

## The Nature and Structure of International Relations in Neorealism and Islamic Theory: A Comparative Study

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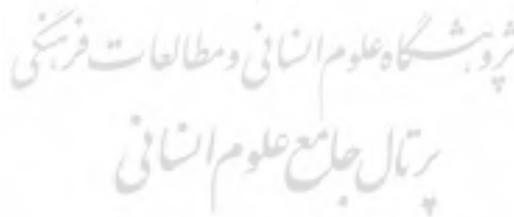
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### Abstract

Realism is one of the approaches that has long been considered as the dominant paradigm in the study of international politics and has played an important role in shaping it. So, it has been criticized by many theoretical schools of international relations. To address these challenges, neorealism led by Kenneth Waltz sought a methodical and scientific reading of realism that conformed to conventional scientific principles and had the ability to explain international relations. The result of Waltz's attempt was neorealism based on the assumptions of positivism. Opposite to positivist views for the analysis of international politics are the religious theories of international relations. Islamic theory is the most important high-powered religious theory for understanding, explaining, and interpreting international politics. This article seeks to express the meta-theoretical foundations of both neorealist and Islamic theory and to take steps to develop the theoretical framework of the Islamic theory of international relations.

### Keywords

Neorealism, Islamic theory, Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology.



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## **Introduction**

Realism is the dominant theory in international politics. In fact, the field of international relations is intertwined with this theory, and it can even be argued that it played a very important role in shaping it. In the path of scientific development within the paradigm, neorealism has been resulted as in critics on classical realism. Kenneth Waltz was one of the experts who reconstructed the theory of balance of power in the framework of structuralism by formulating the theory of neorealism. Waltz by using of systems theory findings and to some extent behavioral methodology, set up a series of testable propositions in which independent and dependent variables are separated. Emphasizing the structuralism approach, Kenneth Waltz introduces anarchy as the first important structural feature of the international system. Waltz also seeks to provide a scientific theory capable of explaining international relations, consisting of documented and verifiable empirical propositions about international relations. Hence, neorealism is more positivist and scientific than classical realism. Neorealist ontologically has a macro analysis of international system. Epistemologically; it is objectivist and methodological; it is positivist and behaviorist. These principles and features of structural realism have led to the critique of this theory not only by a wide range of theoretical approaches, but also by other realist theories.

The main question of this article is “What are the most important meta-theoretical foundations of Islamic and neorealist theory in international relations? Another question arose is that can the Islamic theory explain international politics like mainstream theories? The present study hypothesizes that neorealism, by accepting many of the principles, foundations, and assumptions of positivism, has provoked much criticism. In this regard, most criticisms are from the Islamic theory of international relations, which has criticized the ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations of materialist, positivist and behaviorist neorealism. This research in a descriptive-analytical way, tries to explain and study the ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations of neorealism and Islamic theory with meta-theoretical topics, and through this, to express the strengths points of Islamic theory of international relations.

### **1. Theoretical Framework: Meta-Theory in international relations**

Meta-theory is one of the international relations theory dimensions that has been considered in the 1980s and 1990s, especially with the growth of critical theory and constructivism. As Neufeld said: Meta-theory is a sub-area of international relations aimed at answering the question of what

constitutes a good theory. Disagreements in the content area of international relations relate to Meta-theory. It consists of their ontological roots (what exists and how it works), epistemology (how we can know what we can know through specific methodologies). As Neufeld believed, all theorists implicitly have meta-theoretical commitments. Therefore, methodology is the study of how research should be conducted and how knowledge can be acquired (Moshirzadeh, 2011, p. 166).

### **1-1. Ontology**

In ontology of international relations theories, the four themes of international relations and international phenomena nature, international actors, causation and causal relations, and the structure-agent problem are explained. On the reality of international relations, three meta-theory perspectives can be distinguished: Objectivism, Relativism and constructivism. Objectivism believes in the existence of a world of objective international relations outside the mind and independent of man and researcher. Relativism denies the existence of an objective international relationship outside the mind and independent of the human subject, and sees it as a mere social and discourse construct. The constructivism between the two does not deny the reality of the world in international relations, but neither does it consider it independent of man. In such a way that the world of international relations has a social nature, at least a part of which is made by social actors.

Ontological and epistemological issues are interrelated, but need to be separated. So, each person's ontological position affects his or her epistemological position. Based on the ontological approach, the epistemological consequences of meta-theory are also revealed. For example, if the world of international relations is defined as an objective reality governed by empirical laws, empirical theory is also necessary and efficient to understand it. Consequently, if the purpose of international relations theory is to discover reality and causal relations and to formulate empirically testable hypotheses, the knowledge of international relations will be limited to explaining causal relations between variables. Then, based on cognition that is considered valid, the world of international politics is considered and imagined.

### **1-2. Epistemology**

Epistemology in meta-theory, explain the possibility of cognition and how to achieve it, the nature of theory and knowledge of international relations, sources and tools of cognition, criterion of truth and falsehood and how to test, validate and evaluate existing and desirable international relations

theory. In fact, this dimension includes the formulation of epistemological presuppositions in international relations theory (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: p. 36). There are different perspectives on the possibility of cognition; some basically deny the possibility of true cognition for man and believe that it cannot attain consciousness in certainty. Unlike the first category, some believe in the possibility of cognition and consequently the possibility of the realization of epistemology. They are divided into rationalists and empiricists. Rationalists believe in the human intellect as the only source and tool of cognition, capable of comprehending facts alone. Empiricists, on the contrary, consider a small role for human intellect and consider the only source of knowledge as the material world and objective tools (Moshirzadeh, 2011: p. 10).

### **1-3. Methodology**

Methodology, like epistemology, deals with how human cognition and knowledge, but has a practical nature. Methodology emphasizes on the methods, practices, and mechanisms that man can use to understand the world. Thus, epistemology and methodology are ultimately interrelated; because epistemology deals with the status and how to know that the dimensions and aspects are one. Therefore, separating epistemological issues from methodology is very difficult if not impossible, therefore, these two issues are usually examined together (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2010: p. 87).

### **2. Neorealism in International Relations**

For years, realism has been the dominant theory in international politics (Copland, 1999: p. 187). Historically, realism has seen a variety of theories within itself but four approaches are more familiar: traditional realism, neorealism or structural realism, neoclassical realism, and institutionalism or hybrid realism (Vakil et al., 2010: pp. 139-137). The theory of neorealism was introduced by Kenneth Waltz in his famous book "Theory of International Politics" (1979). Waltz theory emphasizes the importance of the international structure and its role as the main determinant of state behavior (Baylis, et al, 2013: p. 410). Neorealism has borrowed the concept of system and structure from behaviorism, but has remained steadfast to the strong and fundamental principles of realism (Seifzadeh, 1995: p. 176).

Neorealism can be considered, above all, an attempt to provide a scientific interpretation of realism. At a time when classical realism was accused of being traditionalist and unscientific, some of them sought to present realism with conventional and new scientific standards. In addition, realism was severely criticized for not paying attention to economic issues, which eventually led new realism to consider international economic issues.

These efforts were lead to present neorealism or structural realism by Kenneth Waltz (Moshirzadeh, 2011: p. 108). Despite many differences among states, Waltz observes a similarity in their behavior. Waltz argues this resemblance stems from the structure of international system (Donnelly, 2000: p. 16). The main question that Waltz answer is why states - despite differences among their ideologies and political systems - behave similar in foreign policy? He argues this similarity by imposition of structural restrictions on states that is determined by the distribution of capabilities among states. He rejects the role and influence of domestic variables on foreign policy (Rezaei Eskandari, 2005: p. 112). He argues this similarity by imposition of structural restrictions on states that is determined by the distribution of capabilities among states. He rejects the role and influence of domestic variables on foreign policy (Rezaei Eskandari, 2005: p. 112). Waltz believes this similarity cannot be explained in terms of the characteristics of the units, but should instead be based on a systematic conception of international politics. Accordingly, structural realism analyzing the distribution of power at the systemic level (Wieclawski, 2011: p. 173).

Waltz's critique of classical realism was the reductionist nature of the theory. Because classical realism limited the level of analysis to the state level. (Moshirzadeh, 2011: p. 113). Waltz insists on structure of international politics, as opposed to the emphasizing on the individual or the state level of analysis (Brown, 2009: p. 260). Nevertheless, there are ontological, epistemological, methodological, and some common concepts neorealism and other realist perspectives, which are explained below.

### **3. Meta-Theory in Neorealism**

#### **3-1. Neorealism Ontology**

The basic assumption underlying by realism ontology is that states are the only actors in the international system, so, universal and moral principles do not apply to them; the following is the other aspects of neorealism ontology:

##### **3-1-1. The 'Nature' of International Relations**

The ontology of realism has something in common with positivism. For realism, there is a world independent of human cognition. Therefore, ontologically, they are, like positivists, fundamentalists (Marsh and Furlong, 2008: 48). Positivism believe structures and actions exist independent of human perceptions (Rahmati, 2011: 123). Thus, international phenomena, the international system, and international relations have an external reality that exists outside the mind, independent of our knowledge of it. International realities are not mere mental notions of human beings, but exist

independently of human imaginations of it (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2010: p. 63).

### **3-1-2. International Actors**

Waltz emphasizes that states are the main actors in the international system (Sazmand, 2008: p. 123). According to realism, there is no actors but states in international relations. Because, other other types of actors like international organizations, Multinational corporations, terrorist groups, churches, etc. have a small effect on important processes and outcomes such as war, peace, the formation of alliances and trade agreements (Chernoff, 2005: p. 104).

However, state-centric is one of the most important ontological principles of theorizing in neorealism. The state takes ontological precedence over the international system. From Waltz point of view, the appropriate analogy is the classical economic theory - micro theory and macro theory. According to Waltz, international political systems, like economic markets, are the result of joint action by profit center entities.

In general, neorealism is a rational theory based on the presuppositions of rational choice theory in microeconomics. In this regard, three assumptions are prominent; First, political actors — individuals or states — are assumed to be utilitarian and rational. Actors are considered pre-social in the sense that their identities and interests are spontaneously produced. They are also profiteers because they pursue their own interests first. They are also rational and able to create the most effective and efficient way to realize their interests within environmental constraints. The second premise, which is the result of the first premise, is that individuals and states engage in social interactions with their preconceived notions. Social interaction is not considered an important determinant of interests. The third premise is that in society, individuals or states also pursue pre-determined interests. Therefore, actors are not inherently social and are not considered the product of their social environment and are merely rational beings who form social relations to maximize benefits (Burchill, et al., 2013: p. 249).

### **3-1-3. Causal relations among phenomena**

Positivism believes in the existence of causal laws and relations among international phenomena. According to neorealism ontology, the principle of causality governs the international system and international phenomena; since the source of the formation of the system and international realities are real matters, they are also subject to the causal system (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: p. 267).

#### **3-1-4. Agent-structure**

Waltz criticizes and rejects reductionist theories in international politics and considers structural and holistic theory to be the most appropriate theory for explaining international relations. In fact, Waltz emphasizes structure in presenting international policy theory based on his understanding of theory. Waltz abandons the classical realist theory, which analyzes international politics on the basis of human characteristics or states, and emphasizes the structural analysis (Asadi, 2010: p. 234). Neorealism believes that the type and rules of the game are determined by the structure of the international system. Accordingly, the foreign policy of all states is influenced by systemic factors and, like billiard balls, follows the same rules of political physics (Ghavam, 2011: p. 85). Thus, the constraints imposed by the structure causes states to act similarly, and the main differences among them are determined by their capabilities (Linklater, 2007: p. 28). Neorealism also believes that material structures shape actors and interactions and these identities are considered more or less the same (Rahmati, 2011: p. 124).

#### **3-2. Neorealism Epistemology**

In general, the epistemological principles of rationalism include scientism and the subsequent separation of the subject from the object, the separation of value from reality, the attempt to achieve causal explanations and find the laws governing international life (Rahmati, 2011: p. 122).

##### **3-2-1. The nature of science and knowledge**

Realism consider the world to be fixed, definite and comprehensible (Baylis, et al, 2013: p. 539). In the social world, as in the natural world, there are objective rules that can be discovered and explained. Social phenomena are regulated, which can be expressed in the form of generalizations and universal laws. Theorist with objective knowledge resulting from pure experience and without the need for any prior knowledge is able to discover these rules and regulations and transfer them to the scientific community. These rules are discovered and generalized through empirical induction. Just as the goal of knowledge in the natural sciences is to discover causal relationships among observable phenomena, so in the humanities this goal must be defined as the main goal because it is possible to present cause-and-effect relationships among social phenomena. From the ontological point of view, the social world has objectivity and there is an existential entity beyond human consciousness and mentality (Iman, 2009: p. 91). Neorealism holds that the visible parts of the world can be identified (Frigg & Votsis, 2011: p. 222). It is also the task of knowledge to properly represent objects.

In this epistemology, the mind is like a mirror reflecting things (Benhabib. 2011: p108).

### **3-2-2. Separation of value and reality**

Positivism think that science is independent of values, and that the objectivity is the neutrality of values. Objectivity means that the observer confirms and records what he sees, and therefore science is not based on the attitudes and beliefs of the researcher. Science is a separate and distinct field of society that is free from religious, political and personal values and operates independently of social and cultural pressures and forces and other human activities. Science is the rational thinking and systematic observation that goes far beyond prejudices, biases and values. In this view, the researcher can only intervene in his values in choosing the subject of the research. There is an essential difference between values and realities (Izadpanah, 2007: p. 12).

### **3-2-3. Reality and the Criterion for the Truth of Ideas**

The criterion for the truth or falsity of propositions and theories are facts. In such a way that in order to determine the truth and falsity of propositions and theories, one must rely on neutral facts. Objective facts are the only valid tool for judging the truth of propositions and theories. Positivism epistemology is based on the theory of correspondence of truth. Facts are also limited to phenomena and objective, obvious and testable things. So that only the propositions and theories that can be tested in practice and experience and their correctness and accuracy can be confirmed are meaningful and true if they pass the experiments successfully. Hence, all propositions that are untestable in practice are meaningless and cannot be judged to be true or false. The social world is also considered a set of realities that science discovers and explains (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: p. 96).

Waltz considers the criterion of the truth and falsity of theories to be facts. He also believes that the criterion for judging theories is their usefulness in explaining and predicting. The theory makes sense of what is observed, organizes phenomena in such a way that we see them in interdependence, and shows how change in some phenomena implies change in others. A good theory must be built on the principle of thrift, that is, it can be explanatory by including minimal variables, because it is not supposed to tell us everything about the phenomenon in question. Therefore, Waltz seeks to provide an explanatory theory in international politics that can answer specific questions, and this answer should include a small amount of variables and their equal relationship (Moshirzadeh, 2011: p. 112).

### **3-3. Neorealism Methodology**

If we consider behaviorism in the 1950s and 1960s as the first wave of positivism influence on international relations, it seems that with Waltz's neorealism, positivism entered the field of international relations more seriously. Following the scientific structuralism and work of the likes of Lakatos, Waltz in the 1980s, while adopting a deductive approach, sought to provide a systematic explanation of the realities at the international level. In order to achieve a macro theory in analyzing phenomena, he uses three assumptions: a) International relations must be promoted through the macro theories of natural sciences; B) If the inductive approach to focus on the details of phenomena and the collection of partial data is still sufficient in this field, the consequence will be reductionism and failure to achieve a macro theory to explain the whole reality. c) Grand theory is achievable if International Relations seek a systematic explanation. For Waltz, we can arrive at a comprehensive theory when we derive the general rules governing the structure of the international system. The result of this Cartesian and mathematical view of international phenomena is that not only does it ontologically lead to a materialist approach to the importance of material structures, actions, and material powers, but also, epistemologically, is the belief in the intrinsic reality of the orthodoxy of separatism in values and belief in the independence of the theorist from individual prejudices (Daneshnia, 2008: pp. 110-109)

Methodologically in general, rationalism, and especially Waltz, believe in the unity of method among the social and natural sciences. That is, the positivist scientific mechanisms and methods such as observation, control, and quantification that we use in the study of natural phenomena can also be generalized in the field of social sciences and the analysis of actors' behavior in international relations (Daneshnia, 2008: 110). This means that the methodology of neorealism, relying on scientific methods, seeks to explain international relations (Jackson, 2006: p. 135).

### **4. Islamic theory of international relations**

Since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), international politics analysts and diplomats have emphasized the alliance and tension among states based on their national interest. At the end of World War II, the Cold War paradigm was based on the centrality of superpowers; But after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the international system included a more complex set of global actors, from international organizations to ethnic and tribal factions and cross-border groups. After the Cold War and the growth of the globalization, a new paradigm in international relations was formed based on the centrality

of religion and semantics in the international system. In this process, the great religions and especially the religion of Islam in various aspects of human life (economy, culture, and politics) enjoyed a special position (Ahmadi et al., 2010: p. 16 and Hanson, 2010).

The occurrence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran was a turning point in the creation and revival of religion in the international arena. The role of religion in politics took many forms, such as the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the Islamic State in Iran, and the emergence, growth and development of anti-liberal currents in many Middle Eastern countries. Although Islam has political theories before, but undoubtedly the revival of religious propositions in international politics owes much to the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Indeed, Attention to the special role of religion in individual, social and political relations and the discourse distinction among Western and non-Western theories centered on monotheistic religions and Islam are among the achievements of this period. Theorists of Islamic Thought believe that since Islam is an all-encompassing and universal religion and has a plan for human life, and considering that politics and international relations are one of the necessities of life, Islam not only have independent views and theories in this ground, but it also has frameworks that can ensure world security and peace. In the following, Islamic ontology, epistemology and methodology and its differences with neorealism are mentioned.

## **5. Meta-Theory in Islamic theory of international relations**

### **5-1. Ontology of Islamic theory**

One of the most important aspects of Islamic ontology is that the international phenomena, international system and international relations are social realities that are formed by interaction of external realities in a social context, the following is the other aspects of Islamic theory ontology:

#### **5-1-1. The 'Nature' of International Relations**

The most important ontological principle in Islamic approach is the originality of existence and reality. It is hierarchy and recognizable by intellect. (Javadi Amoli, 1999). There is an objective reality independent, outside the mind. Such facts are not merely human imaginations, but exist independently of human perceptions. (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: p. 215). In Islamic ontology, international phenomena and international system are social realities. International realities are not pure mental beings outside of external reality. Moreover, international relations is not just tangible, but it is multiple and go beyond material phenomena and structures including the

invisible and the intangible. International realities have different levels, dimensions, layers and levels of existence. In such a way that an international phenomenon such as state or war has a greater existential intensity. The level of acceptance and the degree of public acceptance, the antiquity and continuity, and the reference to the validity of international realities play a decisive role in the intensity of their existence. Also, the tangible dimension of some international phenomena and realities, such as the United Nations, is more credible and subjective, while some other international phenomena, such as political ideas, norms, values, and ideologies, are intangible. (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: pp. 264-266).

#### **5-1-2. International Actors**

Based on the will of human beings and social agents in Islamic ontology, international actors, including individuals, groups and human societies, have are not captivated by the material and social structure of the international system and are able to change and transform it. In such a way that the independent nature and identity of the international system and the international structure does not imply and does not require the negation of the agency and agency of the international actors, because the international system and the international structure only limit, bind, empower and affect the actors. In this sense, international actors, including individuals and human societies, act on the basis of rationality and behave rationally. In the context of the Islamic ontological approach, social actors do not act solely on the basis of instrumental rationality based on the analysis of the cost of material benefit. Rather, decisions are made based on the interaction of theoretical, practical, normative, intrinsic, communicative, and instrumental reason within the framework of comprehensive reason.

The actor of international relations may, on the basis of his partial intellect, want to make a decision based on material and personal gain, but his innate and practical moral intellect prevents him from adopting it and leads him to altruism and human interests. Of course, this kind of rationality is a requirement of human and divine nature. Thus, it can be said that dual rationality prevails over international actors. In such a way that natural actors do not act solely on the basis of instrumental rationality and the logic of the result, but also have moral intellect and act on the basis of the logic of divine responsibility and duty. On the other hand, instinctive actors behave only from instrumental rationality and result logic, which is based on mere utilitarianism (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: pp. 266-272).

### **5-1-3. Agent-structure**

According to Islamic teachings, man is the most honorable and important creature of God, so that the first stage of theology is self-knowledge. From the Islamic point of view, the limitations in the human body can be compensated with transcendent and spiritual powers, so that in religious teachings, body and soul are considered complementary (Jafari Tabrizi, 1991: pp. 157-159). People who dominate their spirituality can also take control of the material world around them and combat the evil and utilitarian desires of Hobbesian view of international relations. What disrupts the order of creation is materialism, lust, the tendency to dominate and arrogance, which leads to poverty, misery and exploitation of fellow human beings. The only way to get rid of this system of domination is to return to human and Islamic morality, which opens the way for humanity.

In this regard, the originality of the individual and society is raised. The individual and social dimension of man is original and causes his perfection (Ebrahimzadeh Amoli, 2007). In the Islamic view, freedom can be identified in three stages: internal, external and social. Freedom is inalienable, non-transferable and is one of the aspects of divine creation (Jamshidi, 2001: p. 55). Thus man is free and can change the structures of the international system. Man is not a prisoner of the coercion of international structures, but can voluntarily change these structures for better or worse. It is true that the divine tradition ultimately belongs to the oppressed, but human beings can change their ways of their own free will. God will not change the destiny of any nation unless that nation is voluntary and shapes change (Simbar, 2016: p. 53).

### **5-2. Epistemology of Islamic theory**

Islamic thought considers four basic sources for cognition. First, the rational source, the fundamental issues of thought are discussed within the framework of reason, and before the acceptance and judgment of reason in the fundamental issues of thought and the so-called in the field of philosophy of science, no discussion begins. Second, revelation has been used by humans for centuries to describe, understand, and interpret the phenomena of nature. Revelation in cases unknown to the human intellect and also in cases where rational reasons can be presented to both parties to the dispute, has a decisive opinion. The third source is experience with a huge amount of human knowledge that has paved the way for the development of science during the new centuries. The fourth source is intuition, which means that the inner and innate understanding and intuition of human beings benefit from it (Nabavi, 2004: p. 13).

### **5-2-1. The nature of science and knowledge**

In Islamic epistemology, just as cognition is not limited to the tangible, so rational cognition, as rationalists believe, is not the only existing and valid type of cognition, because contrary to the rationalists' belief, intellect does not have innate ideas without the intervention of other forces. In fact, the intellect produces scientific knowledge in two ways. First, it produces scientific knowledge through direct confrontation with rational realities. Second, it produces a part of scientific knowledge through sense and imagination (Parsania, 2008).

The knowledge of theories of international relations is established and produced by combining basic sensory data and rational axioms. In addition to generalization, which leads to logical-empirical scientific cognition, reason is also able to deepen. Deepening is a kind of knowledge of a verse that has been confirmed and emphasized in the Qur'an. This kind of cognition, which is exemplary in material nature, especially history, is relevant for cognition of the supernatural, the unseen world, the human subconscious, and finally the knowledge of the transcendent. Based on this kind of knowledge, man can realize the existence of the unseen world, the soul and God Almighty, because all these sensations and materialities are a sign and trace of the infinite existence that has created them. Therefore, it can be concluded that in society and human society, including international relations, there are also variables and structures of intangible ideas that we know from their effects (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: pp. 322-323).

### **5-2-2. Interaction of value and reality**

Although man has no choice to achieve perfection and happiness but to accept social life and presence in society, but this fact cannot be ignored that not every society and collective life can guide man to the desired perfection and true happiness. A society can guarantee the well-being of a person who has a stable and strong identity first of all, and this depends on the values that govern that society, because society derives its identity and stability from its values. Therefore, the prevailing values must be stable and durable in order to be able to pave the way for individual and social behaviors of a system at any time and place like a beacon, and such power must be pursued in the religious semantic system. Because religious values are typically more stable because of their connection to revelation.

Based on the continuity and change of the world and social realities, the laws and rules that govern them are also divided into two continuous and variable categories. On the one hand, the social world, including international relations and international phenomena, is governed by

continuous and explicable laws and patterns that change over time, such as the laws of natural and social evolution, which have continued despite the evolution of natural phenomena and human social life. On the other hand, due to some different needs and characteristics, different societies and phenomena follow different and changing patterns, rules and regulations (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2014: p. 306).

Considering the epistemological value and authority of reason, intuition and revelation in Islamic epistemology and the non-exclusiveness of knowledge to empirical and sensory science, normative, value, metaphysical and religious propositions are also significant and have scientific-epistemological value. So that it is possible to produce moral and value propositions in the framework of scientific knowledge and science can judge these propositions. Because, in the position of exploration and gathering, in addition to sense, intellect, intuition and revelation are also sources of knowledge. Furthermore, in the position of judgment and justification, reason and revelation define and determine the criterion of truth and validity of value epistemological propositions. Hence, value-free science is neither possible nor desirable. In such a way that science and scientific theory, in addition to describing and explaining the realities of international relations, must also have the power and possibility to judge them. Therefore, Islamic theory of international relations is also normative and prescriptive. In addition, it states the possibilities for human political action and the international community. This theory not only defines and determines explanatory possibilities, but also defines scientific and moral horizons and perspectives. Islamic theory also formulates and justifies the norms of existence and moral rules for international action in order to converge the concrete reality with the desired and desired norm (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2010: pp. 83-84).

### **5-3. Methodology of Islamic theory**

Islamic ontological and epistemological foundations are not compatible with the methodological separation of natural sciences and social sciences on the one hand, and on the other hand, they do not accept the dominance of natural sciences methodology over social sciences. Methodological monopoly causes the researcher to be narrow-minded about the complexities of reality and its various aspects or layers. In addition to rejecting methodological exclusivism, paying attention to the fundamentalist approach, benefiting from standard knowledge, considering the characteristics of the researcher in the validity of the research, paying attention to the third level of reality, generalizing conceptual methodology from social sciences to natural

sciences are other methodological principles derived from Islamic principles. (Koohkan, 2018: pp. 310-311).

International relations is defined as a subset of political jurisprudence, because political jurisprudence is responsible for regulating and organizing the interactions and exchanges of the Islamic society with the international system. For this reason, anything that uses methodology in the science of the principles of jurisprudence can be the basis of the methodology of Islamic theory of international relations using the four sources of the book, tradition, consensus and reason. The most important methodological features of political jurisprudence and Islamic international relations in this way are: the validity of the text and narration, tradition and reason (see Alikhani et al., 2007).

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, the nature and structure of the international system from the perspective of neorealism and Islamic theory have been analyzed. To this end, the meta-theoretical foundations of neorealism were first explained. Meta-theoretical issues are related to ontological, epistemological and methodological roots. In the realm of neorealism ontology, it is much in common with positivism. Then, based on the ontological approach, the epistemological foundations of neorealism were examined. For example, if the world of international relations is defined as an objective reality governed by empirical laws, empirical theory is also necessary and efficient to understand it. Consequently, if the goal of international relations theory is to discover reality and causal relations and to formulate empirically testable hypotheses, the knowledge of international relations will be limited to explaining causal relations among variables. Then, based on cognition and knowledge that is considered honest and valid, the world of international politics is considered and imagined and formed. Accordingly, in the field of neo-epistemology, realism is scientists. It consider science and knowledge to be objective in nature and believe that the social world, like the natural world, is governed by objective laws. The task of knowledge is also considered to be the proper representation of objects and things. In this regard, values are separated from facts. Waltz is also methodologically influenced by positivism and believes in the unity of method between the natural and social sciences.

Islamic theory of international relations seeks to explain and produce the system that governs phenomena in the world today in accordance with the forms of the system of religious thought inspired by the foundations of Islamic ontology, epistemology and methodology. Although the Islamic theory of international relations is based on stable, fixed and ancient Islamic

principles, but from the point of view of explanation, it is emerging and new and therefore in responding to the needs of the day and the power of explanation is at the beginning.

Developments such as the end of the Cold War, the rise of Islamic movements in the Middle East, the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the reproduction of the role of identity and ethnicity in world relations, and the rise of great powers such as China and Japan are among the reasons for the inability of mainstream theories to analyze and predict world events. New and normative theories. Of course, this does not mean the ability and power to explain Islamic theory, but it does mean that all of these theories suffer from shortcomings, but nevertheless, they are used and discussed. Therefore, the Islamic theory of international relations can be considered as one of the theories claiming the normal analysis of the international system with all possible problems.



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