

Foreign Relations from Islamic Perspective and Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

The modern world has started building principles for developing foreign relations some few hundred years ago whereas Islam, the religion of GOD has described the concept of foreign relations some fifteen hundred years ago through the words of “O Mankind” in its Holy Book of Quran. Islam addresses the humanity to define a harmonious path of wellness for mankind. This research qualitatively tries to identify the path of wellness and harmony for humanity through the Islamic ideology and faith.

KEYWORDS: *Foreign relations, Islam, harmony, Islamic law, fundamental, principals, Quran.*

Introduction

Islamic International laws have started evolving in the second half of the second century after Hijra and permanently become a prominent branch of Islamic law under the title of “Siyar”. This specific branch of Islamic law primarily focused on the mutual relations between Muslims and non-Muslims¹. Under this branch the scholars of that time divides the relationship of Muslim state into three distinct categories:

1. Dar al-Islam
2. Dar al-Peace
3. Dar al-Harb

The Arabic word “*dar*” (دار), usually refers to “territory”, “region”, “house”, “structure”, “land”, or “country”. It also often refers as a part of the world². These three categories are not mentioned in the Quran as mentioned in the chapters of Islamic foreign relations and Hadith but actually are political and jurisprudential terms which evolved over time in the reigns of Muslim ruler ships in different parts of the world³. Islamic scholars brought these terms to build foreign relations from the verses (1-4) of Surat “al-Tawba” that divides the non-believers into three categories and furthermore realistically Prophet had to deal with two types of people around him:

1. Believers
2. Non-believers

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- a. In pact of peace
- b. In war

Mainly the foreign relation activities in the Islamic states found the basis on these categorical division of humans with respect to their faith interpreted from the Holy Scripture of Quran. The division of people and land of earth continues in Islamic world the same way as it was initially created in second century of *Hijri* by Muslim scholars until the demise of Muslim empire of Turkey called as “Ottoman empire”. The demise created a new system of nationalism when the “millet” system was falling apart⁴. So the breaking of “millet” system put the three “dar’s” concept to an end and hence the Muslim world also enters into the same system of nationalism that was introduced by Europe in the mid of nineteenth century⁵.

“Millet” system forms the basis for universal value of humanity rather giving importance to historical customs, refinements and national heroism and revival of national creeds but that caused the Muslim world to divide into so many sovereign national states⁶. The divide just not stopped there and moved to the division of thoughts and building sectarian blocks within the Islamic world. Division of Muslim world into sectarian blocks worsen the situation of foreign policy development for Muslim world and that nail the situation to most deterioration post 9/11 attacks which made the Islam as a religion of terrorism. Post 9/11 circumstances transformed the world from nationalism to terrorism and determines the connectedness of terrorism and fundamentalism⁷.

Literature Review

Much has been researched out since 9/11 attacks about the Islamic concept of foreign relations that has been focused mainly in two dimensions:

1. Muslims as terrorists
2. Muslims are not terrorists

Islamic terrorism has become pervasive article of political and academic counter-terrorism discourse of the West in recent years which also creates dissatisfaction among certain groups living in West on the usage of such terms, so it requires reclaiming the label into new terms⁸. Islam has become as manifestly sourced as tool of terror, domination and autonomy with a promotion and execution of untold violence on the human community in the name of God with religious ideology⁹. The manifestation and submission of the knowledge of the Qur'an is reformed and handmade in major radical Islamist dissertations to match their political chronicle, which is in fact the violation of real message for literal application of the Qur'an's teachings¹⁰.

Religion is surely a part of terrorist activities in many of such activities, but it is not the only part, mostly such attacks are ingrained in geopolitics as more than 95% of the fatalities caused by terrorist’s activities are of Muslims themselves¹¹. President Trump's proposal of temporarily banning immigration from areas linked with terrorism without qualifying mainstream Muslims and

Terrorists. This ban has resulted because of the image created against Muslims by the western media that made President Trump alluded towards Muslims¹².

After the attacks in Charlie Hebdo, it started blaming ordinary Muslims for the terrorist's attacks¹³ and concluded that the migration of Muslims in France caused the terrorism to flourish¹⁴.

Methods

The research adopts qualitative analysis technique to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations related to Islamic concept of foreign relations. It provides insights into relating the concept of foreign relations according to the current needs of the time. The research methodology is also used to uncover the trends in thought and opinions, to dig deeper into the situation because of the prevailing situation about its impression on the non-Muslim world. It uses literature research and analysis to draw a better frame of understanding for the foreign policy of Islam.

Results and Discussions

Post 9/11 the dynamics of world relations has changed a lot and nations of the world has started evolving their relations with other nations in a different way than before. It is therefore has become very important to reshape the Islamic perspective of foreign relations in lieu of the changing circumstances of the world due to increase terrorism which may or may not have its foundation in religion. The current research divides the study into following categories after the prior art review on the same as follows:

1. Foreign relations in Islam world – before the demise of Ottoman Empire
2. Foreign relations in Islamic world – after the demise of Ottoman Empire
3. Foreign relations in Islamic World – Post 9/11
4. Foreign relations in Islamic world – Proposed

Foreign Relations in Islamic world – before the demise of Ottoman Empire

In Past Islamic states has used to look at the world from an authoritative perspective as being either as a house to Islam or in pact with Islamic government or in war with the Islamic state. Such authoritative approach yields the results in favor of Islamic states and non-believers has started converting to Islam because of their best principles of war. Islam become the only religion of the world that came into existence as an association of religion and power and hence propagated in the world with the help of arms and community established by the Prophet Muhammad, the last messenger of GOD¹⁵. The use of arms at the time when opposition do not want to come in

pact of peace was justified but requires strong principles and Islam has laid down the most human principles of war as said in the Holy Quran:

*Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! God loveth not aggressors.*¹⁶

The fundamentals principles of the war have been derived from Quran and command the Muslims to follow the humanity at war, which was not ever experienced like before and after Islam. The first caliph of Muslims state, Abu Bakar Al-Siddique clearly mentioned the beautiful guidelines for the Muslim army as¹⁷:

1. Do not kill women, children, the old, or the infirm;
2. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees;
3. Do not destroy any town;
4. Do not kill sheep or camels except for the purposes of eating;
5. Do not burn date-trees or submerge them;
6. Do not steal from the booty and
7. Do not be cowardly.

These principles were kept on being followed by his predecessors with full spirit until the demise of a dynasties, as dynasties or ruling tribe/nation of Islamic states leave the principles of Islamic foundations they were being replaced by new tribe/nation. So, in principle, not the religion itself has something to do with the terrorism but it is individuals who put things in wrong order to follow their own satisfactions that made the things to be perceived in different fashion.

Foreign relations in Islamic world – after the demise of Ottoman Empire

The demise of Ottoman Empire brought a change to Islamic thinking of relationships as it initiated the implantation of a nationalism concept in Muslim world from Europe. Muslim world has started adopting this approach as a whole and Muslim countries formed after the demise of Empire, started building their armies, economies and society on the basis of nationalism. As the concept itself does not has strong roots so political winds blew the nationalism that follows the predominant political attitude of time¹⁸. Same political attitude again ruins the Muslim world and they have put themselves away from the developed world and become either developing or under developing nations of the world.

During this time, the Muslim world has adopted the policy of building relations under political influence. It tends to revolve around economic activities and hence ended up in building stronger relationships on the basis of their raw goods export and finished good import from the foreign world. This strategy further weakens them from inside and created the economic disparity inside the different segments of the society. The economic disparity within the

society then created manifold issues for the countries and hence increase crime rates disturbed the law and order situations.

Foreign Relations in Islam – Post 9/11

Two events of war in Iraq and September 11, 2001 attacks in United States has dramatically changed the political environment for the Muslim of the world. It greatly impacts the religion-political scenery of the Muslim World¹⁹ that was already crippling in the hands of sectarian, ethnic, regional and economic cleavages. The researchers of Islamic world started defending Islam as a religion of peace and west has started criticizing the Islam as religion of terror and threat to humanity. The political governments of the Muslim countries of the globe started looking at US foreign policy towards them to align themselves to meet the expectations of their policy rather than building their own foreign policies. On the other side along with the war on terror with weapons, US has also started public diplomacy programs in the regions of high Muslim population which are also mostly affected with the war on terrorism²⁰.

Revival of Turkey

Turkey has emerged as the only Muslim nation after 9/11 that bring the most positive change in the Muslim world under the religious leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who lead the Turkey to the 13th Largest economy of the world with respect to GDP (PPP)²¹. The achievement involves greater stability through better law and order and peace inside the country through effective foreign relations and ending enmities with their neighbors i.e. Armenia, Greek, other Arabs²² along with resolving the Kurdish issue of inside.

Growth of Indonesia

Indonesia is the 4th biggest nation in the world with respect to population and most populous Islamic country²³. Indonesia has also shown good economic growth post 9/11 which has also laid down its basis on developing better foreign policies and exercising its role for peace, security and stability in the region²⁴. Annual GDP Growth Rate is averaging to 5.30% since 2000. GDP rate went down post 9/11 and then it regains its values²⁵. President Yudhoyono helps Indonesia by restoring their image in the international community and bring it closer to US by signing comprehensive partnership and other agreements²⁶ and focusing on making zero enemies and million friends.

Foreign relations in Islamic world – Proposed

9/11 has changed the world by many ways and on top of it from a perspective of realizing the problem and associated solution when United States spent more than trillion of dollars on war against terrorism, losing thousands of lives and injured humanity for solving a social problem²⁷. A social problem should not be solved through military operations and war. This is a great learning for the humanity to build principles of relationships whether

local, national or international. This study determines from the study of prior researches that it is very pertinent to identify the following for the definition of a suitable foreign policy in the modern age for the Muslim world:

1. Do not defend against being called as terrorists
2. Transform to Millet rather than nation
3. Build harmonious relationships with neighbors
 - a. Nature of difference/problems²⁸
 - i. Problem formulation
 - ii. Context of problem
 - iii. Set of right solutions
 - b. Approach towards employing appropriate solution

Islam plays an important role in building authoritative discourse in policy development in Muslim countries whereas it has no implications in the rest of the world²⁹. So it is very important that the Muslim countries should build relationships with the external world in such a way that it reflects the peaceful nature of religion that promotes harmony, love and peace amongst the humanity rather hatred, enmity and envy.

Future Research

This research opens up the areas of future research for the Muslim world to the following two directions:

- a. Transforming back to millet concept for the Muslim world and its path
- b. Picking up current foreign relation problems of a Muslim country and apply problem identification and resolution techniques to solve them

Such research will help the Muslim countries to believe the efficacies of the proposed policy development guidelines as suggested in this work.

Conclusion

Muslim world is in the dire need of developing better relationships with the other countries of the world. Relationships plays more important role in communicating the nature of faith and beliefs laid down by Islam. It is not the words and articles that will help propagating the beauty of Islam to the non-Muslim world. Islam believes in the harmony of relationships and all relationships starts from home where you need to fulfil and oblige the rights of community closer to you and hence the Muslim governments has to strictly decide and start developing policies in the right direction as proposed in the current research.

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