

Securing National Interests in The Global Information Space: International Experience and Implications for Uzbekistan

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Abstract

Any country seeking to ensure its security, peace and sustainable development must consider the protection of its national interests as its first priority. In this regard, ensuring national interests in the global information space is a priority. The article presents the experience of developed countries to protect national interests in the information space and analyzes the possibility of applying this experience in the practice of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: **Information factor, global information space, interest, personality, public and state interests, national interests.**

Introduction

The strength, potential, economic, social, political, and military capabilities of any state are the primary sources for maintaining its national unity and integrity in a specific time and space. In the context of global changes, ethnic conflicts, various threats, and hegemonic aspirations by certain countries, preserving statehood while maintaining national characteristics and continuing modern development trends remains one of the essential tasks of the new world order. From this perspective, protecting one's people from various dangers and preserving traditions of statehood remains a priority task throughout all periods.

The concept of “national interests”, which emerged in scientific sources at the beginning of the last century and is now recognized as one of the most important categories of our time, encompasses nationwide strategic tasks that need to be studied across various fields and directions. The famous phrase “the end justifies the means” by Italian philosopher and statesman Niccolo Machiavelli can be considered the main idea behind securing national interests in contemporary state affairs. Today, the actions undertaken by certain countries to ensure their national interests reflect this principle in practice. States justify using various means, including force, to ensure their security and stability.

Literature Review

American scholar Kenneth Thompson defines “national interest as a set of specific needs and demands essential for the survival of each political group”[1]. Professor F. Oppenheim of the University of Massachusetts categorizes the concept of national interest as “an aspect that ensures the security, economic prosperity, territory, and independence of the entire state, not individuals or groups”[2]. Several scholars have expanded on Oppenheim's views, suggesting that national interests are not only related to security and prosperity but also to a state's prestige, reputation, and proper use of national resources. Some researchers explain that national interests manifest in the struggle for possession of natural and human-created resources. According to American scholar Joe Gimensky, “when the term national interest is used as a tool for political action, it serves as a means of justifying or condemning policy”[3]. From these definitions, it is evident that national interests are a multifaceted and simultaneously controversial concept whose full content has not been completely revealed. This is because the changing times continue to transform the essence of the concept of interest.

Based on the general purpose of our research, there is a need to categorically analyze the concepts of “nation” and “interest”.

In the National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan, a nation is defined as “the highest peak of the ethnic history of a people formed during a long-lasting social, economic, political, and ethnocultural process, within a specific territorial framework, based on the unity of language and self-awareness, a form of social unity formed on the basis of unique culture, consciousness, and mentality”[4].

In the Explanatory Dictionary of Basic Concepts of Spirituality, it is described as “an ethnic unity of people who create specific material and spiritual wealth as an independent subject connected by economic relations living in a certain territory based on the unity of language, spirituality, national self-awareness, customs, traditions, and values”[5].

In the textbook International Relations (Geopolitics, Diplomacy, Security), a nation is interpreted as “a unity of people who have recognized their identity, have their own mentality, and have formed historically, socio-economically, and spiritually”[6].

The above three definitions from national publications do not differ significantly in content. However, in many Western sources, the concept of “nation” is interpreted as a political category, viewed as the source of state sovereignty and inviolability. We provide some examples:

According to German philosopher and sociologist Max Weber, “The concept of nation is applied to an association that cannot be determined by empirical common qualities and embodies unique views”[7]. Weber's interpretation of the nation category as an association forming the core of the state indicates its broad meaning.

The term “interest” is also broad, like the concept of “nation”, and is a collection of strategic goals formed based on the aspirations, desires, and future plans of a nation, people, and state (our definition). According to the Explanatory Dictionary of Basic Concepts of Spirituality, “1) interest – (Arabic: to benefit) advantage, benefit, effectiveness, result. 2) The main factor that determines the activity and rights of an individual or social group. 3) Necessity, need”[4].

In the textbook International Relations (Geopolitics, Diplomacy, Security), “interest is 1) recognized needs supported by arguments that motivate implementation; 2) the real reason for social actions”[5].

Research Methodology

The concept of “national interests”, formed by combining the words nation and interest, is one of the most studied terms in the social-political sciences system. All positive or negative actions undertaken by various states are being justified under the pretext of protecting national interests. In the modern world, the increasing convergence, threats to sovereignty, and growing force and ideological influence of one country on another are all carried out against the background of protecting national interests. Some countries are even breaking international legal norms, opposing the sovereignty of states and peoples, and trying to establish their own order in the world to achieve their goals. Therefore, the need to study, analyze, and draw specific conclusions about the scientific interpretation of this phenomenon is emerging.

In the textbook International Relations (Geopolitics, Diplomacy, Security), “national interest is defined as the sum of vital interests in the development of the individual, society, and state”[5]. According to Russian scholar S. Kortunov, “national interests are the sum of common interests and needs for members of a specific socio-cultural community, which must be satisfied and protected”[7].

In simple terms, national interests are the collection of views and desires expressed by a particular nation, society, and state based on the necessity to establish its position in all directions within the international community.

The term “national interest” first appears in the works of modern thinkers Niccolo Machiavelli, Hugo Grotius, Jean Bodin, and Thomas Hobbes. However, these modern theorists did not study the concept of “national interest” as a separate category.

“The first person to engage in the analysis of 'national interests' was Alfred Mahan (1840-1914), a rear admiral of the US Navy who was among the first to research the field of 'geopolitics'”[8]. In his work “The Naval Power and Future of the United States,” he recognizes creating naval forces that align with the nation's goals as one of the state's main tasks. According to Mahan, “realizing national interests at sea is the key to ensuring geopolitical balance and achieving national superiority”[8]. His ideas were later supported by Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980), a theoretical scholar who acknowledged the concept of "national interests" as a symbol of state power. Morgenthau argues that “the state should rely on national interests as the primary way to achieve its political and other goals”[9]. Another American historical scholar, Charles Austin Beard (1874-1948), explains “national interests”[10] as an economic category and acknowledges that economic relations play a primary role in this.

Analysis and Results

The experience of developed countries shows that ensuring national interests in the information space is carried out in two important directions: First, achieving internal stability by supporting state policy with information, and second, strengthening the information environment related to securing the country's interests and further strengthening its position and influence in the world. Primary priorities are determined based on these two important directions.

From the beginning of the last century to the present day, the United Kingdom has relied on information support as one of the most important directions for ensuring its national interests on the way to strengthening and continuously increasing its strategic influence in the world.

It should be noted that for several hundred years, England has distinguished itself by focusing its main attention on strengthening its position and influence in the external global space. External activities are led by the country's Foreign Office. According to O. Melnikova, who has conducted research on the topic, "England has 270 foreign missions (embassies and consulates general) worldwide. More than 14,000 employees work there to promote British national interests" [11].

"In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in information flow in the English Foreign Ministry, with several thousand messages and telegrams coming in from embassies alone every day. In addition to this information, employees of the UK Foreign Office departments also use other information sources: reports from British correspondents abroad, materials obtained by mutual agreement from the UK's partners in NATO and the European Union, and reference and analytical materials prepared by them" [12]. The involvement of hundreds of analytical staff to study, analyze, and draw relevant conclusions from incoming information ensures the strength of foreign policy activities. It also has a positive impact on securing British interests.

The US experience in ensuring national interests in the information space is characterized by being more comprehensive than that of other countries, adequately covering all areas of society.

The US government has established itself as the largest information distributor in the global information space. The principle that "whoever owns information owns the world" is evident in the country's practical actions in all areas. According to experts, the formation of the global information society in the US is related to the creation of the internet by this country and the direction of its most modern information subjects, global networks, towards ensuring national interests. Also, the fact that internet services operate based on US legislation today provides opportunities to achieve the desired results. According to the International Foundation for New and Open Democracy, "networks such as Twitter, Google, YouTube, and Facebook can take control of the entire human information system by occupying key positions in the global cyberspace" [12].

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on world experience in addressing national interests in the information space, the need to express some conclusions is emerging. International experience and achievements in the activities of states that have achieved certain positive results in the information space undoubtedly ensure the development of that country and its superiority in the global information field. It should be especially noted that today, two opposite tendencies are observed in the world in ensuring national interests:

The first is the aggressive influence actions of one kind or another being carried out by states with developed information communication systems and strengthened information psychological impact capabilities against countries that are relatively weak and have not formed a general system and skills against the influence power of information. Depending on what purpose the states or information subjects carrying out these actions have in organizing information pressure, it is possible to determine the scope, degree, and consequences of the danger. Countering and eliminating it is directly related to specific knowledge, experience, and skills, and, most importantly, to the protection capabilities of the national information space in all aspects (technical, ideological, etc.).

The second tendency is related to states that regularly face external information pressure and have insufficient protection capabilities. The factors that cause such a situation are characterized by the scarcity of economic, political, information resources, the absence of state programs, or the existence of systemic problems in their implementation.

Any state on the path of national development should view the protection of national interests in the information space in the modern world as a task related to ensuring national sovereignty. In our opinion, ensuring national interests in the global information space requires the following tasks:

- Mastering international experience in ensuring national interests in the information sphere that corresponds to our national characteristics;
- Developing short, medium, and long-term strategies for protecting national interests;
- Modernizing the education system based on the two main directions of information security (technical and ideological), improving the quality of training qualified personnel in these two directions in educational institutions related to the field;
- Developing national information resources, creating a modern image of media capable of adequately responding to external influences, and saturating members of society with information that corresponds to national interests are aspects that ensure sustainable development.

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