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Uzbekistan and USA: the new strategic partnership

The official visit of the Uzbek President Mirziyoyev in Washington on 15-17 May clearly highlights the rising interest of the United States as well as of the international community towards Uzbekistan's new political course, a country which will become a key partner for security and trade cooperation in the heart of Central Asia.

Following the meeting, Uzbekistan and United States have committed themselves to revitalize the strategic partnership – which was signed in 2002 and then frozen after the Andijan events in 2005 – and to enhance bilateral relations in order to achieve mutual aims in the region. In the joint statement Trump “recognized Uzbekistan’s tremendous progress on important political, economic, and social reforms under the leadership of President Mirziyoyev” (The United States and Uzbekistan: Launching a New Era of Strategic Partnership, May 16, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/united-states-uzbekistan-launching-new-era-strategic-partnership/>).

Regional security and trade cooperation were the main topics discussed during this bilateral meeting. President Mirziyoyev has undertaken a process of economic modernisation based on the progressive reduction of the state’s role in the economy which will be partially replaced by small and medium enterprises. The success of this efforts is linked to the international economic support, and American investments could help Tashkent: during the meeting, Uzbekistan signed over 4.8 billion dollars in contracts and trade agreements.

In the security field, President Trump recognized Uzbekistan’s diplomatic and economic effort to promote stability and pacification of neighbouring Afghanistan: president Mirziyoyev adopted a new approach towards Afghanistan, mainly focussed on economic involvement within the regional framework of cooperation in place of a purely military approach. At present Uzbekistan is the only Central Asian country which has a railway connection with Afghanistan (Termez-Hairaton-Mazar-i-Sharif, which was built with the support of the US as a key infrastructure in the Northern Distribution

Network initiative to supply troops in Afghanistan); moreover Tashkent is the main electricity supplier for Kabul and one of the main economic partners.

From Uzbekistan's point of view, the enhancement of bilateral relations with the US represents another successful step to implement its multivector strategy in foreign policy, aimed at balancing the interests of Russia, China and the United States and at maximising gains in the political, economic, military-security sectors. As a matter of fact, after the bilateral meeting in Washington, Tashkent can enjoy strategic partnerships with all the main geopolitical state-actors involved in Central Asia, increasing its strategic relevance as a key regional player.

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