

GEOPOLITICS OF THE NEW UZBEKISTAN: PAST AND FUTURE



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ABSTRACT

The article examines the key moments of the geopolitical history of Uzbekistan, including its role in the Silk Road, the influence of regional and world powers, as well as the post-Soviet period. The article analyzes the geopolitical challenges and opportunities facing Uzbekistan in the context of globalization, energy security and regional integration. The article is based on historical sources, analytical research and expert opinions. She explores important geopolitical principles of Uzbekistan, such as neutrality, regional cooperation and a balanced foreign policy. The article also examines the influence of factors such as the geographical location of the country, natural resources and economic development on its geopolitical decisions. In addition, the article discusses potential future scenarios for the geopolitics of Uzbekistan. At the same time, possible challenges and opportunities for the country are being considered, as well as its role in shaping regional and global security.

Keywords: geopolitics, international relations, foreign policy, regional cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of geographical factors on international relations has played a key role in shaping Uzbekistan's foreign policy since gaining independence in 1991. The country's unique location in Central Asia, rich historical heritage and vast natural resources have made geopolitics a determining factor in foreign policy.

After gaining sovereignty, Uzbekistan took a course towards neutrality, striving not to participate in regional conflicts and maintain good-neighborly relations with all countries. The principle of neutrality was enshrined in the Constitution adopted in 1992. Uzbekistan is also actively involved in the work of regional organizations such as the OSCE and the SCO.

Uzbekistan's central position in Central Asia provides it with unique geopolitical advantages. The country borders with five states and has access to the Caspian Sea. This turns Uzbekistan into an important transport and trade center. Natural resources such as gas, oil and gold play an important role in the country's economy and enhance its geopolitical influence.

In recent years, Uzbekistan's economic development has also had an impact on its geopolitical position. The country has achieved significant success in diversifying its economy and reducing dependence on Russia. This gave Uzbekistan more freedom of action in foreign policy.

MAIN PART.

The further development of Uzbekistan's geopolitics will depend on a number of factors, including regional security, the global distribution of forces and the economic development of the country. Uzbekistan can maintain a course of neutrality, play a more active role in the region, or get closer to one of the great powers.

The geopolitical situation in Uzbekistan is complex and dynamically changing. Understanding its history, current state and possible development scenarios is crucial for understanding the country's foreign policy and its role in the region and the world.

The historical value of the Silk Road continues to play an important role in the geopolitics of the new Uzbekistan. The country is striving to revive the heritage of the Silk Road, using it as a basis for the development of economic, cultural and diplomatic ties. The Silk Road was not only a trade route, but also a channel for cultural exchange. Uzbekistan is proud of its rich cultural heritage, rooted in the times of the Silk Road. The Silk Road contributed to the development of relations between different civilizations. The advantageous territorial location of the cities made them attractive to various conquerors. The territory of modern Uzbekistan has been conquered dozens of times by various conquerors. But the caravan trade roads were revived again, and cities and settlements stood along them, well-kept gardens and arable land were green - the ancient walls of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva cherish the memory of all this. Ancient cities with beautiful architectural monuments preserve the memory of many centuries.

The territory of modern Uzbekistan witnessed the flourishing of several powerful Turkic empires, which had a profound impact on the course of the history of Central Asia and beyond. The Samanids were the first large empire founded by the Islamic Turks. During the reign of the Samanids, the empire flourished both politically and culturally. They were patrons of the sciences, arts and literature and encouraged the development of Farsi as a literary language. Some of the most famous poets and scholars of that period worked at the Samanid court. Later, the Karakhanid state appeared on the territory previously controlled by the Samanids. The

Karakhanids were known as skilled warriors and rulers. Their empire reached its heyday in the 11th century, when they controlled vast territories of Central and South Asia. The Karakhanids were patrons of sciences and arts, and such outstanding scientists as Mahmud Kashgari lived at their court. After the reign of the Karakhanids, the powerful Timurid Empire came to power. The Timurids were descendants of the Turkic-Mongol commander Tamerlane. Their empire stretched from Anatolia to India and was one of the largest and most powerful in history. Samarkand, the capital of the Timurids, became a center of culture and trade. The Turkic empires located on the territory of modern Uzbekistan left an indelible mark on the region. They played an important role in spreading Islam, developing cultural exchange and strengthening trade ties.

In the 16th century, Uzbekistan became the center of the Bukhara Emirate, which was a powerful state in Central Asia. The Emirate controlled a vast territory and was an important center of trade and culture. In the 19th century, Uzbekistan was conquered by the Russian Empire. The country became part of the Turkestan General Government and served as an important buffer between Russia and British India. After the Russian Revolution, Uzbekistan became part of the Soviet Union. The country was a center of cotton growing and had a developed industry. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan became an independent state. The country pursued a policy of isolationism and neutrality in foreign policy.

Having gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan made a bold decision to pursue a policy of neutrality. This strategic decision was aimed at avoiding the country's involvement in regional conflicts and maintaining peaceful and friendly relations with all its neighbors (see pic.1).

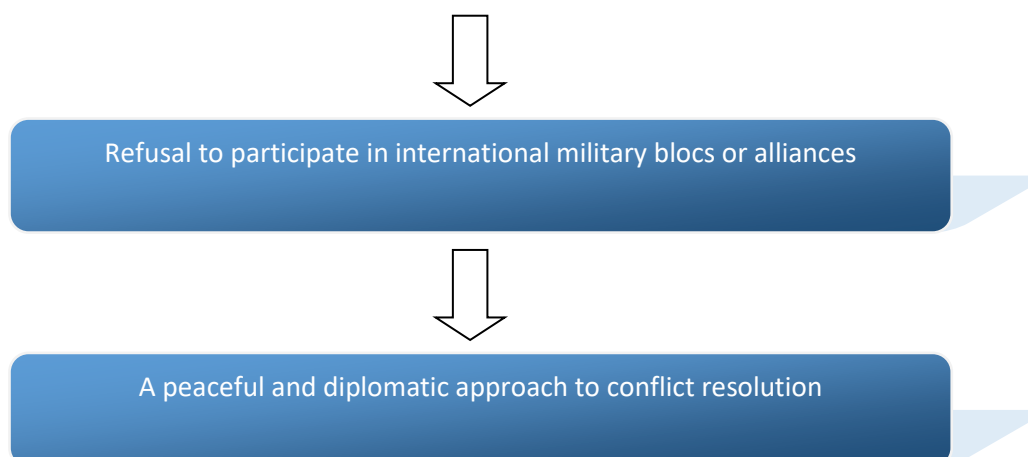
Uzbekistan's neutral position allowed the country to become an active participant in international organizations such as the UN, OSCE, where it contributes to the promotion of global peace and stability.

Uzbekistan plays an active role in regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The country also maintains close ties with its neighbors such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

The main principles of Uzbek neutrality



Non-interference in the internal affairs of other states



Pic. 1. The main principles of Uzbek neutrality.

Uzbekistan, located in the strategically important region of Central Asia, implements a balanced and multi-vector foreign policy, building relations with various world powers such as Russia, China, the United States and the European Union. This policy is dictated by the country's desire to ensure its independence, security and economic prosperity.

Uzbekistan has long-standing and close ties with Russia. The countries are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia is one of Uzbekistan's main trading partners. The countries actively cooperate in the fields of energy, transport and agriculture. Russia is providing assistance to Uzbekistan in the development of infrastructure and industry. In recent years, Uzbekistan has significantly strengthened its ties with China. China has become Uzbekistan's largest trading partner, as well as a major source of investment. Uzbekistan participates in China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which aims to expand trade and infrastructure ties between China and Central Asian countries. However, Uzbekistan maintains a cautious approach in its relations with China in order to avoid falling into debt dependence. Uzbekistan has sought to improve relations with the United States in recent years. The United States provides Uzbekistan with military and economic assistance, as well as security support. Uzbekistan is a member of the NATO Enhanced Capabilities Partnership and participates in regional initiatives supported by the United States.

Uzbekistan's multilateral foreign policy pursues the following goals:

Ensuring independence and security: Uzbekistan strives to preserve its independence and protect its borders from external threats by maintaining relations with various powers.

Economic development: Uzbekistan seeks investment, technology and market access through its relations with world powers.

Regional stability: Uzbekistan supports regional cooperation and dialogue to promote stability in Central Asia.

International recognition: Uzbekistan is striving to enhance its international status and play a more active role in world politics.

By building a balanced and multi-vector foreign policy, Uzbekistan strives to ensure its security, promote economic development and strengthen its position in the international community.

Uzbekistan is located in Central Asia, having no access to the sea. It borders five countries: Kazakhstan to the north and west, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east, and Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to the south. Uzbekistan is the second largest country in Central Asia after Kazakhstan, with an area of 447,400 square kilometers.

Uzbekistan's geographical location gives it unique geopolitical advantages. The country is located at the intersection of trade routes between East and West, which has made it an object of conquest and colonization for centuries. Currently, Uzbekistan is an important transport and trade hub in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan has significant natural resources, including:

- Natural gas: Uzbekistan is one of the largest producers of natural gas in the world. The country has proven reserves of about 1 trillion cubic meters.
- Oil: Uzbekistan is also a major oil producer. The country has proven reserves of about 600 million tons.
- Gold: Uzbekistan is one of the leading gold producers in the world. The country has proven reserves of about 3,000 tons.
- Uranium and copper: Uzbekistan has significant reserves of uranium and copper. The country is one of the largest producers of uranium and copper in the world.

In recent years, Uzbekistan's economy has shown steady growth (see table 1). In 2023, the country's GDP grew by 7.5%, which is one of the highest rates in the region. In 2023, inflation in Uzbekistan amounted to 8.77%. In March 2024, inflation slowed to 0.67%, which was the lowest monthly rate in the last 8 years. In 2023, more than 1 million new jobs were created in the service sector, agriculture and industry.

Table 1

Key growth factors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reforms aimed at liberalizing the economy • Attracting foreign
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	investments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small business development • Creation of new jobs
Main growth directions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of agriculture • Modernization of industry • Export promotion • Tourism development
Potential for further economic growth:	Rich reserves of natural resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young skilled workforce • Advantageous geographical location
Goals for the further development of the economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doubling of GDP by 2030 • Creation of 5 million new jobs • Poverty reduction

Table 1. Economic development of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan's economy is showing steady growth, which is facilitated by reforms, investments and the development of small businesses. The government is setting ambitious targets for further growth, reducing inflation and creating new jobs.

Uzbekistan is playing an increasingly important role in the region, chairing the Council of Turkic States, which contributes to strengthening cooperation between Turkic-speaking countries. The country has initiated the creation of a new format of regional cooperation "Central Asia – India", which aims to strengthen economic cooperation and interconnections in the region. The country is also an active participant in international organizations such as the UN, SCO, and OSCE. It holds major international forums, an example of which is the Tashkent International Conference on Afghanistan. Uzbekistan's active regional policy contributes to strengthening its authority in the international arena and promoting its national interests.

CONCLUSION

The new Uzbekistan confidently positions itself on the geopolitical map of the world, implementing an active foreign policy. The new Uzbekistan plays an important role in ensuring peace and stability in the region, as well as in promoting mutually beneficial cooperation between the countries.

The geopolitics of Uzbekistan has come a long way since gaining independence in 1991. The country has adopted a policy of neutrality, regional cooperation and a balanced foreign policy. Its geographical location, natural resources and economic development have also played an important role in shaping its geopolitical position. In the future, Uzbekistan's geopolitics will depend on a number of factors, including regional security, the global balance of power and the country's own economic development.

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