

Uzbekistan's Good-Neighborhood Policy In Ensuring Regional Stability In Central Asia

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Abstract

This article examines Uzbekistan's Good-neighborhood diplomacy as a key instrument for ensuring regional stability and security in Central Asia. The study analyzes the conceptual foundations of good-neighborly relations through the lenses of international relations theory and international law, emphasizing their practical implementation in Uzbekistan's foreign policy since 2016. Particular attention is paid to regional dialogue, conflict prevention, economic interdependence, and trust-building mechanisms. The article argues that Uzbekistan's diplomatic initiatives have contributed to the transformation of Central Asia into a space of cooperative security, replacing geopolitical competition with strategic trust and collaboration. The findings demonstrate that Good-neighborhood diplomacy represents an effective and sustainable model for regional peace in the contemporary geopolitical environment.

Keywords: Good-neighborhood diplomacy; Regional stability; Central Asia; Uzbekistan's foreign policy; Cooperative security; International relations.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the geopolitical significance of Central Asia has increased markedly in the international arena. Strengthening peace, security, and stability in this region has become one of the key priorities of regional cooperation. Since 2016, Uzbekistan's foreign policy has entered a new stage characterized by the formation of a "Good-neighborhood diplomacy." This diplomatic approach is aimed at resolving regional challenges through dialogue, mutual trust, and the harmonization of shared interests.

Uzbekistan's initiatives aimed at ensuring regional peace and promoting good-neighborhood relations have evolved into a modern model of stability-oriented foreign policy. The country's diplomatic course is increasingly

studied as a successful practical model that advances the idea of regional stability through dialogue in Central Asia. In this regard, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's statement — "We are firm supporters of strengthening centuries-old friendship, good neighborliness, and comprehensive cooperation for the prosperity of our two fraternal peoples" — clearly reflects the pragmatic nature of Uzbekistan's peace-oriented regional policy.

Good-neighborhood diplomacy represents a foreign policy strategy focused on ensuring stability, mutual trust, and cooperation among states within the international system. It is grounded in the principles of peace, sovereign equality, and respect for mutual interests. This approach is closely linked to the principles of "friendly relations" firmly embedded in international law, particularly in the Charter of the United Nations

(1945) and the 1970 UN General Assembly Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States.

In international relations theory, Good-neighborhood diplomacy can be interpreted through several theoretical perspectives. From a realist standpoint, it is viewed as a pragmatic instrument for safeguarding state security, prioritizing balance and the alignment of interests over military confrontation. Liberal theory emphasizes diplomacy as a means of strengthening peace through economic interdependence, integration, and regional cooperation. From a constructivist perspective, Good-neighborhood diplomacy is understood as a normative process through which states construct mutual trust, shared identities, and a sense of regional solidarity.

In international law, the principle of good neighborhood constitutes a fundamental norm of interstate relations. It encompasses respect for sovereign equality and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes through diplomatic means, consideration of mutual interests, and the strengthening of regional security through stability. These principles are reflected in key international and regional frameworks, including the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1975), as well as the activities of regional organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the Organization of Turkic States.

Good-neighborhood diplomacy is a central pillar of a state's foreign policy, as it fosters an atmosphere of trust and stability with neighboring countries, promotes trade, economic, cultural, and energy cooperation, facilitates coordination in addressing transboundary challenges such as water management, migration, and environmental issues, and contributes to the consolidation of regional security systems.

The renewed process of regional rapprochement among Central Asian states since 2017 — initiated by Uzbekistan's policy of "Good Neighborhood, Friendship, and Cooperation" — represents the practical implementation of this diplomatic concept. As a result, tangible progress has been achieved in resolving long-standing and complex issues related to water resource management, transport and logistics, and border delimitation.

Within Uzbekistan's foreign policy doctrine, the

principle of good neighborhood has been identified as a strategic priority and has played a decisive role in restoring mutual trust across Central Asia. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's initiative, announced at the 2017 UN General Assembly, declaring Central Asia a "region of peace, stability, and prosperity," marked a significant turning point in regional diplomacy. This initiative was further endorsed by a UN General Assembly resolution in 2021.

Through this policy, Uzbekistan successfully addressed sensitive border delimitation issues with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, revitalized dialogue on water and energy cooperation, and established the Termez Platform to support regional stability in relation to Afghanistan. As a result of this rational and inclusive approach, a climate of mutual trust and cooperation has gradually replaced geopolitical rivalry in the region.

Sustainable peace is unattainable without the alignment of economic interests. Under Uzbekistan's initiative, major projects such as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, the Uzbekistan–Turkmenistan–Iran–Oman corridor, and regional trade forums have been launched. Between 2016 and 2024, Uzbekistan's trade turnover with Central Asian countries increased fivefold, strengthening economic interdependence as a preventive mechanism against regional conflicts.

Within the framework of public diplomacy, Uzbekistan has developed innovative trust-building tools through international forums held in Samarkand, Khiva, and Termez, as well as youth and women's dialogue platforms. The Uzbek model of "security through dialogue and trust" has gained international recognition. In 2022, numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing regional security were advanced within the frameworks of the UN, OSCE, SCO, and the Organization of Turkic States.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Good-neighborhood diplomacy should be understood not merely as a foreign policy direction, but as a normative system aimed at preserving international peace and stability. It represents a regional manifestation of the global principles of friendly relations, grounded in sovereignty, equality, mutual benefit, and cooperation. In the contemporary geopolitical environment, this diplomatic model is increasingly recognized as an effective mechanism for regional integration, positive interdependence, and security consolidation. Thus,

Uzbekistan's Good-neighborhood diplomacy constitutes a new paradigm that harmonizes the principles of political realism and constructivism in strengthening regional security. Uzbekistan's initiatives have contributed to the formation of a cooperative security model in Central Asia, where strategic trust and collaboration have replaced political rivalry. Economic integration, cultural exchange, and public diplomacy have emerged as institutional pillars of sustainable peace.

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