INVESTIGATING IMPACTS OF CORONA-VIRUS DISEASE ON POLITICAL STABILITY OR INSTABILITY IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has brought distress and vulnerability in all countries of the world. The current situation has led to tough status in many fields, including economics, politics, and health in developing countries such as Iran. However, the disease is a global crisis and countries more than ever need each other to cope with the pandemic. Though, instead of helping, some countries impose economic sanctions on Iran, even try to lead the public towards dissatisfaction, insurgency, and protests against the regime with the aim of political instability. In addition, the profound impact of Corona on the economy is another threat to the political stability of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Corona-virus on the political stability or instability of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Keywords: Corona, economy, media, political stability, political instability.

INTRODUCTION

Background: Studies about the emerging corona phenomenon can be reviewed in four categories:

1- Medical approach: the approach, which deals with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in a professional way and from the perspective of medical science, and since it has nothing to do with this research, we disregard further introduction.

2- Philosophical approach: philosophers and thinkers use a philosophical and ontological approach to explain the consequences of Coronavirus outbreak on human life. Philosophers such as Habermas, Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, and Slavoj Zizek have focused on the expansion of the virus in the Western world. Iranian philosophers such as Dr. Davari Ardakani, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, and Mostafa Malakoutian have addressed the issue, too.

The studies are mostly in the form of interviews, articles, and lectures.

In the West, the famous philosopher, Slavoj Zizek, discusses the global impacts and consequences of the outbreak in a book called *The Universe*.

Habermas speaks of "corona" from the vision of the threat to human life.

Giorgio Agamben also describes the moral and political consequences of Corona in his article.

Among domestic philosophers, Dr. Davari Ardakani has scrutinized the reflection of Corona in everyday human life. Mostafa Malakoutian also discussed Corona with a therapeutic approach.

3- Sociological approach: This approach is associated with sociologists and anthropologists who inspect the social dimensions of the virus. The head of the Iranian Sociological Association, Seyed Hossein Serajzadeh, discusses the outcomes of the corona crisis in Iran and emphasizes the government's role in settling the crisis. The sociologist Saeed Saeedfar considers the role of national trust in coping with the crisis as an important factor. Another sociologist, Saeed Madani says "We need the cooperation of people and the NGOs."

The anthropologist Ali Entezari perceives the emergence of a new way of life as one of the consequences of the current crisis. The sociologist Mirzaei also converse about diverse sights and causes in the emergence of Corona. In an article, Dr. Emad Afrough points out that the corona crisis is giving rise to social solidarity in Iran.

4- Economic approach: The main axes of this approach include the impacts of Corona on various economic dimensions such as poverty, unemployment, production, labor market, government budget, insurance, household income, and so forth. For instance, Dr. Ruhollah Toulaei (2020) in an article discusses the effect of Corona on the development of e-learning and saving on educational costs.

- Dr. Hamid Morteza Nia (2020) focuses on the effects of Corona on the 2020 budget of Iran.
- Dr. Ali Akbar Hafezieh (2020) in his article mentioned some of the main effects of the Corona outbreak in the economy of China, Iran, and the world.
- Dr. Allahmorad Seif inspects health economics and the effects of the corona on the economies of developing countries in his paper.
- Mohammad Hossein Janbabanejad studied the effects of Corona on the urban economy.
- Hossein Mohammadi Foumani investigated the economic effects of the corona around the world.
- Hossein Mennati has surveyed the effects of COVID-19 on the energy market, tourism, financial markets, and the labor market.
- Seyed Mohammad Mousa Motalebi claims that Iran's economic growth will decrease to -17% due to Corona!

5- Political approach: This approach covers the political consequences of Corona in political systems and involves issues such as security and political instability. The approach also addresses international issues, including the impact of Corona on diplomacy and foreign policy. For example, Ali Bagheri Dolatabadi et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of media diplomacy and health diplomacy.

- Alireza Heydari compares the ability of the Iranian government and selected East Asian countries to use political tools for controlling the virus.
- Mohsen Khalili focuses on democracy challenges during the corona crisis.
- Shahrooz Shariati analyzes Iran's efforts to evade the U.S. sanctions in the pandemic era.

- Haidar Shahriari explores the socio-political consequences of Corona in Iranian society and explains the correct policy-making methods in the current circumstances.
- Rasool Safarahang refers to the role of government and its agents in health policies.
- Reza Nasiri-Hamed studies the political circumstances of Iran under the influence of Corona.

At the end of this section, it should be said that no research has already been done on the effect of coronavirus disease on Iran's political stability, therefore, this is an innovative study in this regard.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Ontology of Coronavirus:
Since the corona phenomenon and its reflection is broader than the experimental studies (e.g. medicine) and influences all areas of human life in the 21st century, it seems necessary to explain this phenomenon at the transcendental science level. Transcendental means scientific theories do not suffice to fully understand the corona crisis, and a philosophical and ontological view of the subject is needed.

What we are seeing is that Corona-virus has affected life extremely; as the contemporary philosopher Slavoj Zizek says, we are not just grappling with viral threats, other catastrophes appear on the horizon of the universe, but the response should not be panic.

To have a coherent discussion, it is presented in three categories:

1. Religious faith and belief: The emergence of COVID-19 draws thinkers' attention to theological issues and the philosophy of religion. Basically, suffering from and occurrence of devastating disasters such as floods and earthquakes, as well as the outbreak of fatal diseases such as cholera, has long been discussed by philosophers, theologians, and religious scholars; whether God and religious belief can help man and save him from calamities, diseases, and sufferings has ever been debated. Some believe in reviving religious traditions in order to get out of the current situation, while others believe that God will not play a role in human solutions. However, experience demonstrates that whenever a person feels helpless, he turns to God.

2. Style and meaning of life: Fear and panic caused by Corona-virus have changed the scenery and style of human beings' life. Due to the quarantine and people's keeping out from each other in the age when human beings claim to overcome nature, the boredom, mental fatigue, and the feeling of helplessness become more tangible. Jürgen Habermas, the contemporary German philosopher, says that the corona-virus has raised human awareness of his ineptitude.

Perhaps man's current helplessness to get out of the macabre status can remind him not to become a wolf for others and to give up the idea of domination over others. In the current situation, both human beings and all of the friend and hostile countries need each other internationally.

3. Rethinking in contemporary political philosophy: As we know, the subject of philosophy deals with choosing the best kind of government. In the twentieth century, there was a competition between two types of political philosophy: communism and liberal democracy.

However, a rival left the competition with the collapse of the former Soviet Union. The Liberal Democracy claimed the end of history, arguing that liberalism, which guarantees individual rights and freedoms, was not the only political philosophy that could be cohesive. Now, with the outbreak of Corona-virus and forcing people to stay home and drastically reduction of freedoms in the West and liberal democratically-minded countries, some philosophers, e.g. Slavoj Zizek, are proposing a new interpretation of communism in which countries' independence is preserved and the market is regulated under the governments' supervision. Thus, the emergence and outbreak of the corona-virus have challenged the legitimacy of political systems in the world of liberal democracy, and in the future, we may see newer models of political systems.

Political Stability:

The concept "political stability/instability" features various aspects and this same issue has caused a lot of discrepancies about the definitions thereof. Lerner defines political stability as the preservation of the relative balance between the elites in various areas (Lerner, 1964). In this sense, the primary function of the political system is the preservation of the balance between the elites who advance the society's renovation process without it resulting in the occurrence of violent disintegrations in this process (Khajeh Sarvi, 2006, p.95). Rustow defines political stability in relation to political legitimacy and believes that political stability originates from the existence of a balance between various kinds of legitimacies. In more precise terms, he defines political stability as follows: the legitimacy of individuals + the legitimacy of institutions = political stability. From this perspective, political instability occurs when the balance between the institutional legitimacy and personal legitimacy of the rulers undergoes changes (Rustow, 1976, p.157). Therefore, political stability can be generally realized as the balance between the social structure and political structure. Better said, political stability is observed whenever consistency and coordination are established between the values and norms of the society and the values and norms of the political system otherwise instability and imbalance arise.

Political Instability:

Political instability refers to a situation wherein the existent political system is faced with challenges or crises and there comes about a likelihood of political changes. Under such circumstances, the effectiveness of the governmental organs is usually diminished; the economic activities are disrupted; the possibility of political violence is augmented; the domestic divergences and the foreigners' interventions are increased; the psychological and social security is weakened and the ground is set for the unexpected metamorphoses (Delavari, 2015, p.61).

When the society members are confronted with this choice that should they take part in the social disputes, armed revolution, and nonviolent civil resistance or do nothing, they will engage under some conditions in the social disputes like a demonstration, uprising, strike, domestic clashes and government's measures against the people who are aroused by the public strikes and collective (mass) clashes are methods of fight with a closed political structure (Lichbach, 1987; McAdam et al., 2010). Moreover, there is a high likelihood of the masses' participation in the rebels and demonstrations in a weak country in contrast to the strong ones

because the weak governments neither have the ability to provide the public goods and services to the sufficient amount nor they are capable of identifying and punishing the rebellions (Skocpol, 1994; McAdam et al., 1996; Burgoon, 2006; Atzili, 2010). Social disputes are preferred to revolutions because they require lesser effort and planning and they provide more individual protection for the participants (Chenoweth et al., 2011). Furthermore, when the government (state) does not tolerate the social movements, the social disputes are preferred to the nonviolent resistance because the latter is not more riskless and effective than the former (Goldstone et al., 2010). In the end, if people happen to justify dissatisfaction and bear witness to a given level of the movement's efficiency, the social disputes are preferred to sedentariness (social stagnation) (Karklins and Petersen, 1993; McAdam et al., 2010).

Political Theories on Political Instability:
- ### *The Theory of Relative Deprivation and Political Instability:*

The theory of relative deprivation pertains to Durkheim's tradition in sociology and it emphasizes the adverse effects of rapid social changes. According to Charles Tilley, this theory is rooted in the works of thinkers like Samuel Huntington, Chalmers Johnson, and Ted Robert Garr (Tilly, 2006). The main assumption of all the theories on relative deprivation for the clarification of political instability that can be found in this literature under other titles like social disorganization, renovation, and theory of disruption/pressure is that some forms of failure and dissatisfaction that are created by various kinds of structural and functional imbalances in the society show up in the form of political violence or collective destabilizing actions (Rajabzadeh and Taleban, 2007, p.58). In the relative deprivation approach, the social change, particularly the rapid and hasty changes, are considered as destabilizing and cause the occurrence of social movements through certain social-psychological mechanisms that are termed relative deprivation or frustration. In fact, the people's violent behavior is the result of the dissatisfaction which is per se the product of their relative deprivation signaling the existence of gap and difference between what they want and what they think they can obtain. Therefore, based on the theory of relative deprivation, any social change causes the emergence of expectations in the people for better life without the providing of the required instruments for the supply of such expectations and this can in itself lead to political instability. This perspective claims in the macro-level that the levels of the economic inequality influence the levels of social blockage thereby to structurally source the production of pressure and failure hence feeling of relative deprivation.

The theory of relative deprivation concentrates on the macro-level and structural variables that cause frustration and dissatisfaction to elaborate the political instability. In the macro-level, the relative deprivation is typically perceived as a longitudinal matter and it occurs when the life's standard undergoes severe decline in the course of time and it is usually assessed through the fast reduction in the countries' rates of economic growth. In this regard, Garr believes that the relative deprivation can be deduced as collective statistics like inflation, reduction in the rate of economic growth and economic inequality parameters since the intensity of dissatisfaction differs in macro-level in operational terms due to the levels of the economic depression or inflation.

Based on the presumptions of the relative deprivation theory, the individuals who want to engage in the violent actions may not withdraw from them based on the calculation of their

costs-benefits and evaluation of the results probably attainable by the exhibition of such behaviors rather they substantially perform violent behaviors due to the feeling of frustration or relative deprivation and, especially, the feeling of the aggression stemming thereof. The basis of the theory of relative deprivation is the psychological theory of frustration-aggression. This theory claims that the individual's frustration in the achievement of the goals causes the instigation of a feeling of aggression in them and the higher the frustration, then, the higher the aggression. Thus, based on this theory, the amount of frustration is directly associated with the amount of aggression and severe frustration provides the general motivations for the exhibition of the collective violent behaviors. According to Garr, after the formation of the collective violence as a result of relative deprivation, if the political actors targeted by the frustration are recognized and there be also present such other variables like the amount of cultural or micro-cultural warrants against the vivid aggression, the amount and degree of violence's success in the past, the amount of the clarity and prevalence of the symbolic fascinations justifying the violence, the legitimacy of the political system and the types of responses given to the relative deprivation and also belief in the idea that the violence is useful in the acquisition of the rare values, the politicization of the violence would follow. This that which of the violence parties can come out as a victor depends on the amount of the government's control on the coercion and extensive organizational support and the high degree of the opponents' ability or coercion. This way, political violence is seminally commenced with the emergence of discontent. In the second stage, this dissatisfaction would become political and, eventually, leads to the actualization of the violent action against the political actors and each of these three stages depends on its prior stage in the process of political violence (emergence of dissatisfaction, politicization and its actualization in the form of political violence).

- *Theory of Dependency/Global System and Political Instability:*

Another approach that can be applied for the elucidation of the political instability is the theory of the dependency and global system. This theory was offered during the early 1970s by Emanuel Wallerstein with the goal of clarifying the birthplaces of the capitalism, industrial revolution and the complex, vague and mutual relationships between the first, second and third worlds. This theory is enumerated amongst the theories of the cycle of domination and adopts a holistic approach to the global incidents. While the subjective approaches like relative deprivation and resources' accumulation have substantially (but not exclusively) ignored the internal factors determining violence and political instability, the theories of dependency/global system have emphasized on the importance of the countries' interrelationships in the international system or the external factors for the elucidation of the macro-level political phenomena. The theories of dependency and global system deal with the role of the external factors in the occurrence of the political instability in the dependent and peripheral countries and try showing how the international and universal processes influence the internal violence inside the countries.

The theory of the global system is based on this primary presumption that the new world is composed of a capitalist global economy and the governments are generally the components of this whole and that the global economy should be correctly recognized for the understanding of the domestic class disputes and the political disputes of a given state. Dependency and global

system are two similar subjective traditions and both of them claim that the social structures of the third world countries have been formed by means of the colonial historical experiences since the time that they have somehow been merged into the world's capitalism system and that their bonds that lead to their dependency have been rendered permanent by the unequal transactions, political domination and transnational firms. These theories believe from the normative perspectives, as well, that the blending into the modern capitalism system in all the grounds (not just economic) has been accompanied by negative outcomes for the third world countries with one of these outcomes being the high level of political instability and violence (Rajabzadeh and Talebian, 2007, p.64).

Based on these theories, the overall pattern in the dependent (peripheral) countries includes the inequality of income, class conflict, high rate of unemployment and population excess in an urban market economy. The political results of the dependency theory are complicated and numerous and they have never been so far approved in comparative inter-country researches. One assumption is that the governments' dependency causes the decline of their legitimacy and the governments with questioned legitimacy would likely witness a scene of protest and rebellion against themselves. The other assumption is that the dependency causes adoption of the economically open policies (free market) for the transferring of the global capital with the high degree of the economic openness causing increase in the income inequality which per se causes growth in the political conflicts and violence and instability.

It has to be stated in sum that the dependency and peripheral position in the global system influences the occurrence of political instability through increasing inequality and slowing the pace of the economic growth. Based on the axial predictions in the dependency and global system theories, the primary and substantial source of the political instability in the peripheral countries is the position of their dependency in the global system. In more precise terms, the higher the dependency of a country, the higher the likelihood of the political instability's occurrence therein. Such a prediction conveys this assumption that there is a direct relationship between dependency, violence, and political instability (Rajabzadeh and Taleban, 2007, p.66).

Media Theories:

Due to the widespread coverage of Corona in mass media (including social media such as TV, radio, Internet, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.) it is necessary to consider the theories that justify the impact of the media on public opinion. It should be noted that recent approaches to media effectiveness suggest the relative influence of it.

- *Cultivation Theory*

This theory, proposed by Georg Gerbner, examines the fact that the growing exposure to television influences the audience's conception of social reality since it reflects the most common, intermittent, and enduring ideological patterns and ideologies. Growing up and living in such a symbolic environment, from which television tells the most narratives to most audiences, often leads to the formation of an "unreal" mental image of the world. (Bahonar & Jafari, 2012). The theory was developed in the United States and is more influential on popular and powerful media affiliated with potent regional countries. For example, Bahonar and Jafari

found that the cultivation theory, which emphasizes the strong influence of the television, particularly high-consumption viewers, is not proven and applied in Iran.

- ### Agenda-setting theory

Since "media" is one of the ways through which the corona crisis affects political instability, this study uses the agenda-setting theory as one of the most important theories on the subject of "media influence". Agenda setting reflects the idea that news media, by presenting news, determines the issues that people think about (Imami et al., 2014). According to this theory, the media prioritizes topics for the audience and warns them what to think about.

In fact, by highlighting an issue by the media, it becomes significant and a priority for the people. Indeed, the mass media intend to make the priorities of the masses subject to their own priorities, that is, the masses follow the media. Agenda setting theory was proposed in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw about the role of the media in the presidential campaign. The initial hypothesis of their research claimed that by emphasizing specific topics, the media signifies them to audiences so that the topics are given priority by the audience. For example, people may prioritize economic difficulties, but the media prioritize changing the political regime. In this regard, the media can approach the goal by provoking disappointment and hopelessness among the people. Two scientists, Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang divided the agenda-setting process into six stages:

1- Importance of events: The press highlights some events or activities.
2- Different coverage: Different topics need different types and amounts of coverage to attract attention.
3- Formatted topics: The events and activities in question should be formatted or given a range of meanings so that they can be understood.
4- Language: The language used by the media can affect the understanding of an issue's significance; e.g. turning from the initial reference of "immoral" to the word "awful" gives more importance to the issue.
5- Secondary symbols: The media associate activities or events that have received public attention with secondary symbols whose position is well recognizable from a political perspective.
6- Statements of people: When famous and reputable people talk about a subject, the process of agenda-setting accelerates (Imami, 2014)

However, the lower media knowledge and literacy, the greater the vulnerability of society.

- ### Infodemic in Corona crisis

Infodemic is a condition in which a large amount of information about a problem is developed, and this breadth of information makes it difficult to find a solution, and the dissemination of incorrect information and rumors prevents effective health solutions from responding resulting in a kind of confusion and uncertainty among people. This is so important that the World Health Organization (WHO) has set up Epidemic Disease Information Network (EPI-WIN) to gather information and identify reliable sources. In this way, it provides accurate and up-to-date data.

- *Stupidization sight*

According to Herbert Marcuse'IDEA, the great German philosopher, in liberal and capitalist systems, false consciousness is the main tool for managing public opinion with democratic shells and authoritarian brains. According to him, liberalism and democracy develop consumer societies and, in order to manage it, they adopt stupidization process and thus enslave the people and public opinion. In this way, they shape a one-dimensional human being and dominate over him.

Media coverage of the corona crisis: Media mean social media, including cyber media (e.g. the Internet, Facebook, etc.), radio, and television. The fact is that the media is an important and effective tool for influencing public opinion and achieving the goals of media giant owners. In the meantime, as the media is strong with a wide geographical scope, and advanced technologies and facilities, it will more succeed in media campaigns. Regarding the media coverage of the corona crisis, it should be said that the Iranian domestic media has focused mainly on informing the public about the dangers and threats of the virus. Though the local media have also provided training to prevent the outbreak, apparently the Iranian public doesn't trust the exact number of infected people. Therefore, perhaps, the feedback of Iranian media warnings has not been helpful. Foreign media, however, have purposefully covered the crisis in Iran. Persian-language TVs like VOA, BBC Persian, and Iran International, at the forefront of the campaign of maximum media pressure against Iran and the Iranian people, by pursuing several simultaneous projects try to discourage people from the current conditions and future, to make a gap between the people and the authorities, to polarize the society and finally to arouse civil discontent in order to cause events similar to suspicious street riots in 2019 and to inject additional psychological pressure on the society. These media pursue their goals by denigrating and exaggerating the corona deaths. Interestingly, the sources of these media are usually mentioned as anonym.

Foreign media also aims at distrusting the people towards Iranian radio, television, and media, while making false trust (in some people) in cyberspace and Persian-language media outside the country. The media is mainly affiliated with the United States, (VOA) Saudi Arabia (Iran International), and the United Kingdom (BBC Persian). Here, the important issue of "media literacy" becomes remarkable. Certainly, the level of media literacy of the Iranian people might result in different responses to such news biases by Persian-language media. With media literacy, the opposition of media such as the BBC Persian and Iran International which are directly funded by London and Riyadh will become clear to public opinion. As mentioned, in order to maximize the influence on public opinion, the anti-Iranian media cover the reports with lies and rumors during the corona crisis. In response, Dr. Sima Sadat Lari, spokeswoman for the Ministry of Health of Iran, said: "If the definitions and indicators change, all the statistics in the world will change and decrease or increase according to the new definition and different criteria." For example, there is a serious question in the world that how corona-associated comorbidities are calculated? However, foreign media constantly insinuate that the statistics presented in Iran are false.

Moreover, foreign anti-Iranian media are usually located in the United States and Europe and closely witness the corona deaths or cases and the deteriorating economic situation in European and American countries, but they react differently to the same conditions.

According to a Gallup poll, most Americans believe that the country's media has not honestly covered the corona crisis.

Meanwhile, some countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have imposed punishment to counter the lies and rumors about the impacts of Corona in their countries.
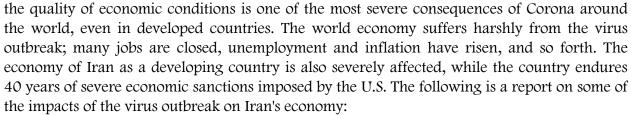
As an example of news bias, on March 29, 2017, the BBC reported 210 deaths and Iran International reported 137 deaths. This is while the World Health Organization confirmed the official statistics reported by Iran's officials.

3- Lying

Manoto TV announced that one of the religious leaders of Iran, named Ayatollah Behjat, had a prescription for the treatment of Corona, but he had died a few years ago

4. Denigration: Grimwood, the author of Atlantic Magazine, writes: The Coronavirus can disrupt Iranian society.

5- Boycott and censorship: For example, none of the mentioned TVs have announced the number of recoveries in Iran's medical centers, despite the most severe drug and health sanctions!

- *Impacts of Corona outbreak on the economy:*

the quality of economic conditions is one of the most severe consequences of Corona around the world, even in developed countries. The world economy suffers harshly from the virus outbreak; many jobs are closed, unemployment and inflation have risen, and so forth. The economy of Iran as a developing country is also severely affected, while the country endures 40 years of severe economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. The following is a report on some of the impacts of the virus outbreak on Iran's economy:

1- According to the report by Donya-e-Eqtesad, the newspaper published in Iran, the country's exports have sharply decreased. For example, due to the corona crisis in China, traveling is not possible for the two countries' businessmen.

2- The International Monetary Fund estimates that Iran's foreign trade will decrease by 16 billion dollars in 2020 and will decrease to 70 billion dollars.

3- Non-permanent jobs and careers such as restaurants, nuts, and confectionery shops, travel agencies, hotels, transport companies, textile companies, sports centers, airlines, and entertainment centers are of the occupations that suffer the most from the virus, to which the government has provided economic support packages.

4- Iran's Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare warned that more than 4,800,000 business people might lose their jobs.

5- Increasing government expenditures in the health sector

6- Reducing government tax revenue

7- According to the report of the Central Bank of Iran, the growth of liquidity has reached 9.1%.

8- Increasing exchange rate and inflation due to the shock caused by the corona-virus

It should be noted that the Iranian government has adopted measures to support vulnerable groups during the pandemic. Overall, given that the impacts of severe sanctions are appearing on the country's economy (imposed by the U.S. before the beginning of the corona pandemic),

it can be argued that the Iranian economy suffered more from harsh sanctions than the virus. Even in some sectors, such as the stock market, there has been a temporary boom, but most of the influenced sectors associate with leisure, tourism, small businesses, and temporary professions. Unfortunately, those without insurance, have experienced severe harms

Impacts of the virus outbreak on the political stability of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

The outbreak of serious diseases is a defect to threaten the political stability of countries, as international organizations and institutions have been warning for years. The outbreak of COVID-19 has led to a reduction in GDP, widespread unemployment, economic recession, budget deficit, and closure of factories and thousands of occupations. Such a circumstance has deprived millions of Iranian citizens of a minimum livelihood especially those under sanctions and the developing countries such as Iran.

In this regard, according to the psychological theory of "relative deprivation", the emergence of feelings of deprivation, frustration, and disappointment among citizens and ultimately rebellion of them and vulnerable groups against officials will result in political instability. On the other hand, the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran have found the current context suitable for inciting unrest and chaos and have applied an intense "propaganda" against the country which is led by the media affiliated with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia; e.g. Persian BBC, Voice of America, and Iran International.

Using effective media methods, the media scare the public opinion with false instincts and provoke disappointment among the people for the outbreak of the corona-virus and thus devalue the Iranian political system. In this regard, harsh and high propaganda by the TVs mentioned is in the same line with agenda setting, infodemic, cultivation, and global dependence theories, as well as with Herbert Marcuse's - the great German philosopher of the Frankfurt School-studidaztion vision. Such consistency is in the sense that the media highlight the problems resulting from the virus (incidentally, they are partly due to the brutal sanctions imposed by countries with media giants) and then pave the way to reduce Iran's ability to control the pandemic, eliminate and distort public awareness of the problems and ultimately lead the public opinion towards street and destructive riots in order to build a suitable atmosphere for political instability.

Therefore, the research model can be analyzed in five levels base on characterizing political instability:

- #### *Political system:*

At this level, media propaganda, along with the adverse economic consequences of the virus, is to hit the foundations and main components of the political discipline, the constitution, the underlying values, and the ideological upheavals on which the political system is built.

- #### *Political regime:*

At this level, the aim of media propaganda, along with the problems caused by severe economic sanctions, is to weaken and feeble Iranian government forces.

- #### *Political norms:*

At this level, media propaganda and exploitation of economic problems caused by economic sanctions and COVID-19 aims at making desired changes in the rules and norms governing relations among actors, institutions, ruling parties, and civil society.

- *Government policies:*

Media propaganda is also to make desired changes in the domestic and foreign sectors, including fiscal, economic, and cultural and foreign policies.

- *Political actors:*

At this level, media propaganda and exploitation of the problems caused by the fatal virus is to deauthorize and delegitimate political actors.

CONCLUSION

Some thinkers consider the corona "pandemic" as a clear sign of globalization. Globalization means the increasing dependence of nations' destinies on each other. This is the salient issue that most powerful governments like the USA refuse to accept. However the world's economy and health have seriously affected and thousands of people around the world have died from the virus, some powerful countries with media giants focus only on their own interests and goals. Meanwhile, praxeology and foreign policies of the media confirm that they precisely attempt to arouse political instability in Iran. It seems that the corona crisis in Iran is a good opportunity for them to achieve their goals. On the other hand, the bad economic situation in Iran due to the sanctions and COVID-19 has made the Iranian people annoyed, vulnerable, and complaining which might make the position to enflame political instability. However, this is not certain, and even some Iranian thinkers, such as Dr. Emad Afrough, believe that the Corona crisis itself may lead to increased national solidarity among Iranians.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that COVID-19 has detrimentally affected Iranians' livelihood, the brutal drug and economic sanctions endanger Iranian people, the lack of medicine and medical facilities have endangered the lives of millions of Iranians -especially in the current pandemic situation-, and the media affiliated with Iran's enemies are trying to destabilize the country, the following strategies are suggested to help Iran's political stability:

Increasing Iranians' media literacy to reduce the negative and destructive effects of foreign media;

- Timely delivering of accurate news to the people;
- Transparency of Corona consequences on the people's economy;
- Strengthening and increasing the quality of domestic media;
- Increasing global pressure on media giants to stop the propaganda and the project for frightening the Iranian people; and
  Increasing global pressure to lift sanctions, at least in the critical circumstance caused by Corona.

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