

Training the Tigers for the Jungle: U.S. Foreign Assistance in East and Southeast Asia

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Historically, the United States Government has provided foreign assistance to countries in East and Southeast Asia via several Departments including State, Defense, Agriculture and Treasury. However, the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) disburses more economic assistance as an individual organization yearly than any other government entity.¹⁾ USAID formed in 1961 as a result of the US Foreign Assistance Act and became the first organization whose primary emphasis was on long-range economic and social development assistance to foreign countries.²⁾

Economic assistance became a foundation for American foreign policy during the earliest years of the Cold War and an artifact of the Marshall Plan, itself an effort to stabilize Western Europe after the destruction of World War II. By the 1970s, funds sent to Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa primarily consisted of food and nutrition, population planning, health and education and human resources development programs.³⁾ The 1980s saw a shift to an emphasis on export-oriented production and trade projects to stabilize currencies and financial systems, and an overall view that market-based principles are most effective in driving development. The 1990s initiated a country sustainable development approach that encouraged a recipient initiative to increase quality of life, a broad policy that also used local organizations to administer some activities.⁴⁾

1) USAID Overseas Loans and Grants Foreign Assistance Fast Facts. 2010. USAID disbursed roughly \$10.5 billion, the Department of State \$9.4 billion, and the Department of Agriculture \$2.6 billion.

2) "USAID history" from the official USAID Website.

3) Ibid.

4) Ibid.

US foreign policy bodies, including USAID, did not specifically pursue development programs and activities focusing on democratization, governance, rule of law or human rights protection on a large scale until after 1989 when a global shift away from authoritarianism started in Eastern Europe.⁵⁾ When democracy-governance (DG) programs did begin, priorities and much funding went to former Warsaw Pact countries in Europe, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Earlier DG programs in Asia, the glaring example being public safety and security sector programs in South Vietnam, achieved notoriety in the eyes of the American public and among lawmakers, for this association with heavy-handed political repression and torture by host governments receiving funds.⁶⁾

US Government Assistance in East Asia: A Model of Success?

The United States' first critical humanitarian and security presence in Asia was in Japan and Korea, initiated by the San Francisco Treaty in 1951, an agreement that would bring Tokyo into America's military and economic umbrella of support.⁷⁾ Subsequently, Japan's "development state" led by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI) promoted technology transfer and available investment capital within the US-led global trading system,⁸⁾ resulting in Japan's "economic miracle" by the early 1960s. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong followed similar paths to economic development in the 1970s, making Japan a role-model for East Asian governments.⁹⁾

South Korea

American economic assistance to Seoul started in 1952 in a post-conflict context with an influx of medical professionals and researchers into the peninsula,¹⁰⁾ eventually leading to specialized development activities such as the Korea Health Demonstration Project from 1975-1980.¹¹⁾ Other non-health sector projects in economic growth, agriculture, infrastructure and education contributed to a new cadre of educated experts¹²⁾, new institutions, laws, and procedures to promote South

5) Carothers, Thomas. 1999. *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington DC. Carnegie Endowment for Peace P. 6.

6) Carothers. P. 36

7) "Korean War and Japan's Recovery" . US Department of State Office of the Historian website.

8) Johnson, Chalmers. 1982. *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975.*: Palo Alto Stanford University Press. P.15.

9) See James Fallows. 1994. *Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System*. New York: Pantheon Books.

10) South Korea: From Aid Recipient to Donor. USAID.

11) Dunlop, David W., Oldwine, Eilene B., et al. 1982. *Korea health demonstration project*. . AID project impact evaluation report number 36. USAID.

12) *The Role of Foreign AID in Development: South Korea and the Philippines*. 1997. Congressional Budget Office.

Korean exports¹³⁾, critical land reform and food aid¹⁴⁾, and infrastructure investment and technical assistance to build railways, ports and power systems for investment in long term growth and prosperity.¹⁵⁾ South Korea graduated from USAID's development assistance in 1980¹⁶⁾ as perhaps the preeminent development success story of the post-World War II era¹⁷⁾ with its eventual successful economic, financial and later political transition. South Korea would become an aid donor rather than a continuing aid recipient.¹⁸⁾

People's Republic of China (PRC)

US government funding of rule of law projects in the People's Republic of China has included several different agencies. The State Department's Democracy, Rule of Law and Labor (DRL) Bureau spend the largest sums, including \$2 million allocated in 2008, for law and judicial support programs along with NGO organizations.¹⁹⁾ Since 1999, USAID and State have collaborated on \$12 million of legal training programs using American law schools as implementing partners. The US Congress funded National Endowment of Democracy (NED) spent nearly \$20 million in the 1990s through its grant-making program and core institutes to assist rule of law, promote the rights of workers and women, and strengthen village elections in China, while assisting in the development of Tibetan communities.²⁰⁾

A specific example of a USAID program in China emphasizing rule of law was Temple University's Master of Laws program, an effort to train Chinese judges, prosecutors and other legal officials in American and other international legal principles. The program also emphasized human rights protection by providing educational opportunities to ethnic minority (non-Han) students, including Tibetans, to assist in the advancement of disadvantaged groups there.²¹⁾

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13) Ibid.

14) Ibid.

15) Ibid.

16) "Celebrating USAID's Role in South Korea's 'Graduation' 2011." USAID blog.

17) The Role of Foreign AID in Development: South Korea and the Philippines. 1997. Congressional Budget Office.

18) See "Korea, new role model for development assistance, Apr 16, 2012. Korea.net."

19) Lund, Thomas. 2008. U.S.-Funded Assistance Programs in China. Congressional Research Service. P. 2 of PDF.

20) Lund. P 6 of PDF

21) Reinstein, Robert J. 2004. Final report: Rule of law projects in China GDG-A-00-01-00020-00, September 25, 2001-August 31, 2004. Temple University, USAID. Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade. Office of Education. P. 14.