

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE REVIEW ON
“AFGHANISTAN IN THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL AND GEO-ECONOMIC
REALITIES”**

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) hosted the international conference "Afghanistan in the new geopolitical and geo-economic realities" on June 10, 2024. The meeting was attended by the top officials of KazNU, together with researchers and specialists from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. Uzbekistan was represented by Ulugbek Khasanov, an Associate Professor from the Department of International Relations at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED), and Islomkhon Gafarov, a Senior Research Fellow from the Institute for Advanced International Studies (IAIS).

Leyla Delovarova, the Dean of the Faculty of International Relations, and Oleg Essenov, the Deputy Director of the International Center for the Development of Science at KazNU, delivered welcome addresses. During their comments, they noted the contrasting views of Central Asian nations towards the subject of Afghanistan and stressed the need for synchronized strategies in addressing this matter.

Sultan Akimbekov, Director of the Institute for Asian Studies, delivered a presentation at the first session. He emphasized that Kazakhstan and Afghanistan are actively cultivating their connection. After the Taliban was removed from the list of terrorist groups, the relationship between the two sides improved. Deputy Prime Minister Serik Zhumangarin is now responsible for overseeing the Afghan aspect of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, as stated by him. The visit of Zhumangarin to Kabul in April of this year enhanced the connection to a higher level. The trade turnover between the two nations amounted to \$1 billion last year, and there are hopes to promptly raise it to \$3 billion.

The main topic of Dr. Ulugbeck Khasanov's talk was the relationship between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. During his address, he focused on the geopolitical dimensions of the connection, specifically noting that Afghanistan serves as a transit area for Tashkent, giving it access to global commerce seaports. Presently, Tashkent, Kabul, and Islamabad are collaborating to execute the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway project.

Tajikistan's independent expert, Sherali Rizoyon, highlighted the operations of terrorist groups in Afghanistan. He claims that a recently formed terrorist group named Tehrik-e-Taliban Tajikistan (TTT) has arisen inside the nation. The analyst

claimed that ISIS-Khorasan comprises around 9,000 combatants. Afghanistan is now home to 22 terrorist groups, causing significant apprehension among the world community, particularly neighboring nations.

Bulat Auelbaev, a spokesperson from the Department of Asian Studies at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, expressed his perspectives on the development of the Kush Tepa Canal in northern Afghanistan. He said that while Afghanistan had the entitlement to use the Amu Darya River, the government has not ratified any global accords about the construction of the canal, hence impeding the enforcement of adherence to international norms and standards. Auelbaev says that Central Asian nations must establish a cohesive strategy for the building of the canal. This is crucial because if Afghanistan fails to fulfill its responsibilities, it might worsen the water equilibrium problems in the area.

He claims that the Taliban are aggressively enhancing the country's tax system. The regulation of the tax sector has a substantial impact on the stability and cohesion of the people under the government's jurisdiction. According to reports, these tariffs have emerged as the main financial resource for the development of the Kush Tepa Canal in northern Afghanistan.

During the second session, Islomkhon Gafarov, a researcher at the Institute for Advanced International Studies, delivered a paper about the Taliban's interactions with Pakistan. Kabul is reevaluating its commerce and logistics policy due to the tense ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Consequently, the Taliban are now prioritizing the expansion of the Iranian port of Chabahar. The realization of the Trans-Afghan Corridor project is made more difficult by this, which harms the trade and economic strategies of Central Asian nations. The nations in the area should adopt a unified strategy for Afghanistan, use the SCO platform for in-depth deliberation on this matter, and prioritize alternative international transportation routes.

In the second session, Associate Professor Zhulduz Baizakova from KazNU delivered a presentation specifically addressing the operations of ISIS-Khorasan. As to Baizakova's analysis, the Taliban have stopped spreading extremist ideology to the area and hence do not present a danger anymore. Nevertheless, the threat originating from Afghanistan persists, but not from the government.

Furthermore, Afghan writer Wahid Sukoot, who works independently, emphasized the interdependence between Afghanistan's security and that of the Central Asian area. He also emphasized the need to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

The international conference "Afghanistan in the new geopolitical and geo-

economic realities" took place on June 10, 2024, at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. The conference focused on important matters related to the present state of Afghanistan and its influence on Central Asian nations.

- The need to align the policies of Central Asian nations; - Concerns over water distribution and the development of the Kush Tepa Canal; - Economic and logistical obstacles; - Risks posed by terrorism; - The interdependence of security and the requirement for humanitarian assistance.

The conference highlighted the significance of collaborative endeavors and global collaboration in tackling the intricate challenges linked to the ongoing situation in Afghanistan. It also formulated suggestions for Central Asian nations to synchronize their policies and activities on this matter.

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