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**ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE POLICY IN AFRICA:  
THE RIVALRY BETWEEN CHINA AND JAPAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to analyze the China and Japan rivalry on economic assistance policy in Africa using a qualitative method and national interest as the conceptual framework. The land of Africa has abundant reserves of natural resources, such as dense forestry and mineral resources which naturally will attract foreign investors. The first foreign investors in Africa were westerners. Within the grip of their iron fists, Africa experienced a bitter history of slavery and colonialization. This rooted problem remains unresolved and causes a significant political atrophy until this day, and has resulted in the incapability of the Africa nations to resolve their own respective problems. Given such a state of affairs, these former colonies in

Africa have always been longing for foreign assistance, especially after the post-Cold War Era. Thus, the abandonment of former colonies gave the opportunity for the Eastern powers, such as China and Japan to establish a foothold in Africa, namely Japan with its Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and China its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Through the TICAD, Japan emphasizes the importance of “Africa’s Ownership” in all its infrastructure development cooperation initiatives. On the other hand, Chinese assistance can be characterised as indiscriminate, reciprocal, and non-interference in internal affairs. This paper suggests that both China and Japan have their own respective agenda on how to conduct diplomacy in Africa. They even share the same goals vis-a-vis Africa, which are economic and political domination and a keen interest in exploiting the available natural energy resources.

**Keywords:** China’s BRI, Japan’s TICAD, Economic Assistance, Africa, Eastern Powers.

## INTRODUCTION

The African continent is rich in mineral resources and very prospective. Due to a bitter past with issues such as, colonialism, ‘*Partition of Africa*’, slavery, apartheid, coups, and civil wars, to date Africa is still experiencing political atrophy at the governmental level (Ihonybere, 2003). This leads to the incapability of the African nation states to overcome their internal conflicts and have to rely on foreign assistance, such as from the Western powers (United States and Europe) and Eastern powers (Japan and China). Africa region perceptions to the world appeared to be fragile and longing for another help from other countries. Although, the aftermath of Cold War resulted in the withdrawal of Western powers from the African continent, it has now become the economic playground for Eastern powers like China and Japan, countries which have taken over the role of the former colonialist. As emerging economic powerhouses in world politics, Japan and China share an extensive history and cultural similarities due to the uniformly ethnic people of East Asia. In fact, China has been in contact with other western and eastern countries compared to Japan, which has been in isolation for hundreds of years. However, Japan’s response to innovations from outside its border, such as in the area of technology has been better as the country begins to develop its

own innovations in various other fields. China, in contrast, vigorously protected its culture from other outside influences (Adem, 2018).

In addition, Japan and China goes a long way back in history and have fought each other as in the Second World War (Sutter, 2017), Japan having occupied parts of China and established puppet states, such as in Manchukuo, Mengjiang, and a rival government under Wang Jingwei against the Nationalist Chiang Kai-Shek and Communist Mao Zedong. The Japanese were alleged to have carried out massacres in Nanjing, a claim which is still denied by Japan to this day. Japan, on the other hand, was also alarmed by the rise of communism's influence after the Communist Party's victory over the nationalists in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. Furthermore, the two countries also have territorial disputes, such as over the Senkaku (Japan) or the Diaoyu (China) and the region around Northeast Asia (Kang, 2015). However, the two countries do enjoy a good relationship in several spheres as they share some things in common, for example in the context of culture, economy, and technology. More specifically, China adopted a foreign assistance approach towards Japan during its period as a donor. Now the two countries have great strength and influence on the economy, culture and technology of other countries. Both countries however, compete competitively in various fields in the world, especially in third countries in the Asia-Africa Region.

After World War II, the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union led to an ideological war during the Cold War. Both the great power states were striving to expand their spheres of influence, especially competing for leadership over "Third World" countries (Gaddis, 2005). The African continent, especially the southern and central regions became a fertile ground for the rivalry between major powers. As many colonial powers had started declining in Africa and the colonies struggled for independence, the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan attempted to fill the power vacuums with money and arms. With the end of the Cold War, Africa has lost its political lustre which it once had (Perlez, 1992). This is because there are no longer any compelling geopolitical, strategic or economic reasons for potential investors to come and work with the local actors. The abandonment of former colonies provided a window of opportunity for Japan and China to gain an economic and political foothold in the Africa continent, that is, Japan with its Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and China with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The Tokyo international Conference of African Development (TICAD) was launched in 1993 by Japan to promote Africa's development, peace and security, through the strengthening of relations in multilateral cooperation and partnership (Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, n.d.). So, after the end of the Cold War, the TICAD was the best proof of Japan taking action on in its foreign policy initiatives. Over 26 years since its establishment, the TICAD has shown a good track record of improving social and economic conditions in Africa, mainly through grant aids and technical assistance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016). The TICAD is a multilateral forum whose participants include not only African countries, but also international organizations, partner countries, private companies and civil society organizations involved in development. In the TICAD process, Japan has established follow-up mechanisms, such as summit-level meetings, and ministerial meetings.

In the case of China, after it had announced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), one of the most ambitious global foreign policy initiative at the end of 2013, Beijing was aiming to connect China's less-developed border regions with neighboring countries. Through the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference, China declared its willingness to strengthening economic ties and deepening security cooperation (Xinhua, 2020) with countries interested in forging such partnerships. The initiative itself is generally popular in the developing world, where almost all countries face the problem of infrastructure inadequacy and shortage of resources. In Africa, the implementation of the BRI is warmly welcomed in Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Even though China has been accused of practising "debt-trap diplomacy", which is providing a loan with a high-interest debt, which in the event the borrowing countries have failed to make a payment, China will have the leverage to 'borrow' the country (Kurlantzick, 2018).

The rivalry between Beijing and Tokyo in Africa was triggered by the growing influence of the two countries, especially in economic sphere in Africa and around the world. Furthermore, this bilateral tension was rooted in the deep disagreement between the two countries over history and territory. There is a distinctive characteristic difference between China and Japan in terms of their respective emphasis on ideologies. China have supported national liberation movements in Africa and built good ties with independent African countries as long

as those countries were not close friends with the United States (Wu, 2011). While Japan was a great supporter of the United States and has vowed to curb the spread of communism post-cold war in Africa. Japan took the initiative to launch the TICAD and became the leading Official Development Assistance (ODA) donor in Africa (Endo, 2016). In light of the background of issues described above, this paper will analyze important aspects of the China and Japan rivalry on their economic assistance policy in Africa.

The rest of this paper will be discussed as follows. First, a conceptual framework section to help us understand the context of the China and Japan rivalry and their economic assistance policy in Africa. The section on the Historical Review of the Africa Post-Cold War Era will provide an overview of what happened after the Cold War which led to a significant impact on Africa's political and economic landscape. The focus is on the shift in foreign economic assistance in Africa from the eastern powers, namely Japan and China. Meanwhile in the Japan and Africa Relations section and the China and Africa Relations section, the discussions are centered on the history of Africa in relation to both Japan and China. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development Policy in Africa describes the TICAD in a more detailed way, which then explores the concept of national interests and the reasons why Japan has acted in this way. The Belt and Road Initiative Policy in Africa will be examined in the context of the concept of national interest and how the policy will impact Africa. The China and Japan Rivalry on Economic Assistance Policy in Africa section explores in greater detail, the rivalry between these two competing powers and how this rivalry has affected Africa. The last section offers a conclusion.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

In order to understand the China and Japan rivalry on economic assistance policy in Africa, this paper will use the concept of national interest. The term national interest has become one of the narratives that has been used to justify or rationalize state behavior in the international realm. Apart from that, national interest is also deployed in explaining and analyzing the various foreign policies of the nation-state visa-vis its nation-state issues. In the study of Joseph Frankel's notion of national interest, there are two things in the formulation of national interest, namely the objective and the subjective. Objective

national interests are interests related to the foreign policy objectives of the nation-state. These interests are permanent and do not stand alone, but are supported by the following: geography, history, neighboring countries, resources, state population size and ethnicity. A subjective national interest is an interest that depends on the preferences of the government or certain policy elites. This policy can be determined by ideology, religion and class identity. As such, a subjective national interest is based on interpretation and can change with changes in the government of the nation-state (Burchill, 2005). Through the concept of national interest, policy makers can understand the path that the nation-state will take in their foreign policy. In sum, the foreign policy adopted by a nation state will directly be the basis for the country's actions against other countries. Thus, national interest has considerable power and is important to legitimize the actions taken by the state (Weldes, 1996).

After the former colonial powers abandoned the African continent, there was a power vacuum to be filled and this state of affairs gave the eastern powers the window of opportunity to gain a foothold in the land, advancing their own agendas. In order to understand the behind this foreign policy maneuvering, it is crucial to understand the concept of national interest. Although China and Japan have not had a smooth sailing history in their diplomatic relations, ties have been growing better steadily. However, in the context of Africa, the two countries still scramble through some foreign relations issues, for example in the struggle for influence in Africa.

Driven by the framework of national interest as used in this study, China and Japan can be seen as having to shape their foreign policies differently as for both countries is in a high-stakes contest for the continent's resources and a role in the continent's economic development. Yet, when it comes to objective national interests, Tokyo and Beijing do not differ that much. Japan is driven by their quest to get the natural resources to fulfill their energy needs. Tokyo has been known to be a major donor to in terms of providing aid to African countries. Japan has adopted a foreign policy which emphasizes the vision of 'Africa's ownership' thus, focusing on the development of human resources, such as the training of African officials in public administration. On the other hand, China is driven to succeed in achieving the objectives of its BRI. As one would expect, it also hopes to secure the continent's natural resources and expand its global

influence. This leads to China's substantial investments in helping to build ports, railways, and highways. In doing so, Beijing hopes to strengthen its ties with African countries and establishes itself as the leading actor in the continent.

In the context of subjective national interests, China and Japan do differ. Japan has tried to develop African countries while trying to improve good governance, thus the idea of 'Africa's ownership'. It is different from the stance taken by China, which seems indiscriminate in those aspects. It adheres firmly to its prominent philosophy of "a cat, whether it is white or black, is a good one as long as it is able to catch mice."

The present qualitative research was completed by analyzing a series of secondary resources. The resources comprised books, journals, and government documents. After the collection of data, the process of filtering and choosing the right data were done in order to answer the research questions. After the Cold War, Eastern powers like China and Japan had the chance to establish themselves in Africa thanks to the abandonment of the former African colonies. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Japan's Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) are both global initiatives. This paper uses the concept of national interest as the framework to gain understanding of the competition between China and Japan in terms of their economic assistance policies in Africa.

### **Historical Review of Africa's Post-Cold War Era**

The African continent used to be a fertile ground for the competition of major power influence during the Cold War era. For African countries, the United States and the Soviet Union used to provide a lot of economic aid and modern armaments to African nations, in the name of assisting national development. One cannot however, dismiss the all too obvious agenda of trying to strongly assert and firmly establish their influence in these countries (Doyle, 2016). Michael Chege (1999), a Kenya political scientist working in Zimbabwe has pointed out that ever since the Cold War ended, Africa has lost its political lustre. In addition, Africa was facing several serious obstacles that made the region remained underdeveloped. For instance, unlike the Asia-Pacific region, Africa as a whole lacks compelling geopolitical, strategic and economic attributes in order to gain attention from

global economic agenda (Chege, 1999). Since then, Africa now find themselves desperate for 'friends' to rely on (Perlez, 1992). For example, Ethiopia which used to be a pro-American country for a long period of time then joined the Soviet camp in 1977 and was rewarded with Cuban troops and billions of dollars of military equipment. The United States responded by pumping arms and money into the vacuum left by Moscow in neighboring Somalia. Now, Ethiopia enjoys only a fragile peace with its government saying that it wants to establish a democracy, but it has yet to receive any of the economic aid that Washington has promised, nor any form of assistance from the Soviet Union.

After the abandonment of the major powers in Africa, countries in the African continent no longer receive any economic assistance from the United States and the Soviet Union. This vacuum has however, attracted other foreign investors, such as Japan and China (Bagwandeen, 2017). Judging by the nature of the past major power involvements in Africa, this continent is still considered a strategic resource zone. Its geopolitical advantage assumes an overall importance over many other factors to enhance the likelihood of future major power interests in investments in certain sectors of the economy. In addition, Africa, famed for its plentiful resources, presents significant potential for resource extraction in the face of rising global resource shortages and the quest for hegemonic reversal. From such a perspective, the internal economic problems in African, for example the lack of real economic growth has become the main factor in the involuntary participation of the less developing countries (LDC) in the global capitalist structure of economic relations.

Japan has had a lengthy foreign aid relationship with the African continent, that is, since the early 1990s, especially after the end of World War II. In order to 'reactivate' the country after its defeat in the war, Japan followed a non-hostile foreign policy and relied heavily on a model of foreign aid from the United States. Also, in line with Japanese situation within the African region, Japan is making every effort to counter China's growing influence in Africa (Adem, 2018). The involvement of Japan in Africa was linked to trade interests and promoting the principles of 'self-help' and 'on-request-basis' during the early stages of the economic aid relationship. As Japan's foreign policy in Africa was supported by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Japan in 1992 formulated its first Official Development

Assistance (ODA) Charter and declared its commitment on economic aid to Africa with the creation of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993 (Endo, 2013). In 2007, Japan experienced severe financial challenges in implementing its foreign aid policy in the continent and this had resulted in significant reductions of foreign aid in Africa. From this point on, Japan's foreign aid policy could no longer counter the emergence of China's active foreign policy in the continent (Lehman, 2010).

Sino-African relations are becoming an increasingly significant feature of world politics. This development has been fueled by China's growing appetite for energy resources, and the desire of many African countries to seek a partner that does not worry about democracy and transparency, and does not seek to impose political conditionalities regarding the economic relations (Thrall, 2015). In the quest to assert China's centrality in world politics, Beijing has come up with a consistent foreign policy which has been designed to advance its interests in the developing world. It is seen as the means by which China can establish its dominant position in the international power structure. In addition, China has been developing the 'anti-hegemonism' posture in all its variants, Beijing uses this rhetoric to gain support for itself from the developing world. For instance, China has released an African foreign policy document, which asserted that China will base its relations with Africa on the 'principles of independence, equality, mutual respect, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs' (Ministry Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China, 2006). Even though China has endorsed the 'anti-hegemonism' stance in its foreign policy, Beijing has nevertheless attempted to establish its identity as a global power, while frequently identifying themselves as a 'developing nation' (Taylor, 2006).

### **Relations between Japan and Africa**

Japan had been in contact with Africa ever since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the first country in Africa to be associated with Japan was South Africa. The focus of the relationship before World War II was economic interests (Mlombo, 2012). But during apartheid rule, Tokyo was so ambivalent that it did not give the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to fight racism in South Africa officially. However, South Africa and Japan were top of the big league in 1987. To offset relations with countries in the South Africa Region, Japan provides the ODA

to African countries, such as Zambia and Tanzania (Mlombo, 2012). After that, Pretoria and Tokyo relations were close with South Africa as its closest ally in Africa, and Tokyo began to provide the ODA to the country (Mlombo, 2012).

Japan began developing African relations in the 1960s after the setting up of the African division of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The relationship went through four phases. The first phase was from 1961-1972, Japan served as a partner of the United States by providing aid to prevent the spread of communism in Africa. The second phase was from 1973-1991, when Japan wanted fossil fuels, such as the oil in Africa. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had raised oil prices during this time. The third phase was from 1991-2006 during which independent African countries develop, Tokyo became the highest donor of the ODA in Africa and established the TICAD. However, in the fourth phase (2006-2013), Japan lost interest in Africa and China was ready to take its place. Today, Japan has begun serious contact with Africa again when Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visited Africa in 2014. This visit can be seen as Japan's reaction to China's influence in Africa. In addition, due to the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant incident, Tokyo also needs the natural resources in Africa such as its natural gas (Adem, 2018).

Japan's interests in Africa was initially because it wanted the support of African countries to become a member of the United Nation Permanent Security Council (UNSC) alongside India and Germany. However, Japan failed to gain that support. According to Iwata (2012), in order to achieve its ambition of securing a permanent UNSC seat in the 1990s, Japan sent many peacekeepers to Mozambique and Rwanda. Furthermore, Tokyo's interests in Africa are to oversee economic growth and prosperity, as well as maintain a steady supply of strategic natural resources, such as oil which is also part of Japan's industrial production needs and economic sustainability (Eyinla, 2018). In other areas, such as military aid, Japan in addition to providing peacekeeping forces under the United Nations, built its first military base outside Japan in Djibouti in June 2011. This base was used for providing air transport equipment and military cooperation in tackling sea piracy around the Indian Ocean. Japan also sent humanitarian aid to a politically unstable Somalia, and this was in the form of a 184 million USD assistance through its ODA for security and infrastructure (Endo, 2013).

## **Relations between China and Africa**

China is not a new actor in Africa. Historically, Sino-African relations has flourished since the Ming Dynasty (Iwata, 2012). In the modern era, Sino-African relationship began in the 1950s. When the Asia-Africa Conference was held in Bandung in 1955, Africa and China ties started afresh through economic, political and other assistance provided in the fight against Western colonialism at the time (Looy, 2006). In the 1960s, support from China for Africa was limited due to domestic problems, such as the Cultural Revolution that left China isolated from the world (Looy, 2006). After that, in the 1970s, there was a dramatic change in China's relations with Africa, which was spurred on by the African countries engaging in diplomatic relations with China and Beijing's entry as a member of the Permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) due to the strong support from Africa. In return, there was the largest infrastructure support from China, such as the Zambia-Tanzania Railway and weapons support for political organizations in Africa for nationalism movements against Western hegemony (Looy, 2006).

China has motivation for investment in Africa in various fields, such as in politics, economy, security and ideology. In politics, Beijing challenged the influence of Western countries and the Soviet Union in the 1960s. China also needed considerable support to obtain international positions, such as gaining membership in the United Nations (UN) and eliminating Taiwan's diplomatic influence in African countries (Sun, 2014). Meanwhile, in the early days during Mao Zedong's rule, China conducted economic activity in Africa with political motives. But at the time of Mao Zedong's death, Beijing introduced a policy called the '*Going Out Strategy*' in 1994 that was appropriate for Africa. The policy sought help Africa manage its own natural resources in order to meet china's large domestic needs and also increase economic distribution, such as improving low quality labor and the global economic chain position (Sun, 2014). Then, in the security aspect, China prioritize the need to protect its people and economic interests. This was because in Africa, security was lacking and there were frequent hijackings, murders, and kidnappings of Chinese citizens (Sun, 2014). Meanwhile, in the ideological sphere, the ideology of socialism was replaced with "Maoism" in Africa, and China is now also spreading this ideology through its model of governance, namely with an authoritarian system that can improve

the economic well-being of Africa. The democratic values of the West is not a universal value suitable for African states and other countries (Sun, 2014).

In advancing its brand of politics, Xi Jinping's government representatives visited many African countries in 2013 including Tanzania, South Africa and Congo Brazzaville. Sino-African relations are pragmatic and diverse because African countries have a democratic and authoritarian style of government (Thrall, 2015). China is also trying to increase its influence via soft-power engagement. This is done by increasing student, cultural and media exchanges between China and the African nations. Chinese media in Africa have risen sharply since 2009 with news reporting on Africa by Xinhua, which is aimed at countering the anti-Chinese bias found in western media (Thrall, 2015). Although Beijing claims that the principle of China's relationship with Africa is non-intervention, Beijing briefly oversaw and influenced politics in Africa, for example in the presidential election in Zambia in 2006 (Iwata, 2012).

### ***Tokyo International Conference on African Development Policy***

The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) or *Afurika Kaihatsukaigi* is a conference that is held regularly with the goal of promoting high-level policy dialogue between African leaders and development partners, alongside with the United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (UN-OSSA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The TICAD is seen by the Japanese as Japan's long-term commitment to fostering peace and stability in Africa through collaborative partnerships. Through the TICAD, Japan has emphasized the importance of "Africa's ownership" of its development, as well as the "partnership" between Africa and the international community, which has become the fundamental factors in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by the African Union.

The "key-countries" of Africa that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited in January 2014 were Mozambique, the Ivory Coast, and Ethiopia. The reason why the Prime Minister of Japan was visiting Africa was not only as a response towards China's influence, but also to secure Japanese access to the newly found mineral resources in Mozambique (Gumede, 2014). Furthermore, in 2011 there was the Fukushima

nuclear meltdown, the former nuclear plant was able to supply the country with 30 percent of its electricity needs. With this problem with its nuclear power plant there is an increased demand for new energy resources. Shinzo Abe's main *raison d'être* to be in the Ivory Coast and Ethiopia was to address the diplomatic imperative of establishing trade relations with Africa in general. This was because Addis Ababa was the headquarters of the African Union, and Ivory Coast was the leader of the Economic Community of West African States in January 2014 (Pilling, 2014).

Japan's foreign policy changed during the end of the Second World War and at the beginning of the Cold War. This was due to Tokyo's international position as the losing side in the Second World War and the weakening of its military power which had made Japan lean more towards the West. Japan's foreign policy relies more on the United States and this has had an impact on Tokyo in terms of the country's military and economy. In addition, Tokyo's foreign policy separates the political and economic fields (*seikei bunri*), which was evident in the Japan-South Africa relations during apartheid rule. After the end of the Cold War, the United States-Japan relations remained important, and Japan began to use the economy as an instrument of power and influence in the world. The main economic tool in Japan's foreign policy is the Official Development Assistance (ODA), which has been quite effective for the country. However, Japan has still not been able to develop better relations with other countries, especially with the African countries (Mlombo, 2012).

The TICAD meeting is held once every five years. TICAD I was held in October 1993 with the attendance of 1000 delegates from 48 countries, 10 international organizations, and 45 observers. It was convened with the aim of supporting Africa's positive contribution to political reform and democratization. TICAD II took place in October 1998 with the aim of improving economic integration and reducing poverty in Africa. This was followed by TICAD III in 2003, and this third meeting was the largest, with the participation of 89 countries (50 African countries), 47 international organizations, and more than 1000 attendees. In addition, the meeting also made addressed several important matters, such as the initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). TICAD IV was held in 2008 and was attended by 51 African countries and 74 international organizations. The meeting was aimed at accelerating the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa and providing additional loans of 4 Billion USD for infrastructure development in Africa. However, the TICAD has posed several challenges for Africa and Japan; the first is that funding from Japan is not very impactful despite the increase in allocation, as it only contributed about ten percent due to the recession ('lost decades'). Then there was the lack of concrete institutional structures, as well as the understanding about Africa and thus, the capability to assist the continent by the Japanese (Eyinla, 2018).

Furthermore, Japan has collaborated with India to create the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) project. This was proposed when there was an African Development Bank Meeting in Gujarat in 2017 as a counterpoint to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Prior to the initiative, Japan and India began to prepare by increasing their investments in the previous three years. It was reported that Japan invested 30 billion USD in infrastructure and India invested 10 billion USD. Tokyo needs to cooperate with India because they have historical experience in African countries. Moreover, the AAGC for infrastructure needs, seeks to address issues in social and individual economies, such as the following: health, agriculture and management in disaster mitigation. But the said project has constraints due to the limitations of the land corridor and the lack of consultation from experts who come from and or know about Africa. Furthermore, competition between China and Japan-India is limited because it has two different priorities, Beijing focuses more on infrastructure and trade while India and Japan prioritize human resource development in African countries (Bagwandeem, 2017).

As time went on, the policy of aid to Africa also underwent changes which were caused by both the following factors: the first was the need for African countries to receive security assistance and the second was economic growth. In 2001, Japan began cutting aid funding to Africa by 27 percent and revising the ODA charter in 2003 (Iwata, 2012). This meant that Japan would rather reduce its influence in Africa than maintain its achievements in its heyday with a record high of the ODA in the previous 10 years. Meanwhile, Tokyo has adopted the western model and has become a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an organization in which with membership there was no political requirement to provide financial assistance. The philosophy of Japanese assistance based on the principles of 'demand' (*yoseishugi*) and 'self-help efforts' (*jijo*)

*doryoku*) was used as the basis to promote Japanese economic projects (Iwata, 2012). However, Japan has now implemented the OECD-ODA western model and is transparent with ‘check and balance’ (Arase, 2017). Furthermore, Tokyo also has a security policy called the ‘Japan Pirate Act Measure’ which came into force in 2009. This policy is concerned with sea piracy, which has been an African problem to date. This policy is in line with the policy of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which implements counter-piracy operations (Arase, 2017).

### ***Belt and Road Initiative Policy in Africa***

Going back in history, one can appreciate the fact that China-Afro cooperation began since the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). It was established in 2000 as an institution to oversee China’s interests and the increase in Chinese influence in Africa (Adem, 2018). China aims to have access to Africa’s natural resources in order to support and sustain the country’s rapid economic growth. Since China’s declaration of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, its main objective remains the lending of money to developing countries in Africa to promote infrastructure development, in areas such as transport, water, and power.

Beijing’s economic assistance is driven not by any ideological doctrine or principles, but simply about pragmatism, as the Chinese has often said that ‘a cat, whether it is white or black, is a good one as long as it is able to catch mice’. This means that its China-Afro diplomacy is not as indiscriminate as it appears, because Chinese investments are targeted at 40 of the 54 countries in Africa which have signed up to the BRI (Nedopil, 2021). It is apparent that Beijing has its own agenda with respect to the natural resource’s provider, as can be seen in its mode of international economic transaction known as the “infrastructure for natural resources”. The BRI is often critiqued as a so-called “debt-trap diplomacy” (Risberg, 2019), because China provides infrastructure funding to developing countries under its loan terms, a strategy that will result in the recipient country to become severely indebted to China in return for economic, military, or political favor. For example, the acquisition of Sri Lanka’s port by China for 99 years because Sri Lanka could not repay its outstanding loans (Limaye, 2017).

Africa was initially seen as a ‘low priority’ continent in the context of China’s foreign policy. In policy making on Africa, the foreign

policy is usually made and implemented by the politburo authorities. There is a difference in how different African countries are viewed in China's foreign policy, the first category of countries are considered well-developed and influential 'regional country' and these are countries like Kenya and South Africa which has enough potential to counter western hegemony. The second category are the 'problematic countries' such as, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe, which are considered low in economic interests for purposes of natural wealth exploration (Sun, 2014).

In the FOCAC mechanism there are three levels in which it can be operationalized. First is the ministerial-level conferences held every three years. Second is the follow-up meetings and preparations at the level of senior officials which are convened every year before the ministerial-level conferences are held. Third is the meeting between the African Diplomatic Corps in China and the Secretariat of the Chinese Follow-up Committee, which is held at least twice a year. The meetings at both the Ministerial and Senior Officials levels are hosted alternately in China and Africa. The 2006 FOCAC Summit in Beijing also consulted Chinese and African Ministers in preparation for the UN General Assembly. In addition, the FOCAC also established a network of forums in various fields, such as the China-Africa People's Forum, the China-Africa Youth Leaders Forum, the Ministry Forum on China-Africa Health Cooperation, the China-Africa Media Cooperation Forum, the China-Africa Poverty Reduction and Development Conference, the Law Forum-FOCAC, the Forum on China Cooperation of African Local Governments, and the China-Africa Think Tank Forum (Forum China Africa Cooperation, n.d.).

In general, China's relations with African countries are based on the following five principles. The first is sincerity, friendship and equality, a principle which best understood as non-interventions in the domestic affairs of African countries (Zengeni, 2013). The second is mutualism and/or reciprocal relationships, in support of efforts in economic development. The third is coordinating with each when it concerns initiatives such as promoting or offering resolutions on peace in Africa. The fourth is to learn from each other, especially when dealing with cooperation in Education, training, and other aspects. Last but not least is political in nature, this is the firm position taken by the People's Republic of China (PRC) with regard to Taiwan. China has insisted that countries wishing to establish ties with the PRC must

terminate all diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) (Ministry Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China, 2006).

China's policies in Africa have not been without challenges and constraints, the first being the existence of a 'policy syndrome'. The policy does not yield economic benefit for the second party, such as the following: local worker discrimination, targeting countries with poor governance, high-quality exports to Africa and damage to the natural environment (Asongu & John, 2016). The second is the lack of a comprehensive China policy strategy towards Africa, as it is plagued with its ever-changing relationship motives and narrow actions towards African communities (Sun, 2014). Then, there is the constant internal bureaucratic conflicts, such as a conflict over aid funding between the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that prioritizes African relations and the pro-investment interests of the Minister of Commerce (MOFCOM). In addition, there is the issue of the profiling of actors from China, such as that Chinese private companies do not align with the latest Chinese policy on Africa, but rather these companies adhere to the traditionally held practices in China. Furthermore, the lack of government involvement in economic relations, such as the absence of supervision mechanisms, the failure to create a long-term strategy for economic coordination, and the issue of risk management are also obstacles to an effective China policy on Africa (Sun, 2014).

In its approach in providing aid, the Chinese initially adopted the Soviet model based on the principle of mutualism, whereby there must be benefits from and respect for each other, as well as helping the country's independence politically and economically. When the Sino-Soviet schism occurred in the 1960s, Zhou Enlai visited Africa and offered a model of assistance based on the '8 Economic and Technical Principles of Assistance', with emphases on independence, mutualism and non-political agendas. With the changes, Japan's assistance and domestic changes have affected China's assistance in the context of changes in the functions of ministries to the so-called state-owned enterprises (SOE). In the 1990s When Chinese aid was framed as a global strategy, Trade Minister Wu Yi issued a 'Grand Strategy of Economy Trade' policy with a mix of Japanese approaches based on aid, investment and trade. In the 2010s, Beijing's aid approach changed from what was then shaped by globalization to shaping globalization. As China's overseas assistance grew, it was

also affected by the 2008 economic crisis and demographic changes in China and Africa. Political constraints from within the country have undoubtedly affected the relationship between investment and help in China, where the aid system was more effective (Rudyak, 2017).

### ***China and Japan Rivalry on Economic Assistance Policy in Africa***

The East Africa region is home to the largest competition between China, Japan and India because it is strategically located and is the gateway to Asia-Africa. In infrastructure, China through the BRI focuses on Egypt, Tanzania, Kenya, and Djibouti. Meanwhile, Japan focuses on countries around the cape regions, such as Somalia and South Africa, as well as West Africa, such as Ghana (Bagwandeem, 2017).

Japan had initially provided financial assistance to sub-Saharan Africa in 1969 through the ODA-OECD and this amounted to 4 Million USD. Then the amount of aid rose significantly almost 10 years later, as in 1978 the total provided reached 105 Million USD. In the late 1990s it ballooned to 1 Billion USD and Japan became the top donor in Africa at the time (Mlombo, 2012). After that, African aid from Japan was stagnant and began to increase again to 4 billion USD in 2006, after the third TICAD meeting (Mlombo, 2012). It is estimated that between 2005-2009, the largest segments of Japan's ODA were in debt relief, public services and infrastructure (Mlombo, 2012). Japan has been rated the ninth largest donor in Africa for the past three years (2015-2018), with contributions totalling 1.6 billion USD (OECD, 2019). In addition, Tokyo created infrastructure projects in Africa including the Kampala Metropolitan Line, Mombasa Port, and the Zambia-Tanzania Railway Bridge (Whitehouse, 2019).

On the other hand, China already has a successful project in Africa, namely the Construction of the Tanzania and Zambia Railways in the 1970s and have provided assistance to independent political organizations from European colonizers. Meanwhile, in the 2014 China white paper, Beijing carried out hundreds of projects in agriculture, education and health, as well as training workers or experts from Africa for two years (2010-2012) (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2014). The following are some of the BRI's project in Africa: the Mozambique's Maputo bridge, the TIPAZA Cherchell Ring Expressway Project in Algeria, the Ethiopia-

Djibouti railway, the Mombasa-Nairobi railway, and the acquisition of Chevron by Sinopec, and South African refineries. These projects have both been financed and constructed by Chinese institutions like the China Exim Bank. McKinsey & Company's report estimates that there are more than 10,000 Chinese-owned firms operating in Africa, around 90 percent of which are privately owned but have assisted in BRI projects in Africa (Dong et al., 2018). However, there have also been 'political efforts' to minimize outside influence in Africa, as was seen in Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Africa in 2014 which sparked protests from the Chinese diaspora there (Whitehouse, 2019).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China had sent medical assistance in the form of medical personnel, medicine, and medical equipment to African countries, such as to Algeria, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. China also collaborated on vaccine development, such as the Sinopharm clinical trials in Morocco and offered vaccine shipments to many African countries. In addition, Beijing also suspended debt payments from African countries in a G20 meeting (Bone & Ferninando, 2020). Meanwhile, Japan does not want to lose out, it has cooperated with Ghana through training programs provided by the JICA, and the construction of facilities, such as the Noguchi Memorial Institute in Ghana in researching COVID-19 (Kouam & Sarfam, 2020). Tokyo then provided 1 million USD in aid through the African Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (African Union, 2020). Japan has also given loans to African countries, for example Morocco of around 200 million USD to help boost its COVID-19 response (Hatim, 2020).

Today, China still dominates in Africa and not the Japanese, as it has a greater influence in various fields. According to the Japan External Trade Relations Organization (JETRO) the reasons why Japan lack influence in Africa are among others: the Japanese public's view of Africa is still negative (terrorism and war), political change, limited human resources and capabilities, structural limitations and therefore, Japan prioritizes countries in Asia and Europe, rather than African countries (Dardenne, 2018). There are also unfavorable effects brought on by Chinese projects and support, despite the beneficial effects such as easier access and an improved African economy. The first is the view of Africans towards China companies and Chinese people that is quite negative, such as the lack of contact, discrimination against local workers and additional issues. On the other hand, the African

community do hold positive views of the Chinese, such as their being very hard working and knowledgeable (Pettersson, 2018). However, overall Beijing's assistance is considered to have failed in paying attention to good governance, human rights, the environment, and social justice in Africa. Many infrastructure projects have been linked to excessive resource extraction and criticisms on environmental neglect. Furthermore, the debt relief provided risk the critique of wasting resources and propping up governments that oppress their people (Kaplinsky et al., 2008).

Countries and institutions in Africa welcome the BRI and the AAGC as initiatives to advance the economy in Africa. However, the economic assistance policy that Africa has in mind is how the China Japan rivalry can benefit African communities (Bagwandeen, 2017). According to Adem (2018), there are five strategies in responding to Chinese and Japanese competition in Africa. First, African communities must develop their their own abilities and strengths in the face of the rivalry between the two countries. The second is to increase economic integration in the African Continent in order to strengthen its economy, rather than relying on other countries outside of Africa. The third is the need for diversification, which means expanding economic ties with countries other than China and Japan. The fourth is to encourage pragmatic diplomacy. Lastly, evaluate and challenge the realism in Africa, including the Beijing's assertion as 'steadfast ally' and additional issues.

## **CONCLUSION**

The end of the Cold War resulted in the decline of two western major powers, the United States and Soviet Union in Africa, especially in the context of economic assistance. Since there has been no other prevailing political, strategic, or regional entities taking over the role of the two former western major powers, two eastern powers have seized the opportunity to widen their influence on the African continent. The lack of foreign aid to Africa has attracted both China and Japan to compete in order to gain an economic foothold in the continent, Japan with its TICAD initiative and China with its BRI. Also, the global demand for energy and natural resources has made the mineral rich African continent, a new economic battlefield. Tokyo's new focus on Africa as a source of energy resources was caused by the Fukushima

nuclear meltdown, the nuclear plant was previously able to supply 30 percent of Japan's electricity needs. For China, due to its Big Push industrialization, has become the leading player in the recent global rush for oil and other energy reserves. Therefore, China's appetite for oil and other resources is the reason for Beijing's active charm diplomacy in Africa after their aggressive campaign to promote the BRI idea to the world.

Japan used to be a great supporter of the United States during the Cold War by helping to contain the communist ideology in Africa. As such Japan became the first eastern country to initiate economic partnership with African countries. Tokyo aims to bring development to the African continent, by ensuring peace and security, and through the strengthening of relations in multilateral cooperation and partnership. The TICAD was proof of Japan taking concerted action alongside with the UNGA and the UN-OSAA, since the TICAD has a track record of improving social and economic conditions in Africa mainly through granting economic and technical assistance. The involvement of Japan in Africa was linked to trade interests and promoting the principles of 'self-help' and 'on-request-basis' through its robust economic aid relationship. Through the TICAD, Japan emphasized the importance of "Africa's ownership" of its development, as well as its significant partnership with Africa. Japan acknowledges the growing Chinese interests in Africa after the declaration of Belt and Road Initiative, but Japanese diplomacy in Africa was focused on connecting through a 'key-country' in Africa. This was reflected in the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Ethiopia because Addis Ababa was the headquarters of the African Union.

Meanwhile for China, within its Chinese philosophy of "a cat, whether it is white or black, is a good one as long as it is able to catch mice". It may be concluded that Sino-Afro diplomacy is not as indiscriminate as it appears, but still striving to benefit from each cooperation, especially on its competition for energy with Japan. Although, China has its own interests in Africa, Beijing is developing an 'anti-hegemonism' posture of all types in their diplomacy. China also emphasizes the 'principles of independence, equality, mutual respect, and non-interference in each other's 'internal affairs' and this has attracted many African countries which wanted to seek a partner that does not seek to impose political conditions in order to build economic relations. However, both Beijing and Tokyo have their own agenda in conducting their brand of diplomacy in Africa. Nevertheless,

in essence they share the same twin goals toward Africa, which can be summarized as economic and political domination through a monopoly of its natural energy resources.

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