

SHARAF RASHIDOV IN RATIONAL CHOICE DIPLOMACY

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Many leading researchers of the history of diplomacy in the era of bipolar confrontation pay attention to the effect of the rational choice theory in shaping modern political processes.

The main postulate of constructivism in the theory of international relations concerns the different players behavioral rationality. So, as a shrewd politician and diplomat of his era, ***Sharaf Rashidov*** is remembered in this way. Scholars frequently argue with decision makers about the fact that actions are not always pragmatic and that therefore the majority of decisions always fall on the political experience, flair, and intuition of a politician, especially in extremely complex, fateful issues and situations.

Any theoretical reading of any international event is necessarily connected with the processes that it explains. The model of a rational actor is considered as the most optimal in the analysis, especially when extremely controversial issues on the global agenda are touched upon. In one of the sections of his book "Decision Theory"¹ Anatol Rapoport contrasts the "zero-sum game", in which the winner's gain corresponds to the loser's loss, to the "variable-sum game", where both opponents can suffer equal losses; introducing a new element into the game and aiming to reduce antagonism, balances the hope for beneficial cooperation of the parties, and as he showed with the example of the famous "*Prisoner's Dilemma*".

Another example of applying the same game theory to superpower relations: the case of the *Cuban Missile Crisis*². It presents a typical model of complex, yet hard situation, when two opponents, trying to defeat each other,

¹Anatol Rapoport. Decision Theory and Decision Behavior/Second Revised Edition/1998, NY/
<https://www.pdfdrive.com/decision-theory-and-decision-behaviour-d188373018.html>

²Paradoxes of Rationality: Theory of Metagames and Political Behavior, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1971

pushed the other to restraint, which would guarantee for any of them a diplomatic advantage. Both offensive and conciliatory techniques, which energize and reorganize crisis circumstances, were shown as political realities by this paradigm. Sharaf Rashidov, who by the will of fate was involved in those crucial and catastrophic events of the era, distinguished himself in those trying circumstances with his tenacity, political shrewdness, and mediation function.

Back in early May 1962, he was requested to head the Soviet delegation to Havana and proposed that the official purpose of the visit be cooperation in the field of agriculture and irrigation. Who better than him could carry out such a mission? In fact, this trip was just a pretext to convince Fidel Castro get ballistic missiles and strategic bombers in Cuba. However, Sharaf Rashidov completed an equally important task - to bring the position of Fidel Castro as close as possible in an extremely difficult situation and build mutual confidence with the Cuban leader, whom he also invited and received in Uzbekistan the following year, 1963. Fidel Castro visited historical sites of Uzbekistan acquainting with the advantages in rural and industrial development projects over there.

In other words, it is in the paradigms of the rational actor model that the key component is the role of the leader of the new formation³, among which the political figure of Sharaf Rashidov can be safely attributed. In the view of Western theoretical science⁴ he was assigned the role of not just the head of the Uzbek Communist Party for more than two decades, but a person who managed to make a significant contribution to the consolidation of the third world as an influential alternative in the face of tough confrontation in the bipolar world⁵.

This image allowed him to make a record series of diplomatic missions abroad, reaching almost 50. Pages of his diplomatic career, his fame in Cairo and Cuba, the success of his "Socialist Islam" project in the very difficult conditions of the war in Afghanistan - all this seemed to researchers and political experts as

³ Gerard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), 252.

⁴ Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR*, (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 134.

⁵ Gerard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), 252.

a model for new approaches in international relations, known as the rational choice paradigm.

The Soviet government tried to pursue a complex and multi-way foreign policy in several areas. The end of World War II, the Cold War with the West, decolonization, and the rise of new, potent players in the international arena, such as India, China, Pakistan, and other Third World countries, forced the USSR to engage in what was referred to as "New Diplomacy." It depended on the new leaders of the former Soviet republics and their foreign ministries, as well as on female, young, and religious organizations, lawmakers, and associations, not to mention celebrities, and even astronauts. In this context, a significant role was assigned to Tashkent, the capital of the Soviet East, a showcase of the Soviet model of development. Decolonization, internationalism, Nikita Khrushchev (1958-1964)⁶ defended himself against criticism from the countries of Asia and Africa, who accused the USSR of representing a different form of Soviet imperialism.

The international recognition of Sharaf Rashidov's diplomatic skills, which were amply exposed during his journeys to Indonesia, Burma, China, and Vietnam in early 1957, was initially actively accompanied by this turn toward the East and the Third World. In those years, Sharaf Rashidov was known as the leader of a new generation of international politicians. He aimed to show his support for Democratic Republic of Vietnam President Ho Chi Minh. After the Geneva Agreements were signed and the Battle won at the Dien Bien Phu, Sharaf Rashidov visited this Indo-China nation, and Vietnamese politicians, who were keen to have him as their respected ally. The anti-colonial leaders of Burma, Cambodia, China, and India have shown a support for him. He presided over Uzbekistan from 1959 to 1983 and was regarded internationally as the president of the modern Muslim republic in making due to his widely recognized charisma on the national stage. Today variety of history handbooks contain such vivid episodes and passages from the history of diplomacy.

In particular, within the context of the conference conducted in Tashkent in 1955 with the Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, this Soviet move toward

⁶Jeremy Smith, 'Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics 1951-1959' in Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (eds.), *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and government in the Soviet Union: 1953-1964*, (Oxon: Routledge/BASEES, 2011), 80.

the East and the Third World was actively accompanied in Uzbekistan between 1955 and 1957.

Sharaf Rashidov led the Soviet delegation to the Cairo conference of Asian and African peoples' solidarity after Moscow was overjoyed with the success (1957). Sharaf Rashidov made a sounding impression there with his witty and surprisingly heartfelt speech, demonstrating his depth of understanding of Islamic beliefs and Oriental culture. Representatives from various countries painted Sharaf Rashidov as a principled party leader who was able to tenaciously defend his region's position before the Kremlin and who was convinced that the USSR and NATO's doctrine of peaceful coexistence did not conflict with the struggle of third-world nations forced to fight for their sovereignty and independence.

Sharaf Rashidov was specifically requested to forge a solid connection with the Egyptian leadership during this time. Gamal Abdel Nasser visited Uzbekistan at invitation from him personally. The Uzbek Soviet Republic's rural engineering, cotton, irrigation of arid lands, aviation, metallurgical and chemical industries, and other spheres of the national economy could not help but pique the Egyptian president's curiosity. When visiting Al-Azhar University, he and Ziyaoddinkhan Eshon Babakhanov, the mufti of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, suggested improving ties between the clergy of Egypt and the USSR. The following year, Gamal Abdel Nasser actually paid a visit to Uzbekistan, demonstrating the success of Uzbek diplomacy in this instance.

The overthrow of Nikita Khrushchev had no negative consequences for Sharaf Rashidov. On the contrary, he became one of the faithful companions Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982). His diplomatic trips continued. In 1965, he called for "anti-imperialist" solidarity in Jakarta, months before the mass executions of socialists by the regime Suharto.

Since the Soviets actively supported Algeria's anti-colonial movement, he also went there frequently. Sharaf Rashidov did not arrive without gifts; the USSR gave its partner loans of 90 and 115 million rubles (approximately \$150 mln.) as well as support for the development of a metallurgical plant and cotton farming. Algeria received particular attention between 1972 and 1981 as a result of the worsening ties between the USSR and Egypt.

In his diplomatic field, Sharaf Rashidov had several reasons to uphold the party line, including the fact that it was he who represented the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) at the congress of the Chilean Socialist Party in 1971 and developed a rapport with Salvador Allende before hosting a group of American activists in Tashkent for civil rights led by Angela Davis.

In 1980, he traveled to Zimbabwe to court the support of Robert Mugabe's government, which, after defeating Rhodesia, relied on the black majority. In defiance of diplomatic protocol, Robert Mugabe arrived at the airport to greet Sharaf Rashidov, expressing his deep admiration for him. During the same period, he maintained personal contacts with Mozambican (FRELIMO) and Angolan revolutionaries (MPLA). Ethiopia was one of the most recent foreign trips.

Under his direction, Tashkent, the capital of a sizable union republic, was rebuilt following the earthquake of 1966. It then served as a showcase for Eastern accomplishments and a testament to the benefits of a modern interpretation of traditional Islamic principles. Under the direction of the Communist Party, of course, scientific institutions, sports facilities, and broad boulevards combined to create a modern, advanced society. The leaders of India and Pakistan signed their proclamation of peace in Tashkent in 1966, demonstrating the power of diplomacy in bringing these intransigent adversaries to the negotiating table. Sharaf Rashidov proved to be a masterful peacemaker in this instance.

Tashkent has developed into a global cultural hub as a result of his backing for cultural endeavors. Ten film festivals were held here between 1968 and 1988, and thousands of writers, poets, journalists, filmmakers, and athletes from Asia, Africa, and Latin America have congregated here for various events.

Thanks to such gifted and charismatic leaders, the Soviet Union served as a showcase for socialism, proving to the outside world that the USSR was tolerant of all religions and that Soviet culture was completely compatible with Islam. Sharaf Rashidov desired that mausoleums, religious schools, and mosques be used to the fullest extent possible and not merely rebuilt for tourists but given back to the faithful for usage as intended.

With his support, a course of theological studies was recreated in Tashkent, the Islamic Institute named after Al-Bukhari, hundreds of thousands of rubles have been invested in the restoration of monuments and teaching the ancient

cultures of Uzbekistan. In 1970, for the first time in the history of the USSR, an international Islamic conference was held in Tashkent.

In the late 70s, after the Iranian Islamic revolution and the invading neighboring Afghanistan by Soviet troops, Uzbekistan became the center of communications and control for military operations over there. At the same time, Tashkent took an active part in fostering the developing projects in it: Afghan consulate was opened, 5,000 young Afghans were accepted to study in the capital of Uzbekistan in early 80th, Afghan newspapers and magazines were printed in different ethnic languages of southern neighbor. At the same time, he was deeply disappointed from the fallacy of the Kremlin's policy of deploying troops and military operations in Afghanistan.

Such samples from the history of diplomacy, and the deep study of its cases through a personalized prism, open up to the research community in understanding the nature of factors and categorical mechanisms of effective models and behavioral approaches in international relations, and reveal the human potential of modern diplomacy optimizing the process of settling the complex and contradictory political dilemmas.

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