

Japan's Participation in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan

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Abstract: In this article, the author analyzes Japan's contribution to stability and peace in Afghanistan. The concepts of "peacekeeping" and "human security" in Japan's foreign policy show its strong commitment to peace and stability and Japan's potential to become one of the leading countries in the fight against terrorism. The conferences hosted by Japan served as a platform for the international community to provide moral support for dialogue between Afghans, known as the Tokyo Process for a New Afghanistan. This article analyzed the fact that Japan's policy in Afghanistan is focused on the construction of a civilian state from a military focus. It was also noted that the stability and recovery of Afghanistan cannot be achieved without cooperation in economic development, security measures, and political processes of the neighboring countries that have close relations with Afghanistan.

Keywords: peacekeeping, security, stability, humanitarian aid, DDR, DIAR, Tokyo Conference.

Introduction. Instability in Afghanistan has long had far-reaching consequences, such as encouraging terrorism, causing regional conflicts, spreading extremist ideologies, and developing criminal networks. Solving the security problems in this area is not only a local problem, but is considered important for regional and global peace. As the second largest donor after the United States for peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan, Japan has played an important role in changing the lives of the Afghan people. After all, the concepts of "peacekeeping" and "human security" in Japan's foreign policy show that it is a strong supporter of peace and stability, and Japan has the potential to become one of the leading countries in the fight against terrorism.

Discussion and results. Meiji University professor P. Hein gives the following five reasons for choosing a non-military, soft way in conducting Japan's policy towards Afghanistan.

Firstly, Japan's Peace Constitution prohibits the deployment of the military to extraterritorial combat zones.

Secondly, Japan is not a member of a multilateral military structure such as NATO or the European Defense Agency. Under the Bilateral US-Japan Security Treaty, the US is obligated to defend Japan in the event of an attack, but Japan is not obligated to defend the US.

Thirdly, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs acts as an independent, neutral, civilian aid and development entity in Afghanistan, even though it is inextricably linked with non-governmental organizations and the International Cooperation Agency – JICA. In addition, most of the government aid was channeled through international civilian institutions (UNHCR, ADB, WFP, UNDP).

Fourthly, Japan has become preoccupied with more pressing internal security issues, struggling to assert its sovereignty over disputed territories and protect its borders (unresolved territorial disputes with China, Taiwan, Korea, Russia).

Fifthly, Japan has taken the lead in promoting an alternative, civilian-focused concept of "human security" from a global perspective under the leadership of former UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata[4].

Japan reacted to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 with concern. Japan's Prime Minister at the time, Junichiro Koizumi, called it "a despicable attack not only on the United States, but on all of humanity." All parties agreed that Japan must work together with other countries in the global campaign against terrorism and that such cooperation is essential to national survival and security[19].

As political scientist O.Alimov noted, although the internal conflicts in Afghanistan are not considered a real threat to Japan's security, the peace-loving and humanitarian policy, ensuring peace and stability in the region has become one of the important directions of the Japanese government's foreign policy[12].

On the initiative of Japan, eight conferences on assistance to Afghanistan have been held in Tokyo:

- 1) Tokyo Conference (January 2002) (beginning of the reconstruction process)
- 2) DDR Conference (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration) (February 2003)
- 3) DIAG I Conference (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups) (July 2006)
- 4) DIAG II Conference (June 2007)
- 5) JCMB political leaders' meeting (Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board - a meeting between the Afghan government and major donors) (February 2008)
- 6) ICG (International Contact Group) meeting (April 2009) - since April 2009, ICG meetings consisting of special representatives for Afghanistan and Pakistan have been held regularly (now they are held annually) for political cooperation of the international community to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region held three times) is being held. Special Representative of Germany, Dr. Koch, chairs the ICG meetings. Tsukasa Uemura, the current Special Representative of Japan, also serves as the Director General of the Bureau of Middle East and African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan[15].
- 7) Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in cooperation between the governments of Japan and Afghanistan (July 2012)
- 8) 21st meeting of ICG (May 2014)

According to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Japan, Shaida Mohammad Abdali, the conferences hosted by Japan served as a platform for the international community to morally support inter-Afghan dialogue, known as the Tokyo Process for a New Afghanistan. In addition, Japan emphasizes the fact that it is acting as the chairman of the G7 in 2023 and as a temporary member of the Security Council in 2023-2024.

Japan is well-suited to implement this initiative due to its diplomatic clout and the wide trust it has gained from all stakeholders. Japan's successful transition to a prosperous democracy after World War II serves as a source of inspiration for all nations, including Afghans.

According to the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Japan, Shaida Mohammad Abdali, Afghans highly appreciate Japan's approach to foreign aid. Given its long-standing commitment to pacifism enshrined in its constitution, Japan defended "human security" by not deploying the military. Focused on protecting people and communities in the country from various threats, armed conflicts, poverty and disease[8].

Even the Taliban have expressed gratitude for Japan's long-standing friendship [17] and now cooperate with the Japanese embassy in Kabul, which serves as a gateway to the international community.

By chronology of Japan's policy in Afghanistan as follows, it is possible to understand in more detail the efforts of this country in terms of peacekeeping and infrastructure development:

1. From the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan after the capture of the city of Kabul by the armed forces of the Taliban movement in September 1996 until the terrorist attack of the United States on September 11, 2001.
2. From September 11, 2001 to 2014, until the withdrawal of the International Security Forces from Afghanistan.
3. It was from 2014 to August 2021, that is, until the establishment of the Taliban government in Afghanistan.
4. The period since the Taliban took over power in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021 and continues until now.

Japan's policy towards Afghanistan until 2001 consisted of mediation between the parties to the armed conflict, and it was almost unsuccessful. In particular, in the 1990s, Japan was neutral in relation to the opposing forces in Afghanistan. The task of Japanese diplomacy was to conduct direct negotiations between the representatives of the warring parties and create favorable conditions for this, and as a result, reach an agreement on a cease-fire. In 1998, for the first time, Japanese diplomats discussed the issue of humanitarian aid to the victims of the civil war in Afghanistan, and for this, in 1999 and 2000, they invited representatives of the Taliban movement and the Northern Alliance to Tokyo and tried to reconcile them as an intermediary state[10]. In August 1997 and January 1999, representatives of Japan and the Minister of Health of the Taliban held a meeting with Mohammad Abbas Akhund. In January 1999, they met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Northern Alliance Abdullah Abdullah in the capital of Japan. In March 2000, in Tokyo, the Japanese discussed the issues of organizing a dialogue between the warring parties, led by Abdul Rahman Zahid, the deputy foreign minister of the Taliban, and Syed Hussain Anwari, an influential field commander of the Northern Alliance. However, the efforts of Japanese negotiators did not lead to direct talks between the Taliban and the Mujahideen[14].

Japan's relations with Afghanistan and foreign policy approaches have changed significantly since the events of September 11, 2001. Japan tried to position itself as the "Britain of Asia" in line with US global strategy, and its contribution went beyond the financial aid it provided to the US during the Gulf War in the early 1990s. Prime Minister Koizumi decided to send the ships of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force to the Arabian Sea to provide material and technical support for the US military operations against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban[11]. Prime Minister D. Koizumi's declaration of absolute support for the United States and its allies in the fight against international terrorism was reinforced by a law that allows the Japanese government to send naval defense forces to provide behind-the-front support to the counter-terrorist coalition in the Indian Ocean[14].

The activation of Japan's actions in the political, economic, defense and security spheres in Afghanistan also showed its unity with the United States and its allies in the fight against terrorism.

For several years, especially between 2001 and 2006, the newly formed government made significant progress, including holding national elections for the President, the National Assembly and provincial councils, establishing the Afghan National Army, reforming the Afghan National Police, more than two million refugees, tens of thousands of ex-combatants were disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated[2].

As can be seen from the above, Japan's policy in Afghanistan was aimed at the construction of a civil state instead of a military one.

A conference co-chaired by Japan, Afghanistan and the United Nations on July 5, 2006 reviewed the implementation of the DDR program and the DIAG program by exchanging views on a common strategy for security sector reform to strengthen peace in Afghanistan. In his statement at the opening of the conference, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Taro Aso, praised the significant achievements of Afghanistan in all aspects, including the political process, economic reconstruction and security sector reform, and state building in the last four and a half years. The conference emphasized the need for all branches of the Afghan government, including the Office of the President, the Upper House, the Lower House, and all security sector institutions, as well as the international community, to work together and work harder towards peace, stability and peace-building, and to continue the DIAG process. It was agreed that effective implementation is essential to establish the rule of law and good governance. The conference congratulated all stakeholders on the completion of the DDR in June 2006. The DDR program disarmed 63,380 ex-combatants, demobilized 62,044 and provided reintegration programs for 55,804, contributing to the creation of a new, unified and professional national army for Afghanistan[1].

In a January 2007 speech to NATO, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that Japan would increase its presence in Afghanistan, mapping out Japan's contributions and commitments:

Firstly, to support Afghanistan's national development strategy in areas such as road and airport construction and agricultural development;

Secondly, to strengthen support in the field of security, disband illegal armed groups, increase the capacity of the Afghan police force;

Thirdly, to activate cooperation with the humanitarian activities of NATO regional reconstruction groups;

Fourthly, in cooperation with Germany, the United States and the European Union, fight against drugs and terrorism by strengthening the border control capabilities of the Afghan government[5].

In general, Japan confirmed that there will be no security in Afghanistan without development.

On July 20, 2010, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada announced at the Kabul Conference a comprehensive plan to contribute to the country's stabilization and nation-building, focusing on three priorities: security, reintegration, and development.

First of all, priority was given to ensuring security and launching government mechanisms. Improving security in Afghanistan is seen as an important condition for its reconstruction. For this purpose, the importance of strengthening the Afghan security forces, particularly the police, was emphasized.

The second is the issue of reintegration, which requires political initiatives to improve the security situation. In particular, under the leadership of the Afghan government and with the support of the international community, efforts are being made to reintegrate moderate groups among the militants into the country's political life, which is very important for ensuring the country's stability.

Thirdly, it is necessary to bring more stability to the daily lives of Afghans and create a strong economic foundation, which will allow for infrastructure improvements in the agricultural sector that ordinary Afghan citizens can see with their own eyes.

The last is a matter of regional cooperation, and the new strategy includes the main principle that it is most effective to help the Afghans increase their ability to solve problems independently and for the international community to remain behind the scenes. That is, the stability and recovery of Afghanistan cannot be achieved without cooperation in economic development, security measures, and political processes of the neighboring countries that have close relations with

Afghanistan. Stability in Afghanistan is a common interest that ensures stability and development for countries in the region and beyond.

Also, development initiatives in various sectors such as infrastructure development, agriculture and engineering have been promoted. In addition, it was reported that Japan will continue cooperation in the fields of education and health, effective governance, finance and anti-corruption[18]. As confirmation of this, it is possible to show the support that Japan has been providing to improve social assistance and urban planning, transport, and agriculture. In particular, the Japanese government allocated funds through ODA for the construction and reconstruction of more than 830 schools in Afghanistan, while JICA organized trainings for 10,000 teachers to improve their teaching quality and provided them with educational materials. Active cooperation with UNICEF was carried out and 500 grants were allocated to Afghan students for higher education in Japan. As a result of the above efforts, the number of children enrolled in primary education in Afghanistan increased from 1 million in 2001 to 9.2 million in 2013[7].

In July 2012, at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, co-chaired by the governments of Japan and Afghanistan, the Afghan government and the international community confirmed that the Afghan government had developed a development strategy for the "Decade of Transformation" (2015-2024). At this conference, Japan announced that it will provide 3 billion US dollars in social and economic assistance in about 5 years from 2012. Based on the development strategy of Afghanistan, he said that he will focus on increasing the opportunities of economic development and security, as well as three priority areas of socio-economic development - agriculture, infrastructure development and human resources development. In the opening speech of the conference, Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba announced the creation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (「東京フレームワーク」), which includes long-term cooperation in the form of mutual obligations in the field of security and development, in cooperation with the international community, taking into account the "Decade of Transformation"[16].

In 2013, Japan provided humanitarian aid to Afghanistan to build schools in three provinces. A new contract was signed to build 75 schools in Bamiyan, Daykundi and Ghor regions. The total cost of these projects is 25 million dollars, as a result of which more than 450 thousand children received education in schools[13].

Japan attaches great importance to improving security, which is a basis for the participation of the international community. At the 2014 Afghanistan Conference in London, Japan's Ambassador to Kabul, Hiroshi Takahashi, supported Afghanistan's security capacity through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), focusing on supporting the salaries of the national police. Most importantly, Japan's support for Afghanistan's efforts aimed at independent development and reform is the implementation of the policy of "Active Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation currently promoted by the Japanese government[9].

From 2014 to 2021, Japan will, through its own efforts and with the help of the international community, continue to support Afghanistan's efforts towards peace, self-reliance and stability, and successfully complete the Decade of Transformation. cooperation relations became more active for implementation. By February 2015, more than \$5 billion in aid had been provided[7]. Along with the construction of a new terminal at the Kabul airport, Kabul-Jalalabad, Kabul-Kandahar highways, Mazari-Sharif and Bamiyan city roads, large-scale expansion and regulation projects of the country's capital have been developed. Taking into account that 80% of the country's population lives in rural areas, JICA has launched the training of specialists in the cultivation of rice and other agricultural products[12].

After the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021, JICA management supported the departure of the Afghan people working in the agency. JICA is exploring other opportunities to help meet large-scale humanitarian needs through mutual cooperation[6].

On September 1, 2021, Japan temporarily moved the Japanese embassy in Afghanistan to Doha, the capital of Qatar, where the political office of the Taliban is located. Japan has used opportunities such as the dispatch of Uemura Tsukasa, a representative of the government, to strongly urge the Taliban to ensure the safe exit of those who want to leave the country, to respect the rights of women and ethnic minorities, and to build an inclusive political system. As a result of diplomatic efforts and negotiations with the Taliban during Japan's visit to Doha in September and Japan's ambassador to Afghanistan, Okada Takashi, to Kabul in November 2021 and January 2022, local staff of the Japanese embassy and members of other Japanese-affiliated organizations, including more than 500 (as of the end of January 2022) arrived in Japan with the help of the Japanese government after the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated. In October 2021, Japan allocated an emergency grant in the amount of 65 million US dollars (about 7.1 billion Japanese yen) through international organizations to support humanitarian needs in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, such as shelter, food, health, water and sanitation, agriculture and education. And in December, Japan decided to allocate 109 million US dollars (about 11.8 billion Japanese yen) in addition to the 2021 budget[3]. It can be seen that Japan continues to provide assistance to the people of Afghanistan and to ensure the stability of the situation around Afghanistan.

Conclusion. In summary, the Japanese government viewed its active involvement in the reconstruction and reconstruction of Afghanistan in terms of three separate but interrelated objectives.

Firstly, Japan's high-level involvement was expected to help manage and strengthen the US-Japan alliance. Given that Afghanistan has become a US national security and foreign policy priority since 9/11, the Japanese government has clearly recognized the need to intervene in Afghanistan to serve as a responsible ally.

Secondly, Tokyo's involvement in international aid to Afghanistan also stems from Japan's long-standing desire to demonstrate its ability to contribute to a major international peace and security operation. The embarrassment of the Japanese government's \$13 billion financial contribution during the First Persian Gulf War, which was criticized as too little and derided as "Checkbook Diplomacy," was not lost on Japanese policymakers when the US-led military operation in Afghanistan began in late 2001. This memory prompted Japanese politicians to intervene in Afghanistan operations in a timely manner and take appropriate financial measures.

The third was to establish good relations with the newly formed Afghan government. The main difference between Japan's position as a politically and strategically neutral actor in Afghanistan compared to other major donor countries, particularly the United States, Great Britain, and Russia, is that reestablishing friendly relations has been viewed as a key priority by Japanese policymakers.

Based on the above three foreign policy goals, it can be said that the Japanese government has achieved certain goals. In particular, Japan's aid to Afghanistan served as the main and sometimes the only positive topic in the Washington-Tokyo political dialogue for several years. Tokyo has made significant contributions to global security, and its support has been well received by the Afghan government and the general population.

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