

Relations Between Uzbekistan And Saudi Arabia: Historical Roots And Peculiarities

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the historical roots, evolution, and distinctive characteristics of relations between Uzbekistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with particular emphasis on their early foundations beginning in the 7th century AD. Special attention is given to the formation of trade, economic, cultural, and spiritual ties that developed between Arab communities and the local Turkic peoples of Central Asia. The study explores how the expansion of trade routes, including segments of the Silk Road, facilitated sustained commercial exchange, while the spread of Islam created a shared religious and intellectual space that strengthened mutual understanding and cooperation. The article also analyzes the role of pilgrimage, scholarly mobility, and cultural interaction in shaping long-term connections between the two regions. By drawing on historical sources and scholarly interpretations, the research highlights how these early interactions laid the groundwork for enduring relations that continue to influence contemporary diplomatic, economic, and cultural cooperation between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical continuity and significance of bilateral relations within the broader context of the Islamic world and Central Asian–Arab interactions.

Keywords: - Diplomatic relations, Cultural cooperation, Trade and economic relations, Islam, Transoxiana (Movarounnahr), Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan.

INTRODUCTION

Relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia have historical roots and are based on ancient trade, economic, cultural, and spiritual relations between the peoples of Transoxiana (Movarounnahr) and Arabia. From the 7th century AD, relations between the Arabs and the indigenous peoples went through various stages. These relations serve as a basis for political, economic, and cultural cooperation not only in the

historical, but also in the current period.

METHODS

The research is based on historical sources, scientific literature, documents, and analyses of Arab and Uzbek scholars. Also, in the scientific analysis:

Results of the Arab conquest of Transoxiana, Cultural and social significance of Islam, Post-independence diplomatic and economic relations,

such aspects were covered.

Trade, economic, and cultural ties between the peoples of Transoxiana and Arabia have ancient roots, stages of development, and specific features, and these cooperative relations began to develop significantly from the 7th century AD.

From historical sources, it is known that these relations between the Turkic and Arab peoples initially arose not within the framework of mutual trust and equal cooperation, but as a result of the Arab Caliphate's conquests and invasions of Central Asia.

It should be noted that the full study of the positive or negative impact of the Arab conquest on the life of the peoples of Transoxiana has not yet been studied as a separate subject of research. In many religious literature, there are cases of avoiding naming these conquests by their proper names and interpreting the processes associated with them.

Some Uzbek researchers link the reasons for the conquest of Transoxiana by Arab troops to internecine wars between local feudal lords. According to Islamic scholar Z. Munavvarov, Arab commanders paid "special attention" to the region and "in many cases used peaceful methods, including exempting the population who converted to Islam from paying jizya and kharaj taxes." The author emphasizes that the Arab conquest cannot be compared with the Mongol, Russian or Bolshevik conquests.

Also, local researchers, taking into account the positive role of Islam in the development of the peoples of the region, limit themselves to recognizing the contribution of this invasion to the consolidation of society, regional integration, and cultural development.

According to scholars, with the arrival of the Arabs in the region, trade, economic, and cultural ties with the local population developed, and the Arabs had a great influence on the development of the customs and traditions of the local population.

In particular, due to the introduction and spread of the holy religion of Islam, some social shortcomings were eliminated. Through the Arabic language, the peoples of Central Asia were able to study the works of ancient Greek scholars and become familiar with Chinese inventions.

As a result of the Arab conquest, a new era began in the development of the peoples of the region, the most advanced of which, the local Turkic population, made a great contribution to the development of Arab-Muslim culture. The process of enriching the Arab-Muslim culture of the local

Turkic population, the ancestors of the Uzbek people, has continued for centuries and continues to have a positive impact to this day. The life and scientific-creative activity of Imam al-Bukhari (810-870), the sultan of hadith science, proves these points.

Representatives of the intellectual class of the local population traveled to such major cities of the Arab world as Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, where they had a great influence on the development of Muslim culture with their works. In turn, during this period, the Arabs also moved to Transoxiana and began to live in separate settlements and cities. Under the influence of long-standing conflicts between Arab tribes, they built villages in different places to live. Researchers note that such places still exist in and around cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Termez. Although they have fully integrated with the local population, they have retained some distinctive features and to this day, during the population census, they write that they belong to the Arab nationality.

Scholar of source studies Sh. Kamoliddinov, unlike other local authors, objectively illuminates these processes based on the sources of that period. In the 7th century, when the Arabs approached the southern borders of Transoxiana, these lands belonged to the Turkic Khaganate. After continuous wars with the Turks and Sogdians until the middle of the 8th century, the Muslims, i.e., the Arabs and their Persian mawulas (supporters), finally conquered Central Asia.

The Arabs pursued a policy of plundering the local population in the conquered lands, taking their lands, and colonizing them. The historian Narshakhi, in his work "History of Bukhara," writes that Bukhara and other cities of Transoxiana were divided between the Arabs and the Persians. In the work "Tarikh at-Tabari," it is said that when Qutayba ibn Muslim captured the city of Samarkand, he drove all its inhabitants out of the city and placed his soldiers in their houses. The commander ordered all city gates to be closed and not a single Sogdian or Turk to enter the city. Thus, the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara were turned into fortresses of the Arabs and Persians.

At the same time, in documents found on Mount Mugh, dating back to the 8th century, the name of Suleiman Abu-s-Sari, who led major raids in Samarkand and was the ruler of Samarkand for a long time, from the Arab tribe "banu a'uwaf," is frequently mentioned. The works of the historian Nasafi also contain information about the Arab

conquest of Samarkand and their colonial policy. Subsequently, as a result of the socio-political processes that took place in the region, the position of the Arabs in Transoxiana weakened. In particular, in the 12th-13th centuries, as a result of the Mongols' military campaigns against the Khwarazmian state and their victories, relations between the peoples of the region and the Arabs weakened.

As a result of Sahibkiran Amir Temur's liberation of the territory of Transoxiana from Mongol oppression and the establishment of a vast empire that included the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan, and the Caucasus, cooperation between the Arab and Turkic world began to develop again. However, as a result of the fragmentation of the Timurid state and the subsequent formation of the Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand khanates in place of this empire, and the emergence of mutual fragmentation and contradictions between them, a decline in Arab-Turkic world relations was observed.

During the conquest of Tsarist Russia and Soviet rule, relations between the peoples of Turkestan were completely severed. During the post-World War II "Cold War," relations between the republics of the former Union with the Arab states were mainly carried out by the central offices of official Moscow. Tashkent's relations with the capitals of the Arab states were severely limited.

According to Z. Munavvarov, as a result of the Tsarist occupation, and then the Bolshevik revolution, the possibility of establishing any direct relations between our country and Arab states was completely eliminated. Nevertheless, cultural ties between the Uzbek and Arab peoples were not completely severed. Strong cultural and trade-economic ties, carried out in various spheres in the past, laid the foundation for the revival of our relations today.

Thus, in the early 1990s, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the first among the Arab states to recognize the new status of the Central Asian states, in particular, the Republic of Uzbekistan. However, in the period up to 1994, no practical action was observed in these relations, except for diplomatic recognition. Before 2000, Saudi representative offices existed only in Tashkent, Almaty, Ashgabat, and Baku. The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Riyadh was opened in May 1995, and the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Tashkent began its work in March 1997.

In April 1992, the first visit of the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. Karimov to Saudi

Arabia took place, and the achieved results created the institutional foundations of mutual relations. Saudi Arabia supported Uzbekistan on its path to independence, in particular, from 1990 to 1992, Uzbek pilgrims visiting the holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, were granted the honorary privilege of "Royal Guest." Since 1990, he has provided sponsorship assistance for the reopening of mosques in the country, such as renovation works, construction of new mosques, and free distribution of manuscripts of the Holy Quran.

During 1990-1999, relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia were relatively "modest." Interstate relations were carried out exclusively within diplomatic frameworks. During this period, Saudi Arabia did not allocate large investments or grants to the economy of Uzbekistan, and royal entrepreneurs did not participate in large projects in the republic.

In the 1990s, Saudi Arabia's economic ties were somewhat limited due to the decline in financial capabilities associated with the Persian Gulf crisis and the lack of practical experience to work in Uzbekistan. The Royal entrepreneurs refrained from rapidly entering the markets of Uzbekistan and limited themselves to short-term activities in trade and construction.

The state of relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia in the period up to 2000 was also influenced by the regional instability of that time. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the mujahideen began radical actions in their countries.

It is clear that their followers did not know the true essence of Islam. The spread of radical views and ideas in the territory of the region could not only threaten the lives of the indigenous peoples, but also negatively affect Arab states. Therefore, Arab states correctly understood the need to influence these processes by developing Uzbek-Arab cultural ties and explaining moderate Islamic culture.

RESULTS

The results of the study showed:

1. The Arab conquest and the arrival of Islam in the 7th-8th centuries AD initiated a transformation in the cultural, social, and scientific spheres of Transoxiana.
2. Trade and economic ties developed between the Arabs and the local Turkic population, and the local culture harmonized with the Arab-Muslim civilization.
3. Although direct ties were severed during the period of Tsarist Russia and the Soviets, cultural

4. After independence, diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia were restored, which at the initial stage developed mainly in the cultural and humanitarian direction.
5. After the 2000s, in addition to economic cooperation and investment ties, positive changes were also observed in the religious and cultural spheres.

Relations between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia are based on historical roots, cultural harmony, and common interests. Historical analysis shows that the Arab conquest and Islam led to positive social and cultural changes in the region. At the same time, geopolitical and economic factors also play an important role in modern relations. After independence, cooperation between the two countries developed mainly in the diplomatic and cultural spheres, with subsequent intensification of economic and investment cooperation. These relations can remain mutually beneficial, equal, and stable in the future.

In conclusion, there are many aspects of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia that need to be studied. Studying the historical roots of Uzbekistan's relations with Saudi Arabia, analyzing relations based on mutually beneficial and equal cooperation, and presenting existing problems as they are will have a positive impact on the prospects of mutual cooperation.

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