

## Uzbekistan – South Korea: new stage of the strategic partnership

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### Abstract

Analysing bilateral and multilateral interactions in the areas of economy, policy, migration, security, technology, transportation, communication, and cultural exchange between Republic of Korea and Uzbekistan and Central Asia is the primary goal of this research. The current state, difficulties, and future prospects of relations between South Korea and Uzbekistan were explained using an interdisciplinary approach and comparative analysis. The Central Asian nations view South Korea as a highly developed state that holds a prominent position in the Asia-Pacific region, and their connection with the Republic of Korea has grown stronger. In exchange, Korea views Central Asia as a significant region with abundant natural and energy resources, the possibility for profitable joint ventures, and a sizable export market. The areas of cooperation between the Republic of Korea and Uzbekistan have grown over time, encompassing nearly all-important areas, both within the scope of bilateral and multilateral platforms. But there are other issues as well, such as the absence of land transportation connections between them, which has an impact on the price and schedule of delivered goods. In Central Asia, South Korea is seen in a very favourable light. Like other nations in the area, Uzbekistan is a staunch supporter of South Korea's efforts to uphold and expand stability and peace on the Korean peninsula. With the restoration of direct railway and road connections between the Korean peninsula and the nations of Central Asia and other states of the continent, the implementation of cooperative projects aimed at the formation of common transport and communication, energy, and production networks on the Eurasian continent can contribute to the revival of the Great Silk Road in contemporary realities. Additionally, the best models for linking Korea and Central Asia with other regional multilateral cooperation initiatives and mechanisms—like Belt and Road, Central Asia + Japan, India-Central Asia, TRACECA and the EU Strategy, etc.—must be developed.

**Keywords:** Republic of Korea, Uzbekistan, Central Asia, strategic partnership, bilateral and multilateral relations, economy

### Introduction

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are five new independent nations that emerged in Central Asia following the fall of the Soviet Union. Republics in Central Asia started aggressively establishing and pursuing their foreign policy initiatives in order to build positive partnerships with the world's most significant allies and nations. As one of the top nations in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) and a major economic force with increasing potential for political sway in international affairs, South Korea has also attained high standards in science, technology, education, and other areas. In response, South Korea views the geopolitics of Central Asia, its natural resources, and the potential for market expansion as critical elements in the formation of strategic alliances with the nations in the area. Numerous publications (Askarov, 2019; Dadabaev & Soipov, 2020; Do, 2020; Fedorovskiy, 2019; Fumagalli, 2016; Ho & Rusecskaya, 2010; Karavaev & Tisheh}yar, 2019; Khan, 2021; Li, 2019; Muratalieva, 2019; Rakhimov, 2020, pp. 327–407; Shin, 2018) have addressed South Korea's policy towards Eurasia and its relations with Central Asia. However, more investigation of the SK-CA ties from an international and interstate standpoint is required. The current paper attempts to conduct a comparative study of the bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations between South Korea and Uzbekistan within the

context of trans-regional and global factors, given that 2022 will mark the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between South Korea and the Central Asian countries. It is clear that, both in the context of bilateral and multilateral settings, the collaboration between the Republic of Korea and the Central Asian nations, particularly Uzbekistan, has greatly developed over the past several years. These days, they collaborate on nearly every significant aspect of life. But there are also a lot of issues, the primary one being that there aren't any direct land transportation connections between them, which has an impact on the price and schedule of delivered goods. In Central Asia, South Korea is seen in a very favourable light. Uzbekistan and other surrounding nations back South Korea's new direction, which aims to uphold and strengthen peace and stability on the Korean peninsula for the benefit of everyone's well-being and the growth of all of Eurasia. Extensions of collaboration between Uzbekistan and South Korea in particular, as well as between Central Asia and South Korea generally, are possible. Joint technology projects for the advancement of e-government, the digital economy, the development of innovative potential in energy, industry, infrastructure, logistics centres, textile and food industry, mechanical and electrical engineering, agriculture, and the creation of transit corridors connecting Asia and Europe through the region are promising areas of cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral formats. The alliance may help South Korea maintain its steady economic expansion as well as the security of its energy and resource supplies. The execution of diverse initiatives and plans is essential for the advancement of ties between the Republic of Korea, Uzbekistan, and Central Asia overall.

### **Uzbekistan-South Korea bilateral relations**

As shown by the depictions of Korean envoys on the murals in the Afrasiab Museum in Samarkand, links between the peoples of Uzbekistan and Central Asia and Korea date back to ancient times. A great deal has changed in culture and customs during a lengthy period of contact and exchange. The Central Asian republics belonged to the Soviet Union in the 20th century, while South Korea was a member of the Western bloc and achieved significant advancements in both economics and intellectualism. Since the end of the Soviet Union, Central Asian nations have opened diplomatic ties with South Korea, built embassies in Seoul and their respective capital cities, and persistently pursued bilateral cooperation to fortify interstate relations across a range of domains.

As a contemporary representation of Asian dynamism and technological advancement, Seoul was sought after by post-Soviet Central Asian states to engage in active political discourse. One of the first nations in the Asia-Pacific area to acknowledge Uzbekistan's independence was the Republic of Korea, with which diplomatic ties were established in January 1992. This recognition occurred on December 30, 1991. There has been a vigorous political discourse between the two republics. As a result, the leaders of Korea and Uzbekistan have met sixteen times: twice in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2019 (Rakhimov, 2020). Other meetings have taken place in 1992, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2005, and 2006. Regular activities include interparliamentary interactions, meetings of governments, ministries, and departments, as well as political discussions with foreign ministries.

Relations between Uzbekistan and Korea have been created and are now growing in a number of areas, including trade, economics, politics, culture, humanitarianism, transportation, and communication. The Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea (2006) and the Joint Statement on the Comprehensive Deepening of Strategic Partnership Relations (2017) are two of the most significant documents that govern cooperation between republics and make up the legal framework for bilateral cooperation. A new Joint Declaration was signed during President Park Geun-hye's visit to Tashkent in 2014, building

on the strategic cooperation Declaration that South Korea and Uzbekistan had signed in 2006. Uzbekistan, which was once the hub of the Great Silk Road, is currently South Korea's biggest trading partner in Central Asia, according to Park. 60 agreements totalling US\$ 7.7 billion were inked during President Karimov's May 2015 visit to Seoul in the areas of trade, investment, economic and technical cooperation, and other areas. Among Uzbekistan's trading partners in Asia, Seoul is assuming a prominent position.

During his first state visit to Korea in November 2017, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev met with President Moon Jae In, other government officials, and former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Shavkat Mirziyoyev participated in the business forum between South Korea and Uzbekistan, which was attended by prominent businesspeople from both countries as well as chiefs of economic and financial bodies. More than \$60 billion worth of commercial, economic, investment, financial, technical, and other documents were signed during the visit. Furthermore, the Joint Statement on the Comprehensive Deepening of Strategic Partnership Relations agreed by the two nations attests to the entirely new level of interaction between South Korea and Uzbekistan.

The prospects of Korean-Uzbek cooperation were explored during President Moon Jae-in of Korea's paid state visit to Uzbekistan in April 2019. The parties decided to establish joint ventures in key economic sectors, train workers for innovative and social domains, and establish free economic and small industrial zones in Uzbekistan. A number of bilateral agreements were signed as a result of the negotiations, including ones that supported and protected each other's investments, concluded a free trade agreement, explored space for peaceful purposes, collaborated in science, technology, and innovation, established the Uzbek-Korean Centre for Cooperation in Health Care, and more. Throughout the visit, 64 documents totalling more than US\$10 billion were signed (<http://uza.uz>, 2019).

One of Uzbekistan's top trading, economic, and investment partners in the APR is South Korea. The fuel and energy complex, the automotive, chemical, light, and electrical sectors, transportation communications, agriculture, information technology and telecommunications, healthcare, etc. are just a few of the fields in which Uzbekistan and Korea's relationship is steadily growing. Over \$7 billion in direct investments have been made from South Korea to Uzbekistan (MFA Uzbekistan, 2022). Table 1 lists South Korea as one of Uzbekistan's top five investors in 2021.

**Table 1. Top investor countries in Uzbekistan in 2021.**

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China	US\$2.2 billion
Russia	US\$2.1 billion
Turkey	US\$1.18 billion
Germany	US\$800.7 million
South Korea	US\$137.4 million

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Source: <https://kun.uz/en/news/2022/03/11/top-investor-countries-in-uzbekistan-in-2021-announced> (date accessed May 23, 2022).

In the framework of mutual commerce between the Republic of Korea and the Central Asian countries, trade with Uzbekistan accounts for the highest share of trade volume. According to the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2020), since \$1.05 billion in 2016, it has surpassed US\$ 2.7 billion. Over 75 Korean company representative offices are registered in Uzbekistan, and there are 800 businesses overall that include South Korean investors as partners. (Republic of Uzbekistan State Committee on Statistics, 2020).

South Korea started to actively aid the reform process and offer financial and technical support for the execution of several socio-economic projects in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan began producing vehicles, high-tech goods for the textile and electrical sectors, silk processing, and other things with the help of Korea.

Established through a cooperation with Korea, the automotive sector is a prominent industry in Uzbekistan, holding the top spot in the region for motor vehicle production. Currently, auto companies collaborate with General Motors in the districts of Andijan, Khorezm, and Tashkent.

Support from South Korea for the growth of the Navoi free industrial and commercial zone is especially significant. Korean Air began operating cargo flights via Navoi airport in 2008, and since then, the airport has incorporated cutting-edge technology and effective system control. Currently, the Navoi centre operates more than 20 weekly flights to various cities including Seoul, Milan, Brussels, Frankfurt, Vienna, New Delhi, Mumbai, and Hanoi.

One of the biggest collaborative investment projects is the establishment of "Tashkent Farma Park," an innovative pharmaceutical and scientific cluster that is unique to Central Asia. Construction on the project started in April 2020 and will take place in the Tashkent region.

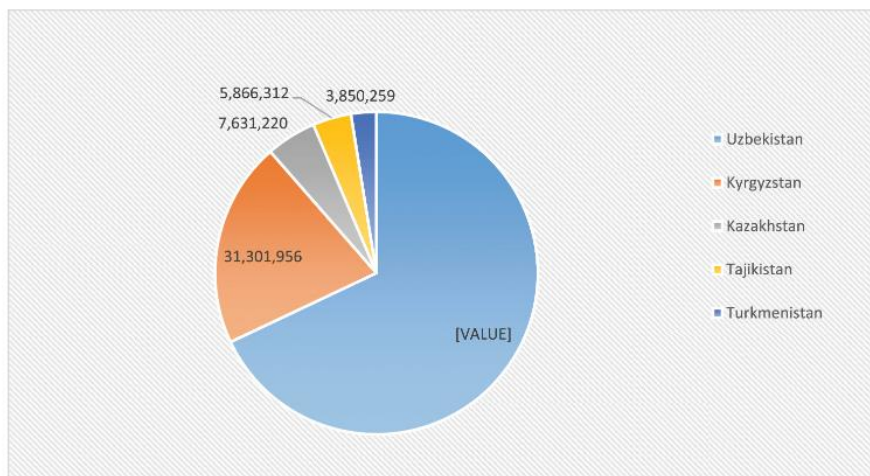
In order to train highly skilled individuals in the fields of pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, cosmetology, and other fields, this project's implementation calls for the establishment of a Pharmaceutical Technical University with a research centre.

The Uzbek-Korean Trading House, which opened in 2018 in Incheon, is a major supplier of world-class items from Uzbekistan to Korea. Food, chemical products, mineral fertilisers, transportation, communication, and tourism services make up the majority of Uzbekistan's exports to South Korea. The biggest imports from South Korea to Uzbekistan include automobiles, plastics, and electrical and mechanical equipment.

The combined Uzbek-Korean project for the construction of the Ustyurt gas chemical complex, which has been repeatedly postponed, is another illustration of the growth of mutually beneficial collaboration in the energy sector. These days, the produced polymer goods are marketed for export to the CIS, Europe, and Central and East Asia.

Development aid from South Korea increased tenfold in the last twenty years in terms of capital accumulation between 2006 and 2019, with public services and social infrastructure receiving the majority of financing (Oxus Society, 2021).

Similar to Japan, South Korea actively provides official development assistance (ODA) to Central Asian nations, with Uzbekistan receiving the majority of Korean ODA. (Surface 1)



**Figure 1.** Korean ODA to Central Asia (2010–2018) in USD. Sources: KOICA, 'KOICA Statistics', Type of Aid, 2018, <http://stat.koica.go.kr/ipm/os/acms/smriizeBtypList.do?lang=en>; Oxus Society (2021).

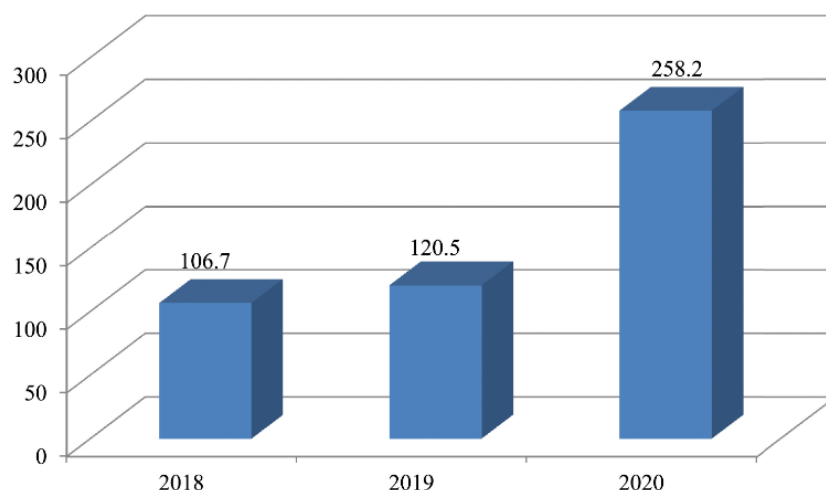
It is noteworthy that Korea's GDP increased from US\$1.25 trillion in 2011 to US\$1.72 trillion in 2018 (World Bank, 2019). The country's economy developed so quickly that there was a noticeable increase in the number of foreign immigrants arriving. The expansion of small and



medium-sized enterprises within the nation has played a major role in the advancement of out-of-country migration. Specifically, in 2015, there were 5,889,611 of them; in 2018, this number rose by 12.7% to 6,638,694 (Ministry of SMEs and Startups, 2018). The number of labour migrants from Uzbekistan who are eager to work in Korea has also increased throughout this time (Dadabaev & Soipov, 2020; Rakhimov & Yakubov, 2022).

In 2010, Uzbekistan's State Statistics report that 4506 labour migrants from Uzbekistan were employed in Korea. In addition, the population grew by about five times between 2010 and 2018. For many years, more than 100,000 Uzbek nationals received training and employment in various fields within the Korean economy.

The amount of cross-border remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan has increased gradually during the last three years. More specifically, it was \$106.7 million in US dollars in 2018. The entire amount of cross-border remittances reached US\$120.5 million in 2019, an increase of over 13%. In 2020, some nations closed their borders as a result of the COVID-19 virus's quick global spread. Consequently, travellers used international money transfer services to send their funds to their relatives. Furthermore, the transfers this year were US\$258.2 million, a 2.2-fold increase over 2019 (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The volume of cross-border remittances of individuals from the Republic of Korea to Uzbekistan (MillionUSD). Source: data compiled by authors (Rakhimov & Yakubov, 2022) on basis of statistics provided by the Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan (<https://cbu.uz/en/>), 2021.

Furthermore, in addition to banks and remittance networks, migrants also send money to people in their host country who engage in informal money transfers by giving them a set amount of money (Rakhimov & Yakubov, 2022). As a result, the precise volume of remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan cannot be determined. The amount of cross-border remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan has increased gradually over the last three years, although this process has been impacted by the COVID-19 virus's quick global spread.

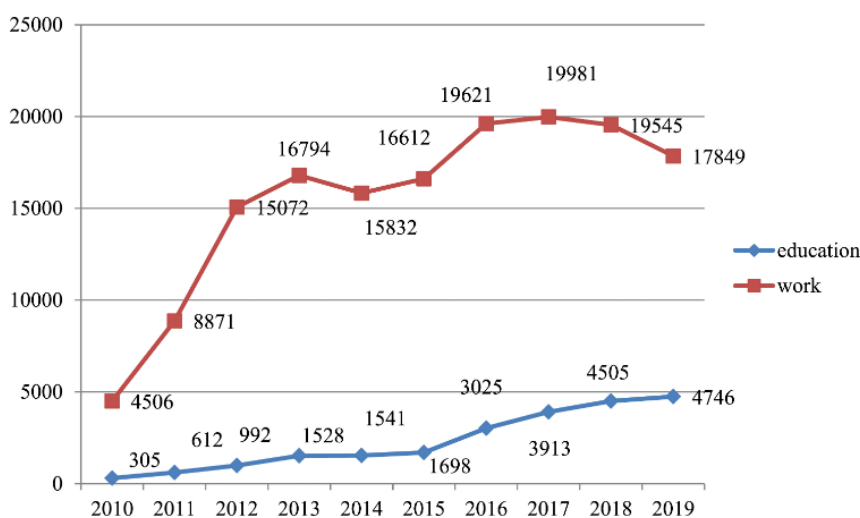
In Central Asia and South Korea, creative festivals and exhibitions, art group excursions, and days of culture are organised to foster mutual respect for each other's cultures, traditions, and customs.

It is often known that, in the early 20th century, Koreans were forcibly relocated from the Russian Far East to Central Asia (In, 2012, p. 420). There are currently about 200 000 Koreans living in Uzbekistan. After the Korean diaspora in China, Japan, and the United States, this population is the fourth largest in the globe. The diaspora of Koreans plays a significant role in Kazakhstani and Uzbek relations with South Korea (Rakhimov, 2020, pp. 327–407). Koreans have assimilated into Uzbek society and are now serving in important positions in the government, including those of Ambassador of Uzbekistan to South Korea Vitaly Fen and Minister of Preschool Education Agrepina Shin.

In addition to the increase in tourism, there are also more cultural exchanges and public diplomacy initiatives between Korea and Uzbekistan. Republic of Korea nationals are eligible for a 30-day visa-free stay starting on February 10, 2018.

Today, Uzbekistan and South Korea have a great deal of experience fostering humanitarian and cultural relations. The Uzbekistan-Republic of Korea Friendship Society was established in 1999. The Government of Korea commissioned the House of Korean Culture and Art in Tashkent with the aim of safeguarding and enhancing the spiritual and cultural legacy of the Korean people. Tashkent and Seoul, Fergana and Yongin, Namangan and Songnam, Samarkand and Geongju, and Tashkent area and Geongsang-pukto province have all developed close municipal links.

Korean institutions are currently included in lists of the world's best universities. For instance, Seoul National University is rated 36th out of more than 1000 universities worldwide in a list produced by QS World University Rankings in 2022 (World University Ranking, 2022). As a result, a large number of Uzbek students attempt to enrol in these kinds of elite colleges in Korea in an effort to boost academic mobility through overseas migration. Specifically, Figure 3 illustrates the consistent increase in Uzbek enrollment in Korean colleges between 2010 and 2019.



**Figure 3.** Dynamics of visits of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea for study and work. Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by Statistics, (<https://stat.uz/en/>), 2020.

Tashkent is home to branches of several Korean international universities, including Inha, Bucheon, Ajou, and Sejong. Fergana is home to Uzbek-Korean International University. Apart from the Korean higher education system, which is currently being transmitted to Uzbekistan at a faster pace, South Korea's primary education experience is also being extensively incorporated into the country's preschool curriculum.

In conclusion, there has been significant development in the relationship between South Korea and Uzbekistan in a number of areas. These include the execution of projects in the energy, gas, and chemical industries; building power plants; information and communication technologies; the automotive and textile industries; the medical and bioindustry; building infrastructure and transportation networks; the creation of new knowledge-intensive economic sectors; and the training of personnel in these. Currently, the majority of Korean investments in Central Asia are made in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. The degree of economic collaboration between Korea and Central Asia does not, however, match the parties' current potential and capabilities, notwithstanding some encouraging advancements. Thus, a long-term plan for Central Asia's growth and for the advancement of interstate ties must be put into action.

### **In the framework of regional and global interconnectedness, South Korea and Uzbekistan**

Globalisation is growing more inclusive, influencing practically every nation and increasing interdependence between nations and regions, according to current trends in world development. In such circumstances, a key element in guaranteeing the stability and sustained development of Central Asia is the establishment of mutually beneficial and equitable bilateral and multilateral connections with the world's most powerful nations. Simultaneously, enhancing international collaboration via the transfer and interchange of contemporary technologies, natural resources, and capital helps to establish the prerequisites for socio-economic growth and the cooperative exploration of efficient means of their incorporation into the global economic framework. Furthermore, because of the high level of economic interdependence between nations, there is a shared interest in preserving and enhancing stability among partner nations.

With a view to fostering a stable and prosperous regional environment, the Central Asian countries are aggressively cultivating a mutually beneficial engagement with South Korea, in line with their multi-vector foreign strategy. Currently, Korea and Central Asia are actively pursuing partnerships in a number of areas, including science, technology, the arts, transportation and communication, political and economics, and investment.

Historically, the region that is now Central Asia was at the epicentre of the Great Silk Road, serving as the meeting point for caravan routes that originated in various parts of the Eurasian continent, including East and South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. This intersection facilitated the growth of trade and cross-cultural exchange between various countries and regions. Currently, Central Asian countries place a high value on implementing coordinated initiatives to improve the region's transit potential, the regulatory framework, tariff policy, and the effectiveness of using international transport routes.

The national transport networks of the Central Asian republics are nearly entwined in terms of international trade. In this sense, the nations in the area pursue a policy of closer transport and communication networks as well as the creation of regional transport corridors, in addition to stepping up their mutual competition. It's crucial to remember that South Korea and Uzbekistan are now working on a number of strategically significant mega projects together that help to build the Eurasian region's transport and logistics infrastructure and to create a single economic space.

Countries in Central Asia have expressed interest in joining the East-West and North-South international transportation corridors, some of which travel through their borders (Alix et al., 2022). China and the EU, which together account for the greatest portion of both international and continental trade, are the main hubs for the formation of freight along the East-West corridor. The initiative places a high value on the regular transportation of goods to Iran, China, Central Asia, and Turkey from Europe. India, Iran, Russia, and Europe should develop as the primary cargo-forming hubs as part of the North-South route.

When compared to current marine routes via the Suez Canal, the realisation of this project will drastically cut the distance and duration (up to 10 days) of freight transportation, as well as lower the cost of cargo transportation (Karavaev & Tishehyar, 2019, p. 10). It is crucial that the transit corridor expedites the movement of freight from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf countries via Iran. Three to five million tonnes of freight per year will be able to pass via the corridor.

The strategic significance of East-West and North-South routes for Central Asian nations enhances their regional and transregional interconnectedness within and outside of Eurasia.

Furthermore, the potential for the long-term, sustainable development of transit corridors across Central Asia will support the establishment of regional economic zones, the growth of national transportation infrastructure, and the expansion of the region's commodity and export potential. These developments will occur along international transportation routes.

Regional and international transport-communication networks in Central Asia comprise, but are not restricted to:

The goods will pass through Russia and Central Asia to reach the ports of the Baltic states, which are Tallinn, Estonia, Klaipeda, Lithuania, Riga, Liepaja, and Ventspils, Latvia; Brest,

Belarus, and Chop, Ukraine, will be the border crossings leading to the European Union; Ilyichevsk, Ukraine, will be reached after passing through Central Asia, Russia, and Ukraine;

TRANSCECA—passes through the ports of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan to reach the Black Sea ports; TRANSFORMA—passes through Central Asia and Iran to reach the Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas; TRANSFORMA—passes through Afghanistan to reach the Iranian ports of Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar, as well as the Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi;

Utilising the Ostyk/Alashankou border crossing between Kazakhstan and China, it passes through Central Asia, China, and Russia to reach the Chinese ports in the east as well as the Russian ports in the far east, including Vladivostok and Nakhodka; it also passes through China and Central Asia to the Chinese ports in the Yellow, East, and South China Seas.

The inclusion of Central Asian nations in integration projects will support the growth of the region's industrial potential, energy and transportation infrastructure, network of international logistics hubs and regional economic zones, integration of the region into the global transportation corridor system, and expansion of national economies' export potential to global markets.

At the same time, the Korean "New Northern Policy" must be combined with other multilateral cooperation projects and implemented within the framework of the policies of China, Russia, the USA, the EU, Japan, and other nations in order to actively and effectively utilise the region's transit capabilities and to improve the interconnectedness in the implementation of international transport on the Eurasian continent. On the other hand, Central Asia is viewed by the Korean side as one of the attractive regions with the potential to attract foreign investment.

The Korean side is very interested in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan as potential regional partners. These countries play a significant role in South Korea's "New Northern Policy," which aims to improve transport and transit infrastructure as well as strengthen trade and investment ties. The production of gas, oil, and uranium, as well as cooperative projects in the chemical and oil industries, agriculture, infrastructure, logistics, and technology development are the main areas of interest for Korea in these nations (Fedorovskiy, 2019).

It is imperative to underscore that the enhancement of the efficacy of the utilisation of international transport corridors necessitates the resolution of several extant predicaments by the participating nations. These issues pertain to the disparities in regulatory frameworks among various nations, technical standards, the absence of a uniform gauge along the entire route, among other things (Rakhimova, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

The Republic of Korea and Central Asia have had a robust and advantageous relationship. South Korea is regarded by the nations in the area as a highly developed state with significant economic, scientific, technological, innovative, and investment potential. It ranks among the top nations in the APR. The Central Asian countries can benefit greatly from South Korea's economic development experience, as it can facilitate the implementation of critical changes to expedite socio-economic development.

In exchange, Korea views Central Asia as a significant region with an abundance of natural and energy resources, the possibility for profitable business ventures, and a sizable export market. Additionally, the region's transit transportation networks and geographic location support South Korea's entry into new markets in both Asia and Europe, diversifying its foreign economic ties and expanding the country's export supply network, which will raise the volume and distribution of South Korean goods, respectively.

The "Eurasia Initiative" is a bold initiative by the South Korean government to reshape national security policy, diplomacy, and the foundations of the world economy. Via "middle power diplomacy," this project advances regional and global governance.

The areas of cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the Central Asian nations have greatly broadened during the last thirty years, in both bilateral and international settings. However,



it should be noted that their cooperation has been hampered by the absence of direct land transportation linkages between them, which has an impact on the price and schedule of delivered goods.

In general, Central Asians have favourable opinions about South Korea. The new direction that South Korea is taking, which aims to maintain and strengthen peace and stability on the Korean peninsula for the benefit of everyone's well-being and the development of all of Eurasia, is generally supported by the countries of Central Asia. Joint projects under the auspices of South Korea's "New Northern Policy," which aims to establish common energy, production, and transportation networks on the Eurasian continent, can help bring the Great Silk Road back to life in the modern era by reestablishing direct rail and road connections between the Korean Peninsula and Central Asian nations. This will ultimately cut down on the cost and duration of logistics while also reducing the distance and time required to deliver goods. Additionally, there are significant detrimental effects of the conflict in Ukraine on regional and global trade and communication, especially that with Central Asia.

It should be noted, though, that not all of the Central Asian nations are actively forming alliances with South Korea. Further efforts are needed to find common ground between the new Korean policy and national projects of these region's countries, as the majority of Korean investment in Central Asia goes to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, while South Korea's investment policy and dynamics of economic cooperation with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remain less than significant.

In order to maintain stability and foster economic cooperation, a number of multilateral projects involving Russia, China, the USA, the EU, Japan, India, and several other states are also being carried out in Central Asia. To enhance the interconnectivity of international transport across Central Asian territories, the best models for linking the Korean "New Northern Policy" with other regional multilateral cooperation projects and mechanisms—such as TRACECA and the EU Strategy, CIS, SCO, Belt and Road, EAEU, Central Asia + Japan, India-Central Asia, etc.—must be developed.

There exists the possibility of expanding collaboration between South Korea and Central Asia. Central Asian republics in particular present promising opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation. These include cooperative technology projects aimed at advancing the digital economy, e-government, and energy sectors, as well as the development of innovative potential in the chemical and energy industries, infrastructure, logistics hubs, textile and food industries, mechanical and electrical engineering, agriculture, and the creation of transit corridors connecting Asia and Europe through the region. Furthermore, republics are interested in developing the postgraduate and higher education system, collaborating with South Korea to implement targeted programmes for conducting joint scientific research, exchanging faculty and doctoral students, and training personnel for innovative economics and the social sphere in order to supply qualified specialists to high-tech sectors of the economy.

Prospective areas of cooperation for President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's new administration with South Korea include the development of new projects in the fields of mechanical, electrical, and textile engineering, as well as infrastructure development, and the expansion of cooperation in the energy, transport, and logistics sectors. Uzbekistan can also benefit from Korea's experience with democratic transition, economic diversification, human capital, education, and academics. The agreements on stepping up bilateral cooperation in support of Uzbekistan's WTO admission are also the partnership's top objective.

The Republic of Korea's and Central Asia's continued relationship development depends on the execution of several international and intercultural tourism programmes and projects. The following are necessary for South Korea, Central Asia, and Korea–Uzbekistan to continue their intra- and extra-cooperation in the future:

First and foremost, there is a need to strengthen scholarly collaboration, educational alliances, and cooperative projects. Examples of these include collaborative textbooks, publications,

seminars, and lecture courses between Korea and Central Asia. Expanding public diplomacy, cultural exchanges, people-to-people interactions, NGOs, and virtual connections in the region is crucial;

Secondly, it is imperative to engage in robust political and economic discourse and gradually establish an institutional framework of collaboration, which includes inter-parliamentary debate. Uzbekistan in particular could serve as a venue for discussions and talks on inter-Korean viewpoints.

Thirdly, the expansion of the region's economy and foreign tourism ought to be correlated with the development of regional and global transportation networks in South Korea and Central Asia. In order to advance in this industry, new routes with related infrastructure and services must be established.

The Republic of Korea's relationship with Central Asia influenced regional and transregional cooperation patterns. In addition to the issues on a global and regional scale, external governments' interests in Eurasia are largely motivated by their conflicting agendas. Strong international alliances with Central Asian nations are necessary, meanwhile, in order to promote innovation, new technology, and economic and democratic changes as well as draw in foreign capital.

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