

CHANGES IN CHINA-UZBEKISTAN RELATIONS DURING THE FIRST ADMINISTRATION OF SH.MIRZIYOYEV THROUGH THE LENSES OF REALISM WITH COMPARISON OF OTHER NEW INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES.

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Abstract: *It is clear by the history that China and Uzbekistan had close relations thanks to the Silk Road which linked these countries even at that time with economic relations. While having bilateral relations, from the history, Sun Szu¹, in his book, The art of war, wrote a lot about Chinese type of thinking of realistic point-views. Furthermore, the recent initiatives and strategies of both countries shows the elements of realism when both of the countries are of paramount importance in terms of regional and global geopolitical scheme as one of them is located in Central Asia and the other one is in the Far East which is strategically, economically and politically vital when it comes to policy of the country. However, China has not only been trying to survive but also to expand and gain power over other countries with its soft power techniques. This paper will elaborate the factors that are responsible for the behavior of these countries and the role of national interests and power dynamics.*

Key words: *Uzbekistan, China, power, state, relations, changes, dynamics, security, strategic responsibility, economic relations, cultural exchanges, dependence*

Аннотация: *Из истории ясно, что Китай и Узбекистан имели тесные отношения благодаря Шелковому пути, который уже в то время связывал эти страны экономическими отношениями. Имея двусторонние отношения, из истории, Сунь Цзы [китайский военный стратег и писатель, автор книги «Искусство войны»] в своей книге «Искусство войны» много писал о китайском типе мышления с реалистичными точками зрения. Более того, недавние инициативы и стратегии обеих стран демонстрируют элементы реализма, когда обе страны имеют первостепенное значение с точки зрения региональной и глобальной геополитической схемы, поскольку одна из них расположена в Центральной Азии, а другая — на Дальнем Востоке, который имеет стратегическое, экономическое и политическое значение, когда речь идёт о политике страны. Однако Китай пытается не только выжить, но и расширить своё влияние и завоевать власть над другими странами с помощью методов мягкой силы. В данной статье будут подробно рассмотрены факторы,*

¹ A chinese military strategist and writer and the author of the book “The art of war”

определяющие поведение этих стран, а также роль национальных интересов и динамики власти.

Annotatsiya: Tarixdan ma'lumki, Xitoy va O'zbekiston o'rtasida Buyuk Ipak yo'li tufayli yaqin aloqalar mavjud bo'lib, bu mamlakatlarni o'sha davrda ham iqtisodiy aloqalar bilan bog'lagan. Ikki tomonlama munosabatlarga ega bo'lgan holda, tarixdan Sun Szu Xitoy harbiy strategiyasi va yozuvchisi va "Urush san'ati" kitobi muallifi o'zining "Urush san'ati" kitobida Xitoyning realistik nuqtai nazardan fikrlash turi haqida ko'p yozgan. Qolaversa, har ikki davlatning so'nggi tashabbuslari va strategiyalari ham mintaqaviy va global geosiyosiy sxema bo'yicha birlamchi ahamiyat kasb etayotganda realizm unsurlarini ko'rsatib turibdi, chunki ulardan biri Markaziy Osiyoda, ikkinchisi Uzoq Sharqda joylashgan bo'lib, davlat siyosati haqida gap ketganda strategik, iqtisodiy va siyosiy jihatdan muhim ahamiyatga ega. Biroq, Xitoy nafaqat omon qolishga, balki o'zining yumshoq kuch texnikasi bilan boshqa mamlakatlar ustidan kengayish va kuchga ega bo'lishga harakat qilmoqda. Ushbu maqolada ushbu mamlakatlarning xatti-harakatlari uchun javobgar bo'lgan omillar va milliy manfaatlar va kuch dinamikasining roli ishlab chiqiladi.

Introduction

Realism is a multi-faceted theory which can explain, from my perspective, almost all angles of the relations between China and Uzbekistan through the spheres of the influence to each other for the following reasons:

- **State centrist perspective:** Realism (while focuses on the state as a core aspect of IR, its main purpose or goal is power maximization but for the state it is different because it should work primarily for the national interest of the country itself. In the context of the China and Uzbekistan's relations, not only they both stick to this model but also their bilateral and multilateral partnerships and relations consist of mutual interests, security and economic development demands as E.H. Carr² suggested in one of his theories that states pay attention to the relative gains while for liberalism the absolute gain is much more important and they do not care about others, for them their own well-being is the thing that matters the most.

- **Power dynamic:** The role of power is of significant importance since realists consider that power policy makes country more influential and improves the role of it on a global stage. Thus, the growth of China's role around the world and political influence of it in Central Asia requests a realistic point view which ought to tackle how Uzbekistan reacts towards the hegemonic state's power

² Korab-Karpowicz, W. Julian, "Political Realism in International Relations", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/realism-intl-relations/>>.

dynamics and how the implementation of national security tools are constructed by the idea of realism. Sometimes, the game theory apply for that.

● **Security concerns:** Realism highlights or puts emphasis on the importance of security in the international relations. The China and Uzbek partnership is trying to stabilize this chaotic world of insecurity and potential threads and in order to be secure they are trying to make a systematic approach of security cooperation to achieve their national interests. Additionally, CSTO and SCO participation of these countries makes it evident that both countries is looking for peacekeeping processes. While joining of China and Uzbekistan to Shanghai Cooperation Organization , they are being committed to counter-terrorism or anti-terrorism exercises. Such common motives or similarities can be partially demonstrated by the joint-military exercises that these two countries have undergone. Moreover , the ongoing military exercises between two of these countries act as a means of strengthening boundary and make them be able to react any potential military threads as for this survival is achieved through increase in power. Their partnership in terms of security is to fight for terrorist acts and operations which is one of the regional problems of Central Asia and Asian countries. Additionally, they both have economic development initiatives as power , in general, is defined in purely materialistic terms (territory, population, military strength and economic strength as well). Uzbekistan's infrastructure and development projects may get benefits from Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This year seventy fifth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the president Xi Jinping said China is speeding up Chinese modernization³ and Uzbekistan is also comprehensively trying to achieve the “2030 strategy”. In order to make these projects real , it is crucial to maintain a peaceful and safe environment and economic growth or rise ought to change or alert economic challenges. Yet, the important thing is Counter Terrorism Training which shapes the connection between the two countries. Finally, border security cooperation is also one of the similarities that they share. Both countries are involved in this type of activities in order to actively protect borders from terrorists and criminals alike as they have the increased surveillance and the joint border patrol initiatives. All of these above-mentioned instances shows that they have deep relationships in terms of security.

Main body

The choice of China and Uzbekistan relations is thanks to the processes that have begun in Uzbekistan after the China's Belt and Road Initiative as it strengthens ties

³ Mikheev V., Lukonin S. Second Century of the Communist Party of China and New Bipolarity // Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia – 2021. – V. 65. – Issue 7 C. 25-33 URL: <http://ras.jes.su/meimo/s013122270016824-7-1-en> (circulation date: 15.12.2024). DOI: 10.20542/0131-2227-2021-65-7-25-33

between these countries. Firstly, it is crucial to notice that in terms of geopolitical and economic interest of the country is the strategic location of the Uzbekistan as a country on the map and as a resource available one which makes the differences in the states behavior; only because of different power capabilities.

Secondly, strategic economic collaboration makes significant difference as China has made a tremendously significant contribution to the infrastructure, energy, technology and the trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan and consequently has established highly economically interdependence, mostly dependence of Uzbekistan. It is, somehow, similar to the Mao Suden's socialist realism⁴ if we take into consideration of some historical distinctive features.

Thirdly, the power dynamics of the economic relation of China and Uzbekistan in particularly how Uzbekistan could be able to manage in the middle of all powerful countries, the USA, the West, China and Russia because of the neutrality of country's foreign policy. Yet, the relationship between those countries has, up to now, provided the most revealing answers for the future while upholding that future is uncertain. However, GSI is on its way towards working forward upholding principles and pursuing justice as Xi Jinping said in his speech on 28 th March which adds taking measures towards addressing pressing issues such as all round escalation of Ukraine conflict and issues in northern Myanmar where china mediated and carried out multiple rounds of talks in order to promote peace in Kunming⁵ which emphasizes that taking practical actions as its priority.

Historical context of China and Uzbekistan relations

1.1. Early interactions

In terms of historical relationship that they shared with each other in ancient times, we always think about the Great Silk road which connected some countries, including Uzbekistan with trade and cultural aspects of all joined countries. Even at that time Chinese people used soft power through-trade as economy and cultural sharings as Joseph Nye's book "Soft Power" focuses on the aspects of influencing other people and countries as through culture, financial aid "Today's Chinese Debt Policy" which has a lot more to explain: China is helping underdeveloped countries as an example African ones and developing countries in Asian and other regions. However, the formal recognition and partnership of these countries did not take place until the Dissolution of Soviet Union in 1991 with Uzbekistan.

1.2. Development of bilateral relations

⁴ Geng, Yan (ed.), 'Realism, socialist realism and China's avant-garde: a historical perspective', in Jacopo Galimbert, Noemi de Haro García, and Victoria H. F. Scott (eds), Art, Global Maoism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Manchester, 2020; Manchester Scholarship, 21 May 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526117472.00007>, accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

⁵ Keynote Speech by H.E. Chen Xiaodong, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, At the Session on the Global Security Initiative, Of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024

Bilateral relations have been developing and improving since 1990s as both countries have realized that cooperation with the balance of Power is the key to economic and security prosperity which involves trade liberalization, technical assistant and counter-terrorism agreements in Central Asia. To be more precise, the 1996 Treaty of Friendship and Collaboration⁶ have laid the groundwork for further collaboration with Russia, all of which , consequently, have led to the intensification of the partnership in 2000s leading to large scale initiatives connecting Central Asia with Chinese economy. Actually, China and Uzbekistan established the formal and diplomatic relations in 1992 on March when china accepted Uzbekistan as an independent state following which Uzbekistan joined as a funding member of SCO⁷ in 2001, a regional organization for economic and security concerns that today is made up of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghistan , Iran, India and Pakistan. In 2005, China and Uzbekistan signed the “ China Uzbek treaty of Friendship and Cooperation “ , a treaty which involves different initiatives , including economic cooperation, anti drug trafficking and counter terrorism.

1.3. The BRI and current dynamics

In the light of the evolving relations of China and Uzbekistan since 2013 in the context of BRI , Uzbekistan is being considered as a key platform to conduct a variety of activities , involving investment in the road and railway infrastructure. While having been involved in this program, Uzbekistan might become the victim of global powers as from the one side Russia is interested in this region, from the other China and the trigger that makes more complex is the West . in order not to be the dull in the hands of these countries , Uzbekistan should take measures to prevent possible outcomes as from the point-view of realism, wars can not be abolished or eradicated. Although Uzbekistan is trying to diversify its economy and inflows of foreign capital or FDI ⁸, its interactions with China is still strongly connected with the energy and resource complementation.

Realist analysis of China and Uzbekistan relations

2.1. Power dynamics

To begin with what realism says that states pursue power and security which might give the observation of the process of the China Uzbek relations that questions how power dynamics have been evolving around the world which means China has obtained the position of economic dominance in the world that puts pressure on Uzbekistan to overcome its political and economic agenda as its economic and political interests are so demand an alliance with China.

⁶ <https://www.china-briefing.com/>

⁷ Shanghai Coperation Organization

⁸ Foreign Direct Investment

Although Central Asian countries are of great importance in their own location, having control over these areas is of great strategic responsibility towards strategic plan of BRI of Peoples' Republic of China. This dependency, in turn, demonstrates the realist power balance equation of power balance of Uzbekistan as it tries to exert power balance influence, in sequence, to be secure enough while having neighbors like China who is more powerful.

2.2. Security cooperation

Realism starts with the assumption that the focus of the government should be the security. All coming problems in security cooperation between China and Uzbekistan is labeled by the conjunctive approach to the thread of the border instability, considering Uzbekistan shares border with Afghanistan which might probably pose a thread towards its neighbouring countries.

According to Xi Jinping, the construction of the China, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan railway road ought to be started as soon as possible and help transform the Uzbekistan from land-locked country into a country which is connected by land roads⁹. In response to that President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said that Uzbekistan supports "One China principle"¹⁰. Mutually, China has promised to aid the fight against terrorism.

2.3. Economic dependence

Economic dependence can be explained as a sign of state behavior, and in principle has a strategic goals. The partnership, especially economic one between China and Uzbekistan is the illustration of it - how states pursue their own goals (self-interests) through trade, investment and construction cooperation.

Uzbekistan's economic growth is literally based on the Chinese investments which is promising one is actually making Uzbekistan more and more dependant. Due to the reliance on the Chinese capital, Uzbekistan may possibly find itself being forced to a challenging choice of sovereignty over its state and control and pressures of external economic actors.

Comparative analysis of theoretical perspectives

Even though realism proposes the dominant theoretical way, the Chinese Uzbek relationship has been in the illustration of the liberalism and constructivism.

● Liberalism- cooperation and interdependence.

In contrast, liberalism brings the idea of cooperation, institutions and the benefits of the relations between states, as for the liberals, integration and state interdependence permits collective security and economic advancement. In terms of China and Uzbek partnership, relations can be viewed through the prism of liberalism.

⁹ "Узбекистан и Китай повысили отношения до всепогодного всестороннего партнерства (Uzbekistan and China have increased relations to an all-weather comprehensive partnership)," Fergana Agency (independent Russian-language news website focusing on Central Asia), 25 January 2024. <https://fergana.agency/news/132723>

¹⁰ <https://fmso.tradoc.army.mil/2024>

Economic cooperation: The Belt and Road Initiative shows the economic connectivity that China has with Uzbekistan. Precisely, investing on infrastructures and development projects rest on the liberal approach of gaining mutual benefits.

International institutions: Both of these countries have the membership of multilateral organization, involving the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] which highlights the liberal construct of the togetherness on security and economic development.

Soft power and cultural exchanges: In order to strengthen relations and provide understanding of each other the cultural and educational exchanges are of great importance. Liberalism believes in mutually beneficial relationships between states, and supports thanks to the economic interdependence, peace and stability can be reached. While realism says wars can not be abolished and the idea of maintaining peace is unreal. This, in turn, makes these two countries able to fuel regional integration and as a result both of the countries is having the benefits, actually mutual ones. Any person could naturally guess that being liberal, having free trade relations is almost a guarantee of having better tomorrow, better future after all, which leading to generally gain. On the high level negotiations of Shanghai Cooperation Organization it is evident as clear as crystal that stability can be achieved in its activities. By contrast with realism, the world is as chaotic as it could be as it might be impossible for liberalists to account for the coercive aspect to which the realism reasoning leads which are the complains, pretenses and increase of power so on. Yet, there are some other encouraging factors of the liberalism perspective in China's relation with mutual partners, the standardized power relations as well as the focus on the interest of the state as mentioned by realism still holds of great importance

● **Constructivism: Norms and identity**

At the same time, constructivism pays attention to the importance of the social constructs and historical narratives in the state's behavior. The core of Sino-Uzbek relations can be set up on the base of cultural and historical background by virtue of the Silk Road exchanges which eventually created and evolved categories and interests as they caused interactivity through norms, through similarities in constructivism.

Identity formation. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has been trying to form its own identity which is pivotal, according to Macchiaveli¹¹ "The Prince", in order to form a state it is necessary to have sovereignty, identity and its own currency. While these are the indispensable part of the state, from my perspective, there are other things beyond them such as land or let me write it as a territory, one

¹¹ Italian political theorist, philosopher and writer in the 16 century.

particular nation or population, a specific language with history which I personally considered that is the missing part in his work.

Norms and values. Chinese noninterference principle is involved in a notion as the core principle of the principles for their bilateral exchanges which is good for the self-development (self-determination) of the both sides simultaneously.

Cultural ties: Even though China and Uzbekistan do not have similar culture or religion from the history, actually Buddhism and Islam are contradictory to each other, they both are the masculine society according to Pierre Burdie which ,to me, shows at least they somehow share similar type of the historical construction.

In addition, cultural contact, educational collaborations, and a common historical events form notions of self and reciprocity on the level of the nations as for the constructivists , everything is construction and can be constructed in the process of formation.

● Key events and their implications

Economic agreements and investments: We can take an instant example of 2017 's Belt and Road Economic and Trade Cooperation Agreement as a representation of the level of economic binding. China is investing hundreds of billions of dollar in infrastructure, energy and construction of the roads of its neighbour Uzbekistan. At the same time, the investment not only strengthens the Uzbek Economy but also doubles the strategic leverage of China in Central Asia. Irrespective of realist and Marxist thought about the cost of economic insecurity, economic growth potential can not be reconciled.

Geopolitical considerations: Due to the growing strategic rivalry between China and the United States on the global arena, the strategic relevance of Uzbekistan is also growing. In this case, from my point of view, uzbekistan has to balance carefully while working with these two great powers, at the same time assures that the one is wise while the other is a realistic one, particularly in the way it relates to national interest.

The government or the authority in Uzbekistan should be aware that the multi polar foreign policy must be taken while simultaneously such a foreign policy is driven by China's investment or capital and at the same time managing the actions of other actors on the international scene [the Russians and the Americans]. This duality is consistent with the realist models of attainment of international risks through excessively depending on one power.

Future prospects and challenges: China and Uzbekistan relations remains to be hopeful in the sense of its economic relations continues to be sustained with mutual benefits for intensifying agricultural advancements of the two nations. Yet, problems relating to sovereignty, security and economic lock in are likely to exist. How Uzbekistan can take an advantage of its capacity to project and defend national interests

from china will be a key determinant in forming Uzbekistan's geopolitical space in the coming years and beyond.

Some factors, involving image effect of Chinese investments in the bilateral relations and the community effect are crucial for providing the stability of the bilateral relations (Public Sentiment or Public opinion) can affect the authority's response , thus PS attitude should be considered while carrying out thematic PS discussions in the International Relations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these all before mentioned interactions between China and Uzbekistan are interesting enough to warrant in various perspectives of International Regulations. While realism "conceptualizes" the powerful, competitive might that limit how they can come to negotiate and by far how they response to one another, liberalism "naturalizes" to what extend actors can and do cooperate with each other and implementing certain positive effects. Additionally, individual identity and social rules are deeply silent for constructivism. In order to fully analyze the complexity of China - Uzbekistan relations , the old model ought to be reinterpret even though it has its own drawbacks when it comes to historical formation and evolution of China - Uzbekistan relations since they develop within the framework of changing and globalized society.

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