
FIVE YEARS IN, UZBEKISTAN'S REFORM PROGRAMME IS BEING READIED FOR STAGE TWO

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By NAESMI

Global headlines have been devoted to Uzbekistans huge privatization plans. But it is the growth of homegrown private businesses which may prove more transformative. Accordingly, diplomats and trade negotiators have been assigned to expand the countrys trading opportunities. To the west, a new GSP+ agreement has been signed with the European Union, establishing duty-free entry for some 6,000 individual Uzbekistan products.

Even more ambitious plans are taking shape on a north-south axis. Much depends on what happens in neighboring Afghanistan, following the withdrawal of US and allied military forces, but if peace or at least some form of stability prevails, Uzbekistan is leading a Central Asian push to establish a road and rail corridor south, through Afghanistan, to the Pakistan ports. This would open whole new markets, both in South Asia and the world beyond, for Uzbekistan goods.

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