some commentary on each of these aspects. First, the request-based approach was a by-product of the reparations' procedure rather than a purposeful invention. The primacy of practical procedures resonates with the tendency of Japanese culture to act on the basis of relative values in relation to the surrounding people rather than appealing to absolute values (Nakane 1967).

Second, because of such a passive lineage, it was difficult for the Japanese government to keep on using *yosei-shugi* in international fora which tend to be dominated by more affirmative norms. Japan had its own logic to justify why such a principle was relevant and important, yet its emphasis on bottom-up procedures did not hold enough credence to stand as an acceptable philosophy from the Western perspective.

Third, the request-based approach had mixed outcomes. On the one hand, it fitted the growing needs of the Asian economies in the 70s and 80s. Yet in countries where the capacity to form suitable or appropriate proposals was lacking, space was created for Japanese consultants, trading companies, and the recipient governments to collude. The lower visibility of transactions that take place in other countries also made it difficult to detect similar tendencies from Japan. This was later addressed by modifying and the strengthening auditing and legal system for projects implemented abroad.

The history of Japan's aid, at least at the conceptual level, has been a struggle to locate its own practice in the aid community, which has been dominated by the West. Yet, the struggle has been valuable. I argue that the request-based principle has helped Japan to recover its place as a regular partner in trade and investment in Asia assisted by the moral justification of aid.

I would further argue that the request-based principle has great potential as a guideline—if not as a philosophy—that should prevail globally if aid is truly intended to be offered *for* developing countries. Rather than adopting a paternalistic attitude toward subordinate countries, the request-based approach respects the agency of countries who are developing toward being equal partners in the international community.

Although originally conceived as a by-product of delivery procedures mandated by reparation treaties, the request-based principle has proved to be a useful complement to another, more explicit, aid philosophy of Japan: self-help support (自助努力, *jijodoryoku*).

With a strong emphasis on avoiding imposition, Japan's aid approach, which relies on encouraging recipients toward self-help, becomes the only viable means of entry.

The system of co-creating "requests" with recipient governments has allowed Japan to guide not only the goods that are actually requested but also the *know-how* of using those goods. Thus, Japan could claim that its aid and cooperation went beyond the transfer of goods as reparations, creating room for private sector participants to play roles in project preparation, implementation, and monitoring. This public-private collaboration was an important driver of Japanese ODA expansion. This procedure-led system comes into conflict with the norm-led aid practices of Western countries. From the Western perspective, the procedure-led system seems to have had moved in an arbitrary direction, while working to the economic advantage of Japan.

Yosei-shugi is a historical vestige of Japanese economic cooperation from the time when Japan was still a developing country. The procedure, which started out as a war reparations scheme, turned out to be a useful mechanism for both Japan and the recipient countries to achieve mutual economic development. It also aligns well with the concept of non-interference, providing a useful distinction with the aid policies of the West. Despite these benefits, it became increasingly difficult to retain it as the main principle for external advocacy.

While the practice continues, the philosophies of self-help and emphasis on human security have become the new face of Japanese ODA from the 2000s onward. The changing justification of aid reflects the fact that principles and philosophies are not so much fixed objectives of aid but are rather dictated by the economic and political stages of the aid provider.

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Abstract (in Japanese)

要　　約

案件形成の単なる手続きに過ぎないはずの相手国政府からの援助要請が、いつの間にか「要請主義」と呼ばれるようになり、理念に近い地位を得るまでに至ったのはなぜか。本稿では、このパズルに１）要請主義という概念が登場するに至る歴史的な過程、２）日本政府から見た要請主義を「主義」たらしめている要素、３）要請主義が被援助国に与えた影響、という三つの視角から接近する。要請主義は、後発援助国である日本の特殊性を示す歴史的な名残である。要請主義は、戦後賠償の時代から脈々と続いてきた手続きであり、それが「主義」として地位を得たのは 1980 年代後半になってからであった。現在では日本の援助のセールスポイントとしての機能は失われたものの、類似のアプローチは中国やタイなどの新興援助国でも採用されている。本稿は、1950 年代の戦後賠償期における援助の実践の展開を追うことにより、要請主義がどのようにして日本型援助の特徴として制度化されるに至ったのかを明らかにしようとするものである。

キーワード：要請主義、日本型援助、援助理念、ヒモ付き援助