

# **Islamic Perspective**

## **Journal of the Islamic Studies and Humanities**

Volume 17, Spring 2017  
Center for Sociological Studies  
In Cooperation with London Academy of Iranian Studies

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Dr. S. J. Miri, Islamic Perspective Center for Sociological Studies, 121 Royal Langford, 2 Greville Road, London NW6 5HT, UK, Tel: (+44) 020 7692 2491, Fax: (+44) 020 7209 4727, Email: [islamicperspective@iranianstudies.Org](mailto:islamicperspective@iranianstudies.Org)

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This Journal was printed in the UK.

ISSN-1946-8946

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## **Diasporic Muslim Discourses: *Re-visiting & Challenging the Stereotypes***

**Esmaeil Zeiny**

Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS),  
National University of Malaysia (UKM) &  
Department of Creative Arts and English, La Trobe University,  
Australia

### **Abstract**

As an upshot of 9/11, the Western literary market has been witnessing a proliferation in life narratives by and about Muslim women. Almost all of these narratives focus on Islam, a patriarchal society, and the state's oppression of women. These diasporic Muslim women authors take the Western readers into a journey of unseen and unheard events of their private lives. Their narratives are usually replete with generalizations, exaggerations, stereotypes and reductive images to support and justify the imperial presence and hegemony project in the Middle East. By drawing upon Hamid Naficy's 'here and there' of exile culture, I argue that the second generation Muslim diaspora masters multiple cultural repertoires that can be cherry-picked in response to the stereotypes. They can challenge and reverse the Oriental stereotypes through their creative works. By studying Amin Palangi's 'Waking with Martyrs,' I will demonstrate how this Iranian Muslim in exile demystifies the images of Muslims and creates a better sentiment towards Iranian and Muslims in general.

**Key Words:** Diaspora, Life narrative, Muslim, Stereotype, Imperialism

## Introduction

After 9/11 and the subsequent political aftermath, life narratives by and about Muslim women experienced a boom and have garnered a particular interest in the West. Since then, these life narratives have become a staple of publishing houses. They have been growingly commodified, circulated and consumed uncritically in the hope of journeying 'behind' and 'beyond' the veil of the Muslim world and its women for the unheard and unseen stories. This promising of a peak 'behind' and 'beyond' the veil of the 'Other' have been fodder for a fetishistic voyeurism originated in the Orientalist obsession with 'unveiling' Muslim women's bodies and lives residing in Islamic societies. The rationale behind the proliferation of these life narratives is the unquenchable curiosity of the Westerners about Islam and Muslims which was aroused and revived after the events of 9/11, the consequent President Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech and his launching of 'war on terror.' This curiosity and the popularity of these life narratives are suggestive of a deeper desire for authoritative knowledge about Muslim societies. Written to unfold the lives of Muslim women, these life narratives provide the readers with the Orientalist accounts of Muslim women as veiled, abused, silent, powerless, and victim of a patriarchal society. These narratives are usually fraught with generalization, exaggeration and are one-sided. They reduce all diversities of Muslims and Muslim practices to a single image as if one Muslim woman's account is every Muslim woman's story. This depiction has been working in tandem with the Western representation of Muslim women which have been narrowly constructed as weak, inferior and victims of religious and patriarchal rules.

To an increasing number of critics, writings by immigrant Muslim women, particularly the life narratives are forgeries to corroborate the Western derogatory perception of Islam and Muslim women, and they further the American imperialistic agenda. This engineered and institutional mode of representation which has accelerated since 9/11 represents Muslim women as the gendered slave in need of "saving" by the West. The 'shout-to-liberate-women' representation creates justification for the imperialism's project of hegemony disguised under the discourse of 'war on terror.' The war on terror was waged by the United States and its allies partly to bring democracy and human rights, especially women's right to areas where a need to catch up with Western sort of modernity was felt. A case in point is the then President Bush's frequent campaign to gather support for saving the women of Afghanistan from the brutalities of the patriarchal and religious society. This is symptomatic of the fact that Muslim women's rights have been continuously

hijacked as a pretext to legitimize West's colonial presence in the East. Thus, it is now transparent that race, gender, and religion are discourses that have scripted the terms of involvement in the 'war on terror.' The systematic representation of Islamic extremism and backward, oppressed and politically immature Muslim women is the revitalization of Orientalist tropes to create Islamophobia. The revitalization of these orientalist stereotypes gains their power through repetition, particularly repetitions of representation of difference. Reiteration of loaded insignias of difference constructs a fixed 'regime of representation' which celebrates and naturalizes the disparities and inferiority. What contributes to this naturalization of differences is the accessibility and visibility of Muslim life narratives in the West.

## The Visibility of Life Narratives

Shortly after 9/11, on November 13, 2001, The New York Times added a new section to its newspaper titled 'A Nation Challenged.' The New York Times kept publishing a piece in this section daily for four months with titles such as 'In Pakistan: Jihad 101,' 'Barbarians at the Gate,' 'The Core of Muslim Rage,' 'Dreams of Holy War,' 'The Deep Intellectual Roots of Islamic Rage, and 'This is a Religious war' all reinforcing the notion that Islam and the West are in collision. These pieces supported the then President Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech and his subsequent launching of 'war on terror' but they were not cogent enough to convince the public of the necessity of the war. That is when the United States and the West in a broader sense, welcomed life narratives by and about Muslim women to relate their stories of victimhood in Muslim societies in order to persuade the Western people that the Middle East is in need of liberation (Zeiny & Yusof, 2016). Due to the genre's hereditary claim to fidelity, these narratives from the Middle East certainly figures in the average readers' opinion formation and support the imperialistic project of hegemony. Since then, Muslim life narratives are being read voraciously by the Western readers in the time of crisis when recognition of speaking subjects in the public domain has become an urgent matter.

Bookstores in the West are replete with Muslim life narratives featuring a woman's full-veiled or half-veiled face, only her eyes are showing, either piercing and staring at the audience or looking down evading the gaze of readers/viewers. Different sorts of Muslim life narratives are congregated on the shelves: the autobiographies from Afghanistan such as *My forbidden face* (2002), the veiled bestsellers from Saudi Arabia by Jean Sasson (2003), the Iranian diasporic memoirs of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) and *Persepolis: The Story of Childhood* (2003),

and Ayan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel: My Life* (2006). What does "the flood of life narratives make available to the metropolitan West: spaces for dialogues and exchange, or a reemergence of stereotypical and mythic East?" (Whitlock 2007, 53). The accumulated array of veiled Muslim women is a powerful and cunning exercise of book marketing when there is a longing and exigency in the West to better comprehend the Muslim communities. This exotic exhibition of many copies of Muslim life narratives, all published from 2001 onwards is suggestive of an old desire to unveil the veiled. It would be an extremely difficult job for the Western audiences of the women's memoir from the Middle East to face a line of veiled women on the covers of multitude memoirs and not get the sense to unveil or 'disentangle' and 'liberate' the Muslim woman. Pulling the Western eyes behind the chador or under the burka is an effective rhetorical strategy that draws out both "sympathy and advocacy" and can be put to quite "various political and strategy uses" (Whitlock 2007, 47).

The propagandistic role of these life narratives makes them 'soft weapons' as these narratives are one of the most alluring forms for the representation and naturalization of the exotic and an offering of genuine others. The life narratives are used to "merchandise exotic cultures" to manufacture the 'Other' (Huggan 1997, 412). The proliferation of Muslim women memoirs in bookstores across the West is also indicative of a unique shift in the publishing of life narratives since 2001. The publishing industry circulates these texts as commodities of the 'postcolonial exotic.' Postcoloniality, in this sense and as seen by Gayatri Spivak (1990), is a state of consistent and uninterrupted vigilance to the neo-colonial and neo-oriental 'regimes of values' through which literary texts are produced, disseminated and consumed. The global publishing industry produces and markets hard copy of life narratives for the popular consumption rapidly in response to current affairs and popular tastes. This indicates something about life narrative: "it is porous, it is open to fashion, and it maneuvers in networks of power in complex ways" (Whitlock 2007, 54). The cautiously orchestrated engineering of information in these life narratives suggests the presence of an imperialistic control. This control takes the forms of the distribution of certain classifications of information and engenders the engineering of consent through the gentle convincement of public opinion management (Robins and Webster 2001). Although this burgeoning canon of memoirs by and about Muslim women saturates the Western literary markets, publishers are still keen to publish these narratives because the publishing industry is run according to the neo-colonial market schemes.

Besides the imperialistic desire to augment the visibility of these narratives, it seems that the world of publishing thinks of nothing but a lucrative business which appraises profit as the benchmark of success and pays no slightest attention to the inaccuracy of the life narratives (Fiore 2010). Another industry which promotes these life narratives is educational institutes. These Muslim life narratives which have been promoted as cultural products of 'marginal' people are now part of a curriculum across North America and Europe in the disciplines of International Relations, Women's Studies, English and Anthropology, with course titles as varied as 'Women and Islam,' 'Understanding Totalitarianism,' 'Understanding Culture and Cultural Difference' and 'Conflict and Gender. Some of them such as Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir of *Persepolis: The Story of Childhood* (2003) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2004) are the reading items at West Point, the United States Military Academy. Both the publishing houses and education institutes are participating in what is called an 'alterity industry:' "one which involves the trafficking not only of culturally "othered" artifacts but of the institutional values that are brought to bear in their support" (Huggan 1997, 413). These life narratives have been taken as a reflection of women's oppression living under the Islamic societies and a lack of every kind of freedom. The fact that they are now part of a curriculum at the military and academic institutions in the West reveals the role of literary pieces and their authors in justifying the imperial rule and intervention in the Islamic societies. I am not accusing all Muslim women memoirists of complicity with imperialism and I am not discrediting their work and agency in its entirety. From their representation of Muslim women, I feel empowered by their resistance to the enforced dress code and feel sympathized with the Muslim women as subordinated to enact the male patriarchal rules. However, I feel alienated as they generalize, exaggerate and come up with reductive images. These traits put their work at the service of imperialism where the terms 'marginality, authenticity, and resistance' have been exploited as commodities of the exotic culture.

What also put these life narratives on a pedestal and offer more visibility are the international prizes and awards. The international literary award or prize is the legitimizing machinery that confers recognition and prominence to the authors. These awards exist within a broader structure of sanction or "consecration" (Bourdieu 1993). In other words, the literary accolades do more than just "reward the significant achievement of a writer; they stake a claim in the right to judge-to legitimize-that writers' work" (Huggan 1997, 413). Humanitarian awards provide another platform where the life narratives and their authors become the limelight for

giving voice to the unseen and unheard. These awards and accolades endorse the "commodification of a glamorized cultural difference" (Huggan 1997, 412). Thus, its easy accessibility and the super- visibility can be sought in the empire's will to perpetrate and perpetuate the orientalist stereotypes. It cannot be refuted that the market, publication, and dissemination of this genre of literature are being watched and controlled vigilantly by the West but critics ironically seem to be participating in offering more visibility to these life narratives. They are so obsessed with criticizing these life narratives by and about Muslim women and are stuck in a debate on whether they are revealing the domestic violence or creating and corroborating Islamophobia that they overlook to accentuate the significance of other discourses that bring to surface a multi-vocal and multi-layered picture of the diverse realities, interpretation, practices, and ideas that shatter the stereotypes. There are loads of discourses produced by Muslim diaspora that debunk the stereotypical images about Muslims and create a better sentiment towards Muslims.

## **Muslim Diaspora & Countering the Stereotypes**

All cultures are located in place and time. Exile culture is located at the intersection and in the interstices of other cultures. Physically placed outside its original homeland, it is mentally and emotionally both here and there, and as a result, it is both local and global. Hamid Naficy (1993, 2)

Muslims forms a growing sect of the world's current migrant and refugee population. These populations are very much heterogeneous not only due to their own "internal differentiation of each community along class, ethnic, rural, urban and sectarian affiliations, but also because of national-cultural idiosyncrasies and the influences on each of the diasporic communities of differing social, cultural and integration policies in the host societies" (Moghissi 2006, xiv). Despite these diverse and distinctive ethnicities, cultures, histories, and languages, they share certain beliefs and practices which help them form a group identity and solidarity. Over the past two decades or so, the Muslim diaspora communities have grown considerably. This growth is not just an increase in population but it is also the growth of the community as a community and as a segment of the society that has been attracting major attention during the past twenty years. The shared beliefs and practices, and the centrality of Mecca are helpful in developing a community, but what makes the Muslim diaspora a diasporic community is a consciousness that many Muslim share. This consciousness is built up and reinvigorated by the hostility, discrimination, and marginalization that Muslims are subject to across the

West. The transnational bonds amongst Muslim diaspora no longer have to be "cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyber space, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination" (Cohen 1996, 516). The 'Diaspora consciousness' is a specific type of awareness which is usually produced amongst transnational communities of the contemporary period (Safran 1991; Clifford 1994).

The diaspora consciousness' particularity is described variously "as being marked by a dual or paradoxical nature" (Vertovec 1999, 8). It is comprised negatively by experiences of being discriminated and expulsion, and positively by relating with a historical legacy or political forces of the contemporary period such as Islam. This sense of duality of consciousness is the diasporic community's cognizance of decentered link of being concurrently 'home away from home' or 'here or there'. Clifford (1994, 32) suggests that "the empowering paradox of diaspora is that dwelling here assumes a solidarity and connection there... [It is] the connection (elsewhere) that makes a difference (here)." Being cognizant of multi-locality provokes the need to conceptually link oneself with others, both 'here' and 'there' sharing the same 'roots' and 'routes'. Anchored within such discourse, community consciousness and awareness within the Muslim diaspora communities led to the production of a myriad of discourses that have brought the Muslim diaspora experience to the realm of popular culture. These narratives, whether visual or textual, can challenge the orientalist stereotypes through reversing the distorted images of Muslims as they are much misunderstood outside of Muslim countries. The 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Hostage Crisis, the return of military regime in Egypt, the rise of Taliban & Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan along with the emergence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria have led to further stereotyping of Muslims as extremists and trigger gloomy images of agonized people, especially black chador-clad women living under the rules of men with long beard wearing turban in a highly theocratic political system with a deep-seated antagonism towards the West. Many of these sentiments might be true but they are not a proper understanding of Islam and Muslims.

Undoubtedly, Muslim diaspora in the West can challenge the stereotypes and bridge the East-West binary through their creative works. The perception oftentimes is that the first generation Muslim diaspora can better challenge the stereotypes as "the transnational attachments will confine themselves to the first generation" (Levitt 2009, 1225). It has been argued that the immigrants' children do not possess

a similar degree of intensity and frequency in engaging with homeland values and practices as their parents (Kasinitz et al. 2008). However, I argue that while first-generation Muslim diaspora invests a great deal in reversing the stereotypes, the second generation feels the fragmentary nature of the world and goes one step further by sewing the splits. Being raised in exile gives the children the opportunity to grow up in an environment where they get to know and appreciate the values, practices, and ideas of both their parents' countries of origin and hostland; hence, they master multiple cultural repertoires that can be cherry-picked in response to the stereotypes. Although a sense of duality creeps up along with the dispersal and fragmentation of identity, the works produced by this group are accounts of an individual quest to negotiate a sense of 'cultural identity.' As Hall puts it, cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as "being" which belongs to future as much as to the past" (2003, 236). For this generation, writing, painting, and filmmaking is a way of negotiating a sense of identities by bridging the cultural gap between their home and host cultures. Once they are grown up, the senses of 'here and there,' hyphenated identities and exile help them become, to borrow the term from Dabashi (2015), actively amphibian. Dabashi (2015) argues that to be actively amphibian, the Muslim immigrants should get rid of senses such as exile and hyphenated identities because those terms make them doubly marginalized. However, I argue that if the senses of exile and hyphenated identities are to be eliminated, then it is an arduous task for the Muslim diaspora to experience the 'double consciousness' which seems to be a prerequisite for being actively amphibian. Amphibians' adaptability to live on both habitats can be exemplary but they are sensitive to anything that adversely affects either kind of their habitat; this sensitivity comes from consciousness.

One such work produced by amphibian Muslim diaspora is Amin Palangi's *Waking with Martyrs* (2012). Palangi is an Iranian-born Australian filmmaker whose *Waking with Martyrs* is a documentary about his sojourn with Rahian-e Noor to the sites of Iran-Iraq war in Iran. Rahian-e-Noor is a series of pilgrimages to the remote sites of Iran-Iraq war, and is organized and instituted by the Iranian government. It is usually a week-long camp and a twice a year event where a great number of people embark. Although Rahian-e-Noor is a new and unique experience for Palangi, the Iran-Iraq war is by no means unfamiliar to him. Right at the outset of the war, his father left his family to go to Khorramshahr, the then occupied city in the Southwest of Iran. Upon his arrival, his father, Naser Palangi, who was a twenty-four year old art student, started to revive the dusty city by painting on the walls of the mosque in Khorramshahr which later became the iconic site for the city's

resistance and triumph. Driven by the craving to see his father's murals and the curiosity to find out the intention and infatuations over this journey, he starts to record the events for his documentary (Palangi 2013). Palangi's *Waking with Martyrs* is one of the few documentaries about Rahian-e-Noor. His documentary brings to light the facts about the often not heard and not seen groups in the Iranian society for the Western audiences.

Palangi enjoys the position of being insider-outsider. As an outsider he knows the culture of the West, the interest of the Western media and audiences and he possesses enough knowledge in framing the concept for better understanding; as an insider he knows the language and the Iranian culture and experiences the pilgrimage in Rahian-e-Noor which offers a new dimension to his outsider status (Palangi 2013). As a culturally hybrid filmmaker, he is fully aware not to fall into the stereotype traps about Iran and tries to be as fair as possible in representing Iran and depiction of the Iranian pilgrims of Rahian-e-Noor. Palangi's documentary is topical in that he has made the film when Rahian-e-Noor made it to the headlines because of all the traffic accident fatalities en route to these sites. What is the obsession with Rahian-e-Noor tours despite all those fatal accidents is the question that Palangi addresses in his documentary. As many of the Rahian-e-Noor pilgrims are pro-government, Palangi offers a glimpse and different viewpoints to his Western audiences about these pro-governments groups. Many people who have either been on the Rahian-e-Noor tours or have sent family members learned that there is more to the simple pilgrimage to the war fronts. While trying to avoid stereotype in representing these pro-government groups, Palangi confirms this sentiment by delving into the issue and digging out the mission of these trips. The relating of a conversion of a Chinese lady who ran into the Rahian-e-Noor tours and upon seeing the war front kneels and instantly converts to Islam and the story of an American woman who accompanied Rahian-e-Noor in skirt and jacket but was so touched by the event that turned into chador reveals the spiritual side of the pilgrimage along with its ideological mission.

Palangi makes it a point to hint that it is not just religious people who go to these sites; irrespective of whether you are pro-government or otherwise, martyrs are always looked up by the general population. It is this insider-outsider position of Palangi that makes him as balanced as possible in representing the group. Another issue that demonstrates Palangi's ambivalent position is the way he approaches the issue of veiling. In the 'shout-to-liberate-women' life narratives, veiled women have no agency and are reduced to "apparition" (Nafisi 2003, 217), "unrecognizable"

(Satrapi 2003, 126), shy, quiet and submissive (Nemat 2007). They are disembodied, fragmented and have no visibility in these life narratives. In his documentary, veiled women move, speak and have authority and agency of their own. Mahya, who is a co-organizer of the trip, is one of these women who recites a poem in front of a camera and even tells the filmmaker how to connect spiritually to the war site to find his "right path." While filming the women section in the entry scene to the chambers of Sayad Shirazi, Mahya faces the camera and speaks. This is where the western audience can feel a chador-clad woman can have the agency of her own. This sentiment is corroborated as Palangi (2013, 51) argues that "Mahya's confession to and about the camera suddenly gives her a sense of agency...This representation...gives her a sense of individuality and differentiates her from other women who may appear to look similar to the viewer under the chador." Her act of facing the camera and speaking is indicative of the fact that she wants to be "recognized and acknowledged by others who will consequently view her on screen" (Palangi 2013, 52). This is how Palangi reverses the Western perception that Muslim women are static being and shatters the "Oriental lunacy" that Muslim women, be it Iranians or Arabs or Indians, are secluded to home, "while the public domain is left to men" (Dabashi 2005, 47).

Another vibrant scene in regards to veiling is the debate on a bus where women engage in talking about the concept of veiling and hijab. The different and conflicting perspectives on the concept of the veiling are accentuated to show the Western audience that Iranian women have different ideas and perspectives about hijab. The fact that they are arguing about it and have their different views on veiling is conducive to counter the Western perception that veiled Iranian women have no agency. The presence of few women who are not wearing chador also helps the western audience to see that chador is not the only means of coverage for Iranian women and there are Muslim women who wear the veil of their own volition, and they feel liberated, not suppressed. Knowingly or unknowingly, Palangi also shatters the stereotypes of the plastic key to paradise story. A number of diasporic life narratives such as Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: The Story of Childhood* (2003), Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003), and Shirin Ebadi's *Iran Awakening* (2006) along with many Middle East analysts have referenced this plastic key. Nafisi claims that ten to sixteen year-old kids were promised "keys to heaven where they could finally enjoy all the pleasures from which they had abstained in life" (208-9) Similar claims were made by Ebadi in her book: "young recruits, wearing red bandannas and their keys to heaven around their necks, boarding busses for the Iraqi battlefields" (2006, 61), Satrapi states that their

family maid's son was given a key, a plastic one painted in gold, at school. The kids at school were told that "if they went to war and were lucky enough to die, this key would get them to heaven" (2003, 99), and later her cousin who is a soldier asserts that "they key to paradise was for poor people. Thousand kids, promised a better life, exploded on the minefields with their keys around their necks (2003, 101). This myth was taken so far to the extent that there were reports of importing hundreds of thousands golden plastic keys from Taiwan. Palangi reverses this stereotypical myth through his representation of the variety of experiences that the pilgrims go through but not including a single scene on the plastic key. The fact that there is not a single scene on the plastic key while his aim is to bring to light different aspects of the soldiers and martyrs' life in the front through the representation of Rahian-e- Noor is suggestive of the ludicrousness of the story. Instead, he represents men and women pilgrims reading and reciting Quran and Mafatih-al-Jenan which alludes to the fact that volunteers who wanted to go to the front were not given a plastic key to heaven but a copy of Mafatih-al-Jinan which means the key to paradise by Abbass Qumi.

It is precisely this type of filmmaking that Hamid Naficy terms as 'accented cinema'; it is a term that refers to the cinema of those who live and work outside of their homeland (Naficy 2001). One of the common attributes of these accented films is that they echo the cultural alterity and "double consciousness" of their authors (Naficy 2001, 22). Accented films such as Palangi's tend to amalgamate the aesthetic and stylistic influences from the cinematic traditions of the filmmaker's homeland and hostland. Being an insider-outsider, Palangi senses the fragmentary nature of the world and simply wants to bridge the differences between West and East. He is cognizant that the most predicament issue of our time is how we are to live together despite all the violence that has filled the world and therefore feels the responsibility to challenge the dichotomization of West-East in his documentary. Focusing on 'we' and 'together,' his documentary shatters the line drawn between 'us' and 'them' or the 'different' and the 'same' as it is a transcultural film. Like his father's painting which revived the dusty city of Khorramshahr during the war, Palangi's documentary rebuilds the image of Iranians in the world and brings a newer understanding towards Iran and Muslims.

## Conclusion

That life narratives by and about Muslim women support and justify the hegemony project of imperialism does not necessarily mean that these narratives do not possess a degree of truth in them and it by no means suggests that all the diasporic

memoirs that have emerged in post-9/11 period have responded to the Western curiosity about Islam and Muslims in the same way. While many have fallen into the trap of neo-orientalism by reproducing the same stereotypical orientalist depictions, some have tried to historicize and represent Islam and their country through a more or less truly objective perspective. Even those memoirs that are involved in the politics of neo-orientalism do possess a degree of truth but what makes them vulnerable to be on the same wavelength with orientalism or put them at the service of imperialism are their one-sided portrayals, depictions out of contexts, generalizations, and selectivity. It is undeniable that some conservative interpretations of Islamic religious scripts are misogynist and in favor of patriarchy but many Muslims are staunch supporter of women's right and there are countless numbers of strong women in the Muslim world. Muslim diaspora communities have always been concerned with theses untrue feelings and are constantly working through their creative work to debunk these images for creating a better sentiment. Amin Palangi's *Waking with Martyrs* shatters the Islamophobia/ Iranophobia, challenges many stereotypes about the place of women in Muslim countries, and pushes against the individualistic autobiographies of the oppressed Muslim women. In an era when the public discourse in the West is increasingly positioning Muslims as the 'Other,' his insider-outsider position helps him in better framing the issues for his Western audiences. Knowing the Western culture and the Western media and being an Iranian gives him the privilege to be as balanced as possible in representing Muslims and Iranians. He brings a newer and better understanding of Iran and Islam while bridging the so-called dichotomy of West/East. Although his primary of reference is Iran, his representation of Muslim veiled women and Muslim men is situated in a broader spectrum within the context of the Muslim world.

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## **Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences**

### ***A Critical Approach to Seyed Javad Tabatabai's Narrative on Ibn Khaldun***

**Seyed Javad Miri**

Associate Professor of Sociology and History of Religions  
Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies  
Tehran, Iran

#### **Abstract**

In this article the author is looking at the narrative of Seyed Javad Tabatabai on Ibn Khaldun. Tabatabai is an Iranian philosopher who has worked consistently on various dimensions of disciplinary social sciences. In his remarkable work on Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences, he tries to conceptualize the relation between traditional forms of cognition as they appeared within the Islamic Civilization and modern forms of disciplinary rationality. He argues that Ibn Khaldun, in despite of his intellectual brilliance, could not overcome the limitations of traditional reason and this has caused a great blow to contemporary Iranian subjectivity. In this article, I have tried to take issue with his narrative on Ibn Khaldun as it has been conceptualized in his masterpiece on Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences.

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldun, Social Sciences, Tabatabai, Hegel, Eurocentric.

## Introduction

Before starting the central theme of this work I need to say few introductory points for those of you who may not be familiar with current research on social sciences and the way Iranian scholars or social theorists read Ibn Khaldun. First of all, it should be mentioned that in Iran, prior to modern scholarship, we cannot see a Khaldunian tradition of social philosophy as compared to other classical thinkers such as Avicenna, Alpharabius, Algazel, Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi or Mulla Sadra. In other words, Ibn Khaldun has not been engaged upon prior to orientalistic engagements which dawned upon Iranian scholarship in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. To put it bluntly, when we talk of Ibn Khaldun in Iran, it is the modern Ibn Khaldun who has been introduced to the Iranian Scholarship through eurocentric vision and this is different than the Ibn Khaldun whom the Turkish scholarship based on the Ottoman tradition has come to terms with. The first translation of Ibn Khaldun's *Prolegomena* into Persian was by Mohammad Parvin Gonabadi in 1966. (Gonabadi, 1996) Prior to this date we do not see any systematic study of Ibn Khaldun as we see on other historical figures in the Islamic tradition. Of course, there are many reasons for that but one which I can say unequivocally is the impression which Iranian philosophers have attached upon Ibn Khaldun, i.e. his anti-Shiite tendencies. However, this should not be understood in the sense we understand the concept of Shiism today, i.e. in a sectarian mode but we should conceptualize this word in a meta-theoretical fashion. In other words, Shiism was understood as an intellectual inclination (a la mu'tazilite) while its opposition was Asharite school of theology. For instance, the contemporary Iranian philosopher Gholam Hossein Dinani considers Ibn Khaldun's metaphysical paradigm as an Asharite form of cognition while Avicenna is considered to favor the primacy of intellect in understanding reality. This perception seems to be instrumental as far as Ibn Khaldun's position in the Shiite tradition is concerned. However, we can find traces of Ibn Khaldun in the writings of contemporary Iranian philosophers such as Morteza Muttahari and Allama Mohammad Taghi Jafari but it is hard to talk about a Khaldunian tradition in Iran. However, after the translation of Ibn Khaldun into Persian by 1966 we can see various forms of application of Ibn Khaldun within various disciplines of history, sociology and even Marxist schools of thought such as Tudeh Party. Again here we do not see systematic engagements with Ibn Khaldun but aspects of sporadic studies which are deeply disorganized. It may not be an exaggeration to mention Professor Taghi Azad Armaki at Tehran University as one of the leading figures who conceptualized Ibn Khaldun not as a lone figure in the context of Islamic civilization but as part of a paradigm of social thought in the Muslim world

along with characters such as Alpharabius, Avicenna, Al-Biruni and so on and so forth. In other words, Taghi Azad Armaki viewed Ibn Khaldun as part and parcel of an organic tradition rather than interpreting it as an extension of eurocentric tradition. His work was entitled as *The social thought of Muslims from Alpharabius to Ibn Khaldun* and published in 1995 in Iran. (Armaki, 1995) Of course, we need a more systematic approach to Ibn Khaldun in Iran but I just wanted to give you a glimpse of the state of the art in Iran and then move on to the main topic of my research which is on the narrative of Ibn Khaldun as constructed by Seyed Javad Tabatabai. His book on Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences was published in 1994. He argues that the main point of his discourse on Ibn Khaldun is to demonstrate the pitfalls of those who consider Ibn Khaldun as the founder of social sciences. When we read the book on *Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences* written by Seyed Javad Tabatabai (Tabatabai, 2011) the first question which comes to mind is the issue of bibliography. In other words, on what kind of literature is his plot based on? To put it differently, we need to know since the demise of Ibn Khaldun what kind of studies have been conducted by Ibn-Khaldunologists. This is a very complex question but for the sake of argument, I would like to simplify the matter by arguing that there are two great traditions in Ibn-Khaldunology: The first one is the Orientalist-Arabic tradition, i.e. the Ibn Khaldun whom Orientalists found and restored and then it was taken by Arabs who were fond of this orientalist image of Ibn Khaldun as the founder of sociology prior to August Comte and Vico. But the second tradition which I think it is even more authentic than the former paradigm is the native tradition of Ibn-Khaldunology which interestingly it does not exist in Iran and to be clearer it is not even known or discussed in the Iranian literature on Ibn Khaldun. In Iran, we did not have Ibn-Khaldunology tradition until very recently that few Iranian scholars began to discuss Ibn Khaldun within the context of social sciences. For example in the field of philosophy, we cannot see any trace of Ibn-Khaldun in the works of Iranian philosophers and thinkers or generally in the Islamic East. Where there was Ibn Khaldunology and Seyed Javad Tabatabai does not touch in his narrative is in the Ottoman World, where we can see a continuous engagement with Ibn Khaldun for the past 400 years up to this very day in different forms and shapes depending on contingencies of time and space and context. To put it bluntly, here we have had a long-standing tradition of Ibn-Khaldunology and this tradition is not just an intellectual pastime since the Ottoman Turks were basically involved in studies on Ibn Khaldun due to the fact that the question of decline of the Empire was a factual question for them and they were trying to 'fix' the problem by discovering the historical laws which govern the patterns of rise and fall of empires.

(Senturk, 2015) In other words, the Ottomans had serious questions such as is this downfall a real one and if that is the case then is it possible to prevent it? When we look at the Khaldunian narrative of Seyed Javad Tabatabai then we see no references to this Ottoman tradition and it is clear that he is engaged with the specter of Ibn Khaldun which is concocted by the Orientalist-cum-Arab tradition. To put it briefly, the literature review in Tabatabai's discourse is deeply incomplete and orientalist and this is one of the methodic drawbacks of Tabatabai's discourse which decreases its coherency and validity as far as Ibn Khaldun and social sciences in the geography of the Islamicate context is concerned.

## Abstention of Thinking

Tabatabai at the beginning of his work admits that:

*"Our point of view is the idea of modernity because exiting from the crisis and impasse conditions, in terms of abstention not possible except through a fundamental shift in perspective. The emphasis on the position of modernity and its repetition. . . was carried out according to this fundamental consideration that in terms of abstaining thought and rigidity of tradition, one can confront tradition seriously only by its critique, otherwise the tradition cannot be examined by reliance on its own possibilities" (Tabatabai, 2011. 7-8).*

The question that can be raised here is that if "abstention of thinking" governs us, so how is the thinking process basically possible? If refusal means "abstention", then this meaning of "refusal" assumes that there is the "subject" and that subject is escaping from the reality which envelops it, but Tabatabai, time and again, in his discourse, insists that one of the reasons for abstention is the absence of the *subject*. In other words, who is the subject of refusal which abstains from thinking engagement? The second question that can be raised is the concept of "tradition". What is tradition? Is there just one "tradition" or multiple forms of traditions are ongoing in a civilization and if there is only one reading of the tradition or one could discern different interpretations of tradition even in the pre-modern world, in the context of Islamic world, which were flowing and one could argue that this reduction of multiplicities into singularity itself is a kind of incitement to rigidity. Isn't it? I think Tabatabai makes the tradition Singular for the methodic and then ontological reasons in order to be able to justify the duality of tradition and

modernity- and that of the Euro-centric kind-, otherwise, if we interpret tradition in philosophical terms, then one cannot consider it in an integrated fashion as an integrated tradition is an ideological concept and is far from tradition as such. To put it bluntly, his interpretation of tradition is based on a Euro-centric subject-object view which sees the Euro-centric reason as valid form of reasoning but deems other forms of reasons devoid of rationality.

Another important point mentioned by Tabatabai is the concept of "sociological ideologies". Although he acknowledges that this concept is very ambiguous and he uses this concept for the lack of a better concept until finding more expressive concepts, nonetheless in my view the problem with this concept is not its being unclear but it is the fact of equating "ideology" and "sociology" as though they are synonymous. In a sense, no conception can be non-ideological, and it means that all our understandings are intertwined with "background assumptions" or "value systems" of some kind, but one of the tasks of sociological insight is that makes the subject conscious and then self-conscious to the presence of these value-assumptions and paradigms so that a different understanding could become possible in its various dimensions apart from dominant values. But suddenly to reduce the possibility of sociology as a vision in Iran and in a single sentence turn it into sociological ideologies cannot be an example of highly sophisticated philosophical method but itself is an instance of ideological assault on other forms of cognitions which may differ from the one we may hold dear.

## Anti-Modernity or Multiple Modernities

The other important discussion of Tabatabai is "settling accounts" with Iranian intellectuals such as Shayegan, Al-e Ahmad, Ehsan Naraghi and Shariati. He says:

*"Most contemporary writers have tried to offer a return to tradition, an ideological interpretation of possibility of modernity in Western thought as a possible way of a different kind, but in the opposite direction of it. This is the anti-modernity interpretation of tradition that authors with different perspectives . . . but aligned in the direction of settling accounts with Iranian fledgling modernity . . . i.e. they offered an ideological form in order to combat the Iranian modern form of social organization . . ." (Tabatabai, 2011, 10).*

Now, the main question is that with what kind of understanding of modernity Tabatabai has conceptualized the Iranian so-called anti-modernist thinkers? In other

words, could we classify the aforementioned thinkers as anti-modern or those who were looking for the possibility of multiple modernities? One of the very important discussions in contemporary global social sciences is the distinction between Westernization and Modernization; now, the question is whether Shariati, for example, was shunning anti-Westernization or anti-modernization? Which one is the concern of Shariati? Additionally, the more important question is whether Westernization itself is not a form of possibility of some type of emergence? In other words, westernization is one of the possibilities of modernity and today due to complex understanding drawn upon historical studies and the ways in which cultures may influence forms of different human conditions in relation to various kinds of civilizational conditions, we have come to realization that we should make a distinction between modernity and multiple modernities, as human societies may produce different kinds of modernities depending on their distinct historical conditionalities. However, it seems that Tabatabai still relies upon eurocentric form of conceptualizing modernity. I have attempted to give you a glimpse of his thought generally so you could have a better understanding of Tabatabai's reading of Ibn Khaldun.

## Understanding the Trajectory of Historical Transformations

One of the most important dimensions of Tabatabai's discourse is his attitude to Ibn Khaldun and even more importantly to the "Islamic Period". He states:

*"Ibn Khaldun confined himself by raising question within the boundaries of the tradition and complied by its requirements. The underlying reason for this was that Ibn Khaldun was a thinker of the Islamic period but not a new era that had to herald and ... begun in the western world" (Tabatabai, 2011. 88).*

To understand his approach to Ibn Khaldun we need to interrogate his philosophical understanding of history. In other words, behind Tabatabai's view toward Ibn Khaldun and his intellectual system one can discern a kind of philosophy of history that takes history in a linear form which starts from point A to point B. To put it differently, this is a way of understanding historic developments of humanity but this is not the only way of conceptualizing historical cycles as there are other forms of understanding the history which are both possible and desirable -since there is no philosophical reason that explain the "necessity" of new epoch as a linear development.

Of course, there is another point which is assumed unproblematically in the abovementioned reference and that is the distinction between the concept of "period" and "era" or "epoch". It seems Tabatabai does not problematize this distinction as far as Ibn Khaldun is concerned and we know that the distinction in Hegelian literature is a very serious one and there is no consensus in this regard. This is to argue that we need to problematize this distinction as the relation between Ibn Khaldun and the concept of "epoch" is really controversial.

## Renewal of and Abrogation of the Tradition

Tabatabai raises another discussion about Ibn Khaldun and that is the distinction between "renewal of tradition" and "abrogation of the tradition" by arguing that:

*"The crisis that led Ibn Khaldun to reflect on the nature of the Islamic period it should have been on abrogation of the tradition and not the renewal of the tradition if his attempt was going to be successful but he did not understand the delicate distinction between these two different dimensions "(Tabatabai, 2011. 98).*

The important point here is the concept of "abrogation" which Tabatabai has taken it as the equivalent of deconstruction but in Quranic literature "abrogation" does not refer to deconstruction but it is rather an act of abrogating and this blending of the concept makes us to ponder critically upon Tabatabai's type of interpretation of Ibn Khaldun. In other words, one could pose a more poignant question by asking whether Ibn Khaldun, has not attempted to deconstruct the tradition or what Tabatabai is looking for in the Khaldunian paradigm is not deconstruction but the destruction of the tradition. Syed Farid Alatas in sociological theories of Ibn Khaldun (Alatas, 2014) and the type of Khaldunian conceptualization has pointed out that Ibn Khaldun has made a kind of deconstruction, but what Tabatabai is referring to is abrogation of the tradition and here one should wonder what does this means. Does he mean the abrogation of the Quranic tradition? Does he refer to abrogation of the prophetic tradition? Does he mean abrogation of the literary tradition? More importantly it is the concept of "tradition" which one does not know that what is tradition in Tabatabai's frame of reference? I think the answer to this question should be found at the end of his work on *Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences*, where he holds that:

*"Ibn Khaldun could not avoid the common theological-monarchical episteme of Islamic epoch and was unable to develop a new episteme*

*by making a break with it in order to explain the degenerating conditions of the Islamic epoch" (Tabatabai, 2011. 360).*

It is interesting to note that Tabatabai in the chapter on *Theological Foundations of Social Thought of Ibn Khaldun*, mentions the concept of "theological-philosophical" instead of the concept of "theological-monarchical" which has been introduced as the main obstacle to Ibn Khaldun's thought and the question which one should raise in this regard is whether the concept of "Monarchy" is a philosophical concept or a mythical/historical one? In other words, in Tabatabai's discourse we are faced with various kinds of conceptual misconceptions on Ibn Khaldun which creates a sense of confusion to a point that one could wonder what Tabatabai implies when he addresses the question of 'relation' between Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences in the context of Islamic civilization. To put it differently, it is not clear that the conjunction of "and" which lies between Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences refers to what kind of relationship in the mind of Tabatabai.

The central point of Tabatabai seems to be the following:

*"Not only the founding and development of political thought in Iran were impossible but the epistemological conditions of Iran was so that even the reconceptualization of Greek political thought at the beginning of the Islamic period through translation into the Arabic language. . . was also not possible. This is a condition that we interpret it as condition of negation and in our understanding Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena. . . can be conceptualized [as one of the most important touchstones] of conditions of negation and its logic" (Tabatabai, 2011. 115).*

In other words, if we assume that from the outset of Islam and the entire Islamic period as parts of conditions of negation and consider non-refusal conditions equal to acceptance of Hellenistic and then Euro-centric rationality, then how can we resolve the conditions of negation solely through thinking today? Because the conditions are not just the product of ideas but also created by objective relations and for changing these relations which date back to 1400 years ago according to Tabatabai, how can they be overcome? Isn't it better for us to accept the conditions of eurocentric modernity and follow the path of Japan, Korea or China rather than overcoming the conditions of negation? Since it seems there is a kind of determinism or fatalism in the Tabatabai paradigm of negation which originates from the fact that multiple rationalities and diverse becomings in his thought that is deeply under the spell of Alexander Kojeve and the Kojevian interpretation of

Hegel that results in a form of thinking that rules out any possibility other than the Euro-centric landscape.

## Founding of Social sciences

Tabatabai believes that the transfer of Social Sciences

*“From West to other civilizational areas is not possible if we think of it as a matter of technological transfer ... in other words, the transfer of social sciences is deeply intertwined with serious reflection on the foundations of modern social sciences. Anyway, the problem of transfer of new social sciences is of a different category, because we cannot fathom the question without conceptualizing the link with tradition, i.e. when we talk about modern social sciences it should be borne in mind that their foundations are premised upon western tradition and without reflecting upon this tradition ... it is not possible to transfer this body of knowledge into the [non-western soil] ... ” (Tabatabai, 2011. 127).*

I think this is a very remarkable point, but this reflection leads us to an important question that is if the *transfer* is not possible based on deconstruction, then what is Tabatabai's project about? Doesn't he try to found the social sciences based on the paradigm of negation through a Kojevian interpretation of Hegelian philosophy? In other words, isn't the application of Kojevian concepts of Hegelian philosophy in understanding epoch, and its differences with period in the context of the Iranian thought a kind of *transfer*?

## Final Words

I think the narrative of Tabatabai on Ibn Khaldun and Social Sciences is deeply indebted to the eurocentric categories and also built upon orientalist vision of Ibn Khaldun which deprives us from encountering the multiplicities of Islamic classical tradition as well as recognizing the pluralities of rationalities beyond the Cartesian Cogito. Of course, his attempt should not be devalued as he forces us to rethink the classical rationalities within the Islamic civilization in a critical fashion and Ibn Khaldun as an example of classical rationality within the soil of Muslim civilization has been singled out by Tabatabai in order to make us conscious about uncritical conceptualization of sociological categories which are rampant in Iran and in other non-western social scientific traditions.

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## **Sacred and Profane Suffering in Islam and Buddhism:**

### *An Ontological and Axiological Approach*

#### **Zahra Akbari**

PhD Undergraduate of Research in Religions  
University of Religions and Denominations  
Qom, Iran

#### **Bahman Akbari**

University instructor and researcher of Islamic studies  
Faculty member of IHCS  
Tehran, Iran

#### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to examine the notion of “reducing suffering in human society through justice and philosophy” from a religious point of view. It opens with an elaboration of suffering within a structured and conceptual framework. Hence, it scrutinizes the concept of suffering using two approaches: ontological and axiological approach.

The essay first tackles the concept of suffering in Buddhism from an ontological point of view and then examines the same concept in Islam, both from ontological and axiological perspectives. Therefore, suffering is divided into two categories of sacred and profane; the former being the suffering which is due to the very creation of man and is the backdrop of his natural living conditions, and the latter happening to man because of his own deeds or the tyrant and ignorant social systems.

Authors also discuss another category of scared suffering which either results from the performance of religious duties, the observance of social responsibilities, or the empathy for the suffering of other humans. The article goes on to trace the roots of suffering in the human community, and

elaborates two notions of Justice and Wisdom (*hikma*) as the means offered by Divine Prophets to ameliorate human suffering.

**Keywords:** Suffering, Religion, Ontology, Axiology, Buddhism, Islam.

## Introduction

In our religious literature, at times, pain and suffering are deemed as ontological realities which are due to the act of creation, while on other occasions, they are depicted as the outcome of human actions and/or of tyrant and misguided social relations. Religious teachings are aimed at mitigating the latter, which result from criminal acts. Human history indicates crime as an indispensable element of human societies. However, this inseparable aspect has never prevented man from attempting to determine roots of crime and seek for ways to prevent it. This subject has not been limited to ordinary people. In fact, religions and prophets have also considered this issue. Islam, as a religion that claims to encompass all necessary mechanisms for human life, offers ways of preventing crime.

A number of criminologists, such as Gabriel Tarde, Grasmick, and David Evans, have examined the link between belief in Christianity and the level of crime. An enormous amount of evidence signifies that religious involvement may lower the risks of many delinquent behaviors (Evans et al., 1996,17: 43-70). “Stark, Kent, and Doyle (1982) found that areas with high church membership and attendance rates represented “moral communities,” while areas with low church membership typified “secularized communities.” (Johnson & Schroeder, 2014, 2)

Therefore, one may conclude that religion plays a considerable role in mitigating human desires and that there is an inverse relationship between religious faith and criminal activity.<sup>1</sup> In fact, not only religion but also spirituality performs this function. Spirituality is a psychological state which transcends religious beliefs<sup>2</sup> and creates motivation in man and feelings such as the comprehension of the divine greatness and respect for the universe. A spiritual person has a goal in life and has come to appreciate its meaning.

### 1. Suffering in Buddhism: An Ontological Examination

Trans-ethics is a philosophical analysis of ethical notions such as good and bad and dos and don'ts. It attempts to answer the questions like whether goodness has an external reality or is an abstract concept, or whether goodness is similar to color

which can be seen or is like pain that can be felt. The same trans-ethical approach must be adopted in the definition of suffering; i.e. what is suffering? According to Michael Palmer, in recent years, the increasing orientation toward linguistic analysis in philosophy has resulted in the rising prominence of this branch of philosophy of ethics (Palmer, 1995, 11).

Here, our focus is on the ontological and axiological analysis of suffering in Buddhism and Islam. Buddhism is a religion, and sometimes called a philosophy, which was founded upon the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who lived in circa 566 to 486 BCE. It is a religion of *Ārya dhrama* and a shamanistic creed. The Buddhist ethics is based on the foundations of “non-harming” and “tolerance”. The Buddhists resort to introspective methods to arrive at perspectives relating to the fundamental functions of the human psyche and the causal processes of the world. The Buddha examined phenomenal life objectively. He described life and universe as “an ever-rolling wheel with four spokes – birth, growth, decay and death”. (Humphrey, 1985, 80-81)

One of the fundamental principles of Buddhism is the concept of “suffering”. According to Buddha, after death, we will be reborn in a new body. This rebirth will be repeated for several times. He calls this the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. (Ibid, 92)

In this approach, existence, birth, old age, ailment, sorrow and hopelessness, and relationship with the unpleasant and separation from the pleasant are suffering. In sum, attachment is suffering. Suffering is caused by carnal desires. Its elimination is contingent upon the shedding of carnal desires and material attachments. According to Buddhist doctrine, (Ibid, 110) being free of suffering depends on the “Eight-fold Path” as follows:

1. The right speech
2. The right action
3. The right livelihood
4. The right effort
5. The right mindfulness
6. The right concentration

## 7. The right worldview

## 8. The right thought

The eightfold path underlined by the Buddha is intended to end all the suffering (Oldenberg, 1927, 206) with which all the creatures are afflicted and it is divided into three groups of Buddhist spiritual practices:

1. Righteousness (*sila*)
2. Oneness of heart (*samādhi*)
3. Superior wisdom (*prajña*)

Superior wisdom is the last part of the eightfold path. Worldview and right thought comprise superior wisdom (*prajña*). In Buddhism, achieving superior wisdom refers to gaining direct knowledge of the reality that lies beyond all phenomena; a perspective that transcends all forms of knowledge. This step follows those of righteousness and oneness of heart and is the outcome of a special Buddhist introspection. The right worldview is the true understanding of the four noble truths. The right thought includes kindness and love that cleanse the heart from any lust, ill-intention, and savagery. These pave the path for achieving superior wisdom. (Ibid, 209-2018)

Buddha elaborated five ethical principles that are simple and clear. While appearing to be more complete as compared with the ten commandments of Moses, they appear as being more difficult to observe: (1) Do not kill any live creature, nor allow others to do so. (2) Do not take possession of anything that does not belong to you, nor allow others to do so. (3) Do not allow another person to drink that which results in intoxication. (4) Do not allow anyone to lie. (5) Avoid adultery and evil actions.

## 2. Suffering in Islam

### a. An Ontological Point of View

A number of Quranic verses and Hadiths define the world as a dwelling that is filled with pain and suffering.<sup>3</sup> From the darkness of the womb to the various stages of childhood, adolescence, youth, old age, and death, man is inundated with suffering which also taints his fulfillments.<sup>4</sup> Neither its spring, nor its winter is lasting. “The world debilitates the bodies and rejuvenates the dreams. It draws closer to death and

makes for long-lasting desires. The one who achieves it suffers exhaustion and the one who fails to achieve it suffers the pain.” Imam Ali (A.S.) says.<sup>5</sup> He goes on in many other sayings as, “How do I describe a world, whose beginning is painful and whose end is nothingness. There is a reckoning in its lawful and a punishment in its unlawful.”<sup>6</sup> Or, “The world is a dwelling filled with disasters. It is understood through trickery and deceit. Its states are fluid and its people lack soundness. It is attended by myriad developments and colorful eras. Living therein is reproachful and bereft of serenity.”<sup>7</sup>

Given the fact that the world is transient and ephemeral,<sup>8</sup> the nature of the world is such that man, depending on his extent of attachment, will not experience serenity.<sup>9</sup> However, one must not come to the conclusion that the faithful are fully deprived of any serenity in this world. By establishing their link with God, realizing their goal, and understanding the nature of this world, the believers come to experience calmness and are content with the fate allotted to them by God. This is the true happiness for man. Hafez, the Quranic mystic and poet, underlines the fact that if one desires the beloved, one should not lose sight of her for even a moment, and if one attains to his beloved, one should let go of the world and its attachments in order to devote himself to the beloved. In this mystical outlook, the very nature of attachment is pain and suffering. In our religious literature, it is said that should one become negligent of himself; his relationship with and love of objects would transform into attachment and dependence; i.e. the means become ends and the relationship turns into shackles. It goes without saying that Islam considers the material world and living therein as unworthy of man’s ultimate perfection, since the eternal world is to follow the present and transient one, and man is worthier than becoming the prisoner of this world. This is what underlines reference to the notion of attachment in Persian literature, an attachment that results in human suffering. Hafez considers life in this world as suffering brought about by attachments and detachment from that would be the solution:

“I am a servant to the one who under this heaven

Is free from whatsoever that has a taint of attachment.” (Hafez, 1391, Sonnet 37)

Moreover, if man comes to experience the divine presence and achieves divine knowledge, he will realize divine serenity. In fact, this presence is tantamount to detachment from the transient world. Again, in his opening poem, Hafez examines this:

“O Hafez, if you seek presence, do not become absent from him;  
 When you attain to the beloved let go of the world.” (Ibid, Sonnet 1)

This interpretation of suffering is also evident in the ontology of a philosopher, like Abu Hatam Razi who offers a mythological account of creation. According to him, the universal soul intended to mix with matter in order to achieve physical pleasure. However, it was unaware that such action would lead it astray from its ultimate goal and hence would imprison it in the world of matter. (Razi, 2002, 34) Thus, according to the will of the creator, the universal soul was mingled with the primordial matter in various ways; a fact that gave rise to elements and objects, and to terrestrial creatures and heavens. Thus, the universal soul became oblivious to itself and plunged into suffering and despair. Thus, God sent the intellect to bring awareness to the soul of man, regarding the fact that this world is not its proper dwelling; that what he sees and desires in the primordial matter is impossible; and that there is no ascending from this material world unless the soul comes to remember its world, lets go of its love for primordial matter and regains its love for its own world. After detaching from the body, it would ascend to that world and dwell there for eternity. Razi also believed in incarnation.

Razi believes this world to be filled with evil and suffering. Ibn Maymum notes: “Razi has a famous book, which he titles ‘Theology’, wherein he has elaborated his great nonsensical statements. One such remark claims that there is more evil than good in this world. If one were to compare man’s comforts and pleasures with his sufferings, ailments, disabilities, problems, and sorrows, one would come to the conclusion that man’s existence is a great evil that has befallen him.” (Ibn Maymum, 2005, 67)”

According to Razi, the only way to achieve salvation is through intellect and philosophy. (Razi, 2002, 61) It is only through philosophy that souls are purified from the darkness of this world, are freed from suffering, and are able to leave this world. “Whoever learns philosophy, understands his world, does less harm and gains more knowledge, will escape this hardship.” (Nasir Khusru, 2005, 102) “... Whoever looks at philosophy and learns, even, a little, his soul will become purified and will escape this prison.” (Razi, 2002, 63) This is owing to the fact that philosophy is not merely a theoretical discipline, but a way of life and a key to knowledge and practice. However, souls will remain in this world until every soul is purified and desires its own world. Then, the soul will leave this world. Being fully separated from the body, the soul returns to its world and regains its comfort. Thus,

the world collapses and the primordial matter is freed from the prison of form and returns to its original state.

### **b. The Axiological Analysis of Suffering in Islamic Perspective**

In the axiological perspective of Islam, suffering is divided into two categories: sacred suffering and profane suffering. Sacred suffering is unintentional and is due to the very nature of the universe. On the contrary, profane suffering is intentional and manmade, and is the result of tyranny and the ignorance of tyrant and ignorant systems. Nevertheless, there are other types of sacred suffering that result from the volition of humans. These are sufferings that either result from performing religious duties, observance of social responsibilities, or the empathy for the suffering of other humans. In religious literature, these three types of sufferings are the suffering of hardship (musibat), the suffering of the performance of religious obligation (ta`at), and the suffering of avoiding sins (ma`siyat).

According to Sa`adi, the famous Persian poet:

“No treasure is gained without hard work;

Indeed the reward is for the one who works.” (No pain, no gain!) (Sa`adi, 2006, 953)

He also says:

“The children of Adam are limbs of one another,

And are all produced from the same substance.

When the world gives pain to one member,

The others also suffer uneasiness.

You, who are indifferent to the sufferings of others,

Deserve not to be called a man.” (Sa`adi, 2006, 31)

## **3. Sacred Suffering**

Motion is the fundamental principle of the world of existence. God has established rules in history and society that are followed by all. No one can halt, go back on or deviate from these rules. One such rule is man's inevitable movement toward God.

“O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord- painfully toiling, but thou shalt meet Him.” (Quran, Sura 84, Verse 6) Man advances and returns to his God, the Creator. “To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return.” (Quran, Sura 2, Verse 156)

However, his advancement appears to be attended by hardship and inflicting harm on himself. The Arabic term “*kad*” occurs both in connotation of effort and inflicting harm. He faces constant obstacles in his way. However, these are surmountable and turn into comfort, for every hardship is followed by ease. Indeed, it is a divine tradition that every hardship is followed by ease. “Indeed, there is relief after hardship.” (Quran, Sura 94, Verses 5-6) “Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief.” (Quran, Sura 65, Verse 7)

Patience and victory are old friends; Victory comes as a result of patience. In Sura 94, God addresses His messenger Mohammad (P.B.U.H.) thus:

“Have we not expanded your chest for you  
 And relieved you of your burden  
 That weighed down your back?  
 Have we not raised your remembrance?  
 Then, indeed, hardship is followed by ease,  
 Indeed, hardship is followed by ease!  
 So, when you have finished (your prayer), labor (in supplication),  
 And let your longing be for your lord (in humility).”<sup>10</sup>

In Sura 90, Verse 4 we see Allah saying “Verily We have created man into toil and struggle.” These types of suffering are not defects, but rather an advantage for man, which drive him toward growth and perfection. As background to human existence, these are to be viewed as scared suffering. However, the second category of suffering consists of those that arise from individual or collective crimes which result from tyranny or ignorance of human being and their social systems. These are profane sufferings that are manmade and the outcome of human social systems. In fact, the outcome of tyranny and ignorance appear in the form of pain and suffering that afflict men in this world and the next.<sup>11</sup>

On the one hand, a great deal of sufferings results from the actions of men, while other worldly hardships and sufferings are punishments for men's sins. "Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness." (Quran, Sura 42, Verse 30)

On the other hand, man's good and bad deeds leave their marks on nature. Some human actions prevent the benefits of water and soil and result in the occurrence of detrimental events. Many evil environmental events are caused by human actions.

In Quran, the hypocrites are those who, upon their assumption of power, only follow the path of destruction of cultivations and human generations (economy and culture). "There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle thee, and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies." (Quran, Sura 2, Verse 204) "When he turns his back, His aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But Allah loves not mischief." (Ibid, Verse 205)

Imam al-Sadiq (A.S.) says: "The life of creatures on the land and in the sea depends on rain. If no rain falls, there will be corruption on the land and in the sea. The rain stops when human sins increase." (Hashemi Rafsanjani, 1992, 287)

In the Quran it is said that, "Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned, that Allah may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)." (Quran, Sura 30, Verse 4)

In the Quranic perspective, man calls upon God when he is faced with hardship, but he ascribes pleasures and comforts to his own doing. "Now, when trouble touches man, he cries to Us: But when We bestow a favor upon him as from Ourselves, he says, 'This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge (I have)! Nay, but this is but a trial, but most of them understand not.'" (Quran, Sura 39, Verse 49)

The Quran says: "Thus did the (generations) before them say! But all that they did was of no profit to them. Nay, the evil results of their Deeds overtook them. And the wrong-doers of this (generation) the evil results of their Deeds will soon overtake them (too), and they will never be able to frustrate (Our Plan)." (Ibid; Verses 50-51)

## Conclusion

Given that corruption and crime on earth are rooted in the tyranny and ignorance of man, the prophets based their message on creating awareness and spreading justice. “We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; He was indeed unjust and foolish.” (Quran, Sura 33, Verse 72) Therefore, one may claim that the main goal of the divine religions is to reduce human suffering. The message of divine messengers is focused on a struggle against tyrant and ignorant systems that create suffering and violence and crime in human societies. The prophets were sent to command man to goodness and protect them from evil, and to declare permissible that which is pure and to declare impermissible that which is impure, and to lift the heavy burden of difficult tasks from their shoulders,<sup>12</sup> hence freeing them from their shackles.<sup>13</sup>

The Holy Quran enumerates the promotion of ethics and spirituality, the establishment of justice, and promotion of teaching and education, the struggle against ignorance, and the creation of a peaceful life as the main goals of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), whose achievement is the revival and development of human rights and, eventually, man’s guidance towards his ultimate perfection. “We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice; and We sent down Iron, in which is (material for) mighty war, as well as many benefits for mankind, that Allah may test who it is that will help, Unseen, Him and His apostles: For Allah is Full of Strength, Exalted in Might (and able to enforce His Will).” (Quran, Sura 57, Verse 25)

The following contains a number of common teachings of divine religions that are aimed at reducing human suffering. The Quran says “Those who follow the apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures), in the law and the Gospel; for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honor him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper.” (Quran, Sura 7, Verse 157)

God appointed the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) to guide men and to establish justice and to eliminate violence, duality, separation, and animosity. He commanded him to recite the life-giving tenets of Islam to the people and to call them to adhere to the straight path. This adherence, founded upon kindness and solidarity among humans as well as upon concepts that are in line with human nature, is a manifestation of monotheism. “As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah. He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.” (Quran, Sura 6, Verse 159)

The message of all prophets is founded upon a single pivot. They called people to common human values and natural teachings such as monotheism, the Judgment Day, piety and justice, prayer and fasting, and performing good deeds for parents and the needy. “The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - that which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which thou call them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him). (Quran, Sura 26, Verse 13)

Another verse refers to the common principles of religions, such as monotheism, performing good deeds for parents, murder, and internal and external corruption. “Say: ‘Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath (really) prohibited you from’: Join not anything as equal with Him; be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want; We provide sustenance for you and for them; come not nigh to shameful deeds. Whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom.” (Quran, Sura 6, Verse 151)

These types of notions are common to all divine religions. The Torah contains similar commandments, e.g. Exodus 20.<sup>14</sup> In four of its verses, the Quran commands to doing good deeds for one’s parents. Imam al-Sadiq (A.S.) says: “Doing good deeds for parents means to act in such a way that they will not be forced to bring themselves to make a request.” (Kulayni, 1996, vol. 2, 157; Majlisi, 1997, vol. 71, 39)<sup>15</sup>

## Note

1. There are indeed some other scholars, like Enrico Ferri, who consider religion as a cause of criminal activity and call for demolition of the church institution and monasteries. Ferri calls sentiments such as the sentiments of religion, honor, friendship, or love “instead of being forces opposed to crime” as “quiescent in the moral dynamics or else themselves become stimulants of crime.” (Ferri, 1917, 23)
2. In English language, the word religion is derived from the Latin root “religio” which points to a trans-human power that calls on man to adopt a particular mode of conduct in order to avoid an evil fate. This term applies to religious rituals performed in the shrine of a particular god. “Religio” refers to a man’s actions, his deep feelings, or that which affects his volition. It calls him to obedience, threatens him to punishment, offers him promises of rewards, or makes him committed to his community. (Wolf, 2007, 20 – 22)
3. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 217
4. Ibid, Sermon 226: The world is a dwelling that is attended by hardships.
5. Ibid, Aphorism 72.
6. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 466.
7. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 217.
8. Imam Ali (A.S.) repeatedly refers to the fact that the world is a good place but only for those who realize its transience. “The world is a good place, but only for the person who does not view it as his permanent dwelling.” (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 223) “The world is a place that one goes through, while the hereafter is a place of permanence. Thus, gather provisions from the place of your crossing for your place of dwelling.” (Ibid, Sermon 203)
9. “How can I be contented in the place of the beloved; Since the call to preparing for departure is constantly issued.” According to Hafez, the world is not the ultimate destination of man, but is an intermediate place, until he reaches his divine end. The night is dark and the sea is turbulent; What do the residents of safe shores know about our condition?
10. The expansion of chest is a simile to the enhancement of man’s capacity so as to be able to tolerate the hardships and be patient in the face of problems. The Arabic concept of “then” at the beginning of this verse is an indication of the fact that this is a universal rule that is not limited to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.). cf. Tabatabaei, vol. 20.
11. All punishments are not delayed until the Judgment Day. Some occur in this world: “Allah may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back.” (Quran, Sura 30, Verse 41) “For the evils of their Deeds will confront them, and they

will be (completely) encircled by that which they used to mock at.” (Quran, Sura 39, Verse 48)

12. The word “isr” means to keep or to detain. It refers to any cumbersome task or duty that prevents man from his activity. The word has also been used in the sense of promise, covenant, or punishment.
13. “Ahglal”, the plural of “Ghull” means chains, which is a reference to false beliefs, superstition, idolatry, heresy, and ignorant and cumbersome customs.
14. Two elders of Medina came to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.). Upon hearing this verse, they converted to Islam and asked to be sent a propagator. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) dispatched Mus`ab Ibn `Umayr to them. Thus, the ground was laid for the conversion of the inhabitants of Medina to Islam.
15. cf. Quran, 2: 83; 4: 36; 6: 151; 17: 23. Verse 153 of Sura 6 makes reference to other common principles of religions, such as respect for the property of orphans, fairness in transactions, justice in judgment and bearing witness, and the keeping of promises.

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## **The regional rise of the threat of Al Qaeda in the Persian Gulf since the Iraq War**

**Fatemeh Shayan**

Post-doctoral scholar  
University of Tampere  
Finland

### **Abstract**

There is a growing body of literature examining security in the Persian Gulf in terms of threats and risks. Numerous studies center on the security of individual states, referring to state perception of threats in the region. Much of the academic work focuses on empirical analyses, while shying away from theoretical aspects of the problem. This chapter instead focuses on Al Qaeda threats to the collective identities of Shia and Sunni sects in Iraq and Saudi Arabia since the Iraq War in 2003. It finds that pro-US Saudi Arabia, which is strongly influenced by its Sunni identity, is not considered sufficiently Islamic by Al Qaeda. Both the state and public are threatened by their acts of terror. Following the war, regional geopolitics have inextricably linked sectarian conflict to terror, with Al Qaeda supporting radical Iraqi Sunnis who conduct acts of terror against both Shia political figures and the public at large. Acts of terror perpetrated by the body-guards of Sunni Tariq Al-Hashemi – the then vice President of Iraq - against Shia political figures are one such an example of this form of societal threats.

**Key Words:** Al Qaeda, Iraq War, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Securitization.

## Introduction

This chapter examines the way in which Al Qaeda has become part of the process of securitization in the Persian Gulf region since the Iraq War in 2003. The Al Qaeda network<sup>1</sup> emerged in the 1990s as a response to the ongoing presence of United States (US) troops in the region during the Kuwait War in 1991. Al Qaeda argued that the US threatened Islamic identity in the region. Acting as radical Islamist militias, Al Qaeda members initiated several acts of terror against US bases in Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda is perceived an extremist<sup>2</sup> Islamic militant network. On several occasions, the leaders of Al Qaeda have declared “holy war” against the US and have recruited Muslim militants from all over the world, including Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda members have built a philosophy of resistance based on radical Wahhabism and recognize themselves as both Muslims and Islamists. Fighting against the US and pro-US states in the Persian Gulf is considered a holy action for Al Qaeda members.

The most relevant and recent studies of Al Qaeda vary from analyses of its internal structure to studies of its acts of terror around the globe. A major subset of this literature studies the background and evolution of the network. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli’s (eds.) *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* (2008) examine the evolution of Al Qaeda by studying key leaders ranging from Osama bin Laden to Abu Musa Al-Zarqawi. Kepel and Milelli’s approach is broad and Al Qaeda leaders are not limited to those examined by Kepel and Milelli. A second body of literature focuses on sites of terror by Al Qaeda. Fawaz Gerges (2009) explains Al Qaeda was a “distant” enemy due to conducting most of its acts of terror outside the Persian Gulf region before the Iraq War. The 9/11 attack demonstrated the US to be a far target of Al Qaeda’s acts of terror (Gerges, 2009: 20-30). The 2003 Iraq War and a lack of a strong government in Iraq provided a chance for Al Qaeda to return to the Persian Gulf and what Gerges calls a “close” enemy. In other words, Al Qaeda’s acts of terror concentrate mainly on the Persian Gulf region. Its targets became US interests in Iraq and other regional states.

Gerges argues that the original menace of Al Qaeda is winding down. Defections, internal cleavages, and the decline of Muslim public financial support have reduced its strength (*Ibid.*, 311). Gerges examines Al Qaeda from its origin in the War in Afghanistan but with only a few discussions of its threat in the wider Persian Gulf since the Iraq War. In addition, his failure to provide a theoretically informed effort pulls the analysis in different directions without an in-depth focus.

A third body of literature exploring the Al Qaeda threat uses case studies in the Persian Gulf.<sup>3</sup> For example, Thomas Hegghammer (2010) concentrates on threats of Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia by examining the network's evolution. He attempts to identify Al Qaeda as a radical Islamist militia but most of his analysis is based on the period preceding the Iraq War. Hegghammer discusses the threat of Al Qaeda within Saudi Arabia but he does not cover the threat in the wider Persian Gulf. For example, he does not discuss how Iraq has become a haven for Al Qaeda members to threaten the Saudi Arabian state and US interests. His brief theoretical approach also refers to a multi-level social movement framework by distinguishing between macro-level variables such as styles of protest policing. Meso-level variables include issues such as underground organizational dynamics and micro-level variables such as recruitment processes. Nevertheless, Hegghammer's approach generated different findings to this article and does not represent the process of the securitization of Al Qaeda since the Iraq War.

In relation to the theoretical and empirical gaps in the existing literature, this chapter follows two themes. First, it has a broader scope in comparison to Hegghammer's analysis by examining the threat of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Saudi Arabia as well as US interests in the Persian Gulf. Second, it utilizes the securitization theory (see below) to study the discourses surrounding Al Qaeda in the Persian Gulf since 2003. It examines the securitizing moves of the then US President, George W. Bush and his successor, Barack Obama.

The theory is designed to uncover the process of the characterization of the Al Qaeda threat. Different components of the securitization theory, such as referent objects, securitizers, audiences and emergency measures (for detailed analysis see, the theoretical section of this chapter) are interrelated interactions of several actors. By extending upon the theory of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998), it is possible to explain how different regional states responded to the emergency measures of the War on Terror vis-à-vis Al Qaeda. The case of Al Qaeda enables us to apply securitization theory to transnational actors in the non-Western context of the Persian Gulf region. The case examines a broader context than Saudi Arabia and provides new findings. Seen in that light, the new analysis and theoretical approach of this article are cutting-edged.

This chapter asks: *In what way has Al Qaeda become a securitized issue in the Persian Gulf region in the aftermath of the Iraq War?* The analysis covers the period from 2004 to 2011. The data for the analysis were collected from primary documents from US public websites such as the Departments of State and Defence,

speeches of President Bush and his successor as well as United Nations (UN) documents. Additional primary documents were collected from the Persian Gulf region such as speeches of the Saudi royalty and leadership in Iraq. The website of Sawt Al-Jihad (voice of Jihad) also provides primary material on the aims, purposes, and speeches of the leaders of Al Qaeda.

Interviews with several Persian Gulf and US experts provided background material for this chapter which was used in the analysis when needed. Expert interviewees from the US and the Persian Gulf were chosen because their government is either directly involved in the War on Terror or has been threatened by Al Qaeda. The interviewees possessed valuable knowledge of international relations, the politics of the Persian Gulf and studies of terror. Interview material added considerable value to the primary analysis. Questions for interviews were prepared based on specific questions of the chapter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face, by phone and email. Secondary data include books, articles, and working papers.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter proceeds as follows: First, the theoretical approach on securitization by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998) is presented. Second, the construction of the threat of Al Qaeda to US interests in the region and the securitizing move of President Bush is explained. In the third and fourth sections, the threat of and reactions to Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and Iraq is examined. The concluding section presents the findings of the research.

## **Approach: Securitization theory**

The subject of Al Qaeda has been explored with different theories. Signalling theory sees the process of recruitment as a game of trust between recruiters and recruits (Hegghammer, 2013: 4). Contest theory describes a game in which rational agents compete for a prize (Caruso and Schneider 2013). These theories, however, have not contributed to problematizing the threat of Al Qaeda. A brief discussion by Mark Salter (2011) indicates the American public accepted the existential threat of Al Qaeda to the US after the 9/11 attacks (Salter, 2011: 126). However, Salter uses the theory to explore public opinion in the US, which is not in the scope of this analysis. Conversely, I draw on the wider picture of the threat of Al Qaeda in the Persian Gulf region. Moreover, Salter's explanation on audiences provides little information about the principles (see below) and process of securitization theory. Thus, to analyse the threat of Al Qaeda since the Iraq War, the securitization of Al Qaeda is more closely considered. The study examined how Presidents Bush and

Obama formed these ideas, and how regional leaders were engaged in the process. The theory examines a constellation of state and non-state actors which interact with each other. As a result, these actors bring issues into the political spotlight by using urgent measures.

Securitization draws on the theory of securitization developed by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998). The study incorporates additional audience elements with the aim of applying this framework to the analysis of the regional rise of the Al Qaeda threat since the Iraq War. Borrowing from Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, securitization refers to “an issue represented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedures” (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 24). Using the securitization theory in the context of the Persian Gulf might raise the critique that securitization has generally been used to examine security processes in liberal democracies with assumptions about the interactions of state and nation (Wilkinson, 2007: 22). However, this issue arises when the securitization theory is applied to local conditions and national levels. This securitization analysis of Al Qaeda addresses the regional level and does not fall in this problematic category.

To situate securitization theory into the case of Al Qaeda, one can conceptualize five principles: securitizing actors, threats, referent objects, audiences, and emergency measure. For Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *securitizing actors* are “actors who securitize issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened” (*Ibid.*, 36). Securitizing actors use the language of existential threats or “speech act” and “when an issue becomes out of what under those conditions is normal politics” (*Idem*) securitization takes place. Common securitizing actors are political leaders and governments. In the analysis, the securitizing actor to Al Qaeda is President Bush, whose political power initially securitized Al Qaeda in 2001 and again in 2003 with the Iraq War; the War on Terror was a priority for President Bush. Subsequently with Presidency of Barack Obama, there is also an emphasis on the securitization of Al Qaeda.

The second component of securitization is *threat*. This component involves what is perceived to be threatening that could be socially constructed. Nevertheless, what is perceived as a threat in a nation-state might not be a threat in another nation-state (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998: 25). In President Bush’s securitizing move, Al Qaeda members are perceived as a threat to US in the Persian Gulf and the Persian Gulf states. Al Qaeda frames its identity from the point of view of religion and radical Wahhabism, and has strengthened an identity conflict between Al Qaeda, the

Shia-Sunni in the region and the US as a non-Muslim actor in the Persian Gulf. Thus, the development of the process of securitization is mapped out by the societal securitization of Al Qaeda using acts of terror to establish its threat (for more information see the analysis below).

*Referent objects*, in Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde's terms, "are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival" (*Idem*). The referent objects for security are the nation-state. "For a state, survival is about sovereignty and for a nation it is about identity" (*Ibid*, 36). However, Al Qaeda neither threatens regional states sovereignty, attempts to overthrow the pro-US Sunni regime in Saudi Arabia nor threatens representatives of the state. In Iraq, Al Qaeda threatens the Shia state of Nuri Al-Maliki by supporting acts of terror conducted by radical Sunnis. However, Al Qaeda has threatened the Saudi Arabian and Iraqi nation by conducting numerous acts of terror against the public. Identity is perceived at both the state and nation levels; thus, the Shia and Sunni identity of the nation-state is threatened by Al Qaeda through acts of terror.

According to Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, merely showing that something poses an existential threat does not create securitization. In other words, the issue is securitized when *audiences* accept it as a threat (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998: 23-24). Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde elaborate on securitization adequately, but there is no in-depth discussion about who makes up the audiences and why securitization cannot take place without audiences. Therefore, I extend Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde's original securitization argument by adding the factor of audiences. Sarah Léonard and Christian Kaunert also acknowledge this deficiency in Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde's account. They conceptualize the relationship between securitizing actors and audiences in a way which audiences must agree with the claims made by the securitizing actor. Audiences are *differentiated* from securitizing actors because audiences must agree with claims made by securitizing actors for successful securitization to take place.

Audiences vary, and securitizers could experience formal support from members of ruling elites and members of parliament. An audience can also be from the public, in the form of those who provide moral support (Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 60-65). Regarding the securitizing move of President Bush against Al Qaeda in the Persian Gulf, the US benefits from the formal support of the Security Council of the United Nations (UN), the leaders of the GCC states, and, to some extent, Iraq. The regional public of the Persian Gulf and other regional institutions can be considered audiences, but these occupy a secondary role in this analysis.

Finally, the existential threat to a referent object creates securitization when audiences accept it as a threat and adopt an emergency measure through coercion, sanctions, and consent. The most significant emergency measure adopted by the audiences in this region has been to fight Al Qaeda by contributing to the War on Terror agenda. Another adopted emergency measure involved imposing sanctions on Al Qaeda's funding resources.

In the analysis below, I will apply the components of the securitization theory in relation to Al Qaeda in the Persian Gulf region.

## **President Bush and Al Qaeda**

Al Qaeda has been perceived as a threat to US interests in the Persian Gulf region, particularly in Iraq since 2003 (Al-Faisal 2006: 1). According to Pete Verga, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense, Al Qaeda members came to Iraq to fight 'us' [Americans] because "we [Americans] are there and we fight them [Al Qaeda members] because Al Qaeda is there" (Verga, 2007: 71). A 2011 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies also directs the threat of Al Qaeda to the US in Iraq. The leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, mobilized his network to conduct acts of terror against the US. In this vein, Al-Zarqawi suggested three carefully prepared strategies (Kirdar, 2011: 3-4).

First, Al-Zarqawi intended to isolate American forces by targeting their international and coalition partners. The obvious example is the August 2003 truck bomb attack which destroyed the UN headquarters in Baghdad, killed 22 people and wounded more than 150 others. Among the victims was Sergio Vieira de Mello, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq (For example see, United Nations Department of Information, 2007: 1). In reaction to the attack, James Rubin, the then US Deputy of Secretary of State, pointed out, "if you have a mission to kill Americans, Iraq is now the place you're going to want to go" (Rubin, 2003: 30). Second, Al-Zarqawi targeted civilian contractors and humanitarian aid workers employed to rebuild the country. The videotaped beheading of Nicholas Berg, a US citizen, who entered Iraq for the purpose of conducting business and acquired a contract for that purpose, was allegedly carried out by members of Al Qaeda in Iraq (cf., United States Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004b).

Third, Al-Zarqawi sought to entangle the US troops in the Shia and Sunni conflict by attacking Shia targets and provoking retaliatory responses against Sunni communities. Attacking the Shia leader, Mohammad Al-Hakim, in the city of Najaf

is an example of such tactics. The US coalition perceived the most important Shia cities, such as Najaf, as insecure for US troops (cf., 'Iraq Holy City Blast Killed Scores', 2003). The Samarra Mosque bombing on February 22, 2006 entrapped US troops and led to a widespread sectarian civil war in Iraq, leaving thousands of Shia dead. The joint Iraqi-American military operations attempted to reduce the Shia and Sunni conflicts through the so-called 'Together Forward I' and 'Together forward II' strategies. These events led to the adoption of new strategies by the US in Iraq. As part of these strategies, President Bush decided to deploy 20,000 additional US troops to Iraq (Marsh, 2012: 414). These *new strategies* in Iraq allegedly changed course the US has taken and helped it to succeed in the War on Terror (Bush, 2007: 1).

An example of this process of securitization is seen in the initial securitizing move of President Bush, as restated<sup>5</sup> in 2006:

*[...] we're engaged in a global war against an enemy [Al Qaeda] which threatens all civilized nations. Today the civilized world stands together to defend our freedom; we stand together to defeat the terrorists [Al Qaeda]; and are working to secure the peace for generations to come (Bush, 2006: 1).*

The restatement of President Bush's securitizing move against Al Qaeda was addressed to the UN Security Council, a key audience for the US. Léonard and Kaunert (2011) conceptualized audiences as actors with formal influences. This is evident in the effect that the restatement of the securitizing move by President Bush in 2006 had: it possessed enough resonance in the UN Security Council to prompt adoption a new emergency measure. The Security Council set up a Counter-Terrorism committee comprising 15 countries in 2006 to assess member reports on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in response to Al Qaeda. The mandate of the Committee was extended in Resolution 1673 on April 26, 2006 (United Nations Security Council and Counter-Terrorism Committee, 2006: 1). Later, the importance of imposing new sanctions on Al Qaeda was also stressed by the Security Council:

*By resolution 1989 (and 2011), the Council decided that the sanctions list maintained by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) would henceforth be known as the "Al-Qaida Sanctions List" and include only names of those individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida (United Nations Security Council, 2011: 1).*

According to a report from the US Senate Democratic Policy Committee in 2008, Al Qaeda has expanded its global operations (United States Senate Democratic Policy committee, 2008: 1) since the Iraq War (see also below). The War on Terror was intensified by President Obama as the successive securitizer:

*My bottom line is that we cannot allow al Qaeda to operate. We cannot have those safe havens in that region. And we're going to have to work both smartly and effectively, but with consistency, in order to make sure that those safe havens don't exist.... I'm not going to allow al Qaeda or bin Laden to operate with impunity planning attacks on the U.S. homeland (Obama, 2009: 1).*

In this sense, the US application of force represents another emergency measure aimed at mitigating the threat of Al Qaeda. In order to fight the War on Terror, for example, \$419 billion was assigned to the Department of Defense in 2006; a 4.8 per cent increase on the amount reported for 2005. Supporting the global War on Terror also included strengthening US defense capabilities and keeping US forces combat-ready. With regard to better protection of US forces against chemical and biological defense weapons, the Department of Defense added \$1.6 billion to 2006 budget, with \$9.9 billion allocated for 2006-2011 (United States Department of Defense, 2005a: 37; United States Department of Defense, 2005b: 1).

Such statements clearly demonstrate that the US perceives Al Qaeda as a threat. The securitizing move of President Bush and his successor, President Obama, illustrate the construction of Al Qaeda threat to the US in the Persian Gulf since the Iraq War. To render Al Qaeda as an existential threat from the viewpoint of US presidents, the need for emergency measures helped catapult acts of terror by Al Qaeda into the political spotlight and persuaded other audiences (particularly in Iraq and Saudi Arabia) to be involved in the War on Terror (see below).

The necessity for securitizing the threat of Al Qaeda supports the logic of bilateral threats, where Al Qaeda threatens the US and the US threatens Al Qaeda. Yet, the analysis above looks at the threat of Al Qaeda to the US and examines the War on Terror from a Western perspective. That is, the analysis takes for granted the US securitization of Al Qaeda but makes a distinction between the US policy of supporting and sustaining Jihadists and Al Qaeda members in the 1980s and fighting against them from the Iraq War and after. Despite these inconsistencies in US policy towards Al Qaeda, the securitization of the threat of Al Qaeda by President Bush and his successor, President Obama, still continued to hold sway in the Persian Gulf region. This understanding has important implications for the

analysis below for how Al Qaeda has posed threats within the context of the War on Terror.

## **The Al Qaeda threat in Iraq**

As the 2006 National Intelligence report indicates, the war in Iraq has helped Al Qaeda to recruit new members, increase its size and strength (National Intelligence Estimates, 2006: 1), and conduct acts of terror against the Shia majority. The same point is made by Edward Gistaro, National Intelligence Officer for Transnational Threats, who has stated that Al Qaeda “has used the conflict there [in Iraq] to raise resources, recruits and to energize the broader extremist community” (Gistaro, 2007: 28). Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), led by Al-Zarqawi, emerged in 2004. At the same time, the US government designated it as a terrorist network, and Bin Laden endorsed Al Zarqawi as his emissary in Iraq (United States Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 2004: 60-62).

In 2007, the members of the Joint Hearing of the House Armed Service and the House Select Committee on Intelligence Subject acknowledged that while there is no reliable data on the numbers of AQI members operating in Iraq, membership levels are certainly sufficient to enable the organization to commit widespread acts of terror in Iraq (United States Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2007: 1). Gistaro, the National Intelligent Officer for Transnational Threats, estimates that AQI has several thousand members, of whom 90 per cent are radicalized Sunni Iraqi footsoldiers. Their motivation to join AQI depends on what part of the country they come from. AQI’s general perspective is that people join the network to support the Sunni community vis-à-vis the Shia majority of Iraq. People in the city of Al-Anbar experienced such appeals; however, they did not follow the radical and coercive ideology of AQI (Gistaro, 2007: 29-30).

In relation to the increased strength of AQI since 2003, Hoffman suggests that because the US is mired in Iraq: AQI has ‘what they want.’ In other words, Iraq for AQI members, Iraq has become an effective means to distract US attention, allowing them to regroup and reorganize (Hoffmann, 2007: 54). The 2007 National Intelligence Estimate report is largely consistent with Hoffmann’s view in this regard, indicating the US has not been entirely successful in confronting AQI’s strength and reconstitution (National Intelligence Estimate, 2007: 1). How has AQI able to regroup and reorganize in Iraq when a 2003 White House report on the War on Terror indicated that the US had destroyed its safe haven of Afghanistan? To respond to this question, it is worth noting that the US also arrested 140 suspected

terrorists and killed a number of senior Al Qaeda leaders, such as Khalid Sheikh Muhammad and Mohammad Atef.

As a part of this initiative, 500 Pakistan-based extremists were arrested, people like Ramzi bin Al-Shibh and Khallad Ba'Attash. In Saudi Arabia, the two most prominent Al Qaeda leaders, Yusif Al-Allyari and Abu Bakr Al-Azdi were killed or arrested respectively at the beginning of 2003 (United States White House, 2003: 3). Many of Al Qaeda's senior leaders were killed or arrested in the years prior to 2003, prompting Al Qaeda to train new members in the aftermath of the Iraq War. Since May 2003, several parts of Iraq have become centers for terrorist education and trainings. A combination of Sunni extremists and foreign fighters have subsequently conducted numerous acts of terror and have killed a large amount of Iraqis (Forest, 2006: 301). For example, Ansar Al-Islam, an extremist militant group in northern Iraq affiliated with Al Qaeda, established training camps in villages under its control and out of sight of foreigners. Ansar Al-Islam instructed lessons to new terrorists about how to use weapons, conduct suicide bombings, and new tactics of terror (United States Department of State 2012: 1). Training new members prepared the ground for the increased strength of AQI.

The strength and size of AQI is also estimated in relation to what extent it has been successful in recruitments to reorganize and regroup (see below). Concerning the increased recruitment of AQI, one Kuwaiti professor interviewed for this book emphasized:

*Since the Iraq War, any form of resistance, whether by Al Qaeda or the local militia, against the US troops and Iraq has been attributed to Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda recruits people from all backgrounds, as long as they agree with their general ideology. Those with a proven involvement in a terrorist attack, they are named members of Al Qaeda. The leaders are minimally involved in practical tasks because of the dangers associated with leadership. Acts of violence and murder by AQI in Iraq have varied in extent since 2003 (Interview with Kuwaiti Professor, June 2012).*

The interviewee quoted above touches upon the recruitment of AQI, highlighting that some Iraqi parties and groups assisted Al Qaeda members in conducting acts of terror in Iraq. The interviewee also noted that everyone (even foreigners) who agrees with the AQI extremist ideology - the Islamic world under the siege of the US - can join. US sources show that at least 41 per cent of foreign fighters in Iraq are from Saudi Arabia (Oppel 2011: 1). Local sources in the Persian

Gulf report around 5000 Saudi Arabians arrived to Iraq to fight the US in 2003 (For example see, Shaista 2003: 1-2). The claim the then Saudi Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Saud Al-Faisal made, “the Saudis going to Iraq are very, very few in number” (Al-Faisal, 2005: 1) is not fully supported by this evidence.

To elaborate on the interviewee’s viewpoint on Iraqi parties and groups assisting AQI, one Iraqi ambassador who was interviewed for this book agreed with the views quoted above, stating that Al Qaeda’s acts of terror have been conducted both by local Iraqi militia and AQI, destruction of infrastructure and weakening of the government as main goals (Interview with Iraqi Ambassador, January 2013). AQI and Sunni Iraqi radicals attacked Iraqi infrastructure and claimed responsibility for attacking the Iraqi public, particularly Shia, to demonstrate that the Shia government was incapable of providing essential services to the public (United States Department of State, [date was not cited]: 21).

In this way, they disrupt and destroy Iraq’s infrastructure and hinder economic development (*Idem*.). AQI also recruited people from a new generation in Iraq consisting of self-radicalized extremists and some Sunni followers of Saddam. Ansar Al-Sunnah, the Sunni terrorist group in Iraq fighting the Al-Maliki government, was formed shortly after the Iraq War and has ties to AQI (United States Department of State 2008: 1). AQI recruitment foments a sectarian war in Iraq and thus signifies the threat of AQI to societal security for the Shia public. This is explicit in Al-Zarqawi’s letter to Bin Laden in 2004:

*The only solution is for us to strike the religious, military, and other cadres among the Shi'a with blow after blow until they bend to the Sunnis. I mean that targeting and hitting them in religious, political, and military depth will provoke them to show the Sunnis their rabies... If we succeed in dragging them into the arena of sectarian war, it will become possible to awaken the inattentive Sunnis as they feel imminent danger and annihilating death (Al-Zarqawi, 2004: 1).*

*[Emphasis added]*

AQI and radical Iraqi Sunnis plotted their acts of terror against the Shia public and leaders as well as the Shia figures in the government. In regards to the first population targeted in 2004, the Shia public and leaders in Iraq, AQI claimed credit for simultaneous bomb attacks in the cities of Baghdad and Karbala that killed 180 pilgrims. That same year, the group also claimed responsibility for a suicide attack at the offices of Adel Al-Hakim, the prominent Shia leader in Iraq. Ansar Al-Sunnah also took ownership for the killings, assassinations, and the kidnapping of

12 foreign workers (United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, 2004b: 60-63; United States Department of State, Country Report on Terrorism, 2004: 60-62).

The threat of AQI to the Shia was, however, not limited only to Shia Iraqis. AQI's acts of terror threatened Shia Iranian pilgrims in Iraq as well. In 2007, AQI accused Iran of seeking to dominate the Persian Gulf region in a secret partnership with the US (Riedel and Saab, 2008: 42). This perspective had been propagated by radical Wahhabists, who issued a religious opinion in December 2006, which referred to the occupation of Iraq as a joint conspiracy between Iran and the US, calling the occupation a "Crusade-Safavid" alliance aimed at isolating Sunnis. The use of the term *crusade* by radical Wahhabists referred to the US's Christian identity, whereas *Safavid* refers to the sixteenth and seventeenth century Safavid Empire that established Shia as the main faith in Iran. This opinion was embraced by AQI, and terror attacks against Shia were blessed (*Ibid.* 40-42). Al-Maliki – the Prime Minister of Iraq – blasted Ba'athists (radical Sunnis) and Al Qaeda by stating that "the terrorist explosions in Baghdad were a continuation of the heinous plots to hinder and obstruct the political progress in the country" (Al-Maliki 2009: 1).

Second, Shias in Iraq observed that plotting acts of terror by the Sunni figures against Shia figures in the government represented the Shia-Sunni conflict at the political level since the Iraq War. Between 2006 and 2007, Shia Iraqi political figures were threatened by Al Qaeda more forcefully. The threat continued with waves of attacks on the Iraqi capital by Sunni radicals. More importantly, Al-Maliki issued an arrest warrant for the Sunni vice-President, Tariq Al-Hashemi, based on an allegation that his bodyguards targeted government officials. Later, the government of Al-Maliki charged Al-Hashemi with running a death squad. However, Al-Hashemi dismissed the case as politically motivated by reiterating that he would be willing to face a fair trial.

Al-Hashemi has referred to the Shia-Sunni conflict and the threat of the Shia government of Al-Maliki to the societal security of Sunni Iraqis. He has accused Al-Maliki's Shia government, including the courts, which allegedly fuelled sectarianism ('Tariq Al-Hashemi: Turkey 'Will not Hand over' Iraq VP', 2012: 1). This perspective supports the thesis of a rise in societal threats in Iraq. Indeed, while the Shia majority claimed that Sunnis threatened their societal security, the Sunni minority purported that the Shia majority, including the government of Al-Maliki, threaten their societal security. This opposition echoes the criticism voiced by the Sunni people when they call Al-Maliki a *sectarian dictator* and a *shade of Saddam*.

The Sunni's position can be broken down into two points. First, the Shia majority was oppressed by Saddam for a long time; hence, Al-Maliki and the Shia majority retaliated against the Sunni minority. Second, the Sunni people noted that Iraq has a religiously diverse government under Al-Maliki, claiming that the US prefers him to control the anarchy in Iraq (Blanche, 2012: 15-18). The Iraqi situation can thus be viewed as an alarming sign that more Sunni Iraqis have been radicalized on the governmental level since the Iraq War began.

How have the Iraq's leaders interpreted the increased threat of AQI since the Iraq War? To answer this question, it must be noted first that different groups and people – ranging from radical Sunni Iraqis and a coalition of militant jihadists – provided an operational base for AQI (Gerges, 2009: 252, 254). This highlights the reality that Al Qaeda is different from the state actors. Second, sectarian threats include violence between and within Shia and Sunni, not only in society, but also at the political level (For example see, 'Iraq's Sadr Loyalists Call for New Elections as Fears of Sectarian Crisis Grow' 2011, 1). This sheds light on the increased threat of AQI to the societal security of the Shia community.

This section examined the rise of the Al Qaeda threat in Iraq. In the following section, the rise of Al Qaeda threat in Saudi Arabia is discussed.

## **The Al Qaeda threat in Saudi Arabia**

The previous section discussed how Iraq has served as the target for AQI regarding the increase of its threat in the Persian Gulf. Jan Schakowsky, the US representative for Illinois's 9th Congressional District, that "[he does not] know why [the US does not] focus more on Saudi Arabia while Al Qaeda members from Saudi Arabia have carried out more acts of terror than other nationalities; 45 per cent of all Al Qaeda members are from Saudi Arabia" (Schakowsky, 2007: 81). This reminds us of an important area from which Al Qaeda actively originates. Moreover, Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) initiated acts of terror within Saudi Arabia (See for example, United States Department of State, 2011: 1).<sup>6</sup>

Al Qaeda has not only established a terror theatre in Iraq, but has also created a parallel battlefield in Saudi Arabia. There is a perception that, while AQAP began in a position of strength in the country, their capacity to commit acts of terror there has declined. However, it must be noted that the threat has not been removed in its entirety; it has merely shifted to other countries (Hegghammar, 2010: 202). For instance, AQAP has also used Yemen as a base of operations. Here, the nature of

the AQAP threat is once again examined in relation to the hypothesized causal mechanism. The threat-level is assessed in relation to the size, strength, and recruitment capabilities of AQAP.

The Department of State estimated the size of AQAP in Saudi Arabia to be several hundred people (*Ibid.*). However, AQAP's strength needs to be studied in relation to the extent to which it has been successful in recruiting new members. While membership in the Al Qaeda network could be understood through recruitment, John M. Matt Venhaus, the Army Fellow of the US, in his report, acknowledges that, rather than being recruited, young people are actively seeking out the organization (Venhaus, 2010: 1).

Such an understanding highlights that recruitment strategies employed by AQAP have included both bottom-up and top-down techniques. The differences between these approaches become clear when analyzing them in the Saudi Arabian context. The bottom-up process conveys how Saudi Arabians have been radicalized and recruited to AQAP as a result of socio-economic problems. In Hegghammer's (2010) investigation of the biography of 260 AQAP members, most of the members had low-status jobs, worked part-time, or were unemployed. This most likely reflects a lower socio-economic status among people joining AQAP. Hegghammer's (2010) analysis also draws attention to an average age of 27 years for people who join the AQAP. Thus, a low-status occupation and an average age of 27 years among people who join the AQAP highlights the high rate of unemployment among young people in Saudi Arabia and the challenges that creates. According to Hegghammer, there were only a few people with high-status occupations, such as doctors, engineers, and economists, in AQAP (Hegghammer, 2010: 188-189). Moreover, many militants in AQAP had returned from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia in 2001 and had problems reintegrating into the labor market. Not only had their absence from society made them an 'Other', but their former association with Al Qaeda alienated this population from the labor market, leaving the AQAP their best option (*Ibid.*, 190).

The top-down recruitment channels operate in four different ways. First, much of this type of recruitment has historically followed pre-existing social links and has taken place in social gatherings. The city of Mecca is an ideal place where thousands of Saudi Arabian young people, including unemployed youth, take part in the Hajj (religious pilgrimage) and are more open to new encounters than usual. In addition, the Hajj program is a way for young people to escape parental supervision and be recruited by AQAP (Hegghammer, 2007: 16-17). Daniel Byman also

observed that new Al Qaeda members receive training, build networks, and become further radicalized through top-down recruitment channels, thus being more likely to commit acts of violence. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 provided an excellent opportunity to recruit radicalized young Muslims to conduct acts of terror in Saudi Arabia and Iraq (Byman, 2011: 151, 157).

Second, another indirect form of the top-down process of recruitment is incitement by radical Wahhabi clerics. Key radical Wahhabis, such as Al-Fahd and Al-Khadiri, encouraged Saudi Arabians to join Al Qaeda and fight the US following its invasion of Iraq. This reaction suggests that anyone attending private lectures of radical Wahhabis in the Al-Shu'aybi School, such as Al-Fahd, could potentially join AQAP. These lectures were closed to the public and were held out of sight of the authorities, but remained open to AQAP newcomers (Hegghammer, 2013: 8).

It is striking to note that the number of young men from Riyadh who become members of AQAP is more than twice as high as that of those from other locations. One possible reason for this discrepancy is the link between the AQAP leaders and key members of the religious schools of Al Shu'aybi in Riyadh (see above). This means that, even though key radical Wahhabis, such as Al-Fahd, did not directly attend AQAP, they actively contributed to its recruitment initiatives (Hegghammer, 2010: 187). Third, Hegghammer notes presence of strong indications that both local imams and senior clerics encourage young people to join AQI and AQAP to fight the US (Hegghammer, 2007: 18). Religious summer camps were additional venues for radical imams to persuade people to join AQAP. For example, Ahmad Al-Dukhayyil, the religious imam, lectured for a small group of people on how to make contact with AQAP (Hegghammer, 2010: 193).

Fourth, the role of new technology is decisive in the radicalization of young Saudi Arabians. AQAP websites, particularly *Sawt Al-Jihad* (voice of Jihad), allow videos, photographs and information about Islam and the threat of the US in the aftermath of the Iraq War to be widely disseminated. Viewed in this way, the Internet was instrumental in facilitating communication between young people and leaders who offer practical advice on how to join AQAP (*Sawt Al-Jihad*, 2013, 1).

This analysis emphasizes the ways in which recruitment helped AQAP. However, Saudi Arabian leaders perceived the threat of Al Qaeda as the referent object of Saudi Arabia as a pro-US state, as well as to the Saudi Arabian nationals and the US nationals residing in Saudi Arabia. Adel Al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabian Minister of Foreign Affairs, acknowledges the threat of Al Qaeda:

*Al Qaeda bombings were aimed as much at the Saudi Government as they were against the United States. Why are they a threat for us? Because we are trying to move our country forward and modernize, innovate and build a civil society. They want to turn back the clock and return the country to the dark ages. They hate us because we want to improve relations with the world. They want to sever ties and lock the doors (Al-Jubeir, 2003, 1). [Emphasis added]*

The terror attack against the then Minister of Interior for Security Affairs, Prince Nayef, in August 2009 underscores the threat to the Saudi Arabian state. In 2010, AQAP leaders made a direct appeal to Saudi Arabian security and military personnel to turn their weapons on governmental officials and royal family members (Rollins, 2011: 14). With these acts of terror, Yusuf Al-Uyayri, the founder of the Saudi Arabian Al Qaeda branch, emphasized the strategy of AQAP (see also below) to prompt critics of Al Qaeda to ask themselves why Saudi Arabia has a pro-US government, which is considered a threat to Islamic identity (Al-Uyayri citing in Kohlmann and Al Khouri, 2011: 15).

Both Al-Uyayri and Al-Fahd claimed that the US is a threat to Islamic identity. Moreover, because Saudi Arabia supports the US, the Saudi Arabian state is a threat as well. Al-Uyayri's interpretation emphasizes the notion of dual threats in Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, Saudi Arabian leaders perceive AQAP as a threat to the Saudi Arabian society and state, whereas leaders and members of AQAP perceive Saudi Arabia as a threat to the Islamic identity. However, by closely examining the securitizing statements of radical Wahhabis such as Al-Fahd, it is evident that they primarily supported jihadists, including Al Qaeda members, against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the US in the Persian Gulf since 1990. In short, radical Wahhabis did not look favourably on the acts of terror within Saudi Arabia.

One factor that can help elucidate why AQAP conducted such acts within Saudi Arabia is that a new generation of Al Qaeda fighters willing to commit acts of terror emerged after the Iraq War. The strategic implications of this new generation signifies the increased prospect of acts of terror being committed against US interests in the region, in Iraq and against the pro-US Saudi Arabian state. This view is in line with the radical Islamic identity and revolutionary agenda of AQAP. Brutalities and controversial tactics, such as the kidnapping and decapitating of civilians, are some of these initiatives (Hegghammer, 2006: 28).

Based on these initiatives, AQAP views acts of terror against Saudi Arabia and Iraq as legitimate actions. Importantly, making such a claim allows drawing a line of distinction between classical jihadists in the 1980s and AQAP. The classical jihadists conducted a semi-conventional war in the Afghanistan Theater, situated outside Saudi Arabia. Yet, AQAP members use all available means within and outside Saudi Arabia and have done so since the Iraq War (Hegghammer, 2008: 706).

The second referent object for AQAP was the Saudi Arabian public. Among the acts of terror committed by AQAP, several threatened the Saudi Arabian public. On May 12, 2003, car-bombings were executed in three neighbouring residence compounds in Riyadh. In the two compounds, car bombs exploded successfully, killing thirty-five people (nine of whom were Saudi Arabian) and injuring one hundred-sixty (For example see, Embassy of Saudi Arabian in Washington D.C. 2003a: 1). The attack was met with widespread condemnation by the public and within Islamic circles in Saudi Arabia. The Muhayya bombing in November 2003 killed several Saudi Arabian children. The attack was planned in a similar way to that executed in May 2003 (Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington D.C. 2003b: 1). In April 2004, the AQAP threat increased as the frequency of attacks reached its peak. Ten suicide car-bombs killed several civilians. Shootouts between police and AQAP also led to the death of several AQAP members. From this time onward, the public perceived AQAP as a terrorist group and an eminent threat to the Saudi Arabian national security.

US citizens in Saudi Arabia are the third referent object. The acceptance of Al-Uyayri's argument that the US is a threat to Islamic identity explains why US civilians became targets in Saudi Arabia. Al-Rasheed elaborates on this connection by citing Sheikh Bashir Al-Najdi, a radical Wahhabi, who disputed the claim that Saudi Arabian Government could guarantee the security of US residents inside Saudi Arabia. In Al-Najdi's terms, Saudi Arabian support for the US and American culture made it an illegitimate state (Al-Najdi cites in Al-Rasheed, 2007: 150-151). Al-Rasheed is of view that radical Wahhabis and AQAP members believe that pursuing and supporting the US demonstrates that Saudi Arabia is not perceived as an Islamic government (*Ibid.*, 151).

Juhayman Al-Otaybi, a radical Wahhabi activist and militant that was active in the 1980s, also suggested that the Saudi Arabian Government is illegitimate because of its alliance with the US. Moderate Wahhabis, on the other hand, argue that Saudi Arabia alone does not possess the means to carry out jihad against the US and its

enemies (Commins, 2006: 165). Consequently, for radical Wahhabis and AQAP, the identity of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic state and the US as a threat to Islamic identity has become a securitized issue. Because these states protect their identity, they are threatened by acts of terror. However, AQAP is also considered a threat to the security of the Saudi Arabian state due to its ties to the US.

AQAP perceives the US as a threat to Islamic identity and justifies attacking its citizens in Saudi Arabia as legitimate. For example, the FBI reported at least six AQAP attacks against US targets in Saudi Arabia in 2004. According to the FBI, the strategy of AQAP was not only limited to acts of terror, but also included individual kidnappings, murders, and attacks against US diplomatic and economic facilities. The kidnapping and decapitation of Paul Johnson, an American citizen and employee of Advanced Electronics, on June 12, 2004 and the shooting of another US citizen, Kenneth Scroggs, in the Malaz District of Riyadh confirm AQAP's use of this strategy. In this context, the attack on the US embassy of Jeddah led to the death of five US citizens employed by the Foreign Service (United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2004b: 1).

This sequence of events suggests that AQAP perceives the US as a threat; similarly, it supports the view that the US also considers the AQAP a threat. Thus, dual threats to and from the US and Al Qaeda are constructed. While this section examined the nature of the Al Qaeda threat on the Arabian Peninsula, the following section examines whether audiences accept the securitizing moves by US presidents and how they responded to the urgent measures proposed under the banner of the War on Terror.

## **Audiences in Iraq and Saudi Arabia; Security Measures**

The securitizing moves of former US President Bush and President Obama, as well as the representatives of the Saudi Arabian Government – another audience with formal support – regarding AQAP have engaged in a related process of securitization by cooperating with the War on Terror program. The statement of Al-Maliki – the Prime Minister of Iraq – expresses the Iraqi position:

*Iraq remained at the center of the War on Terror battling al-Qaeda in Iraq ... The Iraq government, in coordination with the Coalition, made significant progress in combating al-Qaeda and affiliated terrorist organizations... Iraqi government officials continued to*

*strongly condemn terrorists... the Iraqi government continues building its capacity to fight terrorist organizations (Al-Maliki 2007).*

Iraqi security forces also made progress in combating Al Qaeda. This observation is supported by the Department of State, noting that Iraqi security forces were trained by the US military to combat terrorism. In addition, Iraq established schools for Iraqi military services, an Iraqi military academy, a non-commissioned officer academy, a military policy school, and a bomb disposal school. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also established an Iraqi jointly staffed college, offering a curriculum with an emphasis on leadership training, such as professional development for Iraqi squad leaders. This was achieved by limiting lecture courses and extending practical training in anti-terror operations. The outcome of the training was the creation of self-supporting Iraqi forces in combating Al Qaeda (United State Department of State, 2005: 1). In 2011, acts of terror declined from previous years despite the persistent threat of AQI (Rollins, 2011: 5-18). However, it should be noted that AQI is presently shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and members, which inspire more fighters to continue acts of terror in Iraq and the region (National Intelligence Estimate 2006: 1).

The threat of Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia was taken into account by King Abdullah in his 2008 speech before the members of the Consultative Council, when he stated that 'the homeland is still facing the phenomenon of terrorism in spite of recent policies to combat Al Qaeda (Abdolaziz (King Abdullah) 2008: 1). This view was also supported by an American interviewee, who agreed that Saudi Arabia was an obvious target for terrorism, especially because Al Qaeda continued to attempt to destabilize the state owing to its close relationship with the US (Interview with American scholar, May 2012). In addition, King Abdullah has continued to assert that "[They] are firmly determined to confront terrorism [Al Qaeda] in all of its forms" (Abdolaziz (King Abdullah) 2008: 1).

In response to AQAP's activities, Saudi Arabian forces have aggressively supported the War on Terror since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.<sup>7</sup> Hegghammer argues that the Saudi Arabian security system was weak and had limited experience in anti-terrorism in 2003. As a result, AQAP could act freely and conduct numerous acts of terror without much resistance (Hegghammer, 2008: 709). Saudi Arabian security forces launched dozens of security sweeps throughout the country. As a part of this initiative, they dismantled several AQAP cells and killed and arrested certain leaders. AQAP is nevertheless still considered a threat. To build on

Hegghammer's claim, there is evidence that, between 2004 and 2005, Saudi Arabian security forces cooperated directly with US intelligence to combat AQAP, which eventually contributed to the neutralizing of AQAP in Saudi Arabia in 2011.

The weak reaction of Saudi Arabian security forces against AQAP was criticized by some US Congress members in 2003 and 2004. In the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, some members openly claimed that Saudi Arabia was supporting terrorism. Nevertheless, Congress members emphasized the continuation of the US-Saudi relationship as a means of combating terrorism in the aftermath of the Iraq War (United States Department of State, 2003: 1). Some Congress members also acknowledged that the Saudis had, to an extent, cooperated with counterterrorism efforts. As a result, legislation pursuant to section 2043(c) of the Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act regarding Saudi Arabia and terrorist attacks upon the US was enacted (United States Intelligence Senate, 2007: 524-525). State performance reports also describe US assistance in counterterrorism to Saudi Arabian security forces (United State Department of State 2014: 1).

The FBI also deployed investigation and intelligence teams to assist Saudi Arabian security forces (United States Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004b, 1). For example, the Joint Task Force on Terrorist Financing was hosted by Saudi Arabia in 2003 and composed of members of the US and Saudi intelligence and law enforcement communities. Its purpose was to effectively deploy intelligence capabilities and investigative authorities to combat terrorism (Harrington 2004: 1). The Bush administration allocated funding for the International Military Education and Training program in Saudi Arabia, which commenced in 2003. For that year, \$20.2 million was allocated, which increased to \$39.2 million in 2007 (Blanchard, 2010: 15-20). The viewpoint of one expert interviewee in the region draws on the same idea that security forces had been able to control, to some extent, acts of terror by Al Qaeda perpetrated against Saudis, as well as mitigate threats to the royal family (Interview with Persian Gulf expert with a research executive position in Dubai, August 2012).

From 2004 onward, Saudi Arabia devoted almost its full resources to combating AQAP. Its total security budget from 2004 to 2006 was estimated at \$10 billion. In April 2005, deadly gunfire took place on a local residential farm in the town of Al-Raas. In the bloodiest battle between AQAP and Saudi Arabian security forces to date, fourteen members of AQAP were killed, and one hundred police officers lost their lives. AQAP re-emerged by publishing twenty-six announcements about its violent activities on their website, Sawt Al-Jihad. In response to these acts, police

arrested Abdol Aziz Al-Anzi, the latest editorial committee member of *Sawt Al-Jihad* in May 2005. In January 2007, Al-Najdi, another editorial committee member of *Sawt Al-Jihad*, produced a thirtieth issue of *Sawt Al-Jihad*, and was arrested later that year (Hegghammer, 2010: 213, 217). While the government of Saudi Arabia has actively participated in the War on Terror program, its military forces can neither prevent members of the public from being recruited into the AQAP, nor can they respond to all its threats.

Saudi Arabia adopted both a soft approach and both a hard-line approach – manifested through military action to defeat AQAP. The issuance of a fatwa (religious opinion) by reformist Wahhabi clerics rehabilitating former Al Qaeda members, along with raising awareness, were some of the non-violent actions taken by the Saudi state to combat terrorism. In addition, reform Wahhabis such as Sheikh Abdol Aziz Al-Seikh issued religious opinions condemning terrorism and called on citizens to report anyone who plans to conduct acts of terror (United States Department of State, 2004: 67-68). Al-Sheikh and Prince Nayef,<sup>8</sup> the then Minister of Interior of Saudi Arabia, also arranged a re-education and rehabilitation program for former Al Qaeda members.

The rehabilitation program included pro-regime clerics engaged in extensive discussion with arrested terrorists to persuade them to abandon terror. One hundred Sheikhs and scholars were involved in the program, aided by thirty psychologists. However, a dozen ‘rehabilitated’ terrorists returned to AQAP (Riedel and Saab, 2008: 37-38). In a more recent contribution to the War on Terror program, the Saudi Arabian Government has requested that the UN 1267 Sanction Committee add entities and individuals suspected of terrorist activities or supporting activities to its consolidated list (United States Department of State, 2004: 67-68). This recommendation illuminates the use of awareness campaigns and the counter-radicalization programs. TV advertisements and programs, and education in schools and mosques, are just some of the methods used to create public awareness of the threat of AQAP (Rollins, 2011: 14-16).

A distinct shift has occurred in Saudi policy toward Al Qaeda since the Iraq War. In the 1980s, the Saudi Arabian state supported militants in Afghanistan through funding, logistics and recruitment. Since 2003, the state has devoted its resources to combating AQAP. Al Qaeda has undergone a complex evolution over time, changing from a classical militia in Afghanistan to a terrorist network. The strong presence of the US in the region since the 1990s has prompted the Al Qaeda members to highlight the threat of the US to Islamic identity. Since the Iraq War, Al

Qaeda has formed different branches in the region and within specific countries, most notably Iraq.

Al-Zarqawi in Iraq and Al-Uyayri and several other leaders in Saudi Arabia contributed to the leadership of Al Qaeda, including the central leadership of Bin Laden until 2011. Al Qaeda also recruited from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia by advocating extremist ideologies and the use of terror. It remains difficult to say whether Al Qaeda is an ideological movement beyond what any other military group has purported, regardless of whether it is a worldwide organization, network or a mere constellation of radical militants (cf., Borum and Gells, 2005: 472-481). This critique does not undermine Al Qaeda's threat in the Persian Gulf, however, because it is always looking for new theater of operation.

The previous analysis focused on the US securitization of the increased threat of Al Qaeda in Iraq and Saudi Arabia and the response of those two countries to the threat with the War on Terror. This relatively narrow focus does not imply that other GCC states have not become the targets of acts of terror by Al Qaeda. Rather, they simply experienced lesser acts of terror by Al Qaeda than those in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. In this context, it is also worth recalling Riedel and Saab's discussion of how Al Qaeda's threat has not spread significantly to the small GCC states, despite some acts of terror (Riedel and Saab, 2008: 42).

Regional actors in the Persian Gulf have been threatened by Al Qaeda in different ways. The Doha bombing in 2005 by Al Qaeda is one such incident that resulted in fatalities, casualties, and the destruction of a trade building (See for example, 'Car Bomb Targets Theatre in Qatar' 2005). The UN Security Council and representatives of the states of Iraq and Saudi Arabia were not the only audiences with formal support for the securitizing move by Presidents Bush and Obama. Indeed, the representatives of the states in the small GCC states constitute the fourth audience group. Both small and large GCC states, as well as Iraq, cooperate with the US with security matters.

Other GCC states have allowed coalition aircraft to fly over their territory and land at their military bases and civilian airports. At the GCC Interior ministers Summit in October 2001, the Muscat Declaration on Combating Terrorism was issued. At the time, the strategy of uncovering the roots of terrorism and freezing its financing was approved by the Ministers. Small GCC states provided monetary support and supplies for refugee relief for operations associated with the War on Terror. Additional economic assistance has been provided by the C-130 Kuwaiti transport aircraft to deliver humanitarian supplies (United States Department of

Defense 2003: 1). The engagement of the GCC states in the US-led anti-terrorist operations in the region confirms the perception of Al Qaeda among state actors as an existential threat to the security and identity, as well as US interests in the Persian Gulf.

## Conclusion

This chapter examined the regional increase of the threat of Al Qaeda following the 2003 Iraq War through the lens of securitization theory. Existing studies, such as Hegghammer (2010), examined Al Qaeda with various theories and empirical analyses. Yet, most of this work is limited to the evolution of and acts of terror by Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. This chapter, however, suggested a broader perspective by extending the scope of the threat of Al Qaeda to Iraq and beyond. The securitization approach also served to uncover how political discourse regarding the threat of Al Qaeda has evolved since the Iraq War in 2003.

Iraq has become an important site of the Shia and Sunni conflict since the Iraq War. It has provided a haven for members of Al Qaeda to support the radical Sunnis and threaten the Iraqi Shia nation-state as well as US interests in Iraq through acts of terror. In Iraq, the scope of Al Qaeda targeting has become wider. More importantly, the Shia public has become the target of acts of terror. The influence of Al Qaeda members in the Sunni faction of the government provided the impetus for the bodyguards of Al-Hashemi to conduct acts of terror against Shia political authorities. This highlights the threat of Al Qaeda by extending the Shia and Sunni conflict at the political level. This finding leads us to the theme of the book: understanding the radical uses of Islamist and post-Islamist ideology by Al-Qaeda.

In contrast to the anarchic context of Iraq, which created a haven for Al Qaeda, the Saudi Arabian situation has been more or less stable. AQAP members perceive Saudi Arabia as pro-US and have conducted acts of terror against a few members of the state. The Saudi Arabian public and US citizens residing there are also significant referent objects for acts of terror by Al Qaeda. Taken together, this suggests that both Shia Iraq and Sunni Saudi Arabia have been targets for Al Qaeda following the war in Iraq.

Securitization theory draws on how an issue is constructed and securitized by actors. The theory offers a suitable perspective to examine the constellation of actors involved in terrorism and counter-terrorism operations in the Persian Gulf region. It provides empirical explanations for the interactions between Al Qaeda

members, the US, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the small GCC states in the Persian Gulf. This observation is in line with Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde's conceptualization of securitization, where securitization raises the relationship between actors and highlights the security agenda.

Securitization theory also provides a possibility to aggregate the study of societal, political, and military threats as it relates to Al Qaeda. We can return to the analysis of Al Qaeda using acts of terror to threaten the security of regional political figures and the public in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The securitization of the Al Qaeda by Presidents Bush and Obama and the emergency measures adopted under the auspicious of the War on Terror agenda indicate that the threat of Al Qaeda is connected to political arguments.

## Note

1. Al Qaeda has had a complex evolution over time, when it has changed from a classical militia in Afghanistan to a terrorist network (cf., Borum and Gells, 2005: 472-481).
2. *Extremist* and *radical* are synonymous in this chapter; and they mean using violence beyond international law.
3. See for example, Heghammar's different research.
4. Secondary data were collected both from the Persian Gulf region; the Gulf Centre in the University of Exeter in June 2011
5. President Bush initially performed a securitizing move against the Al Qaeda threat after the 9/11 event in 2001. After the Iraq War, President Bush restated his securitizing move against the Al Qaeda threat.
6. Since January 2009, Saudi Arabian and Yemeni Al Qaeda members have worked together under the banner of AQAP but the Yemeni branch is out of the scope of the analysis in this chapter.
7. The author is aware that the Saudi Arabian government cooperated with the War on Terror agenda, but there are governmental people who might support Al Qaeda with funding or other sources of help. Therefore, discussing Saudi Arabia's contribution to the War on Terror agenda is complex. However, in this analysis, I focus on how when AQAP became a threat to the Saudi Arabian state-nation and security forces.
8. Questions remain over whether Prince Nayef financially supported Al Qaeda or the War on Terror agenda. This debate is deliberately left untouched.

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## **The Great Game**

### ***Superpowers' Policy toward Iran - Iraq War***

**Farajollah Ali Ghanbari**

Assistant Professor  
Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies (IHCS)  
Tehran, Iran

#### **Abstract**

The Soviet-American competition and their policies toward a regional conflict in one of the most significant areas of the world, the Iran-Iraq War in the Persian Gulf is the focus of this paper. In this research, I will review the Interests, objectives and policies of both Soviets and Americans in the Persian Gulf. Based on our findings, the contrast between Washington's and Moscow's aims toward Iran has been sharp and clear, though both have attempted to put an end to the conflict without victory of either side.

**Keywords:** Great Game, Iran-Iraq War, Soviet Union, United States, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq , Superpowers..

#### **Introduction**

The topic of the superpowers' relations toward Iran has been treated in numerous published articles, essays, monographs, collections, and books, as well as many classified studies. The best of the English-language open literature on the subject includes works focusing on a broad range of topics, from socio-cultural issues to arms sales. This essay is neither an attempt to cover all materials nor is it designed to summarize all the useful points made here. In this study, I will review the Soviet-

American competition within a narrow subject: their policies toward a regional conflict in one of the most significant areas of the world, the Iran-Iraq War in the Persian Gulf. Generally speaking, the contrast between Washington's and Moscow's aims toward Iran has been sharp and clear, though both have attempted to put an end to the conflict without victory for either side.<sup>1</sup>

## **Period of Study**

This study covers the period from the beginning of conflict to the military intervention of the superpowers in the form of reflagging diplomacy. Hostility was initiated when Iraq sent troops into the Qasr-e-Shirin, northwest of Iran, and later unilaterally abrogated the 1975 Algiers agreement on September 17. The conflict escalated as Baghdad demanded that Tehran relinquish its autonomy over Abu-Musa and the two Tums (islands of disputed sovereignty near the Strait of Hormuz) on behalf of the Arab nations. Later, Saddam requested autonomy on behalf of the Arab inhabitants of the Iranian province of Khuzestan. The conflict became full-scale war on 22 September when Iraq used Israeli tactics in its war against the Arabs in the Six-day War in 1967 and sent Iraqi warplanes to attack ten Iranian airfields in conjunction with the invasion of Irani territories Qasr-e-Shirin in the northeast, the Iranian port of Khorramshahr, and the refinery city of Abadan in Khuzestan.<sup>2</sup> Iraq characterized the invasion as Saddam's Qadidiyya, which refers to the battle of Qadidiyya in southern Iraq in 637 A.D. when an army of Muslim Arabs decisively defeated the army of Zoroastrian Persians and ended the dynasty of the Sassanian empire in Persia (Tahir-Kheli, 1983 .4 and 27).

The timing of Saddam's initiation of war is very significant. The fall of the Shah opened a great opportunity for Baghdad's ambitions in regard to Arab leadership, as well as regional influence which Egypt lost after rapprochement with Israel at Camp David in 1979. Iraq took advantage of inexperienced new leaders in Iran, and welcomed Iran's break- in relations with Israel and the cancellation of the 1957 Treaty of Military Cooperation with the U.S. Further, Ayatollah Khomeini began to formally cancel some \$90 billion worth of military orders as U.S. military deliveries dropped in value from \$2.6 billion in 1979 to about \$14 million in 1980. Iran also departed itself from membership in the western-oriented CENTO Alliance (Central Treaty Organization) and relinquished its claim as the Gulf policeman. Iran's self-generated diplomatic isolation intensified when America's embassy (the nests of spy) was seized by university students in Tehran. This event provided the Carter Administration justification to stop shipment of \$300 million worth of spare

parts purchased by Iran and to arrange an embargo supported by other western countries. This U.S. policy significantly weakened the Iranian army in the Iran-Iraq war (Tahir-Kheli, 130; J. M. Abduighari, 1984. 194-95; and Cordesman, 1988,p. 26).

Regarding the internal situation, post-revolutionary turmoil in Iran altered the military balance in favor of Iraq. Some key weapons in Iranian forces, such as fire control on F-14, the HAWKS missile, and radar units, were sabotaged by anti-Khomeini officers before the revolution took power. A number of weapons also were useless due to lack of maintenance following the revolution. Furthermore, a large-scale defection in the beginning of the revolution and later involvement of a number of officers in a coup d'état in July against the Islamic government intensified executions, and some were fired or retired by Tehran. According to one source, the number of affected by September 1980 reached 12,000, including 50-80 percent of field-grade officers as well as all general officers (Mark A. Heller, 1984. 8-9).

In addition, after the collapse of the former regime, ethnic minorities, such as the Azaries of Azerbaijani, the Kurds, Turkmen, Baluchis, and Arabs, began to challenge the new regime for autonomy. Foreign countries, among them the Soviets, Iraq, and Libya through Palestinian groups, also escalated this issue to put pressure on the central government in Tehran. Of all these ethnic groups, the Kurds have displayed the most tenacious resistance to the central government and pursuit of autonomy. In response to this opposition, in August 1979 the government ordered army units and later organized Revolutionary Guards to restore control of Tehran over the region. Iran also sent troops to control its sovereignty across the country among other minorities, like the Arabs in huzestan province, Azarbaijan and Turkman across the USSR border and in Baluchestan on the Afghanistan border.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, on the eve of the Iraqi invasion, most Iranian forces were deployed well to the rear of the border, and only one of the nine divisions of the Iranian army was on the southern border. Obviously, Iran did not anticipate a full scale war as Iraq mobilized itself.

## **Methodology**

In recent years, the study of world affairs has been marked by three main approaches, each differentiated by its core assumptions about the structure of the global system). <sup>4</sup> In international politics literature, these approaches are labeled

various titles, such as realism or state-centric, pluralism or interdependency, and globalism or marxism. The fundamental distinction between these three approaches relates to their interpretation of the distribution of power within the world system. While realism is based on the assumption that power is located in nation-states, pluralists believe in an interdependent structure within the global system and power distributed among a variety of actors, states, and multinational corporations, as well as international organizations. Globalists believe in the integrated structure of the global system where the distribution of power forms into a pattern global in scope (Maghroori, 1982. 2-3; and Keohane, 1989. 3-60).

The realist perspective (or “realpolitik,” as it is sometimes called) emerged as a view point after the Second World War ( Papp, 1986.6). Its principal founders and their most important works were: Frederick Schuman, International Politics (1933); Harold Nicolson, Diplomacy (1939); E. h. Carr, The Twenty Years’ Crisis (1939); Reinhold Neibuhr, Christianity and Power Politics (1940); George Schwarzenberger, Power Politics (1941); Nicholas Spykman, America’s Strategy in World Politics (1942); Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics among Nations (1948); George F. Kenan, American Diplomacy (1952); and Herbert I3utterfield, Christianity, Diplomacy and War (Vasques, 1983, p. 16) . Realism has attracted later generations of policy makers such as Henry Kissinger, as well as scholars like Kenneth N. Waltz, author of Man, the State and War (1959) and Theory of International Politics (1979). Waltz’ viewpoint is sometimes labeled neorealism (as it is called by Robert W. Cox) or structural realism as it is called by Robert O. Keohen (Vasques, 1983, p. 17).

There is general agreement among scholars on Hans J. Morgenthau as the father/founder of the realist theory (Nye, 1988 pp. 235-236). He wrote his famous book, Politics among Nations, after the Second World War to show that Wilsonian hopes for a moral alternative to power politics were, at very least, naive and sentimental on one hand, and on the other to criticize the isolationist diplomacy of America (Hans J. Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 3-17). Morgenthau has been the most influential scholar and thinker with his focus on power, balance of power, and drive power as the subjects of international politics. He argues that the realist model is an accurate description of world politics and as such presents six basic principles of political realism. First, politics like society, is dominated by objective laws are that preeminently rooted in human nature; by this, he means that by knowing them, it is possible to ascertain the character of a foreign policy, the foreseeable consequences of policy-making, and the objective of the actors. Morgenthau’s second factor is that the concept of interest, defined in terms of power, helps to distinguish between

political and nonpolitical facts, and gives the political sphere a measure of systematic and rational order, which allows us to retrace and anticipate the steps a politician has taken, or will take, on the national scene. The third concept is that interest is not fixed, but rather depends on political and cultural contexts for formation of foreign policy or circumstances, such as time and place. The fourth is that realism subscribes to the moral significance of political action, as well as distinctions between moral action, which refers to justice, and successful political action, which provides the national interests' power. Fifth, says Morgenthau, realism distinguishes between the moral assumption of a particular nation and the moral laws dominant in the world system.

Finally, realism has profound differences with other schools of thought, such as idealism (Vasquez, 1988 Pp. 18-19; and Keohane, 1980, pp. 7-14).

These three assumptions are well known in regard to the realists' interpretation of world affairs. Nation-states are the key units of action, and their decision makers are the most important actors. Second, the rationality assumption assumes that states behave in ways that are, by and large, rational and, therefore, comprehensible to outsiders in rational terms. The third, the power assumption, suggests that states seek power, either as an end or as a means (Maghroori, 1982, p. 15).

The first assumption of realism is that the state is the fundamental political unit in the world system; thus, world politics could be analyzed in terms of interstate relations. Although there have been some changes in the international system since the Second World War, to realists the state remains the primary actor in world politics within geographical boundaries. Because the key units of action in our global system are the nation-states, judgment about international politics has crystallized through analysis of foreign policy. In their analysis of foreign policy, realists focus on national interests, survival of the nation-states, national power and, especially, military elements, as well as the process and dynamics of decision making (Morgenthau, 1985, 10; Kenneth Kipnis, 1987, pp. 1-3; and Charles R. Beitz, 1979, pp. 1-66.).

Realists are suspicious of the objectivity or validity of moral judgments in discussions of international affairs and foreign policy. This factor distinguishes between domestic and foreign affairs, too, realists believe. Based on a state-centric paradigm, a variety of sources discredit morality in the global system, such as: cultural relativism, obligation of rulers to follow national interest, lack of moral principles to apply to the world order of sovereign states and, finally, the idea of the structural features of anarchical world order, known as the Hobbesian state of nature

in the literature of international relations. Generally speaking, there is no agreement among realists as to what extent skepticism about morality is justifiable within nations; however, in the realist tradition, morality has limited content when applied to international relations. Instead, they focus on rationality as the significant factor in drive power and seek the national interest of the key unit of the system-- nation-states (Maghroori, 1989, pp. 192-200).

Realists discredit the role of international organizations in the formation of world politics. They refer to historical evidence and argue that any attempt to use the United Nations to provide agreement among superpowers has failed. They believe the U.N. was successful only in certain areas and only in a limited issue; however, no evidence exists to show that this body could stop any war. Moreover, realists dismiss the reliability of multinational corporations in shaping the international system. They recognize the economic significance of these corporations, but disregard their political impacts. For instance, Gilpin argues that, under certain circumstances and about specific states, the multinational corporation has not, and cannot, exercise considerable influence over the domestic and international circumstances; but it is difficult to generalize the issue and conclude that multinational corporations act as autonomous and independent actors or have significant influences on international politics and in the process on foreign policy making.

Realists also believe that international relations are a struggle for power and that actors attempt to attain peace through military security of the sovereign nation. In realism, power as an essential element in world politics is defined in military form; in power politics, action of the statesman is in terms of power (Keoharie, 1986, p. 10). They accept the balance of power and relatively agree with Morgenthau, who mentions that international balance of power is only a framework for a number of autonomous units with the autonomy of their component parts. To realists, the balance of power and politics that aim at this perspective is not only inevitable but a vital stabilizing factor in a society of sovereign nations (Maghroori, 1982 pp. 227).

In regard to the three fundamental assumptions of this state-centeric paradigm, depending primarily on the realist theory of international relations, this study will assess the history of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the USSR concerning the Iran-Iraq War. The Persian Gulf is an area of regional conflict, an area where throughout history great powers have exploited local passions for their own ends. This conflict has been subjected to the superpowers' manipulation in

both direct and indirect interference. The United States and the Soviet Union's competition in the Iran-Iraq War forms the basis of this study, which supports the realist paradigms as the best explanatory theory for understanding outcomes in this regional conflict, as Maghroori argued in realism world politics defined in terms of the U.S.-Soviet competition.

In a comparative analytical approach, I will review the interests, as well as objectives, of both superpowers in the Iran-Iraq War and evaluate their perceptions toward the war. Then I will discuss Soviet-American politics toward the war, which have crystallized as competitive intervention in the region.

## **Sources**

The information used in the preparation of this study has largely been derived from three main sources. The first are original documents, such as treaties, governmental publications, and memoirs; the second includes literature covering various aspects of the issue; and the third is from Western and Farsi presses. Documents have been drawn largely from Soviet, Persian and American sources, materials that are available in both English and Farsi languages.

## **SUPERPOWERS' INTERESTS IN THE PERSIAN GULF**

### **Soviet Interests:**

Soviet interests in the Persian Gulf, which are limited, are not as important as those of Americans and other westerners.<sup>5</sup> Generally speaking, Soviet interests could be classified into security, political, and economic categories (Paul Marantz and Blema S. Steinberg, 1985, 3).

Security interests in the Persian Gulf are related to protection of its southern frontier from the presence of potentially hostile powers, for example, the United States and Western countries that possess land and sea bases on southern Soviet borders to guarantee access to Persian Gulf oil.<sup>6</sup> American activity was initiated after the Second World War when they supported Iran by ending Moscow's activity toward pro-Soviet Kurdish and Azarbaiyan republics (Richard W. Cottam, 1988, pp. 19-10.). American intelligence services also helped the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahavi, to regain power and extend his alliance in order to assist U.S. efforts to encircle and contain the expansionist policy of the Soviets (Mohanunad Mughisuddin, ed., 1977, pp. 120-121). Furthermore, the anti- Soviet

views of the Shah and the Islamic Republic, regardless of their policies toward westerners, sustain the potential strategic threat. From the Soviet view, U.S. naval forces in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War intensified this threat.

Political interests are generally derived from status issues, such as the Soviet-American relationship, the Soviet-Chinese relationship, and Moscow's role and policies in the Middle East as a whole. The Soviet Middle East involvement and presence have focused more on the Persian Gulf through Iraq, which crystallized in the friendship treaty of 1972. Yet, while Moscow has attempted to increase influence in the Gulf, Soviet activities have been characterized by extreme caution in the area, which is known as an American sphere of influence for local or potential superpower conflict (Mohanunad Mughisuddin, ed., 1977, 121).

In fact, American-Soviet relations and Soviet-Chinese relations, as well as Soviet activities in the Middle East, optimize Soviet political benefits in two important ways, first by maintaining Soviet influence as a superpower in the affairs of Persian Gulf, and second by reducing the influence of other powers like the United States and its Western allies. The two issues exemplify the principal theme of Soviet foreign policy since World War II, that of being accepted as a superpower (Mohanunad Mughisuddin, ed., 1977,122).

Consequently, Soviet status as a superpower promotes the intention to impose its presence in the area that formed the defensive aspect of Soviet policy or offensive mode. The former is that Soviets are aware of direct security threats by the U.S. and westerners through southern borders, such as U.S. military activity in the Gulf or political rapprochement with Iran; the latter is Soviet activity to control or minimize American influence over the Persian Gulf (Atef A. Gawad, 1987,164).

Economic interests comprise the final set of potential Soviet interests in the area. In general, trade between the Soviets and Gulf states is not significant. The primary economic importance to trade relations lies in Soviet energy imports, especially natural gas from Iran and Afghanistan and oil from Iraq, as well as arm exports before the Islamic revolution to both Iran and Iraq, and after the revolution only to Iraq. In fact, oil is not a direct need for the Soviets because of increasing oil and gas production from Siberian fields; but it could be a significant source of cheap oil to East European allies. Moreover, the Soviet Union would be interested in increased access to oil for allies' energy demands or, under extreme circumstances, in damaging the Western economics by denying them Gulf oil, which provided Moscow potential political power. Arms deals with Iran and Iraq

are also a source of money and a tactic to isolate other powers in the region (Atef A. Gawad, 1987, 47-62).

## American Interests

The United States also has strategic, political, and economic interests in the Persian Gulf.<sup>7</sup> Actually, the Gulf forms an important crossroad of vital economic and political importance to the Western capitalist world, and Americans do not want the area under domination of a power hostile to the United States and its Western allies. The U.S. is reluctant to allow the Soviets either direct control or increased influence over the Gulf region.<sup>8</sup>

The United States has had long-standing friendships and mutual interests with the moderate Gulf states because of their great wealth, oil reserves, and influence both within and beyond the region. American policies have long been aimed at promoting regional security and stability, as well as assisting their friends in resistance to increased Soviet influence and presence (Jeffrey Schloesser, 1987, 2). The U.S. was also concerned about Iran because of its size, strength, and location near the Soviet Union and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The U.S. looks to an eventual improvement in Irani-American relations. The Reagan administration's initiative responded to this policy.

The United States and its western allies are substantially dependent on both Middle East oil and the Persian Gulf. Despite efforts and research on alternative energy sources, Europe, the U.S., and especially the Japanese have continued significantly dependent on Gulf oil. The failure to find alternatives in their energy policy, as well as increased needs, suggest dangers to the United States and its allies of embargo and other political or military actions that could disrupt the flow of oil from the Gulf. It needs to bear in mind that Gulf countries possess 63 percent of the world's known petroleum reserves and supply 25 percent of all oil shipping in world trade today. In 1986, about 30 percent of western oil imports and 60 percent of those for the Japanese came from the Gulf; moreover, as American oil reserves decline, that country will also increase oil imports. The energy/security study of the Department of Energy shows that total U.S. imports could double by the mid-1990s (Anthony H. Cordesman, 1988, P. 15-44; Samuel F. Wells and Mark A. Bruzonsky, 1987, 306-308. ). Thus, America as well as its industrial allies, with vital and unquestionable economic interests, are willing to ensure that oil flows unimpeded from the Gulf to the free world now and in the future (Gaddis, 1972, p. vii; and Mughisuddin, 1977, 124).

## **SUPERPOWERS' OBJECTIVES IN THE PERSIAN GULF**

### **Soviet Objectives**

Because of the absence of primary sources, official memos, and the like, Soviet objectives are less clear than those of the United States interests and policy (Mughisuddin, 1977, p. 124-125). While interests may be viewed through various traditional modes of analysis and policy by observation and assessment of behavior, Soviet objectives can only be surmised as a function of Soviet perceptions of interests and constraints.<sup>9</sup>

From the security interest view, the Soviets' long-term objective in the Persian Gulf has been to eliminate the perceived western threat to its security, especially by Americans through the southern border.<sup>10</sup> In reality, the Soviets will not eliminate this threat, but merely reduce it. Their military objective is the reduction and ultimate termination of western bases in the area. The political side of the Soviet objective--to reduce western influence would free the area from western political control and, as any major power in any geographical area, increase Soviet influence in the Gulf.<sup>11</sup>

### **American Objectives**

Americans developed their presence in the Persian Gulf after Britain withdrew from the region in 1971 and defined three objectives in the region: the protection of security, political, and economic interests. As far as security is concerned, the U.S. supports indigenous efforts to ensure regional security to provide stability and fast, orderly development without outside interference. In regard to politics, the U.S. assists peaceful resolution of territorial and other disputes among the regional powers and the opening of better channels of communication among them. Economically speaking, the U.S. wants continued access to and protection of the Gulf oil supplies to meet U.S. needs and those of its industrial allies in Europe and especially in Asia, the Japanese. Moreover, the U.S. is concerned about commercial and financial interests and investment in the Gulf region (Muttam, 1984, 50).

## **SUPERPOWERS' PERSPECTIVE TOWARD THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR**

### **Soviet Perspectives**

From the beginning of war in the Persian Gulf, the Soviets have urged a negotiation settlement between Iran and Iraq. They argue that the war benefits imperialism and increases the political influence and economic interests of America. Moscow presented a number of reasons to support this interpretation.<sup>12</sup> First, in the Arab-Israel conflict Washington has chosen the Israeli side, and Moscow has taken advantage by supporting the Arabs. This policy changed the influence of superpowers among Arab countries in favor of the Soviets. The Iran-Iraq war split the Arabs and polarized them into two opposing camps, a pro-Iraqi camp (Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco) versus a pro-Iranian one (Libya, Syria, and possibly Algeria). The Gulf conflict also diverted the Arabs' attention from the Palestinian issue and their enemies, Israel and its western allies, especially America, into the Iran-Iraq war in which the Soviets could not actively support either belligerent without alienating the other camp (Cordesman, 1988, 1; Phebe Marr, 1985, 305; and Abdulghani, 1988, 212- 214.).

In the second place, Anwar Sadat, leader of Egypt, welcomed U.S. President Carter's policy in the Arab-Israel issue: to put an end to this conflict by peaceful methods. Sadat signed a separate peace treaty with Israel at Camp David through which Egypt became self-isolated among most of the Arab world and Sadat lost his position as leader of Pan-Arabism inherited from Nasser. Since the Iran-Iraq War began, Egypt has supported Baghdad both militarily and politically when Egypt and its pro-western leader reentered the mainstream of Arab affairs (Heller, 1984, 9; and Marr, 305).

Third, the war placed the Soviets in a dilemma. At the beginning of the conflict, Moscow claimed neutrality; but as the war drew on and Iran initiated a number of successful offensive actions inside the Iraqi border, they were compelled to choose sides. The Soviets believed that the war not only prevented their socialist ally, Iraq, from achieving hegemony among the Arab states, but also increased its dependency on moderate Arab states financially as well as politically. This issue also destroyed Soviet aspirations to reap benefits from Baghdad's political position in the Persian Gulf. As a result, Moscow resumed deliveries of weapons and other materials to Iraq to keep Saddam in power. Following this policy, chosen at the expense of

deterioration of relations with Iran, Tehran turned to the west for economic and military assistance (Chubin, pp. 188-202; and Majid Khadduri, 1978, 69).

A fourth reason given was that Iraq was not pleased with the Soviets' arms shipments to this country because of the terms of payment and quality. The war increased this gap and forced Baghdad to shift toward the west for military, political, and economic assistance. Iraq signed military and economic agreements with France and other Western European countries. The U.S.-Iraqi rapprochement also resulted in this slippage of the Soviet sphere of influence (Marr, 1988,305; and Cordesman, 1988, 161).

Fifth, the Soviets were significantly concerned about the increasing threat of direct U.S. involvement in the region. To them, Gulf war provided Washington more military facilities when some Arab moderate countries of the region sought protection under the American umbrella. The establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) by six of the Arab Gulf states, with U.S. indirect support, formation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), and later the organization of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in January, 1983, are all responses to the war situation (Peterson,1988 ,PP. 153-189; and Tareg Azia, 1981 , 57).

The Soviets believed that during the war, two nonalignment countries-socialist Iraq and Islamic Iran- harmed and weakened each other, while Americas' allies, Israel arid Saudi Arabia, found a relatively comfortable position. Iraqi military weakness on the eastern front against Israel provided Jerusalem opportunity to distrust Iraqi nuclear research facility in summer 1981 and invade Lebanon in 1982 (Abdulghani, 1988,214). Riyad also took advantage and adopted an active posture in the Gulf and Arab affairs. From the fall of 1980, Saudi Arabia initiated some major policies, such as delegation of the Syria-Jordanian border crisis, formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and management of regional security affairs to contain revolutionary Iran and Soviet Communism through GCC (Abdulghani, 1988,213).

Finally, as the war continued, the oil-producing countries planned to protect their oil exports from war operation. This policy permitted them to provide other facilities and avoid the three vulnerable water passages in the region: the Strait of Hormuz, the Babal-Mandab, and the Suez Canal (Naff,1985, 87). As a result, Saudi Arabia depended on a new transnational pipeline from Abqaiq to Yanbu (on the eastern shore of the Red Sea). Iraq planned to build a new pipeline to connect the oil fields of the Basra region with this Saudi pipeline, and signed an agreement with Jordan to construct another pipeline from Hadita (about 200 km northwest of

Baghdad) to the Jordanian port of Agaba. Iraq also signed an agreement with Turkey to build a pipeline to carry liquified petroleum gas from Iraq's northern oil field to the Mediterranean. Actually, the shift of oil shipping from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea decreased the importance of the Bab-al Mandab Straits, which were closed to two Soviet allies, Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. As a result, in the Soviets' point of view, though Americans openly advocated the cessation of the conflict, the U.S. actually wanted to keep the war going in order to consolidate their influence and ensure their presence in the Persian Gulf area. Moscow believed peace between Iran and Iraq would be especially painful to the U.S. because the end of the war would seriously damage policy and lessened military expansion/influence in the region ((Naff,1985. 28).

In contrast, the Soviets claimed that they did not have any reason to support this war or support victory by either side; however, a major victory by Iraq might lead to disintegration of the central government in Teheran and provide the Soviets opportunity to reassert historical interest in Azerbaijan and Kurdestan or perhaps spread the influence through South Afghanistan into Iranian Baluchistan. The Soviets could have exploited this situation, but they were concerned about an unexpected clash with Pakistan and feared U.S. decision-makers' reactions toward Soviet expansionist policy in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, where perceived as an American sphere of influence. Furthermore, Iraq was dissatisfied with the Soviet role in the war. Baghdad was well aware that the USSR regarded Iran as the major prize and only turned to Iraq when Tehran was reluctant to deal with Moscow; thus, Saddam was unwilling to serve anymore as a vehicle for Soviet influence in the Middle East. In fact, an Iraqi victory would pose a new political or perhaps military challenge to the most pro-Soviet country in the region, Syria. Although the Iraqi-Syrian hostility was rooted in the Baath's Party leadership dilemma, Syrian support of Iran during the war intensified this conflict. As a result, western-oriented Iraq could have jeopardized the most important Soviet bases in the region (Marr, 1988, 31).

An Iranian victory would be even more dangerous from the Soviet point of view. If a pro-Iranian, Islamic fundamentalist government were established in Iraq, Moscow would lose a long-standing ally (Frederick Axelgard, 1986, 88). The Iranian expansion would threaten pro-western governments in the region, as well as pro-Soviet governments. Both Iran and Syria share a common antipathy for Saddam Hussein, Iraq's leader, but even now they compete with each other in Lebanon; Iran supported the proIranian Hezbollah group but Syria supported the other side of conflict in the civil war, the Sunni sect and Amal party. The

competition could weaken the influence of Moscow's ally, Syria, in Lebanon and to a larger extent in the Middle East. Furthermore, Iranian leaders might decide to replace the Hafez-al Assad regime just as he did the regime of Iraq (Katz, 1987, 9).

After defeating Iraq, Iran could provide greater help to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, which they have already done to a limited extent (Charles Tripp, 1984, 160.). Moreover, the idea of Islamic revolution might possibly spread to Moslem Soviet Central Asia (Charles Tripp, 1984, p. 160), although Iran may be unwilling to risk Russian aggravation by promoting Islamic resurgence. Iran does not threaten Soviet interest in Afghanistan, Syria, or Muslims in Central Asia; as a matter of fact, revolutionary Iran presents a revolutionary ideology competitive with Marxism-Leninism (Mark N. Katz, 1987, 9). As a result, any governments that come to power might be as anti-Soviet as Iran. The expansion of Iran in the Middle East would lessen the influence of the Soviets, and Iran could compete with Moscow in helping Arab states in conflict with foreign powers, not just with arms but with men (Mark N. Katz, 1987, 10).

## American Perspectives

From the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War, the United States has attempted to put an end to this conflict (Schloesser, 1987, 1). They argued that the best outcome of the war would be to preserve the present national structure of Iran and Iraq, without control of either side over the other. Both countries would act as buffer states between the Persian Gulf and the USSR, but only if they remain strong, independent states. Americans believed that the war threatened their vital interests in the Gulf and, in contrast, benefitted the Soviets. The U.S. developed several factors in this argument (Cordesman, 1988:157.).

First, the Soviets wish to sustain adequate hard-currency earnings, and energy exports are a major source of hard-currency earnings that in turn are used to import products that the Soviets produce expensively by standard means. Indeed, Moscow exports all of its imports of Persian oil for hard currency. For example, Soviet imports of Iranian oil in 1981 and some in 1982 were exported to Romania in a trilateral deal. Moscow delivered certain goods, namely military, to Iran, accepted payment in oil, and re-exported the oil to Romania (Gawad, 1983:155-156). Second, the Iran-Iraq War left these two countries dependent on the USSR for arms and political support that weakened the delicate balance in the Gulf between the superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR (Cordesman, 1988:1). Americans argued that Moscow was a major arms supplier to Iraq based on the Treaty of Military

Cooperation of 1972 between Moscow and Baghdad. The USSR also rebuilt some ties to Iran. The Soviet Union and Iran signed an agreement for economic cooperation and stressed good neighborly relations. To Washington, Moscow played both Iran and Iraq cards alternatively at any given time (Cordesman, 1988,160).

In the third place, at the end of 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, almost all Arab governments criticized Moscow during the Islamic Summit Conference in January 1980 that condemned the attack (only Syria and South Yemen refused to attend). These states increased their security ties with the United States and the west; but with the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, the subject of the Islamic Summit Conference became the Gulf conflict and war, not the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Katz,1988, 57).

Fourth, the Persian Gulf states are concerned about the Palestinian problem because of its importance to their power at home, as well as their relations with other Arab and Islamic states (Tahir Khali, 1983, 163). Arab leaders of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, argued that although they supported American interest within the OPEC framework, Washington did not pressure Israel to withdraw from the Arab territories (Tahir Khali, 1983, 165). As a result, Arab interest was not threatened by the Soviet Union, as Washington claimed at the time, but they became Israel's and the U.S. common enemy. The formation of a rapid deployment force (RDF) under the Carter doctrine was viewed with caution by most Gulf rulers as a threat against their oil fields (Stephen R. Grununon, 1982, 87). Furthermore, military mobilization of America in the Gulf as the Iran-Iraq War began, and later the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, intensified this argument. As a result, Arabs turned to the Soviets for political support. They also were frustrated by their inability to purchase American weapons that they wanted for self-defense against regional threats. In 1984, both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait warmed up to the Soviets with the intent to purchase arms from Moscow (. Katz,1988, 58.).

Finally, Islamic revival in the Gulf has been most successful and inspirational, sponsored by countries such as Iran, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. They have been internationally active in assisting Moslem minorities to pressure governments to modify their domestic and foreign policies toward autonomous Moslem movements. There was no exception taken to Soviet Muslims when more than 40 million (about 16 percent) of the population were Muslim, even though one of the most important aspects of the Muslim minority in the USSR is the varying birthrates in comparison to other nationalities (Gawad, 1983,164). According to

some reports, the number of Russian nationalities will fall from 55 percent to 44 percent. The nationalities of Muslims, which mostly inhabit the Caucasus and central Asia, by contrast, would be 80 million, about 25 percent of the total population at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This issue potentially threatens the USSR'S domestic stability (Wolfgang Leonhard, 1986, pp. 50- 53).

Americans argued that the Iran-Iraq conflict turned Muslims' attentions from the Soviet Muslim issue to the Gulf war. Soviets are sure, in light of this conflict, that there will be no Islamic revolution against the Kremlin, no holy war, and no armed secessionist rebellion in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union. As a result, according to the American point of view, the war provided the Soviets opportunity to dominate local governments or acquire a privileged position in the Gulf area. The U.S. considered the victory of either Iran or Iraq a potential threat to the region. The victory of Iran might bring economic, military, and political disaster in the Persian Gulf and shatter the structure of the industrialized interests in the region; however, Islamic revolutionaries in Tehran lacked the skill to carry out this threat. Iran also spoke about exporting of its revolution and alienation of other states in the region, but could do little to further such talk (Barry Rubin, 84, 142). The U.S. also hated the victory of Saddam and argued that Iraq was the first Arab state to propose the direct use of oil as a weapon against the United States and its allies. Moreover, the Ba'athist regime in Iraq joined with Syria and Egypt (two pro-Soviet and socialist-oriented nations) to develop the policy of confrontation toward Israel. To Washington, the victory of a pro-Soviet regime in Baghdad intensified the Arab-Israel struggle, expanded socialist movement among Arab countries, arid unified Arabs against the west, which the Ba'ath party branded imperialism (Tahir Khaili, 1983,pp. 109-114).

Finally, the victory of Saddam could develop a full-scale Soviet military invasion through Iran and later into the Gulf area.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, to Americans there have been some positive aspects to Iran's foreign policy: its vigorous opposition to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, its friendly relations with such U.S. allies as Pakistan and Turkey, and its balanced relationship with Eastern and Western Europe.

## **SUPERPOWERS' POLICY IN THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR**

### **Soviet Policy**

The key issue to profoundly affect Iran-Soviet relations has been the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>14</sup> Although there are several issues that separate Moscow and Tehran, including: 1) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; 2) the Soviet interpretation and description of the Iranian revolution; and 3) the Soviet connection with the communist Tudeh Party, through which the war remained the major barrier to better relations (Kauppi, 1983, pp. 227-236).

The Soviet Union has officially claimed neutrality in the war that began in September 1980 when Iraqi Troops invaded Iranian territory (Szás Michael Z. , 1986, p. 41; and Axelgard, 1986,85). Moscow and Baghdad signed a treaty of friendship in 1972, and the Iraqi military has been armed by the USSR. This proclamation of neutrality was interpreted as a swing in favor of Iran; indeed, Moscow was more interested in wooing Iranian trust than reinforcing Iraq (Chubin, 1983, 934; and Wells, 1987,131). In Moscow's view, strategic gains seemed to be greater in Iran, and Moscow distrusted Iraq, with good reason. First, Iraq had sought better relations with the conservative monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula. Second, Iraq signed major industrial and military contracts with the west, for example the United States, France, and Britain. Moreover, Iraq suppressed the Iraqi communist party (Joseph G. Whelan and Michael J. Dixon,1986, 153). Indeed, the Soviets were involved in a balancing act, and they did not want to sacrifice their partnership with Iraq. Yet, Moscow undermined its neutrality by refusing to supply Iran with arms and spare weapon parts (Christine Moss Helms, 1984, 177.).

Soviet-Iranian relations changed dramatically with Iranian victories in the Gulf War begun in 1982.<sup>15</sup> In March, the tide of warfare shifted in favor of Iran; by May, Iran recaptured the important port city of Khorramshahr. Then Iraqi forces were driven out of the southern Iranian territory. By July of 1982, Iran was on offensive posture, ready to invade Iraq and institute an Islamic government. The Iranian invasion became a major point of conflict between Iran and the Soviet Union (Whelan, 1986,152).

The Soviets gave up trying to push Iran to end the Gulf War and saw no prospects for better relations with Tehran. The Soviets decided to resume arms supplies to Iraq, thus jeopardizing relations with Iran. With this growing hostility, Iranians expelled certain espionage personnel in the Soviet embassy (Gary Sick, 1987, 710; Martin Sicker,1989,125; and Malik, 1987, 261). Apparently, a Soviet

intelligence officer who had defected provided key information on Soviet activities in Iran to the British that in turn leaked to Iranian officials. As a result, the pro-Soviet Tudeh party disbanded because its leadership was charged with the coup d'etat against the Islamic republic in Iran (Nikki R. Keddie, 1986, 201; Sick, 1987, 710; Sicker, 1989:125; and Malik, 1989, 261). Soviets criticized the crackdown on the Tudeh party, not the Islamic orientation of the regime. They also sought alternative allies within Iran and carefully monitored the course of politics in this country. The geo-political significance of Iran is far greater than Iraq; hence, Soviet interests would not be served by openly siding with Iraq in the war. Soviets supported Iran, indirectly aiding their allies such as North Korea, Syria, Libya, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, with arms shipments to Iran (Gavad, 1983, 159; and Mark N. Katz, 1988, 58). Although the Soviets sold arms to both Iran and Iraq, either directly or indirectly, the situation was rather ironic since the Soviet position in the area was eroded rather than advanced by the war. This fact forced the Soviets to focus on an end to war without victory to either side.

## American Policy

When the Iran-Iraq war broke out, the U.S. officially claimed neutrality, and the Carter administration expressed hope for a quick end to the conflict (Murray Gordon, 1981, 159). Indeed, America's policy focused on two issues: 1) to prevent an Iranian victory in the war, and 2) to minimize any Soviet political gains in Iran. On the whole, the war provided Washington the opportunity to expand its military posture and influence in the region. One notable example of this was Iraq's reliance on America and its allies (France and Britain) for military purchases, rather than the Soviet Union (Axelgard, 1988, 59; and Szaz, 1988, 59).

As the war intensified and Iran began to achieve greater military victory, the U.S. policy tilted toward Iraq (Szaz, 1989, p. 50-55; and Helms, 1984, 205). The first sign of Washington's tilt toward Baghdad was in 1982 when the U.S. State Department removed Iraq from its list of countries supporting international terrorism (Axelgard, 1988, 15; and Szaz, 1988, 48). Then America extended some \$2 billion credit to Iraq because of the financial pressures that threatened the country with bankruptcy. Furthermore, the Reagan administration provided over \$500 million in loans to help Iraq construct an oil pipeline through Jordan (Axelgard, 1988, pp. 52-53). The American-Iraqi military ties were strengthened after November 1984, along with resumption of diplomatic relations that had been broken since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (Axelgard, 1988, 59; and Szaz, 1988, 49). This rapprochement provides the most

disturbing aspect of the U.S. tilt toward Iraq. While Washington threatened and used military forces against Iran for its attacks against Kuwaiti ships it maintained a benign attitude toward Iraqi attacks on Iranian oil tankers (Szaz, 1988, 72) From the Iranian perspective, this American policy indirectly encouraged Iraqi attacks of Iran-bound oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Ramazani, 1988), P. 293).

Moreover, the Reagan administration offered naval escorts to tankers on the southern part of the Gulf, but not to ships through the Iranian main oil terminal at Kharg Island. This naval escort emphasized a U.S. policy bias toward one side, rather than an effort to uphold the right of free transit for all vessels. The U.S. policy in this regard helped Iraq move closer to its ultimate policy objective of internationalizing the war and engaging U.S. forces on its side in the Gulf war.<sup>16</sup> American forces in the region were also indirectly involved in combat operations in the Iran-Iraq war. From the Iranian point of view, the United States provided crucial military intelligence data on Iranian troop movements to Iraq. The AWACS planes over Saudi territory, controlled by U.S. personnel, transmitted intelligence data to Baghdad (Axelgard, 1988, 71) . Furthermore, American aerial tankers provided the aerial refueling for Saudi Arabia's fighter bombers that defended against possible Iranian retaliation for Iraqi attacks on Iranian oil targets. In one instance this refueling provided opportunity to the Saudis to shoot down two Iranian jets over the Persian Gulf (. Ramazani , 1988,pp. 63 and 122).

Moreover, the United States encouraged the Conservative Arab States of the Persian Gulf to establish a regional defense system with American military support (Robert G. Darius et al., eds., 1984, pp. 89-91). This regional organization was formed in February 1981 under the name of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with membership from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>17</sup> Although the stated aim of the ccc was to integrate the political, economic, social and security concerns of its six member states, the organization promoted containment policy toward Iran and as such is an extension of U.S. military presence in the region (William L. Dowby and Russell B. Trood, 1985, pp. 178-180; and J. E. Peterson, 1986, pp. 213-224).

**Arms Deal** : In late 1984, the U.S. began an initiative with the broad goal of establishing some useful contacts with a special group of Iranian policy-makers (moderates), labeled the Arms Deal.<sup>18</sup>

The Reagan administration believed this initiative would reduce Soviet and pro-Soviet groups in Iran, and ultimately those who benefitted from the American arms sale in Iran would tilt toward the U.S. after Khomeini's departure from the scene.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Iranian influence might be used to release American hostages being held in Lebanon (Seger, 1988, pp. 130-133). Actually, the U.S. covert arms sales to Iran in 1985 and 1986 became a dramatic phase of American-Iranian relations. During the course of conversations and meetings between the delegations, the two countries clarified their positions on a large number of issues: 1) the principles of U.S. policy in the Middle East; 2) the Soviet Union's ambitions in the Persian Gulf; 3) Soviet support of Iraq in its war with Iran by all means, even Soviet military invasion of Iran to force Tehran to divide forces between two fronts, West and North (Seger, 1988, pp. 174). Later, the Iranian delegations in the "Second Channel," who were the representatives of President, Speaker of the House, and Prime Minister, came to Washington and discussed: 1) Soviet threats in the region; 2) ways of ending the war with Iraq as well as removing Saddam Hussein of Iraq; 3) forms of military assistance to Iran in the war; and 4) ways of releasing the hostages in Lebanon (Tower, 1987, pp. 47-51; Seger, 1983, 298; and Ledeen, 1988, 236.). The release of two hostages and delivery of some defensive arms<sup>105</sup> to Iran, TOW and HAWK, with Israelis' assistance, was the result of this initiative, but domestic conflict and influence of pro-Soviets in Iran brought the issue to a pro-Syria newspaper, Shira'a (Ronald Reagan, 1986, p. 1.). Actually, the American military protection of Kuwaiti tankers was the result of the scandal over U.S. arms sales to Iran (Seger, 1988, pp. 283-284; and Sick, 1983, 76-78.).

## **Reflagging**

As the Iran-Iraq war continued to escalate, Kuwait became increasingly aligned with Iraq and Iraqi war efforts. Despite Kuwait's declared neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war, it did not behave as a neutral power.<sup>20</sup> Kuwait not only supported Iraq financially in its war with Iran, but also worked as a major transshipment point for Iraqi-bound materials. Furthermore, Kuwait as well as Saudi Arabia provided Iraq's energy needs in the war with Iran. Consequently, Iranian leadership viewed Kuwait as an active ally of Iraq. Iran's warnings to Kuwait to stop aiding Iraq were of no avail. As Iraq initiated and later escalated the so called "Tanker War"<sup>21</sup> in 1984 by attacking Iran bound-commercial ships, Iran retaliated in kind to every Iraqi attack on Iranian ships. Since the Persian Gulf was closed to Iraq's ships, Iran's retaliation was directed against Iraqi allies, particularly Kuwait and Kuwaiti-bound ships. Kuwait was unwilling to dissociate itself from the Iraqi support and so sought protection for its ships from outside powers.

Kuwait asked both the United States and the Soviet Union in 1986 to reflag its ships and thereby bring them under direct military protection of the superpowers. According to the United States Department of State, the number of attacks on vessels had increased over the years but the percentage of ships hit was still very small--less than one percent of those transiting the Gulf--and most of them were attacked by Iraq. In September 1986, Reagan rejected the Kuwaiti request (Peterson,1988,p. 194). In March 1987, the United States government was informed that Kuwait and the Soviet Union reached a deal whereby the Soviets undertook protection of Kuwaiti oil tankers. The Soviet Union's positive response to the Kuwaiti proposal prompted the United States to abandon its initial hesitancy and offer to reflag 11 Kuwaiti ships (Schloesser, 1987,11; and Mary Cooper,, 1988, 95). Reagan hoped this policy would prevent a nation friendly to the U.S. from falling into dependency on the USSR for protection of its oil through the Strait of Hormuz. But more obviously the policy was designed to limit the damage in U.S.-Arab relations as a result of Washington's secret arms sales to Tehran (Schloesser, 1987,11).

From the Iranian point of view, Kuwaiti oil tanker protection clearly sided the United States with Iraq against Iran in the war (Raniazani,1988,293). Washington was no longer neutral in its means as well as its ends; its naval escorts protected only the oil tankers of Kuwait, Iraq's close ally. This U.S. policy threatened Iran with retaliation against Iraqi attacks on its oil tankers. The American naval escorts illustrated the one-sided diplomacy designed to stop Iran from winning the war.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Persian Gulf is the focal point of the superpowers' rivalry in the 1980s. Yet, in spite of the generally competitive character of Soviet Union and United States relations, both had at least one shared interest in the Iran- Iraq war--that the war not end with the collapse of either belligerent. Moreover, both preferred a diplomatic settlement, such as proposed by the United Nations. As a result, the U.S. and the USSR attempted to ensure Iraqi inability to prevail over Iran. To stop the fighting, they tried to compel Iran to moderate its war aims and responsibility for continuation of war on Iran. This justified Soviet and American economic and military sanctions on Tehran.

However, third party pressure on Iran was neither unremitting in character nor universal in scope. Both countries have endured economic and diplomatic sanctions.

Soviet allies have told Iran some of what the Soviet Union provided to Iraq, and the United States violated its own embargo to gain opportunity to patch up relations with Iran, is well as to secure the release of a few American hostages. Moreover, enough arms were available on the black market or from various other suppliers to enable Iran to compensate for any arms shortages.

Americans as well as the Soviets did not welcome either an Iranian victory on the battlefield or the fall of the Iraqi government by socio-economic exhaustion and the loss of political authority. If this situation arose, the United States would likely send its military forces to the Persian Gulf to deter an Iranian success in the Arabian Peninsula. Soviet pressure along the northern border by its forces, and eastern border by Afghan rebels, also imperiled an Iranian victory.

After 1984, Iraq accomplished shutdown of Iran's oil exports in order to put more pressure on Tehran. Iran retaliated and attacked ships of Iraqi allies in the Gulf. This policy triggered the U.S. intervention to maintain the flow of oil from the area to ensure the security of the Gulf region, triggered Soviet involvement and also coincided with the Soviets' containment of Iran. Thus, common superpowers' objectives quickly transformed into competitive intervention, and their mutual desire to maintain a balance of power in the region led both superpowers to aid Iraq and prevent a clear Iranian victory.

## Note

1. For an overview of the Soviet-American rivalry, see Seweryn Bialer, *The Global Rivals* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988); Thomas B. Larson, *Soviet-American Rivalry* (New York: W. W. Norton and company, 1978); J. C. Hurewitz, *Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East* (New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1969); and Mark V. Kauppi, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East in the 1980s* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1985), pp. 265-279.
2. For details on the initiation of hostility between Iran and Iraq, see Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 13-30; Edgar O'Ballance, *The Gulf War* (New York: Brasseyts Defence Publishers, 1988), 1-29; Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi, eds., *The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons. Old Conflicts* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983); and Anthony H. Cordesrn, *The IranIraq Ware and Western Security 1984-87: Strategic Implications and Policy Options* (London: Jane's Publishing Company Limited, 1987).

3. For more information, see Sepehr Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1982).
4. The following discussion of the main approaches in the study of world affairs is drawn from Ray Maghroori and Bennett Ramberg, *Globalism Versus Realism: International Realtons' Third Debate* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), 1-22. Other key sources include: Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987); Michael Smith, Richard Little, and Michael Shackleton, *Perspectives on World Politics* (London: Croom Helm London, 1981), pp. 11-24; Daniel S. Papp, *Contemporary International Relations: Frameworks for Understanding* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), Pp. 1-9; John A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: A Critique* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), pp. 13-23; Frederic S. Pearson and J. Martin Rochester, *International Relations: The Gobal Condition in the Late Twentieth Century* (California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 4- 30; and Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989).
5. The following discussions of Soviet interests is drawn from Mohammed Mughisuddin, *Conflict and Cooperation in teh Persian Gulf* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1977), pp. 116- 124. Other key sources include: Dennis Ross, "The Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Winter 1984-85), 615-631; William Dowby and Russell B. Trood, *The Indian Ocean--Perspective on a Strategic Arena* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), pp. 458-477; Imtiaz Bokhari, "Soviet Military Challenge to the Gulf," *Military Reviwe* (August 1985), 50-61; and Kenny Allred, "The Persian Corridor: Zid to the Soveteis," *Military Review* (April 1985), 13-25.
6. On Soviet activity toward minorities in Iran and American policy, see David Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaiyani: The Use of Nationalism for Political Penetration* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987); Miron Rezum, *The Soviet Union and Iran: Soviet Policy in Iran from the Beginnings of the Paljavi Dynasty until the Soviet Invasion in 1941* (Geneva: Siythoff and Noordhoff International Publishers, 1981); Faramarz Fatemi, *The U.S.S.R. in Iran* (London: Thomas Yoseloff Ltd., 1980); and Aryeh Yodfat, *Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 10-24.
7. The subject of U.S. interests in the Gulf has been treated by: Jeffery Schicesser (WashingtonD.C.:TheU.S. Department of State, 1987); George Lenczowski, *The United States in the Middle East* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for PUblic Policy Research, 1973); James H. Noyes, *The Clouded Lens: Persian Gulf Security and U.S. Policy* (Stanford, California: Hoover Insitute Press, 1982), pp. 45-53; Murray Gordon, *Conflict in the Persian Gulf* (New

York: Facts on File, 1981), pp. 21-28; Braun Aurel, *The Middle East in Global Strategy* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), Pp. 221-238; and Samuel F. Wells, *Security in the Middle East* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 306-3 11.

8. For background on the Soviet threat in the Persian Gulf and America's reaction, see Thomas L. McNaugher, *Arms and Oil: U.S. Military Strategy and the Persian Gulf* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985); Joshua M. Epstein, *Strategy and Force Planning: The Case of the Persian Gulf* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987); and J. E. Peterson, *Defending Arabia* (London: Groom Helm, 1986).
9. Soviet objectives in the Persian Gulf may be classified as long term, intermediate, and short term. The long-term objectives are the establishment of a communist regime in the states and control over Persian Gulf oil in regard to COMECON planning, while intermediate objectives are establishment of Pax Sovietica and anti-western regimes close to Soviet Union. The short-term objectives remain to eliminate the western presence and influence, as well as the Chinese penetration in the region.
10. The subject of Soviet objectives in the Gulf has been treated by: McLaurin, *The Middle East in Soviet Policy* (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1975), pp. 3-47; Shahram Chubin, "The Soviet Union and Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1983), 921-949; Dennis Ross, "The Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 99, No. 4 (Winter, 1984-85), 615-635; and Lenore Martin, *The Unstable Gulf: Threats from Within* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1984), pp. 117-126.
11. The subject of Soviet objectives in the Gulf has been treated by: McLaurin, *The Middle East in Soviet Policy* (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1975), pp. 3-47; Shahram Chubin, "The Soviet Union and Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1983), 921-949; Dennis Ross, "The Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 99, No. 4 (Winter, 1984-85), 615-635; and Lenore Martin, *The Unstable Gulf: Threats from Within* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1984), pp. 117-126.
12. In addition to the source listed in the previous note, see Frederick W. Axelgard, *Iraq in Transition: A Political Economic, and Strategic Perspective* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 8-13; and Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 297-298.
13. For an excellent analysis of this point, see R. K. Ramazani, "Iran: Burying the Hatchet," *Foreign Policy*, 58 (1985), 52-74; Robin Wright, "Our Overture to Iran Was a Misstep in the Right Direction," *The Washington Post National Weekly*

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14. Comprehensive Studies of the Soviet-Iran relationship are contained in Muriel Atkin, "The Kremlin arid Khomeini," *The Washington Quartey*, (Spring 1981), 50-67; Shahrani Chubin, "The Soviet Union and Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1983), 921-949; Faramarz Fatemi, *The U.S.S.R. in Iran* (London: Thomas Yoseloof Ltd., 1980); Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 198 ), pp. 327-432; Atef Gawad, "Moscow's Arms for Oil Diplomacy," *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1983), 147-168; Fred Halliday, "The USSR and the Gulf War: Moscow's Growing Concern," *Middle East Report* (Sept.-Oct. 1987), 10-12; Mark N. Katz, "The Soviet Challenge in the Gulf," *Middle East Insight*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1987), 24-27; Mark V. Kauppi, *Soviet Union and the Middle East in the 1980s* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1983), pp. 227-245; Hafeez Malik, *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan. Iran and Afghanistan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp. 244-266; David B. Nissimian, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987); Miron Rezum, *The Soviet Union and Iran* (Geneva: Sijthoff and Noordhoff International Publishers By, 1981); Martin Sicker, *The Bear and the Lion: Soviet Imperialism and Iran* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984); and Aryen Y. Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).
15. In addition to the sources listed in the previous note, see Frederick W. Axelgard, *Iraq in Transition* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), p. 85; Helms, *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1984), P. 177; and Gary Sick, "Iran Quest for Superpower Status," *Foreign Affairs* (1987), 698-706.
16. Marr notes that by the end of 1983, Iraq largely won the diplomatic struggle for world opinion, shifting the blame for the continuation of the war to Iran (Marr, 1985:298).
17. . Discussion of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is contained in: Emile A. Nakhleh, *The Gulf Cooperation Council- Politics, Problems and Prospects* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986); Peterson, *The Gulf Cooperation Council* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988); R. K. Ramazani, *Gulf Cooperation Council-Record and Analysis* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988); anc Robert G. Darius, *Gulf Security into the 1980s* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), pp. 62-92.
18. . Comprehensive studies of the Arms Deal are contained in John Tower, *The Tower Commission Report* (New York: Times Books, 1987); Malcolm Byrne, *The Chronology* (New York: Warner Books, 1987); Samuel Seger, *The Iranian*

Triangle: The Untold Story of Israel's Role in the Iran-Contra Affairs (New York: The Free Press, 1988); Michael A. Ledeen, *Perilous Statecraft-An Insider's Account of the Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988); and R. K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 253-269.

19. In the United States, the U.S. State Department, the White House Staff, NSC Staff, CIA, Defense Department, Congress, and other institutions have divided and disputed control over diplomatic decision-making and operations. In each administration, a number of these institutions are more involved than others in foreign policy. In this period of Reagan's administration, the CIA was much stronger than the others in the process of decision-making, especially in Iran affairs.
20. For more information see; Raniazani, *The Gulf Cooperation Council*, p.263; Frederick N. Axelgard, *A New Iraq? The Gulf War and Implication for U.S. Policy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988), pp. 71-80; William L. Dowby, *The Indian Ocean Perspective on a Strategic Arena* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), pp. 175-178; Curtis, *The Middle East Reader* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1986), p. 221; Helms, *Iraqi Eastern Flank of the Arab World* Washington, D.C.: The Bookings Institution, 1984), pp. 189-194; and R. K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 123- 128.
21. The subject of the Tanker War is drawn largely from Cordesman, *The Gulf and the West: Strategic Relations and Military Realities* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 309-483; R. K. Ramazani, "The Iran-Iraq War and the Persian Gulf Crisis," *Current History*, Vol. 87, No. 526 (198), 61+; US. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *War in the Gulf Staff Report*, August 1984 (Washington, USCPQ, 1984); Frederick W. Axelgard, "The Tanker War' in the Gulf: Background and Repercussions," *Middle East Insight*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (1984), 26-33; Robert E. Hunter, "United States Policy in the Middle East," *Current History*, Vol. 87, No. 526 (1988), 49+; Alen T. Leonhard, *Neutrality--Changing Concepts and Practices* (New York: University Press of America,1988), pp. 59-96; and Eric Hoglund, "Iran and the Gulf War," *Middle East Rort* (Sept.-Oct. 1987), 12-18.

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## **Increasing the Effectiveness of Sociology in Islamic Culture**

**Mohammad Masoud Saeidi**

Ph.D Sociology and Theology  
Assistant Professor  
Faculty Member of  
Islamic Science and Culture Academy  
Mashhad, Iran

### **Abstract**

In discussing religious science, if fundamental and general propositions in a specific science are not inconsistent with their equivalent Islamic religious propositions, it can be said that the relevant science can empathize with Islam. In order to achieve empathy, a complete epistemological or methodological harmony is not significant. Increasing the effectiveness of sociology in Islamic culture through the creation of empathy is much simpler and more effective than the establishment of Islamic sociology, which has been agreed in scientific society and takes privilege of the required effectiveness. By inferring fundamental propositions and general assumptions in the area of sociology, and evaluating the compatibility or incompatibility of them with Islam, it would be possible to evaluate the empathy of existing sociology with Islamic thought. After identifying fundamental and general propositions inconsistent with Islamic-religious worldview, and replacing consistent propositions, a sociological foundation would be achieved that can empathize with Islam. In other words, under this condition, sociology (rather than its specific theories) can empathize with Islam. Now, built upon these empathetic foundations, it would be possible to conduct some research and propose the theories, which have Islamic close assumptions.

**Key Words:** Religious-Islamic Science, Sociology, Empathy, Fundamental Propositions, Islamic Worldview, Epistemology.

## Introduction

Discussion in the field of religious science, its feasibility, and if possible, its features, is a recent issue underpinning the association between science and religion. In Muslim world, after the introduction and influence of the West culture alongside the arrival of modern science, science Islamization movement or Islamic science establishment as a reaction against the dominance of Western culture over Islamic culture came on the scene.

Regarding social sciences and sociology, Besharat Ali, Pakistani sociologist and one of the students of Karl Mannheim advocated the establishment of ideal society science, based on the precepts of the Koran, under the title of Koran sociology. In 1971, Association of Muslim Social Scientists was founded by AbdulHamid Abu Sulayman in America. Another Pakistani sociologist Muslehuddin composed a book entitled "Sociology and Islam: A Comparative Study of Islam and Social Systems" in 1977 (Mehdi and Lahsaeizadeh 1374: 97). Ismail al-Faruqi, a former professor of Islamic Studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, America, founded International Institute of Islamic Thought in 1981 with the aim of "Islamization of knowledge" (Ashtiani, 1373: 737). Association of Muslim Social Scholars and International Institute of Islamic Thought, after holding numerous conferences and research projects about Islamization of science, published the American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences in 1984. In 1985, Bayounes and Ahmad authored a book known as "Islamic Sociology: An Introduction" (Mehdi and Lahsaeizadeh, 1374: 97-98).

In Iran, after the Islamic Revolution (1979), the first systematic attempt to Islamize public sociology was conducted by The Office for Hawzah and University Cooperation. The result of this contribution was the book "An Introduction to the Sociology of Islam" that was published in 1984 (1363). The criteria for confirming Islamic nature of sociology for them include taking privilege of Islamic goals, researcher's contributions to study and explore human societies through benefitting from divine vision of the world, man and human phenomena, and finally the clarifications and illuminations released by the revelation regarding God's laws and social traditions, characteristics of past societies, roots and causes of social phenomena, and other sociological topics (The Office for Hawzah and University Cooperation, 1363, 190-192; 52-53).

Nowadays, there are different propositions and opinions regarding religious science. Some experts' intention of Islamic and religious science is the knowledge that is completely inconsistent with empirical sciences. Traditionally, the dominant

tendency has been to regard Islamic social science as exclusive to the social knowledge that can be inferred from Islamic sources such as the Koran and traditions. In Iran, this tendency has been sometimes expanded in epistemological terms, and one example is “jurisprudential paradigm of religious knowledge”. By extending Jurisprudential Ijtihad to the exploration of non-jurisprudential teachings of religious sources, this theory makes Islamic science producible (Alipour & Hasani, 1389). In line with the same trend, highly elaborately, and using a disruptive approach to the discussion, some have presented a model of Islamic science in which social scientist achieves a theory utilizing Islamic ideology as a theoretical framework and then observes and induces social reality, and the responsibility of final judgment about the validity of the newly-emerged theory is assigned to the revelation and tradition and Islamic worldview (Iman and KalatehSadaty, 1392). In contrast to this traditional tendency, some contemporary perspectives have regarded religious science as impossible and consider such mixture as senseless (Soroush, 1385: 201-225; Malekian 1385: 171-190).

Those who believe in the possibility and validity of religious science present different opinions on its nature. Golchin enumerate possible meanings for Islamic Sociology (specific case of religious knowledge) (1383: 19-30). Those who are more sensitive and pay more serious attention to the distinctions of scientific method (experimental science), its instruments and consequences, and the scope of the allegations resulting from it, and in general, the differences between scientific cognition and other cognitions, they do not consider cognition obtained from understanding or interpretation of religious texts to be science in its specific meaning (experimental science), though they have acknowledged the importance and value of such cognition. Among the practitioners who consider a different function and status for the cognition obtained from experimental science, one of the most famous opinions about the nature of Islamic science which deems to be more suitable for realizing -for example- an empirical and Islamic sociology is that if an experimental science seeks to be Islamic, it should derive its fundamentals (i.e. its metaphysical or non-metaphysical presuppositions necessary to produce a science) from Islamic sources and worldview (Bagheri, 1378: 249-258; Golchin, 1383: 26-31; Bostan, 1383: 50-55)<sup>1</sup>.

## Statement of the problem

Above-mentioned theory has not been operational, i.e. the assumptions necessary to produce an experimental science so far has not been inferred from Islamic sources.

This objective is both difficult and unjustified, and also it has no effect practically. 1) It is difficult because the sciences (first-class knowledge) does not initiate practically from their own bases, rather they are usually developed from confrontation with problems and attempt to resolve them, without attention to the foundations. In the next stage, it is with the creation of second-class knowledge that the origins of the science are explored and further clarified. 2) It is unjustified because the initial establishment of a science, just by inferring its principles from religious sources, means ignoring the findings of that science. The findings, throughout history, despite the deficiencies, have finally led to the discovery of some facts, and solution of some problems. 3) In practice, it does not work, because such knowledge is unlikely to be agreed within scientific pluralistic society.

Instead of science generation, as described above, if the fundamentals of a science (e.g. sociology) in their own claimed area are not incompatible with Islamic thought, the science can be regarded as empathetic to Islam, and those foundations can be used for performing new researches with Islamic backgrounds. A sociological knowledge empathetic with Islam can be obtained simpler, it does not ignore the useful experiences of the past, and it is more likely to achieve consensus. Therefore, the following questions arise:

Do the basics of sociological knowledge empathize with Islam nowadays?

And if not, what changes in the foundations are necessary to achieve such empathy?

## **Conceptual framework**

Sociological knowledge means the modern sociology; it is the part which is now acknowledged by the majority of sociologists, and they are committed to it, and perform social research based on it.

In addition, the purpose of Islam religion, and in other words, the criterion of thought and Islamic worldview, is common understanding of the vast majority of Shi'ite Muslim theologians in the contemporary period. The researcher, as far as possible, avoids presenting much comments on Islamic thought, and -at least consciously- does not regard his personal opinion as a criterion. This is because, the purpose of Islamic thought is Islam from the perspective of most of contemporary theologians that seeks to define or fulfill the Islamic social sciences, rather than what merely exists in the private idea of researcher, as Islam, and Islamic thinking.

The empathy is lack of conflict between the basics of sociology and the relevant Islamic thoughts. It is obvious that sociology is an experimental science, thus the extent and scope of its principles is empirical facts (perceptions of external senses). However, the realm of Islamic epistemological, philosophical and anthropological thoughts transcends experimental and material things and includes metaphysics. Thus, empathy is not complete adaptability and overlapping, rather if the fundamentals of sociology in their own claimed area are not in conflict with Islamic ideas that are related to that area, and do not repudiate supernal and metaphysical realm of Islamic thought (be silent), the relevant empathy comes into being.

The foundations are fundamental propositions and general presuppositions underpinning different approaches or paradigms, or are bases of different methods in sociology. These fundamental and general propositions, with the exception of a small number of propositions regarding the general logic, ontology and anthropology, are often epistemological propositions and most appropriate ones to measure empathy. In addition to such fundamental and public propositions, each of the existing theories in sociology may be underpinned by closer assumptions such as anthropological or psychological presuppositions or other presuppositions that are not examined in the current research.

A significant number of the propositions examined are common among all the experimental sciences, or among the social sciences, and are not specific to sociology. However, it is clear that studying these propositions is necessary, because the propositions are the basis of paradigms and approaches or methods that are proposed in the area of sociology and social studies, thus, they are considered to be the foundations of sociology.

## **Research methodology**

To examine the nature of the fundamentals in sociology, important philosophical issues and sociological procedures in the area of sociology in the literature will be reviewed and general propositions and fundamental presumptions will be inferred. Different approaches or paradigms in the social sciences, especially in sociology, have been developed in a historical process, and in interaction with natural science, and seek to challenge and criticize, amend, and modify previous approaches, or to resolve new epistemic problems. The philosophers practicing in the area of social science and sociology have revised their opinion on some of the basic propositions raised in the area of these approaches, set aside some propositions, and replaced other propositions. Some of the renowned approaches or propositions may still be

recognized as an important part of sociology, whereas they have lost their credibility from the perspective of majority of sociologists, or at least they play roles as a way to complement the cognition of other approaches. In addition, although some new approaches have launched much fuss and achieved high reputation, they have not yet obtained widespread credibility in the eyes of sociologists. Therefore, to have more exact knowledge concerning principles that are now acknowledged by the majority of sociologists, it is required to recognize different approaches in the social sciences and sociology, their emergence and evolution and current status. Due to the limited number of pages in a paper, researcher is forced to select just more significant propositions, and also to summarize their content, and avoid details by make reference to the resources. In addition, only propositions and ideas that are now acknowledged are given numbers.

## Most significant fundamentals of contemporary sociology

**Empiricism** in science has different philosophical narratives. The most important ideas of empiricism can be summarized in five subject matters including authenticity of sense cognition, testability, objectivity, scientific laws, and finally, “universal law” model of scientific explanation. These concepts present a common measure of different narratives in this approach, and they have been more appealing to experimental scientists practically, and are not merely a philosophical theorization.

- **Originality of sense cognition:** Our senses are the only source of knowledge (the total knowledge is gained from the experience). The human mind at birth is the so-called *tabula rasa*, and our understanding then occurs through identifying repeating patterns in our experience, and connecting public ideas with them. Original cognition that is different from pure belief or prejudice is limited to the expression of these patterns in experience and what can be deduced from them (Benton and Craib, 1386: 20, 38). There is no inherent cognition in the sense of the cognition preceding the experience and independent from all experiences (Landesman, 1390: 17-24; Pollock and Cruz, 1385: 52-56).

- **Testability:** Epistemic allegation is authentic when it can be testable through experience (observation or experiment). As a result, epistemic allegations about unobservable (through sense experience) entities can be set aside or somehow justified (Benton and Craib 1386: 38, 74-75; Laydman 1390: 163-165; Trigg, 1384: 16-17; Papineau, 1391: 63-72).

- Objectivity: The science is objective (impersonal) because it is the result of application of formal rules of logic solely on factual evidence. Thus, there is a concrete standard (testability by the general rules of logic and sense experience), independent from social or historical contexts, to distinguish science from non-science (Barbour, 1362: 212-213; Benton and Craib 1386: 39, 80, 112).
- Scientific laws: Scientific laws are general propositions about recurring and repetitive patterns of experience (Benton and Craib, 1386: 39).
- Universal law model of scientific explanation: The explanation of a phenomenon scientifically is the affirmation of the fact that the phenomenon is an instance of a scientific law. Sometimes this explanation method is called universal law model of scientific explanation. Thus, knowing this law should enable us to predict future events of phenomena of the sort. The logic underpinning explanation and prediction is the same. This thesis is sometimes known as “symmetry of explanation and prediction” (Benton and Craib, 1386: 39, 88; Little, 1373: 8-11; Rosenberg, 1384: 55-57 and 61-62)

The term **positivism** since Auguste Comte to the present time, was used to determine the approaches to the social sciences that are common in three important properties including empiricism, originality of scientific knowledge, and naturalism (Mohamadamzian 1380: 38-45; Novack 1384: 131-138; Benton & Craib 1386: 55, 95):

- Empiricism: Empiricist description of natural sciences is accepted.
- Originality of scientific knowledge: Science is the most authentic or even the unique form of knowledge, and the only valid source of cognition.
- Naturalism: the scientific method (as defined by empiricists) must be extended to the study of mind and human life to be able to introduce these disciplines as social sciences.

Today, among natural and social scientists, all of the above issues or propositions have been seriously debated and revised. It is clear that such revision has not excluded science from empirical realm, and does not cause it to coincide with Islamic epistemological thought. However, the important point is the emergence and growth of scientific humility that hinders rejection and denial of non-empirical realms.

1- Regarding the authenticity of sense cognition, the idea that entire cognition emanates from experience and there is no inherent knowledge (as a priori cognition and independent from all experiences) has been challenged due to the evolutions

occurred in scientific disciplines such as linguistics, evolutionary psychology and socio-biology. In addition, nowadays, cognition process is not considered to be the mere recognition of order patterns in the course of sense experience, rather it is believed that the experience is a complex combination of sensory perceptions and conceptual selection and organization. Experience expression itself is to give a special conceptual order to the experience. Considering the diversity of the cultures and historical periods in term of how to interpret the experience, a considerable part of the conceptual apparatus which we interpret our experiences with them, are regarded as acquisitive and specific (cultural), and we learn it from the society in which we live. However, sometimes this is likely that- as Kant perceived- another part of the organizing concepts precedes experience and has a general (innate) nature (Rosenberg, 1384: 251-291; Benton and Craib, 1386: 68-71).

2- Nowadays, it is believed that consideration of an evidence as confirmor or refuter of existing beliefs or hypotheses always entails making judgments. To some extent, these judgments relate to the question that how it would be possible to interpret both current beliefs or hypotheses and new evidences. This issue generates some problems for testability criterion, scientific objectivity, criterion for distinguishing science from non-science, scientific laws, and potential of scientific explanation and prediction. In this case, the emphasis on testability criterion obliges empiricists to diminish differences of opinion about how to evaluate agreeable and disagreeable evidence to be able to realize this criterion objectively and to protect the dignity of science, and obliges empiricists to regard scientific rules merely as a summary of direct observations at the same level as observed set. However, under this situation, limited scientific allegations are not potentially capable of explaining and predicting the issues. In addition, recourse to the relatively weak criterion of testability (confirmability instead of verifiability), does not resolve the problem of experimentalists, because incomplete induction is not confirmable as well (Benton and Craib, 1386: 42, 46-51, 71-74, Trigg, 1384: 29-40). Now, according to empirical falsification criterion, testability of a proposition or epistemic allegation simply depends on whether or not it will be subjected to empirical refutation (Popper 1363: 41-81; Laydman, 1390: 95-121).

3- Form the view of contemporary scholars, universal law model of scientific explanation is a mere attempt to show simple explanatory logic at the level of observable patterns of the phenomena. Evidence collection for observational generalizations belongs to the initial stage of science, and accurate scientific practice starts when such observational generalizations are obtained, and a scientific theory comes into being to explain it (to express causal mechanisms) (Little, 1373:

11-15 , Benton and Craib, 1386: 76-78). Today, theories or theoretical explanations are an important part of the scientific work, and have various types, such as functional explanation, historical-narrative explanation, and hypothetic-deductive explanation (Little, 1373: 17; Benton and Craib, 1386: 81-85; Papineau, 1391: 125-126).

4- In addition, the symmetry of explanation and prediction that empiricists believed in it cannot be applied on all kinds of scientific explanation. In historical natural sciences, and most of social sciences, main causal mechanisms are in interaction with other mechanisms, and usually in these sciences, it would not be possible to artificially separate all mechanisms. Thus, today, nobody regards explanation in these disciplines as associated with prediction capability (Benton and Craib; 1386: 89-91; Papineau, 1391: 111-126).

5- According to of the majority of contemporary scientists, science is not highly objective to be able to consider it as the result of the application of the rules of logic in observations. This is because the process by which theories are developed involves scientific imagination and creativity. One of the most significant aspects of scientific reasoning in this case is the application of metaphor and allegory. The use of metaphor and allegory in developing scientific theories is an important link between science and broader cultural contexts which science does belong to them. Of course, this does not necessarily justify reduction of science to cultural context, because many metaphors and analogies are gradually separated from their initial formulation following experimental tests and observations in context of justification (Barbour 1362: 213-219, 222-231; Benton and Craib, 1386: 77-83).

6- Concerning the authenticity of scientific cognition in positivism, today, the science is not the most prestigious cognition or even the only authentic knowledge, because such a proposition consists of two claims that are both called into question. The first claim is that science and other forms of thought, such as theology and metaphysics are equivalents functionally, and encompass all purposes which human requires them, and the second claim is that the scientific mode of thought and knowledge is superior over other modes. The first claim or functional equivalence cannot be acknowledged. Science and other disciplines are not taken as alternative ways of doing the same work, or achieve the same purpose. Accordingly, the second claim, the claim of superiority of science over other sources of knowledge and cognition is not acceptable, because when science cannot be comparable to other types of cognition, it would not logical to regard one as superior and another as inferior (Benton & Craib, 1386: 95-98; Chalmers, 1374: 206).

7- Naturalism is the belief in the feasible scientific examination of the community, in the same sense that natural processes can be studied in a scientific way. The positivists are naturalist. In contrast, scholars such as Weber, Winch and Habermas (hermeneutic approach) are anti-naturalist. Nowadays, the presence of important alternatives to empiricism in science has provided the possibility of emergence of some forms of naturalism that are not positivistic such as feminist and critical realism (Benton and Craib, 1386: 98-99).

8- The initiator of new approaches can be considered the French tradition of historical epistemology. Non-experimental new approaches to science generally underline the characteristic that science and scientific activity are specific socially and historically (Benton and Craib, 1386: 103-104; Mulay, 1376: 112-220). By proving the existence of the relationship between scientific knowledge and a particular set of theoretical questions, historical epistemology undermined every aspect of science as complete cognition, and objectivity questioned differentiation and universality of science (Benton and Craib, 1386: 112-116; Bucchi, 1394: 43-65). Such perspective to science has retained its domination over the scientific community and its different approaches.

However, by founding the historical approach to philosophy of science, historical epistemology, paved the way for the entrance of historical-sociological explanations into the realm of explanation of scientific beliefs, and after that scholars like Kuhn, Feyerabend, and advocates of rotating reflection notion (Latour, Woolgar and Callon) came to the scene of the philosophy of science, eventually some thoughts such as disanalogy of paradigms, strict relativism, and extreme skepticism emerged which of course were not recognized by the majority of the scientific community (Benton and Craib, 1386: 118-126 and 134-146; Lacoste 1375: 143-146; Rosenberg, 1384: 295-298; Chalmers 1374: 113-126).

When science sociologists indicated that science is a social process, the idea formed that science is also associated with social category of gender. The relationship was proposed by the recent feminist movement in the late 1960s as another dimension of social character (Benton and Craib, 1386: 126-134; Ritzer, 1374: 461-463; Abbott and Wallace, 1380: 19-37, 273-304). Although feminist notions regarding scientific knowledge have progressed to the extent that other philosophers of science cannot simply avoid them, such notions have not been effective enough to be developed in scientific community. Thus, now, we are not able to extract fundamental propositions for the science through feminist epistemology.

There are a number of approaches to social sciences which are formed based on the belief in the important difference between the subject matter of social sciences and natural sciences. These approaches, often considered an alternative to traditional positivism, are interpretive approaches. Nowadays, some of the fundamental propositions of interpretive approaches in most social research are of interest to behavioral scientists:

9- Unlike objects, men cannot be merely recognized through their external manifestations, i.e. through recognizing their external behavior. In addition, understanding the motivation governing the conduct, and interpret the meanings that people attribute to their actions is of importance. In other words, an important task for social scientist is to understand detailed events (allocation) and explain their interpretation through understanding the meanings that people involved in them attribute to their actions (understanding or *verstehen*) (Benton and Craib, 1386: 153-156 and 147- 148).

10- Emphasis on interpretation and understanding of actor does not mean that the man is subject to causal processes. Allocation and understanding, or in other words, idiographic and interpretative explanation is a preliminary step to establish causal relationships, or holistic (nomothetic) and causal explanation. Interpretive understanding and causal explanations in the social sciences are correlated (rather than antithetical) principles (Winch 1993: 47- 52; Coser, 1372: 301-304, 332-336).

By addressing the relationship between knowledge and social world, and tracking the process by which agents make the social world sensible, phenomenological research provides a deeper philosophical basis for interpretive approach in sociology (Benton and Craib, 1386: 164; Knoblauch, 1390: 207-245). When the interpretive approach to sociology was overshadowed by economic utilitarianism and behaviorist psychology at the late nineteenth century, the rational choice theory in the social sciences was developed with an economic fundamental human presupposition in mind. The presupposition was that people act in ways that can bring about benefit and they refrain from acting in a way that does not lead to the benefit (Benton and Craib, 1386: 165; Craib, 1386: 89-104).

11- In modern social science, some critiques have been leveled against rational choice theory and economic human presupposition because of its failure to understand the complexities of human motivation, and to limit the function of values and internal contradictions in human mental life. Nowadays, broader definitions of self-interest and other aspects of the subjectivity in terms of rational choice theory are presented, and the main effort is to limit the scope of rational

choice explanations (Little, 1373: 98-102 and 248-264; Benton and Craib, 1386: 164-167).

Epistemological stance taken by philosophy of pragmatism led interpretive approach toward a new direction. The new route ultimately led to the theory of symbolic interaction. It is important to note that the propositions of pragmatism with effective roles in the social sciences are not necessarily a theory regarding truth (Benton and Craib, 1386: 167-168). Pragmatic epistemological criterion of truth (whatever it is useful in practice, is truth), is clearly invalid. Epistemological propositions of pragmatism express only how to recognize and understand human beings' cognition of their life. The propositions that have had the greatest impact on interpretive approach are summarized in the following propositions:

12- In interpreting human and comprehending relevant meanings, a fundamental pillar is to study the performance of his actions, because on the basis of practical benefits of knowledge, there is an authentic connection between human action and its knowledge (Benton and Craib, 1386: 167-170; Ritzer, 1374: 268-269).

Among hermeneutics issues, the factor with the highest effect on interpretive approach is emphasis on the authority of tradition (history, culture, prejudices). At the first stage, we achieve understanding through the prejudices of our historical period or moment that we ourselves are a part of it. Our prejudices are preconditions for our understanding and practical interpretations. Historical issue is the origin of authority and necessary prejudice, and the understanding requires re-analysis of the authority of tradition (Palmer 1377: 194-214; Benton and Craib, 1386: 198-202; Sherratt, 1387: 132-137).

13- Today, researchers do not confirm excessive emphasis on the authority of tradition, because if tradition would dominate our understanding to such great extent, we could not present a systematic research on our wrong ideas of the world. In addition, criticizing and learning what is contrary to our traditions would be impossible (Hoy, 1378: 258-279; Benton and Craib, 1386: 201).

With the gradual expansion and presentation of critical theory, Frankfurt School has offered the last important contributions for interpretive approach to social sciences. Critical theory presented a completely different way of thinking regarding rationality, and it was more or less acknowledged by others:

14- Rationality transcends the instrumental rationality, and it encompasses practical wisdom (perceived good and bad) and wisdom as well. Wisdom requires

evaluation of the conditions in terms of human values, justice, peace and happiness (Benton and Craib, 1386: 204; Ritzer, 1379: 202).

15- Overemphasis on one side of thinking process, for example, analytical method of natural sciences can create the myth of science. If social sciences can achieve (complete) consistency with the methods of the natural sciences, then they distort and misunderstand the reality that they investigate (Benton and Craib, 1386: 209-213).

16- Natural sciences and technology, and parts of social sciences that are of great resemblance to the natural sciences have been generated from technical interest in control and manipulate the environment, but this is not the only interest for man. Other interests are the source of other types of knowledge (Benton and Craib, 1386: 214- 216; Sherratt, 1387: 301-303).

Another important concept that Frankfurt school introduced into sociology is the concept of communicative rationality. Communicative rationality is a communication system (the communication free from domination) where the ideas are freely offered, and have the right to defense in the face of criticism. In the debate, no power except the power of better argument is used, and there is no incentive except empathetic search for truth. In this position, validity and strength of evidence and argument (agreed by debaters) determine what is valid and true (Ritzer 1379: 214). Under such circumstances, the agreement achieved lacks an imposed function, and secondly, it is clear that speaking of the truth under this situation does not mean addressing a theory about the nature of truth; rather it is presenting a way to get closer to the truth to the same sense of the perception in accordance with reality.

17- The process of thinking with the mediation of communicative action and communicative rationality provides the possibility of understanding that can encompass all. In ethics, in science, in knowledge, and in all discussions, it would be possible to achieve consensus. This offers a way out of relativism built upon the nature of language and thought (Ritzer, 1379: 214; Benton and Craib, 1386: 219).

Experiences and gradual evolution in the history of science such as empiricism and positivism decline, more attention paid to social and historical nature of scientific activity, the realistic understanding of cognition (cognition of reality independent from the process of cognition) and find a way to solve the problem of ensuring the consistency between what happens and reality, and finally, the defense of the rationality of scientific activity, i.e. defending the objectivity and credibility of the relative scientific beliefs in a way that is sensitive to historical and

sociological approach, all led to critical realism approach to natural and social sciences. This approach, in addition to natural sciences, has been highly effective in activating some new research programs in the area of the humanities and interdisciplinary fields. Nowadays, it seems unlikely that there would be a scientist or a researcher that practically and even theoretically oppose to original presuppositions and fundamental and distinctive propositions proposed by realists:

18- The real world is independent from our understanding of itself, and the external world is principally knowable. Unlike idealistic and relativistic theories, cognitive activities such as different sciences are understandable merely because they are regarding something that is independent from our consciousness (Benton and Craib, 1386: 225-226).

19- Unlike empiricism, scientific process is a historical social process. Thus, the existence of communication institutions and practical criticism in the community is taken for granted. In addition, the role of metaphor in scientific reasoning means the presence of the culture through which it is possible to extract raw conceptual material for the production of scientific knowledge. In addition, human is embodied creature capable of deliberate interference in the world, of controlling the consequences of its interventions, and also taking part in the critical discussion about how to interpret the results (Benton and Craib, 1386: 226, 242; Trigg, 1384: 358).

20- Contrary to empirical realism of the empiricists, superficial representation of things potentially confuse their real nature. Scientific cognition is a process to achieve an understanding beyond misleading representations (deep realism) (Benton and Craib, 1386: 226). The infrastructure layers and levels that we fail to observe directly are usually diverse and reciprocally interactive in a realistic manner. The underlying layers and levels are causal mechanisms and forces.

21- The allegation of absolutely certain and one-by-one compromise between existing scientific cognition and presupposed reality is wrong. Current beliefs underpinning science are always ready to be revised in light of more cognitive activities (observation, experimental evidence, interpretations, theoretical arguments, discussions, etc.) (Fallibility) (Trigg, 1384: 358-360; Benton and Craib, 1386: 225-226).

On the basis of its social ontology, critical realism recognizes critical naturalism. Here, in line with the current article's objectives, the result of the arguments are merely summarized as follows:

22- Social ontology: social actors act in a series of institutional relations. Society and individuals, or social structure and functionality are distinct levels, both are real, but mutually dependent and are in interaction with each other (Trigg, 1384: 351-353; Benton and Craib, 1386: 243-247).

23- Critical naturalism: the essence of the critique of the interpretive approach is correct positivist naturalism. Social structure and human agency require some fundamental differences between society and nature, along with implications about the possibility and procedure to understand them. This basic difference creates ontological, relational, and epistemological limitations to naturalism (scientific study of society based on natural sciences model). However, such limitations are not obstacles to naturalism. By the same definition presented on science in natural sciences, community and social life can be interpreted, but not necessarily in the same way and with the application of natural science methods (Benton and Craib, 1386: 243-252; Trigg, 1384: 353-358).

### **Compatibility or incompatibility with Islam**

23 above-mentioned propositions present an overview of contemporary sociology basis (not basis for the specific theory or theories). Except for the propositions relevant to authenticity of sense cognition and testability that require further discussion, none of the 21 other propositions, given the scope of their claims, are incompatible with Islam. This means that, firstly, these propositions merely relate to experimental, sensory and material matters, and do not repudiate transcendental, extrasensory, and metaphysical matters. Secondly, there is no clear and shared interpretative, narrative, philosophical and epistemological thinking among Islamologist experts that corroborate the opposition to the allegations proposed by these propositions.

According to 21 fundamental propositions and above-mentioned explanations on each proposition, nowadays, the science avoids the allegation of dogmatic prediction (4)<sup>2</sup> and absolute objectivity, and in turn, the science speaks of establishing communication with culture of the time and social environment (5). Science does not either recognizes itself as the most prestigious procedure or the only procedure to achieve authentic cognition (6, 15, 16). In addition, the science does aspire to full cognition of pure reality (8). However, it never has surrendered to relativism and extreme skepticism (decline of the idea of rotating reflection), or has not regarded itself as absolute pawn of tradition and culture (13). Nowadays, social

sciences, to the extent of its potential, have paid attention to the difference between man and nature (9, 10), and revised its interpretation of human beings as the creatures with economic rationality and in passionate search for utilitarianism (11). Pragmatism in the social sciences means paying attention to human action for its better understanding, rather than a theory about the nature of truth (12). Now, rationality discussed in sociology is not limited to instrumental rationality of means and objective, but it feeds from the concepts of practical intellect, wisdom, and communicative rationality (14, 17). In addition, to withdraw from (social) relativism (rather than philosophical relativity), the rationality regards the agreement obtained from open, honest and reasonable discussions as a criterion for understanding of the reality rather than a theory about the nature of truth (17).

Finally, current social science and sociology, in addition to all of the above-mentioned features, has acknowledged (at least in practice) critical realism, and made possible the scientific study of society. In addition, although it acknowledges social and historical nature of scientific activity, it has not refrained from a realist understanding of cognition, of objectivity and of trying to ensure compliance with multi-layered and deep reality, and at the same time, it acknowledges the fallibility of its findings (18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23).

The mentioned-above themes relevant to the propositions 3 to 23 are not contradictory to Islamic thinking- in the same sense mentioned above. However, though two themes including the authenticity of sensory knowledge and testability have been greatly revised by philosophers practicing in the area of post-experimentalist science and post-affirmative social philosophers (propositions 1 and 2), they seem to be incompatible with Islamic idea that recognizes sensory cognition as one source of cognition, and considers observation and sensory experience to be the most critical factors in cognition. Of course, the judgment in this case requires further explanation.

Sense cognition authenticity can include three allegations: i) introducing the sensory experience as the unique source of knowledge in the world, ii) introducing the formation of concepts or statements that express repeated patterns in the sensory experience as the unique source of understanding of cognitive process (for example, general concepts or observed comprehensive laws), and draw inferences from them, and iii) prioritization of cognition obtained from sensory experience over other cognitions, and belief in the matter that other cognitions are deponent upon sensory cognition.

Regarding the first claim, in the Islamic worldview, source of cognition, or procedure to cognition, or means of cognition are not limited to sensory experience. In this view, the five external senses are just one of the tools or ways to achieve cognition, and nature is just one source of cognition. Intellect is another source of knowledge. There is the third source, also called the heart or human mind. Koran introduce this source as Inner signs<sup>3</sup>. Spiritual intuitions and revelation (as the most perfect intuitions) are usually related to this source. In addition, from Islamic theologians' perspectives and some Koran verses<sup>4</sup>, declaratory statement (*khbar*) or narrated proof is the fourth source of cognition (Motahari, 1372: 72-74; 1373: 355-429; Mesbah Yazdi, 1370: 211-240; Hoseinzadeh, 1386: 15-310). However, the multiplicity of sources of cognition in Islamic worldview does not show the conflict between Islam and sociology. This is because, firstly, empirical scholars themselves have challenged and questioned monopoly of the source of cognition in sensory experience (Propositions 1 and 6), and secondly, the science acknowledges any type of knowledge derived from any type of source, because such derived knowledge must be finally evaluated and judged properly within the framework of science.

Regarding the second claim, in Islamic epistemology, cognition process is much broader than the generalization, abstraction and deduction of sensory perception (Motahari 1372: 72-74; 1373: 355-429; Mesbah Yazdi, 1370: 211-240; Hoseinzadeh, 1386: 15-310). However, this is the point that has been of interest to the experimental science scholars pursuant to the review and reform of empiricism in science (and positivism in social sciences), as mentioned in the proposition 1. Nowadays, scientists and philosophers of social science do not show such prejudices against cognition process. Therefore, in terms of post-empiricist approach, sociology is not incompatible with Islamic thought in this regard as well.

Regarding the third claim, it should be said that in Islamic epistemology, sensory cognition precedes other cognitions. Muslim philosophers believe that authentication requires imagination, and imagination precedes affirmations. In the imaginations, sensory imaginations are the basis and origin of many other concepts. Of course, in this view, some of the general concepts have an origin other than the perceptions of five physical senses, and they are abstracted from inner experiences (esoteric senses), and a reflection of intuitive knowledge in the mind (Mesbah Yazdi, 1370: 211-242). Thus, in Islamic thought, the achievement of all knowledge in the early stages is dependent on a sensory experience or internal and external sense. Of course, as briefly mentioned in Proposition 1, in terms of post-empiricism realm, it is likely that there would be an ontology independent from sensory experience. If in empiricist view, special attention was paid to inner experiences

(including external and internal senses), the allegation that there is no cognition prior to and independent from the whole experience was in consistency with Islamic perspective. In the meantime, new philosophers' skepticism of the above fact that is related to the physical senses suggests that there is not a reliable and effective difference in this regard between Islamic experts' epistemology and post-empiricist philosophers' thought.

However, concerning testability, it should be said that, although in post-positive era, verifiability or confirmability of observational propositions are not discussed, greater attention is paid to rational argument, intuitive perceptions, and cultural inductions and knowledge in achieving theoretical ideas about invisible universes. However, sensory experience as the ultimate criterion of judgment on scientific knowledge still play the leading role. Meanwhile, in Islamic worldview, test and sensory experience lacks such a high status in the discovery of reality and truth. In Islamic philosophy and logic, observations (physical phenomena and intuitive cognition), empirical premises, transmitted data and other certain statements that are most relevant to sensory experiences explain only a small part of the facts (Al-Muzaffar 1408: 282-289).

At the same time, in the current natural and social sciences, the validity of sensory experience in material world has turned into a conditional issue, because, firstly, experience is used only to invalidate a claim, not to prove or confirm it. Secondly, the claim should be relevant to experimental and sensible things to the extent that can be empirically falsified. However, more importantly, if the science suffices to same extent of sensory conditional realm for making judgments, it encounters the fact that scientific knowledge is not the only way or the most perfect procedure to achieve valid understanding of reality (Propositions 16, 8, 6). Thus, nowadays, philosophy of natural and social science tends to distinguish science from and other types of knowledge, but not denial of any unscientific knowledge, and this represents an overall sign of contemporary sociology's empathy with religion and religious knowledge.

## Conclusion

The current article shows that the current foundations of sociology, within the framework of their allegations, do not contradict Islamic common thought, thus, to create empathy, it is not required to alter the fundamentals. The most urgent need is to perform field-based or theoretical research with a religious-Islamic background.

Any sociological theory other than general and foundational propositions (discussed in the current article), are built upon other closer presuppositions such as anthropological or psychological assumptions, which should be dealt with separately. Inferring close presuppositions from Islamic thinking, and founding field-based or theoretical research on epistemic-methodological foundations of the contemporary sociology (that is empathetic to Islam) is simpler than the initial establishment of Islamic sociology, can maintain empirical status of science and value of previous correct findings, and has greater probability of acceptance in the scientific community.

## Note

1. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli has repeatedly asserted this issue. In some cases, to prove the fact that the fundamentals of experimental sciences are philosophical propositions, Ayatollah's followers and pupils attribute to the assentation's made by famous philosopher Karl Popper.
2. The numbers in the parenthesis refer to the relevant proposition, and the explanations presented on it.
3. Surah Fussilat
4. Surah Al-Imran

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