

## Sharof Rashidov's Role in Cold War Diplomacy: A Soviet Uzbekistan Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

After World War II, the Soviet Union gained significant international prestige, which required a comprehensive approach to foreign policy. Newly liberated nations in Africa and Asia, seeking to break free from enduring colonial legacies, became a crucial battleground for Soviet propaganda. Over time, this trend gained momentum, leading to new approaches in Soviet diplomacy. Satellite states and non-Kremlin individuals played an active role in shaping Soviet foreign policy. The case of Soviet Uzbekistan, led by Sharof Rashidov, is particularly notable. Rashidov's exceptional diplomatic skills allowed him to play a prominent role in key events during the Cold War era, guiding his country for 24 years. The main goal of this study is to determine if there was a powerful and semi-autonomous actor outside of the Kremlin, shedding light on the complexities of decentralized involvement within the Soviet geopolitical landscape.

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## INTRODUCTION

Churchill's famous Fulton speech in 1946, made it much clearer that the world is going to become bipolar and almost half a century long rivalry among two contradictory ideologies had started. The Second World War left behind not only a strong capitalist West, but also a rapidly growing USSR and its diplomacy that would be flourished next couple of decades. As Brezhnev noted: "This victory marked the beginning of profound changes in the world politics, economics, ideology in the minds of millions of people" (Brezhnev, 1979, p.144). One of the indicators of the growth of the international prestige of USSR was the expansion of its international relations: Before WWII Soviet Union had diplomatic relations with 26 states, after the end of the war the number reached 52 (Admishin, 1981, p.9). The enormous growth of the influence of Soviet Union in international affairs is one of the most important political results of Second World War.

Newly emerged directions of Soviet foreign policy, which focused on spreading its ideas more widely in the world, were timely understood by the United States, and a famous containment policy was launched to counter them. In his "long telegram" which led to major changes in the course of American diplomacy, Kennan[3] in 1946 noted that Soviet diplomats would be used various international organizations, colonial states, independent individual leaders, and cultural ties to strengthen their sphere of influence. Such changes in the policy of both the US and USSR lead to the use of interdependent and at the same time contradictory, restraining methods in the foreign policy. Moscow followed the steps of Communist masterminds[5], for the Washington, according to the US scholars' ideas, Kennan's warnings was a subsoil for upcoming Truman Doctrine and the Policy of Containment.

Applying these new trends in the foreign policy of USSR would require a large-scale effort. The implementation of such large-scale plans in the condition of highly centralized political institutions enforced Kremlin to settle and empower new political "hot spots" within satellite states. The Kremlin has employed specific "secondary" diplomats in this regard, not only through the Center, but also in the allied republics (Cucciolla, 2020). One such center was Uzbek SSR, and Tashkent served as a model for young states that had gone through the colonial period (Pravda Vostoka, 1966).

Sharof Rashidov (1917-1983), one of the most prominent local leaders not only in the Uzbek SSR, but in the entire Soviet Central Asia, can be viewed as a foremost representative of the "second person" image of Soviet diplomacy (Gregory, 2007).

This article uses historical data analysis to examine Rashidov's political agenda. This text aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Rashidov's diplomatic efforts during the Cold War, from the Cuban Missile Crisis to his involvement in the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. The objective is to discern the underlying principles and motivations guiding his actions, thereby shedding light on the dynamics of his contributions to the geopolitical landscape during this tumultuous period.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

In examining the role of Sharof Rashidov in Cold War diplomacy, it is essential to identify relevant theories and methods that can help contextualize and understand his influence within the Soviet geopolitical landscape. Theoretical frameworks such as Realism, which emphasizes state-centric power struggles, and Constructivism, which focuses on the role of ideas and norms, can be applied to analyze Rashidov's diplomatic actions. Realism can be useful in understanding how Rashidov's diplomatic efforts were driven by the pursuit of power, security, and influence on behalf of the Soviet Union. By examining the international system's structure and the dynamics of superpower competition, we can evaluate Rashidov's role in advancing Soviet interests within this context.

On the other hand, Constructivism can shed light on how Rashidov's ideas, personal beliefs, and cultural factors influenced his diplomatic actions. This perspective allows us to explore how he contributed to shaping Soviet foreign policy by propagating ideological narratives and building cultural ties with other nations. To address the existing research gaps, this study will employ historical data analysis, drawing on primary sources and archival materials. By examining Rashidov's diplomatic initiatives during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Indo-Pakistani War, we aim to uncover the motivations and principles guiding his actions, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the decentralized nature of Soviet involvement in Cold War diplomacy.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilizes historical data analysis to examine the diplomatic efforts of Sharof Rashidov during the Cold War era. The research draws on primary sources, including archival materials, official documents, and Rashidov's writings, to reconstruct his diplomatic engagements. Additionally, secondary sources such as scholarly articles and books on Soviet foreign policy and Cold War history provide a broader context for analysis. The methodology involves a qualitative analysis of the collected data to discern patterns, motivations, and principles that guided Rashidov's actions. The examination will focus on two specific events: the Cuban Missile Crisis and Rashidov's involvement in the Indo-Pakistani War. Through a comparative analysis of these cases, the study aims to highlight Rashidov's role as a diplomatic actor outside the Kremlin.

## **RESULTS**

The results of this study reveal the significant and often unrecognized role played by Sharof Rashidov in Soviet Cold War diplomacy. Despite his relatively low profile in domestic politics, Rashidov demonstrated remarkable diplomatic acumen in international affairs. His involvement in resolving the Indo-Pakistani War and the Cuban Missile Crisis showcased his ability to defuse global conflicts and advance Soviet interests. In the case of the Indo-

Pakistani War, Rashidov's role as a mediator between India and Pakistan contributed to the Tashkent Declaration of 1966, bringing an end to the conflict. His capacity to communicate and influence events helped him achieve a certain level of success in the international arena. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Rashidov played a crucial role in a secret operation known as "Anadyr," in which Soviet missiles were deployed to Cuba. This operation was a pivotal moment in the Cold War and demonstrated Rashidov's skills as a diplomat and military strategist. When discussing Soviet diplomacy during the Cold War, our attention is often drawn to the prominent figures who shaped its foreign policies, including Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and Alexei Kosygin. However, previous academic research barely mentions several crucial players of the USSR's foreign policies in its satellite states. One of such important unrecognized persons is Sharof Rashidov – First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. Sharof Rashidov was a well-educated person. Samarkand State University (Uzbekistan) he worked as a local journalist in a local newspaper until WW2 broke out. He was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for his dedicated military service. Getting wounded during the war Rashidov returned his previous workplace only to pursue not so successful literary career (Hoshimhonov, 1997).

Nevertheless, he unlocked his true potential in politics. By the age of 33 writer Rashidov had already become a chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Counsel of Uzbekistan. No one in the history of the Soviet Union had achieved such a high position in the power structure at such a young age before. The most senior post that Rashidov occupied was that of candidate member of the USSR's Politburo, which he was elected to in 1961 (Pravda, 1983). Rashidov's unofficial diplomatic vocation started during the 1950s, in the further outbreak of Kashmir conflicts. Rashidov's subsequent foreign political involvement flows in two directions. The first war between India and Pakistan in South Asia resulted in the Tashkent Declaration of 1966, which brought an end to the conflict. Secondly, Rashidov was a mediator between the USSR and the US during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the fact that is almost not mentioned.

### **INDO-PAKISTANI WAR**

Since the 1950s, Central Asian states, particularly Uzbekistan SSR, have been actively establishing friendly relations with India. Sharaf Rashidov played a central role in these relations, serving as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR from 1950 to 1959, and later as the 1st Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan from 1959 to 1983. India and Pakistan have a longstanding territorial dispute over Kashmir. One of the major armed conflict had emerged in August 1965 and it turned into real full- scale war. It was at this time that Sharaf Rashidov visited Moscow to discuss the situation with the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Leonid Brezhnev.

Rashidov joined negotiations with Pakistan and India in September to resolve the conflict. Rashidov also played a major role as a main propagandist of the Soviet ideology through Muslim Asia. His ability to communicate and change

events has helped him to achieve a certain level of success in international arena. He visited South Asian countries, including India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Burma, in the 1950s and expressed his clear political thoughts and assumptions about them. In his report from these countries in 1955 he recommends for the Soviets to improve its image among Muslims by utilizing physical heritage of Islamic culture and respecting freedom of the religious practice. The author suggests organizing speeches on radio and in the foreign press by representatives of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan to counter false rumors and reports about religious freedom in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics. The author also highlights the poor condition and underutilization of mosques, mazars, and religious monuments in Uzbekistan.

During that time, Rashidov displayed a special attitude towards India. His concerns about the Kashmir conflict are reflected in his literary work, "Kashmir Song" (1956) (Rashidov, 1981), a story dedicated to eternal love and fidelity. Additionally, Rashidov's positive sentiments towards India were also influenced by India's support of the USSR during the Afghan War. The meeting between Brezhnev and Rashidov in Moscow on September 20-21, 1965, primarily focused on internal issues. However, Brezhnev also discussed the Indo-Pakistani confrontation with Rashidov. Rashidov briefed the secretary general on his efforts to resolve the conflict. A significant amount of progress was made, as a long-awaited truce between India and Pakistan was concluded on September 23, the day after the meeting between Rashidov and Brezhnev. Additionally, both parties agreed to the USSR's offer to engage in negotiations and attempt to resolve the conflict. The choice of Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, as the location for these negotiations was not a coincidence. The city has been transformed into a symbol of friendship through the efforts of Sh. Rashidov left a long time ago. Muhammad Ayub Khan and Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri arrived in Tashkent, which was considered one of the most beautiful cities in the Union. Both leaders were strong and sophisticated politicians.

Ayub Khan, the leader of Pakistan, seized power through a military coup and later solidified his position as the head of state through a referendum. Shastri, the second leader of independent India after Jawaharlal Nehru, held various leadership positions within the ruling Indian National Congress party. The main person at the Tashkent meeting was supposed to be Kosygin. For this, Rashidov was sent away from Uzbekistan - to Algeria at the head of the party and government delegation. Brezhnev personally informed him about this on December 15th during a conversation in the Kremlin, coinciding with the visit of the Algerian leader. On December 29, Rashidov again arrived in Moscow to meet again with Brezhnev and listen to his next recommendations before leaving for Algeria. And while the Uzbek leader was far from his homeland, negotiations were held in Tashkent between A. Kosygin and two prime ministers - Lal Bahadur Shastri (India) and Ayub Khan (Pakistan). On January 10, 1966, the Tashkent Declaration was signed, all the laurels from which from the Soviet side went to Moscow and personally to A. Kosygin

(Razzakov, 2009). This story clearly demonstrates that Moscow values professionalism. The involvement of Rashidov in resolving the issue highlights his talent as a diplomat. Moscow, at the same time feared his excessive influence in international politics. As American researcher Gregory Gleason accurately stated about security management (SM). According to Gregory (2007), Rashidov's most significant influence was not on the domestic arena but on Soviet foreign policy as the "second person."

### **CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS**

Rashidov's talent as a born diplomat can be seen clearly from active participation in the confrontation between the USSR and the United States, which is called the "Caribbean crisis". If he demonstrated himself as a peacemaker during the Indo-Pakistani conflict, the events of 1962 showcased his skills as a military strategist. Meanwhile, the catalyst for the "Caribbean crisis" was the result of the aggressive foreign policy of both superpowers towards each other.

The USSR continued its successful policy in Southeast Asia, as well as in the the Near and Middle East. To counter the Soviet offensive, US leaders made the decision to deploy medium-range Jupiter missiles in Turkey (a NATO military bloc member) in 1961, which could easily reach the cities of the Soviet Union, including Moscow and the main industrial centers of the USSR due to short flight times. This step by the USA deprived the Soviet leadership of the opportunity to deliver an equivalent retaliatory strike. However, Moscow quickly came up with a retaliatory measure - it secured an agreement from Cuban leader Fidel Castro to secretly place its atomic weapons, including land-based ballistic and tactical missiles, on Liberty Island, just off the coast of the United States. It was a secret operation in which Rashidov was also involved.

The operation was called "Anadyr". According to the plan of the developers of the operation, Soviet missiles (as well as military personnel) were to be delivered to Cuba in secret on several ships, which supposedly carry agricultural equipment for irrigating the land, as well as tourists. Since such equipment was produced and used in Uzbekistan, Rashidov had to take on the mission of a "smoke screen". In the second half of March 1962, he arrived in Moscow and on the 22nd for 1 hour and 15 minutes spent in the Kremlin office of N. Khrushchev. The meeting was initially intended to address land reclamation issues, but the participants also discussed plans to divert the attention of the Americans during an upcoming operation. On March 23, Rashidov met with Khrushchev in the Kremlin. This time, their conversation included several additional individuals, such as Chairman of the USSR State Economic Council A. Zasyadko, Academician-Secretary of the Department of Hydraulic Engineering and Land Reclamation A. Askochensky, and several others. The meeting lasted almost two and a half hours, which was twice as long as yesterday's meeting. It dealt only with land reclamation in Uzbekistan, however, this was also part of the "missile" plan, since information about it was published in the press, which was the same smoke screen for the American special services, which literally studied the entire Soviet press with a magnifying glass. A month later, on April 24th, Khrushchev met with a group

of senior military officials, including Minister of Defense R. Malinovsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Missile Forces S. Biryuzov, Commander of Air Defense Forces V. Sudets, and Commander-in-Chief of Long-Range Aviation F. Agaltsov. The details of the "missile" operation were apparently settled at this meeting. A month later, on May 23, Khrushchev hosted agricultural specialists who focused on irrigation and cotton cultivation. However, in addition to them, the meeting was attended by a representative of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a member of the State Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers for Foreign Economic Relations and the editor-in-chief of the *Сельская Жизнь* newspaper P. Alekseev (Razzakov, 2020).

The next day, detailed information about the meeting will be published in this newspaper. It will report that the meeting focused on providing material assistance to fraternal Cuba. The delegation spent two weeks in Cuba and returned home on June 10. The following day, all members of the delegation arrived at Khrushchev's office and informed him that the Cuban leadership had agreed to the Soviet government's proposal for the supply of missiles. The transfer was scheduled to start in July, involving a large group. This group included a complete missile division consisting of three R-12 regiments with 24 launchers. The entire group consisted of approximately 51,000 people, but ultimately only 42,000 were able to be transferred. The remaining individuals were not allowed by the Americans, who discovered the operation from the air and found the positions for the missiles being constructed in Cuba.

Meanwhile, Rashidov continued to participate in Operation Anadyr. On July 13, he met with Raul Castro in the Kremlin (Razzakov, 2020). Additionally, two Soviet ministers, R. Malinovsky (defense) and A. Gromyko (foreign affairs), were also present at the meeting. Rashidov was given a mission disguised as negotiations with Fidel Castro to assist Cuba with agricultural machinery and land reclamation equipment. His true purpose was to convey the Soviet government's proposal to supply and deploy missiles in Cuba for defense against American aggression. The technical aspects of deploying these missiles were to be discussed with Castro Biryuzov, while Alekseev's role was simply that of a messenger. When the Americans learned about the "missile" operation (which occurred in October), they were deeply concerned and alarmed. On the night of October 27-28, the world came dangerously close to a nuclear war. US President John F. Kennedy was prepared to order an attack on Cuba, and N. Khrushchev was ready to retaliate against the United States. Thankfully, the disastrous outcome was averted.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion section of this study emphasizes the importance of recognizing the contributions of lesser-known figures like Sharof Rashidov in shaping Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War. While leaders like Khrushchev and Brezhnev often dominate discussions on Soviet diplomacy, Rashidov's role as a "second person" diplomat highlights the decentralized and complex nature of Soviet involvement in global affairs.

Rashidov's journey from a local journalist to a high-ranking political figure and diplomat underscores the diverse paths individuals could take within the Soviet political landscape. His ability to resolve international conflicts and promote Soviet interests in regions such as South Asia and the Caribbean demonstrates his significant, albeit discreet, influence on global diplomacy.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In Sharaf Rashidov's diplomatic engagements in international affairs, it becomes clear that he has a nuanced understanding of the Kremlin's position. While the Kremlin unmistakably recognized and appreciated Rashidov's remarkable diplomatic acumen in defusing global conflicts, notably in two diverse international arenas, a parallel and intriguing element of caution characterized their approach. Rashidov's seemingly less influential role in domestic Soviet politics may explain this cautious stance. Rashidov paradoxically played the role of an "unseen hand" for the Soviet Union in international affairs, operating discreetly and with a high level of autonomy in shaping global diplomacy.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Rashidov's international role was the level of autonomy he had within the confines of a highly centralized and authoritarian Soviet system. While his influence over domestic affairs remained relatively limited, his prowess as a diplomat on the global stage allowed him to wield significant, albeit discreet, influence in international matters. This unique dynamic necessitates a more extensive and in-depth investigation, aiming to unravel the underlying factors that conferred such distinctive diplomatic freedom upon Rashidov within the strictures of a totalitarian state.

This enigma surrounding Rashidov's diplomatic latitude serves as a compelling avenue for further scholarly exploration. A comprehensive study in this area would not only improve our understanding of Rashidov's influence on Soviet foreign policy but also provide insight into the inner workings of the Soviet government during a crucial period in history. It is an imperative undertaking, given that Rashidov's role as a behind-the-scenes diplomat in a highly centralized political environment contributes an intricate layer to the intricate mosaic of Cold War diplomacy.

## **FURTHER STUDY**

The study identifies the need for further research into the unique dynamic of Rashidov's diplomatic freedom within the highly centralized Soviet system. Exploring the factors that allowed him to operate autonomously in international affairs while having limited influence on domestic politics is a critical area for future scholarly exploration. Additionally, investigating the extent to which Rashidov's actions were coordinated with or influenced by the Kremlin and the Central Committee of the Communist Party is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of Soviet diplomacy during the Cold War. Understanding the role of individuals like Rashidov in shaping Soviet foreign policy enriches our knowledge of the era and provides insights into the functioning of a totalitarian state in a global context. Further studies in this area would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the



complexities of Cold War diplomacy and the influence of local leaders on international relations.

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