Abstract

This work focuses on the adaptation of personalism to foreign policy, which is analysed on a case study of foreign policy of Turkmenistan towards Afghanistan under president Berdimuhamedow’s rule. The adaptation is based on the deduction from the basic attributes of personalism, which were obtained through the synthesis of the theories of neopatrimonialism, personalism and patronal presidentialism. The main characteristic of foreign policy of personalist regimes is the leader's undivided power over it, which can be observed on the fact that foreign policy follows and supports the leader's internal policies and goals. The adaptation of personalism to foreign policy making and these characteristics are confirmed by Turkmenistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, in which Berdimuhamedow plays a key role. The main foreign policy objective in the political sphere is to maintain friendly relations with both the Afghan government and the Taliban to avoid potential spill over of the Afghan conflict into Turkmenistan, which could undermine Berdimuhamedow’s power and patron-client network. The foreign trade policy aims to diversify the Turkmen exports, to loosen dependency on traditional partners and raise money to sustain the regime and president’s client network. Concerning the security issues, there is an effort to have control over the happenings near the border to ensure that Islamic extremism doesn’t make its way to Turkmenistan. This is done through various diplomatic and trade arrangements, espionage and creation of resource dependencies with all sides of the Afghan conflict. The above-mentioned foreign policy is operated by Berdimuhamedow himself or his loyal subordinates.