

Japan's Official Development Assistance in Southeast and South Asia: Strategy for Economic Revitalization and Regional Security Cooperation*

Jiyeoun Song

This paper examines Japan's development cooperation policy, with a regional focus on Southeast and South Asia. In the 1990s, Japan embraced global norms and values in implementing development cooperation through the adoption of the Official Development Assistance Charter in 1992, in response to the criticisms of the international community against its economic interests-centered approaches. However, under the pressures of Japan's protracted recession and the rise of China, Japan has reformulated its development cooperation policy so as to serve the country's strategic interests, especially in the regions of Southeast and South Asia, since the early 2000s. This paper argues that Japan has endeavored to utilize its development cooperation as a policy tool to bring forth the country's economic revitalization and build the regional security cooperation mechanism.

Keywords: *Japan, Southeast Asia, South Asia, official development assistance (ODA), development cooperation, economic revitalization, regional security cooperation*

I. INTRODUCTION

The international community has utilized development cooperation as a channel of providing economic assistance and support for developing and least developed countries to eradicate extreme poverty and improve social and economic conditions in the postwar period.¹ Despite these common goals, there have been variations in the development cooperation policy among the member countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Some have put strong emphasis on offering humanitarian assistance to least developed countries, whereas others have focused more on lending loans to help developing countries take off their economies. The top five donor countries—the US, Germany, the UK, France, and Japan by the ranking order—that provided 68.25% of official development assistance (ODA) as of 2019 have also adopted different development cooperation policies along the lines of delivery channel (e.g., bilateral vs. multilateral), primary target countries/regions/sectors, and types of ODA (e.g., grants, loans, and technical assistance) (OECD, “ODA 2019 Detailed Summary”).

Among these major donor countries, Japan has illustrated a very interesting trajectory of development cooperation. First, it has successfully transformed itself from the war-

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¹ This paper uses development cooperation and official development assistance interchangeably, since both terms refer to various types of bilateral and multilateral assistance to developing and least developed countries.

devastated economy, which had heavily relied upon the emergency aid from the US during the immediate postwar period, to one of the leading donor countries, due to its rapid economic growth. Second, while Japan's development cooperation had been severely criticized for its economic interests-centered approaches during the 1960s and 1970s, it embraced global norms and values in pursuing development cooperation, such as peace, environment, freedom, and human rights, by establishing the ODA Charter in 1992. Japan further elaborated human security as the key concept of its ODA during the 1990s. Since the early 2000s, however, Japan has shifted toward prioritizing its strategic interests as one of the primary goals of ODA, as demonstrated in the revisions of the ODA Charter in 2003 and 2015. Nevertheless, it has kept maintaining the top regional priority to Asia, particularly Southeast and South Asia, both of which have been the key strategic regions for Japan's economic and security concerns.

This paper examines Japan's development cooperation policy, with a regional focus on Southeast and South Asia. In the 1990s, Japan embraced global norms and values in implementing development cooperation through the adoption of the ODA Charter in 1992, in response to the criticisms of the international community against its economic interests-centered approaches. However, under the pressures of Japan's protracted recession and the rise of China, Japan has reformulated its development cooperation policy so as to serve the country's strategic interests, especially in the regions of Southeast and South Asia, since the early 2000s. This paper argues that Japan has endeavored to utilize its development cooperation as a policy tool to bring forth the country's economic revitalization and build the regional security cooperation mechanism.

This paper proceeds as follows. The second section outlines the history of Japan's ODA policy in the postwar period, represented as an Asia-centered one. The third section analyzes several critical changes in its ODA policy since the 1990s. By examining the establishment and revisions of the ODA Charter, it explains the ways in which Japan's ODA policy has developed along the lines of global norms and values, with an emphasis on human security, and then the country's strategic interests. The fourth section explains Japan's development cooperation policy targeting Southeast and South Asia as a tool for its economic revitalization and regional security cooperation. The conclusion summarizes the key findings of the research and provides the implications for Japan's ODA policy.

II. THE HISTORY OF JAPAN'S OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD: THE ASIA-CENTERED ODA POLICY

Japan has promoted development cooperation to achieve multiple policy goals, ranging from the offering of overseas business opportunities for its corporations and the provision of humanitarian assistance to the strengthening of diplomatic relations (Alesina and Dollar, 2000: 46-47; Kato, 2015: 1; Yoshimatsu, 2017: 1). Experiencing the rapid recovery from the war-devastated economy, Japan aimed to reintegrate into the international community by joining the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific in 1954. In addition, it began to provide economic assistance to countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia as part of war reparations since the mid-1950s. In October 1954, Myanmar (then Burma) became the first country that signed the Peace Treaty and Agreement on Reparations and Economic Cooperation with Japan in return for receiving the bilateral financial aid under the name of war reparations. Since then, Japan's war reparations treaties

with other Asian countries were soon followed in the 1950s, which were transformed into a tool for its economic diplomacy.² In addition, Japan offered the first yen loan to India in 1958, marking the starting point of its economic cooperation with concessional loans (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005a: 29; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Outline of Japan's ODA to India"). In order to create a more systemic mechanism of ODA allocation, the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) was established in 1961 to take over management of the Southeast Asia Development Cooperation Fund from the Export-Import Bank of Japan (JEXIM), whose first OECF ODA loan was provided for South Korea in 1966 (Japan International Cooperation Agency, "History").

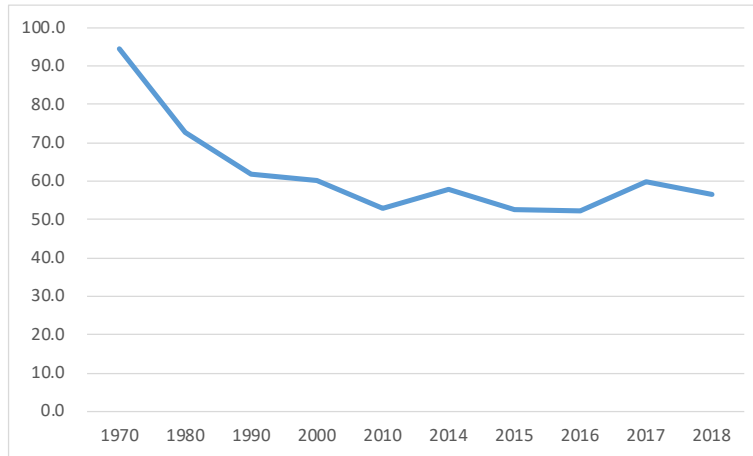
Despite Japan's priority to Southeast Asia, its ODA was not warmly welcomed by the people in the region at first, since Japan endeavored to utilize its assistance as an economic opportunity for paving ways to the overseas market for its business sector and accessing raw materials and natural resources for production (Black, 2013: 338; Kato, 2015: 1-2; Tsunekawa, 2014: 4). Thus, when he visited Southeast Asia in 1974, Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei confronted a series of anti-Japanese protests. In the face of such strong hostility to Japan's ODA, Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo explicitly stated Japan's strong commitments to mutual confidence and trust between Japan and Southeast Asia when he made a visit to the region in 1977, the so-called Fukuda Doctrine (Kato, 2015: 3). With a promise to double Japan's ODA in five years, the goal was achieved even earlier than his plan (Wallace, 2019: 872-873). Japan's rapid economic development and an increasing number of Japanese corporations doing business in Southeast Asia gradually turned its negative image of ODA toward a more positive one in the 1980s (Wallace, 2019: 872-873; Yoshimatsu and Trinidad, 2010: 202). In addition, Japan had utilized tied loans in development cooperation, which had offered business opportunities for its corporations through investment and procurement of materials and equipment from Japan, but received severe criticism on its practices from developing countries. Since the introduction of the untied yen loans in 1972, tied loans were replaced by untied ones, leading to 100% of untied loans by the 1980s (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005a: 34-36).

Departing from its priority to Southeast Asia, Japan began to provide its first ODA to the People's Republic of China (hereafter, China) in 1979, the year after the two countries signed the bilateral Treaty of Peace and Friendship in August 1978. Since then, China became the number one recipient country of Japan's ODA until the early 2000s (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Overview of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to China"). Although Japan suspended its ODA to China twice because of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 and China's nuclear weapon testing in 1995 (Katada, 2001), its ODA helped China build up social and economic infrastructure facilities at a very early stage of China's economic take-off and reconcile the bilateral diplomatic relationship.

As shown in the regional allocation of Japan's ODA, its priority still lies in Asia (see Figure 1).³ Interesting to note is that its primary target country in the region has shifted from one country to another corresponding to Japan's economic and security concerns and

² Japan signed war reparations treaties with the Philippines, Indonesia, and South Vietnam, and offered economic assistance to Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea as a form of grant aid (or so-called "quasi-reparations") (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005a: 27-29).

³ Japan allocated 56.5% of ODA to Asia in 2018, whose proportion declined from 94.4% in 1970 (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, "Table I-2 Trends in Japan's Bilateral ODA by Region").

Figure 1. Japan's ODA Allocation to Asia (% of ODA)

Sources: Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020), "Table I-2 Trends in Japan's Bilateral ODA by Region."

changing ODA goals over the years. The following section examines the development of Japan's ODA, focusing on the analysis of the establishment and revision of the ODA Charter since the 1990s, which indicates important shifts in Japan's development cooperation policy.

III. REVISITING JAPAN'S OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE SINCE THE 1990S

1. Japan's Value-Oriented ODA Policy during the 1990s

Japan embraced more value-oriented development cooperation principles, departing from its economic interests-centered ones, whose efforts were materialized as the establishment of the ODA Charter in 1992 (Black, 2013: 339; Hook and Zhang, 1998; Tsunekawa, 2014: 8). As one of the most critical turning points for Japan's development cooperation policy, the first ODA Charter adopted in 1992 comprehensively covered the basic philosophy, principles, and priority areas from a long-term perspective. By doing so, Japan highlighted its strong commitments to development cooperation based on global norms and values, which were reflected in the philosophy (e.g., peace and prosperity) and principles (e.g., environment, no military purpose, democracy and market-economy with basic human rights and freedom) (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005b).⁴ In addition, Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi addressed a human-centered society and people-centered social development as Japan's ODA priority at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the UN in October 1995 (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1995). Under the leadership of Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, Japan further reinforced human security as the key concept of its ODA, leading to the establishment

⁴ Katada (2020: 168) has pointed out that despite Japan's adoption of the ODA Charter in 1992, it was too short to elaborate the common objectives of ODA by its various stakeholders.

of the human security fund under the UN (Howe and Jang, 2013: 130; Potter, 2012: 15-18). During the 1990s, Japan shifted toward more value-oriented development cooperation policy, nevertheless it still explicitly stated its continuing regional focus on Asia, especially Southeast Asia, as the primary target of its foreign aid.

2. Japan's Strategic Interests-Oriented ODA Policy since the 2000s

Despite such important changes in the philosophy and principles of ODA in the 1990s, Japan confronted severe challenges in securing its ODA funding resources, because of its protracted economic recession. During the 1990s, Japan was the number one donor country, but its rank was replaced by the US since the early 2000s and its ODA budget rather has stagnated since then (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000, "Charter 75: Trends in Major DAC Countries' ODA (net disbursement basis); Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007, "Chart II-2: Trends in Japan's ODA Budget and Other Major Expenditures (Initial Budget Base)). In economic downturns, Japan's policymakers had to make efforts to persuade the general public of why the government continues to allocate the financial resources for assisting developing and least developed countries in taking off their economic and social development (Lindgren, 2020).

Moreover, since the 2000s, the government attempted to make an explicit linkage between ODA and the country's strategic interests, although it also maintained Japan's emphasis on human security in ODA (Katada, 2020: 168). In revising the ODA Charter in 2003, it emphasized the importance of the strategic interests, such as security, economic prosperity, and promotion of Japanese people's welfare, in the process of implementing its ODA policy (Kato, 2015: 5). By doing so, Japan intended to utilize its ODA to serve for the country's strategic interests, while strongly expressing its continuing regional priority to Asia, especially the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). Under the rubric of the 2003 ODA Charter, Japan underlined its economic and security interests in implementing its development cooperation.

After winning the 2009 House of Representatives Election, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)-led coalition government (2009-2012), composed of liberal and progressive political parties, ambitiously announced that Japan would emphasize inclusive growth and human security as well as the strategic use of ODA. Interestingly, the DPJ government's development cooperation policy was not much different from that of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) government in terms of the emphasis on the country's interests in pursuing ODA policy (Yamamoto, 2020: 9-10). In particular, it encouraged an increasing number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to participate in various development cooperation programs and projects, targeting the doubling of the number of participating SMEs by 2015, and the five-fold increase of the number by 2020 (Government of Japan, 2012). In addition, the DPJ-led coalition government proposed to promote overseas infrastructure packages and strengthen the role of experts in infrastructure projects, especially the human resource training and education programs for infrastructure in emerging countries, aiming to make Japan one of the leading countries in infrastructure by 2020. It further specified that the Japanese government would help developing countries establish a set of legal and institutional frameworks, which would in turn assist Japanese corporations in paving the inroad to entering and expanding the overseas market (Government of Japan, 2012). The DPJ also endeavored to utilize its ODA policy to build cooperation with Southeast

Asian countries for maritime security against the rise of China in the South China Sea, in particular, although its strategic use of ODA was not fully fledged yet (Yamamoto, 2020: 10).

3. Japan's ODA Policy for Economic Revitalization and Regional Security Cooperation during the Abe Government

The Abe government (2012-2020), which came to power by winning the House of Representatives election in December 2012, ambitiously claimed “Japan is Back,” and proposed a series of policy agendas to resuscitate Japan’s sluggish economy. It prioritized economic revitalization and national security as the top policy agenda (Kato, 2015: 5; Yoshimatsu, 2017). As one of the economic revitalization strategies, the Abe government included the Strategy of Global Outreach (or *kokusai teikai senryaku*), with an emphasis on the expansion of the overseas market. The expansion consisted of the export of infrastructure and access to natural resources, which was quite similar to the DPJ government’s focus on infrastructure (Government of Japan, 2013). By establishing the Strategic Meeting on Economic Cooperation and Infrastructure on May 17, 2013, it clearly stated the strategic use of ODA and the implementation of various types of the public-private partnership for the purpose of the export of infrastructure and the access to natural resources (Government of Japan, 2013: 89-90).

Furthermore, the Abe government incorporated Japan’s strategic interests, encompassing both economic and security concerns, into the establishment of the Development Cooperation Charter in 2015, which was revised and renamed from the ODA Charter. It identified development cooperation as a policy tool for serving national economic interests in changing global environments (*Japan Times*, 2016; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015; Yamamoto, 2020: 11-12). From the perspectives of the national security, the Abe government included the slogan of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” into the Development Cooperation Charter in 2015, which had been developed as part of the policy direction of the National Security Strategy (proposed by the Cabinet on December 17, 2013) (Japanese Cabinet Office, 2013). Moreover, it inserted a clause that Japan’s ODA would make a contribution to peace and prosperity through cooperation for non-military purpose, which demonstrates its strong focus on the security dimension (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Japan has aimed to enhance its economic and security advantages in Asia, by implementing “two types of infrastructure strategy—a ‘soft security infrastructure’ strategy and a ‘horizontal economic corridors’ strategy,” responding to the rise of China (Wallace, 2018: 884-885).

The Abe government has kept its priority to Asia, especially Southeast and South Asia, in pursuing its ODA policy. In 2015, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo announced the “Quality Investment for Infrastructure” and promised to provide US\$110 billion in order to promote quality infrastructure in Asia over the next five years. Such commitment was regarded as Japan’s strategic response toward China’s initiative for infrastructure development in Asia, represented by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (Gong, 2019: 648; *Japan Times*, 2015; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016: 129; *Nikkei Asian Review*, 2016; Zhao, 2019: 558).⁵ Its policy priority of

⁵ China ambitiously announced an initiative to build regional institutions for infrastructure development during President Xi Jinping’s visit to Southeast Asia in October 2013, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was formally launched in December 2015 with US\$100 billion in capital with 57 founding members (Yoshimatsu, 2017: 13).

Table 1. Estimated Infrastructure Investment Needs by Sector, 45 Developing Member Countries of the ADB, 2016-2030

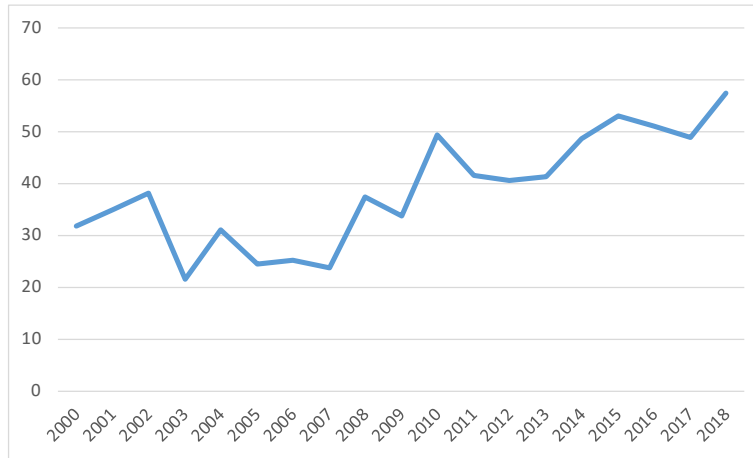
	Baseline Estimates			Climate-adjusted Estimates			Climate-related Investments (Annual)	
	Investment Needs	Annual Average	Share of Total	Investment Needs	Annual Average	Share of Total	Adaptation	Mitigation
Power	11,689	779	51.8	14,731	982	56.3	3	200
Transport	7,796	520	34.6	8,353	557	31.9	37	-
Telecom	2,279	152	10.1	2,279	152	8.7	-	-
Water & Sanitation	787	52	3.5	802	53	3.1	1	-
Total	22,551	1,503	100.0	26,166	1,744	100.0	41	200

Source: Asia Development Bank (2017: xiv, Table 2)
 Note: - denotes not applicable; US Dollar billion in 2015 prices

the infrastructure export, which reappeared in the 2016 version of Japan Revitalization Strategy, highlighted the education and training of human resources, quality infrastructure, and financing (e.g., the Japanese yen loan and other financing mechanism using the Japan International Cooperation Agency, Asian Development Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank) (Government of Japan, 2016: 213-215).

The Abe government considered Asia as a primary region with great potentials of large infrastructure development, which would provide an important overseas market and investment destination for Japanese corporations. According to the Asia Development Bank (ADB)’s estimates, US\$1.7 trillion per year need to be invested in developing Asia, whose estimate doubled from US\$750 billion per year in 2009 (ADB, 2017: xi). The ADB has projected that the infrastructure sector (e.g., transportation network, electricity generation capacity, telecommunications, and water infrastructure) would play a pivotal role in developing Asia’s economic growth and poverty reduction (ADB, 2017: xii; see Table 1). Thus, the Japanese government has endeavored to take advantage of its ODA policy to secure an economic opportunity for its corporations’ overseas infrastructure markets, by allocating a relatively large share of its ODA budget to the sector of economic infrastructure and services, compared with other development cooperation sectors, such as social infrastructure.

As shown in Figure 2, Japan allocated more than half of its bilateral ODA (57.32% in 2018) to economic infrastructure and services (e.g., transport & storage, communication, and energy), proportion of which has noticeably increased since the late-2000s. Meanwhile, it offered 15.77% (as of 2018) to social infrastructure and services, whose proportion was much smaller than other major DAC countries’ commitments to social infrastructure and services (37% in 2018) (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, “Reference Statistics: Table 2-(3) Distribution of Bilateral ODA by Sector”; OECD, “Development Cooperation Profiles”; OECD, “ODA by Sector”). In terms of the types of ODA, Japan provided 39.68% and 60.31% as grants and loans, respectively, indicating Japan’s priority to economic infrastructure and services through loans (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, “Reference Statistics: Table 2-(2) Bilateral ODA by Countries and Types”). The following

Figure 2. Japan's Bilateral ODA to Economic Infrastructure and Services (% of ODA)

Sources: Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Japan's ODA Whitepaper* (various years)

section will examine Japan's ODA policy towards Southeast and South Asia from the perspectives of economic revitalization and regional security cooperation.

IV. JAPAN'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY TOWARDS SOUTHEAST AND SOUTH ASIA

1. Southeast Asia as Japan's Top Priority Region

In the postwar period, Southeast Asia has been regarded as one of Japan's most strategic regions in terms of allocating its ODA, expanding overseas markets, and constructing the regional production supply chain (Wallace, 2018: 871-874). After Japan's foreign direct investment (FDI) in China reached its peak in 2005, the volume of FDI began to decline in the late 2000s, a period during which the Chinese government changed its tax policies for foreign companies and implemented its new labor laws for the improvement of workers' protection. Meanwhile, in 2007, Japan's FDI to Southeast Asia surpassed its FDI to China, which illustrates the growing importance of the region for Japan's business community (Iida, 2015: 389). In particular, the Japanese government has provided a wide range of policy supports for its SMEs to expand the overseas markets, such as those in the member countries of the ASEAN. The Japan's FDI diversification, which was called as the "China-Plus-One" strategy, has been further accelerated by its territorial disputes with China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and China's export restrictions on rare earths to Japan in the 2010s (Iida, 2015: 387-388).

In conjunction with its increasing FDI to Southeast Asia, Japan's ODA has served the purpose of the "investment in the future" for both ASEAN member countries and Japan. Japan has offered Southeast Asia a substantial amount of ODA, most of which has been allocated for various economic infrastructure projects, such as economic corridors, special economic zones, and transportation (Liao and Dang, 2020: 687-689; Wallace, 2013: 497).

Prime Minister Abe pledged to narrow down the development gap in Southeast Asia and further strengthen the connectivity among the ASEAN member countries (e.g., Japan-Mekong cooperation), by participating in economic infrastructure development projects, strengthening the rule of law, enhancing disaster risk reduction, and making a contribution to peacebuilding (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014a: 13; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016: 128; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Japan-Mekong Cooperation”; Koga, 2019: 128).

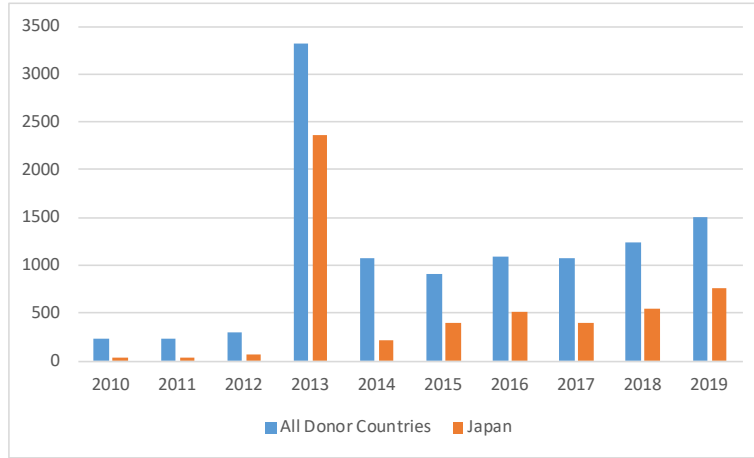
Japan has also served as an advisor for several developing countries in Southeast Asia (e.g., Vietnam and Myanmar) to pursue industrialization projects and enhance horizontal economic integration among themselves (Wallace, 2018: 899). As illustrated above, in response to China's infrastructure development strategy, such as the BRI and the AIIB, Prime Minister Abe announced the “quality infrastructure investment” in May 2015 as a way of distinguishing its ODA policy from that of China. The BRI has been heavily criticized for the debt-trap projects for most developing and least developed countries with scarce financial resources. By doing so, Japan aimed to secure close political and economic relationships with the ASEAN even under the constraints of rising China over the region, and simultaneously pursued to achieve its economic and security interests.

In addition to the proposal of the quality infrastructure investment, Japan has attempted to make a contribution to peace and prosperity through cooperation for non-military purposes, human security, and self-help as the principles of Japan's development cooperation (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Under these conditions, the Abe government decided to supply patrol vessels and loans to purchase maritime security equipment for Southeast Asian countries, especially Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, most of which have had conflicts with China's assertiveness in the South China Sea (Grønning, 2018; Trinidad, 2018; Wallace, 2018: 889-892). More recently, in July 2020, Vietnam signed an agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to borrow 36.63 billion yen (US\$348.2 million) to build six patrol vessels under the pressure of rising tensions in the South China Sea (Vu, 2020). Allocating its bilateral ODA to the maritime security equipment, though of non-military use, Japan has endeavored to strengthen security cooperation with the countries in Southeast Asia facing threats and pressures from China in the South China Sea, in particular (Koga, 2019: 127). The following subsection will analyze Japan's development cooperation on Myanmar as its recent focus country in Southeast Asia.

2. Myanmar as the Primary Target of Japan's Development Cooperation

Since Myanmar began to make a political transition to democracy in 2010, Japan has taken an initiative for helping the country take off its economy by offering generous economic aid and providing policy advice on establishing a set of market institutions. Even during the military regime, Japan continued to provide ODA to Myanmar as the number one donor, while other Western donors imposed strong economic sanctions on the country (Howe and Jang, 2013: 134-137; Strefford, 2016). Japan has made strenuous efforts to increase economic opportunities and enhance strategic positions in Myanmar, especially since the early 2010s, by taking into account its access to raw materials and capability to compete with China (Seekins, 2015; Strefford, 2016). As shown in Figure 3, Japan has been one of the largest donor countries to Myanmar over the past decade. Traditionally, Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam have been the primary destinations of Japan's ODA; however, Myanmar has been also regarded as the key strategic partner in the region of Southeast Asia more recently.

Figure 3. Japan’s ODA to Myanmar since the 2010s



Sources: OECD. OECD. Stat, “Aid (ODA) Disbursements to Countries and Regions [DAC2a].”
Note: Y axis refers to the amount of ODA (constant prices) (US Dollar, million, 2019).

Historically, Japan has developed a very close diplomatic relationship with Myanmar, whose linkage was established through its strong support for Myanmar’s (then named as Burma) independence movements against Britain in the 1930s and 1940s. Under such political and historical settings, Japan has considered independent Myanmar as an ideal first candidate of Japan’s ODA recipient country in the postwar period. By focusing on maximizing its economic development opportunity in Myanmar, Japan signed the war reparations agreement with the country and provided ODA, composed of US\$200 million in reparations and additional US\$50 million in private loans (Black, 2013: 342-343; Strefford, 2016: 489). The first war reparations agreement with Myanmar became an important turning point for Japan to develop its postwar development cooperation policy, targeting for Southeast Asia and East Asia (Strefford, 2016: 492).

Yet since its independence from the British colonial rule in 1948, Myanmar’s political situations have been quite turbulent until very recently. Between 1962 and 1988, the country had been under the tight control of the military junta led by General Ne Win, whose regime had strongly advocated for the “Burmese Way to Socialism,” leading to a long period of serious economic stagnation of the country. In the summer of 1988, confronting nationwide massive popular protests, which had been partly influenced by a wave of democratic movements in Asia, the military government brutally suppressed the protests, resulting in a high number of casualties and arrests by the crackdown. Although General Ne Win decided to step down and the military government promised to hold an election, it did not allow the country to make a smooth transition to democracy. By repressing the massive protests in 1988, the military seized the power again and established the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which was later reconstituted as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) (1997-2011). In 1990, the military government held an election, which had been promised in 1988, but it refused to acknowledge the landslide victory of Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD). Under the system of the SLORC/SPDC, Senior General Than Shwe ruled the country between 1992 and 2011. After then, Thein Sein, a retired general who led the pro-military Union Solidarity

and Development Party (USDP), came to power through the SPDC by holding a landmark election for a civilian government in November 2010. The NLD under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi refused to participate in the 2010 election, undermining the political legitimacy of the victory (Lam, 2016: 512). Yet Aung San Suu Kyi was released from the house arrest after the 2010 election and was gradually allowed to participate in political activities, which led to the further political opening and liberalization of the country. Through such political progress, in November 2015, the NLD finally defeated the USDP in a landslide victory, embarking on a political process of democratic transition (Chow and Easley, 2016: 522).

Myanmar's political turmoil has greatly affected Japan's development cooperation policy for the country. For most of the post-war period, Japan was the top ODA donor country to Myanmar (Howe and Jang, 2013: 136). During the period of 1978-1988, Japan provided nearly US\$4 billion, amount over half of Myanmar's total imports during the same period (Schoff, 2014: 5). Although a large number of Japanese companies expected to participate in Japan's ODA to Myanmar's infrastructure projects, they were not able to benefit from such economic opportunities because of its political circumstances. After the crackdown of the democratic movements in 1988, the international community imposed an economic sanction on Myanmar, which led to the cut-off between the country and the outside world (Lam, 2016: 518). Under such political and economic circumstances, Japan's ODA allocation to Myanmar declined dramatically, except for the offering of very minimum grant aid programs (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014b).

Meanwhile, China has become a much closer ally of Myanmar and the most important economic partner since the late 1980s (Huang, 2015: 198; Lanteigne, 2019: 41-43; Reily, 2013: 149). It has emerged as one of the country's most important sources of investment, trade, and aid, as most of China's ODA was closely linked to its economic and strategic interests (Reily, 2012: 86-88). During the period of economic sanction, China, as Myanmar's number one trading partner and investor, offered low-interest loans and other forms of economic assistance to the country (Chow and Easley, 2016: 531; Lam, 2016: 521; Schoff, 2014: 5). As a result of its huge investment to Myanmar, Chinese enterprises have established a major presence in the country, particularly in construction and extractive industries, such as logging, mining, and energy (Chow and Easley, 2016: 537). Considering the country's strategic location for the BRI, Myanmar has also become one of the most critical partners in securing China's development projects. (Arase, 2015: 37).

Since Myanmar's election in 2010, there has been gradual improvement in the relationship between Myanmar and the Western world. When Aung San Suu Kyi won a seat in parliament in the April 2012 by-election, the Japanese government decided to resume its ODA allocation to Myanmar. In November 2012, President Barack Obama visited Myanmar and lifted its economic sanctions over the country (Iida, 2015: 400). Myanmar has been regarded as the last frontier for Japan in terms of natural resources and cheap labor costs as well as the focal point that connects the East-West corridor and Southern Economic corridor, enhancing the connectivity of the ASEAN (Nippon Keidanren, 2012). The large size of the population and potentials for economic growth have been very attractive for Japan's manufacturing investment and Myanmar's natural resources, including large natural gas reserves, have offered strong economic incentives for Japanese corporations expanding overseas businesses (Schoff, 2014: 4). Since 2013, Myanmar has received more attention as Japan's top priority country in terms of its bilateral ODA allocation (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016; see also Figure 3).

Reflecting such political and economic interests, right after winning the 2012 House

of Representatives election, Deputy Prime Minister Aso Taro visited Myanmar as the first foreign destination. Then, Prime Minister Abe's official Myanmar visit in May 2013 intended to further strengthen bilateral political, security and economic ties. A large delegation of the Japanese business community, looking for investment opportunities, accompanied his visit to the country, and the government announced to offer a comprehensive ODA package (including debt-forgiveness) of almost US\$5 billion and resume the yen loans that had been suspended since 1987 (Lam, 2016: 514-515). During his visit in March 2014 following Prime Minister Abe's official visit, Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio pledged to provide Myanmar Japan's ODA, range of which covered from power transition grids and a train operation monitoring system to the introduction of medical equipment (Lam, 2016: 515).

Even before the official visit of Japan's top political leaders to the country, Japan and Myanmar already began to strengthen the bilateral economic relationship. In 2012, Myanmar signed a contract with Japan that allowed Japanese banks and companies to enter the Myanmar's financial market (Huang, 2015: 203). Japan also signed a memorandum of understanding in 2012 to establish a special economic zone (SEZ) near the port of Thilawa, close to Yangon, a former capital of Myanmar (Black, 2013: 353; Strefford, 2016: 504). In April 2014, JICA signed a joint venture agreement with Myanmar Japan Thilawa Development (MJTD) Ltd., a joint project between Myanmar holding a 51% stake and Japan with 49% through the establishment of the first Japan-Myanmar public-private initiative and the offering of Japan's ODA loans for infrastructure projects related to the Thilawa SEZ (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014a: 17; Strefford, 2016: 504). In terms of the shareholding structure of the MJTD, the Thilawa SEZ Management Committee (TSMC) and the Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Limited (MTSH) hold 51% of the total shares of MJTD. The rest of the 49% shares are held by MMS Thilawa Development Co. Ltd. (which is a consortium composed of Marubeni, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and three Japanese banks) and JICA (JICA, 2014; Myanmar Japan Thilawa Development Limited, n.d.). The Thilawa SEZ (under operation) and the Dawei SEZ (still under construction) represented Japan's strong commitments to promote industrialization, connectivity, and economic development in Myanmar (Zhao, 2019: 560). Japan has employed its ODA policy to signal its enthusiasm for broader economic and diplomatic engagement with Myanmar (Reily, 2013: 153). At the same time, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and JICA have proactively supported the overseas business expansion of SMEs and other entities using ODA (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016: 172). In particular, such a trend has been intensified since the 2000s, a period during which Japan has attempted to revitalize the sluggish economy by taking advantage of the country's ODA policy.

As a neighboring country as well as an economic partner (represented as the Under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)), China has made huge investments in economic infrastructure projects (e.g., dams, highways, and railways) and natural resources in Myanmar (Gong, 2019: 641-647). Despite China's close economic relationship with Myanmar, there has also been a growing anti-China sentiment over the years because of the social and environmental consequences driven by China-led development projects (Wallace, 2018: 887-888). Japan has identified Southeast Asia, and in particular Myanmar, as a new emerging market to help Japan's economy revitalize (Zhao, 2014: 3-4). For Japan, it has become critical to achieve the two goals of economic revitalization and Myanmar's development projects through its ODA policy, while being aware of China's expanding influence on the country and the region of Southeast Asia.

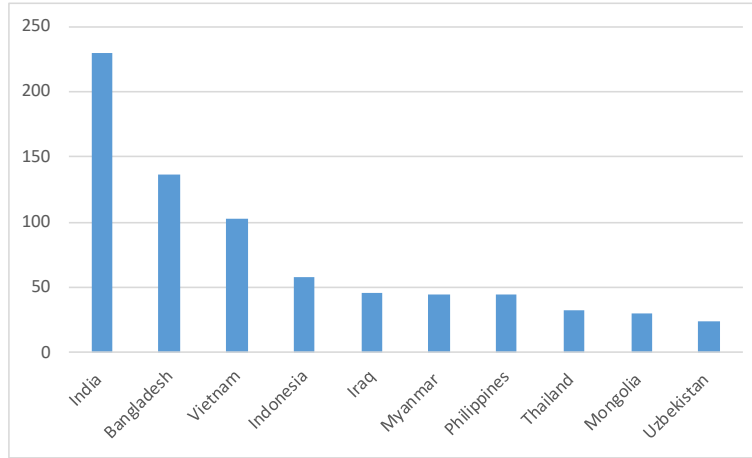
3. South Asia as Japan's Partner in the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy

While Southeast Asia has been one of the priority regions for Japan's development cooperation, South Asia has recently emerged as the key strategic location for its regional security cooperation, leading to the increasing amount of ODA to the region. During his first term in the period of 2006-2007, Prime Minister Abe aimed to extend its strategic horizon beyond the Pacific by advocating the concepts of the "confluence of the two seas" and the "arc of freedom and prosperity." By emphasizing the shared values (e.g., freedom and democracy), Japan proposed to consolidate cooperation among democratic countries in response to non-democratic states, especially China. Nevertheless, its emphasis on the Indo-Pacific region was not materialized as had been anticipated.

In August 2016, Prime Minister Abe ambitiously announced the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" (FOIP) at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Kenya. Japan has increased ODA allocation to the Indo-Pacific region with a diplomatic priority, as a political and diplomatic response to China's rise. Japan's FOIP gained political momentum when the US adopted the term of "free and open Indo-Pacific" in November 2017 at the Japan-US meeting during the APEC summit, which led to the resurrection of security cooperation among the four countries—Australia, Japan, India, and the US (named as the Quadrilateral Security Grouping or QUAD) (Choong, 2020: 3; Koga, 2020: 64). During Prime Minister Abe's second term (2012-2020), Japan's political efforts have been consolidated as the QUAD centered on maritime security cooperation among Japan, India, Australia, and the US, represented as the goal of the freedom of navigation (Koga, 2020: 59). India and Australia have become strategic allies of Japan under the framework of the FOIP. In particular, Japan and India have begun to have joint military exercises since 2012, whose number has increased since the mid-2010s (Katagiri, 2019: 14-15).

Japan's ODA policy towards South Asia has been utilized to serve the goals of economic and security concerns. It has increased rapidly its ODA disbursements to the region over the past few years. As of 2018, Japan allocated 56.5% of its bilateral ODA to Asia, 22.5% to Southeast Asia and 30.1% to South Asia, respectively, indicating its regional focus on Asia (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, "Table III-1 Japan's Bilateral ODA by Region"). Until the year of 2014, Vietnam was the top recipient country of Japan's ODA; however, since 2015, its rank has been replaced by India that has been the top recipient country of Japan's ODA, mostly composed of loans (OECD, 2020: 111). In addition, Bangladesh has taken the second rank of Japan's ODA recipient countries in 2017 just followed by India (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016, "VI-12 Bilateral ODA by Country and Type"; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017, "III-21 Bilateral ODA by Country and Type"; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, "Reference Statistics 2-(2) Bilateral ODA by Country and Type"). As shown in Figure 4, India and Bangladesh were the top two ODA recipient countries in 2018.

As the form of ODA, its financial resource allocation to the region was mostly based on loans to assist these countries in constructing economic infrastructure, such as railways, roads, ports, and power plants (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, "Reference Statistics Table 2-(2) Bilateral ODA by Country and Type"). Japan has been advising and assisting India in developing the industrial areas (e.g., the Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and Chennai–Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC) sections). In addition, it has made efforts to connect India and Southeast Asia, by constructing several economic and transport routes, such as a Mekong-India Economic Corridor between Chennai (part of the

Figure 4. Japan's Top Ten Recipients of Gross ODA in 2018 (US Dollar, million)

Sources: OECD (2020: 16)

CBIC) in India's east and the Dawei Port SEZ (Gong, 2019: 648-649; Wallace, 2018: 900-901). Although South Asia has always been the target region of Japan's ODA, its strategic importance has been further reinforced over the past decade, in particular.

In response to China's rise, the Abe government utilized its development cooperation policy to participate in economic infrastructure projects and build a regional cooperation mechanism, especially in Southeast and South Asia. It is not surprising to see that ODA has been employed as a policy tool for serving the country's strategic interests. Japan is not an exception, either. While it embraced global norms and values in pursuing development cooperation during the period of 1990s, Japan has shifted its focus toward strategic interests-centered approaches under the mounting pressure of economic and security challenges, allocating its ODA to serve for economic revitalization and regional security cooperation (Katagiri, 2019; Yamamoto, 2020).

V. CONCLUSION

Japan has actively participated in development cooperation as one of the major donor countries in the international community over the past few decades. Despite its earlier focus on the maximization of economic interests in development cooperation during the 1960s and 1970s, Japan made efforts to propose more value-oriented policy directions by accepting global norms and values into practices, represented as the establishment of the ODA Charter in 1992 and the focus on human security. However, Japan's economic and political challenges from both domestic and international fronts, such as its protracted recession and the rise of China, have put severe pressure on policymakers to make a shift towards the strategic interests-oriented development cooperation since the early 2000s.

Japan's development cooperation has been utilized as a policy tool for resuscitating its sluggish economy through participating in a series of economic infrastructure projects in Southeast and South Asia. Although it has not been used for the military purpose itself,

its development cooperation policy has further facilitated the establishment of regional security cooperation with Southeast Asia countries that have had conflicts with China in the South China Sea. In addition, Japan's FOIP has taken into account South Asia, especially India, more seriously as the key strategic partner, leading to the rapid increase of its ODA allocation. Considering that Japan has attempted to check China's rapidly growing economic and military presence in Asia, it is more likely that Japan's ODA is going to be more extensively utilized for serving its own economic and strategic interests, as opposed to relying on the valued-oriented ODA policy.

There are variations in the goal of development cooperation across donor countries, ranging from providing humanitarian assistance and supporting social and economic development in developing and least developed countries to securing political partnership in international relations. The country's goal of development cooperation has also changed along the lines of several different dimensions such as economic interests, norms and values, and security concerns. As illustrated in the case of Japan, the pathways of development cooperation are rather dynamic, as opposed to static. By taking into account the country's key strategic interests more seriously, we may enhance our understanding of development cooperation across countries and over time.

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