

## Conference Report

### **Global Africa: Spheres of Interaction: Africa-Japan-Europe**

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An impressively interdisciplinary and multinational group of scholars gathered to participate in this symposium that considered opportunities for greater Japanese and European cooperation on the African continent, with the focus being placed on German-Japanese cooperation specifically. The symposium was organised by the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB) in cooperation with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), and took place over one day at JDZB on March 6, 2017. The symposium also benefitted from support from the Japanese Embassy Berlin and All Nippon Airways. This symposium was held in the context of evolving thinking among politicians, and within the public and private sectors in both countries, regarding the strategic economic and security importance of the African continent and its various sub-regions. In the summary of proceedings below, the identities of the presenters are kept anonymous in line with the initial commitments to the participants made by the organising institutions.

The symposium opened with two scene-setting speeches by the representatives of JDZB and SWP. Both emphasised that Germany and Japan already have many complementary interests and approaches to global issues, and towards Africa specifically. Both Japan and Germany have made long-standing aid and humanitarian contributions to the region, and have emphasised poverty reduction and social stability in their ODA policies. Both have a security footprint in Africa in the form of military units and law enforcement agencies for peacekeeping, peacebuilding and anti-piracy purposes. And increasingly, both countries are modifying their aid and security contributions by connecting them to trade and investment policies for the purpose of making a deeper and strategic contribution to African regional and sub-regional development. One important point raised was how many homogeneous and simplified views of Africa as a place of crisis and dependency on the West was giving way to a greater realisation of Africa's changing relationship with outside foreign actors and the globalisation process itself, and how new economic growth, intra-African cooperation, and demographic changes were changing policy approaches to Africa. This point would be continually emphasised throughout the day's proceedings, as would the important precaution that Africa's social, political and economic situation varied considerably by region and nation. As Germany and Japan have increasingly paid attention to these policy opportunities and developments, the speakers anticipated there being much value in German and Japanese cooperation with Africa countries, especially in a time of perceived geopolitical instability in both countries' regions, as well as globally.

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\*This reports portrays the main line of argument of the conference and it summarizes the presentations and discussions according to the understanding of the author.

The first discussion panel covered the priorities and perceptions related to security and development cooperation that Germany and Japan had regarding Africa. The first discussant, an official from the German government, noted that rather than as a place of crisis (population growth, terrorism, migration and displacement), parts of Africa represented increasingly stable configurations of state-society relationships. The growing and increasingly educated, youthful and urban population offered opportunities for these societies to grow economically and politically, although an increase in youthful energy could also become a major challenge and vector of instability itself if not handled well. The official also noted that, nevertheless, even the more stable countries needed assistance with state capacity, not only to prevent civil unrest, but also to deal with the globalisation of crime and disaster prevention. Germany's proposed Marshall Plan *with* Africa (MPA) was anticipated to address these issues of state capacity in addition to greater cooperation on economic development. The second discussant, a Japanese scholar, noted that while there was a greater geographic and psychological distance between Japan and Africa than between Africa and Germany, the Japanese government has overtime developed its own coherent and mature approach to Africa through the TICAD process, first initiated in the early 1990s. The scholar noted that the TICAD agenda had evolved over time, moving from traditional aid cooperation on poverty and social infrastructure to a greater focus on economic growth. The mantra for TICAD has evolved to emphasise 'African ownership and partnership'. As many of countries in the region have started to stabilize and enjoy dynamic growth, African elites themselves have expressed greater interest in an economic growth agenda, seeing Japan's relative success in its own region at promoting economic growth through its development and economic cooperation agendas. At the same time, concepts of sustainable, resilient and economic growth for African societies have been developed and outwardly embraced by Japanese policymakers due in part to discussions that took place within the TICAD forum, as has the Japanese government's own 'freedom from want' conception of human security. The third discussant, an official from a regional institution in Africa, generally saw Germany and Japan as being relatively constructive partners for Africa. The official noted an increase in private economic interest coming from both countries in addition to public sector commitments, and there was some anticipation of possible gains being derived from the German MPA and enhanced TICAD agendas given the inclusion of and coordination with private sector actors. The discussant did lament however a degree of a lack of coordination within both countries bureaucracies, a need to increase Africa knowledge for not only alignment but savvier dealings with African political interest groups, and the fact that both countries were not as assertive as other OECD nations in putting their views forward, despite having much to offer.

Panel Two took the recognition of an increased economics focus in aid and diplomatic cooperation with Africa by both Germany and Japan, and drilled down on some of the specifics. A German think tank scholar noted that a major economic problem in Africa remained the lack of Greenfields development of business and industries in Africa. This was a problem because there was somewhat of a gap between primary and tertiary industries in Africa. Manufacturing, processing and value-added industries based on local resource and labour inputs were not developing as fast as the more transient tertiary industries such as software development, IT, and business services. Dependence on primary industries also exposed African economies to changing global commodity prices, and there was an identified

need for greater downstream linkages from mining in particular to ensure value-chains remain in the country and that African nations themselves benefitted from their natural resource wealth. Productivity gains in agriculture had also stalled, further increasing the risk of reliance on primary industries. The second discussant, an official of the German federal government, echoed the government's interest in using the G20 presidency to put Africa on the agenda and promote the German MPA. Noting the demographic growth in Africa over the next 35 years, and that some of the fastest growing economies in the world right now are in Africa, both opportunities and challenges should be appreciated in Germany and other nations' approach to Africa. The official argued that the traditional focus of aid cooperation would not be sufficient to address the challenges as well as benefit from the opportunities that Africa's youthful, urbanizing demographics suggest, and that Governments must develop mechanisms that bridge the gap between socially-focused aid and private investment. Sustainable private investment, infrastructure building, and human resource and vocational development were priorities that would support what the official thought should be the main priority of the German and other governments: ensuring 'young Africans find their place in globalisation.' The third discussant, a Japanese scholar, articulated a similar understanding held by both the Japanese government and the private sector, namely that Africa was no longer a place for traditional aid cooperation based on mitigating crises and poverty, but would become a dynamic economic entity. Larger Japanese companies in particular identified Africa's labour and consumer markets as both being attractive in the medium- to long-term. Japan's government was therefore moving from an early focus on agriculture and social infrastructure in its ODA policies to emphasising economic development. Initial investments by Japanese industrial corporations and Japan's integrated trading companies had not only brought industrial production to the region, but were also linked to the development of infrastructure, technology transfer, human resources, and the enhancement of regional distribution and logistics networks. The Japanese government wanted to encourage such investments as well as increase direct merchandise trade between Japan and African nations, which was still rather modest in relative scale.

Panel Three delved into the security dimensions of the Germany-Japan-Africa context by focusing on the Horn of Africa where both Germany and Japan, two countries who in the post-war era have been cautious about the dispatch of military personnel overseas, have nonetheless made significant contributions to regional security. A German official noted that the Horn of Africa and Somalia specifically was the location in 1994 for the first major commitment of German soldiers out of NATO areas in the post-war era. Piracy concerns later enhanced the significance of this region for maritime security for Germany. While for many years this was perceived as an area of instability, in collaboration with many other international actors, Germany perceives that its efforts in the region are paying off. The piracy issue has dramatically reduced, and Somalia is heading in a positive direction in terms of political stability. There are many challenges remaining and these can only be addressed through a comprehensive approach to security in the region that go beyond building military and law enforcement capacity. According to a Japanese defence researcher, Japan also shares this comprehensive approach to security in the region, and its human security concept fits well with the need to consider the social and economic dimensions of instability that underpin extremism and criminal security threats. The Japanese government also sees the need for state

and security capacity of countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region as important to its own maritime interests. Participation in maritime security operations by the Japan Coast Guard and the Maritime Self-Defence Forces also are useful for strengthening Japan's burden sharing and interoperability in the context of the US-Japan alliance and networked security arrangements in Asia which are so critical to Japan's own security. A third panellist, from a German think tank, agreed that hunger and resource competition was a cause of conflict in Africa, but also noted that the reverse is also true – that conflict is also a cause of hunger and resource competition. While there are some anchors of stability such as Ethiopia, the spill over from conflict can quickly undermine even robust states. Thus security problems in Africa are not just due to failed and fragile states, but authoritarianism and militarism elements that inhabit parts of the structure of strong states worked against a broad-based realisation of 'freedom from fear' in those societies and may play a role in 'exporting conflict'. The key insight here was that it was important to work on both traditional security capacity-building as well as human security socio-economic elements, and in this sense Japan and Germany have already played important and balanced roles in stabilisation initiatives through a comprehensive approach including both human and physical security contributions.

Panel Four focused on the potential for future collaboration and common ground between Japan, Germany and African nations, and it provided a range of rich insights worthy of additional detail. One panellist, an expert on both Africa and Japan, noted the evolving approach taken by the Japanese government to African development through the TICAD process and how Japan has managed to forge good connections with African countries despite an initial misalignment of objectives at the start. From the 2008 conference, Japan's approach to TICAD changed decisively in tone as African countries pushed for a more economic growth-oriented model of cooperation. The next two TICADs doubled down on the emphasis on boosting economic growth by committing to accelerate infrastructure and human resource development, as well as empower farming as mainstream actors, all with a view to sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth. The Japanese private sector was prominently brought into the process. Furthermore, growth and future prospects for increased demand in Africa have been aligned with Japan's own economic revitalisation agenda. The government envisages that the infrastructure needs of Africa are considerable and that this presents an opportunity for sales of high quality Japanese infrastructure systems. Furthermore, such infrastructure is anticipated as playing an important role in supporting production network-centred industrialisation and economic growth, which will increase demand for consumer goods. The panellist also noted that Germany and Japan are both already taking a 'whole-of-government' approach to industrial policy which includes economic ministries as well as diplomatic and development ministries. This is desirable because Germany and Japan are both considered to be successful proponents of industrial policy relative to other OECD countries. The panellist asserted that bringing the economic-focused ministries more prominently into the process will benefit this process and will actually give African countries more of a voice, allowing cooperation to go beyond 'diplomatic initiative.' There needs to be a balanced coordinated approach, including high-level political leadership also coordinating and backing the whole-of-government policy process. It was also noted by this discussant that TICAD had also evolved to promote a 'whole of society' approach as well, with NGOs and commercial actors now involved, and the

‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-society’ approaches nurtured during TICAD could be of instructive value for the German MPA.

An official from the German government with intimate knowledge of Japan noted that Japan and Germany appear to see eye-to-eye on the development agenda and the importance of economic development in addition to social stability and poverty reduction. Both understand some of the fastest growing regions are in Africa, and the future demographics are positive compared to the aging West and parts of Asia. The official noted that some foreign ministry-level discussions had taken place between Germany and Japan on developmental aid over time, and there might be opportunities to link at the highest political levels the two nations strategic agendas for Africa. It is notable that Germany appears to be moving closer to Japan's approach regarding Africa (as characterised by TICAD evolution) in focusing on the economic growth and 'quality' infrastructure element of development in Africa. Nevertheless, both need to realise that some of the recent good news stories may mask continued precariousness, and the key challenge will be how to absorb a new middle class in Africa that is fully comfortable and capable of engaging with globalisation and economic dynamism. It is important to recognise and distinguish areas of stability, such as Senegal, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa, and areas of instability such as the Horn of Africa, and to use different development strategies before trying to economically link the areas. Dealing with urbanisation, especially in Western Africa, and encouraging trade within regions and sub-regions are two areas where Japan and Germany's post-war successes could be valuable. The official also noted that Japan is moving towards a more active security approach similar to Germany through the dispatch of personnel (military and non-military), and not just financial and humanitarian contributions. Germany's deployment in Mali, for example, is its biggest overseas deployment yet, and Japan's operations in South Sudan are its most dangerous yet.

The third panellist from Japan also noted the common ground and potential for cooperation. This panellist noted that while the promotion of manufacturing is important, an important piece of the puzzle is agriculture. Germany and Japan are known as manufacturing superpowers, but their agricultural and land policies, and associated agricultural productivity increases in the post-war era were extremely important contributors to Germany and Japan's post-war rejuvenation. The panellist noted the relationship between increased agricultural productivity and its knock-on effects in terms of promoting urbanisation and agglomeration for manufacturing. Enhanced productivity allows for the liberation of rural labour resources necessary for urban development and labour-intensive industrialisation, and food surpluses enhance food security by providing affordable access to sustain this workforce. The food security aspect is all the more important given the growing population trajectory of Africa. Despite enhanced agricultural productivity being an important element of a robust and sustainable economy, agriculture has seen a decrease in employment and value-added shares of African economies. African agricultural productivity also remains well below international standards in terms of yields per hectare. Manufacturing has also dropped in value-added share while its employment share remains stagnant. On the other hand, resource extraction industries have remained the dominant primary industry with little value-add being captured by Africa countries. Tertiary industries and services have however gained significantly. While an advantage in the short-term, the mobility of these type of industries is of concern if African countries become economically reliant on them. Agricultural productivity is thus not just a

hunger/resource solution, but important for manufacturing industries themselves, and ultimately, for the development of a balanced and robust economic structure in African nations. Outsiders should promote agricultural reform as one way to support an industrial, export-focused economic strategy (intra-regionally based on intermediate goods and service inputs into production networks, but also for extra-regional trade), help Africa capture more value from its primary sectors, and future-proof their economies.

In the final discussion session there was reflection on the recurring themes as well as potential areas for mutually beneficial cooperation. Perhaps the most commonly emphasised theme was that population growth, and an increasing youth demographic, means that Africa has great potential as a future market and site for production bases - but only with management and support. Social stability and conflict management have long been understood as necessary for political stability, but before economic success can be achieved, imbalances in terms of the dominance of resource-extractive industries and service sectors will need to be addressed. Otherwise, the current dynamism in some parts of Africa could be undermined in the long-term. The role that the private sector of both countries could play in driving economic growth, if facilitated skilfully through the embrace of new policy instruments by the two governments, was often mentioned in the context of the need for greater assistance in capturing greater value from agriculture and manufacturing activity and exports. Another prominent theme was the fact that there are new and different types of donors very active in Africa who differ in important ways from the established and entrenched OECD donors that Japan and Germany are. A key question is how to coordinate and integrate approaches with them, as ignoring, criticising, or competing with them is likely to be futile. Finally, both countries in the past have played important roles in 'global' advocacy for Africa (e.g. at the G7 or G20 level), and continue to do so. They are thus unique compared to other OECD countries in having a high-level approach to Africa. The opportunities for both a bottom-up and top-down approach to cooperation in Africa are significant for both countries, and would likely have significant additive, if not multiplier effects on outcomes for the continent.

(For "Prospects for alignment and recommendations", please have a look [here](#))