


Prospects for Interregional Collaboration in Central Asia and Southeast Asia

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Abstract: The article highlights the critical role of fostering international cooperation to maintain and enhance peace and stability in Central Asia. It emphasises the need to strengthen mutually beneficial relations between Central and Southeast Asian countries. By collaborating on economic, political, and security issues, these regions can address shared challenges and promote regional development. The article argues that such cooperation is essential for ensuring long-term stability and prosperity. It discusses various initiatives and frameworks that can support these efforts, including diplomatic dialogues, trade agreements, and joint security measures. The importance of inclusive and sustainable development is also underscored as a means to prevent conflicts and build trust among nations. Ultimately, the article calls for a comprehensive approach to regional cooperation, highlighting its potential to create a more peaceful and prosperous future for Central and Southeast Asia.

1 INTRODUCTION


In recent years, the Central Asian countries have been paying special attention to the formation of an environment of peace, stability and security in the region, as well as the development of close neighbourhoods and mutually beneficial relations in their foreign policy. In this regard, along with cooperation with permanent trading partners (CIS countries, China, USA, Turkey, Korea, etc.), the countries of the region pay great attention to strengthening mutually beneficial relations with other developed countries in Asia.

In recent years, the processes of regional integration have created a number of facilities for ensuring mutual economic relations between the countries of the world. In this regard, with the acceleration of integration processes in Central Asia and interregional cooperation, Southeast Asian countries and their regional organization - the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are increasingly considered as such potential partners.

2 ANALYSIS

The cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and the ASEAN organization goes back to the long history of the Great Silk Road. It can be said that both regions have their own characteristics, similarities and differences. This can be explained as follows:

- Geographical location is one of the important factors determining the priorities and goals of their foreign policy. Central Asia and Southeast Asia are geostrategically and geopolitically unique regions. In particular, Central Asia in the Eurasian region, and Southeast Asia in the Asia-Pacific region are such geopolitical regions.
- ASEAN countries are one of the major economic centres of the world. As of 2017, their GDP was 2.8 trillion. dollar and the annual growth was 4.7%. South-East Asian countries occupy the fourth place among exporting regions (7% of world exports), and as one of the global centres of world consumers, 5% of international imports come here. In particular, according to 2018, the GDP of the Central Asian countries

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amounted to 286 billion dollars, while in 2019 this figure increased to 1,026 billion dollars.

- In the system of foreign relations, both regions have the same interests in the fight against religious extremism, terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking;
- The presence of economic potential and demographic diversity in the countries of both regions;
- The countries of Central Asia are one of the oldest places of civilization, inhabited by representatives of many ethnicities and many religious beliefs. Such a similarity can be seen in the countries of South-East Asia;
- The presence of commonalities in the religion, spiritual world, customs and traditions of people of Southeast and Central Asia serves to develop mutually beneficial relations.

As noted by Frederic Starr, a well-known American expert on Central Asia, "Central Asia is geopolitically important for the countries of Southeast Asia, because the region is surrounded by nuclear powers and is a connecting link between great powers in international relations". ASEAN countries are also interested in the development of stability in Central Asia, and this can be done through constructive cooperation that helps prevent economic dependence or external hegemony in Central Asia [2. P.2-3]. In turn, Central Asia sees the ASEAN countries as a market with wide opportunities for its products and interesting investor countries.

Both regions are interested in avoiding the influence of actor states and economic dependence in their foreign policy, encouraging new market opportunities, and expanding the geography of cooperation. The cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and the ASEAN organization started in the early period of independence and the relations continue consistently.

Both regions are active in International relations and have a long historical connection. In recent years, as a result of the meetings of the heads of government of the countries of the two regions, inter-parliamentary cooperation, political activity of the embassy and friendship societies, the cooperative relations of the countries of Central Asia and the ASEAN organization have taken a new form. Nevertheless, the cooperative relations between the countries of Central and South-East Asia have developed differently in terms of the countries, the areas of cooperation established by them and in the years. The countries of Central Asia have cooperative

relations in the economic, socio-political and cultural-humanitarian spheres with the leading countries of the Southeast Asian region, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The development of relations between the countries of Central Asia, in particular, the Republic of Uzbekistan, and each ASEAN member state has specific goals and objectives determined by political and economic conditions [4. P. 75-77]. It should be noted here that the distance between the countries of Central Asia and South-East Asia has an effect on mutual economic relations. Especially, the development of cooperation in this regard with Uzbekistan, which has no access to the sea, is getting complicated.

In recent years, as a result of the initiatives of the governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to liberalize the economy and build a more open, internationally integrated and competitive market economy among the countries of Central Asia, trade and economic relations with the countries of Southeast Asia have entered a new stage of development. (See table).

Table 1: Trade of ASEAN and Central Asian countries (million USA).

<i>Countries</i>	<i>2015 year</i>	<i>2020 year</i>
ASEAN	1737481,4	2096728,8
Kazakhstan	331,5	689,2
Kyrgyzstan	9,5	6,1
Tajikistan	3,9	3,9
Turkmenistan	56,3	13,1
Uzbekistan	153,0	234,6

Source: [https://data.aseanstats.org/\(25.05.20\)](https://data.aseanstats.org/(25.05.20))

It can be seen that in 2015, the mutual trade volume between the countries of Central and Southeast Asia amounted to 554.2 million US dollars, and by 2020, it had increased to 947 million US dollars. This shows that the trade turnover has doubled in five years. In 2020, the economic crisis caused by the pandemic led to significant changes in these indicators. It can be seen in the table that there is economic activity in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan from Central Asian countries. However, in relations with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, this situation remains relatively lower. However, in the future, there are opportunities for further development of cooperation between the countries of Central and South-East Asia. In particular, the creation of the format "ASEAN+5" (ASEAN countries + Central Asia) and the scope of this format is the "Roadmap" for the official meetings of the heads of government of Central Asia and

ASEAN countries, the development of political, trade-economic, investment cooperation, development, strengthening cooperation within the framework of China's "One Belt, One Road" (BRI) project, applying the rich experience of Singapore and Indonesia to the diversification and modernization of the economy in Central Asian countries, agriculture and fisheries with Vietnam and Cambodia. It is desirable to improve the food industry and develop the food industry under the "halal" brand with Malaysia, in turn, to create new opportunities for the export of cars, dried fruits and other national products to these countries.

It should be noted that the events which are taking place in the international arena today have a direct impact on interregional relations, as well as on conducting a mutually reliable and beneficial, open and pragmatic foreign policy, as well as on economic, cultural and humanitarian relations. In the current period of such political complexity, there are the main factors that contribute to the activation of relations between the two regions, which are as follows:

- The desire of Central Asian countries to strengthen relations with South-East Asian countries and diversify their economic partners.
- The West's shift towards East Asia following the sanctions against Russia is encouraging the strengthening of relations between Central and South-East Asia.
- The central role of Central Asia in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has attracted the attention of Southeast Asian countries seeking access to Central Asian and European markets.
- The ASEAN model is recognized as one of the important directions in the integration of Central Asia.

3 CONCLUSIONS

In general, at the moment of intense struggle and clash of interests, it is necessary to develop specific measures to further develop the political and trade-economic relations of both regions and to strengthen interregional cooperation. In this case, the similarity of the principles in the foreign policy of the countries of the region, the harmony of approaches and views on all issues in international relations, and the support of the principles of peace-loving, equality, openness, and constructiveness in relations is the basis of cooperation between the countries of Central and South-East Asia, and also this serves for equal

development. In our opinion, the use of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) model will be beneficial in the integration of Central Asia in the future.

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