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The Ontological Foundations of Iranian Philosophy and its Political Requirements

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to outline the ontological foundations of Iranian philosophy from a specific point of view, in order to deduce its political requirements. In the process of explaining and throwing of light upon Iranian ontology, the foundations of epistemology, anthropology and metaphysics were inexorably discussed. In general, the spirit of spirituality and attention to worlds beyond the material and tangible world is so prominent in Iranian thought that it reveals itself in the examination of all the aforementioned areas. Therefore, believing in a hierarchical system of existential worlds and understanding the manifestation of existence and the relationship between the rank of each person in the existential dimensions and the level of his knowledge and awareness, offers a possibility of centrality of the person and the idea of returning to the paradisiacal place and recovery of the delayed eternity. Bearing in mind that anyone who has more knowledge and is placed in a higher rank of existence, has the competence and duty to guide other people who are in a lower rank, the role of an ideal King or Imam as well as other political dimensions of this thought are highlighted.

The key research question is as follows: What political requirements are illustrated in the foundations and specific characteristics of Iranian thought on existence, epistemology, metaphysics, eschatology? In the research hypothesis, it is asserted that the type of spiritualism and attention to the realms beyond the material and tangible world, which is noticeable in Iranian thought have explicit political consequences. The authors using the qualitative thematic analysis method to examine some prominent works in

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this field. Their discussions are basically focused on the main themes which together present the core of the ideas and explanations offered by scholars such as Henry Carbon and Alameh Tabatabai to explain the consequences, dimensions, and political foundations of Iranian spiritual philosophy. The conclusion of the study is that the stated principles in these works have presented a spiritual theme of guidance, leadership, and politics, which differ from worldly power and leadership.

Key Words: Corbin, Hierarchical Ontology, Imam, Intuitive Epistemology, Shah Armani

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Reformist and Fundamentalist: A Small-Scale Comparative Study of Personality and Mental Health

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Abstract

Increasing interest in the study of the relationship between personality and the choice of political ideology have emerged, and previous studies have found evidence of the impact of personality traits on political preferences of individuals. However, further research can be undertaken in this area in order to gain better understanding of the interactions of personal attributes and political orientations of individuals living in a society. The primary research question is as follows: What are the differences between individuals in the two main political movements of reformism (*eslāh'talabī*) and fundamentalism (*bonyad'garāī*) in Iran in terms of their personality and mental health? In the research hypothesis, it is postulated that variations in political ideologies of reformists and fundamentalists may be attributed to disparities in their personality traits. Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPP) exemplifies the reformist groups, whereas and the 'Principlists' (*osol'garāyan*) serves as a typical example of the fundamentalist political groups.

The population of the study included political journalists, party and political activists, government officials, and members of student political associations in Isfahan and Tehran in the summer of 2017. The use of snowball sampling method resulted in the selection of 65 respondents which included 33 reformists and 32 fundamentalists. Two questionnaires consisting of 60 items (answered on a five-point Likert scale) were used to collect information from these respondents. The first questionnaire was

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designed for the 'Neuroticism, Extraversion and Openness' (NEO) Personality Inventory Test; and the second one was for the 'Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale 21' (DASS-21). Descriptive and inferential statistics were computed, with multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) utilized for data analysis.

The results revealed significant differences between the reformists and fundamentalists on specific personality traits, notably in the subcategories of extroversion, openness to experience, and agreeableness. Moreover, the comparison of mental health indicators showed that these two groups have significant differences in the depression and stress subscales. The reformists scored higher in the variables of openness to experience, depression, and stress, whereas the fundamentalists scored higher in the extroversion and agreeableness scales. These findings are consistent with the results of similar studies. Furthermore, this study concludes that given the role of religion in Iran's politics, it is useful to examine the relationship between religion and the personality of political activists and ordinary citizens in future studies.

Keywords: The Big Five Personality Traits, Mental Health, Political Ideology, Political Psychology, Personality

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Research Paper

Continuity and Change in Russia-U.S. Relations during Putin's Fourth Term, 2018-2024

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Abstract

Maurice Duverger was a French political scientist and professor of constitutional law in the 1950s-1970s, and greatly influenced the intellectual climate of constitutional law and political science. His fame spread abroad throughout Europe, North America and Asia, and his books and articles became known to thinkers and students in a score of countries as diverse as Iran, the U.S., and Spain. Duverger stood between these two academic disciplines and tried to establish a link between them. Abolfazl Qazi, a constitutional law professor at the University of Tehran undertook the task of translating some of Duverger's books into Persian, e.g., *Institutions politiques et Droit constitutionnel* (Constitutional Rights and Political Institutions), and *Sociologie politique* (Political Sociology). He also wrote a book which was clearly and significantly influenced by the French scholar's

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writings on the subject of constitutional law. Nowadays, research conducted on the history of French constitutional thought have been analyzing the negative impact of Duverger's school of thought. The important narrative that he presented about political institutions, for example, his discussions of 'semi-authoritarian system' and 'semi-parliamentarism' has been gradually forgotten. At the end of the 1970s, a slow but significant change in political science was taking place as the result of the systematic and comprehensive use of methods and theories of sociology and history by political scientists, and the growing value of collaborative research, empirical analyses and multidisciplinary scholarly efforts to discuss and analyze issues. This change turned Maurice Duverge into a historical figure who belonged to an obsolete and pre-scientific period. This "new" political science was not exclusively interested in the same issues that were of concern for Duverge such as voting



behavior and political parties. Instead, the attention somehow turned to exploring how politics can draw inspiration from other disciplines and encourage collaboration, elaboration, and evaluation.

The results of the recent studies which have critically examined Duverger's writings might also apply to the discussions of Iranian Constitutional theory. The main objective of this article is to find suitable answers to the following research questions: a) How have Duverger's works influenced Iran's theory of constitutional rights? and b) What consequences have these works had on research concerning constitutional rights in Iran? Using the qualitative content analysis method, the most significant works of Duverger and Abolfazl Ghazi are examined in order to answer these questions. In the research hypothesis, the author claims that Ghazi's translations of Duverger's books have had a negative impact on the studies of constitutional law in Iran. The main findings indicate that the studies of constitutional rights in Iran are still under the influence of Abolfazl Ghazi's work which had been in part influenced by Maurice Duverger's thought. These studies have been diverted from the right course and have not found its way. Thus, Iranian scholars and leading experts must pay closer attention to the link between constitutional rights and political science as two imperative fields of knowledge.

Keywords: Abolfazl Qazi, Constitutional Law, Maurice Duverger, Political Sciences, Political Sociology

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Research Paper

Human Happiness and Political Theory in the Holy Qur'an

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Abstract

Human happiness might be one of the influential principles of political theory, and indeed political theorists are required to understand human nature and its fundamental characteristics and explore ways and means to reach a desirable society. From this perspective, every political theory is based on specific epistemological claims about the traits of human beings. One issue-area in theory-building is how human nature plays a decisive role in the attainment of happiness. A key objective of the present article is to discuss 'well-being' in various aspects of everyday lives of humankind and examine its implications for political theory from the perspective of the Holy Quran. The primary research question to be answered is: Given the existential structure of human beings from the perspective of the Holy Qur'an, would they be able to present a theory of happiness as one of the foundations of political theory, independently and on their own? By using

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the method of thematic study of the Qur'an, the author seeks to answer this question and produce heightened awareness of many issues related to the association between the conception of human well-being and political theory about why happy people are happy, what factors result in happiness, and how to attain happiness. In the research hypothesis, it is argued that political theory's inattention to the fundamental nature of human happiness will be an obstacle to creating a desirable society. The use of the words "*bashar*" and "*ensān*"—that means exactly the same as the word "human"—to refer to the divine prophets in the Holy Book indicated that they were humans but they had the unique ability to receive 'revelation'. This ability fulfills a general need, i.e., the need for transcendental and divine guidance for the attainment of human happiness. The Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) received revelation of the Qur'an from God. The structure of humans' existence and the way of life of human beings on earth are such that they



need divine guidance through the descent of an angel who is a divine messenger to convey the message of divine guidance to human beings to fulfill that need.

For the sake of brevity and presenting a concise discussion, only the term 'human' and some of their Qur'anic applications will be used to answer the research question. The use of the word 'human' to refer to the divine prophets in the Qur'an shows that they are not fundamentally different from other human beings. In terms of the existential structure and nature, in spite of the fact that they had a special and, of course, very important quality (i.e., the ability to receive 'revelation'). This explanation about the implication of a theory of human well-being, which must necessarily be derived from a revelatory source, will be very important for political theory. In this respect, political theory must seek a divine source to explain and attain happiness. This can put an end to the endless and seemingly insurmountable differences that exist in the theories of happiness. The implication of a theory about human happiness, which must inevitably be derived from a revelatory source, is very important for theory building in politics. Political theory must consider the theological dimension of existentialism and the enrichment of human life. If political theory ignores this fundamental feature of the nature of human happiness, it cannot achieve its fundamental objective that is to create a desirable society.

Keywords: Happiness, Holy Qur'an, Political Theory, Prophets, Revelation

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Research Paper

Middle Eastern Elites, the Subjects of the Eurocentric International Order

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Abstract

During the last two centuries, particularly in the post-World War II period, many former colonies in the Middle East have gained independence. However, there is a growing gap between countries—dichotomized into different groups in the international system such as Developed or Undeveloped, North or South, First World or Third World, Center or Periphery, West or East, and so on. The Middle East or ‘the Islamic East’ is one of the regions which have been suffering from either drastic backwardness or dependent development. In postcolonial discourse, the epistemological agency of the non-European world is revived and the one-sided narration of westerners about the whole world is not the only source of knowledge. Intellectual and political elites of the newly independent societies as ‘nationalist and anticolonialist subjects’ entered into battle in order to change the subordinate position of these countries in the international order and find ways to overcome the problem of

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underdevelopment and dependence on the western countries, but these so-called 'Middle Easterners subjects' as referred to in this paper were unable to be independent subjects and actually became subjected to the influence of the external forces. Most Middle Eastern intellectual and political elites had to change their attitudes and activities due to eurocentrism, especially in the area of foreign policy and international relations. As the subjects of the Eurocentric international order, they unconsciously cooperated with the forces which intended to maintain the existing international order, despite the fact that they were initially trying to change this superior-subordinate arrangement in protest against its unequal nature. The so-called subjectivity of these elites has led to an even expanding backwardness in many parts of



the region.

The authors' main objective is to answer the following research questions: 1. how have the postcolonial discourses, which have originated from the Eurocentric international order been reinforced? 2. Why were the anti-colonial elites of the Middle East ultimately influenced by the Eurocentric view in spite of their initial opposition to eurocentrism? In the research hypothesis, it is argued that the worldview of eurocentrism of the Middle Eastern elites and intellectuals have acted as positive reinforces of the Eurocentrism perspective and orientation in the Middle Eastern countries. To answer these questions, they use the framework of the theories of post-colonialism, and draw conclusions from Spivak's discussions of the subalterns and domination, Edward Said's writings on the subject of Orientalism, and the discourse of the elites of the so-called Islamic East who had struggled to confront the challenge of backwardness of their countries during the 1960-1970 period. The findings of the research showed that even some of the staunchest anti-colonial political elites and intellectuals—in spite of their rebellion against imperial powers and critical views of the Eurocentric attitudes of the westerners—ended up as the subjects of the European-dominated international order. Such results are valuable for understanding the persistent backwardness of countries in the Middle East which are confronted with this challenge in different ways and varying degrees of severity.

Keywords: Edward Said, Eurocentrism, Middle East, Orientalism, Subalterns Studies

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Research Paper

India's Defense Diplomacy in the Persian Gulf

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Abstract

In recent decades, India has become one of the emerging powers or rising powers in the international system. Because of India's rapid economic growth and the country's ever-increasing need for energy the Persian Gulf—as one of the top energy resource-rich regions in the world—have become attractive for the Indian politicians. The expansion of India's strategic interests in the Persian Gulf region (PGR), combined with the need to ensure the country's energy security has led New Delhi to explore the opportunity and possibility of military and security presence in the PGR. In recent years, India has consequently entered into a "strategic partnership" with several Persian Gulf countries and has started extensive defense-security cooperation with these states. The objectives of the present study are as follows: a) to explain the dimensions and components of India's defense

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diplomacy in the Persian Gulf region; and b) to examine the policy instruments which are used by India to secure its national interests and to protect its national security based on defense diplomacy.

In the research hypothesis, it is assumed that there is a significant relationship between India's defense diplomacy in the Persian Gulf and its national security. India has explored the opportunities of defense cooperation with PG states in various fields, including cooperation in military training, joint military exercises and provision of resources, research and development (R& D), production and marketing of defense equipment in the PG countries in order to prevent the encirclement of India by China or Pakistan. The Indian policymakers want to expand their country's relations with the US as the major provider of foreign aid for safeguarding national security interests of New Delhi. The theoretical framework of Anton de Plessis's theory of military diplomacy is used. This political scientist defines



this military type of diplomacy broadly as "the use of military personnel, including service dependents, to support conflict prevention and resolution". Among a wide range of activities, military diplomacy includes providing foreign aid for the purpose of developing liable democratic armed forces. Du Plessis also provided a broader definition of military diplomacy as "the use of armed forces in operations other than war, relying on their expertise and trained discipline to achieve national and foreign goals abroad".

For hypothesis testing, one-way analysis of variance (F test) has been used. The research findings show that the relationship between India's defense diplomacy in the Persian Gulf and its national security is significant at the confidence level of 0.99. Moreover, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to estimate the strength and direction of the relationship between India's defense diplomacy in the Persian Gulf and the its national security. The Pearson correlation coefficient between two variables indicates that the intensity of the relationship between them is moderate and its direction is positive. In other words, India's defense diplomacy in the Persian Gulf moderately plays a role in protecting Indian national security.

Key Words: Defense Diplomacy, India, Look West, Maritime Diplomacy, Persian Gulf

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Research Paper

Myth-Based Discursive Formalism: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Non-Realist Foreign Policies

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Abstract

Foreign policies of many countries in various conditions have been proved to be inconsistent with the predictions and prescriptions of realism. In this article, a realist foreign policy is defined as one followed on the basis of

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what realists regard as being rational, more or less risk-averse, furthering national interest and security, employing diplomacy as the preferred way for achieving goals, taking into account others' vital interests, making a balance between one's power and objectives, and being prudent. However, nearly irrational unrealistic foreign policies are not uncommon and attempts for explaining them have led to the emergence of other theoretical frameworks that take into account various factors, from cognition to bureaucratic politics to the role of identity and emotions in order to supplement realism.

In this article, a discursive formalist theoretical framework based on Ernst Cassirer's understanding of myth as a form of thought with extrarational elements and categories has been introduced to show how unrealistic foreign policies—especially those inspired by ideologies such as nationalism—become possible through the formation of specific emotions, identities, and cognition. These elements and categories, when taken into language, acquire fluidity resulting from semantic and semiotic exchanges. Therefore, discourse analysis can help us understand them in specific cases. In order to emphasize the significance of unconsciousness in its interplay with mythical discourse, Lacanian psychoanalysis has been employed. Then,



the limitations posed by the ideational structure of the international system comes into play to make changes in myth-based foreign policies inevitable et again the shift is not beyond the realms of possibility of mythical form of thought.

Mythical form of thought as a whole contains certain characteristics and categories that make unrealistic foreign policies possible. It does not distinguish between objective reality and most subjective experiences such as fantasies and dreams and between objects and their representations such as pictures or symbols. This can be seen in nationalist ideologies where national symbols are as important as the nation itself, and any disrespect for the representations of the nation and/or its representatives are taken as disrespect for the nation leading to emotional reactions. The overemphasis of mythological form of thought on causality makes whatever cannot be easily understood or explained by a specific tangible cause to be attributed to something the effect of which cannot be verified, for example, the conspiracy of others; hence adding to the common pessimism in international life leading to proneness to preventive measures. Parts and whole are not separable here. Therefore, every characteristic is taken to be essentially the same as the object. Thus, for example, in Nazism, being German/Arian provides one with a superiority over others. The way in which similarities work result in over-generalizations that make, for example, the other an enemy.

As space is divided into holy and unholy/profane places and holy spaces cannot be disintegrated, the homeland or even beyond that may take a holiness that makes defending it not only legitimate but also a necessity. This may lead even to over-expansionist aspirations to include the holy spaces that are somehow in the hands of others as a mission that cannot be ignored. Perhaps the most significant example is the Zionist territorial expansionist ideal of a territory from the Nile to the Euphrates. Time in this form of thought is not linear; present is not distinguished from the past which is justified and even sanctified. Referring to the past in order to justify and legitimize specific actions in the present thus becomes common in foreign policies no matter how different they are.

If this form of thought exists in the cultural background of a society, mostly through the existence of particular myths, such as city upon a hill, the Russian World and the like, it can be unconsciously present in the cognition of everyone. When this mythical form of thinking becomes dominant, the agents of foreign policy reflect it in the form of narratives that have an unconscious dimension being explicable by psychoanalysis according to which the symbolic order, as the intersubjective relations, norms, rules, conventions and the like is the site of unconsciousness. The symbolic order which exists both at domestic and international levels imposes limitations upon actors. It is where the desire of the subject is formed and the real is perceived through the subject's desire. Yet both the subject and the symbolic order face the lack as the subject cannot actualize its desire and the symbolic order cannot provide the subject with fantasy. When the state as an international agent faces the limitations of the international structure, its foreign policy may change but again within the limits of mythical thought.

Consequently, a mythical state, on the basis of a predestined mission and a sanctified past becomes an exceptional state assuming that whatever it imagines can be achieved in one form or another. These elements together form an identity that makes unrealistic policy choices possible.

Keywords: Agent-structure, Foreign Policy Analysis, Myth-based Discursive Formalism, Unconscious, Unrealistic Foreign Policy

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Research Paper



Continuity and Change in Russia-U.S. Relations during Putin's Fourth Term, 2018-2024

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Abstract

The main purpose of the article is to examine the reasons of change and continuity in Russia-U.S. Relations during Putin's fourth term (2018-2024). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, these relations have been characterized by various fluctuations, including enthusiasm about promoting mutual understanding and collaboration during the dominance of the Euro-Atlantic discourse in the early 1990s, and the heightened tension during the realist discourse led by Putin. The U.S.-Russia relations have been deteriorating as a consequence of the uncertainties and insecurity which have increased due to the international order transition. The 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War, as the greatest challenge in the relations between the United States and Russia in the post-Soviet period, is a clear manifestation of the gloomy situation. Russia considers this conflict to be a proxy war which is only part of the broader U.S. grand strategy to limit Russia's geopolitical influence by lessening its strategic depth. The West's support for Ukraine is

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viewed as a continuation of Washington's previous attempts—including inciting the color revolutions in the post-Soviet space, gradually infiltrating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), interfering in Russia's internal affairs, supporting the war in Yugoslavia, NATO's Eastward Expansion, and the establishment of an anti-missile shield— aimed at containing Russia without resorting to direct confrontation. On the other hand, American policymakers who seek to maintain U.S. supremacy in the international system, view Putin's Russia as a challenging and destructive actor that has improved its international position and has been trying to change the regional and global balance of power to the detriment of Washington by acting as a revisionist force, individually or collectively in collaboration with other members of the international revisionist front. In this context, the U.S. has adopted the strategy of '*broad offensive*'

deterrence' (BOD) against Russia. Out of an abundance of caution, Moscow is pursuing the strategy of '*active offensive defense*' (AOD) in the hope of reviving and strengthening its great power position. The adoption of these two competing strategies has intensified tension in the bilateral Russia-U.S. relations, and have had repercussions for other states.

The author tries to answer the following research questions: 1. What are the causes of the persistence of conflict and tension in the U.S.-Russia relations? 2. How has the confrontation between the two strategies of '*broad offensive deterrence*' (BOD) of the United States and '*active offensive defense*' (AOD) of Russia led to the escalation of tension in their bilateral relations? Using the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism, the analysis is focused on three inexorable variables (i.e., geopolitical power competition, security, and political culture) in order to find conclusive answers to the two questions. In the research hypothesis, it is argued that the persistence of tension in the U.S.-Russian relations is caused by three tension-generating variables of geopolitical power competition, security, and political culture. The method of qualitative textual analysis of the official documents and previous works on the subject revealed the impact of these variables on the nature of the relations between the two rival powers. The findings show that transformative variables (e.g., the circulation of the elites) had a positive effect on the bilateral relations between the United States and Russia in the short term, but the three above-mentioned factors have caused tension to prevail.

However, Russia and the U.S. will probably continue their cooperation in three issue-areas: 1. Maintaining security and strategic stability in the international system as manifested in their support for the nuclear non-proliferation regime; 2. Confronting certain destabilizing regional challenges, particularly in the Middle East and the CIS; and 3. Dealing with asymmetric security threats such as international terrorism and cyber security. Nevertheless, the failure of the conciliatory approach and the perceived NATO-U.S. belligerent approach to Russia (including the "Reset" project), as well as the continual U.S. aggressive actions against Russian national interest have deepened their mutual mistrust. This perception of the U.S. intentions have been strengthened in Putin's third and fourth terms; and the Kremlin continue to believe inactions, restraint, and disengagement in response to the U.S. actions will not lead to a mutually-advantageous balanced relations. Russian leaders are concerned that a flexible and appeasing attitude towards the U.S. might result in increasing use of coercive and aggressive foreign policy instruments by Washington. This perception has forced Russia to adopt a posture of resistance and the strategy of '*extensive aggressive defense*' against the U.S. It is expected to see the continuation of the tense bilateral relations and the situation of mutual mistrust between the two great powers in the medium term.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Neoclassical Realism, Political Culture, Russia-U.S. Relations, Security

Declaration of conflicting interests

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