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JAPAN AND AFRICA

Initially, Japan's African policy was in response to several concerns and focused on two approaches: on the one hand "resources diplomacy," a permanent feature for a country totally lacking in resources, and on the other, "aid diplomacy." For about twenty years, in an effort to break into the international scene as a global power, Japan fostered an ambition to play a major role. This is what led it to court Africa in order for the latter to support its struggle to obtain a seat as a permanent member on the UN Security Council.

Japan has historical links with Africa. It was present on the continent during the colonial period and, after an interruption due to the Second World War, has revived these links since the 1960s. As the second largest economic power in the world, Japan has been, and to some extent remains, one of the major suppliers of aid to Africa and played a dynamic role in the diversification of the continent's partners after the collapse of the Communist bloc. The Tokyo Conferences on African Development (TICAD), four of which have been held so far, have been very successful and have been imitated elsewhere in Asia and in Latin America. However, financial crises that have harmed its economy have allowed outsiders like China, India or Malaysia to penetrate Africa at its expense. Japan remains nevertheless a major player on the African continent and seems determined to make up for ground lost in the last few years to its competitors.

According to sources available to us today, it would seem that the first contacts between Asians and Africans go back to the 10th century BC,¹ when Sino-Egyptian trade began. But it was Arab and European maritime expeditions that would act as catalysts for these intercontinental exchanges.

In the process of transporting people and goods, Arab and Portuguese merchants in particular brought a significant number of black slaves to

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the Middle Kingdom between the 4th and the 14th centuries. The Portuguese navigators even established a distribution centre for slaves in Canton in about the year 300. Thanks to these maritime expeditions, Islam began to spread into China in the 7th century under the Suy dynasty. Today the Uighurs still constitute an important Muslim minority in mainland China. A thousand years later, in the first half of the 17th century, numerous slaves living in Japan settled in Nagasaki.

Apart from these first indirect and relatively limited contacts, the first real meeting between the Japanese and Africans took place more recently, at the end of the Ashikaga period (1335-1573).² At this time, the thirst for spices, silk, sugar, slaves and souls to convert had led the Portuguese to the Far East. It was in this region of the world that they came into contact with many Japanese adventurers, and it was in about 1510 that the Japanese saw black slaves for the first time in Goa. During the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-1673), the Japanese grew accustomed to seeing the Portuguese accompanied by black guards and servants. The latter aroused moreover both curiosity and admiration in the Asians. However, towards the end of the 16th century, the Japanese demonstrated their hostility towards slavery and, in the first decades of the Edo or Tokugawa periods (1603-1867), the archipelago gradually rejected foreign influences. Nevertheless, links continued to be forged with the black slaves living in the country.

It was only at the end of the 16th century that the Japanese set foot in Africa for the first time. This was on the occasion of the voyage to Europe undertaken in 1586 by young noblemen from Kyushu, who had been invited to Rome by Italian Jesuits. First they made a stopover of six months in Mozambique, then they stayed for a while at the Cape, before going on to their final destination. But it was especially the latter colony that really established lasting ties between Japan and the dark continent. Jan Van Riebeeck, considered to be one of the founders of South Africa, had been based in Nagasaki on behalf of the Dutch East India Company during the years 1647-1648, before settling at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. In 1860, a Japanese mission returning from the United States stopped over in Angola and on the Island of Saint Vincent. In December of the same year, three Japanese officials and their retinue, sent on a diplomatic mission to England, made a stopover of several days in Suez. It was moreover on that occasion that the Japanese discovered the railway. Thanks to the Meiji era, in 1868, Japan opened up not only to Europe and America, but also to

Africa, which progressed from the status of an obligatory stopover to that of a destination in its own right. Despite the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, many Japanese visited ports like Mombasa in Kenya, the Cape and Luanda. And it was from these jump-off points that a few decades later the Japanese began prospecting the continent, already on the lookout for raw materials and export ports.

It has to be admitted that during the pre-colonial period relations between Japan and Africa, although long-standing, were rather weak and haphazard. Japan, which did not take part in carving up Africa, quietly infiltrated it nonetheless, thanks to the irruption and installation of the Europeans in Africa, both during and after the colonial period.

From colonisation to the Cold War: between neutrality and involvement

While a weakened China was practically absent from the African scene in the period between the Berlin Conference in 1885 and the division of the world into two blocs after the Second World War, Japan succeeded in maintaining a certain number of relationships. Although it played a rather low-key political role during all these years, it was quite active on the economic front. It did, however, foster a vague desire of being allocated the mandate of German South West Africa by the League of Nations after the 1914-1918 war. Anxious above all to secure a source of cheap raw materials and to find new markets for its exports, Japan made its way across Africa, in the wake of the colonisers. This is how it was able to benefit from treaties relating to the Congo Basin.³ But it was especially with South Africa that bilateral relations were the most profitable. From 1908, the Japanese would stop over at the Cape en route to South America. Moreover, before the Cape Colony became the Union of South Africa, an honorary consul, Julius Jeppe, was their representative there. From 1930, the Japanese could enjoy a particular status, since they were henceforth considered to be "Honorary Whites." This status, derogatory from the Union Immigration Act of 1913, also enabled them to escape the discriminations imposed on "Non-whites," long before the National Party legislated on apartheid in 1948. Finally, a Japanese legation was opened in Pretoria on 25 October 1937.⁴ However, South Africa's declaration of war on the Land of the Rising Sun on 8 December 1941, put a temporary end to the excellent bilateral relations between Japan and the Union of South Africa.

The post-war period, which lasted until the end of the 1950s, saw Japan's margin of diplomatic manoeuvres being limited, since the archipelago went from being under virtual direct administration by the United States to a period of "probation" until the beginning of the 1960s. It was only after the wave of independence in Africa in the 1960s that Japan began timidly to intervene on the continent, gradually increasing in power.

An analysis of this period, which extends from colonisation to the fall of communism and its corollary — the end of white South Africa, leads us to consider two opposing theories: the "clean hands policy" versus "collusion with the colonisers." The first theory is of course supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), which published in its annual report of 1961 its vision of relations with colonised Africa: "(...) for Japan, Africa was nothing other than an export market for consumer goods, mainly textile products (...)" This version is contested by researchers who follow rather the progressive, anti-colonial trend, like Jun Morikawa.⁵ In their opinion, Japan came to terms with colonisation in order to exploit the riches of Africa and develop lucrative trade. The reality is probably to be found somewhere between these two theories: Japan quite simply accepting the opening-up of Africa to the world and trying to make the most of it. Post-war trade flows between Japan and Africa are a good proof of this opinion. Between 1945 and 1960, the increase was staggering, since it went from 21 to 217 million yen. During this period, West Africa took precedence over East Africa, which can essentially be explained by the number of ships flying the Liberian flag of convenience.

The links developed between Japan and its African partners before independence were admittedly modest. They nevertheless were an indication of future relations between the archipelago and the new States. On the political level, the Japanese authorities tended to regard the dark continent as the Europeans' back yard; and in this regard, Japanese diplomacy was inclined to model its stance on that of the former guardians. On the economic level, Japanese firms, which owed no "moral debt" to Africa, felt free to trade and invest wherever they pleased.

From the beginning of the 1960s until the collapse of the communist bloc, which made the defence of white South Africa by Westerners obsolete, Japanese diplomacy was very discreet in Africa. Firstly because it did not want to embarrass Westerners and secondly because its "preserve" was traditionally Asia. On the economic front, however, it adopted the principle of "key countries," unlike the People's Republic of

China which had adopted the principle of “fellow nations.”⁶ This double policy led Japan to establish privileged relations with South Africa and white Rhodesia. Longer and closer, the collaboration with the Republic of South Africa evolved, however, in accordance⁷ with the condemnation of apartheid by the international community.

Until the middle of the 1970s, fruitful economic, cultural and sporting relations developed without any inhibitions between the two countries. Even the ban on direct investments did not affect bilateral relations. While the MOFA inclined towards a strict application of sanctions, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) took the opposite view. In any case, regardless of the posturing of hard line supporters with regard to South Africa, Japan became its first trading partner in 1987.

At the same time as it was maintaining advantageous relations with white South Africa, Japan was trying to improve its existing relations with other African countries. First there was the period of Africa’s apprenticeship, from the beginning of the 1960s to the first oil crisis in 1973. Then “resources diplomacy” became necessary and Japanese trade missions increased on the dark continent. Finally, in Manilla, the Fukuda doctrine revealed the importance of public development aid (PDA) as a special tool for Japan’s international influence.

Japan was able to pursue, during this whole period, a skilful policy that could be likened to that of a tightrope walker, but which bore fruit at the time of the fall of the Berlin wall. Adept at keeping a low profile, Japan was present more or less everywhere on the continent, be it in old “white” Africa or black majority Africa.

Ambitions of being a global power

The fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the division of the world into two opposing blocs opened up a Pandora’s box of global ambitions for countries like Japan. Already at the end of the 1970s, the Ohira government (1978-1980) had affirmed Japan’s role in the world by looking into the concept of “global security,” which reflected a globalisation of Japanese concerns. This concept should not be understood in a narrow sense, but in a much broader one. It was based on the principle according to which Japan, because its economy was dependent on the rest of the

world — both for its supplies of raw materials as well as for its markets — had to take more responsibility for its stability and its development. It was therefore a question of globalising Japanese concerns. Thus the aim of the global policy was to strengthen the traditional values of the Japanese on the interior level, while opening up the country to the world so that it could play a role commensurate with its power.

But it was the geopolitical upheavals of the early 1990s that stimulated Japan's thirst for power. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the debate on Japan's position on the world stage turned in favour of its taking on more responsibility, in spite of the backfires lit by its great rival — China. Nevertheless, hesitations could be seen between the permanent reminder of its UN policy and practical actions it took on the international stage, notably during the Gulf War. Today Japan's contribution to efforts for peace and prosperity in the rest of the world is no longer envisaged as a matter of "sharing the load," or as an unconditional alliance with the United States, but as an acceptance of increased responsibility for global affairs. With the advent of the multipolar world, Japan has not ceased developing its global ambition, the ultimate goal of which is a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Japan's diplomatic offensive at the United Nations is manifested by the proposal known as G4, which it has presented together with India, Germany and Brazil, to institute a new Security Council increased to 6 permanent members and 25 non permanent ones.⁸ To bring this about, Japan must win over to its cause the greatest number of partners. Since Africa represents about fifty States, being a quarter of the members of the UN General Assembly, it is tempting, as it has been for other great or medium-sized powers before it, to secure their support, in order to obtain their votes both in the General Assembly and in the Security Council, where African non permanent members sometimes play a determining role. This Japanese diplomatic strategy, which has formed part of its fundamental principles since the 1980s, but which is now openly displayed with no inhibitions, has led it to maintain a policy of generous aid, details of which will be given below.

Accused for a long time of sheltering behind its Constitution, so as not to get involved on the ground in peacekeeping operations, and of giving priority to "chequebook diplomacy," Japan had to bring about a change in its involvement during African crises. It has therefore increased its participation in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) since the 1990s.⁹

Its first involvement on the African continent was in South West Africa/Namibia from April 1989 to March 1990, as part of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). Next came Japan's contribution, only financial however, to UNOSOM II (United Nations Operation in Somalia II) at the beginning of 1992. But the good faith of the Japanese could not be doubted in their refusal to commit troops to Somalia, insofar as two conditions had to be met: that a request be made by the local authorities (non-existent at the time) and that the situation not be too confrontational, for the Japanese soldiers would not have been authorised to make use of their arms, even in the case of legitimate defence. While the participation of Japan in UNAVEM II (United Nations Angola Verification Mission II) in Angola was virtually nominal (three persons involved in monitoring elections), it was another matter in Mozambique. Japan had already come out in support of this country in the 1980s, while it was in the throes of a civil war that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths in 1984-1985. A few years later, Japan took part in UNOMOZ (United Nations Operation in Mozambique) with a contingent of 53 military personnel out of 354 international observers. In this special case, it was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that influenced the decision, whereas Prime Minister Miyasawa was inclined to oppose this commitment. The Rwandan drama gave Japan the opportunity to affirm its military presence indirectly in Africa. It seems incontestable that the appointment of the academic Sadako Ogata as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1991 was not unrelated to Japan's decision to send a contingent of 260 men of the Self Defence Forces (SDF), for the first time under Japanese command, to Goma. The reasons mentioned above in the example of Somalia also being applicable to Rwanda, the Japanese soldiers were based on the other side of the border, in neighbouring Zaire. The straitjacket of the Japanese constitution, in particular its Article 9, being too restrictive, a discussion on the annulment or modification of this article became a bone of contention between the Liberal Democratic Party (right-wing), in power until a few months ago, and the left-wing opposition. A first step was taken to "normalise" Japanese institutions on 9 January 2007, when a Ministry of Defence was created for the first time since 1945. Nonetheless the fact remains that Japan's military participation in UN interventions is not systematic. Thus, in 2007, Japan declined the offer it received to transport Burundian troops to Darfur.

Aid diplomacy

Parallel to its classic diplomatic action, Japan implemented actions aimed at reinforcing its image as a global power at an international level; in these actions it followed closely behind Africa's traditional partners. The philosophy behind Japanese aid was not created *ex nihilo*, but was part of the framework of a foreign policy that had evolved steadily for about sixty years. The implementation of Japanese Public Development Aid (PDA) can be explained by various motivations that take into account both the international context and specific concerns.¹⁰ Over the years, Japan's commitment to developing countries has evolved. Whereas before 1989 the motivation had been mainly economic, after the disappearance of the Soviet Empire a diplomatic constituent was added to this motivation, in Japan's quest to become a major player in international politics.¹¹ With this change in focus, the approach to its aid policy became more multilateral, being channelled mainly through the United Nations and its specialised agencies, and aid was progressively "untied."¹²

To implement its aid policy, Japan created specific instruments, which were made responsible for its implementation, essentially in Asia, but also more and more in Africa. It will be noted that, since its implementation, it has undergone various changes and that Japan was the first non colonising country to launch a cycle of bilateral conferences with African countries, the Tokyo International Conferences on African Development (TICAD), which became the model a few years later for other countries like China, Taiwan, India of South Korea.

About twenty ministries and specialised agencies participate at different levels in the preparation and execution of Japan's policy of aid to developing countries. As each one has its own objectives and priorities, their sometimes divergent interests can occasionally be the source of tension. They complicate the development of a coherent policy which is supposedly the fruit of a permanent collaboration between the main actors, these being the MOFA, the MITI, the MOF and the EPA (Economic Planning Agency).¹³

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), based on the International Development Cooperation Agency (IDCA) of the United States,¹⁴ which is one of the more important bilateral aid agencies in the world, constitutes the armed wing of Japanese aid diplomacy. Created in

1971,¹⁵ JICA was assigned several tasks: technical cooperation, promotion of the activities of young Japanese volunteers (Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, JOCV), an organisation modelled on the American Peace Corps,¹⁶ and making available to private Japanese firms funds needed to realise pilot projects and to recruit and train technical managerial staff. Two acts completed JICA's missions: the first, passed on 28 April 1978, concerned grants (Grant Capital Assistance) and the second, dated 6 September 1987, was for aid in the event of natural disasters (Disaster Relief Team). In October 2003, JICA became administratively independent; finally, on 1 October 2008, the "new JICA" came into existence through the merging of JICA and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), whose mission was to allocate subsidised loans to developing countries. With this event, the missions of the "new JBIC" increased: promotion of the development of strategic natural resources in foreign countries, aid towards the efforts of Japanese industry to develop international business and response to financial disturbances in the international economy. The JBIC has two means available for allocating its loans: International Financial Operations (IFO), intended for both developed and developing countries, and Overseas Economic Operations (ODA), essentially devoted to developing countries.¹⁷ Since its reorganisation, JICA has at its disposal 97 offices, which draw up programmes in 150 countries for a total amount of about 8.5 billion dollars.¹⁸

The existence of the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), which is complementary to JICA, should also be mentioned, although its activities in Africa are rather limited. This agency grants long-term loans at preferential rates and participates in private sector projects that fall within the ambit of its missions.¹⁹

On the quantitative level, Japan's development aid has undergone fluctuations both in volume and geographical distribution. Japan, which had become the first provider of aid on a global level between 1993 and 2000, came only third in 2001 after the United States and the United Kingdom, falling to fifth place in 2007, behind Germany and France. And if one takes into account the ratio aid/GNP, its performance is even less honourable, since Japanese aid only represented 0.25 % in 2006, placing the archipelago in the 19th rank of countries belonging to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). In defence of the Japanese authorities, it should be remembered that the crisis which

had shaken the Japanese economy from the middle of the 1990s no longer allowed Japan to increase the volume of its aid. But the sinusoids of Japanese aid have evolved in accordance with decisions taken by successive Prime Ministers, whether it was Ryutaro Hashimoto, who decreased it from 1997 to 2000, or his successors, who cancelled the reduction of the budget for the year 2000, or Junichiro Koizumi, who in his turn decreased aid by 3% in 2001, reducing it by 10% more the following year (910 million yen).²⁰ For the 2008 tax year, it had fallen to slightly more than 600 million yen.

For decades, Asia was the continent that benefited the most from Japanese development aid. In 2006, Africa's share rose for the first time to 34.2% of Japan's total aid, while Asia's share represented no more than 26.8%.²¹ In other words, compared to its level in 2000, the portion of Japanese aid allocated to Africa had been multiplied by 2.5 by 2006, while Asia's share had decreased by 51.1% in the same period. In 2005, Japan committed itself to doubling its aid to Africa within three years. This objective having been reached, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda declared at TICAD IV: "I hereby undertake that by 2012 — within five years — Japan will double its development aid to Africa. (...) Japan should allocate to Africa loans of up to 4 billion dollars to improve infrastructure. Moreover, I promise that Japan will double its technical aid and cooperation to Africa in the next five years."²² Naturally this marked interest in African development was not fortuitous. Japan, which had been the first player of note to inaugurate large impressive meetings with Africans, realised by 2005 that many other countries, like China, were close of its heels and had robbed it of strategic positions, especially in key sectors like energy. It became vital for Japan to renew its links with a continent that contained raw materials that it sorely lacked. Japan intends letting Africa benefit from its know-how regarding power stations fuelled by high speed gas turbines or its experience in electricity networks.²³

Considering its new global ambitions and its growing need for raw materials, Japan understood, admittedly after Africa's traditional partners, but before its Asian rivals, that it was necessary to establish a framework to enable both parties — Japan and Africa — to meet regularly and develop their cooperation. This is how the idea was born to organise the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), on the occasion of a speech by Taro Nakayama, then Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the UN General Assembly in September 1991; this initiative was

taken at just the right moment, since at that time Africans, fearing to see themselves abandoned in favour of Eastern Europe, were looking for new partners. Japan was thus able to appear to some Africans as a lifeline. This context explains undoubtedly the enthusiasm they showed in supporting the Tokyo Conference.²⁴

The first TICAD, which took place in September 1991, ended with the adoption of the Tokyo Declaration on the development of Africa, a rather vague text without much practical importance, but which had the advantage of enabling Japan to emerge as a global power.²⁵ The second TICAD (19-21 October 1998), was characterised by the institutionalisation of the relationship between the two partners. The “action plan” unveiled at that conference helped provide concrete answers to multiple questions posed by the development of the African continent.²⁶ The third TICAD (29 September to 1 October 2003) helped to perpetuate a relationship indispensable to both parties: Japan henceforth made Africa a major feature of its foreign policy and Africa is always in search of new means of development.²⁷ Moreover, TICAD III broke new ground, insofar as it henceforth took into account the priorities of every region of Africa. At this conference, the 53 African countries, the other States represented at the forum, international institutions and NGOs requested that the Millennium Development Goals be fulfilled by 2015. They also insisted that these coincide with the approach of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), drawn up in 2001 and accepted by Japan.²⁸

TICAD IV, which took place in Yokohama from 28 to 30 May 2008, was placed under the catchy title of “Towards a Vibrant Africa.” It attracted the representatives of 51 African States — 41 of whom were Heads of State — and ended with the Declaration of Yokohama that set out an action plan for the next five years. As per usual, after an appraisal as much on the level of “governance” as of the economic domain, several resolutions were taken, apart from those concerning the increase of Japanese PDA already mentioned above. In order to accelerate economic growth, the Declaration of Yokohama expressed the desire to develop African human resources, industry, infrastructure, agriculture, trade and investments. It also promised to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). There was nothing really innovative in this fourth edition of the TICAD, which had to face up to the higher bid of new backers like the United Arab Emirates or other Asian giants such as China, India and, to a lesser degree, Malaysia.

As fate would have it, the last TICAD took place three months before the financial crisis of September 2008. With the result that the financial commitments made by Japan turned out to be too substantial, considering the global economic situation. But finding it difficult to lose face, the Japanese have continued to respect, at least for the sake of form, the schedule of planned periodical meetings. Thus a first follow-up ministerial meeting took place in Gaborone (Botswana) on 21 and 22 March 2009. Its main objective was to consider the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis. Yasuo Fukuda, former Japanese Prime Minister and Ambassador-at-large, reaffirmed Japan's commitment to Africa, taken at TICAD IV, to act as advocate for the continent in international forums like the G8. He also emphasised the importance of collaborating with other organisations like the African Union, NEPAD and the big backers of international funds.²⁹ Finally he confirmed Japan's determination to respect its quantified commitments made at TICAD IV, whether this meant doubling PDA, introducing private investments by the year 2012, implementing a plan of technical subsidies and assistance for 2 billion dollars or mobilising loans for 4 billion dollars. Yasuo Fukuda also declared that the Japanese Government had mobilised a loan of 100 billion dollars, made available to the IMF and the Bank Recapitalisation Fund, initiated by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Japanese JBIC. Finally the initiatives of JICA in favour of technical assistance and Aid for Trade were welcomed by the African representatives in Gaborone.

A second inter-ministerial follow-up meeting of TICAD IV was held on 2 and 3 May 2010 in Arusha (Tanzania). It handled the following themes: progress recorded in the implementation of the Action Plan of Yokohama; efforts made by Africa to recover from the impact of the financial and economic crisis; Millenium Development Goals (MDG); and climate change.

Trade and investments

The TICAD have no doubt contributed to projecting the image of a Japan concerned about the future of the African continent, thanks to sustained diplomatic activity and substantial development aid. However, trade between the two partners and direct investments on the continent have never been commensurate with the economic relations that the

archipelago has had with other parts of the world, as they have been limited and focused both in geographical terms and on specific domains. The causes of this relative disaffection of Japanese firms for Africa are multiple and diverse. Among the obstacles regularly put forward by Japanese entrepreneurs operating on the continent are the following: increasing political instability, giving rise to fear about changes in legislation, even nationalisations; civil wars and endemic poverty and their corollary, insecurity for persons and goods; inadequate and obsolete infrastructure (except in South Africa); substantial health risks; and finally, the multiplication of customs unions, which are eight in number, as well as fluctuating currency rates, including that of the South African Rand, but with the notable exception of the CFA Franc, linked to the Euro.³⁰

Whereas the Second World War had put a stop to the expansion of Japanese trade in Africa, it resumed timidly after 1945. The accession to independence of the African territories under guardianship would further accelerate this tendency. However, the volume of trade between the two partners remained hopelessly weak, especially in newly independent Africa. The years 1960-1970 did see a progression, although there were still a few pitfalls: however astonishing it may seem today, between 1960 and 1964, Africa imported more Japanese products than the Common Market or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Whereas until 1961 there was a trade deficit in favour of Africa, from that date forward, the tendency was reversed: Africa continued to import massively from Japan, while the archipelago did not absorb enough raw materials in compensation. Between 1961 and 1970, Japanese exports increased from 400 million to 1.4 billion dollars; at the same time, imports jumped from 300 to 850 million.³¹ From 1980 to 1990, a certain readjustment was gradually effected. The year 1981 established a record in this regard: imports reached 4.8 billion dollars and exports 10 billion. But the appreciation of the yen, as well as a spectacular fall in the price of oil, had disastrous consequences for the bilateral trade relations from the following year. The transformation of Japanese heavy industry and the fall in the production of Japanese steel resulted in a disaffection for iron ore. Between 1980 and 1990, the main Japanese exports were predominantly in the transport sector (automobiles, trucks, ships), electric equipment, metal products and machines. As for imports, 50% were represented by coal, oil, platinum, copper, steel, gold, cobalt and products of the sea. Japan's main partners on the continent — apart from South Africa — were Egypt,

Liberia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Mauritania, Gabon, Ghana and Tanzania.³²

As for South Africa, it has always been a major trading partner for Tokyo. Deprived of privileged access to sources of raw materials after its defeat in 1945, Japan had no choice but to trade with the most advanced, the richest and the most solvent State on the continent. While issuing statements in principle against apartheid, it was happy to adopt towards the RSA an attitude that could be described as “business as usual.” In spite of sanctions, adopted reluctantly moreover by Japan, trade relations increased significantly until the archipelago became the main trading partner of South Africa in 1987. Between 1962 and 1980, bilateral trade had doubled. But this phenomenal increase in trade led the international community to urge Japan to reduce trade relations with the pariah State; they quadrupled between 1973 and 1987, reaching 4 billion dollars. Officially bilateral trade declined rapidly, but numerous violations of sanctions were noted during this period. That year, six Japanese companies were responsible for half of all trade with the RSA — Mitsui, Nissho Iwai, Sumitomo, Mitsubishi, Itoh and Marubeni, for a combined total of 18.5 billion dollars.³³

The end of the Cold War and the confrontation with buttoned foils between the East and the West on African soil had as a direct consequence the fall of the white regime, which had impeded the development of trade between the RSA and the rest of the world. Strong in its former economic position, Japan consolidated its presence in South Africa, as soon as the abolition of economic sanctions took effect on 22 October 1991, even before Nelson Mandela reached the highest office in the land three years later. From then on, trade resumed its rise, but never returned the record level of 1987.

Trade between Japan and Africa, which was at its lowest level between 1999 and 2001, increased once more, without reaching the peak it enjoyed in 1981. In 2007, there was an increase of 16.3% on the previous year; Japanese exports to Africa doubled between 2003 and 2007, reaching 11.6 billion dollars, while imports reached their highest level for three consecutive years, with an amount of 14.8 billion dollars. After the continuance of growth in raw materials, until the financial crisis in 2008, the trade balance traditionally favourable to Japan changed into a deficit; in 2007, it amounted to 3.2 billion dollars. In 2006, crude oil and platinum were the main imports, representing 21% and 8% respectively of the 13.26

billion dollars bought by the archipelago. Most of the oil came from Sudan, Angola and Nigeria, while rare metals came from South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. As in the past, South Africa remains Japan's most important trading partner on the continent, with 50% of trade, followed by Sudan (11%), Egypt (8%) and Nigeria (5%).³⁴ As for Japanese exports to the dark continent, they consist mainly of automobile vehicles (24% of the total), ships (6%) and machine-tools (4%).³⁵ Although about fifty Japanese company heads accompanied Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Egypt and TICAD IV encouraged increased bilateral trade, in 2008 it represented less than one third of the total trade between Africa and China (107 billion dollars). And in 2009, only 2.5% of Japan's external business was with the continent, as opposed to 11% for China.

In order to boost bilateral trade, several high level trade missions to Africa took place in September 2008, in Southern Africa (Botswana, Mozambique, Madagascar, South Africa), as well as in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania) and in West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal).

Japanese investments in Africa have followed more or less the same pattern as trade. For the same reasons as those mentioned above, Japanese investors decided that prudence was appropriate. Although in 1990 and 1994 return on investments was higher in Africa than in Asia (24 to 30% compared with 16 to 18%), Africa attracted few foreign investors. In 1993, direct foreign investment (DFI) in Africa represented only 2.3% of all investments made in the world. The Japanese were even more cautious, since they only invested 7.351 billion dollars in Africa in 1994, amounting to 1.74% of their total DFI.³⁶ Still today, Japanese DFI in Africa remains weak and has even decreased since the 1990s, since it only amounted to 1.5%, for investments of 1.1 billion dollars in 2007, compared to 4% for China. The implementation of decisions taken at TICAD IV should enable Japanese firms to double their investment in Africa, to reach 3.4 billion dollars by 2012. Until 2005, most investments were made in South Africa, mainly in the mining and automobile sectors, and in Egypt — 85% of Japanese DFI on the continent — as well as in Mauritius, Nigeria, Kenya and Angola.³⁷ However, during the last three years, slightly more Japanese investments have been made in other African countries.

Africa's oldest partner — apart from the former colonisers and the United States — Japan was the first Asian country to take an interest in the continent, both on the economic level and on the level of cooperation. Its

diplomatic offensive targeting African States was materialised by the TICAD conferences, one of the strong points of its foreign policy, the purpose of which is to turn Japan into a global power. For a long time Japan was the main Asian player on African soil, with the exception of Taiwan and a few limited operations carried out by China, such as the construction of the TanZam between 1970 and 1975, a railway line linking Tanzania to Zambia. However, the economic crisis that dealt a severe blow to the archipelago in the 1990s caused it to lower its guard, at a time when other regional powers were developing rapidly. Japan has thus seen its positions challenged by outsiders like China³⁸, Taiwan, India or Malaysia.

Conscious of having lost ground, and seeing its rank as second global economic power threatened by China, Japan is trying to remobilise all its energy with regard to Africa. This is the reason why TICAD IV, which took place in 2008, saw Japan making concrete commitments, why it has multiplied official missions, in which many Japanese business leaders — the Keidanren (members of the Japanese Business Federation) — take part, and why it has opened new embassies, such as the one in Ouagadougou in 2008. The royal family has also been called upon to participate in this attempt to re-conquer Africa. The African tour in March 2010 of Prince Nahurito, heir to the imperial throne, which took him from Ghana to Kenya, is part of this strategy. One round of the competition for the first place in Asia is being played out in Africa. Japan realised this after China and it could prove difficult to wrest from China its power of attraction for Africans, unless the controversial methods used by its great rival end up by attracting too much animosity.

Notes

¹ “Sino-African Cooperation to Rise to New High,” *Quotidien du peuple*, Pékin, 10 February 2000.

² Aicardi de Saint-Paul, Marc, *Le Japon et l’Afrique : genèse d’une relation atypique*, CHEAM, La Documentation française, 1999, pp. 13-15.

³ Article III of the Treaty of Berlin in 1885 and of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1919, which were ratified in Japan.

⁴ Sono (Themba), *Japan and Africa: The Evolution and Nature of Political Economic and Human Bonds*, HSRC Pretoria, 1993, p. 59.

⁵ Morikawa (Jun), “The Myth and Reality of Japan’s Relations with Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African Studies* published by the African Studies Center, UCLA, Los Angeles, Spring 1985.

⁶ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), "La Chine et l'Afrique entre engagement et désintérêt," *Géopolitique Africaine*, n° 14, April 2004, pp. 51-65.

⁷ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), "Le Japon, Taïwan et l'Afrique du Sud," in Special issue on Africa-Asia, *Afrique contemporaine*, Paris, October 1995, pp. 42-58.

⁸ Couraye (Hervé), "Le Japon, lointain et proche," *Géopolitique Africaine* n° 21, January 2006, p. 209.

⁹ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), "La contribution du Japon à la sécurité en Afrique," in *La sécurité collective en Afrique*, international colloquium, Brazzaville, 28-29 November 2003, pp. 121-126.

¹⁰ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, op. cit., pp. 77-89.

¹¹ Van Wyk (Hesté), "Human Security as an Influence on Japan's Contemporary Africa Policy: Principles, Patterns and Implications," <http://hdl.handle.net/10019/727>.

¹² Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

¹³ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, op. cit., p. 91 ; Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), "Un donateur atypique : le Japon," in *Les aides à l'Afrique en question*, *Afrique contemporaine*, La Documentation Française, n° 188, October-December 1998, pp. 147-159.

¹⁴ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *La politique africaine des États-Unis : mécanismes et conduite*, Economica, Nouveaux Horizons, 3^e édition, Paris 1989, pp. 47-48.

¹⁵ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc) *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, op.cit., p. 93.

¹⁶ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *La politique africaine des États-Unis : mécanismes et conduite*, op. cit., pp.42-43.

¹⁷ *Japan Bank for International Cooperation*, Wikipedia, January 2010.

¹⁸ *Japan International Agency*, Wikipedia, January 2010.

¹⁹ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, op. cit., pp. 96-98. and <http://www.bizconnections.com/oecf.htm>.

²⁰ Kamo (Shozo), "De l'engagement économique à l'engagement politique : les nouvelles orientations de la politique africaine du Japon," in "Dossier Japon/Afrique," *Afrique contemporaine*, n° 21, Winter 2004, pp. 63-64.

²¹ Burscheiger (Nadine), "Towards a Vibrant Africa: The Beginning of a new era of Japanese-African Partnership ?" *Afrika Spectrum*, GIGA, Institute of African Affairs, Hamburg, 2008, pp. 418-420.

²² Opening address at TICAD IV pronounced by Premier Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

²³ Mayusyama (Toshikazu), "Economic Diplomacy in Africa," *Highlighting Japan*, April 2008, pp.14-15.

²⁴ Marc Aicardi de Saint-Paul attended the first two TICADs as a guest of the Japanese Government. For the first two TICADs, see Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, op. cit., pp. 56-61.

²⁵ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), "La TICAD et la Déclaration de Tokyo," *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*, n° 2503, 29 October 1993, pp. 2624-2625.

²⁶ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), "La TICAD II, 19-21 October 1998," *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*, n° 2767, 20 November 1998, pp. 2415-2416.

²⁷ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), "La Chine, le Japon et l'Afrique : entre convergence et spécificité," in : *Mélanges offerts au Professeur Edmond Jouve*, to be published in 2010; Lehman (Howard P.), "Japan's National Economic Identity and African Development. An Analysis of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development," Research Paper n° 2007/61, United Nations University, Helsinki, October 2007.

²⁸ Couraye (Hervé), "Le Japon, lointain et proche," *op.cit.*, pp. 208-209.

²⁹ TICAD IV, First follow-up ministerial meeting of TICAD. Opening address by Yasuo Fukuda, Ambassador-at-large and former Prime Minister of Japan, 22 March 2009.

³⁰ Burgschweiger (Nadine), "Towards a Vibrant Africa: The Beginning of a new era of Japanese-African Partnership?," *op. cit.*, p. 424.

³¹ Sono (Themba), *Japan and Africa: The Evolution and Nature of Political Economic and Human Bonds, 1543-1993*, HSRC, Pretoria, South Africa, 1993, p. 286.

³² Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-107.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-109.

³⁴ Source: MOF 2008.

³⁵ Burgschweiger (Nadine), *op. cit.*, pp. 420-422.

³⁶ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc), *Le Japon et l'Afrique : genèse d'une relation atypique*, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

³⁷ Androuais (Anne), "Japon et Afrique : la genèse de relations économiques," in "Dossier Japon-Afrique," *Afrique contemporaine*, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-128.

³⁸ Aicardi de Saint-Paul (Marc) "La Chine et l'Afrique entre engagement et désintérêt," *Géopolitique Africaine*, n° 14, April 2004, pp. 51-65 and by the same author: "Pékin, capitale de l'Afrique ?," *Géopolitique Africaine*, n° 25, pp. 305-310.