

How Did the Ameer of Jihad Turn into a Foreign Minister?

(Translated)

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Yusuf Arslan

Member of the Media Office of Hizb ut-Tahrir – Wilayah Afghanistan

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as an institution for organizing foreign policy, is a modern phenomenon that dates back to Seventeenth Century CE (Christian Era) Europe. This institution entered the political structure of the Muslim World during the period of decline of the Uthmani Khilafah (Ottoman Caliphate), and caused a fundamental shift in the Muslims' view of foreign policy.

This article aims to clarify that the objectives of foreign policy in Islam, such as carrying the Dawah and supporting the oppressed cannot be achieved through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its contemporary form, because this institution was originally established to serve the secular system of the nation-state and to secure what is called "national interests."

The modern Ministry of Foreign Affairs was first established in France in 1626. Before that, foreign affairs in Europe were managed by the royal court or the Church, driven by personal, religious, or authoritarian motives. However, with the rise of nation-states and the spread of nationalist and secular ideas, governments became in need of an official, stable, and organized body to manage their foreign relations. Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established with the purpose of serving "national interests," dealing with the international system, concluding treaties, and securing political and economic interests.

In contrast, foreign policy in the Islamic State was based on the Islamic Aqeedah (doctrine) and the universal Risaalah message of Islam. Foreign policy was an essential part of the Khaleefah's (Caliph's) duties. The aim of this policy was not to protect colonialist nationalistic borders, but instead to expand the scope of the Islamic Dawah, remove obstacles in its path, and establish the authority of Islam in the world.

As for the modern system of the nation-state, it restricted political concepts within geographical borders, and it also limited the concept of war to what is called "defense of the land." For this reason, the one responsible for war was named the "Minister of Defense" instead of the "Amir of Jihad." In Islam, however, Jihad is not limited to reactive defense alone. Instead, in its essence, it is an initiatory Shariah obligation to make the Deen dominant, remove oppression, and establish truth. This was the mission of the Prophet (saw), and it was inherited by the Islamic Ummah. The Prophet (saw) made carrying the Dawah the foundation of his foreign policy, and adopted Jihad as the method for that, as Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً﴾ **"And fight them until there is no more fitnah"** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 193].

The policy of the Prophet (saw) in the state, his expeditions, his letters to kings and emperors, and the policies of the Khalifah Rashidun (Rightly-Guided Caliphs) and those after them all clearly establish this fixed and unchanging principle: that the Islamic Ummah must establish the Khilafah (Caliphate) and conduct its foreign policy

on the basis of spreading Islam through Dawah and Jihad, so as to lead and guide humanity.

In the Sixteenth Century CE, the Uthmani Khilafah (Ottoman Caliphate) established the first official body for foreign affairs, under the name “Reis ul-Kuttab” or “Reis Efendi.” This coincided with the beginning of the decline of the Ottoman Caliphate. The body was managed by Greek Christian elites, who were protected citizens of the Khilafah (Caliphate), but not committed to Islam. It did not hold central importance initially. Instead, it was concerned only with foreign correspondence, yet it gradually began to expand in the Seventeenth Century CE.

In the Nineteenth Century CE, influenced by the European Enlightenment, a new elite emerged in the Uthmani Khilafah made up of Westernized intellectuals such as Mustafa Resid Pasha, Ali Pasha, Fuad Pasha, and Midhat Pasha. They established a Ministry of Foreign Affairs modeled after the European system and borrowed from Western institutions, thereby launching the period known as the “Tanzimat Era” (1839–1876). During this era, the first official Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Uthmani Khilafah (Ottoman Caliphate) was established in 1836, under the name “Ministry of Foreign Affairs” (Nizaret-i Hariciye), with Mustafa Resid Pasha as its first head. He was not only a minister but also played the central role in drafting the “Gulhane Edict,” which laid the foundations for the Tanzimat period. Resid Pasha held reformist inclinations and, during his diplomatic service in France and Britain, was influenced by Western liberal ideas.

Midhat Pasha is considered one of the most prominent figures of this movement. He was among the first to call for constitutionalism and one of the founders of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. These “reformists” sought to introduce Western liberal values into the structure of the Uthmani Khilafah (Ottoman Caliphate). One of the most notable features of the “Tanzimat Era” was that it effectively removed Jihad from the state’s foreign policy, and replaced it with diplomacy and engagement with the West, on the basis of national interests.

During the same period, other ministries were established following the Western model, such as the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Education, and Finance, and the modern bureaucratic structure was introduced, one that still exists today in Muslim lands.

Although Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who assumed the Khilafah (Caliphate) from 1876 to 1909, strongly opposed these “reforms,” and sought to revive the role of Islam in the state, the traditional ulema did not possess a radical solution to this decline. Instead, the ulema opposed any change. On the other hand, foreign influence and external support for the constitutional movement helped sustain this course.

It is worth noting that these reforms, outwardly presented as a means to save the Uthmani Khilafah (Ottoman Caliphate), in reality did not save it. Instead these reforms paved the way for the downfall of the Khilafah and its replacement with the secular republic.

The constitutionalist movement reached its peak with the emergence of the “Committee of Union and Progress” and figures such as Mustafa Kemal, known as “Ataturk (Father of the Turks)” who abolished the Khilafah (Caliphate) completely in 1924, and declared the establishment of the secular Turkish Republic. The impact of this transformation was not limited to Turkey alone but extended to other Muslim lands, such as Iran and Afghanistan.

In Iran, the Iranian constitutionalists, influenced by the Ottoman Constitution and Westernized intellectuals, drafted a constitution and a parliament in 1906. Reza Shah Pahlavi, who began as a military officer loyal to constitutionalism, became one of the leading advocates of modernizing the state after coming to power. He continued Iran's modernization policy on the basis of authoritarianism, centralization of the state, Persian nationalism, and the exclusion of ulema from politics. He reorganized the state institutions along European lines and steered Iran toward becoming a secular state, supported by Britain and the Westernized elite. This movement, with all its Western influences, is what led Iranian society to sink into the quagmire of Western values up to this very day.

In Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan in the 1920s, inspired by the Turkish experience, attempted to reform the monarchy and replace it with modern laws. Mahmoud Tarzi was one of the most influential figures in this direction. He was greatly influenced by the Ottoman reformist movement after residing for years in the lands of the Khilafah (Caliphate). Upon his return to Afghanistan, he established journals and published reformist ideas, playing a pivotal role in shaping the thinking of Amanullah Khan and some leaders. Mahmoud Tarzi is considered the intellectual founder of the constitutionalist movement in Afghanistan, and through him began the process of establishing state institutions along Western lines, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 1919, Tarzi was appointed as Afghanistan's first official Minister of Foreign Affairs, marking the beginning of the systematic "secularization" of the country's foreign policy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its modern structure, is a secular institution whose purpose is to protect the interests of the nation-state, organize international relations, and engage with global powers, whether hostile or non-hostile. This institution was designed to serve the global system of nation-states, within the framework of liberal values. Therefore, it is not surprising that Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Muslim countries, in crises such as the Gaza issue, are limited to issuing verbal statements of condemnation only, without any practical action.

Given that the modern Ministry of Foreign Affairs was built on Western concepts, it is natural that its leadership is composed of figures inclined toward Western values, lacking Islamic depth, and dominated by the logic of compromise and self-interest. This trajectory is not new: the first foreign affairs body in the Uthmani Khilafah (Ottoman Caliphate) was managed by Greek Christian elites unconnected to Islam. Then, in the Nineteenth Century CE, it was led by Westernizing figures such as Resid Pasha. Today, Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the Muslim World are run by individuals who do not adhere to Islamic Shariah rulings, prioritize interests over principles, and view Islamic objectives as mere fanciful slogans or political obstacles.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the states of the Muslim lands is a product of the decline of the Uthmani Khilafah (Ottoman Caliphate), and a direct outcome of Western secular thought. It has replaced the Islamic foreign policy, which was based on making the Deen dominant through Dawah and Jihad. As a result, the nation's foreign policy has shifted from a global mission to a defeated diplomacy, economically oriented and confined within the borders of nation-states.

Unless the Ummah returns to the original basis of its Islamic foreign policy, and revives the role of Jihad within the framework of the Khilafah (Caliphate), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will neither be able nor willing to implement the Islamic approach even if its officials adorn themselves with beards, turbans, and Islamic titles!