



THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT: - With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s Central Asian nations and Japan established diplomatic relations and partnerships began to increase steadily as manifested by the level of official contacts. In 1997 the “Silk Road” Diplomacy concept was formulated for Japan’s policy toward Central Asia. At the beginning of the 21st century, we see the activation of new actors including India, Korea, and Japan in Central Asia, which were mainly welcomed in the region. Tokyo recognized the growing strategic importance of Central Asia in the context of international security and sought to play a more active role as an Asian nation in Eurasia. During two decades Central Asian nations and Japan began to increase steadily. Japan is one of the largest assistants to Central Asia in structural reforms and Japanese investments in the different aspects of the region's economy and transport communication add up to several billion. There are several areas of special interest to Japan in its relations with Central Asia, including cooperation in education, economic development of the region, political reforms, as well as energy resources. Japan’s effort in creating the “Central Asia plus Japan” dialog is part of its multilateral diplomacy. At the same time, there are some challenges and problems in Central Asia–Japan relations. However, there are potentialities for future bilateral and multilateral relations. Japan like Korea, India, and other countries has a strong positive image in Central Asia, which could be regarded as an additional factor for fostering partnerships between Central and East Asia as well as interregional relations with the vast Asian continent and beyond.

This article explores the interests of the Central Asian states as members of the SCO, and their compatibility with the SCO goals. This study shows that the SCO is compatible with the Central Asian

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states' security and economic interests, regional cooperation, and the need for balanced relations with the great powers— China, Russia, and the United States.

KEYWORDS: Central Asia, energy, security, eurasia, SCO. Central Asia Japan, Bilateral relations, Eurasian diplomacy, Multilateral partnership, Central Asia plus Japan.

INTRODUCTION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental international organization founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001 by six member nations: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It was established on the foundation of the —Shanghai Five|| mechanism, which was initially developed for the purpose of strengthening trust and encouraging disarmament in the border regions of China with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Öksüz 2009:715, Kay 2006:159-160). The SCO admitted Mongolia into observer status at its 2004 Tashkent Summit and Pakistan, India and Iran received observer status at its 2005 summit in Astana, Kazakhstan. The total area occupied by the SCO member states is about 30,189,000 square kilometers, or about three-fifths of the territory of Eurasia, with a population of 1.512 billion people, or approximately a fourth of the world's total population (Brummer 2007: 185). The declared purposes of The Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism are: strengthening mutual trust and good-neighborly relations among member states; promoting their effective cooperation in political affairs, economy and trade, scientific-technical, cultural, and educational spheres as well as in energy, transportation, tourism, and environment protection fields; joint safeguarding and preserving regional peace,

security and stability; striving towards creation of democratic, just, reasonable new international political and economic order (United 2008: 232).

Establishing relations and formulating Japan's strategy toward Central Asia Central Asians and Japanese often refer to long history of trade, cultural and humanitarian relations that have taken place among countries and regions, located along the way Silk Road. Among examples referred to the rarities, made in Samarkand in the 13th century and founded in the ancient city of Nara, the historic capital of Japan. Also Buddhism, which in the sixth century, was moved to the Japan from Central Asia through China and Korea. After WW2 thousands of Japanese war prisoners were deported to Central Asia, where they participated in the different reconstructions and had tolerant relations and attitude with and from local people (Zhukova, 2007. pp.62–71). It should be noted that during the Soviet time, Central Asia and Japan were not involved in direct foreign relation, but only in framework Soviets center dominated approaches, there were some contacts of representatives of Central Asia Soviet republics, including Uzbekistan, to involve in different exchanges visits to Japan. Due to the Soviet propaganda the students were well informed that the first atomic bomb where used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, but post-WW2 period of Japan political, social and

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economic development was not wildly informed except for very limited information on its economic progress. Only in the post-Soviet era Central Asian nations and Japan started diplomatic, political and economic relations. Japan is among the first ones recognized and established diplomatic links with the new states of Central Asia and parties tried to develop relations in the different fields. Japanese Foreign Ministry classified them as a part of Europe and Newly Independent States due to be inconvenient to divide the former Soviet Union.

CONCLUSION

The SCO goals seem to be compatible with the Central Asian states' interests and it has made efforts towards satisfying them. In the political sphere, the SCO has stressed non-interference in domestic affairs of sovereign states by foreign nations and support for each member state's right to choose its own path of development. Additionally, in the wake of the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the popular uprising in Uzbekistan of 2005, Central Asian leaders expressed appreciation for Beijing's and Moscow's support for their regimes and understanding of the need to suppress any opposition movements – whether democratic or Islamic – within their respective countries. The SCO addressed Central Asian states' economic interests by providing a forum for discussion of building trade, transit and transport systems in the region as well as energy and tourism development.

The member states have talked about setting up an —energy club|| and a freetrade zone that local economists believe would benefit Central Asian consumers, although at this time Central Asian products are not ready to compete with Chinese goods. Since the inception of the SCO, economic relations among the member states have rapidly

increased, close to ten-fold in eight years from 1997 to 2005. To address security concerns, the SCO created RATS and conducts yearly joint military exercises. Furthermore, out of all the cooperation organizations that Central Asian states have created or joined, the SCO has been the most successful in increasing regional cooperation, especially in the transit and transportation arena. The SCO Forum began functioning in 2006 with the goal of increasing multilateral cooperation in environmental protection, culture, education and sports and has been relatively successful as these are not controversial areas. It is in the interests of the Central Asian states to continue the multidirectional policy towards the major powers that have expressed willingness to develop and secure Central Asia. No major power single-handedly has been able to satisfy all of Central Asian needs, nor do the Central Asian states want a total dependence on one power. It seems clear that, Central Asian leaders will continue to exploit major power differences and sell their cooperation to the highest bidder. Most importantly, multidirectional foreign policies have allowed Central Asian leaders to pursue their national (and personal) interests.

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