

The Botswana-Japan Diplomatic Relations, 1966-2016

Boga Thura Manatsha* and Gabriel GG Malebang[§]

Abstract

Japan's involvement in Africa's development became more pronounced after it co-organised the Tokyo International Conference on African Development in 1993. The mineral-rich and politically stable Botswana offers natural resources and business opportunities to Japan which is not endowed with mineral wealth but is a major global economic power. The Japanese embassy in Gaborone assisted Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation to establish a Remote Sensing Centre in Lobatse, Botswana. This centre has signed memorandum of understandings with all Southern African countries to explore minerals. Japan also needs support from African countries as it campaigns to be a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Botswana receives Japanese Official Development Assistance loans and grants. In the education sector, the relations became more pronounced when Japan extended its prestigious government scholarship to Botswana in 2005. The paper examines the Botswana-Japan relations as Botswana celebrates 50 years of Independence in 2016.

Introduction

Botswana's celebration of 50th anniversary of its Independence in September 2016 also coincides with the 50th anniversary of Botswana-Japan diplomatic relations. At Independence Botswana was the second poorest country in the world after Bangladesh (Magang 2015). It thus received support from the international community, including Japan. When Botswana's then assistant Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration, Mokgweetsi Masisi, spoke at an event in Gaborone celebrating the 77th birthday of the Japanese Emperor, Tsugu Akihito, in December 2010, he described the Botswana-Japan diplomatic relations as 'excellent'. Masisi noted that 'the relations have remained strong and vibrant, despite the vast distance that separates us' (Republic of Botswana 2010). Compared to European powers and the United States of America (USA), Japan is a latecomer in Africa's development. Nevertheless, Japan has played a critical role in Africa's development especially in the post-Cold War era (Ampiah 2005; Rose 2012 and Cornelissen 2012a).

In 1966 Botswana's first president (1966-1980), Seretse Khama, argued that for Botswana to achieve meaningful development and participate in international affairs, 'it needs support from its true friends... [as] it is not alone in the world' (Carter and Morgan 1980:15). Botswana would establish diplomatic relations with many countries, including pariah states such as North Korea (Mwakikagile 2009). Khama never visited Japan during his presidency but he visited the People's Republic of China and North Korea in July 1976 (Parsons *et al* 1995). Ironically, in February 2014 Seretse Khama's son and fourth president of Botswana (2008-), Ian Khama, severed diplomatic relations with North Korea citing 'the threat posed by that country to international peace and security' (Republic of Botswana 2014). His government did the same with Libya in February 2011. Under Ian Khama Botswana continues 'to denounce 'rogue states' or call for censure of some governments and political leaders that stand accused of human rights abuses and undemocratic conduct' (Malila and Molebatsi 2015:5). This deviates from Botswana's past silent diplomacy.

In desperation to attract as many friends as possible, the obscure Botswana extended invitation to 70 countries to its Independence celebrations in 1966 but many African countries turned down the invitation (Parsons *et al* 1995). It is claimed that they might have been influenced by the 'propaganda' spread by the

*Boga Thura Manatsha, Department of History, University of Botswana. Email: boga.manatsha@mopipi.ub.bw

[§]Gabriel GG Malebang, Southern African Development Community (SADC). Email: gmalebang@sadc.int

then Pan-Africanist and radical main opposition Botswana Peoples Party (BPP) (Parsons *et al* 1995:248). In 1965 the BPP leaders discredited the moderate and ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and labelled it a colonial stooge before keen Pan-Africanist leaders such as Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah and Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea at the Organisation of African (OAU) summit held in Accra, Ghana (Masire 2006). Seretse Khama's successor, Quett Masire (1980-1998), explains that, unlike the BPP, 'We [in the BDP] were not ideologists, so we embraced whoever wanted to do business with us, provided they appeared to have clean hands' (Masire 2006:300). Seretse Khama, in his first speech to parliament, declared that 'The foreign policy of my government will also be dictated by reason and common sense rather than by emotion and sentiment' (Carter and Morgan 1980:15). He also warned that 'the histrionics and fulminations of extremists outside this country will not help Botswana to achieve its destiny' (Carter and Morgan 1980:15). This was a veiled attack on the BPP.

Khama's pragmatism was informed by the fact that in 1966 Botswana was very poor with a paltry gross domestic product (GDP) of 76US\$ (Jefferis 2009). Botswana was also surrounded by hostile and racist white minority regimes in South Africa, Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia) and Namibia (South West Africa). It was critical that Botswana's leaders effectively communicated their dilemma to the international community, and forged strong diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible. In 1966 Khama stated that 'Botswana is a poor country and at present is unable to stand on its own feet and develop its resources without assistance from its friends in the outside world' (Carter and Morgan 1980:14). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Botswana relied heavily on donor funds for its infrastructural development. Whereas diamond mining significantly contributed to Botswana's coffers starting in the mid-1980s, throughout the 1990s, it still courted more donors, including Japanese agencies. Former president Masire reminds Botswana to be 'grateful... for the generous support we have received' from friendly countries (2006:153).

In 1966 Botswana forged diplomatic relations with Japan, then the second strongest economy in the world after the USA (Kalley *et al* 1999). The economic success of Japan, a geographically small country with limited natural resources compared to the mineral-rich Botswana, impressed Botswana's leaders. Since the 1950s Japan has reached out to the world for economic and humanitarian support through its Official Development Assistance (ODA) (Cornelissen 2012a). Since 1993 Japan has actively exported her economic development model to Africa through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development's (TICAD) goals (Ampiah 2005). Botswana's leaders, like their African peers, appreciate this.

Though Botswana-Japan diplomatic relations started in 1966, the late Motsamai Mpho, the founder of the BPP, claimed to have been the first citizen of Botswana to visit Japan in 1964 (Edge 1996:82). He proudly says that 'I was the first Motswana to visit Japan, and I acted as a goodwill ambassador for the nation' (Edge 1996:82). Mpho had joined the World Peace Council (WPC) in the 1950s while he was an anti-apartheid activist in the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa before his deportation to Botswana in 1960 when the ANC was banned. In 1964 he travelled to Japan to attend a Peace Conference sponsored by the WPC. That he was the first Motswana to visit Japan could be true.

This paper conceptualises the Botswana-Japan relations by employing the realist theory of international relations. In the study of politics and international relations, the realist theory has dominated the academic discourse (Smith *et al* 2012). The theory of realism 'focuses on the nation-state as the principal actor in international relations' (Evans and Newnham 1998:465). Realists emphasise the centrality of national interests in state relations (Pham 2008). Their central proposition is that the main purpose of 'statecraft is national survival in a hostile environment', and that the acquisition of power becomes a 'rational and inevitable goal of foreign policy' (Evans and Newnham 1998:465). National interests are defined as 'an expression of the combination of fundamental values and goals that a country, institution or corporation will seek to preserve, protect, and promote in the conduct of its affairs, business and aspirations' (Fitz-Gerald 2007:3). They are based on national values.

It suffices, for now, to note that Botswana and Japan benefit from their relations. For instance, Japan, a global economic power but with no strategic natural resources, has made the acquisition or importation of natural resources its strategic national interest (Hirano 2012). Botswana, a developing country beset with serious challenges of unemployment and poverty yet rich in natural resources, has also made the securing of an international market for these resources its national interest (Masire 2006 and Jefferis 2009). Masire explains that 'our Four National Principles [Values]—Democracy, Development, Unity and Self-Reliance—laid strong emphasis on economic goals, not just political ones' (Masire 2006:146).

In this competitive world, with no international government, realists argue that 'states answer to no higher authority' (Evans and Newnham 1998:465). Most, therefore, 'look to themselves to protect their interests and to ensure survival' (Evans and Newnham 1998:465). Realists view humans as inherently selfish, and argue that in pursuit of national interests, states become pragmatic, shrewd and aggressive. Thus realists define national interest 'in terms of power, to the virtual exclusion of other factors such as the promotion of ideological values or of moral principles' (Evans and Newnham 1998:466). Hans Morgenthau, a leading figure of the twentieth century realist school of thought, has argued that the world is characterised by opposing interests. He contends that the minimum aim of foreign policy is the survival of the state (Morgenthau 195). Even in such circumstances, states' 'cooperation is possible but only when it serves the national interest' (Evans and Newnham 1998:466).

Botswana-Japan Diplomatic Relations in Context

In June 1971 the Japanese ambassador to Zambia became a non-resident ambassador of Japan to Botswana (Kalley *et al* 1999). Other Zambian-based missions and embassies servicing Botswana in the 1970s were those of the Soviet Union, Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and North Korea (Mwakikagile 2009). This is not surprising because the then Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, and Seretse Khama had very strong personal relations, which benefited their countries at the official level. Kaunda offered Botswana scholarships and market for its beef (Parsons *et al* 1995 and Masire 2006). The Japanese had no meaningful contacts or relations with colonial Botswana. However, they had had active relations with South Africa since 1916 (Kitagawa 1990). In the 1920s the Japanese developed interest on Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia, and regarded Southern Africa as a region with huge economic potential (Kitagawa 1990). Through South Africa, it is possible that they had access to some key information on Botswana as early as the 1920s.

In 1997 Botswana opened a diplomatic mission in Tokyo, Japan's capital city, with Oteng Jenamo Tebape appointed the country's first resident ambassador to Japan by President Masire. The Tokyo embassy also services Thailand and The Philippines. Before 1997 the Botswana Embassy in Beijing, China, also serviced Japan (Nkala 15 May 2009). In 2008 Japan opened an embassy in Gaborone, and it serves as the main Japanese embassy in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The Japanese ambassador to Botswana is also his country's special representative to SADC. Before 2008 Botswana was serviced by the Japanese embassy in Pretoria, South Africa. Ambassador Onishi explained that his 'responsibility as ambassador is to continue to strengthen this bilateral relationship... by working to attract more Japanese investors to Botswana' (*The European Times* 30 March 2015). In 2009 Botswana's ambassador to Japan, Oscar Motswagae, stated that 'the focus of our [Botswana-Japan] relationship is economic and technical. Japan is one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world and anyone who wants to acquire technological advancement will do well to learn from Japan' (Nkala 15 May 2009). The views of Onishi and Motswagae above resonate well with the realists' proposition that states pursue 'friendly' relations for their national interests.

Strategically located, the Japanese embassy in Gaborone enables Japan to explore economic/business opportunities and establish strong political relations in the SADC region. Southern Africa is rich in natural resources which Japan aims to exploit for its economic needs. To achieve this, in July 2008 a state-

owned Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC) officially opened a Geological Remote Sensing Centre in Lobatse, Botswana, to explore mineral resources in Southern Africa using advanced Japanese satellite technology. It trains geologists from the SADC region. The Japanese embassy in Gaborone played a critical role in the establishment of this centre (JOGMEC 2013).

Historically, Japan has been very effective in using its embassies and consulates to gather data to advance its national interests (Kitagawa 1990). In July 2008 Ryoichi Matsuyama, the first Japanese ambassador to Botswana, explained that the Japanese embassy in Gaborone 'is one of the biggest given the added responsibility to SADC. SADC is a growing community and it is important to us [the Japanese]' (Nkala 4 July 2008). Compared to the rest of the African continent the SADC region is peaceful, and provides Japan with natural resources and markets. Matsuyama described Botswana as not only politically stable but economically viable as well (Nkala 4 July 2008). In March 2015 the Japanese ambassador to Botswana explained that '*Japan... cherishes Botswana as a reliable partner in southern Africa*' (*The European Times* 30 March 2015, italics in the original text). He was further impressed that '*Botswana is a peaceful country that has avoided civil war and offers very favourable conditions for business... Japanese companies would greatly benefit by doing business in Botswana*' (italics in the original text). In 2013 the Japanese ambassador to Botswana, Hiroyasu Kobayashi, expressed similar views (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2013). When speaking at an event celebrating Botswana's 48th anniversary of Independence in Tokyo, Botswana's ambassador to Japan, Jacob Nkate, 'invited all [Japanese] to come to Botswana as investors, tourists and development partners' (Nkate 2014). Having depended heavily on diamond mining for government revenue since the 1980s Botswana is now desperate to diversify its economy as the non-renewable diamonds face many risks.

Japan values Botswana mainly for its economic potential and political stability. Botswana too sees Japan as a global economic power to align with (Nkala 4 July 2008). Botswana's economic value is boosted by the abundance of natural resources (minerals) in the country which Japan needs for its energy requirements. This was made even more acute by a devastating earthquake in 2011 that resulted in the Fukushima nuclear disaster rendering Japan's reliance on nuclear power precarious. A month after Japan opened an embassy in Gaborone, a 50-strong Japanese delegation arrived in Botswana to explore business opportunities. The contingent comprised of politicians, businessmen and government officials. They met with President Khama, government officials and the private sector. Alarmed, one journalist remarked: 'Japan has joined the bandwagon of countries that are interested in tapping Botswana's vast mineral and energy resources as the scramble for African natural resources between Asian and Western countries gathers steam' (Benza 3 September 2008).

The ODA that Japan extends to Botswana is not so much about humanitarian assistance but has economic motivation. Ambassador Masahiro Onishi suggests this in an interview with *The European Times* (30 March 2015). The world over, Japanese ODA has been directly linked to the country's economic and national interests as Kitagawa (1990) and Cornelissen (2012a) argue in their works. It is also argued that 'Against the conventional perception, Japanese aid was [and is] mainly motivated by longer rather than shorter economic benefits' (Sato 2005:67). Thus, Botswana-Japan relations are evidence of this when considering that the Japanese embassy in Gaborone has a special regional mandate as argued.

High Profile Visits between Botswana and Japan

High-level profile visits play a critical role in foreign policy and diplomacy. They help forge and cement long-term bilateral relations between concerned countries. Japan and China have used them as part of their 'resource diplomacy' (Rose 2012). Thus, it is not surprising that Botswana and Japan have undertaken a number of high profile visits to each other since 1966. In 2010 Mokgweetsi Masisi (then Botswana's assistant Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration) noted that Botswana and Japan 'have seen it prudent to invest time in encouraging more frequent high level exchanges to deepen ties and consolidate a common

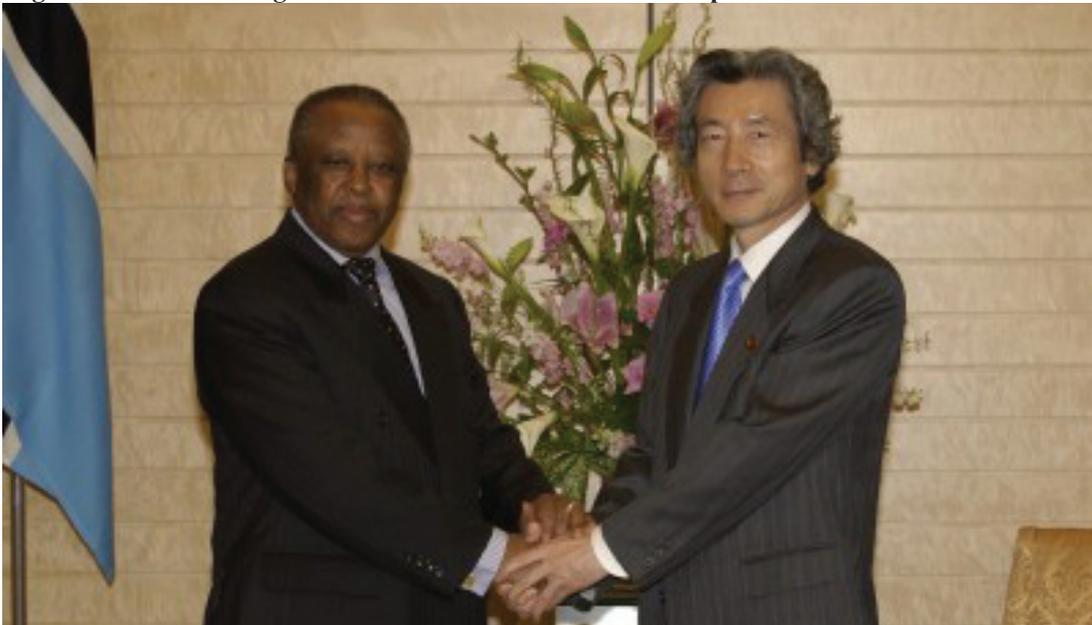
agenda for fruitful beneficial cooperation between our two nations' (Republic of Botswana 2010). This paper does not necessarily discuss all the high-level visits between the two countries. Yet those that are discussed provide good examples of how the two countries have effectively used them to pursue their national interests (especially in the economic sector).

In 1990 President Masire paid a state visit to Japan to attend *Taiso-no-Rei* (the funeral ceremony of Emperor Michinomiya Hirohito). In 1992 he returned to Japan on an 'official working visit'. In October 1993 Masire attended the historic launch of the TICAD I in Tokyo where 48 African countries were represented. Masire was 'one of the five heads of state from Africa' in attendance (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a:2). The TICAD I aimed to achieve sustainable development for Africa 'based on self-reliance of African countries and the support of Africa's development partners' (TICAD I 1993:1). In 1994 Japan's State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Shozo Azuma, visited Botswana, and held fruitful discussions on cooperation with the government. In 1996 Botswana's then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mompoti Merafhe, reciprocated by visiting Japan (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a).

In October 1998 Masire's successor, President Festus Mogae, attended the TICAD II in Tokyo. Mogae, an economist by training, once worked for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as executive director for Anglophone Africa. Because of his experience, he was asked to chair the economic development session during the TICAD II. In August 1999 he also chaired the High Level Debt Management seminar co-sponsored by Japan, the IMF, the United Nations (UN) and Kenya, held in Nairobi, Kenya (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan [MOFA] 2010a).

In March 2003 President Mogae returned to Japan and met with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (Figure 1). Mogae gave keynote addresses to the 3rd World Water Forum, held in Kyoto, and at the UN University in Tokyo. Mogae and Koizumi emphasised that their countries would work together to achieve development in Africa through the TICAD and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.¹

Figure 1: President Mogae and Prime Minister Koizumi in Japan²



In July 2004 a four-member delegation from the Japanese parliament paid a four-day official visit to Botswana. It was led by Tadahiro Matsushita, the then president of Japan-Botswana Parliamentary

1. http://japan.kantei.go.jp/koizumiphoto/2003/03/20botswana_e.html accessed 30 May 2015.

2. http://japan.kantei.go.jp/koizumiphoto/2003/03/20botswana_e.html accessed 30 May 2015.

Friendship League, which promotes friendship between Botswana and Japan legislatures. He was also the vice-president of Japan-Africa Union Parliamentary Friendship League. During the visit, Matsushita reminded Mogae of his 'successful visit to Japan in March 2003, where it had been agreed to forge closer relations between the two countries' legislatures' (*Mmegi* 20 July 2004). In June 2006 Mogae made yet another visit to Japan accompanied by senior government officials, some cabinet ministers and local cultural (music) groups. He attended what was styled 'Botswana Week' which was a social event organised by the Botswana Embassy in Tokyo to 'publicise Botswana in Japan [during the] commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the independence of Botswana and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Botswana' (MOFA 2006).

Mogae also held a summit meeting with Koizumi in which they discussed wide-ranging issues of common national interest. His visit to Japan was welcomed by the media in Botswana. The editorial of private *Mmegi* newspaper noted that 'We have been worried that Botswana tourism marketers and those that are trying to woo investors into the country have not been doing enough to sell the country to high spenders like the Japanese. That is why President Festus Mogae's visit to Tokyo is welcome' (*Mmegi* 1 June 2006). Two months before Mogae's visit, the Botswana Tourism Board engaged the services of Rei Kikukawa, a famous Japanese film actress, to market Botswana and its diamonds through a 'promotional film' (*Mmegi* 22 March 2006). It was launched during 'Botswana Week' referred above. Botswana is the leading producer of diamonds by value in the world; hence securing markets for them is a critical national interest, which has a special place in the country's foreign policy.

In 2005 Ian Khama, then Botswana's vice president, visited Japan at the invitation of MOFA. He met Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and other senior government officials. They discussed Japan-Botswana diplomatic relations, economic issues, tourism, Africa's development and the UN Security Council reform (MOFA 2005). In 2007 Akira Amori, then Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, visited Botswana for high-level discussions on economic cooperation (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a). In March 2009 Botswana hosted the TICAD IV Ministerial Conference, which reviewed the progress made since the TICAD IV held in Yokohama, Japan, in May 2008. The Japanese delegation to this conference held in Gaborone was led by Japan's Foreign Affairs Minister, Hirofumi Nakasone. Japan's former Prime Minister, Yasuo Fukuda, also attended, and he paid a courtesy visit on Mompoti Meraphe, Botswana's then vice president (*Mmegi* 19 March 2009). Fukuda also visited Thamaga Primary Hospital in Botswana and recommended to the Japanese government to assist it with funds. In 2010 the Embassy of Japan in Gaborone donated about US\$80,000 for the construction of the Tuberculosis Resource Centre at Thamaga Hospital (*Botswana Daily News* 22 March 2010).

In October 2010 Mogae's successor, Ian Khama, visited Japan for the first time as the president of Botswana. His meetings focused on wide-ranging issues such as the funding of strategic projects such as the Kazungula Bridge on the Chobe River and the UN Security Council reform (MOFA 2010b). The ambassador of Japan to Botswana described 2013 as 'a grand year for the diplomatic relations between Japan and Botswana' (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2013:1). He further remarked that 'we saw an unprecedented number of high-level visits this year'. For example, in February 2013 Japan's senior Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Masaji Matsuyama, visited Botswana, and emphasised that Japan would continue to enhance cooperation with Botswana in the mining and energy sectors (*Botswana Daily News* 1 March 2013). Still in 2013 Japanese vice Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, Keiichiro Tachibana, vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and five parliamentarians visited Botswana on various assignments.

Indeed the year 2013 saw the high profile official visits taken to a new level between the two countries. For instance, in May 2013 Botswana's Minister of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources, Kitso Mokaila, visited Japan. In June 2013 President Khama, accompanied by ministers Dorcus Makgato-Malesu and Mokgweetsi Masisi, senior government officials and the private sector representatives, attended

TICAD V in Yokohama (MOFA 2013). Khama's delegation, flanked by the ambassador of Botswana to Japan, held talks on various issues with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the side-lines of the TICAD V summit (Figure 2). The TICAD V marked the 20th anniversary of the TICAD. During the meeting with Abe, Khama expressed his gratitude for the support Botswana and Africa receives from Japan. He commended Japan's resilience after the 2011 Tsunami that devastated some parts of Japan. Botswana had donated BWP1 million (about US\$148,000 then) to Japan's Tsunami victims (*Mmegi* 22 March 2011). In November 2013 Botswana's Minister of Transport and Communications, Nonfo Molefhi, visited Japan 'to exchange ideas and experiences on broadcasting regulations' (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2013:1). In February 2013 Botswana became the first and only African country to adopt the Japanese Integrated Services Digital Broadcasting Terrestrial (ISDB-T) (*Botswana Daily News* 30 July 2013). In June 2013 Khama assured Abe that 'Botswana tries to support Japan's efforts to spread the use of the Japanese system' (MOFA 2013). Botswana's decision shows her strategic use of foreign policy to pursue national interests. Foreign policy is seen as 'The decisions and actions taken by a state to pursue her interests within the global system' (Dibie 2008:24).

Figure 2: Botswana delegation led by President Khama in a meeting with Abe and his delegation³



Botswana-Japan Economic Relations

This section examines Botswana-Japan economic relations. 'What should not be disregarded in connection with the friendly and cooperative relations between Japan and Botswana is the... TICAD' (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a:1). Under the TICAD I Japan 'expressed its positive attitude towards supporting African development, and at the same time requested Africa to proceed with self-help, reform and good governance' (MOFA 2014). Under the TICAD IV Japan committed to provide loan facilities for the development of projects in energy, natural resources and infrastructure across Africa (Conelissen 2012a).

In many speeches Japanese high-ranking officials lauded Botswana as an African economic 'success story' and a good investment hub. However, just like relations between major powers and smaller ones, Japan's economic relations with Botswana and other African countries is skewed in Japan's favour

³<http://www.gettyimages.dk/detail/news-photo/president-of-botswana-ian-khama-talks-with-japanese-prime-news-photo/169794540>, accessed 30 May 2015.

(Cornellisen 2012b). As ‘an economic power, Japan has utilised economic wealth for national strategies in international relations, and it has been reflected in her Africa policy’ (Ochiai 2001:38). As of March 2015 imports from Japan to Botswana amounted to US\$3.3 billion, while exports from Botswana amounted to 1.8 \$US billion (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a). The main imports from Japan are automobiles and semiconductors, while Botswana mainly exports polished diamonds (raw products) to Japan. Japan is one of the world’s largest importers of diamonds, while Botswana is the world’s diamond leading producer by value and second by volume.⁴

Japan is making ‘new large-scale and strategic investments in mineral scoping and exploration in locations such as Botswana, the Gulf of Guinea, Namibia, and Madagascar’ (Conelissen 2012a:468). Mineral-rich and politically stable Botswana provides investment opportunities for the Japanese. As it struggles to diversify its economy, Botswana looks to the Japanese investors amongst others. In 2012 Botswana’s ambassador to Japan appealed ‘to the Japanese investor, trader and innovator to come and explore for opportunities in Botswana’ (Nkate 2012). The Japanese had developed interest in Botswana’s minerals as early as 1977. They attempted ‘to establish a consortium of potential investors’ to work on the ‘soda ash and brine deposits’ in Botswana (Kalley *et al* 1999:96). In 2010 President Khama visited Japan and met with Prime Minister Naoto Kan. They issued a joint press statement part of which says ‘In order to boost economic relations between Japan and Botswana, both sides shared the view on the importance of expanding cooperation in the development of mineral resources, including rare metals’ (MOFA 2010b). By March 2015 there were five Japanese companies operating in Botswana and contributing to Botswana’s economy (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a). They include Komatsu, which has signed a deal with Debswana, the leading diamond mining company in Botswana, to supply it with heavy trucks. In April 2015 the ambassador of Japan to Botswana visited the Jwaneng diamond mine and was happy to find the Komatsu trucks in use.

Japan is eagerly looking for minerals everywhere (Cornelissen 2012a:468). In 2007 it signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Botswana to establish a Geological Remote Sensing Centre in Lobatse for the exploration of minerals, ‘especially rare metals, using Japanese space satellites’ in Botswana and Southern Africa (JOGMEC 2013). President Khama and Prime Minister Kan ‘welcomed the on-going activities of the JOGMEC’ (MOFA 2010b). In 2013 the government of Botswana announced that a Japanese company had interest in the ‘construction of a sulphuric acid plant at the BCL [Bamangwato Concession Limited] Mine in Selebi Phikwe’ (*Botswana Daily News* 6 February 2013). The government also announced that another Japanese company was interested in importing ox-tongues from the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC). Another company was also reported to be interested in the construction of a sub-surface water dam. In the energy sector, some Japanese companies were said to be interested in the production of coal bed methane and the processing of coal into liquid products (*Botswana Daily News* 6 February 2013). These opportunities were identified by the Botswana embassy in Japan.

The following are on-going economic projects between Botswana and Japan: i) the implementation of the digital migration project; ii) the project for enhancing national forest monitoring system; iii) the *Jatropha* research project; iv) one-Stop border post project on the Botswana-Namibia border; v) the Kazungula bridge project; and vi) the provision of the broadcasting content to the Botswana national television (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a).

Botswana-Japan Relations in the Education Sector

A rigorous analysis of Botswana-Japan relations in the education sector deserves a paper on its own. Japan owes its economic success to its advancement in science and technology. Since Japan decided to embark

<http://www.debswana.com/>, accessed 26 August 2016.

on industrialisation in 1868 (the Meiji Restoration), it strongly supports its education sector. In 1954 Japan introduced its government/Munbukagakusho scholarship to fully sponsor students from many parts of the world to study at its universities. In June 2005 it extended this scholarship to Botswana. Since April 2006 close to 30 Botswana students, including the authors of this paper, benefited from the Munbukagakusho scholarship. Some Botswana students also benefited from various scholarships offered by Japanese institutions (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015a).

Through the Japan International Co-operation Agency, Japan has also assisted in short-term training of Botswana's civil servants. In February 2015 the Japanese government funded, to the tune of US\$92,079, the construction of a special education unit at Masupe Primary School in Maunatlala in the Central District in Botswana (*Botswana Daily News* 25 February 2015). The ambassador of Japan to Botswana, when speaking at the signing ceremony, was elated that the centre would assist at least 35 children from the village and surrounding areas. On 8 October 2015 the Japanese embassy, together with some partners, supported a science event titled 'Science in Service of the Environment' at the University of Botswana. The embassy expected 'this event to offer an excellent opportunity to encourage students to be good scientists in order to enhance the development of Botswana' (Embassy of Japan in Botswana 2015b).

The UN Security Council Membership: A Factor in Botswana-Japan Relations

Some analysts argue that Japan has a 'hidden' political agenda for dispatching its ODA to African countries. They contend that apart from both short and long-term economic benefits, it wants them to support its bid to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council (Sato 2005; Ampiah 2005 and Rose 2012). Therefore, Rose (2012:222) notes that 'The UN "card" is also often cited as a contributing factor in Japan's courting of Africa'. Cornelissen also contends that 'the African vote is deemed vital' by Japan (2012a:468). African countries fully support Japan's bid. In May 2001, for instance, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria acknowledged that 'Japan by all objective criteria deserves a permanent place in the enlarged Security Council' (Ampiah 2005:109). South Africa, a regional power, strongly supports Japan too and does so 'for more Japanese economic assistance' (Ampiah 2005:109).

The Japanese do not hide that they need Africa's support as the Botswana case shows. In every meeting between Japan and Botswana's top leaders, the UN Security Council issue always comes up. For example, in July 2006, just a month after Mogae's visit to Japan in June 2006, a Japanese delegation of members of the Japanese Diet led by Yoshinori Ohno, then chairperson of Japan-Africa Union Parliamentary Friendship League and former Minister of State Defence, visited Botswana and met with Mogae. They profusely 'thanked Botswana for the continued support of Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and also for the call to North Korea to exercise restraint in its relations with others' (*Mmegi* 31 July 2006). To the delight of Ohno's delegation, Mogae 'once more reaffirmed Botswana's support for Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the United Nations' Security Council' (*Mmegi* 31 July 2006). Japan and North Korea have a long history of tense relations. In June 2006, for instance, North Korea fired missiles over Japan.

In October 2010 Japan's Prime Minister Kan also appreciated Botswana's support to his country's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. He expressed this when welcoming Khama on his first state visit to Japan as the President (MOFA 2010c). Khama held a bilateral summit meeting with Kan. Although the meeting lasted for 40 minutes, it was described as 'successful'. During the meeting, Kan, like his predecessors and successor, 'expressed his admiration for the stable governance and economic growth of Botswana' (MOFA 2010c). Kan reiterated that Japan made certain commitments at the TICAD IV. Therefore, 'as part of these commitments, he [or Japan] would like to proactively consider the provision of ODA loans for the Kazungula Bridge Project, a regional infrastructure project in Botswana' (MOFA 2010c). In reciprocation, Khama 'announced his renewed support for Japan's bid for a permanent

seat in the Security Council' (MOFA 2010c). As mentioned in the introduction, in February 2014 Botswana, under Ian Khama, ended diplomatic relations with North Korea, probably to the delight of the Japanese.

However and dramatically, in 2015, Botswana awarded the tender for construction of the Kazungula bridge to a South Korean company instead of the Chinese company, which had won it. This angered Japan which withdrew part of its ODA loan to the project. Japan viewed Botswana's decision as unprincipled (*Sunday Standard Reporter* 9 August 2015).

Conclusion

This paper addressed a neglected, yet important, topic on Botswana-Japan relations over time. Mineral-rich and politically stable Botswana offers Japan access to natural resources and business opportunities in the SADC region. Japan established a Geological Remote Sensing Centre in Botswana to explore minerals, not only locally, but in Southern Africa. This indicates Botswana's significance to Japan. Japan does not only need Botswana for her natural resources but also wants Botswana's support in Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The permanent members of this council hold veto powers on issues of global interest and have influence in the world.

Botswana has benefited from Japanese ODA and the TICAD. In the education sector, for instance, Japan offers scholarships to Botswana students to pursue undergraduate and post-graduate studies in Japan. Yet the paper notes that Botswana-Japan relations are in favour of the Japanese as the balance of trade indicates. As Botswana celebrates its 50th anniversary of Independence, Botswana should also recognise the assistance received from friendly nations such as Japan since 1966.

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