



AN OPEN, PRAGMATIC, PROACTIVE, AND GOOD-NEIGHBOURLY FOREIGN POLICY: A STRATEGIC PRIORITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21836717>

ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 27-iyul 2026 yil

Ma'qullandi: 29-iyul 2026 yil

Nashr qilindi: 31-iyul 2026 yil

KEY WORDS

Openness, pragmatism, Central Asia, foreign trade, international cooperation, region, investment, external communication, active and good-neighborly policy.

ABSTRACT

Our country has been making progress in implementing an open and pragmatic foreign policy in its relations with states, communities and international organizations since its independence until now. The foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is a supporter of establishing friendly relations based on universally recognized norms. In the conditions of current political instability, Uzbekistan has established an active foreign policy to ensure peace and security with the countries of the Central Asian region and good neighborly relations to develop economic, social and diplomatic spheres. The Republic of Uzbekistan, together with other neighboring countries in Central Asia, has established strong external relations to overcome problems related to regulation of trade industry, transport logistics and trans-border infrastructure.

Introduction

"In recent years, the countries of Central Asia have been following the path of good neighbourliness, stability, mutual cooperation, and development. As a result of our joint efforts, Uzbekistan is succeeding, together with all its neighbours, in overcoming problems related to state borders, transport corridors, and the use of water resources.

Our region is increasingly attracting interest as it becomes a transport and communication bridge connecting East and West, North and South, at the centre of economic development. The openness of Central Asia to the world is becoming the most important condition for ensuring the security and sustainable development of the region.

Not only our history but also our vitally important interests for the future are common and shared. We have no other way, and can have no other way, than to expand our regional cooperation. I am confident that, with the support of the international community, Central Asia will continue along the path of solidarity. Turning Central Asia into a peaceful and flourishing region will remain a priority goal of Uzbekistan's foreign policy from now on."

From the speech delivered by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York

The Republic of Uzbekistan began pursuing an active foreign policy after being declared independent on 31 August 1991. On 2 March 1992, it joined the ranks of the member states of the United Nations and carried out foreign policy activities with other states on an international scale. At the same time, acting together with its close neighbours, the Central Asian states, and with the aim of boosting the economies of their then-developing countries, on 17 July 1998 the "Central Asian Economic Community" was established in the city of Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) in accordance with the agreement on establishing a single economic space; it was later renamed the "Central Asian Cooperation" organization.

Uzbekistan subsequently became a member of UNICEF and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe under the United Nations, as well as a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (in 2003), which includes all Central Asian states except the Republic of Turkmenistan.

As a state with 32 years of experience in conducting foreign policy and international relations, Uzbekistan has now established active diplomatic and external relations with 144 of the 194 UN member states, as well as with UN observers, while abroad, 35 embassies, 15 Consulates General, and 1 Consulate of Uzbekistan operate, together with 3 Permanent Missions to the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies. The establishment of mutual external relations with other states has risen to a considerably higher level, particularly since 2017. This was achieved primarily as a result of the active foreign policy pursued by our President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

METHODS

Uzbekistan pursues an open, constructive, and beneficial foreign policy based on its own national interests. Our country's foreign policy is shaped on the basis of the rapidly changing situation in the world and the region, as well as the broad-scale changes taking place within the country.

The principal goal of the foreign policy activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan is to strengthen the country's independence and sovereignty and its position and role on the international stage, to foster an environment of security, stability, and good neighbourliness in the surrounding area, and to actively advance the country's external economic interests.

The speech delivered by our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 72nd session of the United Nations at the UN Headquarters in New York on 19 September 2017 was an important factor in presenting a renewed Republic of Uzbekistan to the world community; furthermore, the fact that the head of our state delivered speeches at a number of UN sessions and meetings, in particular at the 75th session on 23 September 2020 and the 78th session on 19 September 2023, is a clear example of our country's active engagement in external relations. As a result of the active foreign policy pursued by our President Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has risen to new stages in the diplomatic sphere. One of the main reasons for this is, firstly, that the 5th direction of the "Action Strategy" aimed at developing Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 advanced the principle of pursuing an open, well-considered, and mutually beneficial foreign policy, and to achieve this goal the foreign policy authorities were assigned the following tasks:

- Creating, as far as possible, favourable foreign-policy conditions for the effective implementation of the democratic reforms being carried out in our country and the rapid processes of modernizing society and the economy;

- Forming a balanced, multifaceted system of strategic cooperation with the world's leading countries and international organizations;
- Advancing international initiatives on important directions of Uzbekistan's regional and global policy;
- Preserving and strengthening peace and stability in Central Asia, turning the region into a zone of safe and sustainable development.

The 7th direction of the "Development Strategy," to be implemented in 2022-2026, envisages the goals of pursuing an open, pragmatic, and active foreign policy. Active external relations are directed, first of all, towards achieving active and good-neighbourly relations with the bordering republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan).

In order to further strengthen external relations and establish active foreign relations in 2022-2026, the following goals were set:

- Enhancing the country's role as an equal subject in international relations;
- Further developing relations with our traditional partners, giving priority to expanding the geography of external relations, and strengthening economic diplomacy;
- Strengthening Uzbekistan's activity within the organs and institutions of the United Nations and within global and regional economic, financial, and humanitarian organizations;
- Improving the regulatory and legal framework for foreign-policy and foreign economic activity, as well as the treaty and legal foundations of international cooperation;
- Increasing the effectiveness of information delivery aimed at enhancing our country's image within the world community.

Results

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the goals set as a result of our country's active foreign policy were successfully accomplished in 2017-2021, since during this period our state achieved a number of successes, including: today a visa-free regime is in effect in Uzbekistan for citizens of 86 states (in 2016 it applied to only 9 states), and our republic has risen several positions higher in international rankings.

In the economic sphere, in 2017-2020, within the framework of 327 investment projects involving international financial institutions and foreign government financial organizations, 10.26 billion dollars in credit funds were absorbed and directed towards the development of a number of sectors. In particular, the funds were directed to the fuel and energy industry (5.88 billion dollars); the communications and defence industry (1.56 billion dollars); the agricultural and water management system (1.27 billion dollars); the financing sector (0.95 billion dollars); social spheres (0.47 billion dollars); and other branches.

In 2017 alone, 21 high-level visits were carried out, meetings were held with 60 heads of states and international organizations, more than 400 agreements were reached, and deals worth more than 60 billion US dollars were signed. In 2018, 21 visits at the level of heads of state took place, including 13 visits by Shavkat Mirziyoyev to foreign countries.

Uzbekistan was visited by the heads of 8 states (Afghanistan, Belarus, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan). High-level negotiations were held with the heads of more than 30 states and international organizations, and 180 bilateral treaties and agreements were signed. This shows that, as a result of the foreign policy pursued by our

President, comprehensive relations have been established with many states and high level treaties have been concluded.

As a result of the active neighbourhood policy pursued in 2022-2026, numerous treaties and economic agreements were reached with the bordering Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. The President of Tajikistan paid an official visit to Uzbekistan on 2-3 June 2023, and the agenda of the negotiations between the two countries' leaders included further developing and strengthening Uzbekistan-Tajikistan friendship, good-neighbourly, and strategic partnership relations, and expanding practical efforts in priority areas of mutually beneficial cooperation. Particular attention is being paid to advancing joint cooperation projects in trade, industry, agriculture, transport and logistics, energy, and other sectors, as well as to continuing traditional close inter-regional ties and cultural-humanitarian exchange. On 9 November 2023, Shavkat Mirziyoyev received the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Alikhan Smailov. The head of our state paid particular attention to agreements on the strategic partnership and alliance relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as well as on increasing trade turnover and advancing logistics projects. On 4 August 2023, the President of our country, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, held a meeting with the President of Turkmenistan, Serdar

Berdimuhamedov. The parties noted with satisfaction that the multifaceted cooperation and deepening strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are steadily developing and strengthening. On 6 August of the current year, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev held talks with the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sadyr Japarov, within the framework of the "Consultative Meeting" of the heads of Central Asian states. It was noted with satisfaction that, since the beginning of the year, the volume of trade turnover between the states had increased by nearly 10 percent, exceeding 425 million dollars. Practical work has been launched on implementing joint projects in the priority sectors of the economy, in particular industry, agriculture, textiles, machine-building, and other branches.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that, as a result of our country's open and pragmatic foreign policy pursued at the international and regional levels, good and active cooperative relations have been established with many states and existing ones have been strengthened. Uzbekistan's role in the world community, especially in the activities of the UN and other international organizations, has also increased. Thanks to the initiatives, active and effective diplomacy, and tolerant foreign policy of the head of our state, an entirely new, constructive political environment has emerged in Central Asia today. The efforts made by the Central Asian states on the basis of cooperation and unity in all spheres, particularly in mutual economic relations, are taking on a positive character. It would not be an exaggeration to say that all of this is the result of the successful foreign policy and active diplomatic relations pursued by the Republic of Uzbekistan.

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