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REGIONAL DIPLOMACY IN CENTRAL ASIA: EXPERIENCE OF UZBEKISTAN

Abstract: *The current political processes in the world are influenced by various trends. In most cases, these tendencies are out of the reach of close cooperation, compromise and political negotiation, and attempts are being made to address military conflicts in parts of the world. This requires regional diplomacy in every region and at any time. Central Asia is one of the strategically important regions of the world. The dramatic changes taking place in this region will have an impact on the world political life as well. Today, the interests of the leading nations in the region are intersecting and various non-traditional threats remain. In these circumstances, there is an urgent need to strengthen regional diplomacy among the Central Asian states and jointly address pressing issues. In this regard, the Republic of Uzbekistan through its political vigor and practical efforts has been able to create such a diplomatic atmosphere in the region. This article will present Uzbekistan's active diplomacy in Central Asia, its legal mechanisms and experience.*

Key words: regional diplomacy, paradiplomacy, constituent diplomacy, sub-state diplomacy, microdiplomacy, multilayered diplomacy, preventive diplomacy, the Strategy of Action, Central Asia, Tashkent conference.

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Introduction

The concept of regional diplomacy is emerging as one of the most important instruments of international relations for cooperation in certain regions, reaching agreements, and jointly addressing urgent problems between countries in the context of escalating geopolitical influences. Naturally, small states, often located in geostrategic regions, closely associate their foreign policy with the region in which they are located. However, this is difficult to do individually, and calls for regional diplomacy.

LITERATURE VIEW

The theoretical basis of this research is the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Development Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the UN General Assembly resolution "Strengthen regional and international cooperation for peace, stability and sustainable development in Central Asia" and a speech is called "The consensus

of our people is the highest value given to our work" by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Also, several articles such as "Paradiplomacy as a Means of Expressing the Regional Identity of Subjects of the Federations" by Yu. Akimov and "Regional organizations in Central Asia: characteristics of interactions, efficiency dilemmas" by L.Maren, P.Sebasten are efficiently used in this research.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main method in this article is the content analysis of the materials presented in local and foreign documents. The researcher also investigated information on magazines and newspapers on the subject.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In addition to the term regional diplomacy in international relations, terms such as "paradiplomacy", "structural diplomacy", "interstate diplomacy", "sub-state diplomacy",

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"microdiplomacy", "multilateral diplomacy" are also used. Although they have similar meaning, the terms "paradiplomacy" and "regional diplomacy" are relevant [1]. Paradiplomacy was introduced in the 80s of XX century by I.Dukhachek. It is precisely the theoretical views of this scholar that became the cornerstone of regional diplomacy. He noted that paradiplomacy is a means of establishing international relations between different countries in the region. However, it is worth noting that over time, different scholars have pointed out its distinctive features from contemporary regional diplomacy. Specifically, a similar description of paradigm diplomacy is given by Professor Y.Akimov, Professor of American Studies at St. Petersburg State University: "Paradiplomacy is an international manifestation of subnational units that form formal and informal, permanent and temporary relations with foreign actors based on various strategies of action" [2]. The main premise of this definition is that paradiplomacy can be understood as the participation of state (local, regional) bodies in international relations. In this respect, regional diplomacy is the direct foreign policy instrument of the states in the region, while paradiplomacy is the participation of the subordinate structures in foreign affairs. In covering regional diplomacy as an example of Uzbekistan, it is necessary to study the geographical location, legal, organizational and diplomatic mechanisms of foreign policy.

Central Asia, which is characterized by its strategic role and importance in the world, is undergoing tremendous political changes. Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia, the country's diplomacy plays a crucial role in the region. In particular, as a political will of the new leadership of Uzbekistan, the practical aspects of regional diplomacy are developing in the region. It is advisable to consider this diplomacy on the following criteria:

Legal bases of regional diplomacy

The first legal basis of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is the Constitution of the country. According to Article 17 of the Constitution, The Republic of Uzbekistan shall have full rights in international relations. Its foreign policy shall be based on the principles of sovereign equality of the states, non-use of force or threat of its use, inviolability of frontiers, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and other universally recognized norms of international law. The Republic may form alliances, join or withdraw from unions and other inter-state organizations proceeding from the ultimate interests of the state and the people, their well-being and security [3]. This article fully complies with the diplomatic principles of international law. One of the legal documents defining foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is the Law "The Concept of Foreign Policy Activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan" (September 12, 2012). The

law states that the priority of foreign policy of Uzbekistan is the Central Asian region and the vital interests of the country are inseparably linked with this region. The Concept also includes political consultations as a political and diplomatic instrument for foreign policy of Uzbekistan, joint search for discussion and resolution of pressing issues, exchange of views and coordination of positions on regional and international issues of mutual interest, preventive diplomacy and preventive measures, developing forms and methods, foreign policy initiatives aimed at ensuring the national interests of Uzbekistan, security and stability in the region iqish and other devices are listed [4]. Indeed, these tools play an important role in active diplomacy in the region, but as a result of some internal and external political processes and influences in Central Asia, there has been a number of difficulties in implementing such tools. In addition, another important document that reflects some of the main principles and priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy at present is the Strategy of Action for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The fifth priority of this strategy is to ensure security, interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, and to create an environment of security, stability and neighborliness in Uzbekistan's foreign policy in a well thought out, mutually beneficial and practical manner [5-6]. In our opinion, radical changes in Central Asia through Uzbek diplomacy require the necessary changes and amendments to the Concept of Foreign Policy Activity, or the development of new legal documents on specific areas and mechanisms of foreign policy.

Regional diplomacy practice in Uzbekistan

The role of President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in addressing the problems that have arisen with all Central Asian states through political consultations and encouraging the countries of the region to actively engage in dialogue and cooperation. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev addressed a speech at the General Debate of 72nd Session of UN General Assembly and said, "Today, Uzbekistan considers the region of Central Asia to be as the main priority of its foreign policy. And this is a conscious choice. Being in the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is keenly interested in the region to become a zone of stability, sustainable development and good-neighborliness. A peaceful and economically prosperous Central Asia is our most important goal and key task".

Uzbekistan is determined to engage in dialogue, constructive interaction and strengthening the good-neighborliness. We stand ready for reasonable compromises with the countries of Central Asia on all issues without exception" [7]. Today relations between Central Asian countries are developing dynamically. A new geopolitical environment is emerging in Central Asia. The growing number of problems between Central Asian countries are directly

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related to Uzbekistan's role in this area. In this sense, a number of practical and enormous work has been done not only at bilateral but also regional and international levels. In particular, the meeting of the presidents of states of Central Asia, Samarkand Conference on "Central Asia: One Past and a Common Future, Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Mutual Prosperity", Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan which is called that "Peace process, security cooperation and regional connectivity", Tashkent International Conference: "Central Asia in the System of International Transport Corridors: Strategic Perspectives and Unrealized Opportunities", International Conference "Interconnectedness in Central Asia: challenges and new opportunities" and other regional cooperation mechanisms give a plenty of great chances in political, economic, trade, transport and communication, cultural and humanitarian spheres, the issues of security and stability in a more efficient opportunities.

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev addressed a speech in the Samarkand Conference on "Central Asia: One Past and a Common Future, Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Mutual Prosperity", currently linked the interests of powerful states in Central Asia to the foci of instability and confrontation, with a particular emphasis on the impact that the region in which it is facing all the negative processes taking place in the near and far abroad, what power will prevail here - whether it is conflict or confrontation or cooperation and development? To do this, the President set up a Regional Economic Forum and the Central Asian Regional Business Forum for the development of trade and economic relations, the more effective use of transport and logistics potential, and the adherence to the principle of "integrated security" in ensuring security and stability in Central Asia. comprehensive support for Afghanistan's involvement in regional economic processes, including the process of delimitation and demarcation of state borders, complete the region's water resources effectively, taking into account the interests of all countries in the region, as well as cultural and humanitarian cooperation, especially in Central Asia "people diplomacy" as the most important tool for development of attention [8]. The practical implementation of these initiatives is gradually being implemented. The head of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia N.German said at a press conference at the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan that exactly the initiative of Uzbekistan

had diminished in scale, and the UN was ready to make every possible contribution to the process [9]. In addition, on June 22, 2018 at the UN General Assembly, the resolution was "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region"[10] was adopted. The draft document, developed by Uzbekistan jointly with the Central Asian states, was unanimously supported by all UN member states. This resolution is a practical result of an initiative proposed by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoev at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2017. The Secretary General of the SCO, V. Norov, commented on the importance of the document: "The document states that the UN General Assembly will support efforts and initiatives by the countries of the region to strengthen stability and economic cooperation in Central Asia. The common position of the five Central Asian countries on major regional issues is determined. In particular, the importance of expanding regional cooperation in such areas as strengthening security in Central Asia, rational use of water and energy, addressing environmental issues, and developing transport and transit systems are mentioned. Today, there are all the necessary conditions for a stable and effective cooperation in Central Asia. There is great potential for further development of high-tech industries, improvement of the agro-industrial sector and tourism, attraction of large foreign investments in the real sector of the economy. It should be noted that for the past one or two years, the trade turnover between the countries of Central Asia increased by 20-30%. In some neighboring countries, the rate has increased to 70%." [11-12].

In conclusion, the Republic of Uzbekistan is a key to regional diplomacy in Central Asia. The diplomatic mission of Uzbekistan in this direction is effectively accomplished. There is a growing interest in the Central Asian region. This, in turn, requires the development of a regional diplomacy strategy. Therefore, in our view, it is expedient to elaborate and adopt "the Declaration on Strategic Fundamentals of Regional Diplomacy" in Central Asia. This declaration is based on the norms of international law, the UN special resolution on Central Asia and the agreements on cooperation between the countries of Central Asia. At the same time, the adoption of this Declaration can help to resolve complex issues through diplomatic means and tools, and to foster the development of mutual trust.

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