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## Security strategies of Afghanistan: A model for managing and controlling half a century of crisis

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### Abstract

The anarchic atmosphere of the international system has a rule that governments, by consolidating their capabilities, understand regional and global conditions and requirements; manage their security as a rare commodity. Afghanistan, as a fledgling political entity, has experienced a period of stability and security throughout its life except for the first half of the century. The main reason for the instability, insecurity and backwardness of this country is the inability of this country to adopt appropriate security strategies that will be able to contain the crisis and produce security and stability for this country. Therefore, the main question of this research is what strategy can control the crisis and produce security in Afghanistan? This study presumes security strategies as an independent variable in the analysis of the situation in Afghanistan and tries to draw a desirable and secure model of security strategies for Afghanistan by relying on positivism and realism theory and then apply it will act. The data collection method of this research is also the library research method and we will refer to the existing written works in this field.

**Keywords:** alliance, security, strategy, Afghanistan, network, military

### Introductions

Security strategies shape the general orientation of governments toward their environment. They are largely the product of accurate estimates of the needs, domestic capabilities, and regional and global power structures in order to meet the best foreign policy priorities of a state. In addition to outlining the foreign policy lines of governments, security strategies identify foreign threats and how to deal with them. The main function of drawing up security strategies is to rationally organize national tools and facilities in order to achieve national goals and interests. Any deviation and lack of attention from creating a balance between them will lead to the collapse of strategies in the skirt of idealism and excessive realism and will lead to the failure to achieve the desired view. Security strategies, also known as foreign policy orientations, are defined as a set of macro-strategies, doctrines, and upstream concepts of governments, and regulate their attitudes and interactions with other governments.

Lack of security strategies in foreign policy leads to loss of opportunities, loss of facilities and, in the long run, serious damage to the national interests of governments. In principle, the security orientations and strategies of governments are reflected in their policies, decisions, behaviors and continuous actions to reconcile interests, values and goals with the conditions and characteristics of the internal and external environment. Foreign policy makers cannot arbitrarily select and implement security leaders without calculation. In fact, for rational actors, the adoption of such strategies is always accompanied by degrees of coercion. In other words, in some cases, it is the security strategies that are imposed on the government rather than being selectively adopted by governments.

At least four categories of variables with different degrees are involved in the selection of security strategies. The first variable is the construction of the international system and how power is distributed in it. Patterns of domination, command, and leadership in an international system impose restrictions on the freedom of action of its units and influence their strategies. Another variable that determines the strategies of units is their internal stability and economic and social needs. In some cases, the characteristics of domestic society or the economic dependence of governments lead to the adoption of certain strategies. The third variable is policymakers' understanding of external threats to their national values and interests. Finally, geopolitical position has been proposed as the fourth variable that limits the choices of governments. Afghanistan, which has emerged as an independent political entity in the international system, a century ago, has implemented

various security strategies in its foreign policy. Some of them are derived from domestic needs, the realities of the external environment and the construction of regional and global power, thus contributing to the benefits and maintaining its survival. In some cases, without realistic considerations and based solely on the wishes of political leaders, it has taken a foreign policy orientation, which has ultimately seriously damaged the country's interests and survival, so the main question of this research is what strategy can control the crisis and produce security in Afghanistan? In each of the following strategies, we will try to refer to them. The main strategies and orientations of foreign policy of the countries are as follows:

### **Traditional security strategies**

These strategies are derived from the realities of the simple and classical international system. In this type of systems, the patterns of order are homogeneous and symmetrical, and a kind of simplicity and lack of variability dominates it. Simplicity can be seen in the units, interactions, rules, and boundaries of the system. In fact, classical systems represent the Westphalian pattern, which is governed by linear order (Ghasemi, 2014: 164) <sup>[3]</sup>. The most basic security strategies of governments in such systems include isolationism, alliance, non-alignment and neutrality.

### **Isolationism strategy**

This type of strategy implies a conscious and systematic refusal to engage in global affairs and to distance oneself from extensive political and economic interactions with other governments in the international arena. Isolated states are states that, on the one hand, have no particular interest in changing the international situation and, on the other hand, do not consider security and economic cooperation to be beneficial, either globally or regionally. (Ali Babaei, 2008: 33). In fact, the strategy of isolationism prevents states from engaging in political and military affairs beyond their borders (Mansbach and Rafferty, 2008: 171) <sup>[6]</sup>.

In such orientations, domestic issues take precedence over foreign and international issues, and governments see it as the most appropriate way to address external challenges and threats to their security and economic interests. Governments often adopt a strategy of isolationism that faces serious internal problems and challenges and addresses them as the most appropriate way to meet their national interests and goals, or to provide sufficient resources and facilities to They do not have conflicts with foreign affairs and the implementation of international obligations. Therefore, they consider entering the foreign arena to be to the detriment of their own interests.

The strategy of isolationism can be successful when, on the one hand, the great regional and global powers have no interest in the government in question. On the other hand, the government should have a suitable geographical location and have economic and social self-sufficiency (Holsti, 1994: 168). Therefore, in any case, the strategy of isolationism is not successful and does not produce the desired results. For example, a government that is in a sensitive geopolitical position and within the sphere of influence of one of the great powers of the system, simply and successfully cannot implement such a strategy.

A government can show its willingness not to clash with other states and international and regional political relations, but in many cases it cannot prevent the other states from

clashing with itself. We may have nothing to do with others, but others have interests in us.

Overall, the strategy of isolationism in the era of security and economic dependence today is not only impossible, but also undesirable. Historically, one of the countries that put the strategy of isolationism at the forefront of its foreign policy for a century and a half was the United States. From the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the country insisted on non-interference in military and political affairs across the oceans. In Afghanistan, too, except for the period of Mujahideen rule, civil wars and years of resistance, one cannot look for an example of isolationism in the foreign policy of this country.

It should be noted that the isolationist orientation in this period is the product of conscious choice of Afghanistan political leaders, but also internal problems and challenges prevent them from paying attention to foreign issues and conflicts with other governments in the region and the world.

### **Alliance and coalition strategy**

This strategy refers to a situation in which governments alone are unable to meet national goals and interests and to meet mainly foreign challenges and problems. Thus, by combining their political, economic and military capabilities with one or more other governments, they pursue their national interests. The strategy of alliance and alliance enhances their ability to counter foreign threats, defend national interests, and pursue foreign policy goals by creating common commitments between states. They see the existence of common security, economic and ideological interests as the main factors in adopting such a strategy. Governments with common problems, challenges and interests resort to such strategies.

Some distinguish between alliance and coalition. In their view, while all alliances are a kind of coalition, not all coalitions can be considered alliances. Alliances represent coalitions of states whose commitments are often formal and long-term. In other words, alliances are mostly more formal, more institutionalized, and longer-term, with the parties having common goals and perspectives. NATO can be considered as an example of unity (Viotti and Kauppi, 2013: 284) <sup>[8]</sup>. Alliances can naturally preserve the status quo and be revised. The first category refers to alliances that are formed naturally between two or more governments based on common interests and threats.

The second category of alliances refers to a situation in which states that are satisfied with the status quo accept and work together to strengthen and consolidate such a situation. In contrast, the third category includes alliances in which revolutionary and non-revolutionary states come together and work together to overthrow such an order. Among the existing paradigms, realists consider alliances to have special security and military functions. According to them, alliance is a formal or informal treaty for security cooperation between two or more governments, which aims to strengthen their power, security and influence (Walt, 2009: 86) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Some, like Morgenthau, see alliances and coalitions as features of the balance of power system. In their view, two rival governments can take three steps to maintain or increase their relative position of power; Increase their power, increase the power of other states to their own power, or prevent other states from increasing their power

over their rival power. The first option leads to an arms race and the second and third options lead to an alliance and coalition strategy (Morgenthau, 2010: 308-307) <sup>[7]</sup>.

Governments, large and small, adopt alliance and coalition strategies for different purposes. The main goal of such big governments is to expand their sphere of influence, stabilize geopolitical regions, contain rivals and, in general, maintain dominance over the international system. At the same time, small and weak states, with the orientation of alliance and coalition, seek to unite with the great powers, to unite with them, to provide them with better bases with political threats. - Confront security and maintain their survival (Ghamat, 2015: 118) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Alliances usually have both positive and negative purposes. The positive purpose of alliances is to increase the power of members by consolidating their power in comparison with rival governments or states, and its negative purpose is to confront and deter threatening power by reducing the impact and weakening the threat. Afghanistan has historically adopted the strategy of unity and coalition at two points in time. The first period dates back to the 1979 communist coup in which the government of the Republic of Afghanistan gave way to the government of the People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and openly abandoned its strategy of neutrality in favor of the strategy of alliance and coalition with the Soviet Union. In practice, this has dominated Afghanistan's foreign policy for fourteen years.

The second period goes back to after the 9/11 attacks and the formation of the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which continues with the ups and downs so far.

### **Non-Aligned Strategy**

This type of strategy implies independent decisions, the rejection of any political, economic domination and dependence, and military commitment to the poles of the international system, and the avoidance of joining politico-military alliances. In fact, the strategy of non-alignment is a general orientation in foreign policy that was formed after the process of decolonization and independence of the former colonial countries in Asia and Africa and is institutionalized in the non-aligned movement. According to this strategy, states do not use their political-military, economic and cultural capabilities for the purposes and interests of the great powers, and refuse to accept military and economic commitments that serve their interests. This strategy at the time of the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement meant non-membership in the Eastern and Western blocs and in the Warsaw Pact and NATO.

However, the abolition of the bipolar system does not mean that the strategy of non-alignment is obsolete, because the main focus of this strategy is non-dependence and military alliance with the great powers of the system. It does not matter, then, how many powers are at the top of the pyramid of power in the international system. Non-alignment implies an independent and self-reliant foreign policy without alliance with the powers that be. The strategy of non-alignment, although formally the product of the foreign policy behavior of some states during the Cold War, was intended to increase the independence of action and freedom of states in their foreign policy

Some of the most important principles of non-alignment orientation are; Peaceful coexistence, non-interference in the affairs of others, non-affiliation to any military alliance,

assistance to liberation movements, non-transfer of military bases to superpowers, respect for the sovereignty and currency integrity of countries, Supporting the UN Charter and the inalienable principles of international law, positive international cooperation, combating forms of racism and capitalism.

Afghanistan has followed the strategic principles of non-alignment since the inception of the NAM. The then King of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zahir Shah, attended the Bandung Conference in 1955 and subsequently signed the official declaration of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 (Leake, 2018: 70-75) <sup>[5]</sup>. As an active member of the movement, it attended its summits between 1961 and 1979. But after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the country abandoned its non-aligned strategy and entered into a military alliance with the Soviet Union. Although since the establishment of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, until now, the representatives of this country have participated in the meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement, but in practice it no longer follows the strategy of non-alignment.

### **Neutrality strategy**

The strategy of neutrality refers to a situation in which the government, in times of war or peace, adopts policies and practices that avoid conflicts in the political arena and international conflicts. In this way, it will maintain its survival and ensure its security. Usually, small and weak states in a sensitive geopolitical position are reluctant to adopt such a strategy so that they cannot be exposed to the intervention and aggression of large powers. Due to this, neutrality is meaningful when it is approved by the great powers. Hence, some consider neutrality as a legal concept and oversee the non-intervention and support of the parties to the conflict and war.

The law of neutrality as defined as part of international law in the 1907 Hague Convention, applies to armed conflict. The strategy of neutrality is influenced by the interests and policies of the great powers, in contrast to the non-commitment, which is based on the interests and discretion of governments to increase their independence from the role of the great powers. In other words, lasting neutrality is supported by the House of Commons.

There are many types of neutrality. Neutrality can be unstable, traditional, occasional, negative and positive. Sustainable neutrality is a form of neutrality that forms the direction of a country's entire foreign policy over a long period of time. This type of neutrality is often enshrined in an international treaty or the constitution of that state. This kind of neutrality is endorsed by the great powers. This type of neutrality is characterized by the fact that a neutral government does not use its military forces against others, except in defensive situations. Swiss neutrality can be considered as an example of such neutrality, which was approved by the 1815 Congress of Vienna.

Traditional neutrality is a form of neutrality that the government unilaterally adopts when it does. This kind of neutrality is neither codified nor a guarantee of great powers. In the case of neutrality, governments also declare neutrality in relation to certain events. In negative neutrality, neutral governments merely seek to withdraw from the conflict in the war and do not play a role in resolving or controlling it. In contrast, in positive neutrality, not only does the neutral government withdraw from the conflict, but

it also plays an active role in controlling and resolving it (Agiuse and Devine, 2011: 267-268) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Afghanistan has traditionally put neutrality at the heart of its foreign policy throughout the twentieth century. Although it expanded its foreign relations in the early twentieth century, it sought to strike a balance between the great powers and the security considerations of regional governments in its foreign orientation. During the two world wars, the country officially emphasized its policy of neutrality. During the Cold War, this neutrality was defined in terms of active participation in the Non-Aligned Movement and adherence to its principles. However, this tradition evolved after the military intervention of the Soviet Union and especially the formation of the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

### Networking Strategies

One of the features of security strategies is the integration of capabilities and its efficient management in foreign policy in such a way that it addresses the external challenges and threats of governments and provides optimal opportunities to strengthen national capacities and achieve goals and interests. Due to recent developments in the field of systemic order and the emergence of complex and chaotic systems, communication has been the focus of attention of international relations thinkers. In other words, with the evolution of the international system and demarcations and the importance of communication density within it, traditional non-communication-oriented attitudes have been marginalized and a networked attitude has emerged. Thus, due to the networking of the international system and networking requirements, it affects foreign policy and as a result, traditional foreign policy strategies give way to networking strategies.

A network approach with an emphasis on relationships, modeling communications between units, introduces new realities that security strategies can benefit from. In asymmetric and complex situations, this approach puts networking strategies, or rather networking, on the foreign policy agenda of governments. In networking strategies, the basic goal is to link the points, nodes, loops, and establish a feedback process between them. Increases the overweight links of states in the network, so that any pressure or damage to it affects other points or loops and provokes their reaction, thereby increasing the cost of competing action to give up work. Networking strategies can use different network models. The network can be arranged in different hierarchical, stellar and circular shapes.

In the hierarchical networking model, communications are distributed in such a way that power is formed in the form of a single centrality within the network. Hence, the control process will flow from the center, ie from top to bottom. In such a situation, the domains are clustered to the main unit or ring, and the closer we get to the central unit from the bottom, the less the number of main rings. Therefore, in this strategy, the networks of the main unit of the rings are organized in such a way as to prevent any pressure on them. In other words, any damage to the unit will cause severe irregularities in the network.

In the star networking model, one of the units plays a key role in the network. This role is influenced by its bonding position, which has given it a special ability. The relationships of the other units also point to the main unit. Applying such a strategy in networking puts the main unit in

a position to deter competitors from any hostile actions against itself. Finally, the loop networking model indicates that a functional link is established between the loops, so that the output of one loop is the input of the other loop. In such a situation, damage to any of these rings will cause disruption in the entire network and loss to all (Ghasemi, 2014: 41-45) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Afghanistan is also in a sensitive and important geopolitical, geoeconomic and geocultural position and by drawing its regional network, it can not only ensure its survival and security through networking strategies, but also security challenges and threats, both inside and outside the country. Turn abroad into opportunities for economic growth and development. Taking advantage of its quasi-independent geopolitical position, it connects the surrounding regional network at its axis and achieves its goals through aggregation of interests, independence, demand and security.

### Conclusion

From the beginning of its existence as an independent political entity in the international system, that is, a century ago, Afghanistan has implemented different security strategies in its foreign policy. These strategies have included neutrality, alliance, and alliance by handing over military bases and accepting the presence of the military forces of the great powers, neutrality, and non-alignment. Some of them are derived from domestic needs, the realities of the external environment and the construction of regional and global power, thus contributing to the benefits and maintaining its survival. In some cases, without realistic considerations and based solely on the wishes of political leaders, it has taken a foreign policy orientation, which has ultimately seriously damaged the country's interests and survival.

But mostly in the last half century, Afghanistan has witnessed many crises, instability, insecurity and even military intervention. This study considers the main cause of all these disorders in adopting inappropriate security strategies. Afghanistan, with its critical position, in addition to being able to become the center of crisis in the region, is also prone to adopt a network strategy and draw the network of its region on the one hand to control the crisis of the last half century and It will pave the way for stability, growth and prosperity for its people and the region.

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