

# THE FUTURE OF JAPAN-AFRICA COOPERATION: TICAD

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## Introduction

Africa will remain relevant to Japan as a necessary means to achieve some of its long-term political, economic, and strategic goals. Additionally, Japan seeks to expand its relations with the continent. However, it is difficult to view Japan's participation in Africa as part of an integrated policy or a well-thought-out long-term strategy, but only as a set of goals and some of the tools and mechanisms used to achieve those goals. This is largely reflected in Japan's failure to prioritize its economic and political interests in its relationship with Africa. While Japan views Africa primarily through an economic lens, it has other major political interests.

As Japan strives to bolster the dynamism of its ongoing development, production, and trade through a manufacturing and trade strategy designed to adapt to circumstances and mitigate crises, the nation has concurrently heightened its ambition for strategic hotspots, including resources and wealth. This is evident in its keen interest in the African continent and the ongoing competition between European and American powers for control over it.

## The historical background of Japan-African relations

In 1922, a significant milestone in Japan's diplomatic history was marked by the establishment of relations with Egypt, underscored by Japan's recognition of Egypt's newfound independence (MOFA 2022a). However, Japan's engagement with the African continent at large did not witness substantial growth until the latter part of the 1970s. During its initial phases,

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Japan's diplomatic interactions with Africa remained primarily confined to nations that had recently gained their independence. Notably, it was the wave of liberal revolutions in the late 1950s that served as a catalyst for the expansion of Japanese-African relations (Adem 2010). However, it was not until the early 1970s that a pivotal juncture emerged, characterized by Japan's proactive establishment of diplomatic and consular channels across multiple African nations.

It is noteworthy that Japan has consistently exhibited a proclivity for initiating developmental projects within the African context. Nevertheless, historical records indicate that Japanese corporations approached investments in African countries with a degree of circumspection. This caution was particularly palpable, save for instances where the countries boasted significant reserves of primary resources.

In a contemporary context, the year 2005 serves as a watershed moment in Japan's involvement with the African continent. As a preeminent donor nation, Japan assumed a pivotal role by orchestrating a robust program aimed at augmenting official assistance to African nations. This endeavor was manifested through a concerted commitment to doubling aid provisions, thereby catalyzing comprehensive development initiatives across the African landscape (Sato 2005).

The beginning of Japan's diplomatic relations with Egypt was exemplified by the acknowledgment of Egypt's newly acquired sovereignty. The subsequent decades saw a gradual but steady evolution of Japan's engagement with Africa, culminating in a surge of diplomatic activities during the 1970s. Although Japanese investments in Africa initially exhibited caution, Japan's role as a prominent donor nation since 2005 has profoundly shaped the continent's developmental trajectory. This multifaceted narrative underscores the nuanced and dynamic nature of Japan's relationship with Africa, reflecting both historical underpinnings and contemporary strategic imperatives.

## **The Japanese perspective on Africa**

Japan's presence in Africa is the most consequential development on the continent at the beginning of the new millennium, as its growing presence reflects its priorities in economic and political terms. The main approaches are:

1. Ensure Japan's trade superiority and economic development, which requires the acquisition of strategic raw materials. Japan's

growing economic presence in Africa, specifically sub-Saharan Africa, over the past two decades has attracted a great deal of attention (Pajon 2020). Its rapid increase in financial involvement and political presence in Africa is considered the continent's most significant development since the end of the Cold War. Japan is a giant economy and an emerging power, and there is a strong tendency to make moral judgments while assessing its presence on the continent. It is Japan's quest for natural resources and its support of African efforts to improve the economy and build a sustainable future that are laying the foundation for long-term economic development. Japan's growing role in Africa is part of a new international rivalry for economic opportunities and strategic resources, especially oil and some minerals.

2. Japan's political ambitions in Africa have come to challenge Chinese influence in the region (Bartlett 2022). Access to resources plays an increasingly significant role in Japan's economic engagement with Africa. However, it is not the only explanation for its relations with the region, which are very different from what this might suggest.

Contrary to the traditional perception that Japan cares only about Africa's natural resources, Japan's interests in Africa encompass several dimensions: political, economic, and commercial. As a reflection of international developments and changes, competition has shifted from its traditional ideological form to economic and political competition. However, the traditional and new parties competing for Africa's wealth are still able to compete through wartime confrontations. International changes, mainly represented by the end of ideological conflict and the international trend towards economic competition at the beginning of the nineties, influenced Japan's orientation. This was as it took the political and economic initiative towards Africa, which for some time was among the marginal areas of Japanese foreign policy concerns. Several conditions have been created for Asian penetration, especially Japan, in Africa. The most prominent of these was the conditionality imposed by Western donor countries on their assistance provided to African countries. Despite some African countries' attempts to establish reforms in a democratic direction, they have not received enough of the promised assistance. The threat of stopping aid became a means of imposing a kind of isolation and blockade on regimes that did not follow the (Western) democratic approach, which became known as "political conditionality," and then the beginning of the nineties witnessed a noticeable decline in the volume of Western aid directed to the African continent (Lekvall 2013).

Japan, recognizing sensitivities both in Africa and the West regarding intervention, has strategically utilized these dynamics. Consequently, Africa has increasingly opened its doors and facilitated Asian investments. This shift is attributed to the fact that the Asian partner distinguishes itself by embracing an economic perspective on the interests underlying economic cooperation relations, in contrast to the Western political perception that occasionally seeks to intervene in the affairs of African states. This distinction is further highlighted by the Western political perception that views neocolonialism as an integral part of the “globalized world order” (Niblett 2014). African countries must rely on themselves for success in democratic transition. This is because Western aid, in any case, is only one-tenth of what they need. It is only an argument for controlling the fate and the future of the continent. After the end of the Cold War, European countries and the United States began to support the economic construction of Eastern European countries, which resulted in a decline in aid to Africa. Furthermore, the refugee and displaced persons crisis has become more acute due to the rise in ethnic and racial conflicts on the African continent. Under these circumstances, the Japanese strategy in Africa revolved around the following:

1. Addressing the weak economic performance of the African partner: The Japanese strategy in Africa is generally based on addressing the weak economic performance of the African partner and helping it achieve development; growth indicators indicate the development deficit in these countries (Kato 2013).
2. Adopting the concept of “human security”: Japan was the first to adopt the concept of human security as the basis for its internal or foreign policies, which means adopting the concept of freedom from fear and need (Hynek 2012). The concept of “human security” allows it to facilitate its penetration and extend its influence under the pretext of achieving global security, addressing the dangers that Africa faces, and not allowing it to extend beyond its borders (Clausen 2009).

## **The African standpoint towards Japan**

A distinction must be made between the political, economic, and commercial aspects of the discussion of African gains. From a political point of view, Japan’s approach to non-interference in the internal affairs of African

countries and the non-imposition of any arbitrary conditions on borrowing countries makes dealing with Japan attractive.

Economically, African economies face a chronic lack of basic energy, transport, and communications infrastructure. In 2018, the World Bank estimated that the annual amount needed to fill Africa's infrastructure gap was \$130–\$170 billion a year (AfDB 2018). African countries have neither government revenues nor foreign exchange to invest in major infrastructure projects of this magnitude. Western lenders and investors have also not been interested in financing such projects.

The World Bank and other Western donors, which in the past provided infrastructure loans, have focused heavily on loans linked to programs and social sectors such as health and education rather than infrastructure. African governments, for their part, have been keen to capitalize on Japan's willingness to finance major infrastructure projects in the region.

Thus, the growth of commodity substitution loans is not only a result of Japan's efforts to secure energy supplies and raw materials but also of Africans' desire to develop their infrastructure. African governments have been able to use their natural resources to obtain infrastructure and finance other projects from Japan (Floyd 2019).

African governments welcome additional foreign exchange revenues and government revenues resulting from increased exports of oil, gas, and minerals abroad. This helps ease the balance of payments and budget constraints.

In general, it would be a mistake to ignore the role of Africans' will in explaining Africa's growing commitment to Japan through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) initiatives. Although Japan's interests are the most significant factor in its economic existence in Africa, this growth is unlikely to be so rapid were it not for Africa's complementary interests.

It is dangerous to reproduce Africa's old relationship with European colonial powers by selling raw materials to Japan while buying manufactured goods and services from it. In 2020, Africa's exports to Japan stood at US\$8.6 billion, while African imports from Japan were about \$7.9 billion (Nyabiage 2022). This makes the trade balance more favorable for Japan at the expense of African economies, which remain unstable.

Since the Western World became a major importer of raw materials in the early twenty-first century, prices have experienced upward trends that have strongly boosted the growth of exporting countries for more than a decade but have also experienced their abyss as prices collapse, with dire

social and political consequences. The export strategy contributes negatively to the ambition of some African countries to industrialize and diversify their economies and to develop a value-added industry that will support domestic demand and create wealth and jobs (Adesida 2011).

The arrival of emerging powers such as Japan will give African countries more room to maneuver in terms of conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations, which are dominated mainly by Western powers. It has come to offer a more appropriate alternative at the political, economic, commercial, and social levels. Africa's priorities for future cooperation with Japan are:

1. It is imperative to close Africa's infrastructure gap, a key pillar of Agenda 2063 (Tella 2018). Japan's influence on the G7's "Build Back a Better World" (B3W) initiative could help free up funds while keeping debt low (Zhu 2021).
2. Value conception. This requires Japanese companies to invest in their value chains to improve the quality of African exports (Ighobor 2017).
3. Operationalize the African Standby Force mechanism as a tool that can contribute to conflict resolution. Japan has pledged to support the AU's "Silence the Guns" initiative (Musau 2020). Supporting dispute resolution efforts in five designated geographical regions — Africa, the Sahel, Sudan, and South Sudan — are central features of this effort.

## Cooperation for African Development (TICAD)

Japan's policy developed in line with the post-Cold War situation, and its role was initially limited to providing aid, but by the late eighties, it announced a revamped policy based on three axes: aid, cultural exchange, and peacekeeping.

1. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 1993:** the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development was held in Tokyo, Japan, from October 5–6, 1993, with the participation of about 50 African and Asian countries (MOFA 1993b). This was at the request of the Japanese government at the time to discuss issues related to development and find effective solutions for the advancement of the African continent. The plan

was done so that the continent could support itself. Accordingly, it was just the beginning that opened the door for more Japanese investments and cooperation between the two sides, thus beginning a brand-new phase in the history of Japanese-African relations (MOFA 1993a).

In the early nineties, Japan actively worked to support development on the African continent and to draw the attention of the international community to Africa after a period of marginalization, including its call for the convening of TICAD I in 1993 to embody the beginning of a new phase in the history of Japanese-African relations. During the conference, 48 African countries, 12 donor countries, and 8 international organizations adopted the “Tokyo Declaration on African Development”, which represents the general framework for development: on the one hand, African development for itself, and on the other, African development for others (Eyinla 2018).

2. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 1998:** near the beginning of the third millennium, international institutions witnessed a change in dynamics in favor of supporting development in Africa. The Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) was hosted in the Japanese capital from October 19–20, 1998, to guide the concrete implementation of the policy by African countries and their partners towards African development in the 21st century (MOFA 1998b).

The conference, which was held with the participation of 80 countries and more than 60 official and informal international organizations, culminated in the Japanese government’s commitment to the goals agreed upon during it and the start of their implementation, which included areas of social development such as education and health, industrial and agricultural economic development, and foreign debt.

The conference adopted the “Tokyo Plan of Action for African Development in the Twenty-first Century” as a strategic framework, aimed at achieving two main goals: preserving poverty rates and integrating Africa into the global economy. The plan also refers to the need to pay attention to the areas of social development related to education, health, and disease control as well as economic development (MOFA 1998a).

Japan aimed to contribute to achieving development on the African continent in all its dimensions as a power (MOFA 1998c). This includes improvements to the standard of living of its people, through Japan’s announcement of intention to cancel debts owed to struggling African countries (Nakamu 2022).

3. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 2003:** TICAD 3 was held from September 29 to December 1, 2003, in Tokyo, with the presence of about 90 African and Asian countries (MOFA 2003b) to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the revised Japanese initiative towards Africa (MOFA 2003c). The joint efforts and discussions resulted in the Japanese government extending a helping hand to the advancement of the African continent through the decision of the then Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to allocate an amount of up to one billion dollars in aid and supplies for the development and assistance of the countries of the continent (MOFA 2003a). Japan announced its revised directions to help African countries achieve development by consolidating security and peace. As a result, the Japanese Government announced that one billion dollars would be allocated to countries in Africa within five years. This would be in the areas of water, health, and education.
4. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 2008:** This edition of the Tokyo International Conference differed slightly from its predecessors after it was announced that it would be held for the first time outside Tokyo, in the city of Yokohama, located on the main island of Honshu, from May 28 to 30, 2008 (MOFA 2008a). The conference, which was held with the participation of more than 50 African countries, and in the presence of representatives of 30 Asian countries, culminated at the end of its activities with the Japanese government doubling the aid allocated to the development of the African continent, and allocating about \$ 4 billion in aid to develop the infrastructure of the most suffering countries.

Japanese-African relations entered a transitional phase with the holding of the fourth session of TICAD in 2008, in which a set of measures was announced to strengthen ties between the two parties, the most prominent of which was to increase Japanese aid to African countries, and \$ 4 billion was placed in loans for infrastructure development.

The Yokohama Plan of Action presented actions to be taken over five years: promoting economic growth; achieving the Millennium Development Goals; consolidating peace and effective governance; resolving climate change and environmental issues; and broadening engagement with the African continent (MOFA 2008b).



5. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 2013:** From May 31 to June 3, 2013, the Japanese city of Yokohama hosted the Tokyo International Conference in its fifth edition under the theme “Hand in Hand with a More Dynamic Africa” (MOFA 2013). The conference addressed three main points relating to the development of African countries: Japan’s efforts to resolve the problems of the countries of the continent to gain the confidence of the international community; the restructuring of the United Nations Security Council; and the climate change issue.

The conference, which was attended by representatives of 60 African and Asian countries and representatives of international and regional organizations, resulted in the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) allocating funding to support and accelerate infrastructure development in the countries of the continent, enhance human resources by training African citizens in the field of industrial development, and improve the learning environment for African children (JICA 2018). TICAD 5 was linked to the achievement of three main goals:

1. Japan’s assertion, as a responsible member of the international community, that it is working to solve Africa’s problems to gain confidence in the international community.
2. Japan must strengthen its economic relationship with Africa, a promising market with high growth rates, abundant natural resources, and a growing population.
3. Cooperation with African countries is essential to solving other global issues, including the restructuring of the UN Security Council and climate change. It is clear from the above that Japan focuses its relationship with African countries on the economic aspect and uses several tools, the most relevant of which are:
  - **Investment in the private sector:** Japanese companies are present in all 54 African countries, led by companies such as Toyota Tsusho, Rakuten, Sony, Nippon Steel, and Ajinomoto. The number of Japanese companies in Africa has increased from 169 in 2013 to 259 in 2019 (Junius 2022).
  - **Mining sector:** Japan spent \$220 million but fell short of its two-year budget of around \$800 million due to the global collapse of metal prices (Obayashi 2015).

Among the most influential countries with which Japan maintains trade relations are Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana, and Zambia. These countries

export primary raw materials, such as cotton, metals, and timber, and import from Japan industrial machinery and equipment, such as cars.

6. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 2016:** the sixth edition of the conference was held for the first time outside Japan, which hosted the previous five editions. TICAD 6 was hosted by Kenya in its capital, Nairobi, from August 27 to 28, 2016 (MOFA 2016a). The conference focused renewed attention on measures to ensure that Africa's economic growth is sustainable. The Nairobi Declaration agreed upon at TICAD VI was themed "TICAD Partnership for Prosperity: Advancing Africa's Sustainable Development Agenda" (MOFA 2016b).

TICAD 6 was held in the presence of representatives of African and Asian countries and international and regional organizations, resulting in the signing of several memorandums of understanding and trade agreements between Japanese and African companies, amounting to 73 agreements, which aimed to move towards manufacturing raw materials on the African continent instead of just exporting them, and the Japanese Prime Minister announced the allocation of investments amounting to \$ 30 billion over the next three years (Takenaka 2016).

7. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 2019:** the summit conference was held again in Yokohama, but this time under the co-chairmanship of Japan and Egypt, considering the Egyptian presidency of the African Union (MOFA 2019). The TICAD 7 Summit aimed to develop the continent by facilitating and promoting high-level political dialogue between African leaders and development partners on issues related to economic growth, trade and investment, sustainable development, human security, peace, and stability.

TICAD 7 focused on the potential of digitization and innovation by young African entrepreneurs, as confirmed by the theme of "Advancing Africa's Development through People, Technology and Innovation" (JICA 2022).

8. **Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 2022:** TICAD VIII, the first since the COVID-19 pandemic, was held in Africa again, in Tunisia from 27 to 28 August 2022 (MOFA 2022b).

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida joined the meeting via video conference after he tested positive for COVID-19, stating that "the public and private sector in Japan will work to provide (support to African countries) about \$ 30 billion over the next three years." "This support, which extends over

the next three years, concerns several areas, including green growth, health, education, human resources, agriculture, and investment encouragement, especially for startups,” he added. “It wants to be a partner for Africa to grow with and work with to overcome challenges,” he said. “Japan will adopt its approach with a focus on people or human resources to achieve a resilient African society”. Eventually, Japan announced support for African countries with \$ 30 billion (McDowall 2022).

## Japan's goals from TICAD

The African continent has become an attractive environment for foreign investment, which explains the new wave of scrambling for its natural resources; in this area, global investment data shows an intensifying global competition between international companies, European, American, Chinese, Japanese, etc., to share the African natural wealth (UNCTAD 2022).

The Japan External Trade Authority, through a survey of African markets, found substantial motivation among Japanese companies operating in Africa to expand their businesses. This was based on 24 countries, including South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Kenya, Nigeria, and Cote d'Ivoire. The survey period was extended to September and October 2019.

A total of 423 companies participated in the survey, representing 74.5% of the total Japanese companies in Africa. Despite fears of political instability, Japanese companies are looking to expand their operations in Africa. For example, in Mozambique, which is expected to grow rapidly due to natural gas production, it was just under 70%. About 60% of them are in Morocco, where efforts are being made to attract companies by developing free zones. In Kenya (59.5%), Egypt (58.6%), and Nigeria (54.5%), there was an intention to make substantial developments in the field of next-generation business development (JETRO 2020). Mainly, Japan focuses on the following targets:

1. African voices at the United Nations: Japan is seeking to increase its international standing and aims to obtain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Kral 1999). For this strategic ambition, Tokyo needed the support of African countries that Japan had hoped to receive in exchange for the financial assistance negotiated during these summits. In the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War, the Japanese did not understand the economic feasibility of investing in Africa. Therefore, the

development of trade relations with other Asian countries was sufficient for Japan.

2. Catching up with other Asian and Western players in the African market: when African countries began to experience rapid growth in the late 2000s, driven by Chinese, Indian, and Western investment, Japan realized that it lacked the engine to bring them back to the forefront of the African race. Since then, Japan has been trying to cast a shadow over China in Africa (Kuwamura 2022). Japan has adopted the rhythm of its summits every three years at the request of African countries, which have said that this is what China does. Tokyo has also agreed to hold its summits in African countries, as China has done. TICAD conferences were traditionally held in Japan until 2016.
3. Integrating Africa into a free and open Indo-Pacific: this builds on the vision of the late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who deliberately embedded Africa in Japan's broader strategy for the region (Taylor 2015). This concept is based on four main pillars: the promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation and free trade, the pursuit of economic prosperity, and the guarantee of peace and stability. Shinzo Abe has also made four official visits to Africa, an unprecedented record for a Japanese prime minister. Africa has become one of his government's strategic priorities. Abe intended to celebrate Japan's return to the international stage through intense diplomatic activity. Investing in Africa is worthwhile for several reasons. It was Japan's initial target.
4. Shift to private investment policy: under Shinzo Abe's government, Tokyo has sought to move away from a policy focused on official development assistance, whose budget is constantly shrinking, to a private investment-based approach. Therefore, mobilizing the Japanese business community has been key to expanding Japan's economic presence in this promising market while also continuing to secure strategic energy and mineral resources. Since 2012, Japan has been very keen to discuss public-industry cooperation to encourage companies to invest in Africa (Kaori Kaneko 2013).

## Developing Japanese interests in Africa

Despite that, Japanese strategy in Africa is influenced by economic interests. Africa is a reservoir of energy and natural resources. Japan is one of the most industrialized countries in the world based on the number of its imports represented by energy resources. To do this, it needs many natural resources that are not available on its territory, for example, petroleum, natural gas, and mineral resources such as iron and phosphate. Therefore, we note:

1. The increasing interest and international competition on the African continent are because the continent is a major source - in addition to energy - of all wealth, as it produces 80% of the world's platinum, more than 40% of the world's diamonds, 20% of gold and cobalt, and is rich in significant quantities of natural resources (Matthysen 2009). In general, Japan's growing interest in Africa and the intense competition between international powers over it are due to several considerations, most notably:
2. Geopolitical location: Africa has strategic trade crossings and seaports on the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, making it a very influential region in all dimensions.
3. Energy sources: oil discoveries on the continent have recently increased, which represents a significant opportunity for Japan within the framework of its strategy to bring and provide oil needs, as the continent occupies an increasingly significant position on the map of global oil production. According to the estimates of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, about 13% of the world's natural gas reserves are in Africa, and the continent could supply Europe with around 30 billion cubic meters of gas in a decade. The massive global expansion of gas could jeopardize efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (Chakamba 2022).

Africa represents a vast consumer market, being home to approximately 700 million people. This weakens the ambitions of China's competitors both regionally and internationally. While the economic approach may mitigate the intensity of diplomatic and political competition between the two countries and potentially overcome historical tensions, it's crucial not to overlook the global competition between them, particularly for a permanent seat on the Security Council.

## Conclusion

The importance of TICAD for Japan may vary depending on the circumstances and the nature of its participation in the region. In this section, it is useful to distinguish between two main categories of interests that have led Japan to engage with all its weight in the region. Geopolitical and diplomatic goals include isolating Beijing, gaining allies for diplomatic support in international forums, increasing Japan's soft power in the region, and presenting it as an alternative to China. On issues ranging from human rights to UN reform, regional security, and Japan's core national interests, Tokyo looks forward to Africa always being on its side. Furthermore, geo-economic objectives, include the security of energy supplies and mineral and agricultural resources on the one hand, and the commercial objectives related to the consumer market that it provides to its manufacturers and companies in the private and public sectors, to promote exports, support the international expansion of Japanese companies and reduce dependence on trade with China on the other hand.

There is debate within Japan about whether political interests or economic interests should be Tokyo's top priority in its relationship with Africa. Despite the political importance of Africa, Japan has raised financial considerations to a much higher level in its domestic and foreign agenda. This is the direct result of its diversification strategy and an effort to enhance its legitimacy through the achievement of sustainable development in the Third World.

Japan's economic activities in Africa were mainly driven by Japan's development agenda and focused on providing development assistance to African countries to build diplomatic relations. The focus of Japan's foreign policy shifted to supporting domestic economic development, and this shift directly led to a gradual adjustment of Japan's priorities in its Africa policy from aid to "mutually beneficial commercial cooperation," from assistance to the promotion of "contracts for services, investment, and trade." The theory of "the use of both domestic and international markets and resources" prevails in Japan's foreign business relations.

Africa's rich energy reserves, minerals, and raw materials directly feed Japan's quest for natural resources to boost its domestic economic growth. Africa is the second-largest continent in the world, with an area of 30 million square kilometers and 1.2 billion people, and it contains a huge number of natural resources. This trait, along with its relatively low population density and small manufacturing sector, has made Africa a major target

for Japan's imports. Africa also ranks first or second in abundance in the world for minerals such as bauxite, cobalt, diamonds, phosphate rocks, platinum minerals, coltan, vermiculite, and zirconium. In addition, many other minerals are present in large quantities, such as gold, copper, coal, oil, etc.

Thus, raw materials are at the heart of the economic relationship between Japan and Africa. This is reflected in the composition of its imports and the main sectors in which its companies invest. Although the sources vary widely in their estimates of the size of Japanese companies' investments in oil and mining in Africa, they all agree that these sectors are the most relevant in terms of Japanese investment in the region.

While Japanese projects and loans are not solely focused on extractive industries, they are indirectly connected to the sector through the extensive utilization of loans. These loans are often used to finance infrastructure projects in the region. There is also the importance of trade considerations such as access to the local market, the benefit of African trade agreements, low production costs, and the availability of raw materials in the investment decisions of Japanese companies on the continent. Japan has been keeping an eye on Africa for its market potential. This is because Japan's manufacturing industries are characterized by the production of textiles, electronics, and other products at a globally competitive price, which suits the less developed African market.

Japan's growing presence in Africa reflects its priorities, both economically and politically. The objective is to ensure Tokyo's trade superiority and economic development. This development, both internally and externally, requires the provision of strategic raw materials. Second, politically, although the African continent is of only limited importance to Japan's foreign policy agenda, it plays a largely supportive role in its grand strategy. Rather than viewing Africa as an end or priority, Africa is seen as a tactic on which Japan's broader strategic ambitions are built.

Japan pursued a strategy of indirect and gradual action, and its involvement in the African continent can be considered a "tactic," among others, the purpose of which was not only to respond to its immediate and growing economic needs but also to pave the way to quickly reach the top of international politics, economic and political weight, and commercial and geostrategic influence.

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## ABSTRACT

Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) aims to “promote high-level political dialogue between African leaders and development partners”. Japanese-African relations are significant for understanding the Japanese strategy in Africa, confirming that its approaches are different from the Western approach, identifying the manifestations of eternal competition in Africa and the opportunities for Japan there, and embodying the framework of cooperation for development in Africa. The topic will be approached according to a theoretical framework that explains Japan-Africa relations due to their focus on the economic dimension of international relations. The study also proceeds from a basic assumption: that Japanese interest is linked to the system of economic interests that Tokyo seeks to achieve in Africa more than claims of development on the African continent.

## KEYWORDS

TICAD. Japanese Studies. African Studies. Economy. International Relations.

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