

Dear Reader,

When we are discussing Chinese engagement with Africa, we often implicitly or explicitly assume a uniqueness of the “Middle Kingdom”. We thus often overlook that China has examples to learn from in the East Asian context. The Asian ‘tigers’ have undergone rapid development in the 20th century, with Japan leading in the 1980s and 1990s and other Asian countries following suit, including South Korea.

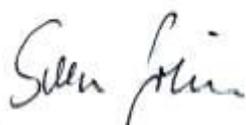
Japan has since stagnated and is struggling to cope with a long-lasting recession and a relative loss of global weight in an extremely dynamic region. It is, however, still one of the biggest development partners to the African continent, as Scarlett Cornelissen argues in this edition of *African East-Asian Affairs | The China Monitor*, with regard to aid, but also with important investments in African states. Some of the Japanese institutions have also set an example for Sino-African structures, not least so the Tokyo International Conference on Aid, Trade, and Development (TICAD). This forum looks very familiar to FOCAC, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

Korea, for its matter, was often used as a comparison for development prospects, e.g. for Ghana at independence. At the time, commentators were unanimous in their forecast of a bright future for Ghana and regarding post-war Korea as a basket case for the international community. Besides teaching us that forecasts come with uncertainties and can thus go wrong, this also gives food for thought about what makes the Koreans successful. Our author Yejoo Kim – who has just joined the CCS as a research analyst – is looking at the specific challenges when establishing an ambitious aid programme. Much of these points of debate are also in focus in China’s Aid policy.

These similarities (and some differences) should presumably be kept in mind when we look for a ‘Chinese development model’ – which is, if anything, presumably rather an Asian approach to development. This, it is worth reminding, is not the only successful approach to development and the ‘model’ presumably boils down to some essential lessons that we have read about in development literature many a times since the 1990s. Implementing these lessons in specific situations remains a challenge, though – and nobody should claim to be in the possession of the blueprint for development.

Our commentary pieces in this edition look at current Chinese economic reforms and what they could mean for Africa. As a second look at internal Chinese developments with greater repercussions, we also comment on pollution in Beijing and elsewhere and how the environmental issues become (highly) political ones. And, last but not least, the last days of March have seen the 4th BRICS summit – subject to much attention in South Africa and elsewhere. I hope you enjoy the read!

Yours sincerely,



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Director

