



## Institutional Factor in the Interstate Cooperation's Development: The Example of Uzbek-French Relations

Yulduz Uktamovna Makhmasobirova

PhD student, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Uzbekistan

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i2.3502>

### **Abstract**

The development of any branch of the socio-political, economic or cultural life of a society is directly related to the work of specialized organizations/institutes that are responsible for this sector. Foreign policy has also developed, improved and, most importantly, stabilized with the advent of universal (as an institute state) and special bodies (ministries, agencies, diplomatic missions, etc.) external relations. The article examines the impact of institutional factors on the dynamics of development of interstate cooperation on the example of Uzbek-French relations. It provides a conceptual analysis of the institutionalization processes' role on the state of bilateral cooperation and a comprehensive study of the evolution of the institutional basis of relations between Uzbekistan and France through a systematic approach. The introductory part of the article defines the practical and academic relevance of the research. The role of institutional factors in the effectiveness of foreign policy of the state and the disclosure of the potential of the state in the international arena is considered. The introduction also sets out the purpose, objectives and methods of research. The main part of the study is a brief theoretical and methodological substantiation of the activities of state foreign policy institutions. It also provides general information on the current state of cooperation between Uzbekistan and France. The current state of this cooperation is revealed through a system-institutional analysis: the author investigated bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and France in five conditional stages: 1992-2005, 2006-2008, 2009-2012, 2013-2017, 2018-at pp. The specificity of transformation of these conditional stages is revealed. The final part of the article provides an overview of the impact of institutionalization on society and the state, the formation, implementation and prospects of foreign policy, the success or inefficiency of international relations of the state. In addition, proposals were made for the further development of relations between Uzbekistan and France.

**Keywords:** *Uzbekistan; France; International Relations; Foreign Policy; Institutionalization; Modernization; Bilateral Cooperation; Foreign Affairs*

### **Introduction**

The independence of Uzbekistan happened in an era of growing interdependence in the international arena, the rise of advanced ideas and innovations in the world economy, technological and information revolutions, deepening regional integration processes around the world. In this context, any young State needs the world experience to modernize its national economy, social status and technical base, to carry out major reforms, and to cooperate with. And France, one of developed countries that

transmit this approved world experience, is the partner that has established diplomatic relations and active economic cooperation with Uzbekistan since the early years of independence.

Identifying the current state of Uzbek-French partnership, its progressive and regressive dynamics and perspectives of development, areas that serve to realize the hidden potential of bilateral cooperation and to find out whether France is a vital partner for Uzbekistan or the relations between the two countries are symbolic due to their regional significance, - these are the most pressing academic issues for today's science. The analysis of the institutional aspects of cooperation between the two countries not only reveals the level of importance of Uzbekistan for France, or France for Uzbekistan, but also allows us to assess the potential of future relations between the two countries.

Indeed, the systemic effectiveness of the state's activities in the international arena is explained by the fact that its foreign policy mechanism- the legal, organizational and institutional structures, is well established or not. As the nature of the institutions in a given country determines "whether the country's long-term development will be successful or unsuccessful" [1, pp. 76-79; 4] and they have the ability "to influence members of society, their behavior, and decision-making through established rules of conduct" [14], the degree a country can achieve in international relations depends directly on the nature of its foreign policy institutions.

The purpose of this article is to reveal the current state and prospects of cooperation between Uzbekistan and France through a comprehensive study of the institutional framework of relations.

The functions of article are following:

A brief review of the theoretical and methodological foundations of foreign policy institutionalization research;

Describe the peculiarities of the current state of institutionalization of bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and France;

Study of the stages of institutionalization of cooperation between the two countries;

Disclosure of the impact of foreign policy institutions on the practice of Uzbek-French cooperation.

General scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, in particular, systematic and historical approaches, as well as methods of comparative analysis, quantitative analysis, scientific evaluation have been used in the research.

### ***Main Part***

So what is the current state of cooperation between the States, what steps did it take to get to the current indicators, how was it formed and how did it undergo transformations? These questions can be answered through an analysis of the institutionalization of interstate cooperation. After all, through institutionalization, relations between states take a certain organizational form. This form of organization is self-regulating and operates according to established rules/norms. It follows that the process of institutionalization of a particular sector consists of the following parts:

- 1) Formation of relations that need to be regulated in this area;
- 2) Emergence of a number of rules and norms governing this relationship;
- 3) Selection or habitatization of the most acceptable among a large number and variety of rules and norms [3, pp. 54-72];
- 4) Establishment of selected standards - organizational form / structure of the institute;

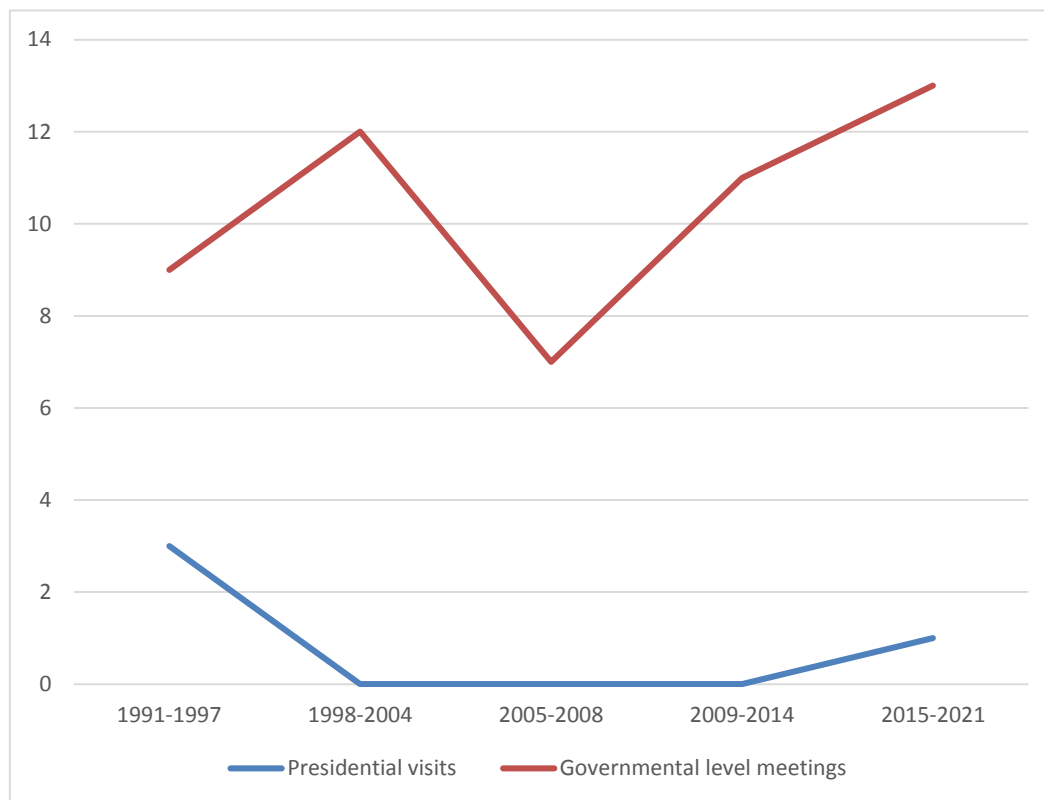
5) The process of continuous development of the institute (norms and rules, organizational, structural and other transformations).

And institutions in international relations and foreign policy:

- are legal holders (for example, a presidential / deputy institutes are carrier of legal rights, not individual ones). They give legitimacy, relative objectivity, to the foreign policy of the state or to international processes;
- are rationalizers that allow to make decisions, implement them and plan for the future, to choose alternative, collective solutions, to pursue long-term policy;
- stabilize the international system and the mechanism of relations in it, reduce unexpected risks;
- can act as a separate actor in international politics;
- have the ability to rebuild the international system;
- have the character of specifying the foreign policy of a particular state or international policy.

In international relations, France and Uzbekistan have close views on global issues, especially international and regional security. However, the overall 28-year history of political cooperation between the two countries shows that this cooperation is more politically based on dialogue between different government agencies of the two countries. This is evidenced by the following diagram of reciprocal visits at the level of heads of state and government from 1993 to 2021, devoted to the dynamics of bilateral relations. According to the graph, the most productive period for official visits and political dialogue between the two countries dates back to the 90s. This can be explained by the need to develop the basis and rules of bilateral cooperation with France after the independence of Uzbekistan. The highest frequency of official visits per year was 6, an average of 2 different levels of visits per year.

**Diagram no.1 Dynamics of bilateral visits<sup>1</sup>:**



<sup>1</sup> The diagram is based on an analysis of the official websites of the Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan and France, and using data from the French Embassy in Tashkent. (<http://www.press-service.uz/ru/search/?q=Франция+визит&s=поиск;> [http://www.mfa.uz/ru/cooperation/countries/58/https://uzbekistan.fr/ru/узбекистан-франция-2/;](http://www.mfa.uz/ru/cooperation/countries/58/https://uzbekistan.fr/ru/узбекистан-франция-2/) <https://uz.ambafrance.org/Istoriya:> )

As a result of joint visits and negotiations, 10 political consultations have been held so far. The two countries have signed more than 35 documents that form the basis of interstate relations, including 23 interstate and intergovernmental documents and 12 interdepartmental agreements [5].

All this is a summary of the current relations between Uzbekistan and France. Now we may consider the stages of development of cooperation within the framework of institutionalization. Thus, we can conditionally divide the process of institutionalization of Uzbek-French bilateral relations into 5 phases.

### **Results and Discussions**

*Phase 1: 1992-2005. The stage of determining the general basis of cooperation.* The main emphasis was placed on the establishment of formal relations, the definition of areas of cooperation, the development of cooperation mechanisms, the establishment of bilateral and regional institutions. The foundation of modern relations was laid: on January 3, 1992, the French Republic recognized the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan; diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on March 1, 1992; The French Embassy opened in Tashkent in June 1992, and in March 1995 the Uzbek Embassy was opened in Paris.

In addition to the official diplomatic mission in Uzbekistan, France has established the Tashkent French Alliance since 1995 by mutual agreement, which is part of the traditional French soft power. The Alliance is part of 800 French alliances operating in 146 countries, and its main goal is to “develop and strengthen mutually beneficial cultural, educational, scientific and technological relations between Uzbekistan and France” [6].

In May 1998, the Uzbek-French Friendship Society was established. Currently, the Friendship Society is patronaged by the National University of Uzbekistan. Also, during this period, in bilateral cooperation, non-governmental organizations and associations have contributed to the development of cultural ties. For example, the Association for the Study of the History and Art of the Timurid Period, established in France in 1988, has become one of the main participants in holding the Week of Uzbekistan and Amir Temur in France, introducing the culture of Uzbekistan to the French people.

The Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between France and Uzbekistan was signed in Tashkent on March 1, 1992, and the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between France and Uzbekistan was signed on October 27, 1993. There were 3 reciprocal visits of heads of state and 20 intergovernmental visits. [8] Agreements of mutual understanding were signed between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Economy, Culture and Defense of the two countries. Inter-parliamentary relations have been established. In particular, the main topics of bilateral talks/negotiations were as follows:

**Table No.1. Negotiations between Uzbek and French officials (1992-2005)** (Compiled by author on the basis of data from French Embassy in Tashkent)

<b>№</b>	<b>Theme of negotiations</b>	<b>Number of negotiations</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>General directions of foreign policy and international cooperation:</i> The state and prospects of bilateral diplomatic relations Cooperation with the foreign policy committees of the parliaments International cooperation and Francophonie	4: 2  1 1
<b>2</b>	Defense	5 times
<b>3</b>	<i>Inter-parliamentary cooperation.</i> Negotiations with representatives of the French Senate (Negotiations on cooperation within the France-Central Asia Friendship group) Negotiations with deputies of the lower house of France	6: 5 (3)  1

4	<i>Investment and foreign trade</i> [10]	3
5	Customs issues in the fight against drug trafficking	1
6	Exchange of experience and cooperation in the field of industry	1
7	Finances	1

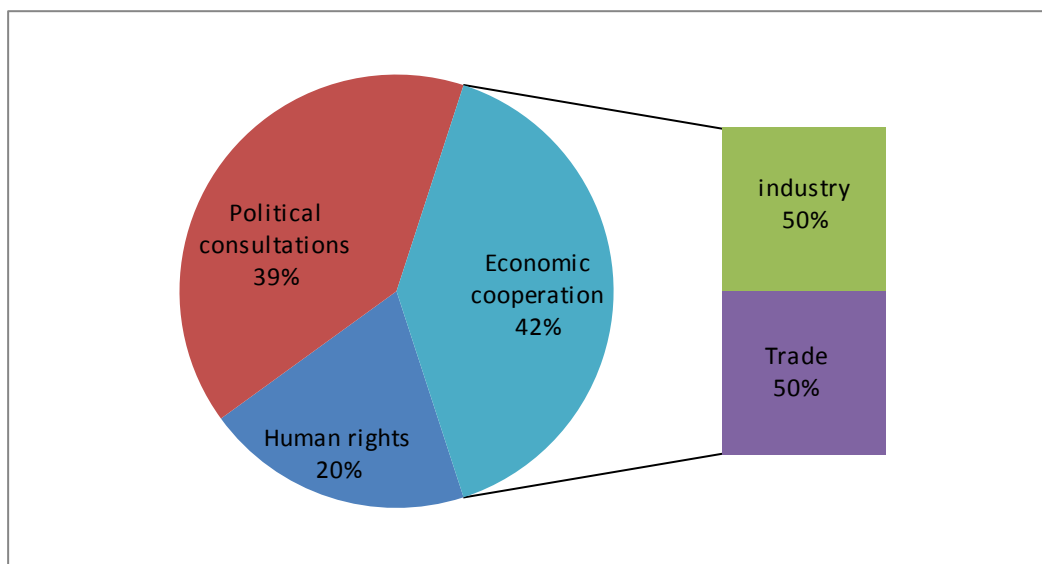
As it is seen in the table, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Cabinet of Ministers (two visits to France - on investment issues) and the Customs Committee have been the most active partners of Uzbekistan at this stage. During the first years of independence, Uzbekistan focused on attracting the necessary investments for its natural development. The institute that has contributed the most to the development of bilateral cooperation in France has been the parliament, especially the upper house, the Senate of France. France, which plans to develop inter-parliamentary relations within the framework of the France-Central Asia Friendship Society, has put forward an initiative to establish bilateral parliamentary groups. The French Ministry of Defense has also been able to establish stable relations with the Uzbek government.

In short, at this stage, the “rules of the game” and the key players in the cooperation between the two countries have been identified. However, the main difference between the two countries is that while Uzbekistan considered that investment and the development of its economy are the main priority of cooperation, France sees organizational, legislative and administrative reforms as key factors in the development of a new independent state and emphasis on inter-parliamentary exchange and cooperation, by attempting to create a single platform for cooperation with the whole of Central Asia. This situation have led to partial misunderstandings and a lack of full coordination of interactions. However, the parliament has become a key player in the development of cooperation between the States.

*Phase 2: 2006-2008. Transition period.* It was during this time that the relationship needed to be reconsidered. Political consultations on the rehabilitation of bilateral cooperation have become the main topic of negotiations.

#### **Diagram No2. Governmental talks between Uzbekistan and France (2006-2006)**

*(Compiled by author on the basis of data from Ministry of Europe and foreign affairs of France)*

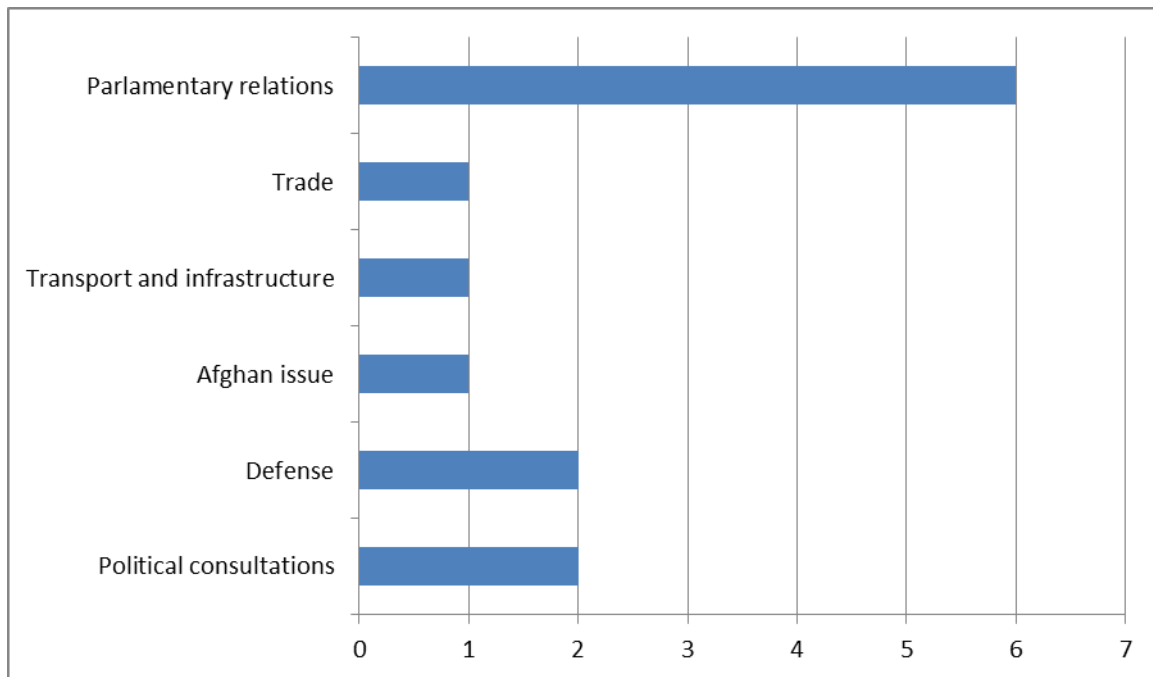


As can be seen from the diagram, during this period, the talks and meetings between the two countries were focused on three main areas - political (general direction of cooperation), economic and human rights. France was visited by a human rights mediator and Secretary of State for European Affairs

in 2006-2008 [9]. Uzbekistan reiterated political consultations and investment. Other areas have experienced some stagnation.

*Phase 3: 2009-2012. Cooperation has been renewed.* The institutionalization of relations between the parliaments of the two countries has accelerated. In particular, the Uzbek-French friendship group was established in March 2008 in the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and in June 2010 in the Legislative Chamber. In 2008, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Ombudsman of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the human rights defender (mediator) of France. The France-Uzbekistan Friendship Group was established in the French National Assembly [2].

**Diagram No.3 The main areas of cooperation in 2009-2012: in the field of bilateral negotiations**  
(Compiled by author on the basis of data from Ministry of Europe and foreign affairs of France)



As we can see from this diagram, at this stage, the Parliament of Uzbekistan has become one of the locomotive institutions of cooperation. All negotiations on inter-parliamentary cooperation were held in the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Four of the six talks were related to cooperation between the two chambers of parliament and the activities of the France-Central Asia Friendship Group. The other two were aimed at establishing and defining the activities of the “France-Uzbekistan” friendship group in the lower house of France. During the inter-parliamentary talks, the sides also discussed the establishment of the practice of parliamentary diplomacy and the exchange of experience in ensuring national interests through parliamentary control in creating a positive international image of the country.

*Phase 4: 2013-2017. Expansion of areas of cooperation.* Cooperation has been established between higher education institutions, human rights, the judiciary, business development, and the environment. During this period, 18 reciprocal delegations visited the government and parliament, and inter-parliamentary relations, defense, and investment / foreign trade remained key areas of bilateral negotiations [12]. Especially after the changes in Uzbekistan’s domestic policy and the 2016 presidential election, France has become more active in Uzbekistan. The French Development Fund AFD, the French agency for economic sponsorship and mentoring CCEF has officially launched in Uzbekistan [7]. The French government-funded Service économique Trésor, which gives French business structures access to

various local markets, has also been operating in Uzbekistan since 2017 through a third country (permanent residence in the Russian Federation) [11, p.2].

Uzbekistan has also re-institutionalized some areas of cooperation in order to further accelerate bilateral relations. One example is that the Uzbek-French Friendship Society, which is a non-governmental sector, has started to be coordinated by the Committee of Interethnic Relations and Friendly cooperation with Foreign Countries under the Cabinet of Ministers since 2017. At the same time, the government has taken on the main part of solving the problems of friendly societies and the implementation of future plans.

*Phase 5: 2018- and current period. The period of renewal of the basic foundations.* The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev paid a visit to the Republic of France in October 2018. Following a long hiatus, the visit resulted in the signing of 10 bilateral agreements worth a total of € 5 billion. In particular, the program of cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs for 2019-2020, cooperation between the State Committee for Ecology and Environment of Uzbekistan and the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy in the field of environment and sustainable development, internal affairs, culture. A total of 10 intergovernmental and interdepartmental documents were signed between the Ministries of Culture and Arts, the Fund for the Development of Culture and Arts under the Ministry of Culture of Uzbekistan and the Louvre Museum. Measures to strengthen the bilateral format have begun to play a key role in deepening cooperation in the real economic sector.

Since September 2018, the Coordinating Council for Prospects for Cooperation with France in the field of regular education and culture has started its work. The Council is composed of the heads of the country's main educational institutions - the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Public Education, the Paris Academy, the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO), the Paris International Fashion Academy and French alliance. Within the framework of the Council, the exchange of experience in the field of preschool, secondary and higher education, cooperation in training in the field of tourism, the establishment of quality French language education in Uzbekistan, the establishment of environmentally friendly and digital schools software development [13]. The French Academy of Fashion in Tashkent has been operating since the second half of 2018.

An important and innovative part of the signed agreements is the document on cooperation in the field of space. Under the agreements, Thales Alenia Space, one of Europe's leading international space and defense companies with an annual turnover of about \$ 18.5 billion, will create an industrial base for the space industry in Uzbekistan and train local personnel in the field.

## **Conclusion**

In short, the qualitative change and improvement of the institutional content of any country's cooperation has a tendency to develop bilateral relations. There are certain problems in the activities of the joint agencies coordinating Uzbek-French cooperation, especially business and entrepreneurship. In particular, it should be noted that there are certain limiting factors in the activities of the court, which is headed by a representative of the French business community. Despite its close ties to personal authority and government structures, its authority is limited to addressing a number of issues due to the lack of a suitable career, as well as ethical motives in relation to other business structures.

The main driving force in the development of bilateral cooperation between Uzbekistan and France is the presidential institution. In France, the parliament, especially the Senate, is a parliamentary group of "France + Central Asia" and "France + Uzbekistan".

Cooperation between Uzbekistan and France is still being defined. However, it is the uncertainty that suggests that this cooperation may go in the wrong direction.

The main problem in the evolution of Uzbek-French cooperation was to set priorities: France has always believed that the main issue in the development of Uzbekistan should be organizational and administrative and legislative reforms. The main topic of discussion for Uzbekistan was investment and trade. This has prevented full coordination, especially from the earliest days of the partnership.

By 2017-2018, the number of participating organizations and sectors of Uzbek-French cooperation has expanded. From space exploration to transportation and education, to energy, real programs have been developed.

France's rich experience in the effective use of industrial potential, innovation and technological progress is of great interest in other countries. Today, the rapid development of technological and scientific-technical spheres in order to create efficient, competitive production is of paramount importance for the economy of our republic. Therefore, it is important for Uzbekistan to further develop cooperation with France. At the same time, it is necessary to improve coordination mechanisms in the development of bilateral relations: first, to restructure and raise the status of the Uzbek-French and French-Uzbek committees on economic cooperation. Second, to establish organizations within the existing committees responsible for the most important areas of cooperation that require appropriate action by the parties. Thirdly, in order to carry out the effective work of these organizations, it is necessary to include in their structure representatives of relevant government agencies, interested businessmen. Fourth, the rules of procedure of the joint court must ensure its high efficiency. It is also necessary to hold talks with the new parliamentarians on the resumption of the France-Uzbekistan friendship group in the French National Assembly after the next parliamentary elections in France in 2022.

In general, analyzing the components of cooperation, we can conclude that for Uzbekistan, the emergence of new areas of cooperation with France is important not qualitatively, but quantitatively.

## **References**

1. Acemoglu D., Robinson J. Why Nations fail: the origins of power, prosperity and poverty. Crown Business, 2012. 546 p.
2. Alimova L. Uzbekistan I Fransiya: rasshiryayutsa parlamentskie svyazi [Uzbekistan and France: expanding parliamentary ties]. Narodnoe slovo №118 from 05.06.2020
3. Berger P., Luckman T. The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology and knowledge. Open Road Media, 2011. 162 p.
4. Thomas L.Friedman. Why Nations Fail// The New York Times, 31 March 2012. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/01/opinion/sunday/friedman-why-nations-fail.html> (accessed 03.12.2021)
5. Urosov A. Uzbekistan - Fransiya: na puti rasshireniya i ukrepleniya dolgosrochnogo vzaimovigodnogo partnerstva [Uzbekistan-France: on the path of expanding and strengthening long-term mutually beneficial partnership]. Available at: <http://www.uza.uz/ru/politics/uzbekistan-frantsiy-a-na-puti-rasshirengsaiya-i-uk-repleniya-dolg-10-10-2018>. (accessed 29.11.2021)
6. Alliance Francaise Tachkent. Osnovnaya missiya i deyatelnost' [main mission and activity]. Available at: <http://www.af-tachkent.uz/ru>. (accessed 03.02.2021)
7. AFD –financement, developpement. Asie Centrale [AFD-finances, development. Central Asia]. Available at: <https://www.afd.fr/fr/le-reseau-des-agences>. (accessed 27.01.2021);



8. Bilateral relations: Uzbekistan-France. Available at: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/ru/dossiers-pays/ouzbekistan/la-france-et-l-ouzbekistan/> (accessed 01.02.2021)
9. Cooperation bilatérale entre la France et l'Ouzbékistan [Bilateral cooperation between France and Uzbekistan]. Available at: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/ru/dossiers-pays/ouzbekistan/la-france-et-l-ouzbekistan/nouveautes>. (accessed 04.02.2021)
10. Economic outlook of Uzbekistan. The world bank. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/overview#economy>. (accessed 03.12.2021)
11. Fiche repères économiques du pays- Ouzbékistan. Direction de la Diplomatie économique MAEE. Paris, 2019. 10 p.
12. La France en Ouzbékistan. Histoire [France in Uzbekistan.History]. Available at: <https://uz.ambafrance.org/istoriya>. (accessed 17.12.2021)
13. L'Ouzbékistan, nouvel Eldorado. Available at: <https://www.lemoci.com/louzbekistan-eldorado-pour-les-entreprises-francaises>. (accessed 04.11.2021)
14. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Social Institutions. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-institutions/>. (accessed 03.12.2021)
15. Sootchesvenniki vo Fransii aktivno prodvigayut imidj strani [Compatriots in France are actively promoting the country's image]. Available at: <https://ouzbekistan.fr/ru/sootchestvenniki-vo-francii-aktivno/>. (accessed 24.12.2020)

## Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).