

Summary: Europeans should know that Japan and the world need a stronger, more cohesive, and more global Europe. As the EU seeks to strengthen its capability to respond to global challenges by strengthening coordination among various externally-facing EU institutions, Japan is an ideal partner to help strengthen Europe's position as a global player. Japan and the EU should work together for more stable and resilient world.

The Japan-EU Partnership on Global Development

by Aiichiro Yamamoto

Introduction

The foundation of the European Union (EU) marked the beginning of a new era in Europe, whereby countries will solve their problems by talking rather than fighting. Thus proclaims an EU pamphlet titled "Your Guide to the Lisbon Treaty." It promises the EU will touch the hearts of all European men and women regardless of their profession, social status, nationality, or ethnicity. Such lofty aspirations are arguably why the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. When we look at human history, however, building peace is easier said than done.

Impact of the Financial Crisis on EU Development Aid

The ongoing financial turmoil in the eurozone poses a tremendous hardship on the economic unity of Europe. Together with other sensitive political issues such as immigration and territorial integrity, this casts a dark cloud across Europe. Southern Europeans are frustrated by their government's austerity measures, and Northern Europeans are increasingly angry that more and more of their tax money is being spent to rescue their debt-ridden Southern neighbors.

In his State of Europe speech three years ago, former Commission President José Barroso said that Europe faced two demons in its post-war history. The first was East-West division, which Europeans overcame when Germany reintegrated and the EU welcomed most of the former East-bloc countries. The second is North-South division. We should feel confident that Europeans will solve the North-South divide with the same wisdom and sense of solidarity with which they overcame the East-West divide. Europe may be in the storm, but it will pass. There is a Japanese saying: "After the rain, the land becomes more solid."

Yet even in a time of austerity, there is good news for EU development assistance. Though the EU budget for 2014-20 was cut by €34 billion, the budget for "Global Europe" increased by 3.3 percent over the previous Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). This is a strong indication that the EU is moving toward a more global Europe, albeit slowly. More encouraging is a recent opinion poll conducted by the European Commission, in which 85 percent of European citizens said that it was important or very important to help people in developing countries, the

Policy Brief

highest-ever figure supporting development assistance in any developed polity. The EU is hosting another “European Development Days” event this June to raise public awareness of the importance of global development.

Concept of Development in the 21st Century

The concept of development aid has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. Prior to 1990, development assistance from the West, including Japan, was focused on bolstering regimes in developing countries that belonged to the Western bloc. Donors concentrated their efforts on development without much thought to political and governance issues.

Since 1990, national, ethnic, and religious conflicts have emerged in many parts of the world, meaning that development donors have to think more about the impact of their actions on security and politics. Development has become a more complex issue of governance, peace, and state building. If there is no security, there is no development. If there is no development, there is no security. Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate this point; Syria and the Central African Republic will be the next challenges.

The turning point was the break-up of the Soviet Union, which deprived Western donors of their political rationale for aiding developing countries — to keep them out of the Communist Bloc. This resulted in the so-called aid fatigue among many Western donors in the 1990s. Japan, a firm believer in helping those living in poverty who strive for a better life, was an exception. Japan was the largest provider of development assistance (known as Official Development Assistance or ODA) in terms of its disbursement from 1991 to 2000, thanks to robust economic growth and relatively favorable public opinion. Meanwhile, other donors in Europe and the United States remained lost about which direction to move.

This changed in September 2000 when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted at a United Nations Summit. The MDGs reinvigorated the international donor community with clear goals and a new justification for aid. They had the overarching goal of poverty reduction and set out measurable sector goals in primary education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, disease control, and environmental sustainability, and were significant in that they depoliticized the rationale of aid by

focusing on the human and social aspects of development. More importantly, they offered a strong motive for the donor community to join forces and pool resources since they were equally bound to achieve common goals.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee wasted no time cashing in on this new momentum. To better deliver and manage aid for the MDGs, it highlighted the concepts of ownership, harmonization, alignment, results, and mutual accountability under the Paris Declaration Process in March 2005.

Coordination and alignment is an early 21st century phenomenon, but the trend is likely to continue as more developing countries assert ownership over their own development and require the donor community to coordinate their efforts to support it. In today’s globalized world, development challenges have become so complex that no single country can cope with them effectively. It is imperative that major aid donors such as the EU, the United States, and Japan coordinate their aid with each other and other bilateral and multilateral donors, including emerging ones. This is essential for sustainable and inclusive development, which is a priority of the MDG development agenda.

Potential of the EU for a More Global Europe

The Lisbon Treaty dramatically changed EU institutions to better serve global development needs. The European External Action Service (EEAS), which functions as the EU’s Foreign Ministry, is still a relatively young institution but is working hard and well to implement the EU’s Common Security and Foreign Policy. In the area of development cooperation, the EEAS works closely with the OECD’s Development and Cooperation Directorate

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Policy Brief

(DGDEVCO), and the two agencies are keen to link security and development as well as emergency aid and development assistance, which they call the comprehensive approach. The role of the EEAS in leading current EU actions on Syria and Mali, for example, is worthy of recognition; that coordination could not have happened before the Lisbon Treaty.

I hope the EEAS will take the lead in coordinating the EU's development aid. The EU is already making progress on joint multi-annual programming to reduce the fragmentation of European aid. Article 4.4 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union stipulates that in the area of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the Union may carry out activities and conduct common policy, however, the exercise of that competence shall not result in member states being prevented from exercising theirs. As a result, traditionally the Commission and the member states have formulated their respective aid programming by country, based on their own priorities and available resources. The joint programming exercise is a step forward to combine all these efforts in one document, called the EU Multi-Annual Joint Programming. Under the MFF 2014-20, this joint programming exercise is taking place in more than 30 partner countries and is expected to be applied to more countries.

The combined development aid of the member states and the Commission €55.2 billion in 2012, which accounted for nearly 60 percent of the global total. The United States contributed about 25 percent and Japan 10 percent. The EU as a whole could be the largest donor in the world if they provided aid in a more coordinated way.

Joint programming will create an ample opportunity for the EU to have a more decisive impact on global development, but this is not only true for the EU. If the EU is better coordinated itself, it would further encourage other major donors such as Japan and the United States to coordinate their efforts with the EU. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has already started talks with the EU about joint programming in Rwanda, Laos, Malawi, and potentially many other countries.

I expect the EEAS and the Council to push forward on further uniting Europe's aid programming. The EU has a currency union and a banking union, so why not an aid union?

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Japan as a Partner for a More Global Europe

Japan is one of the world's leading aid donors, with a long history of providing ODA to less developed nations both in its neighborhood and beyond. Although ODA levels have fallen in recent years due to economic problems, Japan remains an important member of the OECD's Development Aid Committee and JICA is a key partner for many developing nations as well as for Western aid donors such as the EU. Japanese ODA focuses on ensuring inclusive growth and human security, with an increasing attention on Africa. Combating climate change and promoting South-South cooperation are also priorities.

The Japanese public firmly believes in helping people who strive for a better life while living in poverty. Aid in Japan is not about charity since many believe that such assistance makes people dependent on handouts, which is one reason why Japan prefers project-based aid to budgetary support. The concept of technical cooperation has also long been at the heart of Japanese development cooperation. Japan's aid to East Asian countries was based on providing training in technologies and working methods in order to make sure that development was home-grown and sustainable. Even while Japanese ODA focuses on infrastructure, an effort is made to ensure that appropriate training is also provided. For example, when Japan built roads in the Philippines, JICA built a road maintenance training center in Manila for local road engineers.

Japan has ample experience in and knowledge of developing countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America that has been acquired through two-way approaches: working side-by-side with partner governments and reaching out to local communities directly. This has been made possible through people-to-people cooperation by Japanese experts, administrators, engineers, and volunteers dispatched by JICA over the past 60 years. After the massive earthquake and tsunami that Japan suffered two

Policy Brief

years ago, Japan also learned valuable lessons about how to build resilient communities, institutions, and a government, which should be shared with vulnerable developing and emerging countries.

In part because the United States is more reluctant to act internationally, Europeans should know that Japan and the world need a stronger, more cohesive, and more global Europe. As the EU seeks to strengthen its capability to respond to global challenges by strengthening coordination among various externally-facing EU institutions, Japan is an ideal partner to help strengthen Europe's position as a global player. Japan and the EU should work together for more stable and resilient world.

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About the Author

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