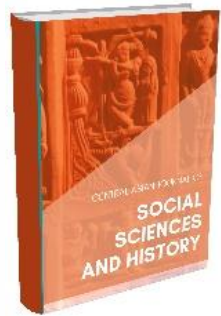




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### Silk Road Restoration Concepts in Central Asia

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#### Summary:

This article provides a concise overview of the Silk Road restoration concepts in Central Asia, outlining the multifaceted strategies aimed at revitalizing the historic trade routes that connected the East and West. The restoration efforts encompass infrastructure development, cultural heritage preservation, tourism promotion, cross-border cooperation, technological integration, educational initiatives, and environmental conservation. The goal is to reconnect the Silk Road, fostering economic development, cultural exchange, and sustainable practices in the region. This article highlights the significance of Central Asia as a crossroads for civilizations and emphasizes the comprehensive approach undertaken to revive and preserve the historical legacy of the Silk Road.

The Silk Road restoration concepts in Central Asia refer to various initiatives and ideas aimed at reviving and preserving the historical Silk Road trade routes that traversed the region. The Silk Road was a network of ancient trade routes connecting the East and West, facilitating the exchange of goods, cultures, and ideas between different civilizations. Central Asia played a crucial role as a crossroads for these trade routes.

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## Introduction

The restoration of the Silk Road in Central Asia involves a multi-faceted approach that combines economic, cultural, and environmental considerations. It aims to reconnect the historical trade routes in a way that promotes regional development, cross-cultural understanding, and sustainable practices.

The processes of globalization and the events taking place in the modern world require further development of socio-political, trade, economic and cultural relations. In world political practice, mutual relations are carried out in various formats. In this regard, the Silk Road is important. The Silk Road has gone beyond regional boundaries, acquired a global character, and in modern international relations it is being revived on the basis of various projects and concepts. Within the framework of these concepts, the countries of the Central Asian region take part in economic and cultural projects, because issues of international and regional interconnection have always been relevant for Central Asia, in particular for our country, which does not have direct access to seaports. Uzbekistan actively participates in the concepts of the Silk Road, which are an important factor in sustainable development.

At the end of the 20th - beginning of the 21st century, in modern international relations there is a restoration of the Silk Road and, on this basis, the coordination of mutual economic, political, cultural, transport and communication relations between states within the framework of the concepts of the Silk Road. The Great Silk Road made a great contribution to the mutual trade, economic, cultural, philosophical and ideological rapprochement of the countries of East and West. According to sinologist Abdulakhad Khodjaev, "The Great Silk Road is a historically large caravan route, which, having connected the East and West, divided in two, united them into a single world and directed the development of human history in a new direction"\*.

The Cold War, which began after World War II, also had an impact on international relations around the world. However, by the 1970s, international tensions had eased somewhat<sup>†</sup>. This, in turn, required the creation of a new platform for the development of international relations. Under these conditions, the revival of "Silk Road diplomacy" in a new format has become one of the most acceptable ways. Through the development of cultural relations between states, the way was opened to solving political and economic problems. This also led to the emergence of soft power politics in international relations<sup>†</sup>. But the Cold War trend continued until 1991. After this, work began to restore the Great Silk Road between the West and the East. By the beginning of the 1980s, the processes of restoration of the Great Silk Road developed in the sphere of cultural relations. Thus, Uzbekistan, in order to restore, preserve and promote cultural values, historical monuments at the international level, as well as increase tourism potential, took part in the UNESCO international program.

Based on the "Silk Road - Road of Dialogue" program (1987-1997), a number of international conferences and scientific expeditions on the history and culture of the Central Asian region were organized, films were created, books and articles were published, and many archaeological and architectural tours were restored. As part of the program in the field of tourism, the Samarkand

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\* Эргашев Ш. Жахон тарихи. IV қисм. – Тошкент: Ўзбекистон, 2019, – Б. 25.

† Понятие "мягкая сила" впервые была использована профессором Гарвардского университета Джозефом Нойем в 1990 году в книге "Bound To Lead: The Changing Nature Of American Power". Позже, в 2004 году, этому понятию даётся более подробное разъяснение в книге "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics".

Declaration was adopted in 1994, the Khiva Declaration in 1999 and the Bukhara Declaration in 2002<sup>‡</sup>. In 1995, the International Institute of Central Asian Studies was established in Samarkand. As part of the program, a fundamental work, “The History of Civilizations of Central Asia,” was created in English in six volumes. However, many agreements and tasks within the framework of cooperation in this direction have not been sufficiently implemented. In particular, there is a need to supplement this major international research and translate it into Uzbek, Russian and other languages of the countries of the region. The US Silk Road strategy began to take shape in the 1990s to coordinate US foreign relations with the countries of Central Asia. Subsequently, in political and scientific circles this strategy began to be called the “American Silk Road Strategy.” In October 1997, US Senator S. Brownback<sup>§</sup>, together with Professor F. Starr, put forward a strategy for the US Silk Road. The main idea and goal of the strategy was to develop a strategy for general cooperation between the United States and the countries of Central Asia<sup>\*\*</sup>.

The US Silk Road concept was aimed at achieving several goals. First, weaken Russia's influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia; second, prevent Iran from becoming a regional commercial center; thirdly, strengthening the role of Turkey as a strategic partner of the United States and Europe and a key mediator between them and the newly independent states. At the same time, F. Starr subsequently proposed the concept of Greater Central Asia<sup>††</sup>. In his opinion, taking into account the fact that during the period of medieval cultural and historical heyday the borders of Central Asian civilization extended far beyond the five post-Soviet republics, the concept of this region should be considered more broadly, including Afghanistan, the northwestern territories of India, Pakistan, Iran and Xinjiang region of China, Mongolia. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton then introduced new views on the US Silk Road in a July 2011 speech in Chinnai, India. However, after China announced the New Silk Road project, the concept of the American Silk Road in Central Asia gradually began to lose its significance<sup>‡‡</sup>. As part of this strategy, Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia, in cooperation with the United States, implemented projects in the cultural, economic and social spheres. In particular, these include projects such as teaching English in the countries of the region, scientific cooperation, and cultural events. These projects were financed by several US foundations. However, their scale did not reach the political level.

The idea of Japanese Silk Road diplomacy was put forward by former Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in 1997 with the goal of attracting energy sources to Japan. Hashimoto used the name “Silk Road region” for the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus and proposed that this

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<sup>‡</sup> The Samarkand Declaration on Silk Road Tourism. – Samarkand. 5 Oktober 1995. P. 1; Khiva Declaration on Tourism and the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage Khiva, Republic of Uzbekistan 21 April 1999; The Bukhara Declaration on Silk Road Tourism // Republic of Uzbekistan 27 October 2002.

<sup>§</sup> Арипов Э. Внешнеполитические аспекты деятельности конгресса США в контексте глобального развития. (на примере Центральной Азии и Кавказа). Автореф. дисс. канд. полит. наук. – Ташкент, 2001. – С. 18.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Лаумулин М.Т. Влияние российско-американских отношений на стратегию США в Центральной Азии // Analytic (КИСИ). 2009. № 4. С. 14–37.

<sup>††</sup> S. Frederick Starr. A ‘Greater Central Asia Partnership’ for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program. Johns Hopkins University-SAIS. 2005. – P.35

<sup>‡‡</sup> Clinton, H. R. (2011, July 20). Remarks on India and the United States: A vision for the 21st century. Retrieved from <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/07/168840.htm>.

concept play an important role in Japan's new foreign policy strategy. Since that time, the term “Silk Road diplomacy” began to be used in relation to the countries of Central Asia<sup>§§</sup>. This strategy provided for Japan to be able to take priority positions in Central Asia in matters of education, culture, energy, to carry out cooperation in the field of energy sources, as well as multilateral cooperation to strengthen Japan’s position in the region.

In 2004, Japan again came up with this strategy and created the Central Asia + Japan<sup>\*\*\*</sup> cooperation mechanism, the goal of which was aimed at taking a leading position in the development of energy sources and trade relations. The Japanese government allocated funds for the development of these countries, investments were directed mainly to the construction of roads, airports, bridges, hydroelectric power plants, water canals and other infrastructure facilities.

It can be said that Japanese “Silk Road diplomacy” in the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia was more active compared to the American Silk Road strategy.

As part of the study, the unique positive, negative, strengths and weaknesses and possibilities of the concepts of restoring the Silk Road were studied and analyzed (See: Table No. 1).

**Table No. 1. SWOT Analysis of Silk Road Restoration Concepts**

	UNESCO program Silk Road - Road of dialogue	America’s Silk Road strategy	Japanese Silk Road Diplomacy
the strengths	It played an important role in the development of international cultural and scientific cooperation.	It helped the newly independent countries of the region to develop political, economic and cultural ties.	Assisted in the development of economic relations between the countries of Central Asia, as well as the development of natural resources, entry into Asian markets.
the weaknesses	The international documents adopted within the framework of the project, the short chronological framework of the project and its termination were not fully used	Not given priority at the level of public policy, insufficient funding	A clash of interests with countries that were around Central Asia and which carried out large projects.
opportunities	International	Assisted the countries	Created an opportunity for

<sup>§§</sup> Japan’s Silk Road Diplomacy Paving the Road Ahead. Editors. Christopher Len Uyama Tomohiko Hirose Tetsuya. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program. Johns Hopkins University-SAIS. 2008. – P. 18.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Rakhimov M. Central Asia and Japan: Bilateral and multilateral relations // Journal of Eurasian Studies Volume 5, Issue 1, January 2014, – P. 77-87.

	publications, studies on the general history and culture of the Central Asian region were carried out.	of the region in gaining experience for foreign policy.	the development of economic and international trade relations between the countries of the region, presented technological opportunities for the development of natural resources.
threats	As part of the project, she had the opportunity to assess the political, economic and ideological state of the region, and had information about its natural resources.	Falling under the political influence of countries that occupied geopolitical positions in Central Asia.	Implementation of the principle of "soft power" in the states of the region.

In our opinion, the study and analysis of the Silk Road in new aspects, on the basis of which it is possible to draw the necessary conclusions in mutual international relations in the political, economic, and cultural spheres, has become one of the priority areas of the foreign policy of developed countries. Such centers were important in the foreign policy of different countries and served as “think tanks”<sup>†††</sup> to assist some states in choosing guidelines in international relations.

In developed countries of the world, centers for the study of the Great Silk Road began to be created in the 70-80s of the twentieth century. As of 2020, there are many such centers around the world<sup>†††</sup>. In particular, the Silk Road Research Centers, which operate in the USA, Europe and Asia, are important<sup>§§§</sup>.

<sup>†††</sup> Diane Stone 'Think Tanks and Policy Analysis', in Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller. & Mara S. Sidney (eds.) Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Methods, and Politics, New York, Marcel Dekker Inc. 2006: 149–157.

<sup>†††</sup> Silk Road Research Centers & Institutes <http://www.silkroadresearchcenter.org/other-research-centers.html> (19.09.2018)

<sup>§§§</sup> *The Central Asian Research Program* provides a unique platform for analyzing, based on research, the processes taking place in Central Asia, as well as accumulating the ideas of diplomats, experts, representatives of scientific, political and commercial circles.

Research conducted by the Central Asian Studies Program on History and International Relations of Uzbekistan requires in-depth analysis by Uzbek scientists and researchers, because on this basis their objectivity and scientific validity can be assessed. And this will further strengthen Uzbekistan’s position in the world.

*The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program* was established in 1996 and 2002 to help advance the study of these regions, in response to the growing need for information, research and analysis of these regions. The Center supports basic and practical research in the social sciences and humanities, ranging from small research projects by individual researchers to large studies involving many scientists. The Center has published several fundamental works on the history of Uzbekistan and Central Asia. The center has published many studies on modern history and international relations of Uzbekistan. In particular, one of the important studies in this series was the book by F. Starr and S. Cornell

## Conclusion

Firstly, the geopolitical processes that occurred in the twentieth century (world wars) led to the need for coordination and development of international relations. Restoring relations between the countries of the world and resolving mutual disputes peacefully has also become an urgent task. In this regard, the revision of international relations was important. In particular, the Cold War trend that emerged after World War II had a negative impact on the system of international relations. In such conditions, the need arose for the systematic development of international relations. Thus, Silk Road diplomacy emerged as the main means of international relations. This, in turn, became the reason for the emergence of a peculiar situation in the bipolar system that arose during the Cold War. First of all, this was noticeable in cultural relations. Leading countries of the world and prestigious international organizations began to implement their strategies in international relations based on the “Silk Road” brand. In particular, such international concepts as UNESCO’s “Silk Road – the Path of Dialogue”, the USA’s “Silk Road Strategy”, Japan’s “Silk Road Diplomacy” based on various interests were applied in the foreign policy of Central Asia. The study observed that these concepts, initially promoted in a cultural form, later expanded into political and economic directions.

Secondly, since the 70s and 80s of the twentieth century, Silk Road research centers began to emerge in developed countries of the world. Such centers play an important role in the foreign policies of various countries and also serve as think tanks that help guide the international relations of certain countries. As a result of the scientific conclusions they put forward, the foreign policy and economic strategy of the main actors in relation to the countries of the Silk Road began to take shape. These issues are observed in the foreign policy of the United States, Russia, China, Japan and other countries in relation to the countries of Central Asia. However, some research centers review tendentious and insufficiently verified analytical materials on the foreign and domestic policies of the countries of Central Asia. Based on this, it is advisable to strengthen the potential of research centers in Uzbekistan, study world experience in this regard, further develop international cooperation, publish more analytical materials about the processes taking place in the country, and create such research centers in regions of Uzbekistan with strong scientific potential.

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“Uzbekistan's new face”.

As part of the GCRF COMPASS project, carried out by *the Cambridge Central Asia Forum* jointly with the University of Kent, research is being carried out on the China-initiated One Belt, One Road megaproject and its significance in global and regional processes. In the research carried out at the Cambridge Central Asian Forum, one can trace the coverage of the modern history of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, in the context of the Eurasian region. On this basis, it seems appropriate to analyze the ideas put forward in them and develop mutual academic cooperation.