

CENTRAL ASIA IN THE PRISM OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MODERN HISTORY OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: The article substantiates that in the history of international relations, Central Asia has always played a key role in the geopolitical interests of great powers. The geographical features and natural resources of the region attracted, and continue to attract, at the present stage of development, the interests of leading actors in international relations. For these reasons, after the Central Asian countries gained political independence, the situation began to change. At the same time, one of the main initiators of philosophical thinking in considering issues of mutual understanding and interaction between the countries of the region is rightfully Uzbekistan.

Key words: security, geopolitics, interstate, international, peace, independence, politics, modern, community, cooperation, stability, terrorism, Uzbekistan, philosophy, Central Asia.

The article substantiates the fact that the leadership of Uzbekistan, from the initial years of independence, has put forward Central Asia as one of the main priorities of the country's foreign policy. At the same time, a number of initiatives of Uzbekistan, put forward from high tribunes of international universal organizations, are revealed to ensure security, stability and sustainable development not only of a single country, but of the entire Central Asian region. Today, in the age of globalization, issues related to the need for a deep philosophical thinking review of views and approaches to modern challenges from each subject of the world community are on the agenda. It seems important to form a new structure of relations between states in the name of strengthening trust, ensuring peace and security, as well as developing mutually beneficial cooperation.

The paradox in the context of globalization is that time itself dictates the need to form a modern system of international relations, in which problems arising both at the global and regional levels must be resolved together. However, with the change of the bipolar world to a multipolar one, inherent in the conditions of globalization, new challenges of the time arise accordingly. Central Asia, which includes five independent republics, stands out for its geopolitical and geostrategic significance in the modern, rapidly changing world. Situated in the center of the Eurasian space and possessing the richest reserves of natural resources, the region occupies a special place in the modern world community.

The Republic of Uzbekistan, as one of the five Central Asian states, due to its geopolitical position, since the first years of independence has been considering issues of political and socio-economic development of the country in conjunction with the interests of the entire region. At the same time, the philosophical idea is realized that to achieve the intended goals, desires alone are not enough. For this, first of all, stable development is necessary, both for the country and the entire region, ensuring regional and global security. At the same time, Uzbekistan, based on the philosophical ideas of protecting universal human interests, and the positions of humanism and tolerance inherent in the Uzbek people, has become a participant in the construction of a new world order. Uzbekistan, based on the developed strategy, principles and priorities of the country's foreign policy, attaches primary attention to the issues of preserving the historical traditions of unity and mutual understanding between the peoples of Central Asia. It advocates for strengthening interstate trust in the region and increasing its role in the world

community.

However, in the new historically established conditions, when the world has entered a period of turbulence and change, global risks and challenges continue to accumulate, geopolitical conflicts are intensifying, factors of instability and uncertainty are observed, many countries, including the Central Asian states, are facing new challenges of the era. Such conditions put on the agenda the task of first of all ensuring security and stability for the successful development of both the country and the entire region. For the countries of the Central Asian region, this issue is most pressing. This is due to the fact that various religious extremist groups and drug dealers, taking advantage of the relative youth of the independent republics, do not discount the attempt to eliminate the existing constitutional order in them, create chaos and form a free space for the movement of drugs and the implementation of other selfish goals. They are trying to achieve this by terror, inciting interethnic conflicts and rampant organized crime. At the same time, the real threat to security and stability in Central Asia came from Afghanistan, which in the 1990s became a base for illegal drug transit, arms smuggling, and transnational crime. Speaking about issues of modern security and stability, one cannot help but note the fact that on the threshold of the 21st century, there have been fundamental changes in international relations on a global scale. The realities of our time increasingly convince us that in the absence of bloc confrontations, the threat to global security should be sought at the regional level. In this regard, Uzbekistan, like other Central Asian republics, is highly concerned about ensuring security conditions for the entire region. The main threat to the region is rightfully international terrorism.

Terrorism, having acquired a clearly expressed international character, under the flag of violence and intimidation has become increasingly internationalized. This means that it, having neither nationality, nor religion, nor statehood, has grown into a global threat to security. Moreover, having acquired a transnational character, terrorism has formed a wide network of infrastructure for its activities. It fully utilizes the colossal possibilities of modern means of communication and transport, has global sources of financing, is well supplied with modern weapons, information resources and subversive means. Considering the complexity of the current situation both in the region and in the world as a whole, representatives of the Central Asian countries regularly voice from the rostrums of international organizations the existence of real threats to the region, while putting forward new initiatives to overcome them. The leadership of Uzbekistan has repeatedly put forward a number of ideas and proposals from the high rostrums of international organizations, imbued with a new philosophical view for overcoming the existing threats to all mankind. For example, speaking at the 48th (1993), 50th (1995), 72nd (2017), 75th (2020), 76th (2021) sessions, at the Millennium Summit (2000), at the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (2010) of the UN General Assembly, as well as at all OSCE summits, the Presidents of Uzbekistan focused the attention of the world community on the complex and controversial problems of our time related to ensuring security and sustainable development in the Central Asian region and in the world as a whole. At the same time, practical proposals were put forward in specific areas. In particular, declaring Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone; introducing an embargo on arms supplies to local conflict zones, while prohibiting outside interference; creating an International Center for Combating Terrorism, etc. In addition, at the initiative of the leadership of Uzbekistan, the following were held in Tashkent under the auspices of the UN and the OSCE: a meeting-seminar on security and cooperation in Central Asia (September 1995); a meeting of the 6+2 group on Afghanistan (July 1999); an international conference on "Strengthening Security and Stability in Central Asia: an Integrated Approach to the Fight against Drugs, Organized Crime and Terrorism" (October 2000), an international conference on "Central Asia: One Past and a Common Future, Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Mutual Prosperity" (Samarkand, November 2017) and others. Progressive humanity is considering with real concern the possible consequences if

terrorist groups get their hands on nuclear weapons. Having clearly assessed this situation, the Central Asian republics have begun to take practical actions. One of the important events on this path, based on the unity of views and approaches of the states of the region, was the implementation of the idea put forward by Uzbekistan to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The first significant step on this path was the International Conference "Central Asia - a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone" held in Tashkent in 1997, following which the Regional Expert Group (REG) was created to prepare a corresponding treaty [5].

From 1997 to 2002, with the active assistance of the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs and IAEA experts, a number of working meetings of the group were held in the cities of Geneva, Ashgabat, Tashkent, and twice in Sapporo and Samarkand. The result of all the work was that on September 8, 2006, in the city of Semipalatinsk (Republic of Kazakhstan), representatives of five Central Asian countries, with the participation of representatives of the UN and the IAEA, signed the Treaty on the Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia [4]. The signing of the final document was the real embodiment of the aspirations of the peoples of the region to turn Central Asia into the fifth nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world [2]. Uzbekistan, along with the issues of threats emanating from outside for the countries of Central Asia, attached great attention to the need to consolidate interstate relations and cooperation of the countries of the region. However, despite the existence of diplomatic relations and the desire of states to strengthen mutual relations and cooperation, for both objective and subjective reasons, contradictory approaches arose on border, transport and communication, water and energy and environmental issues. They served as a reason for some cooling of mutual relations at the state level. However, the situation in this area is changing dramatically with the change of political leadership and the construction of a new Uzbekistan. Against the backdrop of changes taking place in the world, Uzbekistan's entry into a new stage of its development had a resonant character reflected throughout the Central Asian space. As a pragmatic reformer, the new leader of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who came to the political Olympus of the country in 2016, set a course for radical changes in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. At the same time, both the Strategy of Actions on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021, the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, and the Strategy "Uzbekistan - 2030" reflect philosophical approaches to many issues of foreign policy, interstate relations and cooperation. These program documents focus special attention on the Central Asian vector of the country's foreign policy. The need for a radical change in approaches to interaction with immediate neighbors in the region, intensification of multifaceted cooperation, as well as promotion of efforts to resolve the Afghan problem is outlined. This position of Uzbekistan is explained by the following factors. Firstly, Uzbekistan aims to strengthen and develop ties with neighboring states that are close in spirit, culture and traditions, united by common historical roots. This will allow us to radically change the entire political, socio-economic and cultural-spiritual appearance of Central Asia.

Secondly, from a geostrategic point of view, Central Asia has huge reserves of natural resources. It also has a unique potential that can influence the development of other states and even regions.

Thirdly, Central Asia is practically located in the center of the Eurasian space, where the interests of world powers intersect.

These factors bring to the agenda the need to preserve the historical identity of the peoples of Central Asia, to create conditions for the formation of a new architecture of relations between the states of the region.

Consistent implementation of the principle "The main priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is Central Asia" has made it possible in recent years to create a completely new political atmosphere in the region and strengthen relations based on trust. The pragmatic position of the Uzbek leadership, in

turn, contributed to the resolution of a number of important issues. They concern water use, borders, and the renewal and expansion of transport communications.

Authoritative foreign experts claim: “The transformations in Uzbekistan are the driver of the transformation processes taking place in the region. Moreover, just a few years ago we witnessed that the relations between the closest neighbors were complicated, and some problems had not been resolved for years. For a long time, tensions in interstate relations remained, and the countries made mutual claims. Today, the situation has changed radically” [3].

Indeed, the basis for recreating a new picture of transformations in the Central Asian region was laid by the official visits of the head of Uzbekistan to all countries of the region. During the negotiations, solutions to existing problems were found. As a result, border issues between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were almost completely resolved, border checkpoints were opened between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The countries also began to combine efforts in finding ways to rationally and jointly use water resources. This issue, by the way, remained a source of controversy for many years. Together, neighboring states began to create trade and transport routes.

In addition, at the initiative of Uzbekistan, a new multilateral mechanism was created in March 2018 - holding consultative meetings of the leaders of the Central Asian countries. This format has proven its effectiveness. For example, within the framework of the fourth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia in the Kyrgyz city of Cholpon-Ata on July 21, 2022, they signed the Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation for the Development of Central Asia in the 21st Century [1]. The achievement of this agreement is explained by the fact that the states of the region are inextricably linked not only by geographical and geopolitical factors, but also by common challenges related to environmental and economic security and sustainable development.

Another striking confirmation of the solidarity of the Central Asian countries was the first meeting of the leaders of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, which took place in Ashgabat in August 2023 [4]. It was aimed at further strengthening the relations of strategic partnership and mutual trust, continuing a constructive dialogue in search of mutually acceptable solutions to pressing issues facing the three countries and the region as a whole. Given the enormous potential of the three countries in the field of transport, logistics and transit, special importance is attached to the development of cooperation in the transport and communications sector. In order to effectively use the existing potential, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are interested in activating the routes passing through the territories of the three countries to ensure access to seaports, including the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, as well as in the direction of China. As we can see, Uzbekistan is taking unprecedented steps to comprehensively strengthen regional cooperation in Central Asia. Improving and deepening relations and cooperation with neighboring countries in the region is one of the main priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. It is thanks to this that the political climate in Central Asia has significantly improved and a spirit of genuine good-neighborliness and mutual trust has begun to form, opening up broad opportunities for regional integration.

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