

JAPAN'S ROLE AND INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA: THE MAIN ASPECTS OF FOREIGN POLICY

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The present paper analyzes Japan's foreign policy activity in Central Asia. It considers the main foreign policy initiatives of Japan in the region, namely, Japan's Eurasian diplomacy in Central Asia, proclaimed in 1997, and its outcomes; the Central Asia plus Japan dialogue, declared in Astana in 2004. The authors generalize the opinions of different scholars engaged in this field, such as Professor Tomohiko Uyama (Hokkaido University), Togo Kazuhiko, a former Foreign Ministry official, and Timur Dadabaev, an Associate Professor at the University of Tsukuba and the author of numerous works on Japan's relations with Central Asia. They also examine the role of soft power in Japan's foreign policy in the region. Having examined the main directions of Japan's foreign policy in the region, the authors conclude that Japan considers its policy in the region to be quite consistent. In fact, despite criticism, much has been achieved in the 25 years of Japan's presence in Central Asia. However, assessing Japan's activity in this region, the authors believe that one should not forget about the very specifics and inherent caution of Japan in conducting its foreign policy in general.

Keywords: Central Asia, Japan, foreign policy, Eurasian diplomacy, international dialogue, soft power.

INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of five newly independent Central Asian countries in 1991, Japan was one of the first countries to have established the diplomatic relations with them, beginning to provide assistance in various areas as support in the construction of the new states. In the late 1990's, all the major economic states expressed their interest in the region. One of such bright and promising players in the region was Japan. However, after 25 years, Japan's presence in the region became questionable and caused a lot of discussion and misunderstanding. From a research point of view, it is considered important to return to those pages of history and to think about the initiatives of Japan, which seemed very appealing to many Central Asian countries.

Within the research communities, there is debate over the strategy of the "Land of the Rising Sun" in relation to the countries of Central Asia. Professor Tomohiko Uyama (Hokkaido University) even disputes the fact that Japan had any well-defined strategy towards Central Asia. Studying the origins of Japan's diplomacy in the region, he has repeatedly mentioned that strategic thinking was not entirely peculiar to both Japan's policy in Central Asia and Japan's diplomacy in general.

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According to Professor Tomohiko Uyama, Japan's foreign policy before World War II was full of "strategy" and intrigue for expanding the sphere of influence of the Japanese empire, but the defeat in the war radically changed the orientation of Japan's diplomacy. The country has largely lost its military and foreign policy independence, and the main priority has been placed on maintaining the alliance with the United States, although Japan occasionally had to and has to conflict with the United States on economic issues (Miteva, 2015). At the same time, to avoid a repetition of historical isolation, Japan sought to maintain peaceful (but not necessarily close) relations with all the countries of the world and not to irritate the world powers and neighboring countries. This explains the well-known Japan's passive foreign policy, according to Professor Tomohiko Uyama.

The author also mentions another characteristic feature of Japan's Central Asian policy - its dependence on casual and personal moments. In the early 1990s, when the relations between Japan and Central Asia began to develop, the government had no clear understanding of this region, and much depended on the few people (mostly high-ranking officials), who took the initiative. Thus, there were individuals who lobbied for the interests of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, but there was no one who would lobby for the interests of Kazakhstan in the political circles of Japan (Uyama, 2003).

At the same time, it should also be noted that Japan is interested in Central Asia more than in European or semi-European states of the former USSR: the Caucasus and the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Many scholars confirm the fact that for Japan it is easier to maintain friendly relations with Asian countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

T. Uyama explains Japan's lack of a coherent strategy towards Central Asia primarily by economic reasons. It is no secret that the main vector of Japan's economic interests and relations is the US, Asia-Pacific region and South-East Asia. Central Asia, from an economic point of view, is of little interest to Tokyo. According to the author, Japan's interest in the mineral resources of the region is not such an important factor, although Japan's foreign policy aspirations in the region are often reduced only to the interest in minerals, especially oil.

Summing up the results of Japan's policy in the region, Uyama concludes that it is necessary to distinguish between Japan's way of conducting a strategic policy and that of the US. In Japan, there is no strategic diplomacy in its classical form. The mechanism of strategic decision-making in Tokyo is built in such a way that Japan first long waits, attaching great importance to the behavior of prospective partners. This style of foreign policy explains why at the first stage the number of favorites of Tokyo included Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, but not Kazakhstan, with its huge potential remained outside Japan's strategic planning (Tang, 2015).

JAPAN'S EURASIAN DIPLOMACY

While T. Uyamo believes that Japan was not and will not be present in the region in the near future, Togo Kazuhiko, a former Foreign Ministry official, argues that Eurasian diplomacy has had its own achievements. Having observed the evolution and importance of Japan's foreign policy initiatives in Central Asia countries, he came to the conclusion that in the period of four years – between the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s – three prime ministers from the Liberal Democratic Party consistently developed Japan's "Eurasian diplomacy" in the region. They are Ryutaro Hashimoto, Keizo Obuchi and Yoshiro Mori (Len, 2005).

According to Togo Kazuhiko, the global and domestic political situation contributed to the advancement of Eurasian diplomacy in the years 1997-2001 (Kazuhiko, 2014). The proclamation of "Eurasian policy" by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in the field of foreign policy was a kind of definition of what path Japan should follow when China's growing power meets the restraining US Pacific policy. It means that the main task of Japan's foreign policy was the focus on one direction of empowerment, which was between the US and China. For this purpose, Japan considered it appropriate to involve Russia in the affairs of the Asia-Pacific region in the way which is advantageous to Russia. "Getting involved in a love-hate triangle with China and the United States?... That would be playing with fire. That's why Russia is so important," - said Hashimoto (Address by Prime Minister, 1997). As part of this process, it was also expected to solve the problem considered important by Japan's diplomacy - the problem of the return of the Northern Territories.

On July 24, 1997 Hashimoto addressed the Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives), proclaiming the strategy of "Eurasian diplomacy". In Japan, the term "Eurasian diplomacy" has become firmly associated with the name of Prime Minister Hashimoto.

According to the description given by Hashimoto, the term "Eurasia" covered the development of relations with China, Russia and the Silk Road, or Central Asian, countries. Hashimoto, in fact, was talking about the "Silk Road" to Europe, running through China, Central Asia and the Caspian region. It is Hashimoto's speech that serves as the basic document, where the principles and directions of Japan's Eurasian strategy have been laid.

Hashimoto's speech clearly defined the basic outlines of Japan's foreign policy and drew particular attention to the implementation of the concept of "Eurasian diplomacy". He also touched on such issues as the international situation as a whole after the end of the Cold War; confirmation of Japanese-American commitments; development of Eurasian diplomacy; Japan's relations with the Russian Federation; Japan's relations with China; the problem of the northern islands; economic issues between Japan and the Russian Federation; Japan's relations with the Silk Road countries (Address by Prime Minister, 1997).

The main idea in his address consisted in the fact that Eurasian diplomacy was first announced to become one of Japan's foreign policy priorities. Hashimoto clearly developed a strategy regarding the countries of the Eurasian continent and indicated the main directions of cooperation within Eurasian diplomacy.

This strategy of Japan's foreign policy determines the necessity of Eurasian strategy, the importance of Eurasian diplomacy in ensuring the security of Japan itself, as far as the situation in Eurasia has a significant impact on peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region; the availability of rich oil and gas resources and the importance of the Caspian region in global energy markets; Japan's support of Central Asian countries in the process of state-building will contribute to the development of relations for peace and prosperity between not only Japan and these countries, but also between Japan, Russia, China and the Islamic states (Usubaliyev, 2010).

One of the main directions of Eurasian diplomacy is Russian-Japanese relations. In his speech, Ryutaro Hashimoto noted that the relations with the Russian Federation have a significant impact on peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and it is an indisputable fact that Russian-Japanese relations lag far behind. Therefore, for the development of bilateral relations Hashimoto put forward three principles:

- The principle of confidence, without which no progress can be made between the two countries;
- The principle of mutual benefit, according to which the states should coordinate their common interests;
- The principle of maintaining a long-term perspective, assuming that the achievements in Japanese-Russian relations should focus on building a solid foundation for the next generation (Address by Prime Minister, 1997).

Hashimoto also considered the problem of the Northern Territories in the relations between Japan and Russia and suggested its solution on the basis of the above three principles. In addition, the document discussed the issues of bilateral trade and economic relations, which should develop in different directions.

It should be noted that his speech made a strong impression on the Russian side. The basic principles of the relations between Japan and Russia, suggested by Ryutaro Hashimoto, have contributed to further deepening of bilateral relations and formed the basis for many bilateral documents signed in the coming years.

At the November 1997 summit, held in Krasnoyarsk, Yeltsin and Hashimoto agreed to "make every effort to conclude a peace treaty by the year 2000". After that, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was engaged in forging comprehensive diplomatic relations with Russia. The so-called "Hashimoto-Yeltsin Plan" was developed and implemented in the economic sphere. In addition, at the November 1997 summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in

Vancouver on the initiative of Prime Minister Hashimoto, a decision was made on Russia's participation in the APEC beginning the following year (Kazuhiko, 2014). This was a high point for Japan's Eurasian diplomacy.

Japan also took a step toward the resolution of the territorial issue. In April 1998, at the Japan-Russia summit in Kawana (Shizuoka Prefecture), the so-called Kawana proposal was presented which called for concluding a peace treaty for territorial demarcation. However, this was the end of Hashimoto's diplomacy in the Russian direction. While the financial crisis broke out in Russia, and President Yeltsin's health became worse, in Japan the Liberal Democratic Party suffered a crushing defeat in July House of Councilors elections because of the failure of economic policy. Prime Minister Hashimoto resigned.

In addition, a shadow was cast over Eurasian diplomacy by what happened in Tajikistan. Just before the resignation of Hashimoto, a citizen of Japan Akino Yutaka was killed. The Japanese government sent Akino as an observer and political advisor to the UN mission in the context of the Great Silk Road diplomacy, discussed by Hashimoto in his speech to the Keizai Doyukai (Len, 2005).

Eurasian diplomacy also mentioned other areas of Japan's foreign policy, which are important in terms of ensuring the energy security of Japan. This trend was mentioned in Eurasian diplomacy by Ryutaro Hashimoto as "Japan's relations with the Silk Road countries".

In accordance with this concept, Japan's relations with Central Asian countries should be based on three key areas:

- political dialogue, contributing to the deepening of trust and understanding;
- economic cooperation, including in the field of natural resources;
- realization of peace in the region through nuclear non-proliferation, democratization and stabilization (Azizov, 2011).

It was also noted that support from the Japanese side should be an important factor in activating intra-regional cooperation in the creation of transport, communication and energy supply systems, as well as in developing energy resources in Central Asia (Address by Prime Minister, 1997).

A trip of Taro Aso, a former Minister of State, Economic Planning Agency of Japan, to Central Asian states in August 1997 laid the foundation for broad economic cooperation between Japan and the republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The main subject of negotiation was a vital issue for these republics to attract Japanese investment in their economy and, above all, in the energy sector. In terms of implementation of the economic component of the new strategy in September 1997, these republics were also visited by the Keizai Doyukai delegation, which unites the representatives of leading business circles of Japan. During the visit, the delegation members were acquainted with the economic situation in these countries, the problems of the transition to a market economy, and most importantly – they laid the foundations for future active cooperation.

Taking into account the fact that Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, due to their resource potential, and Uzbekistan, as one of the most important transit routes of these resources, occupy the key positions in the region and have an impact, to a certain extent, on the future of intra-regional cooperation in the economic sphere, Japan pays special attention to these countries by allocating significant funds for their development. One of the first steps in the implementation of Japan's Silk Road diplomacy was the visit of the Keidanren delegation (Japan Business Federation) to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The main subject of negotiation was to discuss the prospects for further deepening of cooperation in the development of oil and gas deposits.

With the change of leadership in Japan in August 1998 and the advent of a new Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, his Government, in general, continued to establish active cooperation with Central Asian countries. As a result, in January 1998, a new document in respect of the region's states was adopted - "Action Program for Diplomacy of the Great Silk Road", indicating the need for the development and improvement of the republics' infrastructure and the provision of assistance to them in the development of natural resources. This program also suggested the development of comprehensive economic and trade cooperation, strengthening of political relations and provision of assistance to the Great Silk Road countries in the transition to a market economy. Eurasian diplomacy, which determined the relationship with the Silk Road countries, was supported by the government officials of Central Asian republics.

Since the announcement of Eurasian diplomacy and the Silk Road diplomacy, as noted above, doubts have been expressed about the premature appearance of such a program for regional development and transportation of Central Asian energy resources, due to a lack of markets for Central Asian oil and gas. Moreover, the Asian financial crisis, broke out in 1997-1998, put into question the need for Japan's financial assistance to Central Asian countries and the future of these programs as a whole.

However, Japan's financial assistance through ODA and other credit lines continued to flow into the region. Despite the difficulties of an internal nature, Japan generally maintained its interest in the development of the raw material base in Central Asia.

Another important aspect of Eurasian initiatives is the realization of cooperation in the field of transport and communications as the basis of projects to revive the Silk Road. In this respect, Japan remains the only country that provides funding to almost all the work on the creation of advanced transport networks in the region. At the same time, several features of this activity should be distinguished. Among them, of fundamental importance are as follows:

- the development of railway communication, because it is more cost-effective for transportation over long distances. This takes into account

the fact that only by railway it is possible to supply Central Asia countries with large-tonnage equipment and pipes needed to start the oil and gas projects and to construct major pipelines;

- the development and modernization of intra- and inter-regional road networks, as a prerequisite for further economic growth in the region;
- the development of air transport and the modernization of airports in the region, with the aim of creating a modern transit point of the Silk Road in Central Asia (Usubaliyev, 2010).

In the field of telecommunications, the main focus is on the creation of the trans-European fiber-optic network, which is supposed to connect Europe and Asia to a single telecommunications and information system, passing through 13 countries, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. It will help to include the region into the global telecommunication space. At the same time, cooperation in this field is also carried out with other countries - the US, EU, China and South Korea.

After the announcement of Eurasian initiatives, another important element of Japan's foreign policy in Central Asia was the activity to familiarize the general public with Japan's culture, language, traditions and history. The practice of opening cultural and language centers, organizing language trainings in Japan for students from the republics of Central Asia and establishing the associations of cultural and economic cooperation became widespread. Japan's activity in this area is consistent with the objectives of the country's political leadership to demonstrate a positive image of Japanese society abroad. The extensive scientific and cultural ties allowed Japan to enjoy the benefits of civilization achieved in other countries, and at the same time to distribute the achievements and values of its society in the world, showing the attractiveness of its development model.

After Prime Minister Obuchi who suffered a stroke was forced to resign, in April 2000 Yoshiro Mori became the LDP leader and succeeded Obuchi as prime minister. Despite the fact that Mori held this position for just a year, this period is worth mentioning from the standpoint of Eurasian diplomacy, specifically due to the policy towards Russia (Dadabaev, 2011).

Immediately prior to the advent of Mori, a number of important events took place on the international stage in March 2000. In Russia, President Putin came to power, who during his first year at a time when the US presidential elections were held, France and Germany were increasingly concerned about Russia's actions in Chechnya, and it became possible to normalize the relations with China, pursued a growing interest in Japan.

In the period between April 2000 and March 2001 Mori and Putin held five meetings. During the seven months after Putin's official visit to Japan in September 2000, negotiations rapidly progressed. The Irkutsk summit held on 25 March 2001 brought tremendous results. Firstly, for the first time both parties confirmed in

writing their intention to follow two documents: the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956, which provided for the possibility of returning the islands of Habomai and Shikotan to Japan (after signing a peace treaty), and the Tokyo Declaration of 1993 on addressing the dispute over four contested islands and concluding a peace treaty. Secondly, President Putin did not reject the proposal of Prime Minister Mori to hold consultations on the islands of Habomai and Shikotan along with consultations on the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu. Thirdly, both parties agreed that parallel consultations would begin immediately after the Irkutsk summit as soon as appropriate preparations were made.

Thus, Japan's Eurasian diplomacy has evolved significantly by the advent of the Cabinet of Ministers of Junichiro Koizumi in April 2001. Although Japan realized China's growing power, allied relations with the United States were never neglected. At the same time, Japan significantly improved its relations with Russia, including resolution of the territorial issue, and was actively engaged in building friendly ties with the Silk Road countries. This was the essence of Japan's Eurasian diplomacy.

However, with the advent of Koizumi and after the 9/11 attacks, overturning the usual worldview, Japan's Eurasian diplomacy almost went into oblivion.

Despite all the criticism of Japan's Eurasian diplomacy, much has been achieved in the development of relations with the countries of Central Asia. It may, therefore, be safely concluded that Hashimoto's Eurasian doctrine has laid the foundation for other new projects and concepts of Japan in relation to the countries of Central Asia (Rakhimov, 2014).

THE CENTRAL ASIA PLUS JAPAN DIALOGUE

The geopolitical situation in the world in the early 2000s, strengthening of the US role and creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 pushed Japan to reconsider its position in Central Asia (Nurgaliev, 2009). After the 9/11 attacks all the countries in the world began to pay special attention to their security. Similarly, Japan, declaring international terrorism a threat to its national security, started to assist the anti-terrorist coalition. The stability and security of the Central Asia region was an important component of the country's security (Terada, 2014). All of the above events became the impetus for reconsideration and revitalization of Japan's foreign policy in the region, and the introduction of the regular "Central Asia plus Japan" Forum, initiated by the Government of Japan in 2004. The Forum presented a framework for multilateral dialogue and cooperation between Central Asian countries and Japan, and included five areas: the political dialogue, intra-regional cooperation development, business promotion, the intellectual dialogue and cultural ties and human exchange.

There is a valid structure within the Forum - dialogues held one-by-one at different levels in all Central Asia countries and Japan. Their basic idea is reflected

in the understanding of challenges faced by the region, namely, how to deal together with region-wide issues and to promote intra-regional cooperation, relying on Japan's supporting role as a catalyst of processes (Banno, 2011).

In 2004, the framework of dialogues was determined with the aim of exchanging views on the development of relations between Japan and the regions' countries. Each of multi-level dialogues is important, peculiar and in its own way effective, being held under the same name as the Forum – “Central Asia plus Japan”:

- Dialogue at the Foreign Ministers' Level of the Republics of Central Asia and Japan;
- Dialogue at the Senior Officials' Level;
- Intellectual Dialogue (“Central Asia plus Japan” Tokyo Dialogue, Intellectual Dialogue);
- Economic Forum, since July 2011 (“Central Asia plus Japan” Economic Forum, July 2011) (Foreign Ministers Meeting, 2016).

Despite numerous meetings, after more than 10 years, measures taken for cooperation still remain ineffective. Regardless of the discussion of this subject in 2006, the forum has not reached a higher level, the level of heads of state. However, one should not forget that the dialogue is primarily the discussion platform. The very idea of creating a multilateral forum was aimed at changing the status of Japan in the region, i.e. Japan strived to become a full participant in the discussion of regional issues. It should be noted that Japan's foreign policy initiatives in the region are not stable and have a spontaneous character.

Another outburst in Japan's foreign policy in the region was Shinzo Abe's visit to Central Asian countries in the past year, which went down in history as the first trip of the Prime Minister of Japan to all five countries of the region. It became symbolic, since Japan had long been involved in the issues of Central Asia, and the visit of Shinzo Abe somewhat reminded once again of Japan's support during the last 25 years. It also was a surprise, and caused a number of questions about whether it meant the strengthening of Japan's role in Central Asia.

According to Timur Dadabaev, an Associate Professor at the University of Tsukuba and the author of numerous works on Japan's relations with Central Asia, Shinzo Abe's trip to Central Asia had four main objectives: to strengthen the position of Japanese business communities in Central Asia; to ensure that there are orders from Central Asian countries in Japanese corporations; to build a policy of Tokyo's “soft power” in the region and to expand the humanitarian assistance provided by Japan for the past 24 years (Dadabaev & Komatsu, 2017).

Some analysts believe that this unprecedented tour of the Prime Minister of Japan was partly due to China's policy. The beginning of the new Chinese policy of “the Silk Road” in the region was announced a few years ago. In recent years, the implementation of this project has fully taken hold, and Japanese companies

are starting to miss opportunities, received by Chinese companies in Central Asia.

During his tour, Shinzo Abe spoke of contracts worth almost \$18 billion in Turkmenistan and almost \$8.5 billion in Uzbekistan, which was a surprise for the region. This was a further confirmation of Japan's primary interest in business and economics rather than in politics.

However, this does not mean that economic interest will continue to be the sole purpose of Tokyo in Central Asia. Japan is well positioned for the political progress in the region. According to Timur Dadabaev, "Central Asia is one of the few regions in Asia, where there is no history of Japanese imperialism, and this makes Central Asia more accessible to Japan".

As noted above, Japan has a great advantage in the region in connection with a very good image among the population of Central Asian countries. At the same time, one should not forget that Japan has formed the most positive image of all the many countries "assisting" this region largely due to soft power and historical roots. According to a number of Japanese archeologists and ethnographers, Kyrgyzstan is almost the ancestral home of the Japanese. The Japanese still firmly believe that it was the mountains of Kyrgyzstan where their history began, and therefore at the first stage, they expressed their desire to provide substantive economic assistance specifically to Bishkek. Japan gave a total of more than \$400 million grants and loans to Kyrgyzstan.

JAPAN'S SOFT POWER POLICY

Speaking about Japan's foreign policy in the region, one should not forget about the country's "soft power". Japan has long successfully used a policy of "soft power" in Central Asia. Japanese authorities supported projects on water purification and projects in agriculture and helped to finance the construction and improvement of schools, health care systems, roads, energy supply systems, and many other aspects of Central Asian infrastructure. For example, Shinzo Abe, during his visit to Tajikistan, suggested helping in the fight against locusts, which in recent years had greatly harmed Tajik farmers.

Timur Dadabaev believes that it is paying off, and explains that, according to a recent study by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Central Asia seems to have a positive attitude to Japan. As part of the study, conducted prior to Prime Minister's visit, all five Central Asian countries were examined on how the population treats different countries. Japan received "quite a high score in terms of positive image that enhances the confidence with which Japan can act" in the region (Japan's strategy in Central Asia, 2015).

One cannot but agree with Timur Dadabaev that Japan has the ability to improve its already "very positive" image - by "strengthening "soft power" through the creation of universities (establishment of the University of Technology in

Turkmenistan, construction of a youth center of innovation in Uzbekistan), through the work of Japanese centers, etc.”.

The first center for studying the Japanese language and culture appeared in Kyrgyzstan in 1995, then a similar center was opened in Uzbekistan in 1997, and in Kazakhstan - in 2000. Their main objectives are not only the study of the Japanese language, culture and history, but also the promotion of cultural exchanges on a bilateral basis, the enhancement of interest on the part of the Japanese society in the study of the cultural heritage of Central Asian peoples.

A great contribution to the development of cultural relations between Japan and Central Asian countries is made by bilateral committees and associations of friendship and cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In particular, the Parliamentary League of Japan-Kazakhstan Friendship, the Association for Friendship between Japan and Kyrgyzstan, the Association of Cultural and Economic Cooperation “Fukushima-Uzbekistan”. Such communities are composed of the members of the government, parliament, business representatives, as well as major public figures of Central Asian countries and Japan. Within the framework of these organizations, different summits are regularly held to consult on the most important areas of economic, political and cultural cooperation. With their assistance, a number of seminars, conferences, “round tables” are carried out, as well as the Days of Japanese Culture and the Days of Culture of Central Asian countries.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, we can conclude that from the perspective of Japan, the country's policy in the region is quite consistent. Without doubt, Japan's foreign policy aspirations are different from the policy of the leading countries in the region. For example, in Japan's understanding, the US policy in the region with prevailing democracy and human rights has a different direction. All these years Japan has been trying to find its niche, helping to develop the regional economy. Japan does not impose programs relating to the political conditions, but focus on the functionality and economic benefits of projects, as well as on the issues of cultural understanding, skillfully using a policy of soft power in order to maintain a favorable image of the country in the region.

There is a relationship between Japan's foreign policy in Central Asia and that of the US, but it is not full-scale, and exists not in all areas. Explaining the modesty of Japanese ambitions in Central Asia, we fully agree with the opinion of T. Uyamy that Japan is not - unlike the US and other participants of the Great Game - a full-fledged geopolitical force. This explains why Tokyo is not seeking a massive presence in the region. Japan shows solidarity as part of the West with the overall Western strategy in Central Asia: it acts as a donor, being interested in maintaining stability in the region, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and establishing a

thriving community in Asia as a whole (Laumulin, 2009). In general, the Japanese are trying to develop their foreign policy in the region.

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