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Tehran And Kabul: from intimate enemies to pragmatic allies

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Recently it was brought to light that the Islamic Republic of Iran frequently contributes significant quantities of money to the government of Hamid Karzai.

Although the news was surprising to many people, it was well-known that relations between Karzai and Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, were excellent; what it supposes is a new era in the history of the relations between the two countries.

Historically, Afghanistan and Iran have had troubled relations over questions such as the traffic of opium or the limits of the river Helmand. Many incidents have occurred between the two countries, such as the sad episodes in the consulates of Herat and Mashad in the 1980s or, more recently, the murder of various Iranian diplomats or the savage assault on the Iranian consulate of Mazar-i-Sharif. All these facts caused Tehran to take part in the Northern Alliance hosting more than 3 million refugees in their territory, essentially Tajiks, Hazaras and other Shiite minorities.

The relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan were bound to be faced with this terrible background. Nevertheless, the fall of the Taliban brought a breath of fresh air to the reconstruction of the damaged bilateral relations between the two states. The Iranian refusal to recognise the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan was a fact that helped and although it is certain that Tehran would have been more comfortable with a government run by Dr Abdullah Abdullah, the relations are above the political colour of the occupant of the Afghan presidential palace.

It is for this reason that the Iranian state is financing with one or two million monthly to the government of Karzai, since for Tehran the continuance of Karzai in power is fundamental to carrying out its politics. The main asset of Karzai's leadership for Ahmadinejad is that it keeps the United States and the remainder of its international allies entertained in a puzzle that drains their resources. In fact, Karzai and Ahmadinejad have continuous and overlapping criticism of the presence of international troops in Afghanistan. Though Karzai refers to the lack of liberty caused by the occupation of his country, Ahmadinejad refers to the intolerable sense of siege that Iran is under.

In this same line we find a new kind of movement of non-alignment – Russia, China, Pakistan, Brazil,

Venezuela and Bolivia – that intends to offer a non-democratic alternative to the Western model. Set against the speeches of Condoleezza Rice in Cairo and the continuous callings of Bush and Obama to the politics of the Spread of Democracy, this new block gives the non-democratic states the option to maintain their principles.

Political, religious, cultural or even historic differences do not matter, as the relations between Iran and Afghanistan show. Above all else is the common objective: to create a New World Order whose only point is the destruction of the current one.

Thus, by way of conclusion, we can say that the recently discovered relations between Tehran and Kabul are nothing more than a public presentation of a friendship that existed before the Taliban and that was restored after its fall. The progresses since 2001 have been many and very important to the extent that Iran has become Afghanistan's fourth largest trading partner and one of the main suppliers of aid to the country's development, which has been crystallised through different infrastructure projects along the border with heavy emphasis on the Herat Mashad railway.

As President Obama said, the solution to the problem of Afghanistan is the regional involvement of its neighbours, even if it entails a smaller role for Europe and United States as we are not used to moving the stormy waters of instability.

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