

O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI
OLIIY TA'LIM, FAN VA INNOVATSIYALAR VAZIRLIGI

FARG'ONA DAVLAT UNIVERSITETI

**FarDU.
ILMIY
XABARLAR-**

1995-yildan nashr etiladi
Yilda 6 marta chiqadi

4-2024

**НАУЧНЫЙ
ВЕСТНИК.
ФерГУ**

Издаётся с 1995 года
Выходит 6 раз в год

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UO'K: 327.39:339(575.1)

**XALQARO TASHKILOTLAR ORQALI O'ZBEKISTONNING IQTISODIY HAMKORLIGINI
TAKOMILLASHTIRISH****УЛУЧШЕНИЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА УЗБЕКИСТАНА ЧЕРЕЗ
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ****IMPROVING UZBEKISTAN'S ECONOMIC COOPERATION THROUGH
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS****Jovhar Museyibzada** 

Farg'ona davlat universiteti doktoranti

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola O'zbekiston tashqi siyosati doirasidagi iqtisodiy hamkorlikka qaratilgan. Hamkorlik siyosiy, iqtisodiy, madaniy va gumanitar (ijtimoiy) sohalaridagi turli yo'nalishlarni o'z ichiga olgan bo'lsa-da, ushbu maqola hamkorlikdagi sa'y-harakatlarning iqtisodiy jihati bag'ishlangan. Xususan, tadqiqotning maqsadi O'zbekiston o'z iqtisodiy manfaatlarini ta'minlash uchun xalqaro tashkilotlar doirasida qanday samarali hamkorlik qilayotganini o'rganishdan iborat. Ushbu tadqiqot O'zbekistonning global miqyosda hamkorlik tashabbuslarini shakllantirish va rivojlantirishdagi faol rolini ta'kidlaydi. Bu sa'y-harakatlarni mamlakatning iqtisodiy manfaatlarini ta'minlashga qaratilgan deb ta'riflash mumkin. Tahlillarning amaliy ahamiyati xalqaro munosabatlardagi "kichik kuchlar" mavzusida yuzaga kelayotgan munozaralar nuqtai nazaridan xalqaro tashkilotlar doirasidagi O'zbekistonning iqtisodiy hamkorlik dinamikasi haqida tushuncha berishdan iborat. Tadqiqot usuli O'zbekiston va xalqaro tashkilotlarning rasmiy veb-saytlaridagi rasmiy hujjatlar (deklaratsiya, kelishuv va boshqalar), nutqlar va yangiliklarni tizimli tahlil qilishga asoslangan. Muallif ushbu manbalarda takrorlanuvchi mavzularni tasniflab tahlil qilgan va ularni "kichik kuchlar" tushunchasining nazariy muhokamalaridan ilhomlangan holda maqolani tashkil qilgan.

Аннотация

Данная статья посвящена экономическому сотрудничеству в сфере внешней политики Узбекистана. Хотя сотрудничество охватывает различные измерения в политической, экономической, культурной и гуманитарной (социальной) сферах, в данной статье основное внимание уделяется экономическому аспекту совместных усилий. В частности, целью исследования является изучение того, как Узбекистан участвует в продуктивном сотрудничестве с международными организациями для продвижения своих экономических интересов в международных организациях. В этом исследовании подчеркивается активная роль Узбекистана в формировании и развитии совместных усилий на мировой арене. Эти усилия можно охарактеризовать как направленные на продвижение экономических интересов страны. Практическая значимость анализа заключается в том, чтобы дать представление о динамике экономического сотрудничества в международных организациях с точки зрения возникающей дискуссии о «малых державах» в международных отношениях. Метод исследования основан на систематическом анализе официальных документов (то есть деклараций, соглашений и других), выступлений и новостей с официальных сайтов Узбекистана и международных организаций. Автор собрал темы, заимствованные из этих источников, и организовал их вокруг нарративов, вдохновленных теоретическими дискуссиями о феномене «малых державах».

Abstract

This article focuses on economic cooperation within the realm of foreign policy of Uzbekistan. While cooperation encompasses various dimensions across political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian (social) spheres, this paper hones in on the economic aspect of collaborative efforts. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to examine how Uzbekistan engages in productive collaboration within international organizations to advance its economic interests. While discussing cooperative interactions of Uzbekistan via international organizations, the article presents a nuanced perspective. This research emphasizes Uzbekistan's proactive role in shaping and driving cooperative endeavors on the global stage. These endeavors can be characterized as dedicated on promoting economic interests of the country. The practical significance of the analyses is to offer insights into the dynamics of economic cooperation within international organizations from the perspective of emerging discussion on 'small states' in international relations. The method of the study is based on systematic analysis of official documents (i.e. declarations, agreements and others), speeches, and news from official websites of Uzbekistan and international organizations. The author collected thematic patterns emerging from those sources and organized them around narratives inspired by theoretical discussions of 'small states' phenomenon.

Kalit soʻzlar: iqtisodiy hamkorlik, xalqaro tashkilotlar, transport, savdo, sheriklik

Ключевые слова: экономическое сотрудничество, международные организации, транспорт, торговля, партнерство.

Key words: economic cooperation, international organizations, transportation, trade, partnership

INTRODUCTION

The role of rising minor powers (RMPs) in fostering economic cooperation within international organizations, while simultaneously advancing their national interests, has become increasingly apparent in the contemporary global landscape. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan asserts “My long experience at the United Nations has shown me that the small states of the world... are more than capable of holding their own. I would even go so far as to say that their contributions are the very glue of progressive international cooperation for the common good²⁵.”

Uzbekistan prioritizes its efforts within the economic area to ensure its interests are effectively represented. To address urge for economic cooperation, among other needs, RMPs may seek membership within international or regional organizations. This also helps them alleviate vulnerabilities by integrating economically, and ensuring access to innovations, and ideas that their limited capacity may not generate independently²⁶.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Peace movements and policymakers of the 19th century advocated for the establishment of international structures, believing in the idea that humanity can create systems to discourage war and promote peaceful cooperation²⁷. Therefore, two crucial premises of international organizations emerged in the 19th-century Europe: first, urge to warn against and if possible control inter-state conflicts to achieve Kantian ‘perpetual peace’; second, facilitate inter-state cooperation, which is more relevant to this article²⁸.

Harold K. Jacobson, a scholar on the international politics, categorizes international organizations into three different types, which encompass those focused on security and peace, economic matters, and issues related to social welfare and human rights²⁹. For Harold K. Jacobson ‘economic matters’ constituted a crucial component of cooperation within international organization (IOs), even leading to special IOs dedicated to such matters. Thus, Jacobson’s depiction is useful in perceiving the ‘economic mission’ of the international organizations.

Although realism and liberalism essentially differ in explaining the *raison d’être* and power of international organizations, they do not deny that IOs help states to establish cooperative relations³⁰. Especially, the increasing globalization of the economy enhances interdependence among states. As states deal with the structural shifts linked to globalization, they may find motivations to engage in international collaboration collectively. Liberalism goes as far as claiming that the economic cooperation is a basic form of cooperation³¹ – ‘low politics’ – that can potentially incentivize and intensify a political level cooperation – ‘high politics’³².

Despite their smaller economies and limited foreign policy apparatuses, rising minor powers such as Uzbekistan have demonstrated extraordinary capabilities in leveraging international organizations to mitigate these disadvantages and promote their economic and strategic interests. While disagreeing with the Scandinavian school of thought on claim that relatively weak aggregate structural power (i.e. smaller economies) of rising minor powers makes them less attractive as

²⁵ “SECRETARY-GENERAL LAUDS ROLE OF SMALL COUNTRIES IN WORK OF UNITED NATIONS, NOTING CRUCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS,” United Nations, July 15, 1998, <https://press.un.org/en/1998/19980715.sgsm6639.html>.

²⁶ Thorhallsson and Steinsson, “Small State Foreign Policy,” 8.

²⁷ Andrew J. Williams, Amelia Hadfield, and J. Simon Rofe, “International Organization,” in *International History and International Relations*, 1st Edition (Routledge, 2012), 151, <https://www.routledge.com/International-History-and-International-Relations/Williams-Hadfield-Rofe/p/book/9780415481793>.

²⁸ Jovhar Museyibzada, “Utility of International Organizations” (O‘zbekiston tarixining dolzarb muammolari, Fergana: Fergana State University, 2023).

²⁹ Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*, First Edition (University of California Press, 2004), 3.

³⁰ Museyibzada, “Utility of International Organizations.”

³¹ Note: Under this category, we also see technical and social cooperation too.

³² Williams, Hadfield, and Rofe, “International Organization,” 154; 161.

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coalition partners and incapable to influence economic negotiations, this article also supports the Scandinavian school by illustrating how RMPs benefit most from “institutionalized, cooperative and peaceful international system³³”.

By participating in international organizations, RMPs can access a variety of strategies to enhance their influence, including coalition-building, cooperation with specialized agencies, and leveraging the support of the IOs³⁴. Rising minor powers share several characteristics that enhance their effectiveness in international organizations. For instance, they are adept at developing networks and working through groups, a cooperative mindset that is crucial for success in such organizations³⁵.

The evolution of international communications, the proliferation of international organizations, and the transparency of their proceedings have reduced the incidence of economic coercion³⁶ against RMPs by greater powers and the risk of burdening costs alone. As a result, rising minor powers like Uzbekistan are incentivized to conduct their relations, especially in the economic sphere, through international organizations.

The method of the study is based on systematic analysis of official documents (i.e. declarations, agreements and others), speeches, and news from official websites of Uzbekistan and international organizations. The author collected thematic patterns emerging from those sources and organized them around narratives inspired by theoretical discussions of ‘small states’ phenomenon.

DISCUSSION: HOW UZBEKISTAN ENGAGES IN ECONOMIC COOPERATION THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS?

The **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation** (OIC) recognizes Uzbekistan’s significant role in strengthening cooperation within its framework. Acknowledging Uzbekistan’s abundant potential in science and education, the OIC expresses keen interest in collaborating with the country. Specifically, the OIC aims to enhance cooperation with Uzbekistan in training the skills of youth from developing member countries. The Secretary-General of the OIC, Hissein Ibrahim Taha, emphasized Uzbekistan’s reputation as a hub of intellectuals and scholars, affirming the organization’s eagerness to engage in partnership within these domains³⁷.

The OIC, on the other hand, has contributed to Uzbekistan’s economy through its affiliated bank – the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Founded in 1973, the IDB has 57 member countries and an authorized fund of \$150 billion. Uzbekistan joined the IDB in 2003 and has since benefitted from substantial investments. Notably, 30 major investment projects totaling over \$2.5 billion have been approved, covering development of sectors such as education, housing, infrastructure, and healthcare in Uzbekistan³⁸. These initiatives align with Uzbekistan’s broader efforts to achieve cooperation within international organizations like the OIC, fostering economic development and social progress in the region.

Uzbekistan places great emphasis on transportation within the **Economic Cooperation Organization** (ECO), alongside other areas of cooperation, as highlighted by the former Chairman of the Senate (*Oliy Majlis*), Ilgizar Sobirov, in his speech during the 12th Summit of the ECO, in 2012. “We consider the ECO Summit as an opportunity to discuss the problems of interaction between the countries of our region and, above all, issues of regional economic cooperation. To

³³ Baldur Thorhallsson and Sverrir Steinsson, “Small State Foreign Policy,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 4; 11, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.484>.

³⁴ Diana Panke, “Small States in Multilateral Negotiations. What Have We Learned?,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 25, no. 3 (September 1, 2012): 387–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.710589>.

³⁵ Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, “Small States as International Actors,” *Small States at the United Nations*: (International Peace Institute, May 1, 2014), 4–5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09619.7>.

³⁶ David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations* (Greenwood Press, 1980), 92.

³⁷ “The President of Uzbekistan Discusses with the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Further Expansion of Practical Cooperation,” Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, August 18, 2022, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/5434>.

³⁸ “President Advances Proposals for the Development of Cooperation with the IsDB,” Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, February 9, 2021, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/4602>.

our opinion, the priority areas of cooperation for the countries of Organization should be trade, transport, energy and telecommunications development³⁹.”

Speaker of the Parliament, Erkin Khalilov, echoed this sentiment back in 2006, who emphasized Uzbekistan's support for ECO's efforts in addressing transport issues to drive economic growth⁴⁰. Khalilov pointed out the need for intensive development of transit and transport potential, establishment of modern communication networks, and creation of new transportation routes to global markets. Uzbekistan prioritizes regional infrastructure development. In this regard, the strategic significance of the Trans-Afghan transport corridor project is worth mentioning⁴¹. Besides increasing the outreach of the region, for Uzbekistan, this project serves as a tool to enhance international efforts for Afghanistan's reconstruction.

Uzbekistan has had proactive stance on transportation projects since its independence. In 1992, the country participated in agreements such as the construction of the Tajan-Sarakhs-Mashhad road⁴². This initiative was expected to facilitate Uzbekistan's access to sea routes, international transport networks, and global markets, leading to increased opportunities for trade, and tourism.

With President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's active participation in ECO meetings, Uzbekistan's agenda has evolved further with sophisticated strategies, which are put forward to achieve economic development. Mirziyoyev emphasizes the importance of “more efficient utilization of existing and creation of new transport corridors in the region⁴³”. It is argued that the establishment of interregional transit hubs, modernization of transport infrastructure, optimization of transit tariffs, simplification of international transportation rules, and integration of digitalization to the process are necessary for concrete progress.

During the address at the 16th Summit of ECO, in 2023, Shavkat Mirziyoyev underscored the need to develop the “Strategic Objectives of Economic Cooperation-2035,” a conceptual document aimed at defining future priority areas for the organization. Mirziyoyev urged ECO to overcome the long-standing trade barriers by adopting the Trade Facilitation Agreement. The president invited member states to support the development of new transport corridors, such as ‘Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey’ agreed in 2023, in Tashkent, and proposed the establishment of a Digital Transport and Customs Office, and a Consultative Committee on Tourism.

These statements and actions collectively underscore Uzbekistan's sustained focus on transportation projects within the ECO and their significant impact on regional connectivity and economic development.

Uzbekistan cultivates special relations within the **Organization of Turkic States** (OTS) that focus on business, trade, entrepreneurship, and finance among other things. Initiatives in the OTS include organizing the Young Entrepreneurs Forum, testing projects like the ‘ePermit’ pilot project, and launching collaborative efforts such as the ‘digital TIR’ project with Turkey and the ‘green corridor’ with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan also proposes joining its logistics centers in Tashkent, Andijan and Termez to the ‘Brotherly Ports’ process of OTS, strengthening regional connectivity.

The economic impact of cooperation within the OTS on Uzbekistan is significant, with trade in 2021 reaching \$9.3 billion, comprising about 23% of Uzbekistan's foreign trade⁴⁴. Under Uzbekistan's chairmanship in 2023, over a hundred programs and measures were implemented,

³⁹ “Statements by the Heads of State/Government/Delegation at the 12th ECO Summit” (ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO) SECRETARIAT, October 16, 2012), <https://eco.int/12th-summit-and-20th-com/>.

⁴⁰ “Statements by the Heads of State/Government/Delegation at the 9th ECO Summit” (ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO) SECRETARIAT, May 5, 2006), <https://eco.int/9th-summit-baku-5-may-2006/>.

⁴¹ Note: The project is continuing and gains new impetus over time, despite periods of uncertainty involved during political and economic changes which cause revision in goals and objectives. For more information read: “Trans-Afghan corridor: new chapter in Central and South Asian relations”. Link: <https://daryo.uz/en/2024/03/17/trans-afghan-railway-project>

⁴² Note: This was an infrastructure project, targeting the Iranian segment of the transportation routes.

⁴³ “Annex-V Statements by the Heads of States – Governments at the 15th ECO Summit,” November 28, 2021, <https://eco.int/15th-eco-summit-november-28-2021-ashgabat-turkmenistan/>.

⁴⁴ Sherzod Qurbonov, TURKIY DAVLATLAR TASHKILOTI: mintaqaviy iqtisodiyotni konstruktiv rivojlantirish omillari, interview by Abdulaziz Rustamov, November 27, 2023, <https://turkic.world/uz/articles/politics/174315>.

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leading to a nearly 4-fold increase in mutual trade operations between Uzbekistan and OTS countries. In 2022, this translated into 10.2% increase in the trade turnover for Uzbekistan⁴⁵.

President of Uzbekistan emphasizes creating favorable conditions for direct relations between entrepreneurs and proposes to operate joint technology parks, innovative startups, investment funds and trading houses across Turkic-speaking states. The Declaration of the 10th Summit of the OTS, adopted in 2023, endorsed and commended the exemplary efforts of Uzbekistan to digitalize transport procedures and to launch the 'e-Permit' project between Türkiye and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the declaration noted the first freight block train from Türkiye to Uzbekistan in December 2022, encouraging ongoing efforts to establish new block train services within the OTS region.

Efforts are also underway to launch the Turkic Investment Fund and facilitate the establishment of the Turkic Development Bank, with Tashkent offering to host the latter, which was announced at the 10th Summit of the OTS⁴⁶. The outcomes of forums like the "Tabarruk Ziyorat"⁴⁷ pilot project, led by Uzbekistan, demonstrate a commitment to enhancing cooperation among member and observer states.

Uzbekistan's economic relations with the **Commonwealth of Independent States** (CIS) is one of the most elaborate. Uzbekistan demonstrates a keen interest in cooperation across various economic sectors including trade, investment, transport, and tourism. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasizes the importance of strengthening confidence and cooperation among member states and developing new projects within the CIS framework⁴⁸. For instance, in 2017, Uzbekistan has seen 20% increase in trade turnover with CIS countries⁴⁹, signaling its commitment to further intensifying its participation in the organization.

Within the CIS, Uzbekistan has signed numerous agreements with countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. The country has joined over 20 sectoral cooperation bodies and engaged in more than 24 major agreements across priority sectors, with a portfolio of industrial cooperation projects exceeding \$30 billion⁵⁰. President Mirziyoyev highlights the need for a comprehensive program of industrial cooperation, particularly emphasizing the creation of joint clusters in various sectors, such as light and food industries.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has displayed increased activity within the CIS, participating in numerous CIS structures. A significant development occurred in June 2023 when the heads of government of CIS countries signed an agreement on free trade in services and investment after a decade of development. The agreement aims to allow access to service markets by removing restrictions in sectors such as finance, transport, construction, and healthcare⁵¹. However, as an exception, Uzbekistan reserved the right to maintain legislative restrictions on foreign investment in sensitive areas like electricity, nuclear energy, and engineering.

Since 2017, within **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** (SCO), Uzbekistan's foreign policy direction has transitioned from a focus on security to a broader agenda encompassing economic, transport, logistics, and cultural diplomacy, paving path for constructive and pragmatic initiatives. Strengthening transport and communication connectivity, and advocating for strategic projects like the North-South and East-West corridors aim to enhance regional integration in Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East and access to global markets through multimodal transport routes.

⁴⁵ Qurbonov.

⁴⁶ "Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Tenth Summit of the Heads of State of the Organization of Turkic States," Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, March 11, 2023, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/6831>.

⁴⁷ Note: This project intends to create centralized platform to convey historical places and heritage of Turkic countries, such as ancient ruins, stunning mosques, medieval fortresses, and intricate tilework.

⁴⁸ "CIS Summit in Sochi," Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, November 10, 2017, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/1130>.

⁴⁹ "CIS Summit in Sochi."

⁵⁰ "Uzbek President Attends Informal CIS Summit," President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, December 26, 2023, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/6949>.

⁵¹ "Uzbekistan Agreed on Free Trade in Services with CIS Countries," Official, Invest In Uzbekistan, June 9, 2023, <https://invest-in-uzbekistan.org/en/novosti-uzbekistana/uzbekistan-dogovorilsya-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-uslugami-sostranami-sng/>.

Uzbekistan is actively promoting strategic projects like the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway and the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway corridors⁵². In his speech at the meeting of the Council of Heads of the Member-States of the SCO, in 2022, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed establishing an Interregional Center for Connectivity in Tashkent, supported by the United Nations, to implement the SCO Concept for strengthening Connectivity and Establishing Effective Transport Corridors.

This article observes that Uzbekistan delves into cooperation in specific economic areas within the SCO, for instance, by proposing the adoption of the SCO New Economic Dialogue Program to foster innovative development, digitalization, AI, technology and sustainable practices; and by suggesting the establishment of an Alliance comprising the Special Economic Zones of the SCO⁵³. The country also recognizes the importance of cooperation on the Green Agenda, urging coordinated efforts on climate adaptation, decarbonization, and the development of smart agriculture.

Addressing trade barriers, Uzbekistan advocates for the development of a Joint Action Plan to facilitate intraregional trade within the SCO. The plan focuses on the removal of trade barriers, harmonization of regulations, and digitalization of customs procedures. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev underscores the joint anti-crisis programs to guarantee the achievement of revitalization of trade and economic ties among SCO member states⁵⁴. In addition, the president extends cooperation within SCO to the food security, since member countries are also major players in agricultural production. Unsatisfied with the current level of cooperation on this critical issue, in 2022, Uzbekistan announced its readiness to convene an International Conference on Food Security.

At the conclusion of the Summit of the SCO Heads of State Council in 2022, the Samarkand Declaration was signed along with 44 documents, marking the record number of adopted documents in the summit. Among these documents we can mention initiatives such as the 'Comprehensive Action Plan for the Implementation of the Provisions of the SCO Treaty on Long-term Good Neighborliness', 'Friendship and Cooperation for 2023–2027', the 'SCO Concept of Cooperation for the Development of Connectivity and the Creation of Efficient Transport Corridors', and others⁵⁵.

At the initiative of Uzbekistan, a Business Partnership Week between the regions of the SCO member states was held in Samarkand in 2023. This event facilitated business-to-business and government-to-business negotiations covering various sectors including e-commerce, green economy, transport and logistics, digital transformation, region-to-region cooperation, investment, and industrial cooperation. The comprehensive discussions aimed to enhance cooperation and address priority issues within the SCO framework, aligning with the broader objectives outlined in the Samarkand Declaration.

Uzbekistan's relationship with the **European Union** (EU) has evolved and grown closer since gaining independence in 1991, although the country does not seek joining the EU formally. For Uzbekistan, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed in 1996, serves as the foundation for the broad relationship between EU and Uzbekistan. It encompasses various areas, particularly political dialogue, trade, investment, economic development, and cultural cooperation. Furthermore, the agreement renders technical and financial assistance to support Uzbekistan's

⁵² Note: The trilateral Agreement on the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway has already signed at the meeting of the Council of Heads of the Member-States of the SCO, in 2022. On the other hand, in February, 2022, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed in Tashkent to a roadmap for the construction of a 600-kilometer-long rail project connecting these three countries (Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railroad).

⁵³ "Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Meeting of the Heads of the Member-States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, April 7, 2023, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/6457>; "Speech of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Meeting of the Council of Heads of the Member-States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, September 16, 2022, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/5542>.

⁵⁴ "President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's Speech at the SCO Videoconference Summit," Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, November 10, 2020, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/3936>.

⁵⁵ "A Solid Package of Documents Signed Following the Samarkand Summit," Official, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, September 16, 2022, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/5544>.

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reform agenda, focusing on regional cooperation, security, human rights, and environmental issues.

Negotiations were completed between the EU and Uzbekistan, in July 2022 on the updated version of the 1996 agreement, this time called the 'Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement' (EPCA), reassuring a shared commitment of both sides to bolster relations and support ongoing reforms. Despite not being signed as of April 2024, the EPCA is expected to strengthen cooperation, especially in trade. Under the existing PCA, the EU and Uzbekistan mutually grants favorable conditions on customs duties, on imports and exports, as well as on direct and indirect taxes applied to imported goods⁵⁶.

Economic relations have been further improved through financial assistance from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, focusing on projects aimed at promoting economic development in Uzbekistan. Between 2014 and 2020, the European Union provided €168 million in financial aid to Uzbekistan, marking a substantial increase of 124% compared to the period from 2007 to 2013⁵⁷. This assistance was primarily directed towards rural development and projects focused on areas, such as sustainable water resource management, irrigation, horticulture, livestock, and vocational training.

Importantly, the EU has granted Uzbekistan preferential trade status under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+)⁵⁸, leading to increased trade turnover. This arrangement removes tariffs on two-thirds of the products, corresponding to more than 6000 products, imported from Uzbekistan, stimulating export growth. Consequently, trade flow reached €4.6 billion in 2022⁵⁹. In October 2023, discussions have begun on a memorandum of understanding to extend cooperation to the critical raw materials, reflecting the new level of strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and the EU in key industrial sectors⁶⁰. During the discussions, the EU's Executive Vice President of the European Commission for An Economy, Valdis Dombrovskis said "Expanding our partnership will help solve global problems in providing environmentally friendly raw materials necessary for the transition to green and digital technologies⁶¹."

Economic cooperation between the EU and Uzbekistan was strengthened through interregional initiatives, as well, such as the 'EU-Central Asia International Conference on Connectivity: Global Gateway'. In his address to the conference, held in Samarkand in November 2022, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev urged that "to strengthen relations between two dynamically developing regions and the full implementation of the EU Global Gateway initiative, it is extremely important to focus on priority areas such as digital transformation, transport connectivity and green growth projects⁶²". Interregional cooperation also encompasses the creation of the 'Investment Facility for Central Asia' initiated in 2010 to merge EU development aid with loans from European and international financial institutions, aiming to benefit the five nations in Central Asia economically.

The EU has allocated €5 million to support technical aspects of Uzbekistan's accession to the World Trade Organization, while contributing to the 'Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea Region' in the amount of €5.2 million⁶³. According to the official sources in Uzbekistan, currently, the portfolio of initiatives aimed at creating high-tech industries and

⁵⁶ "The European Union and Uzbekistan," Official, Delegation of the European Union to Uzbekistan, July 28, 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/uzbekistan/european-union-and-uzbekistan_en?s=233.

⁵⁷ "The European Union and Uzbekistan."

⁵⁸ Note: The GSP+ is the special incentive arrangement of the EU for Sustainable Development and Good Governance that supports vulnerable developing countries. There were 12 countries in the reporting year of 2020-2022, namely Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bolivia, Cabo Verde, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Mongolia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan (being the 9th beneficiary country of the GSP+).

⁵⁹ "The European Union and Uzbekistan."

⁶⁰ Note: These discussions came after the EU's decision to lessen dependence on China, and thus EU's Critical Raw Materials Act in March 2023.

⁶¹ "Ўзбекистан может стать поставщиком критически важного сырья для Евросоюза," Газета.uz, October 27, 2023, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/10/27/eu-crm/>.

⁶² "A New Phase in the Uzbekistan-EU Partnership," The Brussels Times, June 15, 2023, https://www.brusselstimes.com/531849/a-new-phase-in-the-uzbekistan-eu-partnership?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=ru&_x_tr_hl=ru&_x_tr_pto=sc&_x_tr_hist=true.

⁶³ "A New Phase in the Uzbekistan-EU Partnership."

generating new employment opportunities with prominent European companies and financial institutions surpasses €20 billion⁶⁴.

CONCLUSION

The case study of Uzbekistan within the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Organization of Turkic States, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation and European Union illustrate how rising minor powers can effectively navigate international organizations to further their national interests. Despite their smaller economies and limited influence in economic negotiations, these nations have managed to effectively leverage their positions to foster regional cooperation, enhance trade, and promote strategic initiatives.

Uzbekistan, through its multifaceted approach within the SCO and proactive engagement with the EU, demonstrates how a rising minor power can transcend its economic limitations. By advocating for enhanced connectivity and sustainable development, and by securing preferential trade agreements, Uzbekistan has managed to integrate more deeply into regional and international economic frameworks. The country's ability to negotiate favorable terms under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences⁶⁴ (GSP+) and its push for the EPCA with the EU highlight its strategic use of international platforms to bolster its economic growth and reform agenda.

Uzbekistan illustrates that rising minor powers can achieve significant economic and political outcomes by engaging in capacity-building, coalition-forming, and strategic partnerships within international organizations. These states utilize their unique strengths, such as Uzbekistan's focus on connectivity and sustainable development, maximizing their influence. The experience of Uzbekistan also demonstrates that international organizations play a vital role in reducing transaction costs, facilitating cooperation, and providing platforms for RMPs to amplify their voices. By participating in these organizations, rising minor powers leverage collective action to achieve greater economic stability and growth.

In conclusion, the ability of rising minor powers to play significant roles in international economic cooperation is not limited by their smaller economic scale. Instead, it is their strategic use of international organizations, their focus on specific economic sectors, and their ability to form effective coalitions and partnerships that drive their success. This case study underscores the importance of international organizations in providing a conducive environment for smaller states to thrive and further their national interests on the global stage.

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⁶⁴ "Uzbek President Launches Major Initiatives to Further Deepen Regional Cooperation between Central Asia and the European Union," President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, June 2, 2023, <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/6396>.

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