

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS OF UZBEK-PAKISTANI ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract

This article analyzes the impact of trade and economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan in the context of regional integration in Central and South Asia, trade and economic relations, which are one of the important directions in the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and its role in interstate relations. The author, based on sources, highlights that these relations are being established, in particular, within the framework of trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, official visits between the two countries, trade, economic and investment agreements of international importance, and intergovernmental agreements. At the same time, promising projects and plans for the further development of these relations in the future are also considered. The article also effectively uses foreign and local scientific sources, materials from the National Archive Fund of Uzbekistan and periodical press, and official websites of ministries.

Kalit so‘zlar: Central Asia, South Asia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, trade and economic relations, foreign policy, official visit, investment agreement, intergovernmental agreement, promising project.

Introduction

As one of the priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, it pays special attention to the development of economic and transport and communication systems connecting Central Asia with South Asia. Pakistan occupies a special place in this strategy. In recent years, the intensification of political dialogue between Uzbekistan and Pakistan has contributed to the rise of economic cooperation to a new level. In particular, regular meetings of the leaders of the two countries, the development of strategic partnership relations, joint initiatives in the field of transport and logistics, and the expansion of trade and economic ties have become an important factor in regional integration.

Today, Uzbekistan is at a critical stage of rapid development in all spheres of socio-political and economic life. Large-scale reforms led by President Sh. Mirziyoyev are achieving sustainable economic growth [1], which, in order to increase the flow of foreign investment and, accordingly, strengthen the economy, create more jobs, and achieve sustainable and comprehensive development, have become a component of the Strategy of Actions on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021, approved by the Decree of February 7, 2017. [2] One of the priorities of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with developed

countries and international organizations in the world. In particular, historically close and friendly relations with Uzbekistan have determined the importance of the countries of South Asia for Uzbek diplomacy. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which has emerged as a rapidly developing market in Asia in the political, trade-economic, transport-communication, and cultural-humanitarian spheres, has also taken an important place.[3] In particular, trade and economic cooperation has been identified as the locomotive of the relationship between the two countries. As our President, Sh. Mirziyoyev, noted, "Our economies, which have great potential, are capable of complementing each other." [4]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article draws conclusions based on retrospective and critical analysis methods on the significant share of trade and economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in recent years.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS ON THE TOPIC

The article has conducted a comparative analysis of the information presented in more than ten literatures on the topic. In particular, the dissertations of Sattorov S.M., The role of economic diplomacy in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan, Oblomurodov N.N., Theoretical foundations and priority areas of attracting foreign direct investment, Khusanboev O.O., Political and legal views of Zakhiriddin Muhammad Babur, Khudoyberdiev I.I., Afghanistan-Pakistan relations in the first quarter of the 21st century, Legislative documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Boronov S.M., Ismatullayev F.O., Vaskin A.I., Fayzibayeva N.T., were used and conclusions were drawn.

RESULTS AND THEIR ANALYSIS

Studying the history of trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, we can see that one or another aspect of the relationship has been studied by local experts, historians and politicians. The scientific works created in the past period mainly cover the issues of the foreign policy strategy and factors of the Republic of Uzbekistan, its entry into the international arena, its role in creating a modern form of international relations, and mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation with countries of the world community and influential international organizations.[5] They also consider the issues of the formation and development of the country's foreign policy and highlight the main principles and priorities of the foreign policy of independent Uzbekistan.

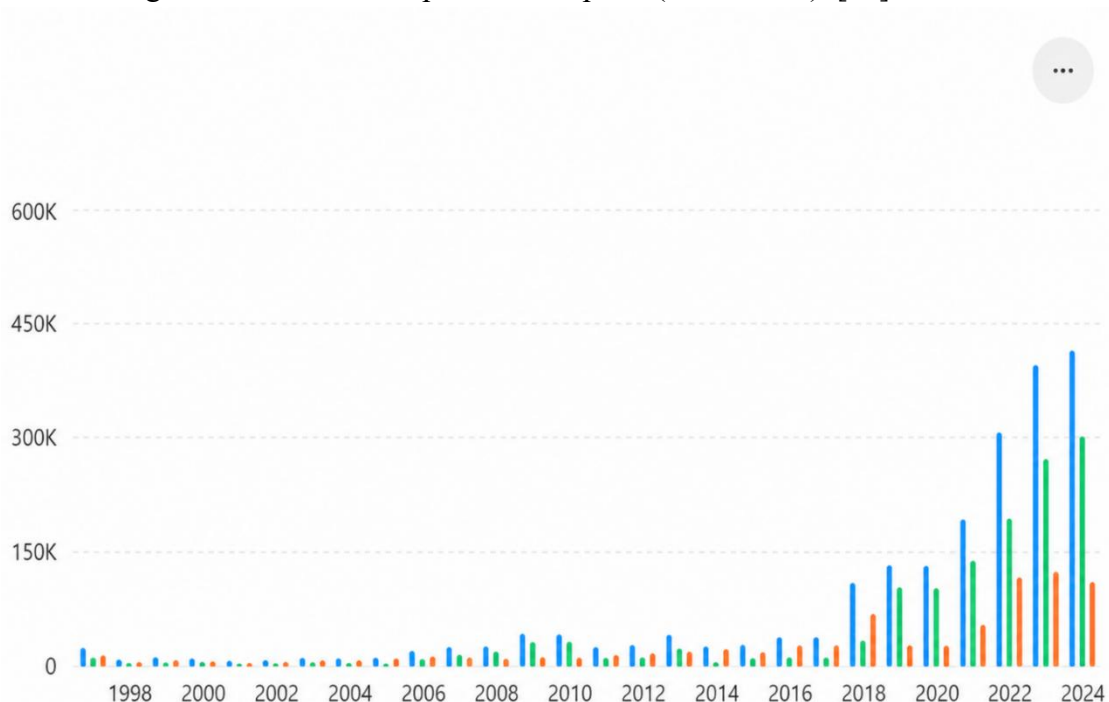
Looking at the recent history of Uzbek-Pakistani cooperation, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was one of the first to recognize Uzbekistan on December 20, 1991, and established diplomatic relations on May 10, 1992. The relations between the two countries reached a new level when the Head of State of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, paid an official visit to Uzbekistan in June 1992. During this visit, trade, economic, transport and cultural cooperation between the countries was established. [6]

On June 27, 1992, an agreement was signed between Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the principles of interstate relations and cooperation [7].

We can see the rapid development of trade and economic relations between the two countries and the entry and operation of a number of famous foreign firms and enterprises in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Uzbekistan. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a leader in industrial economy among Asian countries. The textile, mineral resources, metallurgy, petrochemical, leather and footwear, paper and food industries are developed in the industry. Pakistan exports agricultural products, rice, fruits, wool, leather raw materials, tobacco and fish products, and medical equipment to Uzbekistan.[8]

From the first years of cooperation between the two countries, 14 well-known Pakistani companies entered Uzbekistan.[9] They are Tabani Corporation[10] Metro, Mercury, Fayz Plastic Limited, Irjar Textile, Rahmat Trading Corporation, Kamron Corporation, and others. From 11 to 26 January 1993, a delegation of Pakistani businessmen visited Uzbekistan with the support of the “Uzbekistan-Pakistan Economic and Cultural Center”. [11] Pakistanis Shafiq Siddiqui, Miyan Akhal Mahmud, Miyan Bashar, Malik Ashraf and Hamil Akhtar expressed interest in establishing targeted cooperation with Uzbekistan and entering our markets. During the visit, they reviewed scientific research work carried out by Pakistani scientists on potato cultivation using microbiological methods adapted to Uzbek conditions.[12]

Trade relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan have expanded significantly in recent years, reflecting a significant deepening of economic ties. Over the past five years, the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries has tripled, reaching an impressive \$387.3 million by the end of 2023. This significant growth reflects the growing interconnectedness and rapidly developing commercial opportunities that both countries are exploiting. Uzbekistan–Pakistan Foreign Trade turnover, exports and imports (1998–2024) .[13]



One particularly strong area of growth has been Uzbekistan's agricultural exports. Most notably, Pakistan has become the main export market for Uzbekistan's fruit and vegetables during this period, with a significant 26.2 percent increase in these exports.[14] This makes Pakistan a key pillar of Uzbekistan's agricultural export strategy, surpassing other important markets such as Russia (25.1%), Kazakhstan (10.5%), and China (9.2%). In January-March 2024, the share of fruit and vegetable exports in total exports was 3.4 percent, indicating its increasing contribution to the national export portfolio.

Looking more closely at the trade figures for 2023, Uzbekistan's exports to Pakistan amounted to \$269.1 million.[15] Imports from Pakistan amounted to \$118.05 million. This shows a significant increase in the trade balance in favor of Uzbekistan, which highlights its competitive advantage in certain sectors and Pakistan's significant demand for Uzbek products. As of 2024, trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Pakistan reached \$404.5 million. This figure represents a more than tenfold increase compared to \$36.5 million in 2017. The rapid increase in trade volumes indicates that the institutional foundations of economic cooperation are being strengthened and a new model of economic cooperation is being formed. This positive trade balance further reinforces Pakistan's growing importance as a key destination for various Uzbek agricultural and industrial products.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

By analyzing the trade and economic cooperation of Uzbekistan with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the following conclusions can be drawn:

One of the priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to establish bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, one of the developed countries in Asia. Accordingly, cooperation is being developed in many areas, including various areas of the economy. The legal basis for this is the intergovernmental agreement between Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Trade plays an important role in economic export and import, in raising interstate relations to a new level. The influx of Pakistani citizens from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for business purposes and within the framework of academic exchanges in the field of education and culture, which increases their interest in our country, is an important factor in increasing the flow of tourists.

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