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CULTURAL AND HUMANITARIAN RELATIONS BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND TAJIKISTAN

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Abstract

This article analyzes the stages of formation, legal-institutional foundations, and practical directions of cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan in cultural and humanitarian spheres. The study reveals cooperation trends in education, tourism, culture, mass media, and public diplomacy, while highlighting the role of historical-ethnic factors connecting the peoples of both states in contemporary relations. The research is based on an analysis of official documents, media materials, and relevant scholarly literature, resulting in the identification of promising directions for bilateral cultural-humanitarian cooperation.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, cultural-humanitarian cooperation, public diplomacy, educational exchange, national cultural centers, alliance relations, cross-border cooperation.

Introduction

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, located in the heart of Central Asia, are two fraternal states bound together not only by geographical proximity but also by a common historical destiny, language, and culture formed over centuries. The centuries-old ties between the two peoples, intertwined with a shared historical and spiritual heritage, form a solid foundation for friendly neighborly relations [10]. Over the past decade, particularly in the period following 2016, alongside political-economic cooperation, cultural and humanitarian ties between the two

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states have been developing consistently, becoming an important component of regional integration processes.

The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that cultural-humanitarian cooperation manifests not only at the level of official diplomacy, but also through direct dialogue between peoples, education, tourism, and social projects. The purpose of this article is to provide a systematic analysis of the main directions, legal foundations, and practical outcomes of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in cultural and humanitarian spheres.

Research methodology. The research employed historical-comparative analysis, a systemic approach, and content analysis of documents. The empirical base of the study consists of official documents from state bodies of both countries, official statements issued in connection with state visits by heads of government, statistical data, and scholarly publications on the subject.

Political-legal foundations and institutional mechanisms of relations. A qualitatively new stage in modern cooperation between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan has been observed since 2016, when regular dialogue at the level of heads of state was established. During an official visit to Dushanbe in April 2024, the leaders of the two states signed the Treaty on Alliance Relations, along with a total of 28 intergovernmental and departmental documents, including road maps for interregional cooperation for 2024-2026 between Uzbekistan's Andijan, Namangan, Sirdarya, Fergana, Khorezm, and Kashkadarya regions and Sughd and Khatlon regions [1]. Such documents provided an institutional framework for strengthening cross-border cooperation in not only economic but also cultural-humanitarian directions.

During the state visit of the President of Tajikistan to Uzbekistan in March 2026, the leaders of the two states put forward a proposal to develop a five-year action plan for strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties, taking into account the presence of large diaspora communities [4]. Within the framework of the Intergovernmental Commission, the Prime Ministers of the two states regularly

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present progress reports on the main directions of cooperation, ensuring a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of agreements reached [4]. This institutional foundation places special emphasis on expanding inter-parliamentary dialogue and public diplomacy, as well as developing interregional ties [3]. In their mutual addresses, the heads of state regularly emphasize their appreciation for the friendship between the two peoples, which has been built on the foundation of history, cultural-spiritual heritage, and common traditions [2]. Cooperation in education. Education is one of the most actively developing areas of humanitarian cooperation between the two states. The intergovernmental agreement on mutual recognition of educational documents, in force since 2018, created a legal basis for Tajik students to study at Uzbek higher educational institutions [5]. As a result, the number of young people from Tajikistan receiving higher education in Uzbekistan has been steadily increasing in recent years according to official data, 1,443 Tajik students are currently studying at Uzbek universities [5]. The main factors driving this choice include geographical proximity, relatively lower tuition and living costs, as well as historical-cultural affinity and the widespread use of the Russian language in the academic environment, which facilitates Tajik students' adaptation to Uzbekistan [5].

In addition, scientific-practical conferences and regular meetings of professors, teachers, and representatives of academic circles are organized between higher educational institutions of the two countries, contributing to the deepening of cooperation in the field of science [3].

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Tourism, border areas, and direct people-to-people contact. In February 2018, Uzbekistan introduced a visa-free regime of up to 30 days for Tajik citizens, significantly simplifying mutual visits by citizens of both countries [8]. In the same year, dozens of border crossing points in frontier areas were reopened, restoring kinship ties, neighborly relations, and cultural exchange processes that had been disrupted over decades [6].

The opening of borders created new opportunities not only in tourism but also in healthcare: in particular, the number of patients from Tajikistan seeking treatment at the Neurosurgery Institute under the Tashkent Medical Academy increased significantly, offering a far more convenient and affordable alternative to traveling to distant foreign countries as was previously necessary [7]. According to tourist flow statistics, citizens of Tajikistan consistently rank among the top foreign visitors to Uzbekistan [9].

Ties in culture, arts, and mass media. At the heart of cultural-humanitarian cooperation are regular cultural events, film days, festivals, and creative exchange programs between the two countries. Over various years, Uzbek film days in Tajikistan and Tajik Film Days in Uzbekistan have been organized, and joint cultural events with the participation of creative intellectuals from both countries have been held [3]. Tajik delegations actively participate in international cultural festivals regularly held in Uzbekistan, including the bard arts festival and the Sharq Taronalari, international music festival such events serve to expand intercultural dialogue and preserve the common historical-cultural heritage [3].

Cooperation is also developing in the field of mass media: newspapers, magazines, and radio broadcasting programs in the Tajik language operate in Uzbekistan, contributing to the formation of a Tajik-language information space [2]. Furthermore, the two states are closely cooperating within international organizations such as UNESCO to preserve their common cultural heritage and transmit it to the international community and future generations [10].

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The ethnic-demographic factor: the role of national diasporas. One of the important factors determining the strength of cultural-humanitarian ties is the presence of large ethnic groups residing in both states. In Uzbekistan, Tajiks constitute the second largest ethnic group after Uzbeks, while in Tajikistan, Uzbeks rank second after Tajiks [11]. According to official statistical data, the number of ethnic Uzbeks living in Tajikistan constitutes nearly 12 percent of the country population, i.e., more than 1 million 260 thousand, although unofficial estimates consider this figure to be considerably higher [12]. In Uzbekistan, people of Tajik ethnicity are among the country major ethnic groups [13].

Importantly, Tajiks in Uzbekistan and Uzbeks in Tajikistan are not migrant diasporas but indigenous populations who have historically lived in these territories this factor demonstrates the deep historical roots of the cultural-ethnic closeness between the two peoples [11]. National cultural centers, schools providing education in the relevant language, and mass media operating in both countries serve to help these large ethnic groups preserve their native language, customs, and traditions; the heads of state regularly emphasize their readiness to create the necessary conditions for the activities of such centers [2].

Social-humanitarian projects and youth diplomacy. In recent years, social infrastructure projects have also been implemented as a new form of bilateral cooperation. In particular, Uzbekistan has constructed a school building in Tajikistan Sughd region, and within the framework of projects to develop medical infrastructure in the Qabodiyon district, hospitals and polyclinics have been built [3]. Such projects demonstrate the practical and humanitarian direction of bilateral cooperation.

Forums, ecological camps, and educational events involving youth from both states are regularly organized to strengthen mutual understanding among young people [3]. Such initiatives create an important foundation for representatives of future generations to get to know each other closely, understand shared values, and continue the traditions of public diplomacy.

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Conclusion

Cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan has today become one of the most stable and promising directions of bilateral relations. The analysis shows that this cooperation is being strengthened not only through official agreements at the state level, but also through educational exchange, tourism, cultural-creative events, mass media activities, and direct people-to-people contact. The historical-ethnic closeness binding the two peoples, the common cultural heritage, and the presence of large national diasporas constitute the natural and stable foundation of this cooperation.

At the same time, further institutionalization of cultural-humanitarian cooperation, implementation of long-term programs such as the five-year action plan, and expansion of interregional and youth exchange programs will serve to further strengthen friendship and mutual trust between the peoples of both states in the future. Continued in-depth scholarly analysis of cooperation in this area and evaluation of its social-economic effectiveness remain among the most pressing research directions.

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