

The Emergence of an Islamic Approach in Post-Westphalian International Relations

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Abstract

Islam has a specific approach to the nature of international relations, which is different from two main international discourses, namely, realism and liberalism. In terms of ontological and epistemological foundations, schools in international relations differ from one another and as a result, their approach to international relations is different. This paper intends to compare the ontology foundations of the Islamic approach to international relations in comparison to both realism and liberalism approaches. However, two questions are discussed in this article: First, what are the ontological foundations of the international relations approach? Second, what is the difference between the Islamic theory of international relations and liberalism and realism approaches? The method of the research is analytical and the way of collecting is a documentary type.

Keywords:

Islam, International Relations, Liberalism, Realism, Human Nature.

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Introduction

Realism and Liberalism have long been considered to be the two dominant paradigms of international relations theory and the foreign policy practices of the world's governments. Realism and idealism have each analyzed and studied international relations from different philosophical (ontological) and anthropological approaches. The attitude of realism towards human, politics and society leads it to the so-called "war-oriented international relations" views, while based on the particular attitude of idealism (liberalism) towards human, politics and society, the ruling principle of international relations is peace and the war is an adventitious event.

Each of the existing approaches in theorization of international relations has different meta-theoretical (ontological, epistemological, and methodological) foundations and provide different interpretations of the nature of international relations. The Islamic approach to international relations is no exception, since it offers a special interpretation of the nature of international relations based on its meta-theoretical foundations.

Basically, the two major schools of international relations are materialist and focus more on objectivity, while Islam is interested in virtues and ethical issues in addition to materialistic question (such as interest and power). Paying attention to the jurisprudence of international relations, the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH), and the teachings of the Holy Quran shows that the Islamic approach neither calls for absolute optimism and peace for mankind, as liberalism, nor encourages absolute pessimism, war, violence, and benefit-seeking, as realism.

This research, while critically is looking at the two dominant schools of international relations (realism and liberalism), deals with the Islamic approach of international relations from ontological perspective and by considering the defects of the two dominant schools, it argues that the view of Islam is closer to reality. In addition, this research try to analyze the positive and negative aspects of the two major international relations schools.

As mentioned above, in this essay we discuss, first, the principles and approaches of realism and liberalism, which each of them are divided into different branches, and then the Islamic approach of international relations.

Although several works have been written or translated on realism and liberalism schools to this date, no study has been conducted properly on the Islamic approach to international relations.

1. Realist Approach in the International Relations

Realism, sometimes referred to as the power-centered school of politics, has long been regarded as the paradigm of the study of international politics. Realism in its classic form appeared in Thucydides' work, the "Peloponnesian Wars," dating back to the twentieth century ago. Realism has become an international approach to analyze international politics since the late 1930s and early 1940s (Smith, 2009, p.167). In the following, the foundations of realism are analyzed and then referred to types of realism and its focal points.

1.1. Principles

All realists, despite their various classifications, share three pivotal issues: state-ism, survival, and self-help (Schmidt, 2002, pp. 22-22), and these three characteristics are essential by realism.

1.1.1. Statism

Statism is the core of realism and includes two claims: First, the state is the most important actor and other players in the politics play a less important role; second, the "sovereignty" of the state established an independent political community, has the legal authority over its territory. Realists claim that states compete in anarchical situation to other states for security, markets, influence and ... (Gilpin, 1986, pp. 8-14). The nature of this competition is often interpreted in a zero-sum game.

1.1.2. Survival

The primary goal of all states is to survive, this is the highest national interest that all political leaders must respect. All other goals, such as economic development, have second priority. Realism not only provides other moral principles to the authorities, but also entirely opposes the application of ethics into the field of international politics. Since survival in a hostile environment is prerequisite for achieving all national goals, pursuing and gaining power is an inalienable and rational foreign policy goal (Snidal&eds, 2010, p.75).

1.1.3. Self-help

“No country can be trusted to ensure your safety,” this is a main principle in realist view. In international politics, the structure of the system does not allow the emergence of friendship, loyalty and honesty. Coexistence only occurs through strengthening the balance of power. Limited cooperation in interactions among actors is possible, only where the state seeks to gain more profit than other players (Fearon & Wendt, 2002, p.165). Realists, while stressing the power and national interests, believe that basically destroying the instinct of power is merely an ideal, and the struggle for power is natural (Harrall, 2008, p. 86).

1.2. Categories of Realism

We are faced with several readings of realism, which, according to a variety of theorists’ views, types of realism and their main ideas have been shown in the following table (Schmidt, 2002, p. 173):

Main ideas	Outstanding works	Outstanding scholars	Types
International politics is governed by the struggle for power, which is rooted in human nature. Justice, law,	Peloponnesian War	Thucydides (400-430 BC)	Structural Realism (Human Nature)

and society either have no place or have a limited role.			
Political realism believes that the principles are marginal to the politics, the main skill of the leader is to accept and adapt the formation and the development of power in world politics.	Politics among Nations Prince	Morgentha (1948) Machiavelli (1532)	Historical or Practical Realism
This is not human nature, but it is an irrational system that creates fear, jealousy, pessimism and insecurity. Even if the actors have good intentions to each other, there may be conflicts.	The Social Contract Theory of International Politics	Rousseau (1750) Waltz (1979)	Second Type of Realism (International System)
States that are able to prevent the violence of other states and those who are able to build early laws for coexistence can control international chaos.	Leviathan	Hobbes (1651)	Liberal Realism

Table (1): Categories of Realism

1.3. Ontology

Philosophically, the realist attitude is rooted in the philosophical work of Nibor, a Christian scholar who considered man guilty, transgressor, and driven

from paradise. He believed that because of the initial descent, man is the perpetual guilty. In this belief, man is intrinsically malicious and authoritarian, and these are reflected in states' behaviors, and consequently, the scene of international relations becomes a competition for states. The main commentators of this theory were Hobbes, Machiavelli and Hegel (Buzan, 2008, p.84). Realists consider the root of war in the nature of mankind, and believe that human beings follow war due to their evil nature and their security-oriented nature (Buzan, 2008, p.85). Machiavelli sees war as a part of human life that emanates from his biological point of view. To Hobbes's, regarding to their fear of others as well as war (fear and jealousy) human beings finally resort to "Natural State". Hegel also argued that man is the only creature that can liberate himself from the natural state; therefore, he consciously goes to war and seeks his freedom. Eventually, Morgenthau also believed that the balance-of-power theory is based on this assumption that everyone is looking for power in the international scene. Hence, he proposes a balance-of-power theory to prevent war and conflict (Fearon & Wendt, 2002, p.68).

2. Liberal Approach in the International Relations

Although liberalism has had a great influence on world politics since the seventeenth century, the idea of liberalism in international relations was manifested largely within the framework of idealistic ideas between the First and Second World Wars (Powell, 2009, p. 170). Like realism, liberalism is not an integrated and coherent theory.

2.1. Principles

The most important aspect of liberal theories is the belief in the possibility of development of international relations in the form of cooperation, the reduction of conflicts and, ultimately, the achievement of world peace. In general, liberalism is divided into four categories: Liberal Internationalism; Idealism; Liberal Institutionalism; Neoliberal Institutionalism. Despite the

differences in some of their principles, the four main axes of their discussion are the following: first, democratic peace (emphasizing on the need for change in the political structure of communities to achieve the global peace); second, transnationalism (emphasizing on the emergence of new actors in the international arena and, consequently, the change in international politics); third, emphasis on the role of trade and communications in reducing wars and creating peace; and last but not the least, institutionalism (emphasizing on the role of international institutions to achieve meaningful developments internationally) (Moshirzadeh, 2007, p. 27).

2.2. Categories of Liberalism

Regarding the causes of war and the determinants of peace, there is no consensus among all liberal groups. The following table shows how different liberal thinkers have presented different explanations (at three levels of analysis) for reasons of war and the determinants of peace. (Schmidt, 2002, p. 190)

The determinants of peace	The reasons for the conflict	Outstanding scholars	Liberalism's images
Individual Freedom, Free Trade, Progress, Interdependence	States' Interventions, in the domestic and international levels, disrupt the order of nature.	Richard Cobden (Mid-19th century)	First image (Human nature)
Right to self-determination, open states and accountability to	The non-democratic nature of international	Woodrow Wilson (Early twentieth century)	Second image (the state)

public opinion, collective security	politics, especially foreign policy and the balance of power		
A global government with the power to mediate and enforce decisions	System of balance of power	J. A. Hobson (Early twentieth century)	Third image (system structure)

Table (2): Levels of analysis in liberalism

2.3. Ontology

Philosophically and anthropologically, liberalism owns philosophical thinking of the Stoics and the Christianity's teachings, especially the teachings of "Saint Pierre", which Kant gave it a philosophical color in the eighteenth century. While the religious stoics emphasized the good nature of human and promised peace, Kant introduced the wisdom as a guidance for mankind's future. In his view, man is moving towards a bright and free society, and he is approaching to eternal peace.

One of the pivotal features of idealism is the belief in this principle that the factors which integrate human beings are more important than the factors which cause division between them. Idealism does not accept that the state, itself is the source of moral values for humans. While idealists defending a kind of cosmopolitan morality, they have been trying to teach people for reform in the international system (Wagner, 2008, p. 36). Generally, liberalism considers the state as an actor in the international politics scene, but not as the main actor, instead, it believes that, in addition to states, transnational actors such as international organizations, multinational corporations, associations and international regimes and so on should be

considered as other actors (Suganami, 2009, p.340). Regarding the existence of order in world politics, liberal thinkers principally argue that such an order does not necessarily originate from the system of balance of power, but derives from the interactions between many layers of governing arrangements, namely, laws, agreed norms, institutional provisions, as well as International regimes (Danilovic, 2009, p.345).

Islam and International Relations

Since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648 A.D), analysts of international politics have always emphasized on the unity and conflict of nation-states in their relations on the basis of national interests. Following the Cold War and the growth of the globalization process, a new paradigm in international relations was formed based on religion and spirituality. In this process (globalization), the great religions and especially the religion of Islam enjoy a special place in various dimensions of human life (economics, culture, and politics), as well as the equations of the world order (Hanson, 2010, pp. 32-36).

The return of religion to the international system has led this subject to be studied from variety and new perspectives. Islam is considered the most important religion in the intellectual arena with its important and influential parameters in the field of international relations (Johns & Lahood, 2010, p. 16).

1. The Ontological Foundations of the Islamic Approach

Every theory of international relations has certain ontological foundations which consolidate its approach towards the nature of international relations. Islam has a certain ontology as a divine worldview with a collection of teachings in Quran, tradition, jurisprudence, philosophy, mysticism, Kalam (science of discourse), and Islamic ethics (Dehqani Firoozabadi, 2010, A, p. 68). Various dimensions of this ontology are examined below.

1.1. Anthropology

Religious anthropology is rooted in Islamic ontology, based of which a kind of two-dimensional philosophy dominates the system of creation and existence. The existence of goodness has always been accompanied by the existence of badness, and good and evil are always shadowing the order of creation alongside one another.

The two-dimensional ontology and the combination of good and evil in the order of creation from the viewpoint of Islam also manifests itself in the Islamic anthropology. Human is a being with dual nature from the perspective of the divine teachings: on the one hand, it is rooted in goodness and nobility, and on the other hand, it is accompanied with badness and evil. According to Quranic teachings, the nature of man is a combination of instincts and nature, one of which is rooted in earth and the other in heaven. The ultimate destiny of man is decided by the constant struggle between these two forces; between the power of reason and carnality or nature and instincts; and ultimately, the real personality of a human being is formed by the result of this battle (Motahari, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 23-28).

In general, it can be concluded that the human soul has a single truth with different layers, degrees, and levels that emerge in their lifetime. Hence, the human truth is indeterminate while integrated. This means that their movement is also indeterminate swaying between good and evil. Although Islam strongly believes that mankind has an inherent tendency towards good and natural possibilities, and considers human nature as the base of mankind personality and humanity, the possibility of deviation and fall from the human and divine nature still exists because God has created mankind with free will (Motahari, 2000, p. 393). This duality is also reflected in “religious anthropology” in the field of politics and social relations (sociology). Thus, religion does not have an absolute and one-sided view in politics and social relations same as it avoids absolutism when it comes to mankind (Dehqani Firoozabadi, 2010, B, pp. 57-0).

1.2. The Nature of Politics

From Islam's point of view, politics and power are not inherently positive or negative, but it is the purpose that reveal their true face. Politics is a tool in man's hand; if it leads to dominance of instincts and carnal powers, it is religiously worthless; but it is worth being considered if it is used for the supremacy of wisdom or, in other words, the rule of human nature. Thus, the nature of politics also reflects a kind of duality that roots in the nature of man.

Therefore, from the viewpoint of Islam, politics is neither the ugly and unpleasant face that Machiavelli and Hobbes portray, nor the purely ideal image that Kant and his followers offer. In this sense, when politics is linked to wisdom of mankind and provides grounds for the supremacy of reason on carnality and nature on instincts, it is desirable and justified, and if it is employed by the supremacy of instincts and carnal desires, it will be undesirable and worthless.

1.3. The Nature of International Relations

The nature of international relations is seriously influenced by the attitude toward man and politics. Islamic teachings and doctrines link international relations with war and peace by adopting a distinct and comprehensive stance on the nature and habitude of mankind; war for excellence and safeguarding of self; war for satisfying the need for power and exclusivism; and war for eliminating discrimination and for realization of social justice. Overall, Islam finds war to be a result of the imbalance of relations between human nature and instincts when instincts dominate nature (Seyyid Qutb, 1988, p. 52).

Islam believes that the international arena should be wiped out of anarchy so that a ground for the formation of a kind of international community and, as a result, a common identity could be created. An identity which confirms that the future of the international community is related to the actions of all its actors. In Islamic terms, the mechanism of peacekeeping is cutting the roots of war. This is mainly possible by creating a logical relationship between instincts and nature. By nature, mankind hates war and loves peace and

stability. However, the instincts of dominance-seeking and power-thirst sometimes overthrows this profound nature and creates contradiction and conflict in social relations (Barznouni, 2005, pp. 86-87). Therefore, in Islamic foreign relations, neither war is a principle (as the realists think), nor peace is a permanent state (as the idealists believe), but war and peace are the two realities of human history. Ultimately though, given its universal mission of ushering people to prosperity and perfection, Islam has always sought to pursue peaceful relationships and creates its relations with foreign communities based on the principle of peaceful coexistence (Sajjadi, 2002, B, p. 97).

Islamic approach to international relations is normative because it believes in the order, the system, and the desirable international relations. In the framework of this theory, it is possible to form a single universal moral society based on common human values, interests, and institutions under uniform governance of Islamic. The underlying values of the Islamic international order and system are not contractual, but real, detectable, and explainable because they are derived from human nature (Dehqani Firoozabadi, 2010, A, p. 142). Overall, in the question of foreign affairs, Islam believes for peace to be the main rule and permanent principle, and for war to be an exception limited to necessity and particular circumstances. Islam focuses on peace in three areas of individual, family, and community, and strives to put in place solutions that are objective and consistent with human needs. Is the base of Islamic foreign relations jihad or divine invitation?

Since the Islamic approach to international relations is based on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah (tradition) of the Prophet (PBUH), in this section we will review and study the principles and objectives of the Islamic approach to international relations from the viewpoint of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.

2. Principles of International Relations in the Holy Quran

The Holy Qur'an sets the international relations not on the basis of geographical boundaries but the ideological borders and provides its principles from this point of view (Khalilian, 1988, p. 157). It also depicts the

human relations in terms of Muslims with one another on the one hand, and Muslims with non-Muslims on the other hand. Islam is a universal, public and comprehensive religion. It does not belong to a special tribe, race, country, continent, or region, but it is a divine plan that has come to guide and prosper all human beings and save humanity. Politics, both at the national and international levels, devote an important component in strategic plans and practical strategies of Islam (Fawzi, 2010, p. 523). To sum up the Quranic ayat, we can see a number of general principles in the attitude of Islam about Muslim relations with other nations, which form the nature of Islamic international relations more than any other principle:

First. The necessity of adherence to the provisions of the contracts with other nations, derived from the ayah “O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts”(5: 1), and the establishment or confirmation of the necessity of having a contract.

Second. The necessity of avoiding the relations and contracts that require domination of infidels on the believers, derived from the ayah “...and never will Allah give the disbelievers over the believers a way [to overcome them]” (4: 141).

Third. The close connection of jihad with the concept of divine invitation since from Islamic perspective, jihad has a reformative nature and can be interpreted in the context of Islamic dawah (invitation). This is derived from ayah, “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best” (16: 125).

As a comprehensive religion with the capacity to manage international relations, even in the present era, Islam emphasizes a different principle in defining a pattern of behavior in the international arena. This principle is based on “Equality of Decree” which suggests the uniformity of the international rules for Muslim and non-Muslim actors (Eftekhari, 2010, p. 311). This implies the existence of a pattern of international justice in Islam. In other words, Islam considers great importance for culture-building in its global movement. Islam tries to create the unity of thought and opinion among all

human beings, reject factors of divergence, such as sectarian, racism, and discrimination, extend this fundamental thought that all human beings are equal and brothers and no one is superior, and to teach the standards of equality and unity of mankind (Simbir and the Qorbani Sheikh-Nashin, 2010, p. 272).

The denial of any domination and superiority and the formation of a dominant ruling or subordinate class, and the slave of human beings, are the principles of the spread of Islam in the world. It can be said that the spread of justice in the relations between individuals, races and groups is one of the fundamental principles of Islam. The principles of justice in Islam are universal and they do not recognize any boundaries, which have been made by the rulers and this justice extends to all levels and in both individual and group relationships and international relations (Simbir and the victim of Sheikh Nishin, 2010, p. 271). Although justice in international jurisprudence is considered after peace, but there is a close relationship between them. In other words, because peace is only being established in the light of justice, Islam deals with the tools and instruments of the establishment of justice. Therefore, there is a kind of interdependence between the establishment of peace and justice (Mir Ahmadi, 2010, p. 210).

3. Foreign Relations in the Prophetic Tradition (PBUH)

The 20-year era of Prophet's (PBUH) mission can be divided into two periods:

A. **Nation-Building Period:** This period consists of the first thirteen years of prophecy during which the Prophet (PBUH) lived in Mecca. The basic foundations of ethics and beliefs of the Islamic Ummah (nation) were established with the great backing of the divine ayat in the form of the Meccan ayat.

B. **State-Building Period:** The age of "Ease" started by the end of the nation-building era and the thirteen years of inviting in insecure and risky conditions. This placed new duties and obligations on the Prophet and

Muslims. During this period, the Prophet (PBUH) adopted the following strategies in his relationship with other tribes and countries:

1. **Dawah Strategy:** Dawah means inviting non-Muslims to accept Islam. This was Prophet's primary strategy in diplomacy which he used according to the temporal and geographical conditions. Studying invitational Quranic ayat and traditions of the Prophet (PBUH), one realizes that invitation is one of the basic principles in the Islamic foreign relations with non-Islamic societies. In fact, it is so important that a jihad started without initial invitation loses its legitimacy. This is a rule that most jurists agree upon. (Amid Zanjani, 2004; Shirkhani, 2002, p. 185).

2. **Peace Strategy:** In his foreign relations at the beginning of the mission and after the formation of the Islamic State of Medina, especially after 6 AH, the Prophet (PBUH) adopted a peace strategy. The most concrete and significant example of this was the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah. In the sacred law, war is accepted as an ultimate necessity and a last resort. In this sense, war is nothing but legitimate defense (Montazeri Moghaddam, 2001, p. 130).

3. **Jihad Strategy:** One of the mechanisms used by Prophet's active diplomacy was exploiting of Jihad strategy. The Prophet (PBUH) used jihad (meaning war for divine cause and with divine and humane motives) as a diplomatic tool to force the cruel tyrant into using rational and reasonable methods. (Montazeri Moghaddam, 2001, p. 137). Employing active diplomacy during the war is among the characteristics of the Prophet (PBUH).

On the basis of the political actions of the Prophet (PBHU), the state of peace is the first principle that the jurists believe should rule the relations between believers and non-believers. Contrary to the Orientalist theory that defines Islam as a militant religion that has only been expanded in the shadow of the sword, from Quranic perspective, jihad is permitted exclusively for divine cause and against those who are fighting Muslims and not against those who do not want to fight the Ummah. In general, it can be said that Islamic jihad is more defensive rather than offensive (Amin Zanjani, 2004, p. 39-63; Ferati, 2010, p. 264) .

Conclusion

In general, given that the Islamic approach of international relations considers the principle of moderation in its ontological foundations and it also looks at the nature of man, politics and international relations by a rational approach, so, it can be better interpreted International relations.

The logic of the theory	Principle Governing the International System	State situation	The focus of the theory	Human nature	Schools
Domination +Fear =Permanent War	War-centric	State-centered	Power	Pessimistic	Realism
Providing Ethics, Freedom, Cooperation and Cooperation =Peace	Peace-centric	Individual-centered	Rationality	Optimistic	Liberalism

Priority of nature to instinct =Permanent peace, Primacy instinct to nature =Permanent war	existence of peace and war with each other and the emphasis on the authenticity of peace	Religion-centered	Shariah	Dual human nature and intrinsically optimistic	Islam
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Table (3): Realist, Liberal and Islamic approach to international relations

Liberalist approach which is looking at the human's nature, politics and international relations by a pessimistic view (ontological foundations) has a pessimistic interpretation of the nature of international relations and sees bellicosity and struggling for power as main principles in IR. In many cases, the reality of the international system violates the principles of this theory, for example, environmental issues (destruction of ozone layer), economic issues (the development and growth of trade), and the concept of global security.

One of the basic principles in the theory of realism to maintain global peace is the balance-of-power system, but the trends in history have shown something contrary to this reality. In addition, realist approach to the international system is a reductionist approach.

Liberalism has an optimistic interpretation to the nature of international relations, and considers the peace as a prevailed principle in international relations. The history of IR has violated some of the principles of this school. Although one of the basic principles of liberal theory is this belief that common economic interests are preventing war between nations, in many cases, the history of international relations has violated this principle. On the other hand, liberalism's approach to security is more economic, while in many

cases, the history of the global system violates this principle (territorial conflicts). In general, the theory of liberalism cannot interpret the dichotomies in international relations (war and peace) and (contradiction and cooperation). On the other hand, the theory of liberalism, like realism, is reductionist approach, because it does not pay significant attention to the place of nation-states and looks at the international system with a general view. Of course, it is worth noting that, as it was said, liberalism or realism are not integrated schools and have branches. However this research focuses more on common ground among them.

In general, it can be said that the nature of international relations is much closer to the Islamic approach, since the other two approaches offer a one-sided interpretation of international relations (either war or peace). With its comprehensive approach to human nature (duality of good and evil), depoliticization (the hybrid nature of positive and negative), and international relations (the combination of peace and war), Islam has largely been able to provide an accurate interpretation of the nature of international relations. This is due to the rationality (moderation) principle governing Islam as a universal religion. The lack of the same principle in the ontological foundations of the other two approaches has led to inconstancy of the nature of international relations with the interpretations of these two approaches.

In addition, we see the justice-based discourse in the Islamic approach based on the supreme values of humanity, which has no place in realism and liberalism emphasizing more on its economic dimension and the common economic interests. Justice has a special place in Islam and it can be said that universal justice is the basis of global peace in Islamic international relations theory. In the Islamic approach to international relations, three main issues are emphasized: Peace, Justice and Jihad (holy wars).

Islamic discourse of international relations places the relation of the Islamic Ummah with other political entities on the basis of the principle of peace. Islam is the religion of peace and peaceful coexistence, and therefore, the Islamic Ummah is a peaceful nation seeking peaceful coexistence. Based

on the principle of justice, the behavior of Ummah in interacting with other nations should be just. From the perspective of Islam, jihad is of a reformative nature and can be interpreted in the context of Islamic invitation. Therefore, Jihad establishes a close connection with the concept of divine invitation.

In the end, we can say that the Islamic approach to international relations urgently needs Islamic scholars to do research in this field in order to become a complete theory and a dominant paradigm in the international order theorization.

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