

New Asian Approaches to Africa

Rivalries and Collaborations

Edited by

Takuo Iwata

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Takuo Iwata
October 31, 2019, Kyoto, Japan

Introduction: New Asian Approaches to Africa – Potentialities and Challenges

Takuo Iwata

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In the 21st century, Asian governments, firms, and other stakeholders have become more visible, aggressive, and influential in Africa in comparison to the traditionally influential Western donor countries, whose presence has decreased somewhat in the new world order. Over the last two decades, the Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and South Korean governments have repeatedly hosted forums (or conferences, summits) for development and business in Africa to appeal for their heightened presence and initiatives in Africa and beyond. In increasing their presence in recent decades, these major Asian countries have tried to emphasize their “different” approaches to Africa. Therefore, it is meaningful to (re-)think, from a comparative view, the relationship between Asia and Africa (which is transforming on an ongoing basis) and especially the “new” approaches that Asian stakeholders have adopted toward Africa.¹

What does this reference to “new” Asian approaches to Africa mean? How do they differ from previous approaches? In this collection, “new” does not imply any “technical” deployments in the extension of the current foreign aid system, which was established in Western countries, but focuses on the frame-changing movements in the relationship between Asia and Africa and the concept of international cooperation for developing countries. These Asian actors not only work and engage in rivalries but also show signs of collaboration in Africa. In addition to the collaborations between Asian actors for Africa’s development and their own interests, collaborations occur

¹ The editor of this collection organized an international workshop (November 10, 2018, Kyoto, Japan) titled “New Asian Approaches to Africa,” inviting expert scholars on policies and involvement from Asia to Africa. This book is the fruit of this academic meeting.

between OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and non-OECD international cooperation actors in Africa.

This collection is not only aimed at rethinking foreign “aid”² (or international cooperation) itself but at (re-)viewing Asian approaches to Africa from various perspectives. Governmental organizations and the business sector have worked closely on international cooperation in recent years. International cooperation is likely to take place in a business-oriented framework. International organizations also encourage this trend to promote sustainable development goals (SDGs). Such diversification would affect the concept and idea of international cooperation compared to the traditional understanding established by the major Western countries, which has dominated for decades. The Western-based (or “international community”) foreign aid approach, which demands that recipient countries adopt “universal” values, such as democratization or neoliberal reform—the so-called “Washington consensus”—is no longer the sole standard of international cooperation, whether we like it or not. Each chapter of this book reflects on new aspects of Asia–Africa cooperation on the basis of academically realistic views by drawing the big picture of the progressively transforming relationship between Asia and Africa.

This collection is intended to examine and reflect on “new Asian approaches to Africa” in three parts. First, the book focuses on experiences of forums for international cooperation aimed at Africa’s development, which have been hosted in major Asian countries for over two decades. In the first two decades of the 21st century, we have already observed the results of Africa forums hosted by Asian countries in the growing relationships between the two regions and the expansion of the economic gap. Second, the collection reflects on Asian cultural influences in Africa. We observe some similarities between Asian governments’ approaches to Africa, where each Asian country is keen to show its cultural legacy in addition to economic cooperation and investment. Third, the book tackles issues regarding the new phase in Asia–Africa relations. For example, the Chinese government’s “One Belt One Road” initiative (Belt and Road Initiative [BRI]) proposes room for collaboration among major Asian actors, not only Chinese actors, in international cooperation and trade in/with Africa. Undoubtedly, we will see more signs and frameworks of collaborative cooperation between Asian stakeholders in Africa in the near future.

² Non-OECD partner countries are not willing to call their international cooperation “aid”; rather, they refer to “South-South cooperation,” criticizing the Western style of foreign aid in return for political and economic reforms on the recipient countries.

Sixty years after the Bandung Conference (Asian–African Conference), Asia–Africa relations have dramatically changed in character and volume, especially in terms of the approaches of Asian actors (governments, firms, NGOs, etc.), which reflect the power shift among these Asian countries themselves. In tracing the recent three decades, we observed remarkable changes in international relations in Asia. Three decades ago, Japan was the sole economic superpower in Asia. However, China economically surpassed Japan in 2010, and the size of its economy was double that of Japan in 2017 (almost triple in 2019). India’s GDP ranking rose to fifth place in 2019, surpassing the United Kingdom and France. Furthermore, South Korea transformed its status in the world from an “aid-recipient/developing” country to an “aid-donor/developed” country, joining the OECD and then its Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC).

When the Japanese government held its first development forum on Africa (the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, TICAD) in 1993³, Japan was the number one Asian economy and the sole influential organizer as the development initiator for Africa in the world after the major Western aid donor countries. However, in the 21st century, Japan’s privileged status as a giant foreign aid donor has gradually diminished. China started its Africa Forum (the Forum of China–Africa Cooperation, FOCAC) process in 2000. South Korea (the Korea–Africa Forum, KOAF) and India (the India–Africa Forum Summit, IAFS) followed this trend in the 2000s. These countries have rapidly caught up with Japan over the last two decades as influential Asian economic and development partners in Africa. The significant change in the relationship and power balance among Asian countries and other actors have significantly affected the Asian approaches to Africa.

I once attempted to examine Asian approaches to Africa from an introductory and comparative perspective (Iwata 2012). In that paper, I studied and compared the approaches and strategies of four major Asian countries—namely, China, India, Japan, and South Korea—in Africa while conducting historical reviews and examining diplomatic and economic interests in recent decades. These Asian countries have become more influential annually in Africa, rapidly catching up to the traditional Western foreign aid, investment, and trade partners. Beyond its diplomatic and economic influences, China is progressively expanding its cultural influence on the African continent. In

³ The Japanese government has officially co-organized TICAD with other international organizations. However, the TICAD meetings have been held according to the Japanese government’s motives and coordination. Therefore, we consider TICAD as the Japanese government’s event.

addition to these four major Asian countries, some Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, have emerged as aggressive investors and trade partners in Africa in recent years. Thus, the relationship between Asia and Africa has been drastically changing and becoming closer in these first two decades of the 21st century.

After the publication of my modest paper (2012), Asia–Africa relations continued to change progressively throughout the 2010s. For instance, the New Development Bank (NDB or BRI|CS bank), Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and BRI were launched. The G20 framework became more crucial and influential than that of the G7, whose presence is fading in the new world order. Hence, now is an appropriate time to review the Asia–Africa relationship from a broad perspective with highly experienced expert scholars who have acquired deep knowledge over decades on each major Asian country’s approach to Africa.

The relationship between the two regions has been continuously transforming. These Asian countries have expanded their interests and ambitions in/with African countries over the years according to the transformation of their international relations in Asia and beyond. However, many issues remain.

Among the major Asian countries, African policies have been occasionally carried out as part of rivalries with other Asian countries. Therefore, neither was it commonplace for these countries to work together nor to share their know-how with other Asian stakeholders in the traditional cooperation framework for Africa. In addition, there was another barrier limiting collaboration between OECD members (Japan, South Korea) and non-OECD members (China, India) in their different rules and philosophies on international cooperation. However, the international environment has been remarkably changing with respect to Asian approaches to Africa. We observe more collaborations for Africa’s development among multilateral partnerships beyond the current South-South cooperation framework. The world order is not only changing in an economic and diplomatic sense but also in the system of international cooperation. Non-OECD “aid” providers are no longer negligible actors in this international cooperation. The OECD-DAC is no longer the sole dominant regime and rule-maker in international cooperation. As newly emerging non-OECD countries started becoming more influential in Africa as aid providers, investors, and trade partners, we began to observe the collaboration trials in Africa between OECD and non-OECD governments and their cooperation (-related) agencies.

The idea of the Asia–Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) serves as an outstanding example of the collaboration among Asian governments and between OECD and non-OECD countries. The AAGC is a joint project planned

by the Indian and Japanese governments for Africa's development. On projects such as this, Asian countries collaborate, while each Asian country pursues its own interests and strategies in/with Africa. Asia is becoming the field within which a new framework for international cooperation is developing beyond the aid coordination that OECD member countries have traditionally undertaken.

This collection is aimed at thoroughly examining Asian approaches to Africa by highlighting influential facts and events from recent years and decades in a comparative view. Each author thoroughly analyzes and reflects, referencing local and international sources to comprehensively understand new perspectives that are emerging in the Asia–Africa relationship in the near and medium future.

This collection adopts a comparative style to reflect on the approach and methodology of international relations with an academic goal. We principally focus on major Asian countries' approaches to Africa to learn from the differences and similarities. Comparative studies enable us to clearly observe the ongoing rivalry and collaboration among major Asian countries in their approaches to Africa. In general, the rivalries and disputes among Asian countries seem to be more sensationally highlighted (or exaggerated) by media and in international relations studies. However, careful observation indicates that there is significant room for Asian countries to work together at least in cooperation in/with Africa in frameworks such as the AAGC, AIIB, BRI], G20, and NDB. A quarter-century of experience of Africa forums organized by major Asian partners suggests that each Asian forum-hosting country faces the stagnation of making less of an impact through its African policies and diplomacy.

This book is meant to launch a product of the reflection on new Asian approaches to Africa in the short and long terms. The chapters in this collection have been composed by authors who are not only highly experienced expert scholars of African studies in each of the major Asian countries but also specialists in the African policies of China, India, Japan, and South Korea, who have extensively analyzed local documents and materials. Besides the involvement of Asian Africanist experts, this collection includes chapters contributed by widely experienced and internationally recognized specialists in Asian approaches to Africa. Their contributions strengthen and enrich this collection in terms of the theory and facts to be examined. In addition, this collection not only focuses on official development assistance (ODA) but also on other issues, such as business, civil society, media, and combinations thereof, to comprehensively grasp the previous and new Asian approaches to Africa.

We have observed many disputes among/between major Asian countries in real international relations, such as territorial issues and security concerns. However, this collection does not necessarily intend to exaggerate any rivalry or dispute among Asian countries but to seek mutual academic interests and understandings to elaborately reflect on “Asian-ness” through the comparative studies and direct exchanges among Asian Africanist scholars and specialists in Asian approaches to Africa, and to identify possibilities for collaboration between Asian actors in African policies. Each author in this collection is deeply conscious of seeking the potentialities for Asian collaborations in/with Africa beyond a narrow nationalistic view.

This collection is composed of three major parts. The first part (Asian Forums on Africa’s Development) examines development forums on partnerships with Africa hosted by major Asian governments. Japan launched the TICAD in 1993 before other Asian countries. China organized its first Africa forum, the FOCAC, in 2000. South Korea started its forum, the KOAF, in 2006. India launched its forum, the IAFS, in 2008. In addition to these major Asian partners, Brazil, Malaysia, Taiwan, Turkey, the United States have hosted Africa forums. Recently, Indonesia and Russia undertook their first Africa economic forums (April 2018, Bali, Indonesia; October 2019, Sochi, Russia). Seemingly, Africa’s development forum became a gateway-like event for emerging countries to assert their presence as influential global actors. We examine and reflect on the process of Africa development forums hosted by four major Asian countries from their development to challenges that they have experienced.

Chapter 1 (The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) – a Co-constituted Relationship) reflects on China’s relationship with Africa, highlighting the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation. First, this chapter traces and analyzes the history of the China–Africa relationship and the evolution of the FOCAC (2000–2018) process, and the emergence of BRI as one of the most significant globally focal issues in recent years. In addition, rather than simply highlighting China’s unilateral approaches, the chapter focuses on the actions from the African side to progressively shape the FOCAC’s co-constitutive structure. Yu-Shan Wu is Research Associate at the Africa–China Reporting Project (ACRP), Department of Journalism, University of Witwatersrand (South Africa). She completed her Ph.D. on China’s public diplomacy in Africa at the University of Pretoria.

Chapter 2 (Evolution of India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) since Its Inception in 2008) reflects on how the Indian government’s initiatives have developed the India–Africa relationship. First, this chapter traces the long history between India and Africa and then reflects on the currently transforming relationship. Since 2008, the Indian government has set up the India–Africa Forum Summit as a bilateral platform for accelerating the partnership. India’s approaches to

Africa also mirror the regional relationship in Asia and the Indian Ocean in terms of rivalries or collaborations with China and Japan against/for frameworks, such as BRI and AAGC. Aparajita Biswas is former Professor and Director of Centre for African Studies, University of Mumbai. She is also President of the African Studies Association of India (ASA-India).

Chapter 3 (Korea–Africa Forum (KOAF) – South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy and Its Limitations) reflects on the Korean initiative for Africa’s development by examining the KOAF. This chapter examines South Korea’s approaches to Africa by applying the concept of “middle power diplomacy” as the rational choice for the South Korean government for enhancing its diplomatic influence in Africa, and it clarifies its achievements and challenges. Hyo-sook Kim is Associate Professor at Kansai Gaidai University (Japan), and she teaches international relations. She obtained her Ph.D. at Nanzan University (Japan). Further, she has studied the domestic impact of international aid norms and policymaking process in donor countries—notably, Japan and South Korea. She has published books and articles on these issues.

Chapter 4 (TICADs under the Changing Global Landscape – Japan’s Role in African Development Reconsidered) reflects on the TICAD process and its challenges. This chapter examines Japan’s initiatives for Africa’s development through the TICAD process. The author also argues that the Japanese government, business, and civil society stakeholders do not need to compete with China in their approaches to Africa—in contrast to the rivalries exaggerated by Japanese media—in order to contribute to the development of African countries and pursue its goals in Africa. Motoki Takahashi is Professor at the Graduate School of Asian and African Studies, Kyoto University and Professor Emeritus, Kobe University (Japan). He has taught African development and international development cooperation, among others, and has edited and published books and articles on state–economy relations, agricultural development, conflict and development, Japan’s aid to Africa, and aid coordination.

The second part of this collection (Asian Soft Powers in Africa) focuses on the cultural (non-material) approaches of Asian countries toward Africa. Each major Asian country has keenly endeavored to develop a cultural approach to Africa. The chapters in this part examine the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cases to better understand how Asian actors have tried to exert an influence in Africa via cultural aspects.

Chapter 5 (Asia–Africa Relations – the Way Korean and African Cultures Encounter) examines South Korea’s cultural engagement with Africa. The author elaborates on two analytical views: the government-led cultural policy and civil society’s cultural approaches. The South Korean government has deployed “soft power” approaches to enhance South Korea’s image through

various cultural policies. In recent years, South Korean NGOs have actively pursued cultural interaction with Africa. Finally, the author points out the challenges that South Korean stakeholders face. Yongkyu Chang is Professor at the Division of African Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (South Korea). He teaches anthropology and African socio-cultural studies. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) and researches African belief systems and cultural diaspora. He has published books and articles on his research topics.

Chapter 6 (A New Approach to Cooperation with Africa from the Rise of Chinese Tourism in the 21st Century) examines the growth of China's outbound tourism in Africa and the challenges of the tourism industry in Africa. Tourism has the potential to be further developed in African countries owing to their outstanding cultural heritage. Since 2000, the FOCAC has emphasized tourism cooperation. Tourism is an alternative way for African countries to achieve their sustainable development goals. Huaqiong Pan is Associate Professor at the Department of History, Peking University (China). She teaches the general history of Africa, African cultural heritage, and the evolution of Afro-Asia-Europe relations. She got her Ph.D. at Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium). Besides her dissertation, titled *Etat-paysannerie en Chine*, she has published over 30 papers on African studies.

Chapter 7 (A Turning Point in Japan's Soft Power Strategy in Africa) examines the engagements and challenges of Japan's soft power in Africa at the present turning point in terms of diplomatic and cultural strategies highlighting human security, "One Village One Product," and *Kaizen* as the focal cases. In recent years, the radical change in Japan's diplomatic and economic status in the world has led the country to a turning point in the soft power strategies that it adopts. Takuo Iwata is Professor at the College of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University (Japan). He teaches politics and international relations of Africa. He obtained his Ph.D. at Kobe University (Japan) and has published books and articles on politics and international relations, such as Asia-Africa relations, borders, decentralization, democratization, local governance, and political satire.

The third part of this book (New Phase of Asian Approaches to Africa) reflects on the new phase in Asian approaches to Africa from various perspectives, from government initiatives to corporate/non-profit activities. In particular, this part focuses on the collaboration between/among Asian and international actors to operate their projects in/with Africa. Echoing the subtitle of this book, this part of the collection highlights the potential of the collaboration among/between Asian and international actors/partners working with Africa, rather than exaggerating their rivalries and disputes, to seek future harmony in the relationship between the two regions.

Chapter 8 (Small Farmers – The Missing Link in the ProSavana Triangle) examines the South-South Triangular Cooperation project, “ProSAVANA,” initiated by the Japanese government in collaboration with the Brazilian government in the Nacala Corridor region of northern Mozambique. The Japanese government once advocated this project as the model case under the TICAD framework. However, this project has been questioned by domestic and international groups that have exposed controversial characters who threaten local small farmers’ lives and economic rights. Pedro Miguel Amakasu Raposo de Medeiros Carvalho is Professor at Kansai University (Japan), teaching economic history and African economic studies. He got his Ph.D. at Nanzan University (Japan). He has published books and articles on the development cooperation of Japan and China for Africa, particularly Lusophone Africa.

Chapter 9 (Japanese Firms and Their Internationalization in Africa) focuses on Japan’s economic involvement on the African continent by examining the internationalization of Japanese firms and the specific factors that shape the firms’ investment behavior through case studies in South Africa. This approach is incredibly meaningful because previous studies on Japan–Africa relations have devoted little attention to Japanese firms in comparison to diplomatic and aid issues. Scarlett Cornelissen is Professor in the Department of Political Science, Stellenbosch University. She teaches international relations and global governance. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Glasgow (United Kingdom) and other degrees from the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch (South Africa). She has conducted research on Africa’s international politics with a specialization in Japan–Africa relations. She has published extensively on these topics.

Chapter 10 (Changing Aid Architecture in Africa through the Encounter between OECD Countries and Non-OECD Countries) examines how non-OECD countries have influenced the established aid architecture in recent years. This chapter tackles the issues of the encounter between OECD and non-OECD countries through elaborate case studies in Uganda. The author focuses on changes in the aid architecture through encounters between OECD donors, non-OECD actors, and the aid recipient actor (the Ugandan government). Masumi Owa is Associate Professor at Chukyo University (Japan), specialized in international development and global governance. She previously worked for the Japanese Embassy in Uganda (2004–2006) and Japanese Delegation to the OECD (2008–2010). She received her Ph.D. from the University of Warwick (United Kingdom) in 2015.

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