

FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY ISSUES OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: In the era of globalization, foreign policy issues and diplomatic relations occupy a crucial place in global politics. In today's multipolar world, the necessity for each country to choose its strategic partners has become a pressing topic. This article analyzes the key aspects of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, its role and significance in international relations as the "pearl" of Central Asia. Additionally, potential future strategic partners and the legal framework shaping the country's foreign policy trajectory are assessed through analytical forecasts.

Keywords: foreign policy, international relations, Central Asia, diplomacy issues, global politics, diplomatic relations, soft power.

ВНЕШНЯЯ ПОЛИТИКА И ВОПРОСЫ ДИПЛОМАТИИ РЕСПУБЛИКИ УЗБЕКИСТАН

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Аннотация: В эпоху глобализации вопросы внешней политики и дипломатических отношений занимают важное место в мировой политике. В многополярном мире актуальной темой становится выбор стратегических партнеров для каждой страны. В данной статье анализируются ключевые аспекты внешней политики Узбекистана, его

роль и значение в международных отношениях как «жемчужины» Центральной Азии. Кроме того, на основе аналитических прогнозов оцениваются потенциальные стратегические партнеры Узбекистана и правовые механизмы, определяющие направление его внешнеполитического курса.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика, международные отношения, Центральная Азия, дипломатия, мировая политика, дипломатические отношения, мягкая сила.

Introduction: Since gaining independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan has pursued an active foreign policy, and today, our country is becoming one of the key players in the global community. The role of President Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev in shaping Uzbekistan's dynamic foreign policy is invaluable. Under his leadership, Uzbekistan has strengthened its ties with neighboring countries through equitable agreements, marking a significant step forward in our diplomatic strategy.

The primary objective of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to safeguard national independence and sovereignty, reinforce its position in the international arena, foster a secure, stable, and friendly regional environment, and actively promote the country's external economic interests. Moreover, all partner countries must establish relations with Uzbekistan in full compliance with its legal framework. Additionally, our nation holds an important position in international organizations.

Literature Review and Methods: The theoretical and methodological basis for studying the foreign policy issues of the Republic of Uzbekistan and aspects of international relations primarily includes the new Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, foreign literature on foreign policy and diplomacy, as well as laws on Uzbekistan's international treaties. Additionally, historical and contemporary Uzbek literature on international organizations and foreign policy has been utilized as a foundational source for this research.

In examining Uzbekistan's foreign policy and international relations, various scientific methods have been employed, including analysis and synthesis, a comprehensive approach, a systemic-functional approach, content analysis, retrospective analysis, dialectical and binary analysis methods, SWOT analysis, and the synergetic approach.

Results and Discussion: According to statistical data, today the Republic of Uzbekistan has established diplomatic relations with more than 130 countries worldwide. In Tashkent, 44 foreign embassies, 1 consulate general, 8 honorary consuls, 17 representative offices of international organizations, 13 offices of foreign international intergovernmental and governmental organizations, and 1 trade mission with diplomatic status are currently operating [8].

Our country maintains good relations with each of these nations, as evidenced by economic agreements. In particular, recent partnerships with developed countries around the world indicate that a new chapter has been opened for Uzbekistan. Currently, along with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Uzbekistan's closest partners include Eastern countries such as China, South Korea, and Japan. Additionally, Uzbekistan's political and economic cooperation with Turkey has significantly increased in recent years.

Before delving deeper into the topic, it is important to discuss the legal framework that defines our foreign policy. Chapter IV of the new Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan is dedicated to foreign policy, outlining its principles. According to Article 17 of our Constitution, Uzbekistan's foreign policy is based on the principles of sovereign equality of states, non-use of force or threat of force, inviolability of borders, territorial integrity, peaceful resolution of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and other generally recognized principles and norms of international law [1].

Analyzing these principles, it becomes clear that our country maintains absolute sovereignty in its foreign policy. It has the freedom to establish relations with any country and is not subject to pressure from any external power.

As stated in Uzbekistan's Defense Doctrine, the Republic of Uzbekistan does not consider any state as an enemy. It builds relationships with all countries based on national interests and in accordance with generally recognized principles of international law. These include mutual benefit, equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful resolution of disputes, and recognition of the inviolability and immutability of established state borders [2].

Since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has never interfered in the internal affairs of any country nor posed a threat to the borders of other nations. Considering these factors, it would not be incorrect to characterize our country as a nation with a friendly and peaceful foreign policy. If we examine the diplomatic relations of our country from a historical perspective, we find that the foreign policy of Amir Timur and his diplomatic engagements with other nations remain an underexplored area in our history. While some research has been published abroad, such as collections of Persian-language documents and letters related to Iran, printed in Bombay in 1928 and Tehran in 1963, much work remains to be done [3].

Amir Timur's great empire maintained extensive relations with various countries, and numerous documents reflecting his foreign policy are preserved in state and private archives across different parts of Europe. His policy decisions in international relations were largely guided by Islamic principles. However, it is also essential to note that Amir Timur maintained an equally just foreign policy with countries of different religious sects. This is evident from his deep diplomatic ties with Spain, France, and England.

For the Republic of Uzbekistan, during the years of independence, many countries extended a so-called "helping hand." However, most of these turned out not to be purely altruistic. Primarily, Eastern countries such as China, the Russian Federation, Japan, and South Korea have played a crucial role in our foreign policy to this day. Among them, Japan holds a particularly significant position in our pragmatic foreign policy and international relations. The priority areas of investment cooperation between Uzbekistan and Japan include the mining industry, oil and gas sector, education, the digital economy, the agro-industrial complex, the communications sector, and mechanical engineering [5].

In addition to these areas, cultural and humanitarian ties between Uzbekistan and Japan are also steadily expanding. Japan primarily employs a soft power policy in these relations. In implementing this policy, not only state policies but also the participation of non-governmental actors play an important role. When establishing relations with Central Asian countries, Japan initially placed great emphasis on the human factor. By implementing several investment projects, Japan is contributing to Uzbekistan's economic reforms. In particular, bilateral agreements in the field of education serve as an example of how well-structured our foreign policy.

Several key sources are essential for foreign policy and diplomatic affairs, including:

Intelligence matters;

Interethnic relations;

International organizations and agreements;

Soft and hard power.

To implement foreign policy, various tools are available, with one of the most crucial being intelligence. Intelligence refers to the collection of information through espionage activities to assess any situation and make informed

decisions. It serves as a fundamental element of foreign policy. Covert operations allow governments to deny their involvement in specific actions. When discussing these activities, leaders may view them as a foreign policy tool to avoid high military expenditures and public criticism [6].

The significance of intelligence for a country lies in its role in protecting the state from external threats and providing accurate information about other nations. In particular, when discussing intelligence, a key figure in Uzbekistan's history comes to mind—Bahrom Ibrohimov (Oyqorli), the legendary and first Uzbek intelligence officer. He completely thwarted Nazi Germany's Third Front plan, laying the foundation for Uzbekistan's intelligence operations in foreign policy.

Another vital aspect of international relations and foreign policy is interethnic relations. Uzbekistan's constructive policies in this field are reflected in President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's decree of November 15, 2019, on "Approving the Concept of State Policy in the Sphere of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Uzbekistan," as well as in Goal 74 of the 2022-2026 Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan, which aims to "Strengthen the atmosphere of interethnic harmony and interfaith tolerance in society." Additionally, Goal 100 of the "Uzbekistan – 2030" strategy is dedicated to "Strengthening the environment of interethnic harmony in society and developing friendly relations with foreign countries." These initiatives enhance Uzbekistan's prestige in the international community and demonstrate the adoption of best foreign practices in this field.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated: "We must further strengthen our efforts to preserve and consolidate the friendship and harmony among representatives of various nationalities and ethnic groups living in our country, as well as mutual respect and solidarity" [7].

International organizations and agreements are crucial elements in foreign policy and international relations. In particular, when choosing sides in politics, the role of international organizations and agreements is significant. One of the key references in this regard is the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (No. PQ-4756), issued on June 22, 2020, on “Measures to Improve the Implementation of Uzbekistan’s Obligations Arising from International Agreements and Membership in International Organizations.”

Uzbekistan pursues a peaceful foreign policy aimed at developing bilateral and multilateral relations with states and international organizations. Based on the supreme interests of the state and people, their prosperity, and security, Uzbekistan may enter into alliances, join commonwealths, and other interstate structures, as well as withdraw from them if necessary [1].

The broad-scale reforms, openness, and renewal in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy are becoming increasingly evident. Notably, relations with neighboring countries have warmed in recent years. For instance, the delimitation and demarcation of border areas with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have prevented potential conflicts with neighboring states.

Since assuming office in 2016, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's reforms have placed Uzbekistan at the heart of historical Turkestan, bringing its name into frequent international discourse. The president's "soft power"-based diplomacy, rooted in a constructive and balanced foreign policy, has eliminated the previously tense atmosphere in the region. The success of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy, developed using elements of soft power, is clearly visible [10].

In November 2017, at an international conference in Samarkand, President Mirziyoyev proposed six initiatives aimed at transforming Central Asia into a stable, economically developed, and highly progressive region in the near future. These include:

1. Business and Diplomacy: The core idea of this initiative is to enhance trade exchange, expand large-scale trade relations with other international organizations, and establish business diplomacy to increase the gross domestic product (GDP).

2. Transport Diplomacy: Practical steps in this direction have already begun. Transportation networks, including railways and highways, are being developed. Once the transportation system is fully established, trade volume will increase, and international relations will strengthen.

3. Preventive Diplomacy: This form of diplomacy focuses on preventing disputes between parties, avoiding the escalation of existing conflicts into crises, and limiting the spread of ongoing conflicts through diplomatic measures [10]. Due to recent reforms in preventive diplomacy among Central Asian countries, threats such as terrorism, religious extremism, transnational crime, and drug trafficking are decreasing year by year.

4. Border Diplomacy: For years, unresolved border issues have been a major concern. Thanks to the initiative of President Mirziyoyev, agreements on the delimitation and demarcation of previously unsettled border areas with neighboring countries have been reached. Border diplomacy plays a critical role in foreign policy.

5. Water Diplomacy: In today's world, landlocked countries without direct access to seas and oceans face significant geopolitical and economic challenges. Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, fall into this category. Given this, political and regional analysts have consistently warned about potential serious and pressing water-related issues in their research [10].

Water resources are of critical importance to Central Asia, as transboundary rivers such as the Amu Darya and Syr Darya are shared among the region's states. These nations not only have the right to use these waters but also bear a

collective responsibility for their sustainable management. If these water resources are not used efficiently, the consequences could be catastrophic for the region. Moreover, the ongoing crisis of the Aral Sea, which has nearly dried up, remains a pressing global environmental challenge. Therefore, water diplomacy must be strengthened to encourage all stakeholders to seek a collective and effective solution to this issue.

6. Public Diplomacy: This proposal aims to further strengthen relations between countries and peoples, enhance cultural and humanitarian cooperation, and promote friendship and good neighborly relations. It aligns closely with the concept of a “shared space” that fosters regional unity and collaboration.

The soft power approach of New Uzbekistan is primarily based on diplomacy, emphasizing international dialogue and constructive engagement. Domestically, the government prioritizes public opinion, transparency, and openness while also focusing on the restoration of historical sites to enhance cultural and historical appeal. Today, New Uzbekistan’s peace-oriented and humanitarian diplomacy stands as a testament to its leader’s commitment to soft power policies.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Based on the above discussions, the following key points can be highlighted:

1. Commitment to a Peaceful and Neutral Foreign Policy:

As outlined in the Constitution, Uzbekistan pursues a foreign policy aimed at fostering bilateral and multilateral relations with states and international organizations based on the principles of peace and cooperation.

2. An Independent and Balanced Foreign Policy:

Uzbekistan maintains strategic autonomy, avoiding excessive dependence on any one geopolitical bloc, while strengthening ties with a broad range of international partners.

3. Public Diplomacy and National Identity:

Public diplomacy, patriotism, and national pride play a crucial role in shaping Uzbekistan's foreign policy. A strong balance is maintained between domestic and foreign policy priorities to ensure national unity and progress.

Final Thoughts

Uzbekistan's well-structured and consistent foreign policy is solidifying its position in global politics. The country's active participation in diplomatic affairs demonstrates its growing influence and ability to make meaningful contributions to international relations.

New Uzbekistan's people-centered diplomacy fosters a renewed sense of global outlook, intellectual engagement, and deep respect for both national and universal values among all nations and communities.

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