

Uzbekistan's Evolving Role in Advancing Regional Stability and Security in Central Asia

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how Uzbekistan is responding to the global challenges of extremism and terrorism. It begins with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's reflections on rising ethnic and religious tensions around the world, framing the urgent need for stronger international cooperation. The article outlines the country's key strategies reforming laws, protecting human rights, and engaging with global and regional partners like the UN, SCO, and CIS. It also highlights humanitarian efforts such as Operation "Mehr," which helped bring Uzbek citizens, especially women and children, back from conflict zones. At its core, the piece stresses that lasting peace and security especially in Central Asia depend on unity, mutual respect, and a thoughtful balance between national safety and civil freedoms.

Keywords: Phenomena; Rule of Law; Harmony; International Conventions; Cooperation; Development; Agreements; Military; Strategy.

1. Introduction

As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted, "currently, interethnic and interreligious tensions are increasing in various regions of the world, nationalism and religious intolerance are on the rise. "These vices are eroding the state, tearing apart society, and becoming the ideological base for radical groups and movements" [1].

Extremism and terrorism have become the most dangerous and unpredictable phenomena of our time. Acts of terrorism cause the untimely loss of innocent lives, the destruction of material and spiritual wealth that serves the well-being of society, and the disruption of people's peaceful daily lives. Especially in today's dangerous and complex times, the tense situations and conflicts occurring around the world are causing various conflicts between nations and religions, as well as disrupting the existing order established in the world. At the same time, it is observed that today, destructive groups that commit extremist and terrorist acts are not limited to any one country or region, but are operating in an organized manner in different parts of the world. This firmly places on the agenda the issue of countries around the world working together to combat extremism and terrorism and further increasing the effectiveness of international and regional organizations. One of the most important issues in this regard is that all members of the international community fully comply with agreements on combating extremism and terrorism and fulfill their obligations.

1.1. Study Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) to examine the political and legal reforms undertaken by Uzbekistan to strengthen its national security architecture and align with international counter-terrorism standards;
- 2) to explore the mechanisms of Uzbekistan's regional cooperation, particularly its engagement with international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in combating transnational threats;

- 3) to identify the role of international agreements and national legislation in reinforcing Uzbekistan's commitment to fighting extremism and terrorism, while safeguarding human rights and civil liberties;
- 4) to analyze the impact of Uzbekistan's foreign policy orientation on Central Asian regional dynamics, focusing on how its balanced, multi-vector diplomacy contributes to building peace and preventive diplomacy.

2. Methods

In preparing the article, research methods such as historicism, systematization, objectivity, comparative-legal analysis, and statistical approach were employed. The theoretical significance of the article lies in contributing to a deeper understanding of the reforms carried out in Uzbekistan to eliminate the threat of religious terrorist organizations and ensure security. It also aids in the scientific analysis of related international and national normative-legal documents and the formulation of relevant theoretical conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

Uzbekistan, as a full member of the international community, has ratified many international treaties aimed at combating extremism and terrorism and has been consistently fulfilling its obligations under them. As Shavkat Mirziyoyev specifically noted, "The fundamental basis for combating terrorism in Uzbekistan is ensuring human rights and freedoms, and the rule of law. We are convinced that the fight against terrorism and the protection of human rights are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary and reinforcing goals." [2].

In particular, special attention was paid to this issue in the President's Address to the Chambers of the Oliy Majlis of December 28, 2018. In particular, the President expressed the following views: "Uzbekistan will always be faithful to its traditions in the field of interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, and will never deviate from this path." In our country, primary attention is paid to strengthening an atmosphere of mutual respect, friendship, and harmony between representatives of different nationalities and religious denominations. This is our greatest asset, and it is our duty to protect it like the apple of our eye.

As you know, recently the plenary session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted an important document - the resolution "Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance". The initiative to adopt this resolution was put forward by Uzbekistan at the 72nd session of the General Assembly on September 19, 2017. The broad support of our proposal by 193 United Nations member states gives us all great satisfaction and pride, as a high assessment and recognition of Uzbekistan's efforts by the international community. "I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the distinguished ambassadors of foreign countries and representatives of international organizations participating in our conference today" [3].

As you know, there are 11 UN Conventions and 2 protocols aimed at preventing and combating terrorism, and Uzbekistan has ratified most of them. In particular, the fight against unlawful acts that threaten the safety of civil aviation in 1971; Punish and eliminate crimes against persons, including diplomatic agents, who use international instruments adopted in 1973; The fight against the hostage-taking in 1979; Our country has ratified a number of international conventions, such as the 1999 Convention on Combating the Financing of Terrorism, and we are adhering to the obligations set forth therein [4].

The international community has recognized our government's efforts to implement all the documents ratified by the Oliy Majlis, especially its efforts to ensure peace in Afghanistan. In particular, the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee highly appreciates Uzbekistan's international cooperation in the fight against terrorism in recent years.

In this regard, Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasizes the following: “Only together can we effectively fight terrorism, extremism, transnational crime, especially in cyberspace. As a first step in this regard, we propose the development of a joint action plan against drug abuse with the participation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. As a first step in this regard, we propose the development of a joint action plan against drug abuse with the participation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime” [5].

In particular, the location of the SCO Counter-Terrorism Center in Tashkent is also a recognition of our republic's active role in the fight against extremism and terrorism. After all, the participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in agreements on combating extremism and terrorism is a logical continuation of its domestic and foreign policy.

A special place in the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is given to the development of cooperation in the fight against the “three evil forces”, namely “terrorism”, “separatism” and “extremism”. As part of the organization's fight against extremism and terrorism, the military formations of our republic regularly participate in military training exercises against terrorist forces.

In addition, at the next meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States, held on October 10-11, 2019 in the capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, with the participation of the Presidents of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and the Prime Minister of Armenia, the Chairman of the Executive Secretariat of the CIS Executive Committee, a Cooperation Program on Combating Terrorism, Extremism and Other Forms of Violence among the CIS States for 2020-2022 and other documents were adopted. At the end of 2019, the “Jayron” military exercises, which were held in our country at the initiative of the European Union, included exercises on eliminating the military threat of terrorist forces without casualties. In particular, the parties exchanged views on how peacekeeping forces could neutralize terrorists in the event of a threat using chemical and biological agents.

As part of the “Mehr-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6” operations conducted to date, 438 women and children who were in dire straits and left helpless in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan have been brought to our country [6]. The holy month of Ramadan was also supported by the United States and other partner countries As a result of Operation Mehr-5, 24 women and 69 children who had been stranded in the “hot spots” of the war in Syria and had been held in the Al-Khol camp for more than three years were returned to Uzbekistan.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has emphasized: “Uzbekistan has signed 14 major universal international legal instruments and is actively participating in global efforts to combat international terrorism. State policy in this area is based on comprehensive, inclusive, and consistent approaches. As we all know, such an approach implies the joint implementation of preventive and prophylactic measures, along with law enforcement measures, and the active participation of not only state bodies, but also civil society institutions in implementing the main directions of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy” [7].

It is also important to note that UN member states are required to include in their national legislation the prosecution of cases related to extremism and terrorism. This was emphasized in paragraph 1 of the UN Security Council Resolution of September 14, 2005. Based on this requirement, Uzbekistan has also included a number of regulatory documents in its national legislation, emphasizing that extremism and terrorism are crimes and establishing criminal sanctions for such actions. In particular:

- ✓ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Combating Terrorism” [8];
- ✓ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Combating Extremism” [9];
- ✓ Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan on certain issues of judicial practice in criminal cases related to the financing of terrorism and extremism [10];

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Approval of the National Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Combat Extremism and Terrorism for 2021-2026” was adopted [11].

This rule is also enshrined in the UN General Assembly Resolution “On the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance”, which stipulates that certain restrictions on freedom of religion or belief are permissible in order to ensure peace and public safety.

Nevertheless, by today it is no longer a secret to anyone who these fake democrats really are. Unfortunately, neither modern missionaries nor some human rights “defenders” want to understand such situations. However, Article 18, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates that conversion of religion shall not be subject to coercion, and Article 20, paragraph 2, stipulates that acts that incite hostility or religious enmity shall be prohibited by law [12].

Currently, Uzbekistan's foreign policy is focused on two main directions:

- 1) developing cooperation with other countries of the world community;
- 2) is being carried out in the direction of establishing and maintaining friendly and mutually beneficial relations with international organizations.

As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted in his speech at the meeting in the “SCO-CSTO” format, “In the current circumstances, there are no firm guarantees that the country will not return to the situation in the nineties - a period when the country was caught in the grip of civil war and humanitarian crisis, isolated from the international community, and its territory became a “hub” for international terrorism and drug production” [13].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Terrorism poses a serious threat to the countries of the world. In such circumstances, every country in the world, regardless of the nature of its political system, is forced to wage an uncompromising fight against terrorism. In the context of globalization, ensuring security and stability in Central Asia is also becoming increasingly important. The threats of religious extremism and terrorism, which seek to threaten global security and stability, require constant vigilance. Consequently, this situation requires serious thinking at the regional level.

In light of the findings and ongoing developments in Uzbekistan's efforts to ensure regional stability and security, the following forward-looking recommendations are proposed:

- 1) Strengthen Preventive Diplomacy and Regional Dialogue Mechanisms;
- 2) Enhance Capacity for Cybersecurity and Digital Counterterrorism;
- 3) Expand Civic Education and Grassroots Awareness Programs;
- 4) Uzbekistan should increase public education initiatives, particularly among youth, that promote tolerance, civic values, and awareness of religious and cultural pluralism;
- 5) Uzbekistan could propose a regional intelligence-sharing platform to better monitor cross-border movements of extremist elements and illegal arms, with the involvement of partners from SCO, CIS, and neighboring South Asian countries.

Declarations

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Consent for publication

The author declares that he/she consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

Author's independent contribution.

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