



## **ASPECTS OF CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES IN JAPANESE RESEARCH CENTERS**

**Suyunova Barno Safarali qizi**

Basic doctoral student of Department of oriental policy and international relations, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies

e-mail: [barno.suyunova.95@mail.ru](mailto:barno.suyunova.95@mail.ru)

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<p><b>Received:</b> September 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 <b>Accepted:</b> October 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 <b>Published:</b> November 17<sup>th</sup> 2022</p>	<p>This article discusses important aspects of the research conducted by specialists, scientists and political scientists in Japanese research centers for the study of the Central Asian region. It examines the foundations of the formation of Japan's foreign policy in the region on the basis of historicity, systematic methods and scientific data. Opinions are also given on the importance of creating and implementing the concept of the Silk Road. They illustrate that Japan's economic investment and infrastructure improvements in the region under the official development assistance program, a positive image of the Japanese has been formed in the region.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> "Description of Central Asia", foreign policy, "Silk Road" concept, "Central Asia + Japan" dialogue program, Central Asian Research Group.</p>	

**INTRODUCTION.** In the period after the Second World War, Japan's great achievements in the economic sphere opened wide opportunities for strengthening its role and position not only in the East Asian region, but also on a global scale. There are several challenges for Japan to effectively project its soft power, but also promising opportunities to create or refine channels of attraction and influence. When considering the challenges – beyond global geopolitical uncertainties and frictions – Tokyo was extremely cautious in reopening the country and this caused frustration not only with foreign tourists, but also among international students who were not able to return and resume their studies in person [1]. Today, Japan is carrying out unique bilateral and multilateral relations with the countries of the region, promoting promising projects for cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. In analyzing the prospects of mutual cooperation, it is important to study the main aspects of the research of the Central Asian region in Japan.

**METHODS.** The article is based on the principles of generally accepted historical and systematic methods: historical, comparative, objectivity and logical analysis. In writing this work, situational analysis was used, which made it possible to study Central Asian in Japan foreign policy after the "Cold war". By systematic analysis some features of Japan's foreign policy was determined and analyzed.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.** The work aimed at the study of Central Asia in Japan began a long time ago. In particular, the first studies were carried out by

the diplomat Nishi Tokujiro in the 19th century. He worked for several years at the Japanese Embassy in St. Petersburg. In 1880, he traveled to Russian Turkestan during his career. After returning to Japan, he continued to study modern Central Asia and published a book entitled "Description of Central Asia" in 1886 [2]. This book was not only the first attempt to introduce the Central Asian region to Japanese readers, but it is also distinguished by the fact that it contains detailed information about the region.

During the period between 1930 and 1945, the Japanese conducted many studies in order to deeply study the political and economic conditions and national problems in Central Asia - Soviet Central Asia. Their main goal was to study the weaknesses of the Soviet Union. After the defeat in the Second World War, research in this field in Japan was stopped. Nevertheless, in addition to strategic research, the results of research on the historical geography of pre-Islamic Central Asia conducted by Japanese orientalist such as Shiratori Kurakichi and Haneda Toru served to create a separate school of Central Asian studies after the war. This trend led to the spread of the idea of the "Silk Road" extending through Central Asia to Japan [2]. Until the mid-1980s, Soviet Central Asia was rarely explored. As a result of the reconstruction policy, Japan's interest in Soviet Central Asia increased dramatically, many sources were collected and new books were published revealing new aspects of Central Asia. Since the 1990s, young researchers have also conducted ethnographic and socio-anthropological studies on the post-Cold War political system, major changes in the economy of Central Asia after the



collapse of the Soviet Union, prospects for regional cooperation and integration, the revival of Islam, and environmental problems. In the first half of the 2000s, several collective monographs devoted to the study of Central Asia were published by Japanese researchers. One of the first collective works was the collection "60 chapters about Central Asia" published in 2003, which was republished in 2010. In this study, the main issues in the history, politics, economy and society of the Central Asian region were studied [3].

The 2008 book "Japan's Silk Road Policy" discusses Japan's role in Central Asia in detail. This book is a collaboration between the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program (USA/Sweden), the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University (Japan), and Islamic Area Studies at the University of Tokyo (Japan). This publication represents the efforts of a group of authors - Japanese and non-Japanese scholars interested in the subject, as well as former Japanese diplomats who personally played an important role in the formation and implementation of Japan's Central Asian policy - who sought to clarify Japan's role in Central Asia from the perspective of Japan and Central Asia.

In order to discuss and better understand the important role of Japan in Central Asia, it is planned to write the above monograph at a one-day seminar held in Tokyo on September 22, 2007 [4]. This was necessary because of explaining the concept of "Eurasian diplomacy" introduced by Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro in 1997, while Japan's relations with Russia and China have been well documented in the decade. However, Japan's contribution to the Central Asia-Caucasus region has been poorly illuminated and not understood well outside of Japan. This publication is mainly aimed at covering Japan's relations with Central Asia.

Timur Dadaboev is one of the scholars who researches the relations between Japan and Central Asian countries, and he examines measures to improve the effectiveness of Japan's development strategy in Central Asia. The professor believes that the results expected of the people of Central Asia from the cooperation and the perception of Japan depend to a large extent on the effectiveness of Tokyo's policy in this region. To achieve this efficiency, T. Dadaboev cites the following three factors. First, it is important to create effective models of multilateral relations within the framework of the "Central Asia + Japan" Dialogue, which requires clear expression of the goals and specific directions of cooperation. Cooperation on water resources management and joint environmental projects is a clear example of this. With significant

success in this area, there is a high probability of future cooperation and expansion into related areas. Secondly, the effectiveness of the bilateral commitments implemented in various countries of Central Asia is another important factor. Proposed projects should be carefully reviewed before implementation and re-evaluated after implementation. Third, the positive results of Japan's initiatives in the region shape society's attitude toward Japan as a whole.

Also, the activities of the Central Asia Research Group, specially established at the University of Tsukuba in Tokyo, are achieving significant results among institutions conducting research on the Central Asian region. Today, together with other scientific research centers, the University of Tsukuba is working on these following projects:[5]

- Grant of the Japanese government for the study "International relations in the Central Asian region". In this project, the main focus is on the analysis of the relations between the Central Asian countries based on "theories of international relations".

- Historical regional studies on the study of Central Asian society before and after the Russian occupation.

- Grant for comparative study of Japanese and Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia.

- "Remembering the Soviet past: the case of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan". This project is supported by the Government of Japan and the Tokyo National Institute of Humanities.

- Research on the documents of Khiva (the project of the Central Asian archive organized by the initiative of the Kyoto University of Foreign Languages). The purpose of this project is to conduct a deep study of the archive documents written during the Khiva Khanate (currently stored in the Ichan Castle Museum in Khiva and the Central State Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan).

- "Comparative study of socialist modernism in Mongolia and Central Asia" project

- "Survey of Civil Society Institutions in Uzbekistan", Grants for Scientific Research, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) grant. Civil society, the state and society from a comparative point of view, that is, it is planned to carry out research on the basis of new values specific to the era of globalization.

In the process of increasing competition in the world, Japan tries to develop relations with various countries, especially economic relations. In addition, Japan, which has the largest economy in the world, is trying to become an effective actor in the Eurasian



region along with the Western countries because of the need for countries it can rely on for the supply of underground resources [6]. In particular, deepening and expanding its relations with Central Asian countries can provide Japan with an important playing field within the framework of mutual interests.

**CONCLUSION.** Japan's economic investment and infrastructure improvements in the region under the official development assistance program, a positive image of the Japanese has been formed in the region. However, due to the adoption of the US Silk Road Strategy Act in 1999, South Korea's growing interest in the region, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EOI), Japan's activity in Central Asia has been somewhat overlooked. Today Japan maintains its position on the development of relations with the countries of Central Asia. It can be seen that Japan should intensify its policy towards Central Asia and make more efforts. In order to become more active in this process, along with powerful politicians, the research of professors and scientists working in scientific research centers in Japan is also important.

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