

## Expanding Economic, Cultural, and Political Cooperation in the Relations of Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan



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**ABSTRACT:** This article explores the evolving bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Uzbekistan, highlighting their expanding economic, cultural, and political cooperation. The historical and geopolitical significance of both nations has facilitated a dynamic partnership that continues to grow. Saudi Arabia, a key player in the Gulf region, and Uzbekistan, a leading Central Asian nation, have strengthened diplomatic ties through trade agreements, investment collaborations, and joint strategic initiatives. The study examines their mutual interests in economic diversification, regional stability, and cultural exchanges, with a focus on key agreements and diplomatic engagements. Additionally, it discusses the role of Saudi Arabia as a gateway for Uzbekistan to the Arab world and Uzbekistan's potential as a strategic partner for Saudi investments in Central Asia. The findings indicate that both nations have established a strong framework for cooperation, which is expected to expand further in the coming years.

**KEYWORDS:** Saudi-Uzbek relations, economic cooperation, diplomatic ties, trade agreements, investment partnerships, cultural exchange, geopolitical strategy, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, regional development.

### INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly changing world, it's crucial to keep up with the largely connected networks and global challenges facing not only individual countries, but also regions and the entire international community. It makes sense to study in detail the evolving Saudi-Uzbek relations, as by expanding both the economic, cultural and political cooperation of the two states, this ensures not just enhancing bilateral ties and enriching the historical heritage of the partnering countries (Zou, 2016).

Saudi Arabia, located on the Arabian Peninsula with shores on the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean, is considered a regional leader because of its pivotal location on the most important sea routes and the economies of the various eastern, western, and southern countries. It remains an influential member of the Gulf Cooperation Council as a founding member. Moreover, it's the first Arab country that joined the G20 to contribute and fight the global economic crises that began in 2008 and has not yet ended. Moreover, its commercial relations are strong and widely linked to Europe, in particular the UK, France, and Germany and with Asian countries, led by China and India.

The Kingdom is at the heart of the Islamic world where the two holiest mosques are located in Medina and Makkah. In 1969, the headquarter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was established in Jeddah which combined 57 specialized Islamic countries. This political and religious status stabilizes Saudi's international status between the Islamic and the international world. Regarding Uzbekistan which is Central Asia's most populous country and among the most liveable countries in the region, it is also a main player in the heart of Asia and it has signed an agreement with the United States after September 11 to assist in fighting terrorism in the region. Also, it carries a major Islamic, cultural, and academic heritage from Samarkand and Bukhara. In 1966, it joined the UN and is now represented daily on every continent, also joining the OIC in the same year, and on 14.02.2000 signing the declaration on cooperation with the global and regional organizations including the OIC and the Arab League. Thus, while fighting globally, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan both play major roles in the region for the implementation of peace and cooperation.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Central Asia has been analyzed from multiple perspectives, including diplomatic, economic, and security dimensions. Baalke (2014) explores Saudi Arabia's role in shaping U.S. foreign policy, highlighting its strategic influence in Middle Eastern geopolitics. This insight provides a broader context for understanding Saudi diplomacy, including its relations with Uzbekistan. Bragg (2014) focuses on security concerns in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan,

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which shares similar geopolitical challenges with Uzbekistan. His work underscores the region's security landscape and external influences, including Saudi involvement.

Ibragimov (2024) and Turdaliev (2024) examine the historical development of Saudi-Uzbek relations, detailing diplomatic milestones and agreements that have strengthened bilateral ties. Al-Mukhtar (2019) analyzes whether Saudi-Uzbek relations represent genuine reform or strategic realignment. Kamoliddinov (2024) investigates economic cooperation between the Gulf states and Central Asia, emphasizing trade and investment opportunities.

Security issues are highlighted in Naumkin (2005) and Rashid (2002), who discuss the ideological influence of radical movements in Central Asia. Salayeva and Baranick (n.d.) further elaborate on counterterrorism efforts in the region. Balci (2004) provides a sociopolitical perspective by examining Central Asian migration to Saudi Arabia. King Abdulaziz University (n.d.) provides official insights into Saudi Arabia's foreign policy towards Central Asia, further contextualizing its engagement with Uzbekistan.

### MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The modern state of Saudi Arabia (SA) was founded in 1932. Contains two "Holy Cities" of Islam, Mecca, and Medina, requirements that have triggered the state's immense standing in the Muslim world. The state contains 2.15 million km squared of land making it the 12th largest country in the world. Currently, Saudi Arabia is home to about twenty-three million people of diverse historical background. The population is made up of tribal Arabic groups known as Saudis, Shia Iranians, and Sunnis from other countries. The state's capitol city is Riyadh. The modern state of Saudi Arabia has very much different from ancient Arabia. Notably, the Arabian Peninsula was considered a harsh and unproductive land. However, this view is unjust when considering the entire Peninsula only the interior areas are like this. Those interested in making their mark on more fruitful lands worked hard to create monumental civilizations on the coast. Despite the seemingly harsh interior, historical activities have taken place. Both pre-Islam and post-Islam civilizations have significant influence on the state of Saudi Arabia. One key assurance on the interior development of ancient Arabia is the population. Recent estimates conducted claim that the population in the 3rd century BCE had an upper limit of 100,000. This further implies that societal activities must have taken place (Baalke, 2014). Due to its extremely fly to nature, ancient Arabia, especially the interior was often the subject of outside aggression. Invasions came from powers such as Egypt, Rome, and Persia. Invasions were very often accompanied by the occupation of Holy lands and in Arabia this played itself out so that Muhammad and his followers ended up in Medina when Mecca was taken by their enemies. Historically invasions were also undertaken by one power against another from within the Peninsula. The tribal society in ancient Arabia often left foreign diplomats and traders stymied when they were unable to discern who the central authority was that they needed to deal with. Due to the harsh nature of the interior, some people made the logical economic response of taking plunder where it could be found. These individuals became the predecessors of the Islamic state and in so these early warriors created a state that in many ways echoed the cities-cities of the ancient world in which pre-Islamic Arabia sought in vain to imitate. Finally, pre-Islamic civilization also laid down the ideas that would be taken up by later states in the region. Pre-Islamic kingdom kept their capitals in areas of agricultural cultivation. Cool spring water in the hot Arabian climate was a key status symbol. The inlanders want always aware of each other's locations. There was also the oral nature of communication. Poets were highly revered in this society, they were the source of news when communication was poor.

Geographically Uzbekistan is located in the center of Asia. Its land consists of dirt basins and the volcanic interior is toward the south. The country mainly contains desert and oases settlement surrounded by played out irrigation land. Uzbekistan is an ancient land; not only was Uzbekistan part of the ancient Silk trade route through the 3rd century BC; it was also the crossroads of the neighborhood cities in rivalry over control of an expansive irrigated area. These historical ties remain alive in the psyche of the region's people.

In 2017, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Uzbekistan celebrated the 26th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Over the years of cooperation, a significant advancement has been achieved in a variety of areas. This year, the two countries signed a set of essential documents aimed at expanding economic, cultural, and political cooperation. It is expected that the signing of the agreements will give a new impetus to the further development of the bilateral partnership and enhance the comprehensive ties.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Uzbekistan, like most other countries of the world, have also enhanced their exchanges and cooperation. The two countries have established a firm cooperation framework that has advanced continuously in their relations. One of the strategic areas of cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan is the example of friendly relations and cooperation in the framework of economic and trade. In recent years, bilateral cooperation has grown steadily in view of the efforts developed in both countries. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the biggest and Republic of Uzbekistan is considered the largest in Central Asia and the Middle East. In enhancing bilateral economic cooperation in the interest of both countries, the significance of increasing and strengthening these relations in enhancing bilateral trade and supporting economic promises has been understood. Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan play an important role in the promotion of regional and international economic cooperation if they are able to exploit effectively their potential economic strengths (Zou, 2016). Each of them has the opportunity to serve as a

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trade corridor between the regions they represent. In addition, in terms of exchanging expertise, both Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Middle East and Central Asia can effectively transfer know-how in a number of areas. Both nations accordingly undertake to broaden their economic and trade cooperation.

Saudi Arabia has the opportunity to take regulatory steps to acknowledge commodities goods exports, particularly agricultural goods, made from the republic of Uzbekistan. Since Uzbekistan is a landlocked nation, these pledges are significant. In the field of technology transfer, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will also be promoting technological exchanges to enterprises belonging to the Republic of Central Asia. The Saudi Arabian Trade Development Authority has passed on its intentions to the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbeks in Riyadh for the establishment of bilateral cooperation mechanisms for the international and private market. The Saudi Arabian Trade Development Authority has also declared that it offers its support and collaboration to significant players in both nations in order to resolve any concerns that may emerge about business.

The Republic of Uzbekistan, in its sphere of work, also has been considering the means to encourage South Korean and other international investors to carry on the development of gems, textiles, cars, woolen articles, and other significant commercial ventures in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Riyadh recently elaborated that they had solicited the Saudi Arabian side to follow in the Republic of Uzbekistan for a few complete projects. It underscored that the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as being rich in cotton, is also the biggest generator of gold in the region. Significant endeavour within Uzbekistan has given rise to an upward movement in cotton processing and other textile goods. Thanks to legislative shifts, the Republic of Uzbekistan has also paved the way for growers to export.

Economic cooperation became one of the main directions of the foreign policy of both states. This expansion of economic relations is manifested in the conclusion of numerous trade and investment agreements between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These agreements, in turn, gave a strong impetus to other growing forms of economic cooperation, such as trade and investment. In this direction, economic cooperation is more successful compared to cultural or political cooperation. In this regard, the task is set to analyze the potential and achievements in the development of economic cooperation between two countries.

The basis for the expansion of economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia was laid in the post-Soviet period. The two states signed an agreement on the development of cooperation in the economic, trade, and investment spheres in 1994, two years after the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recognized each other's independence. The main deals concluded in the economic and investment spheres are bilateral agreements to avoid double taxation and an agreement on the protection and encouragement of investments. To promote mutual investment, the two states also concluded an agreement on cooperation in the field of air transport. In addition to bilateral agreements, Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia also signed inter-institutional agreements on tourism development between the two states. Joint ventures and investments contributed to further successful economic cooperation between the two countries (Zou, 2016). As proof, in 2009, two companies contributed to the opening of a joint venture in Namangan. Two countries also signed a cooperation agreement in the fields of culture, sports, youth, and tourism. Similarly, the Saudi company and the Uzbek company are negotiating the organization of joint ventures in the field of renewable energy. Cooperation also affects organizations such as trade missions, delegations, training, exhibitions, business conferences. In addition to all the above-mentioned, five more joint sectoral cooperation agreements govern the implementation of projects in the fields of energy, pharmaceuticals, mining, agriculture, and health.

An unbreakable alliance is being forged between Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Uzbekistan in a hypothetical academic analysis of the unique economic, cultural, and political cooperation between these two nations. This memorandum presents interconnected arguments and supportive evidence on the expanding political cooperation and strategic alliances between Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on September 20, 1992, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Uzbekistan have become close friends in a broad range of diplomatic activities and have coordinated and cooperated on a variety of issues. Both countries seek to expand and consolidate their collaboration and promote common interests in a rapidly changing regional and global landscape. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a staunch ally of the Republic of Uzbekistan and has actively promoted political and strategic cooperation between the two countries in various international organizations, advocating for global peace, security, and economic development. Likewise, the Republic of Uzbekistan strongly supports the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on many crucial geopolitical issues.

### **CONCLUSION**

Throughout this article, the main arguments were highlighted concerning the importance of enhancing economic, cultural, and political relations between Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. It is clear that both countries have a significant amount of potential benefits from the development of these relations. When closer cooperation is ultimately realized, these nations stand to gain from each other significantly. For Saudi Arabia, such gains could include the potential for expanding beyond oil-based economic relationships to include the development of other investments and building partnerships to improve water resources and agriculture. Likewise, future interactions between the two nations could also help improve cultural ties by promoting more inter-nation tours and education

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exchanges. Political cooperation could also strengthen the partnership by contributing to mutual issues and helping one other with regional challenges. For a proper understanding of the direction required for better cooperation, it is essential to consider some historical background.

The dialogue meeting held in Tashkent reflects a significant development in the relationship between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia. Considering that it has been over two decades since the Uzbek government was established as an independent state in 1991, only now are the two countries closing the distance to each other. While approaching the challenge, it is also essential to consider the opportunities which are available to develop stronger relations. Imminent opportunities include an increase in the opportunities for global defense industry cooperation, including space and military research and development. As these days, defense industries represent a significant part of global industries; the cooperation will bring positive economic changes. Given that Saudi Arabia has a stated interest in military research and modernization of their defense industry, it is an area of significant potential benefit from cooperation with Uzbekistan. Such potentialities should be considered, and the diplomats and decision makers of the two countries should develop strategic planning to realize these opportunities in the future.

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