

Afghan Vector of Modern Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article discusses the foundations of the modern foreign policy of Uzbekistan in the Afghan direction. They were formed at the beginning of the reforms of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2016. Their concept is that Afghanistan is seen not as a threat to stability and security, but as a set of opportunities for Uzbekistan and the Central Asian region, especially for their economic development. The Uzbek approach is based on the following principles: support for peace and stability in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan will contribute to the establishment of a peaceful life in Afghanistan and greater participation of the world community in this process; the integration of Afghanistan into projects for the development of relations between Central and South Asia, which are being implemented by Tashkent. Such a realistic approach allowed Uzbekistan to build flexible and constructive relations with the Afghan authorities both before and after the events of August 15, 2021.

Keywords: Afghanistan, «Taliban»^{*1}, reforms in Uzbekistan, economization, security, settlement, interconnectedness, Central Asia, South Asia, «Termez – Mazar – I – Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar» railway

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1 ^{*}The organization has been recognized a terrorist organization by the Russian Supreme Court. Unified federal list of organizations, including foreign and international organizations, recognized as terrorist in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (as of June 25, 2023). Available from: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>. (accessed: 25.06.2023);18+

Introduction

Until 2016, Afghanistan in Uzbekistan's foreign policy was considered mainly within the framework of the issue of ensuring national and regional security. However, after the beginning of the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev reforms in the second half of 2016, the southern neighbor began to be perceived not as a source of challenges and threats, but as a source of opportunities within the framework of the general direction of economizing the country's foreign policy. This did not mean that security issues had receded into the background. Security is simply designed to create favorable conditions for the development of trade, economic and investment relations. The withdrawal of American and NATO contingents, which caused a wide resonance in the world and the region, accompanied by the rapid offensive of the «Taliban»* and the collapse of the government of Ashraf Ghani in August 2021, did not change the new approach of Uzbekistan in general.

The purpose of this article is to show the logic of Uzbekistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, which was formed and implemented after the start of reforms in the country and the change of internal priorities, which reflected on the foreign policy course.

The article is intended to attract the attention of the scientific and expert community to the study of Uzbekistan's policy towards Afghanistan. Uzbekistan sets itself not only regional goals, but also wants to create favorable conditions for the formation of interconnectedness of Central and South Asia.

Materials and Methods

The materials used were statistical data on bilateral trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in 2016–2022, statements and speeches by officials of the Republic of Uzbekistan, reflecting the position of the state and initiatives regarding the peace process, reconstruction and integration of Afghanistan into regional trade, economic and transport connections.

Based on a systematic analysis and the application of the comparative historical method, a group of determinants of modern Uzbek politics, its unique approaches in the Afghan direction and the development of policy after the start of the country's new foreign policy in 2016 were identified.

Results

Uzbekistan's Policy towards Afghanistan until August 15, 2021

The election of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as the President of Uzbekistan symbolized a change in the baseline in the development of the country. The focus of attention has shifted from security, which prevailed in the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, to ensuring socio-economic

reforms in accordance with modern realities and system-forming trends in the global economy. The new foreign policy course was called “economization” in the expert community [2].

As part of the new policy, key attention was paid to the potential for cooperation with regional countries, which are considered as natural markets for Uzbek products. It should be noted that until 2016 this potential was not used to its full potential due to disagreements with a number of Central Asian countries on water and border issues.

The new course of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev showed that the sharpness and depth of the previously existing contradictions were seriously exaggerated. The proof was the rapid normalization of relations with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, accompanied by the explosive growth of bilateral trade and the expansion of humanitarian contacts. Trade with Kazakhstan also began to develop rapidly. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, from 2017 to 2019 the volume of trade between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan increased from \$2.05 billion to \$3.367 billion, with Kyrgyzstan – from \$253.7 billion to \$829 million, with Tajikistan – from \$237.9 billion to \$497 million [2].

Despite the decline in trade with some Central Asian countries during the coronavirus pandemic, after its completion, it quickly recovered and its growth returned. So, if trade with Kazakhstan amounted to \$3.005 billion in 2020, then in 2021 and 2022 it increased to \$3.92 billion and \$4,621 billion. accordingly. Astana has become the third most important foreign trade partner after Russia and China. The trade turnover with Kyrgyzstan in 2022 reached a record of \$1.26 billion (6th place), and with Turkmenistan stopped at a step from \$1 billion – \$26.3 million (8th place). Trade turnover with Tajikistan has consistently grown – \$493.1 million ((2020), \$605.6 million ((2021) and \$674.4 million (2022)².

In the new “economized” foreign policy course, much attention was also paid to Afghanistan, which, during the presence of the United States in this country and large-scale injections of donor funds into the Afghan economy, has become a significant export destination for Uzbek producers. At the same time, Uzbekistan traditionally had a steady surplus in trade with Kabul. If in 2019 it amounted to \$431.2 million (exports \$433.3 million, imports – almost \$2.1), then in the coronavirus 2020, which is a record for bilateral trade – \$774.4 million (export – \$776.7 million, import – \$2.3 million)³

The Afghan market, which accounts for 5% of all Uzbek exports, has become a source of economic activity in a number of sectors of the Uzbek economy, as evidenced by the commodity nomenclature. In 2020, 662 trade items were exported to Afghanistan. Of these, the main share of exports fell on the supply of wheat flour (28.1%), electricity (17.2%), services in the field of freight rail transportation (25.3%). Exports of cement grew rapidly (by 21% compared to 2019) and ferrous metallurgy products (26.6%)⁴.

² Rapprochement with Russia, China is the main supplier. How Uzbekistan's foreign trade has changed in 2022. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/01/24/trade-partners/>

³ Afghanistan trade balance, exports and imports by country 2019. Available from: <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/AFG/Year/2019/TradeFlow/EXPIMP/Partner/by-country>

⁴ Uzbekistan – Afghanistan: Prospects for economic cooperation in new realities. Available from: <https://xs.uz/ru/post/uzbekistan-afganistan-perspektivy-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-v-novykh-realiyakh>

In 2021, Afghanistan was the largest trade and economic partner of Uzbekistan from all countries of South Asia. It accounted for 48.9% of the total volume of trade, India – 35.6%, Pakistan – 13.2% and Bangladesh – 2.1%⁵

The potential of economic relations with Afghanistan at that time was considered as undisclosed to the end, which set the task for the Government and the Foreign Ministry of Uzbekistan to bring bilateral cooperation to a qualitatively and quantitatively new level. As the analysis of Tashkent's foreign policy activity in relation to Afghanistan in 2016–2021 shows, activities in the Afghan direction took on an active character and focused on three directions.

The first direction is to stimulate the efforts of the international community to find a model for a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict. 2016–2021 was characterized by an increase in military and political instability in Afghanistan. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Office for Human Rights, in 2018 there were 3804 dead and 7189 wounded among the civilian population, among them 927 children. The cause of 63% of the victims were the actions of anti-government forces – the «Taliban»* (37%), «ISIS»–Khorasan*⁶ (20%) and 6% – unidentified anti-government forces. Pro-government forces were responsible for 24% of the casualties⁷.

Obviously, this trend inspired fears for the development of the situation inside Afghanistan. In this regard, Uzbekistan has taken the initiative to hold an international conference on Afghanistan “Peace process, security cooperation and regional cooperation”. The event was held in Tashkent in March 2018 and President Shavkat Mirziyoyev unveiled the Uzbek vision for the settlement of the Afghan conflict, which consisted in the development of a comprehensive peace process at the following three interrelated and interdependent levels:

- at the intra-Afghan level, where it was necessary to ensure the beginning of a direct dialogue without preconditions between the central government and the main forces of the armed opposition, primarily the «Taliban»* movement;
- at the regional level, in order to ensure the achievement of a strong consensus with the support of Pakistan, India, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and the countries of Central Asia;
- at the global level, where it was necessary to provide principled political support for the peace process and financial assistance to the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan from the leading world powers and donor organizations⁸.

⁵ Infographics: Uzbekistan's trade with South Asian countries 2021 (Electronic resource). Available from: <https://review.uz/post/infografika-torgovlya-uzbekistana-so-stranami-yujnoy-azii-2021>

⁶ *The organization has been recognized a terrorist organization by the Russian Supreme Court. Unified federal list of organizations, including foreign and international organizations, recognized as terrorist in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (as of June 25, 2023). Available from: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm> (accessed: 25.06.2023);18+

⁷ Afghanistan. Protection of civilians in arm conflict Annual report 2018. Available from: <https://unama.unmissions.org/civilian-deaths-afghan-conflict-2018-highest-recorded-level-%E2%80%93-un-report>

⁸ Speech by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the international conference on Afghanistan: “Peace process, security cooperation and regional cooperation”. Available from: <https://uza.uz/ru/posts/vystuplenie-prezidenta-respubliki-uzbekistan-shavkata-mirziyoyev-27-03-2018>

Later, in 2020, Uzbekistan positively perceived the transformation of Qatar's capital Doha into a negotiating platform for the Afghan settlement. As stated by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his speech at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly,

We fully support the peace talks between the political forces of Afghanistan that began in Doha in September this year. We hope that these negotiations will contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the long-suffering Afghan land⁹.

The second area where the active nature of Uzbek policy manifested itself was the initiative to create a framework for cooperation between Central and South Asia with the participation of Afghanistan. The impetus for this strategic line was given by the international conference “Central and South Asia: Regional Interconnectedness” held in Tashkent on July 15–16, 2021. The expansion of cooperation between the two regions should have a positive impact on the overall security system in Eurasia, contribute to the growth of trade, economic and investment relations, and the development of cultural and humanitarian ties. Afghanistan was considered as one of the key beneficiaries, since the bulk of cargo transportation would have to be carried out directly through its territory. Tashkent proposed a project for the construction of the Termez–Mazar–I–Sharif–Kabul–Peshawar railway, thanks to which goods from Central and South Asia, CIS countries, Europe, Southeast Asia and China would go through Afghanistan¹⁰.

The third direction of Uzbekistan's Afghan policy in 2016–2021 was the creation of additional incentives and platforms for the growth of economic cooperation with Afghanistan. In 2017, a roadmap was signed to increase bilateral trade turnover to \$1.5 billion, including more than 40 contracts for more than \$500 million for the supply of Uzbek products to the Afghan market.

An agreement was signed on the construction of the Surkhan–Puli Khumri power transmission line for stable power supply to Kabul. The contract on the design, construction and operation of power lines in Afghanistan was signed between the National Electric Networks of Uzbekistan and Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat in December 2020, after which its implementation began, which was suspended in July 2021 due to the sharp intensification of hostilities in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan managed at that time to complete the construction of a part of the power line on its territory¹¹.

Among the significant steps to increase trade and economic cooperation, it is possible to highlight the agreement reached by the parties in May 2021 in Termez to accelerate the approval of the draft agreement on preferential trade to bring trade to the level of \$2 billion

⁹ Shavkat Mirziyoyev: We perceive Afghanistan as an integral part of Central Asia. Available from: <https://uzreport.news/politics/shavkat-mirziyoyev-mi-vosprinimaem-afganistan-kak-neotemlemuyu-chast-tsentrallyy-azii>

¹⁰ Uzbekistan is not only adapting to the new international environment, but also opening windows of opportunity for the formation of a new reality – expert. Available from: <https://www.podrobno.uz/cat/obchestvo/uzbekistan-ne-tolko-prisposoblivaetsya-k-novoy-mezhdunarodnoy-srede-no-i-sam-otkryvaet-okna-vozmozhn/>

¹¹ The start date for the construction of power lines in Afghanistan has been extended until August 31. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/07/26/surkhan/>

per year¹². In order to stimulate transit cargo transportation to/from Afghanistan, the Termez Cargo Center was opened in 2016 in Surkhandarya region in close proximity to the Afghan border [3].

The policy of Uzbekistan during the period of Presidents Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani was not limited only to economic interests. Tashkent, considering this country as an “integral part of Central Asia” and has repeatedly provided humanitarian assistance to it. There were several shipments of humanitarian aid during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and the opening of an Educational Center for Afghan students in 2018, which trains specialists in the field of teaching Uzbek language and literature, construction and operation of railways¹³.

Uzbek Policy towards Afghanistan after the Return to Power of the «Taliban»*

Unexpected for many analysts, the rapid fall of Kabul on August 15, 2021 and the establishment by the «Taliban»* of control over the entire territory of Afghanistan, including the previously seemingly impregnable Panjshir Gorge immediately after the withdrawal of American troops, put all Central Asian countries in need of adjusting their foreign policy. According to the statement of Uzbek officials, the return of the «Taliban»* to power was not a surprise for them, since two more years ago. Prior to this, such a development of events was predicted and clear security guarantees were received from the Head of the political office of the «Taliban»* movement in Doha (Qatar) Mullah Abdul Ghani of Barodar¹⁴.

Uzbekistan understood that the current new reality in Afghanistan provides an opportunity to end the forty-year conflict. It was important for Uzbekistan to prevent the degradation of the humanitarian situation in this country, especially since due to the cessation of international financing and the freezing of the country's funds in Western banks, the Afghan economy and banking system were immediately on the verge of collapse. To prevent this, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at the SCO summit in Dushanbe on September 17, 2021, called for the unfreezing of \$9.5 billion of Afghan funds and assistance to Afghanistan in solving social problems¹⁵.

A few days later, at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the President of Uzbekistan also called for the creation of a permanent committee on Afghanistan at the

¹² Uzbekistan and Afghanistan become “best friends”: what connects them. Available from: <https://uz.sputniknews.ru/20210526/uzbekistan-i-afganistan-stanovyatsya-luchshimi-druzyami-chto-ix-svyazyvaet-18917152.html>

¹³ Yeniseev M. Uzbekistan creates an educational center for Afghan students. Available from: https://central.asia-news.com/ru/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2017/12/01/feature-01

¹⁴ “We predicted that these events would happen”. The President about the situation in Afghanistan. *Gazeta.uz*, August 27, 2021. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/08/27/afghanistan-new/>

¹⁵ Uzbekistan has proposed to unfreeze Afghanistan's assets in foreign banks. What is known about them? *Newspaper.uz*, September 17, 2021: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/09/17/frozen-assets/>

UN. His goal was to prevent the isolation of this state, in which it would become alone with its problems¹⁶.

In order to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan constructively and pragmatically accepted the formation of the Transitional Administration of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (interim government) immediately after the capture of Kabul by the «Taliban»¹⁷. Already on October 7, 2021, the Head of the Uzbek Foreign Ministry, Abdulaziz Kamilov, visited Kabul. He met with Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaki, with whom he discussed issues of bilateral economic cooperation in the field of cargo transit, energy, trade and reconstruction of the airport in Mazar-I-Sharif.

In general, the position of Uzbekistan at the end of 2021 regarding Afghanistan and the political changes that have taken place in it can be reduced to several points voiced by A.Kamilov at the second ministerial meeting in the Italy – Central Asia format on December 8, 2021. Among them:

- the need for a constructive dialogue with the new Afghan authorities in order to avoid the re-transformation of this country into a “rogue state”;
- providing a humanitarian corridor to Afghanistan to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe;
- taking measures to lift sanctions, unfreeze Afghanistan's international assets and assist it in restoring the banking system;
- the importance of a post-conflict strategy for Afghanistan and its active involvement in regional integration processes of an economic nature and the implementation of socio-economic projects in this country;
- fulfillment by the new Afghan authorities of their international obligations: the creation of an inclusive government, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, the prevention of the deployment of terrorist groups on the territory of the country, the termination of contacts with them, the support of good-neighborly relations with the countries of the region, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, including women and national minorities¹⁸.

Additional aspects in Uzbekistan's policy towards Afghanistan were indicated in Shavkat Mirziyoyev's address to the participants of the international conference “Afghanistan: Security and Economic Development” held in Tashkent on July 26, 2022. In particular, he stressed that the Uzbek and Afghan peoples share common cultural, spiritual and historical values, as well as a common religion and ancestral heritage. In addition, it was noted that it is impossible to talk about the security of Central Asia without Afghanistan, because without stability south of the Amu Darya, it is impossible

¹⁶ Speech by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, September 21, 2021: <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/4632>

¹⁷ “The main thing is to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan” – Sadyk Safayev. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/09/13/afghanistan/>

¹⁸ Uzbekistan counts on Italy's assistance in regional security issues. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/12/09/italy/>

to achieve security and sustainable development of Uzbekistan and the whole of Central Asia¹⁹.

With the strengthening of the new Afghan authorities, who have shown the ability to keep the situation under control and revive economic activity in the country, despite limited financial opportunities, Uzbekistan has once again returned to priority attention to trade and economic cooperation, promotion of mutually beneficial infrastructure and transport projects [3]. Moreover, the «Taliban»* themselves showed a clear interest in this (5). This is evidenced by the one that took place on December 6–7, 2021. Uzbek-Afghan-Pakistani meeting in Tashkent to discuss the construction project of the Termez–Mazar–I–Sharif–Kabul–Peshawar railway²⁰. At the end of December 2021, during negotiations in Tashkent, the parties announced their intention to continue the construction of the Surkhan–Puli–Khumri power transmission line²¹.

If we analyze the situation in bilateral relations in 2022, we can note a number of positive trends for Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Among them, the growth of bilateral trade to \$759.9 million, which is only slightly lower than in 2020, when President Ashraf Ghani was in power (\$779.1 million). Uzbek exports accounted for \$750.6 million in 2022 (\$776.7 million in 2020). At the same time, imports of Afghan goods and services increased from \$2.3 million in 2020 and \$6.2 million in 2021 to 9.3 million in 2022²².

Among the significant events, it can be noted that Tashkent has completed the provision of technical assistance for the restoration of Mazar–I–Sharif Airport, which included the repair of air navigation and meteorological equipment, the reconstruction of the runway and the restoration of power supply²³.

During the first half of 2022, a rapid increase in transit cargo traffic through Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the southern direction was recorded, which can serve as an indicator of the «Taliban»*'s ability to ensure the security of transport communications. The volume of cargo transportation increased 2.6 times to 330 thousand tons compared to the same period in 2021²⁴.

Thanks to the stabilization of Afghanistan, an opportunity has opened up for Tashkent to establish direct cargo transportation with Islamabad. Already in November 2021, the first transit cargo from Uzbekistan was delivered to Pakistan, and in March 2022, the first batch of Pakistani meat was delivered to the Uzbek market through Afghan territory. India has

19 International Conference “Afghanistan: Security and Economic Development” (Tashkent, July 26, 2022): address of the President of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoyev to the participants; final Statement of the host country. Available from: <https://e-cis.info/news/568/102089/>

20 International negotiations on the Trans-Afghan Corridor were held in Tashkent. Available from: https://railway.uz/ru/informatsionnaya_sluzhba/novosti/26145/

21 Uzbekistan and Afghanistan plan to resume the construction of the Surkhan–Puli–Khumri transmission line. Available from: <https://xs.uz/ru/post/uzbekistan-i-afganistan-planiruyut-vozobnovit-stroitelstvo-lep-surkhan-puli-khumri>

22 Rapprochement with Russia, China is the main supplier. How Uzbekistan's foreign trade has changed in 2022. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/01/24/trade-partners/>

23 Mazar-I-Sharif Airport has been restored with the support of Uzbekistan. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/10/31/mazari-sharif/>

24 The transit of goods through Afghanistan under the «Taliban»* has increased significantly. Available from: <https://www.spot.uz/ru/2022/08/16/afghanistan-transit/>

also tested this route by sending transit cargo to Uzbekistan via Pakistan and Afghanistan²⁵.

The development of joint plans to increase the volume of bilateral trade and investment can be considered an indicator of the emerging positive mood in Uzbek–Pakistani relations. The parties have reached an agreement on preferential trade, according to which duties on several dozen goods will be reduced from 20 to 100%. Thanks to this, it is expected to increase the volume of bilateral trade from \$ 181 million in 2021 to \$1 billion in the coming years²⁶.

Speaking about the future policy of Uzbekistan towards Afghanistan under the rule of the «Taliban»* movement, it is impossible to ignore the potential risks that may have an impact. Although the «Taliban»* controls the overall situation in the country, however, this control remains insufficiently strong. We are talking about the economy and the humanitarian situation. Currently, 6 million Afghans are on the verge of starvation, which is extremely dangerous for the «Taliban»* government. External assistance so far allows us to contain the aggravation of the situation with hunger. More than a quarter of the 40 million population receives food packages from the World Food Program²⁷.

The humanitarian situation can only be mitigated by the accelerated development of the national economy by attracting large-scale foreign investments, technologies and competencies, but for this the new authorities will need to gain international recognition, which will not be in the foreseeable future until an inclusive political system is created and the rights of women and girls to study and work are protected. It is difficult to say whether the «Taliban»* will be ready to change and go for a significant liberalization of their political and value approaches, along the way of mastering the cultural foundations of Modernity.

Nevertheless, time is running out, as the Afghan society will not wait for a natural generational change in the ranks of the «Taliban»*. As the whole history of this country shows, the discontent of the population is always a time bomb, which sooner or later will make itself felt. In this regard, the opinion expressed by the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Afghanistan, Director of the second Asia Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry Zamir Kabulov in an interview with the Indian magazine “The Week” in February 2023 is of interest.

He believes that the «Taliban»* have not learned how to govern the state, although they have repeatedly stated that they have learned their lessons and will not repeat past mistakes. “The «Taliban»* sometimes cannot understand very simple things, especially when there are no challenges to its power. I mean serious rivals who can oust him. This does not mean that there will be no such challenges. It won't be someone from the outside. But this will be a normal reaction of the Afghan people, because under the circumstances

25 Uzbekistan and Pakistan have agreed to increase trade turnover to \$1 billion. Available from: <https://www.spot.uz/ru/2022/12/27/pakistan-trade/>

26 Pakistan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on expanding investments and increasing trade. Available from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/экономика/пакистан-и-узбекистан-подписали-соглашение-о-расширении-инвестиций-и-увеличения-торговли/2773335>

27 Felbab-Brown Vanda. Afghanistan in 2023: «Taliban»* internal power struggles and militancy. Available from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/02/03/afghanistan-in-2023-taliban-internal-power-struggles-and-militancy/>

it will be very difficult for them to survive,” the Russian diplomat said. According to Zamir Kabulov, “The «Taliban»* should take institutional steps to improve the situation or at least open the way for such an improvement, which we do not see at the moment”²⁸.

Conclusions

So, summing up, it can be noted that Uzbekistan’s policy is based on combining bilateral economic cooperation with Kabul, promoting initiatives at the international level to strengthen peace and provide assistance to Afghanistan in order to prevent its next slide into the abyss of instability and humanitarian crisis, and implementing measures to integrate this country into the system of trade, economic and transport relations between Central and South Asia, is one of the most conceptually designed lines among the states, having their own interests in Afghanistan. According to a number of experts, “Uzbekistan is in the group of countries that occupy the most constructive and positive positions regarding the Afghan problem” [1]. As the results of 2021–2022 have shown, this is already paying dividends for Uzbekistan’s foreign policy and economy, including allowing the period of power change in Afghanistan to pass smoothly in August 2021.

At the same time, the further progress of Uzbekistan’s policy in the Afghan direction will be largely related to the steps of the new Afghan authorities themselves in domestic and foreign policy, with their ability not only to control the domestic political situation, but also to implement measures of economic and social modernization, without which it will be virtually impossible to launch sustainable economic growth, increase the income level of the population, gain international recognition and improve the country’s image on the world stage.

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²⁸ Nayar Mandira. India, Pakistan need to show common sense on Afghanistan: Russia’s special envoy Zamir Kabulov (Electronic resource). Available from: <https://www.theweek.in/theweek/more/2023/02/11/russian-presidential-envoy-to-afghanistan-zamir-kabulov-interview.html>

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Contribution of the author

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