NATIONAL ECONOMIC INTERESTS AS DETERMINANTS OF ECONOMIC-SECURITY STRATEGY: A CONCEPTUAL AND POLICY ANALYSIS OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. Economic security is never defined in the abstract: states define it through what they take their national economic interests to be. Yet the link between ranked interests and the content of an economic-security strategy is seldom examined, and in Uzbekistan, where reform has been rapid and the economy has opened, it is poorly documented. This article asks how national economic interests shape economic-security strategy and whether Uzbekistan's strategic goals match the exposures that official data reveal. Using qualitative document and policy analysis, it builds a five-interest framework from the national-interest and security-studies literature, codes the 2022–2026 and 2030 development strategies against it, and compares the result with IMF, World Bank, Central Bank and Statistics Agency indicators for 2024–2025. The strategies state prosperity, external standing and defence interests explicitly and address stability and energy through output and inflation targets. However, they set no explicit goal on concentration: in 2025 gold supplied 29.3% of exports, three partners accounted for 43.3% of trade, and in 2024 Russia was the source of 77% of remittances. The article concludes that an economic-security strategy is credible when ranked interests are translated into measurable exposure thresholds with institutional ownership, and it proposes a published exposure dashboard and counter-cyclical rules for windfall revenues.

Keywords: national economic interests, economic security, strategy, Uzbekistan, vulnerability, policy analysis

Introduction

An economy is secure only in relation to something: the things a state is determined to protect. Governments rarely answer that question with a definition. They answer it with a ranked list of priorities, such as growth, stable prices, reliable energy, open markets and freedom of decision, and then build strategy around the list. Since the end of the Cold War, economics and security, which had drifted apart as fields of study, have been brought back together in both statecraft and scholarship (Mastanduno, 1998), and commercial instruments are increasingly used for strategic ends (Luttwak, 1990). Whether a country is economically secure therefore depends in part on how it defines and ranks its national economic interests.

Uzbekistan is a revealing setting. Within two years it adopted two national strategies: the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 and the Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy, approved by Presidential Decree No. 158 on 11 September 2023 (Mukhtorov & Khatamova, 2024). The economy has performed strongly, with real GDP growth of 7.7% in 2025 (IMF, 2026a). The same period, however, exposed vulnerabilities. Uzbekistan began importing gas from Russia in 2023 (World Bank, 2024), remittances reached USD 18.9 billion in 2025 (Kun.uz, 2026a), and gold supplied almost a third of exports (Kun.uz, 2026b).

Both "national interest" and "economic security" are contested concepts. Nuechterlein (1976) observed that the term national interest is used loosely, and Baldwin (1997) argued that security has

meaning only when it is specified: security for whom, for which values, against which threats, by what means and at what cost. A strategy that does not specify these things cannot be evaluated, because there is no benchmark against which exposure can be judged.

A gap remains. The national-interest literature concerns mainly great powers and foreign policy rather than the economic policy of a middle-income transition economy. Studies of Uzbekistan's economic security list threats such as dependence on remittances, rising external debt and raw-material exports (Samadkulov & Allanazarov, 2025) or describe the development strategy (Hakimov, 2023), but they do not derive the threats from an explicit account of the state's own interests. To the author's knowledge, none compares what the strategies set out to protect with what official data show to be exposed.

This article therefore asks three questions. RQ1: How do national economic interests shape the content of an economic-security strategy? RQ2: How are Uzbekistan's national economic interests expressed in its strategic documents? RQ3: To what extent do the strategic goals match the exposures documented in official and international data? Three propositions are assessed qualitatively: P1, strategic goals cluster around the interests a state ranks highest; P2, a strategy works as an economic-security strategy only when interests are translated into measurable exposure thresholds and assigned to an institution; P3, exposures accumulate where a growth-oriented strategy relies on a single external channel. The thesis is that national economic interests determine economic-security strategy through what they make measurable: interests that are ranked and given indicators are protected, whereas interests left implicit become exposures.

The paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature, Section 3 describes the methods, Section 4 reports the results, Section 5 discusses them and sets out policy implications, and Section 6 concludes.

Literature Review

2.1 The national interest: from abstraction to framework

Morgenthau (1952) argued that the national interest is the essential guide for analysing foreign policy, with a core of survival, the protection of a nation's physical, political and cultural identity, surrounded by elements that vary with circumstances. The idea is powerful but hard to apply, because it does not say how interests should be ranked. Nuechterlein (1976) responded with a framework that separates basic interests (defence of the homeland, economic well-being, a favourable world order and the promotion of values) and grades them by intensity, from survival to peripheral. The framework makes interests comparable, but it treats economic well-being as a single interest among four and says little about what that interest requires in practice.

2.2 Security broadened and economised

Baldwin (1997) showed that security is not too vague to be useful once it is specified. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998) analysed security by sector and argued that an issue becomes a security issue when it is presented as an existential threat to a valued referent. They also noted that the economic sector is hard to securitise, because market logic treats risk, competition and failure as normal. This helps to explain why governments often pursue economic security under other names, such as growth, stability or competitiveness. Mastanduno (1998) traced how economics and security were integrated in the interwar years, separated in Cold War scholarship and linked again afterwards, and Luttwak (1990) described geo-economics, in which commercial means serve strategic ends.

2.3 Interdependence as vulnerability

Hirschman (1945) showed that trade gives larger partners power because the gains from trade can be interrupted, and Katzenstein (1985) argued that small, open economies, being vulnerable, build domestic arrangements to compensate for their exposure. Farrell and Newman (2019) updated the argument: states that control hubs in global networks can use them to gather information or deny access to others. Writing on energy, Cherp and Jewell (2014) added robustness and resilience to sovereignty as perspectives for judging how systems withstand shocks. Together these works imply that exposure should be measured by the concentration of partners, products and income channels, not only by aggregate growth or reserves.

2.4 Uzbekistan: interests and economic security

Maracchione (2023), applying a structural topic model to Uzbekistan's statements at the United Nations, argues that foreign policy and interests have been redefined since the election of President Mirziyoyev through interaction with domestic and external actors, and he questions the label "multivectorism". Samadkulov and Allanazarov (2025) argue that geoeconomic instability threatens Uzbekistan's economic security through weak high-tech exports, rising external debt, dependence on migrant remittances, and reliance on raw-material exports and external investment. They review responses such as import substitution, export diversification and state reserves, and conclude that these are useful but insufficient. Their indicator series, however, rely on general sources and, for 2024, on forecasts. Hakimov (2023) examines the 2022–2026 strategy with a focus on its economic-growth priority; the analysis is largely descriptive and relies on official statements.

2.5 Research gap

The literature is strong on the concept of national interest and on interdependence, but weak in three respects: the conceptual work is rarely applied to the economic policy of a middle-income transition economy; studies of Uzbekistan list threats without grounding them in ranked interests; and no study compares the goals of the national strategies with the exposures that official data document. This article addresses these gaps by building a framework of five national economic interests and using it to compare strategy with exposure.

Methods

Research design. The study uses qualitative document and policy analysis with three components: (1) a conceptual synthesis of Section 2 into a framework of five national economic interests (Table 1); (2) the coding of two national strategies against that framework; and (3) a comparison of the coded goals with exposure indicators from international and national sources for 2024–2025. A statistical test was not attempted: the study covers one country, annual data are few, and no harmonised exposure series exists, so conventional inference would be unreliable.

Corpus. Documents were selected purposively. They were included if they (a) set out national goals or priorities, (b) assessed Uzbekistan's macroeconomic position, or (c) reported official statistics. The strategies coded are the English text of the 2022–2026 Strategy circulated at the United Nations (United Nations General Assembly, 2022), supplemented by an overview by Tulyakov (2022), then head of the Development Strategy Centre, and the English text of the Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy published by ANKASAM (2023). Assessments come from IMF Article IV documents for 2025 and 2026 and the World Bank (2024). National statistics come from the Central Bank, the Statistics Agency and ministries as reported by Times of Central Asia and Kun.uz, and are flagged as such.

Data collection and measurement. Searches in October 2026 combined the terms economic security, national interests, Uzbekistan development strategy, Article IV, remittances, gold exports and gas imports, using web searches of institutional and publisher pages. Concentration was measured with simple shares: gold in total exports, the three largest partners in trade turnover and the largest source country in remittances. A Herfindahl–Hirschman index would be preferable but partner-by-partner shares were not available for all channels.

Analysis. Each strategic goal relevant to economic interests was coded to one of the five interests and classed as explicit (a stated goal or target), indirect (a related target not framed as protection) or absent. The exposure indicators were then compared with the coded goals, and each interest was rated aligned, partly aligned or a gap, according to whether a goal exists and whether it addresses the documented exposure. Each proposition was rated supported, partly supported or not supported. Coding was done by the author alone. **Ethics.** No human participants were involved and all data are secondary and public, so ethical approval and informed consent were not required. Limitations are discussed in Section 5.3.

Table 1. Analytical framework: five national economic interests (author's synthesis of Nuechterlein, 1976; Buzan et al., 1998; Hirschman, 1945; Cherp & Jewell, 2014)

National economic interest	Meaning in strategy terms	Typical instruments	Exposure indicator used
1. Prosperity and growth	Sustained rise in output and incomes	Growth and income targets, investment, export promotion	Real GDP growth
2. Macro-financial stability	Stable prices, public finances and external debt	Inflation targeting, fiscal rules, tariff reform	Inflation, fiscal balance, external debt, current account
3. Supply security	Reliable access to critical inputs, above all energy	Domestic output, imports, renewables, subsidies	Gas trade balance, energy subsidies
4. External resilience	Limited dependence on one partner, product or income channel	Market and product diversification, reserves	Gold share of exports, top-three partner share, remittance concentration
5. Autonomy and standing	Freedom of decision and a recognised place in the trading system	Foreign policy, WTO accession, defence	Foreign-policy wording, WTO accession progress

Results

4.1 Interests expressed in the strategies

Table 2 summarises the coding. The 2022–2026 Strategy has seven priorities. The sixth is to approach global issues "from the perspective of national interests" and the seventh is to strengthen security and defence and to pursue an open, pragmatic and active foreign policy (United Nations General Assembly, 2022). Its economic priority sets an export target of USD 30 billion in 2026, with the private sector supplying 60% of exports. According to Tulyakov (2022), it also sets an inflation target of 5% by 2023, a renewable share of 25% of energy production by 2026, an increase in export destinations from 115 to 150 countries, and faster WTO accession.

The Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy has five directions. It targets GDP of USD 160 billion, GDP per capita of USD 4,000, exports of USD 45 billion, a private-sector share of 85%, a renewable-energy share of 40%

and WTO membership, and it states that foreign policy will be "open, pragmatic and proactive" and "based on national interests" (ANKASAM, 2023). A gas production target of 62 billion cubic metres a year is reported by Kun.uz (2024b). In the texts coded, neither strategy contains a stand-alone economic-security goal or definition, or a target for external debt, reserves, or the concentration of trade partners, exports or remittances.

Table 2. National economic interests as expressed in the strategies

Interest	2022–2026 Strategy	Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy	Expression in coded texts
Prosperity and growth	Accelerate the national economy; exports of USD 30 bn in 2026	GDP of USD 160 bn; USD 4,000 per capita; exports of USD 45 bn; private sector 85%	Explicit
Macro-financial stability	Inflation of 5% by 2023 (Tulyakov, 2022)	No inflation, debt or fiscal goal found	Explicit in 2022–2026; absent in 2030 text
Supply security	Renewables 25% of energy production; PPP investment in energy (USD 14 bn across sectors)	Renewable share 40%; gas output of 62 bcm (Kun.uz, 2024b)	Explicit output targets
External resilience	Export destinations from 115 to 150; free trade zones; WTO accession	Export value; no concentration goal	Indirect
Autonomy and standing	Priority 6 (national interests); priority 7 (security, open foreign policy)	Foreign policy "based on national interests"; WTO; defence capability	Explicit

4.2 Documented exposures

Table 3 reports the indicators. Growth was strong and inflation fell from 9.8% to 7.3% between the end of 2024 and the end of 2025, but it remained above the Central Bank's 5% target; the consolidated deficit narrowed to 2.1% of GDP, external debt rose to 54.2% of GDP, and reserves were about 13 months of imports (IMF, 2026a, 2026b). The IMF credits high gold prices, strong remittances and non-gold exports with the improvement in the external position (IMF, 2026a).

Table 3. Macroeconomic and external indicators, 2024–2025

Indicator	2024	2025	Source
Real GDP growth (%)	6.5	7.7	IMF (2025a, 2026a)
End-period inflation (%)	9.8	7.3	IMF (2026b)
Consolidated budget deficit (% of GDP)	3.2	2.1	IMF (2025a, 2026a)
External debt (% of GDP)	53.1	54.2	IMF (2026b)
Current account deficit (% of GDP)	4.7	3.9	IMF (2026b)
Remittances (USD bn)	14.8	18.9	Times of Central Asia (2025); Kun.uz (2026a)

Indicator	2024	2025	Source
Gold share of exports (%)	27.8*	29.3	Kun.uz (2025, 2026b)
Three largest partners' share of trade (%)	43.0*	43.3	Kun.uz (2025, 2026b)

Author's calculation. Gold: USD 7.48 bn of USD 26.94 bn exports in 2024. Partners: China, Russia and Kazakhstan, USD 28.38 bn of USD 65.93 bn trade in 2024. The 2024 figures for external debt and the current account are the 2026 IMF vintage; earlier IMF releases reported 56.2% and 5.0%

Concentration is visible in three channels (Figure 1). In 2025 gold exports reached a record USD 9.9 billion, 29.3% of exports, and China (21.2%), Russia (16.0%) and Kazakhstan (6.1%) accounted for 43.3% of trade turnover (Kun.uz, 2026b). Russia supplied 77% (USD 11.5 billion) of the USD 14.8 billion of remittances received in 2024 (Times of Central Asia, 2025). In 2025 remittances rose 27.2% to USD 18.9 billion, with the appreciation of the Russian rouble named as the main driver, and their share of household income rose from 16.5% to 21% (Kun.uz, 2026a).

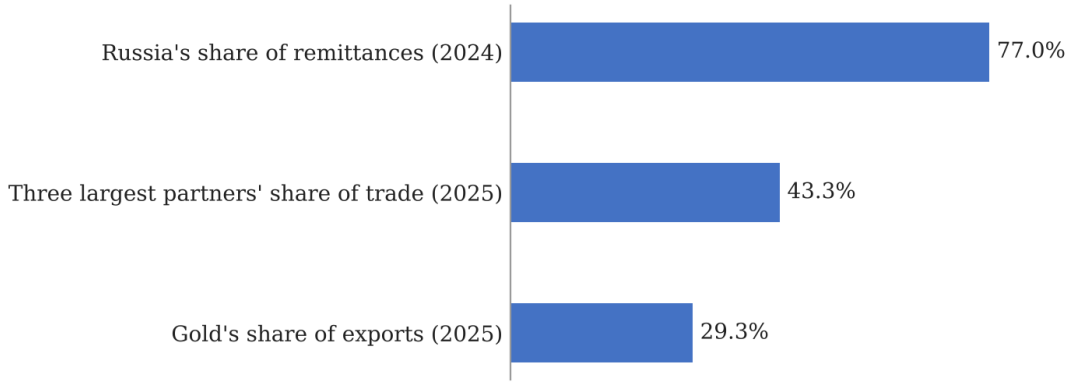


Figure 1. Concentration indicators (Kun.uz, 2026b; Times of Central Asia, 2025). Denominators differ, so the bars are not additive.

In energy, gas production fell by nearly 30% (19.2 billion cubic metres) between 2010 and 2023. In 2023 gas imports (USD 695 million) exceeded exports (USD 530 million), and imports rose to USD 1.55 billion in January–November 2024 (Kun.uz, 2024b); Uzbekistan began importing Russian gas in 2023 (World Bank, 2024). Energy subsidies were 12 trillion soums in 2024, with 7.5 trillion planned for 2025 and an end to subsidies announced for 2028 (Kun.uz, 2024a). The fiscal deficit widened from 4.1% of GDP in 2022 to 5.8% in 2023, with emergency winter energy spending and energy subsidies among the drivers (World Bank, 2024).

The external assessments contain thresholds and rules that the coded strategies do not. The IMF advised avoiding procyclical spending in response to high gold prices and adhering to external borrowing limits (IMF, 2025a), noted a 2025 external borrowing limit of USD 5.5 billion (IMF, 2025b), and recommended a ceiling on the non-mineral primary deficit from the 2027 budget (IMF, 2026a). It also advised that any measures responding to the Middle East war avoid generalised subsidies and be temporary and targeted (IMF, 2026b).

4.3 Alignment of goals and exposures

Table 4. Alignment of strategic goals and documented exposures

Interest	Strategic goal (coded)	Documented exposure	Rating
Prosperity and growth	Explicit growth, income and export targets	Growth of 7.7% in 2025	Aligned
Macro-financial stability	Inflation target in 2022–2026 only	Inflation of 7.3% against a 5% target; external debt of 54.2% of GDP	Partly aligned
Supply security	Output targets for renewables and gas	Net gas importer since 2023; subsidies of 12 trillion soums in 2024	Partly aligned
External resilience	Export value and market-count targets	Gold 29.3% of exports; top three partners 43.3% of trade; Russia 77% of remittances	Gap
Autonomy and standing	Foreign policy "based on national interests"; WTO; defence	WTO-related reforms still to be completed (IMF, 2026b)	Aligned in intent

Table 5. Assessment of the propositions

	Proposition	Evidence	Assessment
P1	Goals cluster around the interests a state ranks highest	Explicit, quantified goals for prosperity and standing; stability and supply by output or inflation targets; resilience implicit (Table 2)	Supported
P2	A strategy works as economic-security strategy only with thresholds and institutional ownership	No thresholds in coded texts; the IMF supplies limits and rules (Section 4.2)	Supported (one case)
P3	Exposures accumulate where strategy relies on a single channel	Gold, Russia-linked remittances and gas imports coincide with growth-led goals; causation not tested	Partly supported

Discussion

5.1 Interpretation

The evidence answers the research questions in a qualified way. On RQ1, interests shape strategy by deciding what becomes a goal with a number attached. Goals are most explicit and quantified where interests are ranked highest, prosperity and standing, which is consistent with P1. On RQ2, Uzbekistan's strategies state prosperity and standing in explicit terms, express stability and supply security through inflation and output targets, and leave external resilience implicit. On RQ3, the match is good where goals exist and exposure is low, and poor where the exposure is concentration. A notable feature is that the channels credited with improving the headline indicators, gold, remittances and a few large partners, are the channels in which exposure is concentrated (IMF, 2026a; Kun.uz, 2026a, 2026b). Strong performance therefore hides the exposure rather than removing it.

5.2 Comparison with the literature and policy implications

The results are consistent with Buzan et al. (1998): the absence of a stand-alone economic-security goal is what one would expect when security aims are pursued under the names of growth and stability.

They also illustrate Hirschman's (1945) argument and the network logic of Farrell and Newman (2019). In 2023 remittances fell partly because of the depreciation of the rouble (World Bank, 2024), and in 2025 they rose 27.2% partly because of its appreciation (Kun.uz, 2026a), so one partner's exchange rate passes directly into household incomes. This does not show that any partner uses the dependence as leverage; it shows that the exposure exists. The results add to Samadkulov and Allanazarov (2025) by showing that the threats they list correspond to interests that the strategies leave without thresholds. Maracchione's (2023) finding that interests are redefined over time is consistent with the disappearance of an explicit stability target between the two strategies as coded, although the evidence here cannot show that this reflects a deliberate re-ranking. Finally, the energy targets measure output, which reflects robustness rather than the resilience and sovereignty perspectives of Cherp and Jewell (2014); the shift to net gas imports shows why the difference matters.

Five policy implications follow. First, publish an economic-security concept that ranks the national economic interests and, following Baldwin (1997), states for whom and against which threats they are protected. Second, publish an annual exposure dashboard with named institutional ownership, covering reserve cover, external debt, the share of the three largest partners, the gold share of exports, the concentration of remittance sources and gas import dependence. Third, adopt counter-cyclical rules for windfall revenues, building on the IMF recommendations on gold prices and on a ceiling for the non-mineral primary deficit. Fourth, complete energy tariff reform on the announced schedule, with targeted rather than generalised protection for vulnerable households (IMF, 2026b; Kun.uz, 2024a). Fifth, treat diversification as the reduction of specific exposures, such as one remittance source or one export commodity, and not only as higher export totals or more destination countries.

5.3 Limitations and future research

Several limitations qualify these conclusions. The study covers one country and relies on secondary evidence; it describes alignment and does not estimate causal effects. The strategies were coded from English-language texts and from an overview by a strategy-centre official, not from the full Uzbek and Russian decree texts, so a goal reported here as absent may appear in the official originals. Coding was done by one researcher without an inter-coder check. Some national statistics rest on official statements reported by the media. IMF figures are revised between releases, as the 2024 external-debt series shows, and the gold share of exports moves with the gold price. Future research should code the full original texts with a second coder, compare Uzbekistan with Kazakhstan or other transition economies, build an exposure index from the indicators proposed above, and interview officials to learn how interests are ranked in practice.

Conclusion

National economic interests determine economic-security strategy through what they make measurable. In Uzbekistan the interests of prosperity and international standing are stated in explicit, quantified terms, stability and energy are addressed through inflation and output targets, and external resilience is left implicit. The result is a strategy that is well matched to its growth goals and weakly matched to the concentration of gold, remittances, trade partners and gas supply that the data document. This supports the thesis that interests left implicit become exposures.

The wider lesson is that strong macroeconomic results do not substitute for a statement of what is to be protected. Naming the interests, setting thresholds for exposure and giving one institution the duty to report on them would turn a development strategy into an economic-security strategy, and would make the next shock a test of a stated policy rather than a surprise.

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