



Development Of Partnership And Cooperation Between The Republic Of Uzbekistan And The European Union

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the European Union within the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. At the same time, the processes of development of trade, economic, and investment relations with EU member states are analyzed. The author demonstrates on the basis of evidence that these relations are developing particularly rapidly in the trade-economic, socio-humanitarian, and transport-communication spheres.

KEYWORDS

Uzbekistan - EU cooperation, Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, investment, transport and communications, free competition, human rights, integration processes.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Uzbekistan, as an integral part of the world community, occupies a special place with active participation in the

formation of a new system of international relations. In

this regard, first of all, in the first years of independence, Uzbekistan's foreign policy has

been based on clearly defined strategies, principles, and priorities. One of the priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to establish and develop equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with leading international organizations.

At the same time, the direction of interaction with European countries is one of the priorities of the republic's foreign policy. The main feature of this direction is the establishment of relations with political, economic, and financial structures in connection with the dialogue with highly developed European countries in the political, economic, and scientific-technical spheres.

An important direction of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is the establishment and development of close mutually beneficial relations with the European Union.

Today, the European Union is an integration organization uniting 27 countries. Its main goal is to ensure stability and peace in Europe and to jointly develop the political and economic integration of member states.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research was conducted using objectivity, analysis, synthesis, comparative analysis, generalization, historical analysis, chronological methods.

RESULTS

The establishment of mutually beneficial and comprehensive cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union and its member states is of great political and economic significance for both sides today. It should be noted that for young independent Uzbekistan, the development of cooperation with this organization is one of

the main directions of the country's foreign policy strategy and is fully in line with national interests [1].

It is becoming a requirement of the time for the Republic of Uzbekistan to establish close ties with the world's major developed countries to create an economy with a broad infrastructure based on market relations and build a secular democratic state.

From the first years of independence of Uzbekistan, work has begun on both sides. In particular, the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan was recognized by the Joint Declaration adopted by the 12 member states of the European Union on 31 December 1991. On April 15, 1992, was signed the "Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Commission of the European Communities". Subsequently, diplomatic relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union were established on November 16, 1994 [2]. It should be noted that the first EU Delegation to the region was opened in November 1994 in Almaty. On May 6, 1995, a representative office of the Republic of Uzbekistan was opened in Brussels, which in turn carried out the mission of the European Union.

Paying attention to the cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union, it should be noted that the cooperation between the parties has developed in two directions [4].

The first is political and is directly related to the signing and prospects of the long-term Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union.

The second is the implementation of the European Union's TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) program in the field of science and technology in the Republic of Uzbekistan and its activities in the implementation of reforms in various areas in the country.

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union lays the foundation for further development of political, economic, and cultural ties between the parties in many areas. This Agreement consists of an introduction, Article 102, Annex 5, the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters [5], and the Statement of the French Government that the PCA (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement) does not apply to its acceding foreign countries and territories [6]. In particular, in the preamble and in Articles 1.3 of the Agreement, the parties define the main mutual political and economic values. Emphasis is placed on respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, and human rights, as well as the need to support economic development in a market-oriented system.

It should be noted that the main objectives of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed between the European Union and the Republic of Uzbekistan are:

- Support for the independence and sovereignty of Uzbekistan;
- Creating conditions for the development of political relations, political dialogue with the parties;
- Implementation and strengthening of democratic reforms in Uzbekistan, assistance, and completion of the process of transition to market relations;

- Harmonization of economic cooperation between investment partners in the development of trade and thus ensure sustainable economic development;
- Creation of a legal basis for cooperation in the legal, economic, social, financial, civic, scientific and cultural spheres.

Thus, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement is an important reality for the European Union and Uzbekistan has opened up new opportunities for cooperation. It should be noted that the implementation of the process of partnership and cooperation with the European Union is one of the important directions of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan and plays an important role in integration with the international community and the world economy [7].

Following the full ratification of the 1996 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement by the 15 member states of the European Union, the European Parliament reaffirmed its formal entry into force on 1 July 1999 [8]. This, in turn, indicates the creation of a full legal framework for cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union.

Taking into account the importance of this agreement, on September 3, 1999, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a resolution "On comprehensive measures to implement the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union and its member states." This document serves as a practical guide in creating conditions for expanding trade and economic relations with European countries, improving the investment climate, improving the system of protection of intellectual property,

production and private property, environmental protection and other areas.

One of the bodies of cooperation between Uzbekistan and the European Union is the Trade and Investment Committee established under Article 81 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The mission of this organization is to discuss various issues related to economic cooperation at the expert level. The first meeting of this organization was held from November 30 to December 1, 2000, in Tashkent.

In particular, the first phase of the project, aimed at promoting the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, began in December 2001 and was completed in March 2003. In the first phase of the project, technical assistance was provided to harmonize the following laws with European standards [9]:

- Law on companies;
- Tax and customs legislation;
- Law on Foreign Investment;
- Competition law.

It should be noted that on November 6-8, 2002, the International Business Center in Tashkent hosted a seminar on the Europe Aid project "Promotion of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed between Uzbekistan and the EU" [10].

The results of these practical seminars show that all the efforts signed in 1996 under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and implemented from 1999 to 2020 have yielded positive results.

If we analyze the dynamics of trade and investment relations, we can see the growth

from year to year. In particular, cooperation with EU member states is developing.

In particular, the volume of trade with the French Republic, the most powerful country in the European Union, amounted to \$ 251.6 million in 2017 [11], and in the first half of 2018, the trade turnover amounted to \$ 146.2 million, compared to the same period in 2017, which is 12 percent more than during the same period. Of course, the importance of high-level agreements in the growth of these results from year to year is incomparable. This can be seen as a practical expression of the official visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M.Mirziyoev to France on October 8, 2018. The visit was a bold step towards summarizing the achievements of a quarter of a century and, in turn, strengthening political dialogue, deepening cultural and economic ties, and opened a new page in the history of cooperation [13].

It is in this direction that cooperation with another economically powerful country, Germany, has reached a stage of development.

In the development of bilateral relations, President of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev's visit to Berlin on January 20, 2019, opened a new era in the history of relations [14]. During the visit, the achievements of the last quarter of a century were analyzed and it was noted that in the future it is necessary to consistently develop socio-economic and cultural-humanitarian ties. In bilateral relations, specific areas for expanding cooperation in the fields of culture and arts, tourism, science and technology, education, trade and economics, investment and technology, human rights have been identified. If we analyze the economic

cooperation in recent years, the volume of bilateral trade in 2018 amounted to 700 million. more than a euro. In 2019, it was planned to increase this figure to 1 billion euros. Thus, this agreement, which has more political and legal significance, has had a positive effect on the regulation of bilateral relations and reforms in the areas of human rights, economic liberalization, and investment climate provided for in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

The second direction of cooperation is the TACIS program, which is planned to provide direct practical assistance in the development of more economic, technical and scientific, transport and communication sectors [16]. It should be noted that until the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which was the main direction of cooperation for ten years.

Since the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the EU in 1992, the TACIS program has been launched [17].

As a result, the following accelerated reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan have been financed by the TACIS program:

- Human resource development;
- Development of organizations and institutions;
- Production, processing and distribution of food products.

However, it should be noted that TACIS projects are implemented in the framework of national and interstate programs. Therefore, the European Commission regularly finances close cooperation with Uzbekistan under the TACIS program. In turn, many projects of interstate programs provide technical and

financial assistance to several CIS countries simultaneously. This can be seen from the early first days of the TACIS program projects when financial resources were allocated.

Another noteworthy aspect of the EU TACIS program is that there are several other specialized programs under this program. The European Union plans to introduce such programs in Uzbekistan as well.

One such important and promising program is the TRACECA (Transport corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) project [18]. It aims to build a transport corridor to connect Europe-Caucasus-Asia.

The TRACECA project is one of several projects under the TACIS program, which includes several projects aimed at providing technical assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States by the European Union [19].

Another noteworthy aspect of the EU TASIS program is that there are several other specialized programs under this program. The European Union plans to introduce such programs in Uzbekistan as well. In particular, a special specialized project called TRACECA has been developed to restore the ancient Great Silk Road through Central Asia on the basis of modern technology. The project was launched in 1993 and initially cost a total of 28 million ECU (European Currency Unit).

It should be noted that the implementation of the TRACECA project through the implementation of technical assistance from the European Union under the TACIS program is promising for Uzbekistan in overcoming the inconveniences associated with transport communications [21]. Accordingly, the leadership of the Republic of Uzbekistan fully

supports the ideas and proposals put forward in the framework of the project on major transport corridors and routes through Central Asia [22]. Because the project envisages the creation of a Transcaucasian highway leading to the Black Sea ports through the territory of Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia [23]

The TACIS TRACECA program was created to establish a transport corridor connecting Central Asia with the Caucasus and Europe via the Caspian Sea, and it is planned to build roads in 9 directions. It addresses issues of road, rail, sea transport and trade. The implementation of this project has created ample opportunities for Uzbekistan to have free transit communications in the south - Iran, in the east - China, in the west - Europe [24]. Currently, 20 international routes pass through the country.

It is known that Uzbekistan is a world leader in cotton sales. The launch of the Tajen-Seraxs-Mashhad railway on May 13, 1996 on the new TRANS-ASIA route, which will take Central Asian countries to Italy through the ports of Iran and Turkey, and from there to European and world markets, was one of the significant achievements in this regard. This road, built with the direct participation of Uzbekistan, is more convenient than the Trans-Siberian highway and is about 1,500 km [26].

The launch of a transport route through Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan to the Georgian ports of Poti and Batumi has created another convenient means for Uzbekistan, including other Central Asian countries, to enter the world market. These ports provided access to the world market via the Black Sea, by rail to Western Europe,

through the Bosphorus to the Mediterranean, and from there to the Atlantic Ocean.

The effectiveness of the European Union's TACIS TRACECA program can be seen in the fact that by 1996, Uzbekistan's cooperation with foreign countries in foreign trade was 74%. The roads built under the TRACECA program serve cooperation and common development. This is evidenced by the fact that the volume of export-import cargo transported by Uzbekistan through the Persian Gulf on the route Transcaucasia (Tashkent-Ashgabat-Bander-Abbas) in 1996 amounted to 140 thousand tons, and the following year this figure reached 285 thousand tons [27]. After the opening of this road until September 1998, within the framework of cooperation with Uzbekistan in the implementation of export-import relations 470 mln. 660,000 tons of consumer goods in the amount of US dollars were transported. In this sense, the development and implementation of transport and communication projects is one of the important strategic areas of cooperation between the European Union and the Republic of Uzbekistan [28].

When we observe the chronological analysis and dynamics of relations in the framework of this project, we can see that it is carried out on a consistent basis, except for cases of short stagnation in certain periods.

The attractiveness of the TRACECA corridor for the countries, the deepening of regional cooperation and the interest in the development of transport are growing year by year. This is evidenced by the fact that after the expiration of the TRACECA International Strategy until 2015, the European Union and other partner countries have developed a new

program for the development of TRACECA countries on the Europe-Caucasus-Asia road.

The Uzbekistan side is also involved in the implementation of this ten-year strategy. This will help increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of this transport corridor, further liberalize foreign trade and reduce barriers to the movement of goods along the entire transport corridor, which in turn will have a positive impact on the economy.

The Ministry of Transport of Uzbekistan also expressed support for TRACECA's projects on digitization and optimization of logistics of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor [29].

At a meeting in Tashkent on 2 March 2020, officials from the Uzbek Ministry of Transport and TRACECA Secretary General Asset Asavbayev discussed the country's participation in projects in the TRACECA digitalization corridor [30]. The scope of digitalization includes ensuring traffic safety, improving border crossing procedures, optimizing logistics centers and ports, and using an integrated border control system.

In December 2017, the Government of Uzbekistan approved a program to diversify foreign trade routes for 2018-2022, focusing on the development of transit routes to European countries through the Caucasus and Turkey.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is worth noting the following:

Firstly, the Republic of Uzbekistan has been on the path of development for almost thirty years. Although these years were counted as a very short period in numbers, they achieved great victories in practice. The economic

reforms implemented in Uzbekistan are highly appreciated by the international community.

Secondly, in its foreign policy, Uzbekistan has made the development of cooperation with influential international organizations and developed countries a priority. Reforms in the development of trade, economic and investment relations, and especially in the field of economic liberalization, have been recognized by the world community, and Uzbekistan has been recognized as one of the ten fastest growing countries in the world.

Third, another priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to develop cooperation with the European Union. Cooperation is carried out within the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Over the past thirty years, these relations have yielded positive results and achieved high results in education, culture, trade and investment.

Fourth, the development of bilateral and multilateral relations with its member states also has a positive impact on the development of cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the European Union. Countries such as France, Germany and Italy have a significant role to play in this.

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