

## CONCLUSION

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This book is made in order to explore the evolution of foreign aid policy in Japan and South Korea and to seek new strategies in an uncertain world. The world in the 2020s is becoming more unpredictable than in the previous decade. COVID-19 broke out at the very end of the 2010s and reached every corner of the globe by 2020. Even with some effective vaccines at hand, many parts of the world are suffering from occasional lockdowns up to mid-2021 (Kwon, 2020). The switch of presidency in the United States from Donald Trump to Joseph Biden was another factor dramatically altering the landscape of global politics. The Trump administration symbolized the unilateralism pursued by some world leaders (Kondoh, 2019). President Biden converted US policies for international cooperation and restored multilateralism to collaborate with allied states. Confronted with the transforming United States, China and Russia have strengthened their presence amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Armed conflicts taking place in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East are amplifying the uncertainty in the world economy and politics.

Under the unforeseeable circumstances of the world, the roles of Japan and South Korea, which are two developed countries in East Asia, have to be revisited and redefined. For that purpose, this concluding chapter firstly summarizes what each pair of chapters discussed in the main body of this book in section “Japan and South Korea: Similarities and Contrasts”.

It is impressive that there are some common features between Japan and South Korea, some of which stem from history and geographical proximity. In the meantime, there are some contrasts in evolution and progress between the two countries toward becoming East Asian donors. Those similarities and contrasts will be reviewed to elucidate the standpoints of the two countries and to figure out common new strategies ahead.

Finally, section “[New Strategies for International Development Cooperation](#)” attempts to address the questions posed in the Introduction that are examined throughout this book, which relate to (i) the dynamics of policy making in Japanese and Korean ODA, (ii) relative weights distributed between national interests and the creation of the global public good, and (iii) new ODA strategies hereafter. Answers to these questions are developed into policy recommendations to the governments and the general public of the two countries.

## JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA: SIMILARITIES AND CONTRASTS

This book is organized with pairs of chapters which describe key issues in Japan and South Korea. Naturally, similarities and differences between the two countries arise from the comparison between companion chapters. These similarities and contrasts themselves and the factors generating the similarities and contrasts are insightful to figure out new strategies of international development cooperation for Japan and South Korea in the 2020s.

### *Experiences of Industrial Development as Aid Recipients*

There are striking similarities in features of ODA between Japan and South Korea, as detailed in several chapters of this book. Below, these similarities are discussed, followed by contrasts.

A common feature from which other commonalities between the two countries originate is the experience of industrial development as aid recipients from war devastation. Most cities in Japan were destroyed by bombing at the end of World War II in 1944–1945. Obtaining financial assistance mainly from the United States, Japan rebuilt the country. Eventually, Japan recovered diplomatic relations with other countries in 1952 and started industrialization. War reparation was a condition of return to the international community as well as the origin of Japan’s aid to neighboring countries (Chapter 3 by Sato, 2022). South Korea was also

severely damaged by the Korean War. With overseas assistance, South Korea struggled through reconstruction and industrial development to become an OECD member country in 1996. As Kwon (2022) reviewed in Chapter 2 of this volume, the achievement of industrial development is a point of national pride for the Korean people, which created momentum for the Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) of the country.

*Emphasis on Economic Cooperation for Industrial Development  
in Recipient Countries*

The experiences of industrial development with foreign assistance of both Japan and South Korea were translated into their stances on international development cooperation for developing countries. Both countries reflected on their own patterns of industrial development with assistance to construct aid policies toward neighboring countries. Neighboring East Asian countries, which have been the main recipients of aid from Japan and South Korea, had made considerable progresses in economic development by the end of last century. Hence, their demands for cooperation also accorded with the orientation of Japan and South Korea toward assistance emphasizing the economic development of recipient countries, infrastructure building with preferential loans, and the involvement of the private sector. Several chapters in this book (Chapters 3–6) document these features as shared by the two countries. In fact, many of these features are applicable to China, too (Asplund & Söderberg, 2017; Shimomura & Ping, 2013; Stallings & Kim, 2016).

It is notable that the features are mutually reinforcing and institutionally complementary. The emphasis on economic infrastructure is realized by the availability of preferential loans. Prospects for economic infrastructure building might allow the private sector to find opportunities for deeper involvement in ODA. Above all, the image of economic prosperity due to assistance from foreign aid from the point of view of recipient countries is shared by those engaged in both the public and private sectors in Japan and South Korea through their own experiences with development. Thus, as detailed in Chapters 7 and 8, the mobilization of the private sector and the advanced technology developed in the two countries are considered conducive to the further development of East Asian recipient countries.

### *Reactive Rationale Setting*

Since, the model of international development cooperation was formed through experiential success with industrial development, Japan and South Korea lagged behind in the conceptualization of normative rationales for their international development cooperation. Criticism and pressure from the OECD/DAC and the United States to follow the norms and principles set by forerunners were the main driving forces for Japan to catch up with other member countries of the OECD/DAC. Public criticism regarding inefficiency and corruption in ODA projects also created momentum to develop the philosophy of Japan's foreign aid (Chapters 1 and 3).

South Korea's international development cooperation originated from the motivation to compete with North Korea for recognition of the country in the Free World (Chapter 4 by Song & Kim, 2022). After South Korea was admitted as a newly industrializing economy (NIE) in the 1980s, growing trade surplus urged to the country to allow the outflow of foreign exchanges in the form of assistance. Thus, diplomatic and economic situations preceded the formation of rationales in South Korea.

### *Efforts to Balance Universal Values and National Interests*

A natural consequence of the former two features is a struggle to reconcile global norms stressed by western donors and the economic-growth-oriented aid model of Japan and South Korea. Kim (2022) depicts this struggle for South Korea as "efforts to balance universal values and national interests" in Chapter 6, while Jung and Takahashi (2022) analyze the same endeavor for Japan in Chapter 5.

Some of the public in the two countries simply assume that any government expenditure, even ODA, must be spent for the direct benefit of nationals in each country. From this viewpoint, the reflection of national interests in each country's ODA sounds natural. However, sustaining universal values is the duty of an established member of the global community. Failing to uphold this obligation affects the status of the two countries. Japan and South Korea face this dilemma more strongly than western donors, partly because both countries are recognized as relative

newcomers to the society of donors and partly because the image of destitution due to war followed by economic development with foreign aid is heavily imprinted on older generations in the two countries.

### *Weak Partnership with Civil Society*

A consequence of placing greater weight on pursuing national interests within the private sector was a weak partnership with civil society in both countries. Statistics clearly show this small contribution of the governments to civil society. Takayanagi (2022) stated in Chapter 9 that while DAC members on average allocated around 15% of their bilateral official development assistance to CSOs in 2018, Japan and South Korea allocated only 1.7% and 2.1%, respectively.

The government of Japan initiated a funding scheme to CSOs in 1989. Since then, having experienced the Kobe Earthquake of 1995 and Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, the government has gradually enhanced recognition of the roles of CSOs in overcoming both domestic and oversea challenges. South Korean CSOs were mainly engaged in service delivery for ODA in the early 1990s. They have now formed the Korea Civil Society Forum on International Development Cooperation (KoFID) and monitor Korean ODA policy to strengthen the advocacy role (Chapters 10 and 12).

### *Notable Differences*

After reviewing the important similarities described above, differences between Japan and South Korea look marginal. As Japan joined the OECD/DAC around five decades before South Korea joined in 2010, Japan's ODA policy was a close reference for South Korea in order to formulate the framework of its international development cooperation (Kondoh, 2013). However, that became another factor producing the similarities raised above.

Some differences still remain. As an institutional aspect, South Korea formulated the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation, which oversees the ODA of the country, in 2009. Japan has not enacted any law covering its international development cooperation. Only some charters on ODA were approved and revised twice by the Cabinet. In the meantime, Japan integrated two aid agencies, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (which formerly took charge of technical

assistance) and (part of) the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (which administered ODA loans), into a single aid agency in 2008. South Korea maintains two counterpart aid agencies: the Korea International Cooperation Agency and the Economic Development Cooperation Fund.

A contemporary issue exhibiting a contrast is national implementation of the SDGs. Japan considers the SDGs to be country-wise and comprehensive goals from which Japan can also benefit. The Prime Minister and a nationwide business association, Keidanren, handle SDGs for promotion in Japan (Chapter 11). South Korea highlights some features of the SDGs by customizing the goals as the Korean Sustainable Development Goals (K-SDGs). The Ministry of Environment mainly takes charge of SDG issues on behalf of the country. Science, technology, and innovation (STI) may have a potential role in achieving the K-SDGs (Chapters 8 and 12).

## NEW STRATEGIES FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In the beginning of the third decade of this millennium, we all live in an uncertain world. COVID-19, climate changes, rivalry between superpowers, regional armed conflicts, and subsequent forced migration are sources of uncertainty and concern. However, it does not seem that the citizens of the world are sufficiently united to solve these critical issues. There are conflicts and confrontations among countries, social strata, ethnic groups, and religious groups.

The contributors to this book, who are all Korean and Japanese, aspire to encourage Japan and South Korea to play constructive roles in reducing uncertainty in the world and helping developing countries make themselves prosperous. To do so, what will be our new strategies for international development cooperation? In this concluding chapter, some proposals for new strategies are given.

The following three questions were posed in the Introduction. (1) What are the underlying dynamics of policy making in Japanese and South Korean ODA? (2) Will national interests be the goal of international development cooperation, or will creating the global public good be the main objective of these countries' ODA policies? (3) Do Japan and South Korea have new ODA strategies for an uncertain world? The chapters in the main body of this book incorporate answers to the first two questions.

The answers to questions (1) and (2) then lead to some proposals which address question (3).

### *Global Interests to Be Prioritized for International Development Cooperation*

As an answer to question (1), salient features of the dynamics of ODA policy making in Japan and South Korea are the mobilization of the private sector and the reconciliation of efforts to achieve universal values, such as poverty reduction and sustainable development, and national interests. Even though many donors encounter the same reconciliation issue in harmonizing the pursuit of public interests and the appeal for contributions from a particular donor, Japan and South Korea encounter stronger forces in terms of national interests and economic cooperation.

However, national interests cannot be a main *raison d'être* behind the international development cooperation of Japan and South Korea. When a donor says “this project is a win–win for both the donor and the recipient”, the recipient may doubt whether or not the donor’s “win” is greater than the recipient’s “win”. Because of the feature emphasizing economic development of the recipient and involvement of the private sector in Japan and South Korea, ODA of the two countries is more likely to be regarded as national-interest-oriented. For the two countries to be respected due to their international contributions, the principle the global public good outweighing the achievement of national interests must be strictly maintained.

### *Enlarging the Scope of the Private Sector*

The feature of deep involvement by domestic private firms in Japan and South Korea creates a risk that the scope and potential of domestic firms define the domain of ODA for Japan and South Korea, which is particularly applicable to public–private partnership (PPP) projects. It is noticeable that there are opposite cases in which a wider scope of global firms expands the potential of ODA. A well-known example is the contribution of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to global health. However, PPP projects of Japan and South Korea are likely to limit partner firms to only those from each country. In this case, Japanese and South Korean partner firms of PPP tend to replicate or reproduce activities based on which they already established advantages in the past.

This means that Japanese and South Korean firms want donor agencies to accommodate partner firms' original activities. If this is the case, even though some call this is a "win-win project", a "win" awarded to the Japanese or South Korean partner firm would be considerably greater than the other "win" granted to beneficiaries in recipient countries.

To avoid such unbalanced win-win projects, Japan and South Korea have to make efforts to enlarge the scope of domestic partner firms. PPP projects should be opportunities for Japanese and Korean firms to expand their capacity, which will generate more benefits for recipient countries. Meeting new demands and preferences in recipient countries would inspire motivation and capability in partner firms to accommodate them. Through guidance and encouragement by donor agencies of Japan and South Korea to partner firms, true win-win projects which benefit recipient countries and partner firms alike could be achieved.

### *Synergy of Collaboration of the Two Similar Countries*

Generally speaking, a collective action by two similar actors intensifies its impacts. By leveraging a common strength of the two actors, a greater effect can be produced.

Collaboration between Japan and South Korea could generate such synergy if the two countries were well coordinated. Suppose, there is a recipient country which violates human rights and that Japan and South Korea agreed with the country to provide ODA for two different infrastructure projects. If Japan and South Korea jointly express concern for human rights protection and indicate the withdrawal of the two infrastructure projects, the impacts of the collective action on the recipient country will be magnified.

Two similar countries might compete with each other by featuring common strengths. This is where the rivalry with China regarding infrastructure building originates. As Asian donors which want to act as good neighbors in East Asia, Japan and South Korea as well as China will compete to attract countries in the region. ODA will be used as an instrument to do so. However, an essential part of international development cooperation is simple compassion applied to anyone and everyone in the world. This book also originates from the spirit of mutual cooperation between two groups of scholars in Japan and South Korea. This spirit of mutual cooperation and respect may go beyond the political tension between the two countries to reach neighboring states and even remote



countries in order to build the global public good together with everyone on the globe.

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