EVIDENCE-BASED COORDINATION OF UZBEKISTAN-SAUDI ARABIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Kadyrov Alisher Kadyrovich
Independent Researcher
Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
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Annotatsiya. Mazkur tezisda O'zbekiston-Saudiya Arabistoni strategik sherikligini siyosiy bayonotlar va yirik investitsiya portfellaridan tasdiqlangan natijalarga o'tkazishning institutsional mexanizmlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot iqtisodiy vositalarning siyosiy ahamiyati ularning nominal qiymati bilan emas, balki huquqiy rasmiylashtirish, moliyalashtirishni tasdiqlash, mas'ul institut, ijro nazorati, mahalliylashtirish va mintaqaviy ta'sir kanali bilan belgilanishini asoslaydi. Hukumatlararo komissiya huzuridagi paritet Muvofiqlashtiruvchi guruh, ikki tomonlama raqamli reyestr, xavflarni erta ogohlantirish tizimi va mintaqaviy filtrni birlashtiruvchi dalillarga asoslangan davlatlararo muvofiqlashtirish modeli taklif etiladi.
Kalit so'zlar: O'zbekiston, Saudiya Arabistoni, strategik sheriklik, iqtisodiy diplomatiya, davlatlararo muvofiqlashtirish, raqamli monitoring, Markaziy Osiyo.
Аннотация. В тезисе исследуются институциональные механизмы перехода узбекско-саудовского стратегического партнерства от политических заявлений и крупных инвестиционных портфелей к подтвержденным результатам. Обосновано, что политическое значение экономических инструментов определяется не их номинальной стоимостью, а юридическим оформлением, подтвержденным финансированием, ответственностью институтов, контролем исполнения, локализацией и доказуемым каналом регионального воздействия. Предлагается модель доказательной межгосударственной координации, объединяющая паритетную Координационную группу при Межправительственной комиссии, двусторонний цифровой реестр, раннее предупреждение рисков и региональный фильтр.
Ключевые слова: Узбекистан, Саудовская Аравия, стратегическое партнерство, экономическая дипломатия, межгосударственная координация, цифровой мониторинг, Центральная Азия.
Abstract. This thesis examines institutional mechanisms for moving the Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia strategic partnership from political declarations and large investment portfolios towards verified results. It argues that the political significance of economic instruments is determined not by their nominal value, but by legal formalisation, confirmed financing, institutional responsibility, implementation control, localisation, and a demonstrable channel of regional impact. An evidence-based interstate coordination model is proposed, combining a parity Joint Coordination Group under the Intergovernmental Commission, a bilateral digital registry, an early-warning system for risks, and a regional filter.
Keywords: Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, strategic partnership, economic diplomacy, interstate coordination, digital monitoring, Central Asia.

Introduction

The contemporary international system is increasingly shaped by middle powers, regional formats and the use of economic resources for political purposes. Investment, infrastructure, energy agreements, sovereign funds, project finance and technology platforms create material assets, but they also establish long-term obligations, alter bargaining positions and generate repeated channels of diplomatic communication. This dual nature is captured by economic statecraft, which explains how economic means can support foreign-policy objectives [1, 1985]. Complex interdependence further demonstrates that political, financial, transport, energy and social links operate simultaneously and may create both mutual benefits and new vulnerabilities [6, 2012].

Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia provide a relevant case for analysing this transformation. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, bilateral interaction has evolved from a basic diplomatic, legal, consular and humanitarian framework into a multi-sector agenda. Relations were officially defined as a full-scale partnership in 2022, while the Central Asia-Gulf Cooperation Council strategic dialogue created a broader interregional setting. The Joint Action Plan for 2023-2027 includes political dialogue, trade, investment, energy, transport, water, education, health and cultural cooperation [5, 2022: online].

The rapid expansion of the project agenda makes verification particularly important. In October 2025, official information referred to 56 projects with a combined value of USD 27.2 billion [4, 2025: online]. However, a project portfolio is not equivalent to realised foreign investment. A memorandum records an intention; a contract establishes obligations; financial closure confirms funding; construction demonstrates implementation; and commercial operation confirms only the relevant commissioned component. The Riverside battery energy storage system, whose commercial operation at 334 MW/501 MWh was officially announced in February 2026, illustrates the need to verify each component separately [7, 2026: online].

Accordingly, the research problem is not whether Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia cooperation is large, but whether political decisions and economic instruments are converted into legally clear, financially secured, nationally embedded and regionally relevant outcomes. The purpose of this thesis is to formulate an evidence-based coordination mechanism capable of reducing the gap between high-level agreements and verified implementation.

Methodological Approach

The study combines institutional analysis, process tracing, comparative political analysis and case-study methods. Institutional analysis identifies the actors, competencies, rules and feedback mechanisms that sustain cooperation. Process tracing follows the causal sequence from political initiative to diplomatic agreement, legal formalisation, financing, implementation and result; it is especially suitable for determining whether an announced outcome can be attributed to a specific institutional chain [2, 2019]. Case studies are used for energy, transport, water and digital initiatives, while source triangulation compares legal documents, official government materials, corporate disclosures and academic studies.

The theoretical framework integrates economic statecraft, liberal institutionalism, complex interdependence, strategic partnership studies and interregionalism. Regional security complex theory emphasises that security and vulnerability are spatially interconnected [3, 2003], while interregionalism explains how a bilateral relationship may become part of a wider architecture between Central Asia and the Gulf [9, 2016]. Strategic partnership is treated not merely as an official diplomatic label, but as an empirically testable degree of institutional maturity, including long-term interests, regular coordination, legal certainty, diversification, implementation capacity and resilience [10, 2008: pp. 358-383].

Results and Discussion

The first result is a distinction between a political mechanism and an economic instrument. A political mechanism is a set of actors, rules, procedures and decisions through which political will is transformed into coordinated action and controlled implementation. An economic instrument is a financial, material, contractual, organisational or technological means used to achieve interstate objectives. Neither is sufficient alone. A political declaration without legal, financial and organisational support remains declarative, while a corporate project without a verifiable connection to the interstate agenda cannot automatically be classified as a foreign-policy instrument.

The second result is an eight-stage chain of institutional conversion: political initiative; diplomatic agreement; legal formalisation; designation of a responsible institution; confirmed financing; practical implementation; verified national result; and demonstrated regional effect. A break at any stage weakens the strategic value of the initiative. This chain replaces the logic of 'large announcements' with the logic of 'verified results'. It also prevents the methodological error of treating signed documents, planned investment, disbursed capital, construction progress and commissioned assets as interchangeable indicators.

The third result is the proposed Evidence-Based Interstate Coordination Model. At the political level, the heads of state provide the mandate and strategic priorities. Ministries of foreign affairs ensure diplomatic coordination. The Intergovernmental Commission converts priorities into a structured portfolio and assigns responsibilities. A parity Joint Coordination Group operating under the Commission should provide intersessional monitoring, preserve institutional memory, verify project stages, coordinate risk owners and prepare quarterly reviews. The Group should not replace authorised ministries, regulators, investors or project companies; its role is to connect their decisions and evidence.

A bilateral digital registry is the operational core of the model. Each agreement, institution and project should receive a unique identifier. The registry should record the parties, sector, legal status, financial model, responsible bodies, deadlines, milestones, current stage, reasons for delays, localisation, training obligations, environmental and social commitments, national result and potential regional channel. A restricted administrative layer would contain commercially sensitive, contractual and risk information, while a public layer would disclose permitted data on implementation stages, commissioned facilities and social, environmental and human-capital outcomes.

The registry must be linked to a standard evidence classifier. Recommended statuses are: 'initiative', 'memorandum', 'legally formalised', 'financing confirmed', 'under implementation', 'commissioned' and 'result verified'. A status may be changed only when a new document or observable fact is available. Evidence should be ranked by reliability: international treaties, legislation, official statistics, financial-closure documents and commissioning acts constitute the highest level; verifiable statements of public institutions, international organisations and companies form the second level; academic analysis, expert assessment and media materials form a supplementary level.

The fourth result is a regional filter that distinguishes bilateral success from regional impact. A national project should be recognised as having direct regional significance only when there is evidence of participation by another Central Asian state or an interregional institution, an effect on cross-border flows or common rules, operational continuity, additionality and the absence of conflict-generating consequences. Direct impact changes cross-border flows, standards or institutions. Indirect impact strengthens Uzbekistan's resilience and reduces wider regional vulnerability through a demonstrable transmission mechanism. Potential impact refers to a realistic but not yet operational scaling pathway.

This distinction is important because the political-diplomatic channel already has a direct interregional form through the Central Asia-GCC dialogue, whereas most energy projects currently produce primarily national and indirect regional effects. Renewable generation and storage can increase the reliability of Uzbekistan's power system, but direct regional impact requires cross-border electricity exchange, compatible technical standards or the participation of neighbouring states. Similarly, aviation cooperation may become regional when routes, carriers and transit functions extend beyond the two partner countries. Water, digital, educational and humanitarian initiatives remain largely potential regional channels until they are jointly financed and institutionally scaled.

The fifth result concerns risk management. Bilateral projects face interconnected political, geopolitical, legal, financial, environmental, social, technological and cyber risks. Delayed milestones, unconfirmed financing, excessive concentration in one sector or company, insufficient localisation, weak technology transfer and low public transparency can reduce both efficiency and political legitimacy. Every material risk should therefore have an owner, an indicator, a response threshold and a corrective plan. For example, a milestone delay exceeding ninety days or the absence of confirmed financing by an agreed date should trigger joint verification and formal consideration by the coordination mechanism.

Policy Priorities for 2027-2030

The proposed roadmap should concentrate on five mutually reinforcing priorities. First, energy and storage projects should be evaluated by commissioned capacity, grid contribution, localisation and specialist training rather than announced value alone. Second, transport and aviation cooperation should develop a sustainable Central Asia-Gulf route network and measurable transit functions. Third, water and environmental initiatives should begin with verifiable pilot projects, environmental assessment and potential regional replication. Fourth, digital infrastructure and human capital should combine data centres, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, local skills development and independent data-governance audits. Fifth, bilateral projects should be connected to a limited, finance-ready pipeline within the Central Asia-GCC framework.

Implementation requires three practical safeguards. New major projects should include measurable local-content, supplier-development and technology-transfer plans. Portfolio monitoring should calculate concentration by sector and investor to identify systemic dependence at an early stage. Finally, universities and independent analytical centres from both countries should participate in periodic evaluation so that project organisations do not exclusively assess their own results. Recent scholarship confirms that

Uzbekistan-Saudi relations have entered a qualitatively new phase, but their long-term strategic value depends on institutional consolidation rather than diplomatic momentum alone [8, 2025: pp. 30-35].

Conclusion

Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia relations have moved beyond episodic cooperation and now contain the political trust, legal foundations and investment scale necessary for strategic interaction. Nevertheless, strategic maturity cannot be inferred from the number of visits, documents or the nominal value of a project portfolio. It must be demonstrated through a complete institutional chain connecting political intent, legal obligations, financing, implementation, national embedding, risk management and regional transmission.

The Evidence-Based Interstate Coordination Model offers a practical method for achieving this transition without creating an excessive supranational bureaucracy. By strengthening the existing Intergovernmental Commission, establishing a parity Joint Coordination Group, introducing a digital registry, applying a unified evidence classifier, managing risks through early-warning procedures and testing projects through a regional filter, the two states can shift from quantitative expansion to qualitative consolidation. Such an approach would improve accountability, protect political trust and enable selected bilateral initiatives to become verifiable resources for connectivity, resilience and sustainable development in Central Asia.

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