



RCAPS

Ritsumeikan Center for Asia Pacific Studies



Onigiri Seminar

Japan's Quest for Region-Building in Central Asia: The Curious Case of the "New Great Game" Engagement



Kuniko Ashizawa

Adjunct Professor of American University

For last two decades, Japan has incrementally increased the weight of Central Asia in foreign policy, designating the region as a “new horizon” for its strategic, political and economic interests. Yet, the country’s new engagement in Central Asia has thus far received only limited attention by international media, policymakers, and regional experts around the world. This is largely because Tokyo’s actions have been often overshadowed by Russia, China and the United States—the main players in what many now call “the New Great Game in Central Asia.” In her presentation, Ashizawa sheds light on this hitherto understudied aspect of Japanese foreign policy, by examining Tokyo’s decision in 2004 to pursue a multilateralist approach vis-à-vis Central Asian countries, officially termed “the Central Asia plus Japan” (CA+J) initiative. She argues that while Japan’s growing activism in Central Asia has been driven by three motivational forces of “securing economic access,” “countering the rise of China,” and “contributing to the U.S. global security agenda,” it was Central Asia’s geopolitical factor that necessitated Japan to adopt and prioritize the CA+J formula in its overall approach to the region. Furthermore, Ashizawa suggests that Tokyo has rather accidentally positioned itself to play a potentially significant role for enhancing Central Asia’s regional cohesion and indigenous capabilities over the long run.

Date: Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Time: 10:35 – 12:10 a.m.

Venue: RCAPS Room A (2F, Bldg. B)

Chair: Prof. SATO, Yoichiro APU-APS

Discussant: Prof. YOSHIMATSU, Hidetaka APU-APS

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