

## تحليل اسبتي

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## FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE EMIRATE: COMPARISON AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)



## FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE EMIRATE: COMPARISON AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

International relations include relations between governments, parties, organizations and even individuals of different countries, but the foreign policy only organizes relations between governments. Or it can be said that foreign policy is a strategy responsible government officials use to achieve specific goals within the scope of national interests.

A country's foreign policy is based on its national interests, as its overall goal is to protect national interests. Although national interests differ among different countries and is changed from time to time, in general, it can be said that the primary objectives of foreign policy are maintaining independence, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, and protection of the rights of their citizens in other countries, maintaining a good reputation of the country at the international level, and protection of such other national interests through diplomatic ways. That is to say, a foreign policy is the means based on which these goals are achieved.

After the revolutions and two world wars, governments came to have the idea of having close communication and relations with their people because the support and consent of the people can give survival and stability to governments and states. If the distance between the people and the government increases, it could even lead to the collapse of the government. Therefore, after the Second World War, most political science scholars believe that foreign policy has only one goal: national interests. It means today's governments manage their foreign policy only to protect national interests.

After 2001, the Political Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan prepared a strategic plan for the foreign policy of the country in 2013, in which the Ministry marked the key points and generally stated three main points for Afghanistan's foreign policy:

- 1- National interest.
- 2- National goals.
- 3- National values and national traditions.



This way, the above three main topics were considered the main criteria for forming Afghanistan's foreign policy.

Also, in the 8th article of the Constitution of Afghanistan dated 2003, the principles of Afghanistan's foreign policy were stated. This article says: "The government manages the country's foreign policy based on independence, national interests, territorial integrity, non-interference, good neighbourliness, mutual respect and equality of rights." Based on this article, Afghanistan's relations with other countries and foreign policy are organized in light of these principles.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which came to power on the 15th of August 2021, has not yet written anything about foreign policy, nor is there any legal framework or Constitution from which we can understand the principles and procedures of the Islamic Emirate's foreign policy. However, some foreign policy principles can be revealed from the practical actions of the Islamic Emirate in the current period.

After an entire transformation period, Afghanistan is now at a stage that requires an active foreign policy. Looking at the fundamental role of foreign policy in the stability of countries at the national and international levels, the foreign policy of every government is significant. In this analytical article, in addition to reviewing the foreign policy of the last two decades, we would like to look at the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and by comparing both eras, we would like to have the necessary recommendations for the use of the country's policymakers especially the organizations active in the field of foreign policy for an active and successful foreign policy.

## **FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN**

It should be clear in this article that when we discuss the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, we mean to analyze Afghanistan's foreign policy from 2001 to the fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. We do not discuss the specific foreign policy of Hamid Karzai or Ashraf Ghani in this article but discuss the general characteristics of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was generally based on the following strategies and foundations; in other words, it had the following negative and positive characteristics:

### **1- Dependent foreign policy**

The foreign policy of the Republic was a dependent foreign policy. It was directly organized under the influence of the United States of America. The reason was that most of the national budget of Afghanistan was based on the aid of the United States of America. For this reason, if any conflict came between the Republic and the United States of America over any foreign



policy issue, the United States of America would impose its preferred foreign policy on the Republic through threats and withholding aid. Here are some examples: Signing security or political agreements with a country is related to a country's foreign policy, whether to sign it or not? But although Hamid Karzai refused to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the United States, President Ashraf Ghani signed it without considering Afghanistan's national interest after coming to power because the United States threatened him by discontinuing US aid to Afghanistan. Also, during the entire period of the Republic, companies from America and Europe, thousands of kilometres away, used to come to Afghanistan for investment, but Russian companies were not allowed to invest here. The Chinese also could not invest openly either. Relations with Iran were also within the limits of what the United States wanted, so it can be said that the Republic's foreign policy was dependent.

## **2- Coalition-based foreign policy**

The foreign policy of the Republic period was not neutral but was based on the alliance of the United States at the international level and India at the regional level, one of which can be said to be a military alliance and the other a political alliance. This alliance was officially confirmed and registered by the United States as Afghanistan was counted as one of the allies of the United States among the non-NATO countries. The damage of this kind of foreign policy was that, on the one hand, Afghanistan created concerns for its neighbours such as Iran, China and Pakistan, and on the other hand, it created concerns for Russia in the region. In order to eliminate these concerns, these countries were doing such actions which ended up harming Afghanistan. Even there were claims that the rival countries were behind the attacks on the diplomatic missions of some countries in Afghanistan.

## **3- Security-oriented foreign policy**

The foreign policy of the Republic period was security-oriented, and this kind of foreign policy had two dimensions: the foreign dimension, which was the presence of the United States in Afghanistan. The primary purpose of the United States of America's arrival in the region was security; therefore, Afghanistan's foreign policy had also become more security oriented. The other dimension was internal and armed resistance against the government. Thus, the foreign policy was organized on the security axis so that Afghanistan could suppress its armed opponents through relations with the countries in the region and the world.

## **4- Unbalanced foreign policy**

Another problem of the Republic's foreign policy was that it was not balanced, as it could not maintain a balance between different countries by taking sides in the disputes between them. For example, in the case of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, it took the side of Saudi Arabia for which Afghanistan's relations with Iran deteriorated. In the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, it took



the side of Azerbaijan. Afghanistan supported India in issues between India and Pakistan. Between the United States of America and Russia, it supported the United States of America. Although, at times, Russia has also been favoured due to differences with the United States. For instance, in 2014, Hamid Karzai supported the reunification of Crimea with Russia due to the deterioration of relations with the United States. Overall, this unbalanced foreign policy was unsuitable for a weak country like Afghanistan.

### **5- Broad international relations-based foreign policy**

Besides the above negative aspects, Afghanistan's foreign policy in the past 20 years had some positive aspects, the most important of which was the extensive diplomatic relations with countries worldwide. During this period, the government of Afghanistan was recognized by the whole world, and the flag of Afghanistan was flying in all countries. Afghanistan had an active presence in international and regional organizations and could express its opinion and stance on international stages. Besides this, although there was corruption and nepotism in the appointments of diplomats and corruption had spread its roots in diplomatic missions, Afghanistan still had its diplomatic staff and many specialist diplomats in different countries and organizations worldwide.

## **FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE OF AFGHANISTAN**

Although the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan cannot be analyzed very accurately because only one year is passed after the interim government of the Islamic Emirate's formation, and on the other hand, there is no written foreign policy or Constitution. Still, according to the positions of the Islamic Emirate, it seems that the country's foreign policy is generally based on the following strategies and features:

### **1- Independent foreign policy**

The fact is that the foreign policy of weak countries in the world can never be independent. The reason is that weak countries need economic aid; on the other hand, they mostly accept the demands of powerful countries to protect themselves. However, the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate can also fall under the same category, but compared to the Republic's foreign policy, it can be said that the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate is more independent. The Islamic Emirate clearly stated that it wants good relations with all the countries of the world, the territory of Afghanistan will not be used against any country, India has opened its embassy and its technical team is busy in discussions, its relations with Russia and China are friendly, and even they defend the current interim government on the international stages, and is also in talks and negotiations with the United States in Qatar from time to time. These are all examples of the independence of foreign policy.



## 2- Neutral foreign policy

The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi, has stated the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate in these words: “The foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is positive, neutral, balanced and economy-oriented.”

When we talk about a neutral foreign policy, our aim is that a country does not get involved in conflicts between major powers, does not join any of the major powers, is not a member of military alliances like NATO, and establishes relations with all rivals within the framework of its national interests.

On the one hand, the Islamic Emirate has declared an official neutral foreign policy; on the other hand, it is practically not allied with any superpower. The United States has also removed Afghanistan’s name from the list of non-NATO allies. The analysis of foreign policy experts shows that the only solution to the end of Afghanistan’s problems is a neutral foreign policy.

## 3- Economy-oriented foreign policy

Another principle and feature of the Islamic Emirate’s foreign policy is that they have declared their foreign policy to be economy-oriented. The main reason is the discontinuation of aid to this country as an ally of the United States. Afghanistan must prepare its budget from internal revenues and strengthen its economy through good economic relations with the world. Another reason is that security has been established in the country, and security-oriented foreign policy is no longer in the interest of Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan still needs to have support at the regional and international levels to fight against ISIS. According to foreign policy experts, this economy-oriented foreign policy is in the interest of Afghanistan. The most significant benefit is that it will provide opportunities for regional connectivity of Afghanistan as regional connectivity of Afghanistan was facing problems due to security-focused foreign policy. The reason was that because of such a foreign policy, Russia, China, and Iran did not want, or the US did not allow them to establish such regional connectivity from which they would be benefited. Now that the United States of America is not present in Afghanistan and the Islamic Emirate has declared its foreign policy to be economy-oriented, this is an excellent opportunity for Afghanistan to connect with the countries in the region. The achievement of this policy is that China is willing to invest here, trade relations with Iran have been expanded, Russia has eliminated the tariff on Afghanistan’s exports and is still seeking good trade relations with Afghanistan, and India has reopened its embassy and its technical team is in discussion with the Islamic Emirate, Pakistan is also working on good economic relations with the Islamic Emirate, and Central Asian countries have started working on joint large-scale economic projects with Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate’s economy-oriented policy has created all this regional connectivity, and it seems that it will continue to flourish in the future.



#### 4- Balanced foreign policy

The Islamic Emirate has announced its foreign policy as a balanced one, meaning that it will maintain balance in the relations between international and regional powers. On the other hand, it will not take sides in conflicts between these powers. For example, in the republican system, Afghanistan could not maintain the balance between India and Pakistan in foreign policy, but now even though India has its own concerns about the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, it still reopened his embassy in Kabul and dispatched its technical team to Kabul. It shows that the Islamic Emirate is committed to its balanced foreign policy and this kind of policy can lead Afghanistan to economic development on one hand and save it from proxy wars on the other hand.

#### 5- Limited international relations-based foreign policy

Even after one year, the interim government of the Islamic Emirate has not been recognized by any country in the world. Only a limited number of countries have entered into interaction and relations with this government without recognition. These countries' interaction is also primarily due to their needs or economic factors. Meanwhile, representatives of the Islamic Emirate participated in some international meetings and conferences last year, especially the Tashkent International Conference on Afghanistan. Still, it was not present in other important global and regional meetings. At the international level, Afghanistan's seat is vacant in the most important organization of the world, the United Nations, and especially a few days ago, no one spoke on behalf of Afghanistan at the General Assembly of this organization. At the regional level, the lack of presence in the meeting of the Shanghai Organization can be mentioned while Afghanistan is an observer member of this organization.

### CONCLUSION AND COMPARISON

To conclude and compare the foreign policy of the Republic with the Emirate, it can be said that there were differences in the following areas:

1. The foreign policy of the Republic was documented, and it was mentioned in the strategic plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the Emirate's foreign policy is still undocumented, and all the documents of the former Republic on the foreign policy have been suspended until now.
2. There was a legal framework regarding the foreign policy of the Republic. Article 8 of the 2003 Constitution established a legal framework for the Republic's foreign policy. Still, there is no legal framework for the Emirate's foreign policy so far, and the Constitution has been abolished.





3. The Republic's foreign policy was not neutral but based on alliances and coalitions. However, the Emirate's foreign policy is neutral and is not allied with any major regional and global power.
4. The Republic's foreign policy was dependent, but the Emirate's foreign policy is independent compared to the Republic.
5. The Republic's foreign policy was security-oriented, but the Emirate's foreign policy is economy-oriented.
6. The Republic's foreign policy was unbalanced and could not maintain a balance between international and regional powers. Still, the Emirate's foreign policy is balanced and has been successful in this regard so far.
7. In addition to all this, the Republic had extensive relations with the whole world and was recognized by the entire world. However, the Emirate has not yet been recognized by any country and has informal ties with limited countries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The Islamic Emirate should prioritize the current government's recognition, and it should be the most important foreign policy priority. If Afghanistan is not recognized, the problems facing the current system will increase day by day. The issue of recognition and foreign policy is closely related to the internal situation and issues of the country. Therefore, the Islamic Emirate needs to resolve the issues that lead to weakening the Emirate's position on the international stage. The most important case in this regard is the fundamental rights of the people, especially the work and education of women, which has increased dissatisfaction at the national and international levels.
- 2) A neutral foreign policy is an excellent solution to this country's problems, so considering Afghanistan's conditions, the Islamic Emirate should not violate neutrality in any way.
- 3) Afghanistan has always become the ground of proxy wars due to unbalanced foreign policy, so it is expected from the Islamic Emirate to keep the balance between Russia and America, China and America, Iran and America, India and Pakistan, India and China and among other countries.
- 4) Afghanistan is currently facing an economic crisis, so the economy-oriented foreign policy is in the country's interest and should be continued realistically. Serious actions should be taken to implement Chabahar Port, TAPI, CASA-1000, TAP-500, Five Nations Railway and other economic projects.
- 5) Good relations with the United States of America, European countries, and other countries that are America's allies are important for the recognition, the enhancement of the



economic situation, and the stability of the internal security situation. Therefore, understanding should be used instead of confrontation with America.

- 6) The Islamic Emirate needs to respect the international costumes in foreign policy if they do not directly contradict Islamic values and principles because maybe the level of its benefits goes higher in case of concession to the country despite some contradictions. If disregarding the international costumes in foreign policy leads to the destruction of some benefits for the country, while it does not contradict Islamic and national values, the government must respect these international costumes because, according to the famous rule of jurisprudence, “the lesser of two evils principle”, preference should be given to the least harmful choice.

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