

PRINCIPLES OF FOREIGN POLICY: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti*, Dr. Ghulam Mustafa**

Abstract:

No country in the world is self-reliant. Some states have surplus resources and at the same time some other states have shortage of those resources. To fill up the gap of demand and supply, states establish relations but these relations are established under the foreign policy of a state. So, it is very important for a country to formulate a sound and viable foreign policy. Foreign policy tells how a country will act economically, socially and politically in response of other states. Every foreign policy is formulated on the basis of some fundamental principles. In this paper, the researchers have tried to explore the principles of foreign policy of an Islamic state from the Quran and Sunnah. Both primary and secondary sources have been used to conclude the arguments.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Islamic State, the Quran, Hadith, the Holy Prophet (SAW)

1. Introduction:

Islam is the only religion that guides humanity towards redemption and salvation. It provides a dignified code of conduct, a guide to a successful life and commands for the well-being of human beings. . Islam is as old as God and his creation. It was the religion of the Prophet Adam, Noah, Lot, Yusuf, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the prophets sent by God to guide humanity. As Allah Almighty declares in the Holy Quran;

“And We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind as a bringer of good tidings and a Warner. But most of the people do not know”.¹

It tells about the life of the previous prophets and their nations to extract lessons for future generations. Islam is the mirror of life and the perspective of Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The Holy Quran and Hadith are the only two sources of divine guidance until the Day of Judgment. The Holy Quran describes the mission, the causes, the pains, the tortures and the tribulations of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during his stay at Makkah. It also describes the formulation of the ideological spirit bound by fraternity and brotherhood, equality and justice when He

* Associate Professor, Department of Politics & IR, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, GCU Faisalabad, Pakistan

(SAW) emigrated and established a state at Madina. He (SAW) established international relations based on goodwill and devotion.

There are several verses of the Holy Book (the Quran) that describe issues with other nations. Obviously, the Holy Prophet's (SAW) foreign policy is based on the revealed teachings. The Holy Quran clarified the universality of His leadership and the dignity of the faith He gave. It is due to the finality of Prophethood and the universality of His message, His "*Uswa*" became a model for humanity. Each and every aspect of His life has been preserved in the pages of the Holy Quran. For instance Allah Almighty says in Surah Al-Araf; Say, [O Muhammad], "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death." So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided".²

The Islamic government is based on specific ideology, faith and aims to achieve certain goals that God has made mandatory. The legitimate Islamic ruler and all officials of that state are not free to choose and follow any line of internal and external policy as they please. They must follow the rules established in the Holy Quran and must operate within this framework. In other words, the rulers of Islamic State must learn what Islam expects of them and, therefore, they must translate Islamic teachings into actions to achieve divine goals. At this stage, they make use of the Shari'ah guidelines. It should also be taken into account that rulers do not enjoy absolute freedom to achieve the desired objectives; they can never violate Shari'ah in any way.

2. Principles of Foreign Policy enunciated in the Holy Quran

Allah Almighty has provided various principles in the Holy Quran to make and sustain relations with international community. These principles became foundation of the foreign policy of the first Islamic state.

a) Principles of Dispute Settlement

Allah Almighty provides proper guideline to believers for the resolution of conflicts. The Muslims have been advised to settle disputes through negotiations, consultations, arbitrations and other such methods. It is very important to mention that the principles of dispute settlement described by the Holy Quran have been incorporated by various agreements, treaties and conventions of the modern world. As Allah Almighty asserts in the Holy Quran;

“And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah. And if it returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly”.³

In the light of the teachings of Holy Quran, one can find various principles of conflict resolution. The most important among those is the need to properly investigate something we feel before we act. As Holy Quran says, “O you, who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful”.⁴

At another place the Quran orders us that in the face of aggravation; we must refrain from reacting and, instead, calm the situation. In the words of Quran, “Every time they kindled the fire of war [against you], Allah extinguished it”.⁵

In this verse, "God extinguishes [the fire of war]" means that we must use the guidance of patience and avoidance given by God in such situations to restore peace instead of reacting to provocation by fighting.

Allah Almighty instructs to refrain from ignorant prejudices and provocations. In the context of the Treaty of Hudaibiya, the Holy Quran reports that when opponents of the Prophet (SAW) showed their prejudice against Muslims, believers did not react in the same way. Rather, they remained established in the consciousness of God.⁶ Since believers did not behave like their opponents, the Treaty of Hudaibiya was possible. God described this treatise as a "clear victory". Two years after this Treaty, entire Arabia came under the rule of Islam.

b) Principle of Sanctity of Pledge (Treaty or Contract)

Islam has placed great emphasis on the sanctity of the promise (treaty), even annulling the obligations of the Muslim brotherhood. We read in the Holy Quran, but if Muslims ask you for help in religious matters, it is your obligation to facilitate them.

وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرُواكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمْ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“And if they seek help of you for the religion, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty. And Allah is Seeing of what you do”.⁷

This verse clearly reminds Muslims of their obligations and universally accepted code of morality. So, the believers can never help their oppressed Muslim brethren living in a country with which they have a treaty. However, the believers living outside the boundaries of Islamic state are free from this obligation. This is confirmed in another verse of the Holy Quran;

“And never is it for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake - then the freeing of a believing slave and a compensation payment presented to the deceased's family [is required] unless they give [up their right as] charity. But if the deceased was from a people at war with you and he was a believer - then [only] the freeing of a believing slave; and if he was from a people with whom you have a treaty - then a compensation payment presented to his family and the freeing of a believing slave. And whoever does not find [one or cannot afford to buy one] - then [instead], a fast for two months consecutively, [seeking] acceptance of repentance from Allah. And Allah is ever knowing and Wise”.⁸

This verse clearly lays down the rule that compensation must be paid for the killing by mistake of a person belonging to a non – Muslim country which has a treaty with the Islamic state. These verses fully explain what importance is given to treaty obligations in the Islamic Law. These are held in great esteem and given top priority in Islamic Shari’ah.

The Holy Quran emphasizes in the strongest terms the need to adhere to the conditions of the contract, stipulated with foreign powers, whether friends or enemies. Whatever happens, Muslims will not be the first to break their promises and deal with other nations. Relations with all other non-Muslim countries are based on friendship and cooperation: on all issues of common interest that promote the cause of peace, goodness and justice in the world. As Allah Almighty says in Surah Al-Maidah:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ۗ

“And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty”.⁹ At another place, the Holy Quran says:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do”.¹⁰

God Almighty warns Muslims in this verse against the injustice practiced by their predecessors and enjoins them always to judge between people with justice whether they be friends or foes.

c) Principle of Universal Brotherhood

Another great principle of the foreign policy in Islam is to establish universal brotherhood. Muslims are loyal to the guidance of Almighty God, as expressed in the Holy Quran, when He verifies the unity between Allah and His creatures, the unity of the human race and true human brotherhood. Almighty God is the Creator and people are His creation, and His will and wisdom require that people be derogatory in their intellectual power, estimations, thoughts, faiths and theories. People are absolutely free to select what is convenient for them, in light of divine revelation and the messages of the Prophet Mohammed (SAW). After making their choice and practicing their freedom, people are responsible for the strength of their choice. Their responsibility is to choose what is for their true benefit, in order to obtain their happiness and salvation in this life and in the next life. Allah says, "Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves. And Allah guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path".¹¹ At many occasion Allah Almighty declares believers as single nation. For instance, in Surah al-Hujurat Allah says, "The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy".¹² In Surah al-Yunus God Almighty again declares, "And mankind was not but one community [united in religion], but [then] they differed. And if not for a word that proceeded from your Lord, it would have been judged between them [immediately] concerning that over which they differ".¹³ At another place the Holy Quran declares: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer".¹⁴ The above verses clearly proclaim that believers are the part of a single nation (Millat) without any kind of discrimination on the basis of race, color, language, sex or place of birth.

d) Principles of War and Peace

Islam is against each kind of aggression or terrorism. Believers are permitted to fight only against those who commit aggression against them and the conditions of persecution on earth. In dangerous situations that had been a challenge to the survival of the Muslims and which revealed that the Quraish would in no way be ready to make sense and abandon their enmity, God gave Muslims permission to fight, but declared it not mandatory. As Allah Almighty has revealed in the Holy Quran, "Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory".¹⁵ In Surah Al-Baqra, Allah Almighty says:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ۝

"Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors".¹⁶ At another place of Surah Al-Baqra Allah Almighty asserts, "Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors".¹⁷

All the above mentioned verses of the Holy Quran shows that Muslims are allowed to fight only for self-defense, the crime of their war should not be personal interest, nor national gain or retaliation. The purpose of the wars in Islam is to eradicate "Fitnah" and establish peace in the world. If all the world's governments follow this golden principle and fight rebel or terrorist groups, then there will be peace in the world.

As far as prisoners of war are concerned, Allah orders Muslims to treat them with kindness and reasonableness. As Allah Almighty says; "And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive".¹⁸ This verse clearly shows that Islam is a religion of peace and security. It gives lesson of love and mercy for the entire humanity without any discrimination. At another place in Holy Quran Allah declares that there is no compulsion in religion.¹⁹ No one can be compelled to accept Islam as a religion. In Islamic state, every citizen is allowed to profess, preach and practice religion of his choice without any hurdle and discrimination. To maintain peace, Allah Almighty does not forbid believers to act justly with non-believers. As the Holy Quran declares, "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who

act justly”.²⁰In another verse this principle of foreign policy is maintained as, “Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, and then it is those who are the wrongdoers”.²¹

Above-mentioned verses show that the Muslims are not allowed to make relations with those states that are inimical to the cause of Islam and inflict pains on them and drove them out of their houses for their belief in one and the only God-Allah. The Holy Quran also guides the Muslims by whom they should make friendly relations and by whom they should avoid to make relations. As the Holy Quran declares:

“O you, who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people”.²²

At another place Allah Almighty describes the same subject:

“O you, who have believed, take not those who have taken your religion in ridicule and amusement among the ones who were given the Scripture before you nor the disbelievers as allies. And fear Allah, if you should [truly] be believers”.²³

These are the basic principles on which the foreign policy of the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) had been formulated. Today, Muslim countries are under great stress and torture for they have taken the Jews and Christians as allies but they should realize that they cannot be their friends for the differences of our faith and religious matters. Atrocities in Kashmir, Palestine, Burma, Libya and Syria are evidence of the enmity and selfishness of the people who has been mentioned in the Quran.

e) Principle of the Unity of the Muslims

Another principle of the foreign policy of the Prophet (SAW) is the unity of Muslim Ummah. It gives the concept of the joint commonwealth of Muslims. Allah declares in the Holy Quran:

"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided".²⁴

Today, the Muslims are suffering all over the world because they are divided in groups or sects. There is great need to be united. Love and

friendship that is due particularly with the Islamic states cannot be entertained with the non-Muslim states. The Holy Quran has described, "Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed - those who establish prayer and give zakah, and they bow [in worship]".²⁵ In Surah Al-Imran, the same subject has also been described by the Allah Almighty:

"Let not believers take disbelievers as allies rather than believers. And whoever [of you] does that has nothing with Allah, except when taking precaution against them in prudence. And Allah warns you of Himself, and to Allah is the [final] destination".²⁶

These principles of foreign policy maintained in the Holy Quran need to be followed for the Muslim Ummah that is suffering under a curse – for leaving these principles. They have political and trade relations with states of non-believers irrespective of the fact that they are enemies to Muslims for their beliefs in oneness of God and finality of the prophethood of the Hazarat Muhammad (SAW). Saddam Hussain in Iraq, Qazafi in Libya and Hamid Karazi in Afghanistan played like tools in their hands but met a disgraced end. Pakistan had also lost its eastern wing in 1971 and terror prone disturbances are going on in all over the country.

f) Principles of Equality, Fraternity and Freedom

So far as the individual is concerned, Islam is the first to prescribe the charter of basic Human Rights and lays down the principles of equality, fraternity and freedom, more firmly than the French revolutionists or the American founding fathers. Allah declares in the Holy Quran:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

"whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely".²⁷

Islam is the religion of peace and the Muslims are advised to call towards Islam in good manner. As Allah asserts, "Invite all on path of Allah with wisdom and excellent directions and argue with them in the best manner".²⁸ In the realm of peaceful co-existence and observance of human rights, the Holy Quran ordains a code of conduct in Surah Al-Hujurat;

"O you, who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by

[offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers".²⁹

Blasphemous remarks, movies and depiction of cartoons as practiced in Denmark, America and other countries are highly abominable. It is against the dignity and sanctity of Islam. The texture of Islam as described in the Holy Quran is based on tolerance and human dignity or self-respect. The modern world has conquered the world but not humanity in the true sense of the word. Oppressed Muslims in Burma, Bharat, Syria and the Muslims living in European states can get the confidence and inspiration from the principles of Islam. The world can move to prosperity by following the principles of Islam in its texture and ingenuity.

3. Principles of Foreign Policy enunciated in Sunnah

The Holy Quran elaborates upon major issues but often deals with the subject briefly, leaving the details to be explained by the Hazrat Muhammad (SAW). Allah Almighty says in Surah Al-Nahl:

“[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought”.³⁰ In Surah Al-Maidah, the Quran also says, “And obey Allah and obey the messenger”.³¹ Abu Hurairh (RA) narrated that the Holy Prophet (SAW) said: "Anyone who obeys me (actually) has obeyed Allah; and anyone who has disobeyed me (actually) has disobeyed Allah".³²

Hadith is the Islamic theology. The Quran and Hadith provide sufficient guidance to enable a Muslim state to form its foreign policy. In this section, efforts have been made to elaborate guiding principles of foreign policy of an Islamic state keeping in view the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

The principle of universal brotherhood was the first principle of his foreign policy to unite mankind in one community and universal brotherhood for their bond of a common religion. After migration to Madina, the Prophet (SAW) knitted *Ansars* and *Muhijreen* in brotherhood. This is the one and only example of universal brotherhood, love and sacrifice for the sake of Allah. No other religion or community of the world can present such an example of ‘economic fraternity. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR) has failed when we observe millions of Muslims in Syria are debarred to enter in the states of Europe, Hungary, Belgium, Greece and Germany for they have installed

electric bars to stop their entry from the borders. ‘Rohingas’ are debarred and excluded from their state and pushed towards the sea. Islam is against each kind of corruption, wickedness and prejudice whether it is racial, lingual, national or geographical. The Holy prophet (SAW) openly condemned the tribal wars on many occasions. He once said;

“He is not one of us who proclaims the cause of tribal partisanship (asabiyyah); and he is not of us who fight in the cause of tribal partisanship; and he is not one of us who dies for tribal partisanship”.³³

There is great need to study the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and follow his teachings to make peace and prosperity in the world. Treaties, pacts and alliances with the unbelievers and nation-states were another principle of the foreign policy of Islam.

Abu Jandal bin Suhayal was returned to the Quraish because it was one of the terms of the contract of Hudaibia that if anybody went over to Muhammad (SAW) without the permission of his guardian, he should be sent back.

Another term of the Treaty was that the Muslims should go back that year without entering the city. Though it was humiliating for them and there were fourteen hundred life-fighters but the Holy prophet (SAW) showed great courage and confidence and had been inclined to the terms of the Treaty.

The prophet (SAW) adopted a humane and generous policy towards the prisoners of war. ‘As far as the prisoners of war are concerned, the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his followers set an everlasting example of generosity and kindness towards the prisoners by their treatment of the prisoners of the Battle of Badr. They were given the option to free themselves by educating the Muslim Children. In the Hunain campaign, six thousand prisoners were released unconditionally. In the countries, conquered by Muslims, such as Iraq, Syria, Persia, Arabian Peninsula and Khurasan, not a single person was enslaved, but on the other hand every captive was set free”.³⁴

Islam presents an ideology and international system that is quite different from the western systems. The system of Islam is the perfection of humanity. Although the Holy Prophet (SAW) fought many battles against his enemies, yet the purpose and manners were totally different. At Badr he said that you will not be the first to attack. You will not allow personal hatred or revenge to influence your hearts as you fight. You will not raise

your arms against anyone who is not part of the fight. You shall protect the old and the sick. You shall protect women and children from injuries.

Khutba Hujjat-ul- wida (The last sermon of the Holy Prophet) can be called the first universal charter of Human rights. The Holy Prophet (SAW) declared at the beginning, that sovereignty belongs to Allah, who is all alone and has no partners. He then asserted that we are all children of Adam and, therefore, equal and brothers of each other. He declared the life, property and honor of all as sacrosanct.³⁵

Now, it is compulsory on every member of Millat –i- Islamia to call and invite to justice and goodness and to forbid people from committing sin and aggression. There seems to be an international movement for global co-operation. That was the basic principle of the foreign policy of the Hazrat Muhammad (SAW). He wished all mankind to work together and co – operate for the betterment of all. Islam is a religion of peace, co-operation and co – existence. Religion was considered to be an entity of the noble few. It was for the first time that Islam came as a blessing for all, the Holy Prophet (SAW) had been endowed with a mission to spread Islam.

Tolerance and forgiveness are the essential attributes in state relationships or diplomacy. The Holy Prophet (SAW) was merciful to all including his enemies and the unbelievers. The Makkans had left no stone unturned in their ridicule, torture and persecution of the Holy Prophet (SAW) but he forgave them. He declared amnesty for all and by saying “There is no reproach against you today”.³⁶

In the Battle of Uhud, the Holy Prophet (SAW) was wounded and his face was covered with blood, but he was saying, “O Allah! Guide my people, for they are ignorant.” These are some lessons to be learnt by the superpowers from the forgiveness, generosity and benevolence of the Holy Prophet (SAW) to make peace in the world. Justice must be administered equally and fairly between all whether it is friend or foe. The unforgiving and bigotry attitude of the western world has left the world to a waste land.

United Nations, Islamic Summit and NATO have failed to make the world peaceful and prosperous. The third world is looming large in Asia, Europe, Africa and Arab Lands. The opponents of the fall of Dhaka in 1971 and the captives of World Trade Centre 9/11/2001 are being sentenced today. They are put in dungeons or cages. Human dignity is at stake. Adopting the practices of the Holy Prophet (SAW), we can revive the status of man. Teachings and practices of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in

statesmanship, foreign affairs or any other matter are as useful and beneficial in our age as they were fourteen hundred years ago.

The Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (SAW) is compulsory to follow for the just and rational organization of human society. This is the inspiring source to establish an Islamic state. The Islamic state is not established only to secure the life of its citizens; it has a far-reaching scope and an important international mission. By order of Islam, you must fight for the success and development of your people in all aspects and, in the same order; you must contribute for development of the entire humanity in general. This offers pleasant relationships in the widest sagacity of the word, with friendly states. It directs the Islamic state to play a significant role in the favor of mankind, internationally, as initiated by the Holy Prophet (SAW).³⁷

4. Conclusion

Islam is the religion of peace, love and mutual cooperation. It provides guidelines in all aspects of human life. In context of foreign policy, the Holy Quran and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) provide a comprehensive set of principles to make relations with other countries. The principle of universal brotherhood, principle of sanctity of treaty or agreement, principle of dispute resolution, principle of war and peace, unity of Muslims, and principle of equality, fraternity, freedom and justice are the essence of foreign policy of an Islamic state.

With the application of these guiding principles, this world can be made peaceful and prosperous. Foreign policy of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in the Post modern world is a mirror to the deep - down rulers of today. They need to revive their faith in Islam to play an inspirational role. They need courage and commitment to throw the slumber and subjugation in which they had been for centuries. Foreign policy of the Muslim world should be based on the principles maintained in the Holy Quran and followed by the Holy Prophet (SAW).

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