

**REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

**CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND  
WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING  
THE GREAT SILK ROAD TOURISM PROJECT  
IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.20.2.08>

**Dzhamilya GUSENOVA**

*Ph.D. (Philos.), Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and  
Socio-Political Sciences, Daghestan State University  
(Makhachkala, Russian Federation)*

**Naila SARKAROVA**

*Ph.D. (Philos.), Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and  
Socio-Political Sciences, Daghestan State University  
(Makhachkala, Russian Federation)*

**Siyadat ALIBEKOVA**

*Ph.D. (Philos.), Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and  
Socio-Political Sciences, Daghestan State University  
(Makhachkala, Russian Federation)*

**Gabibat BAISAIDOVA**

*Ph.D. (Philos.), Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and  
Socio-Political Sciences, Daghestan State University  
(Makhachkala, Russian Federation)*

**ABSTRACT**

**T**he implementation of any international project, including the Great Silk Road, is not conceivable without major legal, economic and political decisions. The article shows that the Central Asian region can hardly be considered homogenous in terms of legal, political and economic resources in the context of this project. The republics are also gradually departing from an authoritative and centralized administrative and political style to a more liberal communication style in their dialog with the tourist industry. The republics have also inherited different historical and cultural versions of this historical phenomenon—the Great Silk Road. This contributed to the fact that economic feasibility led the leadership of the Central Asian republics in different directions in the development of tourism within their segment of the Great Silk Road. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a large number of historical, cultural and religious monuments contribute to the development of tourist infrastructure around these sites. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan, traversed by the mountain transit roads of the Great Silk Road (which also pass through Tajikistan), relies on natural sites, as evidenced by its official map of

attractions and statistics of the National Statistical Committee of the republic. The Republic of Tajikistan, in view of its predominantly agricultural economy, is making efforts to develop rural tourism, relying on eco-friendly agricultural products. Meanwhile, Turkmenistan generally remains a “blind spot” for observers.

Despite the efforts being made, both within the republics (internal reforms) and at the interstate level (an open-door visa policy), the level of tourism development varies significantly between the republics. This applies both to the legal framework and to the financial and infrastructure base. Thus, the Republic of Tajikistan, despite having one of the most loyal visa regimes, demonstrates the lowest number of foreign visitors in the region (not counting Turkmenistan, which has no objective information available in the tourist sphere). An important result of promoting the international Great Silk Road project for the Central Asian republics is the integrative trends and processes aimed at creating a single regional space that contributes to the sustainable development and security both within the republics and in the region as a whole.

**KEYWORDS:** *Great Silk Road, tourism, pilgrimage, legal basis for tourism, Central Asia.*

*Introduction*

The Great Silk Road, which connected Central Asia with China, Western Asia, Europe, the Caucasus and other regions between the 2nd century BC and the 16th century, was not merely an economic, but also a vast sociocultural and political space. The ten-year project Integral Study of the Silk Road: Roads of Dialog, initiated in 1988 by UNESCO, became the launching pad for the modern Great Silk Road and provides for a comprehensive study of the history of civilizations along the Great Silk Road, the establishment of close intercultural contacts between Eurasian peoples, etc. The project turned out to be so topical that the Silk Road International Advisory Commission and a number of states, including the Central Asian republics, decided to extend it in the fall of 1997. It was extended as a new project, East-West Intercultural Relations in Central Asia, aimed at the study and

preservation of caravanserais, the postal system, petroglyphs of Central Asia, and other cultural and historical artefacts. (Later, it was extended as a Great Silk Road.) It provided for the establishment of a network of scientific institutes, including the Maritime Silk Road Research Center (Fu Zhou, China), Silk Road Research Information Center (Nara, Japan), Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (New Delhi, India), International Institute for Central Asian Studies (Samarkand, Uzbekistan). The result of these centers' work was the international colloquium *The Contribution of the Samanids to the Cultural Heritage of Central Asia* in June 1998 in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), as well as the publication of a fundamental work—*Atlases of Religious Monuments and Applied Arts of Central Asia*.

Subsequently, a group of states (China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) submitted an application to include the Great Silk Road in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The route was then represented by the Chang'an-Tien-Shan corridor network that spanned 5,000 kilometers—from the cities of Xi'an (Chang'an) and Luoyang, the capitals of China during the Han and Tang dynasties, to Zhetysay in the Central Asian region. The final, positive decision was made at the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee in Doha, Qatar, on 15-25 June, 2014. The "corridor" approach was considered the optimal way to identify the specific Silk Road sections where the sites to be included in the nomination are located. At present, 54 variations of such corridors have been proposed; they do not merely include the cultural sites that are adjacent to caravan routes, but those of them that reveal the historical significance of this route and contribute to the concept of universal heritage.

Over 30 years have passed since the launch of the Great Silk Road project. During this period, each of its Central Asian participants has arrived at a provisional milestone with its own baggage of experience in promoting this project within their space. Thus, in order to be able to outline the key anticipated results of this international event, it makes sense to draw some kind of interim conclusions and consider the prospects of the project's further implementation.

The outlines of the key results are, in fact, visible today. The draft resolution of the 74th session of the U.N. General Assembly on 14 November, 2019, initiated jointly by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, emphasizes the fact that this route through Central Asia not only promotes tourism in international markets, but also ensures regional stability and sustainable development. The project's legal, as well as both the internal and foreign policy components in the Central Asian republics, which reveal their position in the implementation of this project in their territory, will demonstrate the extent of objectivity of this assessment.

## **The Legal Factor in Project Implementation**

The idea of reviving the Great Silk Road as a tourist destination in the Central Asian states has found its political and legal manifestation in various interstate agreements and domestic legal acts. Currently, this is the only and the central collaboration project conducted by the Central Asian republics jointly with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Despite the fact that Uzbekistan was not among the initiators of the inclusion of the Great Silk Road on the UNESCO World Heritage List, it was still the state that was most actively engaged in promoting this project among all Central Asian countries. To some extent, this is due to the fact that there are more than 7,300 cultural heritage sites<sup>1</sup> that are perfectly preserved to this day. Since 1994, 38 laws and by-laws governing the tourism sector have been adopted in Uzbekistan in the framework

<sup>1</sup> See: O. Mukhamejanov, "Moshchnyi instrument ustoychivogo rosta ekonomiki," *Golos Uzbekistana*, 2 March, 2018, available at [[http://uzbekistonovozi.uz/ru/articles/index.php?SECTION\\_ID=174&ELEMENT\\_ID=52864](http://uzbekistonovozi.uz/ru/articles/index.php?SECTION_ID=174&ELEMENT_ID=52864)], 16 January, 2020.

of this international project.<sup>2</sup> Just as in other Central Asian republics, serious financial investments were required for its promotion, first and foremost, in the outdated tourist infrastructure inherited from the Soviet times. It did not merely necessitate “hole-patching,” that is, the restoration of roads, hotels, and food establishments, but also required the training of highly skilled hospitality industry professionals.

The international Silk Road meeting of the World Tourism Organization on 3-6 October, 1995, and the associated international tourism fair Tourism along the Silk Road<sup>3</sup> can be considered the starting point of project implementation in Uzbekistan. In the presidential decree that followed this event,<sup>4</sup> the republic embarked on a course towards “creating a modern tourism industry,”<sup>5</sup> which presupposes a whole range of measures, entailing the introduction of a simplified customs procedure, the establishment of a single visa for foreign tourists, and preferential loans for the construction of tourist facilities and infrastructure with a maturity term of at least 5 years. Other measures included the establishment of Uzsaekhatinvestbank, the formation of the Interdepartmental Council on Tourism under the Government, with the aim of coordinating the interaction of all commercial agents, promoting tourism, staffing and legal support in the tourism sector, etc. The Meros national program was also developed to restore, improve and utilize the architectural, archeological, historical and cultural monuments located in the ancient cities of the Great Silk Road: Samarkand, Khiva, Tashkent, and Bukhara, which were declared economic zones of international tourism.

The next step in ensuring the legal foundations entailed the special Programs for the Development of the Tourism Sphere in the Khorezm, Tashkent and Kashkadarya Regions for the period up to 2015, which were introduced in 2013. Eighty-four historical and cultural heritage sites were identified and financing was allocated in the amount of \$17.6 million, however, most of the funds, or approximately \$137.4 million, were used for the restoration of hotels and other tourist facilities. The enterprises involved in project implementation were provided with preferential loans and exempted from various taxes and customs duties on the goods produced outside of the republic. In 2017, similar Development Programs were adopted for Bukhara and the Bukhara region, as well as Samarkand and Samarkand region. By 2021, a so-called “green corridor” is slated to be established at the international airports of these cities, the quality of service at these transport hubs will be improved, hotel guests will be registered electronically, the passport and customs control procedures will be simplified, and more.

The decisions made by the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan were aimed, first and foremost, at improving the tourism infrastructure<sup>6</sup> and engaging private tourism companies in the Association.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the government exempted the companies engaged in improving the

---

<sup>2</sup> See: *Acts and Decrees of the President*, State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Development of Tourism, available in Russian at [<https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/document/resolutions>], 16 January, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> See: *Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 2 March, 1995 # 78 On the Preparation and Realization of the International Tourism Fair “Silk Road Tourism.”* Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available at [[https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416784\\_postanovlenie\\_kabineta\\_ministrov\\_respubliki\\_uzbekistan\\_ot\\_02\\_03\\_1995\\_g\\_n\\_78\\_o\\_podgotovke\\_i\\_provedenii\\_mejdunarodnoy\\_turisticheskoy\\_yarmarki\\_turizm\\_po\\_shelkovomu\\_puti&products=1\\_vse\\_zakonodatelstvo\\_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416784_postanovlenie_kabineta_ministrov_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_02_03_1995_g_n_78_o_podgotovke_i_provedenii_mejdunarodnoy_turisticheskoy_yarmarki_turizm_po_shelkovomu_puti&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 10 December, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> See: *Decree of the President of Uzbekistan #UP-1162 dated 2 June, 1995 On the Measures to Stimulate the Participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Restoration of the Great Silk Road and the Development of International Tourism in the Republic*, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<https://lex.uz/docs/182124>], 21 December, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> See: *Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 3 June, 1995 #210 On the Measures to Create the Modern Infrastructure for International Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416782\\_postanovlenie\\_kabineta\\_ministrov\\_respubliki\\_uzbekistan\\_ot\\_03\\_06\\_1995\\_g\\_n\\_210\\_o\\_merakh\\_po\\_sozdaniyu\\_sovremennoy\\_infrastruktury\\_mejdunarodnogo\\_turizma\\_v\\_respublike\\_uzbekistan&products=1\\_vse\\_zakonodatelstvo\\_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416782_postanovlenie_kabineta_ministrov_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_03_06_1995_g_n_210_o_merakh_po_sozdaniyu_sovremennoy_infrastruktury_mejdunarodnogo_turizma_v_respublike_uzbekistan&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 12 November, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> See: *Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 8 August, 1998 z. #346 On Improving the Organization of Tourism Organizations*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in

tourism infrastructure from paying customs duties for three years until 2005:<sup>8</sup> they imported technological and hotel equipment, transport and other means for tourism purposes. In addition, the embassies of a number of states introduced a full-time position of a cultural and tourism adviser, half of which was paid out from the budget of Uzbektourism.

Future tourism and hospitality industry professionals initially studied abroad through the Umid Foundation. However, these functions were subsequently assigned to Tashkent State Economic University.<sup>9</sup> This idea was later abandoned on 28 June, 2018 by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, when a decision was made to establish the Silk Road International University of Tourism in Samarkand.<sup>10</sup> The decision was a part of the phased process that aimed to establish tourism as a strategic industry. The education process at this university is conducted in Uzbek, Russian and English, two foreign languages are taught at the bachelor's level:

- the first is English (French or German),
- the second is one of the official languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Russian or Chinese).

The University and its Board of Trustees have been granted broad rights and powers to develop and approve educational standards, curricula and programs, a system of assessing students' knowledge based on best practices, setting time standards for the types of faculty activities, opening up new promising areas and specialty training based on the need for personnel in the tourism sector, and more.

The first versions of the Laws on Tourism in all five Central Asian republics stipulated for human resources support in tourism through the state system of personnel training, retraining and advanced training. But in the latest versions of this law, which are more liberal, the official authority is limited to the extensive establishment of "qualification requirements for personnel training in the tourism sector,"<sup>11</sup> as it was done in one of the most closed-off Central Asian republics—Turkmenistan. Kazakhstan can also be cited as an example, where Art 9.3 of the Republican Law on Tourism limits state participation to "assistance" in this area. Obviously, these changes are explained by the development of a network of non-governmental higher educational institutions.

Turkmenistan was the first (in 1995) to enact the Law on Tourism among all other Central Asian republics. Then, four years later, a similar normative act was adopted in Uzbekistan,<sup>12</sup> Kyrgyzstan in 1999, Kazakhstan in 2001, and Tajikistan in 2005. A comparative analysis of the features of the Laws on Tourism in all five republics shows a remarkable difference in understanding of how this sector of the economy should develop. In particular, state authorities acquired full control over the tourist in-

---

Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416781\\_postanovlenie\\_kabineta\\_ministrov\\_respubliki\\_uzbekistan\\_ot\\_08\\_08\\_1998\\_g\\_n\\_346\\_o\\_sovershenstvovanii\\_organizacii\\_deyatelnosti\\_turisticheskikh\\_organizaciy&products=1\\_vse\\_zakonodatelstvo\\_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416781_postanovlenie_kabineta_ministrov_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_08_08_1998_g_n_346_o_sovershenstvovanii_organizacii_deyatelnosti_turisticheskikh_organizaciy&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 3 November, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> See: *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 15 April, 1999 #UP-2286 On the State Program of Development of Tourism in Uzbekistan Up To 2005*, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<http://lex.uz/docs/213703>], 14 October, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 30 June, 1999 # UP-2332 On the Training of Qualified Personnel for the Tourist Sphere in Uzbekistan*, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<http://www.lex.uz/docs/214104>], 14 October, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> See: *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan On the Establishment of the Silk Road International Tourism University*, *Golos Uzbekistana*, 29 June, 2018, available in Russian at [[http://uzbekistonovozi.uz/ru/articles/index.php?SECTION\\_ID=173&ELEMENT\\_ID=58015](http://uzbekistonovozi.uz/ru/articles/index.php?SECTION_ID=173&ELEMENT_ID=58015)], 3 December, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> *Law of Turkmenistan dated 10 May, 2010 #107 On Tourism*, Alpagama, available in Russian at [<https://alpagama.org/pravovaya-baza-turista/zakon-turkmenistana-o-turizme>], 3 December, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> See: *Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 20 August, 1999 #830—I On Tourism*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416776\\_zakon\\_respubliki\\_uzbekistan\\_ot\\_20\\_08\\_1999\\_g\\_n\\_830—i\\_o\\_turizme&products=1\\_vse\\_zakonodatelstvo\\_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416776_zakon_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_20_08_1999_g_n_830-i_o_turizme&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 12 November, 2019.

dustry in the Republic of Turkmenistan in the first edition of the Law on Tourism.<sup>13</sup> In particular, Art 4 identifies state and local programs as the organizational and even financial basis for the development of tourism, approved by the president in the former case, and by local executive authorities—in the latter. All this had to be supported solely by state funding. In the new 2010 edition, the legislator has changed the wording from “state administration” to “state regulation.”

The legislation of Uzbekistan provides for a wider range of interaction in terms of tourism industry financing. In particular, Art 12 distinctly addresses the matter of the extra-budgetary Tourism Support Fund, which was established under an authorized state body, specifically, the State Committee). The Fund is formed using the proceeds from the tourist tax,<sup>14</sup> grants from international financial institutions, foreign donors, charitable donations from legal entities and individuals, proceeds from the placement of the Fund’s temporarily available funds and other sources that are not prohibited by law. In Uzbekistan, these funds and fees are redirected to the development of tourism, while in Tajikistan Art 3 of the Law on Tourism explicitly prohibits the free or gratuitous use of tourism resources “included in the state cadaster of tourist resources of the Republic of Tajikistan.”<sup>15</sup> This pertains to tourism resources of national and international importance. However, the taxes obtained from this type of activity do not come back to this sphere for its development, but only replenish the country’s total budget.

The article on the entities of tourism activity, traditionally a part of the standard law on tourism, demonstrates the different degrees of liberalization of the tourism segment of the economy in different republics. Unlike Turkmenistan, Art 3 of the Law on Tourism in Kazakhstan recognizes tourist associations (civic associations) and state bodies that regulate public relations in the field of tourism as entities of tourism industry, in addition to tour operators, travel agents and guides (as the law in Turkmenistan states), equalizing the status of the state with all other participants in tourism activities.<sup>16</sup> There are no such provisions in the legislation of Turkmenistan, but Uzbekistan has gone even further in this matter by introducing a separate Art 13 in the updated version of the law, which is dedicated to citizen self-government bodies and non-governmental non-profit organizations that, within their powers, participate in the development and implementation of state, territorial and other tourist programs and in the promotion of cultural heritage; they carry out public control, make suggestions for improving the legislation on tourism and interact with government agencies and other organizations in the tourist sphere.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to emphasize the fact that the Law on Tourism of Turkmenistan is shifting away from “state administration” to “state regulation.” It defines tourism as a whole, in all its forms, as “a priority direction of the state socio-economic policy of Turkmenistan” (Art 11<sup>18</sup>). In Kazakhstan and Tajikistan,<sup>19</sup> the state assumes the obligation to support and develop only the “priority areas of tourist activity” (Art 8), namely domestic, inbound, social and amateur tourism.

<sup>13</sup> See: *Law of Turkmenistan dated 24 November, 1995*, International Tourist Academy, available in Russian at [<http://www.intacadem.ru/zakonodatelstvotzarubezhnyhstran/zakon—turkmenistana—ot—turizme—ot—24.11.1995.html>], 24 December, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Tourists must pay an entry duty in the amount of \$50 upon entering Uzbekistan.

<sup>15</sup> *Law of the Republic of Tajikistan On Tourism*, Pandia, available in Russian at [<https://pandia.ru/text/80/195/42904.php>], 25 October, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> See: *Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 13 June, 2001 #211—II On Tourist Activities in the Republic of Kazakhstan (amended and revised, as of 1 July, 2019)*, Online.zakon.kz, available in Russian at [[https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=1023618#pos=47;—156](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1023618#pos=47;—156)], 14 December, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> See: *Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 18 July, 2019 #ZRU—549 On Tourism*, Narodnoe Slovo, 19 July, 2019, available in Russian at [<http://xs.uz/ru/16466>], 11 January, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> *Law of Turkmenistan On Tourism*, Parahat.info, available in Russian at [<https://www.parahat.info/law/2010—05—21—zakon—turkmenistana—o—turizme>], 15 December, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> See: *Law of the Republic of Tajikistan On Tourism*, Pandia, available in Russian at [<https://pandia.ru/text/80/195/42904.php>], 11 December, 2019.



It is obvious why the government of Uzbekistan is committed to promoting the Silk Road project. Between 1995 and the present time, 3 thematic meetings were held: 3-6 October, 1995 in Tashkent; 19-22 April, 1999 in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Khiva; 27-28 October, 2002 in Bukhara. In 2009, hygiene requirements for catering and living conditions in accommodation facilities were approved.<sup>20</sup> In 2013, regulations were introduced on the location of tourists in territories with a special regime of stay,<sup>21</sup> as well as a list of sites and territories restricted to tourists,<sup>22</sup> which included military and strategic sites. In addition, there is a ban in the country for photo and video shooting at certain sites (the list remains undisclosed) with the aim of subsequent public display, which requires special permission. As a result, tourists sometimes encounter police hostility. However, in 2018, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev removed such restrictions for tourists with the exception of the official list of sites in the decree On Measures for the Development of Inbound Tourism.<sup>23</sup>

In 2016, the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan named tourism the “strategic sector of the country’s economy,”<sup>24</sup> and for the first time the need arose to ensure “the safety of life and health of tourists and sightseers when organizing tourism services,” and “strengthen the social role of tourism” through the development of child, youth, family and social tourism, expanding international cooperation with the U.N. World Tourism Organization, other international and national tourism organizations, etc.

Of the other Central Asian republics engaged in the Great Silk Road project, Kyrgyzstan<sup>25</sup> relies on natural attractions, namely 86 specially protected natural areas, which is by no means a coincidence. Most of its territory is occupied by mountains (about 90% of its area is located at an altitude of over 1,500 m above sea level). The list of world-class attractions includes Pobeda peak (7,439 m), Lenin peak (7,134 m), Khan-Tengri (6,995 m), and Enylchek, one of the longest glaciers). Forests occupy 5.3% of the area, water—4.4%, and farmland—54%. There are also 1,923 lakes, including Lake Issyk Kul—one of the largest, non-freezing and deepest alpine lakes in the world. In addition to natural attractions, there are historical and cultural monuments in the Kyrgyz Republic located on the Great Silk Road routes, but they are not numerous: the Tash-Rabat guesthouse, the foot of the

<sup>20</sup> See: *Sanitary Regulations and Norms RUz # 0282—09 (Approved by the Head State Sanitary Doctor, 31 December, 2009)*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416770\\_gigienicheskie\\_trebovaniya\\_k\\_organizacii\\_pitaniya\\_i\\_usloviyam\\_projivaniya\\_v\\_gostinichnyh\\_kompleksah\\_motelyah\\_kempingah\\_turisticheskikh\\_bazah\\_i\\_individualnyh\\_mestah\\_razmeshcheniya\\_\(sanpin\\_ruz\\_n\\_0282—09\)\(utverjdeny\\_glavnym\\_gosudarstvennym\\_sanitarnym\\_vrachom\\_31\\_12\\_2009\\_g\)&products=1\\_vse\\_zakonodatelstvo\\_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416770_gigienicheskie_trebovaniya_k_organizacii_pitaniya_i_usloviyam_projivaniya_v_gostinichnyh_kompleksah_motelyah_kempingah_turisticheskikh_bazah_i_individualnyh_mestah_razmeshcheniya_(sanpin_ruz_n_0282—09)(utverjdeny_glavnym_gosudarstvennym_sanitarnym_vrachom_31_12_2009_g)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 14 October, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> See: *Provision on the Entry, Temporary Sojourn and Movement of Tourists through Sites and Areas with a Special Sojourn Regime (Addendum # 1 to the Provision KM RUz dated 10 March, 2015 #53)*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/content?doc=386708\\_polojenie\\_o\\_poryadke\\_vezda\\_\(prohoda\)\\_vremennogo\\_prebyvaniya\\_i\\_perevdvizeniya\\_turistov\\_po\\_obektam\\_i\\_mestnostyam\\_na\\_territorii\\_kotoryh\\_ustanovlen\\_osobyj\\_rejim\\_prebyvaniya\\_\(prilozhenie\\_n\\_1\\_k\\_postanovleniyu\\_km\\_ruz\\_ot\\_10\\_03\\_2015\\_g\\_n\\_53\)&products=1\\_vse\\_zakonodatelstvo\\_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/content?doc=386708_polojenie_o_poryadke_vezda_(prohoda)_vremennogo_prebyvaniya_i_perevdvizeniya_turistov_po_obektam_i_mestnostyam_na_territorii_kotoryh_ustanovlen_osobyj_rejim_prebyvaniya_(prilozhenie_n_1_k_postanovleniyu_km_ruz_ot_10_03_2015_g_n_53)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 14 October, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> See: *List and Sites and Areas Forbidden for Tourist Visits (Addendum #2 to Provision KM RUz dated 10 March, 2015 #53)*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/content?doc=386706\\_perechen\\_obektov\\_i\\_territoriy\\_zapreshchennyh\\_dlya\\_poseshcheniya\\_turistami\\_\(prilozhenie\\_n\\_2\\_k\\_postanovleniyu\\_km\\_ruz\\_ot\\_10\\_03\\_2015\\_g\\_n\\_53\)&products=1\\_vse\\_zakonodatelstvo\\_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/content?doc=386706_perechen_obektov_i_territoriy_zapreshchennyh_dlya_poseshcheniya_turistami_(prilozhenie_n_2_k_postanovleniyu_km_ruz_ot_10_03_2015_g_n_53)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 17 December, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> See: “Turistam razreshat svobodnuiu s’emku v obshchestvennykh mestakh,” *Gazeta.uz*, 6 February, 2018, available at [<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/02/06/photo/>], 17 December, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan On the Measures to Ensure the Accelerated Development of the Tourist Sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2 December, 2016 #UP—486*, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<http://lex.uz/docs/3077023>], 2 October, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> See: *Turizm v Kyrgyzstane*, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, available at [<http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/sbornik-turizm-v-kyrgyzstane>], 20 December, 2019; *Turizm v Kyrgyzstane 2011-2015*, Statistical collection, Bishkek, 2016, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, available at [<http://www.stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/ddd4f2bb-2e32-47bf-8dbf-d44574deb91d.pdf>], 2 October, 2019.

Suleiman Mountain, the Burana Tower, the Uzgen architectural complex. Historically, three branches of trade routes passed through its territory: the Pamir-Alai, Ferghana, and Chui.

The most difficult situation in the development of the tourism sphere is observed in Tajikistan, where the legal support for this industry is just being established. The republic only joined the World Tourism Organization in 2007. Various events that are related to the Great Silk Road project to one degree or another are held in Tajikistan regularly, but they do not have the required resonance and effect. They include the reconstruction of one of the branches of the Great Silk Road, the Aini-Penjikent motorway and the International Exhibition of Artists for Peace *The Pearl of the Silk Road*, held on 11 November, 2016. Scientific and research work is also being carried out to add eight of Tajikistan's historical and cultural monuments to the Great Silk Road route list. These are Pyanjikent Ancient Town, Bunjikat Town, Gissar Fortress, Achinateppa Buddha Sanctuary, Khoja Mashhad Madrasah, the city of Takhti Sangin, City of Khulbuk, Yamchun Fortress.<sup>26</sup>

Back in 2010, P.Kh. Azimov and M.M. Aliboeva<sup>27</sup> named the following among the factors that impede the development of this sector of the economy: the lack of a unified state concept for industry development, ineffectual tax policy, poor infrastructure, unstable situation in the region, problems in ensuring tourists' safety, etc. Emphasis was placed specifically on the need to guarantee security and intensify the fight against current threats in the region in order to safeguard the strengthening of economic relations—not only within scientific circles, but also at the level of heads of state.

According to Azimov and Aliboeva, the republic primarily fosters rural tourism, with well-defined agro-economic belts: cotton, grain, meat and dairy, potato, and pasture. The government is still making what seems to be hasty tax decisions in regard to this still up-and-coming industry. On 31 August, 2012, an amendment was made to the list of types of individual entrepreneurial activities carried out based on a patent, namely, “renting out residential buildings for tourists and providing services in a city (town, village) without hotels.”<sup>28</sup> This targeted, first and foremost, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, where this type of service has begun to develop. Recall that it is one of the largest, yet least populated regions (44.9% of the total area, 2.6% of the population as of 1 January, 2014) bordering Afghanistan, China and Kyrgyzstan. Despite the fact that the current legislation of Tajikistan had followed the example of neighboring republics, exempting travel agencies from taxes on profit and added value, customs duties on the import of equipment and building materials for tourist facilities, and simplifying the visa procedure for citizens of 112 countries, these steps did not produce a tangible result, as eloquently confirmed by statistics on the republic's foreign visitors. To date, there are no official statistics on the development of tourism, and the available information is collected from figures officially published by other states.

The figures for Tajikistan, which are the lowest among the republics of Central Asia (despite the fact that the republic is among the top five countries with easiest requirements for a tourist visa, according to the British travel magazine *Wanderlust*,<sup>29</sup> and introduced an e-Visa electronic system in 2016), are not likely to be objective, since it remains unclear whether these tourists are guest visitors from other countries, or Tajiks who have naturalized in other states and are visiting their relatives at home.

<sup>26</sup> See: *Address of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan*, Official website of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 20 April, 2011, available in Russian at [<http://www.president.tj/ru/node/864>], 14 October, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> See: P.Kh. Azimov, M.M. Aliboeva, “Formirovanie i razvitie predprinimatelstva v sfere turizma v Respublike Tadjikistan,” *Vestnik Natsionalnoi akademii turizma*, No. 4 (16), 2010, p. 62.

<sup>28</sup> *Decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan On Amending and Revising the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan dated 31 August, 2012, #451*, Official website of the Tax Committee under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, available in Russian at [[https://andoz.tj/docs/postanovleniya-pravitelstvo/Resolution\\_\\_№451\\_ru\\_new.pdf](https://andoz.tj/docs/postanovleniya-pravitelstvo/Resolution__№451_ru_new.pdf)], 11 December, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> See: “Tajikistan in the Fourth Place in the World! British Journalist Names RT among the top-5 Countries with Easiest Requirements for a Tourist Visa,” *Tajikistantravel*, 21 August, 2017, available in Russian in Russian at [<https://travel-tajikistan.tj/ru/varzob—2>], 14 November, 2019.



**Statistical Data on Foreign Visitors in Central Asian Republics in 2002-2018**

Year	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
2006	262,000	4,707,000	11,605	766,000
2007	242,000	5,311,000	16,038	1,656,000
2008	560,000	4,117,000	21,779 (13,043 <sup>1</sup> )	2,379,000
2009	903,000	3,774,000	25,504 <sup>2</sup>	2,451,000
2010	1,069,000	4,097,000	160,000 <sup>3</sup>	1,224,000
2011	1,215,000	5,685,000	183,000	3,025,000
2012	975,000	6,163,000	244,000	3,393,000
2013	1,969,000	6,841,000	19,528 <sup>4</sup>	4,134,000
2014	1,862,000	6,333,000	213,000	3,791,000
2015	1,918,000	6,430,000	414,000	4,000,000
2016	2,027,000	6,509,000	344,000	3,853,000
2017	2,690,000 <sup>5</sup>	7,701,000 <sup>6</sup>	430,922 <sup>7</sup>	4,568,000 <sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2008 data taken from: P.Kh. Azimov, M.M. Aliboeva, "Formirovanie i razvitie predprinimatelstva v sfere turizma v Respublike Tadjikistan," *Vestnik Natsionalnoi akademii turizma*, No. 4 (16), 2010, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> 2006-2009 data taken from: L.V. Zhdanova, S. Bobokhonov, "Statistika turizma," Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan, available at [<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/Workshops/Chisinau/docs/09%20c%20-%20Tajikistan.pdf>], 11 December, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> 2010-2012, 2014 and 2016 data reflect the total number of foreigners entering the country, including tourists. Information taken from: "Tadjikistan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Таджикистан/Количество—прибывших>], 12 December, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> "Analiz sostoyaniia turizma v Respublike Tadjikistan," *Vuzlit.ru*, available at [[https://vuzlit.ru/771172/analiz\\_sostoyanie\\_turizma\\_respublike\\_tadjikistan](https://vuzlit.ru/771172/analiz_sostoyanie_turizma_respublike_tadjikistan)], 8 November, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Information on the arriving foreign tourists taken from: "Uzbekistan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Узбекистан/Количество—прибывших>], 2 December, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Information on the arriving foreign tourists taken from: "Kazakhstan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Казахстан/Количество—прибывших>], 2 December, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> S. Karaev, "Komturizma: Tadjikistan posetili svyshe 1 mln 150 tys. inostrantsev," *Asia-Plus*, 16 January, 2019, available at [<https://asiaplus.tj.info/news/life/travels/20190116/komturizma—tadjikistan—posetili—svyshe—1—mln—250—tis—inostrantsev>], 18 December, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Information on the arriving foreign tourists taken from: "Kyrgyzstan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Киргизия/Количество—прибывших>], 17 December, 2019.

The State Program for the Development of Tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan in 2010-2014 was adopted in order to develop this segment of the economy, with the vision of an annual 50,000-people increase in the number of foreign tourists. However, the financial support for this program was extremely insignificant. For example, in 2013, only 661,140 somoni (approximately \$65,000) were allocated for restoration and renovation work in the mausoleums of Imam Zaynolbiddin, Khoja Zar-

rin, Nakibkhan Tugral, Abdullah Vali, Khoja Ahmad Buzurg, Abdukadir Dzheloni and the Vomar fortress.<sup>30</sup>

The situation in the tourist sphere in Tajikistan has fundamentally changed since 2018, when, on the one hand, the threat of a terrorist Islamic state was significantly reduced in the international arena, and on the other, when the country's leadership, realizing the importance of the tourism industry problems, set about creating a legal framework in this sector of the economy. 2018 was declared the Year of Tourism and Folk Crafts Development in Tajikistan. In this context, a meeting of the Tourism Council of the CIS member states was held in Dushanbe, which focused on the development of tourism, the expansion of cooperation, the preparation of regional routes and other issues in the development of the tourist industry. A program was also adopted to promote tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2018-2020. In addition, in August 2018, after a certain delay, Decree #372 of the Government of Tajikistan On the Strategy for the Development of Tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030 was adopted, which outlined phased goals, objectives and priority directions for the development of the country's tourism industry. According to the year-end results, 1,150,000 foreigners have visited the republic.<sup>31</sup> In 2019, the years 2019-2021 were already declared the Years of Village Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts. As part of the implementation of this decree, on 30 December, 2019, the Government of Tajikistan approved the bills On Tourism and On Handicrafts, which will be adopted in the country in 2020.

Advances in this sphere are in no small measure associated with the \$10-million grant provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in November 2019 to support tourism in the country. The Government of Tajikistan, for its part, also committed to allocate \$1 million from the state budget. The implementation of the project, estimated until 2024, provides for the preparation of a comprehensive development plan for this segment of the economy, including the analysis of market demand, skill mapping, strengthening institutional capacity in the tourism sector and estimating the financial support of tourism. This estimation should reflect the share of tourism in the country's GDP and in foreign direct investments, as well as the share of various types of tourism along with corresponding income, etc. As part of the celebration of the Year of Tourism, Dushanbe hosted the International Tourism Forum and the *Tajikistan-2019* exhibition on 8-10 August, with participation of representatives and experts on tourism from 25 countries of the world. In Uzbekistan, similar events are held annually.

As for Turkmenistan, statistical information on entry to the republic is not publicly available. We only know the data for 2002-2007, with the following figures: 2002—10,800 people; 2003—8,200 people; 2004—14,800 people; 2005—11,600 people; 2006—5,600 people; 2007—8,200 people.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, the source does not reveal whether these numbers indicate the number of tourists who have entered the territory of Turkmenistan, or the total number of foreigners who have entered the country.

## Internal and External Political Components of Project Implementation

A number of interstate activities were conducted by the Central Asian countries with the aim of developing regional tourism; however, most of them were implemented on the CIS platform, rather

---

<sup>30</sup> See: F.Z. Mirzoeva, Sh. Saldiev, "Kulturnyi turizm i perspektivy ego razvitiia v Tadjikistane," *Vestnik Tadjikskogo tekhnicheskogo universiteta*, No. 4 (24), 2013, pp. 82-88.

<sup>31</sup> See: S. Karaev, "Komturizma: Tadjikistan posetili svyshe 1 mln 150 tys. inostrantsev," *Asia-Plus*, 16 January, 2019, available at [<https://asiaplustj.info/news/life/travels/20190116/komturizma-tadjikistan-posetili-svyshe-1-mln-250-tis-inostrantsev>], 18 December, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> 2002-2007 data taken from "Turkmenistan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," *Knoema*, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Turkmenistan/Количество-прибывших>], 19 December, 2019.

than within the framework of the Silk Road project. It is not accidental, since this platform is, in fact, the main source of tourists. Of the 5,346,219 foreigners who had entered Uzbekistan, which had attained the greatest success in promoting tourism, in 2018, 5,020,392 were CIS citizens.<sup>33</sup> Another important factor is the lack of language barriers due to the common historical past.

Among the most significant measures is the agreement signed on 30 May, 2012 in Ashgabat on the establishment of the Council on Tourism of the CIS member states.<sup>34</sup> It was slated to be formed from among the leaders of the relevant CIS member states' structures, which sought to implement the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Tourism dated 23 December, 1993. Guided by the CIS Charter, the Tourism Council was entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating teamwork in priority areas and cooperation in the tourism sphere, proposing solutions to specific problems, expanding and strengthening international tourism relations between the CIS countries and the global community, and assisting in the development and implementation of national programs, including the training of scientific and teaching personnel, exchange and professional development of tourism sphere professionals, aiding in attracting investments for the purpose of improving tourism infrastructure and quality service based on international standards. On 4 July, 2014, Kazakhstan acceded to this agreement.

Certain progress has also been observed at the intergovernmental level. On 8 June, 2000 in Astana (now Nur-Sultan), the governments of the Central Asian republics signed an agreement on cooperation in the development of health resorts, health and tourism institutions and organizations. On 25 October, 2013 in Minsk, the heads of the CIS countries proposed the development of a unified Strategy for the development of cooperation in the field of tourism up to 2020,<sup>35</sup> and 2014 in the CIS was declared the Year of Tourism.<sup>36</sup> These initiatives assumed the form of a legal document as early as on 20 November, 2013 in St. Petersburg at a meeting of the heads of governments of the CIS countries.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is also making certain efforts in this direction. Interstate agreements were signed in the framework of the development of tourism and joint measures in this sphere: with Uzbekistan on 10 January, 1994, with the Kyrgyz Republic on 18 November, 1994, with Turkmenistan on 27 November, 2007, and with Tajikistan only on 24 November, 2010. Kazakhstan has an agreement on mutual visa-free travel of its citizens with many CIS countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In the Russian Federation, citizens of Kazakhstan fill out a migration card, which gives them the right to stay in the Russian Federation without registration at the place of sojourn for up to 30 days.

Turkmenistan remains one of the most impassable countries in terms of tourism. There is a visa regime even for the neighboring Kazakhstan, with the exception of citizens permanently residing in the Atyrau and Mangistau regions, who can enter, leave and temporarily stay in the Balkan Welayat of Turkmenistan without obtaining a visa for a maximum period of 5 days with a passport and an identity certificate of a citizen of Kazakhstan, confirming their residence in these areas.

One of the contradictory factors in the development of tourism in Central Asian countries is the Islamic factor. Throughout the period of this region's independence, Islamic rhetoric has been used

---

<sup>33</sup> See: "Kolichestvo inostrannykh turistov za 2018 g.," State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Tourism, available at [<https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/research>], 21 December, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> See: *Agreement on the Council on Tourism of the CIS Member States*, Ashgabat, 30 May, 2012, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<http://www.lex.uz/docs/2630463>], 13 November, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> On 10 March, 2020, an additional meeting of the expert group was held at the CIS Executive Committee in Minsk to finalize and agree on a draft Strategy for the Development of Cooperation between the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Field of Tourism for 2021-2030.

<sup>36</sup> See: *Panel Meeting of the Council of the Heads of CIS States. Vladimir Putin Took Part in the Panel Meeting of the Council of the Heads of CIS States in Minsk*, Kremlin.ru, 25 October, 2013, available in Russian at [<http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19489>], 26 November, 2019.

by various radical forces that aimed to create an Islamic state out of the regions adjacent to the largest cities of the Ferghana Valley: Andijan, Namangan, Osh, with a center in Ferghana, which, according to the plan, were to become part of the global Islamic caliphate. From the number of the most high-profile terrorist attacks that have occurred in the Central Asian region since independence, the number of attacks against foreign citizens takes the third place after attacks against law enforcement officers and religious figures.<sup>37</sup> On 22 November, 1994, an attack was conducted against British and South African citizens working at gold mines in Tajikistan; in August 1999, in Kyrgyzstan, militants took 4 Japanese geologists hostage; in September 2000, 4 Japanese climbers were captured in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan by militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; explosions occurred on 30 July, 2005 in Tashkent (at the embassy of the United States and Israel). In August 2016, a suicide bomber rammed the gates of the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek in a car and set off an improvised explosive device. The Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security blamed the Uyghur terrorist group affiliated with the terrorist organization Jabhat al-Nusra for the terrorist attack. The most resonant was the attack on tourists in the Dangara district of Tajikistan, where 2018 was declared the Year of Tourism. On 29 July, 2018, four out of seven foreign tourists—citizens of the United States, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Germany were brutally killed. After running them over, the driver and passengers (aged 18 to 21 years) finished off the victims with firearms and cold weapons. On the very next day, some of the attackers were liquidated in the village of Osmondara, and two more were detained later.<sup>38</sup> The Islamic State terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attack, and the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), which was banned in the country, was directly responsible for carrying out the terrorist attack.

Due to the awareness of the genuine threat of terrorism and extremism for tourism, various state programs have been adopted in the Central Asian republics to counter this evil. For instance, the State Program for 2018-2022 that was approved in Kazakhstan in 2018 focused on countering violent manifestations of an extremist nature.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, the Islamic factor has a positive context. The Central Asian republics remain in the focus of attention of international Islamic organizations, which also cooperate in developing the tourism sector of the economy. At the 37th meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the OIC member countries, held in Dushanbe on 18-20 May, 2010, with the aim of developing and strengthening the potential of Muslim states, an agreement was reached on investments by Islamic Development Bank into the tourism industry, among other things. As early as on 27 October, 2014, the parties resumed the elaboration of a joint Plan of Action of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation with Central Asian Countries,<sup>40</sup> designed to implement this project. In his statement, the President of Tajikistan noted “Central Asia has a great potential for transforming into a transit region through access to ports and seas, but they have not yet been fully utilized.”<sup>41</sup>

Certain integration and modernization processes are also underway in the interfaith relations sphere in the context of the joint implementation of the Great Silk Road project. For instance, on

<sup>37</sup> See: R.D. Kulbarakov, “Problemy terrorizma v Tsentralnoi Azii,” International practical conference “Terrorism: Problems of Counteracting,” available at [<http://conference.antiterror.rsbi.kz/index.php/doklads/36—kylbarakov>], 11 October, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> See: “Ubiystvo turistov i unichtozhenie prestupnikov. Chto proizoshlo v Tadjhikistane,” Sputnik.Kyrgyzstan, 30 July, 2018, available at [<https://ru.sputnik.kg/incidents/20180730/1040424919/tadjhikistan—ubiystvo—turisty—terakt.html>], 28 October, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> See: V. Mel, “Zona povyshennogo vnimaniia,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 12 December, 2018, available at [<https://www.kazpravda.kz/fresh/view/zona—povishennogo—vnimaniya1>], 23 October, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> See: *Address at the First Investment Forum in the Context of the Action Plan of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for the Countries of Central Asia*, Official website of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 27 October, 2014, available in Russian at [<http://www.president.tj/ru/node/7783#muminobod>], 17 October, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

25-26 May, 2018, during his official visit to Uzbekistan the Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan Serikbay kazy Oraz signed a document declaring a general fatwa regarding religious holidays of the two countries. “The parties are deemed obligated to celebrate religious holidays (Oraza, Kurban Ait, etc.) according to the Hijra, as well as to make general decisions, fatwas on contemporary pressing religious issues,”<sup>42</sup> states the text of the Memorandum of Mutual Cooperation and Interaction. In September 2018, the Muftis of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan signed an agreement on close cooperation and sharing of experience in the dissemination of Islamic values, including the Hanafi madhhab, as well as in organizing pilgrimages.

Earlier, in July 2018, the “Muslim-tour” travel agency began its activities at the foundation of the Office of Muslims of Uzbekistan, which named the organization of travel for local and foreign citizens to holy places for pilgrimage and creating favorable conditions for pilgrims and increasing the authority of Uzbekistan in the Muslim world among its primary tasks.<sup>43</sup> The leadership of the republics emphasizes pilgrimage tourism as part of the Silk Road project. It stipulates for the creation of the tourism cluster in the South Kazakhstan region, one of the sacred sites for the followers of Naqshbandi. This project stipulates for the introduction of the single-entry Silk Visa, the Central Asian counterpart of the European Schengen, which will allow citizens of the two countries and foreigners to visit the major tourist attractions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

The largest number of famous Muslim shrines in these republics have been preserved and are functioning today, thus, it is no coincidence that they are, first and foremost, the centers of pilgrimage and historical and cultural educational tourism. In Kazakhstan, these include the mausoleums of Hajj Ahmad Yasavi (Sufi order Yasaviyya) and Arystan-baba, Beket-ata and Shopan-ata, Karaman-ata, Ukasha-ata and many other pilgrimage sites. In Uzbekistan, there is a memorial complex of Bakhautdin Naqshbandi, Sheikh of the Sufi “Naqshbandiya” order, one of the most famous Sufi brotherhoods. Over 16 ziyarats, where famous Sufi sheikhs and Muslim theologians are buried, are located in Uzbekistan. Mosque tourism, or visits to religious buildings for religious and educational purposes, is also gaining popularity. In July 2018, the central mosque Nur Astana (Kazakhstan) was included in the international list of the top tourist sites. According to this mosque’s naib-imam, Marat Bektazinov, the majority of visitors to the mosques of the capital are foreigners: “...Muslim tourists from Europe, Arab countries, Malaysia, Indonesia.” He noted that, in preparation for the EXPO-2017 exhibition, mosque employees had even studied foreign languages, and “a year earlier, at the initiative of the chief imam of Astana, Naurzybay kazy Taganuly, the imams studied English. In addition, many imams studied Arabic,” said Bektazinov in an interview.<sup>44</sup> The list of Kazakhstan sites also includes the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, Big Almaty Lake, Charyn Gorge and Tamgaly. The idea of creating this list was supported on 7 November, 2017 at the 2nd meeting of the Eurasian Council on Culture, Science and Education, held in the city of Antalya. At that point, a Convention on “the identification of objects of tourist interest for the sustainable development of associations, nations and peoples” was adopted.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> “DUMK: Vynesena obshchaia fetva po aktualnomu religioznomu voprosu,” Official website of the Spiritual Directorate of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 26 March, 2018, available at [<https://www.muftiyat.kz/ru/news/13499>], 4 October, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> See: “Pristupila k rabote turistichekaya firma pri Upravlenii musulman Uzbekistana,” Muslim.uz, 3 July, 2018, available at [<http://muslim.uz/index.php/rus/novosti—2018/item/9190—pristupila—k—rabote—turisticheskaya—firma—pri—upravlenii—musulman—uzbekistana>], 25 October, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> “Mecheti Astany privlekaiut vse bolshe turistov,” Official website of the Spiritual Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 13 November, 2017, available at [<https://www.muftiyat.kz/ru/news/12337>], 16 October, 2019.

<sup>45</sup> “Mechet voshla v spisok luchshikh turistichekikh mest mira,” Official website of the Spiritual Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 13 July, 2018, available at [<https://www.muftiyat.kz/ru/news/14557>] 16 October, 2019.

## *Conclusion*

It has been established that tourism is a business sector that does not tolerate restrictions, prohibitions, non-transparency or authoritarianism. As for the interim and principal results of the implementation of the Great Silk Road project, both display certain notable trends towards extensive liberalization in the Central Asian republics. The interim results include the establishment of a more democratic and liberal regulatory and institutional framework and government programs for the development of the tourism sector of the economy. In addition, it entails the creation of a service network that provides for the existence of both state and non-state economic entities, improved staffing, and a reduction of certain prohibitive measures, including some sites with restricted access or strict regulation of photo and video shooting, the development of legislation to safeguard security in the tourist sphere, etc.

Today, all of these interim results clearly outline the contours of more significant outcomes, which everyone involved in the project must bear in mind. Besides the above-mentioned sustainable phased development of the regional economy and ensuring security in Central Asia, they include the improvement of investment attractiveness of the entire region, establishment of a more open economy through the liberalization of fiscal policy and visa regime, the development of civil society institutions in individual republics, and the strengthening of the interaction between the spiritual administrations of the Central Asian republics, in regard to pilgrimage and religious tourism, among other things. The latter provides hope for a slight decrease in the degree of radicalization and confrontation among the residents of this region, which has not yet pacified, but is very important for the whole world.