

Japanese Definitions of Development Aid Related Concepts:

‘Ownership’ vs. ‘Self-Help’



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Abstract

After several years of development aid being ruled by conditionality, the international trend in discussion revolving around development co-operation and aid efficiency has gradually shifted focus towards the concepts of “ownership” and “partnership”. Through international organizations and official documents, like for instance the OECD-DAC and their Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency of 2005, these terms have become close to synonymous with aid efficiency in a lot of donor countries.

In this study I have reviewed the international discussion concerning these new terms – how they came about and what they entail for both donors and recipients, and further how the Japanese aid policy relates to them with their own similar terminology of self-help efforts. After defining what characterizes each of the philosophies, I have discussed what policy may work better in certain development environments, and analyzed specialist’s opinions as to what measures Japan can take to better harmonize with the ideas in the international community and raise the effectiveness of aid, as well as what the international community can learn from the extensive Japanese aid experiences.

Major findings include the fact that there not necessarily is such a thing as a superior aid modality. Based on the specific conditions and development environments in a developing country, ideal strategies and modalities may vary greatly according to economic and social situations as well as general development environments. It is therefore of utmost importance to adapt and combine strategies and modalities in order to maximize the efficiency of aid. Japan could thus in certain cases benefit from harmonizing more with the international community by for instance increasing focus on budget support and basket funding or moving away from so-called request based aid. Western donors, on the other hand, could for instance potentially benefit from taking project based aid into more careful consideration as a supplementary aid modality.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FASID	Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development
GRIPS	Graduate Institute for Policy Studies
HIPCs	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Co-operation
JICA	Japan International Co-operation Agency
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
METI	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
ODA	Official Development Aid
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

Abstract
Acknowledgements
Abbreviations and acronyms

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1. Introduction

Implementation of development aid was for several years through the late 20th. and early 21st. century largely based on conditionality, meaning that partner countries have been more or less forced to adapt their policies according to the donor country's liking. These policies can be anything from general development policy or concrete development projects, to reform of government policy and institutions. In recent years however, this focus on conditionality has received a lot of criticism for being inefficient, and the concepts of *ownership* and *partnership* have appeared amongst the hottest topics when discussing aid efficiency and development aid policy. When talking about "ownership" in a development context, we're referring to the partner countries' ownership of and responsibility for their own development on all levels; from ownership of aid funds to responsibility for development strategy. Partnership on the other hand can be a bit more of an ambiguous term, as it can refer to any sort of relationship between any donors or recipients. In today's discussion however the term has become epitomized into a more specific concept that entails some degree of equality. Important focal points in partnership can be alignment of aid to partner country policies, harmonizing aid between donors and mutual accountability. Even though this paper to a large extent will concern the ownership aspect of the discussion, it will certainly involve the partnership aspect as well, as these are closely related in the sense that good partnerships in some cases can further promote partner country ownership. In this paper I would like to discuss these concepts and their Japanese interpretations; particularly ownership and its Japanese counterpart, *self-help*.

Japan's experience with development aid started as a recipient with the rebuilding of the country after the Second World War some fifty years ago. Since then Japan has established itself as one of the leading actors on the international stage of development aid policy, and is today amongst the top donor countries in regard to total volume of ODA. Historically speaking the concepts of ownership and partnership holds a central role also in Japanese aid policy as stated here in the official ODA charter of 2003:

The most important philosophy of Japan's ODA is to support the self-help efforts of developing countries based on good governance, by extending co-operation for their human resource development, institution building including development of legal

systems, and economic and social infrastructure building, which constitute the basis for these countries' development. Accordingly, Japan respects the ownership by developing countries, and places priorities on their own development strategies. (2)

This Japanese definition of self-help efforts holds several similarities to the more Western notion of ownership. In fact, in terms of aid strategy, the Japanese word for self-help (*jijo doryoku*) is commonly translated to 'ownership'; a fact that may imply that Japanese aid policy does not make a clear distinction between the two terms. The Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), the implementing agency of all Japanese aid, does in fact in the reference section of their annual report of 2008 define ownership as "self-help efforts of developing countries. The basic concepts in the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's] Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) new development strategy are 'ownership' (self-help efforts of developing countries) and 'partnership' (linkage with more developed countries to support ownership)" (JICA 155). I am however of the belief that the Japanese perception of ownership and self-help efforts are somewhat different from that of most western donors that strive to follow the guidelines put forth by the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency, which is meant as a comprehensive guideline to improve the quality of aid, and constitutes the importance of *partner country ownership*. It is these differences that I will further discuss in this paper. By explaining the concept of ownership and further how the implementation of the Japanese notion of self-help efforts differs from this philosophy, I hope to answer the question of what it is that characterizes the Japanese definition of ownership.

Once the characteristics of self-help in Japanese development aid policy are established and compared to the concept of ownership, there are several questions that can be posed. How exactly, and why, does the Japanese philosophy differ from that of Western donors? Under what circumstances would self-help, rather than ownership, be the more appropriate approach? Is there an ideal philosophy in regard to aid efficiency? How should Japan adapt their self-help policy in order to make aid more efficient? Can Japanese self-help policy contribute anything to the international discussion on ownership? These are some questions that I will look into through this paper.

First off, I will start by reviewing the international discussion on ownership in

development aid relations. I will try to explain what this concept actually entails for donors and, more importantly, partner countries, and what OECD, through the High Level Forum on Aid Efficiency which among other things produced the Paris Declaration, contributes to the discussion. Secondly, I will look into the Japanese notion of self-help and discuss how it relates to, and why it is different from, ownership and the high level forum's framework for efficient aid. Next I will discuss what works best where. It is a widely accepted fact that no two developing countries are exactly alike, and that there is a need to adapt aid strategy to the respective development environment. By looking into what specific policies and modalities might work under certain conditions, we can hopefully acquire some insight as to how aid effectiveness can be improved. Finally, before summing up essential points and making some concluding remarks, I will look into what can be learnt from the different aid strategies – what Japanese policy makers could do in order to better harmonize with other major donors on this field and further maximize their aid effectiveness, as well as what the international community can learn from Japan's experiences.

2. Ownership

2.1. History of ownership

Even though 'ownership' in recent years has become somewhat of a buzz-word in international development discussion, it is by no means a new concept. Apart from the fact that Japan for several years has promoted ownership in the form of self-help efforts, partner country ownership was more or less taken for granted in the early days of development co-operation history (1950s and 60s). Donor countries by large assumed that developing countries had the necessary framework and institutions, and rarely questioned their motives and incentives (Jerve, "Ownership and partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems in aid?" 7).

Over the years, however, corruption and lack of basic governance emerged as major problems, and ownership by partner countries started to fade as donor countries made more demands. This eventually led to a long period where development co-operation was dominated by *conditionality*, simply meaning that the partner country would have to meet certain conditions in order to receive aid. These conditions usually differ according to the donor country's interests, and often call for some sort of policy reform:

The World Bank focuses on anticorruption and improving laws related to the economy, such as foreign trade laws. The US concentrates its efforts on building institutions that contribute to the democratization of developing countries rather than on economic institutions. The core of British strategy is achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs) and the British government is significantly increasing its investment in fiscal assistance. The UK is pressuring developing country governments to allocate their budgetary maximums to activities that benefit the poor, such as health care and education, and is trying to establish pro-poor political systems. (Akiyama 17)

Such pressure for policy reform, no matter how noble the cause may sound, is certain to put a choke hold on ownership. The partner country had little other choice than to somehow adapt to the conditions imposed, in some cases leading to somewhat superficial reforms, and by the mid 1990s a lot of studies started to report that conditionality does not work (Jerve, "Ownership and partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems in aid?" 10), swinging the trend in development aid policy back in favor of ownership.

2.2. What exactly is 'ownership'?

After years of conditionality based development co-operation, ownership started to receive more and more attention from international policy makers, and today it is just about regarded as a prerequisite for effective aid. But what exactly does this concept mean? What will ownership require from the donor community, and what does it entail for the receiving end?

Partner country ownership basically means that the partner country should be in charge of its own development; from planning and implementation to evaluation and continuation of projects. A common analogy is that the partner country should be in driver's seat of the car, while the donor should be in the passenger's seat. The problem however arises when we ask questions like, "who decides where to go?" (Jerve and Hansen 8). Even if the partner country decides where to go with its development policy, it does not necessarily mean that this same policy is not heavily influenced by a donor. True ownership can therefore arguably only be achieved when the partner country kicks the donor out of the car and takes complete

responsibility for its development on all levels. This could however lead to donors choosing development partners that either a) already are leading policies that corresponds with the donor's own interests, or b) are willing to adapt their policies to what is of the donor country's liking. I will now go on discussing this kind of *selective aid*.

2.3. Selective aid

In order to be able to take responsibility for its own development, there are certain properties, such as good governance and investment in local industry, a developing country should possess. These kinds of properties are thought to provide a good starting point for the effective use of aid, and have been defined as a "'good policy' environment" (Nissanke 25) that is the ideal for effective development. With the aim to promote these properties the G8 Africa Action Plan was announced at the Kananaskis summit in June 2002, with the intention "to focus our efforts on countries that demonstrate a political and financial commitment to good governance and the rule of law, investing in their people, and pursuing policies that spur economic growth and alleviate poverty" (Shimomura 38).

Promotion of good governance can certainly be argued to make a good foundation for the effective use of aid, but selective aid becomes a problematic term when discussing partner country ownership. A partner country may very well show a strong sense of ownership in making its own poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), but the fact of the matter is still that, rather than a partner country claiming ownership, this can often be interpreted as a partner country accepting policy choices seen as desirable by donors. Machiko Nissanke, Professor of Economics at School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, therefore argues that "aid relations emerging from the 'new aid architecture' [ruled by selectivity] are far from ideal for forging a genuine partnership between donors and recipients" (30).

Another substantial problem with selective aid in a development perspective is the possibility of effectiveness receiving priority over poverty. If we regard good governance as the most important prerequisite for effective aid, and take into account that the countries deemed to have very poor governance also are the countries that have the highest poverty rates (Shimomura 40), the poorest and most aid dependent countries with weak governance will be the ones at a loss. This will mean neglecting those most in need of aid, something that pretty much works

against the millennium development goals (MDGs) rather than towards them.

2.4. Capacity development and pro-poor policies

As the concept of selective aid implies, there are some partner countries that can be seen as more attractive to donors than others in terms of development co-operation. These countries being favored by donors are often countries with relatively good governance that can exercise a strong sense of ownership. This, on the other hand, means that there are countries with a weak sense of ownership that due to selective aid might be in danger of being ignored by the donor community.

In order to deal with this problem, the idea of aid actually fostering strong ownership and good governance has emerged:

It is the notion that the aid relationship itself can transform a recipient from a weak to a stronger owner, provided one does it right. This idea is often based on the reverse argument, namely that too much 'donorship' evidently has diminished ownership and weakened accountability on the recipient's side. Examples are donor managed project aid and conditionality-based lending. Hence, budget support and program aid as opposed to conventional project aid and multi-donor basket funding arrangements as opposed to conventional bilateral agreements are examples of aid policy reforms believed to have the opposite effect – and hence foster ownership. (Jerve and Hansen 8).

This idea about promoting ownership with aid seems to be the basic thought behind the current focus on *capacity development* that is meant to foster partner country capacity to claim ownership through development co-operation. This is often done by strengthening and encouraging reform of partner country institutions so that they are better equipped to manage donors and projects. By further focusing aid to countries with a sufficient level of governance on budget support and program aid, as Jerve and Hansen proposes, they can consequently become stronger owners as they now get the chance to distribute funds according to their own strategies and preferences. Another concept that has gained a lot of popularity in parts of the Western donor community due to the poorest and least capable countries being neglected, is so-called

pro-poor policies. Pro-poor policies are simply put meant to help deal with poverty in sight. It can be projects related to things like health-care or food security; matters that are thought to be absolute necessities for a worthy life. These are matters that are closely related to the fulfillment of the MDGs that were established to end poverty and hunger as well as increase the level of health-care and education in developing countries, and I believe that pro-poor policies' ability to provide relatively simple and visible measures towards this end is one of the biggest causes of its popularity in today's donor community.

2.5. High Level Forum on Aid Efficiency

In September 2008 OECD organized the 3rd. high level forum on aid efficiency in Accra, Ghana. Over 1700 participants came together, allowing for discussion of aid efficiency and reviewing of one of the most influential documents on the subject; the Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency. The Paris Declaration was the result of the 2nd high level forum on aid efficiency held in Paris in 2005, where "over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials adhered and committed their countries and organizations to continue to increase efforts in harmonization, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators" (OECD, "The Paris Declaration"), and is today one of the most influential documents in terms of providing guidelines for effective aid to most major donors.

2.5.1. The Paris Declaration

The main goal of the Paris Declaration is to strengthen the partnership between donors and recipients, and mainly promotes:

- Partner country ownership ("Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and co-ordinate development actions")
- Donor alignment ("Donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures")
- Donor harmonization ("Donors' actions are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective")

(High Level Forum on Aid Efficiency, "Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency").

Additionally the Paris Declaration raises partner country management for results, and mutual accountability as important factors for the efficiency of aid.

In short the Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency promotes partner country ownership on all levels, from planning to evaluation, as the primary condition for efficient aid, and provides several guidelines to both donors and recipients as to how to best adapt to the proposed policies. Through both donor alignment and donor harmonization it also promotes partnership as a means to raise aid effectiveness. Even though widely accepted, it has also been under somewhat critique for being unclear about what partner country ownership actually means:

What Paris fudged, however, was what “country ownership” means. In effect, it has meant government ownership. In practice, ordinary citizens have not been able to hold government expenditure of aid properly accountable, development priorities have often been set by a government elite. There is intense debate about whether the Paris agenda has in fact sometime achieved the opposite at time, particularly that it has led to an increased technocratisation and depoliticisation of development. And whether its focus on budget support - channeling large amounts of money through government – has increased corruption and patronage. (Deane)

Even if country led aid architecture can lead to better organization and harmonization of aid, the critique from James Deane, head of Policy Development at the BBC World Service Trust, calls for the citizens most affected by development policies to be able to both understand and have the opportunity to shape them.

2.5.2. The Accra Agenda for Action

The most recent high level forum on aid effectiveness in Accra set out to review the Paris Declaration and identify where further actions are needed in order to invigorate aid effectiveness towards the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Among other things, the subject of Deane's critique was up for discussion, and the Accra Agenda for Action was endorsed with an aim to further strengthen and accelerate the implementation of the Paris Declaration.

The Accra Agenda for Action calls for strengthening and deepening ownership in developing countries. It calls on developing country governments to take stronger leadership of their own development policies, and engage with their parliaments and citizens in shaping these policies. It calls on donors to support them by respecting countries' priorities, investing in their human resources and institutions, making greater use of their systems to deliver aid, and increasing the predictability of aid flows. (High Level Forum on Aid Efficiency, "Ownership")

In addition to reaffirming the commitments agreed upon in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action brings special attention to certain challenges for partner country ownership and effective aid. For one, the previously mentioned critique of narrowly confined ownership in central government received a lot of attention, and consequently the Accra Agenda for Action encourages both partner country governments and donors to work more closely with parliaments, local authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs). The continued focus on capacity development and use of country systems, along with increasing aid's value for money by the untying of aid and better donor harmonization, were also important points of the agenda (High Level Forum on Aid Efficiency. "Accra Agenda for Action").

3. Self-help efforts

3.1. Origin of self-help

As previously mentioned, self-help is according to the ODA charter of 2003 the most important philosophy of Japanese ODA today, but much like ownership, self-help is by no means a new concept in Japanese development aid policy.

The fundamental policy of support for self-help efforts in developing countries, which is regarded as the most important philosophy in the current ODA charter, is not only a fundamental policy in the current charter. It was already expressed as a basic idea in the first ODA charter of 1992, and was a basic way of thinking shared amongst aid officials

from the very start of Japan's aid, even before the creation of the ODA charter. (Shinozaki 60)

As Hiromasa Shinozaki, Section Chief of International Exchange at Shinshu University, here states, self-help efforts have been a basic way of thinking amongst aid related officials even before the first the publication of the first ODA charter of 1992. Moreover it is said to be rooted in Japan's own development experience, as opposed to many other bilateral donors who based their aid philosophies on Christian beliefs or colonial experience (Sawamura 29). After the Second World War Japan received development assistance, soon caught up with the West, and greatly contributed to the economic take-off in East Asia. Based on its own historical experience, and also its experience of providing assistance to East Asia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argues that "true development, with economic independence, can be achieved only when a recipient country promotes development strategies through its own self-help efforts" (Sawamura 30).

Self-help efforts can also be said to be deeply rooted, not only in Japanese history of development, but also in Japanese culture and values. The Japanese are often said to have a culture of persistence and perseverance, and Nobuhide Sawamura, associate professor at the Centre for the Study of International Co-operation in Education at Hiroshima University, argues that this attitude leads to the Japanese focus on self-help efforts:

In Japanese schools, the children's academic performance is considered to depend not on their ability but on the intensity of their perseverance. It is assumed that all children have equal ability and that every child can perform well if he/she does his/her best. Likewise, in the context of development, the Japanese tend to think that every developing country can develop well if people make the necessary effort and devote themselves to the development process. (31)

In other words, this idea of persistence and perseverance that pervades Japanese society and way of thinking so much, also greatly influences Japanese development aid policy. According to this philosophy, a developing country has the ability to overcome poverty and poor conditions as

long as they endure and don't give up.

3.2. Characteristics of self-help efforts

Japan was for most of the 1990s the number one biggest donor measured by total ODA volume, and is today still amongst the world's biggest actors in terms of development aid. Even so, due to lack of attractive diplomatic goals, such as promotion of democracy or good governance, and poor public relations efforts, there seems to be somewhat of an under-appreciation for the Japanese efforts in the international community, and thus the Japanese government wants to present "assistance with a visible face" (Ohno and Ohno, Global Development Strategy and Japan's ODA Policy 1). I believe that the Japanese government's promotion of self-help efforts also can be regarded as a means to fulfill this desire for international recognition. The idea of self-help efforts, though similar to the Western notion of ownership, is as I will explain in further detail in this paper is something particularly Japanese. Even though the basic aid modalities and strategies that come along with self-help efforts may be promoted by other donor countries as well, the Japanese aid philosophy known as self-help efforts is based on Japan's own unique historical experience, and thus Japanese policy makers get the chance to put a characteristic 'Japanese face' on more or less globally accepted policies.

In the ODA charter of 2003 self-help efforts was listed as one of the five over-arching concepts underlying Japanese ODA policy, and has furthermore been a key concept of Japan's ODA for decades (Sunaga 13). The basic idea of the concept is, as the word itself implies, to help developing countries to help themselves. By encouraging resource development, institution building and economic and social infrastructure, Japan will help developing countries to create values that will help them develop an independent economy. This idea of supporting self-help efforts has ever since 1972 been recognized in UN's environment conferences (Hayakawa and Ogawa 22), and has probably also worked as an influence on the internationally regained focus on ownership.

3.3. Two types of ownership

As previously discussed, "ownership" is a relatively new terminology within the development world, even though the concept itself has a long history, and Japan has embraced it

for a long time under the name of "self-help efforts". Some scholars connected to the Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) further argue that "the conventional definitions fail to capture the dynamic and interactive nature of catch-up process, and thus do not sufficiently recognize some of the essential dimensions of ownership to be aspired by latecomer countries" ("East Asian Perspectives of Ownership: Managing Donors and Owning Policies"). These "conventional definitions" are those promoted by the Western world and the Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency, and based on experiences in East-Asia it is further argued:

The deeper understanding of the nature of the development process and the East Asian experiences reveal the following essential elements of ownership that are insufficiently covered in today's global debates:

- Willingness to graduate from aid, supported by an "exit plan";
- Managing policy ideas, with selectivity and through "translative adaptation";
- Managing donors and aid, as part of the entire development process.

("East Asian Perspectives of Ownership: Managing Donors and Owning Policies")

This way of thinking leads us to a division into two different kinds of ownership, with both different purposes and varying requirements to capabilities in partner country institutions. On the one hand you have policy management which requires "selectivity and translative adaptation", or in other words, the capacity to identify development goals, plan and adapt projects based on the specific development environment in question and actually efficiently realizing the implementation of them. On the other hand you have donor management, calling for diplomatic skills and coordination and adaptation of donor requests and advice. Even though related, the former can be regarded as a much broader task than the latter, seeing as it calls for the execution of development itself, and not only the aid aspect of it (Shimomura and Ohno 4).

3.4. Self-help efforts vs. ownership

With the idea of respect for partner country ownership coming into fashion in the international discussion on aid, the long tradition of self-help efforts in Japanese aid policy has finally been acknowledged in the international community. Even though this Japanese notion of

self-help efforts often have been interpreted as ownership in Japan, it appears to be different from the Western or international sense of ownership (Sawamura 32), and I will now go on to take a closer look at some specific concepts and ideas that are central to and characterizes the Japanese promotion of self-help efforts.

3.4.1. A broader spectrum of action

The Japanese idea of self-help efforts are as previously discussed based on persistence and commitment of partner country governments to development, and furthermore to building a self reliant economy. Thus, graduating from poverty by a concrete vision and realistic measures for growth promotion and domestic resources mobilization becomes an important goal in Japanese aid philosophy (Ohno and Ohno, "Ownership of What?: Beyond National Poverty Strategies and Aid Harmonization in the Case of Vietnam" 42-43).

While sharing much in common with what the donor community advocates as 'ownership,' the Japanese concept connotes a slightly broader spectrum of action, largely because it stems from Japan's own experience in reconstructing the nation after war. Indeed, what should be uppermost in the strategy to achieve sustainable development is to develop human resources and construct social and economic institutions, while building basic infrastructure. (Sunaga 13)

Consequently, the Japanese government's focus on aid has been on infrastructure, basic and higher education, and improving administrative, legal and health systems in developing countries (Sunaga 13). This focus on developing industrial infrastructure and the potential for a market economy is however not embraced to the same extent in Western countries, where so called pro-poor projects are considered a more popular trend (Ohno and Ohno, Global Development Strategy and Japan's ODA Policy 6)

3.4.2. Technical co-operation

Where most of the international donor community today, as the Accra Agenda for Action suggests, promote the idea of capacity development for a better development environment, Japan

has its own way of ensuring the effective use and administration of its funding in *technical co-operation*. Technical co-operation projects are implemented to achieve specific objectives in developing countries. This can be done by the dispatching of experts, inviting of people from developing countries to Japan for training or providing of necessary equipment (JICA 102). JICA furthermore engages with partner countries in an effort to help and advise with project planning and management in order to maximize results and ensure the sustainability of projects:

Technical co-operation is implemented jointly by the partner country and Japan.

However, ownership of the project lies strictly with the partner country. Therefore, the partner country (the government, local governments, NGOs, citizens, etc.) needs to exercise ownership in the project. For this reason, JICA implements its technical co-operation projects on the principles of a “participatory method,” where the residents of the target region participate in forming plans for, managing, and evaluating the project. (JICA 102)

One can argue that both the Japanese idea of technical co-operation and the Western notion of capacity development start out with the same objective of making partner countries more capable of managing development projects, but it seems like the two concepts present somewhat different ways of achieving this goal. Where JICA is very project oriented, pretty much exercising technical co-operation on a case by case basis to ensure its success and sustainability, the Accra Agenda for Action seems to put more focus on general improvement of partner country governance and development of institutions. Seeing as Japan, ever since the Meiji period, has its own experience of adapting technology and knowledge from the West to their own traditional culture, one could say that Japan are more experienced in, and has a potentially better understanding of incorporation of foreign policies into a non-Western society (Shinozaki 64). Shinozaki however argues that the general idea of capacity development doesn't necessarily exclude Japanese technical co-operation, but rather offers a broader sense of co-operation, further raising the level of effectiveness and efficiency (70). In other words, while Japan's technical co-operation is largely project-based and mainly contributes to the development of local institutions and capacities, the Western notion regards this as only one means of

developing a partner country's general capacities. It furthermore encourages capacity development on all levels of society; personal, organizational and society as a whole.

3.4.3. Request-based aid

Another concept that has been known to characterize Japanese development aid policy is that of *request-based aid*. This is another concept that has been a central part of Japan's development co-operation ever since the beginning, and thus is deeply rooted in Japan's development experience, which requires a partner country's request for aid in order for Japan to actually engage in a development partnership. Even though this promotes the partner country as the owner of the aid relationship, it was somewhat criticized in the OECD-DAC Peer Review:

The Japanese government's request-based principle for project proposals – they are initiated by the recipient countries instead of being imposed by Japan – is commendable for respecting the sovereignty and ownership of the recipients. As explained in the last Review, this is also partially based on Japan's experience in nation building. The drawback is that good governance is a major bottleneck in many developing countries. (OECD, Peer Review: Japan 32)

As the Peer Review implies, this form of request-based aid may actually restrain a country's potential for development, as getting accepted into a development partnership in the first place requires a good sense of governance and an ambitious development strategy. Countries that are lacking in policy management may therefore not have the sufficient capabilities to make effective requests, and have problems entering into a partnership with Japan.

As a response to the Peer Review the request-based aid principle has however been reconsidered (OECD, Peer Review: Japan 32). The latest official Japanese ODA charter says that Japan will give priority to developing countries that make efforts to pursue peace, democratization, protection of human rights, and structural reform in the economic and social spheres, but the government however also states that it does not intend to intervene into internal policies of developing countries, and instead engage in policy dialogues with the development country to discuss what policies and priorities could best help the people living there. The

rethinking of the request-based aid principle is thus not intended to indicate that Japan will cease to respect the requests of developing countries, but rather "that these requests are to be discussed more intensively through a policy dialogue" (Sunaga 14).

3.4.4. Yen loans

International loans have a general tendency to be considered as low-quality aid, but even so it has been a central part of Japanese ODA policy for many years. Again, based on its own experience of accepting loans from the World Bank and other donors, and repaying the debt after reviving its economy, Japan argues that their yen loans actually promotes self-help efforts. From having the obligation to repay a loan, they are different from other types of aid that don't require compensation as the developing country has to earnestly consider the effective use of funds, priority of projects and costs. Yen loans can therefore be argued to have a connection to the effective use of aid; exhibiting ownership by defining the developing country's responsibilities and independence (Shinozaki 61). Furthermore, on the donor's side, since the loans are expected to be repaid, they will not be much of a burden on financial affairs, allowing for more sustainable financing and funding of more large-scale projects (Shinozaki 62).

Recently the Japanese government has decided to change its policy on offering yen loans to also include heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs). Seeing as international loans might prove difficult for HIPCs to handle, and further worsen their financial situation, the general policy towards them has for a long time been to offer grant aid rather than loans that are required to be repaid. Japan's new policy change will however allow for them to offer yen loans even to such countries as long as they have rich natural resources (Nikkei). This could allow for the funding of much more extensive projects, opening for potential extraction of the abundant unexploited natural resources on a larger scale than before. The value of such resources would further allow the development countries to make the repayments in the future.

3.5. "Bottom-up approach"

Even though the general philosophy behind the Japanese concept of self-help efforts may seem pretty similar to ownership in the Western sense of the word, when comparing the two, quite a few interesting differences appear. For one thing self-help efforts carries a somewhat

broader meaning than ownership, seeing as it not only deals with a country's capacity in aid management, but also the will and plan for graduating from poverty. One could say that the Japanese approach deals with a country's development as a whole and not only its aid relations. This also leads to some differences in regard to aid strategy and various approaches that have been discussed in this chapter. Sawamura for example argues that the notion of self-help efforts tends to be more internal and participatory (32):

It could be said that ownership is likely to be based on a top-down approach, while self-help efforts are more bottom-up and process-oriented. Ownership is generally given to those who have at least a minimum capacity since ownership without such capacity results in failure. Thus, it may be that self-help efforts are a necessary condition for ownership. (Sawamura 32)

As Sawamura here argues partner country ownership can't exist without the will and ambition to graduate from poverty that the Japanese idea of self-help efforts so vigorously promote, and thus the Japanese approach may encourage a good basis for further ownership in countries that are lacking in this field.

The idea that encouraging self-help efforts in developing countries can provide a basis for ownership further implies that the Japanese approach offers somewhat more leniency in terms of conditions and pre-requisites. Whereas ownership in the Western sense appears to be externally given and has not necessarily been accepted by developing countries (Sawamura 38), I believe that it is Japan's tendency to favor project-based aid, and the following high degree of technical co-operation that allows for this kind of leniency. By engaging with partner countries in discussions and providing technical co-operation on more of a case by case basis, they get the chance to ensure efficiency and sustainability of a project without imposing too many conditions. In line with the spirit of Japanese culture, they have to show persistence and commitment; endure and not give up. The only necessary pre-requisite is the desire to succeed.

4. What works where?

4.1. Validity of Japan's development experiences

As one clearly can see, the concept of self-help efforts, along with all the policies it entails, is heavily influenced by Japan's own development experiences. It can therefore be argued that this philosophy is tailor made and adjusted to the economic and political conditions you could find in Japan after the war, and in some other countries in South-East Asia where Japan helped stimulate economic take-off. This does not however mean that this same philosophy is ideal for development in other parts of the world where these same conditions are absent. In fact, the latest OECD-DAC peer review argues that not many countries today have the same conditions as Japan had after the war, and points to Japan's "relatively well educated population, strong administrative and governance structures and systems, as well as a burgeoning domestic private sector", and in particular that "the Japanese bureaucracy had enough capacity to clearly determine what it needed in order to reconstruct the nation" (31)

There are also scholars that express skepticism to the validity of self-help efforts in countries with conditions that differ from those of Japan itself. Sawamura for example, argues that the idea of support for self-help efforts functions well in a lot of Asian countries as they have experienced positive results of this in the past and are therefore willing to make the required efforts. African countries, on the other hand, don't have these experiences, and have been given much assistance that disregard the dignity of the African people and actually discourage their efforts of self-help (37). You could almost say that in some cases, attempts to promote self-help in African countries have disregarded country ownership by introducing foreign policies, without allowing the country the chance to exploit their own potential and possibilities, ultimately defeating their own ends.

4.2. Correspondence to different development environments

One thing that just about all academics and aid officials agree upon is the fact that, based on things like governance, economic situation and specific development needs, no two countries are exactly alike. This means that a general development strategy for all developing countries is highly unfeasible, and that donors must therefore rather put efforts into adapting one's strategy to one that is agreeable with the conditions in the partner country. I will now go on to discuss how

different policies can correspond to certain conditions in developing countries.

4.2.1. Level of governance

The level of governance in developing countries is a common problem when it comes to ownership and the effective use of aid. Hence it is obvious that donors must take proper precautions when engaging in an aid partnership with a country with widespread corruption, lack of human resources and inadequate economic institutions; countries that barely maintain a minimum of state-level functioning. However, when it comes to ways of dealing with this problem, the Japanese approach seems to have a tendency to differ slightly from that of most Western donors.

According to the Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency capacity development is an important part of partner countries' development:

The capacity to plan, manage, implement, and account for results of policies and programmes, is critical for achieving development objectives – from analysis and dialogue through implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Capacity development is the responsibility of partner countries with donors playing a support role. It needs not only to be based on sound technical analysis, but also to be responsive to the broader social, political and economic environment, including the need to strengthen human resources. (5)

Further, adherence to “broadly accepted good practices” or “a reform programme in place to achieve these” are noted as indicators for reliable country systems (9), but measures as to how this is to be realized are rather vague. As explained in the previous chapter, Japanese aid institutions engage in technical co-operation with countries with inadequate governance, usually on a case by case basis in order to ensure the effectiveness of development projects, and technical co-operation was actually acknowledged as one means of among others to develop capacity in the recently published Accra Agenda for Action (2). I believe that one could say that while Japan regularly encourages development of a partner country's capacity for the insurance of a project's efficiency, the Western notion of capacity development is somewhat broader;

concentrating on capacity development as a project in itself. Shinozaki also argues that almost all Japanese technical co-operation projects are focused on individual or organizational level development, and that public level co-operation rarely is present apart from with Western donors (66).

Based on these observations we understand that while Western capacity development potentially involves all level for society with private, local and public institutions (Shinozaki 69), Japanese technical co-operation concentrates its focus on specific projects and the lower levels of society. This focus is therefore not likely able to contribute much to developing public and state level institutions to the same extent as Western capacity development, but one can however argue that it contributes to the development of local capacities. This is an example of a bottom-up approach emphasizing local self-reliance, as described by Sawamura (32), that allows for some degree of capacity development on an individual and organizational level, as well as the possibility for more successful implementation of other development projects, even in countries without adequate state-level functioning. In other words, the Japanese philosophy may allow for effective development projects, even in countries that display a low level of governance.

The Western policy, on the other hand, seems to be more focused on state level development and development of public institutions. It deals with capacity development on a much bigger scale by trying to establish a good aid environment where the partner country itself can take full control of its own development. It is rather obvious that this philosophy primarily is focused towards countries that display a low level of governance, but it is not necessarily exclusively so. I would say that the main difference is, as evident by the case studies I will discuss later, that capacity development in countries that have come a long way in terms of governance more often than not is met with some degree of resistance; exemplified by the lack of both Swedish and Japanese poverty reduction schemes in China (He and Söderberg 170). Even though poverty reduction is the main goal of both donors, China has diverted their aid to areas that are of Chinese interest. It is therefore arguably easier to promote good governance in countries with a low level of governance.

4.2.2. Aid dependency

Another factor that to a large extent may affect the aid environment in partner countries is

its dependency on aid. A country's aid dependency is in many ways closely related to a country's level of governance, since most countries that are highly dependent on aid also has a low level of governance. There is however one important thing that one must take into account when discussing aid to countries that are highly dependent on aid, and that is the fact that they are dependent on self-sustainable projects and continued support. A situation where the partner country relies this heavily on donor participation for development can be argued to leave the donor country with too much say in the country's development, and ultimately impose on the country's ownership. I will now go on to discuss some observations based on various case studies on aid relations with both countries with high aid dependency and countries where aid dependency is marginal.

4.2.2.1. High aid dependency

In a Japanese funded infrastructure improvement project in Sri Lanka, where aid dependency is high, we can see an example of the Japanese implementing organization not transferring full responsibility to the local organization. Hence the local organization was forced to work with a Japanese supervising consultancy company, and due to the extensive size of the project, there were no local construction companies with sufficient experience and financial and technological capabilities to handle it. Japanese officials justify this by arguing that local companies do not have sufficient management capability (Jerve, Lakshman and Ratnayake 110). This project shows us that the low level of management capabilities in Sri Lanka led to heavy influence from the Japanese side through technical co-operation. Even though this in some cases may help develop more effective and extensive projects, there is also the possibility of imposing too much influence on the partner country, weakening ownership. This is also mentioned as a possible threat to partner country ownership in the OECD-DAC Peer Review:

Many observers have commented that project proposals generated from individual ministries of recipient countries are frequently influenced by Japanese trading companies, manufacturers, technical co-operation advisors or politicians who operate under objectives which may not necessarily coincide with national priorities of recipient countries and could possibly lead to stand-alone projects with limited prospects for

sustainability. (32)

This may have been the case in the Japanese funded project in Sri Lanka where the local authority played a relatively marginal role. Sustainability might further become a serious issue, as there is no clear vision yet as to how future maintenance, servicing and management of project-created assets are to be handled (Jerve, Lakshman and Ratnayake 109).

Another case study of a development partnership between Sweden and Mongolia could shed some light on aid relations between a Western donor and a development country with high aid dependency. This particular project was intended to raise the level of governance in Mongolia by competence-building, good leadership and improved communication between different parts of the Mongolian administration (Luvsanjamts and Söderberg 126), and was thus by nature a project based on Mongolian participation. Even though the ideas behind the project were initially formulated by the Swedish implementing body, the required participation of the Mongolian side allowed them to influence the direction of the project in a way which better suited their interest. Consequently, the project deviated from the original ideas and its outputs were changed, ultimately resulting in the potential effectiveness of aid being reduced (Luvsanjamts and Söderberg 131). This project shows us an example of the Western approach of capacity development imposing Western ideas of governance and democracy on a country highly dependent on aid. The recipient side however, had no true commitment to these ideas, and its initial sense of ownership of the project was therefore minimal. It seems like it may have been this heavy donor influence that eventually led to major and fundamental changes in both the implementation and the outcome of the project; reducing the potential effectiveness of the aid efforts. Once completed, the project indeed led to some extent of capacity building, but if partner country ownership had been respected from the start, the major changes of the project may have been avoided, and valuable time and resources could further have been saved.

4.2.2.2. Low aid dependency

On the other side of the spectrum of aid dependency we find development countries where aid only plays a marginal role. These countries often have other possible sources of finance, and need not rely on the international donor community to the same extent as their

highly aid dependent counterparts. This gives them the chance to make more demands and impose conditions on potential donors, further enhancing the possibility to successfully take the lead and skillfully manage donors. For instance, the fact that even though poverty reduction is the main objective of both Japan's and Sweden's aid policy, neither of them have any projects directly related to that in China, shows that the Chinese manages to turn the donors to other areas of higher interest (He and Söderberg 170). Studies of Vietnamese aid relations also show signs of skillful donor management. Sweden has, more so than Japan, expressed an interest in promoting democracy and civil rights, and the Vietnamese government seems to have developed close relations with the Swedes, regarding them as the best partner to turn to when initiating reforms the sensitive field of governance, democracy and civil rights (Forsberg 200). Vietnam's co-operation with Japan, on the other hand, is more aimed at economic interests, promoting investment conditions and growth in Vietnam, and there seems to be little interest in co-operation with Japan on matters like governance and policy reform:

That Japan has recently selected Vietnam as a pilot country for its new aid programmes in legal, institutional and policy reform has therefore not been well received by the Vietnamese stakeholders. Some Vietnamese aid officials insist that Japan is less experienced in its new field of institutional capacity support and that Vietnam is not prepared to yield too much and let Japan get involved in fields where many Western donors have substantial experience and capabilities. (Forsberg 204)

As previously discussed, Japan's request-based aid has been under somewhat of a critique as it requires the capability to manage aid from the partner country for it to be able to make the request in the first place. One can thus argue that consultation-based aid is the preferable approach "as it is based not only on the requirements of the recipients but also the capacity and potential of both donors and recipients to carry out the project, as identified through consultative process" (Wajjwalku and Tasarika 210). Studies of a Japanese co-operation project with Thailand can further provide some insight about initiation process and alignment to partner country policies. In a case where Thailand requested Japan's assistance for a project to increase forest area, the Japanese implementing agency took the lead already in the planning process.

Lack of co-operation between Japanese experts and Thai officials led to a continued low level of partner country ownership throughout the implementation of the project, but after the end of the project one could however see evidence of local ownership in the continuation of activities, participation of local communities, extended forest preservation, and enhanced environmental awareness (Wajjwalku and Tasarika 213-215). This case shows us that request-based aid not necessarily leaves the formulation and planning of a project up to the partner country. After the initial request for aid being made, Japan engaged in a consultative process. This specific case, where the Japanese implementing agency to a large extent took control over the project, further tells us that even with a low level of partner country ownership in the planning and implementation level of a project, it can ultimately lead to a high level of ownership of the project's output.

4.2.3. No two countries are the same

We cannot draw any firm conclusions based on the few cases presented here, as they are but a few single cases in a selected few developing countries. These cases are therefore not necessarily representative for development co-operation as a whole, but they do, nonetheless, lead to some interesting observations. For one, we see that while countries with a low dependency on aid have the chance to skillfully manage their donors and secure alignment to their own policies, countries with a high aid-dependency do not have this luxury. This is not to say that all countries with a low aid-dependency are proficient with donor management, as was the case in Thailand where, in spite of disagreement in the planning process, the Japanese strategy was accepted because "getting something is better than getting nothing" (Wajjwalku and Tasarika 213). These countries, as opposed to highly aid-dependant countries, however have the potential to skillfully manage donors, simply because they have the possibility to turn down their donors if the project does not align with their own interests.

We also see that the ultimate level of output can differ in cases where partner country ownership was minimal through the planning process. In both the case in Sri Lanka and the case in Mongolia the output of the projects was limited due to lack of local support, while in Thailand local ownership flourished after the completion of the project, leading to successful continuation. This goes to show that ownership of the planning process may not be a necessity for a project's

success. Different aid modalities and strategies may in other words have different effects in different development environments, leading to the conclusion that aid strategy and modalities need to be adapted to each development environment.

4.3. The East-Asian miracle in Africa

I believe that Japan's great confidence in its own aid policies partly stems from the fact that it is amongst the biggest donor countries in the world, and thus has the opportunity to participate in large scale projects that many other donors simply do not have the economic capacity to undertake. This provides some sort of legitimacy to Japanese aid, as it from sheer volume is a force to be reckoned with. Another means of justification that the Japanese use to back up their aid philosophies is their central role in the economic take-off in South-East Asia, also known as *the East Asian miracle*. The East Asian miracle refers to the rapid development of Japan itself, as well as other East Asian countries like Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea and Thailand, and is generally considered as a success story of development. Since the mid 60s remarkable economic growth was recorded all over East-Asia, and this has often been attributed to Japan's efforts of economic and technical co-operation. This acknowledgement has in a way validated the Japanese aid philosophy, and led to Japanese confidence in their own aid policies as they have proved that poverty reduction is possible by the means of self-help efforts (Jerve, "Asian Models for Aid: Is There a Non-Western Approach to Development Assistance?" 2).

Since the East Asian miracle was so successful and further proved Japanese aid strategy as effective, one could think that it might be effective to simply repeat this strategy in Africa. To successfully accomplish this is naturally not easy, as one must take into consideration the vast differences between Asia and Africa. One basic thing that separates African conditions for development from those of the Asian countries is their natural geography. The improvements that Japan made for infrastructure in Asian countries were mainly coastal projects (Horiuchi, Kitsuta and Ohno 20), so infrastructure projects, which were an important part of the Japanese aid strategy in Asia, would require a completely different approach in African countries without a shoreline. Another important factor that separates the African circumstances from those of Asian countries is Japan's presence in the area. Whereas in Asian countries Japan was by far the biggest donor, some African countries maintain relations to 40-50 different donor countries and

organizations (Horiuchi, Kitsuta and Ohno 21), making Japanese presence, and influence, in Africa much smaller than in Asia. As discussed earlier in this paper, aid strategies need to be adapted to fit any number of different development environments, and this naturally also applies to the success story in East Asia. Hence, there is a need to discuss what changes and adaptations are necessary in order to be successful in Africa.

Shinsuke Horiuchi, representative director of International Development Associates, for one, argues that the current approach for poverty reduction in Africa is "backwards"; that rather than concentrating on distribution of water, food and medicine, one should concentrate on job creation (Horiuchi, Kitsuta and Ohno 22). By creating jobs, the locals get the chance to buy these necessities while at the same time supporting economic development. This however entails more investment in and co-operation with partner country institutions, as the clear vision and ability of a partner country to design own policies can be regarded as a pre-requisite for development (Horiuchi, Kitsuta and Ohno 23). There is in other words a need to support the development and potential of local capacities and governance, a policy that may not align too well with Japan's project-based policies:

They [developing countries] have great potential, but the rhythm is different. Japan has a tendency to immediately display a master plan or country specific plan and say "you should do it like this", but all they say is "is that so?" Japan has not been able to pull out their potential. The problem is that, while preaching ownership and partnership, Japan is unable to interact with the words' true significance. (Horiuchi, Kitsuta and Ohno 21)

5. Lessons to be learnt

Japan accepted the Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency in 2005, and pledged to work towards the targets that it established. None the less, as I will discuss in further detail later, Japan has been unable to form active partnerships with other donors and recipient countries for program implementation and development aid, particularly in the field of fiscal assistance and sector programs (Sasaoka 62). In this chapter I will analyze specialist's opinions on what measures Japan can take to better harmonize with the ideas in the international community and raise the effectiveness of aid, as well as what the international community can learn from

Japanese aid experiences.

5.1. No such thing as a superior aid modality

One thing one should keep in mind when discussing what a donor country can do in order to raise the effectiveness of its aid efforts is that there is not necessarily such a thing as a superior aid modality. It is commonly accepted that the effectiveness of aid is influenced by the local situation and other contextual differences, and that aid must be matched with the respective countries' needs and capacity. Rather than discussing which aid modality is preferable to the other, it is therefore important to debate which aid modalities to use or combine in order to function optimally in specific situations or circumstances.

It is not productive to debate which aid modality is superior over the others. The more important issue is to understand the features of respective aid modalities and apply (or combine) right ones, with due consideration to the country- and sector-specific circumstances. In doing so, donors should make maximum efforts to match aid with recipients' development priorities and ownership, sharing the overall policy and institutional framework. (Ohno and Niiya 49)

5.2. What can Japan do?

As thoroughly discussed by now, the Japanese aid philosophy is deeply rooted in its own experiences and based on its tradition. The fact that the vast majority of Japan's experiences with development are from Asia, implies a need for reform now that the focus of both the international community, as well as Japanese aid officials, is increasingly turned towards the world's poorest countries in Africa. This geographical change is however not the only incentive for reform – the politics of development assistance itself have over the years become infinitely more complex. Development assistance is no longer merely a problem concerning low-income countries, but is also closely related to issues of security, terrorism, natural resources, environment and trade (Akiyama 29). The politics of international development are ever-changing, and hence there is a need for Japan and other donors to change their aid policies

accordingly. Takamasa Akiyama, professor at Nihon University and senior advisor of the Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID), argues for one thing that the Japanese approach of request-based aid no longer is suitable for this development environment (29). By more actively engaging in dialogues with partner countries Japan would be better equipped to effectively handle the complexity that is present in politics revolving around development co-operation today. As an example of this increasingly complex situation the rise of other Asian donor countries, like China and India, may be mentioned. Development aid today can be regarded as a means of establishing relations to potential trade partners, and the new Asian donors' presence on the African continent could thus mean increased competition for Africa and its resources (Masters). China, in particular, has been criticized of leading an aid policy based on promotion of its own economic interests and international relations (Jerve, *Asian Models for Aid: Is There a Non-Western Approach to Development Assistance?* 4), making China an attractive development partner for developing countries due to very small degree of conditionality. A step away from request-based aid could be one way for Japan to deal with this challenge and engage in partnerships with countries that would otherwise lack the capacity to approach Japan with relevant project proposals.

Apart from specific Japanese aid policies, like request-based aid and continued devotion to yen loans, Japan's inability to form active partnerships and co-ordinate aid with other donors is likely to be one of the biggest targets of international critique of Japanese efforts in Africa. Some steps, like for instance the signing of the Paris Declaration, have recently been made with the purpose of better harmonization with other donors, but in substance they seem rather superficial as there is no firm organizational will in the Japanese government to handle development co-ordination (Takahashi 17). This can, among other things, be due to the strong will to present aid with a Japanese face displayed by a lot of Japanese aid officials. One can argue that even though Japan recently has shown some general initiative for dealing with this issue, "development co-ordination which influences donors' concrete activities in the field in each recipient country" remains a major challenge (Takahashi 2). In other words, it seems like Japanese policy makers recently have started to embrace the idea of donor harmonization, but they have yet to prove themselves in terms of concrete measures.

There are of course several factors that may restrain Japan's harmonizing with other

donors, like for example the intricate process that is Japanese policy making. It is a widely accepted fact that the fragmented decision making in regards to Japanese ODA-policy, involving several ministries and institutions, is an influence on Japanese aid practices (Jerve “Asian Models for Aid: Is There a Non-Western Approach to Development Assistance?” 2). When, among others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and JICA, all with different incentives and responsibilities, have the opportunity to exercise great influence on Japanese ODA policy, decision making about ODA becomes highly inefficient and leads to fragmented aid practice. This autonomy problem in Japanese ministries has been an issue in Japan ever since the Second World War, and it has been said that “Japan was a country of ‘ministries without a government’” (Takahashi 10). Several measures have however been made over the last ten years, most recently by the merging of JICA and the Japan Bank of International Co-operation (JBIC). However, I believe that further administrative reforms could help close down some of the perception gaps in the Japanese ODA system, and further improve the efficiency of aid practice as well as open up for a greater extent of alignment with other donors. Centralizing ODA decision making in Japan could lead to less ambiguity in general aid policy and could thus make it easier to engage in partnerships with other donors as there would not be as many local interests to take into account.

Another big strain on Japan's harmonizing with other donors can be found in the Japanese tendency to favor project based aid. Professor Motoki Takahashi from the Graduate School of International Co-operation Studies at Kobe University argues:

If each donor gives aid according to its own aim and motive with its own modalities and procedures, the recipient government would have to bear great managerial (transaction) costs. This often causes aid proliferation [...] which undermines ownership by recipient government. General budgetary supports can reduce transaction costs, as they are, by definition, supposed to be part of government development strategies and the most flexible modality of aid. (Takahashi 4)

As Takahashi here states, by not harmonizing with one another, donors effectively undermine partner country ownership. When several different donors approach a developing country, each

with their very own strategy, it is nearly impossible for the partner country to align with them all at once. This entails unnecessary costs in aid management and ultimately compromises the aid efficiency of all the individual donors. Budget support could however be one way of solving this problem, as budget support is necessarily aligned with partner country strategy. Hence, the partner country can concentrate their efforts on one single strategy, namely their own, eliminating the problem of having to align with several different modalities and procedures.

Alongside budget funding and donor harmonization comes the subject of aid projection. Japanese aid officials have always been very wary about making promises, and have as such been prone to avoid making projections of aid beyond the current year. Alf Morten Jerve, Senior Researcher at Chr. Michelsen Institute, a Norwegian independent centre for research on international development and policy, writes that this aversion to aid projection, along with other characteristics of Japanese aid, leads to difficulties in regard to donor harmonization:

Japan's aid remains basically project-based with a high share of loan financing. Most assistance is in kind – material and services, and rarely is cash transferred directly to recipient governments, and Japan remains skeptical towards covering recurrent expenditures. Grant aid is most often tied to Japanese contractors. Japan does not provide recipient governments with projections of aid disbursements beyond the current year. Evidently, these are characteristics that make it difficult for Japan to harmonize with donors that emphasize on budget support and basket funding. (Jerve, Asian Models for Aid: Is There a Non-Western Approach to Development Assistance? 3)

Working on measures for increased aid projection could be one step along the way towards donor harmonization for Japan to take. Aid projection can however help to further raise the efficiency of aid in a more direct manner as well. By announcing the planned amount of aid disbursement to a certain partner country beforehand, that country will get the chance to incorporate this projection into its own national budget. This will give the partner country a better chance to efficiently plan future development strategy, making it easier to claim ownership of development. In other words, by not projecting aid in this manner, Japan makes it “very difficult for recipient governments to incorporate details of Japan’s assistance into the budget for

next year and into medium-term fiscal programs” (Takahashi 5). Allowing for a greater scale of donor harmonization as well as partner countries’ ability to skilfully plan their own development, aid projections from Japan, which is such a substantial donor, could potentially make for more efficient development in many partner countries.

There are several changes Japan could make in order to raise the level of effectiveness of its aid policy. Here I have discussed how the traditional request-based aid, originally intended to promote the self-help efforts of partner countries, may not be the best alternative in today’s development community, as well as how there is a need for more harmonization with other donors when dealing with African countries that are engaged with numerous donor countries and agencies at once. Based on changes in the international development co-operation discussion, both politically and in regards to geographical focus, policy reform is in other words necessary in order to raise the effectiveness of Japanese aid policy. To accomplish this, however, there is a need to understand the reality of today's complexity in this field, and to furthermore close the perception gap amongst Japanese aid officials in terms of aid policy.

5.3. What can be learnt from the Japanese aid experience?

Even though there is a major trend in the academic community that expresses the need for Japan to better align its policies with the international community, the fact remains that Japan has had successful experiences with development co-operation. The Japanese, by means of the East Asian miracle have proven their aid policies to be effective, which implies that valuable knowledge can indeed be derived from these experiences, even if this knowledge may need to be adapted to fit other development environments. One such case can arguably be found in project based aid. Even though Japan is encouraged to base more of its ODA on budget support, one cannot deny the effectiveness of project-based aid in certain development environments. A common characteristic for most of the East Asian “miracle” economies was that they established basic government institutions for strategic planning, resource management and co-ordination that formulated and implemented growth-oriented economic policies, even though they were lacking sufficient institutional basis for aid planning and implementation to begin with (Shimomura and Ohno 6). The idea of Japanese project-based aid, focused on developing infrastructure and industrial capacity, can in other words be regarded as a plausible alternative in countries with

only a minimum of institutional capacity – especially since a certain level of stability in such local institutions is a pre-requisite for the positive effects of budget support and common pools, where several donors donate resources to a common programme, to be brought about (Takahashi 3-4).

Another policy that was central in the development of the East Asian countries was the focus on industrial infrastructure. Projects focusing on the development of infrastructure and industrial capacity can however not be regarded as so-called pro-poor projects that have gained popularity in a lot of Western donor countries, and consequently the idea that such development focusing on industry and infrastructure should be financed by private investors on a commercial basis rather than by ODA has become widespread in large parts of the international donor community (Ohno and Ohno, Global Development Strategy and Japan's ODA Policy 6). One can however question the capacity of these pro-poor policies to, by themselves, achieve sustained growth. Even if pro-poor policies can help deal with the poverty in sight, promotion of industrial infrastructure is a necessity in order to achieve true poverty reduction and sustained development:

To reduce poverty, it is not immediately clear whether improving hygienic conditions is a better use of aid money than building a trunk road; the conclusion should depend on each case. 'See poverty, lend a hand' is emotionally appealing but perhaps shortsighted as a long-term development strategy. If too much attention is paid to the poverty in sight, we may run the risk of neglecting other important tasks for overall growth, which are the prerequisite for poverty reduction. Apparently 'pro-poor' policies may not be the best way to reduce poverty in the long run. Industrial promotion may be out of fashion in Washington, but its proper execution is absolutely necessary for sustained development. (Ohno and Ohno, Global Development Strategy and Japan's ODA Policy 6).

Furthermore, even though the idea that industrial infrastructure should be based on private funding may be desirable in countries with sufficient institutions and industrialization, there are also countries lacking in such fields, that may have major difficulties encouraging private investment (Ohno and Ohno, Global Development Strategy and Japan's ODA Policy 6). In such

countries, in particular, the need to develop the necessary industrial infrastructure by means of development co-operation becomes clear.

Yen loans are another Japanese aid modality that has been subject to criticism from the international community, but might not be all bad after all. Yasuhisa Ojima, former Senior Advisor in the Planning Division of JBIC, argues that debt doesn't need to be a bad thing for a developing country because "borrowing allows economic entities, including the government, to smooth consumption and make productive investments, thereby aiding the economy" (109). As previously discussed in this paper, ODA loans are not much of a burden on the financial affairs of the donor country, allowing for more extensive and more stable funding, and this, alongside the fact that international focus on grant aid has led to less funding to the developing countries on a gross disbursement basis (Ojima 104), further implies that loan funding may be necessary in order to provide the financing that is needed to achieve the MDGs in time. International loans may therefore be considered as an alternative to raising the total level of ODA. Yen loans have furthermore, much like the focus on developing industrial infrastructure, already proven its worth through the East Asian miracle where it helped contribute to growth and poverty reduction in the area. Such international loans, however, come with the precondition that the loans must not become too excessive (Ojima 206), and this might prove problematic in regard to Sub-Saharan Africa where we can find many of the HIPC's. The new Japanese policy that will allow yen loans to heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC's) that are rich on natural resources may be a solution to this problem, but we have yet to see the effect of this policy reform. Either way, under the right conditions ODA loans can be an efficient means of stimulating partner countries' economic growth, and even though grant aid may be preferable, one should not necessarily discard ODA loans as a supplementary aid modality.

Based on Japan's extensive development experiences there are several things that the international donor community can learn. Even though the development environment in South East Asia differs greatly from that of Sub Saharan Africa, which is the biggest challenge in development co-operation today, we cannot deem Japan's experiences as totally irrelevant. There may however be a need to adapt aid modalities to the specific conditions of the respective partner country. I, however, believe that one of the most valuable lessons, which also is one of the simplest, from the Japanese experience is valid without regard to local development conditions.

It is the very core of Japanese aid policy; you cannot have development without the local will to develop. Promotion of self-help efforts would therefore be a good place to start.

5.4. Ownership and partnership

In this chapter I have reviewed some measures that Japan can take in order to further improve its development aid, as well as what the international donor community can learn from Japan's experiences. These are of course simply observations that may be deserving of further attention from aid officials and policy makers, as there is no guarantee that the discussed measures will lead to higher aid efficiency. As discussed earlier, what works in one development environment may not have the same positive effect in another, and it is therefore important to consider any such measures in relation to the case in question.

If we, however, from these observations are to draw some conclusions as to the general tendency of Japanese aid philosophy as opposed to that of most Western donors, there are a few comments I would like to make with regard to partner country ownership. As discussed in this paper, the international community in general preaches respect for partner country ownership as proposed by the Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency, but some degree of conditionality still seems to remain. Whereas Japan's notion of self-help efforts largely adheres to a line of non-intervention, the Paris Declaration puts a lot of emphasis on capacity development. While Japan concentrates its efforts on implementing sustainable projects regardless of the local conditions in the partner country, Western donors seem to be more prone to believe that a certain level of governance is a pre-requisite for successful development. Even if this Western philosophy is meant to build greater capacity for successful project management in the long run, the means of getting there still entail some degree of conditionality that impose on ownership in the first place.

The Japanese idea of self-help efforts on the other hand seems to have more difficulty living up to the partnership aspect of development co-operation. Even though partnership is raised as an important asset to any development relationship by Japanese aid officials, the actual policy being led largely disregards things like donor harmonization and, by avoiding budget funding, to some extent also alignment to partner country policies. Rather than promoting the general development of governance directly, the request-based aid that is central to Japanese

development co-operation shows a tendency to put efforts into sustainable projects that correspond with the local development strategy. By implementing individual projects in this fashion, they may very well succeed in implementing projects that leave the local institutions with a high sense of ownership after the project's completion, but any signs of a partnership to base future co-operation upon are more or less non-existent due to the lack of involvement with the partner country's public and state level institutions. This means that the project in itself may be very successful, showing a high degree of partner country ownership in regards to project type and output, but that it does not contribute much to the larger picture of development or future co-operation.

In regard to the international discussion on ownership and partnership it might seem like the Japanese policy of self-help efforts is, if not necessarily always in reality then at least in thought, focused on planning and implementing sustainable projects that can be continued and owned by local institutions after their completion. They are however lacking with regard to measures promoting partnership. Japan's Western counterparts, on the other hand, often lead policies that encourage good partnerships, but in doing so often neglect the ownership of partner countries. As one can argue that the ideal aid policy would promote good partnership while at the same time show total respect for partner country ownership, one might say that both parts have something to learn from one another. As Jerve argues in a discussion paper prepared for the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD), there is however a trade-off between ownership and partnership (Jerve, Ownership and partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems in aid? 1), and it might therefore prove difficult to lead a policy that promotes both partnership and ownership at the same time. On the one hand Japan might end up infringing on a partner country's ownership by engaging in a more active partnership, and on the other Western donors may compromise their partnership with developing countries by taking a less active part in reform processes.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have reviewed the international discussion surrounding ownership and partnership in aid relations, and further discussed in detail how these concepts differ from the particularly Japanese notion of self-help efforts. After establishing how the Japanese general

philosophy, as well as specific aid modalities, is different from those of most of the Western donor community, I have looked into how these particular ideas work in certain development environments. By reviewing a few case studies and specialist opinions on the aid effectiveness in differing development environments, I have established that there probably is no such thing as a superior aid modality that will function effectively under any conditions. Furthermore I have, based on specialist opinion, discussed what measures can be taken, by both Japanese aid officials as well as other donor countries, in order to further raise the level of effectiveness in aid relationships.

As for why the Japanese philosophy developed differently as opposed to the Western one, several possible reasons can be found. Historically, the Japanese idea of self-help efforts are based on its own development experiences in East Asia, and thus developed according to those specific conditions and environments. As Sawamura argues, the general idea of self-help is said to be deeply rooted in Japanese society where a culture of persistence and perseverance is distinguished (31). This has led to Japan leading a particular aid strategy with aid modalities that cannot be found in many other places in the world, and I further believe that Japan has been prone to promote its own specific policies rather than adapt to the rest of the international community in an attempt to legitimize their aid efforts that have been largely underappreciated. By leading its own specific aid strategy, Japanese development co-operation has become something particular; showing the world “aid with a Japanese face”.

These are some possible explanations to the different approaches we can see in today’s aid community. The particular differences can be found in the various aid modalities discussed in this paper that are central to the respective aid philosophies. I however believe that the more general characteristic of self-help efforts, as opposed to ownership in the Western sense of the word, is that the idea of self-help efforts is somewhat broader (Sunaga 13). This means that it puts emphasis not only on a developing country’s capacity to manage policies and donors, but also on the will and desire to graduate from aid and become a developed country. Another substantial difference in approach can be found in that self-help efforts can be considered as more of a bottom-up approach, focusing on local institutions and developing infrastructure and education, whereas Western donors often concentrate on developing capacities like governance and public institutions of partner countries, so that the partner country itself will be capable of

managing industry and trade in the future.

Defining such differences between the Japanese and Western strategies leads us to the question of which is the preferable strategy in order to maximize aid efficiency, with the answer of course being that there is no ideal strategy due to the fundamental differences in partner countries' development environment. Rather than discussing an ideal aid philosophy, all donors must therefore discuss what strategies or modalities to use or combine for best effect in each specific partner country. It is however difficult to make any firm conclusions in terms of this problem based on the few cases and discussions I have reviewed in this paper, so I will refrain from making any bold statements on this topic. I will however say that there is in fact a need for Japanese policy makers to reform or adapt the policies based on experiences in East-Asia to better suit the increased focus of aid to African countries where social, economic as well as geographical differences are evident. This need has evidently been recognized, as serious ODA discussions started at the end of 2005, partly with the reform and eventual merging of JBIC and JICA (Akiyama 28), but further concrete measures remain to be seen.

Rather than making bold statements about what specific aid strategies and modalities are the most efficient in certain development environments, I have argued that there are some aid modalities that could prove efficient in a more general sense, and that there is a potential for mutual learning between Japan and many Western countries. What exactly needs to be done is however a question that is harder to answer, as this relies entirely on the specific conditions and situation of the partner country in question. One can therefore conclude that there are no ideal aid strategies that can maximize aid effectiveness regardless of which countries that are in the aid relationship. The relationship between ownership and partnership is also problematic in the sense that there, according to Jerve, is a trade-off between the two concepts (Jerve, Ownership and partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems in aid? 1). Even though I believe that equal partnerships in many ways can lead to a stronger capacity to claim ownership in the long run, too much focus on partnership can lead to excessive donor influence on partner country governance and thus infringe on ownership in the first place. In such situations it could prove beneficial to consider the core idea behind self-help efforts that implies that the partner country must tackle its problems without too much involvement from donor countries. The challenge remains to find out what exactly is needed in any developing country at any time. This is an ever

changing discussion that will need constant attention from the international donor community, so a simple answer to this discussion is not likely to appear in the near future.

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