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THE ROLE OF NATIONAL INTERESTS IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES

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Annotation: This article provides a theoretical and analytical examination of the role of national interests in shaping political and economic relations within the contemporary international system. It explores the nature and significance of national interests, their influence on state foreign policy, and their interrelationship with international trade, investment, energy security, technological development, and regional cooperation. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between state sovereignty, economic interdependence, international security, and multilateral cooperation.

Keywords: national interests, international relations, national security, economic diplomacy, state sovereignty, international cooperation.

Introduction. In the contemporary international system, national interests constitute one of the principal factors shaping states' foreign policies and relations with one another. Every state seeks to preserve its sovereignty, safeguard its territorial integrity, protect the security of its population, strengthen its economic capacity, and create favourable conditions for sustainable development. These objectives are reflected in diplomatic negotiations, international agreements, trade policies, investment strategies, regional partnerships, and decisions concerning international security.

The deepening of globalisation has further broadened the scope of national interests. The development of economic relations among states has created new opportunities for international trade, investment, technological exchange, and scientific cooperation. At the same time, geopolitical competition, regional conflicts, economic restrictions, disruptions to supply chains, challenges to energy security, and competition for strategic technologies have required states to formulate their foreign policies with increasing care. Under these circumstances, reconciling national development

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priorities with the opportunities and constraints of the international environment has become particularly important.

National interests should not be associated exclusively with military power or the expansion of political influence. In contemporary conditions, they also encompass economic stability, food and energy security, technological development, environmental sustainability, public welfare, and the protection of citizens' rights and interests. A state's ability to advance these interests depends not only on its material resources but also on the quality of public administration, its diplomatic capabilities, its international reputation, and its capacity to establish mutually beneficial partnerships.

Historical analysis is used to examine the formation and development of the concept of national interest within international relations theory. Comparative analysis makes it possible to distinguish approaches centred on power and competition from those emphasising institutional cooperation and interdependence. Systematic analysis examines political, economic, security, and diplomatic factors as interconnected phenomena. The institutional and legal approach is applied to the study of principles governing interstate cooperation.

The research is qualitative and analytical in nature. Its purpose is not to establish statistical causation or measure the relative importance of national interests through quantitative indicators. Instead, it seeks to explain the role of national interests in contemporary political and economic relations on the basis of established scholarly perspectives and official documents.

National interests are a multidimensional concept encompassing the fundamental objectives that a state seeks to protect and advance in its relations with other states and international actors. Their content may vary depending on historical circumstances, geographical position, political institutions, and economic structure. Nevertheless, state sovereignty, territorial integrity, national security, economic prosperity, political stability, and the protection of public welfare are generally recognised as essential components of national interests.

The realist approach is important for explaining strategic competition, military alliances, territorial disputes, and efforts to strengthen political influence in strategically significant regions. States frequently seek to avoid excessive dependence on external powers, maintain control over strategic resources, and develop sufficient political and economic capabilities to protect their sovereignty. However, national interests cannot be reduced to competition for power alone. In Theory of International Politics, Kenneth Waltz explains how the structural characteristics of the international system shape and constrain states' foreign policy choices. States operate in an international environment in which no single central authority can guarantee the security of every country. Consequently, they must formulate their strategies by considering the distribution of international capabilities, the actions of other states, and potential security risks.

From this perspective, the pursuit of national interests requires a combination of competition and cooperation. A state can preserve its strategic autonomy while participating in international organisations, concluding trade agreements, attracting foreign investment, and developing diplomatic

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partnerships. When appropriately structured, cooperation does not necessarily weaken national sovereignty. Instead, it can expand a state's capacity to address challenges that would be difficult to resolve independently.

The concept of national interest should also be distinguished from the interests of individual political leaders or particular groups. A policy that benefits a narrow group does not necessarily serve the long-term interests of the state and society. Therefore, the assessment of national interests should take account of public welfare, economic sustainability, institutional accountability, and the long-term consequences of foreign policy decisions. Foreign policy is the principal instrument through which states identify, articulate, and pursue their national interests in the international arena. It encompasses diplomatic negotiations, political dialogue, participation in international organisations, the conclusion of international agreements, the development of strategic partnerships, and responses to international crises.

One of the important functions of national interests in foreign policy is to establish priorities. States have limited financial, institutional, and diplomatic resources. They must therefore determine which international relationships deserve priority, which external risks pose the greatest challenges to national security, and which forms of cooperation are most important for economic development. Such priorities may include maintaining peaceful borders, securing access to external markets, protecting citizens abroad, attracting investment, and strengthening regional stability.

The development of transport connectivity is another strategic priority. As a doubly landlocked country, Uzbekistan faces additional logistical challenges in accessing international maritime routes and distant markets. The development of railways, roads, border-crossing facilities, and multimodal transport corridors can reduce trade costs and improve access to international markets. The effectiveness of such infrastructure depends substantially on agreements with neighbouring countries and the coordination of administrative procedures.

Conclusion. National interests remain one of the fundamental determinants of contemporary political and economic relations between states. They shape foreign policy priorities, diplomatic negotiations, trade agreements, investment decisions, security strategies, and participation in international institutions. However, the contemporary meaning of national interests extends far beyond the traditional pursuit of military power and political influence. It also encompasses economic resilience, technological development, energy and food security, environmental sustainability, and public welfare. The theoretical approaches examined in this article demonstrate that the pursuit of national interests requires a combination of competition and cooperation.

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