

From Dialogue to Delivery: The Implementation Gap in the “Central Asia Plus Japan” Framework and Uzbekistan’s Role After The 2025 Summit

Durdona Toshboyeva

Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

Received: 22 August 2026 | Received Revised Version: 06 September 2026 | Accepted: 24 September 2026 | Published: 13 October 2026

Volume 08 Issue 10 2026 | Crossref DOI: 10.37547/tajpslc/Volume08Issue10-02

Abstract

The first leaders-level summit of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue (CA+JAD), held in Tokyo in December 2025, created a new political opportunity for a framework established in 2004. Yet elevation to summit level does not by itself demonstrate that regional cooperation has become more effective. This article examines the institutional conditions under which summit commitments can be converted into coordinated and measurable outcomes, with particular attention to Uzbekistan’s potential role in connecting regional priorities with bilateral implementation. It asks: what mechanisms are needed to prevent the CA+JAD Tokyo Initiative from remaining a declaration-led process, and how can Uzbekistan help connect regional cooperation with nationally deliverable projects? The study uses qualitative document analysis of Japanese and Uzbek official records, summit outcomes, policy documents and academic literature. It proposes an implementation-chain framework distinguishing political commitment, operational coordination, project delivery and outcome measurement. The analysis finds that the 2025 summit broadened cooperation around green resilience, connectivity and human-capital development, while subsequent technical activity including a 2026 AI practitioners’ programme provides early evidence of follow-up. However, the public record does not yet justify a conclusion that the summit has produced region-wide outcomes. The article’s contribution is an evaluative framework for determining whether CA+JAD is moving from consultation to implementation.

Keywords: Central Asia plus Japan Dialogue; Uzbekistan-Japan relations; regional cooperation; institutional effectiveness; implementation gap; summit diplomacy; policy coordination.

© 2026 Durdona Toshboyeva. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). The authors retain copyright and allow others to share, adapt, or redistribute the work with proper attribution.

Cite This Article: Durdona Toshboyeva. (2026). From Dialogue to Delivery: The Implementation Gap in the “Central Asia Plus Japan” Framework and Uzbekistan’s Role After The 2025 Summit. *The American Journal of Political Science Law and Criminology*, 8(10), 7–13. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajpslc/Volume08Issue10-02>

1. Introduction

International dialogue formats are often judged by the visibility of meetings, the breadth of declarations or the number of initiatives announced. These indicators matter, but they are not equivalent to institutional effectiveness. A dialogue can become politically prominent while remaining weak at coordinating budgets, assigning responsibility, tracking

implementation and producing shared outcomes. This distinction is particularly relevant to the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue (CA+JAD), launched by Japan in 2004 to promote regional cooperation and structured engagement between Japan and the five Central Asian states [1].

The first CA+JAD summit at leaders’ level took place in Tokyo on 20 December 2025. The meeting announced

the CA+JAD Tokyo Initiative and identified three broad priority areas: “Green and Resilience,” “Connectivity,” and “Human Resource Development.” The agenda included energy transition, disaster-risk reduction, critical mineral supply chains, climate policy, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, artificial intelligence cooperation, scholarships, and health and medical cooperation. Japan also announced a target of three trillion yen in business projects over five years; more than 150 public and private sector documents were signed or presented on the summit occasion [1].

These developments demonstrate political elevation and agenda expansion, but they do not establish how many commitments will be funded, how responsibilities will be distributed, whether national projects will be coordinated across borders, or what measurable benefits will accrue to the region. The analytical problem is therefore not whether the summit was diplomatically significant, but whether its institutional design can turn political momentum into implementation.

This article addresses two questions: (1) what conditions are necessary for the CA+JAD Tokyo Initiative to move from summit commitments to sustained implementation; and (2) what role can Uzbekistan play in linking regional-level priorities with national delivery? The core argument is that the framework’s next phase should be assessed through an implementation chain rather than diplomatic visibility alone. Uzbekistan’s contribution will be strongest if it acts not only as a participant in bilateral cooperation, but also as a coordinator connecting regional public goods, nationally defined priorities and operational partnerships.

2. Literature Review and Research Gap

Research on Japan’s engagement with Central Asia has examined the evolution of its regional diplomacy, the role of official development assistance, the construction of Japan’s international identity and the political logic of multilateral dialogue. Scholarship on Japanese foreign-policy discourse shows that initiatives toward Central Asia articulate a conception of Japan as a constructive, development-oriented partner, while also reflecting national interests and changing regional conditions [2].

Studies of CA+JAD identify its value as a continuing platform for official and informal discussion. Dobrinskaya argues that the dialogue has helped define practical cooperation areas and sustain political engagement, but has not produced full-scale economic

integration among Central Asian states [3]. Research on the dialogue’s development from idea to implementation also highlights conference diplomacy, shared norms and the gradual evolution of the format [4]. These findings establish an important baseline: CA+JAD should not be treated as a regional integration organisation, and its value cannot be measured by integration outcomes alone.

Institutionalist scholarship suggests that recurring forums can lower information costs, facilitate repeated interaction and stabilise expectations, but their effects depend on whether they structure practical cooperation and domestic follow-through [5]. Constructivist approaches draw attention to shared language, norms and identity in sustaining cooperation, while recognising that discursive convergence does not guarantee implementation [6]. Work on international instruments further distinguishes assistance, compliance, advocacy and monitoring mechanisms as complementary means of improving implementation [7].

The research gap lies at the intersection of these strands. Existing scholarship explains why Japan established the dialogue, how it functions as a diplomatic platform and what strategic purposes it serves. Less attention has been given to the evaluative question emerging after the 2025 summit: what observable institutional features would demonstrate that the new phase is producing implementation rather than merely expanding the agenda? This article addresses the question by applying an implementation-chain framework to the summit and its early follow-up. It does not claim that implementation has never been studied; its contribution is a structured assessment of the post-2025 phase and Uzbekistan’s potential role in connecting regional commitments with national delivery.

3. Analytical Framework and Methodology

The implementation chain

Institutional effectiveness is defined here as the extent to which a dialogue framework converts political commitments into assigned tasks, funded activities, deliverables and outcomes assessed against explicit criteria. Four stages make the concept observable:

- (1) Political commitment: leaders agree on priorities and publicly signal support. Evidence includes declarations, summit statements and formal decisions.
- (2) Operational coordination: institutions identify responsible agencies, timelines, coordination channels

and project-selection procedures. Evidence includes work programmes, technical meetings, designated focal points and implementation schedules.

(3) Project delivery: commitments become financed activities, signed project agreements, completed training, deployed technology or functioning infrastructure. Announcements and memoranda must be distinguished from actual delivery.

(4) Outcome measurement: implementation is assessed against baseline data and transparent indicators, including who benefits, whether cross-border effects occur and whether activity remains sustainable.

The stages are cumulative but not interchangeable. A high number of declarations may indicate political commitment without operational coordination. Signed agreements may indicate progress toward delivery but not completed outputs. Training sessions can be verified as outputs, but they do not prove improved institutional capacity unless learning and application are assessed. This distinction guards against treating inputs, announcements, outputs and outcomes as equivalent.

Uzbekistan as a linking actor

Uzbekistan's potential role is conceptualised through three functions. First, national implementation: aligning regional priorities with domestic institutions, budgets and sectoral strategies. Second, cross-border coordination: supporting cooperation where national action alone cannot solve shared problems, such as disaster risk, transport connectivity or technical standards. Third, brokerage: connecting public institutions, Japanese agencies, businesses, universities and regional counterparts. These are analytical functions, not claims that Uzbekistan has already performed them to the same extent.

Research design

The study uses qualitative document analysis of Japanese and Uzbek government records on the 2025 summit, the Tokyo Initiative, bilateral summit outcomes and early follow-up, together with peer-reviewed research on Japan's Central Asia policy and international implementation mechanisms [1-8]. The analysis compares stated priorities with publicly available evidence through October 2026. Official documents are reliable evidence of what governments announced or recorded, but they are not independent evaluations of impact. The article therefore separates documented

events from interpretation and recommendations.

From Ministerial Dialogue to Leaders-Level Framework

Institutional evolution since 2004

Japan launched CA+JAD in 2004 to promote regional cooperation and create a structured channel for dialogue with the five Central Asian states [1]. Its significance was partly procedural: it established a recurring forum without creating a supranational organisation. Ministerial meetings, expert discussions and public diplomacy allowed cooperation to develop while preserving the autonomy of participating states.

This flexible design has advantages. It accommodates differences among Central Asian states in economic structure, political priorities and external partnerships, and it encourages technical cooperation where common interests are easier to identify than in security politics. Yet flexibility also has costs: priorities can remain broad, projects may be negotiated bilaterally rather than regionally, and progress may be difficult to compare. The literature's finding that CA+JAD has facilitated practical discussion without generating full-scale regional economic integration is consistent with this institutional trade-off [3].

CA+JAD should therefore not be evaluated against the standards of a supranational organisation. A more appropriate test is whether it creates added value beyond parallel bilateral relations: shared information, compatible technical approaches, regional public goods, repeatable cooperation mechanisms or projects that are harder to deliver through isolated national channels.

The 2025 summit: expanded political ambition

The December 2025 summit elevated the dialogue to leaders' level and grouped cooperation into green resilience, connectivity and human-resource development. The announced areas included energy transition, critical minerals, climate measures, disaster-risk reduction, the Trans-Caspian route, AI, scholarships and health [1]. This breadth reflects a wider conception of regional resilience in which infrastructure and resource access are linked to technological capability, human capital and the management of cross-border risks.

The three-trillion-yen business-project target over five years is politically salient, but a target is a forward-looking commitment, not a verified investment total. Likewise, the summit record's reference to more than

150 documents signed or presented does not by itself reveal their financial scale, legal status, implementation schedule or additionality [1]. Rigorous assessment should classify documents by type financing commitments, memoranda, technical cooperation plans and announcements and track implementation separately.

The summit also created a tension between breadth and focus. A wide agenda can build consensus and allow each state to select relevant opportunities. But if all priorities are treated as equally urgent, agencies may face fragmented workloads. The central institutional challenge is to turn a broad political mandate into a limited set of implementable, measurable and mutually reinforcing actions.

Early follow-up: activity is not impact

The public record contains evidence of follow-up. In February 2026, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened a CA+JAD practitioners' programme on AI for officials from all five Central Asian states. Participants received briefings on Japanese AI policy, data governance, safety, research institutions and human-resource issues, and exchanged information on national AI policies and needs [8]. This is evidence of operational activity: a summit-level partnership was followed by a technical programme connecting officials and institutions.

However, this activity is an early implementation output, not proof of a regional AI ecosystem or measurable economic impact. Stronger evaluation would ask whether it led to joint research, shared standards, follow-up training, institutional partnerships, pilot projects or improved policy capacity. It would also examine whether participation continued beyond a one-off programme and whether benefits were distributed across the five countries.

Uzbekistan's Role: From Bilateral Engagement to Regional Delivery

Why Uzbekistan matters

Uzbekistan is a useful case because it participates in the five-country dialogue while maintaining a substantive bilateral relationship with Japan. Official Uzbek information records that diplomatic relations were established on 26 January 1992 and that the CA+JAD format has been active since 2004 [9]. This dual positioning creates an opportunity to connect bilateral cooperation with regional priorities. It does not

automatically make Uzbekistan a regional leader in every policy field; rather, it provides a potential institutional bridge whose contribution should be assessed through specific actions.

The December 2025 Japan–Uzbekistan summit resulted in a joint statement on an expanded strategic partnership for future generations [10]. Because the bilateral summit took place alongside the first CA+JAD leaders-level summit, the political context offered an opportunity for national and regional agendas to reinforce each other. The key question is whether bilateral projects can be designed to contribute to regional public goods, rather than treating bilateral and multilateral cooperation as separate policy tracks.

Three possible pathways

First, Uzbekistan can connect national projects to regional priorities. A national AI or digital-government project, for example, could contribute to regional cooperation if it includes interoperable standards, joint training or shared research. Without such features, it remains a useful bilateral project but should not be labelled a regional outcome.

Second, Uzbekistan can help identify cross-border problems for which coordinated action produces more value than separate national projects. Disaster-risk reduction is one such field because hazards, early-warning information and response capacity can cross borders. Transport connectivity is another: infrastructure generates greater regional value when customs procedures, logistics data and operational standards are compatible. These are policy opportunities inferred from the CA+JAD agenda, not claims that integration has already been achieved. Third, Uzbekistan can broker connections between Japanese institutions and regional partners by co-hosting technical working groups, linking universities and research institutes, convening businesses around specific value chains, or sharing lessons from pilot projects. Brokerage is meaningful only when it reduces transaction costs or generates cooperation that would otherwise be unlikely; the number of meetings hosted is not a sufficient measure.

Risks

The first risk is bilateralisation: regional initiatives may be implemented as five unrelated national portfolios, with limited shared learning or cross-border benefit. The second is announcement inflation, where the number of signed documents or announced targets becomes a proxy

for success despite uncertain financing, schedules or delivery. The third is uneven capacity: countries may differ in their ability to prepare projects, maintain data systems and meet reporting requirements. The fourth is agenda overload across sectors with different technical institutions and funding models. Finally, there is an attribution risk: national changes should not be credited to CA+JAD without identifying the dialogue's specific contribution. Projects may also be driven by bilateral agreements, private investment or pre-existing national plans.

A common reporting cycle could classify each initiative as announced, designed, financed, under implementation, completed or evaluated. These categories should be supported by documentary evidence. An initiative should not be counted as financed solely because a memorandum was signed, and a completed activity should not be labelled an outcome unless an outcome measure exists.

Evaluation should be proportional to the intervention. Training programmes can use pre- and post-training assessments, follow-up surveys and evidence of workplace application. Infrastructure projects require milestones, service-use data and maintenance plans. AI initiatives should track technical cooperation, staff capacity, pilot deployment and relevant governance safeguards. Regional projects need at least one indicator of cross-border participation or shared benefit.

Reporting should distinguish (a) activities supported directly through CA+JAD, (b) bilateral activities aligned with CA+JAD priorities, and (c) wider developments the dialogue may have influenced but cannot be shown to have caused. This would help assess added value without confusing correlation with causation.

Recommendations for Uzbekistan

1. Establish a national CA+JAD coordination mechanism connecting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, relevant line ministries, research institutions, universities and private-sector partners. Its purpose should be to track commitments and remove bottlenecks, not to create another layer of ceremonial meetings.

2. Select a limited portfolio of flagship initiatives where Uzbekistan can demonstrate regional added value. Potential fields include AI capacity-building, disaster-risk reduction, green technology and transport-logistics facilitation. Selection should depend on feasibility, partner demand, funding readiness and the potential for

cooperation with another Central Asian state.

3. Require each proposed initiative to include a results chain: baseline, target, lead institution, partners, financing status, timeline, output indicators and outcome indicators. Prepare this before public announcements whenever possible.

4. Use bilateral cooperation with Japan as a delivery channel for regional objectives where appropriate. Describe a project as regional only when its design includes a cross-border component, shared standard, joint institution, regional knowledge product or measurable benefit beyond Uzbekistan.

5. Promote reciprocal knowledge exchange. Uzbekistan should not only receive technical support; it can contribute policy experience, host regional training, share data where lawful and appropriate, and facilitate links between Japanese and Central Asian institutions.

6. Publish an annual progress report separating commitments, financial inputs, outputs and outcomes. Where data are unavailable, state this transparently rather than substituting counts of meetings or documents.

Recommendations for CA+JAD

Japan and the five Central Asian governments could agree on a common results framework with a small number of indicators and a shared definition of project status. A technical coordination group could review implementation regularly, while ministerial meetings retain political direction. The purpose would not be to transform CA+JAD into a supranational body, but to strengthen the practical value of its flexible design.

The framework should distinguish regional public goods from bilateral projects. Regional public goods such as disaster-risk information exchange, compatible transport procedures or shared technical training require coordination across countries. Bilateral projects can complement these efforts but cannot substitute for them. The three-trillion-yen target should also be accompanied by a transparent definition of what counts toward it, whether announced and realised financing are separated, and how double counting is avoided. These are recommendations for accountability, not assertions that internal rules do not exist.

4. Discussion

The evidence supports a nuanced interpretation of CA+JAD's post-2025 phase. The leaders-level summit

elevated the dialogue's political profile and broadened its agenda. The subsequent AI practitioners' programme shows that at least one announced priority was followed by technical activity involving all five Central Asian states [1, 8]. The Japan–Uzbekistan summit demonstrates that regional and bilateral diplomacy are occurring in parallel [10]. These facts are consistent with an emerging implementation phase.

They do not yet demonstrate that CA+JAD has become more effective in producing regional outcomes. The record is too recent to establish durable results, and official announcements alone cannot show whether implementation is adequately financed, whether benefits are equitably distributed or whether regional cooperation adds value beyond bilateral channels. Three possibilities remain open: the summit may catalyse deeper coordination; it may generate useful but mainly bilateral projects; or it may expand the agenda faster than institutions can implement it. This uncertainty is precisely why an implementation framework is necessary. A rigorous assessment should not declare a diplomatic format successful simply because its political profile has increased. It should specify what evidence would count as success, identify what evidence is available and state which conclusions remain premature. Institutionalism helps explain why recurring forums and monitoring mechanisms can support cooperation; constructivist insights explain how shared priorities can create legitimacy. Yet repeated meetings and agreed language are not substitutes for assigned responsibilities, funded projects and measured outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The first leaders-level CA+JAD summit in December 2025 created an important opportunity to strengthen Japan–Central Asia cooperation, but its significance should be judged by what follows the political announcement. The Tokyo Initiative widened the agenda around green resilience, connectivity and human-resource development; early technical follow-up in AI provides evidence that the new phase has begun to generate operational activity. The available evidence does not yet justify a claim that the summit has produced region-wide outcomes. The article's central argument is that the next stage of CA+JAD should be evaluated through an implementation chain linking political commitment, operational coordination, project delivery and outcome measurement. This clarifies the difference between declarations, signed documents, activities and durable results, while avoiding the unrealistic

expectation that a flexible dialogue must operate like a supranational organisation.

For Uzbekistan, the opportunity is to connect its bilateral partnership with Japan to regional objectives through carefully selected projects, cross-border coordination, institutional brokerage and transparent reporting. Its role should be assessed not by diplomatic visibility alone, but by whether it helps create initiatives that are implementable, measurable and regionally useful. Future research should revisit the framework when project-level implementation data, financing records and independent evaluations become available.

References

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The Summit of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue (CA+JAD). 20 December 2025. https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ca_c/pageite_000001_01438.html
2. Japan's Central Asia Policy Revisited: National Identity, Interests, and Foreign Policy Discourses. Nationalities Papers. 2019. Vol. 47, No. 5. P. 853-867. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.19>
3. Dobrinskaya, O. Central Asia Plus Japan Dialogue: Its Role in Japan's Strategy in Central Asia. WILAYAH: The International Journal of East Asian Studies. 2024. Vol. 13, No. 1. P. 122-136. <https://doi.org/10.22452/IJEAS.vol13no1.7>
4. “Central Asia Plus Japan” Dialogue: From Idea to Implementation. International Japanese Studies. 2019. Vol. 11. P. 1-21. <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1390009224651722496>
5. Keohane, R. O. After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
6. Adler, E. Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics. European Journal of International Relations. 1997. Vol. 3, No. 3. P. 319-363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066197003003003>
7. OECD. Strengthening the Implementation of International Instruments: Compendium of International Organisations' Practices. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/compendium-of-international-organisations-practices_846a5fa0-en.html
8. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Overview of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue Practitioners' Meeting (AI) for FY 2025. 2026.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ca_c/pageite_000001_01516.html

9. Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the Countries of Asia and the Pacific. <https://gov.uz/en/mfa/pages/o-zbekiston-respublikasining-osiyo-tinch-okeani-mintaqasi-davlatlari-bilan-hamkorligi>
10. Prime Minister's Office of Japan. Japan–Uzbekistan Summit Meeting (Summary). 20 December 2025. <https://japan.kantei.go.jp/104/diplomatic/202512/20uzbekistan.html>
11. Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan. Second Ministerial Economic and Energy Dialogue of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue Held. 16 September 2025. https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2025/0916_004.html
12. Ismail, Z. Implementation Frameworks for International Summits or Conferences. K4D Helpdesk Report. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2018. <https://gsdrc.org/publications/implementation-frameworks-for-international-summits-or-conferences/>
13. Hettne, B., Söderbaum, F. Theorising the Rise of Regionness. *New Political Economy*. 2000. Vol. 5, No. 3. P. 457-472. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713687778>
14. Acharya, A. Regionalism Beyond EU-Centrism. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. P. 109-130.