
THE DIRECTION OF CENTRAL ASIA IN UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the direction of Central Asia in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. Despite the threat of a global pandemic, the leaders of the Central Asian countries maintained constant dialogue and continued active cooperation between the countries. The countries of the region began to provide social assistance to each other from the first days of the spread of the coronavirus infection. Uzbekistan sent humanitarian aid to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan several times.

KEYWORDS: Central Asia, Uzbekistan, foreign policy, global pandemic, active cooperation, social assistance, coronavirus infection, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

Most countries in the world conducted their foreign political activities on the basis of equal cooperation with other countries. Currently, the Republic of Uzbekistan is gaining special influence in the world community based on the unwavering adherence to this principle in its foreign policy.

It should be noted that today every country conducts its foreign policy based on international law norms, universally recognized principles of international law and its national legislation.

THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In particular, the main rules of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan are as follows:

- Openness to cooperation regardless of ideological views, commitment to universal values, peace and security;
- Respecting the sovereign equality of states and the inviolability of borders;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries;
- Peaceful resolution of disputes;
- Not to use force and not to threaten force;
- Respect for human rights and freedoms;

- Precedence of universally recognized rules and norms of international law over internal national laws and legal norms;
- Establishing alliances, entering and leaving commonwealths in order to ensure the highest interests, welfare and security of the state and the people;
- Not to join aggressive military blocs and alliances;
- Equality and mutual interest in interstate relations, the primacy of national interests of the state;
- Development of foreign relations on the basis of both bilateral and multilateral agreements, not to move away from one country at the expense of rapprochement with another [13.20]

In the Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis in 2018, it is emphasized that conducting the foreign policy of Uzbekistan on the basis of new quality and content is one of the priority tasks. Including:

- to continue our activities in the field of foreign policy based on openness, mutual equal and beneficial cooperation and take measures to further increase its effectiveness;
- To expand the scope of political and economic relations, to open new representative offices of Uzbekistan in foreign countries, to increase the number of employees;
- to further improve the legal base of our country's foreign economic and political activities in order to promote the political and economic interests of our country in the international arena;
- in the future, to conduct an active foreign policy aimed at further developing our relations with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States, primarily with the Russian Federation, as well as with the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, the countries of the European Union, the Republic of Korea and Japan;
- paying special attention to further strengthening cooperation with the countries of the Muslim world, which connect us with mutual historical, cultural and spiritual values;
- based on these goals, to further enrich mutually beneficial relations with our foreign partners with practical content in all areas;
- relying on a clear and clear strategy aimed at ensuring security and sustainable development in Central Asia in our foreign policy;
- Uzbekistan considers it an important task to develop practical and mutually beneficial relations with neighboring countries in the region, as well as with Turkey, India, Pakistan, and Iran [14].

As an independent, equal member of the world community, the Republic of Uzbekistan conducts its foreign policy in accordance with the UN Charter, international agreements, conventions, regional organizations established on the basis of democratic principles on human rights, as well as in its sovereign capacity, the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On the main principles of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan", "On the main principles of the policy of the foreign economic activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan", Conducts on the basis of

the Law “On the Defense Doctrine of the Republic of Uzbekistan” and agreements concluded with international and regional organizations, foreign countries and governments.

In particular, the law “On the main principles of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan” enshrines the following principles:

Substance 1: The foreign policy and international activities of the Republic of Uzbekistan are subject to the norms and principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law “On International Agreements of the Republic of Uzbekistan”, the Law “On Defense” of Uzbekistan to the Law of the Republic, it is based on the Defense Doctrine and other laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the principles and goals of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the obligations arising from the international treaties and agreements of the Republic of Uzbekistan ratified by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Substance 6: The Republic of Uzbekistan does not participate in military-political blocs in accordance with the Law “On International Agreements of the Republic of Uzbekistan” and the Defense Doctrine of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Republic of Uzbekistan reserves the right to withdraw from any interstate structure, if this structure is transformed into a military-political bloc [15].

On the basis of the Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Parliament of Uzbekistan dated December 22, 2017, major plans related to the implementation of priority tasks related to foreign policy were developed. On January 11, 2018, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, held a meeting dedicated to the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies of our country in foreign countries, and defined the highly responsible tasks facing the representatives of the diplomatic corps. At the same time, the activities of many ambassadors were severely criticized. During the meeting, it was noted that activities will be carried out in the following important directions:

- Raising the quality of our partnership with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other prestigious international structures and financial institutions to a new level;
- In 2018, the President emphasized that the activities of diplomatic institutions should be focused on solving the following most important tasks.

In the fall of 2016, when Sh.M. Mirziyoyev came to power in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the issue of cooperation with the countries of Central Asia became a priority in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy. Uzbekistan promoted pragmatic ideas in foreign policy and strove to establish good neighborly relations.

In his speech at the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 19, 2017, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev said that Central Asia is the priority direction of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, "We are ready to cooperate with Central Asian countries on all issues without exception on the basis of reasonable compromise.

Thanks to our joint efforts, the level of political trust in our region has increased significantly in the following months. Principally important solutions have been found on many issues", he said [3].

The President of Uzbekistan, Sh. Mirziyoyev, on November 10, 2017, held in Samarkand under the auspices of the UN, at the international conference on the topic "Central Asia: common history and common future, cooperation for sustainable development and progress", the priority of future cooperation with the countries of Central Asia highlighted the directions and they are as follows [16]:

Firstly, it is the development of trade and economic relations and the creation of favorable conditions for increasing the volume of trade and strengthening cooperation.

Secondly, it is necessary to ensure the more effective use of the transit-logistics potential of the region and the rapid development of the transport infrastructure.

Thirdly, this is to further strengthen practical cooperation in order to ensure security and stability in Central Asia.

Fourthly, it is to quickly and decisively complete the process of delimitation and demarcation of state borders.

Fifth, to regulate the problem of equitable use of water resources in the region as soon as possible.

Sixth, it is necessary to strengthen cultural and humanitarian relations, friendship and good neighborly relations between our countries and peoples.

With this, the consultative meeting of the heads of the Central Asian states put forward the proposal to hold the meeting. As a result, another platform was formed, which allows for mutual trust and cooperation between the Central Asian countries, and until today three times of consultation meetings of the heads of state have been held.

It should be noted that the first consultation meeting of the leaders of the Central Asian countries was held on March 15, 2018 in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. The second meeting was held on November 29, 2019 in Tashkent. Unlike the first conference, Gurbanguli Berdimuhamedov personally participated in this meeting, not the chairman of the Parliament of Turkmenistan.

Also, at the Tashkent meeting, it was agreed to hold the next meeting in Bishkek. However, the 2020 meeting was not held due to the coronavirus pandemic. The next consultative meeting of

the leaders of the Central Asian countries will be held on August 6, 2021 in the national tourism zone “Avaza” of Turkmenistan.

During his speech at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly on September 23, 2020, the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev emphasized cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. He also proposed the development of the “International Code of Voluntary Obligations of States during Pandemics” and emphasized that today’s Central Asian countries have an important strategic task to ensure the deep integration of this region into the global economic, transport and transit corridors [17].

Even during the time of global crisis and the spread of the coronavirus infection, Uzbekistan paid special attention to ensuring social and economic stability in the country and continuing cooperation with the countries of the region and the world community. In particular, in order to bring relations with the countries of the Central Asian region to a new level in terms of quality and content in the spirit of mutual friendship, good neighborliness and strategic partnership in all fields, 23 government agencies for foreign political and economic activities during 2020 at the highest level and 12 high-level visits and various activities were carried out. In this process, it was observed that “people’s diplomacy” was very active in practice. In particular, more than 90 different meetings, conferences, video conferences and other such events were held with the participation of representatives of the people - scientists and artists, cultural and religious figures, businessmen and youth, tourism and sports organizations, public associations and non-governmental organizations [2].

As a result, the level of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region has risen to a new level. In particular, during 2017-2019, the trade turnover with the countries of Central Asia increased by more than 50 percent annually and reached 5.2 billion dollars. According to the results of 2020, despite the conditions of the global pandemic, the total volume of trade turnover of Uzbekistan with Central Asian countries was 5 billion dollars.

In particular, the share of Central Asian countries in the total foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan increased from 12.4% in 2019 to 13.6% in 2020. In the total foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan in the region, the share of Kazakhstan was 61%, Kyrgyzstan - 18.2%, Turkmenistan - 10.6% and Tajikistan - 10.2%.

According to the data of the State Statistics Committee, the trade turnover of Uzbekistan with Central Asian countries from 2016 to 2019 has more than doubled, from 2.5 billion dollars to 5.2 billion dollars. The growth rate was 1.8 times with Kazakhstan, 5 times with Kyrgyzstan, 2.7 times with Turkmenistan, and 2.4 times with Tajikistan. The share of Uzbekistan in the total trade turnover with Central Asian countries also increased from 10.2 to 12.4 percent.

This improvement of trade and economic relations between the countries of Central Asia, in general, helped to increase the investment attractiveness of the region. In particular, between

2017 and 2020, more than 300 contracts, as well as contracts and agreements worth about 75 billion dollars, were signed between Uzbekistan and the countries of the region [18.1003].

Also, during 2017-2020, as a result of Uzbekistan's open, constructive, thoughtful and pragmatic policy towards the countries of Central Asia, water use, delimitation and demarcation of state borders between Uzbekistan and neighboring countries, transport communications a solution to complex and confusing problems such as access, crossing state borders has been found. If five years ago 200-300 people crossed the Uzbek-Kyrgyz state border per day, before the restrictions introduced due to the global pandemic, this indicator reached 30 thousand people per day. Uzbekistan-Tajikistan and 20,000 citizens crossed the border a day.

The open and constructive policy of Uzbekistan towards the countries of Central Asia is proven by the joint measures taken by the leaders of the region to mitigate the consequences of the spread of the coronavirus during the global pandemic.

Despite the threat of a global pandemic, the leaders of the Central Asian countries maintained constant dialogue and continued active cooperation between the countries. The countries of the region began to provide social assistance to each other from the first days of the spread of the coronavirus infection. Uzbekistan sent humanitarian aid to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan several times. In response, our neighbors, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, provided humanitarian assistance to restore the Sardoba reservoir. Also, in December 2020, with the support of Uzbekistan, a 200-bed infectious disease hospital, fully equipped with the necessary medical equipment and furniture, was commissioned in Kyrgyzstan.

In addition, in the fight against the coronavirus during the pandemic, the exchange of information and experience in the field of medicine, the provision of mutual humanitarian assistance, and the establishment of uninterrupted movement of goods at the borders were achieved. This made it possible to ensure that the number of cases of coronavirus and the number of deaths as a result of it are low in the region compared to other countries of the world.

In addition, in January this year, the governments of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the United States, launched the "Central Asian Investment Partnership" initiative in order to attract at least 1 billion dollars in five years to support projects that serve to expand economic ties in the region. Through the "C5+1" platform

In order to strengthen and ensure the growth of the economy of Central Asian countries, this initiative seeks to use all available opportunities to increase trade, stimulate comprehensive development and deepen multilateral relations [19].

In the Address of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis and in the 2021 "Year of Youth Support and Public Health Promotion" State Program, special importance is attached to the strengthening of close neighborly relations with Central Asian countries.

In particular, the state program of this year includes the plan of measures for consistent continuation of relations with the countries of Central Asia [20]:

^ Developing a comprehensive program of measures to bring the bilateral and regional relations of Uzbekistan to a new level in terms of quality with the countries of Central Asia;

- > organization of high and high-level mutual visits;
- > Effective use of “people’s diplomacy” mechanisms;
- > joint resolution of existing obstacles to strengthening good neighborly relations;
- > creating favorable conditions for the development of trade and economic relations and the growth of the volume of trade and strengthening of cooperation;
- > ensuring effective use of transit and logistics potential of the region and development of transport infrastructure;
- > It is planned to activate the cooperation between the regions of the Central Asian countries (including the border regions).

In addition, this year Uzbekistan will strengthen its relations with the countries of Central Asia through multilateral cooperation mechanisms, including the United Nations (UN), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries (TCSC), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other structures, in which strengthening not only political-diplomatic relations, but also economic diplomacy, inter-parliamentary diplomacy and public diplomacy.

Characteristics of bilateral relations:

Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan relations. Shavkat Mirziyoyev made his first foreign visit as the President of Uzbekistan to Turkmenistan on March 6-7, 2017. At the meeting, an agreement was reached on the continuation of cooperation on the creation of modern infrastructure in the field of transport. It is envisaged that this cooperation will unite the transport systems of Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguli Berdimuhamedov, will pay a state visit to Uzbekistan on April 23, 2018, and 17 documents on the development of mutual cooperation will be signed. On April 29 of this year, the leaders of the two countries held another meeting in the city of Ashgabat. Due to the changes in recent years, the volume of trade has more than tripled and reached 530 million dollars by the end of last year, more than 150 joint ventures have been established.

Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan relations. Initially, Shavkat Mirziyoyev was on a state visit to Kazakhstan on March 22-23, 2017. At the end of the negotiations, 13 interstate, intergovernmental and

interdepartmental documents will be signed. “Aq Oltin” and “Malik” checkpoints on the M-39 highway, which were closed in 2006, will be reopened.

On April 14-15, 2019, the current President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kasim-Jomart Tokaev, was in Uzbekistan on a state visit. During the meeting, it was noted that both sides are interested in increasing the volume of bilateral trade turnover to 5 billion dollars in the near future.

During the past period, several negotiations on the demarcation of the interstate border were held in the areas where the borders of the Syrdarya and Jizzakh regions and the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan meet. By the end of 2020, bilateral foreign trade turnover exceeded 3 billion dollars.

Uzbekistan-Tajikistan relations. In the past years, the border and water-energy issues in Uzbekistan-Tajikistan relations, which were considered complex and sensitive for many years without a solution, also found their solution. All these changes are felt in the lives of ordinary citizens. For the first time in many years, they had the opportunity to freely visit their relatives and friends. About 20,000 people cross the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border every day. 3-4 years ago, this figure was only 3-3.5 thousand.

In 2018, mutual state visits were held for the first time in the history of bilateral relations. In general, since September 2016, the leaders of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have met more than 15 times in the framework of various summits.

The last meeting of the leaders of the two countries took place on June 10 in Dushanbe. At the meeting, several agreements were signed on the establishment of a joint-stock company for the construction of a hydroelectric power plant on the Zarafshan River, as well as on cargo transit.

Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan relations. For the first time in the past 10 years, positive results were achieved in the relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on border issues. The President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadir Japarov, made his third state visit to Uzbekistan after taking office as the country's leader. Before that, Japarov went to Kazakhstan and Russia. Within the framework of the visit, 22 documents covering almost all directions of the multifaceted Uzbekistan-Kyrgyz partnership were signed. It was noted that the problems on the border, which is one of the most sensitive points between the two countries, will be resolved in the near future.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the changes in Uzbekistan's foreign policy show that the country's leader is taking a comprehensive approach to solving the accumulated problems. The international community welcomed and recognized these changes. Undoubtedly, all this will serve as a basis for more beneficial cooperation in 2018. The reforms in Uzbekistan's foreign policy have become an important indicator of strengthening cooperation between Central Asian countries. The region is increasingly moving from fragmentation to cooperation. In the future, we can witness more radical creative processes. Therefore, the region is united by common values, culture, religion and history. In this sense, the region has the opportunity to present itself in a new way on the

international stage, to improve its image, and to attract more foreign investments. These serve the interests of all countries.

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