

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND SINGAPORE

Makhmudov Ahror Akhmedovich

Master's Student, Navoi State University
Scientific Supervisor: Assoc. prof. **R.N. Tolibov**

Abstract

The article attempts to analyze the history of mutual political, economic, and cultural cooperation between Uzbekistan and Singapore. Opinions are expressed on the achievements in this field, their results and problems, as well as future prospects and tasks.

Keywords

Southeast Asian countries, cooperation, trade, export, import, joint ventures, investment, cultural cooperation, education, tourism, sustainable development.

Introduction

It is well known that no state has achieved development in isolation. Every country has built its civilization by establishing political, economic, and cultural relations with neighbouring or distant states. Nowadays, foreign policy has become a decisive factor in national development more than ever before. The modern transformation of international relations, the emergence of new threats and challenges, and the deepening of globalization and integration processes have significantly increased the importance of cooperation among members of the international community.

As a result, the political, diplomatic, trade-economic, investment, financial, military-technical, and cultural-humanitarian dimensions of Republic of Uzbekistan's foreign policy cooperation are being actively studied worldwide. In this context, one of the priority goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015-namely, strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development-once again demonstrates the necessity of expanding interstate cooperation.

The Republic of Uzbekistan possesses a strategically important geopolitical location, a rich historical heritage and values, as well as significant natural and human resources and potential. Consequently, Uzbekistan's transformation into an equal subject of international relations and its participation in modern geopolitical processes have been steadily expanding. Among them, relations with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region occupy a special place, particularly cooperation with Singapore.

The growing interest in scientifically understanding the true essence of events in Uzbekistan's recent history, along with fundamental changes in foreign policy and the increasing significance of international cooperation, has intensified the need to study this foreign policy vector. This relevance is further reinforced by a number of normative legal acts, including the Presidential Decree No. PF-5046 of May 19, 2017, on improving interethnic relations and friendly ties with foreign countries; Resolution No. PQ-3105 of June 30, 2017, on establishing the Public Council for the Study of Uzbekistan's Contemporary History; and Resolution No. PQ-4680 of April 16, 2020, on improving the training system and scientific capacity in Oriental studies.

In Uzbekistan's foreign policy, the Asia-Pacific region is viewed as the centre of the global economy and politics. Within this vector, special attention is paid to cooperation with countries such as South Korea, China, Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Uzbekistan officially established diplomatic relations with Singapore on April 8,

1997, while Singapore recognized Uzbekistan's independence on December 27, 1992. In 2007, Uzbekistan opened its embassy in Singapore, and the first official visit to Singapore by Uzbekistan's First President, Islam Karimov, took place the same year.

The Agreement on the Main Directions of Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation signed in 2007 laid the legal foundation for bilateral relations and continues to serve their development. Interparliamentary relations began in 2009, and regular intergovernmental political dialogue has been conducted since 2013. High-level contacts, including meetings between parliamentary leaders, demonstrate mutual commitment to constructive cooperation and the strengthening of trust.

According to Article 3 of the 2007 agreement, the most-favoured-nation regime was established in mutual trade. From 2017 to 2022, trade turnover, exports, and imports showed steady growth. Uzbekistan's exports mainly include ferrous metals and products thereof, construction materials, and services, while imports largely consist of services, rubber products, optical equipment, and textiles. All categories of Uzbek fruit and vegetable products have been granted access to the Singapore market.[2]

In accordance with Article 3 of the 2007 *Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Republic of Singapore on the Main Directions of Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation*, a most-favoured-nation regime was established in mutual trade between the two countries. From 2017 to 2022, trade turnover, exports, and imports demonstrated consistently high growth dynamics. Uzbekistan's exports mainly consist of ferrous metals and related products, construction raw materials, and services. In contrast, imports are dominated by services, rubber and rubber products, optical equipment, and textile goods. Permission has been granted for the export of all types of Uzbek fruit and vegetable products.

Trade relations with Singapore have also grown gradually, driven by the initiatives and mutual efforts of both parties. In 1997, trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Singapore amounted to USD 25.7 million. By 2010, the figures had increased significantly, and by 2018 trade indicators reached USD 52.4 million, USD 79 million, and USD 92.1 million, respectively.[3]

With the support of Singaporean partners, a list of 15 new investment projects worth over USD 4 billion has been formed. As of December 1, 2022, 105 enterprises with Singaporean capital were operating in Uzbekistan. Of these, 61 were individual entrepreneurs and 44 were foreign enterprises. The main sectors of activity include electrical engineering, textiles, food processing, education, trade, and automotive manufacturing. Total accumulated Singaporean investment between 2016 and 2022 amounted to USD 700 million. In 2022 alone, USD 38 million in investments was absorbed through the implementation of several projects. A key strategic investment partner is Indorama Corporation, which has implemented three investment projects worth USD 650 million since 2010. By 2025, archival data confirm that Singapore's total investments exceeded USD 350 million.

On January 17, 2023, within the framework of a state visit by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Singapore, negotiations were held with former President Halimah Yacob and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. During the talks, the leaders reviewed the current state of bilateral cooperation. It was noted that trade turnover had doubled in recent years. The number of enterprises with Singaporean capital in Uzbekistan increased fourfold, while direct investment from Singapore reached USD 700 million. Considerable potential for expanding practical cooperation across various sectors was emphasized.

The President identified six priority areas for future cooperation:

1. Development of human capital and training of highly qualified personnel for public administration.

2. Engagement of Singapore in Uzbekistan's privatization processes.
3. Attraction of advanced green technologies and digital solutions.
4. Improvement of urban infrastructure and communications.
5. Expansion of investment and mutual trade, including the promotion of joint projects with leading Singaporean companies.
6. Exchange of experience in ensuring public safety, preserving interethnic harmony, and combating radicalism.

By 2026, cooperation entered a new phase during engagement with President Tony Tan Keng Yam. Uzbekistan–Singapore investment cooperation expanded further, and the objectives outlined in the six priority areas began to be implemented. New opportunities emerged in green energy, innovation, digitalization, and energy-efficient technologies. Singaporean companies have played an important role in establishing high-technology production in Uzbekistan, contributing to modernization and technological renewal. This cooperation has been particularly active in the fields of science and culture. Significant cultural and humanitarian ties have also been established between Uzbekistan and Singapore.[4]

The participation of Singaporean creative groups in cultural, educational, and artistic exchanges has strengthened bilateral interaction. A vivid example of such cooperation is the regular participation of Singaporean artistic groups in the “Sharq Taronalari” international music festival. Promising prospects are also evident in educational cooperation. Since 2008, a branch of the Singapore Institute of Management Development has been operating in Tashkent. In 2021, the Tashkent Institute of Technology, Management, and Communications, affiliated with Singapore's TMC Academy, began its activities. Under institutional agreements, one percent of total revenue is allocated to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security in the Aral Sea region.

Additionally, the interactive English-language learning program developed by Singapore's Six Clouds company has been implemented in 300 schools in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and in 14 Presidential Schools across Uzbekistan. In 2018, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Singapore's Modern Montessori International company and the Ministry of Preschool Education to establish a preschool institution in Tashkent. Uzbekistan continues close cooperation with Singapore in training specialists and enhancing human capital. The number of Uzbek students studying at prestigious Singaporean universities has been steadily increasing. Furthermore, the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, established in 2007, is recognized as one of the world's leading analytical centres in international relations, with its research regularly published in reputable journals and platforms.

Tourism is considered a promising area of cooperation between the two countries due to its significant potential. Cooperation in tourism with Singapore, particularly in the field of pilgrimage (Muslim) tourism, has expanded steadily and entered a phase of dynamic growth. This development is driven by the opportunity to attract millions of Muslims living in the region through more than 50 pilgrimage tourism routes. It is also supported by the fact that Singapore is ranked among the leading countries for attracting Muslim travellers according to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI). [5] Singapore's extensive experience in this area is therefore considered highly valuable for the effective development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan.

As a result of short-term but effective reforms in the tourism sector, 1,804 tourists from Singapore visited Uzbekistan in 2018. By 2025, this number had increased to 2,898. [6] Such growth had not previously been observed in the history of tourist arrivals from Singapore to Uzbekistan. It can be argued that the introduction of a 30-day visa-free regime for Singaporean citizens in 2018 played a decisive role in this increase.

Our research also indicates that cooperation between Uzbekistan and Singapore in areas such as green energy, innovation, digitalization, and energy-efficient technologies remains sluggish. Certain challenges continue to hinder progress in these sectors. In our view, Uzbekistan has not yet reached the level of a principal foreign policy and trade partner in these fields. Therefore, within the framework of the national “Harakatlar strategiyasi,” (Actions Strategies) there is a clear need to identify new directions of cooperation and further improve existing mechanisms.

In conclusion, the history of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Singapore, shaped by time and various challenges, has demonstrated relative stability. These relations contribute to national development and promote the strengthening of political dialogue, mutual respect, and trust. Efforts to bring the peoples of the two countries closer together and to expand friendly atmosphere underscore the growing importance of people’s diplomacy. This shared aspiration continues to encourage Uzbekistan and Singapore to move confidently toward new horizons of cooperation.

Reference:

1. O‘zbekiston Respublikasining Osiyo-Tinch okeani mintaqasi davlatlari bilan hamkorligi // O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Tashqi ishlar vazirligi rasmiy veb-sayti – <https://mfa.uz/> (30.07.2019).
2. O‘zbekiston Respublikasi 1996- yil Jakartada, 1999- yilda Kuala-Lumpurda va 2007- yilda Singapurda elchixonalarini tashkil etgan. Toshkentda 1993- yilda Malayziya, 1994- yilda Indoneziya elchixonalarini faoliyati yo‘lga qo‘yilgan.
3. Шакиров И Р. История сотрудничества Узбекистана и Сингапура (1991-2020 гг.) Автореферат диссертации доктора философии (PhD) историческим наукам. Т.2021. с-16.
4. https://cyberleninka.ru/viewer_images/18536467/f/1.png.
5. Global Muslim Travel Index 2018 // By Mastercard-Crescentrating. GMTI 2018.– P.18-19.; Global Muslim Travel Index 2019 // By Mastercard-Crescentrating. GMTI 2019. – P.28-29
6. Navoiy viloyati ”Turizm” milliy kompaniyasidan olingan ma’lumotlar asosida ko’rsatilgan