



influence its SC policy, delineating Tokyo's decision-making limits. Design of Japan's foreign policy in the SC has dramatically diminished political element both on bilateral and multilateral levels. It is mainly based on the depoliticized Official Development Assistance. We labeled Tokyo's approach to the SC as a policy of *low profile and high purpose*, through which Japan seeks to advance its *high* political, economic and humanitarian objectives, while retaining a *low profile*. The approach of *low profile* can be broken down into three dimensions: (1) *low posture* - eschewing a pro-active policy stance over problematic international matters and challenges, (2) *low interference* - eschewing a pro-active policy over internal issues, such as democracy, rule of law, civil liberties and even environmental protection, (3) *low risk* - minimizing risks that may compromise its bilateral, regional and wider multilateral interests.

The thesis draws on a comparative case study of Japan's policy to the three SC republics and examines its merits and disadvantages in the context of a highly volatile international environment. The analysis led to the following conclusions. By developing and implementing the above-mentioned policy of *low profile*, Japan has managed to minimize risks that could jeopardize its diplomatic, economic and humanitarian objectives both on multilateral and bilateral levels. However, the policy limits Japan's potential for taking a leadership role in the region. At the same time, it utterly undermines the purposes of the announced forth pillar of Japanese diplomacy, i.e. value based diplomacy as described in *the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity*.

Basing on the findings of the conducted research on Japan's foreign policy towards the SC, the thesis argues that Japan possesses extensive trust credit and unexploited political capital in the entire region, sandwiched between powerful vying actors, which crates a potential for Tokyo to make a major move towards globalization of its foreign policy and fill the regional vacuum, generated by the absence of power acknowledged by each local player.

Keywords: Japan, South Caucasus, Foreign Policy, Aid Policy, Multilayered Interests, Low Profile Policy