

h JAPANESE AID TO KENYA: IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL AND
COLLECTIVE INTERESTS -- 1966-1989 4

BY

ALEXANDER MAINA NDIRANGO

MSO (1992)
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in International Relations at the
University of Nairobi

August, 1992

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to identify the major underlying factors that make Kenya the largest recipient of Japanese economic assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based mainly on current secondary literature and interviews conducted with open-ended questionnaires, this study identified Kenya as a major trading partner of Japan in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Being preoccupied with economic recovery and development efforts in the post World War II period, Japanese policymakers targeted countries such as Kenya, which were important as export markets or raw material and energy import sources, as the major recipients of their economic assistance.

Whereas in the short term this aid was meant to contribute positively to the economic stability of the recipients, its ultimate and overriding aim was to secure commercial benefits to the Japanese private sector. Hence, the first and major determinant of Kenya's position as the most prominent recipient of Japanese aid in Sub-Saharan Africa is the fact that Kenya is a major export market of 'traditional' Japanese products in the region.

The second and more recent factor determining Kenya's position as the major recipient of Japanese aid in Sub-Saharan Africa is political in nature. In the early 1980s when Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies intensified in the Middle East and the Horn of

Africa, the United States demanded of her major allies, especially Japan, to boost their economic assistance to strategically located Third World allies.

Being a strong pro-Western as well as American military ally, Kenya became a natural target of such 'strategic' aid from Japan, especially from the early to late 1980s.

As Cold War tensions eased in the late 1980s, however, Japanese aid to Kenya continued to increase, indicating that while strategic motivations had declined, the traditional economic interests once again took an upperhand.

These being our findings, the study ends with two policy implications for both Kenya and Japan. For Kenya, the study suggests that instead of asking for more aid to redress the huge trade imbalance she has with Japan, she should use her position as a major export market for Japan in Sub-Saharan Africa to negotiate an economic package deal in which Japan would open up her market for Kenya's major agricultural and processed products.

For Japan, the study suggests that Japan should follow the US lead in her foreign affairs more cautiously than before. With the United States emphasizing politically sensitive issues such as democratic pluralism as the criteria for their aid allocation, and also hinting that other donors might also follow their lead, Japan should realise that being more reliant on exogenous factors for her survival than the United States is, such aid policies could be detrimental to her bilateral relations and eventually her hard-attained prosperity.