



Strengthening Uzbekistan's Interregional Cooperation with Central Asian Countries Through Environmental Factors

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the processes of strengthening the interregional cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the countries of Central Asia, particularly from the perspective of environmental factors. Based on the foreign policy priorities outlined in the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, the study highlights issues of regional integration and economic, cultural, and environmental cooperation. The ideas of peace, mutual trust, and solidarity promoted by Shavkat Mirziyoyev serve to further strengthen ecological and social cooperation among the states of the region.

Keywords:

Uzbekistan, Central Asia, regional cooperation, environmental factors, foreign policy, sustainable development, water resources, energy security, integration, environmental diplomacy.

Introduction. The issue of strengthening Uzbekistan's interregional cooperation with the countries of Central Asia is currently considered one of the most important directions of the country's foreign policy. Today, special attention is being paid in Uzbekistan to the development of mutually beneficial relations with the states of Central Asia.

The foreign policy of Uzbekistan and the integration processes being implemented with the Central Asian countries are reflected in the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, particularly in Section VI entitled "Approaching Global Problems Based on National Interests," which defines the main priority tasks in the sphere of foreign policy.

As A. Quldoshev noted, "Within the system of international environmental political relations, the relatively independent national environmental policies of states and their

institutional systems are not only constituent subjects but also objects of global environmental policy." In other words, every state implements its own national environmental policy within the framework of international environmental politics.

In this regard, the states located in the region implement national environmental policies based on their territorial and ecological characteristics. In particular, it is important to ensure that national environmental policies correspond with the common and international environmental policies of the regional states. Environmental threats are not limited by the borders of a single country but have regional and international significance.

For example, all states in the region share responsibility for the tragedy of the Aral Sea. The destruction of this international ecosystem continues to pose a direct threat to the region.

The most important directions of foreign policy include strengthening state independence and sovereignty, increasing Uzbekistan's role as an equal subject in international relations, joining the ranks of democratically developed countries, and creating a secure, stable, and friendly environment around the country. At the same time, strengthening Uzbekistan's international prestige, informing the world community about ongoing reforms, improving the legal foundations of foreign political and economic activity, and resolving issues related to the delimitation and demarcation of state borders remain highly significant.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative and interdisciplinary research methodology to analyze the environmental factors influencing the strengthening of Uzbekistan's interregional cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. The research is based on political, environmental, and regional integration approaches.

The study primarily relies on comparative analysis, historical analysis, and political-institutional methods. Comparative analysis was used to evaluate the dynamics of regional cooperation among Central Asian states, particularly in the areas of environmental security, water resource management, energy cooperation, and ecological diplomacy. Historical analysis enabled the identification of the evolution of Uzbekistan's foreign policy priorities and regional integration processes in the post-independence period.

In addition, the research applies a document analysis method to examine official state strategies, international agreements, presidential speeches, and legal documents related to regional cooperation and environmental policy. Special attention was given to the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, official statements by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and academic works devoted to environmental governance in Central Asia.

The theoretical basis of the study includes concepts of sustainable development, regionalism, environmental diplomacy, and international environmental cooperation. The

research also incorporates scholarly approaches concerning transboundary environmental threats, particularly issues related to the Aral Sea crisis, water distribution, and ecological security in Central Asia.

The empirical basis of the article consists of official statistical data, interstate agreements, analytical reports, and scientific literature concerning cooperation among Central Asian countries. The collected materials were systematically analyzed to determine the role of environmental factors in promoting regional stability, mutual trust, and long-term cooperation.

The research follows principles of objectivity, scientific consistency, and interdisciplinary analysis, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of Uzbekistan's regional environmental cooperation policy.

Results.

In Uzbekistan, great importance is attached to building a stable, just, and democratic state in both domestic and foreign policy, ensuring the country's openness to the outside world, and developing regional and multilateral cooperation.

At present, program documents and "road maps" aimed at expanding multifaceted cooperation with the countries of Central Asia have been adopted. During high-level dialogues between President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the leaders of regional states, particular attention has been paid to implementing an open, pragmatic, and carefully considered foreign policy that corresponds to national interests.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized: "Readiness for practical cooperation and sincere aspiration toward it, as well as the sense of responsibility of all Central Asian countries for a common future, form the foundation for the stable development and prosperity of the region. Uzbekistan supports the rapid and peaceful resolution of disputes and the strengthening of mutual trust."

Discussion.

Uzbekistan's foreign policy initiatives are creating new opportunities for the whole of Central Asia. The country is playing an active role as an important state contributing to the

stabilization of economic, socio-political, and cultural processes in the region.

Today, a new system of interstate relations is being formed in Central Asia. Uzbekistan is demonstrating high activity in various directions within this process. A positive trend toward healthier regional relations can be observed.

Uzbekistan has expanded bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan and is actively participating in international efforts to resolve the Afghan issue. The country is involved in projects such as the "Surkhan-Puli Khumri" power transmission line and the "Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat" railway project. In addition, an Educational Center for Afghan citizens operates in Termez.

In recent years, the volume of trade turnover between Uzbekistan and the Central Asian countries has doubled, while the number of joint enterprises has increased fourfold. The Central Asian states have also signed several international agreements on radiation safety, sustainable use of water resources, and energy cooperation.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated: "The expansion of rapprochement and cooperation in the region is a demand of the time and an irreversible process. It has historical foundations and is not directed against anyone's interests. By strengthening unity and solidarity, we are presenting our developing region as a reliable international partner."

In Uzbekistan's foreign policy orientation, establishing a balanced system of cooperation with countries around the world and international organizations is of great importance. This policy serves to modernize the economy, ensure stability, and create a favorable environment for cooperation in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan acts as a leading state in the region. The country has signed strategic partnership agreements with all neighboring states, which creates opportunities for coordinating regional policy.

Uzbekistan's initiatives take into account the interests of all Central Asian countries and are based on the principle of consensus. Tashkent's active and constructive diplomacy has created

a new political atmosphere in the region, contributing to the strengthening of interstate cooperation.

At the same time, cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian spheres is also expanding. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted: "Central Asia is a shared past and a common future. In this regard, it is proposed to establish a Central Asian Prize in the fields of science, culture, and sports, as well as to organize university forums and regional sports games."

Ensuring peace and stability in Central Asia contributes not only to the development of the countries of the region but also to the sustainable development of the entire Eurasian continent.

The Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Oliy Majlis also identifies the active implementation of foreign policy as a priority direction of national development. The New Uzbekistan considers bringing relations with the Central Asian countries, based on friendship, good neighborliness, and strategic partnership, to a new stage as one of its main objectives.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan's policy aimed at strengthening interregional cooperation with the countries of Central Asia has become one of the key priorities of its modern foreign policy strategy. The study demonstrates that environmental factors play a crucial role in enhancing regional integration, ensuring sustainable development, and promoting long-term political and economic stability in Central Asia.

The research findings indicate that issues such as water resource management, environmental security, energy cooperation, and the consequences of the Aral Sea crisis require coordinated regional approaches and collective responsibility among Central Asian states. In this context, Uzbekistan has emerged as an active initiator of constructive dialogue, environmental diplomacy, and regional cooperation.

Furthermore, the foreign policy initiatives promoted by Shavkat Mirziyoyev have significantly contributed to strengthening mutual trust, good-neighborly relations, and

strategic partnership within the region. The implementation of pragmatic and balanced foreign policy principles has created favorable conditions for expanding cooperation in economic, environmental, cultural, and humanitarian spheres.

The study concludes that environmental cooperation serves not only as a mechanism for addressing ecological challenges but also as an important factor in maintaining regional peace, stability, and security. Therefore, strengthening institutional cooperation, developing joint environmental programs, and improving regional mechanisms for sustainable resource management remain essential priorities for the future development of Central Asia.

Finally, Uzbekistan's experience demonstrates that effective regional environmental cooperation can become a significant foundation for broader regional integration and sustainable development across the Eurasian space.

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