

## The Importance of Establishing Intercultural Communication (The example of Uzbekistan and Germany)

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### Abstract

This article examines aspects of intercultural communication in the process of establishing and developing international relations between representatives of different cultures, using the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Federal Republic of Germany as examples.

In recent years, our country has become increasingly attractive to foreign partners as a promising partner for international relations at all levels, including in the cultural and humanitarian spheres. Fundamental changes within the republic have sparked a steadily growing interest and trust from foreign partners, which ultimately leads to increased investment in our country.

Furthermore, the processes of globalisation, democratisation and the opening up of public life, which have intensified recently, are enabling a vast number of people to learn a great deal about Uzbekistan. One cannot but agree that our country is opening up to the international community, and the international community is discovering Uzbekistan for itself.

In this context, the topic of intercultural communication within the framework of international relations, as illustrated by the relationship between Uzbekistan and Germany, is highly relevant. The relevance of research into intercultural communication stems from its exceptional importance in the development of human civilisation, as a guarantor of the peaceful coexistence of cultures; the need to deepen understanding of the nature, essence, dynamics and structure of intercultural communication; the need to systematise the theoretical and methodological foundations, principles and criteria of intercultural communication

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developed by domestic and foreign researchers; the social need to train specialists capable of functioning effectively in the context of the development of intercultural contacts at all levels; the use of intercultural communication as a means of fostering intercultural tolerance, an important moral quality necessary for establishing contacts with representatives of other cultures.

It is now clear that humanity is moving towards greater interconnectedness and interdependence among different peoples and their cultures. This growing interaction between cultures and peoples makes the issue of intercultural communication particularly relevant. The cultural diversity of modern humanity is increasing, yet at the same time the peoples that comprise it are finding ever more ways to preserve and develop their integrity and distinctive cultural identity. This trend towards the preservation of cultural identity confirms a general pattern, namely that humanity, whilst becoming increasingly interconnected and unified, does not lose its cultural diversity. In the context of these trends in social development, the importance of achieving better understanding between peoples is growing, and consequently the need to define the unique cultural characteristics of peoples is becoming increasingly relevant.

The ongoing process of globalisation is leading to an expansion of the

interconnections and interdependencies between different countries, peoples and their cultures. Today, it is impossible to find ethnic communities that have not been influenced both by the cultures of other peoples and by the wider social environment existing in individual regions and across the world as a whole. This influence is exerted through cultural exchanges and direct contacts between state institutions, social groups, social movements, scientific cooperation, trade, tourism, etc.

The process of establishing bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations involves the active development of various forms of intercultural contact, which sometimes outpace existing communication skills between representatives of different cultures and historically established cultural models. In this regard, it is important to foster interaction and mutual understanding between cultures, with the aim of establishing harmonious relations.

The fact is that global changes in politics, the economy and culture are also accompanied by a growing divide between cultures and peoples, prompting some nations to seek cultural self-affirmation and to preserve their own cultural values.

In such circumstances, there is a need to examine issues such as intercultural communication more closely and thoroughly, with a view to fostering interaction and mutual influence between cultures, which is an important factor in regulating relations between countries.

We have chosen to focus our research on the relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Federal Republic of Germany recognised our country's independence on 31 December 1991, and as early as 6 March 1992, diplomatic relations were established between the two countries. The Republic of Uzbekistan's cooperation with

Germany is multifaceted in nature, built on the basis of sustained dialogue and mutual interests. In addition to established bilateral relations, cooperation with Germany also takes place through international organisations such as the UN and the OSCE.

Overall, during the period of close cooperation between the two countries, significant results have been achieved, laying the foundation for the further deepening of bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and Germany. This close cooperation has also been facilitated by mutual understanding and the resolution of issues related to intercultural communication.

Today, effective mechanisms for intercultural communication include tourism, science, education and cultural and humanitarian cooperation in general.

As for tourism, it has become an integral part of economic cooperation between our country and Germany. This is confirmed by the visa-free regime for German citizens recently introduced in our country.

According to statistics, German residents top the list of countries spending the most on holidays. Thanks to measures taken to simplify procedures for foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan, the number of tourists from Germany visiting our country is growing rapidly. Whilst there were 4,889 visitors from Germany in 2016 and 7,207 in 2017, 18,094 people visited Uzbekistan in 2018.

The introduction, from 15 January 2019, of a visa-free regime for citizens of Germany and a number of other countries visiting Uzbekistan for tourism purposes for up to 30 days could lead to a significant increase in German tourists. The vast majority of Germans travel to discover something new and to experience the culture, traditions and way of life of another country. In this regard, many Germans associate Uzbekistan with the fairy-tale land of 'One Thousand and

One Nights'. All that is needed is to widely showcase the national tourism product on the German market. For this purpose, there are tried-and-tested promotional methods, such as festivals, advertising campaigns on television, social media, print media and so on.

As for Germany itself, it is a country with a well-established and developed tourism industry, where tourism consistently shows positive growth and generates significant revenue for the state coffers. Germany today offers a full range of tourist services – from fascinating culture and vibrant cities to unique nature and coastal areas. Germany also frequently attracts business as a premier venue for international trade fairs. For more than ten years running, Germany has topped the European rankings for countries offering the most favourable conditions for hosting conferences and congresses. In the international rankings, Germany ranks second after the USA in the field of business tourism. Visitors are also drawn to major festivals, such as Munich's Oktoberfest – the world's largest folk festival, which attracts around 6.2 million visitors. The list of tourist attractions even includes a football stadium – the Allianz Arena.

By developing tourism between our two countries, we will be able to gain a better understanding of each other's history and culture, especially as we have promising avenues for further deepening one of the mechanisms of intercultural communication. Cooperation between Uzbekistan and Germany in the field of education has a long history. In particular, German academics and representatives of civil society have long taken a keen interest in the history, national customs and traditions of our people. In turn, the general public in our country has also studied Germany's past and its current path of development, as well as its socio-economic foundations, with great attention.

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The great attention paid in our country in recent years to the development of science and education, the conditions being created for young people to receive an education based on international standards, and the large-scale measures to support research work are arousing great interest in Germany. This contributes to the development of cooperation between our countries in the cultural and humanitarian sphere.

The German cultural centre 'Wiedergeburt' ('Renaissance'), which began its activities in 1990 initially only in Tashkent, and now has branches in Bukhara, Samarkand and Fergana, is making a contribution to the development of cultural and humanitarian relations.

The centre runs a wide range of activities designed to help young people gain a deeper understanding of German traditions and customs. However, the most popular programmes are the German language courses, taught by experts from Germany who have a proven track record of effectiveness.

The centre is home to the youth organisation 'Jugendstern' – 'Star of Youth' – which promotes youth social projects such as a national dance festival, stage productions of world classics and works by contemporary German and Uzbek authors at festivals of German-speaking theatres.

The centre works not only with young people; there is also a Seniors' Club for older people, who learn folk songs and take part in celebrations of traditional German festivals: Easter (Ostern), Catholic Christmas (Weihnacht), the Harvest Festival (Erntedankfest), Mother's Day and Father's Day (Muttertag and Fatertag), Oktoberfest, and others.

The centre organises national seminars on the history of Germans in the republic, as well as evenings in honour of outstanding figures in culture and the arts from Uzbekistan and Germany. The promotion of

the works of German classical composers — Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, Richard Wagner and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — performed by the ‘Sogdiana’ orchestra of Uzbek national instruments attracts the attention of the general public.

The German Cultural Centre ‘Wiedergeburt’ actively cooperates in its activities with the German Embassy in Uzbekistan, the Goethe-Institut in Tashkent, other German organisations, as well as the Uzbekistan–Germany Friendship Society.

To get to know its foreign partner better, the ‘Uzbekistan–Germany’ Friendship Society was established in Uzbekistan on 27 November 1998 and has been operating successfully ever since. When the society was founded, the aim was to strengthen friendly ties and introduce a wide range of people to the rich cultural heritage of the peoples of both countries.

Of particular interest is the Society’s external role, which serves our national interests: fostering a positive and objective image of Uzbekistan in Germany – a country that is currently developing steadily and actively cooperating with the international community.

Through a variety of events, the Friendship Society maintains a constant exchange of information, creates information resources and databases about our country, holds conferences and symposia within the framework of cultural and spiritual ties, and organises performances by creative groups and soloists, photographic exhibitions, etc.

The legal basis for the activities of the Friendship Society is the ‘Agreement on Cultural Cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Federal Republic of Germany’, which was concluded on 28 April 1993 and which marks its 30th anniversary this year.

And in the anniversary year of 2013, a trilateral agreement ‘On Cooperation’ was signed by the Council for Cultural and

Educational Relations and Friendship Societies of Uzbekistan with Foreign Countries, the ‘Uzbekistan–Germany’ Friendship Society and the ‘Germany–Uzbekistan’ Society in Bonn. This agreement has served to further develop friendly relations between Uzbekistan and Germany.

At the heart of intercultural communication between the two countries lies the cultural aspect, which is dynamically expanding and strengthening; furthermore, spiritual communication, the exchange of traditions and the joint celebration of folk festivals all create a favourable atmosphere of trust and foster mutual understanding.

Effective communication requires qualified personnel. In this regard, in 2019, a decree was issued by President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev was adopted, ‘On the organisation of the activities of the Tashkent branch of the Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education “Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation”’, where a master’s programme was launched to train simultaneous interpreters for international organisations and in intercultural communication.

We have experience in training specialists through German-language programmes at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy; in addition to the language itself, German language lecturers introduce students to the culture, traditions and mindset of German society.

When training specialists of an international calibre, it is important to focus on issues of cultural integration, intercultural assimilation and tolerance towards other cultures and traditions; only with such an approach can we produce a new generation of specialists capable of intercultural interaction.

It is important to note that today in Uzbekistan, general education schools

offering in-depth German language studies have been named after great figures from German history; for instance, School No. 60 in Tashkent has been named after Goethe, General Education School No. 4 in Bukhara – Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, and General Education School No. 51 in Samarkand – Wilhelm von Humboldt.

The Goethe-Institut, which has opened in Uzbekistan, deserves special attention – a cultural institution of the Federal Republic of Germany, with branches operating in many parts of the world.

The main objective of the Goethe-Institut is to promote the German language outside Germany, whilst at the same time using the language to expand international cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian spheres.

Today, the Goethe-Institut is the most sought-after educational institution in Uzbekistan for those who wish not only to learn German but also to gain an understanding of German culture. All classes are conducted exclusively in German, making use of the institute's excellent facilities and resources.

The Goethe-Institut's cultural and educational programmes contribute to fostering intercultural dialogue and establishing intercultural communication.

At the Samarkand Summit held in 2022, which opened a new chapter in the history of the SCO, our Head of State put forward a number of proposals, including the introduction of digital platforms for intercultural communication, such as virtual museums and academic video conferences.

In these circumstances, establishing successful intercultural communication is more important than ever. For foreigners—in this case, Germans—familiarising themselves with the rich culture of Uzbekistan becomes a genuine desire, one that will help them better explore all aspects of understanding and cooperation with a

people who possess an ancient and unique history and traditions.

For multi-ethnic Uzbekistan, which strives to create an open society, the challenges of intercultural communication are becoming priority tasks that will help to get to know one's dialogue partners better and enrich one's own knowledge of other cultures and civilisations.

The historically formed cultural and character traits of the German people are characterised by qualities such as honesty, precision, meticulousness, a striving for perfect order, and so on.

In turn, Uzbeks demonstrate genuine hospitality, modesty and tolerance towards other religions, cultures and traditions to their foreign guests.

Uzbekistan conducts primarily mutually beneficial business with our German partners; currently, over 200 leading German companies are operating successfully in Uzbekistan, and to prevent misunderstandings between representatives of different cultures, it is important to address issues related to intercultural communication more proactively.

For example, a representative of a high-context culture, for whom it is not customary to give a direct answer—which, in their view, might offend the other party—masks their refusal with phrases such as: 'soon', 'we will look into this', 'we will ring you back', whilst meaning that the contract will not be signed. A representative of the opposite culture, for whom one's word is important, expects that the contract will indeed be signed soon, that they will be called, and so on.

Furthermore, in intercultural communication, one cannot expect partners to adhere to identical rules of behaviour, which are largely determined by the characteristics of their cultures. Consequently, situations of uncertainty arise during communication, for example,

when using forms of greeting and farewell, apologies and other customary forms of behaviour. What is considered normal for some people may be seen as a deviation from the norm by others and may be misinterpreted. Such differences must be taken into account when engaging in intercultural communication.

In addition, high-context cultures are characterised, for example, by a fairly high degree of collectivism; that is, people tend to be quite close-knit and often socialise and work together as a group. People from low-context cultures, by contrast, are very individualistic.

In our view, Uzbekistan is a representative of a high-context culture, whilst Germany, on the other hand, is a low-context culture. This is something that needs to be taken into account, particularly by those planning to visit Germany for various reasons.

In order to adapt successfully to German society, it is necessary to possess the following knowledge:

- A good command of German and a commitment to continuous improvement;
- An appreciation of Germany's cultural and artistic heritage;
- A professional approach to the work entrusted to you;
- Punctuality and adherence to rules;
- In business dealings, strict compliance with all terms of the agreement.

Thus, the successful establishment of intercultural communication will enable representatives of different nations, cultures and mentalities to understand the motives behind certain actions, as well as the roots of traditions and customs of people from other countries. Studying foreign cultures, and a respectful and tolerant attitude towards other religions will help to avoid intercultural conflicts, foster respect and authority when conducting joint business, and contribute to mutually beneficial cooperation and the resolution of many other pressing issues in the context of

globalisation and harmonious international cooperation in the interests of all nations.

As for successful intercultural communication, this is possible when societies possess such universal human qualities as intercultural and inter-ethnic tolerance, particularly if the society is multi-ethnic and multi-faith. This is important not only for establishing international dialogue, but also for domestic stability. If our country upholds the principle of equal rights for all citizens before the law and in society, regardless of their gender, race, religion or nationality, this will serve as the foundation for a social, civil society with a sustainable market economy.

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