

Uzbekistan and the United States: Evolution of Bilateral Relations and Trajectories for Further Convergence



In recent years, relations between Uzbekistan and the United States of America have gained a new impetus. Moving beyond formal diplomacy, the partnership has evolved into a deeper, multi-dimensional engagement. Today, political dialogue is active, economic and business ties are expanding, and humanitarian and people-to-people connections are steadily strengthening.

Until 2017, Uzbek-American cooperation was primarily focused on regional security issues and the situation in Afghanistan, while noticeable progress in the economy and investment was virtually absent. However, following the election of Shavkat Mirziyoyev and his visit to Washington in 2018, cooperation began to acquire a strategic character.

This marked the first visit by Uzbek leader to the United States in 16 years and signaled a new level of mutual trust. During the visit, agreements and memoranda totaling over \$4.8 billion were signed, paving the way for projects involving major U.S. companies.

These positive trends have largely been driven by Uzbekistan's domestic reforms and its pragmatic approach to regional and foreign policy. Consequently, diplomatic engagement has intensified: regular consultations at the level of foreign ministries have fostered systematic and structured cooperation.

Since the 2020s, relations have evolved into a multi-layered structure. In 2021, the format of political consultations was transformed into the “Strategic Partnership Dialogue between Uzbekistan and the United States,” encompassing the economy, security, and environmental issues. The first meeting of this new format took place in Tashkent and laid the foundation for comprehensive cooperation.

In 2024, bilateral relations reached a qualitatively new level with the official establishment of an expanded strategic partnership. This format is based on the alignment of key priorities: Uzbekistan seeks deep economic modernization, attraction of foreign investment, integration into global markets, and the formation of a competitive economy. The United States supports these efforts, affirming its commitment to the reform process and encouraging American business participation in the new opportunities emerging in Uzbekistan.

In this context, the meeting between Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Donald Trump in September of this year on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly outlined specific priorities for bilateral cooperation and established the foundation for long-term collaboration. More than ten agreements were signed with major companies, including Boeing, Cargill, and Citigroup and others.

Following this, in October 2024, a U.S. delegation led by President Biden’s Special Envoy for South and Central Asia, Sergio Gor, and Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau visited Tashkent. The visit reinforced mutual trust and underscored both sides’ commitment to advancing joint initiatives in key areas of the bilateral agenda.

Undoubtedly, the U.S. contribution to Uzbekistan’s economy maintains a steady dynamic: in 2024, trade turnover increased by 15%, reaching \$881.7 million. The portfolio of investment projects exceeds \$11 billion. These figures illustrate a steady expansion of trade and economic cooperation, even as overall volumes remain relatively modest.

At the same time, the contemporary economic agenda, however, extends beyond traditional trade. Joint industrial and investment projects, collaboration in logistics, civil aviation, agro-industrial complex, and metallurgy, as well as the implementation of digital and innovative solutions in supply chain management, are coming to the forefront.

Structural changes in Uzbekistan’s export profile are particularly noteworthy. Services now constitute 86% of the country’s main export portfolio. The United States remains the largest market for Uzbek IT services: of 800 active exporters, 448 provide digital services to the U.S., representing 45% out of total IT exports. This underscores the U.S.’s role as a strategic partner in Uzbekistan’s technology sector.

To increase the export of Uzbek goods to the U.S., the President instructed the regions of the country to establish direct connections with individual states. For instance, in August of this year, a task was set to increase textile exports to the U.S. five to sixfold. Within this initiative, the Andijan Region Textile Trade House opened a representative office in St. Louis, one of the country’s key logistics hubs.

The American company Oppenheimer plans to participate in the financing of three major projects in the Andijan Region with a total value of \$1.2 billion, including the creation of a textile industrial zone worth \$180 million.

Uzbekistan has again attracted U.S. attention due to the presence of critically important minerals and rare earth elements used in batteries, semiconductors, and modern defense systems. In April 2025, the countries signed an agreement on cooperation in the extraction of such resources, and in September, the American investor Cove Capital began geological exploration work.

Significant progress is also observed in the humanitarian sphere: the number of academic exchanges and educational programs is increasing, and the interest of Uzbek youth in American education has noticeably grown. Currently, 40 Uzbek universities implement partnership projects with more than 25 American universities and educational institutions. Cooperation includes academic exchange of faculty and students,

joint research, and the engagement of American specialists in the educational process.

These initiatives reflect Uzbekistan's aspiration for greater openness and integration into the international community, creating conditions for expanding contacts in tourism and cultural spheres.

In this context, starting January 1, 2026, Uzbekistan will introduce a 30-day visa-free regime for U.S. citizens. Previously, such a regime only applied to tourists over 55 years old. The new rules significantly facilitate U.S. citizens' access to the country, promoting tourism, business travel, and cultural exchanges, as well as opening additional opportunities for establishing direct contacts between individuals and organizations in both countries.

A central element of multilateral interaction remains the regional C5+1 format, which unites the U.S. and the five Central Asian countries. The U.S. National Security Strategy indicates the intention to intensify work within this platform to promote initiatives on climate change mitigation, energy and food security, development of transport connectivity, and expansion of Central Asian countries' access to global markets.

To sum up, the evolution of Uzbekistan-U.S. relations demonstrates how pragmatism and reform-driven policies can overcome barriers and create mutual benefits. Today, bilateral relations are comprehensive and resilient: Uzbekistan has emerged as a significant partner, recognized in Washington as a key contributor to regional stability. The trajectory of cooperation points toward constructive partnership, with Central Asia serving not as periphery, but as a bridge for sustainable development and mutually beneficial collaboration.

Shakhnoza Kodirova,

Head of the Department at the ISRS under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan