

THE GAMBIA-TAIWAN RELATIONS, 1995-2013: YAHYA JAMMEH'S FOREIGN POLICY RATIONALITY

GAMBIYA-TAYVAN İLİŞKİLERİ, 1995-2013: YAHYA JAMMEH'İN DIŞ POLİTİKA RASYONALİTESİ

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Abstract

One of Yahya Jammeh's most consequential diplomatic relations was with the Republic of China on Taiwan. Although Jammeh's decision to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan immediately brought US \$35 million to the junta in 1995, it has been criticised by politicians and policy makers for being irrational. However, there has been neither an attempt to document the benefits derived from the relationship nor an analysis of the rationality that justified the relationship. Therefore, this paper attempts to explain the rationality of Jammeh's foreign policy on Taiwan and to document the benefits derived. The paper adopts rationality as a theoretical framework. It argues that to understand Jammeh's foreign policy rationale of choosing Taiwan over China, his promise to deliver development, and outperform Dawda Jawara's regime must be considered. However, this is only possible by accounting for his funding needs and the prospects from China and Taiwan. Accordingly, the paper reviews 150 reports as the main source of data to establish the amount of loans and aid in cash from China between 1974-1994 and Taiwan's total cash and cheque donations between 1995-2012. The paper thus concluded that Jammeh's foreign policy on Taiwan was procedurally and economically rational considering Taiwan's numerous contributions to education, health and agriculture amongst others. The study is of relevance to scholars and researchers interested in Yahya Jammeh's foreign policy, small state studies, Taiwan's diplomatic engagement with one of its most former valued allies in Africa.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Foreign Relations, Rationality, Aid, Grants, Gambia, Taiwan.

Öz

Yahya Jammeh'in en önemli diplomatik ilişkilerinden biri Tayvan'daki Çin Cumhuriyeti ile oldu. Jammeh'in Tayvan'la diplomatik ilişki kurma kararı 1995'te Cunta'ya anında 35 milyon ABD doları kazandırmış olsa da bu karar politikacılar ve politika yapımcılar tarafından mantıksız olduğu için eleştirildi. Ancak ne ilişkiden elde edilen faydaları belgelemeye yönelik bir girişim ne de ilişkiyi haklı çıkaran rasyonelliğin analizi yapılmıştır. Bu nedenle, bu makale Jammeh'in Tayvan'a yönelik dış politikasının rasyonelliğini açıklamaya ve elde edilen faydaları belgelemeye çalışmaktadır. Makale rasyonelliği teorik bir çerçeve olarak benimseyiyor. Jammeh'in Çin yerine Tayvan'ı seçme konusundaki dış politika mantığını anlamak için kalkınma sağlama ve Dawda Jawara rejiminden daha iyi performans gösterme vaadinin dikkate alınması gerektiğini savunuyor. Ancak bu finansman ihtiyaçlarının ve Çin ile Tayvan'dan gelecek beklentilerin dikkate alınmasıyla mümkün olabilir. Buna göre makale, 1974-1994 yılları arasında Çin'den gelen kredi ve nakdi yardım miktarını ve 1995-2012 yılları arasında Tayvan'ın toplam nakit ve çek bağışlarını belirlemek için ana veri kaynağı olarak 150'den fazla raporu inceliyor. Dolayısıyla makale, Tayvan'ın diğerlerinin yanı sıra eğitim, sağlık ve tarıma yaptığı sayısız katkı dikkate alındığında Jammeh'in Tayvan'a yönelik dış politikasının usul ve ekonomik açıdan rasyonel olduğu sonucuna vardı. Çalışma, Yahya Jammeh'in dış politikası, küçük devlet çalışmaları ve Tayvan'ın Afrika'daki en eski değerli müttefiklerinden biriyle diplomatik ilişkileriyle ilgilenen akademisyenler ve araştırmacılar için geçerlidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dış Politika, Dış İlişkiler, Rasyonelite, Yardım, Bağış, Gambiya, Tayvan.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

When Yahya Jammeh seized power in a military coup d'état in 1994, his primary aim was to change the domestic politics of the Gambia. However, with sanctions and suspension of aid programmes from the Gambia's traditional partners such as the United Kingdom, USA, Germany, European Community, Jammeh had to intensify his diplomatic efforts, leading to changes in the Gambia's foreign policy. One of those changes had been the diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, which angered China and thus led to the severing of ties between the Gambia and China. From 1995 to 2013, the Gambia maintained very close ties with Taiwan. For nearly two decades the Gambia served as one of the most vocal advocates of Taiwan's independence. Taiwan on the other hand, made substantial cash and material donations to the government of the Gambia. While many within the Jammeh government as may be expected praised the ties, others outside of the government criticised Jammeh for abandoning China. In fact, Adama Barrow, the president of the Gambia who defeated Jammeh in the December 2016 Presidential Elections criticised Jammeh for recognising Taiwan, referring to it as a 'strategic mistake' that should not have happened. President Barrow went on to promise that the Gambia would adhere to the One-China policy. Jammeh's foreign policy on Taiwan was very intriguing; abandoning a great power for a small power. What must have motivated the decision? Was the decision rational or a strategic mistake?

This paper examines the foreign relations of the Gambia with Taiwan during the chairpersonship and presidency of Yahya Jammeh (1995-2013). The paper adopts the Rational Actor Model as its theoretical framework to examine Jammeh's decision making process and the justification of his foreign policy on Taiwan. The Rational Actor Model focuses on actor's decisions as interest-driven (Karl & Mintz, 2010). Graham (1971, p. 30) defined rationality as a "consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints". Thus, in varied circumstances, individuals pursue objectives that would maximize their benefits and reduce the costs incurred. According to Macdonald (2003, p. 552), rationality has three parts. First, people act for a purpose, thus behaviour is goal-oriented. Second, actors have a consistent preference. The ranking of preferences in transitive order means that in the absence or inability to attain the first ranked preference, actors would pursue the second ranked preference. Finally, actors always want to maximise their gains. Rationality follows certain decision and implementation steps.

Following Cashman's (1993) rationality logical steps, the paper takes a comprehensive approach towards rationality; thus, it attempts to understand Jammeh's foreign policy problem at the time of recognising Taiwan. Thereafter, the paper analyses the possible course of action and associated reactions available to Jammeh. The paper also explains the cost related to those actions. It analyses the probable successes and costs of his decision. These steps were analysed under one section. The last step focuses on evaluating the implementation of the decision. Here, the paper examines the cash and in-kind contributions of Taiwan to the Gambia to understand Taiwan's contribution. I used newspapers and a number of reports as the main source of data to analyse the benefits derived from the relationship.

The paper found that Jammeh's foreign policy decision was procedurally rational as Taiwan was willing to offer a bigger loan compared to China at the onset. Considering that Jammeh and the junta were struggling to attract funding to improve the economic and development situation of the Gambia, it was rational to recognise Taiwan and sever ties with China. Furthermore, Jammeh's diplomatic relations with Taiwan was economically rational. By this, it is meant that the sanctions imposed on the Junta by traditional donors of the Gambia; Jammeh's promise to transform the Gambia; and the need to build local legitimacy all influenced his decision to enter into this diplomatic relation. In the relationship, he found a donor that filled the gap created by Western donors' sanction on the junta. Furthermore, he found a reliable, non-confrontational, non-scrutinising ally who allowed him to build and support his 'development agenda' thereby making him gain legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the Gambians. Furthermore, Taiwan's annual contribution to the different sectors of the Gambia justified Jammeh's foreign policy decision. This is the rationality of Jammeh's diplomatic relationship with Taiwan. The review of 150 reports as the main

source of data revealed that while loans and aid in cash from China between 1974-1994 was approximately \$50,000,000 Taiwan's cash and cheque donations was estimated at \$398,658,655 between 1995-2012. Thus, economically, the relationship was more beneficial compared to the previous engagement with China.

This paper is the first academic attempt to examine and explain the rationality of Yahya Jammeh's foreign policy on Taiwan. It is also the first attempt to comprehensively compile Taiwan's numerous contributions to the Gambia. It will thus provide the first peer reviewed journal article on the subject serving as reference for students and researchers. It will also help better inform policy makers and practitioners interested in Jammeh's and the Gambia's foreign policy.

Introduction

The Gambia is the smallest state in mainland Africa, with a population of just over two million people and territorial size of approximately 11,000 km². It is also a least developed country and has continuously seek relations that brings development aid. Thus, since its independence from Great Britain, the Gambia has pursued an independent foreign policy, establishing relations with diverse countries around the world. Even at the height of the Cold War, the Gambia maintained relations with both the US and the former Soviet Union. Its first prime minister and president, Dawda Jawara, who ruled the country for three decades, has been described as pragmatic in his foreign policy. However, his successor, Yahya Jammeh, who took over power from Jawara in 1994, has been criticised by critics for being irrational in his foreign policy decisions resulting in reduction of funding for the country's development programmes. However, his supporters have praised him for his radical shifts in the country's foreign policy orientations and the benefits it brought. Nonetheless, none of these claims are substantiated with research on any of the Gambia's bilateral relations. Therefore, this paper is a case study of the Gambia-Taiwan relations, from 1995-2013. The diplomatic recognition of Taiwan by the Gambia is an interesting case, as China, a great power, frowns upon the diplomatic recognition of the Island State it considers part of its territory. Moreover, China was one of the main donors of the Gambia at the time of severing ties. However, with the recognition of Taiwan, Taiwan became a leading ally to the Jammeh government.

Using the Rational Actor Model (RAM) as its theoretical framework, the paper examines whether Jammeh's diplomatic recognition of Taiwan was rational or not, and if rational to what extent can it be defined as rational. With over 150 reports and a contextual analysis of the circumstances and considerations under which Jammeh recognised Taiwan, the paper found that Jammeh's foreign policy was both economically and procedurally rational. According to the findings, Taiwan's contribution to the Gambia within 17 years is about 800% of China's contribution to the Gambia in the 20 years preceding Jammeh's chairmanship and presidency. Accordingly, the main contribution of the paper is threefold. To our knowledge, it is the first comprehensive compilation and analysis of Taiwan's contribution to the development of the Gambia. This is important in understanding the relevance of Taiwan to the Gambia and Jammeh for the period under study. Thus, it will be of interest to policy makers and researchers interested in the subject. Secondly, it belies the assumption often held that Jammeh's foreign policy on Taiwan was irrational. In using the rational actor model, it contributes to the literature on use of the model and small states, revealing that a small state can pursue independent rational policies despite opposition from great powers. Finally, it is important for policymakers especially in the Gambia who are currently promoting the One-China policy to explore the possibilities of at least gaining nothing less than that gained from Taiwan.

When the Gambia gained independence in 1965 with Dawda Jawara as prime minister (who became the first president in 1970), the Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-Shek, based in Taipei was the internationally recognised government of China. The party had retreated to Taipei as Chairman Mao's forces took over mainland China in 1949. While Mao's government enjoyed little or no recognition in the

West because of its ideological disposition, the nationalist government based in Taipei was widely seen as an alternative to communism, hence its recognition within international cycles although it managed the Taiwanese Strait only (Cooper, 2009, pp. 46-48). Thus, the Gambia too, followed the norm of the international community in recognising the government in Taipei in 1965. In fact, the Gambia signed an agreement on technical cooperation with the Republic of China in 1967 to boost rice production, which is the staple food of the Gambia (Touray, 2000, pp. 51-52).

However, when the United Nations shifted its recognition to the government of Mao in mainland China in 1971 (Taylor, 2002, p. 40), the Gambia also followed suit to recognise the Peoples Republic of China on 17 December 1974 despite Taiwan's renewal of the five-year cooperation. Following this, Taiwan severed ties and its ambassador left immediately (Touray, 2000, p. 52). For the remaining presidency of Jawara, the Gambia maintained diplomatic ties with China until in 1995 following a military takeover led by Yahya Jammeh in July 1994. Yahya Jammeh served as the Chairperson of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council, the junta that ruled the Gambia from 1994-1996. Jammeh was the President of the Gambia from 1997 to 2016. In 1995, Jammeh established diplomatic relations with Taiwan thus leading to the withdrawal of the Chinese ambassador and technical advisors (Saine, 2009, pp. 95-107). The Gambia continued to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan until 14th November 2013 when the Gambia announced that it has severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan. On 17th March 2016, the Gambia and China formally signed diplomatic agreements, thus effectively ending any speculation about a sudden return to Taiwan-Gambia ties (Janneh, 2017, pp. 25-26).

Literature Review

In a description of Taiwan's foreign aid policy, Lee (1993, pp. 52-53) argued that "foreign aid seems to be an indispensable and effective tool to achieve one of its top foreign policy objectives: to win more international support, preferably official recognition... thus warding off diplomatic isolation and deterring the PRC". While Lee's (1993) work focused on Taiwan's aid policy from the 1960s to early 1990s, Atkinson's (2014) can be seen as a continuum as it looks at three constraining factors affecting Taiwan's foreign policy. Atkinson (2014) explained that President Ma Ying-jeou's administration had to offer aid while attempting to ensure that aid is accountable, reduce aid in line with domestic expectations while galvanising support for Taiwan's course.

Atkinson (2014, p. 409) concluded that "Ma Ying-jeou administration has reduced aid funding, improved management of aid programs, and demands a higher level of accountability from recipient governments". In fact, Ma's government has been characterised by dwindling foreign aid. For instance, in 2011, Taiwan's aid budget was 12.94% lower than in 2010. Nonetheless, Taylor (2002) has argued as early as 2002 that there were limits to Taiwan's diplomacy. Taylor (2002) presented cases where Taiwan's donation led to scandals and reaction from opposition parties in the recipient countries. Also, Taiwan allowed many recipient governments to claim ownership of projects, such as in the Gambia where Jammeh claimed to be the provider of tractors donated by Taiwan. Several other studies on Taiwan have focused on its relationship with the US (Cheng, 2013; Coffin, 2017; Liao and Lin, 2015; Tadahi, 2021; Hsieh, 2020), the European Union (Cho, 2018; Neszmélyi, 2019; Winkler, 2008; Biedermann, 2018; Hsieh, 2020), its attempt for membership or participation in international bodies (Tubilewicz, 2012; Scanlon, 2017; Lindemann, 2014; Rollet, 2021), its relations with China as well as its relations with other Southeast Asian states (Ikegami, 2012; Liew and Tang, 2019).

While Taiwan's foreign policy has received much scholarly attention, generally, the Gambia's foreign policy has not been widely researched. An exception to this is Senegal-Gambia relations especially in the early years of independence (1960s to 1970s) and the confederal period (1980s). Such studies have focused on the viability of the two countries in a union, issues, and challenges to a union between Senegal

and the Gambia (M'bai, 1992; Proctor, 1967; Jallow, 2012; Senghore, 2008; Edmund, 1993). A few other studies have looked at the general orientation of the Gambia's foreign policy. For example, while Janneh (2017) has focused on the role of personalities in the country's foreign policy, Hughes and Perfect (2006, pp. 251-279) in a chapter described Jawara's major diplomatic engagements from the 1960s to 1994.

Moreover, the *Historical Dictionary of The Gambia* has two paragraphs on its foreign policy, which argued that the personalities of the country's leaders dictated their foreign policies (Hughes & Perfect, 2008, pp. 65-66). So far, only two articles on Gambia-Taiwan relations are available on the Web of Science. A Google Scholar search also yields similar results. One of the papers focused on Taiwan's funded vegetable gardening projects in Sukuta, Lamin and Banjulding 1 and 2 in the Gambia, in which the authors asked whether the ideas and techniques being supported by the Taiwanese techniques can work in the Gambia. The paper concluded that the gardens were functioning well, and the ideas and technology seemed working. However, its sustainability would rest on Gambians, it concluded (Baker & Edmonds, 2004). The other paper focused on the role of ideas in Chinese foreign aid to the Gambia in the First Republic (Bautigam, 1994).

Although there has not been an attempt to document Taiwan's contribution to the Gambia during Jammeh's rule, Touray (2000) has compiled Taiwan's contribution to the Gambia in the First Republic (1970-1994). According to Touray (2000, p. 52), in 1967 the Gambia and Taiwan concluded an agreement on technical cooperation which led to the deployment of 16 rice growing experts, which was increased to 40 experts to the Gambia. The Cooperation eventually included the World Bank who provided a concessionary loan of £500,000. By 1974/1975 when Jawara shifted diplomatic relations to China, yields in rice cultivation had rose from 744 tonnes in 1967/1968 to 14000 tonnes. Although the Gambia had a two-China Policy (recognising that they should both exist), it had diplomatic relations with Taiwan only until 1974 when it shifted to a One-China-Policy. By this time, the Taiwanese rice experts were 45. Following the One-China foreign policy of Jawara in December 1974, China sent 32 rice growing experts which was less than the total number of Taiwanese rice experts (Touray, 2000, p. 70).

Notwithstanding, following the Gambia's Minister of External Affairs' visit to China, an agreement of Economic and Technical Cooperation was signed in February 1975; subsequently a 30 million Yuan loan payable over a period of 50 years was given to the Gambia. China further sent 22 people and a 11 member agriculture mission to study rice growing in the Gambia after Jawara visited China in June 1975 (Touray, 2000, pp. 69-70). Moreover, China promised to build a 100 bed capacity hospital in the Gambia, a stadium and a hostel (Touray, 2000). In fact, Chinese exports to the Gambia would increase from 6,000,000 to 18,000,000 in 1975. In the 1980s China provided a loan of GMD 15,000,000 to build hospitals and provide resources for the personnel to run them. In the mid-1980s, a £1,200,000 loan was signed with China for the difference of cost of projects (Touray, 2000, p. 140). Three cooperation agreements were signed in 1987; one provided an equivalent of GMD 6,000,000 for health and agriculture. Two other agreements for fertilisers, animal production, horticulture, brickmaking were also signed. In 1989 an interest free loan of US \$8,000,000 was signed for rehabilitating health centres. Moreover, in 1990, US \$12,100,000 million for economic development was effected according to Touray (2000, p. 140).

Saine, on the other hand, provided a general description of the Junta's foreign policy (1994-1996). Saine (2000, p. 78) narrates that following the 1994 coup in the Gambia, China provided US \$23,000,000 to the Junta but severed ties with the Gambia on 25th July 1995 when the Junta restored diplomatic relations with Taiwan on 13th July 1995. In 1995, Taiwan provided a much-needed loan of US \$35,000,000 to the Junta. Saine (2000, p. 78) further provided a summation of Jammeh's foreign policy from 1997 to 2009 where he estimated that by 2000, Taiwan's aid to Jammeh was equivalent to US \$80,000,000. On the rationale for Taiwan's contribution to the Gambia, Saine argued that the main explanation had been to win support in the international system (2009). This is consistent with the literature on Taiwan's foreign policy with small states and its engagements to ensure diplomatic recognition. Saine (2009) rightly argued that

Jammeh's diplomatic engagement was influenced by his need for resources to fund his development projects. With the main donors turning their back, Jammeh sought support from others such as Taiwan. In 2009, Saine estimated total aid to have reached US \$200 million (Saine, 2009, p. 107).

Although Saine's article (2000) and chapter (2009) on the AFPRC and APRC foreign policy under Jammeh provide a summative statement on Taiwan, it was not a study of Jammeh-Taiwan relations, rather a general description of the Junta's foreign policy. In addition, the chapter on foreign policy (Saine, 2009) is within a book that studied Jammeh's regime focusing on his anti-democratic record and personal autocracy. Moreover, the summative statement covers the period until 2009. These limitations are a necessary condition for a study that attempts to understand Taiwan's contribution to the different sectors of the economy. Furthermore, this study extends to offer a theoretical explanation of Jammeh's rationality of engaging in diplomatic relations with Taiwan which is largely lacking. The following section sets the theoretical framework of the paper.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The rational actor model (RAM) provides an analytical frame that focuses on unitary actors' decisions as interest-driven (Karl & Mintz, 2010). It helps analysts to understand and better predict the behaviour of actors (Alden & Aron, 2017; MacDonald, 2003). Graham (1971) defined rationality as a "consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints" (p. 30). In varied circumstances, individuals pursue objectives that would maximize their benefits and reduce the costs incurred. According to Macdonald (2003, p. 552), rationality has three parts. First, people act for a purpose, thus behaviour is goal-oriented. Second, actors have a consistent preference. The ranking of preferences in transitive order means that in the absence or inability to attain the first ranked preference, actors would pursue the second ranked preference. Finally, actors always want to maximise their gains. A comprehensive view of rationality is that it follows through logical steps meaning decision making is done following certain steps. Therefore, foreign policy makers identify their foreign policy problem first, then they analyse the possible course of action and associated reactions, followed by estimation of the cost of their actions. That is followed by an analysis of the chances of success and estimation of the costs of their actions. Once these are done, implementation of the most rational course of action, that which maximises benefits is pursued (Cashman, 1993). Therefore, analysts can use the same steps to understand the foreign policies of states. This paper utilises Cashman's (1993) rational actor's analytical steps to explain Gambia-Taiwan relations under the presidency of Yahya Jammeh. I asked what Jammeh's foreign policy problem was and his goals; the foreign policy alternatives and the costs and benefits. This is followed by a presentation of the benefits derived from the action.

The paper relies on two major newspapers, *The Point Newspaper* and *The Daily Observer*, the former independent and the latter pro-government. The two were purposely selected because of their extensive coverage of relations with Taiwan and the availability of a digital archive of both, although *The Daily Observer* is now available through a third-party online source namely *allafrica.com*. A simple web search of keywords such as "Taiwan, grant, aid, scholarship, donation, presentation, cheque, inaugurated, farewell" was done. My knowledge of the coverage of Taiwanese assistance led us to prioritise these words in the search. In total, we analysed over 150 news publications and about 120 of these served as the main source for the section on benefits realised from the relationship.

Analysis of Jammeh's Procedural Rationality in Recognising Taiwan

When Jammeh took power in 1994 he had one fundamental problem, legitimacy. The international and traditional donors of the Gambia did not recognise the military government he led after overthrowing Jawara. Accordingly, sanctions were imposed on him. The effect had been that the Jammeh government

lost aid from donors and income from tourism to fund activities. For instance, Britain issued travel warning to UK citizens planning to travel to the Gambia for tourism. Jammeh also faced a legitimacy problem at the domestic level. The opposition parties had wanted him to go back to barracks as well. However, a ban on political parties and publications restricted the possibility of outright opposition. Nonetheless, since Jammeh had argued that the Jawara government was overthrown because of its poor records in developing the Gambia's health, education, and infrastructure, he needed funds if he was going to be seen as different from the regime he overthrew.

Therefore, Jammeh's ultimate goal could be summed into establishing legitimacy and funding. He needed funding to implement his activities in and for the Gambia, but he also needed to be accepted as a legitimate head of state. Nonetheless, the emphasis of the donors was that Jammeh must hand over power and go back to the barracks. In the Gambia, there were some who were receptive to the Jammeh, but many were also opposed. Jammeh needed to see how to attain his goals of getting legitimacy and funds.

Jammeh had alternatives available to him following the coup. Primarily, to solve the legitimacy crises he faced and the funding shortage to proof his worth and difference with Jawara to Gambians, he could just return to the barracks immediately as most of the traditional donors including US, UK, the IMF wanted. On the other hand, he could continue trying to convince the international donors that they needed to recognise him and see how that goes. However, in that process he may search for more non-traditional donors who are not so much concerned about democratic credentials. If he could get that, then he would fund local development projects and invest in education, health, etc.

If Jammeh were to give up as a military leader, hand over power and return to the barracks; what would be the cost? Considering that he had committed a treasonous crime, he would likely face charges sooner or later; a lesser consequent might had been early retirement because none would want a putschist in the army. However, he could engage non-traditional donors and see whether they can offer an acceptable sum for the time being. This would less likely cause him substantial problems. In fact, it would help him to gain legitimacy at local level as people would accept him. Once this is gained, he can turn into a civilian president and be accepted by the traditional donors.

It appears that the best alternative available to Jammeh was to seek non-traditional donors. This would allow him to stay in power, fund his development programmes for a while and then transform into an elected head of state. However, in doing so, he must also select the best non-traditional donor that provides sufficient funds and allows him to direct the funds without questioning him. Taiwan appeared to be a perfect candidate for this. While China as a traditional donor had not questioned Jammeh's credibility, they provided less funds than Taiwan would do. Moreover, Taiwan was known for being more generous and providing cash and cheque donations, China would not do that. Therefore, Jammeh decided to select Taiwan to fund his programmes and subsequently get legitimacy.

It is therefore rational that Jammeh dispatched a team to Taiwan for negotiations and the initial engagement yielded results with a 35 million grant which was more than the 23 million provided by China. A year later Jammeh retired from the army, contested the presidential elections, and won thereby becoming a legitimate president in the eyes of the other donors like the IMF, UK, US etc. and Gambians as well. The elections were held after aid from Taiwan and elsewhere helped Jammeh initiate development programmes. Year after year, Taiwan regularly contributed to Gambia's development agenda, thus contributing to building a legitimacy for Jammeh. It must be taken that as a military government facing sanctions, not having cash, and as an elected government, always quarrelling with the West, it was very much rational to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Jammeh had followed procedural rationality. Secondly, the economic benefits to be detailed later is a proof of the maximum benefits derived by Jammeh in the relationship. The section below details the various contributions made by Taiwan to argue that the

relationship had yielded benefits to Jammeh.

Benefits Derived From the Relationship with Taiwan

Contributions to education and training

Taiwan's greatest contribution to the Gambia between 1995 and 2013 might be on the latter's education. Although little or no coverage was found for the period 1995 to 2001 during our data collection, from 2002 to 2013, Taiwan annually contributed to the Gambia's education sector. Below is an attempt to map this contribution as found in two major newspapers in the Gambia, namely *The Point* and *Daily Observer* newspapers.

Taiwan launched a scholarship for Gambians to study in Taiwan in 2004 (*The Gambia Daily News*, 2005), and 25 Gambian students, the first batch selected to study petrochemical engineering in Taiwan graduated in 2008 (Jawneh, 2008a). Taiwan annually granted more scholarships from 2006 to 2013, as 288 Gambians received ICDF scholarships to study in Taiwan (Manneh, 2006a; Jawneh, 2007; Jawneh, 2008e; Jallow, 2009; Jawneh, 2011f; Jawneh, 2011g; *The Point Newspaper*, 2012a; Y. Ceesay, 2012; *The Point Newspaper*, 2013c; Jawneh, 2013b). This does not include those who benefitted from the Taiwan Defence Scholarship and other packages. Nonetheless, Taiwan had another package for those studying within the Gambia yet faced by financial challenges. Accordingly, Taiwan awarded an annual scholarship of \$6000 to University of The Gambia students (*Gambia Daily News*, 2005; Manneh, 2007b; Nfamara, 2008h; Jawneh Nfamara, 2009f; *The Daily Observer*, 2010; Jawneh, 2011k). The first record of this was found in a 2006 publication, and it appears to have continued until the relations were severed although we could not find news reports of these for the years 2006, 2012 and 2013.

Furthermore, Taiwan contributed to the school infrastructure of the Gambia. For instance, the Mingdaw Cultural Center constructed Mingdaw Junior and Senior Secondary School in 1997 in a peri-urban settlement in the Gambia, thus serving many rural and urban students (Mingdaw Upper and Senior Secondary School n.d.). The school's laboratory was also funded by Taiwan's ambassador (*The Daily Observer*, 2002). Additionally, Mayork Senior Secondary was constructed by Taiwan at a cost of US \$740,160 within two years (A.B. Ceesay, 2002; Manneh, 2007a). In fact, the construction of Mayork and Siffoe schools cost Taiwan US \$2.8 million (Jawneh, 2008c; Jawneh, 2008f). Still, when the Gambia announced the creation of the country's first Science academy in May 2007, Taiwan contributed US \$344,718 (Ngandwe, 2007). Taiwan funded two computer labs at the Science, Technology and Innovation Park in Faraba (Jallow, 2012d). Taiwan provided two 60-seater buses bought at the cost of US \$175,410 for the UTG to facilitate transportation of students to the Faraba Science Park (Jallow, 2012c).

The Gambia's President's Empowerment of Girls Education Project (PEGEP) received US \$700,000 equivalent to GMD 21,000,000 in May 2005 to promote gender parity in education (Trawally, 2005). The review shows that Taiwan had continuously contributed to PEGEP annually (Faye, 2008; Jawneh, 2008b; *The Daily Observer*, 2010). Furthermore, Taiwan provided an annual grant of US \$1,000,000 to the Gambia's education sector (Fadera, 2009; Janko, 2012b; *The Daily Observer*, 2013a). Also, Taiwan provided learning materials such as when a 40-foot container of learning materials was donated to MoBSE 2013 (Bobb, 2013). In 2013 too, Taiwan disbursed US \$31,290 to purchase air tickets for Gambian graduate students to conduct research in the Gambia (*The Daily Observer*, 2013a).

At the time of the severing of ties, there were 276 Gambian students in Taiwan, 175 of them on scholarships from Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs or National Science Council. Notwithstanding, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education allowed them to complete their current semester (*The Point Newspaper* 2013f). These contributions were very important to the Jammeh regime. It could be recalled that during the

military takeover in 1994, Jammeh had blamed the Jawara regime for its failure to develop the education sector. He specifically blamed the government for not making higher education available to everyone. Therefore, Taiwan's construction of schools, donation of educational items, provision of scholarships and grant to PEGEP helped Jammeh to attain his goals. In the next subsection, Taiwan's contribution to the Gambia's health sector for the period analysed is discussed.

Contributions to the health sector

Another sector pivotal for Jammeh where Taiwan has made numerous contributions is the health sector. Jammeh had on several occasions differentiated his regime from Jawara's by arguing that the latter's government had left two hospitals only while the British constructed one only. Therefore, he needed to do more than Jawara had done in the health sector to build local legitimacy. In his relationship with Taiwan, he found a magnanimous aid. In fact the first haemodialysis machine available in the Gambia was donated by Taiwan in 2006 (Sanyang & Sambou, 2019). The latter paid US \$95,974 to upkeep the six machines in 2011 (Ndow, 2011). Moreover, Taiwan donated over 500,000 for the renovation of Phase I of the RVTH (The Point Newspaper, 2011b). In fact, Taiwan was annually in the news for its in-kind donations to the Gambia's health sector. For instance, in September 2006 and November 2008, Taiwan's Ambassador to the Gambia donated 946 walking sticks to the Jammeh Foundation for Peace (JFP) (Manneh, 2006b; Sallah, 2008). And, between 2006 to 2012, it donated 1,146 wheelchairs to JFP (Manneh, 2006b; Sallah, 2008; Jawneh, 2010c; Jawneh, 2011b; Janko, 2012a). Other in-kind donations included 11 mobile x-ray machines (Fall, 2011), 16 computers of clinical system, a server, sets of fingerprint identification and diabetes care equipment (Jallow, 2012e); infant incubators, obstetric diagnostic table, sphygmomanometers, nebulizers, ultraviolet ray sterilizers, an MRI machine (The Point Newspaper, 2013e); and medical items worth US \$167,000 (International Cooperation and Development Fund, 2013b).

Furthermore, Taiwan was providing an annual grant of US \$600,000 paid in two instalments to the Gambia's health sector for capacity building, recruitment of Cuban doctors etc. by 2008 (Jawneh, 2008d; Jawneh, 2009e; Janko, 2010; Jawneh, 2011i; The Point Newspaper, 2012c). Also, medical teams from Taiwan regularly visited the Gambia to offer free medical services, technical support and training (The Point Newspaper, 2011a). For example, from August 2010 to October 2012, three Mackay Memorial Hospital (MMH) teams arrived in the Gambia (The Daily Observer, 2012a). Taiwan awarded scholarships to Gambian doctors to pursue postgraduate programmes in Taiwan (Jawneh, 2008g), and in other states such as Ghana and Liberia (Njie, 2011b; The Daily Observer, 2013b).

On 27th August 2012, the Gambia and Taiwan signed an agreement on maternal health program earmarked for 2012 to 2015 to build capacity of health practitioners in the Upper River Region (URR) of the Gambia and provide equipment and supplies for 11 minor health centres in URR (The Point Newspaper, 2012b). The program which assisted 11 minor health centres in URR to provide antenatal and postnatal care and health checks (The Point Newspaper, 2012b), started with capacity building of health personnel in URR in November 2012 (International Cooperation and Development Fund, 2013a) and by end of August 2013, two community nursing and midwifery courses were held which benefitted 40 participants. Also, 85 traditional birth attendants and 68 other health personnel in Upper River Region were trained. 959 Pregnant and 174 postnatal mothers (1,133 women) benefitted from medical services (International Cooperation and Development Fund, 2013d). In September 2010, Taiwan presented a cheque of US \$50,000 to the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) as its contribution to the Gambia's disaster relief and rehabilitation (Janko, 2010).

Taiwan's contribution to the Gambia's health sector during the period under review was fundamental for Jammeh's image as a transformer and a moderniser of the country's health sector. The MRI machines and other health equipment were regularly shown on state TV as part of Jammeh's transformative

achievements. Arguably, this must have provided a sort of legitimacy for Jammeh within the Gambia. Government officers regularly praised Taiwan in this role. Therefore, it is conclusive that Jammeh's diplomatic engagements brought much needed help to health sector. This is the case with the annual health grant provided by Taiwan for capacity building and payment of Cuban doctors. Between 2008-2013, Taiwan made at least a cash or cheque presentation of US \$8,355,347 for the health sector of the Gambia according to the newspapers reviewed. This excludes in-kind contributions such as medical equipment, health projects implemented, scholarships to nurses and doctors as well as deployment of Taiwanese medical teams to the Gambia just to mention a few. Taiwan stood as the leading bilateral contributor to the Gambia's health sector during the period under review. Therefore, Jammeh's diplomatic relations with Taiwan was rational.

Contributions to agriculture

Jammeh had presented himself as a firm believer in agriculture. As an advocate of the 'peasant' class, he had to present himself as an agriculturalist and a potential transformer of the obstacles in the agriculture sector. In Taiwan, he found a supporter of his desire for technical improvements and project implementations for the realisation of his goals. In 1995, an agreement between the government of the Gambia and Taiwan's Technical Mission was signed for an all-year round productive vegetable gardens in three communities in the Gambia – Banjul, Sukuta and Lamin. Lamin and Banjulnding I project started in 1996 while the Sukuta project started in 1998. In 2001 Banjulnding II was established to expand the gains in Banjulnding I. Baker and Edmonds (2004) revealed that technologies, marketing and management schemes tested and used on the farms proved effective in Taiwan and worthy in the Gambia. In the Banjulnding project, women earned GMD 559.00 as income and were able to save GMD 85,639.75 (Baker & Edmonds, 2004). Furthermore, Taiwan also donated vehicles, four in 2007 alone (wow.gm, 2007); over 4000 metric tonnes of fertilisers from 2009 and 2012 (Jawneh, 2009a; Y. Ceesay, 2010b; Jawneh, 2012a; Jallow, 2012a); a cheque of US \$2,921,317 for farm implements (Darboe, 2012); 2,723 bags of seeds to Gambian farmers (Sawo, 2012); US \$156,986 for the procurement of pumps and GPS system for tractors (The Point Newspaper, 2013d); and 3000 pineapple seedlings to Jammeh in 2013 (Jallow, 2013a).

Additionally, in April 2013 Taiwan's Technical Mission in the Gambia started the implementation of an Upland Rice Cultivation Project to enhance sustainable cropping and to consolidate 22% of 32,000 hectares (International Cooperation and Development Fund, 2013e). However, 54,176.56 hectares had already been developed for upland rice cultivation by the Mission from 2009 to 2012 (Sawo, 2012). By September 2013, farmers in Sapu, Jahally and Kuareh benefitted from training, rice varieties, water control gates; a road pavement of about a kilometer; and improvement of 136 hectares of tidal irrigation fields (International Cooperation and Development Fund, 2013e). Moreover in 2011, a Tilapia Cultivation and Technological Transfer Project was launched by Taiwan to train fisheries staff and local farmers in the Gambia. By March 2013, in addition to several trainings and production of manual on tilapia in local languages and English, 4,800 tilapia fingerlings were distributed to cultivation households (International Cooperation Development Fund, 2013c).

Contributions to the security sector

In a major boost to the security sector in April 2011, Ambassador Richard Shih presented a cheque of US \$528,645 for the rehabilitation of the Yundum Army Barracks (Jawneh, 2011c). The donation came after a surprise visit made by Jammeh to the army barracks in 2009 where he expressed dismay at the shocking state of the barracks and publicly apologised to the soldiers for coping with such a deplorable state (Jawneh, 2009d). Therefore, the donation was a major boost for Jammeh to fulfil his promise to the soldiers. Similarly, Taiwan also funded the rehabilitation of the old police quarters in Banjul at a cost of US \$1,500,000 (The Daily Observer, 2012b, Faal, 2013; Jallow, 2013d); and the rehabilitation of the

Armed Forces Training Center at the Fajara Barracks, at a sum of US \$113,787.88 (The Daily Observer, 2013). Also, Taiwan funded the construction of a perimeter fence around Gambia's only airport with US \$970,442 (Jawneh, 2012d).

Furthermore, Taiwan donated 10 naval boats to the Gambia's navy between 2009 to 2013 (Jawneh, 2009b; Taiwan Today Newspaper, 2012; Jawneh, 2013d). Also 27 naval officers were trained during the period (Jawneh, 2009b; Jawneh, 2013e). However, Taiwan's aid was not limited to the navy only. For example, 63 officers from the other forces were awarded training programmes in Taiwan (Jawneh, 2012c; 4 received Taiwan Defence Scholarship 2013; Jawneh, 2010a; Cole, 2011; Jawneh, 2013a). Moreover, Taiwan provided US \$465,892 to the Gambia government as tuition and stipend for five officers and a civilian to pursue aeronautical engineering and maintenance skills at Spartan College of Aeronautics in USA (Jallow, 2013d). It also provided US \$52,000 to the Gambia Police Force Human Rights Unit's procurement of equipment (Jallow, 2013c).

Accordingly, cheques worth US \$3,482,548 were presented by Taiwan to the government of the Gambia between 2009 to 2013. In addition to this, seven patrol boats were donated to the Gambia navy by Taiwan. During the same period, 48 officers of Gambia's Armed Forces benefited from trainings funded by Taiwan. Taiwan's support to the security sector was very much important especially in renovating and rehabilitating the barracks. The Gambia has not received fundings for that purpose for a long time. Accordingly, it contributed to serving Jammeh to build legitimacy as the man of the soldiers.

Contributions to culture, youth, sports and business

From 2010-2013 Taiwanese students visited the Gambia annually for a cultural exchange. About 40 Taiwanese students took part in the event held in the Gambia (Jawneh, 2009c; Ceesay, Y., 2010a; Jawneh, 2011e; Ceesay, Y., 2011; Jawneh, 2012b; Jawneh 2013c). A group of Gambians also participated in the first Taiwan Youth Culture and Study organised by the China Youth Corps (Jawneh, 2009c), while the Gambia's Cultural Group too participated in Taiwan's indigenous festival in 2011 (Jawneh, 2011d).

Between April 2010 to 2013, Taiwan presented cheques worth US \$1,467,200 to the Gambia for the enhancement of sports and youth development (Jawneh, 2010b; The Point Newspaper, 2013a; Jallow, 2013a; The Point Newspaper, 2013b). It is important to state that US \$1,000,000 of the amount was meant to develop youth enterprises and businesses (Jallow, 2013a). In October 2011 and July 2012, Taiwan and a Taiwanese Company donated footballs to the Ministry of Youths and Sports and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (Jawneh, 2011h). The Company further donated US \$10,000 to orphanages in The Gambia (Jallow, 2012b).

Despite long established diplomatic relations, the first Taiwan-Gambia business Council meeting only took place on 16th November 2009. Taiwan's Ambassador Shih acknowledged that "relationship between our two countries is close but there is a room for more relationship in the area of trade". As a result of the meeting, the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) and Taiwan Africa Industry Development Association (CIECA) signed a business, trade and investment agreement (Jawneh & Marenah, 2009). Although not much was registered in this domain, three Taiwanese companies participated in the 2011 Gambia trade fare. One similar remark was the need for Taiwan to engage in economic diplomacy as the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) CEO, Fatou Jallow, called for more 'private sector engagement' (Jawneh, 2011j). Although officials recognised that business had been neglected, no explanation was given for this. It is not clear if Jammeh had rationalised a potentiality for this area from the relationship.

Contribution to other sectors

In May 2006, Taiwan donated 33 personal computers and monitors, 16 tables and 10 chairs, and other electronic gadgets to the then newly created Department of State for Information, Communication and Technology of the Gambia (Ceesay, A.B., 2006). Furthermore, in August 2006, Taiwan's Embassy to the Gambia, on behalf of Yu-Yuan company in Taiwan donated 26 containers of clothing and household materials valued at US \$3.5 million to the Gambia (Jobe, 2006). Furthermore, in January 2010, Taiwan's Embassy presented a cheque for 1,000,000 Gambian Dalasi to the National Federation of Gambian Women (NFGW) (Jawneh, 2011a). In April 2011 too, the Taiwan's Embassy disclosed that its government has budgeted US \$8.4 million to support the Gambia government (Njie, Taiwan Donates U.S.\$300, 000 Medical Grant 2011a).

Also, in March 2012, Taiwan presented a cheque of US \$3,840,000,963 to the Gambia for the procurement of vehicles to enhance government's mobility (Njie, 2012a). Further to this, in December 2012, Taiwan presented a cheque of US \$747,692 to the Gambia to procure ferry engines as a part payment of US \$1.5 million meant for the purchase of 12 new engines (Njie, 2012b).

In total, in the review above, newspapers had reported a contribution of \$398,658,655 by Taiwan between August 2006 to July 2012. However, 3.5 million dollars of these was clothing materials. In any case, the remaining amount is a significant contribution by Taiwan to the Jammeh regime. In addition to the above, the Janneh Commission which was established to unveil Jammeh's financial transactions had unveiled that Taiwan gave the following aid and/or grants to the Jammeh led government between 1995 to 2004. Taiwan provided US \$18,700,000 for agriculture and light industries to the Gambia in 1995; in 1996 it funded the construction of Essau-Kerewan road at a tune of US \$7,262,77; in 2000, it provided US \$3,289,999 to Gambia's National Water and Electricity Company; in 2002 it provided US \$2,469,060; and in 2004 it granted US \$617,504 to the Gambia for microfinance and capacity development. This amounts to US \$25,802,840. However, the Janneh Commission has estimated that loans and grants between 1995-2004 totalled US \$44,508,842.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to explain the rationality of Jammeh's foreign policy on Taiwan, using the rational actor model following Cashman's (1993) logical steps as a guide for analysis. Accordingly, I argued that every foreign policy decision starts with a foreign policy problem. Therefore, the paper analysed the circumstances and considerations under which Jammeh diplomatically recognised Taiwan, leading to China's withdrawal of aid and technical assistance from the Gambia, a vacuum to be filled by Taiwan. The paper argued that the sanctions imposed on the Junta and the freezing of aid by traditional Western donors of the Gambia, Jammeh's promise to transform the Gambia and the need to build local legitimacy all influenced his decision to enter into diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The sanctions and suspension of aid to the Gambia, created a huge financial challenge for Jammeh, thus requiring vigorous fundraising to fill the gap. Furthermore, Jammeh's condemnation of Jawara's development record, and the expectations the former created, meant that he was required to effect development programmes. Therefore, Jammeh's goal was to raise funds for his development programmes and to fulfil his promise. Jammeh took a number of actions to appease the West, such as engaging China for a loan, reducing the transition period to democracy from four to two years, but all did not yield Jammeh's needs for more funding. Since Taiwan was willing to provide a bigger loan to the government of the Gambia compared to China, it was rational to therefore, recognise Taiwan and get the loan. Accordingly, it is argued that Jammeh's means to attracting more aid for his interest was rational. This fits the core assumption of rationality, that foreign policy action was purposive and interest driven.

Furthermore, comparatively, the total amount of aid disbursed by Taiwan in 17 years is far greater than the amount donated by China in the 20 years immediately preceding the diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. We found that while loans and aid in cash from China between 1974-1994 was approximately \$50,000,000, Taiwan's cash and cheque donations amounted to \$398,658,655 between 1995-2012. Therefore, economically, the engagement with Taiwan was more beneficial than the engagement with China. Taiwan's support to the Jammeh government was diverse and substantial, targeting several sectors deemed priority areas by the Jammeh government. Taiwan supported the education, health, agricultural sectors and many more. For more than a decade, it remained the main bilateral donor to the education sector, supplementing the budget, providing scholarships at home and abroad, providing infrastructure and materials etc. It also provided similar support to the health sector. Therefore, Jammeh's engagement with Taiwan is consistent with another core assumption of rationality – that choices are meant for the maximisation of benefits. And evidently, the relationship between the Gambia and Taiwan was beneficial. It helped Jammeh boast of ultramodern medical equipment often paraded on TV, which offered medical services and helped to contribute to the legitimisation of Jammeh. Through Taiwan's support, Jammeh told Gambians that he brought more developments, in health care and education in less than two decades than Jawara had done in three decades. Therefore, Taiwan's donation also helped attain Jammeh's need for acceptance by the population.

The paper concludes that Jammeh's diplomatic relations with Taiwan was procedurally and economically rational. In the relationship, he found a donor that filled the gap created by Western donor's sanction and freezing or reduction of aid. Furthermore, he found a reliable, non-confrontational, non-scrutinising ally who allowed him to build and support his 'development agenda' thereby making him gain legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the Gambians. This is the rationality of Jammeh's diplomatic relationship with Taiwan.

Nonetheless, the main limitation of this paper is that it has not been possible to ascertain whether the documents analysed forms the entirety of relevant materials that could provide details of aid and loans. Therefore, the paper might have missed a number of reports relating to the subject under study. However, this does not affect or change the conclusion – that Jammeh's decision on Taiwan was rational. Accordingly, this paper lays a foundation for more research on the subject, such as exploring the rationale behind Taiwan's massive support to the Gambia and to what extent the Gambia under Jammeh supported Taiwan and the benefits derived from such support by Taiwan. However, if the conclusion that the relationship was beneficial is true, why did Jammeh terminate diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 2013? This is a very difficult question to answer simply because Jammeh did not say anything at the time or after the termination except that it was done for the strategic national interests of the Gambia. In essence, as everywhere else, what national interest is, is contested and constructed by the power that be. Since Jammeh did not attempt any construction of that, it is therefore difficult to tell. In fact, the Taiwanese did not know either. A request for a meeting by the Taiwanese authorities was rejected by the government of the Gambia. Nonetheless, one noticeable feature of the event was that neither Jammeh nor any member of his government had criticised the Taiwanese government. Typically, Jammeh hurled insults on allies or perceived enemy states whenever there was a problem. This was not the case with Taiwan. This could suggest that he was still appreciative of Taiwan's role. However, it is important to reiterate that the severing of ties happened after President Ma had taken a step to reduce misuse of funds and engaging in donations that lead to scandals. In fact, he is reported to have asked 23 embassies to desist from checkbook diplomacy.

Therefore, it is discernible that Jammeh may have severed the ties to either gain more, probably from the Chinese or to lure Taiwan to provide more. It could also be that Jammeh no longer saw a viable role for the Gambia in Taiwan's claim for independence considering the domestic political changes in Taiwan. Moreover, as Jammeh continued to face heavy criticism, the period saw an attempt to intensify relations with Russia. Was the diplomatic pause intended to enable China to defend its regime at the UN? Was it meant for infrastructural projects China is currently doing? Since 2017, China has expanded its operation

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in the Gambia under Adama Barrow's presidency. Although it is not the focus of this paper to detail Gambia-China relations here, China is also on a path to leave a footprint on the Gambia as it is currently popular for its white elephant projects such as the construction of roads and bridges. Whatever the motivations of Jammeh were in terminating the relations with Taiwan in 2013 and shifting to China, it is clear that his 1995 decision regarding Taiwan was procedurally and economically rational.

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