

Essentials for Political Understanding and Policymaking

Part Six (Final)

(Translated)

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Alliances and Blocs

Studying alliances and blocs is essential for politicians and policymakers, given that alliances and blocs facilitate military and economic dominance and lead the world to widespread wars, such as the World Wars, which nearly annihilated humanity. Alliances and blocs are among the methods states employ to consolidate their military or economic power, giving the alliance or bloc greater weight than a single state on the international stage. Consequently, any member of an alliance carries the weight of the alliance within its area of expertise, not just the weight of their own country. This makes the alliance's influence on international relations evident, and consequently, the influence of the constituent states, particularly the state that formulates and leads the alliance's policies.

An alliance is a contractual relationship between two or more states, whose members agree to assist one another in the event of aggression or war. When we use the term "alliance," we are referring to military alliances. The motives for forming alliances are numerous, although self-interest is the most prominent. An ideological motive may also underlie an alliance, such as the Holy Alliance, also known as Grand Alliance, through which Russia, Prussia, and Austria agreed in 1815 to establish a bond between European states based on the teachings of Christianity, with the signatories considered divinely mandated to defend peace and order. An alliance may also be based on pragmatic interests, such as the League of the Three Emperors, or Union of the Three Emperors, in 1873, where the emperors of Germany, Russia, and Austro-Hungary formed a pact for mutual defense in the event of war against any of their empires. Another example is NATO, a mutual defense alliance established in 1949 to counter the Soviet Union, which in turn established the Warsaw Pact in 1955.

An international bloc, on the other hand, is an agreement between a group of states to adopt common political or economic policies and related measures. Political blocs, economic blocs, and political-economic blocs have emerged globally. In the last century, the world was divided into two main political blocs: the Eastern Bloc, or Soviet Bloc, and the Western Bloc, or Free Bloc. The Eastern Bloc united around the Soviet Union, while the Western Bloc united around the United States, in the context of the conflict between the West and the Soviet Union. Similarly, the Non-Aligned Movement was established, its foundations laid at the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955. Its founders included Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Josip Tito. The movement adopted a position of "positive neutrality," and it was clear that this bloc was aligned with the Western bloc during its conflict with the Soviet Union. Among the political-economic blocs was the European Economic Community (EEC), established as a result of the Rome Conference in 1957. Its objective was to achieve economic integration through the creation of a European Common Market and a customs union among its six member states: Belgium, France, Italy, West Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The European Union was then established following the Maastricht Treaty in 1991. It adopted a single currency, although some member states retained their original

currencies. While the EU has political roles, its most prominent function is economic, as monetary policy has been unified but tax policy has not, making it a political and economic union where the economic aspect is paramount. Among the most important political and economic blocs is the Group of Seven (G7), established in 1973 by the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and Canada. The G7's objective was to discuss and coordinate positions on major issues in the areas of security, trade, the economy, and climate change. An example of an economic bloc is the BRIC group, which was launched after a series of diplomatic meetings culminating in a summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 2008. The group initially comprised Brazil, Russia, India, and China, and later expanded in 2010 with the addition of South Africa, thus becoming known as BRICS. The group's stated purpose was to counter the unipolarity of global finance and to establish a new financial architecture. This led to the creation of the New Development Bank, headquartered in Shanghai, and the establishment of emergency reserve arrangements to protect against global liquidity pressures. In 2015, BRICS countries began discussions to create an alternative payment system to SWIFT, aiming to ensure their independence from the West in the payment system.

Alongside alliances and blocs are conferences and forums. We have already touched upon international conferences in the examples that explored international law and the international situation. International conferences have been foundational in establishing alliances, international law, and common policies. Among the most prominent conferences are the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944, which established the dollar as the world's primary currency, and the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which laid the groundwork for a unified European stance against the Islamic state. Forums, on the other hand, serve as venues for political and economic leaders and thinkers to convene and discuss major global issues. One of the most prominent global forums is the World Economic Forum (WEC), held annually in Davos. This forum brings together the world's leading capitalists, major corporations, thinkers, and politicians to discuss the most significant trends related to major global issues.

Alliances and blocs are dangerous, as they plunge the world into the crucible of major wars. Military alliances were responsible for two major wars that claimed the lives of tens of millions. Britain, which ignited both world wars, could not have waged them alone, so it formed alliances, resulting in widespread destruction. Policymakers must cultivate global public opinion against the idea of alliances to prevent major wars that decimate human life. Only then will smaller wars between any two countries become acceptable in achieving sovereignty or pursuing any interest, as the impact of such wars remains limited in terms of human losses.

Furthermore, politicians must not overlook blocs, forums, and their meetings, as these are important forums where many global issues are discussed, economic and political, and the leaders of the world's influential countries broadcast their point of view on those issues. This draws the attention of the observer to linking the events related to a particular issue with the point of view of the influential countries on the particular issue. This makes the observer not drift with the details of the events towards partial understandings that have no relation to the overall picture.

Political Awareness

It is not enough for someone working towards revival to be adept at political analysis. Analysis is not an end in itself. If one were to limit oneself to it, the individual working towards revival would be unable to achieve their goals, or benefit from their political understanding, remaining merely a theoretical political analyst, with no impact on the revival process. In order for someone working towards revival to be able to truly revive the Ummah, they must possess

The unique perspective from which a Muslim views his country enables him to perceive the plots of the disbelievers. He wages war here and makes treaties there, fighting only in the cause of Allah (swt). His limited resources do not drive him to adopt a colonial mindset for acquiring wealth or to disobey Islamic Shariah. Allah (swt) says, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ ءَامِهِمْ هَذَا وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾ **“O you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-Harām after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, Allāh will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, Allāh is Knowing and Wise”** [TMQ At-Taubah 9:28]. Conversely, this leads him to consider the entire world, devising policies that facilitate his conquest of countries to rule them according to Islam. He sends merchants here carrying the Risaalah message of Islam, directs media there to spread the message of Islam, supports Muslim groups in warring states to keep them preoccupied, and sends his army there to complete the conquest.

Therefore, limiting one’s focus to the local sphere, even from a narrow perspective, is not political awareness. Instead, it is a failure in political awareness and a failure in working towards revival. Those working for the revival of their Ummah must consider the nations and states that influence it, approaching this from a specific perspective.

It is not enough for an Ummah to have politically aware individuals, for this alone does not protect the Ummah from the machinations of its enemies, no matter how numerous the aware may be. Instead, every effort must be made to cultivate political awareness within the Ummah as a whole, even if this cannot be achieved in every single individual.

Furthermore, it is crucial to strongly caution against allowing emotions to cloud one’s judgment when interpreting politics and international affairs, and consequently, the actions that follow. Succumbing to emotion, preconceived notions, or biased interpretations based on personal, partisan, or ideological leanings leads to misinterpretation, and ultimately renders the actions resulting from such misinterpretation futile.

Policy Formulation

A politically aware individual must adopt plans and methods to achieve their perceived goals. If this politically aware individual is responsible for the affairs of Muslims and steers the course of the Islamic state, then policy formulation in terms of objectives, the means to achieve those objectives, and the methods employed to reach those objectives becomes essential and crucial. In today’s world, with all its advancements and globalization, it has become difficult, indeed dangerous, to improvise policies aimed at achieving objectives. Therefore, policy formulation has become an art that requires careful consideration.

The principle of causality (sababiyyah) applies to policy formulation. Policies are formulated to achieve objectives, and achieving objectives requires first defining the objective clearly and distinctly, not merely as a general title. Once the objective is defined, the means to achieve it are examined. When these means are clearly defined, the methods to reach these objectives, based on their underlying causes, are considered. Finally, the objective must be carefully considered throughout the application of these methods until it is achieved.

Once a goal is firmly established in the mind, action is taken towards it. This action is commensurate with both the goal and the individual working towards it. For example, a person, in their political capacity, sets a goal for themselves, such as striving for rizq (sustenance), and then takes the necessary steps to achieve it. These steps are proportionate to the goal and the individual working towards it. Some people limit their thinking about striving for rizq

(sustenance) to simply obtaining basic necessities, while others don't define their needs but simply work for what is available, while others seek becoming wealthy. Those who work for what is available tend to pursue fewer avenues than those who seek becoming wealthy. Similarly, groups formulate their goals. Some aim only to participate in the existing reality, while others seek to transform it into a different one. Each group takes action commensurate with its goal. If someone working towards a goal finds themselves unable to achieve it on their own, they strive to enhance their capabilities until they are commensurate with their objective.

Global parties and states delve deeper into policy-making than individuals or groups with limited vision. This is self-evident, and the reason is that if an individual adopts a method for a specific goal and finds his method ineffective, he will turn his attention away from that method to another, and this turning away from his attention will not cost him much. However, when global parties and states take an action at the party, or state level, and then find that their action is incorrect, their shift to another action takes time. This is like an aircraft carrier that is at sea. If it takes the wrong direction that does not lead to its goal, its captain is forced to turn the rudder in the correct direction, but this change will cost him tens of nautical miles until his ship is righted, due to its size and the strength of its momentum.

Therefore, a state draws up plans and strategies and adopts methods. Plans and strategies are designed to achieve a major goal, which requires a series of smaller objectives and time. Methods, on the other hand, are adopted within the framework of these plans and strategies. Those who formulate plans and strategies outline them as broad outlines, and then, when it comes to implementation, they devise methods that suit the achievement of the goal within the existing circumstances. It is well-known that countries like America develop plans and strategies for a ten-year period. From 2000 to 2010, they were preoccupied with directly engaging in the Middle East and extending their control and influence there, waging the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and reopening the Palestinian issue. When 2010 arrived and revolutions erupted in Muslim countries, they worked for ten years to suppress them and divert their course. By 2020, they had turned their attention towards China. Plans, once drawn up, are not changed, but methods are adapted to suit the reality and circumstances.

Policymaking among non-Muslims is not bound by principled or ethical constraints, as colonialism has become more prominent than principle in their political actions. In contrast, policymaking among Muslims is constrained by several limitations. The first is that objectives and policies must be based on Islamic Shariah, thus requiring policymakers to be familiar with the relevant jurisprudence. The second limitation is the preservation of the state, its structure, the Ummah, and its Deen from any looming threat. The third limitation is securing the trust and satisfaction of the Muslims. For example, the Prophet (saw) made a treaty with the Quraysh at Hudaibiyah and did not break it until they did. He had the Battle of Khaybar in mind when he concluded the treaty. Therefore, the Prophet (saw) did not receive Abu Jandal ibn Suhayl ibn Amr or Abu Basir in Madinah after the treaty was concluded, in adherence to the Islamic legal rulings pertaining to peace treaties. The Prophet (saw) received divine revelation, and his commands, actions, and words constitute legislation for his Ummah. As for the second restriction, when Abu Bakr (ra) saw that the apostasy movement (*Ridda*) was not merely an objection to paying Zakat, but rather a threat to the state's existence, he made a firm decision to eradicate this movement from its roots. When the Companions (ra) discussed this with him, he did not accept any of their opinions, but rather he was harsh with them in his response until he carried out his opinion on preserving the state's existence, and this is what happened. The third condition is that if a ruler tells the people everything he knows, whether it pleases them or angers them, he is being naive. Instead, he should use vague language when necessary to

secure their trust and satisfaction, and he should adopt policies that do not incite the Muslim community against him. Among the examples of this is what al-Tabari mentioned in his commentary on Surah al-Munafiqun (The Hypocrites), "Ibn Ubay also said: 'By Allah, if we return to Madinah, the most honorable will surely expel the most despicable from it. I told you: Do not spend on them. If you leave them, they will find nothing to eat, and they will leave and flee.' So, Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) came to the Prophet (saw) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, do you not hear what Ibn Ubay is saying?' He said, «وما ذاك؟» **'What is it?'** So he told him and said: 'Let me strike his neck, O Messenger of Allah.' He said, «إذا ترعد له أنف كثيرة يبترب» **'Then many noses will tremble for him compassionately in Yathrib.'**" And what Qatadah mentioned about this incident: "Abdullah ibn Abdullah ibn Ubay came to the Messenger of Allah (saw) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, it has reached me...'" You want to kill Abdullah ibn Ubay because of what you have heard about him. If you are going to do so, then order me to do it, and I will bring you his head. By Allah, the Khazraj know that there was no man among them more devoted to his father than I. I fear that you will order someone else to kill him, and I will not be able to bear the thought of seeing Abdullah ibn Ubay's killer walking among the people and then killing him, thus killing a believer for an unbeliever and entering Hellfire. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «بل نرفق به ونحسن صحبته ما بقي معنا» **"Instead, we will treat him kindly and be good to him as long as he remains with us."** After that day, whenever he did something wrong, his people would be the ones to admonish him, seize him, reprimand him, and threaten him. When the Messenger of Allah (saw) heard about their behavior, he said to Umar ibn al-Khattab, «كيف ترى يا عمر، أما والله لو قتلته يوم أمرتني بقتله لأرعدت له أنف، لو أمرتها اليوم بقتله لقتلته» **"What do you think, Umar? By Allah, if I had killed him the day you ordered me to kill him, I would have made noses compassionate for him. However, now, if you ordered me to kill him today, I would kill him."** Umar replied, "By Allah, I know. The command of the Messenger of Allah (saw) is more blessed than my own."

The Prophet (saw) appeased the group of Ansar when they were upset with him for distributing the spoils of war among the new Muslims, and he did not give them anything from it. Abu Saeed Al-Khudri (ra) narrated, "When the Messenger of Allah (saw) gave what he gave of those gifts to the Quraysh and the Arab tribes, and there was nothing in the Ansar from it, a group of Ansar was upset with themselves until the talk among them increased until one of them said: The Messenger of Allah (saw) met his people, and Saad bin Ubadah entered upon him and said: O Messenger of Allah, this group of Ansar was upset with you with themselves for what you did with this booty that you obtained. You divided it among your people and gave great gifts to the Arab tribes, and there was nothing in this for Ansar."

He (saw) said, «فأين أنت من ذلك يا سعد» **"So where do you stand on this, Sa'd?"** He replied, "O Messenger of Allah, I am but a man from my people, and I have no part in that." He said, "Then gather your people for me in this enclosure." So a man from the Muhajireen came, but he left them, and others came, but he turned them away. When they had all gathered, Sa'd came to him and said, "This group of Ansar has gathered for you." So the Messenger of Allah (saw) came to them, praised Allah (swt) and glorified Him as He deserves, then said, «يا معشر الأنصار ما قاله بلغتني عنكم ووجدتموها في أنفسكم ألم تكونوا ضللاً فهداكم الله بي وعالاً فأغناكم الله وأعداءً فألف بين قلوبكم» **"O Ansar, what is this talk I have heard about you, and what resentment do you feel in your hearts? Were you not astray, and Allah (swt) guided you through me? Were you not poor, and Allah (swt) enriched you? Were you not enemies, and He (swt) unified your hearts?"** They said, "Instead, Allah and His Messenger are more generous and more gracious." He said, «ألا تجيبوني يا معشر الأنصار» **"Will you not answer me, O Ansar?"** They said,

“How can we answer you, O Messenger of Allah? To Allah and His Messenger belong all favor and grace.”

«أما والله لو شئتم لقلتم فلصدقتم ولصدقتم: أتيتنا مُكذِّبًا فصدقناك ومخذولًا فنصرناك وطريدًا فأويناك وعانلاً فواسيناك، أوجدتكم في أنفسكم يا معشر الأنصار في لعاعة من الدنيا تألفت قومًا ليسلموا ووكلتكم إلى إسلامكم؟ ألا ترضون يا معشر الأنصار أن يذهب الناس بالشاة والبعير وترجعون برسول الله ﷺ في رحالكم؟ فوالذي نفس محمد بيده إنه لولا الهجرة لكنث By Allah, if you wished, you could have said, and you would have been truthful: ‘You came to us as one accused of lying, and we believed you; as a deserter, and we supported you; as an outcast, and we sheltered you; as a needy person, and we comforted you.’ Did you find fault with yourselves, O Ansar, because of some worldly gain that I have used to win over a people to Islam, and entrusted you to your Islam? Are you not satisfied, O Ansar, that the people go with the sheep and the camel, and you return with the Messenger of Allah (saw) in your homes? By Him in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, were it not for the Hijrah, I would have been a man of the Ansar. If people were to take a path, I would take the path of the Ansar. O Allah, have mercy on the Ansar, the sons of the Ansar, and the sons of the sons of the Ansar.” The people wept until their beards were wet with tears, and they said, “We are content with the Messenger of Allah (saw) as our portion and lot.” Then the Messenger of Allah (saw) departed, and they dispersed [Majma’ al-Zawa’id, al-Haythami].

It is important to note that political situations are volatile, changing with circumstances, actors, and conditions. Therefore, it is not appropriate to always adopt the same policy to achieve a single goal. A style is not chosen for its own sake, but rather for its potential to achieve the objective.

If the Islamic state is established in a Muslim country and sets its sights on expanding into a neighboring country, it must consider the neighboring country. If it is difficult to sway public opinion in favor of Islam, and the possibility of it becoming a thorn in the side of the state if annexed is high, because of the abundance of groups within it that were established under Western influence, the Islamic State adopts a long-term strategy of supporting and supplying Muslims there, mobilizing the country against its corrupt rulers, and cultivating public opinion to accept the rule of the Islamic State. Then, the Islamic State expands its influence. However, if the expansion is to a country whose people love Islam and support the Islamic State, the same considerations are not taken into account. Instead, it may lead to direct expansion.

Those who formulate and implement policies must possess willpower, resilience, patience, and emotional control. Indeed, they must suppress their emotions during action. They must cultivate a spiritual atmosphere, be determined to act wisely, rely on Allah (swt), and be patient, for Allah (swt) is with the patient, and Allah (swt) is with those who are righteous and do good. Allah is the Protector of the believers, the best of protectors and the best of helpers.

And all praise is due to Allah (swt), Lord of the Worlds.