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THE COMMON INTEGRATION AND STABILITY POLICY OF CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES IN RESPONSE TO THE GLOBAL CRISIS

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of global and regional crises on the regional cooperation trends and shared stability policies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan during the 2018-2025 period. The COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, supply chain disruptions, energy and food security issues, and border, water, and security crises constitute the main areas of investigation. The research assesses the capacity of the five countries to identify common risks, develop regional agendas, and produce coordinated policy tools without establishing a supranational structure. Based on a qualitative comparative case design, the study examines official documents, decisions from the Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings, international organization reports, and academic studies through document analysis. The findings show that regional coordination is concentrated in areas where cross-border externalities are high and perceived sovereignty costs are relatively low, such as health, transportation, trade facilitation, water-energy, and disaster management. In contrast, national and central decisions remain dominant in areas related to security preferences, sanctions, and regime stability. Diversification of transportation routes and external economic partnerships has strengthened the pursuit of a multifaceted foreign policy and strategic autonomy. However, economic asymmetries, differing organizational affiliations, sovereignty sensitivities, and limited implementation mechanisms hinder more binding institutionalization. This study concludes that the most viable approach in Central Asia is sovereignty-sensitive functional regionalization based on measurable obligations, technical coordination, and variable participation, rather than supranational integration.

Keywords: Central Asia, regional integration, joint stability policy, global crises, regional cooperation, regional resilience, Consultative Meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asia

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Introduction

In recent years, the regional integration and stability policies pursued by the Central Asian countries in response to global and regional crises have emerged as one of the principal areas of research in regional studies. Especially since 2018, Central Asia has been affected by a series of multifaceted shocks that have followed and often overlapped. While the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted health systems, border crossings, trade networks, and the incomes of migrant workers, the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 increased regional security uncertainties. The Russia-Ukraine War, which began in February 2022, simultaneously affected five Central Asian countries through international sanctions, payment systems, food and energy prices, remittances, foreign trade, and transportation routes. Climate change, water scarcity, energy sharing, and border disputes also constitute the persistent structural dimensions of this crisis environment.

These interconnected crises have brought back to the forefront the question of the extent to which regional states can develop coordination in the face of common problems. This situation necessitates a reassessment of established approaches that primarily evaluate Central Asian regionalism through the lens of institutional failure [1, p. 3]. Previous literature has explained the weakness of regional cooperation through sovereignty sensitivities, economic asymmetries, leadership competition, border disputes, and institutional competition from external powers [2, p. 186; 3, p. 485; 4, p. 249; 5, p. 97]. These structural barriers have also directly impacted the institutional development of region-centered integration initiatives launched after independence.

Indeed, although regional integration has occupied a significant place on the political agenda of Central Asian states since the 1990s, organizational initiatives developed within the region have failed to transform into a lasting and binding institutional structure. Initiatives continued under the names of the Central Asian Union, the Central Asian Economic Community, and later the Central Asian Cooperation Organization, have failed to develop binding decisions, a common budget, permanent institutional bodies, and effective implementation mechanisms. In the subsequent period, Central Asian states, although varying in membership and participation levels, have been involved in broader Eurasian-scale multilateral frameworks in which Russia and China have played significant roles, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and later the Eurasian Economic Union. While this development does not mean that region-centered integration initiatives have completely ended, it has led to regional cooperation being conducted significantly through broader Eurasian institutions in the 2000s [6, p. 71].

However, the inability of region-centered initiatives to evolve into binding organizations does not necessitate a purely failure-based assessment of regional cooperation in Central Asia. Alternative approaches interpret low institutionalization as a preference for intergovernmental cooperation compatible with the sensitivities of regional states regarding sovereignty and decision-making autonomy. Costa Buranelli suggests that Central Asia should be examined not

only in terms of the number and binding mandates of regional organizations, but also as a “regional order” structured around sovereignty, diplomacy, international law, authoritarianism, and great power management [1, pp. 1, 17-21]. This approach links the absence of a formal secretariat, common market, or supranational decision-making body not to a lack of cooperation, but rather to a flexible institutional choice that keeps the cost to national decision-making autonomy low.

Launched in 2018, the Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings are one of the most visible political mechanisms of this flexible and intergovernmental regional order. The fact that the first meeting was called a “consultation meeting” rather than a “summit” indicates that the format prioritizes consensus, flexibility, and regular dialogue between leaders rather than binding institutionalization [7; 8, p. 131]. Rather than establishing a new supranational organization, these meetings have created a political platform where regional states can directly discuss common problems, formulate sectoral agendas, and link bilateral or multilateral cooperation mechanisms. The expanding agenda of the Consultative Meetings during times of crisis raises the question of whether this mechanism is merely a platform for diplomatic dialogue or a coordination space where shared regional policies are developed.

This article investigates whether Central Asian countries have developed common regional integration and stability policies in the face of global and regional crises during the 2018-2025 period. In the study, the concept of “common policies” is not used in the sense of the five countries establishing a single legal order, common government or common foreign policy. The concept is defined as regional states identifying common threats and risks, developing regular consultation mechanisms, ensuring policy coordination in specific sectors, and working together to produce regional stability. Functional regionalization is used as an analytical concept to describe this process, which develops through sectoral coordination without the establishment of a binding superstructure.

The main research question of this study is: Through what mechanisms have global and regional crises that emerged during the 2018-2025 period strengthened or limited the regional policy coordination and shared stability-generating capacity of Central Asian countries? Two sub-questions are examined in relation to this main question. First, in which sectors have different types of crises fostered regional cooperation? Secondly, how have the economic structures, organizational memberships, institutional capacities, and foreign policy preferences of the five countries differentiated their levels of developing a common response?

The article’s central premise is that crises do not automatically or linearly deepen regional integration. The impact of crises on regional policy coordination depends on the intensity of the transboundary externalities they generate, the perceived cost of cooperation on national decision-making autonomy, and the degree to which the area is linked to regime security. Functional regionalization is expected to strengthen in areas such as transportation, trade, health, disaster management, border crossings, and energy connections, where cross-border

externalities are high and the cost of sovereignty is relatively low. In contrast, centralized and national responses are expected to prevail in areas directly related to national decision-making autonomy and regime security, such as defense, internal security, information management, common financial funds, burden-sharing, and supranational oversight mechanisms.

In this context, the dependent variable of the study is the level and form of regional policy coordination. Coordination is assessed through the development of common threat definitions, the regularity of meetings at the leaders' and ministerial levels, the adoption of joint statements and action plans, the establishment of sectoral working mechanisms, the development of bilateral and multilateral agreements, and the implementation of decisions taken.

The conditional relationship between crises and regional integration also applies to the consequences of integration on stability. Regional cooperation can reduce economic uncertainties, facilitate the management of border issues, and strengthen state capacity to respond to crises. However, it cannot be assumed that regional coordination, when focused solely on the mutual protection of ruling elites and the maintenance of regime security, will automatically increase social trust, accountability, and long-term institutional resilience. Building on the work of Costa Buranelli and Debre, this article argues that regime resilience and social and institutional resilience should be analytically distinguished from each other [9, p. 1005; 10, p. 394]. Therefore, the study examines, on the one hand, the conditions under which crises strengthen regional coordination, and on the other hand, the types of stability and resilience that the resulting coordination produces.

This study makes three key contributions to the literature. Firstly, this study analyzes the Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings since 2018 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, security uncertainties stemming from Afghanistan, the Russia-Ukraine War, border disputes, and water-energy issues, revealing the functions the consultation mechanism undertakes during periods of crisis. Secondly, it conceptualizes the institutional form of regionalization in Central Asia not as a completed and binding integration project, but as a coordination process with variable geometry developing at different intensities in different sectors. Thirdly, it develops a conditional model that explains the impact of different types of crises on sectoral coordination through cross-border externalities, sovereignty costs, and regime security variables.

Description of Materials and Methods

To examine the conditional regionalization proposition of the study, the research is based on a qualitative comparative case design that addresses five Central Asian countries sharing a common historical and geopolitical environment through structured-focused comparison. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have been considered comparable cases due to their shared Soviet institutional legacy, lack of direct access to the open seas, interconnected water-energy systems, close relations with Russia and China, and similar regional security environments. While the research design utilized the logic of most similar systems, differences in economic size, hydrocarbon

resources, dependence on remittances from migrant workers, foreign policy orientation, membership in regional organizations, and governance capacity were considered as explanatory sources of variation between countries. This approach allows for the examination of why countries exposed to similar structural conditions develop different national responses and regional cooperation trends in the face of global and regional crises.

The main unit of analysis in this study is the country-crisis-sector composite, which represents the sectoral policy responses developed at the country and regional levels in response to a specific crisis.

The review period has been defined as 2018-2025. 2018 is considered an institutional turning point due to the start of the Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings and the regularization of intra-regional political dialogue. The year 2025 was chosen as the analytical closing point due to the signing of the border agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the trilateral agreement regarding the intersection of the borders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in Khujand. These developments offer important indicators regarding the capacity for diplomatic solutions within the region. The period 1991-2017 has been used as a background period to explain the institutional limitations of previous regional integration initiatives and the historical context of the changes that emerged after 2018.

The study examined the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, border crises, and water-energy crises as key crisis cases. These crises were chosen because they produce transnational effects in economic, social and security areas, and because they are suitable for comparing the relationship between national responses and regional coordination. The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 has been viewed not as an isolated crisis, but rather as a contextual shock affecting the security perceptions, border management, and regional consultation agenda of Central Asian states. Climate change has been included in the analysis not as a singular crisis event, but as a structural pressure element that exacerbates problems of water, energy, food, and border management.

Four main source groups were used in the data collection process. The first group consists of joint statements, speeches by heads of state, national government statements, agreements, and other official documents related to the Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings held during the 2018-2025 period. The second group consists of reports published by the World Bank and the OECD on regional trade, transport connectivity, supply chain resilience, and the economic impacts of COVID-19, as well as studies by CAREC/Asian Development Bank on water-energy relations and food security [11-15]. The third group comprises peer-reviewed academic literature on Central Asian regionalism, regional order, functional cooperation, and authoritarian resilience. The fourth group consists of policy analyses from the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, the Tomsk State University Center for Eurasian Studies, and other regional research institutions.

The document corpus is limited to texts published between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2025, that directly relate to identified crisis cases, Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings, or selected areas of sectoral cooperation. Repetitions of the same official statement published on different platforms, uncredited commentary, and general news not directly related to the research questions were not included in the data corpus. Think Tank and policy analysis texts were used to trace the chronology of events and the development of the official agenda; theoretical and causal inferences were primarily based on peer-reviewed academic studies. Where national accounts of the same event differed, official documents, reports from international organizations, and independent academic studies were cross-examined.

The final body of analysis consists of official documents relating to the Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings held during the 2018-2025 period, as well as reports from international organizations addressing selected crisis and sectoral cooperation areas. The theoretical and contextual framework of this study is supported by peer-reviewed academic papers and regional policy analyses. Official documents include presidential statements, speeches, joint declarations, and adopted policy documents relating to the seven Consultative Meetings. International organizations' resources were selected based on areas such as trade, transport connectivity, the economic impact of COVID-19, worker remittances, water-energy relations, food security, and regional resilience. The documents were examined primarily through texts published in Russian and English, and, depending on the availability of sources, in the official languages of the countries in the region. Where multiple official versions of the same document exist in different languages, the original text or the official English or Russian translation of the relevant institution shall prevail.

The analysis was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, the agendas, joint statements, and policy outcomes of the Consultative Meetings were examined through thematic document analysis. The coding framework comprises categories such as security, trade and investment, transport and logistics, health, food safety, water and energy, climate, disaster management, and cultural cooperation. These categories were predetermined based on research questions and theoretical frameworks, and expanded upon with sub-themes that emerged during the examination of the documents. A document is classified under multiple industry codes depending on its content.

In the second stage, selected crisis cases were examined using a process monitoring method. Process monitoring was used to determine whether crisis shocks translated into a shared risk perception, whether this perception translated into political consultation, and whether this consultation translated into concrete policy tools. The causal mechanism under investigation consists of the following stages: crisis shock, the visibility of transboundary costs, the formation of a shared risk definition, consultation at the level of leaders or relevant institutions, the development of a coordination mechanism, the emergence of a concrete policy outcome, and the evaluation of the stability result to the extent that it can be observed. Within this framework, not only the existence of meetings

and statements was evaluated, but also whether these produced an action plan, agreement, working group, joint project, or implementation arrangement.

In the third stage, five countries were subjected to structured-focused comparison. The same analytical questions were asked of each country and crisis case: Through what economic, social, or security channels has the country been affected by the crisis? What national stabilization tools did the country use in response to the crisis? Which bilateral or regional coordination mechanisms has it resorted to? What have been the main sovereignty, capacity, and foreign policy limitations hindering coordination? Has the developed mechanism produced a concrete policy outcome? Which dimension of stability or resilience has the resulting outcome affected? These common questions have enabled systematic comparisons between country cases and types of crises.

The level and form of regional policy coordination constitute the primary dependent variable of this study, serving as the empirical manifestation of the shared regional policies defined in the introduction. Regional coordination was assessed through indicators such as the development of common threat definitions, information sharing, regular political consultations, harmonization of technical standards, preparation of joint projects, creation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, and the development of a coordinated approach with external partners. The continuity, binding nature, and level of application of these indicators were used to determine the extent to which coordination approached functional integration. According to the analytical framework of the study, the increase in cross-border externalities raises the demand for regional coordination, while the rising perceived costs of sovereignty and regime security limit binding institutionalization; thus highlighting flexible, voluntary, and sectoral forms of cooperation.

In this study, stability was examined in four dimensions. Macroeconomic continuity has been assessed based on the ability of trade flows, remittances, and essential economic activities to continue under crisis conditions. Continuity of public services has been linked to the ability to maintain healthcare services, border crossings, energy supply, and food delivery under crisis conditions. Security stability has been examined through the prevention of violent border and internal conflicts, the maintenance of ceasefires, and the management of disputes through negotiation. Social resilience, on the other hand, was assessed through policy outcomes related to reducing vulnerabilities such as migration, employment, poverty, and food insecurity. This distinction prevents the equation of regime continuity with social and institutional resilience.

The main limitations of the study are the limited accessibility of economic and social data on Turkmenistan and the low statistical comparability among the five countries. Since the scope and level of detail of official documents vary between countries, there is also an asymmetry in terms of document density. Furthermore, presidential and government statements tend to present regional cooperation in a positive and successful light. This source bias has been mitigated by cross-referencing different document and source groups. This study does not make claims of statistical causality due to its current data structure and qualitative

research design; it makes analytical generalizations based on document analysis, process monitoring, and comparative patterns. Furthermore, since the long-term effects of the decisions adopted during the 2024-2025 period have not yet been fully observed, the analysis for this period has been largely limited to policy outcomes.

Results

Institutional Development of Consultative Regionalization After 2018

The first indication of Central Asia's regional transformation after 2018 is the establishment of a regular leaders' dialogue among the five countries without the direct involvement of external actors. In line with the initiative put forward by the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in 2017 [16], the first Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meeting was held in Astana on 15 March 2018 with the hosting and diplomatic support of Kazakhstan [17-18]. The meeting was attended by the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as the Speaker of the Parliament of Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan's lower-level representation reflects its cautious stance consistent with its policy of permanent neutrality, but it has not eliminated the regional nature of the consultation format, which includes five countries.

The 2018 [17] and 2019 [19] meetings demonstrated that the format's agenda-setting capacity has progressively expanded. While security, trade, transportation, border issues, Afghanistan, and water resources were highlighted in the first meeting, investment, energy, tourism, and cultural cooperation were added to the agenda in 2019. Pogorelskaya's comparative analysis views this development as a sectoral diversification of leaders' dialogue [7, pp. 3-5]. However, the fact that some proposals, such as the investment fund, the common market, and the regional council, could not be implemented quickly revealed a significant gap between the capacity to generate agendas and the level of implementation of decisions.

The fact that the third meeting, which could not be held in 2020 due to COVID-19, was held again in Avaza in August 2021 [20], showed that the consultation mechanism was continued even under crisis conditions. At the meeting, issues such as reactivating trade and transport links, food safety, mutual recognition of vaccine certificates, biosecurity, health research and green transformation were discussed. Thus, health security and pandemic resilience have been added to the regional agenda, which was previously focused on trade and transportation. At the fourth meeting, held in Cholpon-Ata in July 2022, regional stability, food security, industrial cooperation, and the preservation of transport links were highlighted in the context of the uncertainties created by the Russia-Ukraine War.

The "Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation for the Development of Central Asia in the 21st Century," signed by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan during the fourth meeting, provided a normative framework for the consultation process. The fact that the agreement was not signed by all five countries at the same time indicates that regional cooperation

is progressing in a way that is open to different levels of participation, rather than a uniform and simultaneous integration. This has created a variable geometry structure that allows states that are ready to deepen their cooperation, while opening it up to the participation of other states in later stages [21].

The Fifth Consultative Meeting was held in Dushanbe on September 14, 2023, and demonstrated that the regional agenda has become more comprehensive from a sectoral perspective [22]. The meeting addressed the development of trade, investment, industry, transportation, energy, agriculture, environment, and cultural relations, as well as joint action against current security threats. Proposals were submitted for developing a free trade area, digitizing customs procedures, preparing a transport and transit agreement, creating an industrial cooperation strategy, and strengthening energy infrastructure. In addition, the regular meetings of the Security Council secretaries and the development of regional mechanisms for border protection, early warning, and joint emergency response were brought to the agenda. These developments indicate that the Consultative Meetings have shifted from general political dialogue to seeking more concrete sectoral coordination in areas such as trade, transport, energy, climate, and security.

This institutional approach gained a longer-term orientation at the sixth meeting held in Astana in August 2024. The “Central Asia-2040” Regional Cooperation Concept, prepared by Kazakhstan, defined the priorities of five-way cooperation in the fields of security, economy, transport, energy, digitalization, and environment, while the 2025-2027 roadmap provided an implementation framework for these priorities [23-24]. Kazakhstan’s President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev’s announcement in May 2024 that intra-regional trade had increased by more than 80 percent in the last five years, exceeding \$10 billion, also indicates that political dialogue is progressing simultaneously with the intensification of economic relations [25]. However, this simultaneity does not indicate that the increase in trade stemmed solely from the Consultative Meetings; it suggests that the leaders’ dialogue is one element of the broader regional context supporting economic convergence.

The Seventh Consultative Meeting, to be held in Tashkent on November 16, 2025, marked the final stage of institutional development during the review period [26]. The acceptance of Azerbaijan as a full participant in the Consultative Meetings format at the meeting demonstrated that the mechanism’s initial five-regional framework was expanding towards a broader area of cooperation linked to the South Caucasus. As a result of the meeting, a joint statement was adopted, as well as the Concept for Regional Security and Stability in Central Asia and a catalog of security risks and preventive measures for the period 2026-2028. Thus, the process that began as an informal leaders’ dialogue in 2018 has reached a more systematic level of coordination by 2025, focusing on jointly identifying regional security risks and developing medium-term preventive measures. However, this development does not mean that the format has transformed into a supranational or binding organization; it shows that it has expanded its institutional agenda while retaining its consultative and intergovernmental character.

A defining feature of institutional development during the 2018-2025 period is not the establishment of a supranational or heavily bureaucratic structure, but rather the support of leadership-level consultations with sectoral contacts between ministries, parliaments, business circles, and security institutions. Although this structure does not rely on a permanent and robust secretariat, it has gained the capacity to generate regular contact, agenda setting, and coordination in specific areas. The findings indicate that the Consultative Meetings did not evolve into a binding regional organization; rather, they became a flexible regional coordination mechanism where common problems were identified, sectoral initiatives were developed, and different levels of participation were reconciled. Therefore, post-2018 institutional development has given rise to a form of regionalization based more on consultation and functional cooperation than on deep integration in the classical sense.

COVID-19: The Limits of Solidarity, Health Security, and Institutional Capacity

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the interdependence of Central Asian countries in areas such as healthcare, food supply, labor mobility, and border management [13, pp. 2, 6]. During the initial phase of the pandemic, unilateral measures such as border closures, quarantines, national support packages, and export restrictions came to the forefront [13, p. 6]. These responses indicate that crisis management was initially conducted through national institutions rather than regional mechanisms. According to the OECD's assessment, the pandemic has exacerbated existing pressures on economic and societal resilience in the region by impacting countries in areas such as debt sustainability, migration, employment, private sector vulnerability, and connectivity [13, p. 1].

As the crisis progressed, bilateral coordination improved in areas such as food, medicine and medical supplies, evacuation of citizens, and the reorganization of border crossings. In his speech at the 2022 Cholpon-Ata meeting, Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev stated that during the most difficult times of the pandemic, the countries of the region demonstrated solidarity by providing each other with food, medicine, and necessary humanitarian aid [21]. However, the documents examined indicate that this cooperation was carried out through contacts between leaders and bilateral decisions, rather than through a pre-established common health protocol. While the pandemic has thus demonstrated the capacity of the consultative order to produce rapid and flexible responses, it has also made it apparent that there is no permanent regional health mechanism.

The pursuit of coordination in the health sector took on a more concrete agenda at the Third Consultative Meeting held in Avaza in August 2021. The meeting proposed re-establishing transport links in a manner compliant with health regulations, regular meetings of agriculture ministers, and the creation of a regional food security monitoring system. In addition, a joint information system to ensure mutual recognition of COVID-19 test results and vaccine certificates, sharing expertise on the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, training of healthcare personnel, scientific cooperation in the field of pharmacology, and joint production of essential medicines were brought up [20].

These recommendations demonstrate that health and food safety are beginning to be addressed not merely as national policy areas, but as shared regional issues requiring cross-border coordination. However, the sources examined do not contain sufficient evidence to show that all of these proposals have been translated into a binding and permanent regional mechanism.

The health and biosafety agenda that emerged from the Consultative Meetings was subsequently complemented by regional initiatives supported by international organizations. The Central Asian “One Health” Framework for Action, adopted by government representatives of five Central Asian countries in November 2023, envisages joint action in the areas of pandemic prevention and preparedness, agricultural competitiveness, trade, environmental health, zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, and food security [27]. The framework also defined the sharing of information and resources relating to human and animal health as an element of regional cooperation. This development points to a layered form of regionalization where the regional states’ own consultative agendas are combined with the technical and financial support of international organizations.

The economic and social impacts of the pandemic were not evenly distributed among countries due to differences in their economic structures, channels of external dependence, and policy capacities. OECD assessments indicate that the recovery process varies depending on factors such as migration, employment, connectivity, public finances, private sector capacity, and the level of implementation of economic reforms [28]. Therefore, a shared regional shock has not produced uniform national policies in the five countries. In contrast, reopening trade and transport links, protecting food supplies, sharing pandemic data, and harmonizing border crossings have emerged as common regional interests.

Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic has not created integration deep enough to warrant a common procurement system, binding data sharing, or a permanent regional health institution. However, high levels of cross-border externalities have increased the demand for coordination in the areas of health security, biosafety, food supply, and border crossings. Instead of a binding structure requiring the transfer of sovereignty, regional states have turned to consultations between leaders, bilateral assistance, and sectoral mechanisms supported by international organizations. In this respect, the pandemic has simultaneously revealed the possibilities and institutional limitations of functional regionalization in Central Asia.

The Russia-Ukraine War: Corridor Diversification and Multilateral Diplomacy

While the Russia-Ukraine War kept Central Asian countries out of direct military conflict, it highlighted the vulnerabilities stemming from the region’s Russia-centric economic, financial, and logistical ties. Sanctions imposed on Russia increased uncertainty in Central Asia’s trade and financial relations, while rising food and energy prices deepened economic and societal vulnerabilities across the region [29]. The Russian labor market and associated remittance flows remained particularly important for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, while remittances

also constituted a major source of external financing for Uzbekistan [30]. The fact that the majority of Kazakhstan's oil exports are carried out via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium route reaching Russia's Novorossiysk Port reveals its transit dependency in energy exports [31]. These different dependency channels demonstrate that a common external shock did not produce the same economic outcomes and national policy responses in the five countries.

The most significant impact of the war on regional policy coordination is that it has accelerated the search for diversification of transportation routes and external economic links. The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, or Middle Corridor, has gained increasing importance as an alternative route connecting China and Europe via Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and the South Caucasus. The World Bank states that the route's potential to increase trade volume depends not only on infrastructure investments but also on accelerating border crossings, developing port and rail capacity, and improving operational coordination between countries [12]. The OECD also indicates that the disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine War have increased interest in the Middle Corridor; however, its functionality requires simplification of customs procedures, widespread use of digital documents, harmonization of tariffs, and coordination between public and private sector actors [32].

These findings indicate that corridor diversification does not automatically equate to regional economic integration. Unless the development of physical infrastructure is supported by common standards between countries, harmonized customs procedures, and regional logistics services, Central Asia is likely to remain a transit area for global trade. According to the OECD's assessment, the long-term sustainability of the Middle Corridor depends on its ability to create trade, production, and value chains within Central Asia and the South Caucasus, going beyond simply meeting the transit needs of external actors [32]. Therefore, the transportation pressure created by the war increased the demand for regional coordination in low-sovereignty cost technical fields; however, it did not produce a deep enough integration to create a common market or a binding economic governance mechanism.

In parallel with the diversification of transportation, the diplomacy conducted by Central Asian states with external partners in five-party formats has also acquired a high level of quality. The first China-Central Asia Summit held in May 2023 and the first C5+1 meeting at the heads of state level in September 2023 reinforced the tendency of the five countries to be represented in a common regional format with their external partners [33-34]. At the first European Union-Central Asia Summit held in April 2025, relations were elevated to the level of strategic partnership; trade diversification, the Middle Corridor, energy, critical raw materials, and regional security were identified as common agenda areas [35]. These developments indicate a strengthening tendency among external partners to treat the five countries not merely as separate states, but as a regional group with common issues and connections.

As Hanova points out, the regionality of Central Asia is produced not only through the discourses of the states in the region but also through the interaction

of external actors, such as the European Union, with their narratives and policy practices towards the region [36, p. 699]. However, the proliferation of “Central Asia+” formats does not mean that the five countries are pursuing a single foreign policy. Countries continue to develop different approaches in their relations with Russia, China, the European Union, the United States, and other partners, in line with their own economic interests, security concerns, and existing obligations. The primary function of the five-party format is not to create a common foreign policy, but rather to present the regional agenda to external partners in a more visible and coordinated manner in areas such as connectivity, investment, security, and trade.

Consequently, the Russo-Ukrainian War did not lead to a geopolitical rupture in Central Asia, where relations with Russia were entirely replaced by another power center. Conversely, the war has accelerated the diversification of transportation routes, trade partnerships, and diplomatic platforms by making the risks of existing dependencies visible. The regional response has evolved into a form of multifaceted diplomacy, where countries maintain their relations with Russia while expanding their ties with China, the European Union, the United States, and other actors, rather than a common and binding foreign policy. This pattern shows that war promotes functional regionalization in the areas of technical connectivity and external economic relations; however, national decisions retain their decisive influence on issues with high sovereign costs, such as sanctions, security preferences, and foreign policy orientation.

Border, Water and Energy Crises: Intra-Regional Diplomacy and Technical Cooperation

Border, water and energy issues are among the most sensitive areas of regional coordination in Central Asia and where concrete policy results are most needed. Water and energy infrastructure, which was managed within an integrated economic system during the Soviet era, was divided into five separate sovereign territories after independence. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, located in the upper basin, prioritize the operation of reservoirs for hydroelectric power generation and winter energy needs; while Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in the lower basin, require a regular flow of water for agricultural irrigation during the summer months. This seasonal and sectoral divergence of interests generates regional tensions in the absence of reliable data sharing, joint planning, and mutual compensation mechanisms [37].

The economic cost of a lack of coordination in the water and energy sectors also demonstrates the importance of regional cooperation. The World Bank estimates that the annual cost stemming from inadequate coordination of shared water and energy resources exceeds \$4.5 billion, while developing regional electricity trade could yield up to \$6.4 billion in economic benefits between 2020 and 2030 [38]. These data demonstrate that water-energy cooperation is not merely a matter of normative regional solidarity, but a functional necessity associated with measurable economic costs and gains. While programs like CAWEP provide support in terms of data production, institutional capacity, investment and technical dialogue, sustainable coordination requires stronger

regional cooperation linking reservoir operations, electricity trade and agricultural water use [37-38].

Disputes over water and infrastructure sharing, combined with border disputes, have highlighted the security dimension of this interdependence. The armed clashes on the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border in September 2022 generated a serious regional crisis involving the use of heavy weapons, casualties, and damage to civilian infrastructure [40]. While the CSTO was able to deploy a collective peacekeeping force in January 2022 at the request of the Kazakh government [39], its role in the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan conflict was limited to calling on the parties to observe a ceasefire and engage in political and diplomatic negotiations [40]. A comparison of these two official responses shows that the organization's capacity to respond to internal security threats directed at the government of one of its member states is not at the same level as its capacity to resolve border disputes between two members.

Bilateral negotiations culminated in the signing of the State Border Agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on March 13, 2025 [41]. The ratification of the border agreement and supplementary arrangements concerning transport links and access to water and energy facilities demonstrate that the settlement extended beyond the demarcation of the border line [41-43]. This development indicates that security, economic connectivity, and shared resource management have become complementary elements of a single negotiation process.

The intra-regional diplomatic solution process gained a trilateral dimension on March 31, 2025, in Khujand, with the signing of an agreement and joint declaration by the leaders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan regarding the point where the borders of the three states intersect [44]. The meeting also addressed the development of customs and transportation infrastructure in border regions, the establishment of new transportation links, and cooperation in the fields of water, environment, and green energy. Thus, the legal definition of borders was not limited to the discourse of good neighborliness; it was linked to agendas such as trade, transportation, energy, and local development.

The 2025 agreements cannot be considered as direct results produced solely by the Central Asian Heads of State Consultative Meetings. The agreements are the product of years of bilateral and trilateral negotiations between the parties. However, these developments are consistent with the trend, which has strengthened since 2018, towards regular leaders' dialogue, the norm of good neighborliness, and the ownership of regional issues by regional states. Therefore, the border resolution can be seen not so much as the intervention of a formal regional organization, but rather as an example of layered coordination where intra-regional diplomacy and sectoral and technical arrangements complement each other.

In conclusion, border, water, and energy crises demonstrate that stability in Central Asia cannot be achieved solely through military security means. Sustainable stability requires a combination of defining the legal status of borders, opening border crossings, improving transport links, regulating access to

water and energy facilities, and re-establishing local economic relations. In these areas, high transboundary externalities increase the demand for cooperation, while sovereignty and security concerns limit the formation of binding regional institutions. The resulting model is a functional form of regionalization based on bilateral and tripartite agreements, technical coordination and regular political dialogue rather than a supranational structure.

The Differing Participation of Five Countries in Regional Coordination

While Central Asian countries face the same global and regional crises, they participate in regional coordination based on different economic capacities, channels of external dependence, security priorities, and foreign policy preferences. These differences lead to shared regional policies being based not on uniform obligations, but on a variable geometry structure where countries participate with varying intensity in specific areas. Table 1 compares how the five countries are exposed to crises, their main national capacities and tools, regional contributions, and key limitations.

Table 1. Forms of Participation of Five Central Asian Countries in Regional Coordination

Country	Main crisis exposure	Key national capacities and tools	Regional contribution model	Basic limitation
Kazakhstan	Hydrocarbon prices, transit through Russia, climate and water risks	Financial resources, energy and transportation infrastructure, a multifaceted foreign policy	Agenda setting, development of the Middle Corridor and the “Central Asia-2040” framework	Hydrocarbon and transit dependency; perception of economic asymmetry
Uzbekistan	Food and energy prices, migration, security risks stemming from Afghanistan, and water stress	A large domestic market, public investment, economic reforms, and an active neighborhood policy	Initiating a consultation process, normalizing border relations, and developing trade and connectivity	High water demand, the state’s weight in the economy, and the level of institutionalization of reforms
Kyrgyzstan	Worker remittances, foreign trade shocks, energy deficits, and border disputes	External financing, worker remittances, hydroelectric resources, and transit location	Supporting border cooperation, free movement, transport and energy links	Limited financial capacity, economic dependence on foreign countries, and political instability
Tajikistan	Worker remittances, Afghanistan, border security, and energy seasonality	Workers’ remittances, central government administration, and hydroelectric investments	Selective participation in security, border management, transport and water-energy cooperation	High external dependence, limited economic diversification, and the fragility of border regions

Turkmenistan	Increased natural gas exports, water stress, and food security	Hydrocarbon revenues, energy infrastructure, and a foreign policy based on neutrality	Cautious participation in energy and transportation projects and involvement in leaders' consultations	Export focus, limited data access, and a distanced approach to binding obligations
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Sources: World Bank [45; 48-51], President of the Republic of Uzbekistan [46-47], and United Nations General Assembly [52]

Comparative findings show that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan play complementary roles in regional coordination. Thanks to its economic capacity, transport infrastructure, and multifaceted diplomacy, Kazakhstan has a more visible position in terms of financing regional projects, diversifying external connections, and establishing long-term agendas [45-46]. Uzbekistan, with its active neighborhood policy developed after 2016, its proposal for the normalization of border relations and regular leader consultations, has been one of the main driving forces of regional political rapprochement [47]. However, regional order does not rely solely on the agreement of these two countries; it can only be sustained through an open format that takes into account the sovereign sensitivities and diverse participation capacities of other states.

Although Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are more vulnerable to external economic shocks due to their limited financial capacity and high reliance on remittances from migrant workers, they are not passive actors in regional coordination [48-50]. Kyrgyzstan's hydroelectric resources, border crossings, and location on regional transportation routes; and Tajikistan's water resources, hydroelectric capacity, border with Afghanistan, and its weight in the security agenda, give the two countries strategic importance in certain sectors. Therefore, economic size and regional function are not synonymous; small economies can become indispensable in areas of high interdependence such as water, energy, migration, border management, and transportation.

Turkmenistan's participation, however, is developing in a more cautious and project-based manner due to its permanent neutrality status and its economic structure based on natural gas exports [51-52]. While the country's distanced approach to binding security arrangements limits the scope of joint institutionalization, its participation in energy, transport, water, and leaders'-level consultations preserves the regional inclusiveness of the five-party format. Consequently, the weight of countries in regional coordination forms a fixed hierarchy, varying according to policy area. This pattern demonstrates that collaborative policies in Central Asia are based on variable-geometry coordination that reconciles diverse national capacities, functional needs, and sovereign sensitivities, rather than on uniform memberships and obligations.

Discussion

The findings show that crises in Central Asia do not automatically and linearly produce deeper integration; however, they do alter the cost-benefit balance of cooperation in specific policy areas. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the

transnational nature of health, food security, and border management; the Russia-Ukraine War demonstrated the need to diversify transportation routes and external economic partners; and border, water, and energy crises showed that local conflicts cannot be resolved sustainably without diplomatic and technical coordination. This result is consistent with the functionalist assumption that common problems increase the demand for technical cooperation. However, in the case of Central Asia, cooperation that begins in one area does not automatically spill over into other sectors; the intensity of cross-border externalities, the political will of the leaders, and the perceived cost of cooperation on sovereignty and regime security become decisive factors in each policy area. Therefore, short-term continuity of the state and regime should not be equated with social trust, accountability, and long-term institutional resilience [9, p. 1005; 10, p. 394].

The transformation in Central Asia can be described not so much as a gradual and continuously deepening integration in the new functionalist sense, but rather as a crisis-driven functional regionalization. The first characteristic of this model is that it relies on regular leaders' consultations and intergovernmental consensus, rather than supranational delegation of authority. Its second characteristic is that it has a variable geometry structure, which does not require all countries to participate in every sector at the same level. The third characteristic is that regional cooperation is shaped according to the priorities and sovereign sensitivities of the regional states, rather than becoming completely independent of external actors. Tukumov [53, p. 20] argued that Central Asian states should not wait for external actors to propose a model of regional security and cooperation, but should develop such a model themselves, primarily on the basis of their own interests. Norov [54, pp. 28–29] linked Uzbekistan's regional priorities to stronger intra-regional cooperation, good-neighborly relations, regional stability, sustainable development, and regular political consultations. Leadership consultations and sectoral contacts that have developed since 2018 show that this regional ownership approach has found partial institutional acceptance.

The intra-regional consultation mechanism does not replace existing external and regional organizations; rather, it forms a layered institutional structure alongside them. The SCO, Eurasian Economic Union, CSTO, Organization of Turkic States, CAREC, and various "Central Asia+" formats undertake different functions in the fields of security, trade, transportation, investment, and diplomatic representation. Kaczmarek [55, p. 1357] argues that China and Russia advance different visions of regionalism and distinct views of regional order through the New Silk Road and the Eurasian Economic Union. Krapohl and Vasileva-Dienes [56, p. 347] argue that the failure of regional integration in Central Asia is strongly shaped by the extra-regional economic dependence of the regional economies and the influence of external powers. While the study's findings confirm this limitation, they also demonstrate that overlapping institutions are not merely instruments of external power competition. Central Asian countries also use these platforms to diversify their external connections, access alternative financing and transportation options, and reduce the risks associated with dependence on a single external actor. Therefore, institutional pluralism, while limiting comprehensive

integration, also creates room for maneuver for a multifaceted foreign policy.

The main advantage of Consultative Meetings is that they combine low institutional entry costs with high political visibility. Regular contact between leaders facilitates bringing common issues directly to the forefront, keeping communication channels open during times of crisis, and mobilizing sectoral institutions. However, a persistent weakness of the format has been the gap between agenda expansion and the implementation of proposed initiatives. As Pogorelskaya [7] shows, a number of proposed sectoral bodies and platforms remained on paper, while some initiatives reappeared on successive meeting agendas without being implemented. The decision in 2023 to establish a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of proposals represented an attempt to address this problem. Nevertheless, the consultation format's agenda-setting capacity has developed faster than its implementation and monitoring capacity. The next stage of the process should focus less on creating new and cumbersome bureaucratic institutions and more on identifying the responsible institutions for adopted decisions, establishing implementation timelines, measurable indicators, and publicly available annual progress reports.

The different capacities of the five countries should be viewed not as a weakness in regional cooperation, but on the basis of complementarity. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are taking on more visible roles in terms of economic capacity, diplomatic initiatives, and regional agenda setting. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are indispensable actors in the regional order in terms of water resources, hydroelectric power generation, border crossings, and security related to Afghanistan. Turkmenistan's cautious participation, based on neutrality, preserves the inclusiveness of the five-party format. Therefore, regional stability should rely not on the hierarchical leadership of a single state, but rather on the pooling of diverse national capacities in the production of regional public goods such as health security, transport connectivity, water management, energy supply, and border stability.

In terms of economic connectivity, the key issue is not so much the number of new corridors, but rather their capacity to generate intra-regional economic interaction. If the Middle Corridor and other transit projects fail to improve intermediate goods trade, joint production, logistics services, and local value chains among the five countries, a "connected but not integrated" regional economy may emerge. Physical infrastructure investments should therefore be complemented by the digitization of customs documents, the sharing of transit data, the harmonization of tariffs, the establishment of regional logistics centers, and facilitating access of small and medium-sized enterprises to cross-border markets. CAREC, the World Bank, and other external partners can provide financing and technical expertise; however, prioritization and political ownership of projects must be maintained by the five regional countries.

The water and energy sector is one of the strongest candidates for functional regionalization due to the high transboundary externalities and measurable mutual economic gains. Flexible trade-off mechanisms based on transparent rules can be developed between seasonal water release and electricity, energy, or financial

compensation. Joint hydrometeorological data production, drought and flood early warning systems, agricultural water efficiency, and regional electricity trading are also areas that can be advanced without requiring supranational delegation of authority. However, the operation of reservoirs, water allocation, energy pricing, and the sharing of infrastructure costs are directly linked to national sovereignty and economic security concerns. Therefore, it seems more feasible to develop water-energy cooperation gradually through data sharing, joint estimation, pilot applications, and bilateral or multilateral swap agreements before a binding and comprehensive regime.

Common policy in the field of security should not be evaluated solely through the lens of military alliances and collective defense. Resolving border disputes, combating terrorism and smuggling, disaster response, cybersecurity, and managing risks originating from Afghanistan require different institutional and technical tools. The State Border Treaty signed between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in March 2025 and the Treaty on the junction point of the state borders of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan signed in Khujand later that month demonstrate that intra-regional diplomacy can produce concrete results in conflict settlement [41-44]. However, these results should not be attributed solely to the Consultative Meetings, as the agreements emerged from bilateral and trilateral negotiation processes. The contribution of the consultative framework lies rather in strengthening a normative environment that supports political communication, good-neighborly relations, and regional ownership of problem-solving. The transformation of these agreements into lasting stability will also depend on improved transport connectivity, access to water and energy facilities, economic opportunities, and stronger contacts between communities in border regions [42-44].

From a policy perspective, five priorities stand out. Firstly, annual performance indicators, responsible institutions, and publicly available progress reports should be prepared for the goals adopted within the framework of “Central Asia-2040”. Secondly, common early warning, mutual assistance, and emergency protocols should be developed in the areas of health, disaster, and food security. Thirdly, the mutual recognition of customs and transit documents and the exchange of digital data should be widespread. Fourth, a continuous technical platform for water-energy swaps, regional electricity trading, and climate data sharing should be strengthened. Fifth, joint development projects in border regions, contacts between local governments, and cross-border economic activities should be supported. These steps do not require the establishment of a supranational union; they complement the existing consultative framework with measurable obligations, implementation timelines, and accountable monitoring tools. Thus, regionalization in Central Asia can transform from a discourse of symbolic unity into a functional model of cooperation that generates concrete resilience against crises.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the shared integration and stabilization policies developed by Central Asian countries in response to global and regional crises during the 2018-2025 period did not manifest themselves in a single treaty, organization, or common foreign policy form. Regional coordination has developed through a layered structure involving regular consultations at the level of heads of state, bilateral and trilateral agreements, sectoral technical programs, and the joint use of overlapping international institutions. This structure allows states to produce gradual and flexible responses to transnational issues while protecting their sovereign sensitivities.

The crises examined have intensified regional cooperation in different policy areas. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted interdependence in health, food security, and border management; however, it did not create a binding and sustainable regional health mechanism. The Russia-Ukraine War highlighted the risks associated with Russia-centric economic and logistical links, accelerating the diversification of transportation routes and foreign partnerships. During this process, the strategic importance of the Middle Corridor and the “Central Asia+” formats has increased. Border, water, and energy crises have demonstrated the capacity of regional diplomacy and technical cooperation to produce tangible results. While the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border agreement and the trilateral agreements signed in Khujand cannot be considered a direct result of the Consultative Meetings, they are consistent with the strengthened dialogue, good neighborliness, and regional ownership understanding that has developed since 2018.

The contributions of the five countries to this process differ according to their economic size, external dependencies, security priorities, and diplomatic preferences. Kazakhstan contributes to regional coordination with its economic, logistical, and diplomatic capacity; Uzbekistan with its neighborhood policy that revitalizes regional dialogue; Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with their strategic positions in the fields of water, hydroelectricity, border management, and migration; and Turkmenistan with its neutrality approach, energy resources, and project-based participation. Therefore, the resulting structure is based not on a fixed leadership hierarchy, but on complementary national roles that vary according to the policy area and on participation with variable geometry.

The main theoretical conclusion of the study is that the low level of institutionalization in Central Asia produces both flexibility and limitations. Informal and leader-centered consultations allow for rapid communication, agenda setting, and adaptation to varying levels of participation during times of crisis. However, significant gaps remain in terms of decision-making, institutional continuity, public monitoring, and accountability. Therefore, the potential direction of development for the regional process can be defined not as European-style supranational integration, but rather as sovereignty-sensitive functional regionalization supported by common data systems, technical standards, implementation timelines, and measurable obligations.

In conclusion, crises in Central Asia have not spontaneously created deep integration; however, they have increased the demand for cooperation in sectors where transboundary externalities are high and sovereign costs are relatively low. Transportation, trade facilitation, health security, disaster management, border crossings, and water-energy connections have emerged as areas more conducive to functional coordination. Conversely, national decisions have remained decisive in matters with high sovereign costs, such as security preferences, sanctions, foreign policy orientation, and binding resource sharing. The Central Asian example thus demonstrates that the impact of crises on regionalization depends less on the existence of the crisis itself and more on the nature of the transboundary costs it generates and how states evaluate cooperation in terms of their sovereignty.

Future research should develop datasets suitable for comparing the implementation rate of decisions adopted at Consultative Meetings and the tangible outcomes of regional cooperation. Indicators such as border crossing times, intra-regional electricity trade, intermediate goods trade, joint disaster responses, sharing of health data, and social trust in border regions can provide a more accurate assessment of the extent to which regional dialogue has translated from symbolic rapprochement to material resilience.

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ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ ЕЛДЕРІНІҢ ЖАҒАНДЫҚ DAҒДАРЫCҚA ҚАРCЫ ОРТAҚ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ТҰРАҚТЫЛЫҚ САЯСАТЫ

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Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеу 2018-2025 жылдар аралығындағы Қазақстан, Қырғызстан, Тәжікстан, Түрікменстан және Өзбекстанның аймақтық ынтымақтастық үрдістері мен ортақ тұрақтылық саясатына жаһандық және аймақтық дағдарыстардың әсерін зерттейді. COVID-19 пандемиясы, Ресей-Украина соғысы, жеткізу тізбегіндегі үзілістер, энергетика және азық-түлік қауіпсіздігі мәселелері, сондай-ақ шекара, су және қауіпсіздік дағдарыстары зерттеудің негізгі бағыттарын құрайды. Зерттеу бес елдің жалпы тәуекелдерді анықтау, аймақтық күн тәртібін әзірлеу және ұлтүстілік құрылым құрмай үйлестірілген саясат құралдарын жасау мүмкіндігін бағалайды. Сапалы салыстырмалы кейстік дизайнына негізделген зерттеу ресми құжаттарды, Орталық Азия мемлекет басшыларының консультативтік кездесулерінің шешімдерін, халықаралық ұйымдардың есептерін және академиялық зерттеулерді талдау арқылы зерттейді. Зерттеу нәтижелері өңірлік үйлестірудің негізінен трансшекаралық сыртқы әсерлері жоғары, ал егемендікке қатысты қабылданатын шығындары салыстырмалы түрде төмен болатын денсаулық сақтау, көлік, сауданы жеңілдету, су-энергетика және төтенше жағдайларды басқару салаларында жүзеге асырылатынын көрсетеді. Ал қауіпсіздік саясатына қатысты басымдықтар, санкциялар және саяси режимнің тұрақтылығына байланысты салаларда шешім қабылдауда ұлттық деңгейдегі және орталықтандырылған басқару тетіктері шешуші рөлін сақтап келеді. Көлік дәліздерін дамыту және сыртқы экономикалық әріптестіктерді әртараптандыру көпвекторлы сыртқы саясат пен стратегиялық автономияға ұмтылысты күшейтті. Алайда экономикалық асимметриялар, халықаралық ұйымдармен әртүрлі институционалдық байланыстар, егемендікке қатысты сезімталдық және іске асыру тетіктерінің шектеулілігі өңірлік ынтымақтастықтың неғұрлым институционалданған әрі міндеттеуші сипатқа ие болуына кедергі жасайды. Зерттеу нәтижелері Орталық Азия үшін ең қолайлы тәсіл ұлтүстілік интеграция емес, керісінше, өлшенетін міндеттемелерге, техникалық үйлестіруге және икемді қатысу қағидатына негізделген, мемлекеттік егемендікке сезімтал функционалдық өңірлену моделі екенін көрсетеді.

Тірек сөздер: Орталық Азия, өңірлік интеграция, ортақ тұрақтылық саясаты, жаһандық дағдарыстар, өңірлік ынтымақтастық, өңірлік орнықтылық, Орталық Азия мемлекеттері басшыларының консультативтік кездесулері

Қаржыландыру: Осы ғылыми зерттеу Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігі Ғылым комитетінің AP27508567

“Қазақстанның аймақтық бірегейлігінің қалыптасуы: геосаяси турбуленттілік жағдайындағы Орталық Азияның саяси, әлеуметтік және экономикалық интеграциясы” жобасы аясында қаржыландырылды.

ОБЩАЯ ПОЛИТИКА ИНТЕГРАЦИИ И СТАБИЛЬНОСТИ СТРАН ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ В ОТВЕТ НА ГЛОБАЛЬНЫЙ КРИЗИС

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Аннотация. В данном исследовании рассматривается влияние глобальных и региональных кризисов на тенденции регионального сотрудничества и политику обеспечения общей стабильности в Казахстане, Кыргызстане, Таджикистане, Туркменистане и Узбекистане в период 2018-2025 годов. Пандемия COVID-19, российско-украинская война, сбои в цепочках поставок, проблемы энергетической и продовольственной безопасности, а также кризисы, связанные с государственными границами, водными ресурсами и безопасностью, составляют основные направления данного исследования. В исследовании оценивается способность пяти стран выявлять общие риски, разрабатывать региональные программы и создавать скоординированные политические инструменты без формирования наднациональной структуры. На основе качественного сравнительного анализа конкретных кейсов, исследование изучает официальные документы, решения консультативных совещаний глав государств Центральной Азии, отчеты международных организаций и академические исследования посредством анализа документов. Результаты показывают, что региональная координация сосредоточена в областях с высокими трансграничными внешними эффектами и относительно низкими воспринимаемыми издержками суверенитета, таких как здравоохранение, транспорт, упрощение торговых процедур, водные ресурсы и энергетика, а также управление стихийными бедствиями. В отличие от этого, национальные и центральные решения остаются доминирующими в областях, связанных с предпочтениями в сфере безопасности, санкциями и стабильностью режима. Диверсификация транспортных маршрутов и внешних экономических партнерств способствовала усилению стремления к многогранной внешней политике и стратегической автономии. Вместе с тем экономические асимметрии, различия в институциональных связях, чувствительность к вопросам государственного суверенитета и ограниченность механизмов реализации препятствуют формированию более обязательной формы институционализации. Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о том, что наиболее реалистичной и практически осуществимой моделью для Центральной Азии является не наднациональная интеграция, а функциональная регионализация, учитывающая чувствительность государств к вопросам суверенитета и основанная на измеримых обязательствах, технической координации и гибком формате участия.

Ключевые слова: Центральная Азия, региональная интеграция, совместная политика обеспечения стабильности, глобальные кризисы, региональное сотрудничество, региональная устойчивость, Консультативные встречи глав государств Центральной Азии

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