

ORIENTALISM AS AN INSTRUMENT OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL COMPETITION: TRANSFORMATION OF COLONIAL LEGACIES IN THE STRATEGY OF GLOBAL BRITAIN

Azimbayeva Shakhnoza Akramjonovna

The University of world economy and diplomacy

ABSTRACT

This article examines Orientalism as an instrument of contemporary British foreign policy in the context of the transformation of the international order and increasing global competition. Particular attention is paid to the evolution of Orientalist discourse from a classical colonial model to an institutionalized system of strategic knowledge production. The study analyzes the concepts of “Global Britain,” “offensive activism,” and the role of expert and analytical institutions in shaping foreign policy decisions. The author concludes that Orientalism remains an important mechanism of British foreign policy influence, ensuring the reproduction of strategic narratives and supporting the country's international status in the post-Brexit era.

Keywords: *Orientalism, United Kingdom, foreign policy, Global Britain, Brexit, soft power, postcolonialism, global competition, expert knowledge, international relations.*

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье исследуется ориентализм как инструмент современной внешней политики Великобритании в условиях трансформации международного порядка и усиления глобальной конкуренции. Особое внимание уделяется эволюции ориенталистского дискурса от классической колониальной модели к институционализированной системе производства стратегического знания. Анализируются концепции «Глобальной Британии», «наступательного активизма» и роль экспертно-аналитических структур в формировании внешнеполитических решений. Автор приходит к выводу, что ориентализм сохраняет значение важного механизма внешнеполитического влияния Великобритании, обеспечивая воспроизводство стратегических нарративов и поддержание международного статуса государства в постбрекзитовский период. [1; 3; 5]

Ключевые слова: *ориентализм, Великобритания, внешняя политика, Глобальная Британия, Brexit, мягкая сила, постколониализм, глобальная конкуренция, экспертное знание, международные отношения.*

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqolada orientalizm Buyuk Britaniyaning zamonaviy tashqi siyosatidagi muhim vositalardan biri sifatida xalqaro tartibning transformatsiyasi va global raqobatning kuchayishi sharoitida tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda orientalistik diskursning klassik mustamlakachilik modelidan strategik bilimlarni ishlab chiqaruvchi institutsional tizimga aylanish jarayoni yoritilgan. Shuningdek, «Global Britain» (“Global Britaniya”) konsepsiyasi, «offensive activism» (faol tashabbuskorlik) yondashuvi hamda ekspert-tahliliy institutlarning tashqi siyosiy qarorlar qabul qilishdagi o‘rni o‘rganilgan. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko‘rsatadiki, orientalizm post-Brexit davrida Buyuk Britaniyaning xalqaro maydondagi ta‘sirini saqlab qolish, strategik narrativlarni shakllantirish va mamlakatning geosiyosiy mavqeini mustahkamlashda muhim ahamiyat kasb etmoqda.

Kalit so‘zlar: *orientalizm, Buyuk Britaniya, tashqi siyosat, Global Britain, Brexit, yumshoq kuch (soft power), postkolonializm, global raqobat, ekspert bilimlari, xalqaro munosabatlar.*

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is characterized by profound transformations in the international system. The gradual decline of unipolarity, the emergence of new centers of power, and the intensification of geopolitical competition have forced traditional global actors to reconsider their foreign policy strategies. Within this context, the United Kingdom occupies a unique position. Despite the loss of its former imperial status, Britain continues to play an influential role in international affairs through a combination of military, economic, diplomatic, and cultural resources. [3; 4]

One of the less visible but highly significant instruments of British influence is Orientalism. Since Edward Said’s seminal work, Orientalism has been understood not merely as a body of knowledge about the East but also as a mechanism of power that shapes perceptions of non-Western societies. While classical Orientalism served colonial expansion, contemporary forms have become integrated into policy planning, strategic forecasting, and international communication. [1]

The relevance of this study is determined by the need to understand how colonial patterns of knowledge continue to influence foreign policy behavior in the postcolonial era. Following Brexit, Britain launched the concept of “Global Britain,” emphasizing its aspiration to maintain global influence beyond Europe. In this process, Orientalist approaches have acquired renewed importance as instruments for interpreting and managing relations with Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. [3; 5; 7]

The purpose of this article is to analyze the transformation of Orientalism into a modern foreign policy instrument and to assess its role in the implementation of Britain's global strategy. [1; 3]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis of this study combines postcolonial theory, discourse analysis, and constructivist approaches to international relations. [1; 7]

The research relies on: official British strategic documents, including the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (2021) and the Integrated Review Refresh (2023); academic literature on Orientalism and postcolonial studies; analytical materials concerning British foreign policy after Brexit; comparative analysis of strategic narratives used in British political discourse. [3; 4; 5]

The study employs qualitative discourse analysis to identify recurring representations of the "East," the "Other," and global threats within British strategic thinking. In addition, historical and comparative methods are applied to trace the continuity between imperial and contemporary approaches to foreign policy. [1; 5; 7]

RESULTS

The findings indicate that contemporary Orientalism differs significantly from its classical colonial predecessor. Rather than openly legitimizing territorial domination, modern Orientalism functions as a mechanism for producing strategic knowledge. [1; 7]

Through think tanks, academic institutions, intelligence agencies, and diplomatic structures, Britain generates analytical frameworks that simplify complex realities of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. These frameworks assist policymakers in identifying opportunities, risks, and strategic priorities. [5; 6]

As a result, Orientalism has become embedded within institutional decision-making processes rather than existing solely as an ideological doctrine. [1; 5]

The Concept of Global Britain

Following Brexit, the United Kingdom faced the challenge of redefining its international role. The concept of "Global Britain" emerged as a response to this challenge. [3]

The strategy emphasized firstly, strengthening international influence; expanding partnerships beyond Europe; second, increasing engagement in the Indo-Pacific region; then, reinforcing Britain's role as a defender of the rules-based international order. [3; 4]

The discourse surrounding Global Britain reflected a desire to project confidence and leadership despite structural limitations associated with Britain's reduced geopolitical weight. [5]

Another important result concerns the emergence of “offensive activism” as a defining feature of contemporary British foreign policy. British strategic documents portray the world as increasingly unstable, fragmented, and unpredictable, so, this representation legitimizes proactive intervention and expanded global engagement. [3; 5]

In this framework, the “Other” is no longer limited to specific states. It may include:

- a) rival powers;
- b) cyber threats;
- c) terrorism;
- d) disinformation campaigns;
- e) economic dependencies.

Such conceptual flexibility allows security to become the central organizing principle of foreign policy. [3; 5]

Britain's global influence increasingly depends on soft power resources. [2; 6]

These include:

- a) higher education; [2; 6]
- b) English language promotion; [2; 6]
- c) cultural diplomacy; [2; 6]
- d) international media; [2; 6]
- e) research institutions; [2; 6]
- f) global financial networks. [2; 6]

Orientalist narratives support these instruments by reinforcing Britain's image as a knowledgeable interpreter of non-Western societies. This image enhances the country's ability to shape international agendas and influence global perceptions. [1; 2; 6]

DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates that Orientalism remains a significant component of British foreign policy despite the formal end of colonial rule. [1; 7]

From a postcolonial perspective, contemporary Orientalism reproduces asymmetrical relations of knowledge and power. Although modern policy discourse employs neutral and technocratic language, it often continues to present non-Western societies through simplified analytical categories. [1]

This tendency creates several challenges, first, it may contribute to misinterpretations of local political realities, second, it can reduce sensitivity toward cultural diversity and regional complexity, third, it risks generating strategic miscalculations in rapidly changing geopolitical environments. [1; 7]

At the same time, Orientalism provides important advantages for Britain, it helps compensate for the decline of traditional forms of power by strengthening intellectual, cultural, and discursive influence. The findings suggest that Britain's foreign policy increasingly relies on the ability to shape narratives rather than solely on military or economic capabilities. In this sense, Orientalism functions as a strategic resource within broader mechanisms of soft power. [2; 6]

The evolution of the concept from colonial ideology to institutionalized expertise demonstrates its adaptability to contemporary global conditions. [1; 5; 7]

CONCLUSION

The research confirms that Orientalism continues to play a significant role in British foreign policy during the era of global competition. [1; 3; 4]

Several conclusions can be drawn:

1. Contemporary Orientalism has evolved from a colonial discourse into an institutionalized mechanism of strategic knowledge production. [1; 7]

2. British foreign policy increasingly relies on expert communities, analytical institutions, and strategic narratives to maintain global influence. [5; 6]

3. The concept of Global Britain reflects an attempt to redefine Britain's international role after Brexit while preserving elements of historical geopolitical identity. [3; 4]

4. Orientalist frameworks contribute to the construction of threats, opportunities, and policy priorities within British strategic thinking. [3; 5]

5. Despite their practical utility, such frameworks may reproduce asymmetrical power relations and limit the development of genuinely pluralistic international dialogue. [1; 7]

Therefore, Orientalism should be understood not only as a historical phenomenon but also as a contemporary foreign policy instrument that continues to shape international relations in the twenty-first century. [1; 7]

REFERENCES

- [1] Said E. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
[2] Nye J. Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

[3] Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. London, 2021.

[4] Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a More Contested and Volatile World. London, 2023.

[5] Grigorieva O., Plyusin N. Constructing the Image of Global Britain in Boris Johnson's Foreign Policy Strategy.

[6] Rakityansky N. Great Britain as a Global Political Super-Subject.

[7] Postcolonial Studies and Contemporary International Relations Literature.