

RETHINKING AFRO-ASIAN RELATIONS - ASSESSING TICAD 8 ON AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Africa has become a significant focus for many international partners, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to changes in how the continent engages with its partners. With numerous countries in Asia, external partners have made consistent efforts to establish their presence on the continent. Japan is one such Asian country that has sought to expand its influence in Africa, especially in response to China's significant presence on the continent. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected different sectors of the African economy; hence, there is a focus on creating future policies that allow resilience related to such pandemics and any unpredicted future global crises like the current one caused by the Ukrainian war. Similar to others, Japan is prepared to strengthen its engagements with African countries as they align their interests with Agenda 2063, differentiating them from China's debt approach. Despite Japan being in the region well before the COVID-19 pandemic, it continues to make efforts to increase its presence following the recent Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Tunisia. This has reaffirmed Japan's intentions and goals despite the competitive presence of China in the continent. This paper aims to analyse TICAD 8 and its consequences on African development. What promises has Japan made, and how will they lead to a developed Africa? How is Japan's approach to bringing development to Africa different from that of other Asian partners?

Keywords

African Development, The COVID-19 pandemic, Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Afro-Asian relations, Japan

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Introduction

Asia and Africa have a common history, with the Indian Ocean being a hub for trade and cultural exchange between the two continents. Historically, cultural exchanges between the continents were substantial, but colonialism disrupted this and in the mid-20th century, solidarity movements against colonialism led to closer ties culminating in the Bandung Conference in 1955 (Harsch, 2004). They presently face similar challenges and work together to find common solutions. Asia has been growing strong economically, and Africa is on a similar path. India has been involved in development cooperation in Africa through programs like the Pan Africa e-Network, which depends on its engagement with the continent (Puri, 2017). More partnerships are being forged by African countries and developing nations with several Asian business centres across Africa. They also contributed to resolving armed conflicts in Africa and participated in a significant portion of UN peacekeeping missions on the continent. Many African policymakers are concerned Western countries are adopting more insular policies and are looking towards alternative partners, particularly in Asia. The major Asian economies, including China, India, and Japan, are more assertive and have increased interest in Africa. This interest is evident in the series of summits held by these countries to strengthen ties with African nations (Gopaldas, 2018). Table 1 illustrates the key summits and their focuses.

The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), established by Japan in 1993, has significantly influenced other countries, including China, Russia, Turkey, the United States, the European Union, India, and Brazil, leading to similar summit meetings focused on Africa (Cornelissen, 2016). The influence between Japan and China goes both ways. China has influenced the conduct and outcomes of Japan's meetings, and vice versa. This influence is evident in changes such as the frequency and location of summits. For example, Japan used to hold summits every five years within Japan but has since adjusted the frequency and location to compete with The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Some underlying similarities include infrastructure development, which is similar in approach, the only difference being the concessional and non-concessional elements of aid, which is more pronounced in China's approach (Brautigam, 2009). TICAD has significantly influenced Japan's involvement in Africa. The initiative has elevated Japan's role by utilizing its aid capabilities and shaping the development agenda in line with its resource and security interests (Cornelissen, 2016).

Despite its agenda being different from that of its counterpart China in the past few years, Japan's desire to grow its international economy in Africa has been consistent. Both nations have strongly desired and committed to integrating Africa into the global economy by improving their domestic production capabilities. This move is not only economically motivated but is also seen by Africa as potential support in the international arena. A deeper examination reveals that economic interests do not solely drive Japan's involvement in Africa but also position Africa as a potential ally in the international arena (Tarrósy, 2012). Both countries recognize the importance of Africa, not only for its diplomatic, political, and economic significance in the

Feature	TICAD	FOCAC	KOAFEC	India-Africa Forum Summit
Inception Year	1993	2000	2006	2008
No of summits since inception	8	8	7	3
Primary Focus	Startup investments, green growth, human resource development, private sector, food assistance	Infrastructure, investment, trade, debt relief, renewable energy, food security	Industrialisation, Energy access and mineral security, trade, climate change, technology	Education and capacity building, trade, digital and physical infrastructure
Main Stakeholders	Japan - Japanese government and business community and JICA Africa - African Union, African leaders, and governments International Organizations - UN, World Bank Civil society organisations Partner countries Private companies	China - Chinese government and business entities Africa - African Union, African leaders and governments, Africa Development Bank	South Korea - Korean government communities Africa - African governments, African Development Bank Group Civil society representatives Business representatives Academic representatives	India - Indian businesses Africa - African Union, AU member states, African leaders, African businesses
Frequency	3 years (changed from every 5 years from 2013)	3 years	3 years	3 years (9 years gap since the last one in 2015)
Last summit	2022	2021	2024	2015
Attendance (Recent)	48 African countries	53 African countries	48 African countries	54 African countries
Financial Commitment (Recent)	US\$30 billion	US\$40 billion	US\$14 billion	US\$10 billion

Table 1: Key Summits Between Major Asian Economies and African Nations. Sources of data: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, African Development Bank Group and Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

international system but also for building relationships with national elites to be used at multilateral levels (Cornelissen & Taylor, 2000). However, Japan's distinctiveness in its cooperation with Africa is seen in the private sector's role; it has established its presence in all 54 African countries. Japan harnesses innovation, entrepreneurship, and business creation through these firms, contributing to economic growth. The government's focus has shifted towards business rather than purely aid activities, striving to balance being donors and promoting their private companies in African markets (Tarrósy, 2014). It offers China an advantage, focusing more on infrastructure development (Atlantic Council, 2022). Japan distinguished itself from China by emphasising the quality of aid over quantity, by adhering to international standards, and through capacity building rather than importing their workers like China does (Pajon, 2022) but remains cautious, acting as an observer (Tarrósy, 2012) and open to alternative offers (Pajon, 2022).

The TICADs summit's agreements are implemented through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). JICA, under the authority of the Japanese government and in line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs objectives, plays a critical role as the primary channel through which Japan provides support to African countries through the bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) program. By co-hosting these summits with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB) and the African Union Commission (AUC), JICA seeks to contribute to the fostering of cooperation with development partners in diverse fields to bolster development in developing countries (*TICAD 8 - Official Website* -, n.d.).

Over the years, JICA has maintained and deepened its engagement on the continent. Its role increased in 2008 after it merged with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), making it one of the largest bilateral aid institutions worldwide (*Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) – DCED*, n.d.). Since the merger, the institution has implemented development policies that focus on helping countries help themselves by taking responsibility and making efforts towards their development (Antil, 2017). Japan's continued efforts have been demonstrated through training African professionals to run their economies and contributing to financing both private and public sectors, amongst other pledges discussed in the preceding paragraphs. However, it may be debated if these efforts result from the Chinese actions through FOCAC (Nyabiage, 2022).

The next section of the paper will analyse the most recent Japan-Africa summit, TICAD 8, particularly examining its significance in the development process in the continent with its advocacy in upholding the principles of ownership and partnership. It has been nearly a year since the TICAD 8 summit, and studying its outcomes is important for its role in African development and its relations with Africa. By analysing these outcomes, African researchers can understand the areas that require improvements and how to explore opportunities for mutual benefits. Besides, it is crucial to analyse the new promises expected to drive development to verify their effectiveness in improving the lives of Africans. This analysis will address the fol-

lowing research questions: What pledges has Japan made at TICAD 8, and how do stakeholders think these promises will help make Africa a developed continent? Moreover, how does Japan's strategy for supporting African development differ from other Afro-Asian summits? How is TICAD perceived by African countries, and what are their responses to TICAD initiatives? By examining these inquiries, the paper seeks to pinpoint areas that require enhancement while concurrently investigating avenues for shared advantage.

Furthermore, the African voices need to be heard; their response towards the initiatives of TICAD is important. This will be crucial in knowing the anticipated direction of this relationship. It would be important to capture the beneficiaries' views, expectations, and experiences to ascertain whether these promises have been felt on the ground and if it is a good deal for the Africans. Looking at the actual groundwork will help develop more inclusive policies that meet Africa's needs in line with Agenda 2063 (Union, 2015). A one-year period is sufficient to assess the progress of the development works and tackle any challenges in implementing the TICAD 8 pledges, which could be handled more efficiently.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach

This section discusses the sources and the theoretical framework used for this study. This paper used secondary sources. The data was retrieved from recorded interviews, speeches, news TV channels, newspapers, web articles, reports from the media (both International and African media), officially published reports and articles, academic journals, and books. The recorded interviews include African development experts, academics, project beneficiaries, and ministerial officials. The officially published reports were retrieved from JICA annual reports and their respective websites, individual government documents, TICAD's final documents, ODA reports from OECD (Organisation for Economic-operation and Development), the African Development Bank (AfDB) reports, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) impact reports and its related websites. To understand the African voices on the ground, the recorded interviews conducted by the media were analysed, which gave a glimpse into the thoughts, impacts and experiences felt by the beneficiaries. The final TICAD documents and previous progress reports were examined and analysed to understand the development philosophy on the three key pillars that have been consistent in the past summits to give a picture of the past and ongoing projects as well as an analysis of any inconsistencies in the Japanese trend. The official reports from AfDB and OECD outlined the policies, financial allocation, and disbursements to specific projects on the field and their impacts reported on the UNDP reports. These data have made it possible to understand and see the attitudes, opinions, views, objectives, and interests towards Africa and vice versa.

The article uses international relations theory to explain Japan's involvement on the African continent. In his book, *Japan's Foreign Aid to Africa*, Raposo (2013) elaborates how Japan's foreign aid policy shifted after the Cold War, which has been evident since the beginning of the TICAD process, offering insights into Japan's pur-

suits in Africa. Realism easily explains these endeavours. When looking at history, the international system has influenced the organization of the summits as Japan seeks to protect its interests, as noted by Raposo (2013). Japan shows its relevance by entangling itself with African development as a natural resource supplier and its expansive market by increasing its diplomatic engagements, firstly, to gain as many resources as possible (Raposo, 2013).

The frequent visits to Africa by high-level Japanese officials and prioritising foreign aid and loans to the continent is a strategy for maintaining its leading force in African development (Tarrósy, 2014), considering the increasing number of counterparts sharing similar interests. The increased presence of China on the continent has provoked a simultaneous response from Japan, as observed by the increased ODA pledges through the TICAD summits. Japan has used this to differentiate itself from the West and bases conditionalities on “good governance,” while China uses a mercantilist approach to gaining African resources (Hughes, 2016). Realism has been a dominant aspect in the TICAD process. However, Takeuchi still believes that idealism is vital to these relations. This is because Japan has not exclusively pursued its interests intensively (Takeuchi, 2022).

TICAD 8: Japan’s Pledges

In a joint press release in July 2020, Japan announced that the next summit, TICAD 8, would be held in Tunisia in 2022 (World Bank, 2020b). This announcement was made when the COVID-19 pandemic had hit the world hard, and Africa was expecting devastating effects from the aftermath, given the vulnerability of its systems. Setting the groundwork for the main event, the event organisers held a high-level meeting, which signified its importance (UNDP, 2022b). Before this, the Japanese foreign minister, Yoshimasa Hayashi, had engaged in discussions with the delegates from fifty different African countries. During the meeting, he expressed his commitment to continue supporting Africa after raising his concerns about the vulnerabilities Africa was experiencing, especially after the pandemic, the Ukraine-Russian aggression, and the increasing dependency on China (Ford, 2022).

Tunisia hosted the TICAD 8 summit from 27–28 August 2022, where twenty presidents and prime ministers were in attendance along with 48 delegates among the 5,000 participants (*TICAD 8 - Official Website* -, n.d.). An online interview with the TICAD Ambassador, Jun Shinmi, conducted by the Japan Times, confirmed that the central theme will uphold the three pillars of the economy, societal resilience, peace and stability, and the principles of “ownership and partnership.” He also emphasised the importance of collaboration in the development journey and explored opportunities for dealing with the far-reaching impact of COVID-19 (The Japan Times, 2022).

During the event, the Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, who attended virtually, articulated his vision of a prosperous growth partnership with Africa and a focus on the people (JICA, 2022). What do Africans want? At the ministerial meeting, Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa, the Regional Director for Africa, expressed Africans’ concerns regarding the consequences of the Ukraine war on food insecurity, the

vulnerability of Africa to its dependence on raw materials for exportation, and its degradation to the environment. She also voiced her concerns about how these occurrences could potentially undermine democracy and peace and that partnership would be the only way to fix this predicament effectively (UNDP, 2022). Discussions with the participants affirmed the necessity of improving foreign investments through private sectors to tackle the digital landscape issues and promote the continent's blue and green economies. The potential for growth opportunities, diversified economies, and increased intra-Africa trade under the fully implemented African Continental Free Trade Area agreement was also emphasised (AfCFTA, 2023). Fragile healthcare systems and achieving universal health coverage, especially given population growth projections, were discussed at great length, as the pandemic demonstrated the urgent need to strengthen these systems to ensure resilience for future challenges.

The frequent visits to Africa by high-level Japanese officials and prioritising foreign aid and loans to the continent is a strategy for maintaining its leading force in African development.

The support extended during the COVID-19 era by availing vaccines to Africa, and the contributions to the COVAX facility were highly appreciated, showcasing the fulfilment of their pledges even post-COVID (Hanspal, 2022). The participants also highlighted the significance of peace and security, demonstrating their efforts to address root causes and their impacts on development. The importance of democracy and the rule of law in fostering a stable and conducive environment for progress was emphasised (African Union, 2022). African countries prioritise economic transformation and conflict resolution guided by Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns 2030. During TICAD 7, Japan committed to supporting conflict resolution in specific regions, which is essential for development. The participants acknowledged the significance of preventing unclear debt financing from impeding development and emphasized the importance of global solidarity in addressing global issues such as pandemics and climate change. As a result, the continent is expected to embrace this partnership, and Japan's financial support is crucial for managing debts and infrastructure, leveraging its influence in the Group of Seven (G7). According to Nantulya (2022), Japanese companies should boost investments by enhancing value addition to enrich the quality of African exports. This could also be achieved by capitalising on JICA's strength, building on human resource development and technology transfer, and creating a conducive environment.

The Japanese government pledged \$30 billion USD in the next three years for both public and private investment to boost the development of human security, food security, debt management, and green growth (MOFA Japan, 2022). This was a bold step considering no amount was promised by the late Prime Minister Shinzō Abe during TICAD 7. Making this commitment displays its dedication and relevance,

highlighting the difference in China's practices in the region (Pajon, 2022). At the plenary sessions, Kishida announced its commitment to support Africa's resilient economy after the impacts it had after the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Ukraine-Russian aggression. He emphasised the importance of having quality livelihoods by focusing on health, education, and the environment to ensure steady growth. Lastly, he pledged to support Japan in promoting the rule of law by building institutions to achieve democracy and improve community infrastructure.

This enables Japan to emphasise its relevance in partnership and make the most of its strengths in human development and human security amidst the food crisis resulting from the Ukraine war, climate change, and the aftermath of the pandemic (Pajon, 2022). This reiterated the commitment to boosting private business, aligning with the African Union's 2063 development agenda (Morreale, 2022). Japan reiterated this after Foreign Minister Hayashi outlined it in a previous event before TICAD 8, the Second Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum held in Nairobi (METI, 2022). Japan also promised to bolster training amongst Africans across different professions to support the needs of the future (JICA, 2022).

The summit led to the adoption of the Tunis Declaration, which focuses on the themes of economy, societal resilience, and peace and stability (United Nations, 2023). It was also determined during the ministerial meeting that strengthening international collaboration is crucial to support development, especially in recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 (UNDP, 2022b). The pandemic has led to a recession in Africa, halting the continent's consistent development progress over the past 25 years (World Bank, 2020a) and causing approximately 38.7 million Africans to fall into poverty in 2020-2021, likely increasing inequality levels (AfDB, 2021). Japan aimed to differentiate itself from China and position itself as a key partner in Africa (Atlantic Council, 2022). Kishida pledged to advocate for a permanent African seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Al Jazeera, 2022).

From Promises to Impact on the Ground

The African Centre hosted a subsequent conversation in October 2022, a month after the TICAD 8 summit, discussing the importance of Africa to Japan and its initiatives on the continent. In attendance was the Ambassador of Japan to the United States, H.E. Amb. Koji Tomita, who reiterated that Japan continued to support Africa's recovery post-pandemic. The Ambassador of Tunisia to the US, H.E. Amb. Hanène Tajouri Bessassi reiterated three key pillars discussed at TICAD 8, and the TICAD general presented TICAD's ongoing initiatives in Africa. Recent developments were highlighted by the African centre fellow Hannah Ryder, who expressed her dissatisfaction with the pledged amount of \$30 billion USD, saying it is important but only a small proportion of what Africa needs (Mittrick, 2022).

In Zimbabwe, JICA increased the number of volunteers from Japan after the decline in numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, these participants have made a difference in the host institutions. These institutions do not need to pay for their services, and they still contribute to development in such countries by trans-

ferring skills and experiences (Njanjangezi, 2023). The Ministry of Agriculture and JICA promotes capacity building in Swaziland and other countries. The recent training sessions were conducted in June 2023, during which participants developed agricultural action plans to empower farmers to increase their yields (PAEPARD, 2023).

Considering the improvement of environmental conditions, the UN World Water Development Report (United Nations, 2023), published in March 2023, demonstrates the partnership between UNDP and JICA in improving water supply and sanitation in Africa. Through this partnership, JICA supports capacity building and infrastructure projects using primarily local resources. This enables the improvement of water quality in both rural and urban areas, focusing on affordability, better maintenance, and the promotion of hygiene education and practices. Meanwhile, the UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre (ABC) is currently focused on developing groundwater resources in pastoral regions of East Africa. This effort is in response to the significant impact of climate change on rainfall patterns, which has affected food security in the region (UNDP, 2023a).

In April 2023, Japan took an important step in supporting the private sector by signing a \$350 million USD agreement with the African Development Bank (AfDB) through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This marks the eighth non-sovereign loan agreement under Japan's Enhanced Private Sector Assistance for Africa (EPSA). The aim is to contribute to economic growth and poverty alleviation in Africa. Japan will collaborate with the AfDB to address these issues using the private sector (AfDB, 2023).

JICA co-hosted the second Dakar Financing Summit for Africa to foster infrastructure development. This event supports African infrastructure development by the African Union Commission (AUC) in partnership with other development partners that depend on resources for its success. In February 2023, JICA participated in co-organising this summit and was in partnership with AUDA-NEPAD in the collection of data to devise a report that highlights achievements over the past years and addresses potential future challenges during the implementation of the African-led projects (JICA, 2023b).

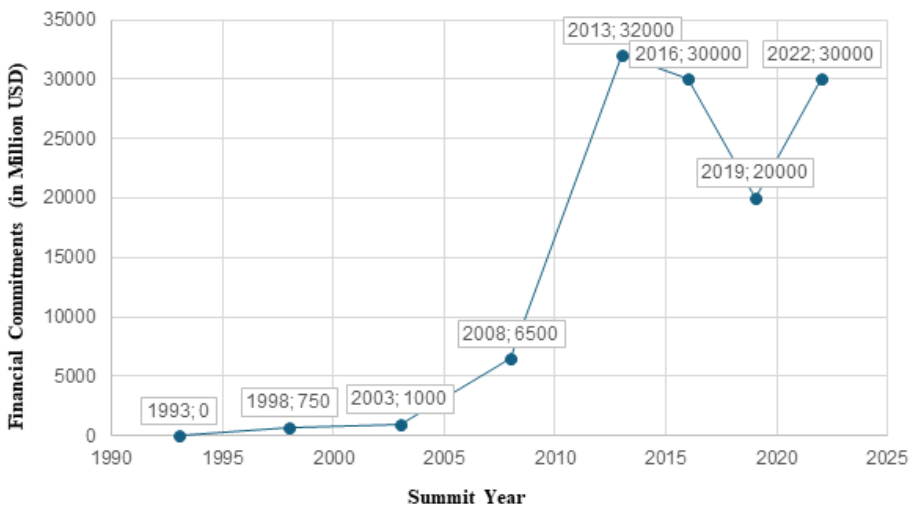
In June 2023, the JICA provided 6.8 billion JPY as a grant for Ghana's Assin Praso-Assin Fosu road project. This project involves the rehabilitation of the road and the reconstruction of drainage structures along the route. These improvements will significantly enhance water management and transportation for commuters in the region and neighbouring countries (The Ghanaian Standard, 2023).

To realise the development of a digitised Africa in 2025, JICA signed a four-party Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with parties in Ethiopia in July 2023. The main objective of this collaboration is to develop digital infrastructure and systems, strengthen e-government services, promote digital transformation in all sectors and capacity building to digital professionals in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 (Union, 2015), which will contribute to the overall socio-economic growth in Ethiopia and Africa as a whole (JICA, 2023d).

In March 2023, the Egyptian parliament signed an agreement between JICA and the Government of Egypt to offer a loan for Egypt’s Universal Health Insurance System (UHIS) amounting to 44 billion yen. This comprehensive system provides broad coverage of health services to expand its reach (The North Africa Post, 2023). In Djibouti, JICA and the government signed an agreement on May 2023, providing grant aid of 590 million yen for a project that will improve medical equipment in the medical facilities across the city. Considering 72% of the population in Djibouti lives in the urban centres (Worldometer, 2023), this project will serve an important role in availing medical services, which will contribute to SDG 3 and Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 of good health and well-being and the promotion of universal health coverage (JICA, 2023c).

The preceding initiatives show evidence of the projects that have been ongoing on the ground, which have had a profound impact on the lives of people since TICAD 8. In an attempt to give a comprehensive perspective, various regions of Africa have been showcased, spanning from east to west and north to south, illustrating the widespread presence of Japan’s support across the continent. It is crucial to note that these initiatives represent only a portion of the ongoing engagements but provide insight into fulfilling their promises. Progress may take time, but these strides give hope for a better future.

Graph 1 indicates the financial commitment made by the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) from its inception in 1993 to 2022. The commitments are shown in millions of USD for each TICAD conference year. The significant increase in commitments over the years highlights Japan’s growing investment in African development, but there has been a notable decline since 2013. This can be attributed to economic conditions and global aid competition, such as



Graph 1: TICAD Financial commitments (1993-2022). Data sources: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The Diplomat

the growing influence of other major players like China through its Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

African voices from the Japanese initiatives

Conventionally, Africa's perspective in Japan has been that of a reliable partner, unlike other global partners' involvement in African development, and Japan has tried to differentiate its approach. Their approach has not involved using big infrastructure projects or opaque tactics; however, Japan has been taking small steps to ensure it is efficient and effective. However, despite this move, Africans have different perspectives on their experiences of Japanese initiatives.

Ethiopia's prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, stated that despite Japan's long-term positive engagement, it still falls short of the new players on the continent (African Business, 2016). African scholars such as Jean-Claude Maswana, a professor at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, believe phasing out of the TICAD process will bolster connections between African and Japanese businesses and professionals; he goes on to argue that economic transformation drives business and not development aid (Fabricius, 2022).

In an interview with Scarlett Cornelissen regarding infrastructure development and TICAD 8 pledges, she expressed concerns about the available funds to support these initiatives. She emphasised the importance of conducting impact assessments to measure the impact of such projects. Reflecting on TICAD 7, she highlighted that thousands of people received healthcare training, demonstrating the TICAD initiatives' positive implications. Although she noted that achieving impact takes time, she recognised that TICAD 8 is taking steps for the future. Cornelissen further pointed out that Japan is different from other donors in that it focuses on improving people's lives through education and healthcare. She stressed the importance of building diplomatic partnerships between Japan and Africa based on mutual trust, respect, and consultation with the African nations and regional partners. She believes such an approach will go a long way in pursuing common interests, especially in the changing geopolitical environment (Cornelissen, 2023).

Mitsugi Endo from the University of Tokyo said it has been challenging to understand Japan's intentions, unlike China, whose objectives are clear from the get-go (Ninivaggi, 2023). The president of AfdB, Keizai Doyukai, praised Japan's efforts in venture capital investment and stressed the importance of understanding markets, being present on the ground, and gathering information to make sound investments. (Ninivaggi, 2023).

In an interview with Ambassador Fayza Aboulnaga, the National Security Advisor to the President of Egypt, she highlighted the positive impact of the Egypt-Japan Education Partnership (EJEP), which has transformed student behaviour. She also mentioned that the success of this partnership has resulted in its implementation in other schools across Egypt and has garnered support from educators, parents, and communities, leading to the expansion of schools in various parts of the country because of its positive impact and successful partnership (JICA, 2023a).

In a speech, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Samia Suluhu Hassan, said that TICAD has played a huge role in fighting Malaria, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and Tuberculosis. She stated that partnerships with Japanese companies have saved lives, promoted economic development, and built resilient structures for unpredicted events (The Global Fund, 2023).

African leaders have viewed TICAD positively; for example, H.E. Mr. Takeshi Osuga, during the 11th African Conference on Sexual Health and Rights (ACSHR), highlighted Japan's role in advancing key development priorities in addressing pressing health challenges. His remarks emphasized the incorporation of the TICAD 8 summit outcomes, showcasing Japan's commitment to its collaborative approach and the importance of partnership in contributing to positive development outcomes (IPPF, 2024).

According to African panelists at the TICAD 30th Anniversary Event in August 2023, there was recognition that Japan needs to leverage TICAD to expand its economic activities onto African markets due to the diverse forms of African businesses. They stressed the need to support infrastructure development for effective matchmaking between African and Japanese companies. Overall, they saw TICAD as a driver for promoting mutual growth and economic partnership while acknowledging the need to accelerate relevant measures (MOFA, 2023).

During the TICAD 8 side event, Ms Ahunna Eziakonswa further highlighted the need for concerted efforts in Africa's emerging complex challenges while acknowledging JICA for their commitment to recover from the recent global shocks (UNDP, 2022a). Other stakeholders on the ground, such as Ayoub Mkhantar, Besma Hadj Kacem, and Yosr Ghazzi, have been beneficiaries of the innovation and scientific research in Africa following TICAD 8. This enabled the African youth to showcase their talents and entrepreneurial skills; through their inclusion, they emphasized the significance of such projects, underscoring the importance of TICAD initiatives in the African development agenda (AfDB, 2022).

In the parallel convening sessions, Mr Malek Ezzahi and Mr Ali Mrabet, the Ministers of Social Affairs and Health, respectively, had positive perceptions of TICAD 8. They both emphasized the significance of the conference, especially convening it in Tunisia as an Arab country, which reflected trust. They highlighted the importance of trilateral cooperation particularly in promoting the integration of vulnerable groups and advancing the health sector (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2022). During the discussions, the role of the next generation of leaders and professionals in Africa at the TICAD Advocacy Dialogue Series held in 2023 was discussed. There were needs arising to nurture future successful leaders, as articulated by Ms Delphine Mukahirwa, who stressed the importance of mentorship and addressing the negative perceptions of the continent. The collective views expressed during the dialogue highlighted that TICAD 9 should serve as a platform for African youth empowerment in the future (UNDP, 2023c).

Ampiah also noted that despite the declarations on ownership and inclusiveness by Africans in the development agenda, many of the grants were returned to Japan.

This has been observed through procuring materials from Japan and getting their consultants for projects, leading to designing and devising these projects with Japanese companies. Therefore, only the Japanese companies gain from these projects, depriving the local companies of the benefits of these grants (Ampiah, 2005).

According to research (Antil, 2017), JICA has a wide range of experts and academics in research, humanities, and agriculture. However, they lack knowledge of the regions in Western and Central Africa, especially in the French-speaking countries, and they also lack Japanese professionals with the language skills required to work in these areas. Additionally, it is important to understand the political climate of most African states to anticipate any changes in fiscal policies.

The sentiments above highlight direct encounters with Japanese partners. It is not an exhaustive compilation of the on-the-ground impacts; however, most of the individuals appear to favour Japanese initiatives regarding their experiences. In contrast to the large infrastructural projects offered as aid or loans, Japan's initiatives evoke appreciation and leave a mark on the lives of the people they touch.

Conclusion

The dynamics of TICAD have been changing over the years, particularly evident in the most recent summit, TICAD 8. Its scope has broadened beyond its initial interests; it is more thoughtful of African demands, especially with its firm involvement in building human security, and this approach sets it apart from its competitors. The analysis shows that Japan has significantly contributed to Africa through TICAD by implementing development projects, providing capacity building, and aiding in finance for peace and security matters. However, there is little information on its direct involvement in peace and security projects despite its insistence on peace to achieve development. African governments should also prioritise their agenda more by learning from the actions of Africa-China working groups before FOCAC8. Japan's potential as one of the largest technology infrastructures could be leveraged by African governments exploring their young population, which can contribute to these infrastructures by increasing investments to boost digital infrastructure globally. Japan is a significant player in Africa and has an ambitious blueprint for the continent. However, the policies originating from Japan lack African expertise, which limits the realization of their full potential. Reflecting on Japan's commitments at TICAD 8, it shows a thorough plan to support Africa's development by addressing immediate needs and fostering long-term resilience. Japan presents itself as an important partner in Africa's journey towards development by emphasising sustainable growth, high-quality investment, and democratic governance. This aligns with the objectives of Agenda 2063 and fosters mutually beneficial cooperation. Japan's strategy through TICAD emphasises sustainable development, human resource development, and broad stakeholder engagement in contrast to other summits that emphasise large-scale infrastructure projects and direct financial commitments, positioning itself as a trustworthy partner. In terms of African perception of TICAD 8, African countries have viewed it positively and value the quality investment and

sustainable development but they also call for a more inclusive and transparent procedure to get the most out of these programs.

Africa has allowed Japan to offer its strategies as a non-Western country. Its involvement brings diversity and competition to the region, setting it apart from its competitors and making its contributions more impactful to the developments in Africa. Priorities should be a joint effort designed by professionals who support implementation for individual countries and flexible experiences tailored to Africa. TICAD 8 has reaffirmed Japan's commitment to the continent, aiming to ensure its approach promotes African needs. To conclude, the future of the Japanese and African partnership is uncertain, but the TICAD 8 outcomes show signs of hope and promising developments. The upcoming TICAD 9 summit set for 2025 reflects an evolving partnership between Japan and Africa with key elements on Japan's plan to leverage ODA Investments on infrastructure, increase public-private financing, and develop an Indo-Pacific network providing a strategic alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (East Asia Forum, 2023).

Future TICAD research could focus on evaluating the long-term impacts of TICAD initiatives on African development, which would provide insights into improving sustainable development outcomes. Additionally, investigating Japan's direct involvement in peace and security projects would provide an understanding of how to foster stability and resilience in Africa.

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