

International Relations in Iran and its Discursive Dynamics

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Abstract

International relations in Iran is characterized by plurality and complexity of discourses. This paper aims to introduce IR “discursive complex” in Iran, its formation, and its dynamics especially during the post-revolutionary era. Five major discourses – realism, Islamism, anti-imperialism, critical dialogism, and international society – are analyzed in terms of the narrative they make about the “reality” of contemporary international life, the main binary opposition on which they build their narrative, their “authorized producers”, their various articulations in the course of time, the identities they construct, and their hegemonic or counter/hegemonic position in foreign policy circles and academic life in different periods.

Keywords: Iran, IR Discourses, Realism, Islamism, Anti-Imperialism, Critical Dialogism, International Society

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Introduction

Iran's modern history cannot be understood without taking into account the nation's understanding of the world politics and international relations. This understanding, however, has not been monolithic or fixed. There have always been various discourses with different interpretations of the world. Some of these have been more or less "imported" from the West and some have more indigenous components. Some have been produced/reproduced in state apparatuses and in particular in foreign policy-making bodies, some in academic institutions, some in religious institutions, and others in political activists' circles.

Traditionally in Iran, there have been a few meta-discourses in international relations. The hegemonic discourse before the 1979 revolution was a kind of realism both at the state level and in academia. At the same time, on the basis of religious texts and traditions, a sort of faith-based, non-territorial understanding of the world was formed. Communism in Iran introduced the discourse of anti-imperialism with its political economic understanding of international relations. The interrelationship between international law and international relations as two main fields of study at universities led to the formation of the discourse of international society with some liberal overtones. And finally the idea of "dialogue of civilizations" based on a critical-dialogical discourse came to play a role in the "IR discursive complex" in Iran.

The aim of this article is to illustrate how these discourses emerged, what were their basic binary oppositions, who were their

authors, how they were articulated and rearticulated to form new sub-discourses, and how these discourses and sub-discourses constituted Iran's foreign policy and its dynamics in different periods. In the first section of the paper, the general conceptual framework is introduced. The second section examines the main discourses of international relations in Iran.

I. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework applied here is a discourse framework within interpretive approach. Thus it is based on the "ideational turn" in political science that involves not only paying attention to "ideational variables" in political explanation (Hey 2004:142) but also to the role that ideas play in the constitution of realities, identities, preferences, and interests. The departure point of interpretive approaches is "the insight that to understand actions, practices and institutions, we need to grasp the relevant meanings, beliefs and preferences of the people involved" (Bevir and Rhodes 2004: 130).

In Michel Foucault's definition, discourse is "a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation...it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form...it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history..." (quoted in Larsen 1997:16). A discourse can be seen as "a structured, relational totality" that "delineates the terms of intelligibility whereby a particular 'reality' can be known and acted upon" (Doty 1996: 6); according to Roger Flower, it "constitutes a way of looking at the world, an organization or representation of experience" (Mills 1997: 6). It is through discourse that meanings are "produced, fixed, lived, experienced, and transformed" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 20).

Discourses are systems of signification that construct social reality. They are "structured largely in terms of binary oppositions" which "establish a relation of power." Discourses produce and define



“*subjects authorized to speak*,” “*knowledgeable practices*,” the audience as well as the “*common sense*” of the audience (Milliken 1999: 229). The categories and classifications produced within discourses generate asymmetries in social capacities. These categories constitute subjectivities with different degrees of power and legitimacy (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 21).

Political discourses as intersubjective phenomena mediate and interpret the political world. Actors reproduce them in their daily practices. Discourses are, however, “inherently open-ended and incomplete” and overlap with each other; it is “the overflowing and incomplete nature of discourses that opens up spaces for change, discontinuity, and variation” (Doty 1996: 6). Thus one can trace both continuity and change within discourses. As Larsen (1997) argues the “political actors are bound by the values and rules of a discourse”. Discourses delimit their actions and constrain the range of possibilities (see Larsen 1999). They make certain actors, policies, actions, and interactions legitimate while de-legitimize others.

Articulation has a significant role here. It is through articulation that meaning is produced out of “cultural raw materials or linguistic resources” (Weldes 1999: 98). Articulation is a practice that consists in the construction of “nodal points” that partially fix meanings (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 113). Articulations are socially constructed and thus non-necessary, but are not arbitrary either. It is through particular and contingent historical processes that they are formed (Weldes 1999: 100). It can be argued that since meanings are partially fixed in discourses (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 110) we may have a degree of “fixation” of identities through reproduction and maintenance of particular discourses (see Hall 1996) that could be realized through institutional arrangements and power relations. Thus “textual and social processes are intrinsically connected” and this connection has implications for “the way we think and act in the world” (George 1994: 191).

One might say that as far as international life and its constitution

and understanding are involved, we may talk of three categories of discourses: international discourses, foreign policy discourses, and discourses of international relations. These are of course highly interrelated and in cases may have very similar elements. Yet if one wishes to study the ways in which the elements of some of the discourse might be articulated and re-articulated in various contexts, the distinction would prove to be helpful.

International discourses can be seen as common meaning structures at the international level including rules, norms, conventions, etc. (Larsen 1997: 28). At the most general level, these are in one way what Wendt (1999) calls various “cultures of anarchy.” They have constitutive effects on the identity and interests of various actors and may lead to the formation of friendly, rival, or collective/cooperative identities. Some of the international discourses are more regional, such as European or Euro-Atlantic discourses; some are more issue-specific (one may see international regimes in various issue areas as sub-discourses within the more general discursive complex); and some are more hegemonic worldwide while others may be more contested.

Foreign policy discourses define the “self”, its interests, enemies, friends, and the range of possibilities for the state’s action. Discourses of international relations affect them but there are domestic discourses including ideologies, rules, and norms that are articulated together to constitute a foreign policy discourse. Identities constructed at the domestic level at least partly “determine the *direction* and *intentions* of states’ foreign policies” (Bozdagioglu 2003: 29). Political discourses may act as “a constraint that shapes the foreign policy” of a state: they are like “a kind of framework within which the foreign policy of a particular country can take place” (Larsen 1997: 21).

International relations’ discourses are not the same as discourses in foreign policy even though some cases they are hardly separable. Furthermore, although international discourses are articulated with



domestic academic or political discourses in different societies, they are different from discourses of international relations produced within domestic contexts. Discourses of international relations are those meaning structures that define the field of the international, characterize its nature, define the subjects therein, and make some actions possible and/or legitimate and make others impossible or illegitimate. Although there are usually a variety of such discourses in a society, one may become hegemonic in certain areas and/or for a short or long period of time. Various IR theories or approaches can be seen as different discourses of international relations. Discourses of international relations, whether produced in the academia (IR discourses), think-tanks, policy-making bodies, or through the mass media, may have more or less common elements with international discourses and reproduce the latter, or may contain such strong critical elements that make them counter-hegemonic discourses, i.e., discourses that claim to de-legitimize or deconstruct international discourses.

The focus of this study is on the discourses of international relations; it argues that the discourse dynamics are to certain extent the result of their articulation with international and foreign policy discourses. In what follows various IR discourses in Iran are examined and their dynamics are explained.

II. Discourses of International Relations in Iran

As it was suggested above, IR discourses in Iran have been and are plural in nature. Five main discourses can be distinguished which are addressed below.

Realism: Realism is regarded here as a reflection of the more or less hegemonic international discourse. With concepts such as power, balance of power, alliance-making, territoriality, nation-state, sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, national interests, national security, national power, separation of ethics and politics, etc., realism⁽¹⁾ claims to recognize the very “reality” of international

life as it is – not as one might aspire (see Carr 1962). This may also be seen as a part of the international culture or the “discursive structure” of the international system that influences the very “discursive space” (Carlsnaes 1992) of the actors. A realist discourse implies the recognition of international power structure, the significance of maintaining or enhancing the power position of the nation, the priority of security in foreign policy agenda, and regarding idealist, legal, and/or moral assertions in the international scene as pure instrumentalities especially in the hands of the most powerful states (see Carr 1962; Morgenthau 1985; Waltz 1979).

One of the main binary oppositions in the realist discourse might be the inside/ outside one. The inside is the realm of self, power, control, and a degree of certainty where a community is shaped and the state is responsible for its security and, more recently, its prosperity. The outside is the realm of the other where the self has little or no power, control and certainty. Thus since the self/inside is privileged, a sort of nationalism or patriotism usually articulates with this realist discourse. Yet a realist discourse for a minor power may have various implications. It does not necessarily lead to impartiality; it may justify bandwagoning or alliance with some great powers against others (see Walt 1987; Vasquez 1997). Nevertheless any of these strategies or tactics is *justified* in the name of national interests and as serving national security.

While as it will be discussed below, realism has an almost long history in Iran, no major Realist text was produced or translated until very recently. In the academic sphere the main disseminators of Realism were university professors educated at Western universities.⁽²⁾ Few major Realist texts were translated into Persian before the 1979 revolution (except for some parts of Morgenthau’s *Politics among Nations* (Behzadi 2535 [1976]), Thompson’s *Comparative Foreign Policy* (Thompson 2536 [1977]) and some articles by Aron). Some textbooks also introduced Realism with its main tenets (Behzadi 1352 [1973]). Nevertheless the realist discourse with some of its main



characteristics did exist. Here I try to show the roots of the realist discourse, its almost “unconscious” emergence, its more or less “conscious” versions, and evolution in the course of time.

One may find some basic “realist” concepts and understandings of politics in medieval Iranian literature in general with emphasis on power, inequality, a pessimistic understanding of human nature and social relations, and even some understanding of balance of power.⁽³⁾ In practice the Iranian elites, through wars, changing alliances, attempts to increase their capabilities and in particular their military power showed a degree of “realist” understanding of world politics. These, however, did not lead to a realist understanding of *modern* world politics until the 19th century.

The first encounters between the Westerners traveling to Iran and the Iranian kings, politicians, religious authorities, and the ordinary people happened during the Safavid era (16-17th centuries). The narratives show how unaware the Iranians were of the developments in Europe. Yet it seems that Iranians had a notion of ‘realist’ principles.⁽⁴⁾ They found the Ottomans as their major enemy and thus continuously attempted to somehow take advantage of their relationships with Europeans as a source of power *vis-à-vis* their arch enemy (see Mahdavi 1364 [1985]: 24 ff) and also made the Spaniards and the Portuguese move out of some Iranian islands with the assistance of the Britons (see Mahdavi 1364 [1985]: 90-92; Ha’erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 143-47).⁽⁵⁾

Following the Russian invasions in the first decades of the 19th century and the defeat of Iran, which led to expansive territorial losses, Iranian elites began to recognize the unprecedented gap between Iran and its new enemy in military power. Since then Iranians tried, on the one hand, to modernize the army and, on the other hand, to engage other European powers in their balancing efforts against Russia. According to the historians of the Qajar period, most Iranian statesmen were ignorant of European politics at the time. They had little understanding of power-oriented foreign policies

of the major powers and interpreted diplomatic etiquette as absolute legal or moral commitments or even emotional attachments. Fathali Shah of the early 19th century, for instance, not only welcomed Napoleon Bonaparte's proposal for allying against Russia and Britain, but also saw him as a trustworthy "great brother" who could make *any* decision on behalf of Iran in its dealing with Russians and others. He even went further to write unconditionally to Bonaparte that "whatever he accepts we agree to" and "with whomever he makes peace we will not fight" (Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 252).

During the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries privileged rights were bestowed to Europeans inside Iran including nearly total judicial autonomy leading to increasing loss of national power (see, for example, Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 247; Mahdavi 1364 [1985]). From a realist point of view these were all later interpreted as being the result of ignorance of the Iranian authorities about the principles of national interest and diplomacy.

It was not until the mid 19th century when the first signs of new understandings of international politics emerged. The idea of "balance of power" was recognized as a positive force which was used by European powers to control power aspirations of each country and to avoid war as far as possible (see Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 276-77, 299). There also emerged to some extent an anti-colonial discourse. It was recognized that a coordination among European countries were established according to which each of them could "conquer lands without an owner [read sovereign⁽⁶⁾] outside Europe" if the people there would "surrender" and "would not call for other Europeans' assistance". This, however, did not prevent some of the 19th century writers from taking a paradoxical position: admiring British colonialism in India while denying foreign powers' chance of success in Iran⁽⁷⁾ (see Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 416, 428-29).

In the late 19th century and early 20th century a series of concessions were given to foreign nationals and/or countries in which personal gains and corruption of the elites involved were



obvious. At the same time some measures were taken by European powers that compromised Iran's territorial integrity and independence. These led to formation of a "national interest" discourse that condemned such policies and actions as being against the independence and sovereignty of the "country".⁽⁸⁾ In this discourse, which were mostly shaped by Iranian nationalist journalists and intellectuals as well as a few politicians such as Chancellor Amir Kabir, the ruling Qajar dynasty was somehow represented as acting against Iranians and, in more or less abstract terms, the national interest of Iran.

Thus one may see how a "realist" discourse was articulated with nationalism. In this reading of realism, sovereignty, independence, autonomy, territorial integrity and the like were the main defining characteristics of a realist understanding of the world. Although the reality of unequal power structure of the international system and Iran's subordinate position therein were recognized, this would not mean unconditional surrendering to international pressures neither would it mean jeopardizing national security. Rather it would require a skillful play in the game that would result in securing Iran's national interest and power. This nationalist/realist discourse survives into contemporary Iran often articulated with other discourses such as imperialism and Islamism.

Reza Shah's era is usually identified as the period of modern nation-state building in Iran. Much effort was canalized into the actualization of internal sovereignty. State's romantic nationalism was more oriented towards an ideal past when Iran was a powerful actor in the world. As far as the contemporary international system was concerned, Iranian state realist discourse was based on Iran's particular geo-strategic position, its bitter historical encounters with its strong neighbor, Russia, and its anti-communist tendencies. The result was a somehow "positive equilibrium" (*movazeneh mosbat*) in which making an alliance with a western power was regarded to be beneficial to Iran's national security and interest. This version of

realism can be called *alliance-oriented* realism.

The nationalist/realist discourse became somehow hegemonic in the 1940's and the early 1950's when "negative equilibrium" (*movazeneh manfi*) substituted the positive one. During this period the nationalist/realist discourse was articulated with the discourses of anti-imperialism and Islamism. Yet following the 1953 coup, the positive equilibrium discourse of the Reza Shah's era regained its dominant status in the state apparatus and this continued until the end of Mohammad Reza Shah's era. The outside world was seen by Pahlavi regime as the source of insecurity and distrust; meanwhile the "Other" was regarded so omnipotent that only allegiance with the most powerful could guarantee a degree of security. The memoirs of the elite at the time show how suspicious they were of the great powers and their intentions despite the very close relationships that were established with the same people. Even in some cases one could see how a "nationalist" realism had the upper hand in explaining the problems and attempts in finding solutions.

The Islamic revolution in Iran was somehow against a particular realist discourse. As far as Iran's relation with outside world was concerned, the main target of the revolutionaries was the alliance strategy of the Shah's regime or what was referred to as positive equilibrium. Iran's special relations with the West and in particular the United States were seen as the major source of damage to Iran's independence, sovereignty and its subordinate position in the international system. This made could a variety of socio-political forces to join the movement -- Islamists, Leftists, and nationalists—in the struggle against the Pahlavi regime.

The first years following the constitution of the Islamic Republic have been interpreted as being anti-realist in many ways. Universal aspirations such as Islamic solidarity or supporting the oppressed of the world (see below) were seen by many, including many of International Relations scholars in Iran, as being against the national interest of the country. During the Iran-Iraq war, however, and more



obviously in the 1990s realism became more dominant in various explanations, analyses, reports, and in policy-making. Besides the tangible experiences of the war, some particular developments might be seen as the factors that influenced the discursive shift to realism. Among them I find two factors very significant.

The first factor is the major role played by universities in training a new generation of political analysts, journalists, researchers, and scholars. Although after the Cultural Revolution of the early 1980's the curricula of Political Science and International Relations were revised, the university professors continued to rely on Western sources and theories in their lectures. All undergraduate students of political science learned about the international system and international practices on the basis of concepts such as nation-states, Westphalian system, sovereignty, territoriality, and the like. Realism was the major theory students were (and still are) exposed to in BA courses such as "Fundamentals of IR," "Strategies of the Great Powers," "Geopolitics," etc. Even in courses such as the "History of Iran's Foreign Relations" or "History of the Modern International System," realism was the guiding principle for most of the analyses. Thus realist discourse has almost always been hegemonic in Iran's academia even after the formation of the Islamic Republic.

An institutional initiative, i.e. the formation of the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), was another major influence. The IPIS is a research institute affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The institute was established in 1983 and its initial activities were limited to a series of lectures by Foreign Ministry officials who explained the foreign policies of Iran and other countries to mostly academic audiences. These lectures were later published by the IPIS. Later the institute began to publish its own journals and bulletins as well as important books (both Iranian sources and translations) on international relations and foreign policy. All these activities were relied on university professors. Moreover, the majority of Foreign Ministry's employees in the immediate years after

the revolution were educated in academic fields other than political science or IR.⁽⁹⁾ When an “academic” or research-based approach was advocated in the researches, university professors and recently graduated students made major contributions and as was pointed out, had acquired a general realist outlook.

The major journal published by the IPIS, *Siasat-e Kabreji (Foreign Policy)*, emerged in the winter of 1986-87 (Maleki 1376 [1997]). A glance at its content during its first decade of publication shows that the journal introduced the major realist works. Many encyclopedic, review-like articles by Iranian scholars on Realism were published (see, for example, Naghibzadeh 1370 [1991]), and some major texts by Realist thinkers were translated (including Morgenthau 1367 [1988]; Hoffman 1368 [1989]).

After the Iran-Iraq war, and in particular during the 1990s, there was more opportunity for various policy-oriented research and academic institutions to publish on international relations. Such centers and institutions published a great number of realist analyses and studies as well as the translation of some realist texts into Persian. The Persian translation of Morgenthau’s *Politics among Nations* (1985) was published by the IPIS in 1995 (Morgenthau 1374 [1995]) and a number of major Realist and Neo-Realist articles were published in 2006-7 in a collection by Andrew Linklater (2001) and IR influential work were translated (Linklater 1385 [2006-7]). Besides the IPIS, other research institutes such as the Center for Strategic Studies with focus on security studies, geopolitics, and geo-strategy, published translations of many realist books and articles as well as the original works in Persian which had realist overtones.⁽¹⁰⁾

Thus in the late 1980s and early 1990s realism became a major discourse not only in academic circles and publications but also in most journals, magazines, and newspapers. During the Khatami administration it gained momentum and somehow became dominant. During the last few years it has not lost its appeal especially among the reformists. Even in the more ideologically-driven publications,



realism is still somehow present; it has, however, been articulated with some forms of the discourses of Islamism and anti-imperialism.

Islamism: What is known as Islamic theory (Djalili 1989) has been developed within the Islamic tradition. It was basically inspired by the Koranic verses, the Prophet's -- and in Shiite version, the Imams' -- deeds and sayings (*sonnat* and *hadith*). Moreover, it includes the original and secondary sources of the Islamic law or *sharia* as elaborated by Muslim jurists of the Islamic Empire and Iran especially during the 8th to 10th centuries. This discourse along with the ideas and concepts it introduced can have sociopolitical connotations with implications for international relations and foreign policy that will be referred below.

The basic dichotomy in Islam, as in almost any other religion, is between *good* and *evil* which is extended to other oppositional binaries such as faith and infidelity, just and unjust, the oppressed and the oppressor, etc. These oppositional binaries were the basis of Muslim thinkers' worldview whose ideal was to establish an "ecumenic" society and spread religion in a universal mission. To fulfill this goal, the basic division of the world was constructed upon a dichotomy, i.e., Islam vs. non-Islam (in contrast with the territory-based inside/outside). Accordingly the human beings were divided into two basic groups of Muslims and non-Muslims. History was divided into pre-Islam and Islamic eras; and place into two territories of Islam (*dar-al-Islam*) and non-Islamic lands which necessitates warfare (*dar-al-harb*). Therefore, the real borders that separate the main communities of the world are defined on the basis of two opposite poles and it has been assumed that with the spread of Islam there will be an ideal worldwide Islamic community (Djalili 1989: 17, AbuSulayman 1987).

Theoretically *dar-al-Islam* may be a single territory with a single authority and a single community (*umma*). In this ideal form, Islamic community does not eventually recognize nation-state-based division of the world and that is why it is said, "Islamic community in its ideal form is not supranational but a single '*umma*'" (Gardet 1976 as quoted

in Djalili 1989: 18). This Islamic description of the world has some normative aspects. In such Islamic community, justice is the prominent value and its full realization is the ideal of the *umma*. The realization of justice is not only the duty of the Islamic authorities but every individual who is regarded as responsible for being just to himself/herself, his/her brothers and sisters in the community of the faithful and even beyond, and to react against unjust behavior toward any other individual. In other words, struggling against oppression and defending the oppressed are considered as important religious duties. Ramazani (1990a; 1990b) suggests that this justice-seeking attitude has been also influenced by the ancient Iranian tradition and in Imami shi'ism [predominant in Iran] in particular, justice ranks the highest among all values.

In the relationships between the two opposite poles (whether individuals or communities) dominance of non-Muslims/ non-believers over Muslims/believers is not acceptable. In Islamic texts this is referred to as the principle of prohibiting dominance (*ghaedeh nafy-e sabil*), according to which Muslims should not be dominated by non-Muslims (Dehshiri 1378 [1999]: 346). This can also be seen as an integral part of the universal quest for justice since the unbelievers seek to impose their dominance to further their own interests at the expense of the Muslims. Although the ideal community did not last long in Islamic territories and was never realized at the global level, it has remained the basic theoretical discourse for Islamic thinkers and particularly the clergy or *ulama*, and the concepts and ideas referred to above have usually been employed in their perception and understanding of the world.

After the 1979 Revolution in particular a body of literature has been developed that makes a direct connection between this traditional Islamic understanding of the world and the modern state system and the position of Iran therein. In a variety of journals, including *Siasat-e Khareji (Foreign Policy)*, *Oloom Siasi (Political Science)*, and *Danesh Siasi (Political Knowledge)*, "Islamist" articles about foreign



policy (Ghaderi 1366 [1987], 1368 [1989], Ghazvini 1374 [1995]), international organizations (Moosavifar 1375 [1996]), human rights (Mehrpour 1375 [1996]), humanitarian law (Khani 1385 [2006]), terrorism (Taremi 1387 [2008]), etc. have been published.

What is most important in the present discussion is that based on this worldview, the Iranian Muslim thinkers came into terms with the West, especially in the last two centuries. The Iran-Russian destructive wars in the first decades of the 19th century and the defeats and losses of Iranians shaped the starting point for perceiving a new “unfaithful evil power” seeking to weaken and defeat Muslims and their faith. For Islamic scholars, ordinary people as well as some political elites, these wars were understood as being launched by non-believers against Islam (see Ha’erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 330, 333). The notorious interventions of Western imperialist powers in Iran’s domestic and foreign affairs during the Qajar period and the losses Iranians suffered as the result of such policies intensified this perception.

The rise of Reza Khan to power together with a coup allegedly supported by the imperial British could be seen as the continuation of the “infidel” west's conspiracy against the Muslims. Reza Shah's westernizing policies and his insistence upon secularizing the Iranian society further intensified the suspicions about the gradual, rather invisible, but ever-increasing success of the “unfaithful” westerners' plot for discouraging Muslims and isolating Islamic teachings and thought. The client yet modernist regime of the post 1953 coup was seen as a sign of the general conspiracy: a dependent regime fully supported by alien powers to suppress Islamic values and its followers.

This has been what many Iranian, as well as non-Iranian Muslim thinkers in Islamic countries, understood from the West based on their historical experience; consequently they called for the resurrection of Islam as a struggle against the hegemonic powers of the West who were not only exploiting the natural resources of the

Islamic territory but also destroying the very foundations of the Islamic tradition and Muslims' beliefs (see Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 388-90). Thus what is referred to as "Islamism" is a political discourse over modernity and its manifestations (see Shani 2008: 727-28). That is why Islamic resurgence takes the form of an anti-colonial discourse or as Cassels (1996) puts it, "an extreme form of anticolonialism" in which the West is seen as the *dar-al-harb* "where the duty of the true believer is to fight against evil" (p. 236).

This dichotomous Manichaean image of the world has been accompanied by a rather monolithic perception of the West as the "Other" against the monolithic "Self" of the Islamic *umma*. Even the formation of modernity and the modern international system is regarded to be the result of West's anti-Islamism (see Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 55-61). The only path toward salvation would be through the resurrection of the Islamic unity in order to revive the lost Golden Age of Islam. Hence, the idea of pan-Islamism emerges. It should be noted, however, that pan-Islamism is a response to the new conditions of the world where nation-states have emerged and the Islamic territories are divided into "artificial" nation-states. This is perceived to be the result of the colonizers' wish for keeping Muslims in a weaker position through imposing internal divisions to guarantee their own "rule".

The Islamist discourse, which was almost limited to the clergy and some Islamist intellectuals and activists before 1978-79, became semi-hegemonic in the first decade after the revolution. Concepts such as world arrogance, oppressed of the world, Islamic *umma*, etc. were repeated not only in the leaders' speeches and statements but also in the media. After the "cultural revolution" of 1980 with changes in academic curricula, courses such as "Islamic International Law" and the "Prophet Mohammad's Diplomacy" have been offered. In these courses and the relevant textbooks (Amid Zanjani 1379 [2000], Ziaee Bigdeli 1365 [1986]) an Islamic notion of the world is provided. Sometimes this would be seen as an alternative to the



existing arrangements. Thus the artificial imposed borders dividing the Muslim community are seen as inauthentic and removable. The genuine unity of Muslims could be regained if internal barriers (“dependent” ruling elites of the Muslim countries) were removed and external pressures were resisted.

Yet in cases attempts have been made to adapt the Islamic notion to the realities of the modern international system. One may point to examples such as taking the concept of diplomacy and apply it to the relations of the early Islamic *umma* under the leadership of the Prophet with the outer world or finding similarities between international law and Islamic rules. Thus these courses in one way could lead to a kind of a modern articulation of Islamic concepts in which some realist elements as well as elements of international society’s discourse were adopted. The dichotomous understanding of the world and the quest for the justice that is not provided by the existing system of international relations dominated by the West imply not only the anti-status quo position toward the system, but also it may actually question the very legitimacy of the existing arrangements. It is worth mentioning here that the perception of a materialist, non-spiritual, and amoral West was not confined to Western capitalist countries. The repudiation of both “the East and the West” as the leitmotif of the foreign policy discourse meant that they were more or less characterized by the same evils, i.e., expansionist tendencies, oppressive behavior, exploitive manners -- all rooted in lack of spirituality. This is what one may well trace in the well-known letter of the late Ayatollah Khomeini to the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev (Ramazani 1990a: 48-49). Even during the political struggles of the early 1960's, this unified nature of the Soviet Union and the Western powers had been emphasized in the famous dictum of the late Ayatollah Khomeini, who announced that “America is worse than Britain, Britain is worse than America, the Soviet Union is worse than both; all worse than each other and all more vicious than each other” (quoted in Madani 1362 [1983]: 88).

Another implication of this perception of the world and the Islamic quest for universal justice is reflected in the concern for all the oppressed of the world. If the present arrangements are unjust and oppressive, then it is an Islamic duty to support and even to pave the ground for justice-seeking movements. That is why the ideas of “supporting liberationist movements” and “the export of the Islamic revolution” have had a prominent position in the foreign policy agenda based on this discourse.

Thus the international system may be considered to be originated from the Euro-centrist arrangements of the West, which imposed artificial borders dividing the authentic communities of the faithful, dominated by evil arrogant superpowers acting through dependent/client unpopular third world governing elites, subjugating the weakened masses of people who need to be assisted in their struggles against big and small arrogant powers/ satanic forces of the world.

It is worth mentioning, however, that even in Iran where the Islamist discourse is the basis of the state identity, it is not monolith. In the course of time and also by various social and political forces it has been articulated with other IR discourses. This has led to the formation of radical as well as reformist sub-discourses.⁽¹¹⁾

Anti-Imperialism: Another discourse that influenced and still continues to influence both realism and Islamism in Iran is the leftist /anti-imperialist discourse dominating more militant intellectual circles in pre-revolutionary. This discourse, founded upon the notion of imperialism, divides the world into two opposing camps of the oppressed and *exploited* people of the periphery and the *exploiting* capitalists/ colonialists/imperialists of the West. The capitalist West would use all its political, economic and cultural leverages to increase its own power. The leftist discourse is also based upon a dichotomy in which the capitalist/imperialist West is represented as the dark evil and the “rest” as the rightful.

The anti-imperialist discourse was perhaps first introduced by



leftists mostly inspired by Russian and Caucasian socialist and communist intellectuals. However, in some aspects, it was similar to the traditional discourse of anti-colonialism and nationalist realism discussed earlier. The latter was an intellectual reaction to Western powers' policies toward Iranians as well as putting pressures on Iran in various military, political, economic, and even cultural/religious forms. This was perhaps the reason for celebration of anti-imperialist discourse among Iranian intellectuals even if they did not have leftist tendencies.

It was the Iranian Communist Party (*Hezb Tudeh Iran*) that disseminated anti-imperialist ideas through its publications and meetings especially in the 1940s and early 1950s when there was a kind of political opening in Iran. Even after the suppressing the Communist Party in the mid 1950s, some underground publication as well as radio programs broadcasted and propagated the ideas from Eastern Europe. During the 1960s and early 1970s, leftist underground organizations continued to rely on translation of Marxist-Leninist texts or their own interpretation of original texts to guide the group's militant activities both against the Pahlavi Regime and the Western imperialist powers. These were, however, mostly small groups of university students and intellectuals with limited influence on the larger society. Moreover, some of the works of Memmi's (2536 [1977]) and Fanon's (2536 [1977]), with a more cultural orientation towards colonialism and imperialism, were published legally just before the revolution.

During the 1978-79 revolution and for a couple of years thereafter a large body of the leftist literature was translated and distributed among Iranian youth. Some of them were pamphlets that were read in underground circles which were publicized for a larger audience. One may refer to classic texts such as Lenin's *Imperialism* (1359 [1980]), Bukharin's *Imperialism and World Economy* (N.D.), and Stalin's *Nationality from a Scientific Philosophical Approach* (1357 [1978]); texts by foreign leftist politicians such as Castro (1364 [1985]) and

ND), militant organizations such as “Ireland Organization” (Sazman-e Ireland 1361 [1982]), or Soviet intellectuals such as Kazlov (1360a, 1360b), Kulagina (1359), and Panov (1356 [1977]); original texts written by Iranian communists such as Ehsan Tabari (1357 [1978]) and Bijan Jazani (1358 [1979]), some anonymous ones like M. A. (ND.) and *Imperialism and Subversion* (N.D.a); anonymous publications by leftist groups such as Students Struggling for the Liberation of Proletariat (Daneshjooyan Mobarez.... ND); work published by other Iranian leftist intellectuals and researchers such as Sodagar (1356 [1977], 1358 [1979]), Zaim (1359 [1980]), and the like.⁽¹²⁾

Significant portion of the literature on Iran’s history, politics, and socio-economic conditions were analyzed in terms of imperialism and/or imperialist policies of foreign capitalist powers (for example, Kazemzadeh 1354 [1975]; NA ND); and in some works domestic power struggles were justified or condemned on the basis of an association existing between domestic forces and imperialist foreigners (for example, see Parsi 1358 [1979]; Daneshjooyan Havadar Jonbesh Mosalmanan Mobarez 1358 [1979]).

Besides this, one may find a more “academic” discourse on imperialism. In the curriculum formulated for undergraduate programs of Political Science, courses on “Imperialism” and also on “Colonialism and Underdevelopment” were introduced and relevant texts were translated or produced by Iranian scholars. For example, Mommsen’s *Theories of Imperialism* (1363 [1984]) was a standard theoretical text in which older theories of imperialism like Hobson’s as well as Marxist-Leninist theories together with neo-colonialism and underdevelopment were discussed. Homayoon Elahi, a political scientist at the University of Tehran and later at the Islamic Open University, played a role in producing texts on *Imperialism and Underdevelopment* (Elahi 1367 [1988]) and the MNCs role in the underdevelopment of the third world (Elahi 1363 [1984]). Even more liberal-minded and realist scholars such as Behdad and Moghtader translated works by leftist thinkers such as Sweezy and Magdoff 1358

[1979]) and Magdoff and Kemp (1369 [1990]).

In another version of the anti-imperialist discourse one sees a more conventional non-Marxist understanding of the term. Here imperialism is used as an equivalent for colonialism or neo-colonialism and even empire. This understanding is perhaps more Realist and one may find the theme in Realist work such as Morgenthau (1985). Many texts on Iran's foreign relations and international politics can be read in this light. Imperialists, it is argued, have their "clients" or "puppets" among native people especially the political and economic elite. These are regarded to be weak personalities seeking their self-interest. Some of them are even "trained" to follow foreigners' interests. And they are all obedient or at least very flexible when facing the demands of foreigners. Through these "agents", imperialists plan to achieve their objectives. Thus along with "targeting" the autonomy and independence of weak countries such as Iran, their wealth is plundered and their development is blocked (for example, Kazemzadeh 1354 [1975]; Zoghi 1367 [1988]).

The main common theme of this literature is the existence of very powerful, sometimes even omnipotent "Other" (a state or capitalist entity) that continuously exploits the resources of the Third World countries. Iran, due to its geopolitical position, its natural resources, and particularly its oil, is represented as the victim of imperialist policies. In its more popular versions, Iran (like other Third World countries) is the victim of continuous conspiracies. Any incident which may have negative effects on the country or any positions taken by the great power toward Iran is taken to be a conspiratory activity. This theme has in particular been reproduced in some newspapers essays and editorials, movies, and TV programs and serials. The articulation of elements of this discourse with some important elements of Islamism and nationalist realism has constituted what has usually been seen as revolutionary foreign policy in Iran both during the years 1981-84 that are usually seen as the peak

of Islamist “radicals' ascendancy” (Hunter 1990, 1992, Behrooz 1990) and in particular during the last four years.

International Society: Liberalism in international relations with its emphasis on the possibility of international cooperation, and the role of international trade, interdependence, international law and institutions, democratic institutions, human rights, non-state actors, etc. in the realization of peace was introduced through academic sources as well as some intellectual discussions in Iran. The translation of Kant's *Perpetual Peace* was published in 2001 (Kant 1380). Yet there had been some short reference to it in review of his work (for example, in Forooghi 1317 [1938]). More recently Mahmoudi (1384 [2005]) in his book on Kant's political philosophy, discussed his ideas on peace. Linklater's collection (Linklater 1385 [2006-7]) translated into Persian also devotes a section to a discussion on Liberal peace. Liberal and Neo-liberal institutionalism have been mainly introduced in IR undergraduate and graduate textbooks (Such as Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1372 [1993]; Bozorgi 1377 [1998]; Seifzadeh 1376 [1997], 1378 [1999], Ghavam 1384 [2005], and Moshirzadeh 1384b [2005b]). And during the 1990's, when globalization was a focus of debate, some neo-liberal themes were raised by those scholars and journalists who favored a more positive attitude towards the global developments. Nevertheless liberal discourse was hardly dominant in its totality except in some very limited pacifist non-governmental organizations and by human rights activists. Instead one may see that some elements of liberal discourse were incorporated into a discourse of international society.

The discourse of international society constitutes an understanding of international life in which the states on the basis of common objectives and interests develop certain principles, norms, rules, and institutions through their interaction. The specific set of rules that constitutes the modern society of states, including sovereignty, non-intervention, diplomatic immunities, international law, etc., was first developed in Europe and was not applied to the



relationships between Europeans and others (see Bull 1977; Watson 1992). In the words of Bull (1977) the European and non-European world shaped a system: although they had interactions, their relations were not based on specific norm, rules, and institutions that characterized inter-European relations. It is clear that although Europeans entered into many treaties with Iran and even recognized its territorial integrity and independence therein, they easily and repeatedly violated them.⁽¹³⁾ The privileged status they sought and the treaties they imposed upon Iranian governments were most often against the principles of sovereignty and independence. Some Iranian elite too were looking for their personal interests rather than following *raison d'état* in foreign relations.⁽¹⁴⁾

The discourse of international society seems to have emerged in the 1870's when the Iranian King, Nassereddin Shah Qajar asked an Iranian diplomat to write a book on international relations. Mirza Mehdi Khan Momtahanoddoleh (1379 [2000]), on the basis of his "twenty five years of diplomatic experience" as well as some extracts of French texts he translated into Persian, wrote a handbook in which he introduced various rules of international life from balance of power to diplomatic immunities, to rules regulating international treaties, war, peace, impartiality, dispute settlements, and the like. The text which has been edited and republished by the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic is interpreted as being a manifestation of the deep understanding as well as commitment of the early Iranian diplomatic apparatus to international conventions.

Later when in the late 19th century the School of Political Science was established the dominance of legal and historical orientation towards international relations made international law of great significance. A very old text in this regard is probably the one with a legal approach to international life (Moshirolmolk (1317-19 [1938-40])).

The first official attempt of the Iranians for being a part of the international society of states was shaped when an Iranian delegate

was sent to the Versailles Conference. In 1919 Iranians applied for participation in the Versailles Conference but their demand was rejected by Britain despite US sympathy. Then the delegate published a pamphlet in which Iran's political, economic, and judicial demands were articulated. These implied a full recognition of Iran's sovereign rights in terms of its territorial integrity, and economic and judicial jurisdiction and an end to all intervention in Iranian affairs (see Mahdavi 1364 [1985]: 358-59). Nevertheless it was only after the World War II that the sovereign status of Iran was fully recognized in the society of states.

A review of the published literature indicates that only a few number of the books and articles that were produced by the theorists of the international society (in particular the English School writers) have been published in Persian (for example, extracts of Bull 1977 (1368 [1989]); Bull 1385a [original 1961], 1385b [original 1966], Buzan, 1378 [1999], Watson 1378 [1999], and a review of Vincent 1986). Nevertheless until very recently the English School had not attracted much attention in Iranian universities.

Those works that are published on issues such as international institutions, law, rules, regulations, diplomatic protocols, etc. have based their arguments on the acceptance of the legitimacy of such institutions in general. Such works can also be classified under the general discourse of International Society. Again here the IPIS and its journal on *Foreign Policy (Siasat-e Khareji)* were pioneers. However, as a review of the content of the articles that were published in the *Foreign Policy* in 1997 suggests, the number of articles on international organizations were limited and most of them focused only on the UN and in cases specific issues such as human rights, women, environmental issues, international commerce, and development were discussed (Farzinnia 1376 [1997]: 11). The number of articles on international law during the same period was proportionally high (according to Farzinnia 1376: 11 and Mostaghimi 1376a, 1376b [1997a, 1997b]). Almost all of these articles are either conventional



debates on specific legal norms or case studies in which the relevant principles, rules and norms are applied. Thus they are premised on the legitimacy of international law and regulations. Academic publications on international law are also abundant. One may find numerous articles on international law, regimes, institutions, and organizations in the journals published by law schools at the University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University, and Allameh Tabataba'ee University.

It is worth mentioning that in many texts that were written by Iranian scholars on international society, the emphasis is on justice rather than order. As Bull (1977) suggests this is perhaps a common approach among third world countries to express their complaint about the unjust nature of many international conventions, treaties, protocols, etc. In Iran, due to the general justice seeking approach to international life this is more evident. One may follow this especially in those texts that are officially produced (for example, Velayati 1368 [1989]), about a case in which Iran or another third world/Muslim party are involved, or are more ideologically driven and are based on a somewhat Islamist approach towards modern international system (for example, Hamidollah 1373 [1994]).

Some elements of the discourse of international society have almost always been present in Iranian foreign policy discourse. During the Iran-Iraq war, international law was most often appealed to for condemning Saddam Hossein's invasion and brutalities, even if international institutions and the society of states were criticized for their indifference. During Rafsanjani's presidency (1989-1997)⁽¹⁵⁾ and his "pragmatic" foreign policy 's presidency in particular (1997-2005), there was more emphasis on foreign policy discourse, the rules and norms of the international society with a more positive attitude towards international organizations.

Critical-Dialogism: The Frankfurt School and critical theory are quite popular in Iran among intellectuals for more than a couple of decades. University professors discussing political sociology have

dedicated a part of their lectures to the critical theory for a long time and some of which have appeared in journals such as *Foreign Policy* (for example, Bashirieh 1368 [1989]). A number of books that were introducing Critical thinking were published (including Houlab 1375 [1996], Ahmadi 1376 [1997]). Major texts written by or about critical theorists have also been translated into Persian, including Adorno and Horkheimer (1378 [1999]), Marcuse 1350 [1972], and Habermas (1380 [2001]; 1383 [2004]).

Although critical theories and their contribution to IR were brought to Iranian academia in the early 1990s, it was almost limited to graduate students. Texts studied and criticized were almost all in English with very limited audience. The review of some articles which contained the major arguments of critical theory in International Relations were published in Persian during the 1990s and 2000s (Augelli and Murphy 1373 [1994]; George and Campbell 1375 [1996]; Devetak 1380 [2001]; Moshirzadeh 1384a [2005a]). IR textbooks played a role in introducing basic ideas of IR critical theory as well (for example, Bozorgi (1377 [1998]); Moshirzadeh 1384b [2005b]). It was just in 2006-7, and with the translation of Linklater's collection (1385 [2006-7]), that some of the relevant texts were introduced to a larger audience. The publication of some original or translated works was sponsored by the Center for Dialogue among Civilizations (including Dallmayr 1384 [2005]). The Center also convened some workshops and conferences on the idea of civilizational dialogue in which the basic tenets of critical-dialogical approach to international relations were discussed (see, for example, Dallmayr and Manoochehri 2007). On the occasion of giving honorary doctorate to Khatami in 2005, the University of Tehran published a three volume series on the idea of dialogue of civilizations in which major works by Iranian and non-Iranian scholars with regard to this idea and its theoretical foundations in critical theory was introduced to the public (Moshirzadeh 1384c [2005c]; Mostaghimi [1384 [2005]; 1384 [2005]).

The critical-dialogical discourse of international relations was



first widely introduced through the idea of dialogue of civilizations by the former President Khatami. As a student of political thought, he was familiar with critical theories in general. He was influenced by German thinkers such as Gadamer and Habermas and found their critical approach towards some aspects of modern life as well as their dialogical approach persuasive. For Khatami, some post-modernist ideas that were related to criticism of modernity and Enlightenment-were convincing. Meanwhile their failure to offer any alternative was not justifiable. Apparently during his teachings about a course on “Contemporary Political Thought” in the early 1990’s, his ideas became more articulated and led to some relevant publication.

Similarities between Khatami’s and Habermas’s ideas are significant. To Habermas communicative action is an action oriented towards *understanding* and not success over an opponent with competing interests, i.e. what may be reached through strategic action (see Pusey 1987: 80-81) – and what is usually seen as the most prominent form of interaction at the international level. The same idea was expressed by Khatami at the University of Florence where he insisted that, “speaking and listening is a bilateral – or multilateral – effort aimed at reaching *truth* and *understanding*” (Khatami 1380: 17; emphasis added).

One can see how Khatami rejects the two epistemological positions that Habermas has been critical of, i.e., skepticism and a monopolized understanding of truth. What Habermas sees as the way to “truth” – though a contingent and contextualized one – can be seen in Khatami’s arguments. He states, the idea of “dialogue is far from [what is envisaged by] either the skeptical thinkers or those who think they have the whole truth in their own hands” (Khatami 1380: 17).

Khatami’s critical approach to international relations is obvious. In various occasions he has criticized what he sees as unjust manifestations of the existing international system: domination, the ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor, the heritage of

colonial era, ethnocentrism, tyranny, violence, lack of security for individuals and societies, etc. (Khatami 1379; 1380). He looks for a world in which “peace is realized” through dialogue, “justice and dialogue” are the basis of international conduct, “human beings and their rights are respected”, “civil society on the basis of human rights in all countries and in the whole world is established”, “democracy ... is realized in the international arena”, “human right to self-determination” is acknowledged, and finally a “moral community” in which the resort to violence is denounced is shaped as the foundation upon which a “world society” is established, a kind of “international tax” as a redistributive device is envisaged, and “various interactive cultures and civilizations protect their own identities and constitute a human ... world” (Khatami 1379: 84-85; 1380: 11-20, 45, 74-75).

It engages parties other than the states in setting the international agenda and making decisions about issues of global interest. It is also a mean for peaceful conflict resolution through dialogue (Devetak 1996: 172; see also Khatami 1379; 1380). Khatami (1380) urges “the realization of democracy and civil society in the international arena.” Here the institutionalization of dialogue becomes necessary (Khatami 1380: 6). Multiple frameworks are necessary both on intergovernmental and international nongovernmental levels.

Almost the same themes are developed by IR critical thinkers such as Robert Cox (1981, 1983, 2002), which have similarities to ideas developed by Linklater (1982). Although this discourse has attracted some intellectuals and academicians (Moshirzadeh 1383 [2004], 2004, 2007a; Manoochehri, 2007), it hardly ever gained any chance to become dominant.⁽¹⁶⁾ Even during the presidency of Khatami, as it was suggested above, a realist/international society discourse was more dominant.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that in Iran international relations have been understood and viewed through a variety of discourses. In the pre-



revolutionary era, there seems to be a clear-cut distinction between the state's alliance-oriented realist discourse and the more anti-systemic discourses of anti-imperialism and Islamism among various socio-political groups. The dominant discourse at universities was realism but the fact that international law have had a major influence on teaching IR in Iran means that elements of international society discourse were also present. As far as the foreign policy discourse of the Pahlavis is concerned, although the alliance-based realism was almost hegemonic, one may find elements of nationalist realist, international society, and even anti-imperialist discourses present in some official circles in certain periods.

In the post-revolutionary era a variety of discourses and their various interrelationships and articulations can be traced which has lead to a significantly less monolithic picture of the discursive world of international relations in Iran. The presence of five discourses (realism, Islamism, anti-imperialism, international society, and critical-dialogism) was emphasized. It was argued each of these was (re) produced by different agents both at political and academic levels and how the two levels affected one another.

The discussion showed how in both pre- and post-revolutionary periods realism in its two variants (alliance oriented and nationalist) has been more influential and permanent. Yet it has been almost always articulated with elements of other discourses.

The future of IR in Iran will be highly dependent on the interaction between academia and foreign policy circles. The more interactive they become, there will be greater chance for mutual influence. Otherwise, a sort of isolated IR in academia might develop that may have little influence on foreign policy discourse.

Notes

1. I use realism (with small r) when I refer to the perspective as a whole and Realism (with capital R) when I use it as an IR theory.
2. There were also similar minded non-academics who were the major critiques of the Islamist revolutionary views of international politics.
3. One may see such themes, for example, in the works of Sa'di (Persian poet of the 13th century), Khajeh Nezamolmolk (Iranian chancellor and politician), and some other texts known as policy-oriented texts.
4. Principles such as “divide and rule,” “the enemy of your enemy is your friend,” temporary alliances, etc. (see Morgenthau 1985, chapter 12).
5. It seems, however, they had little understanding of the vertical structure of world politics and what later became known as colonialism and imperialism. They saw, for example, British presence in India as a source of prosperity and advancement for the people (see Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 168).
6. The word used in Persian is “*sabeb*” which literally means owner but when it is used in its negative form “*bee-sabeb*” it connotes lacking effective control.
7. There seems to have been a sort of low opinion of Indians among Iranians either on the basis of the former being less civilized or lack courage to resist the British (see Ha'erizadeh 1372 [1993]: 454).
8. The term mostly used in Persian in this period and for a long time afterwards was “*mamlekat*” which may mean the realm of a king or ruler.
9. It is often said that they were mostly engineers. The reason for this might be the fact that many of revolutionaries in general were from engineering colleges. Furthermore many of them were former Iranian activist Islamist students abroad whose English was good enough to be able to communicate with foreigners.
10. One can point out to works on balance of power (Niev, 1381 [2002]), power (Clegg, 1378 [1999]), deterrence (Freedman, 1386 [2007]), geo-strategy (Minaee, 1386 [2007]), national security (Mandel, 1377 [1998] and Azar and Moon, 1379 [2000]) among others.
11. This is somehow similar to the distinction made by Esposito and Voll (2000) between two variants of Islamism as the “conflict” and “dialogue” visions of Islam (see Shani 2008: 727-29). Yet even the Iranian “conflict” or radical vision is much less radical than *Salafism* in the Arab world.



12. The activities of some Maoist militant groups led to the emergence of some anti-imperialist literature the main focus of which was Soviet imperialism or “Social-Imperialism” (for example, A.M. ND). Although this version of anti-imperialist discourse had some appeal before the end of the Cold War and had been somehow articulated with Islamic discourse, has lost its significance.
13. This even led to the partition of Iran between Britain and Russia in 1907 (see Mahdavi 1364 [1985]: 319-21).
14. There is much evidence in this regard. See, for example, Tolooi 1377 [1988]; Mahdavi 1364 [1985]; Ha’erizadeh 1372 [1993].
15. Iran's foreign policy in Rafsanjani’s period is usually seen as “pragmatic” and “realistic”, aimed at normal interstate relations, access to western technology, and enhancing economic development (Hashim 1995: 30).
16. It is worth mentioning that the discourse with its self-defined critical nature somehow prohibited its becoming hegemonic. Centers promoting the idea of civilizational dialogue did also publish works that had a critical attitude towards the idea of dialogism at the international level (for example, Moini Alamdari 1380 [2001]).

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