

From the Bandung Conference to TICAD and FOCAC: The Institutionalization of Asia-Africa South-South Cooperation

Jean-Claude Maswana

Professor of Economics, Graduate School of Economics, Ritsumeikan University, Japan

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ABSTRACT

The 1955 Bandung Conference supplied a powerful normative vocabulary for Asian-African cooperation, but it did not create a permanent economic institution capable of converting those principles into recurrent programs, implementation cycles, and follow-up. This article asks how that institutional gap was progressively filled. Institutionalization is understood here as the conversion of normative or political commitments into recurrent organizational practices, assessed through five observable dimensions: repeated high-level interaction, formalized principles and frameworks, programmatic commitments, implementation and follow-up mechanisms, and sustained intergovernmental coordination. The article argues that the post-Bandung architecture developed through institutional succession. Japan's Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), launched in 1993, established a durable high-level conference process built around African ownership, partnership, action-oriented agendas, and follow-up; the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), created in 2000 and elevated to summit level in 2006, operated in the institutional field that TICAD had helped legitimate and scaled a comparable conference-action plan-follow-up repertoire with much greater commercial and financial weight. India's India-Africa Forum Summit and Indonesia's Indonesia-Africa Forum subsequently added further layers. The argument is not that these frameworks are institutionally identical or that Chinese or Indian officials explicitly copied TICAD. Rather, their comparability lies in recurrent Africa-wide high-level dialogue, programmatic commitments, multisectoral cooperation, and implementation or follow-up arrangements, while their political origins, financing structures, governance arrangements, and strategic objectives remain distinct. Organizational similarity is interpreted as institutional isomorphism and succession within a common post-Bandung field. Empirically, the article combines primary institutional documents with a deliberately narrow trade-network analysis for four Asian and six African economies. Weighted eigenvector centrality between 2000 and 2020 shows China's pronounced rise, India's growth, Indonesia's modest expansion, and Japan's relative decline. Because eigenvector centrality is normalized and relational, Japan's lower score cannot be read as institutional withdrawal or as proof of Chinese displacement. African governments and continental institutions are treated as participants in, and sometimes co-producers of, this institutional development rather than as passive recipients. The evidence therefore supports a reinterpretation of Asia-Africa summitry as cumulative institutional deepening in which rivalry and strategic pragmatism may coexist with institutional continuity and South-South cooperation.

Keywords: Bandung Conference; TICAD; FOCAC; institutional succession; institutional isomorphism; Asia-Africa relations; weighted eigenvector centrality; South-South cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The economic dimension of the Bandung legacy is no longer a marginal feature of the world economy. UN Trade and Development's regional merchandise-trade matrix indicates that in 2023 Africa imported approximately US\$280 billion of goods from East Asia, South Asia, and the rest of Asia and exported approximately US\$258 billion to those same Asian regions, implying two-way merchandise trade of roughly US\$538 billion (UNCTAD, 2025). China-Africa trade alone reached US\$295.6 billion in 2024, according to China's General Administration of Customs (General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, 2025). Seventy years after Bandung, therefore, the scale of Asian-African exchange is not in doubt. The more analytically difficult question is how an aspirational political settlement became embedded in recurring institutions that organize economic dialogue, commitments, and implementation.

Bandung itself did not establish such an apparatus. The Final Communiqué placed economic cooperation first among its substantive headings. It called for cooperation based on mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty, technical assistance, exchange of know-how, training, research, and wider trade and investment relations (Asian-African Conference, 1955). Yet the conference created no permanent secretariat, replenishable financial mechanism, action-plan cycle, or monitoring institution. Its significance was normative and political rather than organizational. This distinction between principles and institutional machinery is the starting point of this article.

The central puzzle is consequently one of institutionalization and sequencing. How did a normative repertoire centered on sovereignty, mutual benefit, technical cooperation, and South-South solidarity become translated into recurrent structures? Why did the major institutional break occur only after the Cold War? And how should the subsequent proliferation of Japan-, China-, India-, and Indonesia-led forums be understood: as independent diplomatic inventions, as competing instruments in a geopolitical market, or as successive institutional layers in a field whose organizational forms had become increasingly standardized?

For analytical purposes, this long history is divided into three broad phases. The first is the Bandung phase, beginning in 1955, in which a normative vocabulary of sovereignty, mutual benefit, technical cooperation, and South-South solidarity was articulated without a durable implementation apparatus. The second is the post-Cold War organizational phase beginning with TICAD in 1993, when recurrent high-level dialogue, action-oriented programs, and follow-up became embedded in a sustained Africa-focused process. The third begins with FOCAC in 2000 and is characterized by the scaling and pluralization of this architecture through increasingly dense summit cycles, action plans, sectoral mechanisms, and the subsequent entry of India and Indonesia. This periodization does not imply a linear or deterministic progression; it provides a consistent way to compare changes in institutional form across otherwise very different historical settings.

The existing literature provides rich analyses of individual actors and platforms but less attention to their sequential relationship. Work on Japan-Africa relations has examined Japanese diplomacy, aid, and the developmental meanings attached to Japan's experience (Morikawa, 1997; Adem, 2006). The China-Africa literature has analyzed FOCAC, trade, finance, conditionality, and the political economy of China's African engagement (Taylor, 2006; Brautigam, 2009; Ampiah & Naidu, 2008). Maswana (2009), for example, interpreted the emerging China-Africa relationship as a distinctive South-South economic configuration rather than a simple reproduction of the conventional North-South center-periphery pattern, while still emphasizing Africa's need to build its own productive and technological capabilities. Comparative work on China and India similarly emphasizes the opportunities, asymmetries, and bargaining challenges created by emerging Asian powers (Cheru & Obi, 2010). These literatures are indispensable, but their organization around individual sponsors or competitive comparisons tends to obscure institutional genealogy. The relationship among Bandung, TICAD, FOCAC, IAFS, and IAF remains undertheorized as a sequence of institutional deepening.

This paper advances a different interpretation. TICAD, inaugurated by Japan in 1993, was the pivotal post-Cold War institutional innovation because it transformed episodic development diplomacy into a durable multilateral conference process. Its importance lies less in any claim that it directly implemented Bandung than in the organizational repertoire it normalized: recurrent high-level consultation, African ownership, partnership, action-oriented agendas, multisectoral cooperation, and follow-up. FOCAC entered this already legitimized institutional field in 2000. It developed its own Chinese-African political logic, but it also institutionalized a strikingly comparable combination of ministerial meetings, summit diplomacy, multiyear action plans, sectoral commitments, and follow-up mechanisms. FOCAC then scaled this repertoire through the breadth of Chinese trade, finance, and state capacity. India's IAFS and Indonesia's IAF later added further institutional layers.

The argument is deliberately narrower than a claim of direct organizational borrowing. Documentary evidence does not justify saying that Chinese officials explicitly modeled FOCAC on TICAD. Such a claim would require archival evidence of intentional emulation that is not presently available. The paper instead draws on institutional isomorphism and historical institutionalism. Once a recurrent summit-action plan-follow-up architecture had become a legitimate way to organize Asia-Africa relations, later actors entered an institutional field in which this form was increasingly taken for granted. Institutional succession therefore means that later frameworks built

in the same field, reproduced some organizational features, adapted them to different political economies, and expanded the density of the overall architecture while earlier institutions continued to exist.

Three questions guide the analysis. First, how did the institutional architecture of Asian-African economic cooperation evolve from Bandung's normative principles to recurring summit processes? Second, what explains the timing and sequencing of TICAD, FOCAC, IAFS, and IAF? Third, how should changes in the relative network position of major Asian partners be interpreted in relation to this institutional history? The empirical component is intentionally descriptive rather than causal. It uses weighted eigenvector centrality (W-EVC) to characterize the relative trade-network position of China, Japan, India, and Indonesia in a ten-country Asia-Africa network between 2000 and 2020. The network evidence is used to discipline claims about structural position, not to infer that a summit caused trade.

TICAD and FOCAC are selected for focused comparison because both are durable, Africa-wide intergovernmental cooperation processes organized around recurrent high-level political dialogue, formal declarations or frameworks, multisectoral development agendas, programmatic commitments, and mechanisms for implementation or follow-up. The comparison is therefore one of organizational form and institutional development, not a claim of equivalence in political origin, financing structure, governance arrangements, or strategic purpose. IAFS and IAF are included as subsequent cases that test whether the same organizational repertoire diffused into a wider Asia-Africa institutional field. Throughout the analysis, African governments and continental institutions are treated as participants in, and at times co-producers of, institutional change rather than as passive recipients of Asian initiatives, while continuing asymmetries in resources and bargaining capacity are explicitly recognized.

The paper contributes in three respects. First, it reconstructs a sequential institutional genealogy linking the normative vocabulary of Bandung to the post-1990s proliferation of recurrent Asia-Africa forums. Second, it develops the concept of institutional succession to distinguish cumulative institutional deepening from explicit copying and from competitive displacement. Third, it shows why a decline in normalized eigenvector centrality can occur alongside continuing institutional influence, thereby preventing relative trade-network metrics from being misread as a zero-sum scorecard of diplomatic success. The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. Section 2 reconstructs the institutional history from Bandung through TICAD, FOCAC, IAFS, and IAF. Section 3 develops the network and historical-institutionalist framework. Section 4 describes the documentary and trade-network data and the W-EVC method. Section 5 reports the network results. Section 6 discusses the Bandung legacy, succession versus competition, and African agency. Section 7 concludes with implications for the future governance of Asia-Africa cooperation.

Institutional History and Context

The historical discussion applies a common institutional lens across the successive periods. It asks whether cooperation moved from episodic political commitment toward recurrent high-level interaction, formalized principles and frameworks, programmatic commitments, implementation and follow-up mechanisms, and sustained intergovernmental coordination. These dimensions are used descriptively rather than as a numerical index, and table 1 summarizes how they evolved across Bandung, TICAD, FOCAC, IAFS, and IAF.

The Bandung Conference and its economic vision

The economic content of the 1955 Asian-African Conference was more explicit than is sometimes remembered in accounts that focus primarily on anti-colonialism and non-alignment. The Final Communiqué recognized an urgent need to promote development in Asia and Africa and described economic cooperation as desirable when based on mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty. It called for technical assistance through experts and trainees, pilot projects and demonstration equipment, exchanges of know-how, and national or regional training and research institutions. It also acknowledged trade, foreign investment, and cooperation with countries outside Asia and Africa (Asian-African Conference, 1955). Bandung therefore did not imply autarky. Its economic vision combined political autonomy with openness to cooperation on terms compatible with sovereignty and development.

Yet Bandung was institutionally thin. It was a conference and a communiqué, not a standing economic organization. No permanent Asia-Africa secretariat was created to translate the economic provisions into recurrent project cycles, measurable commitments, or periodic implementation reviews. Political solidarity continued in other forms, including the Non-Aligned Movement and wider Third World diplomacy, but the specific idea of a recurring interregional development process linking Asian sponsors and African governments remained weakly institutionalized. The period from 1955 to the early 1990s is therefore better described as an implementation gap than as an absence of Afro-Asian relations. Bilateral trade, aid, political alliances, and technical cooperation continued, but they did not coalesce into a durable multilateral economic architecture comparable to the summit systems that emerged later (Lee, 2010).

Several structural conditions help explain the gap. Decolonization was incomplete, newly independent governments faced acute state-building problems, and the Cold War fragmented the political space in which the Bandung coalition had emerged. The participating economies also differed sharply in regime type, external alignment, industrial capacity, and commodity structure. Bandung supplied a shared language of cooperation but not the administrative capacity or material incentives required to sustain an implementation regime across such heterogeneity. The later institutional history should thus be understood as a process of supplying organizational complements that Bandung itself lacked.

Japan's pioneering institutionalization: TICAD (1993)

The post-Cold War setting altered these constraints. Japan convened the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development in October 1993 together with the United Nations and the Global Coalition for Africa. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs describes the conference as an attempt to encourage African political and economic reform and to restore international attention to African development at a time when the end of the Cold War risked reducing Africa's strategic salience (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1993). TICAD's original declaration emphasized self-generated reform, private-sector-led development, regional cooperation, the application of Asian development experience, and expanded South-South cooperation. These features made TICAD more than a donor meeting: it placed Africa-Asia learning and structured policy dialogue inside a recurrent multilateral process.

The importance of TICAD for this paper lies in the institutional process that developed across successive conferences. TICAD II in 1998 gave greater prominence to the paired principles of African ownership and international partnership and adopted the Tokyo Agenda for Action, which translated general goals into priority policies and actions. TICAD III reaffirmed the conference process a decade after its creation, while later reforms strengthened monitoring and follow-up. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs records that African leaders at TICAD III explicitly called for stronger organization and a permanent form of monitoring. The subsequent TICAD follow-up mechanism introduced regular review and ministerial-level follow-up (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008). This is important evidence of African agency: institutionalization was not simply designed by Japan and delivered to Africa; African leaders also pressed for a more accountable implementation architecture.

TICAD thus performed three institutional functions. It made recurrent high-level Africa-focused conference diplomacy a normal part of Asian external economic policy; it connected conference declarations to action-oriented programs; and it progressively added mechanisms for review and follow-up. The claim is not that no earlier institution had ever linked Asia and Africa, nor that TICAD explicitly invoked Bandung as its constitutional source. The more defensible proposition is that TICAD was the first durable post-Bandung, post-Cold War development process led from Asia that combined recurring high-level meetings, programmatic commitments, and an evolving follow-up system on a continental African scale. In that sense it provided an institutional precedent for the field that followed.

China's adoption and scaling: FOCAC (2000)

FOCAC was established seven years after TICAD. The first ministerial conference met in Beijing in October 2000 with China and 44 African countries. Its founding Program for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development emphasized equality, mutual respect, practical cooperation, and a long-term partnership,

while the Beijing Declaration placed the forum within the wider language of South-South cooperation (FOCAC, 2000a, 2000b). Crucially for the institutional comparison, the forum did not remain an episodic conference. Follow-up procedures were introduced soon after its creation, the second ministerial conference adopted an action plan for 2004-2006, and the 2006 Beijing Summit elevated the process to head-of-state diplomacy while adopting another three-year action plan (FOCAC, 2003, 2006).

The organizational similarities to TICAD are substantial: recurring high-level meetings; declarations defining broad principles; time-bounded action plans; a multisectoral agenda; and follow-up mechanisms between conference cycles. These similarities are evidence of institutional convergence, but not of documented one-way copying. FOCAC emerged from China's own diplomatic history with Africa, China's growing commercial interests, and a state-centered development and foreign-policy apparatus very different from Japan's. Its financial instruments, infrastructure orientation, and political bilateralism cannot be reduced to a Japanese model. Institutional isomorphism is therefore a better concept than imitation. TICAD had helped establish a recognizable organizational form in the Asia-Africa field; FOCAC adopted a comparable form and repurposed it around China's distinct capabilities and strategic preferences.

FOCAC also scaled the architecture. The 2006 Action Plan described the forum as an important platform for collective dialogue and an effective mechanism for pragmatic cooperation and committed the parties to strengthen follow-up and regular political dialogue (FOCAC, 2006). By the 2024 Beijing summit, the process encompassed 53 African states with diplomatic relations with China and the African Union Commission, and the 2025-2027 Action Plan retained an elaborate follow-up architecture of coordinators' meetings, senior officials' meetings, sub-forums, and implementation reporting (FOCAC, 2024). China's financial capacity magnified the material content of the forum. The 2024 summit announced RMB360 billion in support over the following three years through credit lines, assistance, and investment commitments. The point is not that financial scale proves institutional superiority. It demonstrates that a conference architecture broadly comparable in form to earlier summit diplomacy could be expanded into a much denser economic system.

This sequence is what the paper calls institutional succession. The successor does not abolish the predecessor, and succession need not be cooperative in intention. TICAD and FOCAC coexist and can compete for diplomatic attention, commercial opportunities, or normative influence. Succession refers instead to the cumulative development of the institutional field: later actors operate through organizational forms whose legitimacy has already been established, add their own instruments, and increase the density and scale of the field.

Subsequent institutional deepening: IAFS and IAF

India added another layer with the first India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi in April 2008. The Indian government described the summit as creating a 'new architecture' for India-Africa relations, anchored in the Delhi Declaration and the Africa-India Framework for Cooperation (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 2009). The summit emphasized capacity building, skills, trade, infrastructure, and policy consultation. The second summit in Addis Ababa in 2011 explicitly reviewed implementation of the 2008 framework, while the third summit in 2015 adopted a declaration and framework for strategic cooperation and agreed on continued monitoring (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2011, 2015). The institutional repertoire was again familiar: summit, framework, implementation, review.

Table 1. Institutional genealogy of post-Bandung Asia-Africa cooperation

Institution / date	Core organizational form	Program and follow-up features	Interpretive significance
Bandung Conference, 1955	One-off intergovernmental conference and Final Communiqué	Economic cooperation, technical assistance, know-how, training and research commitments; no permanent implementation machinery	Normative foundation: sovereignty, mutual interest, technical cooperation and South-South solidarity.

TICAD, from 1993	Recurring high-level multilateral development conference led by Japan with international co-organizers	Declarations and action agendas; ownership-partnership principles; progressively formalized monitoring and follow-up	Durable post-Cold War institutionalization of recurrent Asia-Africa development diplomacy.
FOCAC, from 2000; summit from 2006	Recurring China-Africa ministerial forum, later including summit-level meetings and multiple sub-forums	Multiyear action plans; sectoral commitments; follow-up committee and implementation meetings; regular political dialogue	Adaptation and large-scale expansion of a comparable conference-action plan-follow-up repertoire.
IAFS, from 2008	India-Africa leaders summit process	Delhi Declaration; Framework for Cooperation; later implementation review and strategic cooperation framework	Further diffusion and layering of summit-based Asia-Africa partnership architecture.
Indonesia-Africa Forum, from 2018	High-level economic and business forum	Economic cooperation agenda, public-private engagement and renewed forum in 2024	Late institutionalization by the original Bandung host; strengthens the layered character of the field.

Note. Organizational similarities are interpreted as evidence of an evolving institutional field, not as proof of direct copying or causal influence from one platform to another.

Indonesia entered the contemporary forum architecture later, but its re-engagement has become increasingly substantive. The first Indonesia-Africa Forum was held in Bali in April 2018, and the second in 2024 explicitly linked Indonesia's contemporary economic diplomacy with the historical symbolism of Bandung (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018, 2024). The forums were designed not merely as commemorative diplomacy but as platforms for concrete business, investment, health, energy, food-security, and development cooperation. This multilateral re-engagement has been accompanied by a widening of bilateral relations with African partners. In 2024, for example, Indonesia and Tanzania agreed to launch negotiations toward a preferential trade agreement and to deepen cooperation in energy and capacity building, illustrating how the Bandung host is increasingly translating historical affinity into contemporary economic ties (Secretariat of State of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024a). Indonesia's economic scale in Africa remains considerably smaller than China's, Japan's, or India's, but its trajectory is institutionally important because it shows the original Bandung host moving from symbolic stewardship toward recurrent forum diplomacy and expanding bilateral economic cooperation.

Taken together, these processes created a layered rather than centralized Asia-Africa architecture. Bandung supplied the normative vocabulary; TICAD supplied a durable post-Cold War multilateral conference process; FOCAC greatly scaled summit-action plan-follow-up diplomacy; IAFS and IAF extended the organizational repertoire to additional Asian actors. Table 1 summarizes the genealogy. The table is descriptive and chronological. It does not establish that any later institution was causally copied from an earlier one.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Network theory and structural position

Economic relations are relational. A partner's structural position depends not only on the volume of its bilateral exchanges but also on the position of the countries to which it is connected. Network analysis makes this intuition explicit. Degree measures count connections and strength measures sum their weights, while eigenvector centrality assigns greater importance to connections with already central nodes (Bonacich, 1972, 1987). In an Asia-Africa trade network, a high W-EVC score therefore indicates that a country is connected through relatively large trade relationships to countries that are themselves structurally important within the specified network.

The measure is best understood as structural position, not as a direct measure of diplomatic influence. Trade can create material interdependence, information channels, bargaining leverage, and agenda-setting capacity, but

institutional power also operates through aid, development finance, investment, standards, education, security cooperation, technical assistance, and norm production. A trade-only centrality score cannot observe these channels. This distinction is particularly important for Japan because TICAD's institutional activity may remain extensive even when Japan's merchandise-trade weight grows more slowly than China's.

The paper therefore separates material and structural claims. Trade volume is a material flow; W-EVC is a relative relational statistic constructed from those flows; institutional influence is a broader political-economic phenomenon that must be evaluated from documentary and organizational evidence. The results section deliberately avoids converting one concept into another.

Institutional continuity, isomorphism, and succession

Institutionalization, as used in this paper, refers to the progressive conversion of political or normative commitments into recurrent and durable organizational practices. It is operationalized through five observable dimensions: (1) recurrence of high-level intergovernmental interaction; (2) formalization of principles, declarations, or cooperation frameworks; (3) adoption of programmatic or time-bounded commitments; (4) creation of implementation, monitoring, or follow-up mechanisms; and (5) sustained coordination between formal meetings. These criteria make it possible to compare historically distinct initiatives without assuming that they are identical institutions. Bandung scores highly as a normative foundation but weakly on recurrent implementation machinery; TICAD, FOCAC, and later forums progressively add organizational density along these dimensions.

Historical institutionalism emphasizes that institutions are shaped by timing, sequence, increasing returns, and the ways earlier choices structure later possibilities (Pierson, 2000). Institutional change often occurs not through abrupt replacement but through layering, reinterpretation, and gradual modification (Streeck & Thelen, 2005; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). Organizational sociology adds a complementary mechanism: once a particular organizational form becomes legitimate within a field, organizations may converge toward similar forms even without direct command or explicit copying (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

These ideas make it possible to conceptualize the post-Bandung sequence without requiring an implausibly simple causal chain. Bandung did not cause TICAD in the econometric sense, and TICAD did not necessarily cause FOCAC. Instead, Bandung established a normative repertoire. TICAD later transformed part of that repertoire into a durable development-conference architecture. FOCAC emerged after that architecture had become a recognized mode of Asian engagement with Africa, but it combined the organizational repertoire with distinct Chinese diplomatic and financial capacities. IAFS and IAF then entered a still denser field.

For purposes of this paper, institutional succession is defined as a process in which a later institution enters an already structured field, adopts or converges toward some legitimate organizational forms, adapts those forms to its own resources and objectives, and expands the field without necessarily replacing the earlier institution. Succession differs from competitive displacement because both predecessor and successor can remain active. It differs from explicit diffusion because documented intentional borrowing is not required. And it differs from simple parallelism because timing and organizational convergence are treated as substantively meaningful characteristics of the common institutional field.

This framework produces two empirical expectations rather than causal hypotheses. First, if institutional succession is a useful description, later Asia-Africa frameworks should display recurrent organizational features already established in the field: high-level meetings, programmatic documents, implementation cycles, and follow-up. Second, a large rise in one actor's trade-network centrality need not imply institutional displacement of another actor, because W-EVC is a normalized relational measure while institutional influence is multidimensional. The documentary chronology tests the first expectation; the centrality algebra and observed network trajectories clarify the second.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Documentary and network data

The research design deliberately separates the long political-economic history from the narrower period covered by the network evidence. The historical narrative begins with the Bandung Conference in 1955 and follows institutional developments through the contemporary period. The documentary corpus is composed primarily of official texts: the Bandung Final Communiqué; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents on TICAD I and the TICAD follow-up mechanism; FOCAC declarations and action plans; Government of India documents on IAFS; Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs material on IAF; and African Union documents used to assess African agenda-setting. Secondary scholarship is used to interpret the political economy and historical context, not as a substitute for primary evidence about institutional design.

The comparative institutional analysis therefore uses the same five dimensions of institutionalization across the historical cases. Primary sources are used to establish what each forum formally created, how frequently it met, whether it adopted action-oriented program, and whether procedures for implementation or follow-up were institutionalized. The purpose is not to rank the forums on a single scale or infer direct causal transmission from one to another, but to identify continuity, convergence, and divergence in organizational form while retaining the historically specific political economy of each framework.

The network component is narrower. It covers four Asian economies, China, Japan, India, and Indonesia, and six African economies, Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania. These countries are a purposive set of large or institutionally salient nodes rather than a statistically representative sample of Asia and Africa. The principal bilateral merchandise-trade sources used in the existing network construction are UN Comtrade and the IMF Direction of Trade Statistics. The current data update also identifies CEPII's BACI V202601 as the preferred reconciliation source for replication. BACI V202601 supplies mirror-reconciled HS92 bilateral trade data for 1995-2024, removes estimated CIF costs from import reports, and weights mirror reports by reporter reliability (CEPII, 2026; Gaulier & Zignago, 2010).

The updated data vintage matters methodologically even though this article reports only the validated benchmark centrality snapshots for 2000 and 2020 from the existing replication output. Earlier versions of the project contemplated a five-year centrality series. The archived manuscript, however, preserves the 2000 and 2020 benchmark estimates but not a reproducible set of intermediate estimates under an identical network specification. This revision therefore does not interpolate 2005, 2010, or 2015 values. A full replication should regenerate every network year from a single immutable BACI release, rather than splice vintages or manufacture intermediate scores. The decision sacrifices visual smoothness for reproducibility.

This timeframe distinction is fundamental. Bandung is the normative and historical starting point of the paper, but it is not treated as a quantitative intervention date. Likewise, the W-EVC analysis does not claim to measure the entire 1955-2025 institutional history. It describes relative merchandise-trade position during 2000-2020, the period beginning with FOCAC's creation and encompassing its summit-level expansion, while the longer institutional chronology is analyzed qualitatively.

Weighted eigenvector centrality

For each benchmark year, bilateral trade is represented by an undirected weighted network. For country i , weighted eigenvector centrality is defined as:

$$c_{i,t} = (1/\lambda_t) \sum_j a_{ij,t} w_{ij,t} c_{j,t} \quad (1)$$

In Equation (1), $c_{i,t}$ denotes the weighted eigenvector centrality of country i in year t ; λ_t denotes the dominant eigenvalue of the network matrix; $a_{ij,t}$ equals one when an observed trade relationship connects countries i and

j and zero otherwise; $w_{ij,t}$ denotes the bilateral trade weight, constructed as the sum of merchandise exports from i to j and exports from j to i ; $c_{j,t}$ denotes the centrality of partner j . The use of undirected weights is appropriate to the paper's interest in the total intensity of economic connection rather than the direction of bilateral balances.

In matrix form, the centrality vector is the dominant eigenvector of the weighted adjacency matrix:

$$W_t c_t = \lambda_t c_t, \quad \text{with} \quad c_t' c_t = 1 \quad (2)$$

In Equation (2), W_t denotes the symmetric weighted adjacency matrix in year t ; c_t denotes its dominant normalized eigenvector; λ_t denotes the corresponding largest eigenvalue; $c_t' c_t = 1$ is the unit-length normalization used to make scores comparable within a network year. Because the score is normalized, it is inherently relative. A country can lose normalized centrality even if its own nominal trade does not contract when another node expands more rapidly and changes the eigenvector of the system.

Limitations and inferential boundaries

Three limitations are central rather than peripheral to interpretation. First, the ten-country network is small and purposive. It was designed to compare four institutionally important Asian partners against six major African nodes, not to estimate population parameters for all Asian and African economies. The results should therefore be read as a structural comparison within the specified network. A full replication with BACI V202601 should expand the country universe and test whether the ranking is robust to additional Asian and African nodes.

Second, merchandise trade is only one layer of Asia-Africa relations. The network excludes foreign direct investment, official development finance, construction contracts, aid, migration, student mobility, technical assistance, standards cooperation, and diplomatic interactions. The omission is particularly consequential for Japan, whose institutional engagement through TICAD includes channels that merchandise trade cannot record. Future research should construct a multiplex network in which trade, finance, investment, and knowledge exchange are separate but interconnected layers.

Third, the network evidence is descriptive. W-EVC does not identify the causal effect of TICAD, FOCAC, IAFS, or IAF on trade. Summit creation is endogenous to changes in global demand, commodity markets, domestic reform, partner strategy, and the broader redistribution of economic power. The article consequently uses institutional documents to establish chronology and organizational form, and network statistics to characterize relative structural position. It does not infer intentions from centrality values or causal effects from coincident timing.

RESULTS

Evolution of weighted eigenvector centrality

Table 2 reports the validated benchmark W-EVC estimates for 2000 and 2020. The pattern is unambiguous at the level of relative trade-network position. China rises sharply from 0.42 to 0.98; India rises from 0.24 to 0.45; Indonesia increases modestly from 0.08 to 0.12; and Japan declines from 0.68 to 0.55. The important analytical question is what these movements do, and do not, establish.

Table 2. Weighted eigenvector centrality in the ten-country Asia-Africa trade network, 2000 and 2020

Country	W-EVC 2000	W-EVC 2020	Change	Interpretation
China	0.42	0.98	0.56	Strong re-centering of relative merchandise-trade position.
Japan	0.68	0.55	-0.13	Relative decline; not evidence of institutional withdrawal or absolute trade contraction.
India	0.24	0.45	0.21	Substantial increase from a lower initial network position.
Indonesia	0.08	0.12	0.04	Modest expansion from a peripheral trade-network position.

Note. W-EVC is a normalized measure of relative position in the specified merchandise-trade network. It does not measure aid, investment, finance, educational exchange, technical assistance, diplomatic influence, or the full scope of bilateral relations.

Japan entered the FOCAC era with the highest W-EVC among the four Asian nodes in the sample. That chronology is consistent with Japan's substantial pre-2000 economic relationship with Africa and with the seven years of TICAD institution-building between 1993 and 2000, but the statistic does not establish that TICAD caused the 0.68 score. The causal direction could also run from pre-existing Japanese commercial and development ties to both TICAD and network centrality. The correct inference is therefore modest: high Japanese relative centrality preceded the rapid expansion of China's FOCAC-era trade network.

China's increase of 0.56 is the largest movement in the table. It captures a pronounced re-centering of the specified trade network toward China during the two decades after FOCAC's creation. This material change coincided with FOCAC's expansion from a ministerial forum to a summit-centered system with increasingly detailed action plans and follow-up. Yet the two forms of evidence remain analytically distinct. The institutional documents establish organizational scaling; W-EVC establishes changing relative trade-network position. Their concurrence is consistent with the succession argument but is not a causal estimate of FOCAC's trade effect.

India's rise is also important because it prevents the institutional history from collapsing into a China-Japan binary. A change of 0.21 from a lower initial value indicates a meaningful broadening of India's relative position. IAFS was launched in 2008, midway through the period. Again, the chronology is consistent with institutional deepening, but the network change cannot be attributed mechanically to the forum. Indonesia remains far less central in merchandise trade, reinforcing the distinction between the symbolic authority associated with Bandung and contemporary material network weight.

Institutional succession in network terms: why relative decline is not displacement

The most important statistical correction concerns Japan. Eigenvector centrality is not an absolute stock of influence. It is a normalized solution to a system of simultaneous relationships. Differentiating the unit-length normalization in Equation (2) yields:

$$d(c_i'c_i) = 2c_i'dc_i = 0 \Rightarrow c_i'dc_i = 0 \quad (3)$$

In Equation (3), dc_i denotes the change in the normalized dominant eigenvector following a change in the trade matrix; $c_i'dc_i = 0$ means that the first-order change is orthogonal to the existing normalized centrality vector. Consequently, increases in some components of the normalized eigenvector cannot simply be added without offsetting adjustments elsewhere. This is a property of normalization, not a statement about diplomacy.

For a symmetric weighted network with distinct eigenvalues, standard eigenvector perturbation gives a more explicit expression for the response of the leading eigenvector to a change dW_t in trade weights:

$$dc_1 = \sum_{k=2}^N [(c_k' dW_t c_1)/(\lambda_1 - \lambda_k)] c_k \quad (4)$$

In Equation (4), c_1 denotes the normalized dominant eigenvector; c_k denotes the k th orthonormal eigenvector of W_t ; λ_1 is the dominant eigenvalue; λ_k is the k th eigenvalue; dW_t is the perturbation in bilateral trade weights. The sign of the change in any country-specific component depends on the full pattern of network perturbations and on the eigensystem, not merely on that country's own bilateral trade. A large increase in China's links to already central African nodes can therefore reduce Japan's normalized component even if Japan's own commercial ties are stable or growing more slowly rather than contracting absolutely.

This mathematical point alters the substantive interpretation. Japan's W-EVC decline from 0.68 to 0.55 is evidence that Japan became less central relative to the expanding network, not evidence that TICAD lost institutional relevance. China can gain relative centrality while Japan continues to exercise influence through development cooperation, human-resource program, standards, quality infrastructure, or policy dialogue that the merchandise network does not measure. The relevant contrast is therefore relative re-centering versus absolute institutional displacement.

The network evidence consequently fits institutional succession better than a zero-sum reading, but it does not prove succession by itself. The succession interpretation rests on the combined evidence of chronology, organizational form, continued coexistence, and network expansion. A competitive interpretation remains

possible in sectors or diplomatic arenas. The contribution is to show that competition is not the only coherent reading of divergent centrality trajectories.

DISCUSSION

The economic institutional legacy of Bandung

Bandung's most durable economic legacy may lie less in any single trade outcome than in the legitimacy it conferred on organized South-South economic cooperation. Its Final Communiqué articulated mutual interest, sovereignty, technical assistance, training, and economic collaboration as principles of interregional relations. What Bandung lacked was organizational machinery to make those commitments recurrent. The post-1990s forums progressively supplied that missing machinery.

TICAD's institutional importance is therefore best described as resuscitation through institutionalization rather than direct implementation. Japan did not simply reopen the Bandung Conference. TICAD was created in a new post-Cold War environment and included the United Nations, international financial institutions, and an explicit development-policy agenda that differed markedly from 1955. Nevertheless, it translated several compatible principles into a recurrent process and reintroduced Asia as a significant organizer of continent-wide African development diplomacy. Its emphasis on African ownership and international partnership also reduced the conceptual distance between South-South solidarity and contemporary development governance.

FOCAC then intensified the material content of this institutional form. Its recurrent ministerial cycles, summit diplomacy, action plans, specialized sub-forums, and follow-up apparatus produced an organizational density that Bandung never possessed. The central historical claim of the paper is therefore not that the Bandung communiqué contained a latent blueprint whose clauses were mechanically copied decades later. It is that the normative legitimacy of Asian-African cooperation survived, while later institutions progressively developed the organizational complements needed to operationalize cooperation under changing historical conditions.

Institutional succession versus competition

The succession interpretation does not require denying competition. Japan, China, India, and Indonesia have different commercial interests, diplomatic objectives, policy instruments, and conceptions of development cooperation. Governments may compete for procurement contracts, market access, diplomatic support, critical inputs, investment opportunities, and normative influence. A literature focused on strategic rivalry captures important parts of this reality.

Nor should South-South solidarity and strategic pragmatism be treated as mutually exclusive explanations. Institutions can simultaneously embody norms of sovereignty, mutual benefit, partnership, and development cooperation while serving commercial, diplomatic, and geopolitical objectives. TICAD can reflect both a development partnership and Japanese foreign-policy interests; FOCAC can institutionalize South-South language and negotiated cooperation while also advancing Chinese trade, investment, diplomatic, and strategic goals; African governments can invoke solidarity while bargaining for finance, market access, infrastructure, skills, or policy space. The relevant question is therefore not whether these platforms are 'genuine' South-South cooperation or pragmatic statecraft in some pure sense. It is how normative commitments and material interests are combined, institutionalized, negotiated, and contested within recurrent frameworks.

The problem arises when competition is treated as the organizing principle for the entire institutional history.

Such a frame tends to interpret any Chinese gain as a Japanese loss and to read relative centrality as a diplomatic league table. The documentary evidence points to a more complex field. TICAD continued after FOCAC emerged; FOCAC did not eliminate Japanese engagement; IAFS added Indian capacity without requiring either predecessor to disappear; and Indonesia later established its own forum. The institutional outcome is proliferation and layering, not replacement.

Historical institutionalism provides a useful explanation. Once recurring high-level Africa-focused cooperation had become established, later actors did not face a blank institutional canvas. They operated in a field in which

conference cycles, declarations, action program, and follow-up were already recognizable technologies of interregional diplomacy. DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) concept of institutional isomorphism helps explain convergence in form without assuming a written instruction to copy. Streeck and Thelen's (2005) emphasis on layering explains why multiple forums can accumulate and coexist. The resulting architecture can thus be simultaneously competitive at the level of actors and cumulative at the level of institutions.

This distinction also clarifies the meaning of China's rise. FOCAC's scale matters because it transformed what a summit-based Asia-Africa platform could mobilize in trade, finance, infrastructure, and sectoral cooperation. But scale should not be confused with institutional paternity. Japan's earlier role in creating a durable post-Cold War conference process and China's later role in massively expanding a comparable organizational repertoire are analytically compatible. A succession perspective can therefore recognize both Japanese institutional precedence and Chinese material scaling without turning the relationship into a claim of imitation or a denial of strategic rivalry.

African agency within a layered institutional architecture

A genealogy centered only on Asian sponsors would reproduce a serious analytical bias: it would treat Africa as the object rather than a co-producer of institutional change. African agency is understood here not as equality of material power but as the capacity of African governments and continental institutions to articulate priorities, negotiate institutional procedures, press for implementation and accountability, coordinate across external partners, and use institutional plurality to widen bargaining options. The documentary record offers evidence of such agency. African leaders pressed TICAD to strengthen monitoring and follow-up, contributing to the institutionalization of its review process (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008). FOCAC's declarations and action plans are formally negotiated as joint China-Africa texts, and the forum's contemporary mechanisms include African co-chairing and institutionalized consultation. IAFS was explicitly framed by India as a consultative partnership responding to African priorities. These features do not demonstrate equal bargaining power, and they should not obscure substantial asymmetries in finance, administrative capacity, or agenda-setting resources. They do, however, show that African participation has helped shape the architecture rather than merely receiving it.

Agenda 2063 provides an increasingly explicit African-authored framework against which external platforms can be evaluated. The African Union describes it as the continent's strategic blueprint for inclusive and sustainable transformation, with national and regional priorities including human capital, infrastructure, science and technology, manufacturing-based industrialization, value addition, capable institutions, and employment (African Union, 2025a, 2025b). The 2025 TICAD Yokohama Declaration explicitly located Africa-Japan cooperation in relation to Agenda 2063 and emphasized African ownership, mutual interest, and structural transformation (African Union, 2025c). This is significant because it changes the institutional logic from choosing among externally defined partnership menus toward evaluating multiple partnerships against African-defined objectives.

Institutional plurality can increase bargaining options, but it is not automatically an asset. Multiple forums can generate duplicated projects, incompatible reporting systems, summit fatigue, and a proliferation of announcements that exceed administrative capacity. The relevant form of African agency is therefore not simply the ability to attend many platforms. It is the capacity to set priorities across platforms, compare delivery against common indicators, preserve institutional memory when governments and summit cycles change, and redirect each partnership toward complementary gaps in national and continental development strategies.

This suggests a practical division of labor without assuming fixed national stereotypes. African governments can seek Japanese strengths where quality, standards, human-resource development, and long-horizon institutional cooperation are most valuable; Chinese scale where infrastructure, industrial capacity, finance, and market depth are central; Indian capabilities in pharmaceuticals, digital services, training, and private enterprise; and Indonesian partnerships in sectors where its own development experience and commercial capabilities are relevant. The principle is not to allocate sectors permanently by partner but to use institutional plurality strategically, with African priorities determining the combination rather than external competition determining the agenda.

Preserving institutional memory is especially important. Each forum produces declarations, action plans, pledges, working groups, and implementation reports, but these are often evaluated within separate institutional silos. An African cross-platform monitoring framework could record commitments, disbursements, completion, local procurement, skill transfer, technology learning, and long-term operation across TICAD, FOCAC, IAFS, and IAF. Such a system would convert institutional plurality from summit diplomacy into cumulative bargaining knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This article set out to explain how Bandung's aspirational economic principles became embedded in the contemporary institutional architecture of Asia-Africa cooperation. Its answer is sequential. Bandung supplied a normative repertoire centered on sovereignty, mutual interest, technical cooperation, and South-South solidarity but created little permanent implementation machinery. TICAD, beginning in 1993, supplied a durable post-Cold War conference process built around recurrent high-level dialogue, action-oriented program, ownership, partnership, and progressively stronger follow-up. FOCAC, launched in 2000 and elevated to summit level in 2006, operated in the institutional field that TICAD had helped legitimate and greatly expanded a comparable summit-action plan-follow-up repertoire through China's distinctive diplomatic, commercial, and financial capacities. IAFS added a further Indian layer, while Indonesia's IAF marked the active return of the Bandung host to structured Africa-focused economic diplomacy.

The paper has addressed a gap in the literature by treating these platforms as sequential institutional genealogy rather than analyzing them only as isolated sponsor program or as a contest for influence. The concept of institutional succession is deliberately non-causal and non-teleological. It does not claim that FOCAC was explicitly copied from TICAD, that institutional forms are identical, or that competition is absent. It identifies a cumulative process in which later frameworks entered an increasingly structured field, reproduced some legitimate organizational forms, adapted them to different political economies, and expanded the density of Asia-Africa cooperation while earlier institutions continued to operate.

The network evidence reinforces the need for this distinction. China became overwhelmingly more central in the ten-country merchandise-trade network between 2000 and 2020, India also gained, Indonesia increased modestly, and Japan's normalized W-EVC declined. But eigenvector centrality is relational and normalized. Japan's relative decline therefore cannot establish institutional withdrawal, just as China's rise cannot by itself prove that FOCAC displaced TICAD. The statistical evidence describes a re-centering of trade connections; the documentary evidence describes institutional evolution. Their combination supports a more nuanced interpretation of succession and scaling.

Indonesia's renewed role is especially important for understanding the continuity of the Bandung tradition. As the host of the 1955 conference, Indonesia has not confined its role to preserving Bandung as diplomatic memory. Through the Indonesia-Africa Forums of 2018 and 2024, it has actively re-entered the institutional architecture of Africa-Asia cooperation and used the Bandung legacy as a platform for contemporary commercial and development partnerships. The second IAF generated a broad portfolio of business agreements, while parallel bilateral initiatives, including the 2024 decision by Indonesia and Tanzania to begin negotiations toward a preferential trade agreement and deepen energy cooperation, demonstrate that this re-engagement extends beyond summit symbolism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024; Secretariat of State of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024a, 2024b). Indonesia should therefore be understood not simply as the historical custodian of the Bandung spirit, but as an increasingly active economic partner seeking to renew that legacy through both institutional diplomacy and bilateral cooperation with African countries.

The broader implication is that institutionalization should not be confused with homogenization. The recurrent organizational features identified in this study make TICAD, FOCAC, IAFS, and IAF comparable within a common field, but they do not erase differences in political economy, financing, governance, or strategic purpose. Nor does institutionalization resolve power asymmetries. Instead, it creates recurrent arenas in which norms, material interests, African agency, and strategic competition are repeatedly negotiated. This is why South-South solidarity and pragmatic statecraft can coexist within the same institutional architecture.

The policy implication is institutional rather than geopolitical. African governments gain most from plurality when they can preserve memory across summit cycles, compare delivery across platforms, and assign external partnerships to African-defined development priorities. The strategic objective is not to choose one Asian partner as the winner of a competition. It is to use distinct institutions as complementary channels and to strengthen African capacity to coordinate them. Agenda 2063 already supplies a continentally authored set of transformation priorities against which this coordination can be assessed.

The study also defines a clear research agenda. The next empirical step is to reconstruct the full network from a single BACI V202601 release for all available Asian and African economies, calculate annual and five-year centrality measures through 2024, and test the sensitivity of rankings to network boundaries and alternative normalization. A second extension should build a multiplex network combining trade with investment, official finance, development cooperation, student mobility, and technical assistance. A third should use archival materials and interviews with Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, African Union, and African national officials to test whether the organizational convergence documented here arose from conscious learning, indirect emulation, common functional pressures, or some combination of these mechanisms. Those extensions would move the institutional-succession argument from a carefully bounded genealogy toward a more demanding causal explanation.

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