

# Japanese and South Korean Official Development Assistance (ODA) A Comparative Analysis of Rhetoric and Behavior

## Topic and Research Question

This thesis aims at reviewing the coherence of rhetoric and behavior of Japanese and South Korean Official Development Assistance (ODA) by examining role conceptions and role performances of the two donor states. The comparative approach allows for differences and similarities between these donors to provide a broader picture of aid policy than an individual donor study could. The chosen donor states are interesting cases for analysis as Japan has been an aid donor since the 1950s, while South Korea only became one recently. The research is guided by three questions:

How do Japan and South Korea portray themselves in the international donor community?

In what way do actions undertaken by Japan and South Korea with regard to Official Development Aid support the stated rhetoric?

To what extent is a gap between rhetoric and behavior evident and which similarities and differences between the two donors can be derived?

## State of the Art

In the 1950s and early 1960s Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) developed as a subfield of International Relations with a focus on actors in the process of foreign policy decision-making (cf. Rosenau 1966; Snyder, Bruck and Sapin 1954; Sprout and Sprout 1965). Holsti (1970) was the first to use sociological role theory for FPA by analyzing the roles states took in the international system. Role theory is rooted in psychological and sociological theories and related to constructivist work on identity, self-images, culture and norms. It was further developed to understand state's foreign policy conceptions, behavior and expectations by other states (cf. Hermanns 2013; Hook 1995; Kaya 2012; Wish 1980). Breuning (1995) used role theory to compare donors' aid rhetoric with their behavior, which sparked the idea for the theoretical framework of this thesis.

For this research, Japan and South Korea were the focus of analysis. The emergence of Japan as a foreign aid power in the late 1980s and during the 1990s led to wide interest in Japanese ODA and its effects (cf. Arase 1995; Ensign 1992; Islam 1991; Orr 1990; Rix 1989-1990; Söderberg 1996). South Korea's transition from an aid recipient to an aid donor and the characteristics of Korean ODA were targeted by more recent research (cf. Choi 2011; Chun, Munyi and Lee 2010; Kim, Kim and Kim 2013; Kim and Oh 2012). Kang, Lee and Park

(2011) compared the two states in regard to ODA and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), but no research has been conducted that compares the two donors' ODA rhetoric with their ODA behavior as done in this thesis.

## Methodology and Approach

Role theory as the theoretical framework of this research allowed investigating the self-image and actual behavior of the two donor countries (cf. Aggestam 2006; Breuning 2011; Edström 1988). Three different role concepts can be distinguished:

**Role expectations or prescriptions** are held by other actors in a system and prescribe or set expectations for the behavior of an actor.

**Role conceptions** are an actor's self-defined status in the system in relation to others as well as the actor's perception of others' expectations, which are held by agents such as policy-makers.

**Role performances** entail the characteristic patterns of behavior of actors, including attitudes, decisions, and actions for the implementation of a certain policy.

To arrive at roles for comparison a four-step analysis was chosen to identify role conceptions, role performances and possible gaps between the two.

- Qualitative Content Analysis:** The aid-related rhetoric of policy-makers between 2005 and 2012 was analyzed in 55 Japanese and 46 South Korean speeches and statements to derive role conceptions. This analytical step was based on *speech act* theory (cf. Kratochwil 1995; Onuf 2013).
- Development of Indicator Categories and Quantitative Data Analysis:** The approach used to identify role performance based on decisions and actions was a comparative analysis of aid standards as defined in the role conceptions of the donors themselves and by previous academic literature on donor aid practices. Commitment indicators were then compared to aid disbursement data from the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) (OECD 2014).
- Case Study Approach:** The two most important recipients (Vietnam and Tanzania) were selected for two case studies to provide information on indicators that could not be derived from quantitative data.
- Comparative Analysis of Roles:** Role performances were set in the context of the previously derived role conceptions to identify role gaps.

## Main Facts

Five role conceptions ("Bridge", "Model", "Respected Member of the International Community", "Responsible Leader", "Partner") for Japan and six (the previous five as well as "Newcomer") for South Korea were identified.

Five commitment indicator categories were found:

- Overall ODA Disbursements
- Distribution of ODA (Regional Distribution; Recipient Need; Mutual Benefit)
- Universal Values
- Quality of Aid
- Aid Philosophy

These categories were measured based on quantitative data of gross ODA disbursements, ODA to GNI ratio, share of ODA by region and income category, Human Development Index (HDI) of recipient, sector allocation, the share of tied aid, grants and loans etc.

As no indicators for Aid Philosophy could be derived from quantitative data, the country assistance policies of both donors for Vietnam and Tanzania were examined in the case study approach based on partnership and ownership aspects.

## Results

In the final step of analysis the role conceptions of both donor countries were compared with the role performances as derived from the quantitative and qualitative analyses. As shown in Table 1, for several indicators the results varied between Japan and South Korea due to the different commitments made by policy-makers in the role conceptions. Several gaps between the role conceptions and role performances became evident in the comparative analysis.

By directly comparing the identified role gaps the two donors' roles were set in context with each other. Both donor countries—despite offering up to six role conceptions—only performed in coherence with two role conceptions respectively. In the case of Japan, the roles of "Bridge" and "Partner" were assessed to have been taken up in both rhetoric and behavior. South Korea was found to take up the role of "Partner" to some extent and fulfilled the role of "Newcomer." The role of "Partner" exemplifies the difference in how policy-makers defined this role conception and the indicator categories for assessment of role performance. The role conception of "Newcomer" was only expressed by

South Korean policy-makers, making it an inherently South Korean role conception.

In conclusion, neither Japan nor South Korea performed fully in coherence with their role conceptions except for two roles. These results expand role theory research as ODA behavior was measured based on the donors' own conceptions rather than external expectations and contribute to a better understanding of Japanese and South Korean foreign policy.

Role conception	Indicators	Japan	South Korea
Bridge	Quality of Aid	~	No
	Aid Philosophy	Yes	No
Model	Overall ODA Disbursements	No	No
	Distribution of ODA (Mutual Benefit)	No (Yes)	~ (~)
	Quality of Aid	No	No
	Aid Philosophy	~	~
Respected Member of the International Community	Overall ODA Disbursements	No	No
	Distribution of ODA	No	n.a.
	Universal Values	n.a.	No
	Quality of Aid	No	No
Responsible Leader	Overall ODA Disbursements	No	No
	Distribution of ODA (Mutual Benefit)	No (Yes)	~
	Universal Values	No	No
	Quality of Aid	~	No
Partner	Distribution of ODA (Mutual Benefit)	No (Yes)	~ (Yes)
	Quality of Aid	~	~
	Aid Philosophy	Yes	No
Newcomer	Overall ODA Disbursements	n.a.	Yes
	Quality of Aid	n.a.	Yes

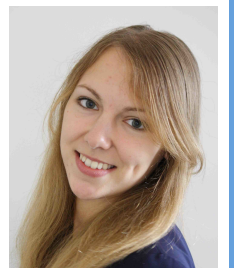
Table 1 Final Assessment of ODA Roles

## References

All references can be found in the full version of the MA thesis available at <http://othes.univie.ac.at/>

## About the Author

Julia Peitl holds a Bachelor degree in Japanese Studies from the University of Vienna. During her studies she spent a year in Yokohama, Japan, and a semester in Melbourne, Australia. She was student representative of the Master Program East Asian Economy and Society from 2011-2013.



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