

The influence of national-ethnic factors on modern Uzbek-Afghan relations

Obidjon Abdurahmonov

basic doctoral student of Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies

+998975979766 obidjonabdurahmonov13@gmail.com

Annotation: This article discusses the relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan and the impact of national ethnic factors on these relations. Additionally, it reveals the significance of ethnic Uzbeks residing in Afghanistan in bilateral relations between the two countries.

Keywords: *“Afghan Uzbeks”, “Turkestan”, peace process, common religion and spiritual values.*

Introduction. The foreign policy of Uzbekistan prioritizes the establishment of a lasting and stable peace in Afghanistan, the development of centuries-old ties between the Uzbek and Afghan peoples based on mutually beneficial and close neighborliness. At the same time, based on the current real situation in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan considers the task of forming a government consisting of all segments of Afghan society to be an important and fundamental foundation of state governance in ensuring long-term peace and stability in this country

It is well-known that the Uzbek and Afghan peoples are closely related in their ethnic origins, united by similar languages, a common religion, shared spiritual values, and a common heritage inherited from their ancestors. It should be noted that Uzbekistan has long been an advocate for establishing and strengthening good neighborly relations with Afghanistan. Due to the geographical proximity and historical ties between the two peoples, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have continued for several centuries. In this regard, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized the following in his speech at the international conference on Afghanistan titled "Peace Process, Security Cooperation, and Regional Partnership": "The peoples of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have coexisted in a single cultural and civilizational space for centuries."

Since ancient times, peoples living on both sides of the Amu Darya River have been united by similar languages, a common sacred religion, and shared spiritual values. The Amu Darya has always been a source of life for us, but it has never hindered people's free movement, close development of trade relations, sharing of scientific achievements, or cultural enrichment of one another. Great representatives of the Central Asian Renaissance, such as Abu Rayhan Biruni, Lutfi, Alisher Navoi,

Kamoliddin Behzod, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, Boborahim Mashrab, and many other of our great ancestors lived and created their works on Afghan soil. Today, close political, trade-economic, and cultural-humanitarian relations have been established between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Millions of Uzbeks live in Afghanistan. According to the Constitution of Afghanistan, the Uzbek language is considered one of the official languages of the country¹. Indeed, the existence of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is of great economic and security importance for Uzbekistan. Moreover, the following factors also necessitate constant interaction between the two countries. Following Uzbekistan's independence, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in October 1992. Embassies of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan were set up in Tashkent and Kabul, respectively. Additionally, the Consulate General of the Republic of Uzbekistan was established in Mazar-i-Sharif, and in 2018, the Consulate General of Afghanistan opened in Termez. Since the early years of state independence, Uzbekistan has been promoting its initiatives to peacefully resolve instability in Afghanistan². Although the unstable situation in Afghanistan has affected bilateral relations in different years, relations have not completely ceased. Relations continued on political, trade, and economic issues. In recent years, Uzbekistan has been pursuing a foreign policy aimed at improving the daily living conditions of the Afghan people. For example, the Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan, in particular Uzbekistan, do not hide the interest of the Afghan government and leadership in the early start of the negotiation process between the Taliban movement, which consists of influential religious figures. In this regard, it should be noted that many officially registered and operating political parties in Afghanistan are also led by influential spiritual figures who actively participate in the country's political life. There is no doubt that the clergy will continue to play an important role in the upcoming inter-Afghan negotiations and in the future political processes of this country³.

When studying the influence of national and ethnic factors on the relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, special attention should be paid to the following important aspects.

Uzbeks of Afghanistan. The Uzbeks of Afghanistan are considered the fourth largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, constituting approximately 10% of the country's population. There is no precise data on their exact numbers. According to the book

¹ O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti Shavkat Mirziyoyevning Afg‘oniston bo‘yicha “Tinchlik jarayoni, xavfsizlik sohasida hamkorlik va mintaqaviy sheriklik” mavzusida o‘tkazilgan xalqaro konferensiyadagi nutqi. (27.03.2018). <https://president.uz/oz/lists/view/1601>

² Бобокулов И.И. Афғонистон. Луғат – маълумотнома. – Тошкент: “Complex Print”, 2021. – Б. 14.

³ Хайдаров А.А. Мусулманское духовенство vs. власть в современном Афганистане: взгляд из Узбекистана // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2020. Т. 20. № 4. С. 747—762.

"Uzbeks of Afghanistan" by Professor N. Nazarov, the number of Turkic peoples in Afghanistan exceeds 8 million, of which 5.5 million are Uzbeks⁴. Similarly, information from various sources suggests that their number may be even greater, with some reports indicating that there are nearly 8 million Uzbeks in Afghanistan. However, these figures are based on estimates.

Afghan Uzbeks reside in the northern and eastern regions of Afghanistan. It is worth noting that they constitute the largest ethnic Uzbek population outside of Uzbekistan, and for centuries, they have placed great emphasis on preserving their rich culture and traditions without losing their national identity. The majority of Afghan Uzbeks are engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, carpet-weaving, and entrepreneurship. Uzbeks inhabit the areas stretching from the border province of Herat to the border of Uzbekistan, including the regions of Samangan, Herat, Badghis, Faryab, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pol, and Balkh. Generally speaking, Turkic peoples also live in various other parts of Afghanistan. Northern Afghanistan, which is part of a sacred region known as "Turkistan," has been one of the crossroads of civilization for centuries. This is noted in Professor I. Boboqulov's book "Afghanistan: A Dictionary and Reference Guide" as follows: "Afghan Turkistan is the southern part of the historical and geographical Turkistan region (Central Asia). The territory extends from the confluence of the Kokcha River with the Amu Darya in the northeast to Herat in the southwest. Its length is 800 km. The width spans from the borders of Central Asian states to the Hindu Kush, measuring approximately 180 km. It covers an area of 150,000 square kilometers, which accounts for slightly less than a quarter of Afghanistan's territory. The majority of the population consists of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens, and Hazaras"⁵. Afghanistan has been the homeland of Turkic peoples for many years. It has deep traces of historical and cultural heritage. Even after the reigns of the Saaks, Kushans, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, Khwarazmshahs, Timurids, and the descendants of Babur, Turkic tribes lived in Afghanistan and knew this land as their homeland⁶. In addition, a large part of Afghanistan was incorporated into the Bukhara Khanate for several centuries, where the city of Balkh became a residence for the heirs (khantoras) of the Bukharan Khan⁷. According to S. Turayeva, a senior lecturer at the Educational Center for Afghan Citizens, Afghan Uzbeks hold a special respect for the history of the Timurids. During the period of this dynasty, cities located in present-day Afghanistan, particularly Herat, developed into major cultural and political centers. Many great figures of the Timurid

⁴ Қаранг: Назаров Н. Афғонистон ўзбеклари. – Т.: 2011. – Б. 7.

⁵ Бобоқулов И.И. Афғонистон. Луғат – маълумотнома. – Тошкент: "Complex Print", 2021. – Б. 38.

⁶ Хўжамуродов Н.С. Афғонистонлик ўзбекларнинг ижтимоий-иқтисодий ва маданий ҳаётидаги этномаданий жараёнлар. Oriental Renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences. ISSN:2181-1784. 3(1), Jan., 2023. –Б. 44.

⁷ Алимов Р. Центральная Азия: общность интересов. – Т.: Шарқ, 2005. – Б.22.

state lived and flourished on Afghan soil⁸. However, most Afghan Uzbeks consider themselves descendants of Muhammad Shaybani Khan.

In conclusion, a unique dilemma emerges today in the national-ethnic aspects of Uzbekistan-Afghanistan relations. On one hand, there is a need to consider the interests of Uzbeks in Afghanistan, and on the other hand, to conduct foreign policy based on the principle of appropriate balance with the Taliban-led Interim Government of Afghanistan. In this regard, it is crucial to evaluate the national-ethnic factor in mutual relations as a guarantee of regional stability and security, and to seriously take into account its direct impact on Uzbekistan.

List of references

1. O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti Shavkat Mirziyoyevning Afg‘oniston bo‘yicha “Tinchlik jarayoni, xavfsizlik sohasida hamkorlik va mintaqaviy sheriklik” mavzusida o‘tkazilgan xalqaro konferensiyadagi nutqi. (27.03.2018). <https://president.uz/oz/lists/view/1601>
2. Бобоқулов И.И. Афғонистон. Луғат – маълумотнома. – Тошкент: “Complex Print”, 2021. – Б. 14.
3. Хайдаров А.А. Мусулманское духовенство vs. власть в современном Афганистане: взгляд из Узбекистана // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2020. Т. 20. № 4. С. 747—762.
4. Wiebke Lamer, Erin Foster. Afghan ethnic groups: a brief investigation. – Civil-military fusion centre, August 2011. – P. 4.
5. Назаров Н. Афғонистон ўзбеклари. – Т.: 2011. – Б. 7.
6. Хўжамуродов Н.С. Афғонистонлик ўзбекларнинг ижтимоий-иқтисодий ва маданий ҳаётидаги этномаданий жараёнлар. Oriental Renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences. ISSN:2181-1784. 3(1), Jan., 2023. –Б. 44.
7. Алимов Р. Центральная Азия: общность интересов. – Т.: Шарқ, 2005. – Б.22.
8. То‘rayeva S. Afg‘onistonlik o‘zbeklar etnik kelib chiqishi haqidagi qarashlar. <https://zenodo.org/records/7619353>

⁸ То‘rayeva S. Afg‘onistonlik o‘zbeklar etnik kelib chiqishi haqidagi qarashlar. <https://zenodo.org/records/7619353>