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CENTRAL ASIA – MAIN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF UZBEKISTAN: A NEW APPROACH AND PRACTICAL ACTIONS

This article discusses the consistent development of cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and Central Asian countries. The importance of making the Central Asian region a priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy was highlighted. It was explained that the centuries-old brotherhood of Central Asian peoples, common history, spiritual and cultural values, similar traditions and customs play a role in strengthening regional cooperation. It has been shown that its implementation contributes to the development of security, stability and economic integration processes in the Central Asian region. The factors contributing to the further strengthening of friendly and trusting relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were also analyzed. When analyzing the issues of economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and the countries of the region, special attention was paid to transport communications, and the important strategic position of the Central Asian states requires the rational use of international transport corridors. The specificity of such types of transport communication as railway, aviation and automobile is shown. They also analyzed the practical initiatives of Uzbekistan to strengthen regional cooperation. In particular, the beginning of a new era in the cooperation of Uzbekistan with Central Asian countries since 2017 has been studied. Conclusions were reached on the transformation of Central Asia into the main priority of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and a number of proposals were made to strengthen cultural cooperation.

Key words. Republic of Uzbekistan, Central Asia, cooperation, Foreign policy, Action strategy, consultations, summit, good neighborly environment, prosperity belt, priorities, general history, stability, sustainable development, good neighborliness, universal values.

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Орталық Азия – Өзбекстанның сыртқы саясат приоритеттері: жаңа тәсіл және тәжірибелік іс-әрекеттер

Бұл мақалада Өзбекстан Республикасы мен Орталық Азия елдері арасындағы ынтымақтастықтың дәйекті дамуы туралы айтылады. Орталық Азия аймағын Өзбекстанның сыртқы саясатының басымдығына айналдырудың маңыздылығы айтылды. Орталық Азия халықтарының ғасырлар бойғы бауырластығы, ортақ тарихы, рухани және мәдени құндылықтары, ұқсас дәстүрлер мен әдет-ғұрыптар аймақтық ынтымақтастықты нығайтуда маңызды рөл атқаратыны түсіндірілді. Оны жүзеге асыру Орталық Азия аймағындағы қауіпсіздік, тұрақтылық және экономикалық интеграциялық процестердің дамуына ықпал ететіндігі көрсетілген. Сондай-ақ Өзбекстан мен Қазақстан, Қырғызстан, Тәжікстан және Түркменстан арасындағы достық және сенімді қарым-қатынастарды нығайтуға ықпал ететін факторлар талданды. Өзбекстан мен аймақ елдерінің экономикалық ынтымақтастығы мәселелерін талдау барысында көлік коммуникацияларына ерекше назар аударылып, Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінің маңызды стратегиялық ұстанымы халықаралық көлік дәліздерін ұтымды пайдалануды талап етеді. Темір жол, авиация және автомобиль сияқты көлік қатынасының түрлерінің ерекшелігі көрсетілген. Сондай-ақ Өзбекстанның аймақтық ынтымақтастықты нығайту жөніндегі практикалық бастамаларына талдау жасалды. Атап айтқанда, Өзбекстанның 2017 жылдан бастап Орталық Азия елдерімен ынтымақтастығында жаңа дәуірдің басталуы зерттелді. Орталық Азияны Өзбекстан Республикасы сыртқы саясатының басты басымдығына айналдыру туралы тұжырымдар жасалды және мәдени ынтымақтастықты нығайту бойынша бірқатар ұсыныстар жасалды.

Түйін сөздер: Өзбекстан Республикасы, Орталық Азия, ынтымақтастық, сыртқы саясат, іс-қимыл стратегиясы, консультациялар, саммит, тату көршілік орта, өркендеу белдеуі, басымдықтар, жалпы тарих, тұрақтылық, орнықты даму, тату көршілік, жалпыадамзаттық құндылықтар.

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**Центральная Азия – главные приоритеты
внешней политики Узбекистана:
новый подход и практические действия**

В данной статье рассматривается последовательное развитие сотрудничества между Республикой Узбекистан и странами Центральной Азии. Была подчеркнута важность превращения региона Центральной Азии в приоритетное направление внешней политики Узбекистана. Было разъяснено, что многовековое братство народов Центральной Азии, общая история, духовные и культурные ценности, схожие традиции и обычаи играют роль в укреплении регионального сотрудничества. Было показано, что его реализация способствует развитию процессов безопасности, стабильности и экономической интеграции в Центральноазиатском регионе. Также были проанализированы факторы, способствующие дальнейшему укреплению дружеских и доверительных отношений между Узбекистаном и Казахстаном, Кыргызстаном, Таджикистаном и Туркменистаном. При анализе вопросов экономического сотрудничества Узбекистана со странами региона особое внимание было уделено транспортным коммуникациям, а важное стратегическое положение государств Центральной Азии требует рационального использования международных транспортных коридоров. Показана специфика таких видов транспортного сообщения, как железнодорожное, авиационное и автомобильное. Также были проанализированы практические инициативы Узбекистана по укреплению регионального сотрудничества. В частности, изучается начало новой эры в сотрудничестве Узбекистана со странами Центральной Азии с 2017 года. Сделаны выводы о превращении Центральной Азии в главный приоритет внешней политики Республики Узбекистан, внесен ряд предложений по укреплению культурного сотрудничества.

Ключевые слова: Республика Узбекистан, Центральная Азия, сотрудничество, внешняя политика, Стратегия действий, консультации, саммит, добрососедство, пояс процветания, приоритеты, всеобщая история, стабильность, устойчивое развитие, добрососедство, универсальные ценности.

Introduction

It is known that the peoples of Central Asia are bound by centuries-old fraternal ties, common history, spiritual and cultural values, similar traditions and customs. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan are nations and states with a common historical heritage and always friendly to each other. Therefore, the sustainable development and prosperous future of the peoples of these states cannot be imagined in isolation.

President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev noted that “Uzbekistan today in its foreign policy gives priority to the Central Asian region. That’s the decent thing to do, and it should end there» (Xalq so‘zi. – 2017. – 20 sentabr).

Republic of Uzbekistan developed friendship relations on economic and cultural fields from firstly year own independence, such as members of contemporary system of international relations (Umarov, 2020:42). From the first days of independence, the countries of the Central Asian region have em-

barked on the path of “national statehood and the formation of a strategy of action. Each republic has chosen its path on the basis of a clear socio-political situation, historical and cultural features, economic and political opportunities. For example, Kazakhstan has embarked on economic reforms and attracting foreign investment, Kyrgyzstan on democratic reforms, Tajikistan on a gradual model of development after the civil war, and Turkmenistan on the path of neutrality and active participation in international energy and communications projects (Raximov, 2019:12-13).

It should be noted that one of the priorities of the concept of foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is the development of interregional integration in Central Asia (O‘zbekiston Respublikasining Tashqi siyosiy faoliyati Konsepsiyasi, 2012:13).

Materials and methods

The cooperation of Uzbekistan with the countries of Central Asia during the years of independence studied by A.A. Kazantsev, A.K. Imangaziev,

F.I. Usmanov, S.A. Parkhomenko, E.B. Ayushieva, E.F. Troitsky, V. Ibragimov Yu. Shiriev, A.I. Iskandarov, M.Ch. Kim, V.I. Maslov, D.V. Aksenov, A.D. Djekshenkulov, L. Chjenpen, R. Abdullo, R. Alimov, B.A. Auelbaev, R. Izimov, A. Iskandarov, M. Laumulín, A. Mamadazimov, K.L. Syroejkin, V. Paramonov, A. Stokov, O. Stolpovskiy, A. Khodjaev. Uzbek researchers such as L. Babakhodjaeva, S. Safoev, M. Rakhimov, R. Alimov, Ch. Kucharov, N. Ziyamov, Sh. Arifkhanov, S. Atadjanova, H. Nizomov, G. Mirzaev have conducted research and created monographs.

Results and discussion

After the inauguration of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a new era of Uzbekistan's foreign policy on regional cooperation has begun. With a focus on the dynamics of development of interstate relations in the region, the level of their interaction, the implementation of promising projects in the regional context began to be reflected in the joint struggle of Central Asian countries against internal and external threats.

Through the efforts of the leader of Uzbekistan, a systematic approach to cooperation with Central Asian countries has been established and consistent development has been identified. In the recent past, historic results have been achieved in regional cooperation. In particular, issues such as crossing the border, water use have been resolved, and issues of reciprocity have been resolved.

In particular, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and Central Asian countries is of great importance. In recent years, it has been assessed as the beginning of a new era in the history of relations between the countries of Central Asia, which has achieved significant positive results in interstate relations in a short period of time. Neighboring countries have opened to each other not only borders but also markets. For the first time since the establishment of newly independent states in the region, cooperation has been established in the field of industrial cooperation, mutual investment and security.

As a result of the first visits of the President of Uzbekistan to neighboring countries, strategic partnership relations have been established with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and important documents have been signed with Kazakhstan to further deepen the strategic partnership.

In particular, the "White Gold" and "Malik" border checkpoints on the route M-39 with Kazakhstan

have been restored. The Tashkent-Almaty railway has been launched. 2 billion Trade and investment agreements worth more than US dollars have been signed, and interregional ties are strengthening.

An agreement on the State Border with Kyrgyzstan, an agreement on confidence-building measures in the border area and a declaration on strategic partnership were signed.

Dustlik, Kosonsay and Rishtan checkpoints have been opened on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border. As a result of the lifting of restrictions on the border with Kyrgyzstan, the number of citizens crossing the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border every day is 30,000. This, in turn, contributes to the development of neighborly, tourism and trade relations between the peoples of the two countries.

Relations with Tajikistan are developing rapidly, trade and economic ties are expanding. In 2017, the trade turnover between the two countries amounted to 240 million U.S. dollar, high results are latest 20-years Flights have been launched between Tashkent and Dushanbe, and culture days have been held in both countries. In order to develop relations between the legislatures of the two countries, in December 2017, the Inter-Parliamentary Group on Cooperation with the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan was established.

A strategic partnership has been established with Turkmenistan, road and rail bridges across the Amudarya have been commissioned between the two countries, and cooperation in the supply of agricultural machinery is being strengthened (Raximov, 2020:68).

The first summit of Central Asian leaders, held on March 15, 2018 in Astana, the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan (now Nursultan Nazarbayev), also serves to strengthen the beginning of a new phase in relations between the countries of the region. If we look at the history of this conference, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev first spoke about it from the rostrum of the United Nations. In his speech at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in September 2017, Mirziyoyev said, "Uzbekistan, located in the heart of Central Asia, is directly interested in the region becoming a region of stability, sustainable development and good neighborliness. A peaceful, economically developed Central Asia is the most important goal and the main task we are striving. Uzbekistan is a strong supporter of dialogue, practical cooperation and strengthening good neighborliness" (Xalq so'zi. – 2017. – 20 sentabr)

At the UN sponsored international conference "Central Asia: Common History and Common Fu-

ture, Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Progress” held in Samarkand in November 2017, the Uzbek leader called on Central Asian leaders to unite their efforts on topical issues in Central Asia. He put forward a proposal to set it up on a regular basis. This initiative was supported by all countries and international organizations in the region. At the invitation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first Consultative Meeting was held in Kazakhstan.

The issues of development of political, trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation between the countries of the region, joint fight against terrorism, religious extremism, drug and arms smuggling, strengthening security and stability in Central Asia were discussed at the meeting.

At the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, the implementation of the principle of “Central Asia – the main priority” in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan contributes to the development of security, stability and economic integration in the Central Asian region. Further strengthening relations in the spirit of all neighboring statesmanship and mutual trust has become one of the main tasks. As a result of joint efforts with neighboring countries, a completely new friendly political environment has been formed in the region, and mutual trust and friendship between the peoples are becoming stronger.

The continuation of cooperation at a new stage has a positive impact on mutual trade and economic results. In 2018, Uzbekistan’s foreign trade turnover with the countries of the region grew.

For example, in 2017, the joint efforts of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan managed to increase bilateral trade to \$ 2 billion. Delegations from Jizzakh, Tashkent, Syrdarya regions and the city of Tashkent also visited the neighboring country and held very fruitful meetings. In turn, representatives of South Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Jambyl, Kyzylorda and East Kazakhstan regions visited Uzbek territory. Such direct contacts serve as a basis for the effective implementation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation (Xalq so‘zi. – 2018 yil – 14 mart). At the invitation of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kasim-Jomart Tokayev paid a state visit to Uzbekistan on April 14-15, 2019. During the talks, the parties positively assessed the results of the first Uzbek-Kazakh interregional cooperation forum held in November 2018 in Shymkent and the first regional economic forum of Central Asian countries held in March 2019 in Tashkent (Xalq so‘zi. – 2019. – 16 aprel).

If we look at the numbers, we can see that Uzbekistan’s trade turnover with Central Asian coun-

tries has grown at an unprecedented rate. The trade turnover was \$ 2.4 billion in 2017 and reached \$ 5.2 billion by the end of 2019. In a short two years, the growth was 150 percent (Mustafoyev)

In 2019, about 4 million citizens of neighboring countries visited Uzbekistan at various levels. People’s diplomacy, which has been developing rapidly in recent years, plays an important role in this. People’s diplomacy, in turn, paves the way for the development of economic diplomacy.

The implementation of the new policy of the President of Uzbekistan on strengthening political trust and mutual understanding in Central Asia will continue in 2018. Uzbekistan’s friendly, trusting and fraternal relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are rapidly expanding and strengthening at all levels, contributing to the expansion of mutual visits between the countries of the region.

In particular, President Sh. Mirziyoyev paid a state visit to Tajikistan on March 9-10, 2018 at the invitation of President of the Republic of Tajikistan E. Rahmon. During the visit, the two leaders signed a Joint Statement on Strengthening Friendship and Good Neighborliness and an agreement on separate sections of the Uzbek-Tajik border.

The visit focused on cooperation in trade, economy, investment, finance, transport and transit, agriculture, water and energy, taxation, customs, tourism, science and education, health, culture, security and the fight against crime, as well as the development of interregional ties. A total of 27 documents were signed (Raximov, 2020:68).

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev also visited Kazakhstan on July 6, 2018 at the invitation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan and took part in a solemn event dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the city of Astana.

On August 17-18, 2018, at the invitation of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Tajikistan E. Rahmon paid a state visit to Uzbekistan. During the visit, several high-level talks were held between the two sides. As a result of these talks, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan signed the Treaty on Strategic Partnership and the Joint Statement of the two leaders. A number of documents on cooperation in industry, standardization and certification, border crossing, recognition of educational documents, geodesy and geology, agriculture, culture and other areas were also signed. Agreements on trade-economic, scientific-technical and cultural-humanitarian cooperation between Surkhandarya region and Khatlon region,

Samarkand region and Sogd region were also adopted.

In addition, in order to continue negotiations on delimitation and demarcation of the state border of the Republic of Uzbekistan with neighboring countries, from August 2016 to July 2018, the Uzbek government delegation met with 63 countries, including 17 with Kazakhstan and 27 with Kyrgyzstan. He played 9 matches against Tajikistan, 9 matches against Turkmenistan and 1 match against Afghanistan. As a result, the delimitation of the state border with Kazakhstan has been completed, 85% of the border with Kyrgyzstan has been agreed, and 99.9% of the border with Tajikistan has been agreed (HSDDTS, 2020:12).

A meeting of the Council of Heads of Founding States of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea was held in Turkmenbashi on August 24, 2018 in order to solve the environmental problems in Central Asia together with the countries of the region and to ensure that the people of the two countries live and work in a clean environment. In it, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev put forward five proposals on cooperation between Central Asian countries in overcoming the consequences of the Aral Sea tragedy:

- Declaring the Aral Sea region as a zone of ecological innovation and technology;
- Establishment of a Regional Center for the cultivation of seedlings resistant to desert conditions and food crops;
- Establishment of protected transboundary natural areas in the Aral Sea zone;
- Adoption of a regional program for the rational use of water resources in Central Asia;
- Carrying out research on problem solving by developing scientific cooperation on the basis of scientific and information centers of the Interstate Coordinating Commission for Water Resources and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (HSDDTS, 2020:14).

It should be noted that in 2019, strengthening the image of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the international arena, promoting the national interests of the country, developing political and economic cooperation with foreign countries, in particular, transforming Central Asia into a stable, secure and economically developed region. it can be seen that active and effective efforts to implement well-thought-out foreign policy activities to strengthen cooperation have been consistently continued.

The first Central Asian Economic Forum was held on March 15, 2019 in Tashkent with the participation of the Deputy Prime Ministers of the Re-

publics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The forum discussed issues of further development of regional cooperation, study of the potential of the transport and communication complex, increasing the volume of mutual trade and the attractiveness of tourism.

It was noted the need to strengthen cooperation in all countries of the Central Asian region in addressing pressing issues such as ensuring economic stability and security, diversification of exports, finding technological and innovative solutions in the leading sectors of the country. A Joint Statement was adopted at the end of the meeting (HSDDTS, 2020:23-24).

Also, in order to ensure good neighborliness and interethnic harmony among the peoples of Central Asia, an international conference on “Central Asia – our common home” with the participation of foreign experts and scientists was held on November 15, 2019 in Tashkent.

The conference focused on strengthening regional cooperation between Central Asian countries, expanding cultural and humanitarian exchanges, strengthening the role of people’s diplomacy in strengthening bilateral ties, the role of national cultural centers and friendship societies in the implementation of people’s diplomacy and other issues. In addition, a series of events dedicated to the International Day for Tolerance was held in Uzbekistan on November 11-16, 2019 as part of the Tolerance Week. During the week, the final part of the festival “Uzbekistan – our common home” and an exhibition of works by artists, a civil forum of national cultural centers and friendship societies, a big concert of artists and art groups of national cultural centers, an international conference “Central Asia – our common home” and the Festival of Tolerance was held in secondary schools and academic lyceums of the republic.

In order to promote security, stability, good neighborliness and economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation in Central Asia, to find common solutions to common problems in the region, a consultative meeting of Central Asian leaders was held in Tashkent on 29 November 2019 at the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan. passed. The issues of overcoming trade barriers between the countries of the region, further strengthening of industrial cooperation, modernization of energy infrastructure and expansion of transit opportunities in the region were discussed at the meeting.

The parties agreed to support active exchanges and dialogue at the regional level, as well as to hold regular joint events in the fields of science, educa-

tion, tourism, culture and sports. During the talks, serious attention was paid to the issues of multilateral cooperation to ensure security and stability in the region.

At the end of the meeting, the leaders of the two countries adopted a joint statement and approved regulations on the preparation and holding of consultative meetings. At this high-level event, the Central Asian leaders agreed to hold such consultations on a regular basis “as a platform for constructive and open discussion of current issues of cooperation in the region and the solution of common problems” (HSDDTS, 2020:22).

Of course, during the meeting in this format, Shavkat Mirziyoyev said, “The historic significance of the 1998 Central Asian Summit in Ashgabat and the fruitful results of the 2018 Summit in Nur-Sultan demonstrate the common interests of the countries of the region” (Mirziyoyev, 2020:275).

It should be noted that the UN Security Council held talks on Afghanistan, radiation safety in Central Asia, the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, the adoption of the Ashgabat Declaration of the Energy Charter, UN General Assembly resolutions on Central Asia and others. In all many other widely recognized international initiatives there is a steady trend – the growing independent role of states and their responsibility for the common future (Mirziyoyev, 2020:271).

In 2019, Uzbekistan has held major events to address environmental issues in the Central Asian region, especially the Aral Sea. Among them is the UN-sponsored international conference “The Aral Sea Region – a zone of environmental innovation and technology” held on October 24 in Nukus. During this international conference, a draft special resolution of the UN General Assembly on the declaration of the Aral Sea region as a zone of environmental innovation and technology was agreed.

The Trust Fund has also partnered with the European Union, Norway, Finland and Japan to fund projects in the region on the basis of the UN Multilateral Human Security Partnership for the Aral Sea Region.

The European Union has allocated € 5 million, Norway € 1.1 mln., € Finland 1 mln. And Japan 3.2 mln. U.S. dollars are financed to projects in the Aral Sea region (HSDDTS, 2020:22). In addition, Uzbekistan supports the negotiations on peace and stability in Afghanistan and actively participates in international efforts to resolve the Afghan problem. Consistent work is also being done to involve this country in the processes of economic development in Central Asia and to turn it into a bridge connect-

ing the region with South Asia and the Middle East.

In particular, on January 12-13, 2019, a new mechanism for expanding regional cooperation in the format of “India – Central Asia” at the level of foreign ministers was launched, the first meeting of which was held in Samarkand with the participation of Afghanistan. Following the meeting, a Joint Statement was adopted. The statement said that the India-Central Asia dialogue had been launched at the level of foreign ministers. Also, the Central Asia-Afghanistan Forum was successfully organized in Tashkent on 14 December 2019 at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers. The forum was attended by Deputy Foreign Ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

The meeting focused on issues related to the fight against violent extremism, terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, as well as economic and environmental issues. The main directions of cooperation between the Central Asian countries and the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia were also discussed (HSDDTS, 2020:26).

In 2020, along with other countries of the world, Uzbekistan has managed to organize interdepartmental visits and meetings, online dialogues in the field of international relations, including in cooperation with the countries of the region, which meet the interests of Uzbekistan and the countries of the region. They discussed topical issues of international and regional significance, multifaceted cooperation, in particular, trade and economic, investment, energy, transport and communications, cultural and humanitarian spheres, education and other priority areas, and achieved a number of results.

In particular, the first meeting of the Joint Demarcation Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan was held on January 7, 2020 in Tashkent to demarcate the state border with neighboring countries in Central Asia. The meeting approved regulatory and technical documents that will serve as a basis for the demarcation of the Uzbek-Tajik border.

Also, on February 17-21, 2020, a regular meeting of the delegations of the governments of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan was held at the Joint Demarcation Commission in Almaty. At the meeting, draft final documents for the demarcation of the interstate border were prepared at the border of Navoi region of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Kyzylorda and Turkestan regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (HSDDTS, 2020:33).

Therefore, the relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Central Asian countries are entering a new stage. For example, in 2018, the trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan increased by 50% and exceeded \$ 3 billion. Uzbekistan's trade turnover with Kyrgyzstan in 2018 exceeded \$ 481 million, with Tajikistan – more than \$ 389 million (Xalq so'zi. 2019 yil 30 noyabr), and with Turkmenistan – economic cooperation amounted to \$ 302 million (Xalq so'zi. 2019 yil 29 noyabr).

The trade turnover between Uzbekistan and neighboring Tajikistan in 2019 increased by 23.4% compared to 2018 and amounted to \$ 480 million. Compared to 2017, this increase was 200 percent. The trade turnover with Turkmenistan at the end of 2019 amounted to \$ 540 million. The increase compared to 2017 is 300 percent.

This trade turnover is not only import, export, but also multiplicative (Mustafayev), that is, the creation of new jobs, infrastructure, which in turn will ensure the growth of living standards. The policy pursued by Uzbekistan in recent years with Central Asian countries is recognized by many experts and leaders of international organizations.

It was noted that the investment attractiveness of Central Asia also increased by 32% compared to 2017. In other words, in 2017, the total investment in the region amounted to \$ 24 billion, and by the end of 2019, this figure reached 35.9 billion (Mustafayev).

At the initiative of Uzbekistan and with the support of Central Asian countries, on June 22, 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in Central Asia" (Raximov, 2019:12-13).

The countries of the region, which have their own path of development and are developing, are developing their foreign policy on the basis of such principles as humanity, social justice, creating an environment of security, peace and tranquility in the region.

According to B. Mustafayev, an expert on cooperation in the Central Asian region, the opening of the borders has given impetus to the development of tourism between the regions. For example, the number of tourists visiting the region in 2017 was 19.5 million, while in 2019 the figure reached 25.4 million (Mustafayev).

According to Sherali Rizoyon, a Tajik expert, in general, favorable conditions are being created for the development of Central Asia as a region, but it is necessary to develop scientific approaches to construction, develop and promote common regional in-

terests that do not conflict with the national interests of Central Asia. The importance of such an approach is explained by the fact that the radical improvement of relations between the countries of Central Asia can serve to form a new center for global politics. "Therefore, it is necessary to conduct joint, in-depth research to identify common features and common structures of regional interests" (YKMOMQHQ).

According to researchers from Boston Consulting Group (BCG), a leading international business strategy consulting firm, Central Asian countries now have the opportunity to diversify their economies by diversifying into the region. This requires investment in infrastructure projects and the development of promising non-primary sectors. Continuation and deepening of market reforms, as well as strong inter-regional cooperation are among the prerequisites for improving the investment climate in Central Asia.

The authors of this report note that based on their research on cooperation between Central Asian countries, there are five important areas that can enhance regional cooperation:

1. Development of regional infrastructure. The construction of regional infrastructure is the first and absolutely necessary step towards deepening cooperation. The existing infrastructure in the region needs to be significantly improved. Also, supporting cross-border movement of goods, services, people and capital. Deepening integration in regional trade is a key condition for developing ties between the economies of these countries.

2. Active development of complementarity. Each country in Central Asia has its own complementary aspect. Instead of competing, countries can achieve more results if they cooperate with each other.

Coordination of investment attraction strategy. Attempts by countries in the region to attract large amounts of investment alone may be less effective. It would be expedient to actively coordinate and combine efforts to attract investors at the regional level (MOIS).

When analyzing the issues of economic cooperation of Uzbekistan with the countries of the region, we should pay special attention to transport communications. Also, the important strategic location of the Central Asian countries requires the rational use of international transport corridors. The launch of rail, air and road services in 2017, the launch of freight traffic on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan highway in August 2018, the new "East-West", "North-South" transport and communications. creates a wide range of opportunities for the implementation of projects.

The proposal put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the 75th session of the United Nations on September 23, 2020 also plays an important role in strengthening economic cooperation and defining the prospects of Central Asian countries. According to Mirziyoyev, today the most important strategic task for the Central Asian countries is to ensure the deep integration of the region into the global economic, transport and transit corridors (gazeta.uz).

Radical improvement of relations between the countries of Central Asia can serve the formation of a new center for global politics. "Therefore, it is necessary to conduct joint, in-depth research to identify common features and common structures of regional interests" (YKMOMQHQ).

In addition, industrial cooperation, further strengthening of trade and economic relations between the regions, the development of regional tourism are among the priorities.

The economic and cultural cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the countries of Central Asia has acquired a new meaning through the efforts of Shavkat Mirziyoyev. In particular, a new era for regional economic and cultural integration has begun. Uzbekistan's economic cooperation with Central Asian countries has been steadily strengthening. As a result, the launch of joint projects in the border areas of the two republics marked the formation of a new approach to economic cooperation. is doing.

The scope of bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and Central Asian countries is wide. The Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation should hold regular meetings and pay constant attention to the development of measures to exploit untapped opportunities, the opening and development of new areas of cooperation.

It is known that one of the most important tasks today is to further develop relations between the states, ensure the implementation of joint projects in the cultural and humanitarian spheres in ensuring peace and stability in the Central Asian region. In his Address to the Oliy Majlis, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev will continue the large-scale work on intensification of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, open, pragmatic and well-thought-out foreign policy that meets national interests. It was noted that cooperation with all countries, far and near, should be further strengthened, long-term and multifaceted partnership (Xalq so'zi. 2020 yil 25 yanvar).

Another important factor in the strategy of action is the formation of a harmonious neighborhood environment in Uzbekistan, ie the "belt of prosperity", the expansion of cultural and humanitarian cooperation with neighbors, the facilitation of people-to-people contacts. In order to implement this principle, cultural trips in the form of "people's diplomacy" were organized not only with neighboring countries, but also with the participation of the public of their neighboring regions. Because of its geopolitical location, Uzbekistan has a number of close aspects that require strong cooperation with neighboring countries in the Central Asian region. Because the countries of the region, namely Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, are united by common history and integral spiritual values. The ancient ties of kinship, ancient neighborliness and mutual respect of the peoples of the region serve as a solid basis for cultural and humanitarian cooperation between these countries.

Indeed, raising cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and Central Asia to new heights in the new era will serve to ensure geopolitical balance and stability in the region, to maintain peace and security.

The historical roots of cooperation, brotherhood and friendship of the Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Turkmen peoples are much older. The living conditions, customs and way of life of these peoples are very close to each other, the historical cooperation of the peoples of the region and the ancient heritage of cultural and humanitarian cooperation, the development and strengthening of cultural and humanitarian cooperation based on today's brotherhood and friendship. Uzbekistan's great attention to the development of relations between the countries of Central Asia in a harmonious, friendly and mutually beneficial manner contributes to the new content of regional integration.

Conclusion

In short, the reforms in the field of foreign policy and foreign economic policy of the Action Strategy for the five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 and the relevant state programs adopted under it, first of all, brought Uzbekistan's relations with Central Asia to a new level. Consistent development of cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and Central Asian countries, creation of favorable conditions for crossing the state border to increase

cultural exchanges in the region, increase people-to-people contacts, trade and tourism ties are important in developing the current state of cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and Central Asia. Uzbekistan's relations with neighboring countries are based on the principles of friendship, good neighborliness, recognition of mutual interests and readiness to engage in dialogue to resolve any issue. To date, Uzbekistan has managed to establish mutually beneficial cooperation with Central Asian countries in almost all areas. Neighborliness and kinship between the peoples of the region are becoming stronger, trade and economic ties are expanding. Such an approach will serve to further strengthen stability in the region through the formation of a "welfare belt" around the country, the creation of decent living conditions for our peoples and the sustainable development of cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

So, "The Central Asian region still attracts close international attention due to its geopolitical and economic importance, natural and human resources, and acts as a collision field for countless cultural, civilizational, political and economic projects.

In the "New Great Game" between the West, Russia and China, it is necessary to emphasize the intensification of Chinese diplomacy aimed at finding and initiating beneficial ways of relations with the states of the region" (Zharkynbaeva R.S., Xie Tian. (2019). *Al-Farabi Kazakh National University Journal of history*. No2 (93). P. 158-164).

Proposal

A number of proposals can be put forward to strengthen the Central Asia – the main priority of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Including,

a) in the economic sphere:

- A number of bilateral and multilateral legal normative documents on economic cooperation of Uzbekistan with Central Asian countries have been

signed, to monitor their regular implementation and, if necessary, to adopt new ones;

- to act in accordance with the normative acts of international law in obtaining the accumulation of national-ethnic, transboundary problems in the use of various political, economic, military, transport, ecological, transboundary rivers in the Central Asian region in economic cooperation;

- Formation of an effective system of land communications in the region by further strengthening, expanding and deepening economic cooperation of Central Asian countries in the new era, accelerating the development of transport and transit potential, accelerating the railway project on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan multimodal transport corridor;

- Accelerate the process of digitization of the economy to develop economic cooperation between Central Asian countries in connection with the pandemic;

- formation of an analytical and information group that regularly deals with and solves internal and external factors that hinder the strengthening of regional cooperation;

b) in the cultural and humanitarian sphere:

- A number of bilateral and multilateral legal normative documents on cultural and humanitarian cooperation of Uzbekistan with the countries of Central Asia have been signed, monitoring and ensuring their regular implementation;

- Formation of an analytical and information group that will regularly deal with and address internal and external factors that hinder the further strengthening, expansion and deepening of cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the countries of Central Asia in the new era, the processes of national-ethnic, friendship and brotherhood;

- It is expedient to establish national cultural centers in the border areas, which will maintain cooperation on Transboundary Rivers and enclaves, which will contribute to the development of cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the countries of the region.

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