

THE EVOLUTION OF UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AFTER 2016: BALANCING BETWEEN NEIGHBORING STATES AND GLOBAL ACTORS

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Annotation

Since 2016, the political, economic, and social reforms implemented in the Republic of Uzbekistan have also led to fundamental shifts in the country's foreign policy. This scholarly article provides a detailed analytical overview of Uzbekistan's new foreign policy strategy, the sharp improvement of diplomatic relations with neighboring states, the strengthening of regional integration, the advancement of mutually beneficial cooperation with global actors – the United States, Russia, China, the European Union, Turkey, and South Korea – and the formation of a balanced foreign policy within these dynamic processes. After Shavkat Mirziyoyev assumed the presidency, Uzbekistan reconsidered the core principles of its foreign policy, resulting in the emergence of a new diplomatic model for the “New Uzbekistan,” based on openness, readiness for dialogue, cooperation, confidence-building, responsible engagement, and pragmatic interests. During this period, Uzbekistan's relations not only with neighboring countries but also with global powers gained new meaning. In particular, regional meetings and summits initiated by Uzbekistan in Central Asia contributed significantly to strengthening stability. This article examines the evolution of Uzbekistan's foreign policy between 2016 and 2025 from a scholarly perspective. The study provides an in-depth analysis of the differences between the country's historical diplomatic trajectory and the activities of contemporary diplomats, the main determinants of foreign policy, the impact of domestic reforms on international relations, and strategies related to regional security. Special emphasis is placed on the fact that principles such as “zero problems with neighbors,” “multi-vector foreign policy,” “open economy,” “favorable environment for international investment,” and “global diplomatic activism” have become central to the new political paradigm, which carries significant academic importance.

Keywords

Uzbekistan's foreign policy, political modernization, regional integration, global actors, Central Asia, diplomacy, multi-vector policy, strategic partnership, international security, economic diplomacy, geopolitical balance, international organizations, neighborhood policy.

Relevance of the Topic

In today's globalized world, the foreign policy of states stands as one of the most crucial factors in ensuring national security, economic development, regional stability, and international cooperation. For Uzbekistan, foreign policy holds particularly significant strategic importance, as the country is located at the geostrategic center of Central Asia, and its stability is a key prerequisite for the development of the entire region.

The profound changes that began in Uzbekistan's foreign policy after 2016 transformed not only the internal environment of the country but also the political landscape of Central Asia as a whole. The previously existing relatively closed, limited, and cautious diplomatic approach was replaced by a foreign policy based on openness, active engagement, practical interests, pragmatism, and cooperation. These very transformations underscore the relevance of the topic.

The main factors that make this topic relevant are as follows:

1. The beginning of new integration processes in Central Asia.

Thanks to Uzbekistan's initiatives, trust, dialogue, and rapprochement among neighboring states have significantly increased. Since 2017, the "Consultative Meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asia" have been institutionalized, helping overcome the diplomatic stagnation of the previous 25 years.

2. Resolution of border issues.

Longstanding unresolved problems concerning the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan-Tajikistan borders were settled through historic agreements. This was not only a diplomatic achievement but also a major development for regional security.

3. The rise of Uzbekistan's reputation on the global stage.

The country's activity within international organizations has sharply increased. Uzbekistan has promoted initiatives at the UN regarding global environmental challenges, the situation in Afghanistan, and the use of water resources, strengthening its new international image.

4. A balanced policy with global actors.

Uzbekistan has established equal and mutually beneficial relations with major powers such as the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union.

Maintaining balance in these relations is now a core strategy, which makes academic analysis highly relevant.

5. Economic diplomacy and investment flows.

Alongside large-scale economic reforms, foreign policy has increasingly focused on protecting economic interests. Uzbekistan's trade volume with major states has grown, and investment projects have multiplied.

6. A new model of relations with Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan is one of the few states in the region that maintains constructive dialogue with Afghanistan, making this a key element of regional security strategy. International conferences held in Tashkent have strengthened the country's role in this sphere.

7. Uzbekistan's emergence as a leading state in the region. Uzbekistan's initiatives have strengthened regional integration and elevated political and socio-economic cooperation to a new stage. Analyzing this process is scientifically important, as regional stability and development in Central Asia largely depend on the effectiveness of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. Therefore, scholarly analysis of Uzbekistan's foreign policy after 2016 is relevant not only for political scientists, but also for economists, geopoliticians, and experts in international relations.

Research Objective

The profound changes in Uzbekistan's foreign policy after 2016 are directly linked to the country's internal modernization processes, creating the need for a thorough scholarly study of this new political course. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the evolution of the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan during the period 2016–2025 and to scientifically substantiate the formation of new diplomatic principles and their practical outcomes. Firstly, the study compares Uzbekistan's previous foreign policy model with the active diplomacy pursued after 2016. This approach addresses questions such as which factors shaped the new foreign policy, how it aligned with domestic political reforms, and how it transformed Uzbekistan's position in the international arena. The second objective is to examine the qualitative changes in Uzbekistan's relations with neighboring countries. Since 2016, regional integration processes have accelerated, border issues have been resolved, and economic cooperation has strengthened. These developments have fundamentally reshaped the regional political landscape, with Uzbekistan positioned at the center of these processes. The third objective is to study Uzbekistan's multi-vector diplomacy with global actors. Within this scope, the research analyzes Uzbekistan's relations with major powers such as the United States, China, Russia, the European Union, Turkey, and other significant states. Issues such as maintaining balance in these relations, protecting

national interests, and implementing strategic partnerships on the international stage are examined in depth. The fourth objective is to investigate the development of Uzbekistan's economic diplomacy. Since 2016, the creation of a favorable environment for foreign investment, economic reforms, simplifications in the customs system, and the expansion of export geography have made Uzbekistan's foreign policy increasingly economically oriented. Studying these processes helps to understand the country's new economic model. The fifth objective is to analyze Uzbekistan's role in regional security. In particular, relations with Afghanistan, cross-border security threats, combating religious extremism, and related areas are studied. Uzbekistan's initiatives in the field of security have become an important factor for regional stability and require scientific analysis. The sixth objective is to examine the conceptual foundations of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, including principles such as "Open Uzbekistan," "New Central Asia," "Pragmatic Diplomacy," "Zero Problems with Neighbors," and "Multi-Vector Foreign Policy." These principles are not only political but also carry ideological, strategic, and economic significance, shaping Uzbekistan's political identity. Thus, the overall goal of the research is to study Uzbekistan's new foreign policy in a comprehensive, systematic, and scientifically grounded manner, analyzing its significance at both regional and global levels.

Research Methodology

To ensure a thorough scientific study, this research employs several methodological approaches. Since foreign policy is a multi-layered and complex structure, studying it through a single theoretical framework is insufficient. Therefore, the study utilizes the following methods from contemporary political science and international relations:

1. Historical-Comparative Analysis

Uzbekistan's foreign policy during the periods 1991–2016 and 2016–2025 was compared. This method allowed for identifying fundamental changes in the new period, as well as their causes and consequences. In particular, shifts in regional integration and Uzbekistan's global position were evaluated from a historical perspective.

2. Geopolitical Analysis

Uzbekistan's geographic location, transport routes, energy resources, and regional influence were examined from a geopolitical perspective. Additionally, the strategic significance of global actors such as the United States, China, Russia, the European Union, and Turkey for Uzbekistan was analyzed.

3. Diplomatic Analysis

Official visits, bilateral agreements, international summits, economic forums, speeches at the UN, and political accords were studied as primary diplomatic sources.

4. SWOT Analysis

The strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) of Uzbekistan's foreign policy were examined. This approach allowed for evaluating the effectiveness of the new foreign policy model.

5. Content Analysis

Documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, presidential addresses, international organization reports, expert opinions, scholarly articles, and diplomatic commentaries were analyzed through content analysis to draw logical conclusions.

6. Empirical Analysis

Statistical data, changes in trade volumes, investment flows, and the dynamics of foreign economic relations were studied based on concrete numerical evidence.

7. Scenario-Diagnostic Approach

Future scenarios for the development of Uzbekistan's foreign policy were developed. This approach is important for shaping strategies related to political stability and security.

The methodological diversity employed in this research ensures a deep, scientific, and reliable study of Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

Research Results

The research results indicate that Uzbekistan's foreign policy after 2016 has fundamentally formed a new diplomatic paradigm and proved effective in practice. The main scientific findings are outlined as follows:

Regional diplomacy has fundamentally changed. Uzbekistan emerged as a leading initiator of integration in Central Asia. As a result, more than 85% of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border was demarcated, strategic partnership with Tajikistan was restored after a 20-year hiatus, trade volume with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan increased several times, and the dialogue mechanism of the heads of state of Central Asia was institutionalized.

A balanced policy with global actors was established. Cooperation with China intensified through the "Belt and Road" projects. Strategic projects with Russia in energy and transport sectors strengthened. Security and economic ties with the United States expanded. The benefits of the GSP+ system with the European Union became clearly visible. This balance reinforced Uzbekistan's geopolitical independence.

Economic diplomacy developed. The inflow of foreign investment increased sharply. Since 2016, the export geography has more than doubled. Over 300 major international investment projects were launched.

Uzbekistan's role in Afghanistan policy increased. Tashkent hosted significant international conferences on Afghanistan in 2018 and 2021. The Mazar-Termez-Peshawar railway project was recognized as important for regional economic integration.

Uzbekistan's international reputation improved. Between 2016 and 2025, Uzbekistan promoted several global initiatives at the UN. Cooperation with the SCO, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the OSCE reached a new level.

The research results demonstrate that Uzbekistan's foreign policy in the new era has developed as an effective, balanced, pragmatic model that ensures regional stability.

Conclusion

The histological structure of alveoli is one of the most important factors determining their efficiency in gas exchange. The extreme thinness of the alveolar wall, the morpho-functional characteristics of type I and type II pneumocytes, the physicochemical effects of surfactant, the density of alveolar capillaries, and the presence of elastic fibers ensure the optimal course of the respiratory process.

While type I pneumocytes provide the main structure for gas diffusion, type II pneumocytes prevent alveolar collapse and maintain stability by producing surfactant. In addition, the ultra-thin alveolar-capillary membrane allows O₂ and CO₂ to pass rapidly and with minimal energy expenditure in both directions.

The total surface area of alveoli, their spherical shape, and direct proximity to capillaries directly affect the body's overall oxygenation. Any pathological changes observed in the histological structure of alveoli—such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pneumonia, fibrosis, or ARDS—significantly reduce the efficiency of gas exchange. Therefore, a deep study of alveolar structure is not only of theoretical importance but also plays a crucial role in clinical practice for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation processes.

The results of this scientific work indicate that the microstructure of alveoli determines the main mechanisms of gas exchange in the body. Maintaining their normal function is essential for the overall health of the respiratory system.

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