

FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES TO REGULATE THE AFGHAN CRISIS

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"In fact, the "fire of war" was imposed on the Afghan people from the outside, this is not their choice. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of civilians have become victims of the confrontation, and millions of people were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in other countries. The involvement of more and more forces in the conflict led to its unprecedented escalation. It has ceased to be purely Afghan, becoming more and more of a complex international problem. The expansion of the presence of international terrorist groups in Afghanistan, the ongoing violence and bloodshed, the drug business - all this indicate the inadmissibility of the world community ignoring the situation in this country. Most importantly, an entire generation has grown up in Afghanistan in conditions of armed confrontation and violence. But, nevertheless, this is not the "lost generation", as some experts cynically claim. These are just people who are tired of war, deprivation and hardships, who want and strive to put an end to hostility, return to peaceful life and creation for the benefit of their country. I am firmly convinced that the Afghan people have the strength, wisdom, courage and resilience to start a new, peaceful life, build it for the well-being of their children and future generations..." [1] These words were voiced by the President of Uzbekistan during his speech at the Tashkent conference. Where in this way he opened a new page in the relationship between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, and not only.

Now the Republic of Uzbekistan has determined for itself new priorities in foreign policy: economic openness and attractiveness of the country for investment and business; focus on solving all problematic issues on the basis of consensus, mutual respect and understanding; balanced and mutually beneficial relations with world powers and other states; the desire for interaction on the basis of political trust and respect for international law - this is how the country's current foreign policy is trying to be built. Before turning to specific areas of foreign policy, I would like to say a few words about how the country's foreign policy priorities are formed in principle.

It is known that, speaking of priorities, many people have in mind bilateral relations with certain countries, especially singling out the world's leading states with significant political, economic, military and other potential. This is of course obvious and even necessary.

However, it is also necessary to proceed from what the main tasks in general should be solved by foreign policy. The most important of them is the creation of favorable external conditions for the successful internal development of the state and society, the implementation of reforms, ensuring the growth of the welfare of the population, and improving the quality of life.

The second task is to form a belt of peace, stability and security around Uzbekistan. It is security in the region where the Republic of Uzbekistan is located that is the main condition for sustainable development.

From which we can see that Afghanistan occupies a special place in the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Today, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan are developing close political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian relations. The security of Afghanistan is perceived as the security of Uzbekistan, a guarantee of stability and prosperity for the entire vast region. Uzbekistan's policy towards Afghanistan is based on the understanding that the prospects for stable development in Central Asia are closely linked to the achievement of peace in neighboring Afghanistan.

According to the Concept of Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan, adopted in 2012, ensuring a peaceful settlement of the conflict, stabilizing Afghanistan and building pragmatic relations with the southern neighbor are among the main priorities of the Uzbek foreign policy.

The Uzbek strategy towards Afghanistan began to take shape as early as AD. 90s. The position of Uzbekistan on the Afghan crisis, announced during the 48th and 50th sessions of the UN General Assembly in 1993 and 1995 hasn't changed much in the last 20 years. Tashkent believes that the settlement of the conflict is possible only through diplomatic means, without the use of force. In addition, special attention is expected to be paid to building a strong vertical of power, economic recovery, and creating conditions for the observance of the rights of all ethnic and national minorities in Afghanistan. The Uzbek strategy is being implemented in two directions. On the one hand, Tashkent participates in the process of resolving the Afghan crisis at the political and diplomatic level: the initiative to create the Contact Group "6 + 2" (1997), proposals to impose an embargo on arms supplies to Afghanistan (1995) and the demilitarization of the country (2001). .), calls to resume the activities of the Contact Group (2008), the provision of territory for the transportation of goods of the international coalition. On the other hand, Uzbekistan is trying to pursue its own economic policy in relation to Afghanistan, and the northern regions of the country, in particular.[2]

It should be noted that the participation of Uzbekistan in the Afghan processes remains hardly noticeable in the international information environment. This is largely due to the weak information policy of Tashkent and the lack of a PR component of foreign policy. At the same time, Uzbekistan remains one of the most active actors in Afghanistan.

After declaring independence in 1991, Uzbekistan found itself in a rather difficult situation. Internal problems associated with the need to reform the public administration system, the transition to a market economy, the implementation of social reforms, and the prevention of interethnic conflicts put serious pressure on the stability of the state. At the same time, external factors related to the destabilization of neighboring Afghanistan and Tajikistan also raised concerns. In this regard, the Afghan issue has firmly taken its place as one of the highest priorities on the foreign policy agenda of Uzbekistan. Tashkent tried to make the most of the stands of international organizations to draw the attention of the international community to the aggravation of the situation in the neighboring country. In the 90s. the process of forming the position of Uzbekistan on the events in Afghanistan took place. Tashkent identified the destabilization of Afghanistan as the main threat to the security of all of Central Asia. At the same time, Uzbekistan advocated a peaceful settlement of the conflict through negotiations. In addition, great importance, in the opinion of the Uzbek side, should have been given to ensuring conditions for disarming the parties and preventing the use of force. In particular, during the 50th session of the UN General Assembly in 1995, Tashkent put forward an initiative to impose an embargo on the supply of weapons to Afghanistan.[3]

The achievements of Uzbekistan in this matter is that on March 26-27, 2018, Tashkent hosted a High-Level International Conference on Afghanistan, which was attended by the President of the IRA A. Ghani, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy F. Mogherini and representatives member states of the UN Security Council. It was the first time that such a large-scale forum dedicated to solving the problem of Afghanistan was held at such a high level. The main result and success of the Tashkent conference is that it was possible to develop and approve a consolidated international approach to the issue of settling the Afghan crisis. All this is reflected in the Tashkent Declaration, which was recognized by the absolute majority of the states involved in the Afghan dialogue.

The Tashkent conference and, in general, Uzbekistan's policy towards Afghanistan led to the intensification of international efforts to resolve the Afghan

conflict and involve this country in regional trade, economic and infrastructure projects that should help advance the peace process.

Uzbekistan began economic cooperation with Afghanistan in 2002. This cooperation affects several aspects: infrastructure construction, energy and trade. The opening of the Hairatan bridge on the Uzbek-Afghan border in 2002 was the first step towards the implementation of the strategy. Already the following year, the Airtom customs post began to function in Termez. These steps were aimed at ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.[4] In addition, at the request of the Afghan government, Uzbekistan restored 11 bridges between Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul that were destroyed during the civil war. This was of strategic importance, because these bridges link the northern and eastern regions of Afghanistan and are an important component for economic recovery in the region.[5]

Much attention is paid to the development of transport communications. In 2008, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Uzbekistan and Afghanistan signed a protocol of understanding to expand cooperation in the field of railway construction. In the period 2008-2010, Uzbekistan Railways (Uzbek Railways) implemented the ADB-financed Hairatan-Mazari-Sharif railway construction project with a total cost of \$170 million. Its length is 75 km, the volume of cargo transportation is 7 million tons with a possible increase to 20 million tons.[6] According to official data, in 2013 Tashkent began construction of a 230-kilometer section of the railway between Mazar-i-Sharif and Andkhoy, which is part of the Sherkhan-Bandar-Kunduz-Khulm-Naybabad-Andkhoy-Herat railway project, implemented under the program of the Central-Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC).[7] It should be noted that such projects are important for strengthening the Afghan economy by uniting the Afghan provinces through the transport network. At the same time, the effective functioning of transport corridors is an opportunity for Uzbekistan to reduce the negative impact of the country's isolation and gain access to South Asian markets and the Persian Gulf. Despite the difficult situation, the long-term systemic crisis in Afghanistan, the foreign policy initiative of Uzbekistan calls on the countries of the region to consider Afghanistan as a friendly partner and neighbor. Analyzing the priority directions of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which pursue different goals, one can come to the conclusion that this state is taking all measures to resolve the Afghan conflict, namely political and economic measures. The foreign policy strategy of Uzbekistan is capable of ensuring a sufficiently effective participation in the processes of settling the Afghan conflict, both at the regional level and within the framework of bilateral relations. Despite the

scenario of further development of the situation in the country, Uzbekistan remains interested in minimizing the negative impact of Afghanistan on the countries of the region and continues to play an important role in resolving the Afghan military-political crisis.

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