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Research Article*

## **CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICS OF EURASIA AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the Belt and Road Initiative. This modern initiative aims to revive the ancient Silk Road and connect China with many neighboring and distant countries and economic blocs. China invests mainly in infrastructure by developing a network of land and maritime roads, facilitating communication, trade and transportation. The various projects under this initiative will make China a leader in international trade and an attractive region for giant partners. This paper analyzes the Chinese presence in Eurasia after the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative and the contemporary geopolitics of Eurasia in light of the great Chinese expansion. This study contributes to clarifying the China-Central Asia relationship and represents this relationship within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. This study is based on data issued by governmental institutions and international research centers, which makes it an important reference in Central Asian studies. This paper concluded that the Belt and Road Initiative will have a significant impact on the economy of Central Asia and its geopolitical position through the great Chinese openness and dependence on Central Asia in China's regional and international trade. The paper also discusses the Sino-Russian contrast that may arise with the Chinese penetration into Central Asia.

**Keywords:** Eurasian Geopolitics, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Chinese Foreign Policy, Central Asia, Caucasus, Post-Soviet Eurasia.

## INTRODUCTION

The Belt and Road Initiative, launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, has become the most important topic in academic circles and it is a concern for policy makers. This state-of-the-art initiative is a tool for China's rapid advancement in the world via a wide range of land and maritime routes. This initiative has implications for China's geopolitical interests in both neighboring and distant regions. The increasing trade between China and Central Asia may increase China's influence in that region, especially with the activation of the Belt and Road Initiative.

In this paper, the author deals with China-Central Asia and the Caucasus relations from an economic standpoint, based on the Belt and Road Initiative, and refers to the changes and development that it may bring about in joint cooperation. The paper presents a geopolitical analysis of Central Asia covering Sino-Russian relations and Chinese cooperation with the Central Asian regions. The author points out the great role of the western region in promoting Sino-Central Asia communication and deepening peaceful exchanges based on the policy of common interests. The author links his regional analysis to the modern Chinese strategy that relies heavily on the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Belt and Road Initiative is concerned with facilitating trade exchanges between China and member countries and overcoming border barriers, thus developing bilateral relations and strengthening the proposed transnational and intercontinental mega projects. If the proposed projects are implemented, they will have economic benefit to more than half of the human population. If the proposed projects are implemented, they will have an economic benefit to about two-thirds of the world's 4.4 billion people, a gross domestic product of about 30% of global output (World Bank, 2018), and 75% of energy reserves (Grieger, 2016).

The term "Silk Road" was coined by German explorer Ferdinand von Richthofen, to refer to the ancient routes that linked China to the West and led to many economic and cultural exchanges. In 2016, the first train loaded with containers set off from Yiwu City in east China's Zhejiang Province to Iran, passing through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, covering a distance of more than 10,000 km. On May 4, 2018, the Chinese train set off from Tangshan to Antwerp, a 16-day journey that covered a distance of 16,000 km. On January 16, 2016, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is the financing institution for the Belt and Road Initiative, was established. This newly established monetary institution has become parallel to the largest and most prestigious monetary institutions in the world and has become a threat to Western liberal monetary institutions in terms of financing development and investment projects.

This paper analyzes the Belt and Road Initiative within the framework of China's foreign policy and refers to China's geopolitical interests outside its borders and the geopolitical interests of member states in partnership with China. For example, China has increased the volume of its trade in Eurasia, as it has become the most important partner in that strategic region that attracts international powers. The paper analyzes the potential effects of Chinese investments in areas bordering China such as Central Asia. The Belt and Road Initiative is likely to affect the geopolitical balance in Eurasia, as well as in other areas of China's



active presence. The huge initiative proposed by the Chinese administration is a tempting deal for many countries, but in return, it will entail many economic, security, and political consequences that may be in favor of China in the end.

The study aims to understand the geopolitical significance of the Belt and Road Initiative and to indicate its effects on member countries. This paper analyzes, relying on Western and Chinese sources, the Chinese presence in Eurasia, which has developed greatly since the last decade; the paper aims to define the objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative, to refer to China's foreign policy in Eurasia and the threat that this initiative may pose to Russia in its backyard. Thus, the paper presents an in-depth study of the modern Chinese strategy in Central Asia and the new geopolitical foundations that China is laying.

The study assumes that the Belt and Road Initiative is a tool for China's domestic growth and foreign policy service. In other words, through this initiative, China seeks to become a global power with cross-border influence. The influence may not be in the traditional sense. China is connected to neighboring or distant regions via coastal ports and inland centers of the Chinese mainland. The Belt and Road Initiative is therefore an innovative way to create a new economic world order that is different from the prevailing one (Zhang, 2017). Chinese interests may clash with Russia in Eurasia, which has historically been considered a political and economic subordinate to Russia.

This study is based on the qualitative approach. The researcher attempts to clarify the issues related to the Belt and Road Initiative with available evidence, documents and data. This study analyzes the effects of the Belt and Road Initiative on the areas of Chinese expansion, specifically in Eurasia, which constitutes a geo-strategic center for Chinese expansion towards many regions and economic blocs. Campos and Da Silva (2015) indicates that it is very difficult to determine the future course of international relations, but this study is based on scientific facts and official documents.

The researcher relies on causality in his analysis. The Belt and Road Initiative is linked to the reasons that prompted its launch, and to indicate its characteristics and the associated regional and international reality. As part of the analysis of the Chinese presence in Eurasia, the researcher studied the Russian strategy in that region. Eurasia is an essential part in the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, since ancient times, both Russia and China had political, security, and economic ties to Central Asia. The Russian administration will be at a crossroads, either clashing with China or cooperating with it in Central Asia. The spatial framework of the study is the land and maritime routes of the Belt and Road Initiative, while the time frame starts from 2013 with the launch of the initiative by the Chinese president (Della Porta and Keating, 2008).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the Belt and Road Initiative and Chinese investment projects in Eurasia, the paper answers the following question: What is China's strategy towards Eurasia in terms of investment and bilateral cooperation?

The paper gives an explanation of China's interest in investing in Eurasia and indicates the strategic importance of that region for China. The paper studies Russia's position in the Chinese progress towards Eurasia and points to the joint

Sino-Russian strategic cooperation in that region as well as to the incongruity of some interests between Russia and China. The paper is mainly based on Chinese official documents and opinions of Chinese officials, as well as opinions of experts from Russia, Kazakhstan, and others. In order to obtain accurate analysis results, reference is made to the data of Chinese investment projects in Eurasia and Chinese trade exchanges. The intensity of trade exchange will be linked to China's geopolitical influence on Eurasia. The paper depends on the analysis of documents as well as the analysis of statistical data.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the last decade, China has achieved unprecedented qualitative development. Morgenthau (1986) pointed out that China's progress is due to its large population, wide geography, and richness in natural resources. China's accumulated surplus of economic power and international prestige through its open-door policy formed the entrance to the Belt and Road Initiative. The geopolitical parameters of this initiative are still unclear, so the Chinese data for this initiative will be analyzed in addition to some Western references that contribute to a clearer understanding. An approach from an Atlantic perspective may contribute to a clearer understanding of the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly through the interactions identified by Keohane and Nye; therefore, it is possible to rely on some Western literature to understand the strategic balance between the great powers in Asia or other regions (Keohane and Nye, 1988).

Currently, China has the second-largest economy in the world after the United States and first place in terms of the human population. It has borders with 15 countries in a strategic geographical location overlooking major marine outlets in the international economy and borders with powerful countries such as Russia and India. The Chinese influence will increase significantly with the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, which may bring about a change in the mentality of governance that has prevailed in contemporary history. The great Chinese progress and the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative confirm the ideas put forward by Keohane and Nye (1988). The economy is the most important means of gaining influence. International politics is entirely linked to economic transformations. China's position in international politics has changed dramatically in the last quarter, mainly due to the massive economic gains it has made.

The Chinese initiative, like many initiatives throughout history, is based on political-economic cooperation and people-to-people interactions, with a special focus on the regional geographic environment. In the Belt and Road model, China places great emphasis on Eurasia. Malena (2010) indicates that China seeks to build a regional system similar to the Chinese system with special political, economic, cultural, and social characteristics. It is the Sinocentric scheme that China, through the Belt and Road Initiative, intends to implement. The rise of China in the last decade may be at the expense of some international powers such as the US, the European Union, and Japan, forcing some international powers such as the US to reconsider their foreign policy. Biden's current policy, for example, differs radically from Bush's foreign policy. The US is becoming less hostile and more focused on domestic economic growth. Pardo de Santayana (2017) indicates that the world is currently in a period of transition from a unipolar regime to a multipolar one. Some third-world countries, such as China and

India, may turn into effective international powers with huge wealth.

The increase in trade exchanges between China and international partners has been reflected in the huge size of its economy. Allison (2017) considers that the Chinese economy in 2004 represented 47% of the US economy, while in 2014 it became 5% higher and is likely to take an upward trend. In March 2018, the US administration imposed taxes on many Chinese goods. This US policy was followed by a policy of reciprocity by China. In turn, China imposed taxes on US goods. This policy was known as the trade war between the US and China. Allison previously noted “in the forest as well as in the relations among nations, most sparks do not ignite blaze” (Allison, 2017). Allison links China’s economic progress with its military superiority and points out that China’s growing military capabilities undermine the United States’ position as a superpower in the world and force it to retreat at times (Allison, 2017).

The imbalance in Asia and the Atlantic began to appear in 2011 in favor of China, that is, before the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative. At that time, then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that the US was considering reducing the US presence in the Middle East and intensifying its presence in East Asia. Zhang Yunling (2017) points out that China makes more contributions than the US in the neighboring region, which makes China a key country in achieving Asia-Pacific growth. In this context, Yong Wang (2016) points out that the Chinese administration considers the neighboring region crucial for it to create a balance of power in Asia and the world and to protect Chinese interests. China’s strong relations with neighboring countries give it more strength when dealing with the West and Japan. Allison (2017) points out that China will strengthen its diplomatic relations, increase economic exchanges with neighboring countries and deepen its dependence on China, thus increasing China’s influence in its surroundings and diminishing that of the US.

In 2012, Bremmer foresaw the future relationship between the US and China. He referred to joint cooperation or a clash of interests. Indeed, a trade war broke out between the two greatest economies, and the bilateral relationship is still tense. China’s foreign policy principles have remained consistent, but its bilateral relations with some countries have been modified in line with its interests (Malena, 2010: 5). According to Malena, the theory of international relations is not just a tool for theorizing, but rather a way to understand the foreign policy of states. Malena quotes the following from the former Chinese Foreign Minister “the strategic calculation of the People’s Republic of China should not ignore a series of elements: 1) cooperate with those regional and global forces that tend to economic integration and facilitate financial assistance; 2) avoid all kinds of foreign control; 3) advocate for our own ideas regarding the new international order; 4) maintain the stability of the surrounding region; and 5) speak on behalf of the Third World countries” (Malena, 2010: 185).

In its dealings with international partners, China relies on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and on the thought established by Deng Xiaoping. These principles were announced during Zhou Enlai’s visit to India in 1954. These principles state the following 1) Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; 2) Mutual practice of non-aggression; 3) Non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; 4) Equality and mutual benefit and 5) Peaceful coexistence. Chinese President Xi Jinping considered these five principles to be

the backbone of contemporary Chinese political thought (Xi, 2017). President Xi Jinping also noted at the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017 that China will continue to support international efforts to maintain world peace and promote common development.

The great economic progress made by China has increased Beijing's international standing at the expense of traditional powers. The "miracle of the Chinese Renaissance" raised questions in academic circles, and China has become the most important topic in contemporary political debate (Montobbio, 2017). Some point out that it is not possible to present an explanation of Chinese politics based on Western theories and viewpoints. China is a unique model that does not align with Western political and progressive trends that have prevailed for decades. Qin (2013) points to three approaches to the study of international relations that have emerged in the past decade and that give space to Chinese philosophy, thought, and customs for a clearer understanding of Chinese society. The three approaches are Zhao Tingyang's approach and theory of Tianxia, an ordinal principle with roots going back to the Zhou Dynasty. This principle is based on peaceful conflict resolution, mutual benefit, and living in harmony. According to Confucian ideals, this system made a peace that lasted for 800 years, by strengthening family ties and non-discrimination, in contrast to the Westphalian that arose in the West in the seventeenth century (Qin, 2013).

The second approach is to study the behavior of China using conceptual schemes through Western theories. Some Chinese scholars, such as Yan Xuetong, interpreted some events before the Qin Dynasty, that is, before 221 BC. Yan Xuetong attempts to connect the ideas of ancient China in the days of the Warring States with modern Chinese strategy. The third approach is interactive. Qin presents a study that combines Western theories of international relations with the historical and cultural foundations of Chinese thought. Qin (2013) emphasizes independent ontology in building international standards. Yan Xuetong points out that China should seek to build partnerships and alliances to build a modern international order, specifically with neighboring countries; Xuetong believes that the Chinese government should focus more on national security than economic security (Creutzfeldt, 2012).

Most studies of the Belt and Road Initiative deal with the economic dimension, while some studies deal with Chinese national security and Chinese foreign policy. Undoubtedly, the Belt and Road Initiative carries political and security dimensions, not just economic ones. For example, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC, 2016) indicates that China is competing with the largest economies through this initiative and creating a loophole in the current international system. Djankov (2016: 13) also points out that China seeks to dominate Asia in the long run, and the Belt and Road Initiative may be an effective tool, but China must cooperate politically and militarily in order to ensure regional security. As Van der Putten et al. (2016) point out that the Belt and Road Initiative increases the Chinese presence in Central Asia and in areas not far from Europe, such as the Balkans, Turkey, the Southern Caucasus and North Africa, and in areas of strategic importance to Europe, such as the Middle East and East Africa.

Rolland (2016) notes that many political thinkers have pointed to the idea of China's great progress after the end of the Cold War. General Liu Yazhou - General of the Air Force of the People's Liberation Army and Chief Political

Commissar of the National Defence University proposed the idea of Chinese integration with Central Asia, due to the strategic importance of this region on the economic and security levels for China. For General Liu Yazhou, the main objective is to support the integration of western China and Central Asia and to thwart any US attempt to establish a presence in that region. In this context, Wang (2014: 131) considers that China should develop an updated plan for cooperation with international partners in order to ensure the security of trade routes that reach western China.

## GEOPOLITICS OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

The Chinese economy has grown tremendously in the last decade, which has brought about changes to the geopolitics of Asia and the world as a whole. Grygiel (2011: 2) referred to the geopolitical changes that occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which opened the door to the United States to be the most prominent international power and an active player in Central Asia. Other scholars such as Qoraboyev (2018: 104) have pointed to the geopolitical dimension of the BRI and China's great interest in Central Asia as a vital area for Chinese influence and the success of the BRI, thus it appears that Eurasia is a strategic region in international politics. From the perspective of Pardo de Santayana (2017), China's greater growth as an international power will lead to updated geopolitics of international relations. The rules of the game that prevailed in the period of the Soviet Union and after it during the absolutism of the United States will change with the rise of China, which pursues a completely different strategy based on mutual gain and international cooperation.

The Russian and British interest in the Eurasian region emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century through the "Great Game". Russian interests may clash sharply with the Chinese in Eurasia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, nationalist sentiments emerged in the countries of Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and others. Despite the Sino-Russian friendship, the foreign policy and strategic interests of the two countries differ. The Belt and Road Initiative confirms Mackinder's ideas of Eurasian connectivity. China is establishing a network of transportation and communication that contributes to Sino-Eurasian communication and creates a developed cooperative economic model. From the perspective of classical realism, Spykman argues that whoever controls the Rimland may control Eurasia (Holmila, 2020).

Historical experiences indicate that powerful states often seek access to the sea and control of trade outlets, and according to Spykman, whoever rules Eurasia will control the world (Spykman and Rollins, 1939). Sino-Russian history is full of tension and conflicting interests. Russia's continental power may constitute a stumbling block for China if it is not dealt with diplomacy and skill (Spykman, 1944). China is penetrating Eurasia through the Belt and Road Initiative, turning China into an unbreakable international power through integrated land and sea routes. Bernal Meza (2016) consider that China has become the hub of Asian regional growth and that the great economic growth achieved by China will enable it to create a common space for Asian integration. According to Malena (2010: 67) China still follows the instructions of Sun Zi, to protect the heart by controlling the limbs; this is one of the foundations of Chinese thought. Malena

refers to “The National Defense of China”, published by the Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China in 1988, in which the document notes the increasing importance of economic security (2010: 91).

China deals with international partners in a pragmatic manner, without forgetting that it belongs to the Third World. China’s constant growth since the eighties has increased its import of natural resources. Therefore, the focus of Chinese foreign policy is based on economic security (Zakaria, 2008: 108). The Belt and Road Initiative is not limited to achieving economic interests, but also to cultural exchanges, people-to-people communication, and political cooperation. China has been able to be the world’s number one exporter of goods and has quadrupled its domestic product in fifteen years (Malena, 2010). The financial crisis of 2008 that hit Europe and the United States made China pursue a strategy of the market and domestic consumption. In the early twenty-first century, Joseph Nye suggested that in the future, China might consider re-annexing Taiwan and adopting a different strategy in the South China Sea (Nye, 2002).

The Chinese administration has launched the Belt and Road Initiative as a tool to achieve the set strategic goals. Currently, there are huge Chinese economic projects in Asia and Europe, in addition to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Nye (2002). The Chinese initiative, which could involve more than 120 countries from all parts of the world, would have a major impact on Central Asia. China has taken advantage of the asymmetry between the West and Russia to woo Putin in its favor (Higuera, 2015). The Belt and Road Initiative and China’s intensification of its projects in Eurasia would fill the void left by the collapse of the Soviet Union and Moscow’s withdrawal from that region. The withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan will facilitate the way for Beijing in its expansion (Clover and Hornby, 2015).

Joseph Nye points out that economic strength is no less important than military capabilities, and this is what constituted a lever for China in its rapid progress. Nye also considers that China has become a force to be reckoned with, as the United States is no longer the only power capable of controlling international politics and the global economy (Nye, 2002). The transition from unipolarity to multipolarity brings the idea of geopolitics forward. The United States, Europe, and Japan are no longer the only dominant ones. Many emerging powers such as China, Russia, India, and Brazil have an active presence in the international economy. The need for the emerging powers to access energy sources reshapes new geopolitics (Pardo de Santayana, 2015). Nye (2002) argues that China could become a great power and replace the United States in many regions, including Eurasia. According to Yong Wang, the Belt and Road Initiative may bring China into many challenges due to the political, cultural, and religious differences between its neighboring countries (Wang, 2016).

## **THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AS A GRAND STRATEGY**

Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the Belt and Road Initiative in September 2013 during an official visit to Kazakhstan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs People’s Republic of China, 2013). Kazakhstan had an active role on the ancient Silk Road and is expected to be a strategically important member state on the

Belt and Road Initiative due to its geographic location in Central Asia. A report issued by the Office of the Leading Group for the Promotion of the Construction of the Belt and Road (2017) indicates that this Chinese initiative aims to deepen regional cooperation and enhance communication between countries on the basis of development and peace. The Belt and Road Initiative creates more partners for China and draws international attention to it (Brown, 2016: 28). China's vital issues such as Tibet, the South China Sea, and Xinjiang will not be compromised (Aoyama, 2016). The Belt and Road Initiative will increase China's regional and international influence, which will reflect on the development of China's economy and local societal progress (Johnson, 2016).

This initiative restores strategic importance to the east after a period of international isolation since the collapse of the Soviet Union. China's relations with the United States and Japan are unlikely to turn into strategic partnerships, given the dark history, strong international competition, and sharp division of interests (Grieger, 2016). The Belt and Road Initiative propagates the Chinese model of development and deepens the "outward" strategy initiated in 1999. Many of the proposed projects have not yet crystallized, but important projects are on their way to be realized, such as the railway between China and Europe and between China and Iran, the development of the ports of Piraeus and Gwadar, and the development of the city of Khorgos near the border with Kazakhstan.

According to official reports from the Chinese administration, the aim of the Belt and Road Initiative is to promote peaceful cooperation and common development at the regional and international levels (Leading Group Office, 2017). The Belt and Road Initiative comes as part of the "Path to Revitalization" of the Chinese nation in an international context, making the People's Republic of China more robust. President Xi Jinping pointed out that the Chinese dream is to achieve prosperity, increase the strength of the country and the well-being of the people (Xi, 2014). The Belt and Road Initiative was launched in 2013 at a time characterized by low exports and less dynamic economic growth, whether in China or the world. The Belt and Road Initiative came as a tool to compensate for China's excess capacity in many industrial sectors by increasing demand for Chinese capabilities and opening more markets (PWC, 2016). Therefore, the new definition of this project may be, the innovative Chinese tool to absorb the excess industrial capacity and promote it outside the borders, as it is an opportunity for the huge government industrial companies to access new capital and embrace investment opportunities looming on the horizon. Chinese companies will thus enter a new wave of "going global".

Starting in 2013, China has entered a new phase of international cooperation through many cross-border projects that will be on the way to implementation within the framework of bilateral cooperative partnerships and agreements and cooperation with economic blocs (Chinese State Council, 2015). The promotion of international production capacity and equipment manufacturing cooperation will be the basis for mutually beneficial cooperation between China and its international partners. The Belt and Road Initiative will link China to energy sources such as gas and oil through special pipelines or roads. An estimated 80% of China's energy imports come from the Middle East via sea routes (Grieger, 2016). Therefore, the issue of energy security is a sensitive case for Beijing. China is in constant search of safe transportation methods for energy sources

and to reduce distances. The Belt and Road Initiative may solve this issue and make China more easily access energy sources. China places special emphasis on the western region directly connected to Central Asia, which is the basis of the ancient Silk Road and an important area of the Belt and Road Initiative. China's development policy in the western region drives away "three evils" of separatists, terrorism, and religious extremism.

## **SINO-EURASIAN INTEGRATION THROUGH THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE**

### **Western China: A Pivotal Region in Regional Integration**

The Belt and Road Initiative eliminates the dream of some separatist groups of establishing their own region. In Xinjiang, for example, there are many huge investment projects and a wide network of roads linking it with Central Asia, which contributes to tightening the grip of the Chinese administration on that region (Hendrix, 2016: 27). According to the Visions and Actions document, an intensive development policy towards Xinjiang is indicated in accordance with the policy of balanced development of the inner Chinese regions, the document indicates the geostrategic importance of Xinjiang to the Belt and Road Initiative and to China's opening up to Eurasia, thus turning Xinjiang into an important economic center and a city for cultural, human and scientific communication, as it was during the Silk Road (National Development and Reform Commission, 2015).

Xinjiang is very close to Central Asia and shares common cultural elements with the peoples of that region. The people of Xinjiang in particular the Uyghurs differ from the Han people in terms of language, religion, and traditions. Xinjiang has strategic importance for China because of the large number of border countries and the historical conflicts that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and some of the residents of that region always demand separation, which complicates the relationship between the central administration and those peoples. Since 2014, several terrorist attacks have occurred in that region. The first suspect was the separatist East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which relies a lot on the religious element to win the sympathy of Muslims and to point out that the Communist Chinese administration is attacking Muslims (Hendrix, 2016).

The development policy adopted by the Chinese administration towards that region within the Belt and Road comes to create a state of security and political stability and economic development, thus achieving prosperity for the peoples of that region. Central Asia is a priority for China. The Chinese administration is working on a policy of rapprochement with the Central Asian republics, thus eliminating the state of secession promoted by separatists. China's policy with those republics is based on resolving border disputes, intensifying investments, and establishing organizations for regional cooperation (Ramos, 2015). The Chinese administration devotes a large part of its foreign policy to the energy sector, cooperation in the field of energy is no less important than the Belt and Road Initiative (The State Council, People's Republic of China, 2015). The spread of Salafist ideology, religious fanaticism and the separatist approach, especially after the participation of some Uyghurs in the Middle East wars, has led the Chinese state to double down with sticks and carrots (Zreik, 2019).



## Regional Integration through the Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative will increase China's influence on the local region, and thus China will become an influential country in terms of economics and politics in Asia (Esteban and Otero-Iglesias, 2015). The Belt and Road Initiative is the most ambitious in history in terms of human resources, financing and geographical scope. China does not intend to set up more international organizations to support the Belt and Road Initiative. Existing organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes Russia, may be taken advantage of. During a meeting of the heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Tashkent in June 2016, senior leaders endorsed the Belt and Road Initiative, as a "tool for strengthening regional economic cooperation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016). During a meeting of prime ministers in Bishkek in 2016, the Belt and Road Initiative was referred to as a tool for international cooperation and creating new opportunities for partnership and investment (SCO, 2016).

Recently, China has pursued the strategy of smooth negotiations and intensified the conclusion of agreements with international partners. During the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in November, 2013, it was pointed out that China should open up to more markets and free trade zones, and to more partnerships with neighboring countries (China Policy Observatory, 2015). The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, RCEP, is vital to the Chinese administration's openness and economic integration. This agreement covers half the world's population and includes 10 ASEAN countries, in addition to the six countries with which this association has a free trade agreement: India, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and China, 30% of world GDP and 30% of its trade (ASEAN, 2018). With regard to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), China has proposed the establishment of a free trade area in the Asia Pacific under the name (Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific) FTAAP. The initiatives put forward and implemented by China contradict the protectionist policy that some countries put forward, which indicates the important role of China in determining the trends of the international economy (Girado, 2017).

The Belt and Road Initiative creates a state of economic dependence on China, especially in the Eurasian region, in which some countries' governments must adjust their policies in line with the harmony of their interests with China. Land and sea routes give China an increasingly strategic position by linking it to many countries and industrial regions (Brown, 2017: 28). This initiative increases Beijing's political presence in Central Asia, which may affect the geopolitical balance in Eurasia between China and other countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, and others. Other countries, such as India and Turkey, have significant interests in Eurasia that may be affected in the event of China's increasing control over Eurasia and a change in the rules of the game. Recently, Eurasia has become a strategic area for China to achieve its interests and a bridge towards distant countries and continents.

## Russia's Position on the Belt and Road Initiative

Despite the Russian-Chinese alliance and the lack of contradiction in strategic positions on international issues, the Belt and Road Initiative may be a source of concern for the Russians because it may threaten their economic interests and endanger their traditional geopolitical influence in Central Asia (Kirisci and Le Corre, 2015). Russian foreign policy indicates Moscow's unwillingness to give up its influence in favor of China in the republics that were historically part of the Soviet Union. Central Asia is the most important in Greater Eurasia and vital security, economic and political region for Russia. Central Asia and the Caucasus are permanent regions to project the strategic plans of Moscow, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation (Lo, 2015).

The Eurasian Economic Union may be Moscow's best tool to restore cohesion with its neighbors (Bond, 2017). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow's strategy changed specifically with its neighbors in the Eurasian space. Moscow's modern strategy is based on maintaining economic and political ties with the republics that were part of the Soviet Union (Mankoff, 2016: 15). Asia has an advanced position in Russian foreign policy. Russia seeks to deepen its relations with Asian countries, especially economic partnerships. The Russian strategy may converge with the Chinese in terms of focusing on the geography of the economy in the region. Russia is in a state of economic progress and is once again returning to the international arena as a force to be reckoned with, which necessitates deepening its involvement within its Asian environment (Timofeev and Alekseenkova, 2015).

In order to create a state of trust, China coordinates the Belt and Road Initiative with the initiatives and projects of other countries and economic blocs such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the Greater Mekong Sub-Regional Cooperation, ASEAN Connectivity Initiative, Turkey's Silk Road Project, the "Promising Road" of Kazakhstan, the "Steppe Highway" of Mongolia, and so on (Wang, 2016). China benefited from the economic losses incurred by Russia during the economic crisis of 2008, which weakened the Russian role in the republics that were affiliated with the Soviet Union. This comes in the interest of China with more economic and political influence, and thus the rapid Chinese expansion in Eurasia (Mankoff, 2010). Russia is currently unable to compete with China economically outside the borders due to the large economic differences in favor of China. The Chinese role in Central Asia is limited to economic exchanges and government political cooperation but does not extend to direct interference in the internal affairs of those republics (Pantucci and Lain, 2016).

Russia still maintains some of its interests in Central Asia and has some political influence, but this does not anger China, as long as it does not affect its major strategic interests (Pantucci and Lain, 2016). Russia still has a large security role in Central Asia and this is in line with China in terms of protecting its interests. Vadim Kozyulin, Vice President of the Eurasian Economic Cooperation Organization, notes that Central Asian countries may fear the presence of a giant Chinese neighbor that may have interests beyond economic partnerships. Reports indicate that Russia is rethinking the Greater Eurasia project in order to restore its lost influence in some countries that were affiliated with the Soviet Union. This project may reach the countries that participate in the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations, through the establishment of a network of bilateral and multi-lateral agreements on trade, coordination of regulations, investments, customs cooperation, etc. (Kuznetsova, 2017).

Russia allocates a strategic focus to Eurasia through the Collective Security Treaty (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping agreed on Russian-Chinese cooperation for the success of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road Initiative (Xinhua Net, 2015). To achieve this goal, Xi and Putin agreed to take the following measures: expand cooperation in trade and investment, build cross-border industrial economic zones; strengthen connectivity in logistics and transportation; long-term work towards the establishment of a free trade area between China and the European Union; encouraging the use of local currencies in bilateral trade and credit cooperation; strengthening cooperation through the Silk Road Fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and to make progress in regional and global multilateral cooperation and in the expansion of international trade. Both EAEU and BRI serve Chinese and Russian cooperation and pave the way for a cooperative future in Eurasia (Timofeev et al., 2017). The Belt and Road Initiative achieves some of Russia's ambitions and contributes to Eurasian economic integration, and EAEU will turn into an effective means of Asian-European communication.

### **The Strategic Location of Central Asia and the Caucasus**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the republics that belonged to it in Central Asia and the Caucasus, some countries have ambitions of gaining influence after the weakness of Russia, such as Turkey, which shares social, linguistic, and other ties with many of these republics. In that period, Turkish foreign policy became more open, hoping for some regional influence. Beijing has given Turkey a special position on the Belt and Road Initiative due to its strategic geographical location between Asia and Europe and its impact on the peoples of Central Asia. At the same time, Turkey is a member of NATO and a major ally of the United States. Therefore, Turkey is not politically committed to a particular axis, but rather follows its interests (Atli, 2017). The presence of President Erdogan at the first BRI Forum in Beijing in May 2017, and the two speeches he delivered, indicate Turkey's strong interest in cooperation with China, and China's desire to strengthen its relations with Turkey (Colakoglu, 2018).

Turkey's involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative will bring it an economic and investment advantage and reduce its trade deficit with China. Turkey will turn into a regional economic destination with a more developed infrastructure (Atli, 2017). One of the proposed projects is to integrate the Middle Corridor Initiative with the Belt and Road Initiative (Republic of Turkey - Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Some of the infrastructure projects are the Kars-Edirne express line and the port of Kumport. Central Asian countries view the Belt and Road Initiative as a source of opportunities and economic gain; the Chinese method of economic cooperation without imposing any political conditions is suitable for Central Asian countries. Central Asian countries do not interfere in China's internal affairs, such as the Uyghur issue; on the other hand, China does not interfere in their internal affairs (Mariani, 2013).

The Kazakh Nurly Zhol or Shining Path project launched by President Nazarbayev in 2016 closely matches the Belt and Road Initiative in terms of infrastructure and local and regional integration. Kazakhstan has a strategic location and owns a large geographical area in Eurasia; this country turns into an international hub for companies, including Iranian, Indian, and Russian, in addition to its strategic location on the Belt and Road Initiative. The Kazakh government is very open to cooperation with the Chinese because the partnership is economic without any interference in its internal politics. Security issues and Islamic extremism may be an obstacle to the full success of the Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia. The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, CAREC, an association established in 1997 may be an effective tool in achieving Eurasian integration and the success of the Belt and Road Initiative. Central Asia's interest lies in cooperating with both China and Russia in order to gain more economic profits and strengthen security (Timofeev et al., 2017).

There are three initiatives in the Caucasus: Eastern Partnership Initiative, the integration into the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Belt and Road Initiative. Russia regained its influence in the South Caucasus in the mid-2000s. This strategy aims to attract Azerbaijan to a new Russian integration model, which has become an element of the Eurasian Economic Union. China, through the Belt and Road Initiative, has filled the void left by the European Union in Baku. Azerbaijan was in dire need of a strong regional partner such as China (Valiyev, 2016). China may benefit from Azerbaijan as a bridge between Asia and Europe. There are no direct political interests because of the geographical distance. Central Asia and the Caucasus depend heavily on Russia and China in their trade exchanges. These countries cannot continue economically without their partnership with these two giants.

## CONCLUSION

China has become a force to be reckoned with. It has the second-largest economy, an extensive network of commercial and political contacts, and a highly armed army. The Belt and Road Initiative, launched by the Chinese president in 2013, will increase China's strength and international standing. Unlike most Western powers, China pursues a strategy of peaceful expansion across the Belt and Road and other projects based on economics and soft power. During the XIX. Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese president pointed out that his country has become a major international power in the East and that socialism with Chinese characteristics has succeeded in making China a world power (Xi, 2017).

This paper provided a deeper understanding of the Belt and Road Initiative and its regional framework, especially in the Eurasian region. Reference was made to Mackinder's thought, which dealt with internal communication in the Eurasian bloc, and to Spykman, which dealt with maritime communication. It seems that the Belt and Road Initiative has combined the two ideas and turned them into a single vision and a unified project. It is a project not limited to economics and trade, but also to cultural exchanges, people-to-people contacts, and political cooperation without interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. This initiative will bring more self-security to China through the multiple partnerships and the great interests it will share with many countries. Many of the

corridors included in the Belt and Road Initiative and forked roads will refute the historically promoted hypothesis of the difficulty of Eurasian connectivity. Trade between China and Eurasian countries has increased significantly in the past few years, which indicates the intensity of communication and further closeness.

Despite the innumerable literature on Central Asia and Sino-Central Asia relations, this paper contributes to clarifying many concepts related to China's foreign policy towards Central Asia and refers to the Sino-Russian relationship in light of the large Chinese presence in Central Asia after the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, which is considered a former Soviet land and part of Russian glory. The study refers to the Chinese peaceful expansion strategy, which is a form of soft power, and the massive Chinese dependence on commercial projects as a tool to expand its geo-economic area and thus more political influence.

The Belt and Road Initiative is vital to Eurasia as well as to China because of the great economic benefit and prospective international cooperation. However, the Chinese economy is still huge compared to the economies of Eurasian countries, so some people wonder about the mechanisms for financing these projects, the nationality of the largest segment of the workforce, whether they are Chinese or from the country of origin, and the terms of partnership contracts. The paper referred to the more active Chinese role in Eurasia, but this does not end the geostrategic role of Russia in Central Asia. The cooperation between Beijing and Moscow comes within the framework of "division of tasks." There is harmony in work, not competition. Joint cooperation will fortify Eurasia more and frustrate the endeavor of any external forces to interfere in Eurasia.

Most of the available studies deal with influence and hegemony in terms of military power and the traditional superior dealings with other countries; this study is mainly based on the soft power that China relies on for peaceful expansion in its surroundings, and on the new and unique strategy in international relations that China is promoting. The paper refers to the development strategy pursued by China in the western region, which will be the focal point for launching the Belt and Road Initiative and for linking China with Central Asia and the world.

The Belt and Road Initiative is the backbone of modern Chinese strategy through an integrated land and sea network, financial institutions such as the AIIB and the Silk Road Fund, and extensive partnership agreements with many member countries from different regions. In a record period of time, China has become a major partner and competitor to the greatest economies of the first world countries. China is a major contributor to the restructuring of regional geopolitics and the formation of unconventional new world order. China will be in a more powerful position in the next ten years in terms of economic power and political influence, especially in Eurasia. In order to understand the bulk of the current international politics and foresee the future, it is necessary to delve deeper into the Belt and Road Initiative.

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**UZBEKISTAN EXTERNAL MIGRATION:  
KEY TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS**

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**ABSTRACT**

At present Uzbekistan is the largest Central Asian exporter of labor and education migration. Remittances play important role in the national economy. The article examines the emergence and main factors of migration in contemporary Uzbekistan. Based on the study of diversity research literature and sources, it was used the comparative study of key trends, dynamics, and transformation of labor and educational migration from Uzbekistan to Russia, the Republic of Korea, and Turkey. It elaborates on the internal factors of the migration issue in Uzbekistan and provides an analysis of the status, conditions, and challenges of the migrants in foreign countries.

**Keywords:** Migration, Uzbekistan, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, mobility.

**INTRODUCTION**

Historically, Central Asians have been actively involved in migration processes. Economic, social, political, and cultural factors impacted the lives of nations and have led to the process of human migration from one region to another. Today, the migration factor covers all countries of the world. A group of demographers from around the world have predicted that the total number of migrants in the world will reach 230 million by 2050 and will make up over 2.6% of the total world population. According to the UN, almost 3.5% of the world’s population or 272 million people are currently involved in migration flows in 2019. Two-thirds of them are directly related to labor migrants (World Migration Report, 2020).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, different scale reforms were carried out in Uzbekistan, including the simplification of the procedure for the population to travel abroad, but also rise of employment.

The population of Uzbekistan by the end of 2020 exceeded 34.5 million people, which is approximately half of the population of Central Asia (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Population growth in Uzbekistan (1991-2020)*

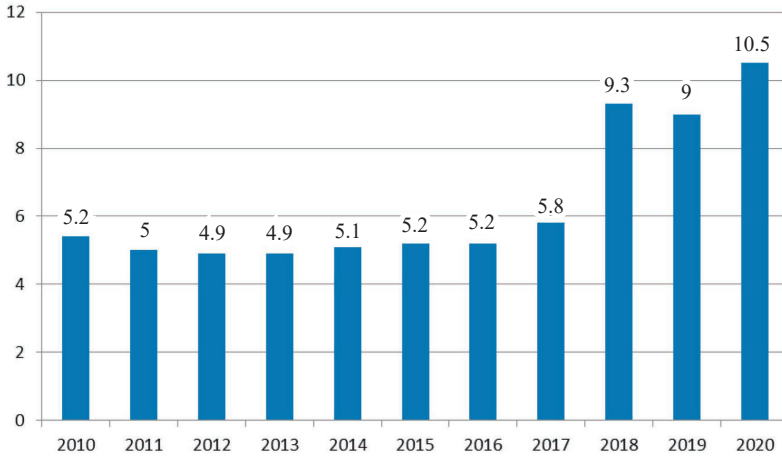
Years	Population at the beginning of the year		
	Total	City	Countryside
1991	20,608	8,305	12,303
1995	22,462	8,671	13,791
2000	24,488	9,166	15,322
2005	26,021	9,442	16,579
2010	28,001	14,424	13,577
2015	31,022	15,748	15,274
2020	34,558	17,487	17,071

Source: Data of the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan.

However, it should be noted that the last census of the republic’s population was carried out only in 1989. It is necessary to accelerate this process, which will determine the exact number of population and fellow citizens living in different countries of the world.

In addition to the high population growth, the unemployment rate is also growing in Uzbekistan. For instance, in 2010, the unemployed accounted for 5.4% of the total population, while by 2020 this figure climbed to 10.5%. And this, in turn, is one of the main causes of labor and education migration among unemployed citizens in the country.

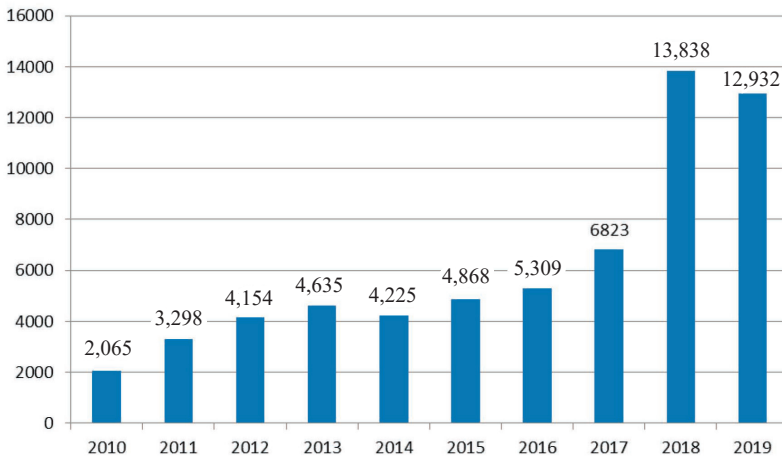
**Graph 1.** *Unemployment in the Republic of Uzbekistan (%)*



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2020.

Since the beginning of the millennium, Uzbekistan has established processes of external migration to foreign countries for work, study and other purposes (Graph 2). But the official statistics is not elaborating fully due to the lack of methodology and defining measures.

**Graph 2.** *The number of people who left the Republic of Uzbekistan for foreign countries*



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2020.

Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Germany, South Korea, and Japan are the most popular directions for Uzbekistan’s migrants. In recent years, the Uzbek government has signed bilateral agreements on the regulation of the migration issue with these and other countries. On a World Bank report the volume of remittances from abroad to the economy of Uzbekistan amounted to 14.8% of GDP (World Bank, 2019). So external migration and flows of remittance play an important role in Uzbekistan’s economy.

## MIGRATION FROM UZBEKISTAN TO RUSSIA

In the post-Soviet time the main direction of migration flow from Uzbekistan was the Russian Federation. In particular, during these years 45-48% of Russians, 16-17% of Tatars, 5-6% of Ukrainians, 5-9% of Jews, 2-3% of Germans, and 7-8% of Uzbeks who lived in Uzbekistan left the country (Maksakova and Mamadaliyeva, 2014). Moreover, 500 thousand people completely migrated from Uzbekistan to Russia from 1990 to 1998. These are people who initially came to Uzbekistan during the period of the industrialization of the country, evacuated with the factories where they worked during the Second World War, as well as, arrived to restore Tashkent after the earthquake in 1966 (Maksakova, 2000: 43). Over the years, the share of the Russian diaspora significantly decreased in the country's population. Russian people decreased from 1.7 million in 1989 to 900 thousand in 1997 (Vitkovskaya, 1998). The flow of labor migrants from Uzbekistan to Russia has increased since the late 1990s (Rasulova, 2010: 84). The development of this process was facilitated by several factors, such as returning to the historical homeland, closing some enterprises, losing jobs and others.

At the same time, Russia's total population has been declining by 0.4% annually since 2000 (World Bank, 2019). By turn, the development of construction, industry, and other sectors in the country has led to an increase in demand for foreign labor migrants in Russia. Russia has not seen a significant increase in demographic growth in recent years. In particular, there was a decline in population between 2017 and 2019. For example, the birth rate and mortality rate per 1,000 population were 10.1 and 12.3 in 2019 (Demoscop Weekly, 2020). Currently, the Russian government is implementing a number of measures, including improving the demographic instability by attracting migrants from the CIS countries to all regions of Russia and preventing the growth of demand for labor in all sectors of the economy. In this regard, President Vladimir Putin noted "The Russian Federation is interested in the influx of migrants. It is quite obvious that with the development of the economy in Russia we no longer have enough, and soon there will be a very noticeable lack of labor, and this is becoming a real, objective limitation of economic growth in the country" (TASS, 2020).

Russia has been attractive for migrants from Uzbekistan. These include the fact that Russia and Uzbekistan were part of the Soviet Union and Uzbeks are familiar with the traditions, language, and culture of the Russian people. Moreover, a bilateral agreement on a visa-free regime, the presence of the networks of air, rail, and road transports between Uzbekistan and Russia can be also considered as suitable conditions for the flow of migrants.

Many employers in Russia focus on employees' specific skills, age, and level of Russian language proficiency, which is one of the main requirements. Unfortunately, most labor migrants from Uzbekistan do not have enough skills and experience and do not speak Russian well enough. These factors might cause migrants to work in low-paying jobs without working conditions and lead to many other difficulties in finding work.

Due to the fact that older and middle-aged migrants lived and studied in the former Soviet Union, as well as served in the military within the territory of

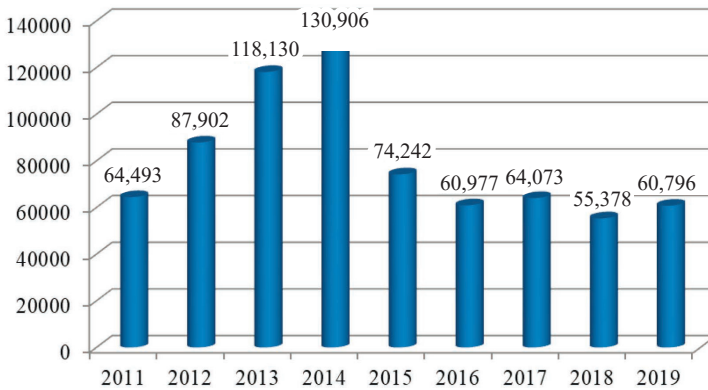
the USSR, and worked during this period, their level of Russian language proficiency is much higher than younger migrants. These advantages are important in communicating with the local population, and in making them aware of their rights through various regulations issued by the government on migrants. Furthermore, they also have the right not to take the Russian language proficiency exams in order to work in Russia. They had to graduate from a school or other educational institution during the rule of the Soviet Union and had a certificate issued in this period for this purpose (Syzykova, 2017).

The Russian government introduced a labor patent system for citizens of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Ukraine. This process was initially introduced on July 1, 2010. According to it, migrants who wanted to work for individual employers were required to obtain a patent, while those who wanted to work for legal entities were required to obtain a special permit. However, the patent system was simpler and cheaper than the special permit system. That's why the mass of migrants tried to obtain labor patents instead of a special permit. In order to avoid such illegal consequences, the government amended legislation for the legal status of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation (Federal Act of the Russian Federation No. 357-F3 of 24 November, 2014). According to this law, from January 2015, a single patent permit was introduced for all migrants who entered Russia without a visa. Also, the cost of a patent varies by region of the country, and a patent permit obtained from one region does not give a permit to work in another region. The price of the patent includes the cost of preparation and execution of documents, medical insurance policy, a general examination that aimed to evaluate the knowledge of the language, history, and legislation of Russia, banking, translation, and notary services (Ryazantsev, 2016). As a result of such changes in Russian legislation, the flow of Uzbek migrants decreased by 18.9%, the flow of Ukrainian migrants by 14.2%, the flow of Tajik migrants by 15.6%, and migrants of many other nationalities also left the country en masse (Musina, 2019).

According to the Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, the flow of migrants from the Republic of Uzbekistan to Russia increased from 15 to 25 thousand people annually from 2011 to 2014. The main reasons for these are the stable situation in Russia, the absence of devaluation of the ruble against the US dollar, as well as high demand for workers in the country.

In 2014, the number of Uzbeks who went to Russia was almost 131 thousand. This figure was the highest among those who left between 2011 and 2019. However, the number of Uzbek labor migrants decreased by 43.3% and an estimated 74.2 thousand people in 2015. During this period, Uzbek labor migrants returned to their homeland owing to the reduction in wages paid to migrants in Russia. In addition, many Uzbeks, who returned from Russia, chose Turkey or Kazakhstan as an alternative direction of migration flows. However, as Russia's economic outlook started to improve (by 0.2% in 2016, 1.8% in 2017, and 2.8% in 2018) (International Monetary Fund, 2020), and Central Asian migrants soon returned to Russia due to huge construction projects such as building infrastructure for 2018 FIFA World Cup created tens of thousands of jobs for migrants (Eraliyev and Urinboyev, 2020). This process led to an increase in the number of labor migrants from Uzbekistan going to Russia and the volume of remittances (Graph 3).

**Graph 3.** *The number of migrants from Uzbekistan to Russia*



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by Federal State Statistics Service, 2020.

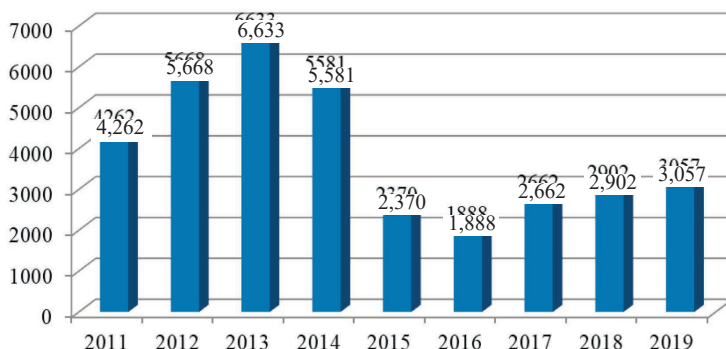
The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the increase in unemployment in Russia as well. As a result, many migrants in the country returned to their homelands. In 2020, the number of foreign labor migrants in different regions of Russia decreased from 20% to 50%. According to it, their share decreased in the services sector by 33.5%, in the household sector by 28.6%, in the water supply and other utility sectors by 25.8%, and in the construction sector by 22.2% (Izvestsiya, 2020).

According to the Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, 1.032 million patent work permits were issued to labor migrants from Uzbekistan in 2019, and in 2020 their number amounted to 662.3 thousand (Rosstat, 2020). However, Uzbekistan ranked first among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in terms of obtaining patents. Uzbek labor migrants were mainly engaged in construction, transport, trade, restaurant services, utilities, various consumer services in Russia.

The volume of remittances from Russia to Uzbekistan was different over time. (Graph 4.) Remittances from migrants to the economy of Uzbekistan increased steadily during the period from 2011 to 2013. In 2014, economic instability in Russia, various economic sanctions by Western countries, a sharp drop in oil prices on world markets, the double devaluation of the ruble against foreign currencies led to a decrease in the number of Uzbek migrants in the country and their remittances accordingly.



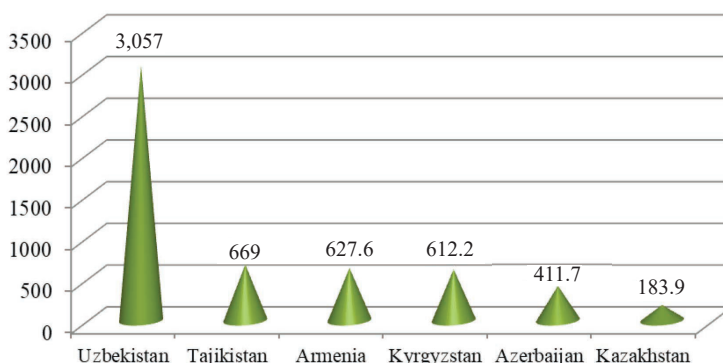
**Graph 4.** Remittances from the Russian Federation to Uzbekistan during 2011- 2019 (million USD)



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, 2020.

In 2016, remittances from Russia to Uzbekistan decreased by 3.5 times compared to 2013 and amounted to \$1.8 billion. Over the next three years, remittances grew steadily and increased by 29% in 2017 compared to the previous year, by 34.9% in 2018 and by 38.2% in 2019. In addition, the volume of remittances of Uzbeks in 2019 was several times higher than remittances from migrant workers from other CIS countries visiting Russia. For example, it is al-most 5 times more than in Tajikistan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, 7 times more than in Azerbaijan, and 16 times more than in Kazakhstan (Graph 5).

**Graph 5.** The amount of remittances from the Russian Federation to the CIS countries in 2019 (million USD)



Source: data compiled by authors on the basis of statistics provided by the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, 2020.

The emergence of the COVID-19 virus and its spread around the world has had a negative impact on all countries. As a result, the closure of many countries’ borders for a certain period of time, temporary suspension of activities of employers, has had a negative impact on Uzbek migrants. Furthermore, Vice President for Human Development and Chair of the Migration Steering Group of the World Bank Mamta Murthi said “The impact of COVID-19 is pervasive

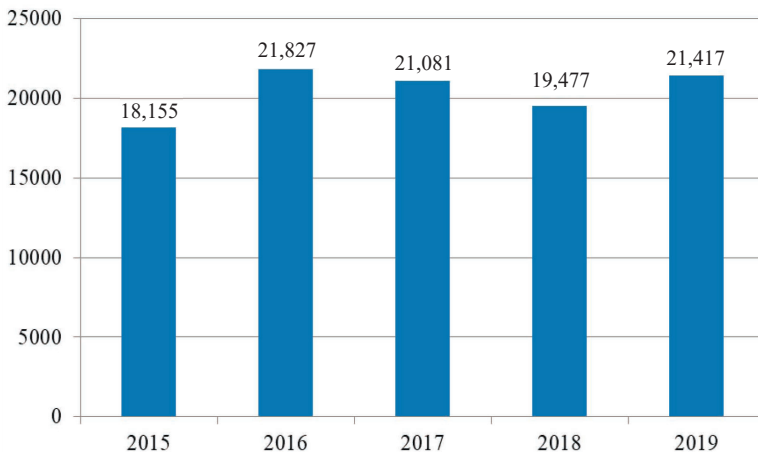
when viewed through a migration lens as it affects migrants and their families who rely on remittances” (World Bank, 2020).

According to the World Bank, remittances to Europe and Central Asia due to the pandemic are projected to decline by 16% in 2020 and 8% in 2021. This is due to the fall in oil prices in the global economy and the devaluation of the Russian ruble, which led to a decrease in remittances (World Bank, 2020).

In addition, migrants from Uzbekistan often use informal remittances system from Russia to Uzbekistan (Interview Akramov, Pulatov, and Sultanov, November, 2019). They send money through their friends, relatives, or colleagues who are returning to their homeland. This is due to the fact that expensive banking fees, excessive paperwork, and formalities encourage migrants to choose informal methods of sending money. As a result, it causes certain difficulties in calculating the exact amount of remittances.

It is worth mentioning the role of the first and second Uzbek-Russian educational forums held in October 2018 and in May 2020 in boosting the educational migration between the two countries. It was held in the offline and online format and brought together representatives of over 150 universities of Uzbekistan and Russia. As a result, in 2020, more than 30 thousand Uzbek students were studying at different Russian universities and institutes from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok. According to our interview with Uzbek students (interviews with Ibragimov in October 2017 and Bekmuradov in September 2020), the main reasons for their study in Tomsk University and Kazan State University were good quality and reasonable education fees (Graph 6).

**Graph 6.** *Educational migration from Uzbekistan to Turkey*



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2020.

To sum up, due to traditions of the Soviet time Russia has been attractive for migrants from Uzbekistan and their number over million and the volume of remittances several times higher than remittances from migrant workers from other CIS countries. It is also highly educational mobility from Uzbekistan to Russian universities and educational establishments.

## MIGRATION FROM UZBEKISTAN TO SOUTH KOREA

Koreans were forced to migrate from Russian Far East to Central Asia in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (In, 2012). Currently, there are over 200 thousand Koreans in Uzbekistan. This diaspora is the fourth largest in the world, after China, Japan, and the USA. Korean diaspora is also an important factor of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan's relations with South Korea (Rakhimov, 2020).

By the end of the 20th century, the Korean economy grew at a high rate and by 1990 it was \$200.5 billion and the annual GDP growth rate was almost 10%. During this time, the country's lack of labor in industries such as manufacturing and the shipbuilding industry led to an increase in the influx of many illegal migrants.

Furthermore, the deteriorating demographic situation in Korea can be cited as one of the reasons for the shortage of labor in the country. Demographers estimate that by 2050, Korea's population over the age of 65 will account for 35% of the total population, making it the second-largest country in the world and that the working-age population will decrease by 9% between 2005 and 2030, and by 26% in 2050. There are currently 7.6 potential workers per retiree; this ratio is projected to fall to 2.8 by 2030 and 1.6 by 2050 (Hayutin, 2009).

Until 1991, the government did not have a system for the management of migrant labor, despite the fact that the massive influx of unskilled labor migrants to Korea (Gray, 2007). During this time, the number of illegal migrants increased, although migrants were only required to independently register their stay in the country. In 1991, the Industrial Skill Trainee System was established in order to mitigate the negative consequences of migration. Later, the system was renamed the Industrial Trainee Program. Within the framework of this program, small and medium-sized enterprises with a capacity of 300 people were provided with labor migrants. In 2003, the government introduced the Employment Permit System instead of the Industrial Internship Program to strengthen control over migrants and improve their legal protection (Draudt, 2019).

“As of February 2013, there are 36 visa types to enter and remain in Korea. The official immigration information website groups all visa types into six categories according to the purpose of visit: tourism/transit, temporary visiting, business, work, visit and stay with family including overseas Koreans, education and others” (Kim, 2016). The visas (E-9 and H-2) are established for labor migrants wishing to work in unskilled jobs in Korea, but the H-2 visa is given only to ethnic Koreans living in China and the CIS countries. However, these types of visas are similar in purpose, but they are radically different in terms of issuance requirements, characteristics, quota places, and others.

Migrants with E-9 visas are mainly involved in such jobs, which are classified as 3D (Dirty, Dangerous, Difficult). That is why the government does not allow migrants coming through such visas to change their jobs. They are mainly engaged in agriculture, processing, and fisheries.

Migrants visiting Korea through the Employment Permit System are allowed to change their place of work or extend their stay in the country for another 1 year and 10 months only with the written consent of the employer. Migrants also have the right to change jobs if it turns out that the employer is mistreating the

migrants and the company ceases to exist (Stokes, 2021).

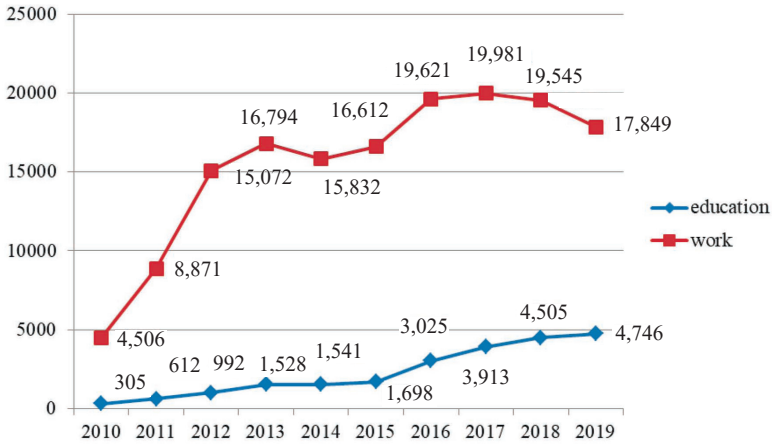
In July 2013, President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a resolution “On measures on further expanding cooperation in labor migration with the Republic of Korea”. According to the resolution, several government agencies have been entrusted to assist citizens wishing to engage in labor activities in the Republic of Korea (Uzdaily, 2013). Currently, the following requirements apply to Uzbek labor wishing to work in Korea: applicants must be between 18 and 39 years old; the absence of a conviction and ban on leaving the Republic of Uzbekistan, the applicant must be medically and physically healthy (Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020).

Candidates who meet the above requirements will be tested to determine their level of knowledge of the Korean language. Such tests are carried out through accredited centers authorized by the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Applicants who score high on the test exams will be given special certificates. This process will provide them the opportunity to take a Korean language proficiency test conducted by the Human Resources Development Service of Korea (Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020).

It should be noted that that in 2011, Korea’s GDP was \$1.25 trillion and reached \$1.72 trillion by 2018 (World Bank, 2019). As a result of such a rapid development of the country’s economy, the influx of immigrants from different countries began to increase sharply. In particular, the growth of the number of small and medium-sized businesses in the country has significantly contributed to the development of external migration. In particular, in 2015 their number reached 5,889,611, and this figure increased by 12.7 percent to 6,638,694 in 2018 (Ministry of SMEs and Startups, 2018). During this period, the number of Uzbek labor migrants willing to work in Korea has also increased. According to the State Statistics of Uzbekistan, 4,506 Uzbek labor migrants worked in Korea in 2010. Furthermore, their number increased almost 5 times for the period of 2010 and 2018 years.

However, according to the Ministry of Labor of Uzbekistan, the demand for Uzbek labor migrants in Korea has been declining in recent years (Graph 7). There are several factors that contribute to this process. The main reason for decreasing flow of Uzbek migrants includes leaving their jobs for various reasons, staying illegally in the country regardless of the expiration of their employment contracts and visas, lack of knowledge of the Korean language, customs and culture, disagreement with employers, excessive alcohol consumption (Kun.uz, 2021). Currently, Uzbek labor work in the field of industry, construction, agri-culture, fisheries, warehousing, and others.

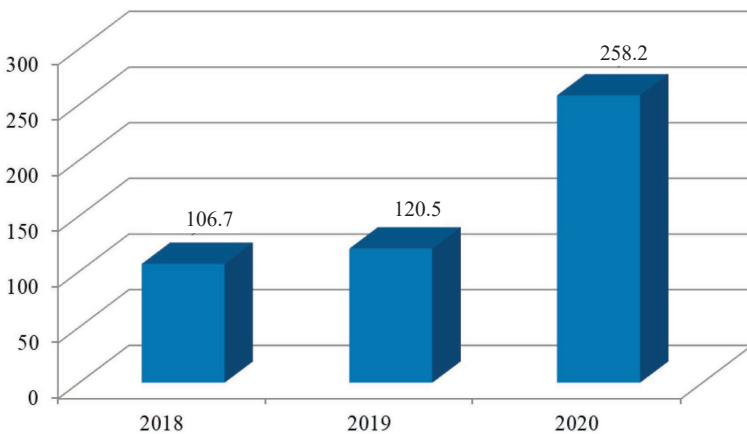
**Graph 7.** Dynamics of visits of citizens of Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea for study and work



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2020.

Over the past three years, the volume of cross-border remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan has grown steadily. In particular, in 2018 it amounted to \$106.7 million. By 2019, the total volume of cross-border remittances increased by almost 13% to \$120.5 million. In 2020, the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus to in world led to the closure of the borders of many countries. As a result, migrants sent their savings to their families using international money transfer systems. And this year, the transfers increased by 2.2 times compared to 2019 and amounted to \$258.2 million (Graph 8).

**Graph 8.** The volume of cross-border remittances of individuals from the Re-public of Korea to Uzbekistan(million USD)



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021.

In addition, remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan are made in different ways. It

is known that remittances are officially sent through banks' remittance systems. However, this process is also made in informal ways (Interview of Askarov, Mahmudov and Juraev in December 2019). For example, migrants pay a certain amount of money to individuals engaged in informal money transfer activity in the country where they are. These individuals provide their partners in Uzbekistan with information about the migrant, the amount of money, and to whom it should be given. After that, they deliver the money to the migrant's family members, friends, or acquaintances. The service fee of this system is much cheaper than banks and official remittance systems. Therefore, it is not possible to calculate the exact amount of remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan.

However, there are cases that Uzbek girls engaged in labor activity and education are also getting married to Korean men. As a result, the number of inter-ethnic marriages has been increased in recent years in rural areas of the country. As the population of rural Korea has been declining for the past 30 years, the government has allocated subsidies ranging from 3 million won (\$3,600) to 10 million won (\$12,000) to help Koreans pay foreign girls and other expenses necessary for marriage. According to the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the cost of marrying Uzbek girls among other nationalities is the most expensive, costing an average 18.3 million won (\$21,960), Filipinos 15.2 million won (\$18,240), Cambodians 14.4 million won (\$17,280), and Vietnamese 14.2 million won (\$17,040), while the Chinese account for 10.7 million won (\$12,840) (Straits Times, 2019). One of the main reasons for the introduction of such measures is that Korean girls move and stay in large cities in search of work, which leads to destabilization of the demographic situation in the country. The Korean government cites such a demographic situation as one of the economic problems and considers problems in the labor market and the shortage of girls for marrying Korean boys through the immigration factor (Draudt, 2019).

At present Korean universities in the list of the best universities in the world. For example, according to a list compiled by QS World University Rankings in 2021, Seoul National University ranked 37th, Korea University of High Technology ranked 39th, Korea University ranked 69th out of more than 1,000 universities in the world (QS Topuniversities, 2021). Therefore, many Uzbek students try to enter such kind of prestigious universities in Korea in order to increase academic mobility through external migration. In particular, there is a steady growth of Uzbek students in Korean universities between 2010 and 2019 (Graph 7).

To sum up, based on an intergovernmental agreement there has been a growth of labor migration from Uzbekistan to Korea. Over the past three years, the volume of cross-border remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan has grown steadily, but the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus in the world led influenced the process. There are cases of intermarriage, especially Uzbek girls getting married to Korean men in rural areas of the county, including based on economic reasons. Korean universities are among the most prestigious ones for studying, training, and academic visits.

## **MIGRATION FROM UZBEKISTAN TO TURKEY**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, labor migrants from CIS began to visit the Turkish Republic. In 1991, Turkey was among the first who recognized

the independence of Uzbekistan. During this period, relations between the two countries in the economic, political, and cultural spheres have been developing on different scales. Today, Turkey is one of the largest partners of Central Asian republics in the Middle East.

Turkish companies entered into agreements to develop industries in the CIS in the 1990s and Turkish workers, engineers, and business managers visited these countries (Kirisci, 2003). Moreover, 150,000 labor migrants entered the CIS from Turkey between 1990 and 2005 (Icduygu, 2009). In particular, many light industry enterprises and large shopping centers with the participation of Turkish companies opened in Uzbekistan.

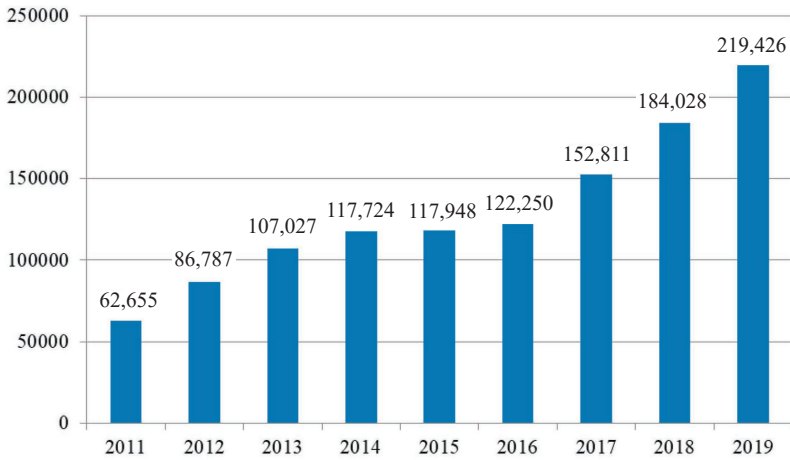
During the 1990s, the number of traders from the CIS countries in Turkey began to increase. They visited Turkey as tourists and bought food, clothes, and other products for the citizens of their country from the Turkish markets. Furthermore, the inflow of these entrepreneurs into the country amounted to more than 1 million people a year (Icduygu, 2009).

Since 2000, the growth of the Turkish economy, the reluctance of the local population to work in low-paid jobs, and expansion of migration flows of able-bodied Turks to Western Europe such as Germany, France and Austria have contributed to an increase in the number of immigrants from different countries to Turkey.

Foreigners wishing to work in Turkey need a special work permit. In this case, the foreigner submits his passport, visa application, and a letter from the employer to the Turkish embassy in his homeland. These documents will be sent to the Turkish Ministry of Labor and Social Security. The application will be considered by the Ministry within 10 working days from the date of submission. Migrants will also be required to pay fees such as entry into the country, a work permit, and residency in the country in order to obtain a work visa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, 2020). Citizens of CIS and Eastern European countries visit Turkey as tourists and work informally in the country in local homes, construction, light industry, restaurants, and shops (Icduygu, 2009).

In the last decade, the volume of visits of Uzbek citizens to Turkey has grown significantly. A visa-free regime between Turkey and Uzbekistan, an affinity of language, customs, and culture of Turks and Uzbeks and other common features contribute to the development of migration relations between the two countries. In 2011, 62,655 Uzbeks visited Turkey, and by 2016 this figure doubled. The main reasons for this are the economic instability in Russia in 2014 and changes in the legal framework for migrants in 2015. It is known that Uzbeks visit Turkey not only for work or study but also for business and travel.

**Graph 9.** *The number of travels by citizens of Uzbekistan to Turkey*



Source: data compiled by authors on the basis of statistics provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2020.

The strengthening of Turkish-Uzbek relations in recent years played an important role in increasing the volume of migration. In particular, during the visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Uzbekistan on April-May 2018, Uzbekistan and Turkey signed an agreement on the protection of the rights of migrant workers and members of their families. According to the agreement, it provides legal protection of the rights of migrant workers from Uzbekistan and Turkey and their families.

Furthermore, according to the decree of the President of Turkey on 10 November 2018, citizens of Uzbekistan have the opportunity to stay in Turkey for 90 days without a visa. Before the decree, Uzbek nationals had the right to stay in the country for 30 days without a visa. If they want to extend their stay in the country, they will need to apply for a residence permit. The residence permit costs 25 dollars for the first month, 5 dollars for the following months, and 80 dollars per year (Kun.uz, 2018).

Uzbek labor migrants work mainly at hospitals, restaurants, and household services in Turkey. But female migrants usually work as nurses for the elderly or children in Turkish homes in various developed cities of Turkey. The main reasons for the great demand for Uzbek migrants are that their salaries are much cheaper than local workers, the presence of the ability to learn quickly Turkish because of the similarity of languages (Interview of Sultanov and Abdurahimov in October, 2017).

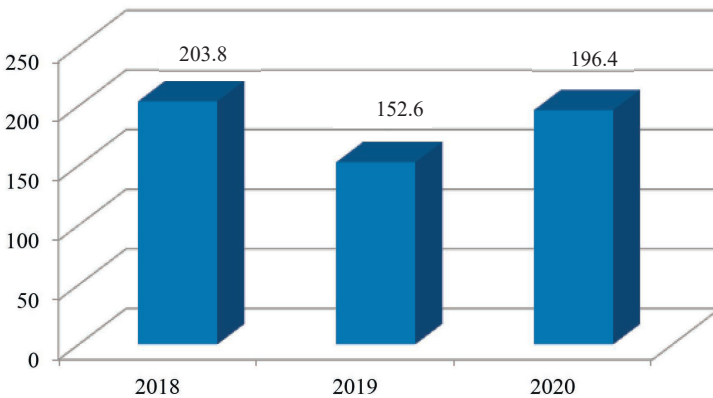
According to Turkish scholars surveys of female migrants from Uzbekistan, Bulgaria and other former Soviet republics in the Turkish cities of Antalya and Marmaris show that most of them have higher education and a certain specialization. In most cases, they become Turkish citizens by marrying Turks. Furthermore, they work as massage therapists, translators, tour operators, guides, and hotel receptionists in tourist areas of Turkey (Toksoz et al., 2012). In addition, the influx of Russian tourists visiting the tourist areas of Turkey is more than



other nationalities. There is a great demand for Russian-speaking migrants to provide Russian tourists with a high level of service. For that reason, many Uzbek labor migrants who know the Russian language work in these regions of Turkey.

Uzbeks often transfer their savings to the family from acquaintances returning to Uzbekistan, or they bring themselves after a certain period of time. Also, migrants use various international remittances from Turkey to Uzbekistan. According to the Central Bank of Uzbekistan, the volume of cross-border remittances from Turkey to Uzbekistan amounted to \$203.8 million in 2018, while its volume decreased by 25.1% to \$152.6 million in 2019 (Gazeta.uz, 2021). However, the spread of the COVID-19 virus around the world in 2020 contributed to rising in cross-border remittances from Turkey to Uzbekistan.

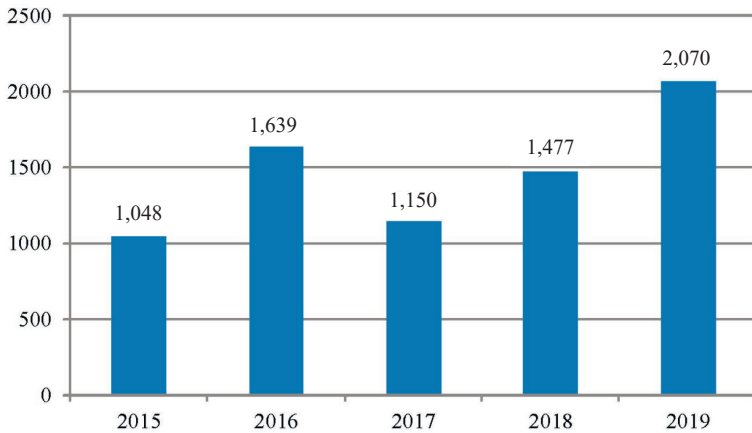
**Graph 10.** *The volume of cross-border remittances of individuals from Turkey to Uzbekistan (million USD)*



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021.

It should note that Turkish universities are popular among Central Asia students, especially from Uzbekistan (Graph 11). Due to improving bilateral political, economic and educational relations, it is a grove number of Uzbek students since 2017 to study at different universities in Turkey in order to get good knowledge and increase international mobility, including to study master program in the EU in general and Germany in particular (Interview of Ashirova and Bekmuradov, August, 2020).

**Graph 11.** *Educational migration from Uzbekistan to Turkey*



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2020.

To sum up, a visa-free regime between Turkey and Uzbekistan, an affinity of language, customs, and culture of Turks and Uzbeks and other common features contribute to the development of migration relations between two countries, which include work, study, business, and tourism. It should note that Turkish universities are popular among students from Uzbekistan.

## CONCLUSION

In the post-Soviet period, Uzbekistan has remained to maintain high-level migration. The main reasons for this is the high population growth in the country, a lack of demand for labor, the presence of a visa-free regime with a high demand for labor migrant countries, high wages outside the country. This, in turn, encourages many workers to work in foreign countries.

Currently, for migrants from Uzbekistan among popular destinations are Russian Federation, South Korea, and Turkey. At the same time, they also face various challenges in these countries. In particular, Russia and Turkey are distinguished by the availability of jobs for labor migrants in all their regions, appropriate wages, and other advantages. However, there are also disadvantages, such as the complexity of the work patent process, corruption, lack of organization of workplaces, and a large number of conclusions of a verbal rather than a written employment contract between the employer and the workforce.

The Republic of Korea is a desirable direction for Uzbek labor migrants. Because this country receives labor migrants from Uzbekistan based on interstate agreements and only on a contract basis and protects their rights of them. Korea differs from other Uzbek partners in labor migration by the systemic organization of labor and the creation of favorable conditions for the life and work of migrants. But it is necessary to create more training courses on legislation and on languages.

It should be noted that Russian, Turkish and Korean universities are likewise

attractive to students from Uzbekistan and other Central Asia republics due to their good quality of education and academic potential. In this regard, Uzbekistan should further develop relations with these countries not only in the field of labor migration but also in the field of academic migration and mobility.

Finally, it is necessary to adopt a regular census in Uzbekistan, which would help to determine the exact number of the population in foreign countries. In a very competitive international market, it is necessary for Uzbekistan to introduce new innovative approaches, the creation of an attractive and effective educational and academic environment that would become a matrix for the young generation to increase their migration and mobility, which would also lead to successful national development.

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**UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER MIRZIYOYEV:  
CHANGE OR CONTINUITY?**

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**ABSTRACT**

After Mirziyoyev came to power in December 2016, impressive developments have taken place in Uzbekistan's relations with the Central Asian republics, regional and external powers, and international institutions. These developments have led some to concur that Uzbekistan is going through remarkable or milestone/drastring changes in its foreign policy. The objective of this paper is to analyze Uzbekistan's foreign policy under Mirziyoyev, in comparison with that of his predecessor, and to reveal whether there have been changes or continuities in Uzbekistan's foreign policy under his administration. The study puts forth that Uzbekistan under Mirziyoyev has continued to maintain its military neutrality and prioritize Central Asia in its foreign policy. This demonstrates that Karimov's core foreign policy strategy has been maintained under Mirziyoyev. The only difference has been his country's constructive foreign policy approach to its relations with the regional and external actors.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, Foreign Policy, Mirziyoyev, Karimov, Change, Continuity.

## INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan has pursued an active foreign policy after Shavkat Mirziyoyev became the new president in 2016. Since then, Uzbekistan has sought to strengthen its relations with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and restore and improve its relations with other two Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with which its relations had been strained almost for two decades. While Uzbekistan and Russia initially started to cooperate closely in economic issues by signing a package of agreements and trade contracts worth billions of dollars, two countries in the following years have taken several significant steps to cooperate in the military and defense issues, nuclear energy and education. Under Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan's cooperation with China has also intensified, especially in economy, communication, and digital infrastructure, and China has become Uzbekistan's largest trading partner since 2018. With his official visit to Washington, Uzbekistan initiated a new era of a strategic partnership with the US, with which its relations had never achieved to this level after the cooling of relations that followed the 2005 Andijan events. To restore and normalize his country's relations with Turkey, he has taken concrete steps among which were his official visit to Ankara and the signing of a decree which reintroduced a visa-free regime for Turkish citizens. Moreover, under Mirziyoyev's rule, through more active cooperation, Tashkent has shown that it has been very eager to deepen its relations with international organizations such as the OSCE, the EU and NATO. All these developments have led some circles to come up views that remarkable or milestone/dramatic changes are taking place in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. A leading scholar on Uzbekistan argued that Uzbekistan's foreign policy is in great flux for the first time in decades (Weitz, 2018). For him, Mirziyoyev played an important role in these changes with his significant new policy initiatives which included strengthening foreign economic cooperation, ending public quarrels with neighbors, easing travel restrictions, and making Central Asian solidarity a core foreign policy goal. It was suggested by another scholar that deep foreign policy changes happened at both intra-regional and international levels and that Uzbekistan has been reinforcing its multi-vector foreign policy of openness (Poujol, 2021: 726). Others viewed Mirziyoyev's attempts to improve relations with neighbors, and in this sense, his special focus on Central Asia as a foreign policy priority as an obvious departure from the Karimov era foreign policy and believed that this policy has revived the hopes for regional integration (Dadabayev, 2018; Saud, 2018). Similarly, while some experts in their analytical articles assessed Mirziyoyev's identification of Central Asia as the main foreign policy priority, and his pursuance of the policy of regional engagement and active multilateral diplomacy as the major/fundamental foreign policy changes, others suggested these changes have not only unlocked Uzbekistan's potential but also have led this country to become a regional leader and active international player, in a manner appropriate for Central Asia's most populous country (Nurimbetov, 2021; Zakirov and Nevskaya 2017; Anceschi, 2019; Szalkai, 2021; Hug, 2020). Lastly, Mirziyoyev's instruction in April 2018 to the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies and relevant ministries to develop and submit a draft of the updated foreign policy concept for consideration has also led to speculations that Uzbekistan would make more significant changes in its foreign policy strategy in the near future.

The paper intends to analyze Uzbekistan's foreign policy under Mirziyoyev, in

comparison with that of his predecessor, Karimov, and to reveal whether there have been changes or continuities in Uzbekistan's foreign policy since he came to power in December 2016. The study argues that although there are some changes in the foreign policy approach of Uzbekistan under Mirziyoyev, he has maintained the core foreign policy strategy established by Karimov. He has changed Karimov's foreign policy approach and pursued a constructive foreign policy in order to restore/improve his country's relations with the neighboring Central Asian republics, regional and external powers, and international institutions. However, as he has not deviated from earlier foreign policy strategy established by his predecessor, there has been continuity in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan since he took over the presidency. Accordingly, the study offers a historical and comparative perspective, which deals with the evolution of Uzbekistan's foreign policy under Karimov and Mirziyoyev in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. It relies on both primary and secondary sources. It widely uses official documents such as foreign policy concepts and military/defense doctrines to examine the country's foreign policy strategy. The study also utilizes data and insights mainly obtained from articles, scholarly books, experts' opinions and reports to address the most pressing foreign policy issues and discuss the subject of the study. The study is composed of three parts. The first part examines foreign policy developments that contributed to the construction of Uzbekistan's foreign policy strategy under Karimov's long rule. The second part analyzes Uzbekistan's foreign policy under Mirziyoyev and attempts to reveal whether Uzbekistan has so far conducted new foreign policy strategy or has followed foreign policy strategy adopted by his predecessor. The last part of the study, in the context of the research question and argument of the study, discusses Uzbekistan's relations with the Central Asian republics, regional and external powers and international institutions during the Mirziyoyev period.

## FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENTS UNDER KARIMOV

During Karimov's long rule, Uzbekistan's foreign policy was based on strengthening its national independence and sovereignty, maximizing its national security, and preventing external actors from having interference in internal affairs. To strengthen his country's national independence and sovereignty, Karimov had been determined to pursue some form of self-reliance/*mustaqillik* policy since the early years of the independence. The rationale behind his self-reliance/*mustaqillik* policy had been to break away from the 'imperial' Soviet center, relinquish dependency and promote its own model of economic development.<sup>2</sup> This is evident in Former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan Paul Bergne's memoirs in which he described Tashkent's stance right after the independence: "President Karimov's first priority was firmly to establish Uzbek independence. And clearly the first step in doing that was to create a distance between him and Moscow as the colonial power" (Pannier, 2000). This policy manifested in a variety of ways in the early years of independence; culturally, he implemented swift de-Russification by elevating Uzbek to the state language, replacing Russian signs with Uzbek-only signs and introducing the Latin script; and economically, he had sought to achieve energy independence from Russia and had attempted

<sup>2</sup> See for detailed analysis of Karimov's self-reliance/*mustaqillik* policy Bernardo Teles Fazendeiro, *Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy: The Struggle for Recognition and Self Reliance under Karimov*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018)

to make his country an export-led economy (Fumagalli, 2007). However, Uzbekistan had been supportive of economic and military alliances led by Russia until the end of the 1990s. In 1991, Tashkent joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for purely economic reasons and due to the threat from 'Islamic fundamentalism' in the region, in 1992, it signed Collective Security Treaty (CST) which was established within the framework of CIS for security cooperation. After 1995, Tashkent had ceased to participate in multilateral CIS structures both militarily and economically, and Karimov had become openly critical of CIS efforts (Jonson, 2006). Offended by lack of Russian help following the Taliban's capture of northern Afghanistan, Uzbekistan opposed Russian attempts at closer integration within the CIS, and objected to its military presence in Tajikistan with its 25.000 troops, and eventually in 1999, announced its intention to withdraw from the CST (Pannier, 1999). Although the Russian side rejected Tashkent's accusations that Russia was seeking military domination, Uzbekistan did not renew its membership. Instead, became a member of the GUAM, which was formally founded in 1997 to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of its former Soviet Union members vis-à-vis Russia.

From the end of the 1990s until the Andijan event in mid-2005, Uzbekistan under Karimov had sought closer ties with the West, particularly the US and NATO. Before September 11, the country collaborated with the US in regional anti-terrorism efforts in order to alleviate its concerns about the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which had close ties with the Taliban then. In the aftermath of September 11, Tashkent had sought to secure closer cooperation with the West to address common threats and concerns and to maximize its national security accordingly. Uzbekistan granted its territory and airspace to the US forces in the fight against terrorism, and in 2002, two countries signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework which came about in the context of September 11 and the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Thanks to the relationship developed through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in the 1990s, Uzbekistan had also cooperated closely with NATO after it took over the command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2003.

Unfortunately, the West's attitude towards the Uzbek government's response to the events in Andijan in May 2005 had led not only to the deterioration of the US-Uzbek relations, but also Uzbekistan's relations with the West as a whole. The divergence between Uzbekistan and the West surfaced after the Uzbek government declared that the armed uprising in Andijan was a terrorist outbreak and responded with force (Gleason, 2006). The US's call on the Uzbek government to allow an international investigation of events in Andijan was openly assessed by Karimov as foreign interference in Uzbekistan's internal affairs. In response, claiming that the OEF objectives had been achieved, Uzbekistan and other neighboring Central Asian countries announced at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Astana in July 2005 that the US needs to set a timetable for the withdrawal of military bases from Central Asian countries. The Uzbek-US partnership ended on 29 July 2005 when the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the US embassy in Tashkent that the US troops had 180 days to withdraw from Khanabad (Gleason, 2006). Similarly, after NATO raised concerns over excessive and disproportionate use of force during the events, Uzbekistan sharply reduced its participation in PfP; pursued an empty seat policy at

most of the NATO meetings; and banned NATO forces from using its territory as a transit route for operations in Afghanistan from 2006 (Bagbaslioglu, 2014).

After a brief and controversial partnership with the US and the West as a whole, Karimov shifted to closer ties with China and Russia. In addition to the reason mentioned above, the color revolutions which took place in post-Soviet countries with the support of the West caused Uzbekistan to develop closer economic and political ties with these regional powers. During his visit to Beijing, where he paid right after the Andijan events, Chinese leadership expressed support for Tashkent's response to the events in Andijan and the sides signed a Treaty on Friendly and Cooperative Partnership. In the following years, he also sought to strengthen Uzbekistan's role in the SCO, with which Uzbekistan has been closely associated because its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure is in Tashkent. In November 2005, Tashkent signed a Treaty of Allied Relations with Moscow a move that could be considered a turnaround in Uzbekistan's foreign policy signaling a beginning of a new era in its international posture. Here, a closer look reveals that regime survival was the main reason behind Uzbekistan's secured realignment with Russia (Fumagalli, 2007). After signing an alliance treaty with Russia, Uzbekistan returned to the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2006. However, since then, its membership had remained nominal since Uzbekistan did not ratify any agreement, did not participate in joint military exercises, and did not actively participate in other non-military spheres of cooperation within the CSTO (Talipov, 2013). In June 2012, Tashkent suspended its membership in this regional military formation by accusing the organization of ignoring Uzbekistan's concerns. Some observers claimed that Karimov's suspicion of Russia's ability to provide security for the Central Asian region could be the reason for his country's suspension of its membership in the CSTO (Ziegler, 2015). Some advanced the argument that he was preparing to host a new US airbase in Uzbekistan (McDermott, 2012). However, shortly after this event, the Uzbek Senate - *Oliy Majlis* adopted a new foreign policy concept as a response to these allegations and speculations.

Under Karimov's rule, Uzbekistan's relationship with Turkey, like its relationships with Russia and the US/or the West as a whole, had experienced hardship. Actually, in the early 1990s, bilateral relations had followed a very positive course. During his visit to Turkey, Karimov expressed the support he wanted from Turkey and the value he attached to Turkey as follows; "If Turkey supports us, then nobody can take Uzbeks subjugation... Atatürk's principles are in line with what we want to do in Uzbekistan. I am an admirer of Atatürk and I hope Central Asians will succeed what he succeeded in Turkey. I support the unity of Turkic peoples (nations). This unity must be realized..." (Budulgan, 2020: 174, quoted in Aljazeera Turk, 2016). After high-level visits of the Turkish side that followed this visit, bilateral relations had started to develop swiftly in the areas of the economy, culture, education, and scientific exchange. Over time, contrary to expectations, bilateral relations entered into a tumultuous crisis "mostly due to misunderstandings and mismanagements in mutual relations" (Yalinkiliçli, 2018). Two developments, first, Ankara's refusal of the Uzbek government's request for extradition of the opposition leader Muhammed Salih in 1994, second, the fact that one of the perpetrators of the bombings, which were allegedly organized against Karimov in 1999, was a Turkish citizen had deteriorated Uzbek-Turkish relations. Turkey's signing of the UN report that criticized and

condemned the Karimov Administration due to the Andijan events completely disrupted bilateral relations. Although Turkey took concrete initiatives to restore and improve relations with Uzbekistan in the following years, full normalization came only after Karimov's death (Karluk and Gencer, 2016; Yalinkilicli, 2018).

Under Karimov's rule, Uzbekistan's intensive relations with the neighboring Central Asian states in the first half of the 1990s had resulted in the creation of regional groupings. In 1994, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan had formed the Central Asian Union (CAU) to create a common economic space (Bohr, 2004). However, this initiative economically had not achieved any of its initial objectives since Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan had taken measures to prevent the flow of goods and services. Similarly, as Tashkent avoided joint efforts, the organization had not shown any serious success in the military/security area, apart from joint military training within NATO's PfP. By 1999, Tashkent had taken unilateral measures, such as tightening its border controls, constructing fences, and installing minefields at the borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to prevent infiltration of militants and protect the regime. Uzbekistan's unilateral attempts harmed its relations with these two countries. For instance, Kyrgyzstan accused Uzbekistan of corralling tens of thousands of hectares of Kyrgyz land and mining Kyrgyz territory in addition to its own. From the late 1990s to the death of Karimov, Uzbekistan had maintained less complicated ties with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, economically well-off countries with vast territories and natural resources. This demonstrates that Karimov attempted to develop relations with the Central Asian countries enjoying economic potential and sharing Tashkent's perspectives. But, Uzbekistan's relations with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which have been struggling with economic problems for a long time and do not have much weight in the region, had never improved due to long-standing disagreements or disputes over water, border, and energy issues. Solution of these problems had hardly been a priority for Tashkent as it had been content with the status quo and was not looking for a change.

## **FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY UNDER MIRZIYOYEV**

### **Adoption of the 2012 Foreign Policy Concept**

In 1996, the Uzbek government adopted its first legislative act regulating the foreign policy of Uzbekistan, "The Law on the Main Principles of Foreign Political Activities of the Republic of Uzbekistan". It comprised certain principles such as building equal and mutually beneficial relations with all the states, active participation in the work of international organizations, integration into regional and international security structures, attaching prior importance to the interstate formations ensuring stability, sustainable development, and national security of the country, non-participation in military-political blocs and withdrawal from any interstate entity if it transforms into a military-political bloc, and active participation in the activities of intergovernmental and non-governmental entities to prevent and resolve conflicts in the region and beyond (National Database of Legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). However, because Tashkent pursued the strategy explained above, its subsequent foreign policy had not been fully implemented under this law. It is hard to argue that Uzbekistan's pendulum behavior - reactionary and opportunistic foreign policy - between Moscow and

Washington, its complicated and strained relations with Turkey and the neighboring states of Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and its attitude towards NATO after the Andijan events had been based on these principles. Nevertheless, Tashkent's active participation in joint exercises with NATO in the second half of the 1990s and its closer cooperation with the alliance in the post-September 11, its cooperative relationship with the SCO, -albeit limited- its cooperation with the neighboring Central Asian states in the 1990s and its withdrawal and staying aloof from the CSTO all were in line with the document's principles.

In August 2012, in light of Tashkent's earlier decision to suspend its membership in the CSTO, the Uzbek Senate - *Oliy Majlis* adopted its first comprehensive foreign policy concept entitled "The Law on the Approval of the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan". Drawing on the past experiences, the 2012 Foreign Policy Concept presented a new foreign policy strategy that Uzbekistan would follow in the near future.<sup>3</sup> It emphasized two major points. First, Uzbekistan would embrace the policy of neutrality in security relations in the future. In this sense, it reiterated Uzbekistan's non-bloc policy and rejected the stationing of foreign military bases in Uzbekistan (Nichol, 2012). While Tashkent made it clear to interested parties that it had no plan to return to the CSTO or to join any military alliance through its non-bloc policy, it reassured Moscow that it would not host any military base in its territory with its refusal to place foreign military bases. In this sense, it can be concluded that the concept was aimed at allaying Russian concerns, as there had been much speculation in the country after Uzbekistan withdrew from the Russian-led CSTO. It was also partly aimed at setting the scene for the upcoming negotiations on the permanent basing rights for the US forces. This has two reasons. First, Tashkent had not entirely benefited from standing together with Washington in the past. Second, Kyrgyzstan, which hosted both US and Russian bases, had experienced social uprisings. Therefore, in a general sense, the document was "a timely message to the international community and geopolitical rivals in Central Asia and a response to various allegations and speculations about Uzbekistan's foreign policy" (Talipov, 2012). The new law also prohibited Uzbekistan's participation in peacekeeping operations abroad. This principle also represented a cardinal change in Uzbek foreign policy since the 1995 Military Doctrine explicitly allowed Uzbek armed forces to take part in peacekeeping missions (National Database of Legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). Here, a closer analysis demonstrates that while in past Uzbekistan had pursued an opportunistic and reactionary foreign policy which left it with the fear of falling under an exclusive zone of influence, in the post-2012 period, with its military neutrality, the country would seek to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy and thus balance great powers.

Second, the document deemed Central Asia as the main priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy and hinted that the country would intensify and enhance its relations with the Central Asian countries in the future (Nichol, 2012). To this end, the concept's focus on the region was aimed at eventually resolving long-standing border disputes and preventing conflicts over them, solving the conflicts over water resources and their distribution mechanisms, and using neighbors' transportation networks to reach international markets. The concept's proclaim-

<sup>3</sup> The 2012 Foreign Policy Concept is not present in the national legislation database. Therefore, the study uses the data obtained from other sources.

ing of Central Asia as a foreign policy priority and advocating diplomatic means to settle regional disputes literally meant that Tashkent was very keen to mend and improve relations with the neighboring Central Asian countries. Here, it can also be argued that Uzbekistan's increased focus on the region was related to the importance of its neighbors for the security and prosperity of Uzbekistan, and its long-term desire to assume a regional leadership in the region eventually. However, although Karimov saw the need to better engage with the region, due to his strained personal relationship with the region's other leaders and the reasons mentioned above, he was reluctant to restore/advance Uzbekistan's relations with the countries of the region.

With the 2012 Foreign Policy Concept, Uzbekistan showed that it prioritizes secure, long-term and sustainable socio-economic development. In this sense, the document reflected Tashkent's urgent need to diversify its trade, economy, information technology (IT), transport, and other international exchanges. The concept's policy of military neutrality and declaration of Central Asia as a foreign policy priority was also related to the economic interests of Uzbekistan. Since these policies aimed at constructing advanced and balanced relations with all the neighboring Central Asian states and regional powers, they would eventually serve for the economic development of Uzbekistan.

### **Change or Continuity?**

After Mirziyoyev became an interim president following the sudden death of Karimov in September 2016 and after he was elected as the new president of Uzbekistan in December, some argued that Uzbekistan would move closer to Russia because of the personal relationship between him and Russian elites appeared. Yet, others suggested that the country would follow Karimov's path or fall into isolationism like Turkmenistan (Dadabayev, 2018). More importantly, the subsequent tangible steps he has taken since he took power have led some to argue that Uzbekistan is going through remarkable or drastic changes in its foreign policy. His instruction in April 2018 to the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies and relevant ministries to develop and submit a draft of the updated foreign policy concept for consideration has also led to such questions as 'Will Uzbekistan give up military neutrality and renew the agreement on military cooperation with the U.S?' or 'Will it join the CSTO and/or join the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)?' and 'Will the country choose another region as a foreign policy priority?' (Bekmurzaev, 2019).

In order to prove the argument, put forward by this study; first, one has to analyze the consistency of Mirziyoyev's foreign policy strategy with the 2012 Foreign Policy Concept; second, to compare his foreign policy approach with that of his predecessor. To start with the first point, the fact that Uzbekistan under Mirziyoyev has remained committed to the principles of non-membership in foreign military alliances, non-acceptance of foreign military bases on its territory, non-deployment of Uzbek troops in foreign countries shows that Mirziyoyev is determined to pursue the policy of military neutrality inherent in the 2012 concept. Although Uzbekistan-Russia rapprochement began in 2016 after Moscow agreed to sell armaments to Tashkent at domestic prices – a privilege that theretofore was accorded only to the CSTO and EEU members, Tashkent has



since then been adamant that there is no chance of Uzbekistan's returning to the CSTO; the country's Foreign Minister already in 2017 stated that "The question of renewing our CSTO membership is not on the agenda... There are no plans to discuss or review this matter in the future" (Saikal and Nourzhanov, 2021: 100). In addition to the country's official policy and statements, the defense doctrine approved in January 2018 by Mirziyoyev also consolidated Uzbekistan's military neutrality declared in the 2012 Foreign Policy Concept (National Database of Legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). Thus, with its military neutrality, Uzbekistan under Mirziyoyev has been able to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy, and balance external powers as envisaged in the 2012 Concept.

Uzbekistan's decision in April 2020 to become an observer in Russia-led EEU and its possible membership in the near future is also consistent with the 2012 Concept, as it does not reject the country's participation in regional economic integrations and such a decision does not violate the country's permanent neutrality. Finally, as experts asserted, if a new updated document on foreign policy is adopted, it will not introduce significant changes in the course and goals of the foreign policy. The changes will only be related to the aspects of optimization and transparency of foreign policy institutions and processes (Bekmurzayev, 2019). These appraisals show that Uzbekistan still maintains its military neutrality and manages its relations with the regional and external actors within this foreign policy framework. Therefore, it can be argued that Mirziyoyev's foreign policy strategy is similar to the foreign policy strategy adopted in 2012 by his predecessor.

The fact that Mirziyoyev continues to prioritize Central Asia in his country's foreign policy also demonstrates that he pursues the foreign policy strategy consistent with the 2012 Foreign Policy Concept. In September 2016, he declared in the *Oliy Majlis* that the improvement of relations with Central Asian neighbors was a key priority for his country. In 2017, he signed a decree in which five priority directions for the development of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 are specified and one of them prioritizing the "creation of a security, stability and good neighborliness belt around Uzbekistan" (National Database of Legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2017). Another example in this regard could be his country's hosting of an international conference with the title "Central Asia is the main priority of Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy". At the conference organized by the Uzbek Foreign Ministry in 2017, to underline his country's approach towards Central Asian republics, the Uzbek Foreign Minister pointed out Uzbekistan's interest in "transforming the Central Asian region into an area of stability, sustainable development and good-neighborliness" (Ogutcu, 2017). Mirziyoyev also confirmed this priority by making his first foreign visits to the Central Asian countries. These and subsequent initiatives clearly indicate that the Mirziyoyev administration attaches great importance to the neighboring Central Asian republics. Like Karimov, Mirziyoyev is also aware that Uzbekistan must work with its neighbors, including Afghanistan, for the security and prosperity of the country. But, unlike Karimov, he has been trying to implement this in real terms since he became the new president of Uzbekistan.

The second important point that supports the argument is Mirziyoyev's foreign policy approach to Uzbekistan's relations with its neighbors and the international community. For him, Uzbekistan's patterns of interaction with the outside

world during Karimov's rule were the major obstacles to the country's economic development and security. In this sense, he saw the need to abandon Karimov's opportunistic, reactionary or isolationist foreign policy, and open up to the outside world. To this end, having stated in his first address to the parliament that Uzbekistan needs a modern foreign policy, the new president indicated that he aspires to a pragmatic and dynamic foreign policy vision. Therefore, recognizing the importance of having better ties both with the neighboring countries and the international community, he has pursued a constructive foreign policy, which includes changes in tactics besides the scope and intensity of cooperation. He has come up with new foreign policy initiatives that have differentiated his foreign policy tactics from that of Karimov. For instance, both he and other Uzbek officials have emphasized the need for cooperation with the Central Asian countries and adopted a more amicable tone with all their regional counterparts. He has expanded the scope and intensity of cooperation by frequently visiting all Central Asian countries, and signing a number of important socio-economic and security agreements during these visits. Likewise, a similar foreign policy approach, such as downplaying Russian ambitions in Eurasia, has also been applied to his country's relations with the great powers and international organizations. Here, it can be argued that while there has been continuity in the foreign policy strategy under Mirziyoyev, there are some changes in the foreign policy approach, which have facilitated the implementation of the foreign policy. Thanks to his foreign policy approach, in a very short time, Uzbekistan has been able to restore/improve the relations with all the Central Asia states, enhance political and economic cooperation with Russia, China, and the US, and restore and improve relations with Turkey (Khaydarov and Mirkasymov, 2019; Simsek and Kurt, 2021).

With his pursuance of a constructive foreign policy approach, Mirziyoyev has been active in the economic rebuilding of Uzbekistan and directed the foreign policy of his administration to serve this task. To this end, he has first sought to restore troubled relations with the Central Asian republics in order to stabilize and maximize the economic potential of these relations. The same approach has been applied in Uzbekistan's economic relations with non-regional actors. Therefore, the foreign policy developments under Mirziyoyev have shown that he also gives priority to the economic development of his country, which is in line with the 2012 Foreign Policy Concept. In this context, his foreign policy distinguished itself from his predecessor's era in the sense that it prioritized economic versus political issues in terms of foreign policy interactions (Dadabayev, 2019). While in past Uzbekistan's standpoint on border issues, water management, human rights, and other sensitive issues had been the most significant obstacles that had often disrupted its relations with both regional and non-regional actors, this time the country shows the signs of downgrading the importance of these political issues and prefers to pay more attention to economic issues in terms of foreign policy interactions in order to ensure economic development. Moreover, Tashkent has adopted the new developmental state model in which government promotes foreign economic activity to be pursued in priority areas. This has led to the rapid growth in Uzbekistan's economy in terms of foreign direct investment, industry, and tourism.

## RELATIONS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

### The Neighboring Central Asian Republics

Since he became an acting president, Mirziyoyev has clearly signaled that Uzbekistan is interested in open, good-natured, and pragmatic policy towards Central Asian neighbors. For him, breaking the mold of self-isolation, suspicion, and acrimony in dealing with other Central states has become a top priority. He is aware of the importance of resolving issues with the neighboring states, improving physical infrastructure and cooperation in the energy sector, and simplifying the visa regime in the region to achieve his country's economic development. In this sense, with the aim of restoring and improving ties with the Central Asian countries, Mirziyoyev launched hectic diplomatic parleys from his first days in the office. He made frequent visits and telephone calls to signal his Central Asian counterparts that he was genuinely interested in closer and friendlier relations and formulating a common approach. The achievements to date have been impressive. Uzbekistan's trade volume with the Central Asian countries has increased significantly; for instance, in 2017, by 32% with Kazakhstan, by 22% with Tajikistan, by 56% with Kyrgyzstan, and in the first quarter of 2018 by 55% with Turkmenistan (Saad, 2018). His focus on a problem-solving approach has removed obstacles that previously impeded the improvement of bilateral relations and the resolution of contentious issues with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the countries that he visited for the first time since 2000. Uzbekistan has made good progress in resolving seemingly intractable territorial disputes, as well as issues related to border delimitation, enclaves, and water management with Kyrgyzstan. For instance, Tashkent succeeded to agree with Bishkek on the demarcation of approximately 85% percent of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. The other achievement in this regard was the signing of an agreement on the complete transfer of the Orto Tokoi reservoir to Kyrgyzstan and the joint use of this reservoir, which had long been a source of contention between Tashkent and Bishkek (Toktogulov, 2018). Mirziyoyev's strides to repair relations with neighboring Tajikistan had resulted in the resumption of direct flights between two countries, the restoration of operations at several border checkpoints, the signing of the agreements on a 30-day visa-free travel for citizens of both countries, the delimitation of parts of the Tajik-Uzbek border and the cooperation on the construction on the Rogun Dam. Since the two countries had been bitter foes for the greater part of the post-independence period, the 'Jaihun-2018' military exercise with Tajikistan was truly historical in Uzbek-Tajik relations (Saikal and Nourzhanov, 2021).

Mirziyoyev's succession to the presidency also gave a new impetus to the movement for Central Asian regionalism. In this sense, two meetings held to hold regular consultative meetings of the regional leaders carry the potential to transform into regional cooperation in the future as these meetings were initiated by the Uzbek side lacking political will in this direction in the past. His leadership role in the fight against COVID-19 is another example in this regard. He has been particularly active in coordinating the measures to contain the spread of the virus and combat the pandemic in the region, as well as in sending his country's humanitarian aid to its Central Asian neighbors. Here, it can be concluded that his proactive policies towards Central Asia have raised hopes for stronger regional integration. However, his proactive policies clearly demonstrate Mirziyoyev's strategy of making Uzbekistan a regional leader in Central Asia.

## THE REGIONAL AND EXTERNAL POWERS

### Russia and China

Uzbekistan's rapprochement with Russia began with Karimov's visit to Moscow in April 2016. He has maintained this rapprochement, but he has done this by downplaying Karimov's public suspicions of Russian ambitions in Eurasia (Weitz, 2018). As a result, his visit to Moscow in 2017 led to the signing of a package of agreements and trade contracts worth billions of dollars. An agreement on the orderly recruitment of Uzbekistani migrant workers for temporary employment in Russia was a huge achievement for the Uzbek side as this document ensures the protection of their legal rights. The fact that the Uzbek army officers have started studying in military institutions in Russia again, the joint military took place in Uzbekistan after a 12-year pause, and that Uzbekistan began purchasing Russian military equipment all indicate that military-technical cooperation has also become an important part of bilateral relations (Khaydarov and Mirkasymov, 2019). In addition, the latest developments such as the signing of the agreements on the construction of nuclear power plant in Tashkent and Uzbekistan's decision to become an observer in the Russia-led EEU demonstrate that Uzbekistan has become closer to and cooperated with Russia in ways not seen since the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, by preserving its military neutrality, Mirziyoyev made it clear that he does not consider Russian dominance in his country or a radical switch to a pro-Russian stance.

For Mirziyoyev, China is a first-order strategic partner for his country as this Eurasian economic power could provide investments that help modernize and develop his country's economy. To this end, he visited Beijing after his visit to Moscow and signed more than 100 mutual agreements, raising the size of Chinese investments and loans to more than \$23 billion (Danilovich, 2020). The largest infrastructure-related agreements include the joint production of synthetic fuel, investments in Uzbekistan's oil industry, the construction of energy-generation plants and other investment projects. The majority of these projects are aimed at establishing production and infrastructure-related facilities to enable Uzbekistan to produce goods mainly for exports. In this sense, Mirziyoyev continues Karimov's economic policy that aimed at creating production facilities in Uzbekistan and exporting the goods to neighboring countries. Uzbekistan-China technology and security cooperation include the 'safe city' initiative which started in 2018 and would be expanded with a 2019 agreement under which \$1 billion would be used (Stryker, 2021). Mirziyoyev's reforms to liberalize the Uzbek economy has once again made China Uzbekistan's largest trading partner since 2018, surpassing Russia. However, it should be noted here that Tashkent pragmatically develops its relations with both Russia and China in a non-exclusive manner in order to prevent rivalry between these countries in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan under the new president is more involved in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): currently, there are approximately 50 specific BRI-related projects in Uzbekistan, most of them focusing on developing transit links for regional efforts, or local industrial-enhancement efforts. Indeed, the fact that the BRI could provide greater advantages to Uzbekistan and maximize its potential as a transportation corridor and economic partner is one of the reasons why Mirziyoyev is interested in closer and friendlier relations with neighbors.

## The United States

Uzbek-US relations, which remained uneven during Karimov's era, have significantly improved since Mirziyoyev took office. His official visit to Washington in May 2018, which was the first official visit of an Uzbek president to the US since 2002 and which was hailed by Washington as a 'new era of strategic partnership between the two countries', epitomized this new rapprochement. Some experts pointed out that Mirziyoyev's meeting with Trump "brought a sudden end to the country's international isolation, opening the door to new investment opportunities and the possibility of a renewed military partnership, vital to the American war effort in Afghanistan" (Ilkhamov, 2018). Others viewed this visit would be US's acknowledgment of the reform process underway in Uzbekistan in the past two years and recognition of Uzbekistan's reputation as a country with a consistent and constructive foreign policy (Valiyev, 2018). Since his visit, parallel to these views, while Uzbek-US rapprochement has touched every area of bilateral relations, military relations have reached an unprecedented depth.

Uzbekistan's pursuance of constructive foreign policy, especially its efforts to seek a larger role in Central Asia, encourages the US and Russia to compete for domination in the region. While Russia sought to secure Uzbekistan's accession to the EEU, the US aimed to keep the country out until it became an observer in the organization in April 2020. However, improvements in interregional relationships especially due to Uzbekistan's pursuance of constructive foreign policy, have expanded the US's potential for engagement through the newly adopted 'Central Asian Strategy' framework and the 'C5+1' format, which was established in 2015 amid signs of a new Cold War-type of the relationship between Russia and the US.<sup>4</sup>

## Turkey

For Mirziyoyev, restoration and normalization of Uzbekistan's relations with Turkey have been one of the most important foreign policy priorities that can be observed through his tangible steps taken so far. His visit to Ankara in October 2017 was a milestone in Uzbek-Turkish relations as he was the first Uzbek leader to visit the Turkish capital since 1999 and as Turkey was the first country visited outside the region. Besides his statement that described his country's genuine interest in restoring relations with Turkey and signing of a joint declaration to upgrade mutual ties to the 'comprehensive and strategic level, the agreements signed during the visit to implement about three dozen of projects in energy, construction, transportation, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture indicated that bilateral relations were once again normalized, after 18 years of frozen relations (Indeo, 2018). The latest developments in Uzbek-Turkish relations, such as Uzbekistan's reintroduction of a visa-free regime for Turkish citizens, the decision to establish 'the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council' to intensify the reopening of cooperation and communication channels, the goal of increasing mutual trade to \$5 billion, which was \$2.2 billion in 2019, and the signing of a military agreement demonstrate that there is a move toward the construction of a multidimensional strategic partnership in bilateral relations

4 "United States Strategy for Central Asia 2019-2025: Advancing Sovereignty and Economic Prosperity" was adopted in February 2020. C5+1 was established to promote dialogue and cooperation between the five Central Asian nations and the US.

(Aben, 2020; Daily Sabah, 2020). Uzbekistan's accession to the Turkey-led Turkic Council in September 2019 could mean that Uzbekistan has largely given up its strong suspicions about Turkey's intentions that had served in the past as the most formidable brake for restoring and constructing close relations with Turkey. As the organization promotes comprehensive cooperation among the members, this move has increased Uzbekistan's cooperation with Turkey. More importantly, the two countries' rapprochement and Uzbekistan's membership in the Turkic Council have facilitated Turkey's reintegration with the Central Asian states since Uzbekistan serves as a gateway for Turkey's return to the region.

### International Institutions

Uzbekistan under Mirziyoyev's rule has also deepened its relations with international institutions, which, in turn, has helped Uzbekistan implement priority areas specified in 'The Development Strategy for 2017-2021'.<sup>5</sup> Although the OSCE criticized Uzbekistan's 2016 presidential election, a year later, Uzbekistan highlighted its interest in more active interaction with the OSCE, and since then the organization has continued to support this program, which has a series of comprehensive domestic reforms largely in line with OSCE commitments (OSCE, 2017: 1) In 2017, Uzbekistan and EU renewed the EU-Uzbekistan Memorandum of Understanding on energy cooperation, hold the first EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council meeting under the Mirziyoyev Administration, and Uzbekistan ratified the Textile Protocol with the EU. By regularly conducting negotiations on a draft of an EU-Uzbekistan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) and joining the EU's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) in 2021, Uzbekistan has already demonstrated its eagerness to take a major step towards closer relations with the EU.<sup>6</sup> Under Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan's relations with NATO have also improved leading to active cooperation on joint projects within the Individual Partnership Program (IPP). While Tashkent keeps pursuing its non-bloc policy, it prefers comprehensive and pragmatic cooperation with the alliance so that it could be able to maintain equidistance with the major powers (Aben, 2018). In its turn, the alliance has increased the level of cooperation with Uzbekistan assisting it in defense capacity building due to its essential role in ensuring stability in Afghanistan and the development of regional cooperation in Central Asia.

### CONCLUSION

This study aspired to prove that Uzbekistan under Mirziyoyev has followed the foreign policy strategy established by Karimov and that Mirziyoyev, recognizing the importance of having better ties both with the neighboring countries and the international community in contrast to his predecessor, has pursued a

<sup>5</sup> The strategy includes five priority areas; improving the system of state and public construction, ensuring the rule of law and further reforming the judicial system, economic development and liberalization, development of the social sphere, and ensuring security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance, and implementation of balanced, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy.

<sup>6</sup> GSP+ is intended to support 'vulnerable developing countries' that have ratified a bevy of international conventions on human rights, labor rights, environmental protection and climate change, and good governance. The core benefit of GSP+ is the removal of tariffs on two-thirds of all goods present in the EU's official product list.

constructive foreign policy which in turn benefited his country. The fact that Uzbekistan has maintained its military neutrality to balance great powers, and has continued to prioritize Central Asia in its foreign policy demonstrates that Karimov's core foreign policy strategy has been maintained under Mirziyoyev. The only difference has been Mirziyoyev's constructive foreign policy approach to the relations with the Central Asian states and major and regional powers, as well as with international institutions. Changes in foreign policy are mostly related to the tactics, scale, and intensity of cooperation. Thanks to his vision of foreign policy, the system of interstate relations has transformed in Central Asia, and the understanding of a joint solution to existing problems has emerged in the region. Tashkent has been able to form a balanced partnership and cooperation with regional and global powers and international organizations and carry the relations to a fundamentally new level. His foreign policy approach, together with his internal reforms, has eventually strengthened Uzbekistan's international image and helped to improve the country's economy and welfare. As a result, Uzbekistan's position in the OECD's credit risk rating and in the World Bank's Doing Business rating improved; about 6.7 million tourists visited the country in 2019 - 3.3 times more than in 2016; in 2019, the inflow of foreign direct investment increased 3.7 times compared to 2018; the country is aggressively industrializing; and thus the country's economy grew almost 6 percent in 2018 and the IMF forecast, if not affected by the COVID-19, a faster growth as much as 8 percent was expected in the next few years (Embassy of Uzbekistan in Delhi, 2020).

The question here is: Will/Can Uzbekistan maintain its foreign policy strategy and continue following a constructive foreign policy approach?, or will/can Uzbekistan continue to develop the relations that developed today with the regional and international actors? The fact that Mirziyoyev, in contrast to Karimov, understood/realized that such a foreign policy approach is a necessity of today for the sake of his country shows that the answer to these questions: Yes. However, it should be borne in mind that although Mirziyoyev has retained Karimov's foreign policy strategy so far, developments such as the spread of Taliban control towards the borders of Central Asian countries could cause drastic changes in Uzbek foreign policy.

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## **BOOK REVIEWS**

**THE SPECTRE OF AFGHANISTAN:  
SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

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**Kirill Nourzhanov and Amin Saikal.** *The Spectre of Afghanistan: Security in Central Asia.* London, I.B.TAURIS Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2021, pp. 249.

In 2001, when the US and NATO troops entered Afghanistan in order to fight against terrorism and establish democracy in the country, the Central Asian countries hoped that security and stability would be established in this region. However, the US counter-terrorism campaign has not been implemented. Moreover, the announcement of the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan in 2014 put the Central Asian countries at a disadvantage. This decision began to lead to a weakening of the central government of Afghanistan, an increase in the number of extremists, an influx of weapons and drugs. This book, which is consisted of five parts, extensively analyzes the evolution of the Afghan threat and how Central Asian states are countering this threat.

The first chapter examines the ongoing conflicts and the process of stabilization and strengthening of security, which began in 2001 in Afghanistan. First of all, the authors focus on the background of the Taliban movement, i.e. the situation in the country before 2001. After 9/11 the US launched a military operation in Afghanistan in order to make free from the influence of the Taliban and to destruct Al-Qaeda's bases. Then authors analyze of US-Afghanistan relations, which deteriorated during Karzai's second term and Ghani's unsuccessful attempt to restore it. The last part explains that the original goal of turning Afghanistan into a stable, secure, and prosperous country, proposed by all US presidents at that period, has not been achieved, because of not taking into account Afghan local culture.

The second chapter analyzes the process of securitization and desecuritization of the Afghan threat regarding the countries of Central Asia. The authors emphasize threats such as terrorism and radicalization, drug trafficking, the spread of hostilities from Afghanistan, humanitarian crises and refugee flows, cross-border ethnicity, and the risk of involvement in the great power rivalry. This chapter compares the hierarchy and intensity of securitization of Central Asian states and concludes that they differ between countries depending on national policies. The threat of terrorism in this region has been seriously raised with the appearance of ISIS. The governments of the Central Asian countries continue to pursue an active and joint policy regarding the problem of drug trafficking from Afghanistan and pay careful attention to the problem of the spread of armed conflict from the territory of Afghanistan. The chapter puts forward the fact that the refugee problems that have arisen due to the destabilization in Afghanistan are not so acute compared to the beginning of the 2000s. The great powers can use the Afghan threat for their interests such as influence on Central Asia. Thus,

the authors have analyzed all possible threats that could affect the destabilization of Central Asia.

The third chapter discusses how the great powers influence the Central Asian states' policy regarding Afghanistan and how they are implemented in practice, as well as the reaction of the Central Asian states to the Afghan threat. The authors focus on bilateral and multilateral relations between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries in the field of economic and military cooperation as well as attempts to resolve the Afghan crisis through diplomacy. The economic contribution of Central Asia to the Afghan crisis was mainly aimed at supporting the needs of coalition forces and humanitarian projects. Central Asia did not conduct open trade and invest in Afghanistan's economy. Instead of this, they turned all their attention to strengthening their own security.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the study of the role of the foreign policy of Washington, Moscow, and Beijing regarding the countries of Central Asia. The authors examined the influence of these great powers on ensuring the national security of Central Asian countries. The great powers differ in their views on the Afghanistan question and are trying to take different convenient steps for themselves. However, influential powers do not always get what they want. Those countries on which they want to impose their policies also have own national interests. The authors noted that, unlike the US, China and Russia are more successful in the question of mutual understanding with the Central Asian states on the Afghan threat. Insufficient integration of the US with the countries of Central Asia reduces its political influence on these countries. Russia and China, on the contrary, are considered more influential because their assessment of the risk of the Afghan threat corresponds to the assessment of the Central Asian countries.

The final chapter summarizes the results of all the events that have occurred in recent years in Central Asia. It also analyzes and provides forecasts on the prospects for regional cooperation. The authors emphasize that Central Asia could become an important player in strengthening peace and stability after a number of important events such as conducting more friendly relations between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, as well as the initiative of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in achieving peace and harmony in Afghanistan. These states have shown themselves to be the main supporters of the peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis and put forward that they are not participants in geopolitical conflicts. The authors are sure that Central Asian states have understood that cooperation with Afghanistan on security issues is possible, but complete desecuritization is impossible in the near future. The Afghan issue will not cease to be a threat to the national security of the Central Asian countries.

In this book, the authors mostly used and argued the analysis and researches of authors from Central Asia, rather than Western and third-party researchers. This kind of act positively characterizes the book, as local researchers and analysts assess the situation in fact and objectively. The book is written in an understandable language, and the issues related to the topic are studied in detail. This book is very useful for researchers who are working on the Afghan problem.

**CENTRAL ASIA:  
NARRATING AND UNDERSTANDING THE REGION**Laura YEREKESHEVA<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, 050000 Almaty;e-mail: [laura.erekesheva@kaznu.kz](mailto:laura.erekesheva@kaznu.kz)

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**Adeeb Khalid.** *Central Asia. A New History from the Imperial Conquests to the Present.* Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021, pp. 702.

The newest addition to the Central Asia scholarship written by one of the prolific writers on the region – Adeeb Khalid – explores the history of the region from the age of empires until nowadays. The monograph is structured around chronologically arranged key topics highlighting formation and transformation of multiple identities of the region, influenced and shaped by colonialism, Soviet modernization, secularization and development. Each of these themes are discussed within the corresponding chapters (Empire, Revolution, Communism, Post-Communism) supported by illustrations, maps, tables.

Focusing on the multiple facets of modernity and the ways how and with which circumstances it transformed the region, the author's goal is to provide a narrative of these transformations; whereas his key hypothesis is that Central Asia as "the product of history" reveals the same regularities as other societies "that experienced colonialism, anticolonialism, modernization and development in the past couple of centuries", and which history is not an exotic or isolated, rather it is "depressingly normal" (p. 22, 620). In a broader sense, the goal of the book is to provide the comprehensive narrative of the region, and to prove the general character and regularities that were typical for other societies that experienced the same patterns of transformations. Therefore, the book's main idea could be also described as how the multiple heritages of Central Asia have been transformed throughout modernity, its currents such as "colonialism, anticolonialism, development, social revolution, nationalism, state-led modernization, and social engineering" (p. 620). Modernity itself was triggered and shaped by various factors, among which encounters of the region with the empires were a significant one.

The rich and saturated history of the region condensed in the 702-page book volume leaves no prospects for its detailed analysis, which, in fact, is impossible to do in one paper - due to a variety of conceptual frameworks and themes for discussion, leaving alone the historical facts and narrative.

*The Concepts of the Multiple Heritages of Central Asia*

It has always been interesting to trace and see the reasons behind writing a book, that are usually a combination of multiple factors. In the case of Adeeb Khalid, a need for a field advancement to fill in a gap in the comprehensive history of Central Asia, was coupled with a culturally defined background of the Lahore native living in the West, to better understand the region which was next door and yet was not easily accessible.

The book's starts with the major definitions related to the region, firstly of its geography that for a long time was a subject of discussions. Acknowledging this, the author gives his own one, "a middle position" including "the five post-Soviet states and the Xinjiang region of the PRC", the area that, following similar and distinguishing trajectories over the last centuries, "has much more in common with each other rather than with their other neighbors" (pp. 22-23).

Highlighting empires as a key starting point that thrust Central Asia "into a new era of its history", the author's narrative focuses on the Russian and Qing empires activities in the region as a decisive factor to define the contours of the region. Due to this reason mainly, he distinguishes Afghanistan, as well as the Tatars, Bashkirs, Mongolia and Tibet as not belonging to the region (p. 23).

Toponymic definitions and spelling also came into focus of the author since they mirrored the various dimensions of the region's history, evidenced in Russian, Chinese, Arabic and Persian sources. (p. 34) This careful handling of the region's past, reflected in its toponymic vocabulary, is a worth-praising attempt to better understand both the linguistic and historical semantics of the region. It also contributes to clarifying specific terms and concepts especially those that had been politicized, included or, on the contrary, excluded from the political vocabularies.

The use of the term "Turkestan" and its variants in this regard is an informative case. The author distinguishes its multiple layers – as a generic term describing the ancient Turkic-speaking people and tribes, as a Russian-conquered province since 1865 and an administrative entity (Turkestan general-governance), as the part of the Qin Empire (Eastern, or Chinese Turkestan versus Western, or Russian Turkestan), as part of the Uyghurs' historical legacy (Altishahr), or as a part of contemporary China's political environment (Xinjiang). This distinction helps to place the particular events, people, religions, ethnic groups, etc. into the broader historical context, discourse. That means the need to always correlate the space and time axes of history and analyze the net results of this correlation in a comprehensive and inclusive way.

The author's key pillars of interest are the global forces of modernity - colonialism, communism and Islam. As a specific feature of the region, he also discusses the Turkism issue as well.

*Colonialism*

Khalid looks at colonialism through the lenses of the general regularities that took place throughout the globe. The concept of colonialism which, as the author mentions, has no unified approach, he sees as the "differences between the metropole and colonies and colonial subjects... conceived of in terms of



civilization, race, and ethnicity, and ... increasingly authorized by science” (p. 132). Further in the book he clarifies and discusses this thesis to show, how “the colonial difference was inscribed in space, social practice and law” of the region. (p. 134)

Two notions are worth mentioning here. The first one is his contribution to the debates on whether Imperial Russia’s advancement into the region could be viewed as a colonial one. Khalid’s answer is yes. He employs the following arguments: (1) the form of expansion doesn’t matter (overland vs oversea); (2) colonialism is a diverse phenomenon; (3) there were moral and political rather than physical distance between metropolis and colony (p. 620). This approach he extends further to Xinjiang by stating its dual character at that time, and the fact that it was more affiliated with the Russian Turkestan rather than with the Qing Empire (p. 621, 151). It seems that author underlines this aspect to distinguish the different trajectories of governing by both empires (Russian and Qing), as well as in support of his initial standpoint on the definition of the region, in which he stated that Xinjiang has much more in common and a shared history with other parts of Central Asia rather than Afghanistan.

### *Islam*

The need to place Islam vis-à-vis broader context, particularly, political power, is a way to understanding its role and seeing the results of these interactions at certain stretches of time. Khalid’s important statement is that “Islam is not a single, homogeneous entity. Islam has taken many forms over its long history and is a site of constant contestation”; this postulates the need to understand “what Islam meant at a given historical moment” (p. 625, 57). Throughout the book he gives numerous samples of the various role of Islam in the “pre-modern” history. As for the modernity itself, the theme of Islam vis-à-vis colonialism and jadids is of a particular interest.

While acknowledging the different approaches towards modernization by the proponents of the new method schools, the jadids, and the ulama, both geographically (in Russian Turkestan, Kazakh Steppe and Chinese Turkestan) and essentially, Khalid distinguishes their specificities as per the question of power. The ulama’s case showed that they could extend support to any political ruler (even outsiders as in case of Afaq Hoja who invited the Dzhungars, and even non-Muslims, or Russian empire, and even Soviet state after religious persecution) “as legitimate no matter how they came to power, as long as they did not oppose the shariat or hinder the work of the ulama” (p. 165). As a contrast to this, Khalid shows that the jadids’ attempts to modernization, in fact, were, firstly, the questioning of the authority of the Islamic “orthodoxy and the hold of traditional elites on it”, it “started as movement of religious reform before it took anticolonial and national positions” (p. 626).

### *Turkism*

Related to the question of reforms and nationalism is the question of identity, particularly, such specific for Central Asia identity as Turkism. Khalid looks at the sources of Turkism from a holistic perspective, considering its various influences stemming from both the Russian empire itself (categorization of the imperial subjects according to the ethnicity), and the Ottoman empire. Another

contributing factor is the scholarly development in the second half of XIX century Europe on the shared roots and languages of the Turkic groups of Eurasia (p. 162).

Khalid describes Turkism as the “new form of understanding community”. However, he distinguishes this concept from pan-Turkism: “it was not the same thing as pan-Turkism—the idea that all Turkic populations should unite in a single state” (p. 163).

The idea of Turkism that focuses on the linguistic roots and shared ethnic origin of diverse groups of people spread throughout the Eurasian continent, could be viewed as a product of that time of bifurcation. Turkism is a phenomenon that combines both boundaries of the ethnic groups and nations, and the transboundary, or transnational character of ideas and ideologies, similar to religion. From this perspective it is equally local and transnational, intense and spread. This duality gives its truly international character on the one hand, and yet it makes it prone to subduing to any other types of identity such as national, religious, and cultural, on the other. As a phenomenon (similar to Slavism), that articulates the language and the shared ethnic origin as a primordial and a non-constructed one, it tends to glorify the past as a “golden age” and acquires high mobilization potential at a times of systemic changes, of which the modernization process was a bright sample. It was not, therefore, surprising that these ideas circulated at the turn of XIX-XX centuries and added towards shaping the multiple identities of the region and beyond.

The author’s contribution to the theme could be his holistic approach – as in case of other issues, he looks at Turkism through local lenses, i.e., its spread and forms in its “heartland” (Bukhara and Samarkand), in Alinshahr, and among the Kazakhs. He highlights that the forms and outcomes of this process in these locales varied.

Summing up, it could be said that the academic field has been enriched by the new study on Central Asia. Adeb Khalid’s succinct and scrupulous narrative, full of details, but not at the detriment to the quality and general idea of the book, is a must read for anyone interested and studying the region.

Perhaps, the time has come to comprehend the region in an inclusive way, from a broader rather than merely “post-Soviet” or “colonial” perspectives. The region today is a much more visible and dynamic space and deserves to be understood and known from an all-embracing holistic perspective. Therefore, the first of its kind, the book is a worthy attempt to provide the readers, both general audience and scholars, with the comprehensive knowledge on the region from an inclusive rather than fragmented or lop-sided prism.

### **Editorial Principles**

*Eurasian Research Journal* aims to publish scientific articles on dynamic realities of the Eurasian region in economics, finance, energy, transportation, security and other related fields. It also aims to contribute to the scientific literature, particularly, on Turkic speaking countries.

Submissions to *Eurasian Research Journal* should be original articles producing new and worthwhile ideas and perspectives or evaluating previous studies in the field. *Eurasian Research Journal* also publishes essays introducing authors and works and announcing new and recent activities related to the Turkic world.

An article to be published in *Eurasian Research Journal* should not have been previously published or accepted for publication elsewhere. Papers presented at a conference or symposium may be accepted for publication if this is clearly indicated.

*Eurasian Research Journal* is published quarterly. Each issue is forwarded to subscribers, libraries and international indexing institutions within one month after its publication.

### **Review of Articles**

Articles submitted to *Eurasian Research Journal* are first reviewed by the Editorial Board in terms of the journal's editorial principles. Those found unsuitable are returned to their authors for revision. Academic objectivity and scientific quality are considered of paramount importance. Submissions found suitable are referred to two referees working in relevant fields. The names of the referees are kept confidential and referee reports are archived for five years. If one of the referee reports is positive and the other negative, the article may be forwarded to a third referee for further assessment or alternatively, the Editorial Board may make a final decision based on the nature of the two reports. The authors are responsible for revising their articles in line with the criticism and suggestions made by the referees and the Editorial Board. If they disagree with any issues, they may make an objection by providing clearly-stated reasons. Submissions which are not accepted for publication are not returned to their authors.

The royalty rights of the articles accepted for publication are considered transferred to Eurasian Research Institute of Akhmet Yassawi University. Authors have full responsibility for the views expressed in their articles and for their stylistic preferences. Quotations from other articles and duplication of photographs are permitted as long as they are fully referenced and cited.

### **Language of Publication**

The language of the journal is English.

### **Style Guidelines for Articles**

The following rules should be observed while preparing an article for submission to *Eurasian Research Journal*:

**1. Title of the article:** The title should suit the content and express it in the best way, and should be written in **bold** letters. The title should consist of no more than 10-12 words.

**2. Name(s) and address(es) of the author(s):** The name(s) and surname(s) of the author(s) should be written in **bold** characters, and addresses should be in normal font and italicized; the institution(s) the author(s) is/are affiliated with, their contact and e-mail addresses should also be specified.

**3. Abstract:** The article should include an abstract in English at the beginning. The abstract should explain the topic clearly and concisely in a minimum of 100 and a maximum of 250 words. The abstract should not include references to sources, figures and charts. Keywords of 5 to 8 words should be placed at the end of the abstract. There should be a single space between the body of the abstract and the keywords. The keywords should be comprehensive and suitable to the content of the article. The English and Russian versions of the title, abstract and keywords should be placed at the end of the article. In case the Russian abstract is not submitted, it will be added later by the journal.

**4. Body Text:** The body of the article should be typed on A4 (29/7x21cm) paper on MS Word in Size 12 Times New Roman or a similar font using 1,5 line spacing. Margins of 2,5 cm should be left on all sides and the pages should be numbered. Articles should not exceed 7.000 words including the abstract and bibliography. Passages that need to be emphasized in the text should not be bold but italicized. Double emphases like using both italics and quotation marks should be avoided.

**5. Section Titles:** The article may contain main and sub-titles to enable a smoother flow of information. The main titles (main sections, bibliography and appendices) should be fully capitalized while the sub-titles should have only their first letters capitalized and should be written in bold characters.

**6. Tables and Figures:** Tables should have numbers and captions. In tables vertical lines should not be used. Horizontal lines should be used only to separate the subtitles within the table. The table number should be written at the top, fully aligned to the left, and should **not** be in italics. The caption should be written in italics, and the first letter of each word in the caption should be capitalized. Tables should be placed where they are most appropriate in the text. Figures should be prepared in line with black-and-white printing. The numbers and captions of the figures should be centered right below the figures. The figure numbers should be written in italics followed by a full-stop. The caption should immediately follow the number. The caption should not be written in italics, and the first letter of each word should be capitalized. Below is an example of a table.

**Table 1.** *Information Concerning Publications in Eurasian Research Journal*

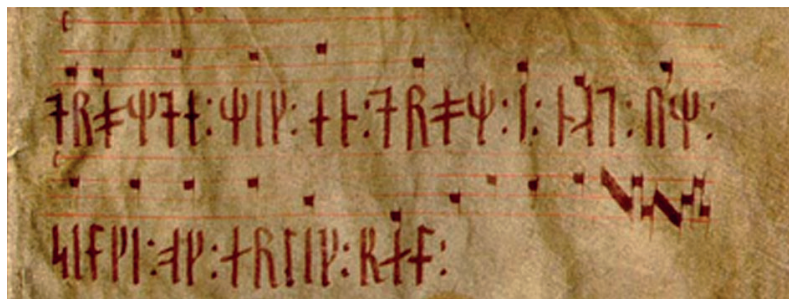
Publication type	Number of publication	Number of pages			Number of references		
		N	X	SS	N	X	SS
Article	96	2,042	21.3	7.5	2,646	27.6	15.8
Book review	4	30	7.5	4.4	31	7.8	8.3
Total	100	2,072	20.7	7.9	2,677	26.8	16.1

Source: Statistical Country Profiles

**7. Pictures:** Pictures should be attached to the articles scanned in high-resolution print quality. The same rules for figures and tables apply in naming pictures. The number of pages for figures, tables and pictures should not exceed 10 pages (one-third of the article). Authors having the necessary technical equipment and software may themselves insert their figures, drawings and pictures into the text provided these are ready for printing.

Below is an example of a picture.

**Picture 1.** *Ancient Rune script*



Source: en.wiktionary.org

**8. Quotations and Citations:** Direct quotations should be placed in quotation marks. Quotations shorter than 2.5 lines should be placed within the flowing text. If the quotation is longer than 2.5 lines, it should be turned into a block quote with a 1.5 cm indentation on the right and left, and the font size should be 1 point smaller. Footnotes and endnotes should be avoided as much as possible. They should only be used for essential explanations and should be numbered automatically.

Citations within the text should be given in parentheses as follows:

(Koprulu, 1944: 15)

When sources with several authors are cited, the surname of the first author is given and 'et. al' is added.

(Gokay et al. 2002: 18)

If the text already includes the name of the author, only the date should be given:

In this respect, Tanpinar (1976: 131) says ...

In sources and manuscripts with no publication date, only the surname of the author should be written; in encyclopedias and other sources without authors, only the name of the source should be written.

While quoting from a quotation, the original source should also be specified:

Koprulu (1926, qtd. in Celik 1998).

Personal interviews should be cited within the text by giving the surnames and dates; they should also be cited in the bibliography. Internet references should always include date of access and be cited in the bibliography.

www.turkedebiyatilisimlersozlugu.com [Accessed: 15.12.2014]

**9. References:** References should be placed at the end of the text, the surnames of authors in alphabetical order. The work cited should be entered with the surname of the author placed at the beginning:

Example:

Isen, Mustafa (2010). *Tezkireden Biyografiye*. Istanbul: Kapi Yay.

Koprulu, Mehmet Fuat (1961). *Azeri Edebiyatının Tekamulu*. Istanbul: MEB Yay.

If a source has two authors, the surname of the first author should be placed first; it is not functional to place the surname of the other authors first in alphabetical order.

Example:

Taner, Refika and Asim Bezirci (1981). *Edebiyatımızda Secme Hikayeler*. Basvuru Kitapları. Istanbul: Gozlem Yay.

If a source has more than three authors, the surname and name of the first author should be written, and the other authors should be indicated by et.al.

Example:

Akyuz, Kenan et al. (1958). *Fuzuli Turkce Divan*. Ankara: Is Bankasi Yay.

**The titles of books and journals** should be italicized; article titles and book chapters should be placed in quotation marks. Page numbers need not be indicated for books. Shorter works like journals, encyclopedia entries and book chapters, however, require the indication of page numbers.

Example:

Berk, Ilhan (1997). *Poetika*. İstanbul: Yapi Kredi Yay.

Demir, Nurettin (2012). "Turkcede Evidensiyel". *Eurasian Research Journal, Turk Dunyasi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 62(3): 97-117.

Translator's, compiler's and editor's names (if there are any) should follow the author and title of the work:

Example:

Shaw, Stanford (1982). *Osmanli Imparatorlugu*. Trans. Mehmet Harmanci. Istanbul: Sermet Matb.

If several references by the same author need to be cited, then the name and surname of the author need not be repeated for subsequent entries following the first entry. A long dash may be used instead. Several references by the same author should be listed according to the alphabetical order of work titles.

Example:

Develi, Hayati (2002). *Evliya Celebi Seyahatnamesine Gore 17. Yuzuil Osmanli Turkcesinde Ses Benzesmesi ve Uyumlar*. Ankara: TDK Yay.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2003). *XVIII. Yuzuil Istanbul Hayatina Dair Risale-i Garibe*. Istanbul: Kitabevi.

If **more than one work by the same author of the same date** need to be cited, they should be indicated by (a, b).

Example:

Develi, Hayati (2002a). *Evliya Celebi Seyahatnamesine Gore 17. Yuzyil Osmanli Turkcesinde Ses Benzesmesi ve Uyumlar*. Ankara: TDK Yay.

Develi, Hayati (2002b). *XVIII. Yuzyil Istanbul Hayatina Dair Risale-i Garibe*. Istanbul: Kitabevi.

For **encyclopedia entries**, if the author of the encyclopedia entry is known, the author's surname and name are written first. These are followed by the date of the entry, the title of the entry in quotation marks, the full name of the encyclopedia, its volume number, place of publication, publisher and page numbers:

Example:

Ipekten, Haluk (1991). "Azmi-zade Mustafa Haleti". *Islam Ansiklopedisi*. C. 4. Istanbul: Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi Yay. 348-349.

For **theses and dissertations**, the following order should be followed: surname and name of the author, date, full title of thesis in italics, thesis type, city where the university is located, and the name of the university:

Example:

Karakaya, Burcu (2012). *Garibi'nin Yusuf u Zuleyha'si: Inceleme-Tenkitli Me-tin-Dizin*. Master's Thesis. Kırşehir: Ahi Evran Universitesi.

**Handwritten manuscripts** should be cited in the following way: Author. Title of Work. Library. Collection. Catalogue number. sheet.

Example:

Asim. *Zeyl-i Zubdetu'l-Es'ar*. Millet Kutuphanesi. A. Emiri Efendi. No. 1326. vr. 45a.

To cite **a study found on the Internet**, the following order should be followed: Author surname, Author name. "Title of message". Internet address. (Date of Access)

Example:

Turkiye Cumhuriyet Merkez Bankasi. "Gecinme Endeksi (Ucretliler)" Elektronik Veri Dagitim Sistemi. <http://evds.tcmb.gov.tr/> (Accessed: 04.02.2009).

**An article accepted for publication but not yet published** can be cited in the following way:

Example:

Atilim, Murat and Ekin Tokat (2008). "Forecasting Oil Price Movements with Crack Spread Futures". *Energy Economics*. In print (doi:10.1016/j.eneco.2008.07.008).

## Guidelines for Submitting Book Reviews

Apart from Style Guidelines for Book Reviews Academic Articles, the Eurasian Research Journal (ERJ) publishes Book Reviews. Usually, there are two Book Reviews published in each issue of the journal. The following rules should be observed while preparing a Book Review for submission to the ERJ:

1. The topic of the book should match with the scope of the ERJ.
2. Only reviews on recently published books are accepted. The book that is to be reviewed must be published within less than a year before the intended date of the publication of ERJ.
3. A Book Review should contain a concise description, critical view, and/or evaluation of the meaning and significance of a book. A normal Book Review should contain approximately 800-1000 words.
4. Name(s) and address(es) of the author(s): The name(s) and surname(s) of the author(s) should be written in bold characters, and addresses should be in normal font and italicized; the institution(s) the author(s) is/are affiliated with, their contact and e-mail addresses should also be specified.
5. The text of a Book Review should be typed on A4 (29/7x21cm) paper on MS Word in Size 12 Times New Roman or a similar font using 1.5 line spacing. Margins of 2.5 cm should be left on all sides and the pages should be numbered.
6. Tables and Figures should not be used in a Book Review.
7. All Author(s) should refrain from using contractions, first or second person viewpoints, incomplete sentences, ambiguous terminology, and slang, informal style as well as wordy phrases.
8. Author(s) are recommended to proofread and copyedit their Book Review prior to submitting.

Book Reviews can be submitted using the Manuscript Handling System option at <http://erj.eurasian-research.org/yonetim/login/index.php>





