

Uzbekistan-Germany: strategic cooperation priorities

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(keynotes on the Uzbek-German round-table “Uzbekistan-Germany: cooperation in the sphere of security and sustainable development in Central Asia», September 19, 2018, Tashkent)

The modern world has entered a difficult period of profound transformation of the system of international relations. New challenges and threats to international and regional security are growing. The conflicts in different regions of the world are aggravated, as well as uncertainty, turbulence and imbalances in the global economy.

All these trends dictate the need to formulate new tasks in the domestic and foreign policies of states, regardless of their geographical location, level of development or cultural and civilizational affiliation. In this context, Uzbekistan is no exception.

Priorities in domestic policy.

After overcoming the difficult historical period of state formation, Uzbekistan has entered in a new stage of building a dynamically developing modern state with a strong civil society and market economy. Based on the objectives and the tasks of the country's internal development, the following priorities are defined:

ensuring the rule of law, reforming the judicial and legal system, strengthening the independence of the judiciary and guaranteeing the reliable protection of citizens' rights and freedoms;

liberalization of the economy, structural reforms, reduction of the state's presence in the economy, protection of private property, stimulation of small and medium-sized enterprises, attraction of foreign investments and high technologies;

increase of employment and real incomes of the population, modernization of the social protection system, improvement of the state youth policy;

ensuring security, interethnic accord and religious tolerance, creating security belt around Uzbekistan, stability and good-neighborliness, strengthening the country's international image.

According to a number of foreign experts, the launch of the "Strategy for Action", in fact, marked the completion of the post-Soviet period of Uzbekistan's development. The large-scale reforms initiated by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev found complete public support and became irreversible.

As most observers note, the changes in Uzbekistan have a positive impact on strengthening security in Central Asia. And this is natural: Uzbekistan is a country, which has almost half of the population of Central Asia and borders all the states of the region, including Afghanistan.

Regional policy.

Thanks to the proactive, initiative and constructive Central Asian diplomacy of President Sh.Mirziyoyev, a new political reality has been formed in the region in unprecedentedly short period of time. The interstate relations of the Central Asian countries have become characterized by such features as mutual consideration and respect for interests, mutual openness and political trust.

The states of the region have opened to each other not only borders, but also their markets. The mutual trade of Uzbekistan with neighboring countries has become noticeably more active. For the first time since the 1990s, 1) industrial cooperation, 2) joint investment projects, 3) close interaction in the

security sphere. The efforts of the Central Asian countries to deepen regional cooperation have received strong support, both from their populations and the entire international community.

This was confirmed by the adoption on the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the UNGA Resolution "Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation for Peace, Stability and Sustainable Development in the Central Asian Region" (June 22, 2018).

The document, in fact, was a consolidated response of the Central Asian states, both to regional problems and to the challenges and threats of globalization. The countries of Central Asia have strengthened their role as independent subjects of the system of international relations capable of jointly being responsible for the present and future of the region

Priorities and principles of foreign policy.

Strengthening of a stable system of balanced relations with the leading states is in the national interest of Uzbekistan. The development of bilateral cooperation with one power is not directed against another.

The important condition for ensuring regional security in Central Asia is the preservation of the geopolitical balance in the region. The Central Asian region should remain open to cooperation with all partners. In this connection, Uzbekistan adheres to the following principles in its foreign policy: a) non-participation in military-political blocs; b) not the deployment of foreign military bases on its territory; c) non-participation in operations abroad.

The key task of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to create the most favorable external conditions for further strengthening of national security, maintaining high growth rates, sustainable economic development, full integration into the structure of world economic relations. In a word, the country's foreign policy interests are based, first of all, on the priorities of internal development.

This is evidenced by the results of all visits and negotiations of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the highest level, where the main attention is paid to the achievement of mutual agreements in the spheres of trade and investment, science and technology, education and tourism. In short, the "economization" of the country's international cooperation becomes the main feature of Uzbekistan's current foreign policy.

Priorities of bilateral cooperation.

Since the first days of its independence, Uzbekistan attaches special importance to the development of bilateral cooperation with Germany. The launch of large-scale reforms within the framework of the "Strategy of Action" has given a strong impetus to the further strengthening of the Uzbek-German multifaceted cooperation.

This is evidenced by an increase in the volume of mutual trade between the two countries from \$520 mln in 2016 to \$613 mln in 2017. In Uzbekistan, more than 120 enterprises operate with the participation of German investors and the representation of more than 30 companies in Germany.

Invaluable is the role of German companies such as MAN, Klaas, Lemken, Knauf, Deutsche Kabel, in the processes of structural diversification and technological modernization of the Uzbek economy. Taking into account the huge potential of Uzbekistan and Germany, we can speak about bright prospects for bilateral cooperation in these areas.

Uzbekistan is ready to become a "center of attraction" for German companies interested in the production and export of finished products to the market of Central Asia and Afghanistan, where today more than 100 million people live.

Surely, with these issues the problem of creating modern production facilities and, correspondingly,

new jobs is directly linked. For the government of the country, where about 60% of the population is young, this is one of the important priorities of socio-economic policy.

Today, deepening of cooperation with Germany in the spheres of management and state administration, new knowledge and education is urgently needed for Uzbekistan. The introduction of German experience in these areas can be an important factor in the successful implementation of the priorities in the framework of the "Strategy of Action" and the sustainable development of the largest country in Central Asia in general.

Uzbekistan and Germany are united by common vision and similarity of approaches to the problems of regional security in Central Asia. For all these years, our countries have acquired a successful experience of cooperation in this field.

The key guarantee for further deepening of bilateral relations is the "soft presence" of Germany in Uzbekistan. Germany is attractive to Uzbek society, especially young people. In Uzbekistan, more than 370,000 students study the German language. About 5,000 schoolchildren learn German in special schools in the cities of Tashkent, Samarkand and Margilan, which have the right to issue the German language diploma (DSD).

In Uzbekistan, activities are carried out by the representatives of the Goethe Institute, the funds of K. Adenauer and F. Ebert, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Association of People's Universities, the Office of the Coordinator for the German language of the Central Board of Schools Abroad (CfA).

Germany, as the locomotive of the European economy, is capable of giving new dynamism to cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the EU. It is no coincidence that the Germany is the largest trade and economic partner of Uzbekistan in Europe. Tashkent highly appreciates the key role that the Germany has always played in strengthening the partnership relations between Uzbekistan and the European Union. Today there is every reason to assert that this will be directly reflected in the process of updating the EU policy in Central Asia and the Agreement on partnership and cooperation between Uzbekistan and the European Union for the next decade.

In general, modern security challenges and threats require the development of common approaches and joint search for solutions to the problems faced by Uzbekistan and Germany. This is an imperative due to the unprecedented growth of interdependence of states in the global world, in which security problems can not be viewed in isolation from development issues. Today in Central Asia and beyond, there is a clear realization that only stable, dynamically developing and prosperous states can become attractive, constructive and long-term partners of the international community.

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