

The Specific Features Of The Transport Policy Of The Republic Of Uzbekistan.

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Уникальные Особенности Транспортной Политики Республики Узбекистан.

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the transport policy being implemented in Uzbekistan and its unique features, with a particular focus on the role of the regulatory documents introduced in the development of the sector. Additionally, the article addresses several issues inherited from the Soviet era and provides suggestions for their resolution.

В данной статье освещена транспортная политика, осуществляемая в Узбекистане, а также её особенности, с особым вниманием к роли нормативных документов в развитии отрасли. Кроме того, рассмотрены детали ряда проблем, унаследованных с советских времён, и предложены пути их решения. **A R T I C L E I N F O Received:** 10th September 2024 **Accepted:** 8th October 2024

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INTRODUCTION. As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the termination of the inter-republican economic ties, the crisis situation in the transport sector intensified. In this context, the newly independent Republic of Uzbekistan, with its political interests, required the establishment of transport networks that would not depend on any foreign state or system but would express national interests and serve the well-being and development of the people. Therefore, from the early years of independence, the government of the republic began to pay special attention to the implementation of a rational transport policy and the creation of the political-legal and economic foundations of the system.

The legal basis for the creation of Uzbekistan's national transport system includes the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan related to the sector, decrees and orders of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers, decisions of organizations within the transport system, the Action Strategy for the Development of Uzbekistan, the Development Strategy, and many other regulatory documents outlining the tasks in this area.

MAIN PART. In 1991, with the aim of establishing a unified railway system, a Presidential decree was adopted regarding the formation of the "Caspian Division of the Central Asian Railway" [15]. Based on this decree, and in connection with the establishment of the Turkmenistan railway, as well as to ensure the efficiency of freight and passenger transportation management via railway in the territories of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm region, the Caspian Division of the Central Asian Railway was founded starting from January 1, 1992. The division included all railway networks located in the regions of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm. The main goal of this reform was to further strengthen the single railway system across Central Asia.

On January 1, 1992, the Karshi Division of the Central Asian Railway was established [16]. This was aimed at improving the efficiency of passenger and freight transportation in the regions of Kashkadarya and Samarkand. The railway networks located in these regions were included in the division. As a result of these measures, favorable opportunities for strengthening relations between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan began to emerge. From this period, promising projects for the construction of railways connecting various regions of the republic began to be implemented.

However, some problems began to emerge in the operation of the Central Asian Railway. These issues were primarily caused by the increased demand for train services during the summer months and holidays. As a result of the increase in the shortage of wagons and the untimely completion of repairs, congestion at ticket counters began to arise. Although some repairs of wagons were carried out in the republic, the majority of repairs were conducted in CIS countries, which complicated the operations of the railway system. In the early years of independence, there were also shortages in the import of new wagons. For example, in 1993, the Central Asian Railway Directorate signed a contract with the Tver plant to deliver 35 passenger wagons. However, only 9 wagons were delivered within the stipulated time [32; 60-63]. Additionally, during this period, the difficult economic situation of the newly formed independent states had a negative impact on the railway transport system. Several railway departments began to adjust train schedules according to their own needs, leading to irregularities in train movements. For instance, on the Tashkent-Moscow route, a train was delayed by approximately 5 hours due to it departing at an inconvenient time. To address these issues, on July 21, 1993, a conference of the heads of passenger transport services from Russia, Central Asia, and the Baltic states was held in Moscow [34]. During this conference, not only issues of the Central Asian Railway were discussed, but all problems related to the connected railway systems were reviewed. A coordinated train schedule was established, and systematic work on the repair of wagons and the delivery of new ones was initiated.

In the following stages, special attention began to be paid to the nationalization of the transport sector. In 1994, the Central Asian Railway system was dissolved, and a Presidential decree was issued regarding the creation of the "Uzbekistan Railways" State Joint-Stock Company [1]. This decree set out the main tasks and operational directions for "Uzbekistan Railways," which included developing the passenger and freight transportation network, improving the competitiveness of the transport system, and enhancing service quality by regularly introducing modern technologies to the sector.

To further strengthen the political and legal aspects of the sector, in 1999, the "Law on Railway Transport" of the Republic of Uzbekistan was adopted [24]. This 28-article document played a crucial role in consolidating the country's railway policy.

Despite such legal reforms, by the end of 1999, compared to the previous year, freight transportation had decreased by 14%, and passenger transportation had decreased by 19% [33; 3]. As a result, the company's revenue did not meet its annual targets. The primary reason for this was the low operational volume of network enterprises during the winter season. The Chairman of the Board of "Uzbekistan Railways" at the time, R. Zohidov, studied the issue and developed various recommendations. As a result, in 2000, the company's service performance improved, with over 14 million passengers being transported and more than 42 million tons of cargo delivered [23].

In 2001, a Presidential decree was issued on the "Measures for the Privatization and Demopolization of Railway Transport in Uzbekistan" [25]. According to this decree, the main objectives were to strengthen the management structure of the transport system, prevent monopolies, introduce modern transport technologies to the sector, and further improve service quality. The decree began to show results quickly. In 2001, the 100% state-owned "Uzbekistan Railways" was transformed into a public joint-stock company. In 2002, companies such as "Uztemiryolovchi," "Uztemiryolkonteyner," "Yolreftrans" (transportation of perishable goods), "Uztemirvagon" (wagon repair), and "TashVQTZ" (construction and repair of passenger wagons) were also transformed into public joint-stock companies [31; 4].

In 2011, amendments and additions focused on the safety of railway transport were made to the "Law on Railway Transport." Based on this law, modern passenger safety systems were installed at railway stations in cities such as Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Andijan, Urganch, and Karshi. Later, based on the implementation of this decree, the Cabinet of Ministers developed a special resolution. According to it, the state was tasked with monitoring passenger and freight transport activities, ensuring transport safety, and establishing the "Ozdavtemiryolnazorat" Inspection Agency to control the safety of rail transport. During its operation, several preventive measures aimed at ensuring transport safety and improving the reliability of technical equipment were carried out. On average, around 100 incidents related to the violation of traffic safety regulations were identified annually, and appropriate measures were taken [9; 94].

However, there were still some unique shortcomings in the system. The number of complaints regarding violations of safety regulations, received during the inspection activities, was reported to be around 60 annually [11]. In comparison, this figure was 10 times lower than for road construction and automobile transport, and considering the technical risks involved in train movement, it can be concluded that the safety activities in the railway system were better managed compared to other transport systems.

By 2015, the "Uzbekistan Railways" State Joint-Stock Railway Company had become "Uzbekistan Railways" Joint-Stock Company and continues to operate to this day [6].

In the New Uzbekistan, a series of reforms aimed at developing the transport sector were launched. By 2017, in order to further improve freight and passenger transport, a decision was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on enhancing the activity of the "Ozdavtemiryolnazorat" Inspection [19]. This decision set the goal of increasing state control over passenger and freight transport safety, improving the qualifications of railway transport personnel, stabilizing retraining systems, ensuring compliance with regulatory documents for transported goods, and cooperating with international organizations on behalf of Uzbekistan. As a result of the decision, from October 1, 2017, the "Ozdavtemiryolnazorat" Inspection began licensing and monitoring both domestic and international passenger and freight transport [20]. As a result, by the end of 2017, over 21 million passengers were served by the railways, and nearly 68 million tons of cargo were transported, which represented an increase of 700,000 passengers and half a million tons of cargo compared to the previous year [9; 290].

According to official data, in recent years, these indicators have increased even further. In general, since the establishment of the "Uzbekistan Railways" Joint Stock Company, the volume of passenger transportation has doubled, and freight transportation has increased by 2.1 times, meaning that over 500 million passengers have used railway services, and more than 2 billion tons of cargo have been transported [2].

In Uzbekistan, important regulatory documents have also been adopted to establish the legal framework for the aviation sector. First and foremost, with the aim of improving the air transport management system in the country, a Presidential decree was issued to establish Uzbekistan's national airline [13]. Based on this decree, the national airline "Uzbekistan Airways" was founded in 1992. This airline became the legal successor of the Civil Aviation Authority of Uzbekistan. Moreover, the airline was tasked with developing and implementing air transport policy within the country. As a result, a system of air transport was introduced that had its own policy and management independence.

One of the most important issues during this period was the training of highly qualified specialists for the sector. To address this, the first President of Uzbekistan issued a decree to establish the "Tashkent State Aviation Institute" [26]. According to the decree, in 1995, the "Uzbekistan Airways" training center, the aircraft engineering faculty of Tashkent State Technical University, and the Tashkent branch of the Kyiv International Civil Aviation University were combined to establish the Tashkent State Aviation Institute.

At the same time, several challenges remained, such as ensuring competition with foreign airlines and introducing modern technologies into the sector. In particular, the outdated and opaque nature of management in the air transport sector hindered the establishment of a modern management system and financial stability. The excessive monopolization of aviation transport infrastructure led to the underperformance of the sector compared to global standards, and several airports in the country saw a decrease in their competitiveness.

The country's air transport policy was implemented in a unique way. In the early years of independence, according to the transport policy, the national airline performed 75% of all flights. The Uzbekistan National Airline was not created for commercial purposes but was responsible for meeting the domestic air transport needs of the Uzbek people and ensuring air transport safety. In the early years of independence, the government banned any type of foreign investment to protect the non-competitive airline. The system of restricting foreign ownership reduced the risk of serving the interests of foreign countries. The airline continued to be protected by the state, thus maintaining its monopoly in the sector. As a result, no significant growth was observed in the development of the airline, and it fell behind global practices.

In New Uzbekistan, efforts began to address these issues. In 2018, the national airline was restructured, leading to the creation of two independent companies: "Uzbekistan Airways" JSC and "Uzbekistan Airports" JSC. Additionally, "Uzbekistan Helicopters" LLC was established under the "Special Aviation Operations" DUK [14]. From that point, modern management practices in the aviation sector began to develop rapidly, with special attention given to increasing international and domestic flight numbers through the use of regional airports. In recent years, serious attention has been given to the independent operation of the airline, and the activity of private airlines not affiliated with the national airline has been encouraged. Furthermore, foreign investments in the sector have been significantly expanded.

Since the early years of independence, reforms have been implemented in the automotive transport sector as well. In 1993, the "O'zavtotrans" state joint-stock corporation (SJSC) was established in place of the Ministry of Automotive Transport of Uzbekistan [12]. The main tasks of this corporation included meeting the public's needs for passenger and freight transportation, providing transport expedition services to various automobile transport associations, enterprises, and organizations, and coordinating their activities. Despite some challenges, by 1994, the number of joint-stock companies in the corporation exceeded 100. These were mainly large freight transport companies and associations such as "Toshshaharyuktrans," "Toshvilyuktrans," "Xorazmtrans," "Samarqandyuktrans," "Farg'onatrans," "Andijontrans," "Jizzaxtrans," as well as divisions of the "O'ztransxizmati" joint-stock association [17; 36].

The next task was to establish a national "brand" in the sector. In this regard, a joint venture was created in collaboration with the "O'zavtosanoat" association and Korea's "DAEWOO" corporation. On November 5, 1992, a decision was made to establish the joint venture "UzDEUAvto" [3]. As a result of the establishment of "UzDEUAvto" in Asaka, Andijan region in 1994–1996, Uzbekistan joined the list of the 28 countries in the world that had their own automobile industry. The factory reached a production capacity of over 180,000 cars per year [22; 17].

In 1998, the "Law on Automobile Transport" was adopted [7]. This resulted in the development of a policy to regulate the activities of the automobile transport sector by the state, including the certification, licensing, taxation, and tariff formation of transport activities, all of which were now under state management.

In 2012, by the decision of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the project for the production of Damas vehicles in the city of Pitnak, Khorezm, was approved in 2013 [5]. As part of this project, thanks to the hard work of builders and industry specialists, the first Damas vehicle was produced at the Pitnak plant on January 6, 2014 [30; 2]. The successful implementation of this project led to a significant increase in industrial and production capacity in Khorezm, along with the creation of new jobs. As a result, the "General Motors Uzbekistan" joint-stock company established the "Khorezmauto" plant in Khorezm. Since 2014, this plant has been manufacturing "Damas" and "Orlando" vehicles, and since 2015, the production of "Labo" small trucks was also launched. As a result of the plant's operation, the size of the region's industry tripled within three years [30; 3].

Along with the development of the automotive transport sector, road construction also became a critical issue. Consequently, in 2017, based on a presidential decree, the State Committee of Automobile Roads was established. In 2019, with the establishment of the Ministry of Transport, this committee was incorporated into the Ministry [18]. The State Committee of Automobile Roads is now the authorized body responsible for the planning, construction, reconstruction, repair, and maintenance of roads across the country.

In recent years, the scope of reforms in the transport sector has expanded further. Specifically, in 2019, a decree from the President of Uzbekistan, Sh. Mirziyoyev, established the Ministry of Transport to improve state management in the sector [21]. This government agency, based on Uzbekistan's automotive transport, is responsible for developing and implementing state policy in the areas of automotive, air, rail, river transport, metro, and road management. Prior to this, there was no single governing body to manage all types of transport in the country, making the establishment of the Ministry of Transport crucial for coordinating the sector.

To train and improve the skills of specialists in the transport sector, Tashkent Transport University has been established as the main institution in this field. Based on a 2020 decree from the President, this university was formed from the Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineers and the Tashkent Institute of Automotive Roads Design, Construction, and Operation [28].

In terms of improving the political and legal aspects of the transport sector, the "Law on Transport" adopted in 2021 is of great importance[29]. The main goal of this law is to regulate relationships in the transport sector, as before, railway, air, and road transport systems were managed under separate legal frameworks, and there was no single legal framework for regulating the entire national transport system. According to the "Law on Transport," the various transport infrastructures in Uzbekistan, including automobile, air, rail, metro, and other transport systems, must form a unified national transport system.

The Action Strategy and Development Strategies developed for the comprehensive development of New Uzbekistan also serve as the legal foundation for reforms in the transport sector. According to the "Action Strategy," a series of reforms have been implemented to improve the condition of roads and the road transport system, ensuring the convenience of transportation for the public. Notably, special attention has been paid to the construction of new roads and the renovation of existing ones, with 1.5 billion som allocated for these processes. In 2017, two high-speed trains from Spain were purchased to improve the quality of Uzbekistan's rail network [9; 394].

According to the presidential decree on January 28, 2022, the Development Strategy for New Uzbekistan was approved [4]. This strategy envisions further reforms to develop the transport system, including the introduction of a "green economy" by promoting electric vehicles (EVs). A project to create a system for producing and using electric vehicles was launched, along with a support and incentive system for EV production. The plan also includes the establishment of a base for the production of components for electric vehicles and the abolition of the utilization fee for domestically produced electric cars.

In order to further accelerate the implementation of the Development Strategy, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued a decree on the "Measures for State Support of the Organization of Electric Vehicle Production" [8]. According to this decree, a series of reforms were planned to be implemented aimed at introducing "green" technologies across all sectors, improving the production of electric vehicles and their

components, and reducing the amount of harmful emissions released into the atmosphere. Specifically, a system of state support and incentives for the industrial production of electric and hybrid vehicles was established.

The development of the railway transport system also includes key initiatives, such as launching high-speed electric trains along the Tashkent-Chirchiq-Khojikent railway line. As part of this project, new intercity high-speed electric trains began running on this route on September 24, 2022, reducing travel time from Tashkent to Chirchiq by up to 45 minutes [27].

Moreover, in several regions, including the cities of Qarshi and Andijon, the development of public transport systems has been prioritized, with the creation of development concepts for these cities' transport systems. Based on these goals, a decree was adopted on the reform of public transport systems [10]. The decree emphasizes the introduction of new bus routes, the establishment of an autonomous payment system, and dispatcher services in urban transport. As a result of these reforms, electronic payment systems for public transportation have been introduced in Namangan and Samarkand cities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the practical implementation and results of the reforms mentioned above, the transport policy of the independence period can be divided into two stages. Initially, political activity was carried out to eliminate the consequences of the Soviet regime, avoid the influence of other countries, and prevent various bankruptcy cases of private companies. In the later period, much more attention was given to using the transport system not only to meet the needs of the population but also as a tool to boost the economy. A wide path was opened for foreign investments, and serious attention was paid to privatization and breaking monopolies in the sector. As a result, the political and legal foundations of the transport system were strengthened, and the development of the sector became one of the key components of state policy. Overall, the transport policy implemented by the government not only helped the system secure its place in the national economy but also played a crucial role in establishing its position in the global community.

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