

INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL MEDIATION IN INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

R. Bektrumov, B. Gabdullina, A. Tursynbek

ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the 21st century, world politics faced the fact that the old methods of dispute resolution were no longer working. Conflicts today arise not only between countries, but also within societies due to social polarization or ethnic contradictions. Traditional diplomacy and courts are often too slow to stop escalation at an early stage. That is why there is an increasing need for flexible tools that can adapt to new challenges. One of these solutions is political mediation. Unlike a court, where there is always a winner and a loser, mediation seeks a compromise through the participation of a neutral mediator. The point here is not just to "close" a dispute, but to restore dialogue and preserve relations between the parties. Today, these practices are actively moving from the private sphere into big politics, becoming an important part of modern international diplomacy. The experience of different countries shows that mediation cannot be a universal "pill". Its success directly depends on the political culture, the structure of government, and the degree to which civil society is developed in a particular state. Therefore, it is impossible to simply copy someone else's model; it is necessary to study how different countries adapt mediation to their internal conditions and which of these approaches can take root in a different environment. This allows us to consider mediation as an institutional mechanism that is formed depending on the specifics of the political system and the level of development of public institutions. As a multiethnic state and a key player in ensuring regional security, Kazakhstan needs reliable mechanisms for public dialogue. In the context of current social transformations, the development of institutional foundations of mediation is becoming a systemic necessity.

Keywords: Political Mediation, Institutional Foundations, Political Conflict, Communicative Interaction, Reconciliation of Interests, International Practice, Mediation Models, Conflict Resolution.

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Халықаралық практика контексіндегі саяси медиацияның институционалдық негіздері

Аңдатпа. XXI ғасырдың басында әлемдік саясат дауларды шешудің дәстүрлі әдістерінің тиімділігі төмендей бастағанын көрсетті. Қазіргі уақытта қақтығыстар тек мемлекеттер арасында ғана емес, сонымен қатар әлеуметтік поляризация мен этникалық қайшылықтар салдарынан қоғамдардың ішінде де туындауда. Дәстүрлі дипломатия мен сот жүйесі көбінесе шиеленістің бастапқы кезеңінде оның ушығуын дер кезінде тоқтатуға қауқарсыз болып келеді. Осыған байланысты жаңа сын-қатерлерге бейімделе алатын икемді құралдарға деген қажеттілік артып отыр. Осындай құралдардың бірі – саяси медиация. Сот үдерісінен айырмашылығы, онда әрқашан жеңімпаз бен жеңілген анықталса, медиация бейтарап делдалдың қатысуымен тараптар арасында ымыраға келуді көздейді. Оның басты мақсаты тек дауды «жабу» емес, сонымен қатар тараптар арасындағы диалогты қалпына келтіру және өзара қатынастарды сақтау болып табылады. Қазіргі таңда бұл тәжірибелер жеке саладан шығып, үлкен саясатқа белсенді түрде еніп, заманауи халықаралық дипломатияның маңызды құрамдас бөлігіне айналуда. Әртүрлі елдердің тәжірибесі медиацияның әмбебап шешім екенін көрсетеді. Оның тиімділігі саяси мәдениетке, билік құрылымына және азаматтық қоғамның даму деңгейіне тікелей байланысты. Сондықтан өзге елдердің моделін сол күйінде көшіру мүмкін емес – әр мемлекет медиацияны өз ішкі жағдайларына қалай бейімдейтінін және қандай тәсілдердің басқа ортада тиімді қолданылуы мүмкін екенін зерттеу қажет. Бұл медиацияны саяси жүйенің ерекшеліктеріне және қоғамдық институттардың даму деңгейіне байланысты қалыптасатын институционалдық механизм ретінде қарастыруға мүмкіндік береді. Көпэтносты мемлекет әрі өңірлік қауіпсіздікті қамтамасыз етудегі маңызды актор ретінде Қазақстанға қоғамдық диалогтың сенімді тетіктері қажет. Ағымдағы әлеуметтік трансформациялар жағдайында медиацияның институционалдық негіздерін дамыту жүйелі қажеттілікке айналады.

Түйін сөздер: саяси медиация, институционалдық негіздер, саяси қақтығыс, коммуникативтік өзара іс-қимыл, мүдделерді үйлестіру, халықаралық практика, медиация модельдері, қақтығыстарды реттеу.

Институциональные основы политической медиации в международной практике

Аннотация. В начале XXI века мировая политика столкнулась с тем, что старые методы решения споров перестают работать. Конфликты сегодня возникают не только между странами, но и внутри обществ – из-за социальной поляризации или этнических противоречий. Традиционная дипломатия и суды часто оказываются слишком неповоротливыми, чтобы остановить эскалацию на ранних этапах. Именно поэтому возрастает потребность в гибких инструментах, способных адаптироваться к новым вызовам. Одним из таких решений стала политическая медиация. В отличие от суда, где всегда есть победитель и проигравший, медиация через участие нейтрального посредника ищет компромисс. Суть здесь не просто в том, чтобы «закрыть» спор, а в восстановлении диалога и сохранении отношений между сторонами. Сегодня эти практики активно проникают из частной сферы в большую политику, становясь важной частью современной международной дипломатии. Опыт разных стран показывает: медиация не может быть универсальной «таблеткой». Ее успех напрямую зависит от политической культуры, структуры власти и того, насколько развито гражданское общество в конкретном государстве. Поэтому просто скопировать чужую модель нельзя – необходимо изучать, как разные страны адаптируют посредничество под свои внутренние условия и какие из этих подходов могут прижиться в другой среде. Это позволяет рассматривать медиацию как институциональный механизм, формирующийся в зависимости от особенностей политической системы и уровня развития общественных институтов. Будучи полиэтничным государством и ключевым игроком в обеспечении региональной безопасности, Казахстан нуждается в надежных механизмах общественного диалога. В условиях текущих социальных трансформаций развитие институциональных основ медиации становится системной необходимостью.

Ключевые слова: политическая медиация, институциональные основы, политический конфликт, коммуникативное взаимодействие, согласование интересов, международная практика, модели медиации, урегулирование конфликтов.

Introduction

In the context of the increasing complexity of modern political processes and the transformation of the nature of conflicts, the importance of institutional mechanisms for their regulation is increasing. Political conflicts in the modern world are becoming multi-layered, involving a wide range of actors and affecting various levels of social interaction. In these circumstances, mediation acts not only as an applied dispute resolution tool, but also as an institutionalized form of political dialogue, ensuring the reconciliation of interests and reducing social tension. In the philosophical dimension, mediation can be considered as a special form of social interaction in which conflict is transformed from destructive confrontation into a controlled process of communication and reconciliation of the interests of the parties. This interpretation makes it possible to analyze mediation practices not only in terms of their effectiveness, but also as an element of the institutional structure of modern political systems.

In the previously published work "Prospects for the development of the Mediation Institute", the issues of the development of mediation mechanisms in Kazakhstan in the context of modern global challenges and social transformation were considered [1]. Within the framework of this study, the key advantages of mediation are analyzed – flexibility of procedures, confidentiality of the negotiation process and a focus on reaching a compromise, and the main barriers preventing its effective implementation are identified.

The analysis of foreign experience shows that the effectiveness of mediation mechanisms is largely determined by the institutional architecture of the political system and the peculiarities of the socio-cultural environment. In states of the Western democratic tradition, such as the United States of America and Norway, mediation, as a rule, develops within the framework of clearly formalized procedures based on a developed legal framework, professional standards of mediation and institutional independence of mediators [2]. In East Asian countries, including China and South Korea, conflict resolution practices are often based on other foundations – traditions of collective responsibility, social harmony, and moral and normative mechanisms for maintaining harmony in society. In turn, a number of Eurasian states, including Russia, are characterized by a more active role of the state in mediation processes, when state institutions act as important participants or coordinators in resolving political contradictions. The variety of institutional models and cultural foundations of mediation practices allows us to conclude that there is virtually no universal and equally applicable model of political mediation for all countries. Mediation mechanisms are formed in each country in different ways and reflect the specifics of its political culture and institutional structure. In this regard, a comparative study of international mediation models is of particular scientific importance, which makes it possible to identify their strengths and assess the possibilities of adapting individual elements in other political and institutional contexts.

The object of the study is the processes of resolving political conflicts using mediation mechanisms in modern political systems. The subject of the research is the institutional, cultural and procedural features of the use of mediation in the political processes of various states, as well as the possibilities of adapting the international experience of mediation conflict resolution in the conditions of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

For the Republic of Kazakhstan, the issues of developing effective mechanisms of political mediation are becoming particularly relevant. Kazakhstan is a multiethnic, multi-confessional state, where ensuring social stability and maintaining interethnic harmony are important elements of state policy [3]. The country is actively involved in regional security and cooperation processes in Central Asia. In the context of ongoing socio-political transformations, the importance of preventive conflict resolution tools aimed at strengthening public dialogue between the state, civil society and various social groups is increasing.

The purpose of this study is a comprehensive comparative analysis of the world's leading models of political mediation (USA, Norway, China, Russia and South Korea) to identify their conceptual differences and substantiate the optimal ways of their adaptation in the political and legal system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Achieving this goal involves solving problems related to the analysis of theoretical approaches to understanding political mediation, researching the specifics of its application in different countries, comparing institutional and cultural models of mediation, as well as assessing the possibilities of their adaptation in the Kazakh context.

The hypothesis of this study is based on the assumption that the existing institutional models of political mediation were formed in specific institutional and cultural conditions and therefore cannot be mechanically reproduced in the political system of Kazakhstan without appropriate adaptation. It is assumed that the most promising direction for the development of the institute of political mediation in the Kazakh context may be the formation of a hybrid model combining the procedural and legal mechanisms of Western mediation practice, socio-cultural principles of reconciliation of interests characteristic of East Asian societies, as well as elements of state-oriented mediation inherent in a number of Eurasian political systems.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of the conceptual foundations of a hybrid model of political mediation, taking into account the political, legal and socio-cultural characteristics of Kazakhstan. The study suggests the author's typology of models of political mediation, formed on the basis of a comparative analysis of the international experience of the USA, Norway, China, Russia and South Korea. The possibility of synthesizing various approaches to mediation and their integration into the national system of political conflict management is substantiated, which opens up prospects for the formation of more adaptive and sustainable mechanisms of social harmony.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the research is formed on the basis of a combination of comparative political science and qualitative analysis approaches, which makes it possible to comprehensively reveal the content of the topic and provide a solution to the research task. The choice of these methods is conditioned by the need to study political mediation as a multi-layered phenomenon operating in various institutional and socio-cultural conditions.

The work uses a comparative method aimed at comparing the models of political mediation that have been formed in the USA, Norway, China, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea. This approach makes it possible to identify differences in the degree of institutionalization of mediation practices, determine the role of the state and civil society institutions, and analyze the impact of the political and cultural environment on the effectiveness of conflict resolution.

Additionally, the case study method is used, aimed at in-depth study of specific examples of the use of mediation mechanisms in political processes. The appeal to empirical cases allows us to identify the features of the functioning of negotiation practices, determine the role of the mediator in the structure of the conflict and evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies of interaction between the parties.

The application of these methods together provides a holistic disclosure of the research topic and forms an analytical basis for assessing the possibilities of adapting the international experience of political mediation in the conditions of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

1 Theoretical and philosophical foundations of political mediation

1.1 The conceptual approaches and evolution of political mediation

In modern political theory, mediation is considered not only as an applied mechanism for conflict resolution, but also as an institutionalized form of organizing political interaction. As the structure of political conflicts becomes more complex and the range of actors involved expands, the importance of mechanisms for coordinating interests and reducing social tension increases. In the philosophical dimension, mediation can be considered as a special form of social interaction, in which conflict is transformed from destructive confrontation into a controlled communication process. This approach makes it possible to analyze mediation not only as a dispute resolution tool, but also as an element of the institutional structure of modern political systems.

In a philosophical context, political mediation can be interpreted through the prism of Yu's theory of communicative action. Habermas, according to which social interaction is based on a rational dialogue aimed at achieving mutual understanding between the participants [4]. Within the framework of this approach, mediation is a form of institutionalized communication in which the conflicting parties move from strategic behavior focused on achieving unilateral advantages to communicative interaction involving the coordination of positions and interests. This allows us to consider mediation not only as a negotiation technology, but also as a mechanism for forming social harmony in the political space.

The evolution of ideas about mediation reflects changes in the nature of conflicts. While the classical diplomatic approach, focused on interstate negotiations and formal agreements, dominated until the end of the 20th century, flexible and inclusive settlement mechanisms that take into account the participation of various social and political actors are becoming increasingly important in modern conditions. Back then, the mediator was usually a strong state or a reputable international organization. The main task of mediation at this stage was to end the active phase of the conflict and reach temporary agreements aimed at stabilizing the situation.

From an institutional point of view, the development of mediation practices reflects the formation of sustainable conflict management

mechanisms, which consolidate the roles of intermediaries, procedures for interaction between the parties and the degree of participation of state and non-state actors. Ralph Dahrendorff made a significant contribution to the theoretical understanding of the nature of conflicts, considering conflict as an inevitable element of social development. In his opinion, "the main source of conflict is not economic, but political contradictions between social groups associated with the concentration of power in some and the lack of it in others," and the differential distribution of power "invariably becomes the determining factor in systematic social conflicts" [5]. Dahrendorf emphasized that the confrontation between dominant and subordinate groups forms the dynamics of social change, as a result of which conflicts should not be eliminated, but institutionally regulated. The further development of conflictological theory is related to the concept of "conflict maturity" proposed by William Zartman. According to this model, the conflict becomes susceptible to settlement when the parties reach a state of "mutually painful deadlock", when the further continuation of the confrontation begins to be perceived by the participants as excessively costly and devoid of rational prospects [6]. At this stage, the likelihood of a constructive dialogue increases, and the intervention of a neutral mediator can play a key role in structuring the negotiation process and reaching mutually acceptable solutions. A significant turn in the development of modern negotiation and mediation theory is associated with the work of representatives of the Harvard School of Negotiation – Roger Fisher and William Ury. In their research, they proposed a conceptually different approach to the organization of the negotiation process, based on the differentiation of positions and real interests of the parties to the conflict. The authors emphasized that "behind opposing positions, along with contradictions, there are shared and acceptable interests" [7, p. 25]. According to this logic, a sustainable settlement is possible only when the parties seek to identify the underlying causes of disagreements and reconcile their underlying interests, rather than limiting themselves to upholding formal demands. Based on the analysis of modern theoretical concepts, it can be argued that mediation is increasingly seen as a tool not only for settlement, but also for sustainable conflict management, focused on reconciling interests and building trust. The current stage in the development of media-

tion practices is characterized by the integration of digital technologies into conflict resolution processes. In these circumstances, political mediation is becoming particularly important for the Republic of Kazakhstan, acting as a flexible mechanism for institutionalizing dialogue between the state and society. It seems reasonable to assume that we are not talking about the mechanical borrowing of foreign models, but about the formation of a nationally adapted practice combining modern legal instruments with traditions of social harmony characteristic of the Kazakh socio-political context. Such a model makes it possible to reduce the conflict potential at the early stages of its formation and thereby contributes to strengthening the stability and predictability of

the country's political development. Ultimately, the ability of political actors to engage in constructive dialogue and reach compromise solutions becomes one of the key conditions for the stable functioning of the political system.

1.2 The institutional models of political mediation

International experience shows that mediation is not a single standard, but a flexible set of tools that works in each part of the world in its own way. Depending on the political culture and the role of the state, three key models can be distinguished, each of which solves the problem of reconciliation of the parties in its own way, indicated in table 1.

Table 1 - Typology of political mediation models

Model type	Type of mediation	Countries	Key Principle
Western	Interest-oriented	USA, Norway	Reconciliation of the interests of the parties to the conflict
East Asian	Socio-cultural	China, South Korea	Preservation of social harmony
Eurasian	Government-centered	Russia	State arbitration and political mediation

The Western model of political mediation has been most developed in the countries of the liberal democratic tradition and was largely influenced by the theoretical ideas of representatives of the Harvard School of Negotiation - Roger Fisher and William Ury. This approach is based on the principle of prioritizing the interests of the parties over their formally stated positions [7]. From this point of view, an effective conflict resolution becomes possible only if the negotiators are able to move beyond the rigid positional confrontation and focus on identifying the underlying needs, motives and mutual expectations of the conflict situation. The mediator does not act as an arbitrator or a decision-making party, but as a neutral organizer of the negotiation process. Mediator's function is to structure the dialogue, reduce the level of conflict tension and create conditions for constructive discussion [8]. This approach has become widespread in the political and administrative practice of the United States of America, as well as in a number of Western European countries. In Norway, for example, mediation procedures are institutionalized and actively used in the settlement of social and political contradictions. Elements of interest-based mediation

are used in international relations, in particular in diplomatic negotiations and peacekeeping mediation missions.

The formation of the East Asian model of political mediation took place under the noticeable influence of the cultural and philosophical traditions of the region, primarily Confucian ethics. The key values are tradition, social harmony, collective responsibility and maintaining social balance. These principles have largely determined the specifics of mediation practices in East Asian countries. Unlike the Western approach, which focuses on formalized negotiation procedures and identifying the interests of the parties, the East Asian model focuses primarily on restoring broken social relations. The conflict in this context is considered not only as a clash of interests, but also as a manifestation of an imbalance in the system of public relations. A mediator in such a system often plays the role of an authoritative mediator with social recognition and moral authority. Its activities are aimed at reaching consensus, taking into account cultural norms of interaction and the peculiarities of the local community. Such practices are widespread in East Asian countries, primarily in China and South Ko-

rea. A typical example of the institutionalization of this approach is the system of “people’s mediation” in China [9]. Public mediation committees function at the local community level and serve as a mechanism for resolving social, domestic and administrative conflicts, ensuring the preservation of social harmony at the local level. The formation of such institutions is largely due to the peculiarities of Eastern legal culture characteristic of Asian societies.

The Eurasian model of political mediation is characterized by a more significant role of the state in regulating conflict processes. In such systems, state institutions act not only as organizers of the negotiation process, but also as an important guarantor of the implementation of the agreements reached. Mediation mechanisms in such conditions are often integrated into the structure of public administration and used as a tool to maintain political stability. In modern conditions, it can be argued that the state’s participation in mediation processes often goes beyond the classical role of a neutral mediator, transforming into a form of institutional arbitration. Based on the analysis of Eurasian practices, it can be argued that in some cases government agencies assume the functions of a guarantor of the agreements reached, ensuring their implementation and monitoring the implementation of agreed decisions. This model is typical for states with a high degree of centralization of power, including the Russian Federation, where mediation processes develop with the active participation of state institutions [10]. The combination of mediation procedures with elements of political arbitration helps to maintain the stability of negotiation mechanisms, reducing the risks of destabilization and providing institutional support for the agreements reached.

2 Comparative analysis of international models

In modern world politics, mediation mechanisms are gradually taking an increasingly prominent place among the tools for regulating conflict situations and maintaining political stability. In order to identify the characteristic features of various approaches to the application of mediation practices, this study provides a comparative analysis of the international experience of political mediation [11]. The United States of America, Norway, China, Russia and South Korea were

selected as empirical cases. The choice of these countries is due to the fact that they represent different types of political and institutional systems, which makes it possible to trace the variety of forms of mediation and identify key trends in the development of mediation mechanisms in modern world politics. A comparative analysis allows us to conditionally identify three main areas of development of political mediation: Western, East Asian and Eurasian. Within the framework of the current stage of development of political systems, it seems reasonable to assume that each of these mediation models forms its own logic of conflict resolution and negotiation mechanisms, determined by historical experience, the institutional configuration of power and the socio-cultural characteristics of the respective societies. Based on a comparative analysis, it can be argued that these differences are manifested both in the nature of the participation of the state and civil society, as well as in the choice of negotiation strategies and the degree of institutionalization of mediation procedures. In this regard, it seems reasonable to assume that such an approach opens up opportunities for a critical assessment of the potential for adaptation of individual mediation mechanisms in other political conditions, including the Republic of Kazakhstan, taking into account its institutional characteristics and cultural traditions.

2.1 Western model: USA and Norway

The Western model of political mediation is characterized by a high level of institutionalization, a developed regulatory framework, and active interaction between government institutions and civil society [12]. Based on the analysis of theoretical and applied approaches, it may be suggested that the key feature of this model is the focus on conflict transformation through the consistent convergence of the parties’ positions and the identification of their basic interests within the framework of the Harvard Negotiation School. The peculiarity of this model is the combination of pragmatic methods of organizing negotiations with the value principles of democratic governance. These principles include transparency of procedures, inclusiveness of decision-making, participation of various social groups in the discussion of socially significant issues, as well as respect for the neutrality of the mediator. The combination of these elements forms an institutional environment in which mediation is per-

ceived as a legitimate and effective tool for regulating political and social contradictions.

In the United States, mediation practices have become widespread at both the federal and regional levels of government. Specialized government agencies and independent mediation organizations involved in the regulation of labor, social, and socio-political conflicts played a significant role in the formation of the mediation institute.

One of the illustrative examples of responding to socio-political tensions was the events in Charlotte (North Carolina, USA) in 2016. The trigger of the large-scale protest mobilization was the death of African-American Keith Lamont Scott as a result of the actions of police officers, which caused a wide public outcry and led to an escalation of protest activity, accompanied by clashes with law enforcement agencies [13]. The analysis presented in the *Advancing Charlotte* analytical report makes it possible to interpret these events not as a single crisis episode, but as a manifestation of deeper structural dysfunctions, including chronic tension in interaction between the police and local communities, as well as a persistent lack of institutional trust in public authorities [14]. In the context of the worsening conflict dynamics, the focus of the settlement has shifted towards the formation of inclusive dialogue mechanisms focused on interaction between municipal authorities, law enforcement agencies and representatives of local communities. The institutionalization of negotiation platforms has contributed to the transformation of confrontational interaction into a process of reconciling the interests of the parties. The key areas of the mediation dialogue were ensuring public safety, increasing transparency in police activities, and restoring trust between society and government institutions.

Another example of the development of mediation mechanisms is the practice of the New York State Supreme Court, which has a specialized mediation program focused on faster and less costly settlement of civil disputes compared to traditional judicial procedures. The significance of this case goes beyond the exclusively legal practice, as it demonstrates that the stability of mediation institutions largely depends on the level of professional training of intermediaries, the availability of accreditation mechanisms and compliance with ethical standards [15]. From a political science point of view, this experience

shows that the effectiveness of mediation is directly related to the institutional maturity of the system and the degree of public confidence in mediation procedures.

Norway, in turn, presents a different option, focused primarily on international mediation and peacemaking diplomacy. For several decades, Norwegian diplomacy has been actively involved in resolving international conflicts, mediating negotiations between States, political movements, and armed groups. A special feature of this approach is the so-called "quiet diplomacy", based on the principles of political neutrality, confidentiality of the negotiation process and long-term maintenance of dialogue between the parties. The international recognition of Norwegian mediation practices is largely related to the country's participation in peace processes in various regions of the world. One of the most famous examples is Norway's mediation in negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC rebel movement, which culminated in the signing of a peace agreement in 2016 [16]. In the future, Norwegian diplomacy continued to develop mediation initiatives aimed at resolving political and humanitarian conflicts in various regions. Norway's experience is of interest not only as an example of international mediation, but also as a model for building long-term trust between the parties to a protracted conflict. In a broader context, Norwegian practice demonstrates that successful political mediation involves not only formal mediation, but also the creation of a stable communication environment in which the parties gradually move from mutual distrust to constructive negotiation interaction. Mediation has a stable regulatory framework within Norway itself. In particular, Law No. 90 of June 17, 2005 "On Mediation and Judicial proceedings in Civil cases" is in force, which establishes the possibility of using both judicial and extrajudicial mediation in civil disputes, and also provides for the obligation of courts to facilitate the peaceful settlement of conflicts between the parties [17]. The Law establishes procedures for judicial mediation and is aimed at stimulating voluntary dispute resolution, reducing the burden on the judicial system and creating a culture of negotiated conflict resolution. This approach makes it possible to find sustainable and truly compromise solutions even in the face of the most acute social and political clashes, turning conflict from a destructive force into a manageable process of searching for common interests.

2.2 The East Asian model: China and South Korea

The East Asian approach to mediation in political processes is a special mediation model that differs significantly from Western practices based on strict legal formalism, the institutional neutrality of the mediator and the procedural rationality of the negotiation process. Mediation mechanisms in East Asian countries were formed in a different cultural environment, where the most important role is played by the values of tradition, social balance and respect for hierarchy [18]. Cultural factors in such systems are not a secondary background, but a key condition for the effectiveness of mediation, especially in the context of complex international negotiations, such as the settlement of the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula [19]. The mediator acts not only as the coordinator of the negotiations, but also as the bearer of the symbolic trust necessary to maintain dialogue between the parties to the conflict.

The most vivid example of the implementation of the East Asian model of political mediation is China's mediation role in the six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear program. Since 2003, Beijing has assumed the function of the organizer of the negotiation process and a kind of "honest broker", which has become an important stage in the formation of China's international mediation potential [20]. In this case, China's diplomatic strategy was based not so much on rigidly formalized procedures as on a combination of diplomatic influence, historically established political ties and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, which, however, was complemented by active participation in the settlement process as the crisis worsened. Here we can identify several key elements that determine the specifics of the Chinese approach. First, we are talking about the mediator model, which, while remaining focused on maintaining harmony, has significant political influence. China was not a completely neutral party in the Western sense, as it had its own strategic interests related to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Nevertheless, Beijing has demonstrated relative impartiality in managing the negotiation process, creating conditions for constructive dialogue and a gradual reduction in the level of confrontation between the participants. Secondly, the cultural foundations of Chinese mediation practice are largely related to the Confucian philosophical tradition, in which harmony is considered as the

most desirable state of social relations [9]. Mediation is aimed at restoring agreement through mutual concessions and respect for the mediator's position. The practice of the six-party talks clearly demonstrates how these cultural attitudes are implemented in political diplomacy. China acted as a kind of "problem communicator" and at the same time a "conflict softener". Thus, using special political and diplomatic relations with the DPRK, China has consistently sought to keep Pyongyang in the negotiation process, while simultaneously maintaining cooperation with key international actors, including the United States, South Korea, Japan and Russia. The gradual, incremental nature of negotiations typical of Chinese diplomacy, which involves reaching agreements through a system of mutual concessions, reflects a pragmatic model of consensus-building rooted in the political culture of the region.

Mediation practice in the Republic of Korea, in turn, is formed as a synthetic model combining traditional cultural foundations with modern institutional mechanisms. Historically, mediation in Korean society, as in China, was based on communal forms of conflict management, where authoritative representatives of the community played a significant role, contributing to the restoration of social harmony. In modern conditions, it seems reasonable to assume that the Republic of Korea is facing the need to institutionalize mediation practices, especially in the context of inter-Korean relations, where a high level of political and historical tension persists [21]. The study of scientific approaches shows that in such conditions, the external side often copes with the role of mediator better. Having a certain political distance makes it possible to act more effectively, although this makes one doubt that the neutrality of a mediator is always mandatory.

South Korea is now actively updating its mediation tools, trying to integrate them into the international system of pre-trial dispute resolution. An illustrative example is the country's accession to the Singapore Convention in 2019 [22]. This confirms Seoul's desire to strengthen the legislative framework and become a prominent player in global conflict resolution. It can be assumed that a special hybrid model is developing in Korea: it combines national mediation traditions and modern legal standards, which helps the system to survive even in a difficult political environment.

The experience of China and South Korea suggests that East Asia has developed its own

approach to political mediation, which in many ways runs counter to Western standards. Here, the authority of the mediator himself, personal trust in him and the desire to preserve public harmony are more important. In such a system, peaceful outcome and harmony are valued more highly than literal adherence to formal rules.

2.3 The Eurasian model: Russia

The Eurasian model of political mediation is characterized by the prominent role of the state in organizing negotiation processes and regulating conflict situations between various social and political actors. Unlike Western democratic systems, where mediation practices rely heavily on the activities of independent intermediaries and civil society institutions, in the countries of the Eurasian space, a significant part of mediation functions are concentrated in government structures.

In Russia's foreign policy practice, participation in conflict resolution in the post-Soviet space was often accompanied by the use of rather harsh negotiation strategies [23]. State institutions acted not only as intermediaries, but also as guarantors of the implementation of the agreements reached. This model involves a combination of diplomatic efforts with the use of political, economic and, if necessary, military-political instruments of influence aimed at stabilizing the conflict situation.

One of the most famous examples of Russia's mediation role was its participation in the settlement of the civil war in Tajikistan. The Moscow Agreement on Peace and National Accord concluded in 1997 between the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition put an end to many years of armed confrontation [24]. The Russian Federation, together with international organizations, took an active part in the negotiation process and played an important role in shaping the conditions for a peaceful settlement. The agreement provided for the redistribution of political powers and the inclusion of opposition representatives in the system of state power, which contributed to the end of the armed phase of the confrontation and created the prerequisites for subsequent political stabilization.

Significant experience in combining forceful methods with negotiation was gained during the Chechen conflict. The Khasavyurt Agreements of 1996 made it possible to stop active hostilities [25], confirming that political dialogue can be an

effective tool for stabilizing the situation, even temporarily. It can be assumed that the further actions of the federal center to include regional elites in the country's governance system became a logical transition from short-term measures to building long-term political stability. Similar features can be seen in other conflicts in the post-Soviet space. For example, in Transnistria, Russian structures participated in multilateral formats, trying to prevent escalation and maintain a balance of interests between the parties.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which began in 2014 and entered a full-scale phase in 2022, requires special analysis. To date, it remains unresolved. Current developments suggest that in conditions of extreme polarization and large-scale military confrontation, the possibilities of classical mediation are exhausted.

The specifics of the Russian approach to mediation are visible not only in the international arena, but also within the country. The State plays a central role here: it undertakes the mission of creating platforms for negotiations and acts as an arbitrator in disputes between various social and political groups. An illustrative example of this approach was the pension reform of 2018, which provided for an increase in the retirement age. The draft law, introduced by the Government of the Russian Federation in June 2018, caused a large-scale public discussion and protests in various regions of the country [26]. According to the results of sociological research, a significant part of the population perceived the reform as socially unfair, which contributed to the growth of public discontent and increased protest sentiments. In response to the situation, government institutions initiated a series of consultation and negotiation procedures with the participation of representatives of trade union organizations, the expert community, regional authorities and public associations. Parliamentary hearings and public discussions held in the State Duma of the Russian Federation played a significant role in the discussion of the reform. During the negotiation process, the initial draft of the reform was partially revised: in particular, it was proposed to lower the planned retirement age for women from 63 to 60 years, as well as provide additional social guarantees for citizens of pre-retirement age. The adopted adjustments made it possible to reduce the level of social tension to a certain extent and adapt the reform parameters to public expectations.

An analysis of Russian practices shows that in the Eurasian political context mediation acts as a variable mechanism that adapts to the specifics of conflicts. In the foreign policy sphere, mediation processes are often combined with elements of diplomatic pressure and deterrence strategies, while in domestic politics a state-centered settlement model prevails. Dialogue in such conditions is formed through institutionalized channels — public consultations, parliamentary procedures and direct negotiations between the state and social groups. In general, the Eurasian model is characterized by the dominant role of the state while maintaining the participation of public actors, and its key function is not only to resolve contradictions, but also to ensure sustainable political stability through preventive containment of conflict escalation.

3 The possibilities of adapting the international experience of political mediation in Kazakhstan

In the context of the transformation of socio-political processes, it seems reasonable to assume that the adaptation of the international experience of political mediation in the Republic of Kazakhstan should be carried out taking into account the institutional features of the national political system, as well as the socio-cultural structure of society. Kazakhstan, being a multiethnic and multi-confessional state, is characterized by a complex configuration of interaction between various ethnocultural and social groups, which leads to the increased importance of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. Based on the analysis of existing practices, it can be argued that maintaining a stable public dialogue in such conditions is one of the key factors in ensuring political stability and social harmony. A feature of the political system of Kazakhstan is the significant role of state institutions in regulating social processes, which determines their leading function in the organization of mediation practices. At the same time, it seems reasonable to assume that in recent years there has been a gradual development of mechanisms for interaction between the state and civil society aimed at coordinating the interests of various social groups and reducing conflict potential.

Such mechanisms include advisory platforms, public councils, and expert structures that ensure dialogue between government agencies, public organizations, and social communities.

An important place in maintaining interethnic harmony is occupied by the activities of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, which for a long time has acted as an institutional platform for intercultural interaction and the prevention of ethno-political contradictions [27]. The activities of this institute were focused on developing a culture of public dialogue and coordinating the interests of various ethnocultural groups. At the same time, the constitutional reform of the Republic of Kazakhstan provides for an institutional transformation of this structure: according to the new Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the institution of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is to be abolished, and its functions are supposed to be transferred to a new consultative and public body - the Halyk Kenesi (People's Council), which will focus on the development of mechanisms for public dialogue and representation of the interests of civil society [28].

A comparative analysis of international models of political mediation shows that mediation mechanisms are formed under the influence of political culture, power structure and the level of institutional development of a particular state. Direct borrowing of foreign models rarely provides a sustainable result. Based on the analysis of international experience, it seems reasonable to assume that the most effective mediation models are those that provide a balance between legal regulation, institutional support and cultural rootedness. In the case of the Republic of Kazakhstan, this aspect becomes particularly important, since the development of socio-political dialogue takes place in conditions of polyethnicity, the expressed role of the state and the preservation of traditional norms of social interaction, including respect for authority, orientation towards collective responsibility and the desire for social harmony.

The key institutional basis for the development of mediation mechanisms in Kazakhstan is the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Mediation", adopted in 2011 [29]. This document established the main principles of mediation: the voluntary participation of the parties, strict confidentiality and independence of the mediator himself. It can be argued that the existence of a clear legal framework paves the way for the widespread use of mediation not only in courts, but also in public and political life. This helps to consolidate the culture of peaceful dialogue and turn it into a familiar dispute resolution tool. The future model of political mediation in Kazakhstan

may become a unique fusion of various international approaches. The experience of the United States and Norway confirms that negotiation procedures work effectively when they are transparent and the mediators are truly independent. At the same time, the example of China and South Korea is extremely interesting for our multiethnic society. There, the emphasis is on maintaining harmony and early conflict prevention, which is deeply in tune with local cultural traditions. Certain elements can also be borrowed from Russian

practice - first of all, the role of the state as an organizer of platforms for dialogue and a guarantor that the agreements reached will be implemented. Kazakhstan's mediation system can harmoniously combine Western clear procedures, Eastern principles of seeking consent and the traditional active role of the state in the Eurasian space.

The main characteristics of the models under consideration and the possibilities of their adaptation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – Comparative analysis of political mediation models

Indicator	USA	Norway	China	South Korea	Russia	Kazakhstan
Type of mediation model	Interest-based	Diplomatic	Socio-cultural	Institutional	State-centered	Hybrid
The main mediators	Independent mediators	Government diplomats	Local committees	Government commissions	Government institutions	Government and public mediators
The main purpose of mediation	Consensus	Conflict resolution	Social harmony	Interest reconciliation	Political stability	Conflict prevention
The role of the State	Limited	Moderate	High	High	Dominant	Significant
The role of society	High	High	Medium	High	Limited	Growing
Basic mechanisms	Negotiation	Diplomacy	Public mediation	Institutional commissions	Arbitration	Public dialogue

The existing models of political mediation differ markedly in terms of the level of institutionalization, the degree of government involvement and the nature of society's involvement in negotiation processes. In the context of Kazakhstan, the formation of a hybrid model of political mediation has the greatest potential, capable of combining elements of the Western negotiation tradition focused on identifying the interests of the parties, public reconciliation practices typical of East Asian societies, as well as mechanisms of state-organized mediation typical of the Eurasian political space [30].

Of particular importance in modern conditions is the use of digital technologies to analyze conflict processes and support mediation practices. In global practice, public sentiment monitoring systems, analytical platforms for processing large amounts of data, and social risk forecasting tools are increasingly being used. Such technologies make it possible to identify potential sources of social tension at the early stages of their formation and develop more informed conflict resolution strategies [31]. For Kazakhstan, the introduction of such analytical tools can become an important element of modernizing the political mediation system. Combining deep expert as-

essment with the capabilities of artificial intelligence allows you to create working tools for early detection of conflicts. This, in turn, significantly improves the quality of decisions taken to preserve socio-political stability. Studying the world experience leads us to the conclusion that the most promising approach for Kazakhstan may be a combined approach, which can be conditionally called a model of "harmony of interests". The essence of this model is the synthesis of three different logics. Firstly, it is the Western tradition of negotiations, focused on a clear consideration of the interests of each side. Secondly, these are East Asian practices, where the first priority is to achieve agreement and maintain good relations in society. Thirdly, this is a characteristic understanding of the Eurasian space of the state as the main guarantor that all agreements will be respected. Such an architecture of dialogue is especially important for Kazakhstan. It allows you to combine clear rules of negotiation, respect for the cultural characteristics of society and the reliability of government mediation within a single and sustainable system.

The practical development of mediation mechanisms in Kazakhstan is confirmed by a number of specific cases of settlement of so-

cio-political, labor and interethnic conflicts, in which tools of public dialogue and institutional mediation were used.

One of the most illustrative examples is the situation that arose during the public discussion of the land reform in 2016. The proposed amendments to the Land Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which provided for the possibility of leasing agricultural land to foreign citizens, caused a wide public outcry and protests in a number of regions of the country. Against the background of growing social tension, the Land Reform Commission under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan was established, which included representatives of government agencies, the expert community, the agricultural sector and civil society institutions [32]. In fact, the commission's activities have become a form of institutionalized mediation between the State and society. The inclusion of a wide range of social actors in the decision-making process helped reduce social tension and increase the legitimacy of the measures adopted. Taking into account popular concerns led to the introduction of a moratorium on the sale of agricultural land to foreigners and the revision of a number of legislative norms. This demonstrates that dialogue plays an important role in resolving issues that are sensitive to society: it allows us to find compromises in which the voice of a wide variety of social groups is heard.

Their use helps to strengthen the culture of public dialogue, reduce conflict potential and form sustainable conflict prevention models. In this regard, it seems reasonable to assume that the further development of political mediation in Kazakhstan will be associated with the formation of a hybrid mediation model that integrates institutional elements of Western negotiation practices, socio-cultural traditions of social harmony characteristic of East Asian countries, and state-oriented regulatory mechanisms characteristic of the Eurasian political space [1].

The addition of this model with modern digital tools for analyzing socio-political processes can be an important factor in improving the effectiveness of mediation practices and strengthening sustainable public dialogue in Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

The analysis shows that the effectiveness of mediation in political processes depends not

only on clear legal procedures. Political culture, the historical experience of relations between the government and the people, as well as the extent to which the country has developed traditions of open dialogue, play a huge role. A comparison of different national models confirms that mediation always adapts to a specific political system, taking the most appropriate form for it.

The experience of the USA, Norway, China, Russia and South Korea clearly illustrates the diversity of approaches to conflict management. In developed democracies, independent intermediaries and civil society play a key role — they create space for maneuver and reconciliation of interests. In countries with a more pronounced management vertical, mediation is more often embedded in government structures. However, mixed models are becoming more common: in them, the flexibility of informal negotiations is supported by the authority of the state. This symbiosis allows not only to follow the letter of the law, but also to find sustainable, long-term solutions.

The main pattern revealed is that the conflict can be resolved only when the parties move from strict requirements to discussing real, deep-rooted interests. This is fully consistent with the classical principles of the Harvard School of Negotiation, where success depends on the ability of participants to go beyond formal claims and focus on finding a compromise that will ensure peace for many years to come.

For Kazakhstan, studying the world experience of mediation is of particular importance. The multiethnic composition of the population and the deep traditions of social harmony create the ground on which the mechanisms of dialogue can develop most naturally. These factors contribute to mediation becoming not just a legal instrument, but an integral part of the country's political governance. The creation of a national model, which can be called a model of "harmony of interests", is seen as a promising way of development. Its essence is not merely mutual concessions, but in building a deep balance between the state, social groups and the civil sector. This logic of seeking agreement fits seamlessly into Kazakhstan's political culture, where stability and social unity have always been a priority.

The introduction of mediation into the practice of Kazakhstan should not be a simple copying of other people's schemes. An adaptive approach that takes into account our internal realities and

established forms of dialogue will give the greatest benefit. In this context, the concept of “harmony of interests” acts as a viable guideline for strengthening stability and creating a solid system of constructive interaction between the State and society. In a broader philosophical context, political mediation reflects a shift from conflict management models based on coercion to models based on dialogue, reconciliation of interests, and institutionalization of communication. This allows us to consider mediation as an important element of the development of modern political systems focused on sustainability and social harmony.

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