

THE KHUJAND AGREEMENT: A NEW STAGE OF GEOPOLITICAL STABILITY IN CENTRAL ASIA.

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the signing of the agreement on the junction point of the state borders of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, emphasizing that it is not only politically significant but also an important event from a historical and cultural point of view. This summit plays a crucial role in the geopolitical position of Central Asia, finding solutions to problems related to borders and the use of water resources. It is emphasized that cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, investment, infrastructure, water resources, transit, science, education, cultural ties, and security has reached a new level. The opening of the “Dustlik” (Friendship) stele is noted as a symbol of kinship. The rapid development of trilateral cooperation is shown to be able to expand regional integration and create new opportunities in the fields of industry, agriculture, and innovative technologies. It is also concluded that the meeting launched a new era of reliable cooperation in the region, aimed at eliminating past problems.*

Keywords: *Enclave, security zone, delimitation, integration, geopolitics, infrastructure, transit, water resources, transboundary problems.*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, regional cooperation is of particular importance for countries as a key tool for ensuring stability and economic development. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, bound by strong historical and cultural ties, are today embarking on a new stage of integration and strategic partnership.

Throughout history, the countries of Central Asia have consistently maintained close political, economic, and cultural ties. Today, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, existing as independent states, are historically deeply interconnected. Through the efforts of the leaders of these three nations, strategic cooperation is entering a new phase, establishing a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the region. In the Middle Ages, these three states were a vital part of the Silk Road, which fostered trade, cultural exchange, and diplomatic relations.

Interstate cooperation between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan has undergone significant transformations in the last decade. Since gaining independence, these countries have comprehensively developed multifaceted relationships. Today, cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, transport, security, and culture is rapidly expanding. In particular, economic cooperation has been strengthened through increased trade volume between the three countries and joint investments in strategic infrastructure and energy projects. Convenient and efficient transport and trade corridors between the countries have created new opportunities for integration.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the relationships between the three countries faced serious challenges. After gaining independence in 1991, each of these three states

encountered political and economic difficulties. Disputes over state borders, water and land resources, as well as problems related to the transportation of goods between the countries, complicated the relationships.³⁶ Border issues, particularly between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, were a very sensitive matter. Enclaves, disputed territories, ethnic intersections, and disagreements over the use of water and roads had become a minefield, hindering peace. The total length of the common state border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is 972 kilometers.³⁷ In the border area, there are two exclaves of Tajikistan: Vorukh and Kayragach.³⁸ There are five border crossing points between the two countries. There are 10 villages in Kyrgyzstan and 13 villages in Tajikistan located near the border.³⁹ These areas have been considered dangerous for many years. The armed conflict in September 2022 in Batken, involving artillery, drones, and armored vehicles, revealed how delicate the situation in the region was. Dozens of people were killed, hundreds were injured, and thousands of residents were evacuated.⁴⁰

These problems demonstrated that the issues were not merely diplomatic in nature, but posed a direct threat to security. Following this, the heads of the special services of the two countries, Kamchybek Tashiyev and Saymumin Yatimov, began conducting closed-format, step-by-step negotiations. Over three years, satellite maps were studied, the official status of the enclave Vorukh was legally secured, a mechanism for land exchange was developed, and a neutral transport corridor was opened. This agreement is not just a forced compromise, but an expression of a conscious, mature civic position. Behind the process lies the hope of saving human lives, restoring trust, and creating a sustainable future. As a result, on March 13, 2025, the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed the treaty on the state border between the countries.⁴¹ Two control-crossing points on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border, which had been closed since 2021, have been reopened. From March 14th, flights from Bishkek to Dushanbe and Khujand have been launched. In addition, bus services will be restored between the border regions of the two countries. At the end of the negotiations, the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed a total of 16 documents, including a joint declaration “On Further Strengthening Friendship and Good Neighborly Relations”. They agreed to increase trade volume to \$500 million and expressed their readiness to accelerate the launch of the Central Asia-South Asia-1000 (CASA-1000) electricity transmission and trade project.

Following this meeting, an agreement was reached in the city of Khujand on the establishment of a treaty on the junction point of the state borders between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. On March 31, 2025, the historic Khujand Summit took place in the city of Khujand, Republic of Tajikistan, with the participation of the leaders of three friendly and fraternal states: President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan, and President Sadyr Japarov of the Kyrgyz Republic. The signing of the Khujand Declaration on the junction point of the borders of the three states, which can be called a “historic document,” once again encourages the values of peace and the methods of resolving all existing problems through good

³⁶ A. Moraczewska. (2010). The Changing Interpretation of Border Functions in International Relations. *Revista Română de Geografie Politică*, [e-journal], 12(1):329-340.

³⁷ Alamanov, S. K. (2018). Enclaves in Central Asia. *Post-Soviet Studies*, T. 1, № 5, P.451.

³⁸ Reeves, Madeleine: *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia*, Cornell University Press, 2014, pp. 241–250.

³⁹ Alamanov, S. K. (2005). A brief history and experience in solving border problems of Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek.

⁴⁰ Starr, S. Frederick. *Ferghana Valley: the heart of Central Asia* / edited by S. Frederick Starr, Baktybek Beshimov, Inomjon I. Bobokulov, and Pulat Shozimov. New York. 2011

⁴¹ “The agreement on the Kyrgyz-Tajik State border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has been ratified”. Available at: <https://president.kg/news/21/38975>

neighborliness, mutual respect, understanding, and dialogue. After signing this agreement, the heads of state expressed confidence that “from today, the borders of the three states will turn into a border of eternal friendship, genuine good neighborliness, and constructive partnership”.⁴²

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

This research utilized an analysis of scholarly literature, normative legal documents, and statistical data. Various sources were examined regarding the integration processes of Central Asian countries, regional security, and economic cooperation issues. In addition, the official documents of the Khujand meeting, expert opinions, and materials from the mass media were analyzed. Comparative analysis, systematic analysis, and deductive methods were employed in the research.

III. RESULTS

The meeting in Khujand served as an important platform for resolving transboundary issues such as water resource allocation, trade and economic cooperation, and security provision. The Central Asian region has experienced long-standing problems due to difficult economic conditions and border demarcation disputes. Joint efforts to resolve them will bring invaluable benefits to the entire region.

The signing of the treaty on the junction point of the three states' borders is assessed as a significant event not only politically but also historically and culturally. This historic summit has found solutions to existing problems related to borders and the use of water resources. In particular, as a result of the agreement, active cooperation between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan has risen to a new level in the following areas: common markets in the economic and trade sectors, expansion of foreign investment and infrastructure projects, rational use of water resources and hydropower plants in the region, creation of new transit routes and simplification of cargo transportation, strengthening scientific, educational, and cultural ties between countries, and combating modern threats, including terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime. It is expected that these areas of cooperation will be pursued more broadly and effectively through the constructive policies of the countries.

At a meeting with the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sadyr Japarov, the head of our state noted that trade and economic relations between the two countries are developing, and the volume of trade turnover has increased by 70 percent since the beginning of the year. Issues of accelerating the construction of major regional projects in the field of energy and transport communications, including the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, were discussed.⁴³

The meeting of the three heads of state in Khujand turned into a grand celebration. Because now there are no border disputes, and no soldier of one state will fire on the territory of another state.

“Today is truly a great and long-awaited holiday for our peoples. We have signed a historic treaty on the junction point of the three states borders. From now on, the borders are lines of brotherhood, a space for new opportunities, creation, and cooperation”, said our President at the Khujand Summit.

⁴² “An important step towards regional prosperity and development”. Available at: <https://tguk.tj/index.php/tj/habarho-5/item/4980-vazhnyj-shag-k-regionalnomu-blagopoluchiyu-i-razvitiyu.html>

⁴³ “A meeting that unites nations and hearts”. Available at: <https://yuz.uz/uz/news/ellerdi-keoillerdi-birlestirgen-ushraso>

Another important outcome of the meetings in Khujand was the opening of the new symbolic Friendship Complex on the territory of the state borders of the three fraternal states, a new symbol of strengthened friendship, good neighborliness, trust, and strategic partnership. This monument is a historical heritage and will serve the long-term development of relations between our countries. The efforts of the heads of state in delimiting state borders are of great importance in ensuring regional stability, economic development, and the well-being of the population of the countries. The opening of borders creates conditions for implementing joint programs and expanding the economic and social opportunities of the region.

Jesus Gil, Professor at the Center for Asian Studies at the Autonomous University of Madrid, Secretary General of the Spanish Association of Orientalists, a Turkologist scholar, commented on this agreement:

“The meeting in Khujand is manifested in a new stage of striving to develop good neighborliness, trust, and strategic partnership between fraternal states. The organization of joint concert programs during the holidays, the proposal to develop transport and trade infrastructure, testify to the special attention paid to improving the lifestyle of citizens and expanding youth opportunities”.

Also, according to Li Yunxeng, a senior researcher at the Institute of Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, this trilateral meeting of the leaders of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan is an important step towards strengthening regional cooperation and ensuring stability in Central Asia. The opening of the Friendship Stele has become a symbol of good neighborliness, trust, and strategic partnership between fraternal states. The initiatives of the President of Uzbekistan aimed at developing practical cooperation deserve special attention. First, active, reliable communication at a high level helps to solve emerging problems and promote joint projects. Second, it is important to develop close cooperation between border regions in promoting economic growth and increasing the well-being of the population. Proposals to improve customs facilities, create a convenient trade and logistics infrastructure, and create a trilateral trading platform are very appropriate. Third, supporting industrial cooperation projects and gradually increasing joint investment capital will serve to create new jobs and increase regional competitiveness. Fourth, developing transport systems, including increasing the frequency of air flights and launching new bus routes, will help strengthen inter-ethnic communication and develop tourism. Finally, promoting large regional projects in the field of "green" energy and transport, as well as programs in the field of water and ecology, is important for the sustainable development of the region and the solution of environmental problems.

IV. DISCUSSION

The Khujand meeting was not only an important step towards ensuring regional integration and geopolitical stability in Central Asia, but also demonstrated in practice that historical conflicts can be effectively resolved through dialogue and negotiation. As a result of this historic summit, a legal solution was found to the long-standing border disputes between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, laying the foundation for eliminating the long-standing atmosphere of distrust. However, along with the success of the Khujand meeting, there are also difficulties and concerns that may arise in the future. First, the management and use of water resources in the region, especially agreements on transboundary rivers, has always been

a complex issue. Water scarcity and the negative impact of climate change may lead to new disagreements in the future.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Khujand meeting strengthened the spirit of friendship, trust, and strategic partnership in Central Asia, laying a solid foundation for a peaceful and prosperous future for the region.

Secondly, in the process of economic integration, differences in the economic potential and level of development of the region's countries may lead to imbalances and competition problems in some areas. It will be necessary to pursue a coherent and coordinated policy between states in attracting foreign investment and implementing common infrastructure projects.

Also, continued and effective measures are needed in security cooperation, in particular in the fight against terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking.

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