

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)
DIJ Social Science Study Group



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***Japan's Official Development Assistance:
Strategies in Changing National and Global Contexts***

In the 1990s, Japan became the world's largest donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Only decades before, after World War II, Japan had still been a recipient of ODA. Japan's own contribution to ODA begins with the war reparations the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 obliged the country to pay. This was an important step towards normalizing the relations with neighboring countries after World War II. Along with the economic recovery of Japan, however, the motivation for ODA spending changed and it was, now, expanded in order to explore new markets in Asia. Furthermore, it served as a resource diplomacy tool after the Oil Crisis in 1973 and became an important pillar of the country's comprehensive security strategy. Emerging as a major global power, Japan contributed increasingly to international humanitarian assistance to underline the importance of her international status.

Yet, despite its successful usage as a foreign policy tool, there has been a clear backward trend of ODA spending since 1997. How can this sudden change be explained? This talk attempts to answer this question approaching it from three perspectives, which correspond to the leading theories of International Relations – Realism (power), Liberalism (interests) and Constructivism (norms). Preliminary results, acquired through expert interviews and archive research, indicate that the applied eclectic approach has a remarkable explanatory power regarding the Japanese ODA distribution after the Cold War. Moreover, ODA distribution patterns turn out to be consistent with Japanese foreign policy behavior.

Raymond Yamamoto, PhD candidate at the University of Hamburg, is currently conducting fieldwork in Japan as a Japan Foundation fellow researcher. This presentation offers an overview over work in progress and first results of his PhD thesis on Japanese ODA.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is organized by P. Holdgrün and C. Hommerich.
All are welcome to attend, but registration (holdgruen@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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