



## Establishment of Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan and its Priorities

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**ANNOTATION:** The article analyzes the process of formation of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the main factors contributing to the formation of the foreign policy of the new state, taking into account the situation in Central Asia. The study also highlights the principles and priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy activities and topical issues of developing international cooperation in order to preserve and strengthen regional stability.

**KEYWORDS:** Central Asia, International cooperation, Republic of Uzbekistan, Regional stability, Security.

*Synopsis.* Since ancient times, with the foundation of state associations and the growth of various activities of humankind (economic, military, political, etc.), the need to establish relationships between different societies arose. Thus, the first state formations of Central Asia, namely Bactria, Sogd, and Khorezm, as well as the Sako–Massagetae tribes before the Great Silk Road began to establish relations with the largest countries of those times: Achaemenid Iran, India, China, and other Eastern and Western states [1, – p. 109–111]. Later, the Central Asian (CA) states, historically located at the crossroads of interaction between different civilizations and cultures, also took active steps to arrange inter–state relations. For instance, during Amir Temur's governance, the relations were formed with France, England, Spain, Italy, Egypt, India, China and many other countries to develop trade and diplomatic relations [2, – p. 114], which contributed to the development of cooperation between the countries of Asia and Europe.

During the Soviet Union, international policy issues were the domain of the Soviet authorities, and the Union republics, including the Uzbek SSR entirely supported and conducted in relevant forms a common foreign policy, in the execution of their constitutional rights they constantly proceeded from the common interests of the Union of the SSR.

*Factors determining the country's foreign policy.* After regaining independence, Uzbekistan obtained the means to independently conduct its foreign policy based on national interests, geopolitical conditions, available economic (natural and raw resources, industrial capacities, etc.) and cultural expansion, as well as on the emerging conditions in Central Asia. At the same time, the republic's foreign policy priorities were defined in light of a number of factors that existed at the time, among which the most important were:

– the first factor is the economic co–dependency of the former republics of the Soviet Union (a closed all–union space with a joint ruble zone, a transport and energy system, and close commercial ties). Moreover, Uzbekistan's lack of direct access to seaports after the collapse of the USSR posed certain challenges to its economy's transition to the world economy;

– the second factor was Uzbekistan's geopolitical location. The Republic, occupying the central position in the region and having a border with all other Central Asian states–Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan–geographically and historically fulfills the role of a mediator between the countries of the region, and between the states of Asia and Europe;

– the third factor is the presence of nuclear arms on the territory of Central Asia. In the early 90s of the last century, a huge stockpile of weapons of mass destruction of the former Soviet Union was concentrated in Kazakhstan: 1,040 nuclear warheads for intercontinental ballistic missiles and 370 warheads for air–launched cruise missiles [3, – p. 49];

– the fourth factor is the civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s, as well as the military–political turmoil in neighboring Afghanistan, where for decades armed conflicts, terrorism, extremism, and illicit drug production and distribution on a global scale have flourished;

– the fifth factor – Central Asia is a region of strategic significance in which the geopolitical and economic interests of major world and regional powers, such as China, Russia, the United States, India, Iran, Turkey, and others, collide. These interests are conditioned by the presence in the region of enormous stocks of mineral resources and strategic supplies, great transport and



communications potential that enable the development of international transport corridors, and the creation in the region of effective mechanisms to counter various threats to security.

The Aral Sea crisis, as a global problem, was taken into consideration in an international partnership aimed at ensuring the environmental safety of the region.

*The principles and priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy.* The core values of the country's foreign policy are reflected in the Constitution, the Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan on International Treaties (1995), on the Basic Principles of Foreign Policy (1996), on approval of the Concept of Foreign Policy (2012), on Defense Doctrine (2017), on the Strategy of Actions in Five Priority Areas of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021, and other normative and legal acts.

In the New Uzbekistan Development Strategy for 2022–2026 endorsed on January 28, 2022 [4], the key foreign policy priorities were defined as increasing the country's role as an equal subject of international relations; bringing to a higher level close coordination in security, trade and economic, water, energy, transport and cultural and humanitarian areas in the Central Asian region; developing Uzbekistan's relations with our traditional partners, expanding the geography of foreign economic relations; strengthening Uzbekistan's activities in the UN bodies and institutions, global and regional organizations; and enhancing its cooperation with the United Nations and other international bodies.

Having studied and analyzed the official documents adopted in this direction, it is fair to say that in defining its foreign policy course the republic has adhered to the following basic principles and priorities:

- multi-vector policy in foreign policy, the establishment and development of constructive relations with international organizations and foreign countries, especially with the closest neighbors in the region, the prevalence of national-state interests, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states;
- acknowledgement of the priority of international law over domestic legislation;
- recognition of the inviolability and permanence of state with bordering countries, completion of delimitation and demarcation processes of interstate borders with Central Asian countries, renunciation of the threat or use of force in resolving disputes;
- ensuring peace in the region, establishing a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia, non-participation in military-political blocs, and assistance in resolving the Afghan crisis;
- rational use of water resources of cross-border rivers in the region and development of international cooperation to ensure environmental stability in the region;
- enhancing the international image of Uzbekistan as a reliable and responsible partner in efforts to attract foreign investment and advanced technologies to the country's economy, promoting the development of international transport corridors that run through the country, as well as increasing its appeal in the international community.

Uzbekistan seeks to establish fair and mutually beneficial relations with all states, barring any possibility of interference in internal affairs, infringement of independence and sovereignty, and indoctrination of interstate relations [5]. And the main priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is the region of Central Asia, which is a single geographical, geopolitical, cultural and civilizational space.

According to the Concept of Foreign Policy, the republic reserves the right to enter into alliances, commonwealths and other multinational entities, including economic ones, which ensure stability, sustainable development and national security of the country, contribute to the information, technological and communication accession of the new state into world economic relations [6, – p. 15–16]. The Republic does not engage in military-political alliances and reserves the right to withdraw from any interstate formation in case of its transformation into a military-political bloc [7].

At the same time, the dynamically changing geopolitical situation, new trends in international relations and rapid development of globalization processes today demand the search for new approaches to ensure the stability of countries and the development of new security models. In turn, the problems of stability and sustainable development of individual countries in the context of globalization are of great importance in the interests of regional and international security.

*Multilateral cooperation to counter modern challenges and threats.* In today's world with the development of information technology, international transport and communication, and various integration processes there is a sharp increase in the impact of globalization on the stability of states. Globalization is an evolutionary trend of development of the modern world in all its spheres and has ambiguous consequences. On the one hand, it strengthens the relationship between states and regions and contributes to



the economic prosperity of developed countries, increasing their integration, contributes to the emergence of a global community [8, – p. 2]. On the other hand, globalization brings new dangers: conflicts in unstable regions can destabilize the international order and have a negative impact on international, regional and national security [9, – p. 39].

In the context of globalization on the international stage, there are new multifaceted threats to which modern societies are exposed. Such transnational phenomena as terrorism, extremism, drug and arms smuggling, environmental problems have changed the traditional notions of stability and security of any single state. Non-traditional threats to security in modern conditions may not be effectively faced by any state in the world alone, even though the borders between countries are not an obstacle to them. In such a situation, the involvement of sovereign states in international organizations is one of the important factors in preserving and strengthening security both in a particular region and on a global scale.

A quite logical consequence of such interest is Uzbekistan's foreign policy course aimed at interstate cooperation both on a bilateral basis with foreign countries and within the framework of international and regional organizations.

Adhering to this policy, the Republic of Uzbekistan in the period of its independence has managed to achieve recognition by the international community and establish mutually beneficial relations with many countries of the world. In particular, as of the end of 2022, the Republic of Uzbekistan established and maintains diplomatic relations with 142 countries. 46 embassies of foreign countries, 13 honorary consuls, 24 representative offices of international organizations, 26 representative offices of international intergovernmental and governmental organizations of foreign states are operating in Tashkent. In turn, the republic has 59 diplomatic and consular missions in foreign countries and with international organizations [10]. Uzbekistan is a member of more than 100 international organizations, including such prominent organizations as the UN, the CIS, the SCO, the Organization of Turkic States, etc., and is also developing relations with various structures of multilateral cooperation.

It is essential to note that in the contemporary world, where national and regional security issues are an inherent part of global security, Uzbekistan is also playing an active role in addressing pressing issues related to bolstering regional and international security. For example, the most important initiatives of the Uzbek side in this direction, which aroused great interest in the international community, are the November 2017 International Conference on ensuring security and sustainable development in the region under the auspices of the UN "Central Asia: Shared Past and a Common Future, Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Mutual Prosperity" in Samarkand and in March 2018 the Tashkent international high-level conference on Afghanistan "Peace process, security cooperation and regional interaction", which was attended by delegations from many international agencies and foreign countries. In addition, the Tashkent conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Interconnectedness. Challenges and Opportunities", hosted at the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan in July 2021, became a unique platform to discuss the development and augmentation of ties between the states of Central and South Asia, have a significant potential for regional integration due to their vast resources and economic opportunities, as well as the contribution of joint efforts of the regional countries to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan. According to Shabir Ahmad Khan, director of the Center for Central Asian Studies at the University of Peshawar, peace and stability in Afghanistan is the shared responsibility of all countries in the region. Afghanistan's peace is beyond the capacity of any country. The best route to help Afghanistan is to restore its historical role as a bridge between Central and South Asia. Thriving trade, transport and energy infrastructure through its territory will bring the country significant revenues, allowing it to reduce its dependence on foreign aid [11].

Uzbekistan considers another acute and urgent global problem—the tragedy of the Aral Sea, which has an adverse impact on the environment and the livelihoods of millions of people living in the region.

In order to prevent the disaster of ecosystems in the Aral Sea region at the initiative of Uzbekistan a multi-partner Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region was founded on November 27, 2018 at a special meeting of the United Nations. In addition, a special resolution proposed by Uzbekistan "On declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovation and technology" was adopted on May 18, 2021, during the plenary session of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly [12]. The adoption of this UNGA resolution is aimed at joining efforts to form conditions and incentives to attract investments in the development and implementation of high-tech innovations, environmentally friendly, energy- and water-saving technologies, comprehensive application of the principles of "green" economy, prevention of further desertification and environmental migration, development of ecotourism and implementation of other measures.

*Closure.* Having summarized the above, it should be noted that in the period of independence Uzbekistan, taking into account the transformation of the system of international relations in the modern world, has sought to conduct a mutually



beneficial and constructive foreign policy based on the principles and objectives of the United Nations, as well as on the obligations arising from international treaties and agreements.

In this regard, the main efforts in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan were aimed at adherence to the principle of multi-vector; participation in the formation of an effective system of bilateral and multilateral partnerships within international and regional organizations; building partnerships with other countries on the basis of equality and mutual respect; interest in the active promotion of foreign economic interests of the country; expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation with all partners for the sake of maintaining and strengthening peace.

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