

THE HISTORY OF COOPERATION BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Annotation: This article analyzes the historical development of political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the People's Republic of China. It presents an overview of the cooperation process from the establishment of diplomatic relations to the present day, highlighting high-level visits, collaboration within international organizations, and joint investment projects. Special attention is given to projects within the framework of the "Belt and Road Initiative," as well as cooperation prospects in transport, energy, and industrial sectors.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, People's Republic of China, diplomatic relations, strategic partnership, Belt and Road Initiative, investment, trade, energy, transport, SCO, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Xi Jinping.

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the People's Republic of China were established on January 2, 1992. Since then, relations between the two countries have steadily developed and reached the level of strategic partnership.

While bilateral cooperation in the late 1990s was mainly limited to economic and political dialogue, since the 2000s it has expanded significantly into fields such as energy, transportation, infrastructure, science and technology, military-technical cooperation, and culture.

China has become one of Uzbekistan's main foreign trade partners. The number of joint industrial enterprises, investment projects, and collaborations in high-tech sectors has grown. The proposed China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan railway project plays an important role in regional logistics.

Within the framework of the "Belt and Road Initiative", launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, Uzbekistan has actively participated in implementing joint projects in transportation and infrastructure. Major projects include the Angren–Pop railway line, the Kamchik tunnel, and logistics centers.

Cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and both countries' shared approaches to regional security and counterterrorism, have further strengthened bilateral relations. High-level meetings between President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and President Xi Jinping have elevated bilateral relations to a new stage. Since 2017, numerous trade and investment agreements worth billions of dollars have been signed during official visits ¹.

The First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, once stated: "We want to establish good and equal relations with China. We aim to achieve harmony with our great neighbor. We are willing to study and adopt its valuable experience. A new chapter has been opened in the history of our mutual relations with China. A solid foundation has been laid for further developing mutually beneficial ties with this great country."²

¹ ЎзМА, Ф-М 37, 1-рўйхат, 6454-йиғма жилд, Б.62.

² Каримов И.А. Ўзбекистоннинг ўз истиқлол ва тараққиёт йўли. Т.: "Ўзбекистон", 1992. Б.165.

In November 1998, at the invitation of the Ministry of Education of China, a delegation from the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of Uzbekistan paid an official visit to China. In 1999, an agreement was signed between the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies and Tianjin Polytechnic University of China to establish a joint educational venture.

The “Chinese Language Center” is successfully operating at the Uzbek State World Languages University, playing an important role in promoting Chinese language studies in Uzbekistan. In 1998, a cooperation agreement was also signed between Tashkent State Technical University and Beijing University of Science and Technology of China. Under this agreement, faculty exchanges, postgraduate training, and joint scientific research programs have been established³.

The fifth session of the Uzbekistan–China Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, held on February 13, 2003, played a significant role in expanding trade and economic relations between the two countries. During the session, negotiations were held regarding the sale of IL-76 military transport aircraft manufactured in Beijing in February 2003. The Chinese side also expressed its interest in cooperating in the fields of gas and oil extraction, indicating a willingness to strengthen partnership in the energy sector⁴.

During his official visit to the People’s Republic of China in 2005, the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, stated: “Uzbekistan–China relations have entered a new stage of development, and the Interstate Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership signed during this visit serves as a solid foundation for advancing strategic partnership relations.”⁵

To date, Uzbekistan–China relations have developed rapidly and reached a high stage of advancement. At the invitation of President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, paid a state visit to China from May 11 to 15, 2017.

Uzbekistan–China cooperation has become broad and multifaceted, with strategic partnership relations elevated to a high level. These relations contribute to the national interests, socio-economic development, and growing global influence of both countries. This dynamic partnership is evolving on the foundation of mutual trust and enduring friendship, initially laid by Uzbekistan’s First President, Islam Karimov.

Expressing his respect for China’s interest in Uzbekistan’s ancient history and culture, President Mirziyoyev stated: “We are pleased by your visit to Bukhara in 2016 and the great interest you showed in the rich cultural heritage left by our ancestors. Uzbekistan views China as a country with an ancient history, unique culture, and immense potential—one of the leaders of the global economy that is moving forward with firm determination toward its goals.”⁶

China is one of the largest investors in Uzbekistan’s economy. More than 700 companies and enterprises with Chinese capital are currently operating in the country. Over the past years, Chinese investors have contributed approximately \$7.8 billion in investments to Uzbekistan’s

³ ЎзМА, Ф-М 37, 1-рўйхат, 6454-йиғма жилд, Б.63.

⁴ Қирғизбоев А. “Ўзбекистон Республикасининг Осиё мамлакатлари билан халқаро ҳамкорлиги” Т. Фан нашриёти. 2004. Б.156.

⁵ Каримов И.А. “Ўзбек халқи ҳеч қачон ҳеч кимга қарам бўлмаганди” Т.Ўзбекистон нашриёти. 2005-йил. 13-жилд.Б.420.

⁶ “Халқ сўзи” газетаси. 2017-йил 16-май.

economy. On May 14–15, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev took part in the “Belt and Road” International Forum held in Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China. During the forum, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed several priority areas for cooperation, emphasizing the following key task: First, he suggested enriching the Belt and Road Initiative with specific programs and projects aimed at fostering regional development⁷.

Secondly, President Mirziyoyev proposed the development of a Comprehensive Program of Joint Actions to establish transport and logistics corridors that would connect Central Asia with countries in South and Southeast Asia, as well as Europe, via China and Russia.

On April 7, 2019, the Second Belt and Road International Forum was held in Beijing, People's Republic of China. At the forum, Uzbekistan presented several initiatives, including: The creation of a joint agro-innovation center aimed at introducing cutting-edge technologies and advanced solutions for the development of the green economy and smart agriculture, as well as enhancing food security; The proposal to establish a UN Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region; The initiation of a project to create a zone of environmental innovations and technologies in the Aral Sea area⁸.

On May 7, 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, held a telephone conversation with the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping. During the call, both leaders agreed to continue active exchanges between the healthcare and sanitary-epidemiological control agencies of the two countries, particularly in the context of combating global health challenges⁹.

At the invitation of President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, delivered a video address on November 4, 2020, to the participants of the opening ceremony of the 3rd China International Import Expo (CIIE – 2020) held in Shanghai¹⁰.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Uzbekistan–China relations are rapidly developing. This progress is significantly influenced by high-level meetings between the leaders of both countries and the thousands-year-old historical ties between their peoples. Today, China ranks second globally in economic power, after the United States. At the same time, China highly values Uzbekistan's role and significance in the revival and implementation of the Great Silk Road.

On the international political stage, Uzbekistan and China support each other as strategic partners. In the context of the comprehensive development of Central Asian countries, including the Republic of Uzbekistan, and their increasing recognition in the global community, cooperation with major powers like China is of great importance. In this regard, both countries are actively expanding mutual cooperation in socio-political and economic spheres, strengthening their strategic partnership for long-term mutual benefit.

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⁹ Ўша жой.

¹⁰ “Халқ сўзи” газетаси .2020 йил 5-ноябрь.

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