



Discourse Analysis of Economic Justice in the Ahmadinejad Administration and Its Tensions with the Intellectual Framework of Imam Khomeini

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ABSTRACT

Objective: In the contemporary era, economic security, as one of the fundamental and vital pillars of national security, has assumed a central position in the strategic planning of nations. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in recent decades, has faced extensive economic threats, including unprecedented sanctions, which has multiplied the need for conceptual and policy clarity in this domain. The present study aims to clarify the relationship between the economic policies of the ninth and tenth administrations (Ahmadinejad period) and the components of economic security within the intellectual framework of Imam Khomeini.

Method: The research employs a comparative-analytical method grounded in discourse theory. Components of economic security were extracted from Imam Khomeini's thought through thematic analysis of his statements and assessed using a three-level model (normative principles, declared policies, structural outcomes) in relation to the most prominent economic policies of the Ahmadinejad government, such as the Targeted Subsidies Plan, Small and Rapid-Return Enterprises, and Justice Shares.

Findings: Findings indicate that the dominant discourse of the Ahmadinejad administration, centered on the nodal point of "Economic Justice," sought, at the declarative and normative levels, to position itself as an extension of Imam Khomeini's thought. However, at the levels of implementation and structural outcomes, tensions emerged, including the expansion of slogan-driven approaches over pragmatism, the weakening of planning and legal institutions, extensive and non-expert governmental intervention in the market, and the lack of systematic utilization of national scientific capacities, developments that stand in contrast to principles such as rule of law, public participation, production-orientation, and economic independence in Imam Khomeini's thought.

Conclusion: This study also acknowledges the role of external sanctions as a structural variable influencing the economic outcomes of this period and emphasizes the necessity of distinguishing between consequences arising from domestic policy and those resulting from external pressures.

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Introduction

Within the modern paradigm of security studies, the economic dimensions of national security have acquired a status equal to, and at times surpassing, military dimensions. Economic disputes and financial warfare have become effective tools for exerting pressure on states (Rosecrance, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 349). The Islamic Republic of Iran, due to its strategic position, has always been exposed to such threats. In this context, economic security, defined as safeguarding the national economy against internal and external shocks and preserving the capacity to meet essential needs and ensure sustainable development, has become a vital priority.

The economic thought of Imam Khomeini, as the founder of the Islamic Republic, serves as a rich source for extracting foundational principles and components of Islamic-Iranian economic policymaking. This body of thought, rooted in Islamic, revolutionary, and national foundations, places particular emphasis on concepts such as economic independence, social justice, production-orientation, public participation, and combating corruption.

On the other hand, the ninth and tenth administrations (2005-2013 AD/1384-1392 SH), led by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, represent a challenging period in Iran's economic history, marked by unprecedented oil revenues on one side and escalating international sanctions on the other, during which policies such as the Targeted Subsidies Plan, Justice Shares, and Small and Rapid-Return Enterprises were implemented.

The central question of this study is how the relationship between the discourse and economic policies of the Ahmadinejad administration and the components of economic security in Imam Khomeini's intellectual framework can be explained. This study does not seek a definitive evaluative judgment regarding "Conformity or non-conformity," but rather aims to analyze the mechanisms, contexts, and outcomes of this relationship.

The significance of the study arises at both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, it contributes to methodological enrichment in comparative studies within political and economic thought. Practically, its findings may serve as a model for evaluating future economic policies based on enduring principles.

1. Research Questions

- What are the key components of "Economic Security" in Imam Khomeini's thought?
- How can the dominant discourse and core economic policies of the Ahmadinejad administration be characterized?
- How is the relationship between these policies and Imam Khomeini's components manifested across the normative, operational, and outcome levels?
- What internal and external factors influenced the formation of this relationship?

The research method is comparative-analytical. The theoretical framework is discourse theory (with emphasis on the views of Laclau and Mouffe), which examines meaning-making and identity formation in the political-economic sphere. Data collection relies on library research, documents, speeches, development plans, and official statistics. Thematic analysis was used to extract components of Imam Khomeini's thought, and the comparative analysis was conducted using a three-level model. Comparative analysis refers to the description and

explanation of similarities and differences in conditions or outcomes across large-scale social units such as regions, nations, societies, and cultures (Ghaffari, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 99). Based on this approach, two modes of thought or two sets of policies can also be compared and evaluated in relation to each other.

2. Research Background

Although no independent study directly addressing the subject of this article was found, related works can be identified in three thematic areas:

1) Studies on Economic Security

- In the book "Economic Security," Sina Makki Abadi discusses concepts, approaches, influencing factors, the role of law, political stability, and the place of economic security from the perspective of Islam and statements of the Supreme Leader.
- In "Economic Security from the Perspective of Islam and Its Strategies," Naser Jahaniyan analyzes economic security as a public good and an indicator of development, emphasizing the central role of the state and the increasing importance of this dimension in the age of globalization.
- Barry Buzan, in "People, States, and Fear," examines economic security within the framework of national security and defines it as access to resources, capital, markets, and the preservation of state welfare and power. He identifies economic threats as the most complex threats to analyze within this framework.

2) Studies on the Economic Policies of the Ahmadinejad Administration

- In "Pathology of Iran's Economic Development," Abbas Mosallanejad analyzes the shortcomings in implementing the Fourth Development Plan by the ninth administration, highlighting issues such as the administration's populist actions, its labeling of the Fourth Plan as an "American" plan reflecting Western dominance, the absence of good governance, excessive state intervention, and the removal of prior intellectual and executive elites.
- In "Iranian Populism," Ali Sarzaeem characterizes the governance of that period as a quintessential case of economic populism based on three pillars: short-term distributive policies, rent-seeking use of oil revenues, and a bipolar discourse of "The underclass versus the elite." He argues that this pattern led to the erosion of economic, institutional, and social capital and harmed long-term economic security.
- In "The Confidential Files of Iran's Economy," Sayyid Shamseddin Hosseini reviews key policies of that period, including industrial growth, social justice, targeted subsidies, and confronting sanctions. None of these three studies address Imam Khomeini's intellectual framework in the field of economics.

3) Studies on Economic Security from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini

- In "National Security from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini," Karimi Maleh Ali and Babaei explain the components of national security and its threats (including economic threats) from Imam Khomeini's viewpoint. This work does not analyze state security

approaches in the Islamic Republic.

- In "The Security Doctrine of Imam Khomeini," Alireza Khosravi elaborates the meta-theoretical and theoretical foundations of security in Imam Khomeini's discourse, describing it as a religion-based doctrine distinct from realist and liberal schools. This book likewise does not examine the security perspectives of different administrations. Neither of these works addresses the economic policies of the Ahmadinejad government.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1. Discourse Theory and Political-Economic Analysis

The present study uses discourse theory as its theoretical framework. This theory originated in linguistics, where Zellig Harris introduced the analysis of units larger than sentences and named it discourse analysis (Soltani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 154). This theory emphasizes the role of language in reconstructing the social world. Accordingly, reality can only be accessed through language; yet language does not merely reflect a pre-existing reality but actively contributes to its construction. Thus, theories and discourses confer meaning upon objects and phenomena.

Language not only represents reality but also interprets the social world, identities, and social relations. Changes in discourse lead to changes in the social world, while discursive conflicts reproduce new social orders (Hosseinizadeh, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 19).

Laclau and Mouffe, drawing on Saussurean linguistics, argue that the meaningfulness of any phenomenon requires its articulation within discourse and that language serves as the mechanism linking political and social theories. Saussure, through distinguishing *langue* from *parole*, separates the social dimension from the individual (Haghighat, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 456).

A discourse consists of signs articulated around a central signifier, and there is no inherent relationship between a sign and its meaning; rather, signs are "floating signifiers" whose meaning is fixed within a particular discourse (Hosseinizadeh, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 20). This theory aims to provide discursive interpretations of all social phenomena (Hosseinizadeh, 2004 AD/1383 SH: Issue 28, 187). Thus, all social phenomena can be analyzed using tools of discourse analysis (Soltani, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 75).

This theory, which extends Foucault's discourse theory into the domain of social and political philosophy, encompasses parts of society and gives meaning to their speech and actions (Soltani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: Issue 28, 155). In discourse, the relationship between a signifier and its meaning is temporary; each sign attains a temporary fixation, referred to as nodal fixation, which is nonetheless contingent, since floating signifiers may be redefined by other discourses (Hosseinizadeh, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 20).

Within a discourse, signs are articulated around a central nodal point that provides identity for the discourse, while other signs derive their meaning from it (Behrouz Lak, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 38). A floating signifier is a sign caught in a field of discursive struggle in which meaning becomes contested and suspended (Haghighat, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 517). Even nodal points originate as floating signifiers whose meanings later become fixed, yet their associated meanings are still interdependent (Hosseinizadeh, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 20).

The analysis of Ahmadinejad's discourse in this study focuses on identifying the central nodal point, its peripheral signifiers, and the process of their articulation.

3.2. Economic Security

Various definitions of economic security have been proposed. Mandel defines it as the ability to preserve and improve one's standard of living through domestic and international performance (Mandel, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 74). Buzan defines it as access to resources, capital, markets, and financial capacity required to maintain the welfare and power of the state (Buzan, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 34). In Islamic thought, economic security is defined as protection from violations against legitimate economic rights (Jahan Bozorgi, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 99).

In this study, economic security is conceptualized as a long-term condition characterized by guaranteed basic livelihood, macroeconomic predictability, preservation of public trust, and relative independence from external shocks.

4. The Intellectual Framework of Imam Khomeini in the Realm of Economy and Security

Imam Khomeini's economic thought forms a dynamic, contextual, and priority-based system. Its general principles, extracted through thematic analysis of his statements, can be summarized as follows:

- Comprehensive independence: Rejection of economic dependency on foreign powers, especially dependency on oil and imports.
- Social justice and support for the oppressed: Emphasis on equitable distribution of opportunities and resources, with special attention to the deprived.
- Production-orientation and self-reliance: Prioritizing domestic production, agriculture, and industry.
- Public participation and the role of the private sector: Opposition to a fully state-dominated economy and emphasis on people's involvement.
- Rule of law and institutionalism: Necessity of governing according to law (centered on Islamic rulings) and through legitimate institutions.
- Expediency of the Islamic system: Recognition of the priority of safeguarding the Islamic system under emergency conditions or conflicting obligations.

These principles serve as general guidelines under normal circumstances, although Imam Khomeini adjusted priorities when facing extraordinary conditions such as wartime exigencies.

5. Economic Security under the Ahmadinejad Administration

5.1. The Discourse and Economic Policies of the Ahmadinejad Government

Central Nodal Point and Discursive Articulation: The dominant discourse of the Ahmadinejad administration emerged in opposition to the preceding "Reconstruction" and "Reformist" discourses. Its central nodal point was "Islamic justice," articulated in contrast to "Unequal economic growth" and "Political liberalism." (Sadeghi, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 301; Akhavan Kazemi, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 204-210)

Core Policies (Peripheral Signifiers): Key policies were articulated around justice as peripheral signifiers:

- Targeted Subsidies Plan (more equitable resource distribution);
- Justice Shares (public participation in national wealth);
- Small and Rapid-Return Enterprises (immediate job creation);
- Mehr Housing Scheme (affordable housing for low-income groups);
- Iranian-Islamic Model of Progress (rejection of Western development models).

In foreign policy, this discourse was completed by signifiers such as "resistance against the hegemonic system." (Firoozabadi and Radfar, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 140)

Implementation Measures and Policy Actions:

- Economic Transformation Plan: Centered on "Equal distribution of opportunities" and "Structural reforms" such as subsidy targeting and banking reform (Ettelaat Newspaper, 10 July 2006).
- Mehr-e Imam Reza Fund: Supporting employment, marriage, and housing for youth.
- Small and Rapid-Return Enterprises: Aimed at large-scale job creation (Central Bank; Daneshjoo News Agency, 11 May 2013).
- Justice Shares: Designed to more fairly distribute wealth and encourage public economic participation.

Mehr Housing: Housing provision for low-income groups.

Gasoline rationing and subsidy targeting: To reform consumption and distribute subsidies more equitably.

Institutional restructuring: Merger or dissolution of high-level councils (such as the High Council of Economy) and the Management and Planning Organization.

Fifth Development Plan: Approved with emphasis on an Iranian-Islamic model of development and rejection of Western economic prescriptions.

Summary: The economic discourse of the Ahmadinejad administration centered on "Islamic justice," pursued extensive distributive and welfare-oriented policies and positioned itself in discursive contrast to previous administrations and the international order.

5.2. Economic Policies of the Ahmadinejad Administration and Their Tensions with the Intellectual Framework of Imam Khomeini

5.2.1. Economic Performance of the Ahmadinejad Government Based on Key Macroeconomic Indicators (2005–2013)

- Economic growth: A decline from 6.9% (2005) to 1.9% (2012).
- Inflation: A sharp increase from 10.3% (2005) to 39% (2013).
- Scholars identify causes such as monetary expansion, government borrowing from the Central Bank, and excessive lending.
- Government's view: sanctions and obstruction.
- Unemployment: Some reduction due to employment initiatives (rapid-return enterprises, Mehr-e Imam Reza Fund, etc.).
- Gini coefficient: Relative improvement due to distributive policies (cash subsidies, justice-centered programs).

- Investment: A steep decline from 8.7% to near zero.
- Exchange rate: Severe currency shock; about 200% increases in 2011–2012 and an overall rise of roughly 280% (from ~900 to 3500 Tomans).
- Oil revenue: A surge in oil prices provided significant financial resources to the government.

Performance Summary: Improvements occurred in income distribution indicators (unemployment, Gini index), while major productive and stability-related macro indicators (growth, investment, inflation, exchange rate) weakened. Structural problems included excessive imports, depreciation of currency, banking disruptions, and increases in economic corruption stemming from rent-seeking policies.

5.2.2. Critique of Policies Based on Principles of Governance and the Thought of Imam Khomeini

- 1) Slogan-orientation versus Pragmatism: Imam emphasized pragmatism as a means of creating security (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 15, 120). The government's performance was met with criticism regarding "Unconventional Principlism" (the letter of 60 economists) and "Impromptu Decision-making" (Statement of the Supreme Leader, July 24, 2012).
- 2) Rule of Law and Institutional Deconstruction: Imam regarded law (Islamic law) as essential for governing the country and establishing security (Khomeini, n.d.: 308). Criticisms of the government included: dissolution of key institutions such as the Management and Planning Organization and the Monetary and Credit Council, which, according to critics, facilitated tendencies toward non-observance of law and reduced oversight (Mosallanejad, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 292; Jahangiri, Hamshahri, Nov. 14, 2012). The Supreme Audit Court also reported extensive budgetary violations (Mosallanejad, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 298).
- 3) Role of the Private Sector and Interventionist Policies: Imam emphasized the participation of the public and a private sector rooted in the deprived and considered a fully state-dominated economy a "Fatal illness." (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 19, 158) Criticisms of the government: economists warned about the consequences of unprofessional market interventions and wage-setting (letter of 50 economists). Outcome: the decline of investment growth to zero, capital flight, and failure to realize the goals of Article 44 of the Constitution (Statement of the Supreme Leader, Sept. 9, 2009).
- 4) Utilization of Experts and Professional Knowledge: Imam stressed the necessity of employing committed specialists in the administration of the country (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 18, 463). Criticisms of the government: removal of managers and elites from previous administrations and failure to use expert opinions (e.g., during meetings with economists on the Economic Transformation Plan) (Renani, Mehrnameh 3: 117). The Supreme Leader also highlighted this problem (Aug. 28, 2011).
- 5) Ensuring Livelihood and Welfare of the Disadvantaged: Imam regarded improving the welfare of the oppressed as a duty of the Islamic government (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 14, 149). Evaluation of the government's performance: although distributive policies

such as cash subsidies provided short-term relief, high inflation effectively increased pressure on low-income groups. Programs such as Justice Shares had limited impact due to low returns and the absence of stable income generation. The Rapid-Return Enterprise program resulted in resource wastage (75% of allocations being non-productive) and inflation, and even led to the dismissal of the Minister of Economy and the Governor of the Central Bank (Shahrvand-e Emrooz, Issue 65: 20; Mosallanejad, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 300).

- 6) Liquidity Management and Inflation: The Supreme Leader identified excessive liquidity growth as the most important driver of inflation and emphasized the need to control it and channel it toward production (Aug. 23, 2012). Economists had also warned about the inflationary effects of policies such as the Targeted Subsidies Plan (due to insufficient study and rushed implementation) (Letter of 60 economists, 2008 AD/1387 SH).
- 7) Production-orientation and Independence from Oil: Imam considered a production-based economy and reducing dependence on oil as foundational to national independence and viewed oil as an exhaustible resource belonging to future generations (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 4, 364; 4, 470-471; 5, 113-114).

Government performance: despite unprecedented oil revenues (around \$600 billion by 2011), revenues were channeled into excessive imports and liquidity expansion rather than foundational investment. Industrial growth did not materialize (7% instead of the 12% target of the Fourth Development Plan), factories faced widespread difficulties, and approved measures to support production were not implemented (Statements of the Supreme Leader, Aug. 28, 2011, and Aug. 23, 2012).

8. Combating Corruption: Imam regarded eliminating the roots and motivations of corruption as the first task of an Islamic government (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 4, 362; 4, 413). Criticism of the government: the Supreme Leader emphasized the lack of practical anti-corruption action (Feb. 16, 2013 AD/1391 SH).
9. Attention to Labor and Workers: Imam considered workers the backbone of the revolution and the foundation of national independence (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 14, 328-329). Criticism of the government: the Supreme Leader stressed the need to resolve unemployment and improve productivity (Aug. 30, 2010 AD/1389 SH).

5.3. Final Comparative Analysis

At the normative level (intent and declared goals), the economic policies of the Ahmadinejad administration, centered on "Islamic Justice," displayed partial alignment with Imam Khomeini's justice-oriented and independence-seeking aspirations.

However, at the operational level (methods and mechanisms), the neglect of expert consultation, the rule of law, specialized institutions, and economic balance marked a significant departure from the Imam's foundational principles.

At the outcome level, the emergence of major macroeconomic instabilities (inflation, recession, currency shock) created a notable gap between the results of the policies and Imam's emphasis on production-orientation, reducing reliance on oil, safeguarding national wealth for future generations, and practical anti-corruption efforts.

Sanctions acted as an intervening variable that intensified these negative outcomes.

5.3. Analysis of the Targeted Subsidies Policy

At the normative level, the policy overlapped with the principle of distributive justice and consumption reform in Imam Khomeini's thought. The government, by invoking support for low-income groups and correcting distorted prices, appeared to pursue the Imam's concern for assisting the disadvantaged.

However, at the operational level, the policy was implemented hastily and without preparing the productive infrastructure, and expert warnings were disregarded, contradicting the Imam's emphasis on legality, expert-driven action, and gradual reform.

At the outcome level, the policy led to stagflation, reduced purchasing power of the middle class, and increased uncertainty, weakening the components of "Predictability" and "Trust" in economic security.

After 2011, sanctions increased pressure to raise non-oil revenues and may have strengthened the government's incentive to implement the plan rapidly.

5.4. Analysis of the Rapid-Return Enterprise Policy

At the normative level, this policy aligned with Imam Khomeini's emphasis on job creation and entrepreneurship. However, at the operational level, loans were distributed widely and without conditions, effective oversight was lacking, and critical managers were dismissed, contradicting the Imam's principles of expertise-orientation and supervision. At the outcome level, the policy led to waste of banking resources, growth of non-productive liquidity, and intensified inflation, thereby weakening the components of "Optimal allocation of resources" and "predictability." Although primarily a domestic decision, sanctions, by reducing opportunities for productive investment, may have increased the incentive for such redistributive initiatives.

5.5. Analysis of the Justice Shares Policy

At the normative level, this policy was consistent with the principle of public participation in national wealth and distributive justice in Imam Khomeini's thought. However, at the operational level, the privatization process was complex and non-transparent, and shareholders did not gain an active role, contradicting the Imam's emphasis on transparency and empowerment. At the outcome level, the policy created unmet expectations and mistrust toward privatization models, weakening the component of "Public Trust." Sanctions and recession in the capital market reduced the real value of Justice Shares and prevented the fulfillment of the promised welfare outcomes.

5.6. Analysis of the General Policy of Administratively Reducing Bank Interest Rates

At the normative level, this policy appeared to align with the Islamic principle of combating usury. However, at the operational level, the decision was imposed administratively and without coordination with the banking system, contradicting the Imam's emphasis on expediency of the Islamic system and expert-based governance. At the outcome level, the policy created a black market for money, reduced incentives for savings, and disrupted the financial system, weakening the components of "Capital market efficiency" and "Predictability." Under

conditions of sanctions and capital flight, the policy conflicted with the need for attractive interest rates to keep capital inside the country.

5.7. Summary of the Three-Level Analysis

The foregoing analysis shows that the economic policies of the Ahmadinejad administration, at the normative level and in their stated intentions, often overlapped with the general principles of Imam Khomeini. However, at the operational level, these policies significantly diverged from the methods emphasized by the Imam, namely legality, expertise, gradualism, and transparency. At the outcome level, these policies weakened key components of economic security. External sanctions in some cases acted as aggravating or enabling factors. This analysis indicates the presence of tension between discourse and practice within the economic orientation of this administration.

6. Theoretical Synthesis

The findings of this study indicate that the economic discourse of the Ahmadinejad administration suffered from an internal contradiction: "On the one hand, by articulating the signifier "Justice," it sought to place itself within the continuation of the Islamic Revolution's discourse and the ideals of Imam Khomeini." On the other hand, in implementation and structural impact, due to non-institutionalized, slogan-driven, and under-expertized methods, it unintentionally weakened key components of economic security (as defined in this study), several of which, such as adherence to law, production-orientation, and independence, were themselves pillars of the Imam's thought.

Conclusion

This study, by moving beyond a binary or value-laden perspective, demonstrates that the relationship between the Ahmadinejad administration's economic policies and the thought of Imam Khomeini is complex, multi-layered, and fraught with tension. At the level of discourse and declared policies, areas of overlap around the theme of justice can be observed. However, at the deeper levels of implementation and outcome, due to non-institutional practices, reduced roles for law and expertise, and extensive state intervention, significant gaps emerged that ultimately weakened major indicators of economic security (predictability, trust, independence). These results occurred alongside unprecedented intensification of external sanctions, which played a substantial role in worsening the crises.

Research Limitations:

The difficulty of precisely distinguishing the impact of sanctions from domestic policy in producing specific outcomes, limited access to certain operational and financial data, and the inherent interpretive nature of discourse analysis constitute the main limitations of this study.

Suggestions for Future Research:

Future studies may replicate this comparative framework for other administrations, examine

the role of specific institutions (such as the parliament or judiciary) in mitigating or exacerbating these tensions, and undertake deeper analyses of the concept of "Resistance Economy" as a reinterpretation of Imam Khomeini's thought under conditions of sanctions.

Matrix of the Three-Level Comparative Analysis of Ahmadinejad Administration's Economic Policies and the Components of Economic Security in Imam Khomeini's Thought

Policy Under Analysis	Level 1: Alignment of Normative Principles (Intent and Declared Policy)	Level 2: Analysis of Implementation Process (Method and Mechanism)	Level 3: Evaluation of Structural Outcomes (Impact on Economic Security)	Analysis of the Role of Sanctions (as an Intervening Variable)
Targeted Subsidies	<p>- Imam's principle: distributive justice, consumption pattern reform.</p> <p>- Overlap: the government's emphasis on supporting low income groups and correcting price distortions.</p> <p>- Tension/Ambiguity : in Imam's view, justice is both distributive and opportunity creating (production oriented).</p>	<p>-Imam's principle: rule of law, expertise, gradualism.</p> <p>-Implementation: rapid execution (2010), without full preparation of production and compensation infrastructures.</p> <p>-Violation: relative disregard for expert warnings (letter of 60 economists).</p>	<p>-Security indicators: predictability, livelihood continuity, trust.</p> <p>-Outcome: creation of stagflation, reduced purchasing power of the middle class, increased market uncertainty.</p> <p>-Result: temporary weakening of "Predictability" and "Trust."</p>	<p>-Sanctions' effect: from 2011 onward, sanctions increased pressure to raise non-oil revenues and strengthened incentives for rapid implementation.</p> <p>-Difficult to separate: liquidity expansion due to cash transfers became more inflationary under sanctions and declining production.</p>
Rapid Return Enterprises	<p>-Imam's principle: job creation, entrepreneurship, support for the deprived.</p> <p>-Overlap: emphasis on reducing unemployment and creating job opportunities.</p> <p>- Tension/Ambiguity : for Imam, employment must be productive and</p>	<p>-Imam's principle: expertise, oversight, anti-corruption.</p> <p>-Implementation: widespread and unconditional loan distribution, severe oversight weaknesses, extensive reports of resource diversion.</p> <p>-Violation: dismissal of critical managers (e.g., the</p>	<p>-Security indicators: optimal resource allocation, predictability.</p> <p>-Outcome: waste of banking resources, growth of non-productive liquidity, failure to generate sustainable production, intensified inflation.</p> <p>-Result: weakening of "Optimal</p>	<p>-Sanctions' effect: limited; the policy was mainly a domestic decision driven by the government's redistributive priorities. Sanctions, by reducing productive investment opportunities, may have increased incentives for such redistributive</p>

Policy Under Analysis	Level 1: Alignment of Normative Principles (Intent and Declared Policy)	Level 2: Analysis of Implementation Process (Method and Mechanism)	Level 3: Evaluation of Structural Outcomes (Impact on Economic Security)	Analysis of the Role of Sanctions (as an Intervening Variable)
	sustainable.	Central Bank Governor), non-expert decision making.	resource allocation" and "Predictability" in the banking system.	schemes.
Justice Shares	<p>-Imam's principle: public participation in national wealth; distributive justice.</p> <p>-Overlap: attempt to distribute assets and ownership.</p> <p>-</p> <p>Tension/Ambiguity : Imam's notion of justice is based on empowerment, not merely transferring illiquid assets.</p>	<p>-Imam's principle: transparency, legality, empowerment.</p> <p>-Implementation: complex and non-transparent privatization process; lack of education and meaningful participation for shareholders; transformation of the scheme into a redistributive instrument without real public involvement.</p> <p>-Violation: failure to provide necessary conditions for genuine participation (education, transparency).</p>	<p>-Security indicators: sense of benefit, trust in institutions.</p> <p>-Outcome: creation of unmet expectations, failure to deliver promised welfare, erosion of trust in privatization models.</p> <p>-Result: weakening of "Public trust" in people centered economic policies.</p>	<p>Sanctions' effect: indirect; sanctions and capital market recession reduced the real value of Justice Shares and hindered fulfillment of welfare promises.</p>
General Policy: Administrative Reduction of Bank Interest Rates	<p>-Imam's principle: combating usury, facilitating economic activity.</p> <p>-Overlap: rhetorical alignment with fighting the usury based system.</p> <p>-</p> <p>Tension/Ambiguity : Imam advocated an efficient economic system,</p>	<p>-Imam's principle: expediency of the system, expert based governance.</p> <p>-Implementation: imposed administratively without cooperation of the banking system; lack of consideration for inflationary consequences or market distortions.</p> <p>-Violation:</p>	<p>-Security indicators: efficiency of the capital market, predictability.</p> <p>-Outcome: emergence of a black market for money, reduced incentives for saving, disruption of the financial system.</p>	<p>Sanctions' effect: aggravating; under sanctions and capital flight, attractive interest rates were needed to retain capital. This policy contradicted that need.</p>

Policy Under Analysis	Level 1: Alignment of Normative Principles (Intent and Declared Policy)	Level 2: Analysis of Implementation Process (Method and Mechanism)	Level 3: Evaluation of Structural Outcomes (Impact on Economic Security)	Analysis of the Role of Sanctions (as an Intervening Variable)
	not non expert directives.	insufficient expert consultation; reliance on an unenforceable directive.	-Result: weakening of "CVapital market efficiency" and "Predictability."	

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Citizen Rights Based on Human Dignity in the Intellectual Framework of Ayatollah Khamenei

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ABSTRACT

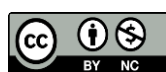
Objective: Citizen rights grounded in human dignity constitute one of the central themes in the legal and political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei. This approach divides human dignity into two types: "Innate and acquired. Innate dignity is a natural and inherent attribute inseparable from being human, while acquired dignity results from ethical conduct, the pursuit of justice, the commitment to rightful claims, and a conscious effort to realize lofty human values." Both forms of dignity serve as the foundation for a coherent and interconnected system of human, civil, judicial, welfare, political, and social rights that originate from four sources: "Divine, legislative rights, innate, creational rights, natural rights, and contractual rights.

Method: This study, through the method of content analysis, seeks to provide a renewed reconstruction of dignity based citizenship rights in the political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei.

Findings: A key conclusion drawn from the intellectual system of Ayatollah Khamenei is that the realization of the foundations of dignity, together with their corresponding legal structures, depends on the presence of a righteous and dignified government and on the active participation of dignity seeking and justice oriented citizens. In this view, all four sources function in a complementary and harmonious manner. Citizenship rights are rooted in human nature and innate disposition; revelatory legislation affirms them, and human contracts establish them as the basis of social life. The dignified state, likewise, emerges from human nature and innate disposition, is affirmed by divine law, and through human agreements becomes the central guarantor of dignity and citizens' rights. Within such a framework of sources and foundations, human life proceeds on the basis of reciprocal rights and responsibilities.

Conclusion: Commitment to the rule of law, ethical conduct, civic participation in the reform of societal affairs, and mutual observance of rights and norms are mechanisms for realizing this process.

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Introduction

In contemporary political and legal literature, the concept of citizenship is regarded as one of the core subjects in social and governmental theories. In modern political systems, citizenship is defined as a legal and contractual status within society, shaped by reciprocal rights and obligations between the individual and the state. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, this relationship in Iran was largely based on unilateral dynamics between the ruler and the subjects, in which individual rights were overshadowed by the power of the sovereign.

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution, a new discourse emerged in which human dignity was recognized as the foundation of citizenship rights and responsibilities. Ayatollah Khamenei, emphasizing this transformation, argues that the Islamic Revolution brought about the true realization of citizenship in Iran, replacing previous hierarchical relations with reciprocal and human-centered ones.

This study aims, through an analytical and interpretive approach, to re-examine the concept of citizenship within the intellectual framework of Ayatollah Khamenei. In this view, citizenship is not merely a political or social status but is rooted in human dignity originating from the Islamic worldview. Dignity in this philosophy is divided into innate and acquired forms. Innate dignity is a natural and inherent human right belonging to all individuals solely by virtue of being human. This dignity is potentially present in all human beings regardless of their actions or behavior.

In contrast, acquired dignity results from a conscious and responsible human effort to actualize innate capacities with the guidance of reason and religion. From Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, the realization of this dignity in society depends on the establishment of justice, for justice provides the necessary conditions for everyone to attain legitimate rights and freedoms while preventing individuals from falling into negligence and sin.

In this approach, citizenship rights encompass not only civil, political, economic, and cultural rights but also highlight the integration of divine, innate, natural, and contractual rights. The rights of the people, including the right to choose their government, do not compete with divine authority but rather originate from it; therefore, any violation of the people's rights is considered a violation of divine right and deserving of punishment.

Within this framework, the dignified state serves as the primary infrastructure responsible for guaranteeing the dignity of citizens and providing the necessary conditions for the realization of their rights. In turn, dignity-seeking citizens bear reciprocal responsibilities, including respect for one another's rights, adherence to the rule of law, and active participation in the reform of societal affairs. This reciprocal interaction constitutes the fundamental basis of the code of citizenship in the Islamic system.

Through a precise analysis of these foundations, this article seeks to present a theoretical framework for understanding how the ideal of human dignity is transformed into concrete and explicitly articulated rights within the system of the Islamic Republic. It further aims to demonstrate how this perspective paves the way for the enhancement of civic culture and the realization of social justice and sustainable development. In this regard, by carefully elucidating the concepts, foundations, and categories of citizenship rights from the viewpoint of the Leader

of the Islamic Revolution, this study also examines practical strategies for promoting civic conduct.

This analytical approach enables us to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the reciprocal role of governance and the people in realizing a just and dignified society, one in which every individual, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation, enjoys their rights and freedoms and actively participates in shaping their collective destiny.

1. Conceptual Foundations of the Research

1.1. Citizenship/Citizen

The term "citizenship" does not have a long history in Persian political and legal literature. Prior to the Constitutional Revolution, terms such as subjects were used to denote the social status of individuals (Dekhoda, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 7, entry "Ra'īyyat"). At that time, people were followers and subjects of the monarch and lacked recognized social rights.

In prevailing legal and political discourse, the concept of citizenship is closely associated with the emergence of nation-states. Individuals residing within the borders of a country became citizens, possessing shared rights and duties (Rezaeipour, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 110). This concept became recognized in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. Ayatollah Khamenei has explicitly stated that "The Islamic Revolution led to the formation of the reality of citizenship in Iran; prior to that, the relationship between rulers and the people was based on that of master and subject." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 27/08/1370)

In the Islamic system, the interconnection between rights and duties for citizens is a recognized principle. This perspective is compatible with the modern definition of citizenship, which is based on nationality rather than belief. In the Islamic system, when securing the rights of an Iranian citizen, no inquiry is made regarding his or her religion; rather, individuals are treated on the basis of "Shared Citizenship" and "Common Nationality." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 27/08/1370)

In the past, political and national affiliations were subordinate to religious affiliation and the distinction between the abode of Islam and the abode of unbelief prevailed. Even in classical Islamic political philosophy, it was held that if a virtuous Muslim resided in another city, he was considered part of the virtuous city (Mohajerania, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 335). Today, however, an individual's belonging is determined by nationality, and all nationals of a country, regardless of religious identity, possess citizenship rights (Mohajerania, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 112).

1.2. Citizenship Rights

Citizenship rights refer to the set of legal and social entitlements and responsibilities that define relations between individuals and society. In effect, these rights encompass all the powers and duties to which each person is entitled by virtue of membership in a given country (Rezaeipour, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 110). This concept includes such fundamental rights as freedom of thought, expression, and belief; the full equality of all individuals in enjoying benefits and fulfilling obligations; and active participation in shaping social life. These rights can take various forms, including equality before the law, the right to personal security, the right to welfare and social development, the right to determine one's political destiny, the right to adequate housing, and other material and moral rights. Anthony Giddens, the eminent

sociologist, grounds citizenship rights in the principle of equal enjoyment of rights and obligations for all and holds that all citizens share in the creation of social order (Giddens, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 795). In the Islamic perspective, Ayatollah Khamenei has emphasized that anyone living in an Islamic society is regarded as a citizen and enjoys all citizenship rights (Khamenei, 15/06/1380). This view underscores the dignity and equal rights of all members of society.

1.3. Human/Islamic Dignity

Dignity signifies human nobility, honor, and magnanimity (Raghib, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 30), and exalted honor accompanied by superiority (Mostafavi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 10, 46), as opposed to baseness, inferiority, humiliation, and ignobility (Dekhoda, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 538). In Ayatollah Khamenei's thought, it denotes the intrinsic sanctity and inherent worth of all human beings bestowed by God, a natural and divine right of all people, realized solely by virtue of "Being Human." In his exegesis of Surah *al-Isrā'*, verse 70, "Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam," he regards innate human dignity as the right of all human beings without racial, religious, or ethnic distinction (Ayatollah Khamenei, 26/05/1402).

2. Theoretical Framework and Research Method

This study reaches its conclusions within the framework of the "Five Rites" theory presented in the book *Political Philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei* (Mohajeraniya, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 201). There, the author contrasts the rite of citizenship with the rite of rulership and treats dignity as one of the foundations of citizenship rights. The technical apparatus of the research is based on the method of textual inferential elicitation, which is a specialized approach to content analysis. Inferential elicitation from text is among the most important methods for understanding and uncovering a text's and author's intended meaning. It assists the researcher in four stages to move beyond descriptive understanding toward explanation, analysis, and even prescription. "The significance of this method lies in its capacity to apply a philosophical approach to contents and sources produced in past eras or other cultures without regard to time and place, and, using intra-hermeneutic techniques, to extract the text's philosophical and abstract contours in a profoundly layered manner. Employing this method in the present study is necessary for three reasons":

- Access to information on the political philosophy of the Islamic Revolution is largely limited to documentary sources;
- Understanding its essential elements is contingent upon grasping the language employed in the texts and documents;
- In textual inferential elicitation, attention is typically directed to the basic elements of texts, namely symbols, themes, characters, propositions, and titles.

The principal function of the inferential elicitation method is content analysis, identifying the foundations, goals, values, culture, and orientations of the text or its author. In the present study, following the four stages below, an effort has been made to elucidate and examine the subject of citizenship in the political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei:

- An initial understanding of the text's content through description and identification of its explicit content and outward features;

- Explication of the fundamental, ontic elements that constitute the text's content;
- Analysis of the identity-forming, cultural, and linguistic elements of the text's content;
- Prescription of determinate, elevating components for consolidating and sustaining the content.

The authors maintain that only through a logical response to the above stages can a proper analysis of the described content be presented. Without passing through this process, one cannot gain sufficient insight into the three factors that lie beyond the text, namely the pre-textual, identity-forming, and determinative elements. We believe that after describing, explaining, and analyzing the relevant texts, it becomes possible to formulate a theory of citizenship within the political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei.

3. Human Dignity as the Foundation of Citizenship Rights

The most explicit Qur'anic verse regarding dignity states: "Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam." (al-Isrā': 70) This divine message indicates that the human species as a whole has been granted this divine beneficence and honor. However, when this verse is considered alongside other verses that speak of human dignity and mention certain conditions and causes for it, such as piety, good character, justice, self-restraint, gentleness, and nobility of spirit, it becomes clear that human dignity is of two kinds:

A) Innate Dignity

This refers to that which exists inherently in the essence, nature, and constitution of human beings in a creational and natural sense. As long as it has not yet reached the stage of realization and external manifestation, it exists potentially in all human beings. In Islamic teachings, the human being, considered the crown of creation, has been granted certain ranks and stations in the order of creation, such as: Vicegerent of God (al-Baqarah: 30), possessor of the divine spirit (al-Hijr: 29), bearer of the divine trust (al-Ahzāb: 72), the one before whom the angels prostrated (al-Baqarah: 34), and the being for whom the heavens and the earth have been subjected (al-Nahl: 12), among others.

Regarding the relationship between the Islamic Revolution and the intrinsic dignity of human beings, Ayatollah Khamenei states:

"The other pillar of the Islamic Revolution is attention to human dignity. A society that lives within a given geographical and political framework requires, by virtue of its dignity, to be free and independent, for its talents to flourish, to be in control of its own destiny, not to be subjected to humiliation and insult, and for its intrinsic personality to manifest itself." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 22/07/1382)

B) Acquired Dignity

Acquired dignity refers to the form of dignity that human beings actualize through specific means and through the guidance of reason and religion, transforming the potential capacities of their innate dignity into actuality. Conversely, through negligence, sin, and indifference, a person may decline and fall to the lowest of states.

Ayatollah Khamenei considers the attainment of this form of dignity in society to depend on the establishment of justice. Justice is one of the most fundamental and essential principles of

the Islamic system. The efforts and struggles undertaken within this system are centered on implementing justice in society; when justice is properly established, human rights and human dignity are also guaranteed, and individuals gain access to their legitimate rights and freedoms (Ayatollah Khamenei, 23/08/1382).

In the case of intrinsic dignity, considered at the level of ontological reality, the sole condition for possessing this status is simply being human, and human conduct or behavior has no role in attaining this rank. In contrast, with regard to the realization and acquisition of dignity, numerous causes and conditions are required.

Some Qur'anic commentators, in explaining the verses on human dignity, have attributed the honoring of the human being above other creatures to several factors: "The capacity for speech, the upright human posture, the structure of human fingers which enables the performance of many tasks, eating with the hands, the ability to write, the beauty of human form, mastery over many creatures and their subjugation, the direct creation of the first human by God, and the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was chosen from among human beings. Some of these qualities derive from reason, such as the capacity for speech, writing, and gaining mastery over other beings." (Tabataba'i, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 13, 165) Therefore, reason itself is considered a factor in human superiority and dignity (Alidadi Soleimani, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 150).

However, since the human being is not self-sufficient and reason alone cannot determine all orientations and ultimate purposes, humanity requires guidance and the mission of the prophets (Ayatollah Khamenei, 13/11/1370). As he states:

"The prophetic mission has been the means of liberating human beings, it frees and emancipates them. Human bondage in the context of the prophetic missions has been both material and spiritual. In the sphere of material life, human beings were in bondage: "Their economies, their governments, their social relations and interactions were under the domination of tyrannical and satanic powers. Pharaohs ruled over them. Their material lives were harsh; they had neither freedom nor independence. They obtained even a meager livelihood with great difficulty. Among human beings there was discrimination; justice did not exist. People were humiliated, and they were subjected to torture."

Society was struggling under various forms of material pressure; this describes the material dimension of life. Yet in the spiritual and moral dimension as well, human beings remained in bondage. People's morals were corrupt. They were not permitted to learn correct thought and sound reasoning; they thought incorrectly and crookedly; virtue did not exist in human societies; no one showed mercy to another; people's talents remained dormant. Human beings were not allowed to develop the treasures inherent in their nature or allow the springs of their inner capacities to flow forth. It was in such conditions that prophets appeared and the prophetic mission emerged (Ayatollah Khamenei, 30/1/1364), to save human beings, guide them toward light, elevate them to human morality, and raise them to the station of humanity and dignity (Ayatollah Khamenei, 12/9/1379). Thus, the mission of all prophets is to bring human beings out of these darkneses and away from everything contrary to the path of humanity, and to guide them toward light and dignity.

Reflecting on Ayatollah Khamenei's political philosophy, it appears that the following five principles can be inferred from his perspective:

- Dignity is inherently part of human rights and the rights of humankind;
- Dignity is the result of a collection of human attributes and qualities;
- The realization of dignity as a right occurs only within social life and through acceptance of membership in a community;
- Attaining dignity requires citizenship within a guardianship-based government;
- Human beings living under oppression, deprived of the right to dignity, must sever their allegiance to such regimes and embrace citizenship in a guardianship-based government.

On this basis, dignity is both the product and outcome of many elements and components that are secured through the acceptance of citizenship. At the same time, providing these elements for the citizen generates rights for them. Conversely, corresponding to these rights, the citizen bears duties that must be fulfilled in order to strengthen the bond between the guardianship-based society and the dignified state.

4. Conditions for the Realization of a Dignified Society

In Ayatollah Khamenei's intellectual framework, two fundamental conditions must be met in order to attain dignity as a citizenship right:

A) The Existence of a Dignified State

To guarantee human dignity, the existence of a dignified state is essential. This concept appears in *Iftitāh* pray as "O! God, we long for a dignified state" meaning a plea to God for an honorable and noble government. Such a state must possess specific characteristics: it must be noble and steadfast, remaining impervious to external pressures. It must also hold firm conviction in the path defined for it by the Constitution and by the duties of the Islamic system. A dignified state does not cheapen its own values to accommodate others, and presents to the world a fresh and meaningful message, such as religious democracy, which is a new concept in today's world.

This outlook parallels the advice of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) to one of his followers:

"If you hold a precious gem in your hand and the entire world tells you it is worthless clay, does your belief change? Do you feel humiliated?" When the follower answered no, the Imam replied: "Then preserve your gem."

Ayatollah Khamenei uses this example to emphasize steadfastness in values and resilience as defining features of a dignified state (Ayatollah Khamenei, 05/06/1380).

According to him, the most complete example of a dignified state is the ten-year government of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This period forms the foundational blueprint of the Islamic system and serves as an unparalleled model for all societies and eras. Although reaching its full perfection in later periods may be impossible, its indicators and criteria can be used to evaluate systems and individuals. These indicators act as guidance for Muslims and for all humanity. The system established by the Prophet contains numerous markers, among which seven stand out: "Faith and spirituality, justice and equity, knowledge and insight, harmony and brotherhood, moral and behavioral rectitude, power and dignity, and constant work, movement, and progress." (Ayatollah Khamenei, Friday Prayer Sermon, 28/02/1380)

Based on these characteristics of the Prophetic system, Ayatollah Khamenei considers the Islamic Republic in the contemporary era to be an instance of the dignified state (Ayatollah Khamenei, 16/09/1374).

B) The Existence of Dignity-Seeking Citizens

One of Ayatollah Khamenei's notable qualities is his ability to bridge theoretical concepts with practical realities and to link abstract ideas to tangible examples. Unlike purely theoretical approaches, he presents the concept of the "Complete human being" not only as an abstract ideal but through real and observable models.

In Ayatollah Khamenei's anthropological foundations it is stated that the purpose of human creation is not mere earthly existence; rather, human beings are created to traverse the path toward God, reaching their rightful station, which is the station of divine vicegerency, becoming manifestations of God's attributes. Therefore, what is fundamental in the human being is the set of elevated values inherent within them, which they can actualize through their own will (Ayatollah Khamenei, 22/07/1382).

From his perspective, the impeccable Imams are regarded as the most outstanding exemplars of the "Complete human being." He maintains that the divine straight path is the only path these individuals follow in order to attain their ultimate goal. In his thought, this process of exemplification is not limited to positive models; rather, identifying negative examples is equally important, as it helps in recognizing misguided paths.

However, in raising the concept of dignity, the intention is not merely to describe a perfectional attribute of the human being. Thus, 'What has been stated regarding the meaning and significance of dignity serves, in this discussion, as a preliminary foundation?' The essential aim of presenting dignity as a right of citizenship is to clarify that every human being possesses both intrinsic and acquired dignity and that once a person becomes subject to and a citizen of a state, their dignity must be secured and preserved.

In Islamic teachings, accepting citizenship and submitting to social regulations is intended to enable human beings more readily to fulfill their rights and duties, cultivate elevated values within themselves, and attain moral excellence. If, however, accepting citizenship in a given society prevents a person from attaining dignity, perfection, and felicity, the explicit command of religion is that one must sever the bond of citizenship and migrate in order to attain dignity, joining the citizenship of a virtuous state (Farabi, n.d.: 56) and a dignified government.

Ayatollah Khamenei divides migration into three types:

- Spiritual migration toward God, meaning non-attachment to a particular place;
- The migration of nomadic tribes to cities, for the purpose of civilized life;
- Migration for the sake of a new civilization and new citizenship.

Regarding the third meaning, he refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from Mecca to Medina, stating that it was undertaken in order "To establish a civilization. So long as people do not become subject to a civilizational order and urban social organization, it is not possible to implement divine and Islamic prescriptions upon them or elevate them." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 20/06/1373)

He considers this type of migration to be among the requirements of a guardianship-based government. Thus, he argues that at the very beginning of the Hijrah, the Noble Prophet's first action was political: "Laying the foundation of the Islamic community, establishing the Islamic government, and forming the Islamic system." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 31/05/1385) This was because citizenship under guardianship-based governance required precisely such a foundation.

"The primary meaning of guardianship is connection, linkage, interweaving, and mutual entanglement. This is the meaning of guardianship: "Something that evokes unity, joining hands, being together, moving together, unity of purpose, unity of path, and unity in all political and social affairs. Guardianship means bond and connection. 'And those who believed but did not migrate, you have no bond of guardianship with them until they migrate (al-Anfāl: 72). This means that the bond among members of the Islamic community is achieved through migration, not merely through faith. Faith alone is not sufficient. The bond of guardianship, which is a political and social phenomenon and a determining event for life, is realized through effort, movement, and migration, being alongside one another, and working together." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 27/01/1377)

5. The Nature of Citizenship Rights

One of the fundamental questions in Islamic political thought is: 'To what is a citizen subject?' 'Is the citizen subject to a city, a country, a nation, or the the abode of Islam?' Despite differing viewpoints, what is certain is that terms such as people, citizen, and subject acquire meaning only within the context of a society, whether that society exists within the limits of a city-state or nation-state, within the broader scope of a regional polity encompassing an *Ummah*, or even at the level of a global state.

By virtue of a person's allegiance and obedience to a state and its governing authority, they are referred to as a citizen or subject. And because they stand opposite the state as its counterpart, they are known as the people. When the relationship between citizens and rulers is founded on Islam, it becomes a humane and desirable relationship. Thus, citizenship is a political and social concept referring to social and political structures as well as to the manner in which power is distributed within modern city-states. Beyond defining the type of social and political order, this concept also determines the level and quality of the relationship between governing power and members of society.

A) The Importance of Dignity-Centered Citizenship Rights

The concept of individuality and individual rights within the framework of citizenship was first articulated in the West, particularly through the schools of humanism and liberalism. The historical conditions of Europe were such that this concept conveyed two main intentions: "The negation of being subjects and the negation of servitude to God. In effect, human will and desire were placed in the position of divine guidance, and thus human law, reflecting human will, replaced divine law. European-style theocracy, or divine sovereignty over society and human life, gave way to democracy, while slogans such as freedom, equality, and fraternity became the foundations of social life."

By emphasizing natural rights, they argued that all human rights arise from nature. Since

natural laws operate uniformly everywhere, the rights of all human beings must also be equal, and all individuals should equally participate in determining their own destinies. Accordingly, a citizen was defined as a free and autonomous individual, endowed with rights, who participates in shaping the general will and collective decision-making, and who accepts three fundamental principles:

- Political power does not arise from divine will, but from the consent of citizens;
- All socio-political systems must be based on rationality and oriented toward human welfare;
- The human being possesses innate rights that must be respected by state authority (Ayatollah Khamenei, 15/05/1382).

From the perspective of Islamic thought, the human being is not a forsaken or abandoned creature; rather, he holds a unique position. He is the chosen of God and His vicegerent on earth. His being is composed of both spiritual and material dimensions, and within his nature lies an inclination toward God. The human being is free, independent, a divine trustee, and responsible before himself and the world. His journey begins in weakness and moves toward perfection; yet true tranquility is found only in connection with the Creator. His intellectual and practical capacities have no fixed limits, and he possesses an intrinsic dignity, one whose motivations may at times be purely spiritual.

Although the human being has the right to benefit from divine blessings, he remains accountable to God (Khamenei, 15/05/1382). In Ayatollah Khamenei's political philosophy, the human being differs from all other created beings and possesses special privileges granted to no other creature. For this reason, true humanism exists only within divine religions, for they focus on the growth and elevation of the human being and do not permit him to be sacrificed for the aims of others. All of a human's grandeur and nobility stem from his existential connection to God, and his lofty capacities can flourish only through this bond and within a divine educational system.

Therefore, a human being detached from God cannot qualify for these rights and attributes. One of the fundamental principles shared by all divine religions is the emphasis on human dignity. This dignity prevents the human being from committing sin or encroaching upon the rights of others. The liberation of human beings from the chains imposed by oppressive rulers has been the great ideal of the prophets and divine leaders. Certain human rights can be established on the basis of the very nature of human existence. "Islamic narrations also emphasize that one who feels no dignity within himself cannot be trusted, and one who possesses dignity does not stain himself with sin."

The foundation of rights in Islam is built upon a distinctive anthropological and worldview framework. Without understanding these foundations, neither the philosophy of Islamic rulings can be grasped nor can the limits of Ijtihad and proper implementation of laws be determined. Acceptance of human responsibility before God and the relationship of servitude play an essential role in defining the boundaries of human rights.

However, to establish universal rights for all human beings, a shared essence among them must first be demonstrated. As long as human thought remains dominated by differences, proving this common ground, and formulating equal laws for all, will be difficult. In this regard,

innate disposition offers a comprehensive definition of the common element shared by all humans. This concept stands in contrast to mere "Nature," and in harmony with Islam's view, which attributes both natural and spiritual dimensions to the human being, *Fitrah* emphasizes the primacy of the spiritual dimension.

Thus, *Fitrah* represents the human's immaterial, heavenly spirit, which, through the infusion of the divine breath, attains value and exalted status. *Fitrah* is a universal and uniform reality that guides all human beings toward truth and perfection. According to this theory, the human being is not a neutral entity; rather, he possesses innate cognitions and inclinations. *Fitrah* has key characteristics that help us establish human and citizenship rights:

- Universality: All human beings, regardless of differences, possess it;
- Innateness: This attribute exists from birth in every human being and requires no special conditions to be affirmed.

For example, the right to freedom is a universal requirement for attaining perfection. Since the ultimate purpose of creation is human elevation, this goal can only be achieved through freedom in choosing one's path. Therefore, the foundations of rights in Islam lie either in *Fitrah* or in nature. In cases of conflict, *Fitrah*, because of its higher value, guides the human being toward his ultimate end, which is perfection. Divine laws based on revelation also constitute an important source. Ayatollah Khamenei states: "We believe in freedom. Our belief in freedom and the securing of citizenship rights in social matters is deeply rooted and has a religious foundation." (Khamenei, 15/05/1382)

Regarding sovereignty and its relation to citizenship rights, he asserts: "Human rights are secured under Islam and the Islamic government. It is Islam that says, "Judgment belongs to none but God; He has commanded that you worship none but Him." (Yūsuf: 40) This verse rejects every form of tyrannical authority. No one has the right to rule over the people unless they possess legitimate criteria and are accepted by the populace (Khamenei, 13/11/1370).

The Nature of Citizenship Rights

Given the definition of citizenship rights, the question arises: 'How do they differ from human rights, and do the two concepts overlap?' It appears that human rights constitute the foundation of citizenship rights. Within this framework, every person, by virtue of being human and residing within the geographical boundaries of a state, enjoys similar rights.

The key differences between these two concepts can be examined in two dimensions:

- Scope: Human rights are universal and global, whereas citizenship rights are defined within the context of a specific country and political system;
- Nature: Human rights concepts are often abstract and somewhat ambiguous, while citizenship rights, due to their direct relationship with the people and their practical, implementable character, are more concrete. In fact, modern citizenship rights concern reciprocal relations among citizens as well as their relationship with state institutions, making them a particular interpretation of human rights.

The importance of citizenship rights is such that it becomes closely linked with the position of sovereignty. Some analysts believe that in societies where citizenship rights are not firmly established, the relationship between the people and the state becomes unstable. In modern

citizenship theory, the relationship between government and people is based more on interaction and mutual cooperation than on state authority and command. Although the state exercises sovereign power in certain major matters, in most areas both citizens and the government bear clear responsibilities to ensure the realization of citizenship rights.

One of the important questions regarding citizenship rights concerns their relationship with divine rights. 'Are these two concepts incompatible and irreconcilable, an assumption that emerged in post-medieval Europe? Or are they in fact not contradictory and even mutually reinforcing?' In the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei, several key points can be identified on this issue:

- Rooted in human nature and *Fitrah*: From a philosophical and legal standpoint, part of citizenship rights is grounded in human nature and innate disposition, and divine religions have correctly affirmed and recognized these rights (Khamenei, 22/12/1368);
- Rooted in divine obligations: From a theological and religious perspective, another part of citizenship rights originates from the duties and laws that God has prescribed for human beings (Khamenei, 27/12/1380);
- Positive and contractual rights: Based on these two categories of rights (natural and divine), human beings formulate additional rights in their social life to regulate their mutual relations. These are known as positive (enacted) and contractual rights (Khamenei, 15/05/1382);
- No conflict with divine rights: The legitimacy and authority of positive rights ultimately derive from religion, and therefore they must not contradict the divine rights that God has embedded in human *Fitrah* and conveyed through revelation.

Ayatollah Khamenei explicitly states that in Islam, divine rights and the rights of the people are not only non-conflicting but are in fact complementary. All the rights people possess, including the right to participate in selecting the governing authority, originate from divine commands and ordinances. In reality, the validity of people's rights stems from God's sovereignty and the laws He has established. Thus, in the Qur'an, violations of people's rights, such as usury, are described as "War against God." (al-Baqarah: 279) Likewise, regarding corruption on earth, the Qur'an considers it "Waging war against God and His Messenger." (al-Mā'idah: 33) This demonstrates that violating human rights is essentially a war against God, for the rights of the people are a divine duty and a right that God has assigned to them and placed as a responsibility upon those in authority (Khamenei, 27/12/1380).

6. Types of Citizenship Rights

Citizenship rights are not confined to a particular domain of civic life; rather, they encompass all dimensions of human social life insofar as the individual is a member of society. Human rights exist across all these domains. Examining the structure of civic life reveals that some of these rights belong to a person simply by virtue of being a member of society, and they are indispensable. They are established to protect a person's life, property, and freedom.

A review of the system of citizenship rights shows that a significant portion of these rights are privileges granted solely on the basis of an individual's membership in society. These essential and fundamental rights are formulated to safeguard each person's life, possessions, and liberty, and no individual can be exempt from them. These are commonly referred to as

public rights. They exist across political, social, economic, and cultural spheres and take on the characteristics of the domain to which they belong.

Some classifications divide citizenship rights into three main categories:

- Civil Rights: This category includes the rights that the law recognizes for every individual. Examples of these rights include freedom to choose one's place of residence, freedom of expression and belief, the right to property, and the right to a fair trial before the law;
- Political Rights: These rights pertain to individuals' participation in determining the political destiny of society, such as the right to vote and the right to run as a candidate in elections;
- Social Rights: These rights are defined on the basis of each individual's natural right to attain a minimum standard of living. They include matters such as access to health and medical services, social security, and other welfare services.

7. Citizenship Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Ayatollah Khamenei believes that genuine human rights can be secured for citizens under the umbrella of Islam. From the Islamic perspective, sovereignty belongs solely to God, and the verse "The command belongs to none but God; He has commanded that you worship none but Him" (Yūsuf: 40) invalidates any form of tyrannical rule. Therefore, no one has the right to govern the people unless they meet recognized criteria and are also accepted by the populace. Only under such conditions can citizenship rights be fully realized.

He considers attention to citizenship rights a modern idea, stating:

"There is an advanced, highly modern, and defensible mode of thinking within the Islamic system regarding the people's right to vote and political activities. Of course, political activity is not limited only to voting, though that is its greatest and most important part. In summary, among various freedoms, the political freedoms, the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right to political activity... in the Islamic Republic we returned to the Islamic model, which we found to be clearer, more progressive, and stronger than what exists in the world today." (Khamenei, 22/03/1366)

He values these rights so highly that he equates the Islamic Republic itself with the recognition of such rights, stating:

"The Islamic Republic means a political system that recognizes, in the broadest sense; the rights of the people, relying on God have will and divine legislation." (Khamenei, 27/12/1380)

Therefore, anyone who, despite professing belief in Islam, violates people's rights should expect divine punishment, because the rights of the people originate from divine duties, and constitute rights that God has designated for them and placed upon the shoulders of officials (Khamenei, 27/12/1380).

Ayatollah Khamenei regards citizenship rights as fundamental pillars of the Islamic Republic and emphasizes their importance. He holds that the foundational principles of the system, including the drafting of the Constitution and the election of officials, are directly dependent on citizenship rights. According to his view, the people's choice, based on divine criteria, is a necessary condition for governmental legitimacy in the Islamic Republic (speech dated 27/12/1380).

An important feature of this view is the inclusiveness of citizenship rights. Khamenei stresses that these rights are not limited to Muslims, and followers of other religions are also entitled to them (speech dated 25/11/1379).

To demonstrate these rights and freedoms in Iran, he frequently refers to the country's Constitution. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, grounded in an Islamic worldview and a profound understanding of the human being, establishes rights for individuals. Paying attention to these rights can promote awareness and insight among citizens, enabling proper and logical relations with the government and other members of society, ultimately contributing to social stability and well-being.

Throughout all its sections, from citizens' rights to the structure of government, the Constitution pursues specific goals. Each article of the Constitution represents an objective that must be pursued for realization (speech dated 07/03/1381). This perspective presents the Constitution as a roadmap for achieving the defined goals of society and the state.

Conclusion

Citizenship refers to the social status and position recognized for an individual in relation to society or government. This status is attributed to someone who enjoys inherent, natural, and legal rights, which the state is obligated to respect and protect. In return, the citizen is required to consider him or herself bound by the laws of citizenship. This status is defined by the laws of each country, and there are various ways through which it may be acquired.

In the political thought of Muslim scholars, there have been differing views as to whether a citizen is affiliated with a city, a nation-state, or the broader *Ummah* and *Dar al-Islam*. Nevertheless, what is certain is that terms such as "People," "Citizen," and "Subject" acquire meaning only within the context of a community, whether that community is defined as a city-state, a nation-state, a regional religious community, or even a global government. Beyond describing social and political structure, this concept also indicates the nature and level of the relationship between political authority and members of society.

Citizenship rights constitute a collection of individual and public rights that regulate social relations. These rights are, in effect, privileges that every individual enjoys by virtue of nationality, including freedom of thought, belief, expression, and opinion. Equality of all individuals in the enjoyment of rights and responsibilities, as well as their active participation in social life, are also among the essential dimensions of citizenship rights.

From a philosophical and legal perspective, part of these rights is rooted in human nature and *Fitrah*, whose validity has been affirmed by divine religions. From the standpoint of Islamic political philosophy, another part of these rights originates from the divine obligations that God has prescribed for human beings. These two categories of rights, natural and divine, are not in conflict; rather, they complement one another.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes that in Islam, the rights of God and the rights of the people are not in competition or contradiction. He explains that all the rights of the people, including the right to choose in matters of governance, derive from divine command, and that the legitimacy of people's rights stems from God's sovereignty and His laws.

Citizenship rights are not confined to a single aspect of life; rather, they encompass all spheres of an individual's social existence by virtue of his or her membership in society.

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Sociopolitical Currentology: Essence, Rationale, and Methodology

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The research aims to present and design a macro theoretical-methodological model in the field of current studies (jaryan shenasi) to enable a systematic, interdisciplinary, and rule-governed understanding, analysis, and explanation of complex societal developments (particularly Iran before and after the Islamic Revolution). This work has been conducted in response to the need for an independent methodological approach in this field. Therefore, the research addresses this main question: What is sociopolitical current studies and how is it conducted?

Method: In answering this question, the effort has been to define the process of implementing sociopolitical current studies in three stages by introducing a method-theory founded on the integration of descriptive-inductive, explanatory-analytical, and critical-diagnostic approaches: 1. Preliminaries; 2. Data Analysis (Methodological Model) including: Definition, Description, Explanation, and Analysis of the Current; and 3. Synthesis of the Current.

Results: This proposed scientific framework introduces sociopolitical current studies as an analytical framework capable of analyzing a significant portion of developments across various social, cultural, economic, and political domains in relation to one another, and of enabling the identification of intellectual-social currents in diverse societies.

Conclusion: Consequently, in response to the question of what sociopolitical current studies is and how it is conducted, this research provides a macro model that aligns with the traditional expectations of social sciences for presenting analytical frameworks such as systemic, game-theoretic, or discourse models. This novel method, as a tool for a coherent understanding of complex sociopolitical phenomena, enables the systematic analysis of societal transformations.

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Introduction

Currentological studies not only demonstrate the evolution and changes of social and/or political currents but also pave the way for the pathology and prediction of their future course. This research trend is a novel phenomenon that requires a specific logic and an efficient methodology. This is because whenever the results of research are published in a scholarly document, researchers meticulously describe their methodology; otherwise, other researchers will not be able to judge the quality of the work done (Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary, 2025). The lack of a clear foundational logic and principles in such studies leads to their becoming arbitrary and, consequently, unscientific.

Personal conjectures, emotional attachments, and intuitive understanding are not sufficient justifications for knowledge. Accepted criteria, adequate evidence, and logical coherence are what can be used to judge claims regarding knowledge (Zuckerman, 1991: 3). Therefore, in accordance with the definition of methodology as "A way of doing something based on particular principles and methods," (Oxford, 1999: 458) selecting the right method is the first crucial step in conducting a scientific research.

Researchers are expected to follow those rules in their social research work that keep them away from any probable mistakes and deviations in their understanding the realities. Therefore, a method for discovering the unknowns and solving problems are supposed to have precise set of rules that can prevent any mistakes and guide the researchers toward the truth when examining and studying realities (Sarookhani, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 24). Only by applying valid logic to a method can the results be considered scientific.

Therefore, if currentology, as a new discipline or sub-discipline in humanities and social sciences research, aims to produce some scientific works, it must organize itself to enable researchers in this field so that they can present their findings, discoveries, and conclusions by means of a common language, and to critique and evaluate each other's work, now the groundwork has been laid for the creation of such a method. In contemporary Iran, the necessity for a methodological framework in the domain of current studies has been emphasized in recent decades. Presently, conducive conditions exist for the development of such a methodology to serve as an analytical tool for examining historical transformations, particularly in elucidating power networks, prevailing discourses, as well as the roles of religion, the clergy, intellectuals, political parties, the bazaar (traditional merchant class), and other actors in the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Hence, the main question of this paper is: 'What is Sociopolitical Currentology, and how is it conducted?' By answering this question throughout the article, the contribution of this research is presented, and its essence will be provided in the conclusion. Therefore, after introducing the concept of a current in the 'what' section, the present paper delineates its interconnected and interdependent components in the 'how' section. It will demonstrate how, by assembling these components together, understanding the current becomes possible much like finding and arranging the pieces of a puzzle, which ultimately forms the overall picture. Three crucial stages in this arrangement are:

Stage One: Preliminaries, which addresses the importance and methodology of gathering information.

Stage Two: Classification of Information and Data Analysis, which constitutes the core part and introduces the methodological model. This stage includes how to define, describe, explain, and analyze a current.

And the final stage is how to synthesize the current, meaning indexing and announcing the research findings.

1. Literature Review

Although Seyed Ali Taleghani, a pioneer in this field, addressed current studies from a methodological perspective in his article "Terminology of Cultural Current Studies," Mohammad Bagher Khorramshad and Ebrahim Sarparast Sadat are among the first researchers to have presented a methodological interpretation of "Current studies." In the article "Political Current Studies as a Method," the authors examine political current studies from a scientific and formal perspective (Khorramshad, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 80-81). This article emphasizes the formation of currents around a core idea, thought, or creed, which, moving from the realm of the mind into practical action within society, generates a collective movement. It distinguishes between a current and a specific ideology, school of thought, or even the ideas of prominent thinkers.

Mohammad Bagher Khorramshad, in articles such as "Political-Ideological Discourses and the Problem of National Identity Before the Islamic Revolution" (Mehrjerdi, Khorramshad, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 71-96), "The Discourse of National Identity: The Nationalism Current Before and After the Islamic Revolution (A Comparison of Ahmad Kasravi and Ezzatollah Sahabi's Thought)," (Khorramshad, Kalantar Mehrjerdi, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 21-48) and "The Political and Political Discourses in Iran After the Islamic Revolution (1979-2013)" (Khorramshad, Jamali, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 165-184), significantly contributes to understanding and analyzing the what, why, and how of phenomena in the Islamic Revolution from various angles. He does this by identifying and describing certain currents in Iran, such as nationalism, liberalism, socialism, Islamism, and their affiliated socio-political forces.

Gholamreza Khajeh Sarvi is another researcher who has approached current studies from a methodological angle. He defines it as a composite analysis of various components such as social and political infrastructure, actual figures or ideologues, intellectual and operational leaders, ideas and performances influencing political power, and the cultural element of society. Ultimately, these coalesce into an influential political power that intervenes in the body of social power (Khajeh Sarvi, Share'i, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 195-215).

Abdolvahhab Forati, in his book "The Clergy and Modernity: With Emphasis on Intellectual-Political Currents in the Qom Seminary," defines a current as going beyond mere thought, being a set of presuppositions. Recognizing these presuppositions is of utmost importance, and therefore, in his approach to current studies, the precise analysis of presuppositions holds significant weight (Forati, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 30-40).

The book "The Method and Requirements of Current Studies in Iran" by Abdullah Ganji (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH) and the book "Methodology of Current Studies as an Interdisciplinary Theory-Method" by Ali Ebrahimipour (Ebrahimipour, 2020 AD/1399 SH) are

also two works that have addressed current studies largely from a methodological angle. However, they do not present a method for current studies that is independent of methods like discourse analysis or historical analyses.

Research in current studies has so far been presented in three categories: First, biographical current studies; studies that merely inquire about the intellectual foundations, leaders, and key followers of a current, who are the leaders? How successful were they in advancing? How long did they last before decline, dissolution, or fragmentation? Second, current studies augmented with a genealogical approach, which delves into the roots and backgrounds influencing the formation of a current. And third, new current studies; which utilize new or combined methods, especially methods like discourse analysis. In this type, the current is examined through the lens of Foucauldian discourse formation, and attention is paid to concepts within a specific cultural and political space. This discourse-analytical approach relies on the influence of powers on cultural values and perspectives (Hamidreza Mazaheri Seif, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 18-23).

Furthermore, the use of historical methods is also recommended in conducting current studies. A method like the sociology of knowledge (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 171; Ebrahimpour, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 297), as a historical method, enables the understanding of the extent to which the thinkers and producers of a current are influenced by the determinations of their local environment and facilitates the identification of the intellectual-political schools, movements, and ideologies of a society.

Thus, it becomes evident that a sociological, and particularly a sociopolitical, approach is missing from this collection, a gap that this research seeks to address. It is expected that this paper will be able to introduce sociopolitical current studies as an independent and comprehensive method within current studies research, in the form of an epistemological method.

Accordingly, the present paper endeavors to introduce the Sociopolitical Currentology in its general sense as a novel interdisciplinary research method in the humanities, specifically developed for nascent current studies research. It seeks to address its nature and methodology as a field or sub-discipline. For instance, by aiding in the methodical understanding of various socio-political currents in Iran, it makes possible the formulation of a model or framework for identifying currents operating both within and outside the discourse of the Islamic Revolution.

2. Conceptual Framework

Obviously, the contextualised meaning of "Current" has to be exactly clarified here prior to the explanation of the quiddity and methodology of Sociopolitical currentology.

2.1. Current in Lexicology

The term "Current" has only entered the field of human and social affairs, or better to say in humanities, within the last few decades. Consequently, from its literal meaning of flowing or thematic progression along a path, new definitions directly related to human and social matters have developed.

2.1.1. Current

"The part of a fluid body (such as air or water) moving continuously in a certain direction."

(Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary, 2024) "Movement of water, air, or electricity in a specific direction" or "A particular opinion or feeling that a group of people have". (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2025) Displacement of a certain amount of electricity within a conductor; electric current (Larousse Dictionary, 1990: 147). Collective movement, directional displacement, literary current, intellectual currents, and public opinion current (Le Robert Dictionary, 1983: 1, 408).

2.1.2. Movement

A place where a group of stimulated and influential people and the flow of masses of people or the mass movement of people occur simultaneously (Le Robert Dictionary, 1992: 668). "The act or process of moving." (Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary, 2025)

The terms "Camp," "Tendency," "Trend," and "Flow" have also been offered as English equivalents for "Current" in its lexicological sense (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 63-64). However, among these terms, "Current" is the closest and most appropriate one to the meaning intended in this study and remains as the basis of this paper.

2.2. Current in Phraseology

When "Current" is used as a modified noun in some phrases such as "Intellectual Current," "Political Current," or "Cultural Current," it acquires a distinct meaning metaphorically different from that commonly used in physics or other disciplines of natural sciences. Initially, a current was defined as a specific organization, group, or social collective that, in addition to having intellectual foundations, exhibited a particular type of social behavior. A more recent definition describes a current as a managed population by which society is influenced, with its type being determined by its sphere of influence: influence on thought is constituted as an intellectual current, in the political sphere a political current is formed, and in the realm of public culture, a cultural current is established.(Khosrowpanah, 11/02/1393).

Some scholars maintain that individuals with various intellectual and ideological leanings can be defined as a "current" within a single identity framework, even without any close structural and organizational connections (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 24). Alternatively, a current can be defined as a voluntary or guided collective movement which is formed within a shared context and specific direction to achieve a particular goal, just like the collective movements in nature. In this regard, labor, nationalist, Marxist, and fascist currents can be named as some typical examples commonly used in academic atmospheres. According to this definition, a current emerges when a thought first creates a voluntary or guided collective action, then produces a movement and/or a change, and finally takes on a social dimension (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 64).

Thus, a current can be defined in terms of its continuity and based on its actors (Sobhani, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 282-283), or with emphasis on its intellectual primacy (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 26). Therefore, "[Currents are] a social phenomenon composed of a set of epistemological principles and presuppositions (a shared system of meaning) upon which an organized (managed) population acts and exerts influence." (Ebrahimpour, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 116) Consequently, they are multi-dimensional phenomena with their own specific components

(Ebrahimpour, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 152-154; Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 20) that collectively form a system. Hence, currents, whether cultural, social, economic, or political, invariably coalesce around a specific and defined thought, idea, or creed, subsequently manifesting as collective action in the realm of society (Khorramshad, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 65-66).

2.3. Sociopolitical Currentology¹

In natural sciences, the term "Current," as a common synonym for flow, is generally applied for movement of liquids such as water, tears, and blood and that of electrons in conductors². Accordingly, the study of water currents in seas and oceans is called streameology (Nazemi and Shabani, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 90; Ghamami, 2023 AD/1403 SH: 11-33). However, there seems to be no terminological background for "Currentology" in research documents of humanities already published all over the west (Ebrahimpour, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 115). According to the lexical meaning of "Current" as a collective movement, a directional displacement, and some intellectual currents, or a particular opinion or feeling shared by a group of people (Le Robert Dictionary, 1983: 1, 408; Cambridge Online Dictionary), this research has ultimately adopted the term "Sociopolitical Currentology" (Khorramshad, 1998 AD/1377 SH: Political Sociology Class Notes).

In this way, the multiplicity and diversity of current studies in Iran have led to the formation of a new discipline titled "Current Studies" (Study of (social/political) Currents or Current Studies). Sociopolitical currentology analysis makes the study of currents possible in a coherent and organized systemic manner. This approach encompasses both the understanding of the shared principles and assumptions that form the backbone among individuals and grant them identity, as well as the population and the guiding management of this population, along with its influence and networks until its dissolution or demise. Thus, if a current is considered as a whole composed of interconnected components with a coherent relationship (Ebrahimpour, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 149), sociopolitical current analysis proceeds from understanding the whole.

3. The Essence of Sociopolitical Currentology

Sociopolitical currentology is basically a historical phenomenon that encompasses various political, social, cultural, and other contexts, exhibiting characteristics similar to a current. It means that the researcher examines a phenomenon that began and materialized at a specific period of time and remained active and continuous for a certain duration, and it either may have already ended or is still ongoing (Ahmadi Hajikalaei, 2007 AD/1386 BSH: 31). Through this method, the researcher or currentologist can systematically study the thought, politics, knowledge, and socio-political and cultural behaviors of the current, facilitating the identification, recognition, and understanding of a current (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 20).

The fundamental goal of currentological studies is to effectively study and understand a

1. This term has been proposed by Khorramshad, a full professor of political sociology and faculty member at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Iran, for the method of stream analysis.

2. When liquids encounter no obstacles in their path, they inherently flow and move toward a stable physical state, and this dynamic state of liquids is called a flow.

phenomenon [current] to manage challenges and avoid any harm. Currentology should consider not only the social dimensions but also the sources, origins, and emergence of currents, as well as their sociological processes and outcomes (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 71). Therefore, adopting descriptive-inductive, explanatory-analytical, and pathological-critical approaches, Sociopolitical currentology addresses the introduction and typology of a current regardless of any evaluation; explanation and analysis of the intellectual and political foundations of the current through genealogy and situational logic; the study of the population and understanding its status; the discourse and primary source of movement and dynamism of the current; and finally, the evaluation and presentation of pathological discussions of the current (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 103-110).

Sociopolitical currentology aims to develop some conceptual tools and principles through the analysis of political, social, cultural, and other phenomena. These tools and principles can subsequently be applied to a wide range of diverse activities in various societies. Therefore, the goal of currentology is not only to identify the roots and emergence of the tendencies but also to understand their interactions, trends, growths, declines, and the mutual influences. Accordingly, currentology includes a conceptual, interpretive, and detailed exposition of the birth, evolution, and transformation of political currents (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 72).

In addition to revealing and identifying the potential and actual currents, currentology firstly aims at understanding the factors and contexts that lead to the emergence of the studied currents. This involves determining the concepts and principles of homogeneity that have provided the foundation for their formation, maturation, and growth. Secondly, currentology seeks to examine how these currents function or operate in society. By recognizing the main lines and fabric of the social, intellectual, and political realities that shape currents and combining them, despite the flexibility, ambiguity, formlessness, and fluidity of social phenomena, the currentologist aims to understand a part of the truth. This is pursued by proposing hypotheses and theories extracted from core realities, methodically presented as classifications of social and political phenomena (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 76).

Sociopolitical currentology aims to make the study of social and political realities within currents closer to methodical, intelligent, dynamic, and productive approaches. As an interdisciplinary study, Sociopolitical currentology offers an opportunity for more accurate, objective, practical, and comprehensive reflections on political, social, and cultural phenomena, and even other ones and their transformations in societies (Ebrahimpour, 2021 AD/1399 SH: 264-268). Through a coherent framework and model derived from the integration and interaction of knowledge, skills, methods, and theories, it paves the way for the description, analysis, and interpretation of these transformations, facilitating a deeper and more accurate understanding of them (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 77).

The ways of attaining knowledge are diverse and vary according to each branch and subject. However, epistemological methods are among the approaches that can be used to acquire reliable and trustworthy knowledge. The most common and widely used ways of gaining knowledge include: "Intuition, sensation, reasoning, recollection, transmission, consulting experts, and experience, which can generally be presented within four main methods: philosophical (rational),

scientific (empirical), intuitive, and narrative (or historical)." (Haghighat, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 45).

Sociopolitical currentology analysis, as a method of acquiring knowledge, falls under the scientific-historical method., Sociopolitical currentology, as a method of acquiring knowledge, falls under the scientific-historical method.

4. The Methodology of Sociopolitical Currentology

Sociopolitical currentology examines the interconnected components of a system through a systematic and organized study that enables the researchers to confidently analyze a significant portion of their societies' history, both on macro and micro levels, using a coherent method. It aims to explain the past, analyze the present, and predict the future of a current by means of an appropriate method. By studying and examining the interconnected and interdependent components of a current, currentologists depict the current just like choosing proper pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and arranging them properly to reveal the overall picture. The three main stages in arranging the pieces in the puzzle are:

- 1) Preliminaries (Data Collection);
- 2) Classification of Information and Data Analysis (Methodological Model):
 - Defining the current (under the study)
 - Describing the current
 - Explaining the current
 - Analyzing the current
- 3) Summarizing the Current (Indexation and Presentation of Research Findings).



Fig.1: Stages of Sociopolitical currentology

4.1. Preliminaries: Data Collection

Data collection, as one of the most crucial stages of any research, must be accurate, comprehensive, and conducted systematically and correctly. This stage ensures that the next stages including data analysis and conclusion drawing can be carried out efficiently and accurately. Depending on the type of research, data collection methods can be library-based, field-based, or a combination of both. Sociopolitical currentology falls into the latter category, utilizing both library-based and field-based methods.

Since Sociopolitical currentology is considered a historical study, it focuses on observing people and events, making it concrete rather than abstract. Therefore, in the first step, to understand the shared principles, assumptions, and semantic system, one must utilize the reporting of critics' views, the study of the thoughts, books, and written works of the current's figures, as well as speeches and interviews given by figures inside and outside the current about it.

In the second step, for understanding the population, reports on the members of the current should be used.

In the third step, to comprehend the dynamics and influence of the current, reports on events, incidents, and documents must be employed (Ebrahimpour, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 307).

On the other hand, due to the direct relationship between currentology and sociological topics, the current researcher, in addition to being aware of sociological, cultural, and political theories related to this field, can use observation methods (both common and specific norms), questionnaires, and interviews for sociological studies to understand the audience of a current (Khorramshad, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 79). To obtain the data needed in the next steps, such as the current, history, geographical location, thought generators, challenges, intellectual foundations, etc.



Fig.2: Data collection procedures

4.2. Classification and Data Analysis (Methodological Model):

- Step 1: Define the current (case-specific)
- Step 2: Describe the current
- Step 3: Explain the current
- Step 4: Analyze the current



Fig.3: Steps of the second stage (data classification and analysis)

4.2.1. Defining the Current

Defining, identifying, or introducing something involves removing ignorance about it through using knowledge about other things. In other words, a definition is the sum of known concepts that clarify an unknown concept (Khansari, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 251). In this context, defining the current under the study means providing sound information that specifies the characteristics (qualities, properties) of the current in so clear a way that distinguishes it from other currents or even pseudo-currents. This definition has to be so comprehensive and

exclusive that can cover all defining and non-defining aspects and include all the characteristics that set it apart from other currents. To conduct currentological studies and find instances of a current, currentologists primarily have to outline the currents' characteristics to obtain an accurate image for identification. As a matter of fact, a more complete definition of the current is expected to emerge all through the research progress.

4.2.1.1. Conceptualization

In currentological studies directly or indirectly related to specific schools of thought, ideologies, or currents, it is necessary to provide explanations according to relevant concepts and topics, such as the classification of concepts, the relationship between concepts, meanings, words, and linguistic elements used.

4.2.1.2. Indicator Identification

A specific current or currents stemming from a particular thought, if undergo a currentological study, have to be quite clear in their titles and the thought from which they have been originated from. In other words, currentologists have to exactly specify the type of the studied current or currents, their characteristics, and the characteristics of the thought in question.

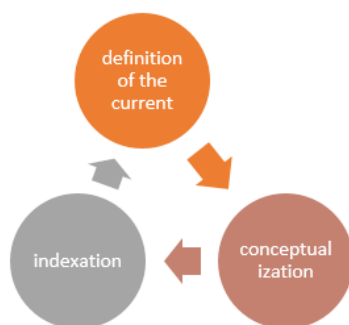


Fig.4: Components of the first step of the second stage

4.2.2. Step 2: Describing the Current

Sometimes, understanding something only calls for a clear description including its characteristics, commonalities, and similarities with other things. Simply stating the history and narrative of something is called description, and the researcher's mere task is to record what they find. This is the simplest level and type of description (Ahmadi Hajikalayi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 36). In currentology, description serves as an absolute prerequisite for achieving a more important goal (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 75). Describing a current focuses on its sociological dimensions, which include: genealogy, process analysis, location analysis, typology, personality analysis, audience analysis, and situational analysis.

4.2.2.1. Historical Background and Context of the Emergence of a Current and Its Situation Logic

The first question in any currentological research is: What were the contexts and background of the emergence of a current, or in general, the history of its formation?

A) Genealogy

Genealogy is a type of conjuncture analysis that demonstrates how different forces, potentially

from various historical times, origins, and sources, converge at a specific time and place to create something new, much like different genes intersecting to form something novel (Heidari, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 76).



Fig.5: Genealogy

B) Situation Logic

The manner and reasons for the emergence of each current are specific to that current. The specific contexts of its emergence are also known as situational/ situation logic (Ganji, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 106), which refers to the logic that necessitates the creation of a current and includes three substructures namely intellectual, structural, and social.

4.2.2.2. Process Analysis

How is a current, whether past or present, formed, sustained, or extinguished? Process analysis focuses on studying the process in which some independent variables undergo and ultimately lead to a result with meticulous examination of the specific mechanisms through which an independent variable is linked to a dependent one. These mechanisms can include actors, individuals, organizations, and systems, as well as the activities they undertake, such as protests, research, election campaigns, and other actions.

4.2.2.3. Location Analysis: Territory or Geography of the Current

Currents, regardless of their types, have their own specific birthplaces or geographical origins, from which they begin, grow, and develop. Nonetheless, a current does not necessarily belong to a specific group, ethnicity, or tribe and similarly it is not exclusively confined to specific temporal or spatial boundaries. A current may continue for centuries and transcend the national borders (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 71). Currents have their own time span of birth, growth, maturity, and decline during which they can gradually move from national to transnational spheres, influencing social forces, power, and politics (Mozaffari, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 15).

4.2.2.4. Typology: Different Approaches of the Current

In sociology, various types of groups such as territorial, professional, horizontal, and vertical ones can be specifically defined. Each of them can also be a subordinate, a follower, an imitator, or an influential and decisive one. For instance, based on the methods adopted to achieve their goals, currents can be categorized as reformist or revolutionary, conservative or revisionist, radical or pacifist, and so on. This diverse range of behaviors can exist within a single current, allowing it to form some sub-currents with different approaches. Additionally, depending on

the circumstances in different periods and locations, a current can change its position from subordinate to dominant or from revolutionary to reformist. The division of the left-wing Islamist movement in Iran, in part of the book "Political Current of Iran" by Ali Darabi, into the traditional left and the modern left in the two decades after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, is an example of typology (Darabi, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 247- 265).

4.2.2.5. Personality Analysis

An indispensable prerequisite of understanding the ruling system of a current and comprehending that current comprehensively is both identifying and introducing its influential figures and actors (Khorramshad, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 66). These figures and actors can be categorized as pioneers or thought leaders, founders, heralds, promoters, and carriers.

A) Thought Leaders

Many great figures, at various levels, appear in social life as thinkers and intellectuals; however, only some of their ideas attract attention and are able to influence the intellectual, political, social, and even cultural atmosphere of society. The producers of these ideas, seeking to solve social problems, diagnose the issue, trace its roots, and propose solutions by outlining an ideal model and offering feasible approaches, thereby presenting a theory (Spragens, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 39-41). Thus, the responsibility for generating ideas and concepts for a movement lies with these producers, and their words serve as strategies and a roadmap for the movement. In general, in addition to providing the intellectual foundations, idea-producers are responsible for designing and engineering the movement's vision (Genji, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 111). However, it is possible that during the lifetime of an idea-producer, no movement may form, or that movement-building is not their goal at all. Nevertheless, it is possible that either in their own time or later, their ideas become the axis and the source of intellectual growth for a movement.

B) Pioneers and Founders

Pioneers and founders of a current are the first to explain and expand the central concepts of a thought or meaning and mobilize the surrounding ideas of a discourse and transform it into a school of thought or ideology which attracts the initial supporters around that school.

C) Heralds and Promoters

Heralds and promoters of a current attempt to contribute to the accumulation, content production, and development of the current through various theoretical and methodological approaches. They can be considered as the most important pillars of the current and the movement, expansion, and progress of the current strongly depends on their direct and indirect contribution.

D) Bearers of Thought

Bearers of thought are those who play the key role in distributing what has already been produced by the heralds and promoters of a current and act as a mediator between the public and the latter. It is self-evident that each of these agents can change roles. For instance, while one may consider Muhaqqiq Karaki as the pioneer and founder of the juristic current advocating

Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) among Shia scholars, Imam Khomeini, while serving as the herald, promoter, and bearer of this current, ultimately emerged through his theory of Absolute Guardianship of the Jurist during the Islamic Revolution as the de facto founder of a new current in Shia political jurisprudence.

4.2.2.6. Audience Analysis: Knowing the Target Groups

The degree of influence and recruitment (penetration) of any current in generating collective movements among elites or the masses has a direct impact on the continuity and stability of that current. The question at this stage pertains to the type of audience. The type of audience a current attracts can determine its social base and position, even on a global level. The audience of a current can be divided into three groups: adherent audience, staunch audience, and rhetorical audience. Depending on whether the audience consists of societal elites and specialists, the general public, or a specific stratum, and further, how many among these are adherents, staunch supporters, or merely rhetorical listeners, the power and influence of the current changes (McQuail, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 59-63).

The adherent audience has a strong, even fanatical, attachment to the current and its produced content. Characteristics of this type of audience include deep understanding and empathy, as well as following the behavioral patterns of its advocates or even its carriers. This group has the potential to become carriers of the current themselves. The staunch audience, although followers and supporters of the current, are not as submissive as the adherent audience and exercises selectivity in allocating their attention to various issues. The rhetorical audience consists of scattered individuals who, depending on circumstances and at specific times and places, pay attention to the current and maintain a one-sided connection with it. Although they may agree with the current, they can quickly turn into opponents. These audiences possess the capacity to transform into another level (McQuail, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 92-94). For example, during the formation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran under the leadership of the revolutionary political Islam current, the prevalence of staunch audiences among various social strata facilitated the path of this revolution towards victory in 1979.

4.2.2.7. Situational Analysis: The Current's Social Status and Bases, and Its Current State

The expansion of a current both vertically and horizontally, its position among the like-minded national and international political currents, its success or failure in achieving power or influencing power structures, the level of public acceptance, and its penetration among the audience, its success or failure in establishing groups, parties, fronts, and/or factions, as well as its supporting financial resources, are all questions addressed by situational analysis. In general, situational analysis reflects the status and rank of a current in society and enables the determination of a current's strength or weakness at the societal or international level through accurate measurement, document review, comprehensive and scientific research, avoiding any bias, unfairness, or propagandistic atmosphere (Ganji, 2020 AD/1397 SH: 248-260).

Situational analysis in the study of political currents regarding leftist Islamist movements in Iran reveals their current status as follows: "The leftist Islamist current, which constituted the dominant discourse during the first decade of Iran's Islamic Revolution and consequently

monopolized most government institutions, entered a phase of declining power and marginalization as the traditional left following the Sacred Defense (Iran-Iraq War)." However, from the early 1990s onward, through self-redefinition, reconsideration, and revision, including the reorganization of intellectual circles, proliferation of press outlets, and formation of political parties, it gained staunch supporters among the middle classes, students, and certain religious segments. This ultimately strengthened the modern right-wing current and enabled their return to power under the new designation of "Reformists" or, qualitatively speaking, as "Liberal right-wingers."

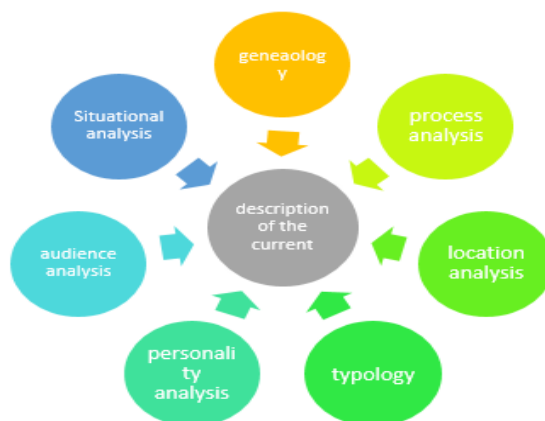


Fig.6: Components of the second step (current description)

4.2.3. Explaining the Current

Explanation or explication of a current can be descriptively and/or causally defined. In descriptive explanation, a set of propositions describe the facts, causes of behavior, or conceptual background, and consequences of those facts, and ultimately answer the question about the essence of the current while the causal explanation tries to answer why and how a current was born and developed (Fallah, Eqbal, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 83). Elucidation means removing the dust of ignorance and distortion from people's minds by expressing the truth. Therefore, after describing a movement, two questions are raised here: one concerning the efficient cause and the other concerning its final cause. The answers to these questions can be obtained by studying the movement's doctrinal foundations and intellectual bases, such as ideology, ontology, epistemology, axiology, theology (religion studies), anthropology, sociology, behavioral studies, and political thought, as well as by examining its performance or functions, its spheres of influence, and its discourse.

4.2.3.1. Ideological Foundations: Trends, Positions, Concerns, and Objectives of the Current

The semantic system of a movement is rooted in the ideology¹ on which it is based. An ideology is a systematic set of static political and social beliefs and ideas, such as intellectual, philosophical, and religious systems, that an individual, group, or society has and is effective in determining their

1. *Ideology* is one of the terms approved by the Academy of Persian Language and Literature as the equivalent for *ideology* in English. "Dictionary of Approved Terms of the Academy: 1997–2006, Latin Section," Academy of Persian Language and Literature, p. 112.

policy, action, or stance on socio-political issues (Pakizeh, Kurdi, 2016 AD/1395 SH). Michael Freedman defines ideology as "A consciously or unconsciously held set of thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes [that] shapes our perceptions and misperceptions of the social and political world. Ideology impacts on judgments, behaviors, decisions, and recommendations." (Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1998: 3847) Therefore, doctrine analysis involves understanding the intellectual, philosophical, and religious systems that have already influenced the current and determine its objectives and policies. It relates to the type of action or position taken by the current's population, from founders and promoters to its audience, on social, political, cultural, or economic issues.

4.2.3.2. Foundations Analysis

A) Ontological Foundations

The study of the ontological foundations of a current concerns with the nature and essence of the existence and reality of the studied current. Ontology is the most fundamental and prominent issue, determining the worldview of a thought, ideology, or school, as it addresses questions of existence such as the origin, current, and destination of existence (Ganji, 2016: 48). For example, if the ontology of a current has a divine origin and orientation, the current's attention in all matters will be directed towards "From God," "With God," and "Towards God." However, if the ontology of the current stems from a materialistic or secular origin, the foundation of the current's movement will be materialistic or secular.

B) Epistemological Foundations

Epistemology as a branch of philosophy examines the nature, origin, and limits of knowledge and how it is acquired; accordingly, looking at the epistemological foundations of a current is a significant step of studying it quite comprehensively. Due to the different views, the methods of acquiring knowledge are different (Khorramshad, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 79). For example, the fundamental distinction between the Usuli and Akhbari schools regarding the authority of reason created a conceptual rift between the two currents, which gradually led to two entirely different worldviews. The Usulis viewed religion as a living dialogue with the times and with reason. In their view, the jurist was the representative of religious rationality in the era of occultation, who must interpret the rulings of Sharia in accordance with contemporary conditions, based on the principles of *ijtihad*.

In contrast, the Akhbaris, relying on the text of narrations, considered religion to be a complete, closed matter in no need of reinterpretation. They argued that they were merely tasked with obedience, not interpretation (Al Ghafur, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 123).

C) Axiological Foundations

Axiology or value theory as a branch of philosophy studies the values as the essential constituents of any phenomenon; accordingly, values and norms are among the most important components to be considered when studying and understanding a current. They refer to what really is considered valuable in human societies, especially in areas such as ethics, improving human relations, strengthening individual rights and freedoms, preserving human ideals, and expanding cultural heritage (Rafipour, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 217- 265)

D) Current Insight and Attitude towards Religion

Religion is a set of beliefs (in God and eternal life) that a person follows in the course of their life with appropriate feelings and regulations (Tabatabai, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 3). At this stage, questions such as the following arise: What is a current's perspective on religion? Does it accept traditional religion, the religion envisioned by modernity, a synthesis of both, or neither of these? In other words, is the current's foundational belief in the comprehensiveness of religion, or does it hold a Western, secularist view of it? Generally speaking, what are the current's religious beliefs? Is it religious or non-religious at all?

E) Anthropological Foundations

"Human Being" is one of the most important philosophical subjects; therefore, the discussion here revolves around the nature of humanity and its place in the world. A current's view of the human being itself, as the main constituent body of that current, is one of the components for understanding the current in "Current Analysis." That is, is the human being fundamentally autonomous, or is it derivative of a whole and authentic existence, namely God? If the human being is autonomous, why and how? And if the human being is not autonomous, what will be the status of humanity within such a belief? (Khosropanah, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 221-223). Furthermore, questions concerning the limits of human free will and freedom, the primacy of the individual versus the primacy of society, the status of human reason, etc., also fall within the domain of anthropology. The analyst of currents will comprehend the anthropological foundations of the current under study through the answers to these questions, reflecting the current's own perspective.

F) Sociological Foundations

The main question in this area is the priority of the individual over society or society over the individual or the simultaneous primacy of both. What is the nature of society? (Khalili, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 112) Where is the position of the individual, family, civil society, social organizations, social institutions in the thinking and type of movement of the current? In short, the current scientist must be able to find appropriate answers to these and other necessary sociological questions from the current under study.

G) Behavioral Foundations

Behaviour, in its general sense, refers to the range of actions, reactions, and mannerisms made by individuals, groups, organisms, systems or even artificial entities in some environment (Shoarinejad, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 54). In a currentological study, understanding the stable behaviours of a group and the unstable behaviours it exhibits in various situations and towards whom is essential in analyzing the group's actions and performance as its behavioral foundations. This greatly contributes to the pathology, critique, and comparison of different groups.

H) Policy-related Foundations

Any matter related to the management, shaping, objectives, and methods of a current's activity can be considered as the current's policy. The policy of a current determines what approaches it adopts to regulate and organize social, political, economic, or cultural situations,

how it behaves in different situations based on what plan and policy, within what legal framework the current's policies are adopted, and what issues they address, what impact the adopted policies have on the life of the current, to what extent they have ever contributed to its weakening or strengthening, and whether these policies are able to encourage and empower its audience.

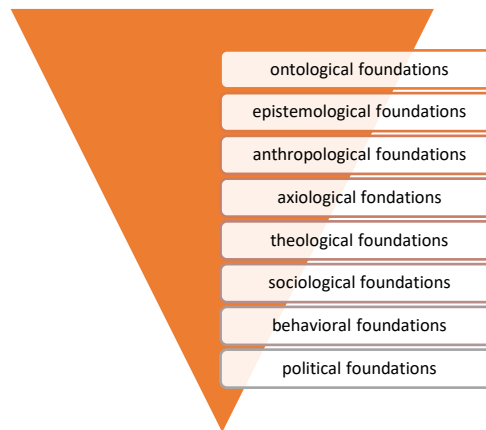


Fig.7: Cognitive foundations

4.2.3.3. Performance and Function of the Sociopolitical Current

After gaining an understanding of the basic aspects of a thought, particularly its behavioral and political foundations, it becomes evident what impact a current has had during its lifespan within the areas being analyzed and what role it has played in its original society or in other societies. For instance, in the political realm, whether it has remained indifferent to the existing policies, or it has actively worked to support or challenge them and what role it has already taken in political events.

4.2.3.4. Spheres of Influence of the Sociopolitical Current

Although movements can be categorized from various perspectives and different classifications have been presented in studies of movements, one of the most important classifications is based on their spheres of influence. This means that, depending on the domain to which a movement's activities are directed and the arena in which it has expanded the most, the movement is named and categorized accordingly. However, during the process of explaining a movement, when focusing on certain indicators and distinguishing features, changes may occur in these classifications, and even with slight shifts a movement may be transferred to another category. Although an initial classification is useful for facilitating a basic understanding of a movement, it is necessary to specify the movement's spheres of influence so that readers and audiences of movement studies become familiar with the overall configuration of these movements and the domains of their influence.

4.2.3.5. Discourse Analysis

Identifying the central signification of the discourse of a current and its key terms makes it easier to grasp the intellectual and operational framework of that current. At the final stage of analysis, and building on what has already been understood, the currentologist can pinpoint the central signification and main keywords of a current. This is achieved by examining texts, statements, positions, speeches, and discussions, as well as evaluating the orientations and the social, political, and cultural priorities of its key figures.



Fig.8: Third step's components

4.2.4. Analyzing the Sociopolitical Current

Analyzing a reality, a current, or an event entails deconstructing it to reveal its constituent and formative elements, while clarifying how these components interact (Ahmadi Hajikalaei, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 40). In the field of currentology, analysis requires both vertical and horizontal approaches. Vertical analysis focuses on understanding the current itself, while horizontal analysis examines the evolution and transformation of currents, their interactions and relationships with one another, and the paths they have followed in the society under the consideration (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 80).

4.2.4.1. Strengths of the Sociopolitical Current

The first step in analyzing a current is to identify its strengths such as where it has achieved growth, where it has faced less damage or shown resilience, and more broadly, what positive factors have contributed to its stability, longevity, and dynamism during its active period. Strengths also highlight how effectively a current has sustained its presence and attracted audiences, supporters, followers, and promoters.

4.2.4.2. Critiquing the Sociopolitical Current

Critique is a crucial aspect of the analysis and pathology of a current based on its weaknesses. It involves identifying issues that, if neglected, could result in the deviation or weakening of the current, while greater attention to these areas could foster its growth and progress. By examining the opinions, interviews, and works produced within the current itself, as well as external critiques, and evaluating the descriptions and explanations of the current, the researcher can pinpoint its existing and potential weaknesses and vulnerabilities. This is done by critically analysis of the foundations of its thought, performance, spheres of influence, and the composition of its population in details.

4.2.4.3. Challenges of the Sociopolitical Current

The challenges faced by a current stem from its interactions with political, social, and international dynamics, as well as national crises. Since currents aim to establish their discursive dominance, gain influence, and, if possible, achieve power within the society, they inevitably

compete and clash with other currents. In this process, they attempt to intensify power struggles and shape public opinion by emphasizing certain issues while sidelining others. Therefore, understanding how currents navigate these challenges is crucial, as it provides a solid foundation for meaningful comparisons.

4.2.4.4. Perception and Evaluation of the Sociopolitical current (by Society)

The production and use of social capital by a current depend on its social acceptance, which in turn is determined by the society's perception of the current and the level of trust it inspires. Society's ability to discover and understand a current can be assessed using the following indicators:

A) Depth

This refers to the extent to which the current's program is comprehensive and its ability to address the cultural, political, economic, social, and other critical issues facing the society.

B) Truthfulness

This reflects the degree of alignment between the current's core beliefs and what it presents for public acceptance, serving as a key measure of its integrity. As a case in point, Iran's religious intellectual current, while ostensibly accepting religion, has at times distanced itself from intra-religious discourses including Quranic exegesis and hadith traditions. In some instances, the propositions advanced by this movement have come into direct conflict with orthodox religious doctrines and mainstream theological interpretations

C) Insight (Environmental Adaptability and Responsiveness)

Each society is shaped by its own belief system, history, traditions, and values. The extent to which a current aligns with these societal characteristics, or, alternatively, adopts models from other societies, plays a critical role in determining its ability to attract an audience and, consequently, to strengthen or even to weaken it (khorramshd, Sarparast Sadat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 82).

D) The Other of the Sociopolitical Current

How a current defines its "Who" and "What," as well as how society perceives the "Other" of that current, plays a key role in shaping the society's evaluation and judgment of it.

E) Influence

The extent of public acceptance of the current and the degree to which it resonates with or influences elites are key indicators for assessing the current's overall impact and effectiveness.

F) Interaction of a Current with Other Sociopolitical current (Relationship with Competing Currents)

The way a movement interacts with other movements, with official and dominant discourses, and the manner in which it deals with rival movements, whether superior or subordinate, affects how society evaluates that movement. The main questions in this section concern how the movement engages with others, ranging from closely related movements and competitors to distant or hostile ones, as well as the degree of the movement's independence from or dependence on other movements, and the nature of how it is influenced by them and how it, in turn, influences them.

4.2.4.5. Discursive-Epistemological Evolution

Evolution means "Becoming Varied" or "Taking on Different Forms" (Jebran Mas'ud, 2013 ADS/1392 SH: 489; Mo'in Dictionary, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 327). Here, it refers to a process of diversification or undergoing certain transformations. One of the stages of understanding a movement, from its birth to its end or continuation, is to identify the semantic shifts in its thought, discourse, intellectual framework, and even its demands.

4.2.4.6. Future of the Sociopolitical Current

Currentology, as a type of trend research, is expected to predict the future trajectory of the current by analyzing past patterns. In fact, one of the primary aims of currentology is to gain some insights into emerging trends and anticipate events before they unfold.

4.2.4.7. Dimensions of the Current's Political Thought

This section addresses the following questions: To what extent has the movement's thought addressed the pursuit of power and the formation of a political system? In the movement's political thought, how should the relationship between the people and the ruling authority be structured? What is the movement's political ethos and conduct toward the people? What is the movement's program for governing society? Answers to these questions will be obtained by examining five fundamental axes in the movement's thought.

A) Relationship with the Governing Power

The relationship with the governing power can generally be of the following three routes: alignment with and inclination towards the political power, maintaining a critical and distant stance, or adopting an oppositional approach.

B) The Ultimate Goal of the Political Order

In this regard, a current from its own perspective seeks to know what the ultimate purpose of forming a government is.

C) The Authority for Exercising the Political Sovereignty

From the perspective of the current, who has the authority to exercise political sovereignty is of particular importance. For example, in the religious view, the only authority with authority for sovereignty is God, so the implementation of divine limits and laws requires that divine principles govern society, but in the secular view, sovereignty is earthly and the government has no divine origin or basis, and religion is only authoritative in the individual and specific realm (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 95-96).

D) Limitations on the Exercising the Rule

The belief that power corrupts and that absolute power will lead to absolute tyranny (Lord Acton, April 5, 1887); highlights the need to control power, therefore, it should be determined what the movement's view of power control is. Power control patterns can be divided into three categories (Kashi, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 18):

- 1) Value (belief) limitation model: Belief beliefs and the attributes and characteristics of

rulers can control power. In this model, the ruler must be accountable to God and the nation (depending on the type of belief).

- 2) Institutional limitation model: Based on the theory of separation of powers, power is multiplied and assigned to various institutions, and power is controlled by methods of control, restriction, and supervision of institutions.
- 3) Legal limitation model: This is the law that, as a chapter of speech, specifies the powers and duties of the rulers. Depending on the type of government and the ruling system, a combination of these models can be used to limit power, such as the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is a combination of these three models.

E) The Relationship between Religion and Politics from the Sociopolitical current Standpoint

The way a movement views religion and the way it is perceived and developed in the political arena has a direct impact on its planning for governing society. Maurice Barbier has drawn a model to express the relationship between religion and politics in ideas, which can be used to some extent to determine the relationship between religion and politics in a movement when studying movements (Ganji, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 70).

- 1) The superiority of religion over politics;
- 2) The compatibility of religion and politics;
- 3) The subordination of religion to politics;
- 4) The separation of religion and politics.

4.3. Summarizing the Sociopolitical currenetology (Indexing and Reporting Research Results)

The final stage of Sociopolitical currenetology is presenting the results in the form of indexing and reporting the research findings.

4.3.1. Indexing

Indexing aims to present the main concepts and axes of the current and to provide the possibility of criticism and comparison between currents, and extract the indicators of the current. Indicators, as turning points, represent the observable and measurable elements of a current. The indicator, characteristic, or identifier helps the researcher transform the main characteristics of the current into concepts that can be understood through emotion or reason. In other words, indexing means finding us for a concept in the real world and the observable world (Mehvash, Saadovandi, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 62); therefore, specifying the indicators of a current is the last stage of facing the reality of a current, which expresses its characteristics in various intellectual and behavioral dimensions.

4.3.2. Conclusion in the Current's Research

The last step of Sociopolitical currenetology studies is a repetition of the first step, or definition, with the difference that after going through various stages and mastering all the components of the current as a system, the current scientist is able to draw a comprehensive and complete picture of the current, meaning that in the final definition of the current under study or the current he has discovered, he considers the entire system of thought and action of the current and presents his definition of the current based on the characteristics he has

extracted. This definition, as an achievement of research, can be used as a model and scientific guide for scientific communities and specialized areas of each current.

Conclusion

Understanding various currents within a society is essential to grasping that society as a whole. Recognizing which currents are still active and thriving and which, on the contrary, are fading, and what unique characteristics each one possesses paves the way for the development of a clear and effective plan for the future of the same society, particularly for society post-Islamic Revolution Iran.

Accordingly, the need for studying the sociopolitical trends of a society truly justifies currentology as a subdiscipline, if not a discipline. Just in this regard, research in this field without a comprehensive and unified approach will lead it to being subjective and lacking scientific accuracy.

Currents are deeply embedded in every society and play a crucial role in shaping its social, political, cultural, and economic landscape and a thorough understanding of all the key factors that influence a current is essential for making some substantiated claims about currentology. Therefore, in response to the question of "What" currentology is, it can be defined as a systematic approach to studying the ideas, politics, knowledge, and socio-political and cultural behaviors of various currents. Accordingly, it allows the researchers to identify, analyze, and comprehend currents effectively, and helps manage challenges and mitigate risks. Currentology employs descriptive-inductive, explanatory-analytical, and pathological-critical approaches to introduce and categorize currents without passing any judgment. In this way, it provides the answer to the "how" of currentology.

This paper aims at introducing a meta-model that considers various components, including the movement and dynamism, encompassing birth, continuity, transformation, production, inheritance, or termination. It also examines the time of a current's formation, its evolutionary course, its changes over the time, its inputs and outputs, branches, and its continuation or ultimate demise. Additionally, it analyzes population factors, the individuals who create, carry, and shape the current, including founders, promoters, propagators, and audiences. All of these elements function as the interconnected parts within an organic system. This system is studied in three stages: the first one involves the preliminaries to the research; the second one focuses on data analysis through a methodological model, incorporating the definition, description, explanation, and examination of the current; and the third one involves summarizing the findings, indexing them, and reporting the research results.

The interdisciplinary approach of currentology, as outlined in the proposed model (Figure 9), systematically examines currents through analyzing everything from their shared principles and assumptions, their identity-forming core, to their population, including audiences, supporters, heralds, promoters, and founders. It also explores their influence and communication dynamics up to the time of study. By presenting currents as complex, multifaceted phenomena rather than mere surface-level trends, this approach ensures that currentological studies remain unbiased and fair, upholding the principle of neutrality and avoiding any kind of preconceived judgments. As a consequence, currentologists who closely follow this approach must scrupulously avoid promoting, weakening, or strengthening any particular current.

In the third stage of currenetology, all aspects related to currents are carefully examined, and their characteristics are systematically presented. This process enables the development of a standardized definition and model for the current being studied or identified by the currenetologist. Since this method follows a structured framework, it ensures that the research can be replicated, providing a solid foundation for critique and comparison.

This methodology enables the systematic identification, study, and comparison of socio-political currents in Iran, both pre- and post-Islamic Revolution, including liberal (right-wing), socialist (left-wing), nationalist, Islamist (right or left), secular, principlist, reformist, and others. It employs a unified, structured framework free from personal biases or subjective preferences.

Consequently, the present study proposes a methodological framework for currenetology, offering a systematic model designed to enhance the scholarly rigor and analytical precision of research in this field.

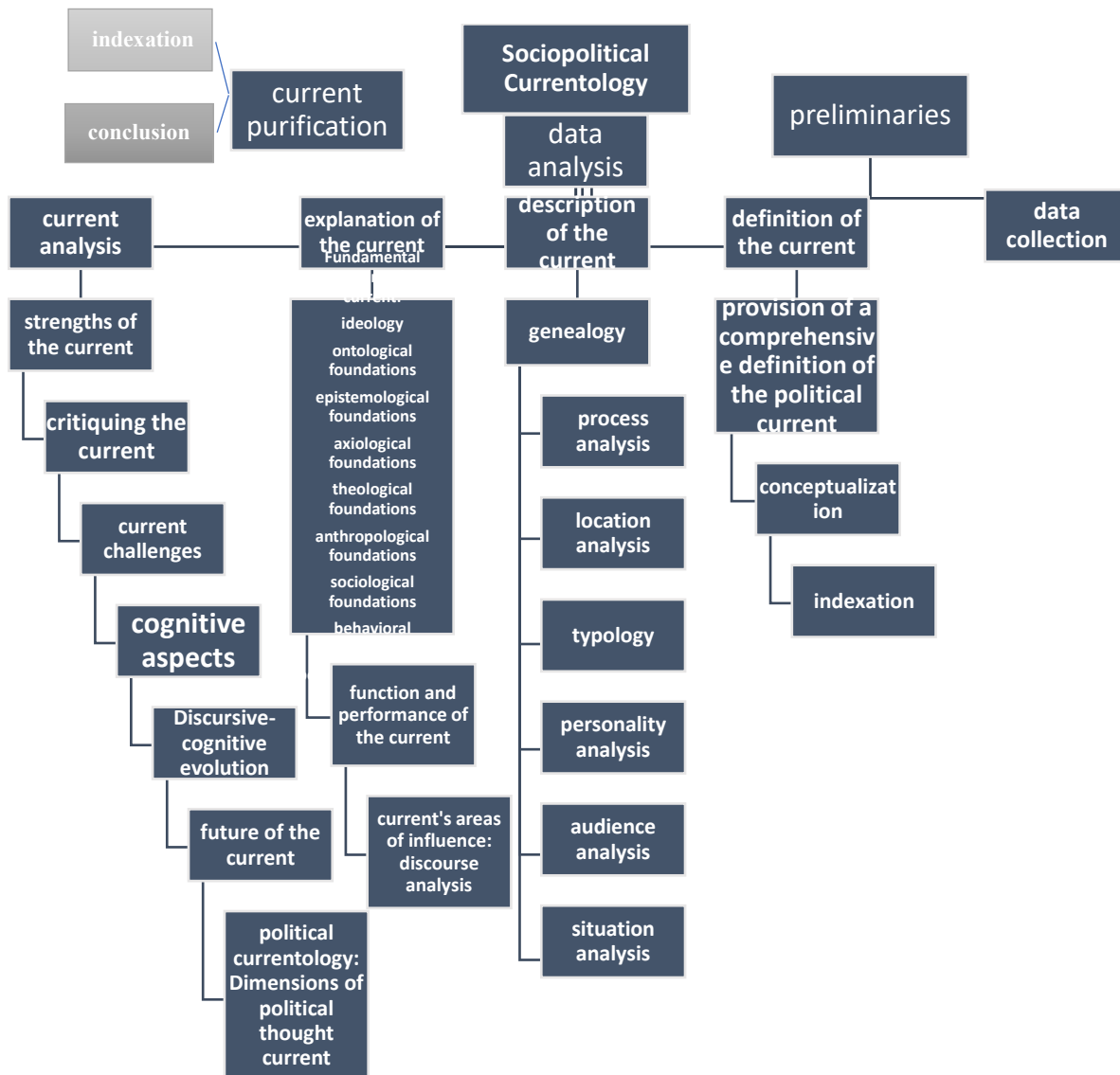


Fig.9: Procedural model of Sociopolitical Currentology

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The Legitimacy Paradox in the Pahlavi State: An Analysis of the Consequences of Authoritarian Modernization and Cultural Engineering

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article seeks to trace the roots of the legitimacy crisis in the Second Pahlavi monarchy. Its main goal is to analyze the fundamental contradiction through which the regime's authoritarian modernization and cultural engineering, designed ostensibly to consolidate power, actually led to the systematic undermining and erosion of its own legitimacy.

Method: The study employs a qualitative approach based on descriptive-analytical methodology and historical institutionalism. The analysis uses Weberian concepts of legitimacy as a benchmark and applies the notion of strategic culture to interpret the monarchy's identity policies.

Result: The research reveals a structural and irresolvable tension between the two main pillars of the Pahlavi project. On one hand, authoritarian modernization, marked by the personalization of power and the emptying of modern institutions of democratic substance, prevented the emergence of rational-legal legitimacy. On the other hand, cultural engineering, driven by the promotion of a "Strategic Culture" rooted in neo-ancientism and militant secularism, eroded the traditional bases of legitimacy and deepened the alienation between state and society.

Conclusion: Ultimately, the Pahlavi regime collapsed into a vacuum of legitimacy due to these contradictory policies, becoming a brittle and vulnerable political structure. This crisis was not a random occurrence but the logical outcome of the intrinsic paradox within its state-building project, one that prioritized economic growth over participation and identity construction over consent, paving the way to its eventual downfall.

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Introduction

The collapse of the Pahlavi regime in 1979 AD/ 1357 SH, one of the most extraordinary political ruptures of the twentieth century, raises a profound paradox: 'How did a government, celebrated abroad as an "Island of Stability" and lauded for its military might and oil wealth, unravel with such shocking rapidity?' This puzzle extends far beyond the narrative of a political downfall; it exposes the core of a deeper, structural crisis in Iran's modern state-building enterprise.

The origins of this crisis can be traced to the elite's response to the turmoil unleashed by the Constitutional Revolution. Amid pervasive anxiety over instability and disorder, many Iranian intellectuals came to embrace the idea that the nation's salvation lay not in the development of constitutional freedoms but in the imposition of a "Strong Government," even a "Reforming Dictator." The conviction that "A powerful government must come to power... a dictator or a strong government, whatever it may be" became deeply entrenched among the country's leading circles (Bahar, 1978 AD/ 1357 SH: 100). The Pahlavi state became the embodiment of this prevailing faith in "Authoritarian Modernization." From its inception, successive Pahlavi rulers launched a dual project to institutionalize centralized, stable authority: "Authoritarian modernization and cultural engineering."

The first pillar, authoritarian modernization, prioritized the creation of a modern army, a centralized bureaucracy, and new economic institutions (Abrahamian, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 169). Especially after the 1960s AD/ 340s SH, buoyed by soaring oil revenues, this order was transformed into a "Rentier State," (Mahdavy, 1970: 428-467) insulated from the demands and participation of society and its constituent classes (Skocpol, 1982 AD/1382 SH: 125; Haji Yousefi, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 137-13). Ostensibly, the regime's ambition was the construction of a Western-style modern Iran; yet this process was always riddled with contradiction. As numerous analysts have observed, the Pahlavi era was marked by a persistent tension between the quest for "Political Order" and the development of "Political Democracy." (Haji Naseri & Mohammadi Masiri, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 75-76) The relentless concentration of power, alongside the ascendancy of the Shah's personal interests over the "impersonal interests" of legal institutions, hollowed out these institutions, progressively undermined democratic stability, and ultimately foreclosed the emergence of rational-legal legitimacy (ibid.).

The second pillar was cultural engineering, an assertive campaign to forge a cohesive modern national identity grounded in archaic nationalism, secularism, and Westernism. This project, conceived to impose a particular "Strategic Culture," was deliberately set in opposition to the country's religious traditions and deep-rooted societal norms, aiming above all to undermine traditional bases of power, most notably the clerical establishment (Ghanizadeh et al., 2019 AD/1398 SH: 18). Serving not only ideological but also economic ends for the ruling elite, these policies reshaped patterns of consumption and fostered new monopolies. Yet, this top-down cultural project ultimately backfired: "It clashed with the historical and religious self-understanding of the majority, deepening the divide between state and nation and hastening the erosion of traditional legitimacy." (Souri Laki et al., 2002 AD/1394 SH: 723; Bashirieh, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 357; 2007 AD/1386 SH: 723)

Accordingly, the central argument of this article is that the Pahlavi regime's legitimacy crisis and eventual collapse were not contingent developments or simply the product of external opposition, but the logical outcome of an intrinsic internal paradox. By interrogating this relationship, the article addresses one core question: 'How did state projects of authoritarian modernization and cultural engineering, engineered to legitimize and reinforce power, paradoxically produce the systemic erosion of all forms of legitimacy (traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal) and precipitate the regime's downfall?' It further explores how each of these ventures, in turn, dismantled the foundations of rational-legal and traditional legitimacy, and how their intersection yielded a uniquely "Fragile Political Order."

The central contention, then, is that the Pahlavi state-building project was beset by a legitimacy crisis rooted in a fundamental structural contradiction: "On one hand, authoritarian modernization, development¹ without participation, foreclosed the emergence of rational-legal legitimacy; on the other, aggressive cultural engineering, identity-building without consent, subverted the foundations of traditional legitimacy. Together, these dynamics consigned the regime to a profound legitimacy vacuum, rendering it a "Fragile Political Order" whose collapse was the inexorable consequence of its own internal paradox.

The significance of this study lies in its development of an integrated analytical framework. Moving beyond one-dimensional interpretations that reduce the crisis to strictly political, economic, or cultural factors and this article demonstrates that the collapse of the Pahlavi regime was the outcome of the entanglement and conflict between processes of structural modernization and identity engineering. The study's core innovation is its focus on "Paradox," explaining the regime's downfall not as an accidental failure but as the logical result of fundamental contradictions embedded within the state-building project itself. By employing concepts such as "Fragile Political Order" and "Strategic Culture," this approach offers a deeper understanding of the regime's internal dynamics of failure and provides insights for comparative work on legitimacy crises in other modernizing states.

To unravel the central paradox of the Pahlavi state, this study adopts a methodology that bridges historical analysis and institutional theory. It employs a qualitative approach grounded in historical institutionalism, a framework that enables the analysis of path-dependent processes by tracing the evolution and internal contradictions of the state's institutions over time. To anchor this theoretical framework in historical evidence, the study utilizes a descriptive-analytical method, drawing on both primary and secondary sources. This combined approach makes it possible to demonstrate not only that the state's key projects failed, but also how they systematically and paradoxically undermined the very legitimacy they were intended to secure.

The article proceeds as follows: "The next section reviews the relevant literature and outlines the theoretical framework; the main analysis then examines the dual projects of authoritarian modernization and cultural engineering, tracing their paradoxical consequences; the final section concludes by summarizing the findings and discussing their broader implications for understanding legitimacy crises."

1. In this article, the term "Development" refers specifically to its economic and infrastructural dimensions, modernization, and, due to its separation from the political sphere, it is characterized by the qualifier "Without participation."

It should be noted that the focus of this study on analyzing the internal structures and fundamental contradictions of the Pahlavi regime in no way implies disregarding or underestimating the decisive role of political agency, most notably the struggles of the Iranian people and the unparalleled leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. Rather, the analysis seeks to clarify how the "Fragile Political Order" generated by these paradoxes created a context in which revolutionary action by the people and leadership could successfully challenge and ultimately overthrow the entire political system. In other words, this study addresses the conditions that made the revolution possible.

1. Literature Review

The legitimacy crisis and the collapse of the Pahlavi state have long been central topics in Iranian history and political science. The existing scholarship can be broadly categorized into three main streams, each illuminating a distinct facet of this phenomenon. By building on and systematically synthesizing these approaches, the present study aims to offer a more integrated and innovative analysis.

The first, and most voluminous, stream of research, centers on the character of the Pahlavi state and its drive for "Authoritarian Modernization." Foundational works, such as Homa Katouziyan's theory of the "Arbitrary State," (Katouziyan, 1981) Ervand Abrahamiyan's analysis of the "Modern Absolutist State," (Abramian, 2005 AD/1384 SH) and John Foran's conception of the "Dependent Rentier State," (Foran, 1992) have shaped the field's principal framework. Collectively, these studies argue that the Pahlavi state, especially due to its heavy dependence on oil revenues, evolved into a political order increasingly autonomous from society, where modernization served not political development or public participation but the consolidation of the Shah's personal authority.

More recent research has refined this line of analysis through sharper theoretical lenses. For example, Haji Naseri and Mohammadi Masiri, drawing on the theory of "Conflict of Interest," contend that the Pahlavi order was animated by a fundamental paradox: "The tension between the Shah's "Personal Interests" and the "Impersonal interests of collective-rational political institutions." This contradiction not only stymied democratic institutionalization but propelled the state toward "Illegitimate Power" and produced a persistently "Fragile Political Stability." (Haji Naseri et al., 2022 AD/1401 SH)

The second stream addresses the Pahlavi state's project of "Cultural Engineering" and its ambitious bid to construct a new national identity. This approach, anchored in the triad of "Archaism, Westernism, and Secularism," sought to sever links with Islamic-Iranian traditions and reconfigure national identity around pre-Islamic and Western models. Drawing inspiration from the ideas of early intellectuals like Mirza Agha Khan Kermani,¹ such policies became a cohesive state program under the Pahlavis (Ashraf, 2005 AD/1384 SH).

1. Mirza Agha Khan Kermani was one of the most prominent representatives of this intellectual current. In his works (such as *Three Written and Hundred Sermon*), he explicitly attributed Iran's backwardness to the "Arab Invasion" and the "Influence of Islam," and saw the path to salvation in a return to the glory of ancient Iran and the imitation of Western civilization. (Kermani, 2000; n.d.)

Within this domain, Ghanizadeh and Mortazavian's research provides a fresh analytical perspective by introducing the concept of "Strategic Culture." They argue that the Pahlavi regime attempted to impose a "Strategic Culture" rooted in monarchical nationalism, Westernism, and secularism, a model that fundamentally clashed with the society's "Deep-rooted Culture" and was marked by internal contradictions (e.g., advocating modernity while reinforcing monarchical absolutism). As a result, this project not only failed to solidify legitimacy but also deepened the legitimacy dilemma and widened the state-society divide (Ghanizadeh and Mortazavian, 2019 AD/1398 SH). Additionally, Ghaderi et al. analyze this aspect from a political economy standpoint, showing how the regime's cultural policies enabled the emergence of "Identity-based Monopolies" and a "Modern form of fiefdom" for the elite (Ghaderi et al., 2022 AD/1401 SH: 153-194).

The third stream directly interrogates the "Crisis of Legitimacy" as the consequence of the intertwined processes described above. Seminal works such as Hossein Bashiriyeh's "Political Sociology" (Bashiriyeh, 2002 AD/1381 SH) and Ervand Abrahamian's "Iran between Two Revolutions" (Abrahamian, 2005 AD/1384 SH) vividly illustrate how the regime's authoritarian and cultural policies systematically alienated all social groups, from the clergy and traditional *bazaaris* to modern intellectuals, thereby paving the way for a broad-based revolutionary coalition.

More recent scholarship has sought to analyze this crisis through a structural lens. For instance, Shokraneh and Akhavan Kazemi argue that the regime's deficit of legitimacy across the three core dimensions of "Ideology, Structure, and Performance" left it in a state of paralysis, acutely vulnerable to revolutionary mass mobilization (Shokraneh, 2021 AD/1400 SH). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the regime's collapse was not a sudden or isolated episode, but rather the culmination of a protracted process of legitimacy erosion.

2. Research Gap and Innovation

Despite the breadth of existing scholarship, most studies have tended to address one of these three dimensions in isolation: some have concentrated on the configuration of the rentier state, others on cultural policies, and yet others on the final outcome, namely, the legitimacy crisis itself. The principal gap in this literature is the absence of an integrated analytical framework capable of examining authoritarian modernization and cultural engineering not as discrete policies, but as fundamentally intertwined and mutually contradictory dimensions of a single state-building project.

This article's key contribution lies precisely at this intersection. By synthesizing insights from across these diverse streams, it argues that the Pahlavi legitimacy crisis was, at its core, the structural outcome of an internal paradox. Specifically, the study demonstrates how "Development without Participation" (the product of authoritarian modernization) and "Identity-building without Consent" (the product of cultural engineering) worked in tandem, systematically and simultaneously, to dismantle all three Weberian bases of legitimacy: "Traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal. In sum, this research contends that the collapse of the Pahlavi state was not simply an accidental failure, but the inevitable outcome of fundamental contradictions

embedded within the very heart of its nation-building enterprise."

3. Theoretical Framework

Analyzing the "Paradox of legitimacy in the Pahlavi state" demands a composite theoretical framework capable of capturing the crisis's structural, cultural, and political dimensions in an integrated fashion. This framework rests on four conceptual pillars: the Weberian theory of legitimacy (serving as the benchmark for the crisis), the concept of the patrimonial-sultanistic state for elucidating the power structure, the theory of conflict of interest to illuminate the regime's internal mechanisms of collapse, and the notion of strategic culture to account for the identity-building project.

4. The Benchmark for Crisis: Max Weber's Types of Legitimacy

The foundation of this analysis is Max Weber's seminal theory of legitimacy, which posits three ideal types underpinning the rightful exercise of authority:

- Traditional Legitimacy: Derives from the sanctity of age-old traditions and hereditary status, exemplified by the institution of monarchy;
- Charismatic Legitimacy: Stems from the exceptional personal qualities, magnetism, or "Grace" of a leader;
- Rational-Legal Legitimacy: Is rooted in impersonal legal norms, codified procedures, and modern bureaucratic institutions (Weber, 1978: 215).

The Pahlavi state occupied a unique position, attempting to draw simultaneously from all three sources: "Performing as heir to Iran's monarchical tradition (traditional), projecting a charismatic and savior-like image of the Shah (charismatic), and establishing modern state and legal institutions (rational-legal). The core hypothesis of this article is that the regime's dual policies, authoritarian modernization and cultural engineering, paradoxically led to the simultaneous dissolution of all three bases of legitimacy."

5. The Structure of Power: The Patrimonial-Sultanistic State

To more precisely apprehend the nature of "Authoritarian Modernization," the Pahlavi state's structure is examined through the Weberian concept of "Sultanistic Patrimonialism." (ibid: 231)

Later developed by theorists such as Juan Linz to analyze contemporary regimes, this model refers to a state in which the boundaries between public and private spheres are obliterated, and the country is governed as the ruler's personal domain (Chehabi et al., 1998: 12-13). In such a system, personal loyalty to the ruler supersedes legal-rational competence, and modern institutions, such as the bureaucracy and military, are not deployed to empower society, but are transformed into instruments for consolidating the "Sultan's" personal power and for managing the elite. The absolute concentration of authority in the person of the Shah, together with the de facto subordination of officials to "Royal Orders," epitomizes this mode of governance in Pahlavi-era Iran (Katouziyan, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 418-31). This model explains why, despite their outward trappings, modern institutions in Iran failed to serve as foundations for rational-legal legitimacy.

6. The Mechanism of Crisis: Conflict of Interest and the Fragile Political Order

At the analytical core of this article's account of paradox lies the concept of "Conflict of Interest," adapted from the political philosopher Thomas Nagel. Nagel distinguishes between the "Personal Viewpoint" (individual interests, desires, and loyalties) and the "Impersonal Viewpoint" (the obligations of rational institutions, laws, and the public good) (Nagel, 1995). Scholars of Iranian politics have applied this framework to the Pahlavi state, revealing a structural tension between the "Shah's Personal Interests" and the "Impersonal interests of rational-legal institutions." The systematic predominance of the personal over the impersonal produced two devastating consequences: first, the consolidation of an "Illegitimate Power," in which decisions were dictated by individual will rather than the common good; and second, the creation of a "Fragile Political Order" that appeared stable on the surface but was deeply vulnerable at its core (Haji Naseri, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 82). This theory sheds light on the precise internal mechanism through which rational-legal legitimacy was ultimately eroded.

7. Cultural Dimensions: The Failure of Strategic Culture

To analyze the project of "Cultural Engineering," this study draws upon the concept of "Strategic Culture," rooted in the literature on security studies.¹ Strategic culture refers to the constellation of beliefs, symbols, and norms that ruling elites actively cultivate to legitimize their authority and shape national identity. The Pahlavi state's strategic culture was anchored in three pillars: "Archaistic Nationalism," "Westernism," and "State Secularism." This cultural project served as the regime's primary instrument for breaking with the past and crafting a new collective identity. However, this official strategic culture fundamentally clashed with the "Deep-rooted" Islamic-Iranian culture of the broader populace. Its authoritarian and anti-traditional character not only failed to supplant the established cultural order, but also undermined the regime's own claims to "Traditional Legitimacy," fueling widespread alienation and deepening the legitimacy crisis (Ghanizadeh, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 12–20).

In sum, this integrated theoretical framework demonstrates how authoritarian modernization (as conceptualized through patrimonialism and conflict of interest) eroded rational-legal legitimacy, while, simultaneously, cultural engineering (understood via the lens of strategic culture) dismantled traditional legitimacy, leaving the regime trapped in a comprehensive legitimacy vacuum.

8. Research Findings and Analysis

This section employs the preceding theoretical framework to examine the Pahlavi state's two principal undertakings: "Authoritarian Modernization" and "Cultural Engineering." The central argument advanced here is that, while these initiatives were ostensibly designed to strengthen and legitimize the state, they instead operated in a fundamentally paradoxical manner, simultaneously

1. Snyder was the first to seriously introduce the concept of strategic culture into the literature of international relations and security. He argued that the strategies and strategic attitudes of powers cannot be analyzed solely according to military logic and technology, but have deep cultural and historical roots. His research played a major role in the development of strategic studies after the Cold War and even today, founding the culture-centric approach in the analysis of international security. See Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1977).

eroding all three Weberian bases of legitimacy (traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal) and propelling the regime's legitimacy crisis to a point of irreversibility.

8.1. Authoritarian Modernization and the Destruction of Rational-Legal Legitimacy: "Development without Participation"

At the heart of the Pahlavi state-building project, particularly after the 1953 coup d'état, stood the project of "Authoritarian Modernization," which, on the surface, aimed to establish a modern, efficient state modeled after Western prototypes. By constructing modern institutions, a new military, an expansive bureaucracy, a revamped judicial system, and a national parliament, the regime projected the outward appearance of a rational-legal order (Abrahamian, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 215-20). In Weberian terms, such institutions should have constituted the primary wellspring of rational-legal legitimacy: the rightful exercise of power rooted not in veneration for tradition or personal charisma, but in the "Rule of impersonal laws and predictable procedures." (Weber, *ibid*: 215-20)

Yet, a closer analysis exposes a fundamental paradox at the core of this project. Pahlavi modernization did not unfold in a democratic context but rather within the architecture of a patrimonial-sultanistic state. In this system, the driving logic was not the empowerment of society or the institutionalization of law, but the consolidation and concentration of authority in the person of the Shah (Adibi, 1979 AD/1358 SH: 30-38; Katouziyan, 1979: 30-38).

As a result, modern institutions, far from fostering autonomy or the rule of law, were reduced to mere instruments for enacting the ruler's personal will and maintaining societal control. This process aptly characterized as "Development without participation," systematically hollowed out and discredited the foundations of rational-legal legitimacy through the following mechanisms.

8.2. Absolute Concentration of Power and the Hollowing Out of Political Institutions

The essence of a rational-legal system lies in the existence of independent political institutions, especially a legislature, capable of checking executive power and representing the interests of society. In the late Pahlavi era, these institutions persisted in form but were effectively stripped of substantive authority. The National Assembly and Senate, which under the constitution of the Constitutional Revolution were meant to embody the nation and serve as the locus of legislation, were reduced to ceremonial bodies. The electoral process, particularly after 1953, was entirely stage-managed: lists of approved candidates were finalized by the Shah and SAVAK prior to the polls (Abrahamian, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 207-321; Keddie, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 182 and 269).

This scenario exemplifies the structural conflict of interest identified in the theoretical framework: "An institution founded on an "Impersonal Viewpoint" (representing public interests and enacting general laws) was recast as an instrument of the Shah's "Personal Viewpoint," a rubber stamp for royal policy and a conduit for dispensing privileges to loyalists. In this environment, both opponents and modern technocrats concluded that legal pathways to participation were foreclosed, and that advancement could only be secured through proximity to the Shah's personal court." (Azimi, 2008: 277-80)

The culmination of this self-destructive trajectory, and the decisive moment when the regime

abandoned even the semblance of pluralism, was the decree establishing the "Rastakhiz (Resurgence) Party of the Iranian Nation" in March 1975. This was not simply an administrative directive to dissolve political parties; it constituted a profound statement on the very nature of power and a radical redefinition of the relationship between state and citizen (Milani, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 374; Shahedi, 2003 AD/1382 SH). At the apparent height of his power, buoyed by soaring oil revenues, the Shah refused even to tolerate loyal, state-created opposition parties such as Iran Novin and Mardom; with a single command, he summarily dissolved them all (Madani, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 298-300). In the logic of a patrimonial state, even wholly loyal intermediary institutions are seen as redundant and potentially subversive, power must flow directly from the person of the ruler to society, unmediated by institutional layers.

In his address proclaiming this mandate, the Shah, in unmistakably uncompromising terms, eliminated any room for dissent or even neutrality, prescribing citizenship through absolute party loyalty and dividing the nation accordingly:

"Every Iranian must belong to this party [Rastakhiz]... Anyone who does not enter this political organization and does not believe in the three principles I have stated has two paths: either he is an individual belonging to an illegal organization, meaning in our own terms, a Tudeh-ite. That is, again in our own terms and with proof: unpatriotic. His place is either in an Iranian prison, or if he wishes, tomorrow we will gladly place a passport in his hand, without an exit fee, and he can go wherever he pleases. Because he is not an Iranian, he has no homeland, and his actions are not legal, they are illegal, and the law has specified his punishment..." (Ettela'at newspaper, 3 March 1975 AD)

These remarks, uttered in the most explicit terms, substituted the ruler's "Personal Viewpoint" for the "Impersonal Viewpoint" enshrined in the constitution. From that moment onward, the standard for "Being Iranian" and displaying loyalty to the homeland was no longer adherence to the country's laws, but membership in, and allegiance to, a party established solely by the will of a single individual. This decree equated political opposition with treason and foreclosed the last remaining formal avenues for participation. Ultimately, this act sowed deeper disillusionment among loyalists than it did fear among opponents; it made abundantly clear to political elites and technocrats within the regime's own restricted order that their prospects depended not on the rule of law, but on the personal and immutable will of the Shah. Thus, rather than consolidating power, the Rastakhiz Party became the clearest emblem of the delegitimization of legal institutions and the profound fragility of the regime's political order (Abrahamiyan, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 549; Ansari, 2001: 18).

8.3. Rentier Bureaucracy, Personal Loyalty, and the Weakening of Efficacy

The second pillar of a modern state, its bureaucracy, likewise succumbed to the same logic. Vast oil revenues transformed the Pahlavi state into a "Rentier State," freeing it from reliance on citizen consent or taxation and thus relieving it of any genuine sense of accountability (Katouziyan, 1982: 270; Skocpol, 1982: 270). This financial autonomy enabled the Shah to structure the bureaucracy not according to the principle of meritocracy, essential for rational-legal legitimacy, but on the foundation of personal loyalty.

Marvin Zonis, in his psychological analysis of Iran's political elite, demonstrates how the Shah deliberately prevented the emergence of independent power centers within the bureaucracy by fostering "Balanced Conflict" and mutual distrust among his officials (Zonis, 2021). In such an environment, sycophancy and proximity to the ruler supplanted expertise and competence. The result was the creation of a vast, yet inefficient and corrupt, bureaucratic apparatus that, far from serving citizens, primarily operated to safeguard the "Sultan's Authority." (Chehabi, 2001: 48-57) This pervasive inefficiency further undermined another critical dimension of legitimacy, namely "Functional Legitimacy,"¹ and reinforced the widespread perception that the state's massive administrative machinery served not national development, but the consolidation of a single individual's power (Saikal, 2009: 150-65).

Ultimately, the project of "Authoritarian Modernization," instead of yielding a stable and legitimate political order grounded in the rule of law, produced a "Fragile Political Order." (Sariolghalam, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 179; Haji Naseri, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 67-68) Though the regime maintained a modern and institutional façade, its internal substance was wholly dependent on the will of one man. By hollowing out institutions of genuine authority, the Pahlavi regime forfeited its most vital potential source of legitimacy, rational-legal legitimacy, and rendered itself profoundly vulnerable to crisis.

8.4. Cultural Engineering and the Identity Crisis: The Simultaneous Destruction of Traditional and Charismatic Legitimacy

If "Authoritarian Modernization" constituted the structural pillar of the Pahlavi project, "Cultural Engineering" served as its ideological counterpart. This initiative represented an ambitious bid to redefine Iran's national identity and to forge a "New Model of Man" whose loyalty would be reoriented away from deep-seated Islamic-Iranian traditions and directed squarely toward the Pahlavi monarchy. Within our theoretical framework, this undertaking is conceptualized as a deliberate "Strategic Culture," rooted in three pillars: archaistic nationalism, Westernism, and state secularism (Ghanizadeh and Mortazavian, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 14). Its ultimate aim was to construct a novel and enduring foundation of legitimacy for the regime.

Paradoxically, however, this project produced the very opposite of its intended result. The Pahlavi state's efforts at cultural engineering not only failed to generate a new source of legitimacy, but, by assailing the society's established normative and semantic structures (Azghandi, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 110-114; Moaddel, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 179), simultaneously and irreparably eroded the other two Weberian bases of legitimacy: traditional and charismatic.

8.5. Archaistic Nationalism: The Invention of Tradition against Living Tradition

The Pahlavi state recognized that the durability of its rule required a historical narrative and a claim to traditional legitimacy (Ashraf, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 212; AliAkbari, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 142). The very essence of traditional legitimacy lies in the "Sanctity of age-old traditions and the status of those who rule in accordance with them." (Weber, *ibid*: 226) Yet, unlike earlier

1. Functional or performance legitimacy refers to a government's right to rule based on its effectiveness and its successful delivery of public goods, economic development, and security.

dynasties such as the Safavids or Qajars, the Pahlavis lacked both an ancient lineage and a genuine tribal or religious base (Keddie, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 53). Confronted with this deficit, the monarchy opted not to engage with the society's actual, living traditions, rooted deeply in Shi'ism, but instead manufactured an "Invented Tradition." This construct hinged on a highly selective, theatrical, and ideological revival of Iran's ancient past, systematically marginalizing the Islamic period, an inseparable facet of the nation's cultural and historical identity, as if it were merely an obstacle to a restored ancient grandeur (Marashi, 2008: 85; Hoveyda, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 121; Tavakkoli, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 78-85).

This artificial approach culminated in two highly symbolic actions:

- 1) The 2500-Year Celebration of the Persian Empire (1971): Orchestrated with lavish displays and attended by foreign dignitaries at Persepolis, this celebration sought to draw a direct line between Mohammad Reza Shah and Cyrus the Great, establishing the Shah as the rightful heir to a 2,500-year-old imperial legacy. The spectacle, in which ordinary Iranians were mere passive observers, transmitted a dual and damaging message: By erasing fourteen centuries of Islamic history, it alienated the cultural identity of the majority, and by its conspicuous luxury and extravagance, it starkly highlighted the gap between the ruling elite and society's persistent poverty and hardship (Avery, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 100). Rather than generating traditional legitimacy, the event painted the regime as an "Alien" and "Westernized" entity, profoundly disconnected from the true culture of its people (Madani, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 2, 166-73; Foran, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 469-470).
- 2) Changing the Official Calendar (1976): If the Persepolis celebrations embodied ideological theater, the abrupt switch from the Solar Hijri calendar to the Imperial calendar marked a direct assault on everyday life and the temporal rhythms of society. By replacing the Islamic calendar, rooted in the Prophet's migration, with a chronology based on Cyrus's coronation, the state severed its last symbolic ties to Iran's Islamic identity. This unnecessary act, motivated purely by ideological zeal, provoked fierce opposition among the clergy and was interpreted, even by modern and secular segments, as further evidence of the Shah's autocracy and detachment from social reality (Madani, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 309-10).

In the final reckoning, the policy of "Archaistic Nationalism" failed decisively. Its invented tradition collided headlong with the society's living traditions, rooted in centuries of Islamic heritage. Instead of generating traditional legitimacy, this approach eradicated its last vestiges and recast the Shah as an adversary of the people's culture and historical identity (Bigdeli, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 126).

8.6. Artificial Charisma and Sultanic Isolation: A Disconnected Aura

Parallel to its pursuit of traditional legitimacy, the regime invested considerable resources into constructing charismatic legitimacy. Charisma, by definition, springs from the "Exceptional grace and allure of an individual" and relies on a direct, emotional bond between leader and followers (Weber, *ibid*, 241). Employing a full arsenal of modern propaganda, the Pahlavi state sought to shape Mohammad Reza Shah into a charismatic icon, a benevolent "Father of the Nation," a savior-like figure, the Aryamehr (Light of the Aryans), divinely protected (Milani, *ibid*: 39;

Pahlavi, 1970 AD/1349 SH: 68, 436-52; Pahlavi, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 301-305). Yet this "Artificial Charisma," engineered from above, was structurally doomed to failure for three fundamental reasons:

- 1) **Sultanic Isolation and Lack of Real Connection:** Especially after the 1953 coup, the Shah withdrew ever further into a cocoon of fear, suspicion, and the flattery of his inner circle. This "Sultanic Isolation," emblematic of the patrimonial state, foreclosed any possibility of genuine, emotional engagement with the masses (Zonis, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 189; Milani, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 462). The Shah, insulated and distant, addressed the nation through the screen, always separated by bulletproof glass, never truly among his people. This profound physical and emotional remove precluded the formation of the authentic relationship that is essential to charismatic legitimacy (Ansari, *ibid*: 159, 170; Hoveyda, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 159, 170).
- 2) **Megalomania and Belief in a Supranational Mission:** The regime's construction of charisma was further undermined by the Shah's deep personal conviction in a divinely ordained mission. In *Mission for My Country*, he overtly recounts mystical experiences and what he calls the "Support of a hidden force," writing:

"In any case, from the age of six or seven, I have held the continuous belief and faith that the great God has always kept me and will continue to keep me under His protection. Faith in this matter has brought me a special peace of mind and reassurance, and for this reason, when I sometimes measure my own will against the will of the Almighty, I become greatly concerned and wonder whether my will is predetermined or free. And if the eternal will and divine force are for my preservation and protection, then this will must be based on a cause and a purpose. Perhaps such beliefs are not very agreeable to those who consider themselves worldly or opinionated, but in my view, the great God has been my protector and helper in dangers and calamities." (Pahlavi, 1970 AD/1349 SH: 68)

This self-perception gradually devolved into a form of megalomania that left the Shah divorced from social and political realities. Asadollah Alam notes in his diary entry of February 16, 1971, His Majesty's telling declaration:

"I have tested it; whoever has confronted me has been eliminated; whether domestic or foreign; for example, the Kennedy brothers in America, Nasser the President of Egypt, Khrushchev the Premier of the Soviet Union. Domestically, too, whoever has confronted the Shah has been overthrown, like Mossadegh and to some extent Ghavam Saltaneh. Razmara. Mansur, too... was extraordinarily ambitious, he too was killed... Look how everything suddenly worked out. We solved the oil issue. Heavy rain fell. And in the world, the issue of Iran's leadership over a large Middle Eastern region was proven." (Alam, *ibid*: 1349-1351; Alikhani, 2011: 207)

This conviction in his own immunity and chosenness, though foundational to his self-understanding and sense of legitimacy (Fallaci, 1978 AD/1357 SH), in practice rendered him impervious to criticism or dissent, intensifying the distance and alienation that defined his rule.

- 3) **The Rise of a Rival and Authentic Charisma:** Political reality abhors a vacuum. In the space left by the failure of the Shah's artificial charisma, a genuinely powerful and culturally anchored charisma was rising: that of Imam Khomeini. Unlike the Shah,

Khomeini embodied simplicity and austerity, spoke the people's language using deeply resonant religious idioms, and cast himself as the defender of "Islam and Iran" against "Tyranny," "Corruption," and "Foreign Colonialism." (Khosropanah, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 720-50) Whereas the Shah's charisma was constructed on luxury, aloofness, and foreign backing, Imam Khomeini's was grounded in spirituality, asceticism, and a call for independence. This revolutionary charisma not only filled the prevailing void but decisively recast the Shah from a putative charismatic leader to a "Corrupt and dependent dictator," shattering the last remnants of his legitimacy (Akhavan, 2019: 61-68).

In sum, the cultural engineering project, intended to fortify the foundations of the regime by manufacturing charismatic leadership, instead prepared the ground for the rise and triumph of a rival, authentic charisma. By projecting an unrealistic, isolated image of the Shah, the regime pushed the legitimacy crisis to a decisive point of no return.

8.7. Consequences of the Legitimacy Crisis: The State in a Vacuum and the Collapse of Fragile Political Order

The foregoing analysis has demonstrated how the twin policies of "Authoritarian Modernization" and "Cultural Engineering" converged to systematically erode all three Weberian foundations of legitimacy, rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic. This led to a profound and pervasive legitimacy vacuum. Outwardly, the Pahlavi regime projected unprecedented strength, anchored in its modern military, sprawling bureaucracy, and vast oil revenues; but internally, it suffered a deep crisis of meaning and complete disconnection from society.

At this stage, much of the literature dwells on the immediate accelerants of collapse, such as the economic crises of the 1970s (inflation and inequality) or external pressures like the Carter administration's human rights campaign. While these factors undeniably exacerbated the situation, the analytical framework advanced here contends that they were not root causes but rather sparks igniting the powder keg of a widespread legitimacy vacuum. The central question, then, is as follows: Why did such pressures culminate in a full-scale revolution in Iran, while similar shocks elsewhere did not? The answer lies in the nature of the Pahlavi system as a "Fragile Political Order," (Haji Naseri, *ibid*: 81-82) one so bereft of genuine legitimacy that it lacked any capacity to absorb or deflect such crises. The consequences of this legitimacy vacuum are especially clear in three key domains:

8.8. The Supremacy of the "Personal Viewpoint" over the "Impersonal Viewpoint" and the Production of Illegitimate Power

Within the Pahlavi patrimonial-sultanistic state, the equilibrium between the ruler's "Personal Viewpoint" and the law's "Impersonal Viewpoint" was radically upset in favor of the Shah. He regarded himself as the very embodiment of the state and conflated his personal interests with those of the nation. This outlook is powerfully encapsulated in a 1965 U.S. Department of State report:

"The Shah is not just the monarch; he has in practice made the job of Prime Minister his own. He is the commander of the army, and all important government decisions are subject to his opinion and approval. No important appointment in the state apparatus

is made without his approval. He directly runs the country's security apparatus. Foreign policy is in his hands. He selects and appoints ambassadors. Promotion in the army, above the rank of lieutenant, is directly in his hands and cannot be realized without his approval. Important economic decisions, from the details of foreign loans to the appropriate location for a new factory, are referred to him. The management of universities [and the appointment of their chancellors] is his responsibility. He determines the details of the fight against corruption. He chooses the representatives for the Majles and the Senate. The nature of opposition activity in the two houses and the bills that are passed are up to him." (Milani, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 510)

This overwhelming dominance of the "Personal Viewpoint" turned modern institutions into little more than passive instruments for enacting "Royal Orders." As a minister in Hoveyda's cabinet wryly observed, "When I saw that everything was fabricated, I had to laugh. Nobody said much. The ministers just sat there signing documents." (Graham: 1979 AD/1358 SH: 163) Thus, state power became "Illegitimate" in the truest sense of the term: exercised without the belief or consent of the governed (Haji Naseri, *ibid*: 62).

8.9. The Rentier State as an Accelerator of State-Nation Alienation

Rentier economics relieved the state of a fundamental necessity that underpinned the formation of modern states in the West, namely, the creation of a social contract based on "Taxation in exchange for accountability." This dynamic diverted the state-nation relationship in Iran from the classical state-building trajectory and deepened the profound alienation between the two (Katouziyan, *ibid*: 125 and 245). This new dynamic had two profound and destructive effects:

- 1) Erosion of the Social Contract: Rather than serving as the representative and servant of its citizens, the state became a dispenser of patronage, distributing resources, services, and development projects (such as those under the White Revolution) not as a "Duty" toward the people, but as "Gifts" and "Royal Favors" bestowed upon subjects. The relationship between state and society was thus transformed: what should have been a bond of "Rights and Responsibilities" devolved into a paternalistic "Father-Child" dynamic, intensifying mutual alienation and eroding any sense of partnership between rulers and ruled (*ibid*: 1987: 386-7).
- 2) Vulnerability of Functional Legitimacy: The regime's legitimacy strategy ultimately rested on its ability to raise living standards and provide material benefits. Yet this "Functional Legitimacy" was precariously brittle. When the economic crisis of the 1970s struck, Iran's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, exceeded 0.50 by 1977; rampant inflation and growing inequality quickly undermined this last, fragile foundation. As soon as material benefit could no longer be guaranteed, the regime's legitimacy evaporated. Economic grievances almost overnight escalated into a full-blown political crisis, because no alternative, deeper bases of legitimacy remained (Katouziyan, *ibid*: 332-4; Foran, *ibid*: 334-8; Pesaran, *ibid*: 504-8).

8.10. The Elimination of ‘Shock Absorbers’ and the Creation of a Deadly Political Vacuum

Arguably the gravest consequence of the Pahlavi autocratic structure was its systematic eradication of all independent institutions and elites capable of acting as "Shock Absorbers"¹ during periods of political crisis. In robust political systems, intermediary bodies, such as autonomous political parties, professional associations, a free press, and critical elites, serve as vital mechanisms for absorbing, channeling, and diffusing social discontent. By providing outlets for popular grievances and structured venues for criticism and negotiation, these institutions play a crucial role in transforming potential crises into manageable challenges, deterring escalation into existential threats.

These institutions, by channeling popular demands and providing space for dialogue and critique, prevent challenges from escalating into structural crises. The Pahlavi regime systematically dismantled these arenas one by one, and ultimately, with the establishment of the single Rastakhiz Party, suppressed every independent voice (Parsa Banab, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 1, 512, 643).

The outcome was the creation of an absolute political vacuum. Freed from any mediating forces, society became starkly polarized into two opposing and irreconcilable blocs: on one side, the Shah and a narrow circle of loyalists; on the other, a diverse but unified coalition of adversaries. This collapse of intermediary institutions stripped the system of all flexibility and resilience. Consequently, any shock or episode of discontent, no matter how minor, was transmitted immediately and unbuffered to the apex of the power pyramid, destabilizing the entire regime.

The absence of these shock absorbers proved fatal in 1978-79. Lacking mechanisms for containment or gradual reform, burgeoning social dissatisfaction could no longer be managed or channeled; instead, it rapidly escalated into a sweeping revolutionary movement intent on toppling the existing order. Thus, the Pahlavi "Political Order," while outwardly robust was in truth exceedingly "Fragile," having forfeited every base of legitimacy, it stood fully primed to collapse at the first encounter with genuine crisis.

Conclusion

This study set out to address the central question: how did the very strategies by ‘Which the Pahlavi regime sought to consolidate power and forge a modern, robust state come to undermine and ultimately destroy the foundations of its own legitimacy?’ The evidence presented here demonstrates that the regime’s legitimacy crisis and subsequent collapse were not abrupt failures or the products of sudden shocks; rather, they represented the culmination of a gradual, structural process by which all three Weberian forms of legitimacy, rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic, were systematically eroded by the regime’s own dual policies.

First, the destruction of rational-legal legitimacy through "Authoritarian Modernization."

Although the Pahlavi regime constructed the shell of modern institutions, these existed within the confines of a patrimonial-sultanistic order, hollowed out of any genuine rational-legal substance. The absolute centralization of power in the Shah’s person, the overwhelming

1. The concept of "Shock Absorbers" in a political system refers to intermediary institutions like independent parties, a free press, and civil society organizations that can absorb and manage social discontent, preventing it from directly destabilizing the core of the state.

dominance of his "Personal Viewpoint" over the "Impersonal" interests of law and nation, and the reduction of both elected and appointed institutions to mere extensions of royal will, collectively demolished the rational-legal foundations required for modern state legitimacy. Sustained by rentier oil revenues, this system rendered the state ever more insulated from society, severed the remaining bonds of accountability, and deepened the alienation between ruler and ruled.

Second, the simultaneous destruction of traditional and charismatic legitimacy through "Cultural Engineering."

In an attempt to fill the resultant vacuum of meaning, the regime pursued an aggressive strategy of "Cultural Engineering." By seeking to "Invent Tradition" through archaistic nationalism, the state's ideological project clashed headlong with the authentic, lived culture of Shi'i Iran, alienating its most powerful reservoir of traditional legitimacy. Simultaneously, the effort to manufacture an "Artificial Charisma" for the Shah via a vast apparatus of propaganda failed to generate an authentic emotional connection with the people; at the moment of crisis, this synthetic charisma rapidly collapsed, yielding ground to a rival, revolutionary charisma.

Third, the "Fragile Order": the ultimate consequence of pervasive illegitimacy.

In the end, the Pahlavi regime succeeded only in obliterating all its own sources of legitimacy. Bereft of commitment to law and accountable institutions, it lacked rational-legal legitimacy; by disregarding the people's deepest traditions, it forfeited traditional legitimacy; and with a leader isolated and unconvincing, it could not meaningfully lay claim to charismatic legitimacy. All that remained was the naked exercise of hard power, sustained by oil and coercion, a "Fragile Political Order" whose apparent strength belied its inner hollowness. Devoid of intermediary institutions or shock absorbers, the regime was unable to withstand the profound crisis of 1977–79: what seemed a sudden collapse was, in fact, the logical conclusion of years of self-inflicted erosion.

The fate of the Pahlavi regime stands as a stark historical reminder that enduring political power cannot subsist in a vacuum, propped up merely by material resources and coercion. Legitimacy is the essential connective tissue between rulers and the ruled, and any order built upon foundations alien to the deep cultural, social, and political structures of a nation is destined, sooner or later, for self-destruction. It is self-evident that this structural analysis of the "Conditions of Possibility" for collapse in no way seeks to negate the decisive role of historical actors, particularly the leadership of the Revolution and mass mobilization. Rather, it explains why and how revolutionary agency, operating within a context of legitimacy vacuum and structural fragility, was able to exert such profound effect and ultimately achieve victory.

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A Comparative and Analytical Study of Iran's Military Deterrence in Transition from the Dependent Deterrence Model during the Pahlavi Era to the Self-Reliance Model in the Islamic Republic of Iran

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Deterrence, as a fundamental component of national security, has undergone profound transformations in contemporary Iranian history. An analysis of these developments appears essential for understanding the distinct models that have shaped the country's national security at critical historical junctures. The present study, with a comparative and analytical method, aims to examine the nature of Iran's military deterrence models during the two periods of the Pahlavi rule and the Islamic Republic.

Method: Employing a comparative method and analyzing data extracted from official sources and reputable domestic and international research, while also focusing on strategic documents and reports, this research seeks to answer the main question of how the transition from security dependence to defense self-reliance has led to an increase in the resilience of the Islamic Republic of Iran against sanctions and external pressures.

Findings: The research findings indicate that during the Pahlavi era, the deterrence strategy was based on structural dependence on Western powers, and national security was secured through the mass import of weaponry and the extensive presence of foreign military advisors. This model, which can be termed "Dependent Deterrence," had rendered the country vulnerable to international pressures. In contrast, the Islamic Republic of Iran, by adopting a resistance-oriented approach and emphasizing indigenous capabilities, established the model of "Self-reliant Deterrence." This novel strategy is founded upon domestic production, technological innovation, the development of asymmetric technologies, and the utilization of specialized human capacities.

Conclusion: The transition to this model has not only guaranteed the country's strategic independence but has also, through the creation of an indigenous value chain in the defense sector, significantly increased the Islamic Republic's maneuverability and resilience in the face of comprehensive sanctions. This paradigmatic shift signifies the transition from purchased security to security produced domestically.

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Introduction

As a country with a sensitive geopolitical position adjacent to the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and the challenging borders of West Asia, Iran has consistently faced external threats and structural pressures. Contemporary Iranian history has experienced two fundamental approaches in confronting these threats: "One based on military-security dependence on Western powers during the Pahlavi era, and based on resistance, self-reliance, and indigenous innovation during the period of the Islamic Republic." The confrontation between these two paradigms can be analyzed not only in the hardware dimension but also in deeper layers such as the definition of threat, type of response, the role of the people, and the function of culture.

During the Pahlavi era, with Iran being perceived as the West's gendarme in the region, the concept of deterrence was reduced to the purchase of expensive, imported weaponry, a matter that led to severe arms dependence and was accompanied, in some cases, by inefficiency in technology transfer, inability to repair equipment, and reliance on foreign advisors (Ghasemi, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 250-252). Simultaneously, Iran's strategic commitments to the West limited the country's maneuverability (Mousaviyan, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 182-185). Following the Islamic Revolution, this consumerist and dependent model gave way to a resistance-based and indigenous model, in which defensive and deterrent structures were built upon domestic capacities, popular participation, and the development of asymmetric technologies (Rostami, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 19). This transformation, which first took shape during the Sacred Defense (1980-1988) and reached its peak in 2019 with precision missile strikes on the US *Ain al-Asad* base in Iraq, and subsequently during the twelve-day war of 2025 against the Zionist regime and the final attack on the US Al-Udeid base in Qatar, signifies the Islamic Republic's deterrence transition from a defensive level to active deterrence.

In addition to comparing the nature of deterrence under the Pahlavi regime and the Islamic Republic, the question arises as to how the transition from the dependent deterrence model to the indigenous model has been effective in the deterrence of the Islamic Republic of Iran against international pressures and sanctions. Furthermore, why has Iran's deterrence appeared more effective and sustainable despite the reduction of the defense budget from 10% of GDP during the Pahlavi era to approximately 2.5% under the Islamic Republic (cf. Global Firepower, 2024)?

To examine this historical transformation, how the Islamic Republic of Iran was able, by changing the deterrence model, to utilize domestic resources and indigenous capacities and design a deterrence model that renders Iran resilient against external threats and strengthens its regional and global position, it is necessary to investigate two important levels: first, the transition from the Western-dependent model during the Pahlavi era, which relied on arms supply and support from foreign powers; and second, the formation of a resistance-based and self-reliant model through which Iran has independently gained the ability to produce advanced military technologies and establish resistance networks in the region. In light of these developments, it can be argued that the deterrence of the Islamic Republic has transformed from a purely defensive model into a hybrid and active model, the effectiveness of which has become evident in the field and psychological dimensions of the region's security equations. This process demonstrates the adaptive capacity of the Islamic Republic, which, despite global

sanctions and pressures, has continuously managed threats and maintained its presence as an effective power in regional and global security equations.

Main Research Question:

- How has the transition from security dependence to defense self-reliance led to an increase in the resilience of the Islamic Republic of Iran against sanctions and external pressures?

Sub-Questions:

- On what foundations, resources, tools, and objectives was the military deterrence model during the Pahlavi era based, and what characteristics and vulnerabilities did it possess?
- On what foundations, resources, tools, and objectives is the military deterrence model in the Islamic Republic of Iran based, and how has it evolved?
- Through what stages and processes has the transition from the dependent Pahlavi model to the self-reliant model in the Islamic Republic occurred, and what factors have played a role in this transformation?
- What substantive differences does a comparative analysis of the two deterrence models (dependent and self-reliant) reveal in terms of foundations, resources, tools, domains, and objectives?

Main Hypothesis:

The main hypothesis is that the transition from the dependent deterrence model during the Pahlavi era to the self-reliant model in the Islamic Republic has significantly increased Iran's defense resilience against sanctions and external pressures. This hypothesis is based on the premise that the deterrence model during the Pahlavi era was founded on structural dependence on Western powers, mass arms imports, and the presence of foreign advisors, which, while incurring enormous defense costs, increased Iran's security vulnerability to sanctions and international pressures. In contrast, the deterrence model in the Islamic Republic has been established on the basis of defense self-reliance, domestic production, technological innovation, and the development of asymmetric technologies. This, despite the reduction of the defense budget from 10% of GDP during the Pahlavi era to approximately 2.5% in the Islamic Republic, has been able to create more effective and sustainable deterrence and increase national resilience against external pressures.

Research Objective:

The main objective of this research is a comparative and analytical study of Iran's military deterrence during the two periods of the Pahlavi rule and the Islamic Republic. This study seeks to present the substantive differences in the deterrence models of these two periods and, by employing a comparative method and analyzing documented data from official sources and reputable domestic and international research, to examine these two models.

To achieve this objective, two important levels are investigated:

- First, the transition from the Western-dependent model during the Pahlavi era, which relied on arms supply and support from foreign powers;

- Second, the formation of a resistance-based and self-reliant model through which Iran has independently gained the ability to produce advanced military technologies and establish resistance networks in the region.

Furthermore, by focusing on the five axes of deterrence, foundations, resources, tools, domains, and objectives, this research elucidates the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the transformation of Iran's deterrence from "Structural Dependence" to "Strategic Resistance."

Research Necessity:

Deterrence, as a fundamental component of national security, has undergone fundamental transformations in contemporary Iranian history. However, existing studies have largely examined specific periods in isolation and have neglected a comparative analysis of these two models. On the one hand, Western studies have often viewed the issue from the perspective of their own interests and have failed to explain the resistance-oriented roots of the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, domestic studies have mostly described present-day successes without comparatively examining the historical transition process from the dependent model to the self-reliant model. Additionally, the security dimensions of the Pahlavi era and the impact of sanctions on Iran's defense self-sufficiency have received less attention. This research seeks to fill these gaps.

1. Research Background

Studies related to deterrence models in the Islamic Republic of Iran can be divided into two major approaches of Western research focusing on hardware dimensions and threat-oriented perspectives, and domestic studies emphasizing resistance, self-reliance, and the internal construction of power. Among Western works, reports such as those from the RAND Corporation (2022) and analyses by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS, 2023) have addressed issues including Iran's missile program, nuclear capabilities, and the regional role of the Islamic Republic in Middle Eastern security developments. For instance, Kenneth Waltz (Waltz, 2021), in an article in the journal *International Security*, argues that Iran's missile power has shifted the balance of power in the Persian Gulf in Tehran's favor. However, these approaches have largely analyzed Iran as a threat from the perspective of Western interests and have neglected to explain the resistance-oriented roots of the Islamic Republic.

In contrast, the main body of domestic research has examined defense capacities within the framework of the indigenous deterrence model. For example, reports published by the Center for Strategic Studies of the Presidency consider the deterrence of the Islamic Republic to stem from asymmetric power, hybrid warfare (cyber, intelligence, drone-based), and the formation of a regional resistance network. Shamoli and Basiri (2023 AD/1402 SH: 31-58) have also shown that the domestic production of over 90% of light equipment and 50% of missiles has raised the cost of aggression for enemies to a deterrent level.

Regarding the Pahlavi era, works such as Abrahamian's analysis (2013) in *A History of Modern Iran*, and Gasiorowski's study (1987) in *The Foreign Policy of Iran under the Pahlavi Dynasty*, have addressed the Pahlavi regime's intense dependence on the West, Iran's role in CENTO, and its military reliance on foreign advisors. Nevertheless, most studies focus on

political and economic dimensions and have less examined the security aspects and structural weaknesses of military deterrence during that period. On the other hand, domestic works such as Haji Yousefi's (2019 AD/1398 SH) *Iran's Defense Strategy* have largely described the contemporary successes of the Islamic Republic, without comparatively analyzing the historical rupture from the dependent Pahlavi model and the gradual development of indigenous deterrence.

Accordingly, three main gaps can be identified in the research literature: The lack of a comparative study between the dependent deterrence model of the Pahlavi era and the resistance-based model of the Islamic Republic; the neglect of the role of ideological and cultural transformations in the transition from "Imported Security" to "Popular Security"; and the absence of a systematic analysis of the impact of sanctions on defense self-sufficiency and the reconstruction of military infrastructure. Therefore, this research seeks to help fill these gaps by utilizing archival data (such as documents released by the NARA concerning Iran-US military cooperation in the 1970s), up-to-date international reports (such as the Global Firepower 2024 index), and analysis of field interviews with select researchers.

2. Theoretical Framework

To analyze the transformations of Iran's deterrence strategy during the two periods of the Pahlavi rule and the Islamic Republic, an integrated "Dependence-Resistance" theoretical framework has been employed. This framework provides an analytical tool for examining the foundations, resources, tools, objectives, and domains of deterrence in each period and enables a comparison between a dependent model and a self-reliant model.

3. The "Dependence-Resistance" Theory in Iran's Military Deterrence

In the present study, the integrated "Dependence-Resistance" framework is used to explain the fundamental differences between the two deterrence models. This framework combines components of military dependence theory (based on Wallerstein's center-periphery model) and resistance deterrence theory (based on defense self-reliance and ontological security). Accordingly, deterrence in the Pahlavi government is defined under the "Structural Dependence" model, a model in which military power was a function of asymmetric relations with central powers and was based on the import of advanced weaponry, foreign training, and the presence of American advisors (Wallerstein, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 45; Abrahamian, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 131). In contrast, deterrence in the Islamic Republic took shape within the framework of "Self-founded Resistance," a model that, while emphasizing defense self-sufficiency and the development of asymmetric technologies, is based on the reproduction of security within the context of religious-revolutionary identity and popular mobilization (Simbar, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 45; Haji Yousefi and Ansarifard, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 22-24).

This model has continued from the Sacred Defense era to the contemporary period and has materialized in practice through examples such as Iran's missile attack on the Ain al-Asad base in Iraq (January 8, 2020), developments after October 7, 2023, and Iran's active resistance during the twelve-day war of 2025, which reflected the changing strategic balances in the region (Hainsworth et al., 2023; UN OCHA, 2021). Thus, the "Dependence-Resistance" theory enables a comparison between two opposing deterrence discourses: Dependent and exogenous deterrence

in the Pahlavi structure versus resistant and endogenous deterrence in the Islamic Republic. Within this framework, the indicators of deterrence are based not merely on hard power, but on strategic independence, political legitimacy, and the linkage between defense capability and national identity (Barmak, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 25; Mohammadi, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 48).

Subsequently, based on this theoretical framework, a comparative analysis of deterrence in the two studied systems will be pursued across five axes, foundations, resources, tools, domains, and objectives, in order to clarify the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the transformation of Iran's deterrence from "Structural Dependence" to "Strategic Resistance."

3.1. The Foundation of Military Deterrence in the Pahlavi Government

During the Pahlavi period, particularly under Mohammad Reza Shah, Iran's military deterrence policy was formed based on structural dependence on Western powers, especially the United States. This dependence determined the foundation of the country's defense system and also functioned as a strategic pillar of national security policy. Instead of investing in indigenous capacities, the Pahlavi government adopted an approach based on the import of equipment, extensive reliance on foreign training, and the permanent presence of military advisors, an approach whose roots began in the Reza Shah period through cooperation with colonial powers such as Britain (Abrahamian, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 290).

After the coup d'état of August 19, 1953, Iran assumed a symbolic role as the "Gendarme of the Region" as a strategic ally of the Western bloc. However, contrary to this designation, the country's defense structure remained dependent and inefficient. Most of the weaponry purchased from the United States was either incomplete and obsolete or operationally incompatible with Iran's geographical conditions. A clear example was the British Chieftain tanks, which faced technical problems and maintenance limitations. Full control over the operation of much sensitive equipment was in the hands of American advisors, such that the activation of certain advanced systems on fighter aircraft was possible only in their presence (Shafiei, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 67).

By the mid-1970s, Iran's military expenditures reached as much as \$17 billion, meaning that the expenditure-to-population ratio exceeded the military expenditures of countries such as China, Britain, Israel, and Brazil (Mesbah Yazdi, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 198). Nevertheless, this volume of investment never led to defense self-sufficiency. Iran's military industries largely remained at the level of assembling imported components, and projects for the indigenization of advanced technologies, including missiles with a range exceeding 100 kilometers, were not implemented due to American obstruction (Mohammadi, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 91). According to military dependence theory, Iran's deterrence during this period, rather than relying on internal resources, was subject to the will and policy of the central power in Washington.

At the peak of Tehran-Washington relations, the number of American military advisors in Iran reached approximately 24,000. The role of these advisors was not limited to training; they also influenced major military decisions and even the appointment of high-ranking commanders. The Shah himself acknowledged in his memoirs: "I could not dismiss or appoint even a minister without American approval" (Pahlavi, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 211). The operational

command of the army was effectively conducted under the supervision of American officers (Navaei, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 43).

Such intense dependence on Western defense infrastructures caused the Iranian army to lack the necessary capability to respond to threats during critical periods, such as the onset of the Imposed War in 1980. Not only did Iran lack access to appropriate missile and air defense systems, but the sudden cessation of technical cooperation after the Islamic Revolution caused a crisis in the repair and maintenance of Western weaponry. The army was even forced to use American logistics bases to supply spare parts for fighter jets, a possibility that was effectively lost after the severance of bilateral relations (Kachouian, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 82).

In sum, military deterrence in the Pahlavi government rested on three unstable foundations: "Excessive reliance on arms imports, the structural influence of American advisors, and the absence of an indigenous defense technology strategy." This deep dependence severely weakened Iran's strategic independence and transformed deterrence into an external and unstable component, such that at the slightest change in international relations, this seemingly robust structure collapsed.

3.2. The Foundation of Deterrence in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Unlike the Pahlavi state, the foundation of deterrence in the Islamic Republic system is based on unique ideological, strategic, and operational pillars that even distinguish it from conventional deterrence models in the international order. This model is derived from Islamic teachings, historical experiences, and Iran's geopolitical imperatives, and relies on principles such as active resistance, defense self-reliance, security independence, and the utilization of multi-faceted deterrent tools (Haji Yousefi, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 72).

The concept of "Resistance," which is among the fundamental concepts in the intellectual system of the leaders of the Islamic Republic, forms the central axis of the Islamic Republic's deterrence. This concept, arising from religious teachings and the experience of resistance against foreign domination, such as the experience of the Imposed War, has allowed the Islamic Republic to withstand sanctions and military pressures through the development of indigenous industries and defense institutions (Khamenei, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 18; Mesbah Yazdi, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 103), to advance along the path of "Defense Self-reliance," and consequently, today has achieved the capability to produce a wide range of modern defense equipment, including ballistic missiles, drones, and air defense systems (Askari, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 45).

By investing in modern military technologies, the Islamic Republic became one of the regional missile powers. Precision-guided missiles with various ranges, drone systems with offensive, reconnaissance, and loitering munition capabilities, as well as the development of electronic and cyber warfare capabilities, constitute the fundamental elements of this indigenized deterrence (Abbasi, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 60-61). These capabilities have enabled rapid and precise response to threats and have made military action against Iran costly for its enemies. As demonstrated in recent developments, including the missile response to the Ain al-Asad base and the formation of the twelve-day war against the Zionist regime, this indigenous model has now transcended the national level and has been upgraded to a stage of active deterrence and strategic deterrence against extra-regional powers.

Unlike the dependent approach of the Pahlavi era, the Islamic Republic emphasizes decision-making independence in its national security foundation. Institutions such as the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the IRGC Intelligence Organization, and the Ministry of Defense play a decisive role in realizing regional and extra-regional deterrence. The effective presence of the Quds Force in the geopolitical equations of the region and its support for the axis of resistance constitute one of the pillars of the Islamic Republic's active deterrence against threats from the Zionist regime and proxy terrorist networks (Siahpoosh, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 90).

The deterrence of the Islamic Republic also possesses a multi-dimensional nature, ranging from hardware deterrence (military and missile) to soft deterrence (spiritual power, the intellectual discourse of the revolution, public diplomacy, etc.), as well as smart deterrence (cyber and cognitive operations). Targeted support for regional resistance groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Ansarallah in Yemen is also evaluated within the framework of "asymmetric deterrence," which can provide the Islamic Republic with the capability of reciprocal strikes when facing unconventional threats (Safavi, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 128).

In sum, the Islamic Republic of Iran, relying on religious foundations, the historical experience of resistance, and indigenized strategies, has been able to establish a unique model of deterrence at the regional level, a model that, on the one hand, increases the cost of confrontation with Iran for its enemies, and on the other hand, has consolidated the country's strategic independence in the security arena.

3.3. Sources of Military Deterrence in the Pahlavi Government

Military deterrence during the Pahlavi era was based on structural dependence on foreign powers, particularly the United States and Britain, which played a central role in all dimensions of Iran's defense and military policy. Within this framework, instead of relying on indigenous capabilities, deterrence was founded upon the extensive import of weaponry, the stationing of foreign forces, the utilization of oil revenues for equipment purchases, and the receipt of foreign aid. Therefore, its most important components are addressed.

A) Extensive Reliance on Arms Imports

During the second Pahlavi era, the modernization of the army was designed as a function of the geopolitical interests of the Western bloc in the region, without regard to Iran's strategic needs and climatic conditions. The Pahlavi army had become a warehouse of advanced but operationally unusable equipment under conditions of operational independence, because most of this equipment could not be used without the presence of foreign advisors, a supply chain for spare parts, and technical training. For example, the Hawk air defense system, purchased from the United States in the 1970s, required constant maintenance by foreign technicians, and any defect in its parts would practically render the army inoperative (Institute for Contemporary Iranian History Studies, n.d.). Furthermore, the American M60A1 tanks, delivered in significant numbers to the Iranian army, had limited effectiveness in Iran's diverse climate due to their heavy weight and the need for advanced technical support (Haghani, 2021 AD/1400 SH). On the other hand, the Alvand-class frigates, purchased from Britain in the 1970s, despite their

advanced appearance, were heavily dependent on British spare parts, and the slightest disruption in the import chain would impair their operation. Additionally, the AH-1J SeaCobra attack helicopters, purchased on a large scale from the United States, lacked domestic production and repair capabilities, and even in terms of training, Iranian pilots could not fully operate them without American instructors (cf. Najafi, 2019 AD/1398 SH). In such a structure, the army had become less of a national and indigenous power and more of a tool serving the strategic interests of the West in the region, such that the slightest change in political relations with foreign powers could paralyze a significant part of the country's military capability.

B) The Stationing of Military Advisors and Foreign Management of the Armed Forces

The dependence of Iran's defense structure on American advisors during the second Pahlavi era was such that William Sullivan, the then US Ambassador to Tehran, stated that these advisors not only played an advisory role but were also directly influential in the army's command structure, the design of arms contracts, and even the country's defense policies (Sullivan, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 134). According to data from the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), in the late 1970s, approximately 45,000 American military and civilian personnel were present in Iran, operating within the framework of official missions and contracts in the country's defense and economic institutions (Nikfar, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 72). Through military missions such as MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) and ARMISH (Army Section of the Military Assistance Advisory Group), these advisors effectively held a portion of the country's defense decision-making (Sharifzadeh, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 29). The influence of the advisors was such that even official army documents noted the need for "Washington's Approval" to change certain command levels. This situation clearly demonstrates the structural dependence of the armed forces during the Pahlavi era and the negation of the country's military independence.

C) Financing through Oil

Oil revenues were the most important source of funding for military expenditures during the Pahlavi era. The 1954 agreement with the Iran Oil Consortium is a clear example of this dependence, whereby a portion of Iran's share of oil sales was spent on importing military equipment from the very same countries (Yazdanfam, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 63). In the 1970s, Iran's military expenditures exceeded \$17 billion (Katouzian, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 413), but this enormous volume of investment failed to lead to the formation of independent defense industries or effective technology transfer.

D) Conditional and Targeted US Military Aid

After the coup d'état of August 19, 1953, Iran became known as America's gendarme in the region (Sullivan, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 134). In this regard, numerous military aid programs, such as Project Nickel Grass¹ and Project MIDAS, were designed to equip Iranian forces, but the

1. The "Nickel Grass" plan was the United States' emergency military aid to its regional allies; the "MIDAS" plan was a program for training and equipping Iranian forces with the aim of increasing their dependency on the West.

primary goal of this aid was to secure American interests in the region and counter Soviet influence, not to enhance Iran's defense independence (Nikfar, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 72). Through selective sales of equipment and the imposition of technical restrictions, the United States sought to consolidate Iran's strategic dependence on the West (Sharifzadeh, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 29).

E) Weakness of Domestic Defense Infrastructure

The advances of Iran's military industries during the Pahlavi era were very limited and dependent on the assembly of imported components. Aside from the assembly of some light weaponry or the repair of used equipment, there was no sign of independent technological development (Rastegar, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 173). This incapacity manifested itself when Western support for the industries was cut off, as during the Imposed War, Iran was practically unable to supply spare parts or repair equipment.

Based on the above, the sources of military deterrence of the Pahlavi government can be summarized in four main axes: the import of ineffective weaponry, the foreign management of the defense structure, heavy dependence on oil revenues, and the receipt of targeted aid from great powers. This model weakened defense independence and tied the deterrence of the Iranian government to exogenous and unstable factors. The historical experience of the Pahlavi era demonstrated that the theory of military dependence is incapable of achieving sustainable security; because with the severance of external ties, the defense structure quickly collapses and the country becomes vulnerable to threats.

3.4. Sources of Military Deterrence in the Islamic Republic

The Islamic Republic of Iran, unlike the Pahlavi system which had built its deterrence upon dependence on foreign powers, adopted an approach based on independence, self-reliance, and regional resistance. This approach is understood within the framework of "Resistance Deterrence Theory," which rests upon five main sources: defense self-sufficiency, specialized and popular human resources, advanced indigenous technologies, regional cooperation, and geopolitical position.

A) Self-Sufficiency in Defense Industries

One of the primary sources of deterrence for the Islamic Republic is reliance on domestic capability in the production of military equipment, particularly after the arms embargoes of the 1980s. Organizations such as the Ministry of Defense, the Aerospace Industries Organization, and the Army's Self-Sufficiency Jihad, by focusing on the production of missile systems, drones, radars, and air defense equipment, have provided an effective substitute for arms imports (Momeni, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 257). For example, the family of Shahab, Qadr, and Sejjil, Khorramshahr, and Fattah missiles is symbols of sustainable development in the missile field. These advancements, while consolidating hard deterrence, send a clear message to enemies regarding the costs of aggression (Siahpoosh, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 141).

B) Specialized and Popular Human Resources

Within the framework of resistance deterrence, the role of human resources is prominent both in the specialized dimension and at the level of public participation. Institutions such as the Basij of the Oppressed, which consist of various segments of the population with military

and cultural training, have provided a significant capacity for all-around defense (Kachouian, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 171). Furthermore, universities and scientific centers such as Imam Hossein University and Malek Ashtar University play an important role in training experts in the fields of aerospace, reverse engineering military electronics, and cyber. This human capital constitutes the backbone of the indigenization of defense technologies (Askari, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 83).

C) Advanced Military Technologies

The development of strategic technologies such as precision-guided missiles, radar-evading drones, and electronic warfare systems supports hard deterrence and also strengthens cognitive deterrence, such that before any military action, the enemy must consider the costs of Iran's response (Saeedi, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 211). The Shahed-136, Saegheh, and Mohajer-6 drones, as well as air defense systems such as Bavar-373 and 360-Tabass, are part of these indigenous technologies that have simultaneously enhanced offensive and defensive capabilities. The field of cyber warfare has also been considered by the defense institutions of the Islamic Republic as a new dimension of deterrent power.

D) Regional Alliances and Strategic Depth

Another source of resistance deterrence for the Islamic Republic is the expansion of "Strategic Depth" in the region. Unlike the classical deterrence model, which is based solely on a national army, the Islamic Republic, by establishing strong ties with resistance groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) in Iraq, Ansarallah in Yemen, and the Islamic Jihad in Palestine, has created a network of actors aligned with its defense objectives (Rahimpour, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 93). This network structure enables regional mobility, reciprocal pressure on enemies, and the prevention of conflict on national borders.

E) Exploitation of Strategic Geography

The Islamic Republic, by relying on its geopolitical position, particularly control over the Strait of Hormuz as the passageway for 30% of the world's oil, has been able to create an important lever in deterrence equations. The mountainous terrain, population dispersion, and the existence of vast plains have provided more favorable conditions for decentralized defense against potential attacks (Mohammadi, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 192). This geography plays a deterrent role not only in the military dimension but also in the enemy's political calculations. In general, the deterrence resources of the Islamic Republic, unlike the dependent resources of the Pahlavi era, are founded upon resistance, indigenization, and public participation. By producing the literature of resistance deterrence theory, the Islamic Republic has succeeded in liberating its resources from dependence on the system of domination and, by utilizing endogenous capacities and regional alliances, has created a sustainable and multi-layered structure to confront threats.

3.5. Tools of Military Deterrence in the Pahlavi Government

The second Pahlavi government organized its military deterrence tools based on deep dependence on the technology, training, and support of Western powers. Although these tools appeared modern, they reinforced Iran's vulnerability due to the lack of alignment with the country's real needs.

A) Imported Weaponry: Dependent Power Projection

Mohammad Reza Shah, by transforming the country into one of the largest arms importers¹ in the 1970s, sought to portray Iran as the preeminent regional power. Extensive purchases such as 80 F-14 Tomcat fighter jets from the United States, over 700 British Chieftain tanks, and Hawk air defense systems were indicative of this trend (cf. SIPRI, 1977). However, this equipment had three structural weaknesses: technical dependence, mismatch with actual threats, and political function. In fact, the maintenance of the purchased weapons required the presence of thousands of American advisors. The engines and parts of the F-14 were repaired only in the United States (cf. Katzman, 2008). The F-14 fighters were designed to intercept Soviet bombers, whereas Iran's main threat in the 1970s was border insurgencies and guerrilla operations (cf. Gasiorowski, 1991). Many arms contracts were also accompanied by political bribery to secure the support of Western powers; for example, the purchase of 160 F-16 fighters followed US support for OPEC's oil price increase in 1976 (cf. Sazegara, 2002).

B) Military Alliances: Integration into Western Strategy

Iran's accession to the CENTO pact and cooperation with NATO were tools for integrating Iran into the anti-communist front. This cooperation materialized through the establishment of electronic surveillance bases in Tabriz and Mashhad, and joint exercises with the US Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf (such as Exercise Midlink 1972) (cf. Hajiyousefi, 2004). This approach, however, rather than serving national security, turned Iran into an arena of the Cold War and a subordinate to Washington's interests.

C) Human Resources: Foreign-Oriented Training

Annually, over 1,500 Iranian officers were sent to Western military academies such as West Point and Sandhurst. This training was primarily based on NATO doctrine and did not address counterinsurgency or irregular warfare. On the other hand, this process created a cultural gap between the army and society and reinforced mental and operational dependence on foreign advisors (cf. Authoring Board, 2014 AD/1393 SH).

D) Security Cooperation with Israel: The Hidden Arm of Western Policy

Security relations between SAVAK and Mossad included the transfer of surveillance technologies, suppression of domestic dissidents, and participation in joint projects such as non-operational nuclear facilities. Furthermore, sending oil to Israel during the 1973 war placed Iran in opposition to public opinion in the Islamic world (cf. Gasiorowski, 1991).

E) Oil Economy: The Financial Engine of Military Dependence

85% of the military budget of the Pahlavi regime was directly provided from oil exports, and the majority of it was spent on foreign purchases (cf. Sazegara, 2002). Instead of investing in the production of indigenous weapons, Iran became a major consumer market for Western arms, such that in the mid-1970s, 40% of US military exports were destined for Iran (cf. SIPRI, 1977).

Therefore, despite enormous expenditures, such as \$50 billion between 1972 and 1977, the deterrence tools of the Pahlavi government, due to their dependent nature, lack of alignment with

1. Second in the world according to the SIPRI report

national realities, and disconnection from popular legitimacy, proved completely incapable in the face of the revolutionary pressures of 1978-1979. The Pahlavi experience demonstrated that deterrence is not achieved through reliance on arms imports and military alliances, but depends on domestic legitimacy, technological self-reliance, and a correct understanding of indigenous threats (cf. Ahmadian, 2020 AD/1399; Siahpoosh, 2017 AD/1396 SH; Mohammadi, 2018 AD/1397 SH).

3.6. Tools of Military Deterrence in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Inspired by the idea of independence and resistance, the Islamic Republic advances its military deterrence tools, unlike the dependent model of the Pahlavi era, through technological self-reliance, hybrid warfare, and regional networking. These tools are designed with the aim of increasing the cost of potential enemy aggression and creating sustainable deterrence. In the following, the most important of these tools are analyzed.

A) Ballistic Missiles: The Backbone of Strategic Deterrence

Iran's missile capability, as the most important tool of hard deterrence, is considered one of the prominent symbols of defense self-reliance. Diversity in range and precision has been developed from short-range missiles such as Zolfaghar with a range of 700 kilometers to medium-range missiles such as Khorramshahr-4 with a range of 2,000 kilometers (cf. Ministry of Defense, 2023 AD/1402 SH). Importantly, according to an official report from the Ministry of Defense, over 90% of the country's missile technology has been indigenized and foreign dependence has been minimized (ibid.). This policy has led to the missile attack on the US Ain al-Asad base in January 2020 and the twelve-day war serving as proof of Iran's operational capability and rapid response to threats (cf. Marandi, 2020 AD/1399 SH).

B) Attack Drones: A Revolution in Asymmetric Warfare

By developing unmanned aerial systems, Iran has created a low-cost advantage in the field of deterrence; indigenous design, including the Shahed-136 drone with a range of 2,500 kilometers which has been widely used in the resistance front (Sardar Fadavi, 2022 AD/1401 SH). The operational application of Iranian drones has played an effective role in attacks on terrorist positions in Syria, surveillance operations over the Strait of Hormuz, and the attack on the Aramco oil facilities (2019) (cf. Tabyin Strategic Institute, 2021 AD/1400 SH). On the other hand, drone exports to countries such as Venezuela, Ethiopia, and Russia have strengthened Iran's security and economic standing (cf. Siahpoosh, 2017 AD/1396 SH).

C) The Quds Force and the Axis of Resistance: Regional Strategic Depth

The cross-border arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), by organizing regional allies, has extended Iran's deterrence capability beyond its territorial level. According to Israeli sources, Hezbollah in Lebanon, possessing over 150,000 missiles, has become one of the serious obstacles to an attack on Iran (cf. Israeli Regime Security Studies Center, 2023). Furthermore, the Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) in Iraq, Ansarallah in Yemen, and Palestinian groups, in the form of a united front, have made the cost of any direct confrontation with Iran exponential (cf. Khoshchehreh, 2023 AD/1402 SH).

D) Cyber Warfare and Intelligence Operations: Battle in Invisible Space

Over the past decade, by developing cyber command infrastructures, Iran has established its effective presence in soft and digital warfare. Offensive operations and infiltration into the vital systems of the Zionist regime and US government departments in 2020 (cf. Parliament Research Center, 2022 AD/1401 SH), the exploitation of intelligence obtained from Israel, and the disruption of the Iron Dome system during the twelve-day war are considered part of Iran's cyber power. Additionally, cyber defense and psychological warfare, the broadcast of images of American prisoners, and intelligence operations against Western intelligence agencies are among the deterrent tools in non-physical space (cf. Siahpoosh, 2017 AD/1396 SH).

E) Independent Defense Industries: Sanctions as an Opportunity

Severe defense sanctions not only did not halt Iran's military progress but also served as a factor for technological leap in many fields. Indigenous production of weaponry, including the Kowsar fighter jet, the Karrar tank, and the Fateh submarine, indicates the growth of domestic defense industries (cf. Ministry of Defense, 2022 AD/1401 SH). Alongside these, air defense systems such as Bavar-373 and Khaybar, with the capability to counter high-altitude targets, are parts of the country's air deterrence power (ibid.). Furthermore, nuclear technology, although Iran has always emphasized the peaceful nature of its nuclear program, the resulting strategic ambiguity has played a psychological role in deterrence (cf. Mohammadi, 2018 AD/1397 SH).

Therefore, the deterrence tools of the Islamic Republic, unlike the imported and dependent tools of the Pahlavi government, are based on three fundamental pillars:

- Technological self-reliance in defense industries;
- Hybrid warfare and increasing the cost of enemy aggression;
- Strategic depth through regional networking.

These tools, despite international restrictions, have enabled the Islamic Republic to remain immune from direct attack by great powers for over four decades and to redefine regional security equations in its favor.

3.7. Domains of Military Deterrence in the Pahlavi Government

During the period of Mohammad Reza Shah, Iran's military deterrence structure was designed within the framework of Western, particularly US, grand strategy. This approach transformed Iran from an independent security actor into a subordinate agent in the geopolitical order of the Cold War. Therefore, the deterrence domain of the Pahlavi government can be analyzed at three levels, geographical, strategic, and operational, centered on the theory of military dependence.

A) Geographical Domain: Iran as an Anti-Communist Bulwark

Iran's geostrategic position during the Cold War made it a vital link in the strategy of containing the Soviet Union. Within the framework of the "Northern Tier" doctrine, the United States turned Iran into a base for monitoring and containing communist threats in the region. The establishment of electronic surveillance bases in Mashhad and Tabriz, the presence of American military advisors on the northern borders, and the equipping of Iran with radar systems such as Hawk were manifestations of this role (cf. Pye, 2005). Even Iran's military

presence on the three islands in 1971 was carried out with the green light of Britain and the United States, and rather than aiming to consolidate national sovereignty, it served to control the Strait of Hormuz to secure Western energy supplies (cf. Mesbah Yazdi, 2013 AD/1392 SH).

B) Strategic Domain: The Military Arm of the West in the Middle East

The Shah, as a strategic ally of the United States, transformed Iran's military power into a tool for realizing Western geopolitical interests. The major arms contracts that Iran concluded were not based on real defense needs, but within the framework of the interests of Western arms companies and the balance of power with the Soviet Union, positioning Iran as America's gendarme in the region (Siahpoosh, 2017 AD/1396 SH). Iran even played a role in extra-regional projects, from symbolic participation in the Vietnam War through the dispatch of medical personnel to covert support for Israel during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Membership in the CENTO pact was also not the result of regional necessities but part of the Southern NATO strategy to encircle the Soviet Union (Mohammadi, 2018 AD/1397 SH). Even Iran's nuclear program in the 1970s was defined in this same direction, that is, not for genuine deterrence, but as a symbolic project serving the Western-dependent deterrence doctrine (cf. Khoshchehreh, 2023 AD/1402 SH).

C) Operational Domain: Proxy Deterrence and Coalition Security

The operational role of Iran's military forces in the 1970s extended beyond the borders but remained within the framework of US interests. The dispatch of forces to suppress the Dhofar rebellion in Oman, intelligence cooperation with Mossad in monitoring Arab movements, and participation in joint military exercises with NATO were examples of Iran's gendarme role in the region (Marandi, 2020 AD/1399 SH). Major security decisions, such as how to confront Iraq in the 1970s, were also made under the influence of US strategies and in coordination with the policy of containing the Soviet Union. Studies indicate that the United States, by supporting Iran's military interventions in the Persian Gulf, sought to have Tehran play a proxy role in the West Asian security order (cf. Shafiei, 2021 AD/1400 SH).

Based on the above, Iran's deterrence during the Pahlavi era was a form of collapsed deterrence based on imported security. In fact, the deterrence domain of the Pahlavi regime, despite possessing advanced equipment and demonstrative military power, lacked strategic independence and domestic legitimacy. The focus on external threats and neglect of internal crises, including political and religious grievances, turned the army into an institution detached from society. Consequently, on the eve of the 1979 revolution, this deterrence structure collapsed due to intense dependence on foreign advisors and lack of reliance on popular support. The Shah's army, despite possessing the most advanced weaponry, could not resist the legitimacy crisis and defend the regime. In other words, the deterrence of the Pahlavi government was based not on the foundation of national authority, but on "Imported Security," a model that lost its function with the shift in US strategic priorities (cf. Siahpoosh, 2017 AD/1396 SH; Mohammadi, 2018 AD/1397 SH).

3.8. Domains of Military Deterrence in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran, relying on the idea of resistance and strategic independence,

has built its military deterrence domains on foundations different from those of the Pahlavi government. This system, emphasizing the "Resistance Deterrence Theory," has based its strategy not on dependence on foreign powers, but on self-reliance, domestic innovation, and the creation of a network of aligned forces in the region. The domains of military deterrence of the Islamic Republic can be analyzed in the following three main areas:

A) Geographical Domain: From the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean

The Islamic Republic of Iran, by utilizing its geopolitical position, has defined deterrence beyond its national borders and extended it to a regional sphere. Control over the Strait of Hormuz as the world's energy highway, combined with a strategic presence in countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq, and has turned Iran into a key actor in the security equations of the Middle East. Support for resistance groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) in Iraq, and Ansarallah in Yemen has created a reciprocal threat against rivals such as Israel and Saudi Arabia and formed a "Deterrence Ring" around Iran's borders. This strategy is designed with the aim of preventing the repetition of the Imposed War (Iraq against Iran) and creating strategic depth (cf. Mohammadi, 2018 AD/1397 SH).

B) Strategic Domain: Asymmetric Deterrence and Self-Reliance

Unlike the Pahlavi government, which considered deterrence contingent on the purchase of advanced Western weaponry, the Islamic Republic, by focusing on "Defense Innovation" and the development of asymmetric capabilities, pursues deterrence based on cost imposition on the enemy. The ballistic missile program with various ranges (from Shahid 110 to Khalij-e Fars), attack drones such as Shahed-136 (inspired by the Ukraine war), and advanced cyber forces are the main pillars of this strategy. Furthermore, the establishment of the Quds Force as the cross-border operational arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has made it possible to carry out deterrent operations anywhere in the region. This approach is based on the principle of "Reciprocal Threat": "Any attack on Iran will be met with non-linear and widespread responses across the Middle East." (cf. Siahpoosh, 2017 AD/1396 SH)

C) Operational Domain: Hybrid Warfare and Resistance Diplomacy

The Islamic Republic has combined military deterrence with political, economic, and ideological tools. A clear example of this strategy is "Missile Diplomacy"; by displaying its missile capabilities (such as the attack on the Ain al-Asad base in Iraq in 2020), Iran simultaneously sends clear political messages to its enemies. On the other hand, the creation of a network of allies in the region (the axis of resistance) and cooperation with powers such as Russia and China have given multi-layered dimensions to Iran's deterrence. Even during crises such as maximum sanctions, Iran has challenged the economic costs of sanctions through military maneuvers in the Persian Gulf (such as the Great Prophet exercises) and the detention of foreign tankers (cf. Khoshchehreh, 2023 AD/1402 SH).

Therefore, despite the success of the Islamic Republic's deterrence strategy in creating fear of extensive retaliation among its enemies, although it faces challenges such as technology sanctions, international pressures, and an arms race with Arab countries, the fundamental difference from

the Pahlavi era lies in the "Endogeneity" of this strategy. Iran's deterrence is based not on arms purchases, but on indigenous knowledge, committed human resources, and the ideology of resistance. Although this model carries political and economic costs, over the past four decades it has prevented the outbreak of an all-out war against Iran (cf. Marandi, 2020 AD/1399 SH).

3.9. Objectives of Military Deterrence in the Pahlavi Government

The Pahlavi government, particularly during the era of Mohammad Reza Shah, defined its military deterrence objectives within the framework of structural dependence on the West and maintaining Iran's position as a strategic ally of the United States in the Middle East. This objective, which was largely aligned with Washington's geopolitical priorities, was designed not on the basis of independent national interests, but in service of consolidating the royal regime and ensuring the security of global capitalism (cf. Saei, 2019 AD/1398 SH). In the following, the most important objectives of Pahlavi military deterrence are analyzed.

A) Preserving the Royal Regime as the West's Base in the Region

The most important objective of Pahlavi deterrence was the political survival of the government against internal and external threats. The Shah, by transforming Iran into the "Gendarme of the West," sought to secure unconditional US support. This strategy had two components:

- Internal suppression: Equipping SAVAK and military forces with advanced surveillance technologies (with the help of Mossad and the CIA) to counter leftist, religious, and nationalist groups (cf. Jafari, 2020 AD/1399 SH);
- Symbolic power projection: Purchasing F-14 fighters and Chieftain tanks not for operational use, but as a tool of legitimation for the government (cf. Sadeghi, 2020 AD/1399 SH).

B) Containing Soviet Influence and Communist Ideology

Iran's geographical position as a neighbor of the Soviet Union had made it the front line of the Cold War. The Pahlavi deterrence objectives in this area included: Creating a security barrier for the establishment of US electronic surveillance bases in northern Iran (Mashhad and Tabriz) to monitor Soviet activities (cf. Saei, 2019 AD/1398 SH); preventing the spread of leftist movements, through participation in suppressing leftist insurgencies in countries such as Oman (Dhofar) with financial and intelligence support from the CIA (cf. Jafari, 2020 AD/1399 SH); and cooperation with NATO through membership in the CENTO pact and hosting joint exercises with the US Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf (cf. Yaghmaei, 2018 AD/1397 SH).

C) Ensuring Western Energy Security and Controlling the Persian Gulf

Iran's oil, as a source of revenue for the Pahlavi regime and a tool for pressuring the West, played a central role in deterrence objectives; therefore, protecting oil routes and the presence of naval forces in the Strait of Hormuz and the purchase of advanced destroyers (such as Sam-class destroyers) to control the Persian Gulf (cf. Sadeghi, 2020 AD/1399 SH) on the one hand, and on the other hand, coordination with Saudi Arabia to form the "Sadabad Pact" as a tool for containing anti-monarchical movements in the Persian Gulf (cf. Hosseinzadeh, 2019 AD/1398 SH) were undertaken. Efforts were also made to support oil price increases and in exchange for

cooperation with OPEC during the 1973 oil shock, more weaponry was received from the United States (cf. Yaghmaei, 2018 AD/1397 SH).

D) Transforming Iran into a Consumer Market for Western Arms

The Shah, by transforming Iran into the second largest arms importer in the world (after Saudi Arabia in the 1970s), pursued two objectives:

- Financing Western arms companies, with 40% of US arms sales in the 1970s going to Iran (cf. Sadeghi, 2020 AD/1399 SH);
- Security dependence on the West, which resulted in Iran's military programs being designed by the Pentagon, such that even combat training of the armed forces was conducted under the supervision of American advisors (cf. Hosseinzadeh, 2019 AD/1398 SH).

E) Confronting Regional Rivals: Iraq and Nasser's Egypt

The Pahlavi government, in line with demonstrating regional superiority, pursued objectives such as dominance over the Persian Gulf, support for Israel, and an arms race with Iraq. To this end, the occupation of the three islands (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa) in 1971 took place with the covert support of Britain (cf. Jafari, 2020 AD/1399 SH); the sending of oil to Israel during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and security cooperation with Mossad to monitor Arab countries emerged (Yaghmaei, 2018); and the purchase of F-5 and F-4 Phantom fighters to confront Iraqi MiGs was carried out (cf. Saei, 2019 AD/1398 SH).

According to what has been presented, the Pahlavi deterrence objectives, despite short-term successes in containing external threats, became a factor for instability in the long term due to neglect of domestic legitimacy and absolute dependence on the West. The focus on military power projection and alignment with US interests created a deep gap between the government and the people. The 1979 revolution demonstrated that genuine deterrence lies not in purchasing F-14 fighters, but in converging with national aspirations and strategic independence. The rapid collapse of the Pahlavi army, which according to CIA analysts was "The most advanced army in the Middle East," is evidence of this reality that imported security never substitutes for popular legitimacy.

3.10. Objectives of Military Deterrence in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Relying on the idea of resistance, defense self-reliance, and strategic independence, the Islamic Republic has defined its military deterrence objectives beyond merely securing physical borders and has designed them in line with consolidating the anti-colonial discourse, creating a strategic balance in the Middle East, and becoming a decisive regional actor (Safarinejad, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 122). These objectives, in fundamental contrast to the dependent model of the Pahlavi era, are based on three main axes: technological self-reliance, regional strategic depth, and asymmetric cost imposition on the enemy, which are elaborated in five sections:

A) Consolidating the Discourse of Resistance as an Alternative to the System of Domination

The Islamic Republic utilizes deterrence as a theoretical and practical tool to challenge the Western security hegemony. This objective is pursued at three levels:

- Confronting sanctions through the development of indigenous defense industries, particularly supplying over 90% of light defense needs and a significant portion of missile capability, as a symbol of national self-reliance (Dashti et al., 2020 AD/1399 SH: 110);
- Inspiring liberation movements such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Ansarallah in Yemen, as examples of anti-Zionist popular deterrence (Shapouri, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 71);
- Utilizing missile diplomacy in response to direct threats, such as Operation Martyr Soleimani against the Ain al-Asad base in 2020, which carried a clear political-deterrent message to the United States (Naghdi, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 53).

B) Creating a Strategic Balance against the Zionist Regime and Regional Alliances

With the aim of reducing the military superiority of regional enemies, the Islamic Republic has pursued strategies such as: Asymmetric control of the Strait of Hormuz through threatening to close the energy highway using anti-ship missiles (such as Khalij-e Fars) and intelligent mining (Sadeghi, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 125); strategic encirclement of the Zionist regime by strengthening Hezbollah in Lebanon and supporting resistance groups in Gaza to create a reciprocal deterrent threat (Shapouri, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 75); and containing Western-dependent regimes by supporting popular groups in Yemen and strengthening the axis of resistance in Iraq and Syria (Ebrahimi, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 130).

C) Preventing Foreign Intervention and Ensuring Territorial Integrity

The experience of the Imposed War and continuous threats has led the Islamic Republic to pursue multi-layered objectives in territorial defense. This has resulted in cyber deterrence through the Islamic Republic's Cyber Command to counter attacks on critical infrastructure such as power plants and the banking network (Fotouhi, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 56); advanced air defense with indigenous systems such as Bavar-373 and Khaybar, capable of tracking stealth targets (cf. Farzin, 2021); and on the other hand, hybrid warfare at the borders by simultaneously utilizing popular mobilization forces (Basij) and drones such as Shahed-136 to intercept threats (Zamani, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 91).

D) Establishing Iran as a Strategic Actor in Regional Security Equations

The grand objective of the Islamic Republic is to exit the security periphery and consolidate its position as an influential power in regional equations. To this end, the Islamic Republic has sought to create a regional network with the axis of resistance, consisting of Iran, Hezbollah, Syria, the Popular Mobilization Forces, and Ansarallah, which plays a reciprocal role in balancing power (cf. Smyth, 2021). Furthermore, by establishing the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq or the resistance front in Syria, it has altered Western-oriented power equations and order in the region (Karimi, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 44).

E) Cost Imposition on the Enemy through Asymmetric Warfare

By utilizing the defense-in-depth model, the Islamic Republic has sought to dramatically increase the cost of any potential aggression for its enemies. The deployment of the resistance front in the region, such as Ansarallah's attack on the Aramco oil facilities in 2019, which

analysts have described as part of Iran's regional deterrence (cf. Watkins, 2020); the development of low-cost attack drones such as Ababil-3 and Shahed-136 with the capability to target naval vessels and high stealth (Ghasemi, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 71); and targeted psychological operations, including the release of images of the capture of soldiers who had threatened Iran's borders or the testing of long-range missiles to influence public opinion and enemy governments (Karimi, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 51), have led to the creation of fear among enemies.

Based on the points raised, the resistance deterrence model and the future challenges of the Islamic Republic's military deterrence, based on "Strategic Endogeneity" and "Popular Support," have succeeded in keeping Iran immune from an all-out war since the early 1980s to the present. While technology sanctions, international pressures, and arms races constitute serious threats, reliance on defense innovation, dependence on indigenous capacities, and regional networking have transformed this model into a stable example in the security geometry of West Asia (Rezaei, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 109).

Conclusion

A comparative study of military deterrence in the Pahlavi government and the Islamic Republic of Iran is not merely a technical or military comparison, but rather a paradigmatic analysis of two distinct conceptions of security, power, and political legitimacy. Whereas the Pahlavi system defined deterrence within the framework of dependence on the global power structure and the Western security order, the Islamic Republic, based on the discourse of resistance, has redefined deterrence on the foundations of self-reliance, revolutionary identity, and endogenous balancing. This fundamental difference can be articulated across four main axes.

1) Conceptual Divergence in the Foundations of Deterrence

The Pahlavi government pursued deterrence through membership in Western military alliances such as CENTO, the purchase of advanced equipment from the United States, and playing the role of regional gendarme. This strategy was designed merely for the survival of the royal regime; its consequence was the alienation of the security structure from the people and the collapse of the army at the first internal crisis. In contrast, the Islamic Republic has founded deterrence upon popular legitimacy, regional resistance networking, and the production of security from within society. The linkage between public mobilization, defense self-sufficiency, and support for regional movements has made security a reflection of social cohesion and identity discourse.

2) Distinction in the Resources and Tools of Deterrence

In the Pahlavi government, the resources of deterrence relied on oil rent and the injection of foreign aid. The tools included F-14 fighters, American naval vessels, and complete dependence on Western military advisors. However, in the Islamic Republic, the resources of deterrence stem from a resistance economy, indigenous innovation, and the intelligent utilization of domestic capacities. Tools such as precision-guided missiles, Shahed-136 tactical drones, Bavar-373 air defense systems, and hybrid warfare units have shaped the image of a multi-layered and independent deterrence.

3) Differences in the Domain and Strategic Objectives

The Pahlavi regime defined its deterrence domain merely within national borders with an emphasis on the north and the Persian Gulf, pursuing objectives such as controlling internal uprisings or maintaining balance with the Soviet Union. In contrast, the Islamic Republic, by utilizing strategic depth in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, has defined deterrence at the regional level. This strategy includes containing Israel, defending the axis of resistance, and increasing the cost of conflict for the enemy through proxy operations and asymmetric warfare.

4) Strategic Consequences of the Two Models: The Failure of Dependence and the Success of Resistance

Despite billions of dollars in expenditures, the dependent Pahlavi model, due to its lack of domestic legitimacy and lack of linkage with society, collapsed entirely in the face of the Islamic Revolution. Imported security did not prevent threats, and with the first political crisis, the army disintegrated. However, in the Islamic Republic, despite severe sanctions, diplomatic pressures, and military threats, the resistance deterrence strategy has succeeded in consolidating the Islamic Republic's position as a decisive power in the regional security order by utilizing proxy warfare and, in the event of attack, missile responses and aggressive diplomacy.

Ultimately, military deterrence in the two governments of the Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic represents the contradiction between two attitudes toward security and national identity: one secular, inclined toward the system of domination, and dependent on foreign powers; the other relying on strategic self-reliance, indigenous ideology, and a resistance network. Although the Islamic Republic's model faces challenges such as technology sanctions and international pressures, it has succeeded in transforming threats into opportunities, particularly in the field of defense technologies and drones, presenting an indigenous model of active and multi-dimensional deterrence. This model is a viable example for Global South countries in confronting international hegemony and demonstrates that sustainable security is achieved not through arms imports, but through popular legitimacy, intelligent resistance, and active agency in the regional environment.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Military Deterrence in the Pahlavi Government and the Islamic Republic of Iran

Components	Pahlavi Government (Dependent Military Model)	Islamic Republic of Iran (Resistance Deterrence Model)
Theoretical and Identity Foundations	Based on dependence on the West and the definition of security within the framework of Western bloc interests; military identity subordinate to US and British foreign policy.	Based on self-reliance, strategic independence, and ontological security relying on religious and popular identity; security as an indigenous and civilizational value.
Resources and Capacities	Reliance on oil revenues and the import of expensive weaponry; lack of technology transfer and dependence on foreign advisors.	Reliance on domestic capacities, knowledge-based defense development, technological sanction-evasion, and the development of indigenous missile and drone industries.
Tools and Methods	Purely military tools; a conventional army dependent on NATO and the US; lack of indigenous capability to produce or repair equipment.	Combination of hard and soft power; utilization of asymmetric technologies, popular mobilization, and the regional resistance network.

Components	Pahlavi Government (Dependent Military Model)	Islamic Republic of Iran (Resistance Deterrence Model)
Domain and Scope of Influence	Limited to national borders and subordinate to Western considerations; unstable in the face of regional threats.	Regional and extra-regional; influential in West Asian equations from Lebanon to Yemen; expansion of the axis of resistance as multi-layered deterrence.
Strategic Objectives	Preserving the regime through foreign support and playing the role of regional gendarme; serving the interests of central powers.	Ensuring sustainable national security, protecting the country's independence, supporting the resistance front, and creating active deterrence against the US and the Zionist regime.
Field Examples	Presence of US military advisors, purchase of F-14s, and uninformed support for US proxy wars in Vietnam.	Sacred Defense (1980–1988), missile attack on Ain al-Asad (2020), twelve-day war with the Zionist regime (2025), and active deterrence against the Al-Udeid base in Qatar (2025).
Final Outcome	Dependent and fragile deterrence; rapid collapse in the face of crises.	Hybrid and sustainable deterrence; transforming threat into opportunity and consolidating Iran's position as a stable regional power.

Research Limitations

Despite efforts to adhere to the highest scientific and methodological standards, the present study has encountered certain limitations, attention to which is essential for a more accurate evaluation of the findings as well as for planning future research:

1. Limited access to classified documents: A significant portion of information regarding arms contracts from the Pahlavi era, as well as technical details of the Islamic Republic's defense capabilities, remain classified due to security considerations and were not accessible to the researcher. This issue has created limitations, particularly in the precise analysis of defense budgets and the quantitative assessment of arms self-sufficiency.
2. Scattered sources and lack of integrated statistical data: Data pertaining to the Pahlavi era are presented in various sources with sometimes contradictory statistics. Furthermore, during the Islamic Republic period, some defense statistics are not publicly released. This has rendered precise quantitative comparison between the two periods difficult.
3. Temporal limitations: The evolution of the Islamic Republic's deterrence, particularly in recent years (including developments since October 7, 2023), is still ongoing, and some of the assessments presented may be subject to change with future developments.
4. Linguistic limitations regarding foreign sources: A portion of archival documents related to Iran-US military cooperation during the Pahlavi era, held in American archives such as NARA, have not been fully utilized due to limited online access or the need for formal requests.
5. Limited access to elites and experts: Due to security considerations as well as geographical dispersion, in-depth interviews with a larger number of former and current commanders and officials in the defense sector were not possible.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Based on the findings of this research as well as the identified limitations and gaps, the following suggestions are offered for future research:

Thematic Suggestions

1. Comparative studies in other areas of deterrence: The present study focused primarily on military deterrence. It is suggested that similar studies be conducted in the areas of political, economic, cultural, and media deterrence during the two periods of the Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic in order to draw a more complete picture of the evolution of national deterrence.
2. Comparative study of Iran's deterrence with similar countries: Conducting comparative studies between the deterrence model of the Islamic Republic and countries such as North Korea (in terms of defense self-reliance) or Turkey (in terms of geopolitical position) could help identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Iranian model.
3. The role of culture and ideology in deterrence: Given the reference in this research to the role of cultural transformations in the transition from "Imported Security" to "Popular Security," it is suggested that independent research be conducted focusing on the cultural and ideological components of deterrence in the Islamic Republic.
4. Resistance economy and deterrence: A deeper investigation into the relationship between the resistance economy and the increase in defense resilience against sanctions is a topic that could be pursued in the form of an independent study.
5. Quantitative cost-benefit analysis of deterrence: Conducting quantitative research to more precisely calculate the costs of deterrence in the two periods and compare the cost-effectiveness ratio could complement the findings of this study.

Methodological Suggestions

1. Deeper archival studies: It is suggested that future researchers, in cooperation with national and international documentation centers, gain access to more archival documents, particularly Pentagon and US State Department documents from the Pahlavi era, and provide a more precise analysis of the arms contracts of that period.
2. Field studies and elite interviews: Conducting in-depth interviews with commanders of the Sacred Defense, former officials of the Ministry of Defense, and military advisors could contribute to a better understanding of the transition process toward defense self-reliance.
3. Content analysis of leaders' discourses: It is suggested that, using critical discourse analysis, the speeches and statements of the leaders of the two periods concerning security and deterrence be analyzed and compared.

Applied Suggestions

1. Pathology of the dependent model: A deeper examination of the security vulnerabilities of the Pahlavi era and extracting lessons to prevent the recurrence of the dependence model in other areas.

2. Presenting an indigenous model of deterrence: It is suggested that, based on the findings of this research and complementary studies, a comprehensive indigenous model for deterrence in the Islamic Republic be designed and presented that encompasses the various military, political, economic, and cultural dimensions.
3. Futuristic study of deterrence: Conducting future-oriented research to outline the perspective of Iran's deterrence by the horizon of 2041 (1442 Persian calendar), considering technological developments (artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, hypersonic technologies) and geopolitical changes in the region.

Conclusion

The present study sought to analyze, with a comparative approach, the transition of Iran's deterrence model from dependence to self-reliance. It is expected that the above-mentioned suggested research, while complementing the findings of this study, will pave the way for the formulation of an indigenous theory of deterrence in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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The Role of Intercultural Religious Interactions in the Formation of the New Islamic Civilization, with an Emphasis on the Second Phase of the Revolution Statement

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Ayatollah Khamenei.

ABSTRACT

Objective: In today's world, scholars pay significant attention to the importance of intercultural interactions among religions. The improper interactions of some followers of various religions have further highlighted the necessity of work in this area. Among the influential and legitimate phenomena in such interactions are religion and its teachings. The central question of this study is: 'What role do intercultural interactions among religions play in attaining correct belief and establishing a divine and human civilization based upon it?' Regarding intercultural interactions among religions, various views have been offered, which generally fall into three categories: "Extreme, negligent, and the balanced and correct approach."

Method: Using a descriptive analytical and critical method, this research seeks to examine the role of intercultural religious interactions in preparing the ground for guiding humanity toward the true religion and establishing the New Islamic Civilization. In doing so, it draws upon the thought and guidance of Ayatollah Khamenei, especially as articulated in the Second Phase of the Revolution statement.

Findings: Accordingly, the findings of the study show that focusing on religion and its ethical and human teachings, as well as the criteria of religious truth mentioned in the Second Phase document, such as being revolutionary and anti oppression, can accelerate and strengthen intercultural interactions and interfaith dialogue. This, in turn, can pave the way for people's inclination toward the true religion and the establishment of the global just government of the Promised Mahdi (AJ).

Conclusion: Therefore, one must adopt a reading of religion that proposes a balanced and correct path in interacting with other religions and sects, and avoid deviant readings, whether extreme or negligent.

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Problem Statement

Today, scholars around the world acknowledge and emphasize the role and importance of interactions among followers of religions and sects, particularly intercultural interactions. Moreover, the incorrect and improper interactions of some followers of religions and sects, such as Takfiri Wahhabi groups with Muslims and non-Muslims, have intensified the need for cultural interactions. Among the influential and acceptable phenomena in such interactions are religion and its teachings; therefore, intercultural interactions and interfaith dialogue must pay greater attention to the element of religion and its human and ethical teachings.

Ordinarily, works related to interfaith dialogue have mostly had an intra-religious orientation, often aimed at affirming a particular religion, though discussions on interfaith dialogue have also become prominent alongside this. In this study, we too adopt an intra-religious methodological approach, but from a different angle, namely, examining the role of interfaith dialogue in creating a positive atmosphere and convergence among followers, facilitating better presentation of beliefs, attaining true belief, and forming a divine and human civilization based upon it, with emphasis on the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution Statement. Considering that the Second Phase is the continuation and completion of the First Phase, addressing the first Phase of the Revolution is also necessary. It is worth noting that the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which occurred in the name of religion, introduced its primary aim as paving the way for the establishment of Islamic civilization, an aim that multiplies the responsibility of Muslim scholars in presenting the discourse of "Engineering Islamic Civilization." (Erfan, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 178)

The main research question of the present study is:

- What role do intercultural religious interactions play in better understanding religions, attaining true belief, and forming a divine and human civilization based upon it?
- What is the role of intercultural interactions among religions in the creation of the New Islamic Civilization, based on the Second Phase of the Revolution Statement?

Therefore, this study, using a descriptive-analytical and critical perspective, seeks to explore the role of intercultural religious interactions in preparing the ground for guiding humanity toward the true religion and providing a model for Islamic societies in order to establish the New Islamic Civilization. In this regard, it draws upon the thought and guidance of Ayatollah Khamenei, particularly the Second Phase Statement.

The importance and necessity of this research may be summarized as follows:

- The results of this study may serve as a model for various systems and contribute to understanding the position and performance of religions and sects in communication.
- The research can emphasize expanding the interactions established for presenting pure and authentic Muhammadan Islam.
- Using Islamic teachings, one can pave the way for moderation in interreligious interactions and use it to address the problems of contemporary humanity and elevate its intellectual and spiritual dimensions.
- This study can serve as a preliminary Phase toward attaining true belief and establishing a

divine and human civilization based on it, with emphasis on the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei, especially the Second Phase Statement.

1. Research Background

Regarding the research background, although discussion about "Intercultural interactions among religions and sects" is common worldwide and has received attention from scholars with various perspectives, it has **not** yet been studied from a civilizational angle, particularly regarding the formation of a divine civilization, drawing on the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei and especially the Second Phase Statement. It has also not been academically pursued in this specific context. Consequently, not only is there no independent work in this area, but no research has been found that reflects or examines the ideas and views of leading Muslim thinkers and prominent figures of the Islamic world, particularly Ayatollah Khamenei, on this matter. As an example, the following works may be mentioned:

1) Interfaith Dialogue: Global Perspectives

This book examines the views of Raimon Panikkar and Ken Wilber concerning interfaith dialogue. It also includes discussions about the documented history of interreligious dialogue, such as the declaration on the relation of the church to non-Christian religions (Nostra Aetate), as well as documents concerning the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Additionally, it addresses various methodologies, including the methodology of Christian interreligious dialogue and comparative theology.

2) A Theological Approach to Interfaith Dialogue (Principles, Boundaries, Goals, and Methods)

Master's Thesis, 2017 AD/1396 SH, written by Sedigheh Hamidi, Supervisor: Saeed Arjmandfar, al-Mustafa International University, Bint al-Huda Higher Education Institute.

In this research, discussions related to interfaith dialogue are first presented in two sections: doctrinal principles and anthropology. Then, the origins of interfaith dialogue in the Islamic world and the West are examined, followed by a review of the historical process of such dialogues in recent centuries. The study also includes a pathology analysis of the governing principles, results, and methods of these dialogues, based on which the theological boundaries of interfaith dialogue are elaborated.

3) Religious Diversity and Interfaith Dialogue

(Authors: Ulrich Winkler and Hans-Georg Ziebertz, Germany)

This article, published by Springer, examines the role of interfaith dialogue in promoting peace and harmony within diverse societies. It emphasizes the importance of gender-sensitive dialogue and highlights the role of women in inter-religious and intra-religious interactions.

4) Intercultural Communication and Interfaith Dialogue: A Case Study of "Three Institutions in England"

This article by Hassan Bashir and Mohammad Hossein Shoa'i seeks to identify the modes

of interaction and key discursive foundations of interfaith dialogue in England, with an emphasis on intercultural communication.

5) Interfaith Dialogue: Objectives and Theoretical Foundations (An Interview with Professor Vincent Brümmer, Contemporary Philosopher of Religion)

(Interview by Sayyid Amir Akrami, translated by Saeed Edalatnejad)

Ishraq: Journal of Philosophy and Mysticism, Year 1, Issues 2–3, Spring–Summer 2005.

This article discusses the goals of interfaith dialogue, examines aspects of inclusivism and pluralism, and explores the impact of new developments in hermeneutics on fundamental interfaith dialogue.

6) Interfaith Dialogue

(Author: Sallie B. King, USA)

This article is part of *The "Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity."* It provides an overview of interfaith dialogue and its various forms, including theological and spiritual dialogue. It also discusses the importance of interfaith engagement in promoting peace and understanding among diverse religious communities.

As evident, the above works address interfaith dialogue in general or from particular perspectives, such as pathology, principles, results, methodologies, and the role of women, and do not engage with the concerns or objectives of this research. The novelty of the present article lies in its focus on intercultural interactions among religions and sects from a civilizational perspective, specifically the formation of a new global divine civilization, with emphasis on the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei, particularly the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution Statement.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1. Intercultural Interactions

Barnouw, a contemporary scholar, defines intercultural interactions through the concepts of "Cultural Boundaries" and an "Internal Approach." He argues that the process of interaction takes place across cultural boundaries and that the best way to understand it is to view it from the perspective of the individuals involved (Barnouw, 1989: 330).

Samovar, author of "Communication between Cultures," emphasizes race and ethnicity in his definition, asserting that intercultural interaction occurs between individuals whose cultural perceptions and symbolic systems are sufficiently distinct. This intercultural interaction changes when the sender and receiver of a message belong to different racial or ethnic groups, and these changes can influence events (Samovar, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 103).

Accordingly, intercultural interaction can be defined as: "Respectful and balanced engagement between two individuals or groups belonging to two different cultures, aimed at familiarizing themselves with and benefiting from the positive aspects of each other's culture."

In such interactions, various factors, including religion, race, ethnicity, and plays influential roles.

2.2. Religions

The term "Religions" is the plural of "Religion." In lexicography, "Religion" carries multiple

meanings, including law, customs and traditions, habits, judgment, and ruling (Dehkhoda, 1998 AD/1377 SH: Entry "Din"). In the Qur'an, the word "Religion" is used with several meanings, such as Islam, monotheism, worship of God, way or method, submission, reward and recompense, law, obedience, servitude, accountability, and order (Qarashi, 1975 AD/1354 SH: 2, 380-381; Turayhi, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 76-77; Raghīb Isfahani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 175).

From the collection of definitions proposed by Islamic thinkers regarding religion, a comprehensive definition may be formulated as follows:

"Religion is a set of theoretical and doctrinal teachings, practical rulings and laws, and ethical instructions which, taking into account human reason and innate disposition, and addressing both individual and social dimensions, have been sent by the One God through prophets for the guidance of human society in both its material and spiritual aspects. If adhered to, it guarantees human happiness and salvation in this world and the Hereafter." (Tabataba'i, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 2-3; Mesbah Yazdi, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 1, 28)

3.A Brief Note on Interfaith Dialogue

Regarding interactions and dialogue among religions, two general perspectives can be identified:

1. The cognitive (theoretical) perspective: This view refers to the awareness and knowledge obtained as a result of the exchange of ideas between two or more individuals.
2. The communicative (practical) perspective: According to this view, interaction and dialogue constitute an opportunity through which individuals can establish communication with one another (Neyestani, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 14).

It appears that these two perspectives significantly influence the way interfaith dialogue is defined. From the first perspective, dialogue is considered a method of understanding and being understood, with understanding itself as the primary objective. Thus, "Cognitive Dialogue" may be regarded as a means of transmitting ideas. From the second perspective, however, the act of dialogue itself is considered intrinsically important. Consequently, in "Communicative Dialogue," the focus is on dialogue as a channel of communication in itself, rather than on outcomes such as discovering truth or even achieving mutual understanding.

Interfaith dialogue may also be categorized in various ways. Some scholars classify types of dialogue based on their objectives, including:

- Dialogue aimed at acquiring new information;
- Dialogue intended to criticize the other party;
- Emphatic dialogue (Sana, 2013: 41).

The Second Vatican Council, categorizing dialogue based on its audience, proposed three types of dialogue corresponding to three groups of people:

- All human beings (often including the non-religious);
- Religious individuals who are non-Christians;
- Religious individuals who are non-Catholics (Razi, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 51).

From the perspective of content, three forms of dialogue may also be envisaged:

1. Dialogue within the framework of human relations;
2. Dialogue aimed at discovering truth;

3. Dialogue for practical rapprochement despite ideological differences.

Accordingly, "Dialogue" can be classified based on its fundamental elements, namely the participants, content, and objective, as follows:

Types of Interfaith Dialogue

Religions Dialogue based on	Types
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-religious individuals - Followers of other religions - Followers of other denominations within a religion
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human relations - Seeking truth - Practical rapprochement
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquiring new knowledge - Criticism - Enjoyment or emotional engagement

An important point is that the cultural environment of the followers of any religion can play a highly significant and influential role in determining the type and quality of interfaith dialogue and in achieving the objectives of such interactions.

4. Historical Background of the Discussion

The history of interaction and dialogue among followers of religions is as long as the history of humanity itself.¹ Religious debates have long existed with the aims of mutual understanding, discovering the truth, or achieving doctrinal victory. For instance, in examining the history of intercultural interactions between major religions such as Christianity and Judaism, it can be observed that each considered itself to be in possession of the truth while regarding the other as mistaken (Shalabi, 1988: 1, 27).

The Holy Qur'an describes the relationship between Judaism and Christianity as follows: "And the Jews say, "The Christians have no basis," and the Christians say, "The Jews have no basis." (al-Baqarah: 113)

The emergence of Islam as a universal religion and its expansion across the world transformed the confrontation among religions into interaction and truth-oriented dialogue. Islam has opened the path to dialogue with other religions in order to attain truth and promote correct belief, considering it a noble method for the free expression of religious convictions (Shalabi, 1988: 1, 27). In this regard, Islam places strong emphasis on interaction and dialogue among religions. In verses 17 and 18 of Surah *al-Zumar*, the Holy Qur'an describes listening

1. The first dialogue took place between Abel and Cain regarding the acceptance or non-acceptance of their offerings. (See verses 27 to 30 of Surah *al-Mā'idah*.)

to all statements, including those of supporters and opponents of Islam, and engaging in dialogue as a sound approach for attaining truth. According to these verses, interaction and dialogue among religions, sects, and various intellectual schools, and selecting the best among them, are emphasized by religion and are among the qualities of God's guided and rational servants.

Based on Qur'anic verses (al-Baqarah: 30-32), the first being to initiate interaction and dialogue was the Almighty God Himself. He spoke with the angels about the creation of Adam, and they expressed their opinion. God, to demonstrate the validity of His statement, presented Adam to them so that his capabilities would become evident, thereby making the angels aware of their error regarding his creation. Likewise, God also conversed with the disobedient Iblis (al-A'rāf: 12-18). Throughout history, prophets communicated with their communities, other people, and even their opponents in order to guide humanity. Prophet Noah preached the true religion to his people for nine hundred and fifty years, speaking extensively (al-'Ankabūt: 14), and strove to such an extent that they eventually said to him: "O! Noah, you have argued with us, and you have prolonged your argument with us." (Hūd: 32) Prophet Abraham, in addition to speaking with his own people, conversed with God Almighty regarding the lifting of punishment from the people of Lot (Hūd 11:74). Other prophets, such as *Hūd*, *Ṣāliḥ*, Lot, Moses, and Jesus, peace be upon them, also engaged in dialogue and discussion with their communities, as mentioned in the Qur'an.

The Messenger of God (PBUH) and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) likewise engaged in dialogue and debate with their supporters and opponents. Some of these exchanges were compiled by *Ṭabrisī* in his valuable work *al-Ihtijāj*. At the beginning of this book, he discusses the concept of "Argumentation," its types, and provides examples of the Prophet's (PBUH) eloquent debates with disbelievers, followed by the arguments of the impeccable Imams (AS) with others.

In the contemporary era, various scholars and thinkers in the Islamic world have worked in this field. Among the most prominent is Ayatollah Khamenei, who approaches the discussion of interreligious and inter-sectarian interaction from a civilizational perspective. Based on this view, he presents the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution as preparation for the global revolution of the Promised Mahdi (AJ) and the establishment of the New Global Islamic Civilization.

An important point is that dialogue and interaction, whether for peaceful coexistence or for intellectual elevation, are affirmed by Islamic and religious texts. However, such interaction is, in reality, a prelude to attaining the true religion and forming the New Islamic Civilization and the global Mahdavi government (AJ), which has been the goal of all prophets and divine friends, peace be upon them all.

4. Theories of Intercultural Interactions

Given the importance of interaction among followers of different religions and sects for the growth and advancement of human societies, the elevation of the true religion, and the establishment of the New Islamic Civilization, it appears necessary, toward understanding proper interaction, to briefly discuss theories of intercultural interaction, types of interaction,

the views concerning intercultural interaction among religions, and the correct perspective.

Gudykunst, one of the leading scholars in the field of intercultural interaction, classifies theories of intercultural interactions into seven categories in the introduction to his book (Gudykunst, 2002). In accordance with the subject of this research, two of these theories, "Acculturation to a new culture" and "Communication Accommodation," have been used.

5.2. Adopting to a New Culture

Intercultural adopting occurs when individuals find themselves in unfamiliar cultural and social conditions and intend to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment. At its core, intercultural acculturation involves creating harmony between one's internal conditions and the new external environment (Gudykunst, 2002: 388).

5.2. Communication Accommodation Theory

This theory was developed in the 1960s by Howard Giles, a professor of communication at the University of California, along with his colleagues working in the field of cultural communication (Gudykunst, 2002: 121–294).

Communication accommodation explains the methods individuals use to influence one another and describes how individuals choose strategies of "Convergence," "Divergence," and "Maintenance" to express their attitudes toward the other party.

1) Convergence

Convergence occurs within a communicative situation, namely when the communicator adjusts their expressive or behavioral patterns to create similarity with the other person (the interlocutor). According to communication accommodation theory, in certain communicative circumstances, individuals may exhibit convergence in their behavior or speech to show approval of the other party or to enhance the level of communication. The greater the communicator's convergence with the other party, the more positively and attractively they are perceived by their interlocutor.

2) Divergence

Divergence occurs when a communicator feels the need to emphasize a distinct and differentiated communicative style in relation to the other party. The strategy of divergence is typically adopted to highlight differences between the two sides of a communicative exchange. Individuals resort to this tactic to express disapproval of, or reproach toward, the other party. In other words, in certain communicative situations, individuals may wish to display or assert their differences.

3) Maintenance

Communication Accommodation Theory also notes that in a communicative situation, it is possible for communicators not to change their communicative style or mode of action (speech or behavior). In most communicative contexts, large portions of one's communicative style

remain unchanged. Therefore, maintenance occurs when a communicator does not alter their specific communicative actions or behaviors.

5. Major Views on Intercultural Interactions among Religions

Regarding the approaches to intercultural interactions among religions and sects, three general categories of views may be identified: the extremist view, the lax (or overly permissive) view, and the moderate view.

6.1. The Extremist View

This view pertains to radical groups such as Takfiri Wahhabism, which reject any form of interaction or dialogue with other religions and sects. Wahhabism, especially its more advanced manifestations such as jihadi-takfiri groups and ISIS, considers all Islamic sects other than itself to be infidels, and in their view, the ruling concerning an infidel is killing, leaving no room for discussion. Even in certain matters such as seeking intercession or visiting the graves of divine saints, dialogue is acceptable only if the other party acknowledges that such acts are "Polytheistic" and repents; otherwise, they must be killed on the spot.

In other words, these groups are exclusivists who deem only one religion or sect to be true and a source of salvation, while viewing the followers of all other religions and sects as doomed and as having lives, property, and honor that are licit to violate, even if some of their doctrines, laws, or rituals are in harmony with the true religion (Rabbani Golpayegani, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 73). In Christianity as well, extremists or "Exclusivists" consider Christianity to be the only true religion and the followers of other religions to be destined for destruction in the Hereafter. In the Islamic world, Takfiri Wahhabism places no value whatsoever on intercultural interactions among religions and sects. Their violent behavior toward followers of other religions and Islamic sects, and at times serving as tools of global arrogance has created numerous problems for humanity, especially for the Islamic world. For this reason, it is necessary to confront such an empty and irrational ideology, which contradicts both reason and religion, through scholarly and doctrinal means.

6.2. The Lax (Overly Permissive) View

This view belongs to those who claim that religious interaction must involve tolerance in thought, meaning the abandonment of some of one's beliefs and acceptance of the opposing side's beliefs when necessary. Of course, tolerance and "Religious Forbearance," understood as leniency and patience toward the beliefs and behaviors of the other side (Fathali, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 9), and practical forbearance, meaning good neighborliness, mutual understanding, and communal coexistence, are acceptable. However, defining tolerance and forbearance as the acceptance of opposing beliefs (Kadivar, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 4) is incorrect and represents an overly permissive view.

According to this definition, one could, for the sake of interaction and unity with other religions and sects, overlook certain religious beliefs or, at the very least, refrain from committing to them in practice. However, it appears that neither interreligious interaction nor rapprochement requires abandoning one's own beliefs to find common ground. Rather,

intercultural interactions among religions, as well as debate and dialogue, must aim at creating a suitable environment for attaining the true belief and choosing the straight path. In this process, all doctrines and schools of thought may be subject to critique and examination.

6.3. The Moderate View

According to this view, although the true religion is one, followers of other religions may still attain salvation (Rabbani Golpayegani, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 74). Moreover, interacting with and bringing religions and sects closer together does not require abandoning one's own religious beliefs in order to find common ground.

Karl Rahner (1904–1984), one of the most prominent Catholic theologians and religious scholars of the twentieth century, is among the proponents of this idea. He argues that by emphasizing similarities and commonalities among religions, existing differences can be reduced. According to him, Christianity is the best and only salvific religion; however, all individuals who lived before or after Christianity and did not accept it due to lack of awareness of Christ's teachings will still benefit from God's infinite mercy. He refers to them as "Anonymous Christians." (ibid: 74-75)

In Islamic teachings as well, a distinction is made between truth and salvation. The Holy Qur'an refers to such individuals as "Intellectually Oppressed," for whom the social and personal conditions necessary for discovering the true belief were not available (al-Nisā': 98). It is through interaction and dialogue that such conditions must be provided for them.

A review of the history of the Islamic Revolution of Iran shows that the Revolution today is based on this idea, and the views of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, are also rooted in this perspective. These views will be examined in the following sections.

A key point is that intercultural interactions among religions and sects encompass theoretical discussions, dialogue and debate, and the practical mode of engagement with the followers of other religions and sects, which plays a significant role in attracting them to the true religion and creating opportunities for discussion and exchange.

6. Ayatollah Khamenei and the Interaction of Religions and Sects

Ayatollah Khamenei, in numerous statements, has emphasized interaction and cooperation between the two civilizational domains of Christian Western civilization and Islam, considering this approach the opposite of confrontation and conflict. He maintains that there are numerous capacities for interaction and cooperation between these two civilizational spheres that could lead to a correct and unbiased understanding of Islam. For example, in his letter of Bahman 1393 (February 2015) addressed to the youth of Europe and North America, he writes:

"Do not miss this opportunity for a correct understanding and an unprejudiced perception of Islam, so that perhaps, thanks to your sense of responsibility toward the truth, future generations may record this period of Western interaction with Islam with less bitterness and a clearer conscience." (Saeedi, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 1-4)

In this letter, Ayatollah Khamenei laments the obstacles to interaction and cooperation between the two civilizational domains of religions in the Islamic world and the West, including Islamophobia and the extensive negative portrayal of Islam. He urges them to obtain a direct

and firsthand understanding of Islam, an understanding based on reference to the original and primary sources of Islam, such as the Qur'an and the life of its noble Prophet (PBUH). One of the ways to understand Islam and resolve differences and conflicts, leading to positive interaction and cooperation, is interreligious dialogue, grounded in their shared divine origin.

An important point is that "Pure Islam, while emphasizing its own truth and showing respect for other religions and belief in the divine prophets, is the standard-bearer of global dialogue based on human nature, rationality, and mutual respect. According to this perspective, relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are founded upon peace, coexistence, and good conduct. Thus, war is an exceptional matter, and as long as nothing instigates war, peace prevails" (Moradi, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 269) as God states in verse 61 of Surah *al-Anfāl*: "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [as well], and rely upon Allah; surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing."

Ayatollah Khamenei, "While criticizing the spirituality-averse and destructive Western culture, does not deny the importance and value of cultural ties; rather, he emphasizes them. In reality, Islam adopts an approach based on dialogue and interaction in relation to other religions and cultures. Alongside stressing human unity and the concept of one human community, it also respects racial and religious differences. Especially in the era of globalization, the cultural capacities of Islam and its support for cultural ties among religions and cultures can serve as a distinct hallmark of Islamic thought in contrast to Western aggressive and homogenizing ideologies. Furthermore, with human convergence, unity, and the governance of the faithful and the Islamic community, ultimately the global Islamic society, and in other words, the New Islamic Civilization under the leadership of the impeccable Imam (AS), will come into being. Therefore, by emphasizing the necessity of dialogue and interaction based on the common foundations of divine religions and human nature, the severity of confrontation among nations must be reduced, and the grounds for human elevation and a pure and wholesome life should be prepared." (Moradi, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 213-216)

Ayatollah Khamenei also considers "Interaction and cultural exchange" essential, placing it directly opposite "Cultural invasion." Advising cultural exchange and the necessity of benefiting from the positive aspects of other cultures, he states:

"In cultural exchange, the goal is to enrich and perfect the national culture; but in cultural invasion, the goal is to uproot and destroy the national culture. In cultural exchange, a nation that takes something from other nations chooses what is pleasant, appealing, good, and desirable."¹

From his perspective, cultural exchange is necessary, and no nation is exempt from it. However, "Cultural invasion is different from cultural exchange; it is different from adopting the superior and refined elements of other cultures. Cultural exchange is permissible, indeed obligatory. Islam commands us, and reason independently demands from us, that whatever is good, beautiful, and valuable, wherever we find it, we must learn it and benefit from it."²

Therefore, "considering Islam's global approach, which emphasizes human unity and

1. Statements of Ayatollah Khamenei in a meeting with the Minister, deputies, and heads of education departments from across the country, 21/05/1371 (August 12, 1992).

2. Statements of Ayatollah Khamenei in a gathering of the staff of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), 28/02/1383 (May 17, 2004).

acknowledges human diversity, it can be said that in the process of globalization, Islamic teachings affirm interaction and cultural exchange." (Moradi, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 218)

7. The First Phase Statement of the Islamic Revolution and Intercultural Interactions of Religions

The First Phase Statement of the Islamic Revolution, which in fact constitutes the foundation and basis of the Revolution's first forty-year phase, is the collection of Imam Khomeini's speeches, especially his "Political–Divine Testament." The Second Phase Statement, as a roadmap for the Revolution's next forty years, is also of great importance; yet in order to understand and interpret it correctly, it is first necessary to study the First Phase and the path already taken, so that it may serve as a guiding light for the future.

When, in the course of explaining the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution, we return to the statements of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic system, we find the fundamental framework and structure of the Second Phase Statement to be fully in harmony with the Imam's thought. This shows that the Islamic Revolution, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei, has entered its second forty-year phase with firmness and without deviation from its foundational principles. Here, Imam Khomeini's speeches, especially his Testament, may be examined as the First Phase Statement and as a prerequisite for the Second Phase.

As a religious and political leader, Imam Khomeini consistently emphasized the importance of interaction and dialogue among the followers of religions and sects. He believed that interreligious and inter-sectarian dialogue could help eliminate intolerance and conflict, and that on the basis of shared human and religious principles it could generate peace and coexistence. Moreover, he held that agreement among the great monotheistic religions was necessary for the advancement and elevation of humanity (Khomeini, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 6, 177).

These points can be clearly discerned in Imam Khomeini's statements, especially in his conduct and theories concerning Islamic unity and the necessity of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and the followers of other religions. He also believed that all forms of discrimination and racism must be avoided, and that instead of enmity, common bonds should be emphasized (Khomeini, 2006: 18, 95, 334).

For further study on this subject, one may refer to the "Sahifeh Noor" (Collected Works of Imam Khomeini), which contains his detailed statements on these themes. In Imam Khomeini's speeches and messages delivered on various occasions, emphasis can be found on Muslim solidarity, respect for other religions, and the necessity of dialogue and coexistence among the followers of different religious traditions, demonstrating his view that intercultural dialogue among the followers of religions and sects can play a significant role in cultural elevation, the clarification of true belief, and the establishment of a new global civilization based on that belief.

8. The Second Phase Statement of the Islamic Revolution and the Interaction of Religions and Sects

With the publication of the "Second Phase Statement of the Islamic Revolution" in Bahman 1397 (February 2019), Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, explained the achievements of the Revolution's first forty years and offered essential recommendations for continuing this bright path. The Second Phase Statement is, in reality, an executive charter

for progress and civilization-building, breathing new life into the Revolution. This second Phase will bring the Revolution closer to "Its great ideal, which is the creation of the New Islamic Civilization and preparing for the rising of the Sun of the Great Authority." (Khamenei, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 10)

In the Second Phase Statement, Ayatollah Khamenei introduces a novel method for the interaction and cooperation of religions. First, he emphasizes that one of humanity's greatest historical misconceptions has been the imagined conflict between religion and worldly life, a misconception that, with the emergence of the Islamic Revolution and the harmonious pairing of religion and life, was dispelled. This marked the beginning of a new era of humanity's return to religion. Indeed, this can be considered one of the major services that Islam and Shi'ism have offered other religions and sects in the field of intercultural interaction during this age. He writes:

"When the world had been divided between the material East and West, and no one imagined the possibility of a great religious movement, the Islamic Revolution of Iran entered the scene with power and magnificence; it broke the established frameworks, revealed the obsolescence of prevailing clichés, presented religion and worldly life side by side, and announced the dawn of a new era." (Khamenei, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 7)

Second, he emphasizes that in interreligious and inter-sectarian interaction and in the search for truth through dialogue and debate, attention must be given to the fact that one of the criteria of the legitimacy of a religion or sect, or various interpretations of it, and indeed the first criterion, is its revolutionary nature and its stance against oppression, rather than providing justification for injustice or the actions of powerful oppressors.

Accordingly, he presents the true and authentic Islam to the world as a religion that stands against global domination and opposes the colonization and exploitation of oppressed nations by the powerful. He strives to introduce the real face of Islam to the followers of other religions, Islam as resistance to oppressors and tyrants; that is, revolutionary Islam, the pure Muhammadan Islam, in contrast to the "American Islam." Such an Islam is concerned with the suffering of oppressed peoples and considers it its duty to defend them against global powers and injustice. This is the Islam that, following Imam Husayn (AS), believes in the triumph of blood over the sword and never bows to humiliation. In this regard, the Second Phase Statement declares:

"From the beginning until today, the Islamic Revolution of Iran has stood openly and courageously against tyrants and arrogant powers, and has defended the oppressed and the downtrodden. This revolutionary honor, this honesty and courage, this global and regional outreach in standing beside the oppressed, is a source of pride for Iran and the Iranian people, and may it ever remain so." (ibid: 9-10)

Ayatollah Khamenei also emphasizes that with the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which arose from true and revolutionary Islam, "The magnificent and honorable symbol of standing firm against the bullies, oppressors, and arrogant powers of the world, at the head of whom stands the predatory and criminal America, became more and more prominent each day. Therefore, refusal to surrender, safeguarding the Revolution, its divine grandeur and majesty, and its proud stance against arrogant governments have become a known characteristic of Iran and Iranians. On the other hand, the monopolistic powers of the world, who have always

considered their survival to depend on encroaching upon the independence of other nations and trampling their vital interests for their own sinister aims, have confessed to their helplessness before revolutionary Islamic Iran." (Khamenei, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 19)

Therefore, in the "Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution Statement," Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes that with the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the removal of the false notion of a contradiction between religion and worldly life, a new era began in which humanity returned to religion and religious interactions and dialogues flourished. Considering the main aim of these interactions, reaching the true religion, he introduces certain criteria for determining the truth of a religion or denomination so that the followers of religions and free-minded humans may, through these dialogues and interactions, choose the true religion with clarity and help prepare the ground for the establishment of the global Mahdavi (AJ) government and the new Islamic civilization.

9. Evaluation of the Views

As stated earlier, the extremist view blocks the path of interaction and dialogue, causes violence and hatred, violates human rights, and prevents reaching the truth. In reality, holding such a belief in today's society, where freedom of expression and the right to choose one's religion and beliefs exist, creates major problems and causes people to turn away from religion. Moreover, human societies will never witness peace, calm, or progress, because the window of opportunity for interfaith dialogue closes and only extremism, violence, and killing will remain.

The negligent (over-tolerant) view, by legitimizing all beliefs, even contradictory ones, and by permitting the abandonment of one's own convictions to align with other religions and denominations, blocks the path toward reaching the true belief. It renders interreligious interactions ineffective by contradicting their very purpose. This view is also clearly opposed to the unchanging and non-negotiable principles and rulings of religion, those fixed and immutable foundations that a believer must always accept and follow in any time and place, and from which religion never allows withdrawal or compromise.

But the third view, the moderate theory, holds that through interaction and dialogue, one should create the conditions for guiding human beings and enabling them to reach correct and true belief, while at the same time there is no need to abandon any true belief for the sake of interaction, rapprochement, or finding common ground among religions and denominations. This view, in addition to being compatible with the contemporary age, has the capacity to lead to the formation of a new Islamic civilization. Therefore, based on the earlier reports we presented from Ayatollah Khamenei's views and from the Second Phase Statement, it is clear that this theory is not only beneficial for Islamic society in Iran but can also be useful and influential in all Islamic and human societies.

Conclusion

Attention to religion and its human and ethical teachings by the followers of different beliefs and schools can accelerate and strengthen intercultural interactions and interfaith dialogue, leading to the elevation of human beings and human societies. In this context, one must adopt an interpretation of religion that proposes a correct and moderate path in interacting with other

religions and denominations and avoid deviated interpretations, extremist or overly lenient ones.

Interfaith dialogue can also be divided into various types based on different aspects (audience, content, and objective), with each requiring its own method. The views discussed in the field of interreligious and intercultural interactions can generally be divided into three categories: extremist, overly lenient, and moderate. The first two views are unacceptable, because each faces fundamental problems. The extremist view blocks dialogue, causes violence and hatred, violates human rights, and prevents reaching the truth. The overly lenient view, by legitimizing all beliefs, even contradictory ones, and permitting the abandonment of true belief (to please the other side), blocks the path to true belief and, in effect, renders interfaith dialogues ineffective by contradicting their intended purpose.

However, the third view, namely the moderate theory, which posits that through interaction and dialogue, the ground should be prepared for guiding people and reaching correct and true belief, while at the same time, there is no necessity to abandon some of one's true beliefs for the sake of interaction, rapprochement of religions and denominations, and finding common ground, is a correct theory suitable for the contemporary era and possesses its own unique civilizational capacity, which has manifested in the thoughts of His Eminence Ayatollah Khamenei, particularly in the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution Statement.

By examining the thoughts of Ayatollah Khamenei, we arrive at the fundamental point that interaction and cooperation between the two civilizational spheres of the Christian West and Islam is essential and stands in direct opposition to confrontation and conflict. Furthermore, there are many capacities for interaction and cooperation between these two civilizational spheres that can lead to a correct understanding and unbiased perception of Islam, thereby neutralizing the Islamophobia conspiracy in the Western world. In fact, one of the ways to recognize Islam and resolve differences and disputes, leading to positive interaction and cooperation, and paving the way for the establishment of the global Mahdavi (AJ) government, is through interfaith and interdenominational dialogue, considering their common divine roots. Therefore, from his perspective, "Cultural interaction and exchange" is necessary, which is precisely the opposite of "Cultural Aggression" and can serve as a prelude to people becoming acquainted with the true religion.

Ayatollah Khamenei also introduces the emergence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in the Second Phase Statement as a prelude to humanity's return to religion, which is one of Islam and Shiism's greatest services in intercultural interactions with other religions and denominations in this era. This serves as a precursor for people to reach the true religion and establish the new global Islamic civilization. In this regard, by introducing pure Muhammadan Islam (PBUH), which is revolutionary Islam, in contrast to "American Islam," and opposed to oppression, colonialism, and arrogance, as the true religion possessing the capacity to establish a new global civilization, he emphasizes that in interactions among religions and denominations and in the pursuit of truth through these interactions and debates, attention must be paid to the fact that one of the criteria for the truthfulness of a religion, denomination, or its various interpretations, and indeed, the primary criterion, is its revolutionary nature and its opposition to oppression, not its justification of the tyranny of oppressors and the crimes of the arrogant.

The outcome of this thought and the criteria presented within it serve as a guiding light for free thinkers around the world to attain truth, turn towards the true religion, and lay the groundwork for the establishment of the new global Islamic civilization.

In conclusion, based on the thoughts of His Eminence Ayatollah Khamenei, especially the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution Statement, intercultural interactions among religions and denominations have the potential to be beneficial and influential not only in the Islamic society of Iran but in all Islamic and human societies as a prelude to reaching the true religion and establishing the new global Islamic civilization.

Considering the importance of the subject of this research for the destiny of human societies, particularly followers of religions and denominations, and the significance of promoting the true religion, namely the clear religion of Islam, throughout the world, and the establishment of the universal just government of the Promised Mahdi (AJ), the savior of humanity and the dispenser of justice to the world, it is suggested that:

1. Further reflection and research be conducted on the subject of dialogue and interactions among religions and denominations, promoting tolerance and good relations with followers of other religions and beliefs, and that appropriate and significant works be published in this field.
2. Interfaith and intercultural dialogue be given more attention from a religious perspective and with consideration of internal religious sources in the clear religion of Islam, including the Quran and the narrations of the Prophet (PBUH) and the impeccable Imams (AS). Written and oral works in this regard should be presented to the academic community and the general public of followers of religions and denominations in different countries.
3. The thoughts of Islamic and Shiite scholars, especially the groundbreaking ideas of Imam Khomeini and His Eminence Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, be studied more than ever by researchers and enthusiasts in this field.

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