

Original Research Paper

Religiöse friedensorientierte Gedanken im heutigen Iran

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Empfangen: 02.01.2025; Akzeptiert: 15.01.2025

Zusammenfassung:

Ein intellektueller Ansatz für friedensorientierte Gedanken in der Ära der Islamischen Republik ist die religiös orientierte Friedensidee, die das Konzept des Friedens aus der Perspektive des Islams untersucht. Denker dieser Denkschule analysieren die Wurzeln und Kontexte von Zwietracht und sozio-politischer Gewalt in der Gesellschaft. Sie greifen dabei auf islamische Texte zurück, darunter Koranverse, die Praxis des Propheten sowie die Aussprüche und Traditionen der schiitischen Imame, um Frieden, Koexistenz, Toleranz und Geduld für Individuen und sozio-politische Gruppen zu fördern und vorzuschreiben. Diese Studie zielt mithilfe eines theoretischen Rahmens und einer gestaffelten Methodologie der Gedankenanalyse darauf ab, diese Denker und ihre Ansichten zu identifizieren. Dabei werden Problemstellungen, vorgeschlagene Lösungen und Dimensionen analysiert, die in einem religiösen friedensorientierten Ansatz verwurzelt sind. Die von religiös friedensorientierten Denkern aufgeworfenen Themen lassen sich in mehrere Kategorien einteilen, darunter: politische Streitigkeiten und Konflikte zwischen Einzelpersonen und Gruppen, militante Auslegungen des Islams, die Anwendung bestimmter rechtlicher Vorschriften zur Rechtfertigung von Tötungen, offizielle religiöse Interpretationen, ideologischer Extremismus, die Übernahme vorislamischer Stammesgewalt in die islamische Kultur, epistemologische Verwirrung beim Verständnis der Religion sowie irreführende und geheiligte Unwissenheit in Bezug auf Religion. Zur Bekämpfung von Gewalt und zur Förderung von Frieden und friedlicher Koexistenz in der Gesellschaft haben diese Denker Lösungen wie Einheit, religiöse Demokratie, die Anwendung von Kriegs- und Friedensprinzipien basierend auf schiitischen Lehren, Pluralismus, die Förderung eines glaubensbasierten und monotheistischen Friedens, die Entwicklung einer Friedenstheologie und zehn epistemologische Unterscheidungen im Verständnis der Religion vorgeschlagen.

Schlüsselwörter: Islam, Koexistenz, Frieden, Gewalt, Religionen

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So zitieren Sie diesen Artikel:

Zarif M., Mohammadzadeh R. (2024). Religious Peace-Oriented Thoughts in Today's Iran *Spektrum Iran*, 37 (2), 47-81.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/spektrum.2025.497362.1018> | Die Autoren erklären, dass kein Interessenkonflikt besteht.



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اندیشه‌های دینی صلح‌گرا در ایران امروز

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چکیده:

یکی از رویکردهای اندیشه‌های صلح‌گرا در دوران جمهوری اسلامی، اندیشه‌های دینی صلح‌گرا است که از منظر دین اسلام به موضوع صلح می‌پردازند. متفکران این اندیشه‌ها با شکل‌گیری بسترها و زمینه‌های ناصح و خشونت‌های سیاسی اجتماعی در جامعه، با استناد بر متون اسلام، شامل آیات قرآن، سیره پیامبر (ص) و احادیث و روایات امامان شیعه (ع)، صلح، همزیستی و مدارا و تساهل را به افراد و گروه‌های سیاسی و اجتماعی توصیه و تجویز می‌کنند. این تحقیق، با استفاده از چارچوب نظری و روش لایه‌ای در اندیشه پژوهی، به دنبال شناسایی متفکران و اندیشه‌های آنان، شامل مسئله شناسی و ارائه راهکارها و ابعاد مبتنی بر رویکرد دینی صلح‌گرا می‌باشد. مسئله‌های متفکران دینی صلح‌گرا در چند محور قابل طرح‌اند که شامل، «منازعات و اختلافات سیاسی میان افراد و گروه‌ها»، «بازخوانی جنگ طلبانه اسلام»، «به‌کارگیری برخی از قواعد فقهی در تجویز کشتار»، «قرائت رسمی از دین»، «ایدئولوژی گرای»، «رسوخ خشونت جاهلی در فرهنگ اسلام»، «خلط‌های معرفت‌شناختی در فهم دین»، و «کج‌اندیشی و جهل مقدس از دین»، می‌باشند. متفکران دینی صلح‌گرا برای حل مسئله خشونت و ایجاد صلح و همزیستی مسالمت‌آمیز در جامعه، راهکارهایی ارائه داده‌اند که شامل، «وحدت»، «دموکراسی دینی»، «کاربست احکام جنگ و صلح بر اساس آموزه‌های شیعی»، «پلورالیسم»، «طرح صلح ایمانی و توحیدی»، «تولید و توسعه الهیات صلح»، و «ده تمایز معرفت‌شناختی در فهم دین»، می‌باشند.

واژگان کلیدی: ایران، اسلام، صلح، اندیشه‌های دینی

Religious Peace-Oriented Thoughts in Today's Iran

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Received: 02.01.2025; Accepted: 15.01.2025

Abstract

One intellectual approach to Peace-Oriented thoughts in the Islamic Republic era is the religiously oriented peace thought, which examines the concept of peace from the perspective of Islam. Thinkers in this school of thought, addressing the roots and contexts of discord and socio-political violence in society, draw upon Islamic texts, including Quranic verses, the Prophet's practices, and the sayings and traditions of Shia Imams, to advocate and prescribe peace, coexistence, tolerance, and forbearance for individuals and socio-political groups. This study, utilizing a theoretical framework and layered methodology in thought analysis, aims to identify these thinkers and their views, encompassing problem identification, proposed solutions, and dimensions rooted in a religious Peace-Oriented approach. The issues raised by religious Peace-Oriented thinkers can be categorized into several themes, including: political disputes and conflicts among individuals and groups, militant interpretations of Islam, application of certain jurisprudential rules to justify killings, official religious interpretations, ideological extremism, infiltration of pre-Islamic tribal violence into Islamic culture, epistemological confusions in understanding religion, and misguided and sanctified ignorance of religion. To address violence and establish peace and peaceful coexistence in society, these thinkers have proposed solutions such as unity, religious democracy, application of war and peace principles based on Shia teachings, pluralism, the proposal of faith-based and monotheistic peace, development of peace theology, and ten epistemological distinctions in understanding religion.

Keywords: Iran, Islam, Peace, Religious Ideas

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How to Cite this Article:

Zarif M., Mohammadzadeh R. (2024). Religious Peace-Oriented Thoughts in Today's Iran. *Spektrum Iran*, 37 (2), 47-81.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/spektrum.2025.497362.1018> | The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.



Introduction

During the Islamic Republic era in Iran, various peace-oriented ideas have been proposed by scholars and thinkers through philosophical, secular, integrative, and other approaches. Among these, religious peace-oriented thought stands out, focusing on the concept of peace from the perspective of Islam. These scholars, amidst the nation's challenges – such as social and political conflicts, war, and tensions with the West, particularly the United States – have used their reasoning to advocate for peace, tolerance, and coexistence among individuals, groups, and political and social movements. The core research issue revolves around understanding the content, foundations, and origins of these ideas. The main question seeks to identify the dimensions of religious peace-oriented thought during the Islamic Republic. To address this overarching question, several sub-questions are explored: When and how did these ideas emerge? Who are the key thinkers and scholars behind them? What issues have they raised in this context? What are their sources of reference? What are the central themes and implications of their ideas? Finally, what strategies do they propose for promoting peace and coexistence in society?

In this study, the term "thought" is understood in a specific sense, defined as: "*Relatively coherent discussions derived from a knowledge system that address relevant issues within their specialized domain using normative, prescriptive, explanatory, interpretative, and evaluative approaches, with the primary goal of solving problems or advancing one of the specialized fields of human and social studies*" (Alikhani, 2023: 44-45). Accordingly, "religious peace-oriented thought" in this research refers to a coherent body of epistemological discussions that advocate peaceful relations, coexistence, tolerance, and mutual understanding in human interactions, drawing on Islamic teachings, including Quranic verses, the Prophet's tradition, and the narrations of the Infallible Imams. The term "contemporary Iran" specifically denotes the era of the Islamic Republic.

Theoretical Framework and Research Method

This research utilizes a layered theoretical framework, which involves conducting the study in five stages, each with several layers. Each layer consists of practical steps that facilitate understanding and recognizing the thought. Not all stages, layers, and defined steps in this method may

apply to every thought and thinker, or the researcher may not have the opportunity to implement all of them in their study. Consequently, the research on thoughts is conducted to the extent feasible and possible. The five stages are as follows:

Stage One: Pre-Philosophy of Thought

This stage serves as a roadmap that the researcher determines to follow, applying the defined cases throughout the research. The layers of this stage include the following: thought indicators; problematization of thought; typologizing research patterns and selecting a suitable model; determining the research level (Alikhani, 2022: 91-75). In this layer, the researcher must describe the research level within one of the models and across five levels: description, analysis, explanation, interpretation, critique, or a combination of all. The model determined in this study involves two levels of description and analysis of the thoughts (Alikhani, 2022: 91-90).

Stage Two: Thinker Identification

This stage focuses on understanding the thinker themselves, serving as a bridge between the first stage and the stage of thought identification. In this stage, thinkers and thinkers with peace-oriented religious thoughts are identified and introduced (Alikhani, 2022: 108-93).

Stage Three: Thought Identification

This stage is considered the main body of the research, with the previous two stages serving as an introduction and background for better understanding. Directly addressing the content of the thinkers' ideas being studied occurs in this stage. The layers of this stage include: 1. foundational philosophy of thought; 2. problematization of thought; 3. goal identification of thought; structure identification of thought. The thoughts of human and social sciences in Iran and Islamic countries consist of five components forming their main structure. These components are: Islam, liberal West, leftist West, regional culture, and the domestic culture of the country (Alikhani, 2022: 121-109).

Stage Four: Post-Thinking Analysis

The layers of this stage include: explaining thought; analyzing thought; interpreting thought; critiquing thought; understanding and justifying

potential informational chaos and contradictions; compiling a thought system; developing the thinker's worldview (Alikhani, 2022: 133-125).

Stage Five: Meta-Thought Analysis

The layers of this stage include: the geography of the thought's epistemology; the approach to thought and its intellectual shifts; compiling a comparative table of the knowledge geography of the thought (Alikhani, 2022: 177-135).

Research Background

Based on conducted searches, there has not yet been an independent study titled "Peace-Oriented Religious Thoughts." However, some studies indirectly relate to it, which can be categorized as follows:

The first category includes studies that examine topics such as jihad and peace in Islam, Islam and peaceful coexistence, and tolerance and coexistence in Islam. In these studies, the concept and dimensions of peace in Islam and Shia jurisprudence are discussed, attempting to present a merciful and peace-oriented image of Islam through references to the Quran, the Prophet's (PBUH) traditions, and the sayings of Shia Imams (PBUH) (Sheltout, n.d.; Salehi Najafi, 2003; Feirahi, 2008,2009; Rashad, 2019; Ayazi, 2020 and 2021; Haqiqat, 2021; Alikhani, 2010; 2014; Mohaqiq Damad, 2019; Arayesh, Mansouri, & Rahimi Imad, 2022).

The second category includes studies that examine peace and coexistence in the thought of the Islamic Revolution (Haqgou and Shokouhi, 2020) and the anti-imperialism and peace in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic (Rouhi and Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2018) and peace and coexistence from Imam Khomeini's perspective (Simbar, Jafari, & Payande, 2016; Fawzi, 2017).

The present research seeks to identify peace-oriented religious thoughts in today's Iran using the layered theory and method of thought research, systematically categorizing, examining, and analyzing these thoughts.

Thinkers of Religious Peace-Oriented Thoughts

In this stage, we introduce thinkers with religious peace-oriented thoughts in the Islamic Republic era. These thinkers, besides having an

intellectual system, also possess scientific works and writings, directly or indirectly addressing the topic of peace from an Islamic perspective. The thinkers discussed in this article include:

1. Ayatollah Ni'matollah Salehi Najafabadi (1924-2006): A jurist, theologian, Quran commentator, and a pioneer of contemporary religious intellectualism. His area of thought relates to "jihad." Some of his works include "Martyr Jawad," "Jihad in Islam," and "Open Letter on the Ta'if Conference and War Issues."

2. Mahdi Bazargan (1907-1994): One of the founders of the Freedom Movement of Iran, a member of the Revolutionary Council, the head of the provisional government, and a representative of Tehran in the first elections of the Islamic Consultative Assembly. His thought is a combination of religion and modernity and is based on a return to the Quran movement. Notable works of his include "Scientific Critique of Marxism," "The Iranian Revolution in Two Movements," and "Reviving Values."

3. Mohammad Mojtabeh Shabestari (born 1936): A jurist, university lecturer, and specialist in comparative theology. Before the revolution, he was the director of the Islamic Center in Hamburg, Germany, and after the revolution, he was elected as a representative of Shabestar in the first elections of the Islamic Consultative Assembly. With the onset of the Iran-Iraq war, he criticized the political situation in Iran, reflecting his opinions in Parliament and media. His works include "Faith and Freedom," "Critique of the Official Reading of Religion," "Reflections on a Human Reading of Religion," and "Hermeneutics of the Book and Tradition."

4. Ayatollah Seyyed Mostafa Mohaqiq Damad (born 1945): A philosopher and legal scholar, with roles such as the head of the Islamic Studies Group at the Academy of Sciences and a member of the Board of Trustees at Shahid Motahari University. His works include "The Catastrophe of Sacred Ignorance," "In the Court of Sacred Ignorance," "International Humanitarian Law; An Islamic Approach," and "Wisdom and Religion."

5. Abdul Karim Soroush (born 1945): A researcher and religious intellectual. After the Islamic Revolution, he joined the Committee for Cultural Revolution; however, he later became a serious critic of the

Islamic Republic, ultimately leaving Iran for the USA in 1995 due to various limitations. He has written "Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of Shari'ah," "Heavier than Ideology," "Tolerance and Management," and "Straight Paths."

6. Mohsen Kadivar (born 1959): A religious thinker, researcher, and university lecturer in theology, jurisprudence, and Shia political thought. He has criticized the policies and positions of the Islamic Republic since 1987. Invited by the University of Virginia in 2008, he became a visiting professor in religious studies in Charlottesville and has since lived abroad. He currently serves as a research professor at Duke University in the USA, with works including "Concerns of Religious Governance," "Shari'ah and Politics," and "Revolution and System in Moral Criticism."

7. Mohammad Jafar Amir Mahallati (born 1952): A former diplomat and professor of Islamic Studies and Peace Theology at the Religious Studies Department, holding the Nancy Schroom Chair in Middle Eastern and North African studies at Oberlin College. He established the Majd Research Center for promoting peaceful thoughts in Shiraz, aiming to study and research theological discussions focused on peace. His works include "The White Ruby," "Excuse and Forgiveness; a Comparative Study," and "Friendship as Worldview."

8. Ali Akbar Alikhani (born 1968): An associate professor at the University of Tehran, he is a member of the West Asia and Africa studies group in the Faculty of World Studies. He has focused part of his academic and practical activities on "peace and conflict resolution," publishing numerous articles and books regarding peace and violence from an Islamic perspective and in the thought of Imam Ali (PBUH). He established the permanent Secretariat of the "International Conference on Peace and Conflict Resolution" at the University of Tehran and has organized five cycles of this conference. Furthermore, he was the first in Iran to establish a Peace and Conflict Studies program at both Master's and PhD levels in the Faculty of World Studies of the University of Tehran. Works include "Islam and Peaceful Coexistence," "Realizing Iranian-Islamic Peace; From Ideal to Reality," and "Justice and Violence in Islamic Political Thought."

Background and Socio-Political Conditions for the Emergence of Religious Peace-Oriented Thoughts

First, we will examine the political and social conditions in Iran that gave rise to religious peace-oriented thoughts in response to the existing problems. These conditions are as follows:

1. Ideological Conflicts Leading to Violence Among Political Factions

Before the Islamic Revolution, the most crucial factor for the coalition and unity of the involved forces in the revolution was opposition to the Shah and the Pahlavi regime. However, after the revolution, this coalition quickly fractured, and various semantic structures of political power, society, economy, and culture were reproduced, leading to political - social conflicts among groups of various political currents such as Islamists, national-religious, liberal, and Marxist left. Although the plurality of political and social forces seemed promising for establishing an open political space and moving toward democracy, the political disputes in the early months after the revolution led to radicalization and increased political and social violence. One of the main causes of such conditions was "ideological and intellectual conflicts" manifested in issues such as the Revolutionary Council, the provisional government, press freedom, the draft Constitution, presidential and legislative elections, cultural revolution, and the hostage crisis at the US embassy (Banisadr, 2001: 118-113). Though political power was held by two currents—liberal-religious (Freedom Movement) and Islamists (Islamic Republic Party)—other groups also engaged in political conflicts, sometimes resulting in political and even physical violence, such as torture, murder, and assassinations of political and cultural figures. Radical and violent actions by leftist and Marxist groups, and some extremist Islamists like the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization and Farghan group, can be noted in this regard.

2. Iran-Iraq War

With the onset of the war between Iran and Iraq in 1980, political disputes among groups and currents entered a new phase. The involvement of all discourses, currents, and groups in the war did not signify their agreement on a single meaning or final reality of "war." The

"war" was interpreted concurrently as a nationalist attack aimed at dismembering part of Iran's territorial integrity, as an imperialist conflict against the revolution (leftist discourse), as a battle of the front of infidelity against the front of truth (political Islam discourse), and similar interpretations. Though the continuation of the war brought about political, economic, and social challenges, the unfolding situation pointed to the effective attempts of the "political Islam" discourse to analyze the war, gradually coalescing around concepts such as "the war of infidelity against Islam," "resistance," "martyrdom," "Basij," and more. The conflict over the meaning of war was seen as part of the discourse struggle over defining the contents of political order, significantly affecting how forces dealt with the war issue and whether or not to prolong it after the liberation of Khorramshahr. According to the "jurisprudential Islam" currents, any effort to influence the fate of the war politically for peace was seen as a liberal, compromising, and non-revolutionary move. These reactions contributed to a deeper link between the war and a revolutionary discourse that continued until the war's end (Hemmati and Delavari, 2015).

3. Dominance of Islamists and Marginalization of Rivals

Following the ousting of Banisadr, the Islamists or the "Maktabi" currents overshadowed other political movements such as Liberals, Nationalists, and Marxist left, marking them as "illegal other" and removing them from the political scene. Consequently, the period of political plurality gave way to political homogeneity gradually eliminating rivals from the political arena, a significant step towards the establishment of an Islamic Republic System (Delavari et al., 2020). After the events of 1981, the political atmosphere of the country was consistently dominated by the leftist and rightist Islamic factions framed within two main organizations: the Islamic Republic Party and the Islamic Revolutionary Mojahedin Organization, which can be considered the progenitors of reformist and principlist movements (Shadloo, 2007: 21). Islamist groups, with labels such as "political Islam," "Maktabi," and "jurisprudential," managed to seize political space by constructing a political discourse based on the two concepts of "Islamicity" and "Republicity" under a third hegemonic concept of "Guardianship of the Jurist." The political Islam discourse sought "otherness," "decisive confrontation with the West," and "resistance

against imperialism," serving the cause of "post-war idealism" (Fawzi, 2011).

4. Duality of Idealism and Political Realism During Reconstruction

After the war ended, it provided the opportunity for new perspectives from Islamist currents and a re-examination of some slogans and positions in the political and economic conditions of the country. Additionally, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Communism, alongside the dominance of Liberalism in a "global discourse," some currents influenced by this intellectual atmosphere defended Islamic Liberalism and Secularism, critiquing some foundational ideas of the religious government. Political rivalry during this period was characterized by two currents: "principlists" and "reformists"; while both emphasized the values of the revolution, the principlists adopted a radical policy against political critics and the West, particularly the United States. In contrast, the reformist faction called for more open cultural, social, and even economic policies, showing a tolerant attitude towards the hegemony of religious values in society (Fawzi, 2011). This dual space intensified "domineering" and "political blockage," escalating political and social conflicts among individuals and currents that persisted until the Khorramabadi, 2nd election in 1997.

5. Lack of Political Institutionalism During the Reform Era

With the advent of the reformist government, new demands arose in politics, driven by the participation of new social actors such as religious intellectuals, students, women, and youth. Concurrently, indicators such as access to information and education level, along with a desire for political participation, increased. Globally, the collapse of the Soviet Union rejuvenated the "democratization wave" that had begun in the 1970s. In the realm of thought and discourse, a range of thinkers proposed new discussions; some political actors entered political and social activities through groups such as the Society of the Clergymen of Struggle, the Islamic Revolutionary Mojahedin Organization, and the Office for Consolidating Unity (Ebadi and Rouzkhush, 2017). During this period, a new political-social discourse emerged with concepts like reforms, political development, rule of law, citizenship rights, justice, and human

dignity, while in the cultural domain, terms such as "cultural participation," "cultural dialogue," and "intercultural communications" proliferated. However, outside groups close to either of the two factions – "reformists" or "principlists" – faced barriers to organized activities, and political practices unfolded in the form of factionalism, albeit with more parties gaining strength among reformists. Despite reformists and Seyyed Mohammad Khatami emphasizing the need for legal political engagement by all groups, this slogan never materialized and gradually faded during the reform period. Some scholars believe that although the reformist era facilitated dialogue and negotiations over internal political disputes among individuals, currents, groups, and parties, the reform front was criticized by some political groups for its "lack of political institutionalism" and "disregard for the enemy" (Khorramshad and Jamali, 2018). Gradually, a division emerged between the concepts of reformism on one hand and the "revolutionary current" on the other, paving the way for radicalism and violence in the political and social realms of the reform era, as evidenced by incidents such as the University Dormitory incident, serial killings, arrests, and torture of some intellectuals. Such conditions contributed to the emergence of a new discourse known as "justice-oriented or Islamic principlism" (Maqsoodi and Rahbar, 2015).

6. Continuing Domestic Political Conflicts and Distrust of the West During the Principlist Government

The Ninth government, known as the Principlist government, was formed after the 2005 elections under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This government, with its goals and slogans centered on fighting corruption and social justice, aimed to resurrect the ideals and principles of the revolution and the war. These principles were intertwined with religious Mahdism symbolism, reflecting the government's "populist" policies (Rezapour and Maqsoodi, 2019). Ahmadinejad believed that the Ninth government or "Third Revolution" faced challenges on both internal and external fronts rooted in previous administrations. His strong criticisms of previous governments led to "othering" within the domestic political discourse that persisted nearly until the end of his second term.

Externally, the Ninth government and its supporters harbored historical distrust toward the West, a sentiment stemming from ideological skepticism and conflicts with the "other," notably the West and Israel. Overall, the foreign policy of the Ninth government was characterized by "offensive-confrontational" stances, which despite their radical nature, rarely deviated from a fixed pattern. Such policies resulted in significant repercussions concerning the Iranian nuclear issue, leading to three IAEA resolutions, one statement, and four United Nations Security Council resolutions against the Islamic Republic, imposing economic sanctions and political pressures on the country (Haji Yousefi, 2010).

7. The Issue of Iran's Nuclear File

The "Government of Prudence and Hope," or the moderate government led by Hasan Rouhani, emphasized foreign policy based on "interaction and dialogue with the West" grounded in mutual respect. The new government, with its novel approach and reliance on critical pragmatism in redefining core principles such as independence, justice-seeking, and resistance, emphasized the peaceful nature of the Islamic Republic's nuclear program and sought recognition of its enrichment rights within regulatory frameworks (Moshirzadeh, 2018). Through ongoing negotiations with foreign parties, the government aimed to clarify its nuclear activities and fulfill its obligations within international laws, ultimately culminating in the July 2015 signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Other initiatives and programs of Rouhani's conciliatory and moderate government included the "Hope Coalition" or "Hormuz Peace Endeavor ", based on security doctrines to maintain peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region in 2019. According to the Government of Prudence and Hope, such international agreements were based on crucial principles like adherence to commitments, dialogue, mutual respect, non-aggression, and the peaceful resolution of disputes (Pourghoushchi and Maqsudi, 2019). However, this situation proved unstable; with renewed political disputes between supporters and opponents of the JCPOA, political tensions and economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic intensified. Some causes of the Post-JCPOA unsustainability encompass:

1. The failure of political fractions and groups to employ peace and tolerance strategies with domestic and international rivals;
2. The anti-imperialist stance, particularly animosity towards the US, as a dominant discourse since the revolution;
3. The revolutionary idealistic approach prioritizing revolutionary-Islamic interests, promoting an ideology of resistance and refraining from adopting peace and compromise (Ghanbarlou, 2017).

Problematization of Religious Peace-Oriented Thoughts

In this section, which could represent the most significant part of the thought research, we will address the issues and anxieties of thinkers of religious peace-oriented thoughts. Thoughts emerge in response to challenges, crises, and problems, and thinkers first identify these issues and propose solutions for their resolution. Some of the concerns of peace-oriented religious thoughts include:

1.: political disputes and conflicts among individuals and groups

One of the thinkers who considered political disputes and conflicts among individuals, groups, and movements as an intellectual issue contributing to the unsustainable atmosphere following the Islamic Republic was "Mahdi Bazargan." According to Bazargan, before the Islamic Revolution, there was coordination, cooperation, coalition, and unity among the involved individuals, groups, and political currents of the revolution. He uses the term "centripetal", drawn from physics", to describe the socio-political situation during that period. However, after the success of the revolution and the establishment of the provisional government, division, strife, conflict, and exclusion replaced unity, which Bazargan describes as "centrifuge " He observes:

"Our revolutionary society gradually drifted away from coalition and unity, with everyone and every group following its own path, considering only itself justified and obligated, seeking to eliminate or merge other beliefs, individuals, and groups. The initial slogan of 'everyone together' turned into 'everyone with me'." (Bazargan, 1984: 14-11).

Bazargan does not deny legal opposition and criticism; rather, he sees it as essential for the survival and growth of a just system (Bazargan, 2010, Vol 1: 127-126).

From Bazargan's perspective, one of the consequences of conflicts among individuals and groups after the revolution was the "superiority and monopolization of the political parties of the Islamists or Maktabi"¹ (Bazargan, 1984: 128). According to supporters of these groups, the meaning of Islam was not its broader definition, but rather a specific school of thought that existed above other schools and sects, higher than "Iran and Iranianness," and functioned as a political ideology.

According to this ideology, both the government and the people should adhere to this school and think in these terms; religion in the particular jurisprudential branch must govern the thoughts and internal and external laws of society. For these groups, the goal of the revolution and the duty of the government was something akin to or exceeding the mission of prophets; its execution and dissemination were equally imperative (Bazargan, 1984: 130-128). In Bazargan's view, stripping opponents of their dignity, claiming superiority, dominance, and ownership over the lives and faith of the people represented "superiority," an act far worse than exploitation and colonialism, more advanced than tyranny; the characteristics he likened in the Quran to "Pharaoh" and "the Pharaohs"(Qur'an, 28: 4).

From Bazargan's perspective, another effect of the militant approach of Islamist groups was the formation of a climate of "otherness" and "anti-imperialism" in foreign policy, which was mirrored in the Marxist International's school of thought's fight against imperialism and animosity toward America needing to be destroyed through revolutionary antitheses. For him, the peak of such an approach was seen during the US embassy takeover, whereby an atmosphere of "borrowing," "astonishment," and "ambiguity" emerged against the Islamic Revolution internationally, while domestically, it led to conflict and division among individuals and groups; promoting the idea of exporting the revolution, exclusivity, sectarianism, and glorification of martyrdom and self-sacrifice became ingrained (Bazargan, 1984: 105-96). Bazargan highlights the negative consequences of such approaches across political, social,

economic, and cultural dimensions for the country, a phenomenon he terms "self-destruction" (Bazargan, 2010, Vol 1: 182-181).

2. militant interpretations of Islam

One of the issues that peace-oriented religious thinkers have contemplated is the "militant reading of Islam," which portrays Islam as a religion of the sword. In this regard, thinkers such as Ayatollah Salehi Najafi, Mahdi Bazargan, Ayatollah Mohaqiq Damad, Mohsen Kadivar, and Ali Akbar Alikhani have addressed it. There are two overarching approaches in this matter:

First Approach: It includes thinkers who engage with religious texts such as Quranic verses, the Prophet's (PBUH) traditions, and those of the Shia Imams (PBUH), employing rational interpretation to discuss religious peace-seeking. This group of scholars engages in examining the term jihad in the Quran, utilizing "interpretative"² and "rational deduction" methods to present a merciful image of Islam. They argue that the concept of jihad is much broader than terms like "combat" and "terrorism," and by examining other religious sources, including the Prophet's (PBUH) traditions and the sayings of Shia Imams (PBUH), they contend that specific rules accompany the concept of jihad, which must be followed during warfare. Examples of these rules include:

1. In accordance with human nature and conscience, and jurisprudential principles, Islam opposes offensive jihad, as peace is fundamentally seen as a natural state in human societies while war is secondary and exceptional. Islamic sources demonstrate human dignity as a fundamental principle in creation and the Islamic faith that must not be compromised under any circumstances (Alikhani, 2006).

2. Reviewing Islamic rules indicates that all wars in Islam were of a "defensive" nature, referred to as "morally defensive jihad" (Kadivar, 2024). Thus, war is permissible only for divine causes, the protection of one's life and property, and repelling enemy upheaval but not for expansion, vengeance, or the superiority of the oppressor (Bazargan, 1984; 162-157). Escalating violent confrontation in international relations contravenes human rights, as violence in Islam is fundamentally deemed immoral and illegal, without any justifications.

3. In Islam, warfare is also impermissible for imposing beliefs and religion; indeed, belief is an internal and innate matter attained through advice and wisdom (surah (Qur'an, 16: 125), not coerced through force (Qur'an, 2: 256), "Furthermore, war is an emergency situation and can be considered a last resort (Nahj al- Balagha, sermon 167: 547); once the enemy's discord is resolved, its continuation is no longer necessary and must be concluded immediately" (Qur'an, 2: 193) (Salehi Najafi, 2003: 15-27; Bazargan, 1984: 162-157).

4. Not only does Islam not forbid peaceful coexistence with non-believers who do not cause disturbance (Qur'an, 60: 8), but it also invites international coexistence (Bazargan, 2010, Vol 2: 271-268; Alikhani, 2011: 30-27). Islam prohibits any military attacks against non-Muslims due to their disbelief or under the pretext of converting them to Islam, a concept referred to as "religious jihad." In this regard, some thinkers believe that a hermeneutical return from ancient texts to the modern era can be used to analyze contemporary international relations (Haqiqat, 2021). However, other religious thinkers oppose such an approach, arguing that the doubt some individuals express today concerning the permissibility of initiatory jihad in Islam arises from "a loss of self in the face of absolute Western culture" (Mesbah Yazdi, 2015: 91).

5. In Islam, peace is regarded as a fundamental and foundational principle in social relations, which must be actively pursued in both its establishment and maintenance. Therefore, as long as non-Muslims seek peace and coexistence with Muslims, they must act according to this principle, and violation of it is not permissible (Surah Anfal (8): 61). Even if an attacking enemy shows a willingness for peace after a period of time, it should be welcomed, and efforts should be made to establish peace between the conflicting parties (Qur'an, 49: 9), thereby saving the community from falling into "social disease" (Salehi Najaf Abadi, 2018: 446-452).

Second Approach: This perspective refers to the foundations of "Islamic Law" and addresses the militaristic interpretation of Islam through "Islamic humanitarian law" proposed by Seyyed Mostafa Mohaqiq Damad. Although some scholars disagree with this title as they contend that not all parts of Islamic international law can be precisely

labeled "humanitarian," Mohaqiq Damad argues that despite all Islamic laws being humanitarian and peace-oriented, peace is not the sole reality of human societies; competition among humans and massacres by one another are undoubtedly undeniable realities as well (Mohaqiq Damad, 2019: 71-69). Differentiating between "human rights" and "humanitarian law," he argues that human rights pertain to humanitarianism whilst laws about humanity correspond to "human dignity." He insists that the first humanitarian rules were drafted in Islam and later brought to Europe, substantiated by the narrative of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who stated: "I am the Prophet of compassion, and I am the Prophet of the epic..."(Tabaqat al Kubra, vol 1: 105), reflecting these humanitarian laws and emphasizing mercy and compassion over warfare. Consequently, he argues that Muslims have not adequately utilized the valuable teachings of Islam in their interpretations and applications (Mohaqiq Damad, 1996).

3. The application of certain Jurisprudential Rules in Justifying Killing

According to Mohaqiq Damad, certain Islamic jurisprudential rules, such as the notion of "necessity," have negatively influenced the application of various war regulations, leading some political or religious figures to issue religious orders justifying violence and even massacre. This scenario permits certain prohibited acts, like employing mass destruction weaponry in war and targeting civilians in urban and rural areas and harming the environment under specific conditions. Regarding some aspects of specific verses such as Surah Al-Anfal, verse 60, some believe that the manufacture, equipping, and usage of mass destruction weaponry is permissible even in non-essential conditions (Zakariyaei, 2000)³. However, in light of these verses along with prohibitions of "aggression" and "corruption," their applicability becomes conditional, as such an interpretation cannot legitimize the use of mass destruction weapons. In Islamic ideology, the aims of forming a state should encompass reviving and establishing rights, deterring evil, achieving justice, and safeguarding human dignity (Mohaqiq Damad and colleagues, 2021). It seems that the roots of such warlike and violence-prone interpretations in Islam can be explored through three approaches: the narrative approach, the theological approach, and the jurisprudential approach (Alikhani and Kouzeh Gari, 2021)⁴.

4. official religious interpretations

Another issue contributing to the conditions of unrest and the emergence of political and social violence in post-revolution Islamic Iran arises from the "official religious interpretations," as proposed by Mohammad Mojtabeh Shabestari. He argues that the official interpretation of religion presents several types of damage, the most significant of which includes:

1. It presents an absolute and universal interpretation of religion, interpreting it as having a fixed and eternal system in political, economic, and legal matters derived from jurisprudence. This type of interpretation claims that the government's duty among Muslims is to implement Islamic laws not based on rational approaches, but solely on the Quran and Sunnah; such an interpretation of religion will conflict with the proper processes of democracy and political participation. The official interpretation of religion, due to the belief that the government's role is to enforce Islamic laws and uphold religious values, has pursued the "theorization of violence" in society against the younger generation, including women, thinkers, intellectuals, dissenters, artists, and academics. Contrary to the content of the constitution and the messages and goals of the Islamic Revolution, a theory known as "divine legitimacy and popular acceptance" was proposed, which, in practice, divided society into two segments: "insiders" and "outsiders" (Mojtabeh Shabestari, 2011: 36-30).

2. Regarding human knowledge as a singular source that overshadows all other forms of knowledge; assessing the truth and falsehood of all other knowledge against the criteria of religious knowledge, thereby ignoring humans' differing understandings of religion (lack of hermeneutic knowledge or interpretative understanding of scriptures, religious rationality, and critique) while focusing on proving a single truth without considering the foundational philosophical, theological, epistemological, sociological, psychological bases, and more (Mojtabeh Shabestari, 2011: 36-30).

5. ideological extremism

Within the discussion of violent ideologies, Mahdi Bazargan, Abdul Karim Soroush, and Ali Akbar Alikhani highlight how individuals,

groups, and political currents holding ideological viewpoints can lead to unsustainable and violent circumstances in various forms. Overall, ideological approaches exhibit certain indicators such as:

1. Lacking foundational philosophical and scientific grounds while being inflexible, absolute-minded, dogmatic, and delineating boundaries between themselves and others and refrain from vilifying, slandering, denigrating, and degrading those regarded as disruptive or incorrect; (Alikhani, 2022: 172-171).

2. Interpreting and co-opting religion, ethics, human rights, and human values toward their ideological goals and justifying their means (Alikhani, 2022: 172-171).

3. Operating as a weapon; as Lenin stated, ideological individuals seek to craft a "hostile adversary" because without an enemy, survival is untenable (Soroush, 1993b). Thus, individuals advocating rational dialogue between Iran and the West face risks of being labeled as Islamic appeasers or promoters of Western imperialism (Vakili Vala, 1997).

4. Preferring revolutionary movements and foundational periods over stability; operating abruptly and revolutionarily instead of adopting a more gradual approach to political and social paths (Bazargan, 1984: 91-90; Bazargan, 2010: 134).

5. Anti-intellectualism, where emotion prevails over reason (Soroush, 1993a) and imitation supersedes investigation, stripping humanity of its capacity for reflective thought (Soroush, 1993b).

For peace-oriented religious thinkers, the roots of extremism, radicalism, and ideological violence in society and Iranian political culture, including phenomena such as "otherness," the binary of "self-other," and "insider-outsider," can be categorized under several primary causes below:

First, "Islamic motivations," interpreted as ideological religious bases, convey a harsh, inflexible, anti-rational, and "othering" image of Islam, depicting no outcome besides "decaying and imprisoning" it. Abdul Karim Soroush asserts that such perceptions of religion do little to enrich or liberate it (Soroush, 1993b).

Secondly, the ideology of commu-socialism⁵, which is a deeply rooted Marxist and communist leftist culture, has penetrated Iranian society and has influenced the culture, religion, faith, and socio-political views of Iran. According to Alikhani, this ideology has entered the minds and consciousness of Iranians and appears completely local for two reasons:

Third, another factor fueling radicalism and intolerance in contemporary Iranian political culture is the influence of contemporary Arab thinkers whose works and ideas have emerged in Iranian society through translations and interactions (Alikhani, 2023: 264-255).

6. infiltration of pre-Islamic tribal violence into Islamic culture

A fundamental issue posed by Ali Akbar Alikhani concerns the "encroachment of pre-Islamic violence in Islamic culture" following the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He argues that although numerous modalities are provided for peace and coexistence in the Quran and Sunnah, every war and jihad in the Quran is defensive, with no verse permitting the initiation of warfare or violence. However, since the Prophet's passing, the Islamic world has experienced various wars, violence, and bloodshed in Islam's name, which continue to this day. Alikhani in his book "Islam and Peaceful Coexistence" strives to demonstrate that violent approaches are ingrained in Islam from pre-Islamic times and propagated over centuries, interlinked with centers of power and wealth, and where the despotism of rulers plays a crucial role in replicating such violence (Alikhani, 2014: 240-234).

He determines that the roots of radicalism, extremism, and violence in several Islamic countries stem from these cultures, which do not correlate with early Islam, reflecting the Quran and Sunnah but are subjected to contemporary political and socio-cultural interpretations and manipulations. It is also typical for political groups to utilize the capacities of religion and sacred beliefs for mobilizing supporters and justifying their behaviors (Alikhani, 2022).

7. Epistemological Confusions in Understanding Religion

Another cause for violence and extremism within religious communities and the Muslim world arises from theoretical and conceptual confusions addressing cognitive aspects, as discussed by

Abdul Karim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, and Ali Akbar Alikhani. In this instance, Soroush identifies roots in failing to distinguish between the substantial and accidental qualities of religion (Soroush, 1998b) and possessing a predominant perception of religion rather than focusing on the minority perspective.

Religion, with all its comprehensiveness (Qur'an and tradition), is not wholly accessible to us, signifying significant gaps (Soroush, 1998a). Soroush posits that human understanding is ever-evolving, suggesting that future generations may attain a more purified and precise comprehension than previous ones (Soroush, 1998a). Alikhani discusses ten cognitive confusions that have led to violence and extremism. These ten cognitive distinctions include:

1. Distinction between Islam and Muslims;
2. Distinction between Islam and Islamic culture;
3. Distinction between Islam and Islamic sciences;
4. Distinction between historical Islam and overarching Islam;
5. Distinction between worldly Islam and otherworldly Islam;
6. Distinction between systematic Islam and contradictory Islam;
7. Distinction between Islam and issues of Islamic countries;
8. Distinction between Islam and logical/human subjects;
9. Distinction between the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers;
10. Distinction between the conditions of the Prophet's presence and non-presence (Alikhani, 2023: 264-255).

Another issue raised correlates to the contradiction between the ideological foundations of modernist religious thinkers and traditionalists, derived from texts and emphatically aligned with traditional theological and jurisprudential paradigms infused with rational interpretative and human rights perspectives. Here, two issues arise: First, traditionalists hinder the proposed foundational knowledge compatible with a democratic political structure due to not rectifying previous authoritarian thought, thus preventing the transition to democratic structures-identified as a factor contributing to violence

(Soroush, 1998b). Second, it is plausible that traditional foundations encompassing ontological, epistemological, religion-based, and theological elements inherently lack peace, coexistence, and tolerance; for instance, the views about God they hold, either "Severe in Punishment" or "Wrote Mercy for Himself" can change their worldviews. Notably, if their portrayal of the world depicts it as a punitive realm filled with retribution and not just a preparation for the afterlife, this framing fosters a climate conducive to religious violence and extremism (Kadivar, 2000: 798-784).

8. misguided and sanctified ignorance of religion

From the perspective of Mohaqiq Damad, one reason behind the emergence of violent interpretations of Islam is the "religious ignorance" or "sacred ignorance" enacted by figures such as Tocqueville and Goldziher. This ignorance allows some individuals to commit massacres and slaughter in the name of God. These violent behaviors stem from theories obscuring the beautiful and merciful aspects of Islam, thereby isolating it. Other factors include the instrumental reading of religious power, where theological and legal institutions are exploited. Mohaqiq Damad believes the historical roots of such violent interpretations of Islam extend from the era of the Ottoman Empire based on the viewpoint of "victory through terror." According to this perspective, creating fear and terror in enemies arises from warfare, followed by seizing power. This perspective theorizes about wielding power and expanding Islam through any means possible, underscoring encroachments on elected sovereignty without sustainability (Mohaqiq Damad, 2019: 169-167). Within Iran, some individuals beat the drum of violence, responding harshly when others speak of a merciful Islam or coexistence rooted in Quranic principles of collective compassion. Such behaviors emerge from their twisted cognitive and interpretative frameworks (Mohaqiq Damad, 2013: 57-31).

Solutions Proposed by Thinkers of Religious Peace-Oriented Thoughts

Based on the theoretical framework and layered method of research; after identifying the causes of unrest and violence within society, thinkers of religious peace-oriented thoughts have proposed various solutions

pertaining to the establishment of peace and coexistence among humanity, which include:

1. Unity

In the early years after the revolution, conflicts and disagreements among individuals and political factions were key issues for thinkers of religious peace-oriented thoughts, which Mahdi Bazargan and members of the Freedom Movement termed an "urgent need." Bazargan's proposed solution can be conceptually divided into theoretical and practical dimensions. From a theoretical point, he emphasizes the concept of "unity" based on religious teachings, illustrating the paths toward a unified community through the words of Allah, especially the phrase "There is no god but Allah." He relates resolving societal differences to emulating the behavior of the Prophet Muhammad and the ethos of "Mercy to the World" with adversaries, as well as the conciliatory policies of Imam Ali (PBUH) towards opponents (even toward Ibn Muljam) as models for governance and political engagement (Bazargan, 1984: 81-80).

In the practical dimension, Bazargan utilizes the phrase "Infinitesimals"⁶ to foster collaborative "integrating" efforts within society to construct a healthy community unhindered by divisions and disputes. His pragmatic solution to this issue is forming the "Commodity Society" through creating organizations, institutions, and educational entities aimed at reforming society under the influence of religion. Following his 1951 prison release, Bazargan experienced setting up such organizations, successfully collaborating with Ayatollah Seyyid Mahmoud Taleghani, establishing the Islamic Engineering Association, the Publishing Company, Yad Company, etc. He views these civil institutions as prerequisites for democracy, ensuring the freedom and dignity of individuals (Tavassoli, 2005: 147-138; Bazargan, 1984: 151).

To address foreign policy issues, especially regarding the USA, Bazargan criticizes the discourse of "anti-imperialism" and blaming all domestic problems on external factors. He maintains that during engagements with foreign nations, whether "noticing external situations" or "focusing internally," the beginning and center of all movements should be explored within "ourselves"; in the first instance, we essentially deny the verse that states: "Indeed Allah does not change the condition of a

people until they change their own condition," (Qur'an, 13: 11) and if our motto is that all misfortunes arise from Britain, America, or Russia, it contradicts Imam Ali's (PBUH) words: "Your cure and ailments lie within you" (Bazargan, 2010, Vol 1: 96).

2. Religious Democracy

Another suggested solution for fostering peace and coexistence in society, advocated by the thinkers of religious peace-oriented thoughts, hinges on the integration of religion and democracy or "Islamic democracy." Abdul Karim Soroush views religion and democracy as intertwined, considering their combined essence to be a super-religious strategy represented in merging knowledge and religion concepts. He believes that to achieve individuals' natural rights, assess the rulers' power, and attain justice, religion must be aligned with democracy rather than the reverse. He further stresses that justice cannot be strictly religious; religion should then be founded upon principles of justice (Soroush, 1998a). However, some reject this theory, asserting that harmonizing Islam with democracy can only be plausible if Islam capitulates completely to secularization (Paydar, 1994).

According to Soroush, the realization of democracy necessitates acceptance of principles such as truth relativity, awareness, rationality, freedom, and satisfaction. The element of "rationality" will generate balance between internal and external dimensions of religion, transform understanding toward diverse and varied interpretations of faith, and recognize these differences by fostering flexibility, tolerance, and coexistence amongst relationships between authority and the people. A democracy devoid of others and ethics will never be established; rather, the essence of democracy demands embracing the thoughts and beliefs of others, and that spirit of accommodation toward thinkers and dissenting views is pivotal (Soroush, 1997b).

3. application of war and peace principles based on Shia teachings

One approach among peace-oriented religious thinkers concerning jihad is applying critical views based on Shia teachings. Shia jurisprudential rules emphasize the role of the Prophet's (PBUH) traditions and those of Shia Imams (PBUH) in interpreting similar Quranic verses. Research and issuing jurisprudential rules concerning jihad and

defense also fall under these fundamental guidelines. Given the fundamental differing principles between Shia and Sunni views on jihad, the influence of critical modernist thinkers in Islamic jurisprudence holds significant value today. Notably, Thinker Ni'matollah Salehi Najafi in his book "Jihad in Islam" provides innovative and critical perspectives on wartime issues, noting that his motivation stemmed from experiencing the tragedies of the Iran-Iraq war. Conclusively, he identifies that the jihad depicted in the Quran and the Prophet's (PBUH) traditions starkly contrasts with the interpretations proffered within jurisprudential texts, a divergence as pronounced as "one hundred and eighty degrees." He argues that this misunderstanding is what provides grounds for western critiques claiming Islam to be a religion of violence and warfare. He further emphasizes the important responsibility resting on jurists and religious modernists to endeavor in critical, evaluative engagements with traditional texts, aligning them more closely with the dictates of the Quran and the Prophet's (PBUH) and infallible imams (PBUH). Jurists must reconceptualize jurisprudential texts concerning Quranic principles and the Prophet's (PBUH) and infallible Imams' (PBUH) traditions to separate impure interpretations and manifest the authentic humanitarian image of Islamic jihad. He also deduces from his analysis of peace practices of Imam Hasan (PBUH) and the battle of Imam Hussein (PBUH), that the latter's war was defensive in reaction to Yazid's aggression, while Imam Hasan's peace policy conformed with prophetic tradition and the true essence of Islam, asserting that suppressing the tyranny of the aggressor can only be justified if there's an unprecedented chance for success (Salehi Najafi, 2018: 463-461).

In his book "Open Letter Regarding the Taif Conference and the War Issue," he elaborates on the importance of negotiation and the mediation of the Algerian delegation for establishing peace with Iraq, in relation to the statements made by the Speaker of the Parliament on Monday, February 25, 1980, regarding Iran's non-participation in the Islamic Conference in Taif. Salehi Najafabadi believes that negotiating for the establishment of peace and ending aggression is neither a sign of surrender nor an indication of weakness, and it does not require a reduction in the military readiness of the aggrieved party. Rather, negotiation, in accordance with the dictates of reason and Islamic

principles, the practices of the Prophet (PBUH), and the infallible Imams (PBUH), is aimed at halting the continuation of war, in order to restore Iran's rights, and to pursue the most rational path for ending aggression and establishing security (Salahi Najafabadi, 2008: 14). He argues that refusing the invitation for mediation and peace not only goes against Article 11 of the Constitution⁷, but also leads to misunderstandings about Iran being perceived as an aggressor in the international arena. This issue, instead of achieving the unity of the Islamic nations, would result in the political isolation of Iran (Salahi Najafabadi, 2008: 30-26).

4. Pluralism

A theoretical discourse framing power distribution is the model of pluralism or multiplicity, a US-origin theory that examines the impacts of group and local conflicts on policymaking. This concept gained prominence in political discussions during the 1950s and 1960s, subsequently spreading globally. The discussion of pluralism within the context of religious peace-oriented thoughts initially stems from religious pluralism discussions prevalent within academic and political circles during the 1960s and 1970s, particularly published in the *Kyan* journal (*Kiyan Magazine*, issues 28, 36, 40). Among thinkers of peace-oriented religious thoughts proposing thorough discussions on pluralism, Abdul Karim Soroush, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, and Mohsen Kadivar can be highlighted. Soroush initiates his discussion on "pluralism" by addressing "religious pluralism" before transitioning into "political pluralism," laying the groundwork for discussions related to "democracy." According to Soroush:

"Recognizing multiplicity and diversity, declaring the irreducibility and incomparable nature of cultures, religions, languages, and human experiences represents an ideal human condition characterized by a fragrant and colorful garden—a modern conception of humanity, primarily articulated within the realms of culture and society" (Soroush, 1997b). Soroush, in his theoretical treatise on jurisprudence, emphasizes that our understanding of religious texts must inherently be diverse and pluralistic, rejecting the notion of a singular interpretation; and that interpretations are fluid, since the religious text itself is silent, and our expectations, inquiries, and presumptions from the sources produce

various meanings (Soroush, 1995). Religious pluralism advocates for interfaith dialogue, recognition of belief diversity, tolerance, and non-coercion towards others' beliefs. Consequently, endorsing religious pluralism as a reality cultivates non-monopolistic pursuits of truth, thereby facilitating compatibility between faith and fluid experiences in a multi-faith environment (Mojtahed Shabestari et al., 1995).

5. the proposal of faith-based and monotheistic peace

Peace, while avoiding conflict among humans, encompasses positive aspects and meanings. One positive facet in peace-building is the proposal of "faith-based or monotheistic peace initiatives," as suggested by Mohaqiq Damad. From his viewpoint, faith-based peace does not arise from human-centric understandings but reflects a submission to the one God. This knowledge does not partition humanity into self and other constructs or categorize the world into sentient and inanimate domains; instead, it outlines peace in four dimensions: "the peace of humans with God," "the peace of humans with themselves," "peace with others," and "peace with the surrounding world." This type of knowledge prioritizes establishing harmony with God, defined as faith, bridging two inseparable principles: faith as the cause and righteous action as the manifestation of that faith.

In the second layer, individuals should conquer their the most ultimate selves, represented by their caprices. The peace-oriented knowledge framework designed by God endows humans with a particular worldview whereby every human serves as a link to the divine and the flow of existence. When God, Humanity, and the Universe converge in unity, notions such as "I" versus "You" and "insider" versus "outsider" dissipate, echoing the Quran's verse: "O humanity! We have created you from a male and female...the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous" (Qur'an, 49:13). A person in concord with their environment will egregiously avoid harming natural ecosystems or the Earth itself, as their understanding is rooted in the harmony of existence. As the teachings of transcendent wisdom indicate, the universe is one, with an indivisible God; thus, humans are inseparable from nature and existence. One outcome of monotheistic knowledge is that all heavenly religions propagate a loving and compassionate God, not a terrifying

deity, affirming God's will of: "Allah desires ease for you, not hardship" (Qur'an, 2:185). The principle of ease is pivotal within the faith narrative, where God seeks to relieve burdens through religion while shaping it primarily around ease and benevolence (Mohaqiq Damad, 2020).

6. development of peace theology

One of the vital necessities for theorizing peace revolves around the development of "peace theology," as posited by Mohammad Jafar Amirie Mohalati. He emphasizes that peace theology unfolds within three realms: 1. Ethics of war suppression, constituting primary or negative peace; 2. Ethics of forgiveness and reconciliation, representing intermediary peace that leads to neutrality; and 3. Ethics of friendship, embodying positive or advanced peace. In the first realm, resources for knowledge regarding war suppression are essential, drawing from both the historical cultural heritage of Iran (Amirie Mohalati a, 2021) and religious sources, chiefly including the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet, and the conduct of the infallible Imams (PBUH) (Amirie Mohalati, 2020).

In the second realm, acknowledging the necessity of ethics, it entirely repudiates any form of violence, warfare, and hatred within human interactions. At the core of peace theology lies "forgiveness," a keyword warranting meticulous exploration within Islamic practices alongside comparative studies with other religions. The significance of Shia thought concerning concepts like forgiveness, compassion, and mercy (Amir Mahallati, 2018), particularly within the context of the concept of intercession (Amir Mahallati, 2018), serves as a valuable resource for promoting peace and coexistence within political and societal dimensions.

In the third realm, he articulates the paradigm of "friendship" as a crucial cultural paradigm needed by humanity; it facilitates the delineation of superior ethical and, correspondingly, a superior religious framework (Amir Mahallati, 2021b). Conversely, enmity among humans, societies, nations, and between humanity and the environment is not a natural or inherent aspect of existence—rather, it portrays a massive cost imposed upon humanity due to erroneous worldviews and ideologies that bend its stature. Warfare claims human lives, hate-centered ideologies ravage the spirit of humanity, and enmity strips life, intellect, heart, and soul of meaning and happiness (Amir Mahallati, 2021c).

7. Ten Cognitive Distinctions in Understanding Religion

In earlier discussions, it was indicated that Alikhani sees ten cognitive confusions in religious understanding as one of the primary causes of violence in the Islamic world misrepresented as Islam. In the same discussion, he presents ten distinctions he believes crucial for expanding peace and coexistence within society and the Islamic world, including the following (Alikhani, 2023):

1. Distinction between Islam and Muslims;
2. Distinction between Islam and Islamic culture;
3. Distinction between Islam and Islamic sciences;
4. Distinction between historical Islam and transcendent Islam;
5. Distinction between worldly Islam and otherworldly Islam;
6. Distinction between systematic Islam and contradictory Islam;
7. Distinction between Islam and the issues of Islamic nations;
8. Distinction between Islam and rational or humanitarian subjects;
9. Distinction between the Prophet (PBUH) and believers;
10. Distinction between the conditions of the Prophet's presence and absence.

Conclusion

Today, the factors contributing to the atmosphere of unrest and violence in Iranian society are diverse and multifaceted, shaped by political, social, economic, ethnic, and cultural objectives and motivations, yielding a range of negative domestic and international consequences for the country. The peace-oriented religious approach grounded in epistemological and ethical foundations rejects all forms of violence and slaughter, aiming first to present a merciful reading of Islam based on Islamic texts and thereafter to recommend, prescribe, and institutionalize solutions for fostering peace and peaceful coexistence within the society. However, centers of power and wealth, combined with distorted and violent interpretations by various political and social factions, have formed significant hurdles in actualizing and institutionalizing these

thoughts within society. Moreover, rapid changes in the age of globalization, spanning political and social dimensions alongside technology, have further heightened the possibility of warfare and violence in various global regions. These factors simultaneously facilitate the practical execution of Islam's cognitive strategies yet also complicate them. Therefore, the prominence and significance of peace-oriented religious thinkers in society become evident, underscoring the urgent necessity for cultural policymakers in the nation to place special emphasis on fostering and nurturing such ideologies in the future.

Footnotes

1. Regarding the division into two groups, ideological and non-ideological, the newspaper "Jomhuri Eslami" dated February 24, 1982, states: "The Revolutionary Council can be divided into two currents; one is the current that trusts in the line of jurisprudence and Islam, and the other is the current that is either non-committed to the line of jurisprudence or at least indifferent to it..."

2. According to the legal principle, absolute verses should be interpreted in light of the conditional verses, which in fact explain the verses without conditions; Khoe'i, Abu al-Qasim, Lectures on the Principles of Jurisprudence, Volume 5, pages 374; <https://lib.eshia.ir/13106/5/374>.

3. Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, in a speech prior to the Friday prayers in Tehran on July 6, 1999, said: "We have the instruction of 'Irhab' in the Quran, and those who are familiar with Arabic literature should go and find the equivalent of Irhab. Now, if I say what it means, tomorrow the newspapers will headline that this person supports terrorism," as reported by the Khorad newspaper on August 7, 1999.

4. **Islamic literalism or the Islam of the Ahl al-Hadith**, or literalists, relies on the apparent meanings of the Qur'an and the hadiths and narratives transmitted from the Prophet of Islam (PBUH); in Shiism, the traditions and teachings of the Twelve Imams (PBUH) must also be added to this.

The science of theology is an internal religious science based on the principles and foundations of the Qur'an and Sunnah, focusing on transmission to defend the religion and respond to doubts.

The legal and judicial system of Islam is based on jurisprudence (fiqh), and throughout history, the science of jurisprudence has been responsible for providing rules and legal and Shari'ah laws for governing Islamic societies (Ali Khatani, Ali Akbar (2020), "Islam and Violence in the Islamic World; From Theoretical Backgrounds to Practical Actions," *Quarterly Journal of International Relations Research*, Vol. 9, Issue 34, pp. 172-147).

5. This term was introduced by Ali Akbar Alikhani, and it is a synthesis of communism and socialism. He considers communism as the political aspect of Marxism and socialism as its economic and social component (Alikhani, 2023: 264-255).

6. It is a term from the field of mathematics.

7. The eleventh principle of the Constitution states: According to the noble verse "Indeed, this is your nation, one nation, and I am your Lord; therefore, worship Me," all Muslims are one community. The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is obligated to base its overall policy on the coalition and unity of Muslim nations and to make efforts to achieve political, economic, and cultural unity in the Islamic world.

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