

Sino-Japanese Rivalry in Africa?

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Abstract

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Ivory Coast, Mozambique and Ethiopia from 9th to 14th January 2014. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Ethiopia, Djibouti, Ghana and Senegal from 7th to 11th January 2014. The two visits somewhat overlapped chronologically as well as geographically. The visits also took place on the heels of a steadily deteriorating relationship between the two Asian powers. And, at times, the visits themselves descended into a verbal combat over who has Africa's best interest at heart. From 4th to 11th May 2014, roughly about four months after Prime Minister Abe visited Africa, Mr. Li Keqiang, China's Prime Minister, also visited Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola and Kenya. In this essay, we shall explore some of the major issues that ought to be considered in assessing what seems to be an unfolding Sino-Japanese rivalry in Africa, and the options available to the continent under the circumstances.

Keywords: Afro-Japanese Relations, Sino-African Relations, Sino-Japanese Relations, Sino-Japanese Rivalry

Introduction

In the post-Cold War period uncertainties have arisen in East Asia that have complicated Sino-Japanese relations, including those pertaining to the consequences of China's growing power, Japan's "normalization," American commitment (or lack thereof) to the region, and the nuclear threat from North Korea. Sino-Japanese rivalry in Africa is presumably taking place against the background of such anxieties in Northeast Asia. "Japan will not just extract resources from Africa but create jobs" (Kantei 2014). This statement was made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan in Maputo, Mozambique, in January 2014. The Prime Minister was suggesting at least two things. First, China is soaking up Africa's resources, and, second, Chinese workers are taking away from Africans the jobs Africans need and deserve. As *The Yomiuri Shimbun* (15th January 2014) elaborated further: "Many Chinese companies import workers from China to work in Africa—a practice that does not help in increasing local employment". Prime Minister Abe was thus touching on a legitimate but sensitive issue in China's economic diplomacy in Africa. On their part, China's leaders also launched a diplomatic offensive. Hong Lei, the spokesperson of China's Foreign Ministry, said: "Japan claims to boost employment in Africa, but how do you do that if there is no industry to support? We will wait and see how far the aid program Abe promised will go" (quoted in Zhendong and Jian 2014). The reaction of China's Ambassador to Ethiopia sounded more offensive than diplomatic. He said: "Abe has become the biggest troublemaker in Asia and his visit to Africa was part and parcel of a China containment policy" (The Bangkok Post 2014).

Would Africa someday become the battleground of China and Japan? This was a question some people had quietly entertained for some time but never imagined that it would literally come to pass, and so soon. As *The Japan Times* (16th January 2014) reported: "The Chinese disdain for [Prime Minister] Abe's visit went past the political level.

On Sunday, Chinese activists brawled with Japanese embassy security in the capital of Ethiopia, as they took pictures of the embassy and protested Abe's visit."

What all this seems to suggest is that there is a rivalry between Japan and China which is unfolding in Africa. We can go further and hypothesize that the rivalry was triggered by the anxiety caused in Japan by, among other things, the growing power and influence of China in Africa and around the world, an anxiety which is also rooted in the deep disagreement between the two countries over history and territory. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Africa was a manifestation of the general sense of insecurity which prevails in Japan. Before we scrutinize contemporary features of China's and Japan's diplomacy in Africa, we shall offer one perspective on their historical evolution. Along the lines suggested by other studies (for instance, Ayinde 2007; Lumumba-Kasongo 2010; Lehman 2010; Iwata 2012), we will then focus on the elements of divergence and convergence in Sino-Japanese diplomacy in Africa. Then comes an examination of the nature, sources and manifestations of Sino-Japanese rivalry in Africa before we close with tentative answers to the question of how Africa must respond under the circumstances.

Comparative Foreign Policy

China and Africa

There have been three distinct phases in the history of China's diplomacy in Africa. Wrapped in ideology, the first phase (1955-1978) began in Bandung (Indonesia) at the conference of Afro-Asian countries. In subsequent years, China supported national liberation movements in Africa. It, then, forged relations with independent African countries so long as those countries were not close friends of the US. Later, the ideological litmus test became the Soviet Union. This phase of China's diplomacy was conducted in the shadow of Mao's ideologically-inspired experiments at home, too, including the Hundred Flowers Experiment (1956), the Great Leap Forward (1958-60) and the Cultural Revolution (1965-67). After Mao's death in 1976, the role of ideology in China's diplomacy and domestic politics waned, almost running its course in 1978. Deng Xiaoping's "Four Modernizations" heralded the beginning of the second phase of China's diplomacy in Africa (1979-1989) which also coincided with the end of the liberation project in the continent, except in Southern Africa. Ideology ceased to be the sole consideration. China forged relations with countries like Zimbabwe, Angola and Ivory Coast, too. The Tiananmen incident in 1989 sealed the end of the second phase of China's diplomacy in Africa, while heralding the third phase. The incident brought China and many African countries closer even as it led for a while to China's global isolation (Anshan 2008: 28).

The third phase (1990-) of China's diplomacy in Africa is marked by the end of the Cold War globally and the triumph of market socialism in China. It saw accelerated economic and diplomatic interactions between China and African countries. China's trade with Africa grew by leaps and bounds, and its leaders became frequent guests of their African counterparts.

Japan and Africa

Japan's diplomacy in Africa, which began in 1961 when the Africa Division was created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has passed through five or six phases (Adem 2014a: 367-376). In the first phase (1961-1972), Japan seriously

took upon itself the role of supporter of America, vowing to curb the spread of Communism in the continent by ensuring its diplomacy was in lockstep with America's overall Cold War strategy. Japan's Cold War diplomacy in Africa came to almost an abrupt end in 1973 when the Organization of Petroleum Producing Countries (OPEC) decided to raise the price of oil. One effect of the OPEC decision was therefore to usher in the second phase of Japan's Africa diplomacy (1973-1992) in which the nation realized more than ever before that it must diversify sources of energy and other raw materials critical to its industries. Japan paid attention to Africa, too, sending its Foreign Minister (Toshio Kimura) for the first time to visit the continent in 1974 (Ochiai 2001: 39).

In the third phase (1993-2006), Japan showed greater independence in its Africa diplomacy (Adem 2001; Cornelissen 2012). It became a leading Official Development Assistance (ODA) donor. It took certain initiatives in its African diplomacy, such as the launching of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). Generally, Japan's diplomacy in this period reflected the nation's international status as well as its global aspirations. The first-ever visit to Africa by a Japanese Prime Minister took place when Yoshiro Mori visited Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria in 2001. Prime Minister Mori's successor, Junichiro Koizumi, visited Ghana and Ethiopia in 2006.

In its fourth phase (2007-2013), Japan's diplomacy in Africa looked less vigorous. This phase also coincided with drastic changes in the conditions which had inspired a vibrant diplomacy previously. China became the largest trading partner of Japan in 2008 and of Africa in 2009. China overtook Japan as the second largest economy globally in 2010. No Japanese prime minister visited Africa in this period, including Mr. Taro Aso (2007: 251-253) who had lived in Sierra Leone for two years. Questions have now arisen whether or not a fifth phase in Japan's diplomacy has begun with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Africa in January 2014, and whether or not it was partly a reaction to the growing influence of China in Africa. We shall address below these challenging questions against the background of China's diplomacy in Africa today, but first let us examine the elements of convergence and divergence in the foreign policies of China and Japan in Africa.

Elements of Divergence

We can identify at least seven elements of divergence in the diplomacy of China and Japan in Africa. The first relates to the perception in Africa that China pays greater attention to more African countries, and it does so sometimes irrespective of the immediate benefit to itself (Adem 2010). Conversely, Japan is said to follow the "key-country" approach in which a country is singled out in a specific African region and used as a diplomatic springboard in and beyond that region (Morikawa 1997: 22-24). In reality, however, China's African diplomacy is not as indiscriminate as it appears. On closer inspection, we would learn that the bulk of China's economic interactions in Africa, too, are concentrated in a handful of African countries in different regions of the continent, as are Japan's.

The second issue pertains to the view that Japan's economic aid to Africa is often geared towards promoting what may be called neutral freedom as opposed to China's aid which is concerned with positive freedom. Neutral freedom gives one the abstract freedom to choose whereas positive freedom gives one the concrete power to choose. In other words, neutral freedom is a freedom from domination or control by another person. Positive freedom the freedom to do something. The president of China's Exim Bank was tapping into this very distinction when he said: "Roads and radios are more urgent needs for Africans than human rights and freedom" (quoted in Jacobson 2009: 425). In the specific

context of the unfolding Sino-Japanese rivalry, Lu Shaye, Head of African Department at China's Foreign Ministry, echoed a similar sentiment when he described Japan's approach as "empty words whereas Chinese assistance 'can be seen and touched'" (quoted in Feng 2014).

Third, although the economic exchanges of China and Japan with Africa are asymmetric, favoring the Asian powers by virtue of the size and nature of their national economies, the two countries use divergent approaches for dealing with issues arising from trade imbalance with African countries. Japan generally prefers to extend Official Development Assistance (ODA) primarily and use debt cancellation, while China takes additional measures such as encouraging exports from African countries to China through reduction or elimination of trade barriers. Because of its immense appetite for natural resources, no African country is too poor for China to cultivate if it has useful resources, even if these are not yet fully developed (Adem 2012: 143-160; Hess and Aidoo 2015: 109-122).

It is widely believed that while Japan's economic aid to Africa has historically sought to promote the so-called "Washington Consensus", China's economic engagement with Africa challenges this very "consensus". Some people have even begun a discourse about the "Beijing Consensus" (Kennedy 2010: 461-477; Zhao 2010: 419-436; Ampiah and Naidu 2008: 333). This is the fourth distinction which simply (and somewhat simplistically) is said to reflect the dichotomy between the "free market" economy of Japan and the "state guided" development of China. The fifth divergence exists in the realm of cultural diplomacy. China has already built more language schools in Africa in the last ten years than what Japan has built in the continent in the last half a century. Here is also where the issue of comparative Diasporas becomes relevant. Chinese Diaspora on the African continent is growing. Japan has virtually none. As Chinese immigrants become more integrated into African societies, it will not also be very long before they start to speak what Mazrui and Mazrui (1992) called ecumenical (as opposed to communal) African languages.

The sixth element of divergence pertains to the key players in Africa which in the case of Japan are corporations and diplomats. In China's case, the multiple actors range from the state, semi-private enterprise and private companies to municipal governments and even retail traders. And this fact has given Japan's diplomacy in Africa the appearance of greater cohesiveness than China's (Hess and Aidoo 2015: 137). It must be noted, too, that unlike Japan's, China's investments in Africa are promoted by corporations that receive substantial government support (Gurtov 2013: 41). And the multiplicity of players in China's diplomacy in Africa has created ample opportunities for potential conflicts among its various constituent parts.

The last element of divergence pertains to the most basic question of what Africa is. For a Japanese diplomat, Africa is what is commonly known as the Sub-Saharan Africa. This formula, of course, leaves out of Africa at least North Africa and Sudan (before it was partitioned). China's conceptualization of Africa is trans-Saharan, comprising both Sub-Saharan and what is called Arab-Africa.

Elements of Convergence

We can identify at least six elements of convergence in the diplomacy of China and Japan in Africa. First, the role of state is relatively strong in both countries (Beeson 2009: 5-39). As Beeson and Breslin (2014: 112) have also observed: "The state in China, like Japan before it, has also controlled access to markets through the issuing of licenses and protecting domestic producers from external competition." There is probably less difference between them on how state

should relate to the economy than between either one and the United States. And yet the similarities must not be stretched too far since China's developmental state owes more to the heritage of its Maoist ideology than anything else. Japan's developmentalism is based upon a different ideology, or ideologies, with implications for direct control and ownership of the means of production.

Second, the tendency to creatively combine big business and diplomacy is another feature which China and Japan share. Unlike Japan – Africa relations in which case the scale of economic interactions has been limited, however, China-Africa relations are becoming more complex, more expansive and more consequential, making them more sensitive to tensions between China's business and diplomatic interests in the continent. Third, Japan and China have variously used public diplomacy to connect with Africa's populace (Adem 2001: 2013). Two recent examples will illustrate this point. When he visited Ethiopia in January 2014, Prime Minister Abe told his audience in reference to Ethiopia's legendary Marathon runner Abebe Bikila who won a gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964: "My name is Abe, but everybody teased me at school, calling me Abebe. Many Japanese Marathon runners would collapse after the race but when I saw Mr. Abebe actually stretching afterwards, it was such a surprise, even for a 10-year-old" (quoted in The Australian Network News 2014). In May 2014, Prime Minister Li Keqiang visited Ethiopia, and he also made sure to remind his audience that the current Ethiopian President and he were studying at Beijing University at the same time in the 1970s (CCTV 7th 2014). As simple and human as the above two stories are, they also go a long way in creating goodwill among peoples far more deeply than a generous ODA alone could ever do.

The fourth element of convergence has to do with the overlapping nature of the interests of China and Japan in Africa. Given the dependence of the two countries on imports of mineral fuel and other critical raw materials and in their quest for markets and diplomatic support, Africa could, theoretically, become an arena of cooperation rather than conflict between them. Of course, the same phenomena, the competing goals, could also become a source of conflict in the context of bilateral hostility between the two countries. Of all the regions of the world, Northeast Asia has the lowest level of institutionalized cooperation (Swanstrom and Kokubun 2013: 5). Additionally, Japan and China were never so strong at the same time. Fifth, Japan, like China, had been less predisposed in the last half a century to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. The sources of such restraint on the part of Japan and on the part of China are, of course, quite different. Japan's reluctance to interfere primarily stems from its constitution that has imposed considerable constraint on foreign activities of the nation after WWII, whereas China's restraint is rooted, at least officially, in the fact that it was itself the victim of external intervention, including by Japan.

The final point of convergence is in the realm of aid diplomacy. There is circumstantial evidence which points to a possible connection between Japan's aid diplomacy in China and China's aid diplomacy in Africa (Brautigam 2011: 24; Feng 2005: 202-223). The connections presumably reflect the effects of lessons China had learned over the years as a recipient of aid from Japan. If so, this means that China's economic diplomacy in Africa is not as far apart from Japan's as it is sometimes assumed. And yet there are certain distinctive features of China's diplomacy in Africa which are worth outlining.

China's Dual Diplomacy

By duality I mean the contradictory features of Sino-African relations which sometimes come not just in doubles but also in triples and quadruples. China's dual diplomacy in Africa, thus understood, takes various forms including the

following. One is China's tendency to invest both in resource-rich countries (such as Angola, Sudan, Congo Rep., Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria) and in countries not yet known for producing or having resources critically important to China (for instance Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, CAR, Mozambique, Tanzania, Liberia and Madagascar).

Another manifestation is the multiplicity of actors on the part of China. They range from the state, semi-private enterprises and private companies to private individuals. There are sizable Chinese expatriates that include not only entrepreneurs but also construction workers and retailers in, among other countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Sudan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Zambia and Mozambique. Then there is China's emphasis on both bilateralism and multilateralism. China today has diplomatic posts and commercial councilor's offices in more than forty countries in Africa. In addition to one-on-one relations with African governments on bilateral basis, China also has shown inclinations for diplomatic engagement about African issues with inter-governmental organizations in the continent. As of 2005, China already has representatives not only at the African Union (AU) and the New Economic partnership for African development (NEPAD) but also in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In May 2015, China became the first country to open a permanent mission to the AU at its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The fourth expression of this diplomatic duality pertains to China's contributions to peace and conflict in Africa. Between 2001 and 2006, for instance, Chinese personnel contribution to PKO activities in Africa increased by ten-fold (Huang and Morrison 2007: 5). However, China's arms have also contributed directly or indirectly to the perpetuation or, in some cases, escalation of violent conflicts in, for instance, the DRC, the Sudan and Horn of Africa (Shinn 2010). In fact, China continues to be the largest exporter of small arms and light weapons to African states (Thrall 2015: xii). Fifthly, there is the issue of China's collaboration with and defiance of the West both at the same time. China has sometimes acted *in tandem* with, for instance, the IMF, the World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and similar multilateral institutions on issues relevant to Africa. At other times, China has ignored the principles of some of these multilateral institutions.

We must also bear in mind that the duality of China's diplomacy in Africa is partly a reflection of the diversity in the continent itself with which China has come to deal. As Linda Jakobson (2009: 412) observed, "In Africa, multiple contradictions coexist, because the continent encompasses some of the world's most resource-rich countries, most fragile states, poorest nations, most severe humanitarian crises, and most-harsh regimes." But the ambiguity of China's behavior is rooted in issues which are far wider than what goes on in Africa itself, considering that China's international behaviors elsewhere, too, are often contradictory. Analysts still wonder, for instance, whether China is or would be a "radical revisionist" or a "moderate reformist" internationally. There are signs which point in both directions.

Let us now turn to the diplomacy of Japan in Africa which came into sharp focus when its prime minister visited Africa in January 2014. What are the features of the visit? And what are its implications for Sino-African relations?

Abe in Africa

On 9th January 2014, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe left Tokyo on a three-nation Africa tour which took him to Ivory Coast, Mozambique and Ethiopia. The visit was not totally unexpected since he had earlier indicated that he looked

forward to visiting Africa “at the earliest possible time” (Kantei 2014). But the visit was still intriguing for the following reasons. First, none of the countries visited by the Prime Minister were among the most important today in terms of Japan’s economic interest in Africa—as sources of its imports and destinations of its exports. The second reason has to do with the fact that this was the first Japanese prime ministerial visit to Africa since 2006. And third, the visit took place when many believed that Japan would singularly focus on domestic recovery after Fukushima, the large-scale disaster which befell the nation in March 2011.

So, why did Prime Minister Abe visit Africa? Why did he do so in January 2014? Do the answers to these questions in any way relate to Sino-Japanese rivalry? Let us first consider why Prime Minister Abe went to Mozambique, Ivory Coast and Ethiopia. Mozambique was included in Prime Minister Abe’s itinerary because of the recent discovery of huge natural gas reserve in that country. Japan had long sought to diversify the source of its liquefied natural gas which it presently imports, like China does, mainly from Australia and Qatar. There was an added urgency in this regard after the Fukushima nuclear meltdown in 2011. The disaster heightened anti-nuclear sentiments in Japan. In July 2014, Japan’s 48 nuclear reactors which had supplied 30 percent of the electricity generated in Japan, were all offline waiting safety standard test (Iwata 2014). Reduced electricity from nuclear power also meant increased demand for importation of natural gas. What this also means is that Abe went to Africa not in spite of Fukushima but, in part, because of it.

In addition to natural gas, Mozambique also has “rare earths.” This is a critical raw material which China sometimes used as a bargaining chip against Japan (Bradsher 2010). After announcing a substantial aid and investment package in Maputo, Prime Minister Abe said: “our assistance is aimed at securing access to the vast mineral resources of Mozambique” (Kantei 2014). If Prime Minister Abe visited Mozambique for economic reason, we can say that he visited Ivory Coast for diplomatic reasons. Ivory Coast was the Chair of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in January 2014, with its president, Alassane Quattara, serving as the Chairperson of ECOWAS. By visiting Ivory Coast, Prime Minister Abe wanted to reach out to as wide West African audience as he could, since it was more logical to invite West African leaders to Ivory Coast in this context, than to any other country in the region. But Prime Minister Abe’s visit to Ivory Coast acquired additional meaning since it was also the first time for a sitting prime minister of Japan to visit a French-speaking African country.

In general, the same reason which took Prime Minister Abe to Ivory Coast also took him to Ethiopia. It was easier to address Africa from Addis Ababa, the seat of the African Union (AU), especially when Ethiopia’s Prime Minister, Haile Mariam Desalegn, was also the Chair of the AU. Another consideration was perhaps the fact that Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa and a potentially huge market. Furthermore, Ethiopia and Japan have the longest-running bilateral relations in sub-Saharan Africa. Early twentieth century rulers of Ethiopia went as far as portraying Ethiopia as a Tokugawa Japan (Clarke III 2011: 10-11; Mazrui and Adem 2013: 39-40).

Now, about the timing of the visit. Why did Prime Shinzo Abe visit Africa in January 2014 rather than when he was the Prime Minister of Japan from 2006 to 2007? Is this a tale of two Abes, or is there something particularly significant or unique about January 2014? The answer is both of the above. The first administration of Shinzo Abe (2006-2007) was, in hind sight, markedly different from the second (2013 – to date) with regard to policies towards China. The first Abe administration appeared more pragmatic. In fact, China was the first destination of Prime Minister Abe’s international visit in 2006. The second Abe administration was less pragmatic (Swanstrom and Kokubun 2013;

Warren 2013: 175-187). The rapid rise of China was perhaps seen as a unique development by the second Abe administration to justify a change of course.

In any case, more generally, there are at least four somewhat overlapping theoretical scenarios, or schools of thought, about Prime Minister Abe's visit to Africa in January 2014. These are theoretical scenarios because we cannot link a specific school to a specific proponent for the time being. The first school maintained that the visit was part and parcel of the Abe administration's strategy to contain China's expanding influence in Africa and elsewhere. The second school saw Japan's aim in Africa as engaging China by trying to make it clear that China's behaviors in Asia could affect its interests in Africa. The third school viewed Japan's ambition in Africa as more limited in nature, focusing mainly on gaining access to Africa's resources and its potentially huge market. The fourth school considered Japan's interests in Africa as more specifically diplomatic, one of trying to garner the continent's support for, among other things, its quest for permanent membership in a reformed UN Security Council and its other ventures.

One does not have to subscribe to the "containment" school of thought in order to maintain, first, that it was the growing power of China in Africa (and elsewhere), and the insecurity it triggered in Japan that conditioned the timing of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Africa in January 2014. Worth more than USD \$198 billion, China-Africa trade hit all-time high in 2013, and this was more than 7 times the value of Japan's trade with Africa in the same period. While Africa's imports from China grew from 2 percent in 1995 to 13 percent in 2012, Africa's imports from Japan fell from around 7 percent in 1995 to 3 percent in 2012 (JICA 2013: 4; Hanauer and Morris 2014: 26). In 2014, 13.5 percent of Africa's trade was with China; the comparative figure for Japan was only 2.5 percent (Fabricius 2014: 1).

China has also bolstered its growing economic presence in Africa with a potentially formidable soft power by mobilizing its cultural resources and opening multiple channels of public diplomacy with the governments and peoples of Africa. In 2012, Xinhua, China's state news agency, had 23 bureaus in Africa (Jacobs 2012: 18). In the same period, China had built 31 Confucius Institutes in 26 African countries (Hanauer and Morris 2014: 78). In 2010, NHK, the Japanese equivalent of Xinhua, had only one news bureau in Africa, and that was in Egypt. Japan's daily newspaper, *The Yomiuri Shimbun* (2013) thus sounded the alarm: "...Japan must be cautious about China's moves on the African continent, where it is stepping up its presence. We cannot ignore China's policy towards Africa, which is noticeably aimed at monopolizing natural resources there, while focusing only on China's interest." Surely, the prevailing sentiment among Japanese business leaders even today seems that Africa is not yet ready for Japanese economic involvement in a major way. That was, for instance, what one study recently found — 98.2 percent of 110 Japanese firms doing business in Japan indicated "political and social instability" was still a major problem in Africa (JETRO 2013). And yet a broad consensus was emerging that Japan had to make a move without much delay. "If you wait until the security situation fully improves across Africa," a Japanese government official reportedly said, "there will be no market left for you" (quoted in Obe 2014).

The second factor is Abenomics, which is Prime Minister Abe's policy designed to restore vitality to the Japanese economy by ending its long economic slump through fiscal stimulus (such as public works package), structural reform (such as free trade agreements) and monetary policy (manipulations of interest rate). Abe's experiment has been successful so far as it had made possible the growth of Japan's GDP for six quarters in a row (Baker and Schlesinger, 2014). Needless to say, stable supply of energy sources, preferably from diverse places, is one of the requirements to ensure sustainability of Abenomics. Third, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is arguably the most assertive leader of Japan

vis-à-vis China in the postwar period (see, for instance, Baker and Schlesinger 2014: A7; Abe 2010; 2015). When Abe traveled to Ivory Coast, Mozambique and Ethiopia, it was soon after tensions which arose between his country and China over disputed islands in East China Sea, and his visit to the Yakasuni Shrine in Tokyo. Abe's visit also took place when China's Foreign Minister, Mr. Wang Yi, was touring some of the same African countries. But China seemed clearly unintimidated; in May 2014, its premier, Li Keqiang, visited Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola and Kenya.

If China and Japan are now ready to compete not only for raw materials and markets but also for respect and love in Africa, what is the proper African response?

African Strategies

At least five strategies are available to Africa for consideration in the context of Sino-Japanese competition in the continent. In the first place, African countries must be able to resist the temptation to deal with China and Japan on bilateral basis alone, and African countries must be prepared to use collectively their producer power, their consumer power and even their debtor power, to induce both China and Japan to make significant concessions. If China, with its 1.4 billion people, could speak in one voice, why is Africa, with one billion people, could not do so even after allowing for the uniqueness of Africa's historical experiences? Africa's collective voice will also help to make up for the immense variations in power among African countries themselves.

Particularly urgent, second, is a much delayed strategy of intra-African economic linkages both at regional and continental levels. Of course, the idea about the need for increased mutual dependence among African economies is not new—it has been advocated for many decades. But little was achieved in practice. In 2013, only 10 percent of African countries trade with each other, compared to 40 percent in North America and 63 percent in Western Europe (Hanuer and Morris 2014: 14).

We must, of course, also accept the supposition that the structural constraints which are rooted in the nature of African political economies make regional economic integration more difficult for the time being. Also vital is the third strategy of diversification which has three dimensions. Africa should forge better relations with multiple powers. As China turned its attention to Africa, with significant investment and opportunities for trade, there is a tendency to see China as the savior of Africa, and to care much less, if at all, about other powers. Diversification also means it is less useful to rely on singular ideology, whether it is developmentalism or neoliberalism. Finally, Africa should invite in multiple extra-regional powers not only to counter China and Japan but also to let them counter each other.

The fourth strategy requires that African countries pursue diplomatic pragmatism. Europe has often criticized China for dealing with African states which are known—or suspected—to be systematic violators of human rights. China itself has occasionally been the target of sharp European criticism for its treatment of certain individuals or groups within its own borders. At the same time, economic relations between Europe and China continue to deepen and expand. In spite of the apparent contradiction between Europe's rhetoric and its behaviors vis-à-vis China, Europe is nowhere near the risk of being chastised for the contradiction. One explanation for this is that Europe sometimes speaks to China in different voices. The fact that various organs of EU as well as individual EU member-states have different interests and different constituencies with respect to engagement with China makes a "multi-faceted" policy towards China necessary, possible and plausible. Africa would do well to take a leaf out of Europe's book.

The final strategy calls for enlightened realism on Africa's part, particularly with regard to relations with China, which claims to be Africa's "all-weather friend." It is true China had supported national liberation movements (NLMs) in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. And yet the China of the 1960s and 1970s is not the same as the China of today. China today is an aspiring capitalist state irrespective of what its leaders say; and the logic of capital is the same irrespective of who is in the driving seat now (Steinfeld 2010; Gurtov 2013). Sino-African relationship today is based on an unequal interdependence. For instance, only 5.3 percent of China's global trade was with Africa in 2012; the level of dependence of Africa on China for the same period was 16.3 percent (Hanauer and Morris 2014: 28). In spite of this fact, we continue to hear, in some circles both in China and Africa, that the relationship is based on equality.

Conclusions

Afro-Chinese and Afro-Japanese relations in the last half a century reflected adjustments and readjustments by the two Asian countries to changing domestic and global conditions. The unfolding Sino-Japanese rivalry in Africa is likewise a by-product of the growing power of China and the anxiety it has caused in Japan, the Fukushima nuclear accident, and the coming to power of an administration which is committed not only to revitalizing Japan's economy in a certain way (Abenomics), but also pursuing a "muscular" foreign policy toward China. The rivalry is also fueled by historical love-hate relationship between the two countries which goes back centuries. In their respective long histories, now is the first time when the two countries have both acquired the status of major power at the same time, making it difficult for us to look back at history for clues about the future. But one thing is clear. As I argued elsewhere (Adem 2014b), Africa is likely to provide a fertile ground for Sino-Japanese rivalry for two reasons. Firstly, China and Japan do not suffer legitimacy deficits in Africa; both countries are respected in the continent. And, secondly, China and Japan have overlapping interests in Africa.

Although China and Japan have already acquired the status of a great power, they are at different stages of industrialization. It follows that they may compete but not necessarily confront each other in Africa. Both China and Japan could each make unique contributions to Africa's efforts to modernize, if they wish to do so. They could also help themselves to Africa's vast resources. In this case, Africa becomes an arena of cooperation rather than conflict, with all sides benefitting in the process, including Africa. It would not be totally unrealistic, therefore, to imagine also a scenario in which, for instance, there would be a co-ordination between the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Admittedly, this is much easier said than done, but it is not an unachievable scenario.

In economic terms, relations with Africa are far less important both for China and for Japan compared to the respective relations of the two Asian countries with the major powers and other regions. Africa's shares in the overall global trade of China and Japan are much smaller than the latter's shares of overall global trade of Africa. What this means is that Africa needs the two Asian powers more than the other way round. Despite the lack of symmetry in the relationship, however, Africa could still maximize its relative autonomy and reap optimum benefit through (non-adversarial) collective bargaining. Africa must also diversify its partners.

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