



Relations Between India and Uzbekistan in a New Geopolitical Scenario

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Abstract:

Due to its location in Central Asia, its vast energy reserves, and other factors, Uzbekistan has been able to draw attention from around the world. After Islam Karimov, the previous President of Uzbekistan, passed away, Shaukat Mirziyoyev took over as leader (1938-2016). During Karimov's presidency, bilateral and multilateral economic, diplomatic, cultural, and commercial relations between India and Uzbekistan grew. However, in light of the shifting geopolitical landscape, it will be important to monitor how India and Uzbekistan advance their bilateral relations on a forward-looking standard. In the near future, it will be crucial to monitor how India and Uzbekistan's bilateral plans and cooperation will affect the geopolitical and security cooperation in Asia. This essay makes an effort to concentrate on it.

Key Words: Uzbekistan and India, Central Asia, geopolitics, bilateral ties

Introduction:

Due to its geographic location and abundant mineral and hydrocarbon resources, Central Asia has become a centre of interest for the superpowers since the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, is significant for its security and strategic potential due to its location in the heart of Central Asia. For two reasons, Uzbekistan has been significant to the world's superpowers. First, Uzbekistan has a significant role to play in bringing security and peace to Afghanistan. Second, the availability of raw materials, including natural gas, cotton, and gold.¹ India and Central Asia have shared historical and cultural ties. Scholars from Central Asia visited India during the Middle Ages, and horses were imported from the region during the Mughal era. Important commercial routes connecting China, Europe, and India passed via Uzbekistan along places like Fergana, Samarkand, and Bukhara. "India's strategic alliance with Uzbekistan" has three justifications. It will first aid in building positive ties with other Central Asian nations and aid in halting the development of fanaticism. Second, having solid ties with Central Asia can assist meet India's internal energy needs while ensuring energy security. Third, it will be very financially advantageous, leading to the development of strong business ties"². If Uzbekistan were to be characterised geographically, it would be connected to Afghanistan by a border of 137 km, 2,203 km, 1,099 km, Kyrgyzstan, 1,161 km, Tajikistan, and 1,621 km.³ With a population of 25,755,519, Uzbeks (80%), Russians (5.5%), Karakalpaks (2.5%), and Tatars (1.5%) live in this multilingual and multilingual -cultural nation. Gold, silver, lead, zinc, uranium, and tungsten, among other materials, are readily available in adequate amounts in Uzbekistan, a nation with abundant gas, oil, and coal deposits.³ The President developed the Uzbek model as part of a long-term development strategy to implement extensive reforms in the political, economic, social, and other spheres. Despite the severe effects of the economic crisis, development has continued at a steady rate⁴. As a result, Uzbekistan's GDP increased by at least 8% in 2015.⁵ The entire value of Uzbekistan's exports in 2015 was \$5.85 billion USD. The policy of variety in the system has sped up international trade. Russia, South Korea, Japan, Germany, China, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Turkey, Tajikistan, Bangladesh, and India are



Uzbekistan's top trading partners. Islam Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan, passed away on September 2, 2016. On December 4, 2016, a vote resulted in the election of former prime minister Shaukat Mirziyoyev to the position of president. The Central Election Commission reports that Shaukat Mirziyoyev received 87.73 percent of the vote to win.⁶ The new President of Uzbekistan, Shaukat, has hoped that Uzbekistan will resolve regional and international issues since taking office on December 9, 2016. Will demonstrate increased agitation for action and economic growth.⁷ Both internal and external challenges are faced by Uzbekistan, including corruption, ISIS terrorism, Afghanistan's instability, border disputes with neighbouring nations, the Fergana Valley dispute, water disputes, the Uzbek Islamic Militant Movement, human rights violations in the cotton industry, child labour, and the Andijan massacre in 2005, among others. Despite all of this, Uzbekistan has been successful in strengthening its position in the global energy market.⁸

Diplomatic Ties:

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, India and Uzbekistan established diplomatic relations. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao made a high-level visit to India in 1993. Trade and economic cooperation agreements were made between the two nations at that time, and the Indian Cultural Center in Tashkent was also established. The Indian Chair at the World Economic and Diplomacy University was also announced.⁹ In a similar vein, ties between India and Uzbekistan improved. Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Indian Prime Minister, inked eight agreements in 2006.¹⁰ Travel to Uzbekistan India hosted President Karimov in 1994, 2000, 2005, and 2011. His 2011 visit gains significance in light of the signing of a Strategic Partnership between India and Uzbekistan, which aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation and the sharing of perspectives on regional and global concerns. India's State Declaration on Central Asia Connectivity Minister E. Ahmed announced the year 2012 in his speech. In accordance with his statement, "India's 'Connect Central Asia' policy is our general policy of strengthening ties with the Eurasian region, our policy to improve our ties with China and Pakistan, and to further develop our traditional ties with Russia."¹¹ Narendra Modi, the prime minister of India, declared during a 2015 visit to Uzbekistan that the two countries had recently developed a strategic alliance based on shared values and objectives. This involves fostering regional integration, fighting terrorism, enhancing economic cooperation, and fostering regional stability. In the sectors of tourism, India and Uzbekistan reached an agreement on three different types of agreements. Intergovernmental Program of Cultural Cooperation for 2015–17; Second Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation; Third Intergovernmental Cooperation Protocol.¹² Plans to commemorate the 25th anniversary of India and Uzbekistan's diplomatic ties and to advance the two countries' bilateral diplomatic relations The 13th round of India-Uzbekistan Foreign Office Consultations was held on March 23, 2017, to give momentum. Uzbekistan is in favour of India's complete SCO membership. Uzbekistan has backed India in exchange for its permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Economic connection

A trade and economic cooperation agreement was struck between India and Uzbekistan in 1993 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Most Favored Nation Treatment (MFN) was deemed to enhance economic, scientific, and trade cooperation under this agreement, leading to a rise in bilateral trade and cooperation between India and Uzbekistan. Both the Bilateral Investment Promotion and the Avoidance of Double Taxation between India and Uzbekistan were signed in 1999. Consequently, the ongoing negotiations between India and Uzbekneftegaz over natural resources in western Uzbekistan took place during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan's 2006 trip to Tashkent. The project was established for cooperative investment in and exploration of The two businesses signed a Memorandum



of Cooperation. Through this project, work is being done on the western portion of the LGP multiplant. This project is expected to cost between \$50 and \$60 million.¹⁴

In order to advance the bilateral relationship between Uzbekistan and India, Oil and Natural Corporation of India (ONGC) Videsh Limited (OVL) and Karimov, the former president of Uzbekistan, signed an agreement on "Long Term Strategic Partnership" during Karimov's visit to India in 2011.¹⁵ One of the biggest investors in Uzbekistan's economy is India. Two projects between India and Uzbekistan were to be implemented in 2011, according to a requirement. The first project, at \$143.7 million, is carried out in the textile sector by Spatex Industries. Second, the Minda Group, which manufactures automotive components, started a new project for USD 25 million.¹⁶ To formalise bilateral cooperation on the entire, including India's trade and industry, both nations hold annual meetings. The Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Indian Entrepreneurship Association worked together to establish the job centre. SEZs Navoi, Angren, and Jizzakh have also been added to promote investment cooperation between India and Uzbekistan and to create favourable conditions for investment by Indian companies in Uzbekistan. President Karimov positively responded to my suggestion to streamline the process and policies for Indian investment, etc. Joint ventures in the financial services, insurance, agricultural, information technology, pharmaceutical, and other sectors are the greatest way for India to connect with Central Asia.¹⁷ India has signed a Bilateral Investment Promotion Protection Agreement (BIPA) with each of the Central Asian nations in order to strengthen its trade connections with Uzbekistan after agreement on the Principle of Inter Cooperation was established.¹⁸ The demand for medical travel between India and Uzbekistan has increased. The country of Uzbekistan's top patient preference is India.¹⁹ Given the close proximity of India and Uzbekistan, patients from that country are increasingly choosing to travel there for medical treatment. India's Pharmaceutical Promotion Council exports to the CIS Various events, such as pharmaceutical buyer-seller conferences, are planned to promote. However, only 1.2% of India's overall exports are to the CIS. Increased investment in this field will speed up the economy and bilateral trade, demonstrating cooperation. Various events, such as pharmaceutical buyer-seller conferences, are planned to promote.

Security Partnership:

Any nation's foreign policy and national interests are impacted by instability and insecurity. Similar to how India's national interests are impacted by unrest and instability in Central Asia. India is funding the rehabilitation effort and training Afghan military and administrative leaders in order to bring about stability and peace in that country. Drug and opium smuggling poses a serious threat to the security of India and Central Asia as the Ferghana Valley has turned into a distribution hub for drug smuggling²⁰. During his 2015 visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated, "The two sides (India-Uzbeks) agreed to establish peace in Afghanistan, a genuine Afghan-led process for peaceful reconstruction and revival for the security and stability of the region." This is then transferred via a number of channels to Russia and the West via the Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Kazakhstan. India now faces a major concern as a result of this. In India, it stretches into the northwest adjacent nations of Pakistan and Afghanistan, while the northeastern nations of Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia.

Cooperation for Transportation and Connectivity:

India and Uzbekistan don't have any direct land connections. Both nations stated a willingness to establish various transportation corridor projects, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor, to address this issue (INSTC). Through Iran, this project will link Mumbai with St. Petersburg and Moscow. Central Asia and the South Caucasus have also been included in this initiative. India began this significant sea, rail, and road



project in 2000 in coordination with Russia and Iran. To create an international transportation and transit corridor that enables freight travel between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf, India would wish to enter into multimodal transport agreements with Oman, Kazakhstan, Oman, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The INSTC covers both the Armenia-Iran Railway Link and the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Rail Link.

The INSTC project was pushed into action in 2015 with the visit of Indian Prime Minister Modi. Additionally, India declared its desire to be included in the 2011 Ashgabat Agreement, which was signed by Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Oman. For example, joining the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA 2010) can aid in boosting trade with this region. India has to create new ways to link with Central Asia. India's trading area from Afghanistan could expand if it signs on to this transit deal. The 5th Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia Istanbul Process 2015 was held in Pakistan, where Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj stated that "We have formally expressed our willingness to join the Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement."²⁷. Through seamless and ongoing connectivity, India's participation in the treaty may aid in the expansion of its trading relations with Afghanistan and Central Asian nations. Trucks from Afghanistan will deliver 22 Indian items to Central Asian markets. India would be able to exchange commodities extremely readily as a result. This could develop into a useful method for India to convey commodities. Pakistan, meanwhile, has not yet granted India's desire. One such nation that offers a different way to connect India with Central Asia is Afghanistan. India has built an Afghan road connecting Zaranj and Delaram, giving Afghanistan access to a transportation route in remote areas. Iran, on the other hand, offers a path that connects India with Central Asia. For instance, Iran opens the way for trade from Central Asia to India via a rail link through Turkmenistan.²³.

Cultural exchange:

India and Uzbekistan have a very deep cultural relationship. Cultural exchange and direct contact between the two nations' citizens have improved bilateral relations. Tashkent's Indian Cultural Center was founded in 1995 and was renamed Lal Bahadur Shastri Indian Cultural Center in 2005. The management of the Government of India's scholarship programmes aims to disseminate information about Indian culture and life through this exchange of cultural, language, lectures, etc. between the two nations. welcomed the 2015–2017 signing of a new programme of cultural cooperation and urged for its prompt and complete implementation to improve cultural interactions. Uzbekistan joined ITEC in 1993, and as a result, the Indian government awards ICCR scholarships to Uzbek students to help them develop their abilities and enable them to enrol in Indian higher education institutions.²⁴ A centre for information technology named after Jawaharlal Nehru was built in Tashkent in 2006. The Indian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and Uzbekistan reached an agreement in 2011. In order to reach a cyber security agreement with Uzbekistan, India's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), India, and the Information Security Center (ISC) worked together in January 2016. The agreement's main goal was to explore potential areas of cooperation and increase knowledge and experience sharing in the identification, remediation, and prevention of security-related incidents on the Internet. During this time, bilateral cooperation in the sphere of tourism was acknowledged as being crucial.

Multilateral Cooperation Forums:

India and Uzbekistan are active participants in multilateral forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the CICA (Conference on interaction and confidence building measurement in Asia). A key venue for regional economic and security cooperation is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Since 2005, India has been a part of this



organisation as an observer, however as of the SCO conference in Astana, Kazakhstan, in 2017, India has been admitted as a full member. In a way, the SCO will serve as a link between India and Central Asia. India's admission to the SCO will aid in the effort to live up to the demands of the Asian century. It will be internally secure and stable, play a significant part in the global economy, and which will be strongly connected to the rest of the globe. ²⁵ From Afghanistan's stability and peace, Central Asian and Indian relations have improved Afghanistan's stability and peace will hasten the economic and political integration of Central Asia and India. Through SCO, this project can be carried out. On the other hand, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are concerned about the rise in religious extremism and terrorism. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can be helpful in resolving this issue by providing RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Framework) information to address the widespread issue in the region. can offer a forum for sharing. By building the Uzbek-Afghan border bridge and putting into service a new electricity line from Uzbekistan to Kabul, among other things, Uzbekistan is effectively aiding in the fulfilment of UN projects for Afghanistan rebuilding. Afghanistan is another country where India and Uzbekistan are cooperating on a bilateral basis. The transmission system that India built to send electricity to Afghanistan and Uzbekistan's power plant is now complete. ²⁶ CAREC, or Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, may be a wise choice for India. India will meet with its eleven member nations (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Kyrgyzstan) at the multilateral and bilateral levels if India declares its willingness to join this organisation. It will be able to develop in several locations at once to meet the demand for economic expansion and the supply of energy, which will also open the door for linking with Central Asia.

Conclusion:

Since the Mughal Empire and the old Silk Road, India and Uzbekistan have had good bilateral relations. Since Uzbekistan has been a friend of India, this nation is given prominence in India's relations with this region and in its policies on connectivity in Central Asia. Together, the two nations are enhancing their political, economic, and cultural relations. There should be frequent high-level political visits from Uzbekistan to India. The strengthening of people-to-people contacts under official dialogues and bilateral agreements, as well as mutual cooperation on new trade possibilities, are necessary for India's Central Asia connectivity policy to be effective. Both nations may work together more closely to address issues including Afghani peace, terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, and cybercrime. Both nations must enlarge their horizons, deepen their understanding of one another, and expand their operational scope. The world is drawn to Uzbekistan because of its natural gas and oil deposits, and India's foreign policy is starting to prioritise energy issues. Uzbekistan has a significant impact on India's ability to secure its energy supply. India has to improve its global and bilateral ties with the nations that have oil and gas reserves under this circumstance. In the area of energy, new investments and sources should be promoted. India faces difficulties, but it is well-positioned to overcome them all.

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