

## **Prospects for Developing Cultural Diplomacy between the Republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan**

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**Abstract.** In this article, author examines the prospects for developing cultural diplomacy between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan within the broader context of regional cooperation in Central Asia. Drawing on theoretical approaches to cultural diplomacy and soft power, the study conceptualizes culture as a strategic instrument for enhancing mutual trust, societal connectivity, and long-term interstate partnership. The research employs qualitative methods, including comparative analysis, document analysis of bilateral agreements, and the examination of institutional frameworks governing cultural cooperation. The author also argues that Uzbek–Kazakh cultural diplomacy has evolved from symbolic exchanges toward more institutionalized and multidimensional cooperation, encompassing education, cultural heritage preservation, creative industries, tourism, and people-to-people contacts. Particular attention is paid to shared historical memory, linguistic and cultural proximity, and the role of state and non-state actors in promoting cross-border cultural initiatives. The study identifies key drivers of cultural diplomacy development, such as political rapprochement, regional integration dynamics, and the growing demand for inclusive and society-oriented diplomatic practices.

**Key words:** cyber diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, cultural landscape, educational institutions, creative industries, academic communities, and civil society organizations.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In modern world, cultural diplomacy has emerged as a significant instrument for strengthening interstate cooperation, complementing traditional political, economic, and security-oriented forms of interaction. As a component of soft power, cultural diplomacy enables states to shape positive perceptions, foster mutual understanding, and build durable social foundations for long-term partnership.[1] This dimension of diplomacy is particularly relevant for regions characterized by shared historical experiences, cultural proximity, and intertwined identities, such as Central Asia.

The Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan occupy a central position in the political, economic, and cultural landscape of Central Asia. Their bilateral relations have undergone a qualitative transformation in recent years, marked by intensified political dialogue, expanded economic cooperation, and growing attention

to humanitarian and cultural ties.[2] Within this context, cultural diplomacy has become an increasingly important channel for consolidating trust, reinforcing regional solidarity, and promoting a shared vision of Central Asia's future development.

Historically, Uzbek–Kazakh relations have been shaped by deep civilizational roots, common traditions, linguistic affinities, and overlapping cultural spaces. These factors create favorable conditions for the advancement of cultural diplomacy beyond symbolic gestures toward more structured and institutionalized cooperation.[3] At the same time, globalization, digitalization, and the diversification of diplomatic actors have expanded the scope of cultural diplomacy, introducing new forms of interaction involving educational institutions, creative industries, academic communities, and civil society organizations.

### **MAIN PART**

Cultural diplomacy is widely understood as a component of soft power that operates through the exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and cultural practices in order to influence perceptions and foster long-term cooperation. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which is predominantly state-centric and interest-driven, cultural diplomacy emphasizes societal interaction, symbolic communication, and the construction of shared narratives.[4] In regions with strong historical and cultural interconnectedness, cultural diplomacy functions not only as a foreign policy instrument but also as a mechanism of regional identity formation.

In the Central Asian context, cultural diplomacy acquires particular significance due to common historical legacies, post-Soviet transformation processes, and ongoing efforts to strengthen regional cohesion. For the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan, cultural diplomacy serves as a low-conflict and inclusive channel through which bilateral relations can be deepened without challenging state sovereignty or strategic autonomy.[5] From a theoretical perspective, this interaction aligns with constructivist approaches in international relations, which emphasize the role of shared meanings, identities, and norms in shaping state behavior.

The development of cultural diplomacy between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is supported by a growing legal and institutional base. Bilateral agreements on cooperation in culture, education, science, and tourism form the formal backbone of cultural interaction. These documents provide a normative framework for exchanges in areas such as joint cultural events, preservation of cultural heritage, academic mobility, and cooperation between cultural institutions.

At the institutional level, ministries of culture, foreign affairs, and education play a coordinating role, while embassies and cultural centers act as implementing actors. In recent years, intergovernmental commissions and joint forums have increasingly

incorporated cultural and humanitarian issues into their agendas, signaling a shift toward a more comprehensive understanding of bilateral partnership.[6] However, the effectiveness of these frameworks depends on coordination capacity, continuity of initiatives, and the involvement of non-state actors.

Uzbek–Kazakh cultural diplomacy is manifested through several interconnected domains. One of the most prominent areas is cultural heritage cooperation, including joint celebrations of historical figures, shared anniversaries, and collaborative research on Turkic cultural legacy.[7] Such initiatives contribute to reinforcing a sense of common historical space while respecting national narratives.

Education and academic exchange constitute another critical pillar. Student mobility programs, partnerships between universities, and joint research projects facilitate the formation of transnational epistemic communities and promote long-term people-to-people ties. In parallel, cultural diplomacy increasingly extends to creative industries, literature, cinema, and performing arts, which offer modern and globally resonant platforms for cultural representation. Tourism and cultural festivals also function as practical instruments of cultural diplomacy. Cross-border tourism routes, exhibitions, and festivals not only stimulate economic interaction but also enhance mutual visibility and cultural familiarity among broader segments of society.

A notable trend in the evolution of Uzbek–Kazakh cultural diplomacy is the growing role of non-state actors.[8] Universities, research centers, artists’ unions, youth organizations, and civil society institutions contribute to diversifying diplomatic channels and reducing overreliance on state-driven initiatives. These actors often demonstrate greater flexibility and innovation, particularly in digital and informal cultural exchanges. Digital platforms and media have further expanded the scope of cultural diplomacy, enabling virtual exhibitions, online academic cooperation, and transnational cultural dialogue.[9] This dimension is especially relevant for engaging younger generations and for ensuring the sustainability of cultural interaction beyond official diplomatic cycles.

The prospects for developing cultural diplomacy between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan lie in deepening institutional coordination, expanding joint long-term programs, and integrating cultural cooperation into broader regional strategies.[10] Establishing permanent joint cultural platforms, enhancing academic and youth exchange mechanisms, and investing in digital cultural diplomacy can significantly strengthen bilateral interaction.

From a strategic perspective, Uzbek–Kazakh cultural diplomacy can serve as a model for broader Central Asian cooperation, demonstrating how shared cultural capital may be mobilized to support regional stability, mutual trust, and sustainable partnership. By

moving from episodic exchanges to structured and forward-looking cooperation, cultural diplomacy can become a key pillar of comprehensive bilateral relations.

### **CONCLUSION**

The analysis undertaken in this article demonstrates that cultural diplomacy constitutes a strategically significant and increasingly institutionalized dimension of bilateral relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan. Rooted in deep historical ties, cultural proximity, and shared civilizational heritage, cultural diplomacy provides a sustainable and low-conflict mechanism for strengthening mutual trust, societal connectivity, and long-term partnership between the two states.

The study has shown that Uzbek–Kazakh cultural cooperation has evolved beyond symbolic exchanges toward a more diversified framework encompassing education, cultural heritage, creative industries, tourism, and people-to-people interaction.[11] The growing involvement of non-state actors and the expanding use of digital platforms further enhance the inclusiveness and resilience of cultural diplomacy, allowing it to adapt to contemporary regional and global dynamics. At the same time, the effectiveness of these processes remains contingent upon the coherence of institutional coordination, the continuity of joint initiatives, and the strategic prioritization of the humanitarian dimension within broader bilateral relations.

In conclusion, the article argues that the further development of cultural diplomacy between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan holds significant potential not only for deepening bilateral cooperation but also for contributing to regional cohesion and stability in Central Asia. By institutionalizing cultural interaction and embedding it within comprehensive strategic partnership, Uzbek–Kazakh cultural diplomacy can serve as a normative and practical model for regional cooperation, reinforcing a shared regional identity while respecting national diversity.

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