

Overview

The University of World Economy and Diplomacy's Current Methodological and Research Priorities

In November 2021 the First Deputy Chairman of the Senate of Uzbekistan, Rector of University of World Economy and Diplomacy *S.Safoev* proposed the establishment of the Methodological Council at the UWED, aimed to provide political, legal, and economic expertise with in-depth exploration and interdisciplinary approach, critical discourse analysis and argumentative discussions of issues related to international agenda, regional cooperation, and Uzbekistan's contemporary foreign political-and-economic narratives and strategies.

The meetings of the Council, which are held/occur typically once a month and are focused on certain issues of substantial interest, are traditionally opened by Head of the Council, Rector *S.Safoev*. The Council's seminars feature prominent specialists as keynote speakers, as well as members of connected ministries and departments, celebrities, and academics. The studies (latest research) and presentations made by key speakers on a certain issue are introduced. UWED leaders, professors, lecturers, PhD students and researchers generally take part in discussions. The Council's sections and/or research dimensions correspond to International Relations, International Law, and International Economics. Formats range in workshops and round-tables, kaleidoscope of views (relevant trends), book talk(s), and theory talks.

The **first meeting** of the Methodological Council, held on November 13, 2021, was dedicated to the Address by Sh.Mirziyoyev at the Solemn Ceremony of Assuming the Post of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the Joint Session of the Chambers of Oliy Majlis (6.11.2021). The First Deputy Chairman of the Senate of Uzbekistan, Rector of UWED and Head of UWED Methodological Council *S.Safoev* delivered a comprehensive lecture covering features of transition from the Strategy of actions to the Strategy of development. The Rector gave emphasis to a completely new approach applied in adjustment of New Uzbekistan's Development Strategy for 2022-2026, that was articulated in the evaluation of the

efficiency of continuing reforms by the system measuring the capacity of completion the development goals.

To understand the essence of Strategy for development, speaker focused on the following fundamental issues: (i) the elections of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan created completely new conditions for internal political development and the implementation of foreign political tasks; (ii) the election campaign has clearly shown that fundamental changes have taken place in Uzbekistan's development model over the past five years; (iii) the first stage of the society modernization related to the implementation of primary tasks was successfully completed.

Also, Rector in his report accentuated, that the Strategy clearly defined the main goals of the country's development in the following seven directions: 1) establishing people's (a people-friendly, a people-oriented) state through the development of free and strong civil society; 2) ensuring justice and the rule of law, that is the most basic and necessary stipulation for sustainable development; 3) improving national economy and its growth rates that correspond to contemporary needs and challenges; 4) conducting a fair social policy; and therein, the quality of education as the most essential factor in the development of human capital will continue to be the core of reforms; 5) carrying further reforms in spiritual development and educational improvement; 6) dealing with a number of global issues and challenges, and in this regard, the openness of the country to the world, as well as constructing the wide-ranging scope of its foreign relations and developing its foreign ties equally in all directions with understanding the considerably changing nature and content of diplomatic activity; 7) increasing the power of country's Armed Forces as a reliable guarantee of peace and security¹. In the final part of the meeting the audience commented on the topic and shared views on raised issues.

At the **second meeting** held on December 30, 2021, the Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies, UWED Prof. Dr. **Sh.Abdullaev** shared his vision on "The methodological crisis of modern international science". In

¹ For more complete report see: Сафоев С.С. Ҳаракатлар стратегиясидан – Тараққиёт стратегияси сари // Халқаро муносабатлар, № 3-4, 2021.[Safoev S.S. Path from the Strategy of actions to the Strategy of development//International Relations (Uzbekistan), No.3-4, 2021]

his report scholar marked out, that serious recent transformations in UWED generated by its current leaders in line with tasks set by the President of the country require a deep analysis of the very state of contemporary science. The current global crisis is portrayed by: a) the economic crisis spurred on by the pandemic; b) a deep crisis in the international economic and political order that emerged after the World War II; c) elements of the civilizational crisis of the Big West that dominated the World for centuries; d) rapid decline in international political and strategic stability; e) weakening the persuasiveness of traditional, international political and intellectual concepts (thought).

Speaker noted that the confrontation between main foreign partners of Uzbekistan would intensify: the Russian Federation – the USA, the PRC – the USA, the EU – the Russian Federation, Turkey – the West, the Islamic world – the West, India – China, India – Pakistan, Iran – Saudi Arabia, and etc. Unpredictability is growing in the southern vector of country's foreign policy, correlated with the latest changes in Afghanistan. In Uzbekistan, over the past decades, certain success has been made in academic political research in IR field. At the same time, appropriate conclusions should be drawn by understanding the crisis of modern international science and be considered as an opportunity for renewal, and reaching a new level of development.

Professor epitomizes a number of tasks the researchers community is facing, that is expressed in the need for/of: a qualitative growth of the methodological and conceptual culture of the research and expertise; a radical revision of research policy, taking into account the serious transformation of the modern international political system; a keen (closer) look at issues of international and regional development, and historical experience of independent Uzbekistan's foreign policy over three decades; there is an urgent need to create interdisciplinary research centers and laboratories; as well as demand of a resolute focus on Central Asian studies ².

On February 18, 2022 the Council arranged **third meeting** and academic seminar on “Water management issues in Central Asia and prospects

² The full text of the report was published in the journal of International Relations (Uzbekistan): Абдуллаев Ш.М. О методологическом кризисе современной международной науки // Международные отношения, № 3-4, 2021. [Abdullaev Sh.M. On the methodological crisis of modern international science// International Relations, No.3-4, 2021.]

for its resolution”. In the main part of the event key speakers – the First Deputy Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan **A.Nazarov**, the Head of the IFAS Agency for the Management of Project Implementation in Uzbekistan **V.Sokolov**, and Acting director of Scientific-Information Center of ICWC **D.Ziganshina** shared their views on the announced issue.

In his report A. Nazarov paid attention to the current development issues, challenges and prospects for water distribution in Central Asia. The speaker outlined the issues of water supply in the sectors of Uzbekistan’s economy and identified the challenges to the country’s water management system in terms of climate change, population growth, urbanization and economic development. Uzbekistan’s constructive policy consistently advocates the consideration and resolution of all issues related to the use of trans-boundary basins/rivers in Central Asia based on generally recognized norms of international law, mutual respect and consideration of the interests of all participating parties/stakeholders. At the present stage of the country’s development, the “Concept for the Development of the Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2020–2030”, which has been recently adopted, provides for the development and promotion of mutually acceptable mechanisms for the joint management of trans-boundary water resources, considering a balance of interests of all Central Asian countries.

Having previously mentioned the long-term activities of IFAS, V. Sokolov, in his presentation gave a comprehensive diagnostic review of the interactions between Uzbekistan and neighboring countries on the joint management of water resources in the Amu Darya river basin through the following prisms of (i) the key characteristic of the Amu Darya river basin, (ii) the specifics of natural river flow in the Amu Darya basin, (iii) data on the transformations of the Amu Darya River’s hydrological regime as a result of climate change and the consequences of the ecological crisis of the Aral Sea, which affected the system of air and humidity circulation in Central Asia, (iv) the regulating process by reservoirs of the Amu Darya River flows, (v) accumulation/storage of return waters, (vi) the water distribution principles within the Amu Darya River and (vii) the complexities of managing the water system of the Amu Darya, (viii) the issues of key water ponds in the south regions of Aral Sea and (ix) assessing the real water demands for a stable substance of water reservoirs of the south part of Aral Sea,

(x) the specifics of bilateral relations in terms of joint management and use of water resources in the Amu Darya basin. As the speaker noted, one of the most relevant issues in water management within the Amu Darya basin at present is the coordination of the principles of water allocation with Afghanistan, as well as the possible impact of the joint development of the Panj River water resources by Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

In report entitled as “Issues of trans-boundary water management in Central Asia: diplomacy, law, science” D. Ziganshina introduced the specifics of the interaction model within the ICWC through the collegiality/companionship and coordination between the executive bodies and water management departments of the Central Asian countries in decision-making over general water management issues, as well as measures for the implementation of joint programs regarding interdependence between national and regional interests of the participating countries. The expert emphasized the advantages of contemporary diplomatic mechanisms and channels, in contrast to traditional ones, in particular, in the implementation of the so-called “water” diplomacy, expressed in multi-level and network interactions, cooperation between expert communities and representatives of various branches of science in promoting the common development and collaboration goals of Central Asian states.

The concluding part of the academic seminar was followed by the Q&A session, when participants of the event commented on the topic and expressed their initiatives to better identify the “water” economy, create the position (rank) of so called “water” attaches and other institutions within diplomatic service in the field of trans-boundary water management in Central Asia, anchoring the importance of discussed issues in a new version of the Concept of Foreign Political Activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

On April 7, 2022 at the **fourth meeting** the Council organized an academic discussion on “Fourth Industrial Revolution and its impact on World development”. Key speakers – Director of Research Institute of Digital Technologies and Artificial Intelligence under the Ministry for Development of Information technologies and communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan **A.Atabekov** and PA at the Department of “Applied analysis of international affairs” (the Department was incorporated with IR Department), IR Faculty,

UWED, **R.Makhmudov** contributed to the conversation on prospects and challenges of Fourth Industrial Revolution.

In his report and presentation “Fourth Industrial Revolution: the political-and-economic review” R.Makhmudov delineated following key dimensions of various waves of industrial revolutions as: (i) the specifics of industrial revolutions I-IVth; (ii) main energy sources inherent in/to each revolution (mainly oil, coal, gas, water, and nuclear energy), crucial innovations (from the steam engine, lathes and milling-machines, steam locomotive and railways, electric and electromagnetic telegraph, internal combustion engine, automobile, and electrification to microprocessors and PCs, industrial robots, nuclear energy, the Internet, AI, “green” energy and, even, thermonuclear/fusion energy) and the exact/relevant date and timing of inventions; (iii) technological zones, their structure (comprised from technological metropolitan power, sphere of influence, and means of ‘keeping in’ the sphere of influence), the history and struggle among technological zones (for ex., British, German, American, Japanese, Soviet one in the fullness of its time); (iv) determinants of Chinese technological zone’s emergence. In concluding part of his speech author particularly referred to the dilemma of “labor demand/workforce” (creating new jobs) during the 4th industrial revolution.

In his presentation on “Artificial Intelligence as the driver of Industry 4.0” A.Atabekov featured the following: (i) components of Uzbekistan’s IT brand as human capital, IT exports, business support, and IT park residents; (ii) a brief description of the 4th industrial revolution in terms of automation, artificial intelligence, and IT structures; (iii) prospects for digital development of Uzbekistan expressed/identified in automation of government processes, integration of databases using machine learning and artificial intelligence; (iv) the opportunities and potential of Uzbekistan in its future transformation to IT capital with demographic dividend, direct and profitable trade and cooperation ties with all markets of Central Asia, the CIS and Asia, IT visa, legislative and legal framework for IT, and enhancement of Uzbekistan’s IT Park infrastructure.

The closing part of the academic discussion was followed by the Q&A session, participants of the event commented with critical views on raised issues and shared a pragmatic assessment of the topic under discussion.

On April 29, 2022 at the **fifth meeting** of the Methodological Council the workshop on “Environmental issues of Central Asian region and the priorities of Uzbekistan’s ‘green’ policy” featured the following speakers widely contributing with their views, ideas and interpreting their findings on the environmental issues: Chairman of the Committee for the Development of the Aral Sea Region and Ecology of the Senate of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan **B.Alikhanov** and Head of the Research Department of Applied Ecology and Sustainable Development of the National University of Uzbekistan **A.Azizov**.

Focusing on the significance of environmental policy coherence in the course of New Uzbekistan’s Development Strategy for 2022-2026 and one of its seven vectors, namely ‘National interests-oriented approaches towards global problems’, B.Alikhanov summarized number of issues related to (i) the environmental peculiarities of and the ecological situation in Uzbekistan, (ii) the country’s ‘green’ policy, (iii) the specifics of ecological systems and natural complexes, (iv) challenges and threats to national environmental security, (v) significant aspects of environmental diplomacy, (vi) the environmental crisis of the ‘drying up’ of the Aral Sea and desertification of its seabed, erosion and deflationary processes within the area, (vii) comprehensive measures to implement and promote eco-innovations and technologies in the Aral Sea region, and etc.

Meanwhile A.Azizov in his report provided an overview of (i) the notion of ‘sustainable development’, the very concept, its key principles, determinants and mutually influencing factors, (ii) the laws of ecology, (iii) tasks for the completion of sustainable development policy in the socio-economic and environmental spheres in Uzbekistan, (iv) foreign and local academic and research publications and editions related to ‘sustainable development’, as well as (v) joint projects of Japan and Uzbekistan intended to minimize the soil salinity of agricultural lands in the regions of the country, and etc.

The discussion section was followed by the Q&A session, and participants commented on the need for (i) further inventory/stocktaking of national and international regulatory frameworks of environmental law with the aim of its legislative improvement and upgrading; (ii) ‘raising’ the level of general

environmental literacy (ecoliteracy) of the population, interpolating the environmental training courses in secondary education, and integrating the disciplines on ecology with general educational standards; (iii) reliable, forehanded (well-timed), and thorough informing the population about potential environmental threats and challenges in Central Asian region, with understanding the complexity of resolving environmental issues, and the dependence of environmental management on socio-political development of each country of the region.

Foregrounding the issues of (i) “greening” the economic sector both at national and international levels, (ii) improving the conduct of environmental expertise, (iii) further developing the mechanisms of environmental law, (iv) obtaining environmental knowledge about the protection of atmospheric air, water, land and biological resources, (v) understanding the “indivisibility” of environmental challenges Rector S. Safoev in the concluding part of the session emphasized the need for the constructive functioning of the Center for Sustainable Development and arranging/holding in 2022 the International Conference on a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of environmental issues and risks, as well as national, regional and global trends and challenges in the very sphere, involving a wide range of scholars, experts and analysts in the field of the applied natural and social sciences.

On May 27, 2022 at the **sixth meeting** the Council arranged an academic seminar on “Current situation in Afghanistan, its implications and Uzbekistan’s foreign political priorities” with the key speaker – Special Representative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan **I. Irgashev**. Guest speaker widely contributed with his diplomatic experience and relevant views on Afghan issue. Concentrating on the significance of peace efforts in Afghanistan I. Irgashev outlined a number of issues related to (i) the complicated situation in Afghanistan in the course of the withdrawal of international coalition and the events, taken place after the return of the Taliban government, (ii) the negotiation process, the efforts of the international community and the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan to establish peace in Afghanistan, and in this case the implementation of Taliban’s commitments, (iii) the search for a consolidated approach of key participants of the international

community to the recognition of new Afghan government, (iv) issues of ensuring fundamental freedoms and basic human rights, the rights of women, ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan, (v) the humanitarian crisis in the country and taken by the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan actions and measures aimed at the prevention of such a catastrophe, (vi) the comparative policy of the neighboring to Afghanistan countries (Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and China) towards the acting Afghan government and the situation in the country in general, (vii) the political landscape in Afghanistan and its provinces, (viii) the return of Afghan citizens and security forces from various countries and the prevention of their possible persecution, (ix) the current government's policy towards various terrorist groups in Afghanistan, (x) the issue of return of military aircraft, (xi) regional transport, communication and infrastructure projects and initiatives, (xii) possible research gaps and relevant topics in Afghan studies, and etc.

During the Q&A session participants considered (i) the mediating role and efforts of the Republic of Uzbekistan in various negotiation formats to intensify the peace process in Afghanistan, (ii) the revitalization of the China's security policy and Russian strategies in the Afghan direction, (iii) issues of drug production in Afghanistan and actions to eradicate it, (iv) the Taliban's policy against ISIS, (v) women's rights, opportunities and access for girls to education, addressing these issues in various provinces of Afghanistan, and etc.

On October 6, 2022 at the **seventh meeting** and academic round-table on "Contemporary trends in the development of higher education system: key landmarks and challenges" main speakers, the First Deputy Minister of Higher and Secondary Special Education **K.Karimov** and Professor of Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, MHSSE National expert in Higher education reform project («EACEA/Erasmus+») **N.Kasymova** discussed with UWED Academic Community current development approaches and transformational features of Higher Education (HE) in international and national contexts.

In his speech K. Karimov outlined a number of key global trends and issues in Higher Education through following points: (i) the Academic Revolution, (ii) educational globalization, (iii) internationalization of HE, (iv) transformation

towards World-Class Universities, (v) universalization of academic competencies, curriculums and educational programs, (vi) academic mobility, (vii) opportunities and scope of HE, (viii) commercialization of HE, (ix) development of hybrid approaches to HE, (x) skills that important while recruiting new employees, (xi) global Ed-Tech, and etc.

Kasymova N., in turn, involved audience's attention to key approaches and dimensions of contemporary student-oriented concept of HE, the interdependence between its components namely "education – research – innovations", issues of strategic planning in HE institutions, its core tasks and directions, and etc. The final part of the workshop was followed by the Q&A session, when participants commented on the topic and shared views on raised issues.

On November 4, 2022, the Methodological Council arranged **eighth meeting** and seminar on "Global and regional economic-and-trade challenges and Uzbekistan's economic modernization path". In the main part of the event a key speaker – Professor of the Department of World Economics and International Economic Relations Dr. *N.Sirojiddinov* in his speech and presentation slides sketched a number of key global economic challenges as digital transformation; environmental issues (catastrophic environmental pollution, biodiversity decline, global warming); tackling the scarcity of resources (depletion of natural resources, shortages of water resources); demographic issues (population explosion in developing countries and demographic crisis in developed ones); food security; development gap between rich and poor countries, poverty, hunger and illiteracy in a number of developing countries; TNCs as participants of a global struggle for the governance of the world economy; COVID-19 and other geopolitical challenges.

Among regional economic challenges the speaker identified water and energy issues, a low level of human capital development, high birth rates, unemployment and migration, the Aral Sea crisis, geographical location and logistics, uneven economic development in Central Asian countries, etc.

The author has also reflected on the main issues of the economic modernization of Uzbekistan by 2016: the widespread use of administrative methods in economic management; high taxes and their uneven distribution; a high share of state ownership in the economy and direct management of

enterprises; creation of artificial monopolies by restricting access to the markets of new participants and providing tax, customs and credit benefits to certain enterprises; import restrictions by tariff and non-tariff barriers; and etc. Additionally, the report delineated major directions of economic modernization of Uzbekistan in the course of key ongoing economic reforms in 2017-2022: unification of exchange rates, liberalization of the foreign exchange market, the introduction of currency conversion for operations in progress (Sept. 2017); elimination of a number of administrative barriers on the way to the cross-border flows of goods and people (primarily with the neighboring countries) and reduction of customs duties (2017-2018); reform of the bank sector and monetary circulation (2017-2018); radical reform of the tax system (2019); reduction of a number of administrative costs in doing business; privatization and reduction of the state-owned share in the property.

The following main directions were identified in further deepening of economic reforms: the banking sector; the tax system; administrative reforms; liberalization of foreign economic activity and accession to the WTO; protection of property rights, development of competition; reforms of the agricultural sector, and the irrigation system. Particular attention was paid to the issues of the system of incentives as the core driver in the modernization and long-term economic growth of the country.

Throughout the Q&A session participants expressed their interest and views on raised issues, particularly, the active participation of experts from academic institutions in the development of ongoing reforms; Uzbekistan's readiness to join the WTO in the course/context of deglobalization, sanction wars and the "crisis" of the WTO; the economic dimensions in Uzbekistan's foreign policy reforms in the Central Asian direction (issues of delimitation, demarcation of borders, energy and water resources, and etc.) and the management of possible contradictions between Central Asian countries without external power/interference and by creating a crisis management Center; issues of country's public debt and external borrowing; assessment of the securities market development in Uzbekistan; and progress of the digital economy in Uzbekistan.

Concluding a brief overview of Council's academic activities in 2021-2022, it is important to emphasize, that the Council will further continue to provide broader methodological and research agenda, and focus on intellectual changes in domains of International Relations, International Law and International Economics.

*Current overview was prepared by Assoc.Prof., PhD, Nargis Muminova
UWED Methodological Council's Executive Secretary,
Department of International Relations*