

# Meaningful Good Governance in Iran:

## The Iranian Aestheticized Wisdom in Firdausi's Epic Revisited

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### Introduction

This article starts with the following two questions: 1) how to overcome multi-dimensional challenges in Iranian's transitional politics as a pre-requisite? and 2) how to creatively end up with a **practical solution to be meaningful to all Iranians?**

In challenging side, in addition to miserable economic situation, Iranians suffer from social anomy, cultural sensationalism invigorated by competing ideological populism, and hostile polarization defined in terms of ideological confrontations both within the Islamic Republic politicians and activists in one hand and between the proponents and oppositions of the regime on the other.

In the theoretical domain, there is also a huge gap among intellectuals. In the one hand, Dariush Ashouri's narrative argues Iranian "natural & analytic" language is short of supporting modernity.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly "The challenge of our language in encountering the modern world requires two different ways of thinking and researching: one, about the relation between the modern world and its subscribed languages, and the second, between Persian language in encountering with the challenge of Modernity such as the difference between the spoken and the written language, idiosyncratic mode of natural language,...the context of modern language and ...techniques for inventing mechanistic concepts."<sup>2</sup> Aside to linguistic problem, Aramech Doustdar's book title is a self-declared statement: "impossibility of the Religious Thinking."<sup>3</sup>

In contradistinction with Doustda's narrative, and without criticizing Ashouri's, and in criticism of both traditional and fundamentalists' narrative, Soroush deems contemplating a new reading of Islam, based upon human rights than human duty, is a workable solution, attending to diverse reading of democracy and bereft of unbounded liberalism. In an interview with daily Sharq, Soroush criticizes secularist democracy and in his lectures deems unbound liberalism as to be in contradistinction with religion. In the interview, referring to Western definition of democracy as:

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<sup>1</sup> . Dariush Ashouri, "with Islamic Revolution, the process of formation of nation-state has fallen apart," <https://www.zeitoons.com/63792>.

<sup>2</sup> .Dariush Ashouri, *Open Language, Persian*, Tehran: Nashre Markaz/Markaz Publisher,1386/2007, excerpt from the back cover.

<sup>3</sup> . Aramech Dustdar, "l'impossibilite de penser dans la culture religieuse, translated to Farsi, Khavaran Publisher, no place, no date.

rule by the people over the people, if you are not a citizen of a country, even a big (an accomplished) scholar don't have the right to vote or to work. We have a plurality of democracies in the international community. Religion is for people and people determine their own relationship to it. In other words, it is not my business, your business or the ruling system's business what people do with religion. If people want to turn away from religion, it is not my business. You have to bear in mind that democracy occurs in the context of practice, and it has to have an external manifestation. Even if we speak a thousand times about this or that kind of state, if it has no objective manifestation, it is undemocratic even if it is called democratic.<sup>4</sup>

In the Website of one of the sub-units of Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (Comprehensive website of Social Science), Reza Parsa criticizes Soroush. According to Parsa (an unknown scholar to this student of politics), by paraphrasing Soroush, criticizes Soroush liberalism in line with Iran fundamentalists. Accordingly, the "authoritarian liberalism" of Soroush supports liberalism in rather expedient term: "liberalism is in conflict with imposed official religion, and welcomes the unofficial, researched-based religion." Yet, in another context, Soroush emphatically states: "we do not question everything and do not accept all answers." As in his talk over "aestheticized wisdom, intellectualism and religiosity", he emphasized that in "religious thought, everything is not acceptable."<sup>5</sup>

This student of politics deems de/constructing poetical experiences defined in terms of **aestheticized wisdom** (in Persian *sho'our*) as a plausible mechanism to bridge the intellectual controversy. In the meantime, the main presumption is that a de/constructed **aestheticized wisdom**, as defined in terms of "*contemplating morally, talking morally and acting morally*" in proactive terms, can provide Iranians with a meaningful "good governance." That is, to expedite both human sovereignty and high quality of life for all Iranians indiscriminately, without domination in practical terms. Due to these attributes, such a de/constructed narrative can be

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<sup>4</sup> .An interview with Abdelkarim Soroush with Sharq Daily, trans. By Niloo Mobasser,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20130915093340/http://drsoroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-20031200-1.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Reza Parsa, Abd-al-Karim Soroush, "A liberal opposing liberalism, Sharvand, Issue 65, Mehr 1387(October 2008), Abstract. <http://ensani.ir/fa/article/50770>

and meaningful to all Iranians in ideational term. Whereas human sovereignty reflects the modern concern of intellectuals, indiscriminate high quality of life, and bereft of domination of one group and marginalization of others reflects their post-modern equivalents.

In addition to above-set goals, the supplementary moral motivation of this student of politics is to set the stage for avoiding another violent street revolution like the one in 1357/1979. That is, democratization of Iran and developmental process be achieved through non-violent institutional revolution.

As appeared, the method used is de/construction, inspired by a de/constructed reading of the constructivists, in addition to Derrida and Foucault. Unlike constructivist, I deem Iranian aestheticized wisdom provides humanity with the precedence of human will in mildly modify the mutually constituting process of ideational & situational.<sup>6</sup> Different from Derrida's deconstruction, the goal of this article goes beyond accepting different readings of a text. Rather, it is hoped the discussion of this article not only to echo the voice of marginalized Iranians as Foucault advises us, but also to provide all Iranians with a meaningful, political model whereby all can have happiness as well.<sup>7</sup>

Based upon the set goal and investigation method, this article will have 4 sections.

#### I. **Divided Iranians, Alternative Interpretations and Solutions:**

Iranians in general seem to be severely divided as to both the ongoing political structure and processes in Iran. The June 18 2021 presidential election of Iran was witness to the lowest record number of voters took casted their vote. Such a low turn-out does not reflect the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader's recommendation prior to election: "people's vote in favor of Islamic Republic..., against the will of the enemies,(capitalized) in the weakening of the Islamic establishment."<sup>8</sup>

Citing ILNA (Iranian Labor News Agency),Baztab' reported on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021, the number of casted votes 28,650, 505,(%48.32 of eligible voters), spoiled votes 3,740,688 (%12 of eligible voters), valid votes 24,909,817 or %42.1 of the eligible

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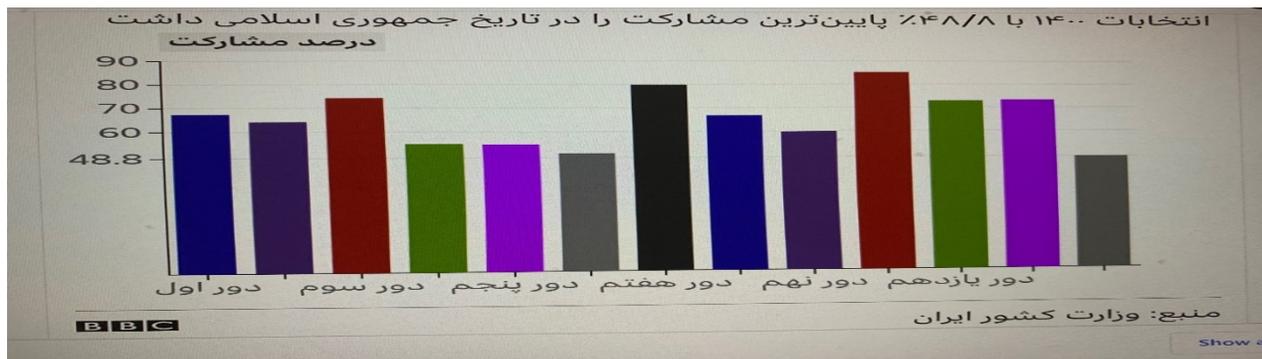
<sup>6</sup> . Crotty, M. 1998. *The Foundations of Social Science Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, Sage.

<sup>7</sup> . cited from Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction - Critical Legal Thinking, May 27 2016 by [Catherine Turner](https://criticallegalthinking.com/2016/05/27/jacques-derrida-deconstruction/)<https://criticallegalthinking.com/2016/05/27/jacques-derrida-deconstruction/>

<sup>8</sup> . <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=48049>.

voters.<sup>9</sup> The ILNA record number was 288,499 votes less than what Minister of Internal Affairs Rahmani reported on June 19<sup>th</sup>: 28,933,004 standing at 48.8% of the eligible voters 2021.<sup>10</sup> The worst turn-out was in the capital, Tehran. Only %26 of registered voters in Tehran participated their votes in contrast to Southern Khorassan with %74.22.<sup>11</sup> It needs to be noted that Supreme Leader of Islamic Republic, Speaker of Majlis and the president elect are from Khorasan.

“By comparison, the turnout in the last two presidential elections -- in 2013 and 2017 -- was about %73, while in 2009 nearly %85 of voters cast their ballots according to official Interior Ministry statistics.” Moreover, the number of the spoiled votes was also 6 times more. This is %12 of the total vs. the average of about %2 in the earlier elections,<sup>12</sup> as following image shows.



Hamid Reza Jalaeipour informs us of similar trends that is “the lowest casted vote” in 11<sup>th</sup> parliamentary election.” Accordingly, the participation rate at the national level was “%41 and in Tehran %22... whereby most of the elected deputies in Tehran were elected by less than %7 of the eligible voters.”<sup>13</sup>

Mahde Tamaddon daily warns: “the message of doubling the numbers of those apathetic to voting and the lowest participation record in the presidential election (is) “Listen to the silent voices.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> . <https://bazztab.ir>, news code 821393.

<sup>10</sup> . <https://www.imna.ir/news/501773> & Ettela'at Daily, Khordad 30 1400, June 20 2021.

<sup>11</sup> . <https://www.irna.ir/news/84374531>

<sup>12</sup> . Voters Send A Message To Iran's Leaders After Dismal ...<https://www.rferl.org> › iran-turnout-message-leaders.

<sup>13</sup> . <https://www.dw.com/fa-ir/-52487286>.

<sup>14</sup> .Mahd Tamaddon Daily, Tir 1, 1400/June 22 2021. MahdTamaddon77978410010448524966200.pdf

Ideologically speaking, whereas the pro-Islamic Republic are divided in favor of democratic reform or alternatively sustaining Islamic Republic regime as it is<sup>15</sup>, frustrated opposition invited people not to vote, in their bid to delegitimize Islamic Republic altogether.<sup>16</sup>

In such a divided context, the Speaker of Majlis, originally from Khrasan, and a former Revolutionary Guard, endorsed the turn-out and expressed his endorsement by stating: “The leader has managed the high participation in the election.”<sup>17</sup> His endorsement was in the context whereby the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic showed his dissatisfaction over some procedural result of Guardian Council’s screening attempts. “In the screening process, injustice has been incurred upon some candidate whose competency was not confirmed. They had been accused of charges that was never verified. I am of the viewpoint that the responsible systems to redress it.”<sup>18</sup>

Ironically, Sadegh Larijani as the member of Guardian Council also criticized the screening process of the Guardian Council whereby, he is an appointed cleric by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic. It is not known to this student of politics whether/ or not the rejection of his brother’s (as the former Speaker of Majlis )competency has impacted his point of view.<sup>19</sup>

Outside the governmental structure, based upon the previous parliamentary election, former president Khatami warns: “Disappointment and frustration of people from the government is an alarm to alert all.”<sup>20</sup> President-elect Raisi’s reaction to the lowest turn-out was: “I will restore hope and trust.”<sup>21</sup>

In his scholarly analysis, Azad Ormaki, the sociology professor of University of Tehran argues: “we turned out to see a defeated winner earned majority of the casted votes, not the majority of the eligible vote.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> . See the antithetical views of Hassan Khamenei “Republic”-ness is an anti-revolutionary move <sup>15</sup> vs. Sadeq Larijani who emphatically claims “the government does not derive its legitimacy from the votes of the nation.” *Iran Briefing September 2006 Issue*. *caisuk.com*. Archived from *the original* on 30 July 2007, or “No vote activist campaign” <https://iranintl.com/en/iran-in-brief/more-1400-signatures-no-islamic-republic-campaign>.

<sup>16</sup> . <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/31233498.html>

<sup>17</sup> .Ebtakar Daily, Tir 1, 1400/June 22 2021. <http://www.ebtekarnews.com/>

<sup>18</sup> . <https://www.irna.ir/news/84354949/>

<sup>19</sup> . <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1518733>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/khatamimedi>, Khatami Media@ Twitter, cited by Gooya News, June 21 2021.۲۰۲۱, <https://news.gooya.com/2021/06/post-53056.php>.

<sup>21</sup> .Shahrvand Daily, Tir 1, 1400/June 22 2021.

<sup>22</sup> .<https://www.jamaran.news>

In the same line of scholarly critique, Ali Fathollah-Nejad, a scholar affiliated with the Free University of Berlin, told RFE/RL: "The real winner has been the boycott campaign that wanted to strip the Islamic Republic of its ability to leverage voter turnout as proof of its legitimacy, especially to the outside world...What it got instead is a quasi-referendum against it."<sup>23</sup>

Fathollah-Nejad's viewpoints somehow reinforces Bashirieh's 1388/2009 analysis. According to him, "the power myth of this regime has long been corroding, albeit its pace has speeded and aggravated." The conclusion of his analysis indicates that the legitimacy of political structure and processes has been on incremental decline.<sup>24</sup>

At an online discussion organized by the Atlantic Council on June 20, Sadegh Zibakalam, a retired professor of politics at University of Tehran, said: "It's not the government that took the message that the people are no longer with you, the reformists also took the message that people are no longer with you," Zibakalam.<sup>25</sup>

Theoretically, "Soroush ... described (by) many journalists as "Islam's Luther," is in favor of freedom and individual rights, and he is a critic of the theological tradition that has justified power through transcendence, thereby sanctifying centuries of tyranny."<sup>26</sup> In his "militant secularism"<sup>27</sup> article and a Persian lecture in Belgium<sup>28</sup>, Soroush elaborates on his alternative narrative over how Western liberal narrative and its fall-out in terms of secularism, let alone laicity, has a negative term (Dahr). That is, secularism merely attends to this objective material life, bereft of any transcendental reference prior or after this material life. In the process, Soroush concludes that Iranian religious culture can accept political secularism rather very attentively and diligently, but reject philosophical secularism.<sup>29</sup> This student of politics somehow differently think that the policy in the nation-state is secular and limited to serve one nation within the territorial geography of presumed contractual (please read conventional in real term as) state.

Despite different aspirations, which are at times unfolds in adversarial terms, patriotic Iranians are deeply concerned about following two threats: 1) disintegration of Iran and 2) violent confrontations between adversarial groups as is the case in some countries around Iran.

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<sup>23</sup> .Voters Send A Message To Iran's Leaders After Dismal ...<https://www.rferl.org/iran-turnout-message-leaders>.

<sup>24</sup> . [https://www.radiofarda.com/a/o2\\_logos\\_interview/1895378.html](https://www.radiofarda.com/a/o2_logos_interview/1895378.html)

<sup>25</sup> Voters Send A Message To Iran's Leaders After Dismal ...<https://www.rferl.org/iran-turnout-message-leaders>

<sup>26</sup> Liberal Democracy in Islam: Abdolkarim Soroush (1 January 2012), <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/liberal-democracy-in-islam-abdolkarim-soroush> retrieved July 7 2021.

<sup>27</sup> . Abdel-Karim Soroush "militant secularism, *Nedaye (The Voice of) Islam*, Vol.31, (Fall 1386/2007).

<sup>28</sup> . <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qBoNiOhAT4>

<sup>29</sup> Nedaye Islam, op.cit. & ibid.

Amongst them, some groups are in ideological conflicts with one another on both substantive and procedural means. Notwithstanding incremental rise of anti-religious sentiments vs the fundamentalist groups in the regime, moderate secularists are rather post-secularist patriots. In line with the latter group, even atheists are also in favor of non-violent reform.

Yet, some groups of divided Iranians at times engage in mutually hostile accusations and confrontations with one another. Most recently, during 1400 presidential election, some frustrated Iranians insult their compatriots in Iran who differs in either casting vote or campaigning for “No Vote Campaign,” or at times physically attacked their opponents physically.

As to the explanatory factors, it is plausible to claim that current citizens' discontent to be substantially different from the one in final years of both Pahlavi absolutist monarchs in 1320 and 1356-7. Based upon Viktor Frankl, one would explain the citizen discontent in Pahlavi case was merely due to the absence of meaningfulness than enjoying moderate quality of life, in a rather level of a developing state. Both monarchs succeeded phenomenally to promote citizens' standard of subsistence, health, security and education. In contrast, the lowest 42% participation indicates how the political structure and processes has become troubling for a huge majority and meaningless to a sizeable minority, deem themselves as having been marginalized. The incremental frequency of protests by dissident Iranians and the repressive measures has only aggravated the situation. The elected president has contacted various daily columnist and political activists. The July 11 2021 dailies elaborations on future developments were mixed.

Whereas the material life is objective enough to be addressed, meaningful life for Iranians are more complex than its equivalent in the West. Due to an unconscious philosophy in support of aestheticized wisdom capable of making the life meaningful to life, Iranians meaningful life requires a deconstructed reading of Frankl's meaningful life. According to Frankl, whereas happiness is in line with a reason, life “without meaning” can be characterized as “a relatively shallow.” Somewhere in between, Baumeister proposes that “the defining thrust of human psychological evolution was selection in favor of cultural capability.”<sup>30</sup>

Without such a deconstructed reading of meaningful life, Malikian agrues “the ideal life is the one with following 3 attributes: “psychological pleasure, morality & efficiency”.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, both epistemologically and morally, democracy is both a truth-seeking and justice-seeking without any restriction...” However, democracy is a means, he continues, that can provide the

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<sup>30</sup> . Baumeister, R. (2008). Free will in scientific psychology. *Perspectives On Psychological Science*, 3(1), 14-19.

<sup>31</sup> .<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNrPZf12JNg>.

context with both good and bad outcomes. Despite being as necessary condition, it is not a sufficient condition to a prosperous happy life."<sup>32</sup> Notwithstanding the significance of morality in Malikian's narrative, it seems democracy to him is the one discussed by Plato rather than as a modern concept build upon human sovereignty. Yet, his ideal spiritually meaningful life, defined in above 3 items, is only philosophically in accord with aestheticized wisdom of this scholar as the fundamental Iranian philosophy defined in terms of morally-ethical than ethically-moral in Western definition of liberal philosophy.

Hossein Bashirieh, a distinguished professor of political sociology, also a purged academican from University of Tehran like Soroush, argues "plurality and difference in identifying oneself or identities is considered by monolithic ideologies as identity crisis. All ideologies undemocratically involve a unified identity around values, ideals, nationality and... race; hence, it leads to a dualism defining oneself against others."<sup>33</sup> As regards Iran, he argues Iran's national identity does not have a monolithic, central base. Rather, (Iran's national identity) is a like a salad bowl whereby diverse factors such as history, culture, Islam & Shiism, modern culture and civility and globalization has influenced it."<sup>34</sup>

To this student of politics, generally speaking, the usage of identity is not an appropriate terminology to involve human dignity. Unlike Persian and Arabic, identity's etymological root refers an individual person or collective group to be the same as something outside of the self. Due to the absence an appropriate substitute, he reluctantly uses this concept.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, any personal and collective groups of humans, not just the Iranians, are to be considered as a multi-dimensional & multi-layer being, symbolically referred to as a "becoming" salad-bowl. In short, identity is not simply religion, ethnicity, or race.

As regards Bashirieh's argument about the declining trend in political identity, this student of politics thinks the exclusivist and monolithic approaches to define political identity, and in fact one's own identity, is on the decline, not the political identity itself. Moreover, this student of politics emphasizes the plurality of layers & dimensions of identity needs to be signified. To address this plural layers and dimensions of identity, this scholar has conceptualized protocol identity, whereby each of multiple human relations with others are in fact communicated through different windows defined in terms of particular protocols.

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<sup>32</sup> . <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq-UKvTKWyl>

<sup>33</sup> Hossein Bashirieh, interview with Radio Farda, [https://www.radiofarda.com/a/o2\\_logos\\_interview/1895378.html](https://www.radiofarda.com/a/o2_logos_interview/1895378.html)

<sup>34</sup> . Hossein Bashirieh, the decline of political identity, the sunset of identity-making ideologies.

.. <http://nasour.net/1386.10.05/16.html>

<sup>35</sup> . <https://www.etymonline.com/word/identity>

In Sattari's narrative, the difference of what this student of politics conceptualized as Iranian aestheticized wisdom finds significance. Accordingly, Iranian wisdom is expressed in a symbolic language dominant in Iranian literature & culture.<sup>36</sup> Despite the fact that, Firdausi's epic expressed his narrative in terms of Iranian aestheticized wisdom, defined in terms of promulgating "good thoughts, good talks and good deeds." In fact, such a wisdom is manifested in Iranian morally-ethical code of conduct whereby freedom is the context to anesthetize liberal philosophy in general and any liberating endeavor than to result from it. That is, this context is a voluntary cultural attribute to reflect aesthetized wisdom in terms of "good thoughts, good talks and good deeds.

This said, the main difference between Iranian reading of modernity, liberalism and secularism with its Western equivalent is highlighted most in the strategic action. Whereas "aestheticized wisdom is the sense of some form of contact with the divine or transcendent,<sup>37</sup>" symbolized in the concept of freedom as the context prohibiting instrumentalist approaches codified as Machiavellianism and justified as the legal loophole. As appeared in both the character of figure-head Shah and paladins in Firdausi's epics,<sup>38</sup> they manifest an aestheticized wisdom modified with transcendental spirituality. For instance, he offered "strength" as the source of acting in line of truthfulness. In a dialogue between Noshirvan and his minister Bozorgmehr, Firdausi defines the Shah as the source of all goodness, whose function is to be a Sharyar (companion of the city).<sup>39</sup> In fact, such an approach has inspired more self-devotedly in Mowlana, as being very different from the practicality manifested in Sa'adi's benevolent pragmatism and Hafez's moral pragmatism.

## II. Archaeology of Firdausi's Narrative of The Kayanids:

Firdausi's "Shahnameh," literally meaning the history of kings, is an epic poetry allegedly composed of nearly 60,000 couplets, though around 50000 of them are in the various editions available now.<sup>40</sup> Shahnameh chronicles the story of Iran for a period reckoned traditionally as more than 4 millennia. His narrative is manifesting an inspirational source of Iranian aesthetical

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<sup>36</sup> , Jalal Sattari, A Prelude o Aesthetical Wisdom Symbolism (Madkhali be rams shenasi erfani), Tehran: Nashre Markaz, 1372/1993. , جلال ستاری .

<sup>37</sup> . <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christian-Aesthetical-wisdomism>.

<sup>38</sup> . <https://www.britannica.com/topic/epic>

<sup>39</sup> . <https://ganjoor.net/ferdousi/shahname/anooshirvan/sh3/>

<sup>40</sup> . Lalani, Farah (13 May 2010). "A thousand years of Firdaws'i's Shahnama is celebrated". *The Ismaili*. Retrieved 24 May 2010, and, Khaleghi Motllagh, "Firdausi Shahnameh" Daneshname Zaban va Adabiati Farsi, supervised by Ismaeel Saadat, 133-134.

wisdom defined in terms of moral philosophy to define a law to sanction “good thought, good talk, good deeds.”; heroism of the Paladins with the strategy and appropriate power to uphold the Good & fight the Evil”; and the historical or the factual side of the Iran’s pre-Islamic political life. “It is divided into three parts—the mythical, heroic, and historical ages. Written in modern Persian, the **Shahnameh** is a work of poetry, historiography, folklore, and cultural identity and is a continuation of the age-old tradition of storytelling in the Near East.”<sup>41</sup>

The mythological part establishes the theoretical basis of Iranian politics based upon moral philosophy. In the narration of this part, Pishdadian dynasty starts with Qumarth who established justice and law. As the dual history of Jamshid and Freydoun and Zahhak unfolds, the law is to establish good and to fight evil based upon Iranian aesthetical wisdom defined in terms of “good thought, good talk and good deeds.”<sup>42</sup>

Thanks to institutionalization of such moral responsibility, the second part of Shahname narrates the Kayanids. According to Avesta this era was hostile to Zoroaster,<sup>43</sup> apparently due to the change from hitherto aristocratic status of prophetic role to the oligarchic status of the paladins responsible strategy to uphold good and fight the evil. The third part is historical, whereby after mentioning the name of few Partian Kings, Shahnameh continues with Sassanian.

As to the sub-title of this section of the essay, , according to “Shahnameh”, after the death of Shah Kersasp, there was no heir to the throne of Iran. Zaal and Rostam took it upon themselves to find a suitable royal monarch for Iran.<sup>44</sup> Zaal came to know, through Shah Zav, that a descendant of Shah Freydoun was living somewhere in the Alburz mountain, between the central Iran and Mazandaran, in the care of a holy men. Rostam himself went there to look for the descendant.

The child, who had grown up to be a responsible man, realized his mission in life after having dreamt about himself being chosen as the Shah. In the dream, he saw two eagles, indicating divinity, coming to him and naming him as the legitimate Shah.

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<sup>41</sup> . U.S. Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/thousand-years-of-the-persian-book/epic-of-shahnameh.html>

<sup>42</sup> . Encyclopedia of Iranica, retrieved on July 17 2021, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/zoroastrianism-i-historical-review>

<sup>43</sup> Mehrdad Bahar, Some Survey in Irann’s culture, Tehran, Fekre Rouz, 1376/1997: P. 92.

<sup>44</sup> .Abolghasem Esmaeeli pour, The Paladns Era, <https://roshanfekran.blogspot.com/1389/09/26/post-8/>

Thus, it came as no surprise to him when Rustam offered to accompany him to the capital and assuming the throne of the Shah of Iran. Rustam was surprised at the readiness and confidence shown by Kobad to come to the capital west of Iran. Iran According to “Shahnameh” and Avesta, this historical Iran as referred to is now a part of Afghanistan, Sistan, Zabul and Anshan: That is a geographical .<sup>45</sup>

When Rustam expressed his astonishment at Kobad’s readiness, Kobad divulged his dream to Rustam. Accordingly, Kobad expressed his confidence in being crowned as the next divinely ordained Shah of Iran. Rustam and Kobad marched off to the Capital. They were received by Zaal, the priests, wise men, and other paladins. Subsequently, all the people unanimously accepted Kobad as the Shah of Iran. In the coronation ceremony, all warriors, such as Karan, Keshvad, Kharrad and Barzin, were present at the capital, Istakhr. Afterwards, his name was prefixed by “Kae” and then called Kae Kobad. That is to say that the institution of Shahanshah i(kingship) is itself a bestowal of God’s Grace, nonetheless it needs both the consent of the “citizens” and the approval of the powerful, the Paladins.

Aside from his personal traits and ceremonial arrangements, the role of Shah is to protect the heritage of Iran. Then Firdausi tells us how the culture of Iran this time was threatened by Turanian. As it appears, Firdausi’s allegory is very similar to post-Islamic Iran. After dethroning Zahhak, the Arab tyrant and evil-doer, Iran had to deal with another foreign threat – the Turanians. In this new epic battle, Iran had eminent paladins like Rustam, Zaal, Mehrab, Gastaham, Karan, Keshvad and Barzin on her side. The Turanians, led by Afrasiab, had paladins such as Shamasas, Karsivaz, and Viseh. As a sign of patriotic identity, the Iranians went into the war with the Kavyani flag by their side. The Iranians won; and Afrasiyab had been taken as war prisoner, he managed to escaped. Eventually, he retreated and repented for his callous attitude in waging inconsequential wars with both last Shahs of Pishdadian and the First Shah of Kiyaniids.

As a result of this victorious war, once again Iraj’s territory remained a sovereign territory of Iran, and Tour (similar to Salm’s territory) remained the sovereign territory of

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<sup>45</sup> . Guy le Strange, *The Lands of The Eastern Caliphate, Farsi translation Mahmood Erfani, Vaziri Publishers, 1364/1985, p. 200.*

Touranian. The border line between the two has remained unchanged— Jaihun (Amoudarya).

The very outstanding trait of the King that Firdausi emphasizes is depicted in the reply of the victorious Kae Kobad – the peaceful ideal of Iran. The king's strategy could be classified as moral pragmatism. Firdausi demonstrates the cunning of king, which bridges the gap the harsh reality of war and moral desire for a long-lasting peace. Firdausi narrates a dual character. For a cunning king such as Kae Kobad, war is an unwanted existential problem imposed by a situational problem. Knowing he has won the war and knowing that it is the Turanians that have always initiated the war, the king, having the moral imperative of forging a lasting peace, foregoes the advantages he has after winning the war and makes a compromise.

With peace in Iran and Afrasiyab unwilling to break it on account of his fear of Rostam, Shah Kae Kobad had a very smooth time on the throne. Because of the ready riches, he had become vain and proud. He spent his time in feasting and merriment.

As he mellowed, he started increasing the boundaries of his empire on all four sides with the help of Rostam. He was responsible for changing the small kingdom of Iran into a vast and major empire.

Kae Kobad tackled the issue of war and peace demonstrated the moral and yet pragmatic existential concerns of Iranian Shahs. Inspired by religious morality of the priests and supported by the power of the paladins, the Shah's responsibility was a synthetic one to safeguard the polis, or state, most conscientiously within the context of moral philosophy. Unlike the realist existential present of Thucydides,<sup>46</sup> Firdausi's narrative of the Shahs of Iran represents a type of moral pragmatism. That is the application of the paladins' power is to be aestheticized with the idealist spiritualism in moral philosophy in rather moral pragmatic term. Such a conscientious concern is unambiguously reflected in rejecting the realist position of Rostam. The latter did not approve of a treaty with the Turanians. Accordingly, a mutually appealing treaty was nothing but the Turanian's ruse to escape defeat, as their army was already on the brink of defeat. He argued that the Turanians would break the treaty as soon as they recover

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<sup>3</sup>. Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War edited and written an Introduction by M.I. Finley, trans. Rex Warner, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1972

and attack once again, as they had done several times in the past. However, Shah Kae Kobad explained to Rostam that he desired peace and was against warfare, and hence he had accepted the offer of a treaty against Rostam's will.

Territorial integrity and power as a required means to restore it had provided Iran from arbitrary rule. The shah's legitimate power was supposed to arise from his "Farr" (glory). Farr was the qualitative trait bestowed upon by the creator. It was an aura of being blessed as long as one does not lose sight of doing morally prudent deeds. This quality allowed one to forego strategic thinking in order to achieve a greater moral good. Let us say that Farr (glory) allowed an individual person or group to possess moral charisma, based upon Iranian aestheticized wisdom. That is moral good should not euphemistically forfeit the existential physical demands of the city and citizenry.

What makes the brute physical strength of the paladins worthy is this sense of moral goodness defined in terms of aestheticized wisdom of Shah. Otherwise, the ego in the Paladin might overtake this sense of goodness. In classical moral philosophy of Iran, the priest are not assigned a political role, lest Priest's undermine their spiritual duty to the community. On the other hand, if both the Paladin and the Priest, having performed their utmost duty, come to contradictory conclusions about solving the social-political problems of here and now. Due to the requirements of both and the bias of each ideal-typic paladin and Priest, the Shah's aestheticized wisdom is a political duty is to decide judiciously the best course of action on behalf of the people.

Conversely, if the Shah gives in to the selfish egoism and forgets its institutional duty towards the people, it is the duty of the Paladin and the Priest (please read as the public sphere in Habermas terms, to use their physical and moral powers to dissuade the Shah. "Shahnameh" makes it clear that the ideation of good governance in Iran hinges on a pragmatic balance between the necessary physical demands and the moral imperatives of the good. The Shah as arbiter or judge acts on behalf of the people while understanding the existential demands and constraints of the time. The danger of relinquishing the power of the Shah to either of the other players, namely, the Paladin, the Priest, and the people, may be unbridled populism, religious fundamentalism, or despotism.

The Shah's Farr provides this necessary attribute for making such the prudent pragmatic decision to keep the city physically secure and morally intact. Yet, Shah's role is not to rule over people but to act as model for the citizens to develop the state. Farr allows the exercise of this moral authority by the King.

Notwithstanding the fact that the existence of Farr is a necessary attribute for the Shah, it is not sufficient to ensure the making of the prudent decision. "Shahnameh" teaches us that the right or the prudent decision has to be made in a consultative manner taking into account the Paladins' and the Priests' councils on the situation as well as the possible course of action to be followed. If the Shah's self-indulgence and vanity occupies him with egoist ambition, pride, and jealousy, such that he would disregard their sound advice, then Shah's Farr is not going to help and the Shah and the Kingdom is doomed.

Firdausi drives this point home through the story of Kae Kobad's successor, Kae Kavuos, and his ambitious project of acquiring Mazandaran. After his father's victory over Afrasiab, Shah Kae Kavuos found the situation primed for regaining a lost territory, Mazandaran, back to Iran, an ambitious task that eluded all previous kings.

The Shah counseled with the wise men and paladins of his court. They warned the Shah to live with the separation because the Shah of Mazandaran was aided by powerful black magicians. They reminded the King that no Shah after Shah Tehmurasp, not even Shah Jamshed, Freydoun or Manocheher had been able to accomplish this task.

The king, Kai Kavuos, consulted with both the paladins about the feasibility of the choice and with his religious advisers regarding the morality of it. The council of the paladins including Toos, Give, Kharrad, Goudarz, Gorgin and Bahram warned the Shah of the pitfalls on his way to accomplish this strategic goal. Accordingly, no king had been able to regain Mazandaran due to the presence of sinister sorcerers. The council sought the help of the chief, elderly Paladin Zaal to convince the king not to wage this war.

The paladins immediately sent a messenger requesting Zaal to come urgently to the capital. On receiving the news, Zaal, although too old and fragile to undertake this journey, immediately set off to talk to Shah Kae Kavuos. Zaal admonished Shah Kae

Kavoos. He patiently explained to the Shah that the people of Mazandaran practiced black magic and witchcraft and were guided by great demons. Spells and magic protected Mazandaran against intruding powers. Even Jamshid failed to accomplish the goal of invasion. Just having a great army was not enough to defeat Mazandaran, as it needed a lot of spiritual strength to stand against the powerful onslaught of Sorcerers of Mazandaran, for which the Iranian soldiers were not equipped. That is, political prudence is a key element in making strategic decisions. Zaal reminded the king that his predecessors, though brave, never undertook such a mission to take Mazandaran because of these unforeseen dangers posed by these sorcerers.

The pleas of Zaal did not convince the Shah. Kae Kavoos had made up his mind to go to Mazandaran. He said that he considered himself braver and more thoughtful than his predecessors and considered his army much better equipped than any other army to undertake such a campaign and be victorious. Kae Kavoos went even further, telling Zaal that if his heart was not in it, he and his army would go to war without the support of him and other Paladins. The Shah then requested that in his absence, Zaal and his son Rostam protect Iran's borders and the throne.

Zaal was greatly disappointed that he had not been able to dissuade the king of his ambitious campaign. The less senior paladins also thanked him for the arduous journey to come from Sistan to the capital on their request. Zaal in turn advised the paladins to go with king and obey his command. He wished them well and returned home to Sistan. After some preparations, Kae Kavoos sets off for Mazandaran along with Gudarz and Toos through the rocky terrain of the Asperuz mountains. Gurgin's father Milad was appointed as the Royal Governor in king's absence and the king instructed the Governor to call on Zaal and Rostam if needed. Gudarz's son Giv, was sent ahead of the battalion to clear the way and provide reconnaissance to the troops that followed. Giv was awe-struck on seeing the natural beauty of Mazandaran. It was much more spectacular than anybody could imagine. He immediately sent a message to this effect to his Shah. On receiving the message, Kae Kavoos continued his campaign with greater vigor and within a few days arrived at the outskirts of Mazandaran at dusk. He decided to rest his soldiers for the night and planned an attack for the following morning.

The Shah of Mazandaran became aware of Giv's presence and sensing danger, sent a demon by the name Sanjeh as a messenger to Diev-e-Sapid (The White Demon, popularly known as "Safed diev" in Gujrati), the leader of all black magicians, to come to his aide.

Diev-e-Sapid was as tall as the skies. On receiving the message from his Shah, he sent his men to scout the territory. They came and reported that Shah Kae Kaoos was camping on the outskirts. Diev-e-Sapid with his evil powers immediately enveloped the entire Iranian army under a huge black cloud and showered bricks and stones on them. The Iranian army was not prepared for this sudden onslaught. This surprise attack created havoc in Kai Kavoos' army, and in the pandemonium that followed, more than half of Iranian soldiers perished.

As morning dawned, the remaining soldiers, including Shah Kae Kavoos, realized that they had become stone-blind. They stayed that way for seven days and on the eighth day Dive-Sapid came and warned the king that they had not even seen the full force of his wrath and that if it were not for his promise to the great Paladin Kersasp, they would all be dead by now. Div-e-Sapid then had all the Iranian soldiers and Paladins, including their Shah, imprisoned at Mazandaran. The Shah, remorseful for not listening to Zaal's advice, was in sorrow.

King Kae Kavoos was fortunate enough to find a soldier who had managed to escape the magic spell and urgently sent him to Zabulistan, requesting Zaal to immediately come to his support. He also told the messenger to express his apology on king's behalf for not following Zaal's council. On receiving this news, Zaal, displeased with the outcome, called Rustam and orders to set off towards Mazandaran to rescue the king.

Rustam's strategy was based upon a dialogue between the voice of reason and the call of duty. The expectation of following through the consultative process and the observation of the chain of command are pinned against each other. The wise leader would balance these demands in a caring manner that would give hope and encouragement to the players. This is exactly how Zaal manages the challenge and is precisely what Kai Kavoos had failed to do in dealing with Paladins in the first place when deciding to go to war in Mazandaran. Here we see the fall-out of the absence of strategic vision to synthesize the antithetical recipes of idealism and realism. Ideally, a

king who sensationally disregards the situational context realistically, then success turns out to become a remote possibility, yet very costly. The aestheticized wisdom provides the logical mechanism to synthesize both idealism and realism in terms of moral pragmatism.

Thanks to Zaal's wisdom and leadership, Rostam undertakes this mission. Rostam, overcomes all the obstacles of this perilous journey, defeats and destroys Div-e-Sapid, and sets free the King and his army. Rostam once and for all rids Mazandaran of all the sorcerers for good.

The famous story of Seven Labors (khane) of Rostam and the death of Siavash fall under this second part: the paladin serving the Kayanids dynasty. According to Johannes Hertel, a German orientalist, the Kayanids might infer to Achaemenides (550-329 BC).

The historical part starts with Bahaman and the invasion of Alexander, name-called as the damned by nationalist Iranians. The section on Partian dynasty includes just name a few kings, due to the lack of documentary sources as Firdausi himself said. The historical part concludes with the Sassanids dynasty who ruled Iran for 437 years ( 224-651 AD).

**III. Genealogical De/construction of Ancient Iranian Politics by Firdausi** The archeological narrative in the preceding section depicts the interplay of the three institutions of power in ancient Iran as well as the play of Farr, moral charisma, in their midst. The story demonstrates the fallibility of each of these constituents of the political society as well as the inadequacy of being blessed with Farr alone. Yes, the Shah remains the ultimate decision-maker; however, the consultative process necessary to make the decision is essential and must be in accordance with the existential concerns, both physical and moral, of the community. Giving into the dictates of passion, ambition and pride Iranshahr, the polity, has three integral institutional parts:

- 1) The Paladins in charge of generating secular intelligent power,
- 2) The Priests to define which decision is morally legitimate, and
- 3) The Shah to make prudent decisions in the best interest of the polity — Shahr.

The conversation between Zaal and Rostam after Zaal orders Rostam to travel to Mazandaran and rescue the King is quite revealing of this consultative dynamic of the

ideation of good governance. Young Rostam is reluctant to undertake this rescue mission, answering Zaal this way: “Father, I would most willingly submit to any of your command, but why should we help the king, who is deaf to our advice?”

Zaal: “Son, the Shah did what he thought fit at that moment. As faithful servers of the cause in the chain of command to the Shah, it is our duty and responsibility to go and rescue him, irrespective of his attitude towards us.” Moreover, “My son, your physical and spiritual strength will overcome any obstacle and you will be victorious. Go forth dear son, our prayers are with you.”

Due to presuming the general Iranian ethos, and Iranian moral philosophy based upon aesthetical wisdom, this student of politics offered his narrative. The main goal of him is to provide Iranians with a practical solution for good governance in Iran in a way to be meaningful as well. Thanks to his last 40 years’ observation of Iranian politics, he hypothesized that de/constructing Firdausi’s narrative on the Kayanids in democratic terms are valuable in addressing democratic transformation of Iranian politics in institutional terms rather than violent street revolutions and non-productive reforms in the last century. In this respect, the traditional Persian ideal governor has to reflect a role model for Iranians in the following terms:

- 1) how to form a balance between achievements (producing power in modern democratic terms and high quality of life in a post-modern anarchic disorder) within the morally-ethical approach of Iranians, and
- 2) how to de/construct the functional role of top political authorities not to fall into the decadence loop of domination of one person or group over the citizens in one hand and ending marginalization of some others.

De/constructing Firdausi’s narrative convinces us that Iranians can capitalize on the centrality of Shah’s role-model for the citizens defined in terms of integrating two functional roles:

- 1) addressing one’s own citizenry role through civil society benefitting from an orderly, secure and stable country whereby citizens can empower themselves within a democratic system. This system inspired by the academics, facilitated by the enlightened bureaucrats, safe-guarded nationally by the nationalist army, and
- 2) balancing one’s own life in terms of aesthetical wisdom. Cultural non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) can be a source of attending this goal.

The Shah's noble position lies in the responsibility & ability to balance between these two forces that results in a caring reconciliation of fulfilling both of the functional need and moral values in an aesthetical wise way.

It is to be reminded that the role of Shah is to be a model functioning as Shahryar (helping the city, not ruling over subjects) unfolding responsibility and with accountability. That is, the Shah (read politicians from now on) is also morally both responsible and accountable to deliver these two opposing demands in a manner consistent with the existential societal sense and sensibilities. As portrayed by Firdausi, the authority of the Shah is not ruling over the citizens, but simply appearing as a model.

Firdausi's method of choice in delivering this narrative, poetry, itself is quite telling. It reflects the Iranian mindset, whereby the being and any narrative describing it is aesthetically modified by spirituality, practically defined in terms of morality. Due to this mindset, Iranian ethics in all different arena is also modified by morality defined in terms of established ethos of free citizens, not imposed on them by a figurehead called as ruler. That is politicians voluntarily reflect morally ethical code of conduct vs. ethically moral of western civilization or politics. In short, beyond legal and political responsibilities, politicians are also culturally accountable to the citizens and at the risk of impeachments and removal, as Jamshid and Zahhak experienced.

Aside from its popular appeal, it allows Firdausi to take full advantage of "poetic license," to be more metaphorical, more sarcastic, more mythical, and thus be less discoverable in case of any threat this alternative discourse may be posing to the dominant social-political structure. In his Shahnameh, Firdausi flashes back to the rich Iranian mythology to construct the ideal type of good or desirable governance. Reflecting as a great scholar, Firdausi teaches the modern citizens to revolt against the injustice of a Sultan (dominator) illegitimately occupying the model position of the Shah (read freely-elected politicians). Such an approach is reflected both in his narration of Kave the Blacksmith against Zahhak and his own action against Ghaznavi King Sultan Mahmood. This seems to be the position Locke took at the threshold of the Britain's Great Revolution of 1688:

*whenever the Legislators endeavor to take away, and destroy the Property of the People, or to reduce them to Slavery under Arbitrary Power, they put themselves into a state of War with the People, who are thereupon absolved from any farther Obedience, and are left to the common Refuge, which God hath provided for all Men, against Force and Violence. Whensoever therefore the Legislative shall transgress this fundamental Rule of Society; and either by Ambition, Fear, Folly or Corruption, endeavor to*

*grasp themselves, or put into the hands of any other an Absolute Power over the Lives, Liberties, and Estates of the People; By this breach of Trust they forfeit the Power, the People had put into their hands, for quite contrary ends, and it devolves to the People, who have a Right to resume their original Liberty.*"<sup>47</sup>

This said inspired by a de/constructed reading of the Manicheist dualism<sup>48</sup>, in some way Firdausi, echoed an early mindset of realism of Hobbes and his pessimistic definition of human being ("The life of man" in the state of nature, Hobbes famously writes, is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"<sup>49</sup>) and also the idealist mindset of Locke's optimism toward the human being: "A thinking intelligent **being** that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself."<sup>50</sup> Having noticed this dualism, he believed the negative forces of the bad, always having an alluring presence, stand in the way of the good, as reflected in the two episode of Jamshid's reign or in the adversarial position of Freydoon and Zahhak. Inspired by the Iranian selection of the concept Shahanshah (the best of the best), and as a role model for promoting the polity, he produced his epics

In order to show the challenging position of the historical Shah in this regard, Firdausi resorts to the mythical struggle between forces of evil against the forces of good. The symbol of forces of bad is symbolized in the figure of the Dieve. The Dieve, like the devil, is a source of all things wicked and undesirable. It is a negative force. It is the dark side. Yet, unlike the devil, Dieve is not in a constant fight against God. Rather, Dieve is the enemy of the good. The devil or *Dieve* is a permanent force in fight against the Good not God. It is to be noted that Dieve in "Shahnameh" has the same root with Divinity in both Hinduism and Christianity.<sup>51</sup>

In a contrasting character, the Shah (please read as the freely elected politician for Modern Iran)'s main responsibility is to guard against this wicked power of Dieve by engaging in 2 fundamental tasks. In the one hand, the Shah, commissions the paladins to the benevolent power source to remain on the side of the people. In this mission, his job is a strategic secular **role model** (not a ruler) to synthesize a morally pragmatic solution between the secular needs of

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<sup>47</sup> . <https://fee.org/articles/john-locke-natural-rights-to-life-liberty-and-property> also recited by Jim, Powell, (1 August 1996). "John Locke: Natural Rights to Life, Liberty, and Property". In *The Freeman*. Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington, New York, US.

<sup>48</sup> .For Mani's religious belief, see: [Iranian Religions: Manichaeism: An Introduction to Manichaeism](#)". The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies. Retrieved 7 June

<sup>49</sup> . <https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/hobbes/section2/>

<sup>50</sup> . <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3750997>.

<sup>51</sup> Whereas the Divinity is an abstract construct in the Christianity and embodied construct in Hinduism, Ahurmazda is infinite and unknowable: "To call something Divine is to immediately hook your consciousness back into the past of the Monotheistic Religion of the Patriarch through the doctrine and dogma of the Roman Catholic Church..." *From the Sanskrit, the primordial masculine and feminine essences are known as Deva and Dhevi. Their translation into Western Traditions has seen them objectified as 'god' and 'goddess' which they are not.*" Hence agnosticism in Khayyam's word is not blasphemy, but the sublime sign of humbleness.

peoples' security with the spirituality of the saint which provides the moral certitude that the good is on their side. As such, the Shah, the ideal model, is the synthesizer of the two demands of society: the earthly demand for physical security and the psychological need for some kind of spiritual affirmation by perhaps public sphere. Due to this synthesizing soft-power, the Shah becomes a role model for the citizens' acting as a conduit between the physical-material and the moral-spiritual well-being of the society. The Shah (please read as the elected politician in modern Iran)'s role is now clearer.

The Paladin (read as nongovernmental public sphere, civil society and governmental institution of the army officers and bureaucrats in modern terms) powerful and enlightened enough to gravitate toward the good and stay clear of the bad, but he lacks both the sagacity and the prudent judgment of the Shah (read as the single figure who as a synthesizer plays the role model of strategic thinking) and the moral authority of the saint (please read as public sphere in modern time) .

At the same time, the saint (or public sphere and civil society or NGOs) lack the military power of the Paladin that helps making them as hero. That is why, the saint (or public sphere and civil society or NGOs) do not carry the same majestic influence of the Shah over the Paladin (Read as the Army). In the Meantime, the saint (or public sphere and civil society or NGOs) lack the synthesizing soft-ware power invested in the complex figure of the Shah.

Firdausi's narrative illustrates that the Kayanid's governance were the ideal model of aestheticized wisdom in politics of ancient Iran. In fact, their synthetic model was to reflect the message of "thinking good, talking good and acting good." Hence, Shahs' names were prefixed by the title *Kia*, denoting the necessity that the secular task of governance must be moralized by a more profound spiritual quality, not to enforce morality. In modern context, he is a role model, and as the result, he is not authorized to force people to implement his decrees. Both cases of Jamshid and Zahhak shows that Shah is accountable to citizens.

To make long story short, Firdausi's masterpiece inevitably must be viewed in the context of his own existence, as it addresses the concerns of the people in a time when they were in the grip of foreign Arab & Turk occupiers and tyrants. Notwithstanding such an existential context, Firdausi's "Shahnameh" also transcends time and space and speaks to the inspiration of the people for good governance everywhere — a government that is brave, wise, and moral all at the same time. A de/constructed narrative of Firdausi provides an alternative model of governance that may prove to be quite useful to contemporary Iran at the time when Iranians are disarrayed and frustrated from find a suitable path to good governance.

In other word, “Shahnameh” (Book of the Shahs) as an ideational narrative has been a construct mutually constituted of a number of scholarly works written towards the end of the rule of Sassanid dynasty in Iran. Influenced by the first Arab invasion as well as the Turks’ rule and domination over Iran, “Shahnameh” is cherished as the most valuable document of national heritage and identity by Iranians.

At times, Firdausi’s existential narrative seems to reflect the post-Islamic era in Iran. Although Firdausi’s “Shahnameh” is not the first attempt to capture the historical journey of Persian civilization in prose, it is the epic poetry at its best. Firdausi acknowledges his debt to Daghigi Tousi, who was the first who conceived of the idea of using epic poetry to write the history of Persian kingdoms and indeed managed to produce beautiful epic prose before being assassinated.<sup>52</sup>

Firdausi took up the task. Firdausi began to write his masterpiece, the “Shahnameh”, at about the age of 40. His main motive in undertaking this great task was to revive the glory of ancient Iran. His main sources were his own imagination and some prose resources such as the one from Daghigi Tousi.

The Genealogical deconstruction of Iran’s ancient history as appeared in Firdausi’s narrative of Kayanids inspires us political strategy had 3 sources in the modern time: intellectuals in the form of public sphere, the elected politicians and the strategists of civil society, parties and the military. In ancient history of Iran, political mission was to uphold good in Iran’s moral philosophy. This was the from the intellectual philosophy of Greece. Of course, due to huge difference in modern & post-modern times, both the ideational and situationals have transformed immensely.

To attend to the diversity of culture and temporal changes, and to contemplate it in theoretical terms, this student of politics suggests two sets of twin concepts to show how Iran and the Western political thought has emerged from two different back grounds. The first set shows the intellectual component of these two diverse philosophies. In the one hand, whereas the Western philosophy is the product of the cognitive wisdom, the Iranian philosophy is the product of the aestheticized wisdom. In

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<sup>52</sup>. Daqiqi Tousi was murdered by a slave in 368-389. See Zabih-allh Safa, Producing Epic Narratives in Iran, Farsi Original, Tehran: Amir Kabir, 6th ed. 1379/200: P. 137.

the other, the resultant code of conduct of the Western cognitive wisdom unfolds in terms of ethically moral, whereas the Iranian one in terms of morally-ethical. This is the lesson learned from deconstructing Firdausi's narrative on Kayanids.

#### **IV. De/constructing Firdausi for A Democratic Solution for Iran in the Globalized Context:**

Various media surveys inform us of general Iranians are overwhelmed an anomic struggle to live in a democratic context whereby to enjoy fairly good quality of life. In the meantime, due to such an anomic situation, political activists opt for populism. Having seen such a confusing context, Iranian scholars are so divided as regards to how to find a democratic breakthrough to overcome Iranians need in a way to be meaningful to them as well. In this essay, an attempt is made to find a practical and meaningful solution. In contemplating such a solution, this student is concerned to suggest an inclusive mechanism attending to the multi-ethnic & multi-dimensional socio-political fabric of Iran, most particularly by de/constructing Firdausi's narrative on the Kyanids. It is presumed here that Firdausi's narrative both attends to the plural social structure and the overall Iranian's culture smoralized by the underlying aestheticized wisdom modifier in the general Iranian ethos.

Based upon preceding arguments and counter-arguments, this student of politics presumes diverse cultures influence politics very differently, hence meaningful politics means very differently to different cultures. While modern sovereignty and high quality of life is defined in terms of providing all different groups of citizens of the nation indiscriminately so that to live happy and comfortable, meaningfulness is to show the purpose of life. In this respect, it should be noticed that meaningfulness in Iranian case is more expressed in terms of aesthetical wisdom expressed in morally-ethical codes of conduct: "good thought, good talks and good deeds." ."<sup>53</sup> Hence in Farsi, meaningful (Ma'naee) means to be purposeful as different from the concept of ma'navi meaning the purpose of life aestheticized by voluntary spiritualism.<sup>54</sup> That is, through aesthetical wisdom, meaningfulness is modified with morality. Due to such a different basis, Iranian philosophy is more expressed in Farsi poetry. Such poetical philosophy is very different

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<sup>53</sup> . <https://forum.unilang.org/viewtopic.php?t=30659>

<sup>54</sup> .Greece and Persians, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/greece-iii> and [https://www.worldhistory.org/Ancient\\_Persian\\_Culture/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ancient_Persian_Culture/)

from the Iranian philosophy and Islamic religious Jurisprudence, both written in Arabic. In fact, Firdausi commitment to the renaissance of Iranian identity through his Farsi epic,<sup>55</sup> has inspired this student for an equivalent sublime goal but within the post-modern context.

As appeared in many confrontational controversies observed, there is a very deep division between the fundamentalist in one hand, Muslim intellectuals, secularists, pro-laicity and atheists, a threat of another populist street revolution is not far-fetched. Whereas politics is secular, a noticeable sector of Iranians deem laicity and militant secularism as a threat. The intellectual Muslims attempt is in favor of a post-secularist mechanism. To them, neither does God's mission is terminated, nor He deemed as Retired. That is, His Infinite Sovereignty is not subjugated to human sovereignty as we see in the Western democracies: the government decides where God's Sovereignty can attend.

This said, this students' presumption leads to the following 3 distinct conclusions: 1) secularity of the politics does not mean secularism of individual religious Iranians and 2) Submitting to God's Sovereignty is a personal choice. To be very specific, the government cannot assume the role of implementing God's will. In fact, such presumption can mean God is in need of the human power. Since, religiosity is a belief system, it is voluntarily practiced by individual religious person and 3) power since emanated from God is not corrupt. Rather create a capacity whereby the believers devote their intellectual, professional or material assets to serve others, according to this student of politics. Yet, since it is possible that power-seeking groups or individuals to exploit political domain, as mythological Jamshid had done, then following 2 legal mechanisms are in order: 1) to attend to the integrity of the individuals in search of power must be modified by observation of one's human right, and 2) all government officials to be accountable to citizens without any restriction. Such attributes is in with freedom, defined in terms of moral anarchism by this student.

With all due respect for all defined in terms of human dignity and human rights, the difference between his philosophical vision (not as a political activist) in one hand with the fundamentalists and in the other with militant secularists convince him of the invalidity and unreliability of the fundamentalist politics and militant secularists and pro-laicity force. This said, I benignly confess as to the difficulty of formulating an appropriate theoretical construct for the transition to democracy with good governance for a nation whose political background has experience 3

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<sup>55</sup> . <https://ganjoor.net/ferdousi/shahname/yazdgerd3/sh17/>

fundamentalist experiences: Sassanid's prior to Islamic Iran, Safavid in the post Moghul military invasion and destruction and the 3<sup>rd</sup> after prevalence of Western inspired modernism.

The emphasis on an Iranian post-modern narrative is due to attending to this background in one hand and this student's presumption of necessity of transformation to a democratic political system and a de/constructed liberal philosophy expediting scientific exploration to satisfy Iranian material and civic needs. It is a well-established consensus that "liberalism provide not only a theory of freedom, equality, and the public good, but also a discipline of power—the means of creating power as well as controlling it."<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that "Power is essential to liberty, yet power is also inimical to liberty.... To say that an individual or some other agent is powerful, however, usually means that it can bring about one particular kind of result: It can prevail over others—it can get them to do something they do not want to do, defeat them in a conflict, or perhaps even shape their understanding and desires."<sup>57</sup>

Such a fall-out of Western liberalism in one hand and the one defining human will in terms of personal whim is not compatible with Iranian "aestheticized wisdom", liberty within the context of moral freedom manifested in early period of Jamshid's reign, and liberty bereft of moral freedom in the latter period of his reign.<sup>58</sup>

To make long story short, notwithstanding the potential of liberal philosophy to expedite scientific revolution to achieve sublime human goals, Iranian classical philosophical poetry is not receptive to liberty bereft of moral freedom. That is freedom is not the result of egoistic & individualist liberalism. Rather, freedom is defined by this student to unfold in terms of moral anarchism. Moral anarchism reinforces the afore-mentioned freedom. It is to be noted under communitarian ethics, anarchism welcomes voluntary institutional setting to serve the constituents, not to restrict them. Such a function requires to be attended to, rather momentarily and independently, by everyone inspired by aestheticized wisdom" narratives of Iranian philosophers.

As a student of politics, attending to the centrality of "aestheticized wisdom" in popular philosophical poetry of Iran, this student of politics thinks a de/constructed narrative of Firdausi's epic in post-modern terms can both practical and meaningful to all Iranian. Thanks to this de/constructed narrative, Iranian anesthetized wisdom can create a

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<sup>56</sup> . PAUL STARR: "Liberalism and the Discipline of Power," Freedom's Power: The True Force of Liberalism (Princeton: Basic Books., April 2007), chap 1.

<sup>57</sup> .ibid P...

<sup>58</sup> . <https://ganjoor.net/ferdousi/shahname/jamshid/sh1/>

version of modern philosophy whereby to provide Iranians with good governance. That is both their sovereignty and quality of life, without any domination or losing a meaningful life through transplantation of alien philosophy.

Thanks to Iranian narratives of liberalism, emerged within the context of human freedom, Iranian intellectual potentials can come up with appropriate scientific theory-building and free political parties engage in strategic planning addressing Iranian modern and post-modern needs, while observing Iranian de/constructed values in terms of morally ethical codes.

To sum up his de/constructed solution, and avoid another sensational street revolution, this paper's practical solution is defined in terms democracy requiring

1. the commitments of public sphere advocacy for democracy, constituted by:
  - free thought-producing academic centers (wrongly called university despite its diverse perspectives in English or danesgah in Persian despite its role in generating theories),
  - free media to monitor politics responsible to make both government & entrepreneurs responsive to the will of people and differentiate will of the citizens not whims of the masses, and
  - The Attorney Bar responsible to keep the government-civil society-media accountable.
2. Any democratic regime (parliamentary, presidential, or semi-presidential) elected in free election, just for limited time, limited number of times for head of the state.
3. The elected politicians be both legally and morally accountable to people. They must be removable from their positions, when petitioned by the civil society and failed to convince the Bar Association. Their mission needs to attend to be responsive to the secular needs of the nation, so that they feel they are sovereign citizens. This ideal is in need of :
  - A Holistic approach to promote territorial integrity and national solidarity whereby, reconciling the sovereignty of the collective nation as a whole (supported by a non-political army) and all citizens supported by the parties of their choice indiscriminately,

- Plural needs of each and all Iranians to enjoy high quality of life for all, presented in strategic program of free parties, transformed to acts of law by a freely elected legislative, regulated by a freely elected executive and implemented by competent bureaucrats.

In the Challenge side, I would like to highlight 2 impediments in the horizon:

1. The antagonistic struggle between the forces of good and the forces of Evil ever-present in “Shahnameh.” Such antagonism has frequently revisited Iranian politics, by the fundamentalists, ethnic extremists and even romantic nationalist and communist.
2. The prevalent ideation or sensational psyche in the political culture defined in terms of patrimonialism or clientelism.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this article, an attempt was made to investigate how de/constructing Firdausi's narrative of the Kyanids in a modern democratic and post-modern pro-quality life for all can make Iranian politics meaningful to all Iranians. In the process of investigation, an attempt was made to base the investigation on studying both diverse situational context in the multi-layers and multi-dimensional socio-econo-cultural fabric of Iran. A complementary attempt was also made to survey the diverse ideations expressed particularly in the 1399 parliamentary & 1400 presidential elections. In addition to these, some theoretical constructs were touch upon as a supplementary investigation.

Having appreciated both journalistic, partisan and theoretical analyses, it appears to this student, Iranian politics is in a crucial crossroad whereby opportunities are plummeting and challenges rise. In specific terms, Iran is in prompt need to exit from the ongoing populist-sensationalist syndrom and contrive a strategically meaningful solution to democratize and provide a moderate quality of life to her highly divided and anguished citizens.

Due to this investigatory survey at both factual levels, thanks to overwhelming consensus over the need of democratization and moderate quality of life, the deficient meaningful politics convince this scholar as to the validity and reliability of a de/constructed reading of Shahname in general and the Kyanids in particular. Whereas all over Shahnameh, the inherent aesthetical wisdom in moral philosophy of Iranians is reached through the advisory boards of the priest and Paladins, highlighted role of the paladins as the source of generating power is best reflected during the Kyanids. Of course, the structure advisory board needs to be deconstructed. Contemporary politics warns us how engaging the state in defining the moral code for nation

can easily lead to totalitarianism of the various kinds, religious, secular or laic. Any normative concern can be represented by non-governmental organizations of various kinds.

To sum up the conclusion, this student of politics argues both cultural and following three items needs to be de/constructed in both modern & post-modern terms:

1. the role of “aesthetical wisdom” in the moral philosophy and political culture of Iranians as appeared in the Firdausi’s functional narration of Shahnameh needs to be de/constructed in the modern and post-modern term,
2. The structure of the political system needs to transform imperialist structure to a presumably contractual modern nation-state. Moreover, these structures needs to be both differentiated at system and regime levels. At systemic level of modern nation-state, state is to serve the nation in a democratic regime whereby all its politicians are elected freely and advised by competent bureaucrats, inspired by:
  - ✓ free academics of universities,
  - ✓ informed by the free media as to the will of free and sovereign citizens so that the regime become responsive to the sovereign citizens will, and
  - ✓ accountable to the sovereign citizens through deliberation of the Bar Association, as to the questioning the competency and character of the elected politicians and assigned administrators, and
3. The processes become complementary to boost territorial integrity and national solidarity through equal treatment of all by servant politicians and bureaucrats.