**Research Interests**

Iranian foreign policy under the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) fundamentally shifted from a confrontational to a peaceful approach toward both domestic and international communities. The main question of my Ph.D. dissertation was as follows: “What are the underlying reasons for this change, and how has this shift affected Iranian foreign policy?” I argued that the cornerstone of this fundamental change rests on Khatami’s belief system; in order to capture the content of his belief system, I applied Operational Code analysis.

Khatami’s belief system illustrates that Khatami did not perceive conflict as an enduring feature of world politics, and he believed that the best way to achieve goals was through dialogue. His initiative for *Dialogue among Civilizations* was welcomed by the international community when the United Nations declared 2001 as *The Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.*

In order to analyze Khatami’s Operational Code, I examined some of the intellectual influences on his belief system, specifically Habermas’ theory of communicative action and Gadamer’s hermeneutic philosophy. A common claim is that Khatami’s *Dialogue among Civilizations* closely relates to Habermas’ category of “communicative action” with its inherent orientation to mutual understanding based on his theorem of an “ideal speech situation.” (Moshirzadeh 2004; Ansari 2006; Wastnidge 2016; Paya & Ghanneirad, 2007; Petito, 2007). Khatami was also inspired by Gadamer’s notion of a “fusion of horizons” and their concrete expressions in a “new global solidarity” and “unity in diversity.” (Petito, 2004: 24-25). However, further examination of Gadamer’s work has made me realize that the similarities between his philosophy and Khatami’s *Dialogue* and general world view may go beyond the afore-mentioned concepts. In my postdoctoral research, I intend to investigate, in greater depth, to what extent Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Khatami’s *Dialogue among Civilizations* rely on shared philosophical foundations. Three interrelated concepts which are arguably fundamental to both Gadamer’s, and Khatami’s philosophies have received little scholarly attention, namely solidarity, understanding, and the Other.

My proposed research shows that Khatami and Gadamer, from different cultural perspectives and historical-political contexts, emphasized the transformative dimension of dialogical engagement. In other words, Khatami’s *Dialogue among Civilizations* can be interpreted as dialogical journey which Gadamer called a “new global solidarity”. It can be argued that the main common goal of Khatami and Gadamer is the peaceful regulation of a multicultural and globalized international society.

More importantly, this comparative study would show that the East (and specifically the Islamic world), is not always the subject of study, but it can be the agent of a dialogue. It is argued that most Western approaches view the non-Western world as if it has little, if anything, to offer to the conception of a good society or to a potential new global architecture (Etzioni, 2004:26).

The world is currently faced with a constant tension between Islam (including Iran) and the West. More than 15 years after the end of Khatami’s presidency, the necessity and relevance of his worldview is still worthy of attention. Khatami believed through dialogue, not force, a peaceful international order could be achieved, and a dialogue could not be accomplished without creating the necessary conditions for its realization. Such conditions include non-interference, not only in military but also in ideological terms. This also means to refrain from self-righteousness to establish a meaningful relationship among nations based on tolerance and mutual respect.

A review of the literature shows that there are few comparative studies of Khatami’s Dialogue among Civilizations and Gadamer’s philosophy (Petito, 2004, 2007), which leaves this subject largely unexplored. Therefore, my proposed research would offer a meaningful contribution to the existing debate on Khatami’s and Gadamer’s worldviews.

In my post-doctoral research, I will examine the three concepts, namely solidarity, understanding and Other in Gadamer’s philosophy and Khatami’s belief system. Gadamer identifies three important characteristics of friendship. First, he suggests that friendship involves that which constitutes being at home, where everything is trusted. Secondly, friendship indicates a respect for difference and otherness rather than the commonality of a bond. Then, because of the two afore-mentioned characteristics, friends can reveal themselves to one another in a way which allows for mutual self-understanding and insight, or what Gadamer calls “reciprocal co-perception.” (Gadamer, 1999:139).

Gadamer attributes similar characteristics to solidarity and argues that to be in solidarity with others is not necessarily to identify with those others (Gadamer, et.al. 2001:80). In a third similarity with friendship, solidarity involves mutual insight. Friendship is self-revelatory insofar as a friend helps us understand our distinctiveness as individuals. Therefore, for Gadamer, solidarity binds members of communities together in various ways, but it does not mean that others are like “us”.

Like Gadamer, Khatami emphasizes the understanding of each other’s logic, avoidance of unreasonable hostility and prejudice, acceptance of difference, a critical assessment of oneself as well as others, and an acceptance of truth. He believes that dialogue promotes mutual understanding if the parties approach it with a genuine attitude of openness to reciprocal learning (Khatami, 2004). One of the key components of Khatami’s belief system is the relationship between the self and the other. In his initiative of *Dialogue among Civilizations*, Khatami suggests that dialogical engagement is not only a process through which a deeper mutual understanding can emerge among different civilizations, but it is also a process of discovery of the “self.” (Khatami, 2001).

To conduct this research, I will study Khatami’ books, articles, and speeches in both Farsi and English, as well as Gadamer’s works including, but not limited to, *Truth and Method* (1975), *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1977), *Reason in the Age of Science* (1983), *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* (1983)*, Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics* (2011). The methodology would be combination of analytic and historical concept analysis, intertextual analysis, contextualist interpretation, and discourse analysis.

This comparative study would be enhancement of my dissertation with the object of a book publication.

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