TICAD: A Partner or a Partnership Problem?

Abstract: This chapter asks whether TICAD’s primary concern is a ‘partner problem’, that is insufficient dialogue between stakeholders to strengthen the linkage between the dual principles of ‘ownership’ and ‘partnership’ or ‘a partnership problem’ arising from assertive Southern development partnerships. It is both. If TICAD players’ different approaches converge through strengthening African ownership and decision-making through Japan’s supporting partnership, positive outcomes would increase stakeholders’ expectations, thus reversing the tension between TICAD and Asian donors.

The emerging powers’ SSC and development approach seems to be one of several problems contributing to TICAD’s downturn (Mawdsley 2012: 216). Paradoxically, TICAD’s achievements itself have proved worthy of being replicated by emerging powers so-called nontraditional (South) donors, particularly China, India, and Korea. Also, international development partners such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) and, most recently, the AUC as co-partners of Japan in TICAD have praised Tokyo’s initiative as an important platform for the development of Africa.

Doubt persists among scholars, African leaders and international NGOs as to whether the principles, actions, and resolutions established throughout TICAD can fulfill the expectations created in previous conferences (Cornelissen 2012: 201–202). Morikawa (2005: 485) notes how TICAD’s material agenda is hampered by an existing gap in the Japanese MOFA’s true intentions, real capabilities, but somehow unrealistic outcome within TICAD policy, resulting in increased distrust on the African side. Therefore, pressure on MOFA’s policymakers is high, particularly after TICAD V in June 2013.

As Kanayo F. Nwanze (2013), president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) observes, it all depends from which angle one looks at TICAD. While Japanese NGOs and African civil society criticize TICAD V for focusing too much on economic cooperation rather than political, security and governance issues, African leaders call into question Japan’s outmoded approach with ODA as the catalyst for development. They have also alerted Japan about how different Africa is from that of the first TICAD in 1993 (Johnston 2013: 2). African economies need less ODA compared to the lower volumes of trade and FDI Japan is providing them. Nevertheless, Shaw et al. (2012: 196) warn that the growth and development Africa felt in the last decade has not yet translated into more self-reliance and ‘true’ ownership of an Africa-driven development agenda, as donors still dominate the development policy agenda.

While internally Japanese policymakers need to articulate the different perspectives of the process, they also need to keep up with African demands. At the same time, Japan feels that it has a ‘new’ responsibility for Africa like in the 1990s, when it warned the international community of the danger of marginalizing Africa. Japan must counterbalance the rising China and India factor, as their growing influence in Africa and competition with the West (the EU, the US, and Australia) in extractive industry concessions may be a double-edged sword (Halligan 2012: 182;