

PROBLEMS OF COOPERATION WITH UZBEK DIASPORAS ABROAD

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Abstract: This article analyzes the main challenges arising in the process of cooperation with Uzbek diasporas abroad and the underlying causes of these issues.

Keywords: Diaspora diplomacy, CIS, transnational relations, Uzbek diaspora, Central Asia.

Introduction: In the context of intensifying globalization, diasporas abroad have become one of the key factors in the foreign policy of states. For Uzbekistan as well, cooperation with Uzbek diasporas abroad holds significant political, economic, and cultural importance. However, this process is complicated due to various political, social, and legal challenges present in different countries.

According to various studies, today more than 5 million representatives of the Uzbek diaspora live in different countries around the world, with the majority residing in Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, South Korea, and Afghanistan. These diaspora communities have mainly formed as a result of labor migration, historical migration processes, or economic reasons. They serve not only as participants in the economic life of their host countries but also as an important bridge for developing cooperation with Uzbekistan in various fields. In particular, diasporas provide opportunities to expand trade and economic relations, attract investments, promote national culture and language, and develop public diplomacy. Some researchers describe diasporas as a “network of transnational relations,” emphasizing their role in economic and cultural integration. At the same time, representatives of the Uzbek diaspora in certain countries face various challenges. For example, in Russia and other CIS countries, labor migrants often encounter difficulties related to legal registration, obtaining work permits, and social protection. Russian scholar Sergey Ryazantsev notes that labor migrants from Central Asia often work in the temporary labor market segment, which weakens their social protection. These legal, social, and economic challenges can negatively affect the effectiveness of diaspora activities. One of the key issues concerns the Uzbek diaspora in Russia. Russia has long been a primary destination for Uzbek labor migrants. However, migrants in this country frequently face legal, social, and economic problems. Researcher I. Rasulov highlights that Central Asian migrants in the Russian labor market are often employed in low-skilled jobs and have low levels of social protection. This situation is a major obstacle to establishing effective cooperation with the Uzbek diaspora. Political scientist Marlene Laruelle also points out the existence of discrimination and stereotypes against Central Asian migrants in Russia, which complicates their integration. As a result, the Uzbek diaspora in Russia is largely engaged in low-skilled labor, has weak social protection, and faces discrimination and stereotypes. These factors hinder effective cooperation.

Another challenge is related to ethnic and political issues in certain Central Asian countries. For example, the Uzbek diaspora in Kyrgyzstan faced a difficult socio-political situation following the ethnic clashes of 2010. Some researchers note that these events reduced the political activity of the diaspora and weakened their trust in state institutions. Kazakh researcher



J. Abuova emphasizes issues such as integration challenges, identity concerns, and political-legal barriers in cooperation with diasporas. After the 2010 events, ethnic tensions weakened social stability, reduced political participation, and diminished trust in state institutions. Identity and integration challenges also persist, as maintaining a balance between adapting to the local society and preserving national identity becomes difficult. Legal barriers also exist, including restrictions on citizenship, voting rights, and political participation. These issues complicate both integration and identity preservation. Therefore, improving the local political and social environment and developing strategies that address identity and integration are essential for effective cooperation. This is important not only for Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan but also for Uzbekistan's public diplomacy and regional stability.

Another major issue concerns the Uzbek diaspora in Afghanistan. Approximately 2 million Uzbeks live in Afghanistan, mainly in the northern regions, where they constitute an important ethnic group. However, prolonged political instability, security challenges, and economic difficulties complicate systematic cooperation with this diaspora. American scholar Michael Fumagalli emphasizes that the Uzbek community in Afghanistan is closely linked to regional politics and security issues, requiring a cautious approach in diaspora policy. Political instability limits their representation in governance and reduces their participation in decision-making processes. Security issues and the activities of armed groups hinder stable social life, while economic crises lead to unemployment, weak infrastructure, and limited business opportunities. Additionally, the lack of educational institutions offering instruction in Uzbek restricts access to education in the native language and hampers cultural development. Political instability also limits international projects, reducing opportunities for economic and cultural cooperation with Uzbekistan and other countries. Therefore, a cautious and balanced approach is necessary when dealing with this diaspora. Uzbek scholar Suhrob Bo'ronov emphasizes that the situation in Afghanistan directly affects not only the country itself but also the security of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. He stresses that without peace and stability in Afghanistan, regional development is difficult. Supporting social, religious, and educational projects is seen as an important investment for Uzbek communities there. Based on this analysis, the Uzbek diaspora in Afghanistan represents not only an ethnic or cultural issue but also a complex matter linked to regional security, political stability, and economic development.

Similar challenges can be observed in Turkey and South Korea. In Turkey, Uzbek migrants are mainly employed in the service sector and small businesses. According to Turkish researcher Ahmet İçduygu, migration processes often create complex issues related to legal status and social integration. One key problem is the preservation of cultural and linguistic identity. Diaspora youth often receive education in Turkish and grow up in a Turkish cultural environment, making it difficult to maintain Uzbek language and traditions. Additionally, diaspora organizations are not sufficiently developed in some regions, which complicates community consolidation and problem-solving. There are also issues related to social integration, including cultural differences and stereotypes. The lack of educational and cultural centers further weakens national identity among younger generations. Thus, one of the main challenges for the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey is maintaining national identity while ensuring integration into the local society. Strengthening diaspora organizations and cultural ties is essential. In recent years, Uzbekistan–Turkey relations have been rapidly developing. According to unofficial data, over 130,000 Uzbeks currently live, work, or study in Turkey. Around 17,000 have work permits, and more than 60,000 have residence permits. In 2026, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev made his first foreign visit to Turkey, where the fourth meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council was held. During the visit, the foundation of the first Uzbek school in the world was laid in Istanbul. In South Korea, Uzbek migrants working in the manufacturing sector face challenges



related to working conditions and language barriers. Some scholars emphasize the importance of a systematic state policy for effective diaspora engagement. British researcher Robin Cohen describes diasporas as key actors in global processes and highlights their role in economic and cultural diplomacy, including strengthening a country's "soft power."

Another issue is the insufficient development of institutional mechanisms for diaspora relations. Some researchers note that Uzbekistan did not actively pursue a policy toward ethnic compatriots for a long time. Edward Lemon and others argue that Central Asian states have traditionally followed a non-interference principle, which slowed the development of diaspora policies.

Finally, challenges related to cultural identity and integration remain. In many countries, Uzbek diasporas face language and cultural adaptation issues, while younger generations risk gradually losing their national identity. Therefore, supporting cultural, linguistic, and social ties, as well as developing educational and cultural projects, is crucial. This will help diasporas integrate into the global community while preserving their national roots. There are also certain challenges faced by the Uzbek diaspora in the United States. For example, representatives of Uzbek immigrants in the U.S. often encounter difficulties related to language, culture, and social adaptation. When their level of English proficiency is low, their social interactions and employment opportunities become limited. Members of the Uzbek diaspora often live far from their families, which increases their reliance on community support networks. Most studies indicate that social support systems—such as local immigrant groups, Russian- or Uzbek-speaking clubs, and community organizations—play an important role in the adaptation process. At the same time, there are also positive examples of diaspora representatives achieving success in their professional fields. For instance, there are documented cases on social media of Uzbeks working successfully in the technology sector or academic environments. Another factor affecting the Uzbek diaspora in the U.S. is immigration policy. Undocumented immigrants face significant concerns due to immigration raids and strict legal enforcement, which create additional difficulties. First, the domestic policies of host countries, migration legislation, and the level of integration directly influence the effectiveness of cooperation with diasporas. In some countries, restrictions or strong control mechanisms on diaspora activities slow down their organizational development. At the same time, insufficient internal consolidation of Uzbek diasporas—meaning the lack of a unified platform and weak coordinating institutions—also complicates cooperation. Second, communication gaps represent a significant challenge. Due to the lack of an effective system of information exchange between state institutions and diaspora communities, existing opportunities are not fully utilized. This leads to delays in the implementation of economic, investment, and cultural projects. Third, issues related to socio-cultural identity remain highly relevant. In particular, there are cases where preserving national identity, as well as promoting language and culture among Uzbeks living abroad for a long time, is not sufficiently supported. This may gradually weaken the diaspora's connection with its historical homeland. From this perspective, improving cooperation with Uzbek diasporas abroad requires a comprehensive and systematic approach. In particular, it is important to strengthen institutions working with diasporas, widely implement digital diplomacy tools, improve the legal framework, and support cultural and humanitarian ties.

Conclusion. In general, the challenges of cooperation with Uzbek diasporas abroad are associated with several factors: social issues related to labor migration, ethnic conflicts in certain countries, political and legal barriers, and the processes of cultural integration within diasporas. Therefore, in order to pursue an effective policy in this area, it is essential to develop institutional mechanisms for working with diasporas, strengthen cultural ties, and enhance the



social and legal protection of diaspora members.

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