

Ideas for the Cica Region: Prospects for the Republic of Uzbekistan

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Abstract. This article analyzes the activity of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which assumes a pivotal position in fostering economic growth, sustainability, stability, and peacebuilding, as well as facilitating technological progress, owing to its diverse membership.

Throughout centuries, the continent of Asia has played a vital role on the global stage in the arenas of politics, economics, and culture. At present, it serves as a convergence point for diverse traditions, cultures, and religions, thereby holding immense potential for collaboration among numerous nations and a variety of organizations.

Keywords. Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, international and regional organizations, anticorruption policy, international law, law of regional organizations, international and regional cooperation.

Introduction.

First of all, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) is an international forum aimed at promoting peace, security and stability, improving the well-being of countries and peoples in Asian continent. Moreover, CICA is an international forum aimed at expanding cooperation in the fields of security and stability, enhancing trade and economic partnership, and interaction in environmental issues. This year (2023), the initiative to create this organization turned 31 years old. Currently, 28 States (including Uzbekistan) are members of CICA. Another 9 countries and 5 international organizations have observer status. The highest body of CICA is the Summit of Heads of State and Government. Kazakhstan has been chairing CICA since 2020 [1].

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) has developed tremendously since its establishment. Lately the Conference is on the path of transforming into international organization (Laumulin, Kozhirova 2021; Kuppaeva 2023; Astana Statement 2022). Military aspects of relations between member states, including the respect of boundaries, non-interference, arms control, were the main motives of CICA (Declaration 1999). Upcoming transformation will most likely come with the new opportunities and challenges as a result of the widening of the scope of equally prioritized responsibilities.

The ensuing discourse will analyze each case study of a member nation of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, evaluating their achievements in economic and

cyber security within their respective countries. These accomplishments can then be employed as models for other nations, while also providing recommendations, notions, and strategies for the advancement of Asia.

Methodology

We are deeply aware that the new geopolitical realities have a negative impact on the stability of the entire Asian region. The crisis phenomena directly affect the States of Central Asia and hinder our efforts to deepen economic integration.

The end of the cold war ushered an era of unipolarity - characterized by the military, economic and political hegemony of the West. However, the reorganization of the global political economy and technological diffusion has led to the emergence of a more pluralistic international system-referred by Amitabh Acharya as “Multiplex world”.

A multiplex world, in Acharya’s understanding, is a system of complex inter-dependence shaped by diverse array of state and non-state actors operating within multiple, often competing international orders. As opposed to a singular ‘liberal international order’, the “Multiplex World System” could be characterized by multiplicity of approaches to international norms and governance.

As the center of gravity of global geopolitics is increasingly shifting towards the East, Asia is becoming the nucleus of the emerging Multiplex World. But Asia’s ascent in the global economic ladder is not without problems. The continent is facing a multitude of economic, political and environmental challenges, which could potentially disrupt the social and economic progress. Hence, how Asia addresses these core challenges within a peaceful framework would define the future of humanity.

Results and Discussion.

It should be noted that President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in his speech at the summit of CICA in Astana (October, 2022), assessed the current international situation developing against the background of an unprecedented lack of dialogue and trust, growing uncertainty in international relations. In this regard, he stressed the need to pay special attention to the situation in Afghanistan [2], which, against the background of other acute international problems, began to fade into the background.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev called for developing common, coordinated approaches to interaction with the Interim Government of Afghanistan [3]. He suggested considering the possibility of a joint appeal by Asian countries to the United Nations General Assembly with an initiative to form a high-level international negotiating group to prepare and coordinate with the Afghan authorities an algorithm for step-by-step fulfillment of the obligations of the parties.

In our opinion, in order to promote a peaceful settlement and socio-economic development in Afghanistan, it would be advisable to pay special attention to the prospects for the implementation of the strategic project for the construction of the Termez - Mazari Sharif - Kabul- Peshawar railway under the general auspices of CICA.

One of the main challenges for the CICA region is economic connectivity. This includes physical, digital, and institutional aspects that facilitate trade, investment, tourism, and regional cooperation.

However, the region faces uneven infrastructure development, lack of coordination and harmonization of standards and regulations, and geopolitical tensions [4].

To address this challenge, CICA Youth Council can create youth-led innovation hubs to foster entrepreneurship and innovation, digital skills training programs to prepare youth for the digital

economy and cross-border youth exchanges like internships and volunteer opportunities to foster relationships between future leaders.

Another challenge for the CICA region is innovation driven growth, which is essential for productivity, competitiveness, and resilience. However, the region faces low research and development spending and digital divide [5]. CICA Youth Council could create youth-led research commons to study economic development challenges in the CICA region and share their findings and recommendations, sources of economic synergies and collaboration among the CICA members and beyond and advocating for evidence-based policy changes and innovation promotion in the region.

Cross-border investment and collaboration are crucial for economic growth and regional integration in the CICA region, but they face high risks and costs of infrastructure projects, lack of bankable projects, and regulatory barriers. To address these challenges, CICA Youth Council and CICA Business Council can create a framework like the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which uses public funds to attract private investors for risky but beneficial projects. For example, a financing agreement for SMEs, supported by EFSI in 2017, created credit lines of 246 million euros for over 4300 small and medium-sized enterprises in Romania [6].

A fourth challenge for the CICA region is trade and investment, which is vital for economic development. However, the region faces rising protectionism, trade disputes, and non-tariff barriers. CICA could address this by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in regional and global value chains. SMEs make up more than 90 % of all businesses in Asia, but face challenges such as lack of access to finance, technology, markets, and skills [7]. CICA can support SMEs by providing financial and technical assistance, facilitating their participation in value chains, and promoting their innovation and competitiveness through CICA Business Council and CICA Youth Council in partnership with local business incubators and accelerators to strengthen the regional and global supply chain.

As co-chair of the CICA Youth Council, our country proposes to launch a new format - a Dialogue of Generations, designed to promote better understanding between people of different ages, joint search for solutions to the most pressing problems of youth.

Our country is putting forward a number of initiatives to adapt the economies of Asian countries to the growing negative consequences of the global crisis, including:

- to prevent the strengthening of protectionism, as well as the introduction of new restrictions that destabilize global markets;
- to strengthen interconnectedness in the Asian region, primarily through the creation of production and logistics chains and transport corridors that effectively connect Central Asia with South and East Asia, as well as the Middle East;
- to promote the knowledge economy as the basis for the transition to a new stage of the global industrial revolution;
- to use the potential of innovation transfer more fully, actively stimulate digitalization, the development of "cloud" technologies, artificial intelligence, etc.

Along with the above, we offer new approaches to overcome problems in the field of food security. These are the formation of sustainable food production schemes and optimal chains of its delivery, the harmonization of technical regulations for the growth of intraregional trade, the creation of an integrated food security monitoring system in Asia. In our opinion, CICA members should discuss these issues at an International Conference under the auspices of FAO, which will be held in Uzbekistan this year. To solve the problems of ecology and climate change, it is proposed to combine efforts and launch regular expert consultations within the framework of the Green Asia conceptual program on intensive greening of our countries and support for vulnerable ecosystems.

Environmental sustainability is a challenge and an opportunity for the CICA region. We face environmental problems such as climate change, natural disasters, deforestation, desertification, and water scarcity. These threaten economic development, social well-being, and security.

However, the region can enhance its environmental sustainability by investing in quality infrastructure that is resilient, low-carbon, and resource-efficient.

This can mitigate the environmental impacts, promote green transformation, and foster regional cooperation. The CICA region should support quality infrastructure development by harmonizing standards and regulations, facilitating financing and investment, sharing best practices and information, and strengthening coordination and dialogue. The CICA Youth Council has the capacity to support the Paris Agreement by showcasing social innovations that tackle environmental issues in a forum.

Good governance is a challenge for the CICA region, as it faces issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, weak institutions, and political instability. The CICA Youth Council can contribute to this goal by hosting a youth anticorruption hackathon, which aims to harness the creativity and potential of youth to design and implement technological solutions for corruption related problems that impact their communities [8].

Summing up, we believe that it is possible to effectively overcome modern challenges only through dialogue, consideration of each other's interests and compliance with universally recognized norms of international law. That is why the main goal of the Samarkand Solidarity Initiative put forward by the Republic of Uzbekistan in the name of common security and prosperity is to involve in a constructive dialogue all those who care about the future of humanity, who strive for peace, harmony and joint prosperity.

As Muhammad Asif Noor (*Editor in Chief, The Diplomatic Insight*) mentioned that "... the historical background and unique features of CICA help to explore the organization's significant role in reshaping Asia in a new global context. CICA is committed to inclusivity, consensus-based decision-making, and confidence-building measures. The contributions of CICA in fostering and creating a more harmonious and prosperous Asia are remarkable. It is a platform where nations come together to address shared challenges and work towards a common future of peace and stability. The success of CICA lies in its recognition of the interconnectedness of security and the collective desire for peace, fostering close interactions among both small and significant states in Asia" [9].

Conclusion.

We know that strengthening the multifaceted and long-term cooperation of Asian countries is a guarantee of overall sustainable development and we strongly believe that "*Single vision for a safer and more prosperous region*" will become a single slogan for the CICA member countries.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that Asia is currently one of the most dynamic components of the global economy, which strengthens Uzbekistan's interest in deepening cooperation with Asian states [10]. The active participation of our country in the activities of the CICA and the implementation of the initiatives announced by the leadership of Uzbekistan can contribute to strengthening political mutual trust, promoting regional cooperation in maintaining security, developing trade, economic, transport, logistics and tourism potential of the entire Central Asian region. In conclusion, the future of Asia we want hinges upon our ability to cooperate constructively. We should eye development, innovation, sustainability, and social and cultural capital. By addressing economic, environmental, social, and governance challenges while leveraging the diversity and strengths of the youth, CICA can lead the way towards a prosperous and harmonious future for Asia.

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