



THE ROLE AND EVOLUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN THE HISTORY OF WORLD DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

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Received: 20 th July 2025 Accepted: 14 th August 2025	This article analyzes the role of historical science in the study of environmental policy processes in the context of world politics and diplomacy. International relations, which are increasingly forced to proceed from environmental realities, are a modern truth dictated by external climatic factors. The course of development of this type of transnational relations creates a new historical stage in world diplomacy.
Keywords environmental policy, climate policy, environmental diplomacy, green diplomacy, green policy, sustainable development, Uzbekistan, international relations, ecology, ecopolitics, history of Uzbekistan.	

INTRODUCTION. Historical science in modern scientific discourse appears not only as a discipline dealing with the study of the past, but also as an interdisciplinary multi-vector field capable of comprehensively comprehending the factors of the emergence, transformation and development of social, political, economic and environmental systems. The purpose of historical science is to identify the patterns of the historical process, critically analyze cause-and-effect relationships, and form sound forecasts based on a deep understanding of the mechanisms of historical development.

The interdisciplinary nature of historical science is manifested in close interrelation with archeology, anthropology, political science, sociology, economics, geography, ecology and other fields of knowledge. This relationship is due to the fact that the historical process is not limited to chronological fixation of events, but includes an analysis of cultural, ideological, technological and natural determinants. For example, the study of the causes of the collapse of the Roman Empire requires taking into account not only domestic political factors (crisis of government institutions, corruption, increased pressure from barbarian tribes), but also climate change, droughts, epidemics and depletion of natural resources, which requires the use of data from paleoclimatology and geography. This clearly demonstrates how historical science can function as an integrative platform for analyzing the complex causes of systemic crises.

MAIN PART. Political science, like sociology, draws empirical material and conceptual foundations from history to build theories of power, institutional development, models of public administration and political culture. History provides political science not only with retrospective cases, but also allows it to

develop analytical models based on the dynamics of regime change, revolutionary processes, and the evolution of legal and managerial systems. For example, the study of historical transformations in Eastern Europe in the 20th century – from monarchical and imperial forms to totalitarian and then democratic regimes – allows political scientists to comprehend the mechanisms of legitimization of power, the role of ideology, mass movements and the international context. The analysis of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent unification of Germany is an example of a historical event with large-scale political and sociological consequences. Historical perspective is indispensable in the formation of categories of political identity, nationalism, historical memory, as well as in the analysis of conflicts. For example, historical narrative plays a key role in ethno-political conflicts in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East, where the past becomes an instrument for legitimizing political claims.

Historical science is of particular importance in the context of environmental policy. Analysis of the history of human interaction with the environment makes it possible to identify both destructive and sustainable models of environmental management. The history of environmental disasters (for example, the Dust Bowl in the USA in the 1930s) shows a direct link between economic activity, agricultural policy and ecosystem degradation.

History also demonstrates how government policies can either exacerbate or prevent environmental crises. An example is the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, where a combination of man-made risk, the closeness of the political system and the inefficiency of management institutions led to an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. This example highlights the importance of



transparency, scientific expertise, and an interdisciplinary approach in environmental policy. Moreover, historical science contributes to understanding the concepts of sustainable development and the sustainability of societies in the face of climate change. Analysis of the collapse of civilizations (for example, the Maya, the Great Migration, or the decline of the Angkor Empire) shows how climate change, resource depletion, and demographic shifts can trigger social and political change.

History, for all its focus on the past, also performs a predictive function. The use of the historical method in scenario modeling, including in political and environmental forecasting, makes it possible to minimize risks and calculate the potential consequences of management decisions. Forecasting based on historical analogies requires, however, high methodological rigor in order to avoid mechanical repetition of models that do not take into account changed conditions. An example is understanding the causes and consequences of pandemics. A comparative analysis of the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic and COVID-19 makes it possible to identify both common patterns (mass mortality, overloading of health systems, growing distrust of institutions) and new phenomena (the role of digital technologies, global logistics, information warfare), which helps in preparing for possible future epidemiological threats.

Historical science, being an interdisciplinary multi-vector field, performs a key function in understanding and forecasting social processes. Its significance goes far beyond the fixation and interpretation of the past. It forms the methodological foundations for the analysis of political systems, social structures and environmental interactions, providing a scientific basis for the development of sustainable development strategies. That is why the integration of historical knowledge into political science, sociology and environmental science is a prerequisite for the formation of a holistic and responsible approach to the future of humanity.

In modern conditions of globalization and accelerating climate change, environmental policy has ceased to be exclusively an internal matter of states and has acquired the status of one of the key factors shaping international relations [4]. From the point of view of historical science, environmental policy on the international plane is the result of a complex evolution of the world order, where the interaction between the natural environment, economic interests, ideological systems and political choices of nations forms new forms of diplomacy and global governance. The analysis of this area requires a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach combining

historical data, political science theory, international law and environmental sciences.

Historically, environmental issues have long been on the periphery of international politics. However, already in the 19th century, with the growth of industrialization and the expansion of colonial empires, the first practices of international environmental regulation began to take shape. Thus, the 1900 London Convention for the Protection of Animals in Africa can be considered one of the earliest examples of transnational environmental cooperation, albeit limited by the interests of European powers.

A qualitative shift occurred in the middle of the 20th century, after the Second World War. The increase in industrial pollution, nuclear testing, ecosystem destruction, and population explosion have brought environmental issues to the center of international dialogue. The landmark moment was the Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Environment (1972), which marked the beginning of a systemic environmental discourse in international relations [1]. It was from this period that environmental policy became institutionalized and became an integral part of the global security architecture. Environmental policy has an increasing impact on international political alliances, economic competition, and social stability. A new type of diplomacy is emerging – environmental diplomacy, based not only on national security interests, but also on long-term sustainable development strategies.

The history of the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Climate Agreement (2015) demonstrates how the environmental agenda is able to form global coalitions and mechanisms of responsibility. These agreements were the products of lengthy negotiations between developed and developing countries, during which the history of resource exploitation, postcolonial inequality and the industrial legacy of the West became the subject of intense international discussion. Examples of environmental disasters with cross-border consequences, such as the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident (1986) or the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico (2010), have clearly demonstrated the need for global environmental governance. These events became not only humanitarian and environmental tragedies, but also catalysts for political change: Chernobyl accelerated the processes of perestroika and revealed to the world the weakness of the Soviet management model, and the US environmental policy after the oil spill was severely criticized by the international community, which affected domestic environmental regulation.

Historically, the formation of environmental policy as a part of international relations has been accompanied by the institutionalization of appropriate mechanisms. The



creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) [2], the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other organizations indicates the transformation of environmental challenges into an element of global governance.

In this context, there is a shift from reactive to preventive thinking in international relations. Thus, the participation of States in agreements on the control of greenhouse gas emissions, the regulation of ocean resources or the limitation of plastic pollution is increasingly motivated not only by international pressure, but also by an understanding of the risks of systemic environmental crises that can provoke migration, conflicts over resources and even state collapses. An example is the water conflict in the Nile River basin, where environmental policy directly affects the strategic interests of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. The redistribution of water resources due to the construction of the Vozrozhdenie dam in Ethiopia is not only an engineering conflict, but also a historical one, rooted in colonial treaties, national identity and the desire for regional leadership.

Environmental policy as a tool of "soft power". The historical dynamics of the development of international relations indicates that environmental policy is increasingly becoming an instrument of soft power. States use the green agenda as a means to improve their image, form sustainable alliances, and influence global politics. An example is the European Union, which is building a model of "green leadership" based on ESG standards (environmental, social and corporate governance), climate norms and cross-border carbon regulation.

History shows that such a policy, despite its declared universality, is not free from elements of inequality. "Green protectionism" is increasingly being used as a means of trade pressure on developing economies, which necessitates a historical and political analysis of the balance between sustainable development and economic justice. The historical perspective allows us to consider environmental policy as an indicator of future forms of international cooperation [3]. There is already an obvious trend towards the formation of so-called ecological geopolitics, where control over ecologically significant territories (Amazon forests, the Arctic, freshwater resources) is evident. It becomes an object of strategic rivalry. History suggests that environmental crises can not only increase competition, but also promote new forms of international solidarity. An example is the Montreal Protocol (1987), in which the global community united to protect the ozone layer. This agreement has become unique in the history of

international relations, showing that effective environmental cooperation is possible if there is political will.

The historical role of environmental policy in international relations reflects the profound transformation of the global system, where natural and climate challenges are becoming equivalent to traditional security threats [4]. Historical science, which has interdisciplinary tools, allows not only to comprehend the dynamics of international environmental policy, but also to form predictive models that prevent possible conflicts and guide strategies for sustainable development [5]. Thus, the integration of historical analysis into the sphere of international eco-policy is a prerequisite for the formation of a responsible, scientifically based and ethically verified global strategy for the future.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has faced the need to build a national environmental policy in the face of the most acute environmental and socio-economic challenges [6]. This policy, as historical analysis shows, has developed in accordance with the key arguments previously outlined in the context of the historical and international environmental agenda: under the influence of heritage factors, institutional processes, international commitments and predictive strategies for sustainable development. Its evolution demonstrates the most important transformations in the system of international relations, regional cooperation and internal environmental modernization.

First of all, it should be noted that the formation of Uzbekistan's environmental policy took place against the background of the difficult ecological legacy of the Soviet period [7]. The large-scale use of water resources for the needs of cotton farming, the active use of chemicals in agriculture, irrational landscape management, as well as the targeted drainage of the Aral Sea have led to profound violations of the ecological balance in the republic. By the time of the collapse of the USSR, the problems of land degradation, desertification, and deterioration of water and air quality had become acute and required systemic solutions.

In the context of the post-Soviet institutional vacuum, Uzbekistan was forced not only to respond promptly to the consequences of past environmental policies, but also to develop long-term sustainability-oriented approaches [8]. Thus, already in the 1990s, the first elements of environmental legislation began to take shape, a system of environmental management bodies was created, and cooperation with international organizations in the field of environmental protection was initiated.



Over time, the republic's environmental policy has become more systematic and institutionalized. The development of legislation was accompanied by the creation of relevant ministries and agencies, the expansion of the legal framework in the field of nature protection, emissions regulation, water use and waste management. It is important to note that Uzbekistan has consistently participated in shaping the global environmental architecture: the country has joined fundamental international agreements, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Thus, environmental policy began to be built not only on the basis of internal needs, but also within the framework of the global legal and political field [9].

A significant step in this direction was the adoption in 2024 of the Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment (effective from August 2025), prepared with the support of organizations such as GGGI and AFD. This document reflects the Republic's commitment to build environmental expertise at the strategic planning level, which meets international standards for sustainable development. Simultaneously with the internal reform of the environmental sphere, Uzbekistan actively integrated into international environmental initiatives [10]. Cooperation with such structures as UNDP, UNECE, the European Union, FAO and others has become particularly important. Together with them, projects were implemented to manage waste, reduce pesticide exposure, protect biodiversity and combat desertification.

Special attention on the international agenda is paid to the Aral Sea crisis, which continues to be one of the largest environmental disasters of the XX–XXI centuries. Uzbekistan, realizing its historical and geographical responsibility, promotes initiatives to restore ecosystems in the Aral Sea region, large-scale landscaping, reduce dust storms and protect public health. These actions fit into the framework of regional cooperation and diplomacy, where environmental policy is becoming an important tool for building sustainable cross-border mechanisms [11].

Along with responding to existing challenges, Uzbekistan's environmental policy in recent years has focused on the proactive development of a "green economy." This includes projects on renewable energy sources, waste recycling and the introduction of sustainable agricultural technologies. So, in 2024, the republic announced the launch of waste-to-energy projects with a total cost of over \$1.3 billion, which indicates a desire to use modern technologies to solve systemic environmental problems [12]. Special attention should be paid to measures for sustainable

water use, including the introduction of drip irrigation and soil conservation methods. Water resources, being strategically important for agriculture and the population, are becoming the subject of both internal modernization and international cooperation, in particular with the States of Central Asia.

It should be emphasized that environmental policy in Uzbekistan goes beyond the narrow-profile sphere and acquires intersectoral significance [13]. It is integrated into issues of social stability, health and food security. These relationships are particularly acute in ecologically vulnerable regions such as Karakalpakstan, where environmental degradation issues are superimposed on the economic vulnerability of the population. In this context, environmental policy performs an important function of political legitimization. The development of the environmental education system, the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, and support for public and media initiatives create conditions for the formation of an environmental culture that promotes the sustainability of the entire political system.

Finally, it is impossible not to mention the predictive function of environmental policy, which is increasingly clearly expressed in strategic documents and international commitments of the republic. The development of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), participation in climate forums, and the formulation of decarbonization goals indicate Uzbekistan's desire not only to respond to threats, but also to model a sustainable future [14]. Regional ecosystem initiatives, the introduction of strategic environmental assessment mechanisms, green investment programs and participation in climate diplomacy – all this determines the direction of movement for the future up to 2030-2040.

CONCLUSION. Thus, the environmental policy of Uzbekistan in the period from 1991 to 2024 demonstrates a progressive development from a response to a catastrophic environmental legacy to the formation of a strategic, institutionally mature and internationally oriented system of sustainable management of natural resources. Involvement in global processes, emphasis on the green economy, focus on strategic planning and regional cooperation turn the environmental agenda into one of the key pillars of Uzbekistan's state and international policy in the 21st century.

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