

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

**Foreign policy change under authoritarian leaders:
analysis of Uzbekistan's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era**

by

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The purpose of this research is to explain foreign policy change under authoritarian settings. Analyzing the case of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, this research proposes a model to explain why and how foreign policy change takes place under authoritarian leaders. The model suggests that leaders' perceptions of their environment become a decisive factor inducing authoritarian leaders to (re)consider their regime survival strategy. Concern with regime survival, in turn, shapes foreign policy goals which then manifest into a distinctive foreign policy behavior of a leader. Ultimately, the behavior of a leader translates into certain foreign policy outcomes.

Despite the abundance of case studies on foreign policy making in non-democracies, the literature, being empirical in nature, lacks conceptual explanations of foreign policy change in authoritarian regimes. Whereas, existing models of foreign policy change presuppose decentralized decision-making, which is more relevant to democratic regimes than authoritarian ones. By providing advancements in the conceptual understanding of foreign policy change in authoritarian regimes the model proposed in this research contributes to the literature on foreign policy change. It also contributes methodologically to the understanding of perceptions by offering a Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) as a method to operationalize perceptions of the leaders.