

Cultural Diplomacy and Regional Integration: A New Stage of Uzbek-Pakistani Cooperation

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Abstract: This article analyzes the impact of cultural diplomacy in the process of regional integration in the cooperation relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. The author has covered cultural exchange, joint projects, holding cultural days between the two countries, cooperation in the field of science based on sources. Also, modern methods and prospects for deepening cultural ties, further strengthening regional integration are considered. The article also effectively uses international and national scientific sources, the National Archive Funds of the Republic of Uzbekistan, periodical press materials, and official websites of ministries.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Cultural diplomacy, cooperation, integration, cultural exchange, joint project, science.

Introduction: Uzbekistan is pursuing a pragmatic and active foreign policy in the process of international interstate cooperation in the context of geopolitical changes in the era of globalization. Cultural diplomacy, which is an important direction of diplomacy in these relations, is an important factor in strengthening friendship, mutual understanding and solidarity between peoples. In fact, cultural diplomacy is an integral part of state diplomacy and is a practical complex of actions with strategic and tactical goals in the field of cultural cooperation between different peoples.

Today, Uzbekistan has established active cultural relations with other countries, holding international exhibitions, international music festivals, scientific and literary conferences. One of these countries, one of the countries of the South Asian region with a common history and culture, is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Republic of Uzbekistan established diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1992, and in the same year, on June 27, 1992, the official visit of the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, and the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on

Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Healthcare, Science and Technology, Personnel Training, Tourism, Sports and Mass Media, are the legal basis for bilateral cultural cooperation.[1]. Historical ties and common roots serve as a solid foundation for the development of modern relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. Cooperation in the cultural sphere not only brings economic benefits, but also serves to strengthen social and political stability.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS

The article conducted a comparative analysis and research of the information presented in several literatures on the topic. In particular, the agreements, memorandums and contracts signed with the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, D. Sayfullayev's monograph "The History of the Formation and Development of Cultural Diplomacy of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1991-2019)"[2] is one of the main literature, providing information on Uzbekistan's achievements in the field of cultural diplomacy, L. Bobokhodjaeva's monograph "International Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Period of Independence)" provided valuable information on Uzbekistan's cultural relations with Asian countries and its role in the life of the

country[3], and A.K. Kirgizbayev's doctoral dissertation "International Cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with Asian Countries" well covered Uzbekistan's cooperation with a number of Asian countries, in particular Pakistan, in the economic, political and cultural spheres.[4] Also, R.B. Asadova, B. Atakhanov, and F. Ismatullayev's dissertations were effectively used and conclusions were drawn.

METHODOLOGY

The article draws conclusions based on the historical-analytical method, content-analysis, and systematic approach in analyzing the mutually beneficial cultural cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historically, cultural diplomacy has been a major force in bringing people together and strengthening friendships. In today's modern world, this area, which is described as a tool of "soft power", plays an important role in building solidarity between peoples. This factor is especially important in the current era of wars. [5]

Uzbekistan and Pakistan have a long history of shared religious and historical ties and cultural cooperation. The Silk Road was a route through which the two nations exchanged not only trade but also ideas, knowledge, and cultural values. Central Asian cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Balkh, and Herat, as well as South Asian centers such as Delhi, Lahore, and Agra, became major centers of science and culture.[6] Cultural ties between the two regions reached their peak during the Babur dynasty. The Babur rulers brought with them the literary, artistic, and monumental traditions of Central Asia, leading to a fusion of cultures. This unique union is reflected in the historical monuments that exist in the two regions today.

The restoration of cultural ties between Uzbekistan and Pakistan will not only serve to restore historical justice, but also to strengthen regional stability. Strengthening cultural cooperation between regions was considered the basis of regional cooperation. In particular, the establishment of friendship societies between the two countries had a great impact on the development of cultural ties. In 1993, one of the important events between Uzbekistan and Pakistan was the opening of the "Pakistan-Uzbekistan Economic and Cultural Center" in Lahore, Pakistan. An agreement was signed between the National Association of International Cultural and Educational Relations of Uzbekistan, the "Uzbekistan-Pakistan" Friendship Society, and the "Pakistan-Uzbekistan Economic and Cultural Center". According to this agreement, it was envisaged to organize Uzbek language courses in Lahore, exchange

business delegations, women's and student delegations, and publish the works of Uzbek writers in Urdu, and publish the works of Pakistani writers in Uzbekistan.[7] In this regard, Uzbek language courses were opened in Lahore. An Urdu-Uzbek dictionary was published, and several exchanges of women and business delegations were held.

It can be said that the importance of art weeks and international music festivals, which are an integral part of cultural diplomacy, is extremely high. Pakistani artists have regularly participated in the international Sharq Taronalari music festival, which has been celebrated every two years in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, since 1997, and have contributed to the festival's promotion worldwide. In 1999, during the II Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival, Pakistani singers demonstrated their skills and talent, with Ustad Ali Hamidkhan and Ustad Fareh Alikhan winning the Honorable 3rd place.[8] Similarly, at the 2013 Sharq Taronalari Music Festival, renowned singer Sanam Marvi received a UNESCO special award (2,000 US dollars) and participated in an international conference held within the framework of the festival.[9] The fact that Pakistani artists not only participated but also won high places indicates that cultural ties between the two countries have been well established. In recent years, cooperation between the two countries has been elevated to the level of strategic partnership. During the official visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on February 5-6, 2026, a number of agreements were signed aimed at further strengthening cultural cooperation. In order to strengthen the friendship between the peoples of the two countries, it was agreed to hold the Uzbek Culture Week and the Days of Uzbek Cinema in Pakistan this year. A cooperation program for 2026-2028 was signed between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which included an agreement on cooperation in the field of cultural cooperation, an agreement on the preservation, study and wide promotion of the scientific, educational, cultural and architectural heritage of the Great Babur dynasty, and an agreement on cooperation in the field of sports.[10]

The promising development of cultural cooperation between the two countries has made an invaluable contribution to regional stability and cultural exchange.

CONCLUSION

Based on this information, we can conclude that the revival of the cultural ties between the historically common Central Asian and South Asian regions can serve as a basis for strengthening regional cooperation. Uzbekistan and Pakistan, due to their convenient

geographical location, serve as a kind of bridge between the South and Central Asian regions. The successful establishment of cultural relations between the two states strengthens the friendship and solidarity between the two peoples. The deepening of cultural diplomacy between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, the popularization of our common cultural heritage, and the further improvement of the activities of cultural centers will lead to the further expansion of solidarity and friendship between the peoples.

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