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THE FORMATION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA (1991–1992)

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Annotation: This article examines the formation of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the early years of Uzbekistan’s independence, with a particular focus on the political and historical significance of the 1992 official visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal to Tashkent. The study analyzes the initial stages of bilateral cooperation, the process of mutual diplomatic recognition, and the role of shared religious, cultural, and historical values in strengthening interstate relations.

Based on archival materials, official documents, press publications, and scholarly literature, the article highlights how the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992 marked a turning point in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy. It also demonstrates that mutual trust, Islamic brotherhood, and political dialogue served as key factors in the development of long-term cooperation between the two countries.

The findings suggest that Uzbekistan–Saudi Arabia relations, initiated in the early 1990s, laid a solid foundation for contemporary strategic partnership and continue to play an important role in political, economic, cultural, and religious cooperation.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, diplomatic relations, foreign policy, independence, Prince Saud Al Faisal, 1992 visit, international cooperation, Islamic brotherhood, Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

After gaining independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan placed special emphasis on the development of mutually beneficial cooperation with Muslim countries as one of the priority directions of its foreign policy. In this process, the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia played an important role not only in political and economic cooperation, but also in the development of ties based on historical, religious, and cultural commonalities. Both countries are united by the religion of Islam, shared spiritual values, and the rich heritage of Islamic civilization.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was among the first states to recognize Uzbekistan’s independence, and the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the two countries significantly strengthened Uzbekistan’s international standing. In particular, the visit of the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Saud al-Faisal, to Uzbekistan in 1992 is recognized as a major political event in the history of bilateral relations. During this visit, the signing of the protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations laid a solid legal foundation for future political, economic, religious, and cultural cooperation.

The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that today the relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia have developed to the level of a strategic partnership, steadily expanding in the fields of political dialogue, investment cooperation, pilgrimage tourism, education, and culture. Studying the historical roots of this cooperation and scientifically analyzing the process of the formation of diplomatic relations is of significant theoretical and practical importance for understanding contemporary international relations.

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The aim of this article is to analyze the history of the formation of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia, particularly the political and historical significance of the official visit in 1992, based on relevant sources. It also highlights the initial stages of cooperation between the two countries and the role of mutual trust and Islamic brotherhood in the development of diplomatic relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE TOPIC

The issue of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been partially addressed in scholarly and journalistic literature produced during the years of independence. In studying this topic, the works of the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, serve as an important theoretical source. These works outline the priority directions of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, including cooperation with Muslim countries and broader issues of international relations.

In addition, the study of Saudi Arabia's political development and foreign policy is significantly informed by S. Inoghomov's work "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" as well as J. Wynbrandt's research "A Brief History of Saudi Arabia". These studies provide valuable insights into the historical and political evolution of the Kingdom and its external relations.

Furthermore, the February 1992 issues of the newspaper "Xalq so'zi" serve as an important primary source, documenting the visit of the Saudi Arabian delegation to Uzbekistan and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states. These materials are of particular historical value for reconstructing the early stages of bilateral cooperation.

While these sources contribute to understanding the initial phase of Uzbekistan–Saudi Arabia relations, the political and historical significance of the 1992 official visit has not yet been sufficiently studied as a separate research object, indicating the need for further in-depth scholarly investigation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the fundamental principles of historical science, including scientific objectivity, impartiality, and historicity. A comprehensive approach was employed in examining the formation of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In the article, the historical-comparative method is used to analyze the factors contributing to the establishment and the stages of development of relations between the two countries. The historical-chronological method was applied to systematically present the political events that occurred during 1991–1992 in a sequential order. Through the source studies (source criticism) approach, official documents, periodical press materials, speeches of state leaders, and memoir literature were analyzed, and their scholarly value was critically assessed.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

After gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Uzbekistan elevated the development of international cooperation particularly strengthening relations with the Muslim world to the level of a state policy priority. In this process, the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the development of bilateral ties became a significant event in national history.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Saudi Arabia, like many Arab countries, was among the first to formally recognize Uzbekistan's independence in December 1991 and expressed its intention to establish diplomatic relations [6, p. 115]. The historical ties and shared spiritual and cultural values between the two peoples created a solid foundation for the beginning of cooperation.

In the early years of independence, approximately thirty countries recognized the Republic of Uzbekistan, including major states such as Turkey, the United States, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, and China. This international recognition strengthened national confidence and opened the way toward future development [5, p. 289]. From the very

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beginning of independence, leading Arab countries, along with major global powers, initiated efforts to establish diplomatic relations and develop cooperation with Uzbekistan.

A congratulatory letter addressed to the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, by King Fahd ibn Abdulaziz Al Saud reflects the early emergence of sincere bilateral relations. In the letter, the King stated:

"Brother Islam Karimov, Your Excellency!
To the Honorable President of the Republic of Uzbekistan!
May peace, Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you! I am greatly pleased to extend my sincere congratulations to you personally and to the people of Uzbekistan on the occasion of independence, and to express my heartfelt wishes to your country, which is an essential pillar for resolving issues of the Muslim nation and ensuring stability" [7, pp. 1-2].

The King also noted that Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal Al Saud would personally deliver this message during his visit to Uzbekistan.

In February 1992, the official visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal ibn Abdulaziz Al Saud to Uzbekistan took place. During this visit, a protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations at the embassy level between the two countries was signed [6, p. 115]. This event marked the beginning of a new stage in bilateral relations.

On 19 February 1992, President Islam Karimov received the Saudi delegation. During the meeting, he provided detailed information about the political and economic situation in Uzbekistan, post-independence state policy, and international relations. He also expressed regret, stating:

"At present, we cannot describe our relations with Saudi Arabia as satisfactory. There are, frankly speaking, certain reasons for this: until now, you were often misrepresented to us, and similarly, false information about us was spread in your country. This was done to create discord between our two states.
Now, however, no one will be able to sow discord between us. I believe that strong brotherly relations will be established between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia. I consider your visit as the first step in this direction. If God wills, we will also visit your country and become closely acquainted with your people and the noble efforts being carried out there" [8, pp. 1-2].

These words reflected the necessity of overcoming previous misunderstandings and misinformation between the two states.

The visit of Prince Saud Al Faisal was of major political significance and marked the starting point of official diplomatic relations. On 20 February 1992, the Saudi Foreign Minister met with Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister U. Abdurazzoqov. During the meeting, important agreements were reached, including the signing of documents on the establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of embassies in Riyadh and Tashkent.

On the same day, the Saudi delegation visited the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Central Asia. The Chairman, Mufti Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, informed the guests about the growing attention to religion in Uzbekistan after independence and the strengthening of ties between Uzbek Muslims and their brethren abroad [8, pp. 1-2]. This meeting contributed to the strengthening of spiritual closeness, religious solidarity, and brotherhood within the Muslim world.

Prince Saud Al Faisal was not only the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia but also one of the most influential diplomats in the world. Born in 1942, he graduated from Princeton University with a degree in economics and had extensive experience in oil policy and international relations. As one of Saudi Arabia's most prominent political figures, he led delegations to major international and Arab forums. Under his leadership, the Saudi delegation played a decisive role in establishing diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan and strengthening the foundations of strategic partnership.

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The 1992 official visit of the Saudi delegation and the agreements reached during it marked the beginning of a new era in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. This visit symbolized not only diplomatic relations between the two states but also Islamic brotherhood and cultural-spiritual closeness.

At the conclusion of the meeting, President Islam Karimov stated:

"I do not consider you merely members of a foreign official delegation, but rather our brothers and friends" [8, pp. 1-2].

In conclusion, the establishment of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia particularly the 1992 visit led by Prince Saud Al Faisal opened a new stage in bilateral relations. This visit strengthened the principles of mutual respect, trust, and religious and cultural affinity. The agreements reached during the visit laid a strong foundation not only for political relations but also for Islamic brotherhood and strategic partnership. As one of the first foreign policy steps of independent Uzbekistan, this event remains both a historical milestone and a foundation for current cooperation. Therefore, relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia continue to play an important role in strengthening regional stability and unity within the Islamic world.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that the formation of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was one of the key directions of Uzbekistan's foreign policy during the early years of independence. Saudi Arabia's recognition of Uzbekistan as one of the first states to acknowledge its independence, along with the 1992 visit of the delegation led by Prince Saud Al Faisal to Tashkent, created the legal and political foundations for bilateral cooperation.

As a result of this visit, diplomatic relations were officially established, and agreements were reached regarding the opening of embassies. At the same time, the principles of mutual trust, Islamic brotherhood, and cultural and spiritual affinity emerged as important factors in the development of bilateral relations during the meetings.

In conclusion, the official visit of 1992 marked a turning point in the history of Uzbekistan–Saudi Arabia relations, laying a solid foundation for the development of political, economic, religious, and cultural cooperation that continues to this day.

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