

Diplomatic Correspondences of the Sheybanid and Ashtakhanid Sovereigns with Iran and India

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Abstract: Diplomatic correspondences disclose the history of relations between states. They show political and economic ambitions of sovereigns towards a particular country or countries. The correspondences also explore the positions of certain states in relation to other events happening around them or using benefiting of other powers in order to weaken the third actor. The correspondences between Shaybanid and Ashatarkhanid rulers with Indian Baburid monarchs and Iranian shahs illustrate the calls to take joint steps in order to weaken or withstand the other power, territorial disputes and supremacy of unilateral interests.

Introduction

Diplomatic correspondence are important sources to research trade, economic, political and cultural ties between states and political figures of the past. However, the correspondences have been preserved in small quantities and they have been understudied by researchers.

It should be noted that correspondences, or rather their copies have mostly been preserved in historical and biographical works. For instance, many letters are found in “Silsilat al-salatin” (“Genealogy of Sovereigns”, 1143/1730-31) by Haji Mir Muhammad Salim [2:110-111; 7:1149]*. The source is vital for the study of the socio-political history of Turkestan in the 16th – first quarter of the 18th centuries, and its relations in policy and other fields with Iran and Baburid India. The last two parts of the work can be considered quite valuable for Turkestan studies since they are dedicated to the history of the Sheybanids and Ashtarkhanids. The copy of letters discovered in the manuscript characterize the history of political relations between the Bukhara Khanate, India, Iran and other countries. Some of them are analysed below.

Main part

The dispatch from the ruler of Baburid India Akbar (963/1556 1014/1605) to the Bukhara khan Sheybanid Abdallah Khan II (991/1583-1006/1598), which was written in 994/1585-86, was sent to Bukhara by Hakim Humam, who was accompanied by Sadr Jahan and Khoja Muhammad Ali (l. 128a-133b). This was a response mission to the previous visit to India by the Bukhara ambassador Mir Kureysh. The task assigned to him was to establish close and good neighborly relations with the Baburid state and, if possible, persuade Akbar to take joint action against Safavid Iran. Much depended on Akbar’s answer, although Abdallah Khan was practically not encouraged by his support for his aggressive goals in relation to Khorasan (this was proven by further events: in 996/1588 Abdallah Khan seized Herat, in 998/1590 Abd al-Mumin invaded Khorasan and occupied its several cities including Mashhad). It was important for him to make sure that Akbar would not take retaliatory actions against Badakhshan or Balkh. Akbar, confirming his friendly attitude towards Bukhara, responded ambiguously to the main question - the question of joint actions against Safavid Iran. In particular, he expressed his readiness to enter Iran, but not for the purpose of conquest, as Abdullah khan proposed, but to assist its ruler

* We express our gratitude to B. A. Akhmedov for the opportunity to use his photocopy of this list. The copy of the work itself is kept in London, in the Bodleian Library, Inv. No. 269.

against the frequent attacks of Ottoman Turkey.

Akbar's correspondence notes: "Now that our unity and alliance have become obvious to all the peoples of the world, our [thoughts] of helping and assisting the inhabitants of Khorasan and Iran must be held in accordance with our powerful state". As can be seen, Akbar's answer neither express his support for Abdallah Khan's plans, nor does he condemn them [6:132b]. Moreover, he asks Abdallah Khan to "turn a blind eye to the sins of Mirza Shahrukh [6:132b]" who, taking advantage of Abdallah Khan's absence in Bukhara in 991/1583, invaded Balkh, which subsequently served as the reason for the capture of Badakhshan by the Uzbeks in 992/1584.

There are different opinions regarding Akbar's response dispatch [6:132b; 4:69-72]. Thus, according to F.N. Nasr, Akbar was not against Abdallah Khan's policy towards Khorasan, but did not express consent to participate in it; Indian historian R.U. Varma, on the contrary, believed that Akbar was not averse to implementing this plan. However, Akbar, even if he wanted to, at that time could not interfere with Abdallah Khan's plans for Khorasan because of internal difficulties in the Baburid empire (riots among Afghans, Baluchis, the struggle for Kashmir, Tats) and external issues (unstable situation in Kandahar, campaigns to Seistan).

After the Uzbeks seized Mashhad, Shah Abbas I (995/1587-1038/1629) found himself in a rather difficult position. According to "Silsilat al-salatin", not daring to stand against Uzbeks in Khorasan, he sent a mission to India headed by Yadgar Sultan Iramlu, sent to Agra in 999/1590-91. In his correspondence [6:137a], Shah Abbas I reminded Akbar of friendly relations, which had developed under his predecessors, and called him to joint alliance against Bukhara Khan. He, in particular, proposed that the Baburid army arrived in Iran through Kandahar, so that the allied forces could begin the intended act. Shah Abbas clearly sought to arouse Akbar's suspicions regarding Bukhara Khanate. The correspondence says "If the power of the Uzbeks increases more and more, then they can encroach on the possessions of that highly venerable [padishah]" [6:137a].

According to the evidence of Haji Mir Muhammad Salim, having been aware of the contents of the correspondence, Abdallah Khan ordered Din Muhammad Sultan, Baki Muhammad Sultan and Wali Muhammad Sultan, his nephews, to march on Seistan and Kandahar and take possession of them. Soon, Uzbek troops occupied Seistan, Zamindawar and Garmsir, reaching the banks of the Helmand River. Then Din Muhammad Sultan sent an ultimatum to Kandahar asking them to give in. The response was that Kandahar was subject to Akbar, and if the Uzbek troops intended to take possession of it, then the governor of the city could not surrender the city without Akbar's awareness [6:137b]. Muhammad Husayn Mirza, the governor of Kandahar, proceeded from the fact that the good neighborhood relations between Bukhara and India would not allow Abdallah Khan to do so. This move of Muhammad Husayn Mirza turned out to be successful. Consequently, Abdallah Khan ordered Din Muhammad Khan to take the army from Kandahar.

Akbar's correspondence to Abdallah Khan, sent with Khoja Muhammad Ashraf (l. 138b-143b) characterizes political relations between Bukhara and India under Abdallah Khan and Akbar. For Bukhara, this mission was important, because by that time Abdallah Khan had begun to lose dominance not only over Khorasan due to Shah Abbas's strengthening, but also in Balkh, where his son Abd al-Mumin (killed in 1006/1598) openly sought independence and claimed to the Bukhara throne. In such circumstances, it was important for Abdallah Khan to know the position of India since the interests of both states collided in Kandahar, Zamindawar and Seistan, as well as after the rash actions of Abd al-Mu'min, who, having put an end to the unrest in Badakhshan, led by Muhammad Zaman, the son of the mentioned Shahrukh Mirza, suspected Akbar's involvement in this and demanded that he hand over everyone who was intricately involved in it and found shelter in India. In addition, Abd al-Mumin insisted that Akbar give him his daughter and gift a part of India [5:84].

Akbar's response was generally in a friendly manner. Its contents elucidates that he did not want to aggravate relations with Bukhara. Akbar's correspondence, in particular, shows that he did not

accept Shah Abbas's request for help against the annexations of Khorasan by the Uzbeks. However, the correspondence contained a reproach to Abdallah Khan regarding the actions of his son Abd al-Mumin in relation to India. In short, he tried to maintain good neighborhood relations with Bukhara. Since by that time the interests of India and Iran were colliding in Kandahar, it was unwise for Akbar to aggravate relations with two states in the region at once. The correspondence also states about the visit of Bukhara mission headed by Ahmad Ali Ataliq and Mawlana Hussein in India.

"Silsilat al-salatin" also contains three documents reflecting some aspects of Bukhara's foreign policy in the last decade of the 16th century. The first of them is a copy of the correspondence of the Turkish Sultan Murad III (982/1574-1003/1595) to Abdallah Khan II (l. 144a-144b). The Turkish Sultan, calling on Abdullah Khan II to establish friendly relations, proposed to jointly act against Iran and disintegrate it. The Sultan wrote "Now my heart desires that the patron of Islam, the Padishah on the other side, and we on this side, supporting each other, attacked Iraq (i.e. Iran) and completely cleanse it of the abomination and meanness of our enemies..." [6:144ab]. In other words, Murad III sought to involve Abdullah Khan in his long-lasting struggles against Iran. Here he took into account the aggressive aspirations of the Uzbek khan in relation to Khorasan. However, this plan was not destined to implement. Energetic Shah Abbas I, systematically suppressing unrest and conflict in the country, immediately marched on Khorasan with considerable force and took it away from the Uzbeks.

Correspondence from Shaybanid Abd al-Mumin Khan to the ruler of Iran, Shah Abbas I (fol. 150b-151b). Having succeed supreme power in Bukhara in 1006/1598, Abd al-Mumin Khan continued the policy of subjugating Khorasan. He sent a correspondence to Shah Abbas I by Ali Iarbak, demanding "to completely renounce the conquest of Khorasan and to grant the rule of Nisa and Baward to the authorized representatives [of Abd al-Mu'min Khan]" [6:150a]. Abd al-Mumin Khan's correspondence was in a high tone. It characterizes the dignity and power of his state and lists the territories under his control: Dasht-i Kipchak, Murghab, Kashgar, Badakhshan, Mawarannahr, Samarkand, Khorezm, Khorasan. The Shah was given conditions according to which the sons of Haji Muhammad Khan Nurmuhammad Khan and Muhammad Kuli Sultan, allegedly guilty of disrupting the affairs of the mission sent a year ago by Abd al-Mumin to Iran, had to be sent to him or expelled from Iran. Abd al-Mumin Khan also demanded on Seistan be given to him. Only after the fulfilment of these demands, the ruler of Iran could hope a peace treaty. The correspondence ends with the following words: "Before putting claim to Iran and promising the desire to conquer it, [let him first try] to capture [it], so that this would become the cause of well-being and a reason for peace of wanderers and fakirs, cripples and beggars and all servants of God" [6:151ab].

However, Abd al-Mumin Khan's correspondence had no effect on Shah Abbas I; on the contrary, the latter, taking advantage of the death of Abdallah Khan, the change of power in Bukhara and discord among the nobility of Turan [6:151b], decided to finally liberate Khorasan from the Uzbeks. In his response correspondence (l. 151b-154a), Shah Abbas I admonished Abd al-Mumin Khan for arrogance and haughtiness. Expressing his thoughts in poetry, the Iranian ruler reminded Abd al-Mumin Khan of the norms for treating the padishah. Further, Abbas I noted about his suppression of unrest and riots in Gilan, Mazandaran and Astrabad, and described the power of his army and state in verse. In conclusion, he sharply responded to the claims of Abd al-Mu'min Khan: "The seized possessions (i.e. Khorasan) [by] usurpation must be returned to our representatives without conditions and disputes. If carelessness, nonchalance and oversight happen in this matter, then a firman [will be] issued, [determining] the fate of what is happening, and two hundred thousand horsemen fighting for Islam... headed by Imam Muhammad Quli-Sultan go to Ibrahim Khoja Muhammad Khan and, joining [the] leaders and troops of Genghis dignity, they will go to the borders of [Mawarannahr] and, taking their wives and children captive, they will bring them to the threshold of the world protector" [6:153b-154a]. Such a correspondence arose the anger and indignation of Abd al-Mumin Khan and he decided to march on Khorasan. However, this was prevented due to the rebellion in Tashkent, where he

was forced to go to quell the rebellion, and soon Abd al-Mumin became a victim of a conspiracy of the nobility who were dissatisfied with him. Shah Abbas I did not renounce his plans either. In 1007/1598, he marched on Khorasan with a large army and, by Zulfiqar-bek zulqadar was the person with whom he sent a correspondence to Herat to Ashtarkhanid Din Muhammad Khan, who took possession of it after the death of Abd al-Mumin Khan. Khorasan, Seistan, Merv, Muruchak to the borders of Iran were then subject to him [6:158a].

The Shah sent Din Muhammad Khan a correspondence [6:158a-159a] in the following content: “Abd al-Mumin Khan for many years, having enjoyed of our involvement in Iran and Tabriz, launched raids in the vicinities and territories of Khorasan and seized some of its cities including Mashhad. No matter how hard we tried a meeting with him, he did not appear before our troops. If you follow our advice, then stop forays into Khorasan, otherwise our troops will reach Balkh and Bukhara”[6:159a].

Having received this correspondence, Din Muhammad Khan immediately began to prepare for battle. Shah Abbas arrived in the vicinity of Herat on Muharram 6, 1008/30, 1599. In the ensuing battle, the Uzbeks were defeated. Having captured Herat, Shah Abbas I intensified his actions, looking for a reason to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ashtarkhanid state. After Imamkuli Khan (1020/1611-1051/1642) had come to power in Bukhara, Shah Abbas wrote him a special correspondence [6:188b] in which he called on the Uzbek khan to restore the previous good neighborhood and friendly relations.

Correspondence (l. 188b-189a) of the Bukhara khan Ashtarkhanid Imamquli Khan to Shah Abbas I. In it, he reproaches the Shah for supporting Rustam Muhammad Sultan, the son of the aforementioned Wali Muhammad Khan, who continually raided Balkh. Further, recalling the peace agreements between Shah Abbas and Baki Muhammad Khan and the desire to respect these relations, he asked him to send to him the princes and nobles of Turkestan, who, as a result of minor resentments in the future, might turn to him with a request for asylum. Here it is clear that Imamkuli Khan meant the extradition of Rustam Sultan. Imamkuli-khan ended his letter with a request for attention to his citizens going as pilgrims to Mecca and Medina through Iran [6:188b-189a]. In a word, the exchange of correspondences between the two rulers did not contribute to the improvement of Bukharan-Iranian relations. And after Shah Safi I (1038/1629-1052/1642) succeeded to power in Iran, the relations significantly worsened.

Correspondence of Baburid Jahangir (1014/1605-1037/1627-28) to Imamkuli Khan (l. 189b-192b). It was sent with Mir Baraka. This mission was a response to the embassy of Uzbek Khoja Dadkhah, sent earlier by Imamkuli Khan to India. I. G. Nizamutdinov wrote about Uzbek Khoja mission: “Unfortunately, we do not have this document and therefore it is difficult to say anything concrete about this” [5:84].

It also states no information about the names of Bukhara ambassadors. Therefore, the copy of this document given in “Silsilat al-salatin” provides clarity to the issue. From Jahangir’s correspondence it can be concluded that the task of the Bukhara ambassadors was to involve Baburid in joint actions against Iran. The proposal was accepted by Jahangir. The latter writes: “The followers of false creeds, in particular the vile deeds of the Shiites, who are transmitters of sectarian and heretical beliefs, wanderers in the desert of error and deviation from the truth, [must] be destroyed. [This should happen] where the support of that heretical sect is the ruler of Iran. All efforts [must] be spent on eliminating it; if Allah pleases, we will eliminate [it]” [6:191ab].

In addition, not everything was stated in Imamkuli Khan’s correspondence regarding plans for relations with Iran, but it was conveyed verbally by Uzbek Khoja. This is evidenced by the following words of Jahangir himself: “In a secluded place in the palace of holiness, having prepared an audience, [we] asked [Uzbek Khoja] about the secret thoughts that [you] had expressed to him verbally” [6:191b]. In turn, Jahangir informed Imamkuli Khan that he conveyed some of his answers personally by Uzbek Khoja. And at the end of the correspondence, he asked the khan not to detain Mir Baraka any longer, but having provided him with an appropriate

answer and, accompanied by a person entrusted to him, it is better, if this would be Uzbek Khoja, to send him back to India. Apparently, Jahangir esteemed this opportunity to conclude an alliance with Bukhara against Shah Abbas, who seriously intended to seize Kandahar from India.

The information from “Silsila as-salatin” about the audience given by Imamquli Khan to the ambassador of Shah Jahan (1037/1628 - 1068/1667) Hakim Hazik is very interesting. As is clear from the source, upon arrival in Bukhara, the Indian envoy was unable to obtain a reception for six months. Hakim Haziq, in addition to the correspondence from Shah Jahan, had expensive gifts intended for the Uzbek Khan. In the end, Hakim Hazik addressed for assistance to Nadr Diwanbegi Arlat, the all-powerful emir of Imamkuli Khan. Nadr Diwanbegi agreed and, taking the moment, conveyed the request of the Baburid envoy to the khan: “If we allow [him] to meet [with us], the khan says to his nobleman, we will also have to accept his gifts; [but] our high position does not allow us to pay attention to [those] padishah offerings” [6:194a].

Due to the amir’s persistence, the reception finally took place. But not in the palace, but near one of the city gates on the square. When Hakim Hazik presented gifts from his ruler, Imamquli Khan, addressing Rahim Parvanachi who was present there, said: “I give all these gifts from the ruler of India to you”, which led to surprise Baburid envoy [6:194b]. How should it be explained such treatment of the ambassador of a great country? The answer to this question lies in the events of recent years, when, due to the aggressive actions of both Nadr Muhammad Khan and Shah Jahan [1:190], relations between the two states somewhat deteriorated. The reason for this was the concentration of Indian troops outside the Bukhara Khanate with the aim of invading Badakhshan and in response to this, the raid of Nadr Muhammad Khan, brother of Imamquli Khan - the ruler of Balkh, to Kabul. In addition, Imamquli Khan harbored a grudge for the words Shah Jahan expressed to him during a conversation with Khoja Muhammad Siddiq, the son of Abd al-Rahim Khoja, who stayed for some time in the Baburid palace after the death of his father, regarding Imamquli Khan’s respected one. Khoja Muhammad stated that the thoughts of his ruler were not occupied with anything worldly. In response, Shah Jahan smiled and said: “Where has he seen [this] world that has no inclination [toward it]” [6:193a]. It can be assumed that the conversation quoted by Muhammad Yusuf Munshi does not accurately reflect what happened. Firstly, Jahangir is named here instead of Shah Jahan, and, secondly, it does not indicate the person holding the conversation with the ruler of India [3:106].

As is seen, “Silsila al-salatin” brings some clarity to this issue: the conversation took place between Shah Jahan and Khoja Muhammad Siddiq. In short, Hakim Haziq received an official reception only the next day. Imamquli Khan received him in the palace, where he was given a correspondence from Shah Jahan (l. 194a - 196a). The correspondence states about the long-lasting friendly relations of Turan India, and it calls not to violate these good traditions. The delay of Abd al-Rahim Khoja’s mission, according to Shah Jahan, happened by two reasons: 1) the death of Abd al-Rahim Khoja himself and 2) Nadr Muhammad Khan’s raid on Kabul. Exactly, he does not draw any special conclusion from the latter, but Nadr Muhammad Khan’s actions was connected with his inexperience and youth. In other words, Shah Jahan preferred to maintain the friendly atmosphere that recently had been established between Bukhara and India rather than move towards confrontation. Moreover, having a destined plan regarding Kandahar, Shah Jahan hardly wanted to have two opponents at the same time in the person of Bukhara and Iran. During the reign of the Bukhara Khanate of Ashtarkhanid Nadr Muhammad Khan (1051/1642-1055/1645), the relations between Bukhara and India were not as favorable as before. Immediately after ascending the throne in Bukhara, Nadr Muhammad Khan sent a mission to India, headed by Khoja Waqqas, to restore good neighborly relations and apologize for his own raid on Kabul when he was the ruler of Balkh.

Response correspondence of Shah Jahan (l. 205b -209a). Tarbiyat Khan brought it to Bukhara. The ruler of India accentuated to his readiness to continue good neighborly relations in the correspondence. Without sparing praising and sublime words addressed to Nadr Muhammad Khan, Shah Jahan, however, wrote: “[Our opinion] regarding the apology that [you] asked for

the courtesy you showed towards Kabul, was explained in detail to the above-mentioned Khoja [Wakkas], who will bring it to you” [6:207a). The correspondence further notes that India’s position regarding the qizilbash would be outlined by Tarbiyat Khan. And then it was indicated: “We must be sure that in accordance with what Allah wills, it be fulfilled in its own way” [6:207a]. Apparently, here we are talking about some kind of plan of Shah Jahan regarding Iran, conveyed in words by Tarbiyat Khan. The correspondence also states about some internal political events in India (Shah Jahan’s struggle against the Afghans, Europeans), etc. Shah Jahan’s plans for Iran were are not entirely clear, but his true intentions regarding the Bukhara Khanate soon became clear.

Less than four years had passed since Nadr Muhammad khan ascended the throne in Bukhara; as a result of his short-sighted policy in resolving some issues of the internal life of the country, he was forced to cede supreme power and turn to Shah Jahan for help. Nadr Bi from the Shabayat tribe was sent with a correspondence for help to India [6:223a]. In a response correspondence (fol. 227-224b), transmitted by Prince Murad-Bakhsh, son of Shah Jahan, the ruler of India expressed sympathy for Nadr Muhammad Khan, condemned some of his subjects who had disobeyed and announced the dispatch of troops led by Murad Bakhsh to support him. The latter received a command from Shah Jahan to provide all possible assistance to the Uzbek Khan in suppressing the unrest.

However, in fact, the ruler of India pursued other goals. As stated in “Silsila al-salatin”, sending his son as the head of the army, ostensibly to support Nadr Muhammad khan, he “secretly ordered [him] to capture Balkh” [6:223ab]. But the capture of Balkh and Badakhshan and the presence of the Baburid army there (summer 1646-autumn 1647) did not give Shah Jahan anything. Consequently, he was to send a correspondence [6:259b-261a] apologizing for the rash actions of his son. Nadr Muhammad Khan was in Iran at that time. But the letter did not reach the addressee. In the correspondence, Shah Jahan calls for the restoration and continuation of previous good neighborly relations. It is characteristic that he reproached the Uzbek khan for not understanding the noble character of Mansoor Murad-Bakhsh’s mission and believing all sorts of fables, intrigues and leaving Balkh, and the Baburid prince had to suppress the rebellion of the infidels. Shah Jahan hinted to Nadr Muhammad Khan that the latter left Balkh in difficult times and saved himself, and did not fight against the infidels. Moreover, at the end of the correspondence, Shah Jahan unequivocally reminded him that his sons Bahram Sultan, Khosrow Sultan, Abd al-Rahman Sultan were in India, i.e. their fate is in his hands.

Correspondence from Ashtarkhanid Bukhara Khan Abd al-Aziz Khan to Shah Safi II. In 1077/1666, Shah Abbas died, and Safi II (1077/1666-1105/1694) ascended the throne. On the occasion of these events, the Bukhara Khan Abd al-Aziz (1055/1645-1091/1680) sends Hasan Kushbegi to Iran with a correspondence (fol. 280b 282a). The letter proposes the continuation of long-standing good neighborly relations, the refusal to raid each other’s possessions, and also suggests not to harm the subjects and servants of both sovereigns. “If one of the sides is attacked by the enemy,” the correspondence says, “let [the other side] support [him] to the extent of its power” [6:282a]. This kind of statement by Abd al-Aziz Khan to the Iranian ruler can be explained by the fact that although he, according to the testimony of “Silsila al-salatin”, possessed Mawarannahr and Turkestan, he felt awkward when the Khiva khans raided deep into the country, on the other hand, in Balkh, Subhankuli Khan rioted. Abd al-Aziz Khan’s fears were justified. After a long struggle, Subhankuli Khan finally managed to seize the reins of Mawarannahr from his brother.

Correspondence (l. 308a-312a) of the Bukhara Ashtarkhanid khan, Subhankuli Khan (1091/1680-1114/1702) to Baburid Aurangzeb (1068/1658 -1118/1707). Sent in 1098/1687 with Nadr Diwanbegi. This document emphasizes Subhankuli Khan’s willingness to further develop friendly relations with the Baburids, and to strengthen them, maintain ambassadorial ties. Next, Subhankuli Khan informs Baburid ruler about the events in Balkh, the invasion of the Khiva Khan, etc. The correspondence also notes Subhankuli Khan’s capture of Bala-i Murghab,

which was the “key” to the country of Iran and the gates of Khorasan” [6:311a]. Here the Uzbek Khan undoubtedly wanted to demonstrate his military successes. He further expressed regret that Aurangzeb could not take part in this campaign. In other words, Subhankuli Khan invited the ruler of India to jointly march on Khorasan. It is seen from the correspondence that both sides were interested in maintaining peaceful relations between both states.

The correspondences considered bring together the following characteristic features: all correspondences have a political connotation; issues of the socio-economic and cultural life of countries remain out of sight; in the actions of each of the parties there is a desire to achieve their unilateral goals with maximum benefit by involving the other party against the third; at the same time, the objects where joint political actions of the two contracting parties would take place would be Iran or the Khanate of Bukhara, depending on who negotiated with party; no matter how close the two collaborating parties came, they were never able to realize their goals against a third party, since this was prevented by the internal difficulties facing one or the other party.

Conclusion.

The analyzed material indicates that letters and correspondences in the study of history of Turkestan and the neighboring countries of the East provide an opportunity to further disclose various aspects of their political life. In the letters we find not only documentary evidence of this or that historical fact, but also information about the main directions of foreign political life of both a single state and interstate relations in general.

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