

The impact of Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan relations on the central Asian region

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Received: 23 January 2025; **Accepted:** 26 February 2025; **Published:** 25 March 2025

Abstract: This article discusses the concept of interstate relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia. From a historical point of view, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are united by many traditions, such as the fact that the Uzbek and Kazakh peoples have lived in the same geographical space for thousands of years, a single religion, a similar language, culture, and common customs. From a political perspective, the similarities between the two countries' systems of governance based on democratic principles, as well as their multifaceted foreign policies, the creation of a good-neighborly environment in the region, and adherence to universally recognized principles of international law, have always encouraged the two brotherly countries to maintain friendly relations. The article discusses the political and economic reforms currently underway to create a free economic and secure zone in the territory of the Central Asian countries within the framework of cooperative relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, concept, foreign policy, interstate relations, cooperation, regional security, regional cooperation.

Introduction: The rapid development of relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan today, and the fact that cooperation between the two countries plays a special role in the development of regional cooperation in the Central Asian region, is of great importance. Because the states of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are actors with a leading status in the Central Asian region in all respects. For example, while Kazakhstan's GDP is almost equal to the GDP of all other countries in the region combined, Uzbekistan ranks first in the region in terms of population. Both countries, as developing countries in the region, are interested in developing mutually beneficial cooperation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following can be noted as Uzbekistan's opportunities and priorities in Central Asia:

1. Geographical location. As noted by the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, I.A. Karimov, Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia and is the only country that has a common border with all the countries of the region.[1] American political scientist

N. Spikeman, in his article "Geography and Foreign Policy", noted that the geographical location of a state is a decisive factor in the foreign policy of a country.[2] In his opinion, geographical location is the territorial basis on which states rely in times of war, stability and peace. It should be noted that this factor is the most constant and has remained unchanged for centuries. Uzbekistan's location in the very center of the region, with a common border with five countries, allows it to be an initiator and coordinator of strengthening regional cooperation.

2. Common history and culture. Historically, Central Asia has been the only region with a common culture, history, religion, and traditions for many centuries. At the international conference "Central Asia: a common past and a common future, cooperation for sustainable development and mutual prosperity," the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, said that the peoples of our region are connected with each other by millennia of brotherhood and good neighborliness. We are united by a common history, religion, culture, and traditions.[3] This has become one of the main factors

in the change in the direction of Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

3. Economic development of the Central Asian region. Today, in the world of globalization and information technologies, economic development is impossible without active regional and international cooperation. The geographical location of Uzbekistan, at the same time, creates advantages for it and also hinders its economic development. Uzbekistan is a "double landlocked" country, which not only does not have direct access to the seas, but is also forced to cross the territories of two countries to access the sea. This hinders the development of the national economy, as it complicates the export of domestic goods. Therefore, it is necessary to develop close economic cooperation with close neighbors. A peaceful, economically prosperous Central Asia is our most important goal and main task.

4. Creating a security belt around Uzbekistan. At the initiative of our President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, the state program "Strategy of Actions on Five Priority Areas of Uzbekistan's Development in 2017-2021" was developed. According to the strategy, the goal was to create a security belt around Uzbekistan. This task cannot be achieved without taking into account regional security in Central Asia. The President states that Uzbekistan is directly interested in transforming the region into a zone of sustainable development and good neighborliness, that regional security is urgent, and that political and military threats spread more easily over short distances than over long distances.[4] In our opinion, regional integrated security plays an important role in ensuring stability in the region. Accordingly, countries where a stable and peaceful environment prevails contribute to the spread of security both in the region and in the international arena.

5. Cooperation in the rational use of transboundary rivers. The First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov also noted that the water problem in Central Asia can lead to conflicts and disputes between the countries of the region. The urgency of this issue is explained by the fact that the economy of the region is based on agriculture irrigated by two main rivers. The Amu Darya and Syrdarya rivers are the main water arteries of Central Asia. Therefore, the need for effective and rational use of these water resources and a rational solution to this problem is urgent for all countries in the region. In 2017, Uzbekistan, together with neighboring countries, carried out a number of positive actions to resolve many sensitive issues, such as the exchange of water resources, the demarcation of borders, the opening and restoration of checkpoints, and the expansion of

transport links.[5] During his speech at the UN General Assembly, the President emphasized how close to reality the position of the UN Secretary-General that "the problems of water, peace, and security are inextricably linked" is. Uzbekistan supports the draft conventions on the use of water resources in the Amu Darya and Syrdarya basins developed by the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy. In addition, Sh.M. Mirziyoyev once again drew the attention of the world community to the Aral Sea problem.

6. Resolving problematic issues. Another important issue of great importance is the unresolved issues between the Central Asian states for many years. The most important of them are the demarcation and delimitation of state borders, the use of transboundary river waters, etc. Sometimes they led to tension in relations between the two countries, conflict situations on the borders. For some reason, these issues were not resolved in the early years of the independence of the Central Asian states, which affected ordinary citizens living on both sides of the borders. The region needed a catalyst, a new impetus to resolve these issues.[6] The initiator of such actions was the new President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh.M. Mirziyoyev. Another important issue of great importance was the most difficult - the demarcation and delimitation of state borders, the use of transboundary river waters, the construction of large hydroelectric power stations and other issues. They led to tension in relations between the two countries, even to conflict situations on the borders. Today, Uzbekistan is demonstrating its readiness to make reasonable compromises with the countries of Central Asia on all issues in order to strengthen mutual dialogue, constructive cooperation and good-neighborly relations.

For example, the signing of the agreement on the state border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in early September 2017 was a significant event. This was the first breakthrough in 26 years on a very sensitive issue. Indeed, resolving such issues that have remained unresolved for many years was considered a difficult task for the Uzbek government. Important steps have been taken to normalize relations with our neighbors. In particular, we managed to reach mutually acceptable decisions with the leadership of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The issues of demarcation and delimitation of state borders have become a specific problem in relations between Tashkent and Bishkek. Sh.M. Mirziyoyev called for resolving this issue and turning the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border into a "border of friendship". As a result, an agreement on the state border was signed with Kyrgyzstan, laying the foundation for resolving the border issue. An agreement was reached with Tajikistan to resume regular flights.

7. The need for close cooperation in resolving the Afghan problem. Today, Uzbekistan has achieved a number of positive achievements in resolving the Afghan problem. The international conference held in Tashkent in 2018 and the negotiations with the Taliban political movement in 2019-2020 have begun to bear fruit. Also, today, Uzbekistan is implementing a number of projects to promote peace and economic recovery in Afghanistan, as well as improve infrastructure in the country. In recent years, high-level negotiations have been held with the Taliban leadership to bring bilateral trade and economic relations to a new level. Also, today Uzbekistan is implementing a number of projects to promote peace and economic recovery in Afghanistan, as well as improve infrastructure in the country.

In particular, the implementation of the Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor through the construction of the "Mazar-i-Sharif - Khirat" railway, which connects the "Khayraton-Mazar-i-Sharif" railway with Iran, will be of significant trade and economic importance for Uzbekistan and will significantly reduce logistics costs.

In addition, Uzbekistan is a leading supplier of electricity to Afghanistan, and today electricity is exported through the Surkhan-Puli Khumri power transmission line. This network is of great importance for the subsequent implementation of the Central Asia-South Asia project (CASA-1000) and for the export of electricity from Central Asian countries to South Asian countries.

8. Regional cooperation on trade facilitation, investment and regional financial integration. Active economic diplomacy has become the most important task of the countries of the region. The rapid pace of internationalization and globalization of world economic relations between countries has made it possible to develop and expand the interconnectedness of their economies. One of the important factors stimulating the development of market economy countries is foreign investment.

After the Republic of Uzbekistan gained independence, an active policy was pursued to create a favorable investment climate in our country, a legal system was created to provide guarantees and measures to stimulate the activities of enterprises with foreign investment. Today, one of the most important factors of sustainable and sustainable development is high investment activity, which can ensure the effective and rational use of the country's external and internal resources and potential. The conditions and opportunities created for foreign investors in Uzbekistan in the post-pandemic period in 2017-2022 are growing year by year. In addition, the mutual

attraction and support of bilateral investments with the countries of the region, especially with the Republic of Kazakhstan, are yielding the expected results. In addition, the region itself has the following features in terms of its geographical and geopolitical location:

Firstly, the region is located at the crossroads of world trade routes and is considered the "heart" of Eurasia, a bridge connecting Europe and the Middle East, South and East Asia, and borders such major countries as Russia and China.

Secondly, the region is also a region where the interests of world powers clash. Our foreign policy is based on a clear goal and a clear strategic vision to ensure security and sustainable development in Central Asia.

As the Head of our state Sh.M. Mirziyoyev noted, at the same time, the interests of world powers intersect in Central Asia, the region is caught in a vortex of instability and conflicts, experiencing the impact of all negative processes taking place in the near and far abroad. One can be firmly convinced that the solid foundation and guarantee of the region's sustainable development and prosperity are the readiness and sincere aspiration for cooperation, as well as the responsibility of all Central Asian states for a common future. [7]

Sources that complement the conceptual aspects of Uzbek-Kazakh relations include the Concept of Foreign Policy Activities of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted in 2012, and the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020, adopted in 2014. An analysis of these two official documents shows that these concepts have their own distinctive differences. Today, in the context of rapid reforms in society, Goal 94 of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, entitled "Bringing cooperation in Central Asia in the security, trade-economic, water, energy, transport, and cultural-humanitarian spheres to a qualitatively new level", sets out the task of developing a strategy for developing regional cooperation in the Central Asian region. This, in turn, indicates the need for large-scale scientific research on cooperation processes in our region.

The third section of the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is devoted to "Priority Areas of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan", which lists the regions and countries that are of priority importance in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The Central Asian region takes the first place in this list. The main priority area of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is the Central Asian region, and the country's vital interests are closely linked to this region. Uzbekistan will always adhere to an open, friendly and pragmatic policy in relations with its close neighbors, and advocates that

all urgent political, economic and environmental problems in the region be resolved on the basis of mutual interests, practical dialogue and international law. The problems of Central Asia must be resolved by the countries of the region themselves, without the intervention of external forces.[8]

The essence of this is that Uzbekistan, due to its geopolitical location in the heart of Central Asia, has inextricably linked its foreign policy with the region. Uzbekistan considers the development of relations with the countries of the region to be the first priority of its foreign policy. Based on this, it has always been a supporter of the rapid development of constructive and pragmatic dialogues with neighboring countries. That is, Uzbekistan focuses on implementing its relations with neighboring countries based on a win-win strategy. In this regard, the emphasis is on equal consideration of the interests of the parties, avoiding the formation of an atmosphere of hostility, and resolving all regional issues through consultative meetings in a spirit of mutual trust.[9]

At the same time, Uzbekistan considers the continuation of a mutually beneficial, open, effective and harmonious neighborhood policy with neighboring Kazakhstan as one of the priority tasks of its foreign policy. Uzbekistan considers the use of the winner-takes-all strategy (the principle that the side that prevails or wins in a particular issue ultimately owns everything) as an instrument of foreign policy to be ineffective and out of step with the requirements of the times.

A closer look at the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 paints a different picture of the Central Asian region. The first section of the concept, Chapter 3, is devoted to "Country and Regional Priorities," and this chapter discusses the regions that occupy a more prominent position in Kazakhstan's foreign policy. In the ranking of priority regions, Central Asia is not in first place, as many predicted, but in third place. The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China occupy the first and second places on the list. As a third priority region, Central Asia is described as follows:

In developing the multifaceted relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan with the countries of Central Asia - the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan - the main emphasis is on uniting the efforts of the countries of the region to jointly combat internal and external challenges and threats, and to intensify political, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation on the basis of mutual benefit and equality. [10]

Although Central Asia is seen as the third most

important region in Kazakhstan's foreign policy, it is clear that it is interested in intensifying multilateral relations with neighboring countries. Therefore, it remains committed to generalizing joint efforts in relations with the countries of the region.

On March 6, 2020, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030 was adopted. This document can be included in the category of documents that further enrich the conceptual foundations of Uzbek-Kazakh relations. The concept also addresses cooperation with Uzbekistan. Paragraph 2.9 of the second chapter of the fifth section of this document reflects the issues of further enhancing Kazakhstan's foreign economic interests by launching the "Central Asia" trade and economic cooperation center together with Uzbekistan. On November 9, 2023, within the framework of the 16th summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Tashkent, an agreement was signed between the governments of the two countries on the establishment of the "Central Asia" international industrial cooperation center.[12] This project, the only one in Central Asia, will not only be effective for both sides, but will also give additional impetus to the development of trade and economic relations in the region.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are one of the largest markets in Central Asia, home to more than 50 million people. The launch of the center will open up vast opportunities in the field of service systems, transport and telecommunications services, servicing tourist flows, and the development of international and regional trade. International trade is expected to grow as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are key participants in the North-South Central Asian transport and transit corridor, connecting the largest markets of Central and South Asia with the richest regions of Europe - the Urals, Siberia and the Far East.

The new concept also shows that the priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign policy have undergone significant changes. These changes concern, in particular, Kazakhstan's position in the regional context. If in the previous concept Kazakhstan was presented as a country that feels its role and responsibility and seeks to develop regional integration in Central Asia, in the new concept it openly declares its intentions to strengthen its status as a "leading state in the region". However, it is clear that strengthening its leadership position in Central Asia and promoting long-term interests in the field of foreign policy have fallen into second place among Kazakhstan's strategic goals.

CONCLUSION

Close regional cooperation between the Central Asian republics will help solve many problems that have

hindered the economic development of the region for many years. The main link in the economic reforms implemented in recent years is the development of trade. Because the increase in trade turnover with neighboring countries is the most important factor in ensuring the economic stability and development of the country. Therefore, today Uzbekistan pays special attention to the development of trade. The deep reforms implemented in recent years under the leadership of President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev play a major role in achieving this goal.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, bilateral relations have been based on solid political and legal foundations. If we pay attention to the essence of bilateral agreements, it becomes clear that they contain many common positions. It was precisely the issues of legally strengthening those similar positions that prompted the two sides to sign agreements, and often the interests of fraternal states were similar and always complemented each other. In addition, the foreign policy concepts adopted in certain years in the Republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan further enriched bilateral relations in legal terms. These concepts clearly define the priority areas of foreign policy, and special attention is paid to further strengthening relations with neighboring countries.

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are undoubtedly important republics for Central Asia in terms of geopolitical location, population, common culture, traditions and customs. Today, despite some differences, cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is developing rapidly. The heads of state clearly and successfully interact on issues of economic integration and regional security, which are necessary for both sides.

At the same time, the events taking place in the world political and economic life show the need to develop comprehensive ties in order to preserve the historically formed political and economic relations and unique culture in the Central Asian region. The system of vital, national interests of the two states in the region can be expressed through the following basic concepts: security, stability, economic cooperation. The proposals put forward in the system of Uzbek-Kazakh relations in these three factors, the current agreements, and the full implementation of the tasks set will create a basis for further strengthening both the internal potential of the two states and their place in the sustainable development of the region.

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