

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract:** International relations is the study of the interaction of nation-states and nongovernmental organizations in fields such as politics, economics, and security. Professionals work in academia, government, and non-profits to understand and develop cooperative exchanges between nations that benefit commerce, security, quality of life, and the environment. Our richly connected, complex world demands professionals skilled in international relations, an exciting field of study that presents a globally oriented perspective on issues that transcend national boundaries.

Uzbekistan is a member of the United Nations, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Partnership for Peace, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

**Keywords:** International relations, international politics, Soviet Union, United Nations, Central Asian Union, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Central Asian Cooperation Organization, “smoothly”, “warm reception”, Commonwealth of Independent States

International relations (IR) are the interactions between sovereign states. The scientific study of those interactions is called international studies, or international affairs. In a broader sense, it concerns all activities between states—such as war, diplomacy, trade, and foreign policy—as well as relations with and among other international actors, such as intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), international legal bodies, and multinational corporations (MNCs). There are several schools of thought within IR, of which the most prominent are realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

International relations is widely classified as a major sub discipline of political science, along with comparative politics and political theory. However, it often draws heavily from other fields, including anthropology, economics, geography, law, philosophy, sociology, and history.

While international politics has been analyzed since antiquity, international relations did not become a discrete field until 1919, when it was first offered as an undergraduate major by Aberystwyth University in the United Kingdom. After the Second World War, international relations burgeoned in both importance and

scholarship—particularly in North America and Western Europe—partly in response to the geostrategic concerns of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent rise of globalization in the late 20th century presaged new theories and evaluations of the rapidly changing international system.

Uzbekistan joined the Commonwealth of Independent States in December 1991. However, it is opposed to reintegration and withdrew from the CIS collective security arrangement in 1999. Since that time, Uzbekistan has participated in the CIS peacekeeping force in Tajikistan and in United Nations-organized groups to help resolve the Tajik and Afghan conflicts, both of which it sees as posing threats to its own stability. Uzbekistan is an active supporter of U.S. efforts against worldwide terrorism and joined the coalitions which have dealt with both Afghanistan and Iraq (although, in 2005, relations with the U.S. were strained after the May 2005 unrest and Uzbekistan demanded that the U.S. leave Karshi-Khanabad). It is a member of the United Nations, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Partnership for Peace, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It belongs to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization, which comprises 7 Central

Asian countries: Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is a founding member of and remains involved in the Central Asian Union, formed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, joined in March 1998 by Tajikistan.

In 1999, Uzbekistan joined the GUAM alliance (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), which was formed in 1997 (temporarily making it GUUAM until Uzbekistan withdrew in 2005). Uzbekistan is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and hosts the SCO's Regional Anti-

Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. Uzbekistan also joined the new Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) in 2002. The CACO consists of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. It is a founding member of and remains involved in the Central Asian Union, formed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, joined in March 1998 by Tajikistan.

Antti Turunen, the head of the Finnish Foreign Ministry's Eastern European and Central Asian department, led a European Union fact-finding mission to Tashkent, Uzbekistan on August 29, 2006. The Uzbek deputy foreign minister indicated that the Uzbek government was interested in talks with the EU during a visit to Helsinki, Finland in June 2006, just before Finland assumed the EU presidency. Radio Free Europe journalists spoke to Turunen on September 1. Turunen said the visit was inconclusive, but promising enough for the EU to “analyze” to see if the sanctions imposed on Uzbekistan could be lifted. Turunen's visit to Uzbekistan was the first EU

visit since October, when sanctions were imposed after the Uzbek government refused to allow an international investigation into the Andijan massacre.

The diplomatic sanctions consisted of a ban on political contacts, aid cuts, and visa bans on officials held responsible for the events in Andijan and their cover-up. Turunen said, “There are many, many open cases on human rights, and we have to now carefully look into what has really been done and what recommendations of [the] international community have been implemented. They indicated [then] that there would be possibilities to resume ministerial level dialogue, that they might be willing to again discuss all aspects of EU-Uzbek relations, including the events in Andijan. That will be part of the assessment of the sanctions regime and on the basis of that assessment a decision on the fate of the sanctions will be made by mid-November.”

Turunen said that the visit went “smoothly” and that Uzbek Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov offered a “warm reception.” The EU delegation met with officials from the Justice Ministry, the Attorney General’s office, and Uzbek parliament members in a “rather good” atmosphere. He stressed that “the real issue” for the EU is the Uzbek government’s response to the Andijan massacre and human rights abuses. “Well, it seems that at the moment the issue with the international inquiry is not on the agenda as such. They are to a certain extent open to discuss on expert level the events that took place in Andijan and we have to now see what this amounts to, what concrete steps towards that direction could be taken. The other issue is they are now willing to engage on human rights, to establish some kind of human rights dialogue or regular meetings on human rights issues which, in itself, is a positive signal.”

Although he was unsure what prompted the invitation to EU officials, he said Uzbekistan is trying to overcome its isolation. He said Russia-Uzbek relations and possible EU development of Uzbek energy reserves were not “directly” discussed but that “one might assume in the longer run they look forward to EU investment in this area.” If the sanctions are lifted, a “Cooperation Council” meeting with Foreign Minister Norov will take place in Brussels later in autumn.

With over 32 million inhabitants, Uzbekistan is by far the most populous country in Central Asia. It plays a key role in both the economic development and the security of the region, and is thus an important partner country for Germany in terms of development cooperation.

Since 1991 Uzbekistan has been an independent republic, belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) along with other successor states to the Soviet Union.

In September 2016, Islam Karimov, who had been president of the country since it gained independence, died. That December, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, for many years the country’s Prime Minister, was elected as the new president. The most important political powers are concentrated in the hands of the president. There is currently no

parliamentary opposition, as none is permitted. At the parliamentary elections held in December 2014, only the four parties already represented in parliament – and close to the government – were allowed to stand for election.

Uzbekistan's economy has seen positive development in the past few years. Gold, cotton and natural gas are the country's key export products. However, only a small proportion of the population is actually benefiting from the economic upturn. Rural dwellers in particular are badly affected by poverty, unemployment and inadequate medical care.

#### Cooperation with Germany

Uzbekistan is one of the partner countries with which Germany is closely engaged in development cooperation based on intergovernmental agreements. Development cooperation focuses on improving health and on sustainable economic development. The aim of German involvement is to bring about tangible improvements in the living conditions of the Uzbek people.

At government negotiations in May 2019, the German government committed to the Uzbek government a total of 123.8 million euros for the period 2019 and 2020 for Technical Cooperation and Financial cooperation.

The aim of all Germany's support is to bring direct and tangible improvements to the lives of the people living in Uzbekistan and to ensure that the reforms currently being undertaking are irreversible. The priority areas are health and sustainable economic development.

Efforts in the health sector are mainly concentrated on improving health in rural areas. One focus is on modernising regional hospitals. Other important areas are reproductive health, maternal and child health, tuberculosis control and training for doctors and other medical and technical staff.

Cooperation in the second priority area, sustainable economic development, was suspended for a number of years but has now been resumed. The focus here is on creating jobs and income opportunities for people in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is also covered by some of the regional programmes being implemented as part of Germany's development cooperation. These focus on areas such as the rule of law, quality infrastructure, trade, sustainable use of natural resources, vocational training and drug prevention. These regional programmes are intended to provide a forum for the exchange of experience and to encourage closer cooperation between the countries of Central Asia.

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