

A New Stage of Strategic Rapprochement between Uzbekistan and Pakistan: Key Outcomes of the Summit of the Two Countries' Leaders



The state visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which concluded on 6 February of this year, became an important milestone in the development of the strategic partnership between the two countries. The visit gave additional impetus to cooperation and filled the dynamically developing political dialogue with new practical content.

The negotiations in Islamabad demonstrated the transformation of the dialogue from a format of periodic meetings into a systemic mechanism of interaction. A landmark event in this context was the holding of the first meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, which turned this format into the "load-bearing structure" of the entire architecture of bilateral relations.

The launch of this platform marked the beginning of systematic work aimed at achieving concrete results. This is evidenced by the adopted long-term "roadmaps," reflected in the Joint Declaration and a solid package of around 30 documents covering virtually all spheres of interstate interaction.

Special attention was paid to strengthening the mechanisms of political consultations: the parties agreed to hold the first meeting of the Coordination Committee of the foreign policy agencies in Tashkent, and also confirmed mutual support in the international arena. In particular, Islamabad's support for Uzbekistan's accession to the WTO was especially emphasized, and Pakistan's constructive role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2025-2026 was noted.

A particularly vivid event was the ceremonial awarding of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, with the highest state award—the Nishan-e-Pakistan Order. The presentation of this award by President Asif Ali Zardari became clear confirmation of the high level of personal trust between the leaders and recognition of the historical merits of the Head of Uzbekistan in strengthening the

friendship between the two peoples.

Another important component of the summit was cooperation in the field of security. The Head of Uzbekistan held a separate meeting with the Commander of the Pakistan Army, Field Marshal Asim Munir, and the reached agreements were consolidated in a signed “roadmap” between the ministries of defense.

At the same time, interaction in this area will also be significantly expanded through the adopted package of agreements in the law-enforcement sphere. During the visit, bilateral agreements were reached on countering corruption, combating illicit drug trafficking, and the mutual transfer of convicted persons, which testifies to a high level of trust and coordination in addressing cross-border threats.

Along with strengthening the partnership in the field of security, economic cooperation occupied a key place in the negotiations. A solid foundation for joint work in this area was laid during the 10th session of the Intergovernmental Commission held on the eve of the visit. New mechanisms were developed to increase trade turnover to \$2 billion USD, including accelerating the harmonization of phytosanitary protocols and establishing a joint working group on labor relations.

Another important event was the joint business forum attended by the Heads of the two states, as well as representatives of more than 300 leading enterprises, companies, and business structures. Following the event, for the first time, a Protocol on Achieved Agreements was signed, which fixed specific timelines for the implementation of joint projects and established personal responsibility of the heads of ministries and agencies.

Consolidating these initiatives at the highest level, the leaders of the two countries adopted a solid package of documents covering key sectors of the economy—from agriculture, the textile industry, and geology to digital technologies, logistics, and pharmaceuticals. Alongside this, important agreements were adopted in the fields of radiation and nuclear safety, ecology, and emergency management.

The effectiveness of the chosen course toward expanding the strategic partnership is confirmed by concrete indicators: over the past eight years, the volume of mutual trade has increased fifteenfold, reaching nearly USD 500 million by the end of last year. To ensure the sustainability of the positive dynamics and achieve trade turnover of up to USD 2 billion, a decision was made to multiply expand the product range within the framework of the existing preferential trade agreement.

A separate important “driver” of Uzbek-Pakistani relations is investment cooperation. In particular, over the past eight years, the number of enterprises with Pakistani capital in Uzbekistan has increased 6.5 times, reaching around 230. To support this dynamic, during the recent visit a portfolio of joint projects worth USD 3.5 billion was formed, and an agreement was reached to establish the Uzbek-Pakistani Business Council, as well as a cooperation agreement on the development of small and medium-sized businesses was signed.

At the same time, the institutional base of the Uzbek-Pakistani partnership was reinforced by agreements on direct interaction between the administrations of Samarkand and Islamabad, and Termez and Peshawar. Moreover, as a first step toward launching dialogue between the regions and provinces of the two countries, a decision was made to hold an Interregional Forum in Khiva already this year.

Another strategic priority of cooperation is strengthening transport and logistics connectivity. Thus, an agreement in the field of port services was signed, which will become an important addition to the implementation of the railway project “Termez – Naibabad – Logar – Kharlachi.” Calculations show that the development of this corridor will reduce cargo delivery times to 3-5 days and lower costs by 40 percent, integrating Central Asia with the ports of Karachi and Gwadar.

Simultaneously, an agreement was reached on creating a new transport corridor “Pakistan – China – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan,” with pilot shipments along this route to begin as early as February of this year. According to experts, this will contribute to a significant reduction in logistics costs, increased supply

resilience, and diversification of foreign trade ties.

Cultural and humanitarian cooperation has also reached a new level. Vivid evidence of this includes the establishment of Babur Park and the naming of one of the streets “Tashkent” in Islamabad, the creation of a joint cultural center in Lahore, as well as the holding of the Week of Uzbek Culture and the Days of Uzbek Cinema in Pakistan. An important addition to this was the expansion of academic ties: an agreement on cooperation was concluded between Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies and the University of Peshawar.

Another important step toward deepening strategic interaction was the signing of a memorandum on the establishment of the Uzbek-Pakistani Expert Council between the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies and the Islamabad Institute of Regional Studies. The new format has become a permanent platform for analytical support of the strategic partnership and coordination of joint initiatives.

Overall, the outcomes of the visit закрепили за узбекско-пакистанским сотрудничеством роль своего рода «локомотива» межрегиональной интеграции. The combination of firm political will of the leaders, large-scale economic projects, and deepening cultural and humanitarian dialogue represents a historic opportunity to strengthen sustainable development and restore connectivity between Central and South Asia.

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