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A.A.Каримов Философия калама –рациональная основа средневекового исламского мировоззрения.....	203
D.E.Normatova Islom islohchiligi (modernizm): diniy-falsafiy va siyosiy jihatlar.....	210
B.E.Xusanov Estetik tarbiya mohiyatining falsafiy tahlili.....	215
N.M.Axmadiyev Yoshlarning axloqiy, ma’rifiy, madaniy tafakkurini yuksaltirishda kekxa avlod tajribasidan foydalanishning ahamiyati.....	220
N.N.Teshayev Fuqarolik jamiyati rivojlanishining ijtimoiy-madaniy omillari	223
K.G’.Kamolova Ijtimoiy-gumanitar fanlar tizimida falsafaning o’rni	227
M.M.Qaxxorova, B.Farfiev Oila instituti mustahkamligining ijtimoiy-madaniy asoslari.....	232
K.U.Sharipova Jamiyatda gender tenglikning shakllanish jarayoni.....	240
S.A.Xayrullayev Jamiyat barqarorligida konsolidatsiya jarayonining konseptual asoslari.....	244
O’.X.Rajabov Maslahat – konsensusning sinergetik omili	248
Sh.T.Abbosova Milliy g’oya –insoniyatni barqaror taraqqiyot sari yetaklovchi kuch	251

SIYOSAT

K.X.Avazov Siyosiy tadqiqotlar tizimida tahdid, tahdidbardosh jamiyat tushunchasining mazmun-mohiyati.....	254
A.A.Abdilxamedov Huquqbuzarlik profilaktikasi tushunchasining mazmun-mohiyati va xususiyati.....	261
B.Y.Paluaniyazov Markaziy Osiyo davlatlari xavfsizligiga ta’sir etuvchi tahdidlarning namoyon bo’lish xususiyatlari.....	265
U.M.Kuranov Globallashuv sharoitida missionerlikka qarshi kurashning ma’naviy – ma’rifiy ahamiyati	270

ТАРИХ

Ma Jian, Vang Jianxin, M.Xasanov, Chen Aidong, Chjou Xinying, A.E.Berdimurodov, K.D.Arziyev O’zbekistonning Samarqand vodiysi janubiy tomonidagi 2014-yilgi arxeologik dala qidiruv ishlari hisoboti.....	275
M.X.Исамиддинов Оборонительные стены Афрасиаба и основные этапы его развития.....	309
X.Raxmatillayev Turkistonda XIX asrning ikkinchi yarmidagi etnik jarayonlar	314
F.X.Utayeva, P.Q.Sharipova, F.G’.Rahmatova Mustaqillik yillarida Buxoro to’qimachilik sanoatida modernizatsiyalashuv jarayonlari	318
N.S.Abdullayeva Rossiya muzeylarida saqlanayotgan O’zbekiston madaniy merosi namunalari.....	324
S.B.Xakimova “Xulosat ul-ahvol” asari xususida.....	329
Ш.Т.Темиров Мухаммад Сиддик Хашмат, сын Эмира Музаффар (1864-1932) – жизнь и научное наследие	332

**O‘ZBEKISTON TASHQI SIYOSATIDAGI MARKAZIY OSIYO: YAQIN QO‘SHNICHILIK
VA O‘ZARO MANFAATLI MUNOSABATLAR****CENTRAL ASIA IN UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY: CLOSE PROXIMITY AND
MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONS****ЦЕНТРАЛЬНАЯ АЗИЯ ВО ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ УЗБЕКИСТАНА: ТЕСНОЕ
СОСЕДСТВО И ВЗАИМОВЫГОДНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ****Boboyorov Bobomurod Normatovich¹**¹Associate Professor of TUIT named after Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD),
Tashkent, Uzbekistan**Boboyorov Shohmalik Bobomurod og‘li²**²Student of Diplomat University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan**Annotatsiya**

Maqolada O‘zbekiston Respublikasi tashqi siyosat kursining vektorlari ko‘rib chiqiladi. E‘tibor Respublika tashqi siyosatining siyosiy-huquqiy asoslariga, statistik ma‘lumotlarga, tashqi siyosatning hujjatli asoslariga qaratiladi. Maqolada, shuningdek, O‘zbekiston Respublikasi rahbariyati xavfsizlikka umumiy tahdidlarni (Orol dengizining qurishi, terrorizm, diniy to‘qnashuvlar, giyohvand moddalar va qurollarning kirib kelishi, Afg‘oniston bilan bog‘liq keskinlik omili) bartaraf etishda, migratsiya va bojxona siyosati masalalarida hamkorlik tufayli Markaziy Osiyo mamlakatlari bilan aloqalarni mustahkamlashdan manfaatdor ekanligi tahlil qilingan.

Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются векторы внешнеполитического курса Республики Узбекистан. Внимание уделяется политико-правовым основам внешней политики Республики, статистическим данным, документальным основам внешней политики. В статье также анализируется заинтересованность руководства Республики Узбекистан в укреплении связей со странами Центральной Азии за счет сотрудничества в преодолении общих угроз безопасности (высыхание Аральского моря, терроризм, религиозные конфликты, проникновение наркотиков и оружия, фактор напряженности в отношениях с Афганистаном), в вопросах миграционной и таможенной политики.

Abstract

The article examines the vectors of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Attention is paid to the political and legal foundations of the Republic's foreign policy, statistical data, and documentary foundations of foreign policy. The article also analyzes the interest of the leadership of the Republic of Uzbekistan in strengthening ties with the countries of Central Asia through cooperation in overcoming common security threats (the drying up of the Aral Sea, terrorism, religious conflicts, the penetration of drugs and weapons, the factor of tension in relations with Afghanistan), in issues of migration and customs policy.

Kalit so‘zlar: xalqaro munosabatlar, tashqi siyosat, keng qamrovli islohotlar, milliy mojarolar, konsensus, etakchilik, xavfsizlik, xalq diplomatiyasi, barqarorlik.

Ключевые слова: международные отношения, внешняя политика, комплексные реформы, национальных конфликтов, консенсус, лидерство, безопасность, народная дипломатия, стабильность.

Key words: international relations, foreign policy, comprehensive reforms, national conflicts, consensus, leadership, security, public diplomacy, stability.

INTRODUCTION

It is known that Uzbekistan pursues an open, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy based on its national interests. The current foreign policy situation of the new Uzbekistan is formed based on the rapidly changing situation in the world and the region, as well as large-scale changes within the country. The comprehensive reforms, openness and renewal observed in Uzbekistan's domestic policy in recent years are also evident in the country's foreign policy.

As an equal subject of international relations, Uzbekistan conducts active foreign policy activities at the regional and global levels, develops mutually beneficial relations with foreign partners. Such a consistent, clear and constructive foreign policy is recognized by international experts and observers.

It is known that one of the main tasks of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to create an atmosphere of peace, stability and security around its territory. In this context, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has identified the development and strengthening of friendly, close-neighborly and

SIYOSAT

mutually beneficial relations with our neighbors – the countries of Central Asia – as the main priority of foreign policy [1, 1p].

Currently, political scientists are paying more and more attention to Central Asia, due to the fact that the region is a link in trade routes and has rich resources. In particular, in the articles, the authors consider Uzbekistan from the point of view of its development path and relations with the outside world.

YE. Ionova in her work [2, 2p] evaluates the directions of Uzbekistan's foreign policy after Sh.Mirziyoyev, justifying the reasons for the Republic's special interest in Afghanistan and South Asia, giving an analysis of the strengthening of Russian-Uzbek cooperation.

The authors emphasize that the post-Soviet space has become a "zone of increased political risk" due to the presence of its own national conflicts, as well as an increase in terrorist danger and migration problems. [3, 2p].

This article discusses more current trends in the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, since it is necessary to take into account the active participation of new initiatives put forward by the President of Uzbekistan, joint projects of the Republic within the framework of international organizations.

The methodology of the study is based on an institutional analysis, during which the structures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, their tasks and functions, and the legal framework are considered. In addition, a systematic method of analysis was used, which included the study of foreign policy vectors in the system of international relations, the definition of the interests of the country within its values, the functionality of subordinate structures as mechanisms of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

METHODS

What is Uzbekistan's foreign policy aimed at implementing the above priorities?

First of all, this is a completely new foreign policy that Uzbekistan has been pursuing in the Central Asian region in recent years. As the head of our state Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated, the development and strengthening of friendly, close neighborly and mutually beneficial relations with the countries of Central Asia is a priority of our foreign policy. The main goal is to create an atmosphere of peace, stability and security in the region, creating conditions for comfortable living of people.

At the new stage of regional relations in 2017, an international conference on the theme "Central Asia: a common history and a common future, cooperation for sustainable development and development" was held in Samarkand under the auspices of the UN on the topic of ensuring security and sustainable development in Central Asia, and the "Spirit of Samarkand" formed after this historic event.

As a result, in a short period, thanks to the joint efforts of the peoples of Central Asia, the creation of an atmosphere of friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation in the region was achieved.

Political trust has risen to a high level. This makes it possible to effectively solve the pressing problems of the region. The leadership of Uzbekistan is pursuing a consistent, thoughtful and active foreign policy in this direction.

It should be noted here that positive changes in Central Asia serve to increase the position and influence of the region in the world community.

First of all, as an example of this, the fact that for the first time the UN adopted a resolution "Strengthening regional and international cooperation in order to ensure peace, stability and consistent development in the Central Asian region".

One of the important aspects of this resolution, which was adopted on the initiative of Uzbekistan, is that through this document the desire and firm political will of all Central Asian leaders to further strengthen the atmosphere of trust and good-neighborliness in the region was demonstrated.

Secondly, for the first time, priority areas of cooperation in the region were identified by the Central Asian countries in an international document, combining them into a common and comprehensive consensus. In addition, the adoption of the resolution confirmed that the Central Asian countries are ready to take full responsibility for the fate of the region. For the first time, the goals and interests of the Central Asian countries as a single region have been identified.

As a logical continuation of this idea, it is worth noting that, according to experts of the Carnegie American Center, the processes observed in the region can be assessed as an attempt to find the identity of a renewed Central Asia. The current regional closeness and friendly relations are a positive phenomenon observed for the first time since the independence of the Central Asian countries.

In particular, 23 high-level visits and 12 high-level visits of state bodies of foreign policy and economic activity in 2020 in order to bring relations with the countries of the Central Asian region to a new qualitative and meaningful level in the spirit of mutual friendship, good-neighborliness and strategic partnership, various events were held. At the same time, it was noted that "people's diplomacy" was very active in practice.

In particular, more than 90 different meetings, conferences, videoconferences and other similar events were held with the participation of representatives of the people - scientists and artists, cultural and religious figures, entrepreneurs and youth, tourism and sports organizations, public associations and non-profit organizations.

It should be noted that in recent years, as a result of the support of the initiatives of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev by the leaders of neighboring countries in Central Asia, political dialogue and mutual trust have been strengthened, consultative meetings of heads of state have been established.

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 on average by more than 50% per year and reached 5.2 billion US dollars.

By the end of 2020, despite the conditions of the global pandemic, the total volume of trade turnover of Uzbekistan with the countries of Central Asia is \$ 5 billion [4, 4p].

Such an improvement in trade and economic relations between the Central Asian countries as a whole contributed to increasing the investment attractiveness of the region. In particular, in 2017-2020, more than 300 agreements were concluded between Uzbekistan and the countries of the region, as well as almost 75 billion rubles.

Also, during 2017-2020, as a result of Uzbekistan's open, constructive, thoughtful and pragmatic policy towards the Central Asian countries, solutions were found to such problems as water use, delimitation and demarcation of state borders between Uzbekistan and neighboring countries, the use of transport communications, crossing state borders.

In the Message of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Oliy Majlis (Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan) for 2021, in the section of foreign policy, special attention is paid to the issue of cooperation with the countries of Central Asia [5, 4p].

The republic is trying to establish strategic partnership with all countries, while promoting its ideas and interests, for example, the idea of "Trading is more profitable than fighting" was put forward, Uzbekistan suggested that the countries of Central and South Asia solve security problems through the economy [6, 4p]. This is confirmed by the Development Strategy of the new Uzbekistan for 2022-2026.

By the end of 2022, the volume of Uzbekistan's foreign trade with Central Asian countries increased by 17.2% and reached 7.5 billion US dollars. According to the Center for Economic Research and Reform, it accounted for 15 percent of the country's total trade.

Uzbekistan's exports to Central Asian countries amounted to \$ 3.1 billion (an increase of 15.4%), and imports – \$ 4.4 billion (an increase of 18.6%). Kazakhstan has the largest share in Uzbekistan's trade turnover with Central Asian countries - 62 percent. Kyrgyzstan accounted for 17 percent, Turkmenistan - 12 percent and Tajikistan - 9 percent.

The governments of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the United States, will spend at least \$1 billion over five years to support projects that serve to expand economic ties in the region. Launched the Central Asian Investment Partnership initiative to raise funds equivalent to US dollars.

This initiative, implemented through the C5+1 platform, is aimed at using all available opportunities to increase trade, promote comprehensive development and deepen multilateral relations in order to strengthen the economy and growth of Central Asian countries.

In addition to the existing communication formats such as "Central Asia — USA", "Central Asia — European Union", "Central Asia — Republic of Korea", "Central Asia — Japan", in recent

SIYOSAT

years "Central Asia — India", "Central Asia — China" and new formats such as "Central Asia — Russian Federation".

This situation indicates that, firstly, a completely new environment created as a result of positive changes in the region has increased the attention of the leading countries of the world to Central Asia, and secondly, indicates that foreign countries are paying attention to the development of unified regional multilateral relations with the countries of the region, and not only within the framework of bilateral cooperation.

RESULTS

It should be noted that the stability and unity of the Central Asian countries, firstly, serve the well-being of the people, and secondly, increase the investment attractiveness of the region and create broad opportunities for cooperation with foreign partner countries and investors.

The new environment formed and strengthened between Uzbekistan and the countries of the region serves to achieve these goals and strengthen mutual political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

In the Message of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis (Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan), special importance is attached to strengthening close good-neighborly relations with the countries of Central Asia.

In particular, in the action plan for the consistent continuation of relations with the countries of Central Asia this year:

- Development of a comprehensive program of measures to bring Uzbekistan's bilateral and regional relations with Central Asian countries to a qualitatively new level;
- organization of mutual visits at the highest and highest level;
- Effective use of the mechanisms of "people's diplomacy";
- joint elimination of existing obstacles to strengthening good-neighborly relations;
- creating favorable conditions for the development of trade and economic relations and the growth of trade turnover and strengthening cooperation;
- ensuring the effective use of the transit and logistics potential of the region and the development of transport infrastructure;
- It is planned to intensify cooperation between the regions of the Central Asian countries (including border regions).

In addition, this year Uzbekistan's relations with Central Asian countries are being strengthened by 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), "Security in Europe and Development" within the framework of the Cooperation Organization (OSCE) and other structures, this includes strengthening not only political and diplomatic relations, but also economic diplomacy, inter-parliamentary diplomacy, and public diplomacy.

The concept of development of the New Uzbekistan 2022-2026 includes a number of tasks that are directly related to the implementation of the foreign policy course:

- Further improvement and increasing the attractiveness of the investment climate in the country;
- Creation of an effective system for ensuring public safety, timely identification and elimination of conditions conducive to the commission of offenses. Further strengthening of the state's defense capability, strengthening the combat readiness, combat capability and potential of the Armed Forces;
- Raising to a high level of close cooperation in the field of security, trade and economic, water, energy, transport and cultural and humanitarian spheres in Central Asia.

One of the main priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to ensure the security of the Central Asian countries, in particular, it can be emphasized that the first steps have been taken towards encouraging practical actions aimed at mitigating the situation in Afghanistan and creating a transit corridor connecting Central and South Asia.

Indeed, Uzbekistan is interested in creating a peaceful and independent State in Afghanistan. Afghanistan should become a bridge in strengthening mutual cooperation between Central and South Asia.

Because the presented program of strengthening cooperation with South Asia in the trans-Afghan transport and communication projects promoted by Uzbekistan is significant because it is designed for the long term.

The consistent continuation of the implementation of major trade, transport and energy projects of regional importance with Afghanistan deserves attention, as it fully meets the interests of not only Uzbekistan, but also the countries of Central Asia.

Due to the seriousness of the situation in Afghanistan at the moment, the assistance of donor countries is very important. This country is entering a serious humanitarian crisis every day. To alleviate this situation, the international community, including its immediate neighbors, must provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. Uzbekistan has taken the first steps in this direction, in particular, the Uzbek-Afghan border has been opened, supplies of basic foodstuffs, petroleum products and electricity to this country have been restored.

Uzbekistan regularly correctly and effectively and systematically interacts with the new situation in Afghanistan by means of preventive diplomacy and political and diplomatic mechanisms at the international level. The main goal is the peaceful and prosperous life of the Afghan people [7, 7p].

In general, the position of Uzbekistan at the end of 2021 regarding Afghanistan and the political changes that have taken place in it can be reduced to several points voiced by A. Kamilov at the second ministerial meeting in the Italy – Central Asia format on December 8, 2021. Among them:

- the need for a constructive dialogue with the new Afghan authorities in order to avoid the re-transformation of this country into a so-called "rogue state";

- provision of a humanitarian corridor to Afghanistan in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe;

- Taking measures to lift sanctions, unfreeze Afghanistan's international assets and assist it in restoring the banking system;

- the importance of launching the development of a post-conflict strategy for Afghanistan and highlighting as a priority its more active involvement in regional integration processes of an economic nature and the implementation of socio-economic projects in this country;

The new Afghan authorities are fulfilling their international obligations: creating an inclusive government, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, preventing the deployment of terrorist groups on the territory of the country, ending contacts with them, supporting good-neighborly relations with the countries of the region, respecting fundamental human rights and freedoms, including women and national minorities [8, 7p].

Additional aspects to the designated political line of Uzbekistan in relation to Afghanistan were introduced in the address of Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the participants of the international conference "Afghanistan: Security and Economic Development" held in Tashkent on July 26, 2022. In particular, he stressed that the Uzbek and Afghan peoples share common cultural, spiritual and historical values, as well as a common religion and ancestral heritage. In addition, the indivisibility of the security of Central Asia and Afghanistan was noted, since without stability south of the Amu Darya, it will be impossible to achieve security and sustainable development of Uzbekistan and the entire Central Asia [8, 8p].

If we analyze the situation in bilateral relations in 2022, we can note a number of positive events and trends for Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Among them is the growth of bilateral trade to \$759.9 million, which was only slightly lower than in 2020, when President Ashraf Ghani was in power (\$779.1 million). Uzbek exports accounted for \$750.6 million in 2022 (\$776.7 million in 2020). At the same time, imports of Afghan goods and services increased from \$2.3 million in 2020 and \$6.2 million in 2021 to 9.3 million in 2022 [9, 8p].

During the first half of 2022, a rapid increase in transit cargo traffic through Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the southern direction was recorded, which can serve as an indicator of the Taliban's ability to ensure the security of transport communications. The volume of cargo transportation increased 2.6 times compared to the same period in 2021 to 330 thousand tons. [10, 8p]

Meanwhile, speaking about the future contours of Uzbekistan's policy towards Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban movement, it is still impossible to ignore the potential risks that may affect its progressive nature. Although the Taliban controls the overall situation in the country,

SIYOSAT

however, this control still remains insufficiently strong in its basic basis. We are talking, first of all, about the economy and the humanitarian situation. Currently, 6 million Afghans are on the verge of starvation, which is an extremely dangerous challenge for the Taliban government.

The further aggravation of the situation with hunger is still possible to restrain external assistance. More than a quarter of the 40 million population receives food packages from the World Food Program.

The humanitarian situation can be mitigated only through the accelerated development of the national economy through the attraction of large-scale foreign investments, technologies and competencies, but for this the new authorities will need to gain international recognition, which will not be in the foreseeable future until an inclusive political system is created and the rights of women and girls to study and work are protected. It is still difficult to say whether the Taliban will be ready to change and go for a significant liberalization of their political and value approaches, as well as along the path of mastering the cultural foundations of Modernity.

Commenting on the foreign policy course pursued in our country in recent years, international experts identify three of its main vectors: **the first vector** is a regional vector, Uzbekistan has begun to pay more attention to its neighbors, which is a very correct and "fundamentally important" issue; **the second vector** is a multilateral form of cooperation. According to them, there are many problems in the world that cannot be solved on a bilateral basis. These are problems related to the environment, terrorism, the international trade regime and others. This requires close international cooperation; **the third vector** of the updated foreign policy is a clear definition of tasks that meet the interests of Uzbekistan, the ability to act "more reliably" at the international level.

Having developed this idea, we can add to it another vector (the fourth vector) as an addition - **the vector of "responsible leadership"**.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has appeared in the world community not only as a representative of national interests, but also as a representative of the region-wide interests of Central Asia. First of all, this is reflected in many international initiatives of Uzbekistan, such as the rational use of energy resources in the region, the environmental tragedy associated with the Aral Sea, the establishment of peace and tranquility in Afghanistan.

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, it can be said that strengthening mutual trust and good-neighborly relations with the countries of Central Asia is the main priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. This is reflected in the fact that Uzbekistan is the only country in the region bordering all the countries of Central Asia, that any political, economic and cultural changes in the country directly affect the region, and that the stable development of Central Asia serves the interests of all countries in the region.

Today, Uzbekistan is gradually moving towards improving its image in the international arena. It does this strategically, first of all taking into account its national interests specified in the Constitution of the Republic, and accelerating the pace of economic reforms to create a favorable investment climate. The main values of Uzbekistan in foreign policy are the establishment of comprehensive relations with various countries on the principles of equal partnership and mutual respect for integration into the system of world economic relations, the implementation of active international, political, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation.

Economic liberalization and gradual democratic transformations taking place in Uzbekistan are of great interest to the peoples of neighboring countries and have a positive impact on regional processes. Although until recently it was considered inappropriate to talk about some regional issues in relations, at the moment there is a tendency to be open about discussing controversial issues. In particular, the opening of border posts and the introduction of a visa-free regime contribute to the intensification of the movement of people, goods and services in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan views Central Asia as a platform for multilateral cooperation to expand the economic, transport and logistics potential of the region. Uzbekistan plays a key role in ensuring security in Central Asia, including in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking.

It should be emphasized that Central Asia is at the intersection of the interests of major geopolitical players who are trying to influence the development trend in the region. The "Central Asian Five" need to develop effective steps to confront any external actors in order to take into

account their interests. Based on the tendency towards a predisposition to closer cooperation, experts believe it is advisable:

– to preserve the format of holding consultative meetings, since institutionalization and its transformation into an organization may lead to interference by external actors, as well as the collapse of regional integration;

– to increase the frequency of holding consultative meetings at the level of the heads of foreign ministries and defense of the five countries up to twice a year for the effective identification and resolution of issues;

– establish a consensus-based decision-making practice to take into account the interests of each of the countries, which will further facilitate the procedure for signing the contract by all parties;

To hold an annual regional youth forum of Central Asian countries to promote the ideas of unity and cultural community between peoples, which will allow creating a "pole of good neighborliness" in the future. The Central Asian countries need to use every opportunity to hold meetings to resolve joint issues, otherwise the threats and problems of regional security will only worsen.

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