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THE ROLE OF TRANSPORT COMMUNICATIONS IN STRENGTHENING INTERSTATE ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND IRAN

Temirbek Kuchkarov
Senior Lecturer, Department of
Social Sciences and Humanities,Oriental University

Annotation. Transport communications occupy a system-forming place in the economic relations between Uzbekistan and Iran. As a double-landlocked state, Uzbekistan depends on stable, diversified, and cost-efficient transit routes for access to external markets, whereas Iran offers outlets to the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman - including the ports of Bandar Abbas and Chabahar - and serves as a bridge toward India, the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe. Drawing on recent intergovernmental agreements, corridor initiatives, and analytical studies, this article argues that transport links are evolving from an auxiliary sector into a strategic instrument of trade growth, logistics diversification, industrial cooperation, and broader regional integration. The findings show that the greatest economic gains arise when infrastructure, institutions, and corridor integration advance together.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Iran, transport communications, logistics, transit corridor, Chabahar, economic cooperation, regional integration.

Introduction. In scholarly and policy-analytical discourse on Uzbek-Iranian relations, transport and transit are increasingly regarded as the principal driving force of bilateral economic cooperation. Among the relevant studies, S.A.Fayzullaev's research on trade and economic cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Uzbekistan addresses the structure of bilateral exchange[1], while the analytical materials of A.Normirzayev, a specialist at the Center for the Study of Problems of Transport and Logistics Development under the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Uzbekistan, directly connect regional development with new transport corridors involving Iran[3].

This emphasis is objectively grounded in geography. Official Uzbek sources note that Uzbekistan is one of the few double-landlocked countries in the world, which turns the development of external transport corridors into a structural necessity rather than a discretionary policy choice[9]. From this perspective, cooperation with Iran acquires strategic importance, since it provides Uzbekistan with additional southern and south-western outlets to seaports and international transit chains. Iran offers access to the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, including the ports of Bandar Abbas and Chabahar, and functions as a bridge toward India, the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe.

The aim of this article is to analyze the role of transport communications in strengthening interstate economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Iran on the basis of recent intergovernmental agreements, corridor initiatives, and academic and official analytical sources. The article treats transport not as an auxiliary technical field but as an economic category that actively shapes the scale, stability, and geography of bilateral exchange.

Research Methodology. The study is based on a qualitative analytical methodology, with document analysis as its principal method. The source base combines several types of materials: academic studies of bilateral economic and transport cooperation[1; 2; 3]; official documents and statements of the Government and the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Uzbekistan[4; 5] and of Uzbek diplomatic missions[9]; corporate information of the national railway company[6]; and diplomatic sources reflecting the trilateral Chabahar mechanism[7; 8].

Methodologically, the article applies a descriptive-analytical and comparative approach and relies on an analytical synthesis of official and scholarly materials. Transport communications are understood not merely as physical infrastructure but as a complex of

railways, roads, ports, customs procedures, tariffs, and institutional measures that reduce transaction costs and increase the territorial mobility of goods. Because the study draws largely on official and press sources, factual claims are, where possible, cross-checked across several independent sources, and the conclusions are presented as analytical syntheses rather than direct quotations.

Analysis and Results. ***Transport communications as an economic category.*** From an analytical standpoint, transport communications should be understood as a combined system of infrastructure and institutional arrangements that lowers transaction costs and raises the mobility of goods. In their study of Iran-Uzbekistan economic cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative framework, E. Makhmudov and M. Hasheminejad emphasize that transport and transit constitute a crucial direction of bilateral relations, while prolonged customs delays, tax barriers, road tolls, and weak transport capacities remain the principal factors impeding trade growth[2].

Accordingly, the economic effect of transport cooperation between Uzbekistan and Iran manifests itself in several interrelated forms: first, a reduction in delivery times and logistics costs; second, a diversification of export and import routes; third, an expansion of market access; and fourth, the creation of conditions for investment in warehouses, terminals, logistics centers, and related services. This means that transport communications do not simply "serve" trade; they actively shape the scale, stability, and geography of interstate economic exchange. This conclusion follows from the scholarly and official sources cited above.

Institutional foundations of Uzbek-Iranian transport cooperation. In recent years, cooperation between Uzbekistan and Iran on transport matters has shifted from general declarations toward more concrete institutional decisions. On 18 June 2023, the transport ministers of Uzbekistan and Iran agreed to develop the trilateral "Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran" multimodal corridor, to reduce on a parity basis the fees levied on Uzbek carriers in Iran, and to advance plans for an Iran-Uzbekistan logistics center, together with terminals and warehouses, at the Iranian ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas with the participation of Uzbek entrepreneurs[4].

A further step was taken on 31 July 2023, when representatives of the Ministry of Transport of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran discussed accelerating the intergovernmental agreement on an international transport corridor involving Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran, reducing fees for international road transport through Iran, and using Bandar Abbas and Chabahar for Uzbekistan's export and import cargoes[5]. These decisions are significant because they translate geopolitical interest into practical logistics policy.

Cooperation also became more substantive at the railway and port levels. According to JSC "O'zbekistan temir yo'llari" (Uzbekistan Railways), in January 2022 an Uzbek delegation visited Iran and Chabahar, after which a memorandum of understanding on transit, logistics, and freight transport via existing multimodal routes was signed between Uzbekistan Railways and the port of Chabahar[6]. Official descriptions characterize Chabahar as one of Iran's principal ports and an element of the North-South transit architecture, which increases its importance for Uzbekistan's long-term access to maritime communications[6].

Chabahar and the expansion of southern connectivity. The Chabahar direction is especially important because it extends the functional horizon of Uzbek-Iranian cooperation beyond the bilateral framework. A trilateral mechanism on Chabahar has been operating between India, Iran, and Uzbekistan, within which the parties coordinate the port's use for connecting Central Asia with India and South Asia. The third Working Group meeting on Chabahar between Iran, India, and Uzbekistan was held in Mumbai on 22 November 2024; the participants underlined the significance of Chabahar as an alternative trade corridor to Central

Asia and discussed ways to strengthen regional connectivity[7]. According to the same source, business circles have shown active interest in using the port, and since an Indian operator assumed responsibility in 2018, Chabahar has handled more than 450 vessels, over 134,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU), and more than 8.7 million tonnes of bulk cargo[7].

This framework subsequently acquired additional institutional depth. The first trilateral political consultations between Iran, India, and Uzbekistan, held in Tehran on 9 September 2025, reaffirmed the intention to deepen cooperation on connectivity, ports, and the International North–South Transport Corridor, and reviewed the implementation of the decisions adopted at the third Chabahar Working Group[8]. For Uzbekistan, this means that transport communications with Iran increasingly operate within a broader transregional network linking Central Asia not only with Iran but also with India and the maritime trade routes further south.

Corridor logic: from bilateral transit to a regional economic space. The importance of Iran for Uzbekistan also lies in the corridor logic of Eurasian integration. According to A.Normirzayev, the Center for the Study of Problems of Transport and Logistics Development under the Ministry of Transport of Uzbekistan has carried out research on forming a China-Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey multimodal corridor[3]. This is methodologically significant, since it treats Iran not as an isolated bilateral partner but as an essential link in a wider East-West and North-South logistics chain.

Official Uzbek sources of 2025 reaffirm this corridor-based approach. At the United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized that the volume of cargo transported along the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey corridor had increased significantly, and called for the accelerated development of international transport corridors and infrastructure[9]. In parallel, analytical materials note that in November 2023 a protocol was signed in Tashkent on forming an international multimodal corridor between Asia and Europe through the "Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey" route[3].

From an economic standpoint, this corridor logic has important implications. It means that Uzbek-Iranian cooperation creates not only bilateral transport capacity but also a basis for attracting transit cargo from third countries, integrating industrial supply chains, and increasing exports of transport services. As the cited official texts suggest, the more stable and predictable these corridors become, the stronger the incentive for firms to invest along the route in logistics infrastructure, warehouses, customs services, and value-added trade operations.

Constraints and prospects. At the same time, the available materials show that infrastructure alone is not sufficient. Academic analysis points to customs delays, transport bottlenecks, taxes, tolls, and weak equipment as persistent obstacles[2]. Official Uzbek sources likewise stress the need to harmonize regulatory and technical standards, to establish competitive freight tariffs, to digitalize trade and transport procedures, and to reduce non-physical barriers to the movement of goods[5; 9].

Therefore, the future effectiveness of Uzbek-Iranian transport communications depends on three interrelated tasks: modernizing physical infrastructure, harmonizing institutional procedures, and integrating bilateral routes into larger regional networks. The evidence indicates that the greatest economic returns arise when railway, road, port, and customs reforms are implemented in a coordinated manner rather than in isolation. This conclusion represents an analytical synthesis of the official and scholarly sources cited above.

Conclusion. The role of transport communications in strengthening interstate economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Iran is of fundamental importance. For Uzbekistan, cooperation with Iran mitigates the structural disadvantages of its double-landlocked geography by creating additional access to international maritime routes and diversified transit corridors.

For Iran, cooperation with Uzbekistan strengthens its role as a regional logistics hub connecting Central Asia with the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, India, Turkey, and Europe. Recent agreements on corridor development, port use, logistics centers, tariff coordination, and the trilateral mechanisms around Chabahar demonstrate that transport communications are becoming one of the most effective instruments of interstate economic cooperation[4; 5; 7].

In conclusion, transport communications between Uzbekistan and Iran should be regarded not as a narrow sectoral issue but as a strategic platform for long-term economic integration. Their development reinforces the stability of trade, expands investment opportunities, supports the formation of new logistics chains, and enhances the international competitiveness of both states within the emerging architecture of Eurasian connectivity.

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