

THE PRIMACY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW PRINCIPLES IN UZBEKISTAN’S FOREIGN POLICY

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Annotation: *This paper explores the central role that the principles of international law play in shaping Uzbekistan’s foreign policy. Since gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has consistently emphasized respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful dispute resolution, and adherence to international legal norms as key pillars of its diplomatic strategy. The study highlights how Uzbekistan's foreign policy is aligned with the UN Charter and other international legal instruments, contributing to regional stability and multilateral cooperation. Particular attention is given to Uzbekistan’s participation in international organizations, commitment to non-aggression, and active engagement in regional diplomacy based on mutual respect and legal equality.*

Keywords; *Uzbekistan, foreign policy, international law, sovereignty, non-interference, legal norms, UN Charter, diplomacy, regional cooperation*

Since declaring independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has steadily pursued a foreign policy grounded in the fundamental principles of international law. In a complex and evolving international environment, the country has sought to establish itself as a responsible and law-abiding member of the global community. Its diplomatic approach is guided by core legal principles such as sovereign equality of states, territorial integrity, non-interference in domestic affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, and the obligation to honor international agreements.

These principles are not only stated in Uzbekistan's key legal and strategic documents, such as the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, but also reflected in its consistent actions on the international stage. By aligning its foreign policy with the United Nations Charter and other global legal frameworks, Uzbekistan aims to build constructive partnerships, prevent conflicts, and ensure stability in Central Asia and beyond.

This paper analyzes the legal foundations of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy, with a focus on how international law guides its bilateral and multilateral relations. The study also discusses the broader implications of this legalistic approach for regional diplomacy, trust-building, and peaceful coexistence.

Uzbekistan’s foreign policy since its independence in 1991 has been firmly anchored in the universally recognized principles of international law. As a landlocked country in a geopolitically sensitive region, Uzbekistan has prioritized legal frameworks and multilateral diplomacy to safeguard its sovereignty, promote regional stability, and advance its national interests without resorting to force or coercion.

One of the core principles guiding Uzbekistan’s external relations is **sovereign equality of states**, as enshrined in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter. Uzbekistan’s diplomatic strategy emphasizes mutual respect, equal partnerships, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. This principle is especially relevant in Central Asia, where historical tensions, ethnic diversity, and border issues require careful and lawful navigation. Uzbekistan has consistently promoted peaceful coexistence with its neighbors—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan—through dialogue, treaty-based cooperation, and conflict prevention mechanisms.

Another cornerstone of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy is **respect for territorial integrity** and the **peaceful settlement of disputes**. Rather than engaging in or supporting aggressive actions, Uzbekistan supports international mediation and legal arbitration when conflicts arise. For instance, Uzbekistan played a constructive role in regional water-sharing negotiations and border demarcation processes. The country’s commitment to peaceful diplomacy is also visible in its neutral stance on international conflicts, including its calls for de-escalation and international law compliance in crises such as those in Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan has also actively participated in international and regional organizations that promote legal norms and multilateral cooperation. These include the **United Nations**, the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**, the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**, the **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)**, and the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**. Through these platforms, Uzbekistan supports collective security, economic development, and cultural dialogue—all based on the rule of law and mutual respect.

In 2012, the government of Uzbekistan adopted the “**Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan**”, which explicitly reaffirmed the priority of international legal norms in foreign relations. This document not only outlined the country’s peaceful and non-aligned strategy but also emphasized its commitment to fulfilling international obligations, supporting disarmament, and engaging in equitable global partnerships.

Furthermore, **Uzbekistan’s initiatives in regional diplomacy**—such as the promotion of the “Central Asia – A United Region” platform—demonstrate its dedication to cooperation based on legal and diplomatic tools rather than competition or coercion. This

approach reflects the vision of Uzbekistan as a stabilizing actor in Central Asia, working to transform the region from a zone of potential tension into one of active partnership and legal dialogue.

Another notable development in recent years is **Uzbekistan’s enhanced legal diplomacy under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev**. His administration has emphasized transparency, rule of law, and reforms in both domestic and foreign policy. This includes active participation in international law conferences, strengthening of treaty obligations, and harmonization of national legislation with international standards in areas such as trade, human rights, and environmental protection.

In summary, Uzbekistan’s foreign policy is a clear example of a modern diplomatic strategy that prioritizes law over power, dialogue over force, and cooperation over confrontation. The sustained application of international legal principles has enabled Uzbekistan to maintain balanced relations with global and regional powers while promoting a peaceful, stable, and rules-based international environment.

Uzbekistan’s consistent adherence to the principles of international law has been a defining feature of its foreign policy since independence. By prioritizing sovereignty, non-interference, peaceful dispute resolution, and respect for international norms, Uzbekistan has positioned itself as a responsible and constructive actor in regional and global affairs. This legalistic approach has not only strengthened bilateral and multilateral relations but also contributed to stability and cooperation in Central Asia.

As the international system continues to evolve, Uzbekistan’s commitment to the rule of law serves as a model for emerging states seeking peaceful integration into the global order. Its emphasis on diplomacy, mutual respect, and legal instruments over confrontation reflects a strategic vision rooted in long-term peace and development. Moving forward, Uzbekistan’s foreign policy will likely continue to evolve in line with international legal standards, reinforcing its image as a trustworthy and law-abiding member of the international community.

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