



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN AND THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

The legal basis for cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic is founded on a number of international treaties and agreements that regulate various aspects of their bilateral relationship. For example, the Treaty on Eternal Friendship between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, signed on December 24, 1996, is a fundamental document that lays the groundwork for the comprehensive development of cooperation between the two states. It enshrines the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and the commitment to peaceful dispute resolution. As of January 24, 2023, the two countries have signed 213 foundational documents, with 22 of them signed during President Sadyr Japarov's state visit to Uzbekistan in March 2021. The main documents that have established a strong basis for friendly relations are the Treaty on Eternal Friendship of December 24, 1996, and the Declaration on Strategic Partnership, Friendship, Good-Neighborliness, and Strengthening Trust of October 5, 2017. These documents affirm the core principles of bilateral cooperation: equality, mutual respect for independence and state sovereignty, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and a shared desire to establish mutually beneficial economic partnerships at both the state level and among business entities.

KEYWORDS

Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Treaty on Eternal Friendship, diplomatic relations.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that "Diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were established more than 30 years ago. Over this time, the relations between the two countries have gone through various stages of development, have been enriched with practical substance, and have risen to a qualitatively new level. Currently, cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan has a solid legal basis, consisting of more than 180 agreements and treaties. These documents cover such areas as trade, economics, science and education, tourism, transport, culture, and others" (Xudayberdiyeva, 2021).

In particular, the existing Treaty on Eternal Friendship and the Declaration on Strategic Partnership, Friendship, Good-Neighborliness, and Strengthening Trust provide a strong foundation for achieving a high level of bilateral relations.

Important agreements have been reached on resolving disputed sections of the state border and on the joint use of water resources, a resolution that was difficult to imagine just two or three years ago. The Kyrgyz-Uzbek Development Fund is actively working with a charter capital of \$50 million, which is planned to be increased to \$200 million.

Agreements in the economic sphere are regulated by a number of agreements, including:

The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Free Trade of December 24, 1996.

The Agreement on Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments.

The Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital.

These documents create favorable conditions for the development of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, helping to attract investments and expand business ties.

Cooperation in the area of security also has its legal basis. The parties work closely together on issues of combating international terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, and other security threats. Various agreements are in place in this area, aimed at strengthening cooperation between the law enforcement agencies and special services of the two countries.

Citizens of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan can enter, exit, transit through, and stay in the territory of the other party without a visa for up to **60 days**. For this, they need a valid identity and citizenship document as stipulated by the legislation of the two countries.

Literature Analysis

On September 3, 2018, Uzbekistan participated as an honorary guest in the 6th Summit of the Turkic Council, where discussions also focused on admitting new members to the organization. As a result, at the Baku summit in 2019, Uzbekistan once again strengthened its ties with the Turkic world. The 7th summit of Turkic states, held in Baku on October 15, 2019, went down in Uzbekistan's history with golden letters. The republic's president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, began his participation in the summit as an official member of the organization. It is important to note that the first steps toward Uzbekistan's membership in the Turkic Council were taken on fraternal Kyrgyz soil. Cooperation in science and culture between the Turkic states is developing every year. The events held in 2017-2018 serve as clear evidence of this (Tajiev, 2024).

"Undoubtedly, all these positive trends are, first and foremost, the result of the firm political will and tireless joint efforts of the heads of state, who have defined and continuously filled the main line of Uzbek-Kyrgyz interaction with positive content. For instance, in September 2016, upon assuming the duties of President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev immediately began to comprehensively increase mutually beneficial cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, based on the principles of mutual respect, consideration of each other's interests, good-neighborliness, and mutual support. Since 2017, about 20 joint meetings of the two countries' leaders have been held, and 5 mutual bilateral visits have taken place. The intensity and frequency of interaction become obvious when noting that in the 25-year period from 1991 to 2016, there were only 8 bilateral visits" (Adamson, Fiona, 2002).

Turkish researchers Coruk and Oktem Kemaloglu, while evaluating the constitutional changes from 1992 to 2024, note, “As a result, we see that all the constitutional changes that have taken place in Kyrgyzstan, the political order and the nature of the political system have developed within the framework of the relations and power of political leaders. In short, networks of patronage relations and politics developed through these networks precede the country's democratization and political stability” (Çoruk, Ökten Kemaloğlu, 2023).

They provide their assessment that the constitutional changes in Kyrgyzstan have yielded results, and the country has begun to develop stably and has improved its friendly relations with its neighbors.

At the same time, the approach to solving systemic-nodal issues in Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations has been fundamentally changed. In particular, a constant and multi-level dialogue has been established and maintained, which allows for finding mutually acceptable compromises on all acute issues of bilateral cooperation in a constructive and trusting atmosphere.

A distinctive feature of the new approach was the strengthening of interregional cooperation, and the expansion and deepening of dialogue at the level of border regions, where the most acute problems related to the border, water sharing, and land use had accumulated. The basis of this approach was the desire to resolve border issues by considering the needs, aspirations, and interests of the population living in the border territories of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

In particular, the strategic partnership between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and the initiatives of the countries are of great importance in ensuring peace and stability in the region and developing bilateral cooperation.

Diplomatic relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were established in 1993, with Kyrgyz diplomats exchanging diplomatic notes on cooperation in January, and official Tashkent following in February. Embassies were opened in the capitals of both states: the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan in Uzbekistan and the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Kyrgyzstan. During the 30-year period of independence of the two states, there have been 2 state and 7 official visits at the highest level (including 5 visits to Uzbekistan in 1992, 1996, 1998, 2006, 2017 and 2 visits to Kyrgyzstan in 1994 and 2000). In addition, the heads of the two states regularly meet within the framework of multilateral events of an international and regional nature. At the diplomatic level, **180 documents** have been signed, including: 88 inter-state and inter-governmental; 48 inter-departmental; and 44 other documents that do not have the status of an international treaty. As of today, 137 documents are in effect between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

These documents enshrine the fundamental principles of bilateral cooperation: mutual respect for independence and state sovereignty, equality, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and most importantly, a mutual desire to establish mutually beneficial economic partnerships, both at the state level and among economic entities. This approach has allowed for the launch of a large-scale cooperation program.

That is why one of the very first documents signed in 2016 between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on the path to improving relations were memorandums on mutual cooperation between the border regions of the two countries—Andijan and Osh, Fergana and Batken, Namangan and Jalal-Abad.

A year later, in 2017, the Council of Heads of Border Regions was created, led by the prime ministers of the two countries, making it a unique platform with no analogues in any other country in the region. The institutionalization of interregional interaction gave a powerful impetus to strengthening mutual understanding and trust at the border. After this, meetings of not only the heads of border regions but

also districts began to be held regularly, allowing for the quick resolution of urgent issues for residents of border territories and the full use of the potential of cross-border cooperation. To date, 4 meetings have already been held (the last one in April 2022, in Osh).

Discussion

New practices of interregional cooperation have become widespread. These include meetings of youth, elders, and intellectuals, mutual tours of artistic groups, business forums, and joint industrial fairs. The operation of 18 border crossing points has been resumed with a simplified border crossing regime. Consequently, in its turn, bus services have been established between Fergana–Batken, Andijan–Osh, and Tashkent–Bishkek. Since December 2021, flights on the "Fergana-Sokh-Fergana" route have been operating twice a week. Previously, in June 2020, multimodal cargo transportation was launched on the "Lanzhou-Kashgar-Irkeshtam-Osh-Andijan-Tashkent-Mari" route, which became an important contribution to the successful integration of our countries into international transport and trade systems. In short, all the necessary conditions are being created to meet the needs of the citizens of the two states; as a result, there is a strengthening of historical family ties and an increase in contacts and communication between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. A striking example of this is the tenfold increase in mutual daily trips, from 3,300 in 2016 to 35,000 in 2022.

All this has become an impetus for the comprehensive development of Uzbek-Kyrgyz cooperation and the dynamic growth of cross-border trade. In this context, the trade turnover between Namangan region and the border regions of the Kyrgyz Republic is significant: from 2016 to 2022, it increased 17-fold, exceeding \$ 83 million. At the same time, the volume of mutual trade between the two countries grew from \$167 million to \$1.26 billion, or **7.5 times**. In terms of the growth rate of bilateral trade for Uzbekistan, this indicator surpasses all countries in the region.

It should be noted that the heads of state express their readiness not to stop there, intending to consistently and systematically deepen interregional cooperation and encourage direct dialogue and practical interaction of border territories. To this end, comprehensive programs for expanding interregional cooperation for 2023-2025 were adopted at the Bishkek summit between the border regions of Andijan and Osh, Fergana and Batken, and Namangan and Jalal-Abad. These are essentially "road maps" designed to bring interregional cooperation to a qualitatively new level and serve as a catalyst for the development of multifaceted interaction in the trade, economic, industrial, cultural, humanitarian, and other spheres.

One can confidently say that the new, "well-thought-out" strategic approaches being used are already bearing fruit and having a positive impact on all areas of Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations, helping to turn the shared border into bridges of friendship and good-neighborliness and to establish the Fergana Valley as a space of mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation.

After high-level political consultations, a bilateral agreement was adopted. As of January 30, 2023, citizens of Uzbekistan can enter Kyrgyzstan with an ID card (without a foreign passport). A similar procedure applies to citizens of Kyrgyzstan entering Uzbekistan. Foreign citizens staying in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic for more than 5 business days must register with the territorial bodies of the State Registration Service under the Ministry of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic at their place of stay. The legal and contractual framework for cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is constantly evolving and improving. New agreements are regularly concluded, covering

various aspects of bilateral relations, including cultural and humanitarian cooperation, cooperation in transport and communications, and other areas.

It is worth noting that the legal framework for cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan complies with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, as well as the national legislation of the two countries. From July 18-19, 2023, at the invitation of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov will pay a state visit to Uzbekistan.

A constructive, multifaceted, and mutually beneficial dialogue with Kyrgyzstan, based on the principles of good-neighborliness and strategic partnership, is one of the priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The legal basis for cooperation has been strengthened, with a legal and contractual framework of more than 248 bilateral documents covering trade, economics, science, tourism, transport, culture, and other areas.

Inter-parliamentary cooperation has also significantly intensified. In September 2017, during the visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, a Memorandum on Inter-parliamentary Cooperation was signed between the Oliy Majlis and the Jogorku Kenesh. An Inter-parliamentary Commission for Cooperation was created in June 2020, and a visit by the Chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan took place in September 2021.

Mutual exchanges of visits by parliamentary delegations have gained momentum, and the parliamentarians of the two countries also interact on multilateral platforms—the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of CIS Member States, the Dialogue of Women Leaders of Central Asian Countries, and others.

Consequently, fruitful cooperation has been established at the level of the foreign policy departments of the two countries. Regular telephone conversations and constant meetings of the heads of foreign policy departments are held, including at international venues. Direct scientific and research ties are being established between analytical centers of the two countries, aimed at developing specific joint proposals and initiatives for the further expansion and deepening of Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations. Impressive results have been achieved in the development of cooperation in the trade and economic sphere. The volume of mutual trade has increased almost fourfold in recent years. From January to May 2024, trade turnover between the countries amounted to \$294.3 million. 273 enterprises with Kyrgyz capital are successfully operating in Uzbekistan, while 70 enterprises with the participation of residents of our country have been established in Kyrgyzstan. The Intergovernmental Commission, which has been active since 1996, and the Business Council, created in 2021, are contributing to the expansion and strengthening of bilateral trade, economic, and investment interaction.

It is significant to state that important decisions have also been reached on the delimitation and demarcation of state borders between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Concluding his state visit to Kyrgyzstan in January 2023, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized that the conclusion of the Agreement on Separate Sections of the Uzbek-Kyrgyz State Border was a truly historic event in bilateral relations. “The full settlement of the border delimitation issue will undoubtedly play an important role in the development of bilateral cooperation and cross-border exchanges, and will contribute to strengthening stability and security in our region,” said the President of Uzbekistan.

Nevertheless, one of the long-standing difficult issues in relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan was the management of water resources. Thanks to the political will of the two countries, important agreements have been reached in this area, in particular, the agreement on the joint management of the water resources of the Kempir-Abad (Andijan) reservoir. In 2022, a Joint Water Commission was

established, which has already held four meetings, the last of which took place in April 2024 in Andijan. The commission's work is aimed at resolving long-standing contentious issues and ensuring the rational use of water resources. This helps build trust between the countries and creates conditions for sustainable development of the region.

It is worth noting that “On February 26, 2001, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan signed a Memorandum on the Settlement of the Legal Basis for the Delimitation of the Joint State Border. The total length of the state border between the two countries is more than 1,400 km. This border is one of the most complex in the entire post-Soviet space. Its main part runs through densely populated areas of the Fergana Valley, which, as is known, is divided between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and is characterized by the presence of a number of enclaves, including the Tajik enclave of Vorukh in Kyrgyzstan, and the Uzbek enclaves of Sokh, Shakhimardan, and Chongara in Kyrgyzstan. In world practice, there are almost no examples of enclaves remaining, but in the Fergana Valley, this problem persists to this day. To solve some issues with the enclaves, Uzbekistan proposed to Kyrgyzstan to make a parity exchange of territories in order to ensure a direct connection between the enclaves and the main territory. However, this proposal did not meet with understanding from the Kyrgyz side” (Rakhimov, 2020).

The importance of forming a new economic cooperation agenda is noted. The urgency of developing comprehensive measures to bring the volume of trade to \$2 billion in the coming years is increasing. A business forum was successfully held on the eve of this, as a result of which a package of new agreements was adopted. During the current visit, cooperation projects will be launched in the fields of renewable energy sources, automotive, and the textile industry. Priority attention is given to the issues of the earliest possible practical implementation of strategic regional projects, including the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway and the Kambarata HPP-1. New project proposals in the field of transport and energy infrastructure development were considered. The presidents stated the importance of further expanding interregional cooperation, including within the framework of the Council of Hokims of Border Regions. Issues of developing mutually beneficial cooperation in the fields of agriculture and water management, ecology, security, and others were also substantively discussed.

The delimitation and demarcation of unestablished border territories, joint water use, strengthening economic ties, especially in agriculture and energy, are topics of discussion. According to the agreement, 85 percent of the state border has been agreed upon, restrictions have been lifted from some checkpoints, and construction of hydropower facilities in the Kyrgyz Republic is underway, as is the implementation of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project and a new automobile corridor along the "Kashgar-Irkeshtam-Osh-Andijan-Tashkent" route. There is mutual understanding on open issues.

"Every day, Kyrgyz-Uzbek ties are strengthening in all areas. Bilateral ties between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were established on the basis of a treaty on friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance. Starting in 2017, the Days of Culture of Uzbekistan were held for the first time in the cities of Bishkek and Osh, and in 2018, the “Days of Culture and Art of the Kyrgyz Republic” were held in the cities of Tashkent and Samarkand" (www.uzbekistan.kg, 2023).

According to 2021 statistical data, more than 14.3% of the total population of Kyrgyzstan are Uzbeks, which is the largest group after the Kyrgyz people. If you look at the dynamics of the number of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, it has been increasing every year. For example, in 1989, Uzbeks were in second

place among ethnic minorities, behind Russians. In 1989, there were more than 900,000 Russians out of the total population, which accounted for 21.53%. At the same time, there were about 550,000 Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, which was 12.9% of the total population of Kyrgyzstan. By 2021, the demographic situation had changed dramatically, and the Russians and Uzbeks had swapped places. Over the past 30 years, the number of Uzbeks has almost doubled and stands at 960,000 people, which is 14.3% of the total population, while the number of Russians is about 340,000 people, which is 5.14% of the total population. It is noteworthy that the growth in the number of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan was mainly due to natural growth, that is, due to the high reproductive characteristics of Uzbek families. Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan mainly live in the south of the country: in the Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken regions (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2023).

They have been given all the conditions and opportunities to preserve and develop their native language, culture, and customs. Kyrgyzstan creates favorable and equal conditions for all citizens of the country, regardless of nationality. The Uzbek diaspora in Kyrgyzstan is politically and economically active and has a solid financial foundation.

"In Kyrgyzstan, 43 schools with Uzbek language instruction are successfully operating" (24.kg, 2024).

"Based on Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 505 of July 19, 1994, the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Higher Technological College was created. A little later, by Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic of March 31, 1997, the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Higher Technological College was transformed into the Kyrgyz-Uzbek University. At the beginning of 2021, it was granted international status and named after Batirali Sydykov" (www.kuu.kg, 2024).

On May 12, 2022, the second Forum of People's Diplomacy of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was held in the capital of Uzbekistan on the topic "People's Diplomacy - Mutual Understanding for the Sake of Development". It was emphasized that the SCO forum is aimed at developing people's diplomacy, deepening mutual understanding and awareness of people, as well as expanding cooperation in the areas of humanitarian activity, including science, education, culture, sports, and tourism (24kg. 2024).

Conclusion

Thanks to the strong political will and joint efforts of the heads of state, significant progress has been made in resolving vital issues and infusing the cooperation between the two nations with qualitatively new substance. Many barriers that created interstate tension have been removed, most notably the resolution of border issues, and a productive dialogue has begun on the joint use of water and energy resources. Our people are already feeling the results. Today, more than 20 border checkpoints are operating on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, a number unmatched by any other country in Central Asia. As a result, a record number of mutual trips were recorded in 2022—12.4 million people, or 35,000 daily, whereas in 2016, only 3,000 people crossed the border each day, totaling just 1.2 million for the year.

Saidikram Niyazkhojayev states: "Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations have deep roots. This includes a shared history, religion, traditions, and a territory where our peoples have lived and worked for centuries. Today, thanks to Presidents Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Sadyr Japarov, cooperation between the two bordering countries has been elevated to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership. The guiding principle of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to live in peace, friendship, and harmony with other states, especially with neighbors. With Kyrgyzstan, we have a high dynamic of bilateral relations. A

solid legal framework has been created, consisting of nearly 300 interstate, intergovernmental, and interdepartmental agreements, as well as joint statements by the heads of state" (Niyazkhojayev, 2025).

It is particularly important to note that "On June 10, 2025, the law "On the Ratification of the Treaty between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic on the Transfer of Persons Sentenced to Imprisonment for Further Serving Their Sentences (Tashkent, July 18, 2024)" came into effect. In the current complex geopolitical situation, effective public control in the fight against crime, carried out by law enforcement agencies in cooperation with relevant state and public organizations, is of great importance. In this regard, it becomes necessary to establish systematic interaction with foreign states to identify and prevent socially dangerous acts in a timely manner, as well as to effectively apply investigative measures and operational-search activities. The adopted legal act is precisely aimed at achieving these goals. To date, 96 citizens of Uzbekistan are serving prison sentences in correctional facilities in Kyrgyzstan. In correctional facilities in Uzbekistan, 55 citizens of Kyrgyzstan are serving prison sentences. At the same time, the lack of a legal basis for the transfer of convicts limited the possibility of full-fledged bilateral cooperation" (uza.uz, 2025).

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