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MODERN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF TAJIKISTAN

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Abstract. The article analyzes the priority areas of Tajikistan's modern foreign policy in the context of the transformation of regional processes in Central Asia. The author describes and examines the factor of Afghanistan in the perception of Central Asia by the world and regional powers as well as its impact on the foreign policy of the countries of the region and Tajikistan in particular. The process of formation of Tajikistan's foreign policy strategy and its structural characteristics are demonstrated. The author explains conditions of proclamation and implementation of the 'open door policy' and provides an overview of the modern Concept of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy. In conclusion, general findings and outlook on political processes in Central Asia and Tajikistan are outlined.

Key words: *Tajikistan, Central Asia, foreign policy, Afghanistan, National Interests, Security, Multi-Vector Policy.*

ТӘЖІКСТАННЫҢ ҚАЗІРГІ ЗАМАНҒЫ СЫРТҚЫ САЯСИ БАСЫМДЫҚТАРЫ

Шерали Ризоён

Андатпа. Мақалада Орталық Азиядағы аймақтық үдерістердің трансформациясы жағдайында Тәжікстанның қазіргі заманғы сыртқы саясатының басым бағыттары талданады. Автор Орталық Азияны әлемдік және өңірлік державалардың қабылдаудағы Ауғанстан факторын және оның аймақ елдерінің, атап айтқанда Тәжікстанның сыртқы саясатына әсерін ашып зерттейді. Тәжікстанның сыртқы саяси стратегиясының қалыптасу үрдісі және оның құрылымдық ерекшеліктері көрсетілген. Автор «ашық есік саясатын» жариялау және жүзеге асыру шарттарын ашып, Тәжікстанның сыртқы саясатының қазіргі тұжырымдамасына шолу жасайды. Қорытындыда Орталық Азия мен Тәжікстандағы саяси үдерістерге қатысты жалпы тұжырымдар мен болжамдар көрсетілген.

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Түйін сөздер: Тәжікстан, Орталық Азия, сыртқы саясат, Ауғанстан, ұлттық мүдделер, қауіпсіздік, көпвекторлы саясат

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПРИОРИТЕТЫ ТАДЖИКИСТАНА

Шерали Ризоён

Аннотация. В статье анализируются приоритетные направления современной внешней политики Таджикистана в условиях трансформации региональных процессов в Центральной Азии. Автор раскрывает и исследует фактор Афганистана в восприятии Центральной Азии мировыми и региональными державами и его влияние на внешнюю политику стран региона и, в частности, Таджикистана. Показан процесс формирования внешнеполитической стратегии Таджикистана и ее структурные особенности. Автор раскрывает условия провозглашения и реализации «политики открытых дверей» и даёт обзор современной Концепции внешней политики Таджикистана. В заключении представлены общие выводы и прогноз относительно политических процессов в Центральной Азии и Таджикистане.

Ключевые слова: *Таджикистан, Центральная Азия, внешняя политика, Афганистан, национальные интересы, безопасность, многовекторная политика*

Introduction

The system of international relations experienced significant changes at the end of the twentieth century. It influenced the emergence of new sovereign states on the political map of the world. The modification of the post-war architecture of international relations contributed to the formation of new non-traditional challenges and threats of general global significance. Thus, after the decline of the bipolar world (the collapse of the USSR), there were both signs of the formation of a unipolar world (where the United States played the leading role) and a multipolar world (the number of independent states and UN members changed significantly). In these circumstances, Tajikistan declared its state sovereignty and began to establish cooperation with the states of the world.

The importance of considering Tajikistan's foreign policy strategy in the current circumstances arises from the assumption that in the era of the post-COVID world

the situation in Central Asia may change. The 2020 overview has demonstrated that political processes in this region predictably remain unforeseeable. On the one hand, we observe cooperation among the countries of the region, which has been shaping up slowly but consistently over the past 3 years. Nevertheless, there are still few conditionalities in the intra-regional relations of the countries, which can be assessed as constraints to cooperation in Central Asia. On the other hand, strategies of global and regional powers are gradually changing and their substantial transformation may be affected by the situation in Afghanistan, namely the effectiveness (or failure) of the peace process in the country. Together, both of these notable processes may affect the overall situation in the region, which will certainly have an impact on the degree of implementation of national interests for both Central Asian countries and Tajikistan.

This work is written based on the country's

scientific discourse to reveal the features of modern foreign policy priorities of Tajikistan. The choice of this approach is justified by the fact that, firstly, not all the research and published works in Tajikistan are presented to foreign readers; secondly, the assessments and works of foreign authors on the current priorities of Tajikistan's foreign policy do not always reflect the reality; and thirdly, a comprehensive analysis of Tajikistan's foreign policy in modern conditions and a comparison of the approaches and opinions of domestic and foreign researchers will be presented later as a logical continuation of this work.

Research methods

The methodological basis of this article is the descriptive narrative approach, which allowed us to consider the foundations of the formation of Tajikistan's foreign policy and its structural characteristics as well as to demonstrate the contemporary priorities in the network of relations with the countries of the world.

The method of comparative analysis made it possible to identify the peculiarities of the foreign policy strategy declaration and implementation in the context of changing situation in Central Asia and Afghanistan. On the basis of the analysis, we were able to assume scenarios for the situation development in this region, policy transformation of global and regional powers, as well as emergence of new challenges and threats that will have an immediate impact on the foreign and domestic policy of Tajikistan.

Results of the study

The modern foreign policy of Tajikistan is based on an 'open-door policy', which involves the development of relations with all external partners. This principle was noted in the first Concept of Foreign Policy, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic

of Tajikistan on September 24, 2002 [1,68] and was officially declared at the solemn meeting in honor of the tenth anniversary of the 16th Session of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Tajikistan on November 15, 2002. The Leader of the Nation Emomali Rahmon emphasized at the meeting that "Tajikistan will continue to strive to develop mutually beneficial relations with all organizations, as well as with parties that want to have friendly and disinterested relations with us. In other words, **our foreign policy will be based on the principles of an 'open-door' policy for the sake of good and mutually beneficial relations**" [2,40]. The open-door policy has been the main principle for the implementation of Tajikistan's foreign policy strategy for two decades.

The factor of Afghanistan in the fate of Central Asia

An essential condition for Tajikistan's announcement of an open-door policy was the change in the position of Central Asia in global processes, when the region from the periphery of world politics turned into a field of increased attention of global and regional powers. The three decade-long history of Central Asia in global politics demonstrates that the declared goals have not been achieved, and the region as a whole and the countries in particular have not been able to transform into a full-fledged player on the global stage. Today, Central Asia is treated rather as a site for implementation of global and regional powers' policy. If we compare it with other regions of Eurasia in terms of importance in global politics, unfortunately, despite its sufficient potential (natural, human and location factor), Central Asia is not as important as regional experts and researchers say. It is worth mentioning that one of the reasons for the increased attention to the region from external powers, along with the neighborhood with Russia and China, is the factor of Afghanistan.

Through the example of Tajikistan, it should be emphasized that with the beginning of the international anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan after the well-known events of September 11, 2001 provided an opportunity for official Dushanbe to establish mutually beneficial relations with Western countries. Although, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan already in the 90s of the twentieth century had relationships with key global players. Tajikistan faced an internal civil conflict in the first decade of independence and was busy with post-conflict peacebuilding. The active participation of official Dushanbe in regional processes begins precisely in the 21st century, which became a condition for the announcement of an open-door policy.

An analysis of the situation in the first decade of the 21st century in Central Asia shows that the regional integration was discontinued when countries began to compete with each other to gain benefits in relations with key players in world politics. Also, the process of cooling of relations within the region begins, which ultimately significantly restrained the subjectivity of Central Asia. Today, the factor of Afghanistan has a significant impact on the image of Central Asia on the world stage, which contributes to the entry of the region into world politics.

In the early 2000s, experts and journalists began to discuss and write about the beginning of the 'New Great Game', meaning the 'Great Game' of the late 19th century, when the 'Pamir Issue' was resolved between the Russian and British empires, and the lines of delimitation of the strategic interests of these states where Afghanistan was perceived as a buffer country between them.

Today, it is obvious that the ongoing processes in Afghanistan with the beginning of the peace process in this country in order to achieve "respected and sustainable peace"

[sulhe bozzat va poydor]⁴ will significantly affect the region as a whole, and the Central Asian states in particular.

The current situation in Afghanistan, as in the early 2000s, shows that the interests and strategies of global and regional powers are intertwined in this country. The United States, Russia, China, Great Britain, France, Germany, Iran, Pakistan, India, Turkey, the Persian Gulf states and other countries have permanent interests in Afghanistan. It has been unchanged for a long time, and the territory of Afghanistan is used as a space for competition and opposition to each other.

An analysis of the available literature shows that the interests and positions of the global and regional powers involved in the problem of Afghanistan, and how their policies can promote (or oppose) the achievement of peace in this country, stabilize (destabilize) the political situation and ensure (vulnerability) security. Thus, Central Asia as a region, and the states included in it as Afghanistan's northern neighbors, will attract the attention of global and regional powers. It should be emphasized that the policy of the Central Asian states towards Afghanistan is considered friendly and acceptable to official Kabul. Since the countries of Central Asia do not interfere (and do not have such potential) in the internal processes of Afghanistan, which is impossible to say about other neighbors of this state. Thus, in the foreign policy strategy of the Central Asian states, in particular Tajikistan in the fourth decade of independence, the factor of Afghanistan and the ongoing processes in this country will be felt.

In view of this, let us briefly consider Tajikistan's contemporary foreign policy priorities and the specifics of their perception by domestic experts and researchers:

³ Дискурс политического руководства Афганистана, когда они в официальных встречах и мероприятиях говорят о достижении мира и начала межафганских переговоров.

The concept of multi-vector in the foreign policy of Tajikistan

The concept of ‘multi-vector policy’ in the scientific and expert discourse of Tajikistan appeared after the panel discussion of the Center for Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan in 2009 on the topic ‘Multi-vector foreign policy of the Central Asian states and its prospects’ [3]. Then it became the focus of regular attention of researchers and practitioners. So, in 2009, a collection of articles, interviews and speeches of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tatarstan Khamrokhon Zarifi was published under the title ‘Multi-vector diplomacy of Tajikistan’ [4], and an article by Professor Abdunabi Sattorzoda on the topic ‘Theoretical aspects of multi-vector foreign policy’ [5] was published in the scientific journal of the Center for Strategic Research ‘Tajikistan and the Modern World’, which in fact became the first attempt to theorize the country’s multi-vector strategy in foreign policy. A. Sattorzoda published a scientific monograph entitled ‘Actual problems of Tajikistan’s foreign policy (multi-vector in action)’ [6], in 2014 which has become a valuable research material on this issue. Along with the aforementioned collection of H. Zarifi, this book are the most important works that scientifically substantiate the multi-vector foreign policy of Tajikistan. It is noteworthy that in the second Concept of Tajikistan’s Foreign Policy (adopted in January 2015), this concept is noted as a method of protecting and realizing national interests in the country’s foreign policy. In other words, the modern multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Tajikistan can be characterized as the evolution of the ‘open-door’ policy.

Foreign policy priorities of Tajikistan in the current conditions

A key change in the understanding of the

priorities of Tajikistan’s modern foreign policy can be called the speech of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon at a meeting with the country’s diplomatic officials on the occasion of the opening of the new building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan on March 15, 2013, where the urgent problems of protecting and realizing Tajikistan’s national interests in modern conditions were considered in detail. Thus, the Head of State emphasized the fact that “The geopolitical position of Tajikistan, its natural-economic and demographic capabilities, as well as the level of socio-economic development require an active, realistic and balanced policy. At the same time, it should be noted that the success of foreign policy largely depends on the balance of goals and the possibilities of their implementation” [7,65].

Then the Head of State directed to develop a new Foreign Policy Concept of Tajikistan, which had been approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan dated January 27, 2015, No. 332 [8].

A feature of the above stages is that in each of these periods the priorities of foreign policy and the structure of Tajikistan’s national interests are determined in a new way. The time frame can also be marked. Each stage is the beginning of a deep understanding of the state priorities of Tajikistan. The third feature is that the Head of State instructed to develop a Concept of Tajikistan’s foreign policy, which, respectively, together identified the main priorities of Tajikistan in modern international relations.

The Concept defines national interests in the country’s foreign policy [8], which at this stage consist of:

- protecting and strengthening the state sovereignty of Tajikistan and ensuring its national security; the formation of a belt of security and good neighborliness on the borders of the country;

- development of relations of trust, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world on the basis of mutual consideration of interests;

- creating favorable conditions for economic, social and cultural development, gradual growth in the well-being of the people, ensuring the economic security of the country;

- ensuring energy independence of Tajikistan, achieving food security and getting the country out of the communication deadlock;

- ensuring and protecting the rights and freedoms, dignity and interests of citizens of Tajikistan inside and outside the country;

- strengthening the positive image of Tajikistan in the world as a democratic, secular and legal state;

- promoting the creative and legal activities of the societies of Tajiks and compatriots in other countries.

It is known that the cooperative nature of modern international relations contributes to the realization of the national interests of one particular country. Today, taking into account global and regional challenges and threats, the countries of the world cannot ensure their own national security and the implementation of national interests in foreign policy on their own. Thus, in the Foreign Policy Concept of Tajikistan, multilateral diplomacy is included in the list of the country's foreign policy priorities.

The Concept defines that Tajikistan considers international organizations and institutions as:

- the vital mechanism for uniting efforts to counter modern challenges and threats;

- an indispensable platform for resolving disputes and problems in the system of international relations;

- an effective tool for strengthening of international peace and stability.

Thus, Tajikistan "in order to make its

contribution to the formation of a new and fair structure of international and regional relations, as well as to **protect and promote its national interests** within their framework, participates in their activities" [8].

Priority international organizations in Tajikistan's foreign policy have identified such structures as the UN, OSCE, CIS, SCO, CSTO, ECO (ECO), ADC (Asian Dialogue for Cooperation), CICA, UNESCO, NATO and international financial institutions.

According to the text of the current Concept, the following states are the priority directions of Tajikistan's foreign policy:

1. Russian Federation;
2. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan;
3. Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia;
4. People's Republic China;
5. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan;
6. Islamic Republic of Iran;
7. United States of America;
8. Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina;
9. Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia;
10. Japan, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore;
11. Turkey;
12. India;
13. Pakistan;
14. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates;
15. Egypt;
16. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya;
17. South Africa and Mozambique;
18. Australia and New Zealand

Thus, the development and strengthening of relations with global and regional powers, as well as with neighboring countries, is of key importance in Tajikistan's contemporary foreign policy strategy.

The conditions for expanding Tajikistan's cooperation with the above-mentioned countries in a bilateral and multilateral format, in the context of the provisions of the current Foreign Policy Concept, are:

First, the factor of traditional challenges and threats: international terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, as well as unpredictable challenges associated with the confrontation of global powers in various regions of the world, including Central Asia.

Second, the factor of economic diplomacy. Economic diplomacy is primarily aimed at achieving national development goals. At the present stage, the goal is to contribute to the effective implementation of the "National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030" [9] by attracting foreign investment in priority sectors of the economy of Tajikistan. This National Strategy will be implemented in three stages; four strategic objectives are defined: ensuring energy security and efficient use of electricity (1), breaking the communication deadlock and becoming a transit country (2), ensuring food security and access to quality food (3) expanding productive employment (4), which implies the industrialization of the country's economy. Recently, the country's economic diplomacy has been intensified to diversify investment resources. The tasks of economic diplomacy and one of the important priorities of Tajikistan's foreign policy are considered to be the protection of economic interests, the formation of external favorable conditions for strengthening the economic potential and expanding the economic base of the country, the implementation of the "green economy" in the country, the protection of business abroad, attracting foreign investors, joining the international and regional transport, energy and communication infrastructure, the expansion of multilateral cooperation within the WTO, UN agencies and international financial institutions, as well as the expansion

of trade and economic cooperation with neighboring countries, which, according to the geographical location of Tajikistan, along with China and Afghanistan, includes all the countries of Central Asia.

Third, the factor of water cooperation diplomacy. This priority of Tajikistan's foreign policy is due to the natural conditions of the country, which is among the top ten countries in the world with significant reserves of water resources. Tajikistan's water cooperation diplomacy can be divided into two areas:

1) Actualization of global problems, i.e. access of the world's population to drinking water, efficient use of water resources; and solutions to environmental problems connected with water resources. "The Republic of Tajikistan, while implementing water diplomacy, sets the goal of playing an active role in the world arena in resolving water related issues" [8]. At the international level, The Republic of Tajikistan remains a recognized leader of water diplomacy. Since 1999, the world community has supported four global initiatives of Tajikistan on the water issue, which were maintained by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly [10,115]. These are "The International Year of Freshwater, 2003", "The International Decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005-2015", "The International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013", and the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", which has started on March 22, 2018 and is ending on March 22, 2028.

2) The use of the water and energy potential for the sustainable development of the country through the construction of hydropower facilities and the production of environmentally friendly and cheap electricity. Completion of the construction and full operation of the Rogun Hydroelectric Power Plants (HPP), as well as the construction of other Hydroelectric Power Plants (HPP) in

inland rivers and later on in trans-boundary rivers may be a condition for using the existing potential to provide sustainable development of Tajikistan. It should be emphasized that over the past 4 years water-energy cooperation has been transformed in Central Asia and, in general, the potential of Tajikistan in the future can be used by the countries of the region to achieve national development goals.

Fourth, the factor of cultural-humanitarian diplomacy. In the modern world, issues of cultural-humanitarian cooperation are updated and act as instruments of “soft power”. In the context of globalization, there are both observed the interpenetration and complementarity of cultures and values, and tendencies in the formation of conditions aimed at strengthening the crisis of identity. In these conditions, an important point in the preservation of national originality for any state is limiting the negative impact of cultural-humanitarian intervention. Also, in the framework of cultural-humanitarian diplomacy, it is considered a priority of forming a positive image of Tajikistan at the regional and global level. It is expected that in the medium term, the factor of cultural-humanitarian cooperation both in the world and in Central Asia will increase, and a preventive measure to minimize negative consequences is the development of policy which is possible to implement based on conditions and economic potential.

Fifth, the factor of information diplomacy. Strengthening the foundations of the information society and the intellectualization of all spheres of public administration today significantly affect the overall global processes. Information technologies act as a policy-forming factor, without which it is impossible to realize a policy aimed at protecting national interests. The role of new media and social networks is steadily increasing and they have become an effective tool for international cooperation and the

formation of public consciousness. Under these conditions, the implementation of information diplomacy for Tajikistan allows to ensure information security and limit the influence of “fake-news” both on the internal audience and on external consumers on the main provisions of the country’s state strategy. An essential point is also the issues of the country’s security from cyber terrorism and cyber extremism, which are currently being actualized in the information space of Central Asia.

Conclusion

The analysis of Tajikistan’s contemporary foreign policy priorities has demonstrated that Central Asia as a region, and its countries as neighbors, are the key priorities since the processes occurring in this space have an impact on the overall situation in the country, the level of security, and the degree of implementation of national interests.

In the conditions of state independence, Tajikistan has formed its own vision of foreign policy implementation; a number of practical studies in this area was conducted. The country has developed and is implementing an ‘open door policy’ with the further transformation to the multi-vector principle. Although, in fact, foreign policy cannot be single-vector or isolated and distant from regional and global powers. For such countries as Tajikistan, the acceptable approach in implementation of foreign policy is the principle of ‘openness’, since they do not have disproportionate ambitions and aspirations. For two decades, the political leadership of Tajikistan has been implementing this approach. At this stage, it is consistent with the vital national interests and reflects them.

The ongoing and future processes of Central Asia in the medium run will be influenced by the situation in Afghanistan. The active policy of the countries of the region in this area, which is observed today, can be beneficial

for the expansion of trans-regional relations, diversification of economic cooperation, development of transport infrastructure, ensuring security and reducing the negative impact of potential and real challenges and threats.

We can safely assume that in the fourth decade, the public diplomacy of global and regional powers in Central Asia will intensify and the information warfare between them will escalate, leading to hybrid wars in many different variations. It is expected that the 'soft power' tools of these countries will

significantly influence the formation of public consciousness on both foreign and domestic political agendas. In this regard, the issue of close cooperation between experts and researchers on the analysis of ongoing processes and the joint production becomes more relevant.

In general, the research on Tajikistan's contemporary foreign policy priorities has demonstrated that this policy is primarily aimed at the protection and implementation of national interests, which can contribute to the country's sustainable development.

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