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O'ZBEKISTON TASHQI SIYOSATIDAGI O'ZGARISHLAR: XALQARO TASHKILOTLAR ORQALI OBRO' VA HAMKORLIKNI MUSTAHKAMLASHDA FAOL ISHTIROK ETISH

СДВИГ ВО ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ УЗБЕКИСТАНА: АКТИВНОЕ УЧАСТИЕ В ПОСТРОЕНИИ РЕПУТАЦИИ И СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА ЧЕРЕЗ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ

SHIFT IN UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY: ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN REPUTATION AND COOPERATION BUILDING VIA INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Annotatsiya

Prezident Shavkat Mirziyoyev rahbarligidagi O'zbekistonning tashqi siyosati innovatsion va liberal islohotlar bilan ajralib turadi. Ushbu maqolada mamlakat ko'p vektorli diplomatik aloqalar orqali global miqyosdagi tarkiflari bilan "tashabbuskor" rolini qay tarzda o'z zimmasiga olayotganligi tahlil etilgan. O'zbekistonning xalqaro miqyosdagi obro'-e'tiborini oshib borayotganligi mamakat tashabbus bilan tashkil etilayotgan anjumanlarda xalqaro ahamiyatga molik rezolyutsiyalar qabul qilinayotganligi ta'kidlangan. O'zbekiston Afg'onistonda tinchlik o'rnatish jarayonida muhim rol o'ynab, global qurollarni tarqatmaslik va mintaqaviy xavfsizlikni ta'minlashdagi faol ishtiroki bilan o'z tashqi siyosatining tinchlikparvarlik tamoyillariga sodiq qolayotganligi ko'rsatib berilgan. O'zbekiston xalqaro maydonda terrorizmga qarshi kurashish va global xavfsizlikni ta'minlashda bag'rikenglik, yoshlar imkoniyatlarini kengaytirish va ularni ijtimoiy qo'llab-quvvatlash muhimligini ta'kidlayotganligi, Markaziy Osiyo davlatlari o'rtasidagi mintaqaviy hamkorlikka ustuvor ahamiyat qaratayotganligi va Orol dengizining qurishi kabi ekologik muammolarni hal qilishda ilg'or qadamlar qo'yayotganligi ochib berilgan. O'zbekiston turli xalqaro tashkilotlarga a'zoligi va ulardagi faol ishtiroki, sammitlarga mezbonlik qilishi bilan xalqaro siyosatning muhim subyekti sifatidagi o'z mavqei va nufuzini mustahkamlab borayotganligi asoslangan.

Аннотация

Внешняя политика Узбекистана при Президенте Шавката Мирзиёева характеризуется новаторскими и либеральными реформами. В этой статье описывается, как страна взяла на себя роль «инициатора», активно участвуя в инициативах глобального масштаба и многосторонней дипломатии. Узбекистан организовывал конференции и принимал международно-значимые резолюции, укрепляя свой международный имидж и демонстрируя свою добрую волю. Узбекистан активно выступает за мир, играя ключевую роль в мирном процессе в Афганистане и содействуя глобальным режимам нераспространения и региональной безопасности. На международной арене нация подчеркивает важность терпимости, расширения прав и возможностей молодежи и социальной поддержки в борьбе с терроризмом и обеспечении глобальной безопасности. Узбекистан также уделяет приоритетное внимание региональному сотрудничеству между государствами Центральной Азии и предпринимает новаторские действия для решения экологических проблем, таких как высыхание Аральского моря. Благодаря своему членству и активному участию в различных международных организациях, проведению саммитов Узбекистан укрепляет свои позиции и имидж важного субъекта международной политики.

Abstract

The foreign policy of Uzbekistan under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has been characterized by innovative and liberal reforms. This article describes how country has taken on the role of an "initiative-taker," actively engaging in global-scale initiatives and multilateral diplomacy. Uzbekistan has organized conferences and adopted internationally-relevant resolutions, enhancing its international image and showcasing its goodwill. Uzbekistan actively advocates for peace, playing a linchpin role in the peace process in Afghanistan and promoting global non-proliferation regimes and regional security. In the international arena, the nation emphasizes the importance of tolerance, youth empowerment, and social support in combating terrorism and promoting global security. Uzbekistan also prioritizes regional cooperation among Central Asian states and takes pioneering actions to address environmental challenges, such as the Aral Sea desiccation. With its membership and active participation in various international organizations, and hosting of summits, Uzbekistan strengthens its position and image as an important subject of international politics.

Kalit so'zlar: Tashqi siyosat, ko'p tomonlama diplomatiya, konferensiya diplomatiyasi, hamkorlik, xalqaro tashkilotlar, xalqaro munosabatlar, mintaqalararo muloqot.

Ключевые слова: Внешняя политика, многосторонняя дипломатия, конференционная дипломатия, сотрудничество, международные организации, международные отношения, межрегиональный диалог.

Key words: Foreign policy, multilateral diplomacy, conference diplomacy, cooperation, international organizations, international relations, inter-regional dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

International organizations are crucial actors in handling significant international political events, such as mediation, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and the implementation of sanctions. Stronger organizations tend to emerge from agreements between states that are usually referred to as inter-governmental organizations. These organizations are involved in addressing various global issues and governing various areas, ranging from global healthcare policies to worldwide monetary policies. The objective of Uzbekistan's engagement with international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), is to utilize their capacity and influence to aid Uzbekistan in its progress towards becoming a potent member of the global community. The President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in his book titled "New Uzbekistan Strategy", asserts that developing deeper relations and building resilient partnerships with international organizations carry great importance in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan.

A new foreign policy was formulated in a decree "On Uzbekistan's Development Strategy" signed by the president Shavkat Mirziyoyev. It specified five priority areas essential for the development of Uzbekistan. Among those five priority areas, it is pertinent to emphasize the economic development and liberalization, and implementation of a balanced, constructive foreign policy. To achieve these goals, the strategy urges to take action in expanding international cooperation, develop road transport infrastructure, introduce information and communication technologies, and improve the legal framework for foreign policy. The strategy aims to strengthen Uzbekistan's position as a full subject of international relations. Uzbekistan's foreign policy pursues the goal of resolving acute issues such as water usage, disputes over border delimitation, border crossing, transportation communication and environmental degradation by testing and investing in international organizations.

Moreover, the development strategy plan for 2022-2026 outlines several goals related to various areas of foreign policy. For instance, the seventy-third goal is about promoting the rich scientific heritage of Uzbekistan through international cooperation, conferences and forums organized by Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and others. The eighty-second goal targets to counter extremism and terrorism by improving international legal frameworks, exchanging information and experience with foreign states and international organizations, and participating in joint efforts to implement the UN Global Anti-Terrorism Strategy. The ninety-third goal aims at strengthening the role of Uzbekistan as an equal subject in international relations by holding ongoing dialogues and promoting Uzbekistan's position and initiatives on global issues. All these goals indicate Uzbekistan's constructive stance towards liberal institutionalism. Uzbekistan cooperates with dozens of organizations to promote the Foreign Policy Agenda of the country.

This research paper investigates the following research question: "How does Uzbekistan promote its foreign policy with the help of international organizations?". In order to answer the research question and further review what has already been written on the topic, the author consulted the legal documents concerning the norms and principles of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, other official state documents, speech and interviews of the officials and experts, and articles written on the topic. After careful analysis, author observed recent trend in Uzbekistan's foreign policy that is characterized by the effort to build and lead cooperation, and thereby enhance the country's reputation internationally. International organizations are certainly indispensable and prove necessary in fulfilling the country's aspiration to emerge as important player of international relations.

To prove the core argument of the research paper, this article will illustrate initiatives announced by Uzbekistan from the rostrum of international organizations in the field of strengthening international and regional security and peace; ecological restoration; promoting sustainable development; building stronger foundations in society such as imbuing tolerance and spirituality; consolidating technical and advisory assistance; and investing in tourism, transportation and logistics. It is not a coincidence that Uzbekistan takes initiatives multilaterally, believing in the

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utility of international organizations as effective actors which can aid cooperation-oriented policies of Uzbekistan.

USE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PROMOTE UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA

By acknowledging invaluable role of the international organizations, Uzbekistan actively engages in cooperation with them. Uzbekistan makes effective use of those organizations as a **platform** to voice concerns and perspectives of Uzbek people as well as a **reference point** to address issues within standardized and legitimate legal frameworks. For example, over the past six years, Uzbekistan has been actively engaging the UN in various international and regional initiatives and has gained unique experience in collaborating with the global community. By utilizing the UN as an international political platform, the country has been able to work towards resolving global and regional issues as a significant player in the international community.

There have been 25 UN entities (i.e. programs, funds and agencies) working together with the Government of Uzbekistan since 1991, which fully align their action with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. While some of these entities operate office in the country, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Children's Fund (UNICEF), The United Nations Educational, UNESCO, World Health Organization (WHO), the Population Fund (UNFPA), others continue their operations from headquarters or regional offices abroad, such as Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Human Rights Council.

Uzbekistan has a productive collaboration with the UN and its specialized agencies in different domains, including combating modern security threats and challenges, reconstruction of Afghanistan, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, seeking permanent solutions to environmental issues, particularly offsetting the negative consequences of the Aral Sea catastrophe, achieving socio-economic development, and promoting human rights. This illustrates that the utility of international organizations for Uzbekistan is their suitability to be used as a **catalyzer of change** both in local, regional and global levels. Speaking at the international conference held in November 2017 in Samarkand, on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and UN, the president pointed out that "the United Nations should play an important role in solving the problem of regional security..." and for this reason assured that "Uzbekistan will continue close partnership with the UN structures."

In recent years, Uzbekistan spearheaded the adoption of several resolutions and documents at the UN General Assembly, namely "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in Central Asia"; "Enlightenment and religious tolerance"; "Sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central Asia"; "Declaration of the Aral Sea region as a zone of environmental innovations and technologies"; "Samarkand Action Plan for the Development of Human Rights Education". This manifests that Uzbekistan's proposals and initiatives have received broad international support and recognition.

Uzbekistan and the UN prioritize regional security, peace, and stability. In this direction, the Tashkent Declaration and the resolution about strengthening regional cooperation to ensure peace in Central Asia, both signed in 2018, are evidential. These documents enhance mutual cooperation to particularly address security issues (i.e. situation in Afghanistan), besides developing common grounds on use of water, transportation etc. Moreover, during the 51st meeting of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, in the leadership of Uzbekistan, a resolution titled "Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance" was unanimously adopted, which emphasizes support for all kinds of initiatives that aim to foster harmony in intercultural and interreligious relations – the best prevention strategy to fight religious extremism and radicalism in the name of peace and stability – and combat discrimination based on religion and beliefs. The resolution also acknowledges the essential role of UNESCO in ensuring peace and tolerance.

UNESCO is especially functional in realizing the foreign policy goals. Uzbekistan is proud and aware of rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the country. In this respect, Uzbekistan engages UNESCO to highlight the importance of the cultural treasures of the region, and emphasize the role

and contribution of Uzbekistan in shaping global values and fostering mutual understanding among nations. Thus, engagement takes shape in the form of organizing international forums such as the “Central Asia at the Crossroads of World Civilizations”, held in Khiva in 2021. Similarly, the International Institute for Central Asian Studies, established in Samarkand in 1995 as part of “UNESCO Silk Road Programme” initiative, focuses on bringing scientific and cultural problems of Central Asia to a wider audience’s attention, as well as improving cooperation among scientists to study cultural heritage, environment, archeology, and history of the region.

Uzbekistan collaborates with the UN on environmental issues and alleviating ramifications of it as well, specifically focusing on protecting and rehabilitating the ecology, and improving the socio-economic indicators complicated as a result of environmental degradation. Shavkat Mirziyoyev has brought to attention the urgent issue of the Aral Sea tragedy and appealed to the world community to take action in order to minimize the negative impact on the livelihoods of people in Central Asia and conserve the natural and biological balance in the region. On the initiative of Uzbekistan, in 2018, the UN led a program to establish the “United Nations Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region” which is planned to serve as a platform where international community combine its efforts to assist and increase resilience of the population living in the area affected by the consequences of drying up of the Aral Sea basin. This indicates that Uzbekistan and the UN align their actions and share common goals to address the issue.

Furthermore, Uzbekistan hosted an international forum, called “Central Asia at the crossroads of world civilizations” in 2021; organized Samarkand web forum titled “Youth 2020: global solidarity, sustainable development and human rights” in 2020; the president Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed to adopt an International Code of Voluntary Commitments of States during pandemics and establish a permanent UN commission on Afghanistan that “would address the concerns of long-suffering Afghan people”; in cooperation with Uzbekistan, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has established a regional center in Samarkand to promote tourism on the Great Silk Road; to eradicate forced and child labor Uzbekistan has involved ILO in the country; Uzbekistan also masterminded the idea of creating the nuclear-weapon-free-zone at the international conference in Tashkent in 1997, which turned into a regional treaty in 2006. These examples demonstrate that Uzbekistan has effectively deployed resources of the UN agencies, used those agencies as a means (i.e. platform to voice concerns and suggestions) and as legitimate authority (i.e. enacting legally binding norms through agencies) to achieve progress in domestic, regional and global questions.

TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE OF CREATING INTER-REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Uzbekistan acknowledges the reality that Central Asia is located in a relatively disadvantageous geography away from sea ports and international transport hubs. This in turn creates difficulties for integration of the region into the world economy. On the other hand, neglected nature of the region has caused many challenges for the regional countries ranging from transportation to security issues that definitely have global consequences, such as activities of non-state violent actors and trafficking of illegal goods. These issues pose threat to the region and their control requires full integration to and support of the world community. Therefore, Uzbekistan pays special attention to build strong diplomatic and economic ties with outer regions and sub-regions via partnerships and investments. Uzbekistan takes up the challenge of creating inter-regional connectedness.

When asked about “specific tasks that are necessary to take action on to ensure a worthy future”, the president Shavkat Mirziyoyev answered that “it is necessary to more effectively use the transit and logistics potential of the region and ensure the rapid development of transport infrastructure” and commended the Turkmenabat-Farab bridge that is seen as an important section of the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman transport and transit route. Particularly, CIS countries are indispensable in bridging Uzbekistan with other regions of the world, while allowing a free space for Uzbekistan to maneuver thanks to previously inter-connected nature of the socio-economic relations between post-Soviet countries. Uzbekistan views the CIS as a crucial element of interstate cooperation. For instance, the CIS reserves the potential to develop common approaches to solve issues, such as threat to security, through high-level political dialogues.

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One of the milestones in the inter-regional partnership is the “Central Asia - South Asia” format. On the initiative of the head of Uzbekistan, the international conference titled "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities" was held in the city of Tashkent, in 2021, with delegations from 44 countries and 30 international organizations. It aims to strengthen regional interdependence; and expand cooperation between regions in various fields, including transport-logistics, energy, trade, production, investment and more. The format was born out of necessity and is based on the premises that “there are no effective cross-border roads, trade-economic relations are not well developed, and the potential of cultural-humanitarian relations is not fully utilized [...]” partially due to instability in Afghanistan, where Uzbekistan is interested in sustainable peace and stability. Uzbekistan proved effective in using the language of conference diplomacy by raising pressing issues at the inter-regional level. The conference once more provided insight into the nature, new priority directions and strategies of Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: BUILDING THE IMAGE OF NEW UZBEKISTAN

Presidency of Shavkat Mirziyoyev inspired new trends and trajectories in foreign policy of Uzbekistan. Implementation of innovative and liberal reforms in the country, and the concept of third renaissance opened up the country and shaped its foreign policy accordingly. Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been tasked with taking global-scale initiatives on various areas to promote regional and international policy-making, which accentuates “**initiative-taker**” character of the state. Multilateral diplomacy has become a key determinant in Uzbek foreign policy. As mentioned above, the country's leadership initiated several conferences and the adoption of many internationally-relevant documents (i.e. resolutions) that simultaneously serve the purpose of building the international image and demonstrating the goodwill of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan adheres to a policy of neutrality and refrains from aligning with military-political blocs. The country prohibits the deployment of foreign military bases and facilities on its territory and similarly refuses participating in military conflicts abroad. In other words, Uzbekistan engraves in its military and foreign policy doctrine that the country shall maintain a peaceful line of coexistence and development, avoid military alliances and conflicts, and restrict foreign military presence on its land. In the same vein, the peaceful resolution and prevention of conflicts, and achieving new levels of cooperation and dialogue between nations are among the aspirations of the foreign policy. For instance, Uzbekistan initiated the Tashkent High-level International Conference on the topic of “Peace Process, Security Cooperation and Regional Partnership” which put the peace process in Afghanistan at the core. The conference showed that Uzbekistan intends to play a **linchpin** role in contributing to the international efforts regarding the settlement of instability in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan has taken considerable initiatives in **peace advocacy** with a unique formula for stable peace in regional and global levels. As a well-known fact, Uzbekistan played a crucial role in promoting global non-proliferation regime and regional security by proposing the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia (CAWFZ), which was consolidated as a treaty in September 2006. On the other hand, the fight against international terrorism, extremism and illegal trafficking is essential part of image creation. Uzbekistan supports the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, which was created partly due to Uzbekistan's attempt to create the International Center for Combating Terrorism (proposed at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999), in 2001. The president Shavkat Mirziyoyev further suggests establishing a regional council of experts under the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office to improve rehabilitation and reintegration process for repatriated citizens from conflict zones and combat terrorist propaganda in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan contributes with an interesting insight that peace is only durable with the **inculcation of tolerance** in youth. Uzbekistan believes that the use of force alone to combat terrorism is insufficient, and that multilateral cooperation in the field of social support for young people is crucial. To this end, in 72nd session of the General Assembly, Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed the development of a UN International Convention on the Rights of Youth that will guide the formation and implementation of youth policy, taking into account the globalization and the rapid development of information technologies. Moreover, Uzbekistan also led the adoption of a

resolution of the General Assembly called "Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance" in 2018, which aims at eliminating illiteracy and ignorance, and promoting religious tolerance and mutual respect to strengthen global security and peace. This is regarded as a great achievement of Uzbekistan's foreign policy and manifestation of diplomatic dexterity in international affairs.

Uzbekistan considers cooperation among Central Asian states as a main driver of positive change in the region. To attain high-levels of cooperation, the president of Uzbekistan suggested holding consultative meetings in the format of "Central Asian Heads of State Consultation Council". The format allows regional countries to effectively use the platform for jointly addressing the current problems based on the principle of common responsibility. In recent times, four such advisory meetings have been held in the cities of Astana, Tashkent, Avaza and Cholpon-Ata. Within the framework, the participating countries discussed regional cooperation in addressing environmental challenges, joint water use, providing practical assistance to the Afghan people and more. The format was positively received by international community, noting that it has initiated a new era of regional cooperation, whereas Uzbekistan proved its **pivotal role** in setting up a platform for future collaboration. Therefore, as discussed under the heading of "Taking up the challenge of creating inter-regional partnerships" of this research paper, Uzbekistan emerges as a **key to inter-regional dialogue**.

When it comes to the Aral Sea desiccation and desertification in general, Uzbekistan constructs an image of **decision-maker with environment/ecology in mind**. Uzbekistan actively confronts the consequences of the Aral Sea disaster by implementing practical measures to prevent further damage. As it has been already mentioned, the country contributed to the establishment of the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region. Since the environmental situation in the region is still critical, and protecting the population and promoting sustainable development are crucial, the President of Uzbekistan declared the Aral Sea region as a zone of environmental innovations and technologies through a special resolution at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly.

Finally, Uzbekistan has become member of new organizations (i.e. Organization of Turkic States in 2019) and headed several others in recent years, aside from hosting summits and conferences of these organizations. For example, in October 2019, delegates to the UN General Assembly elected Uzbekistan as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period of 2021-2023 for the first time since the independence of the republic. The Human Rights Council is responsible for monitoring the human rights situation around the world and making recommendations to heads of state. In 2022, Uzbekistan has taken on the chairmanship of three prominent international organizations, namely the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Organization of Turkic States, and the Economic Cooperation Organization. The planning of summits in Uzbekistan with the participation of leaders from member states of these organizations signifies a new chapter in Uzbekistan's foreign policy and multilateral diplomacy. In all these, the leadership of Uzbekistan is using the opportunity to further the image of the country as an important actor of international politics.

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