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Editorial

The Action of the Iranian People Amid Crisis: An Action Rooted in Cultural, Historical, and Ethical Depth

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Abstract

Introduction: In the 21st century, wars are no longer defined solely by missiles and firepower. They have transformed into psycho-social arenas in which the ultimate targets are not just land or government, but the very fabric of "The Public" and the foundational "state-nation relationships." By threatening the biological and psychological security of people, such wars aim to surface latent dissatisfactions, destabilize collective bonds, and internally lead societies toward despair and collapse. In this context, Iran and the Iranian people have responded to the recent crisis (the twelve-day war) in a complex, multilayered, and unpredictable manner. This paper attempts to reinterpret and analyze this response within its conceptual, ethical, and civilizational framework.

Conclusion: Modern wars, especially those exemplified by the twelve-day war, may begin by targeting geography, but their ultimate aim lies in the psychological and social structures of nations. These wars strive to turn the people into agents against their governments by provoking anxiety, eroding solidarity, disrupting social life, and employing media representations. One well-known scenario in waging such wars involves using real economic, psychological, and social grievances to activate a destructive chain reaction: from external threat to internal explosion. In this model, the pressure of war incites the people against the ruling system, deepens the state-nation divide, and facilitates internal collapse. In this scheme, the people are not merely targets. They are positioned at the heart of the war as the primary medium through which pressure is applied. However, the people are not merely reactive. History has shown that nations can engage in actions that exceed all predictions; actions emerging from their deep cultural, historical, ethical, and mythological layers. In the early days of the twelve-day war, while the Iranian people were experiencing anxiety, natural defensive reactions, and intense concern, on a more hidden level, they demonstrated an ethical, national, and even mythic form of agency. This action was undoubtedly not in defense of the power structure, but rather in defense of The Public, the collective self, and a meaningful mode of existence. The response of the Iranian people can be analyzed on several layers: initial biological and psychological reactions; followed by efforts to preserve social ties and recreate meaning on a cultural level; and finally, the emergence of an ethical-mythical form of action that reflects the people's connection to their collective memory, national dignity, and existential conception of "Iran." While war may destabilize existing mechanisms, it also creates the possibility for reconstruction. If this ethical, mythological, and meaning-oriented action of the Iranian people is properly heard, recognized, and reflected, it could serve as the foundation for a renewed The Public, not one based on power but on collective selfhood and the common good.

Keywords: *Ethics, Society, War, Crisis*

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary human society-especially in Iran-is deeply afflicted by a lack of thought and the loss of thinkers. The authority over life has fallen into the hands of powers that do not recognize humanity, acknowledging only success, victory,

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and domination. These authoritative powers construct their individuality by denying the Other and The Public. The loss of The Public has led to the denial and rejection of the common good. Higher values have collapsed, and baseless values have taken their place. This is the 21st century manifestation of nihilism.

Nihilism has cried out the crisis of individuality, making clear that on the foundation of individualism alone, one cannot speak of the Other, nor reach The Public through personal interests or aspects of individuality. Thus, a deep rupture-called nihilism-has swallowed everything into itself. Therefore, it is imperative to return to The Public. The Public, however, requires detachment from self-centered individuality. The way forward is to construct the social self and build The Public upon that foundation.

The social self is not formed in "self-assertion" but rather in the concept of being-in-relation. It is a self that is embodied, thrown into the world, and tied to the Other, a self that is formed in dialogue; a self that considers society the precondition of its emergence. This self is not a negation of the individual, but the opening of the individual toward society, a kind of "individual-in-relation," or in Mircea Eliade's words, a person who exists because they have understood being-in-connection with the Other.

Allameh Tabataba'i, in his theory of I'tebarat, teaches us that we must place the boundaries of The Public within the bounds of the human individual and construct the collective self to reach the common and social good beyond conflicts and the struggle for interests. In this theory, the origin of The Public is found neither in contract nor in history, but in the human individual and their needs, not merely material or instinctual needs, but the need for the survival of the species, order, and meaning, which can only be achieved through the structured, constructed organization of human relations.

In Allameh's view, the human is a natural-social being who, to live, needs a system of values and structured relationships. This system is neither embedded in human nature nor a divine gift, but is constructed by humans in response to their needs. I'tebar means to posit something for the sake of something else and toward the purpose of shared life, like instituting "ownership" to organize resource use. The Public is born from practical reason and human needs. Allameh emphasizes that The Public must be built on the human measure, i.e., needs, existential structure, and the mental and practical capacities of humanity. In his framework, if constructs are founded on self-centered, interest-based, and fragmented individuality, the result will be nothing but conflict and strife. But if they are based on the common good, the survival of the species, justice, and the rational regulation of human relations, then The Public can flourish. Therefore, The Public depends on moving from the individual to society, and from society toward the common good. From the perspective of I'tebar, the common good is the creation of a space in which everyone can flourish within their human bounds and participate in collective life.

Allameh believes that The Public, when narrowly founded on tribalism and social collusion, can ultimately lead to ethnic conflict and devastating wars. Hence, the common good must be considered a higher limit than mere social good, and human ethics and deep, noble values must be placed above tribe-based, geography-based, and ideology-based social ethics. A human being, grounded in a collective self, based on public ethics and the highest good, can move toward true perfection and thus, ground The Public. Therefore, if The Public is constructed without relying on human ethics and the highest good, it becomes a source of violence, discrimination, and conflict.

Unless humanity is reconstructed on the foundation of an ethics-oriented collective self, it

remains ever prone to reproducing violence from within the very structure of society. In Allameh's thought, The Public without a foundation in human ethics is unstable and dangerous. The Public must be built upon an ethical collective self-aimed toward the highest good. This is the only path beyond legitimized violence, tribalism, and interest-based conflict toward an authentic, perfection-seeking collective existence. The Public, beyond individualism and groupings based on interests, must rest upon the perfection of the social human; this is what guarantees the true health and flourishing of humanity.

The one who stands at the center of this rethinking is the thinker. The thinker, in the realm of practical philosophy, contemplates the common good. The thinker is neither a pure philosopher seeking abstract truth, nor a scientist or technologist pursuing the satisfaction of needs through tools, plans, and progress. Rather, the thinker is a human who, based on the social self, gives form to social life. The thinker guides the social life of humanity as the vital artery of human existence. The loss of the thinker severs this lifeline, and philosophy, science, and technology then proceed in a closed, defective cycle. The thinker is committed to the preservation of social human life; the thinker understands the human not as a subject or object of knowledge, but as a lived, ethical, and social being. A society without a thinker will have sterile philosophy, blind science, and destructive technology. Only by returning to the social self and reviving the role of the thinker can human life be regenerated from within ruin, war, and nihilism.

To understand the role and significance of the social self in crises such as the twelve-day war, it is essential to pay particular attention to the relationship between the following three triads:

a) The triad of society, ethics and war
b) The triad of the loss of The Public, the loss of social thought, and the loss of dialogue
c) The triad of the land of Iran, the people of Iran, and the twelve-day war

DISCUSSION

A. The Triad of Society, Ethics, and War

Contemporary Iranian society is currently faced with the triad of society, ethics, and war. Social life has collapsed into a real and immediate threat. Practical, wisdom-based problem-solving is a serious necessity, one whose loss is deeply felt. The "triad of society, ethics, and war" and the necessity of taking a stance about it is a voice rising from the heart of a turbulent age. It is as if we are living within a triangle, each side of which pulls us in a different direction. Society with all its complexities, power structures, passivity and uprisings; Ethics with a whispering voice that is often drowned out in the clamor of external realities; And war, not only the external war of weapons but also the internal war of meaninglessness, threat and the collapse of frameworks for living, each seeks to determine our direction. In a situation where "inner life" has fallen into a real chasm of threat, what we need is practical reflection, not mere theorizing but a mode of thinking that arises from within life itself, from suffering, and from existential questioning.

When Nietzsche said that nihilism is standing at the door, he had reached a deep insight: that we are faced with the collapse of ethics and higher values. Humanity is threatened by the meaninglessness born of this collapse, and the socio-political crises stemming from it have rendered war inevitable. Nihilism still roars through the depths and surfaces of life; it gives birth to war, constructs and elevates instruments of warfare and swallows life itself into this inner void of meaninglessness.

When Nietzsche warned that "nihilism is standing at the door," he was not merely offering a historical analysis; he was touching the living pulse of an ontological crisis, a crisis that began

with the death of God (not necessarily the God of religion, but the God of meaning, purpose and foundation which modern humanity dethroned by its own hands). What followed was not pure freedom, but a lack of meaning. And within that loss, nihilism, like a hidden disease, gradually sweeps through everything.

In this condition, war is no longer just an external event; it is a state within the human being: the collapse of the question "Why should one live?" The danger grows when nihilism comes disguised as hope, technology and justice. That is why it builds weapons but not meaning; advertises but inspires no faith; lies, but not out of malice. Against this storm, there is only one form of resistance: the construction of new meaning out of meaninglessness; the creation of values, not through a return to the past, but by descending into it, emerging from it and transcending it. Nietzsche envisioned this resistance in the form of the Übermensch. But for us, living in an era in which technology, media, and violence have become deeply intertwined, this resistance may only be possible through creative action, dialogue, and the revival of lived human experience.

B. The triad of the loss of The Public, the loss of social thought, and the loss of dialogue

In the current condition, we can also speak of another triad—a triad rooted in loss and non-being, one that deepens the soul's anguish: the loss of The Public, the loss of social thought, and the loss of dialogue.

1. The Loss of The Public: In the loss of The Public, society no longer functions as a ground for connection, solidarity, and meaning. Instead, it becomes a collection of scattered atoms, immersed in fear, competition, and defensiveness. The Public-in its rooted sense-refers to the in-between, the space that once linked us together, that carried us from "I" to "we."
2. The Loss of Social Thought: We are trapped in individualistic, moralistic, or technical analyses. No one speaks anymore from the perspective of structure, history, inequality, or the new forms of domination. Social thought means thinking in terms of relationships, contexts, and formative forces. It does not merely point to individual behavior or moral judgments. The loss of social thought has stripped us of the ability to grasp root causes; we have personalized crises and psychologized suffering, thereby allowing the structures that produce pain to remain hidden.
3. The Loss of Dialogue: We live in a time full of speech, noise and information, but empty of dialogue. What passes as conversation today is often a monologue of personal pain. There is no true listening, no real being-heard, no space for accepting the other. We repeat ourselves, shouting from behind walls, but there is no space for discovering the other or creating a shared platform for dialogue. And so, when dialogue dies, violence begins to speak.

This second triad is the hidden dimension of the first. If society, ethics, and war are events upon the stage, then The Public, social thought, and dialogue are the floodlights meant to illuminate that stage but they are now switched off. Without bringing back this light, we only see the performance and the surface, not the depth of suffering. Can this loss be remedied? Can The Public be reconstructed, social thought revived, and dialogue restored in place of violence? How can we generate possibility from loss? Can saying "no" to this loss become a "yes" to presence and creative action?

These are not merely theoretical questions, but ontological ones in the most concrete form of life. Questions that lie on the edge between destruction and creation, where loss can be seen not just as lack, but as a fundamental possibility. Exactly in that space which Heidegger called "the

disclosure of Being in the shadow of Nothingness," and Nietzsche called "saying yes to life," even in the face of wounds and meaninglessness. Loss is not pure non-existence; it is a silence that asks to be heard. It is not the quiet of something vanishing into darkness, but a resonant presence-in-loss, a kind of emptiness full of potential. Like the space between musical notes, or the silence that makes the lips tremble before speech. Not something that doesn't exist, something that has not yet come into being, but it can.

How does this loss say "yes" to life? Through creative re-creation, life can begin again. In the loss of The Public, it is we who must reproduce it, not by imitating the past, but by creating new relationships in the midst of rupture. The Public is no longer a given inheritance, but an existential project. Through thinking within the situation, we can rethink everything. Social thought is not the repetition of theories, but thinking within the age itself, with all its wounds, discontinuities and tensions. Thinking from within crisis is what Walter Benjamin called thinking in a moment of danger.

Through authentic dialogue, The Public can be recovered. Where language has been reduced to violence, dialogue becomes a fundamental act. In the heart of dialogue, loss speaks. And right there, life begins. This is the saying of "yes", not a naive yes, not an optimistic yes, but a tragic and creative yes. A yes that moves through the "no," through loss, through emptiness, through abandonment and despair and still, once again, says yes. This is where the language of being begins to speak.

C. The Triad of the Land of Iran, the People of Iran, and the Twelve-Day War

The third triad, deeply rooted in the painful, anxiety-ridden, and decision-shaping reality of our present moment, is the triad of the land of Iran, the people of Iran, and the twelve-day war. This is not merely a political or military issue; it is an existential question about the relationship between people and land, reaction and action, silence and voice, and the experience of living in a time of crisis.

Iran is not just a country; it is a historical-cultural existence; a body wounded by a thousand years of invasions, yet still alive in collective memory, language, poetry, myth, pain, and hope. The social body and collective self of the Iranian people extend into a land now directly confronted with a politico-military project: a proxy-real war unfolding through missiles, media, and global narratives. This war is not merely a geographical threat but a challenge to identity, to the future, and to the people's perception of self and the other.

The people of Iran are torn between exhaustion and hope, anger and compassion, aversion to violence and fear of destruction and generations differing in how they understand "Iran," "power," "rights," and "enemy." In response to this war, the people find themselves engaged on three levels:

1. At one level, they display a passive reaction to objective conditions, marked by anxiety, distrust, fear, informational shock, and in some cases, defensive numbness; silence or noise; a desire for personal salvation or retreat into justificatory narratives.
2. At another level, there is an active inaction: a state of confrontation and effort to make sense of the war. Is this our war? Or a war imposed on us? Is Iran a "situation"? Or a "responsibility"? This active inaction seeks, in the loss of a reliable official voice, ways to independently understand, empathize, and act.

The twelve-day war is not merely a military event; it has become a test of the psychological-social fabric of the Iranian people. The fundamental question of this triad is: How can the people of Iran, in their relationship with "Iran" and "war," move from mere reaction to meaningful action? And how can such action be grounded in the common good, humanity, and social

responsibility? At this level, the social conscience awakens and bears witness to the societal condition, a conscious presence that has moved beyond passive, conservative reaction and entered the path of decision-making and accountability. Here, the collective self of the Iranian people begins to care for itself and appears to be in the process of recovering that collective self -a self that seems to be passing through threat, fear, violence, and indifference, testing and preparing itself for the challenges of crisis.

3. At the level of creative action, Iran is understood as The Public sphere shaped through history, extending across a geography and mythic expanse. This is not a singular concept but a multilayered reality, something that could be viewed, in one sense, as a concrete atlas of lived experience, and in another, as a mythical entity representing the spirit and meaning of a nation. Which layer of this complexity is the war targeting? And at which layer and level will the people respond to this destructive event? Will the response be at the geographic layer, or will it reveal a deeper, mythic act? How do the political, ethical, historical, cultural-social, and linguistic dimensions play their role within this vastness?

Iran as territory is defined by political-military borders, infrastructure, cities, population, and resources. War at this level manifests through missiles, security threats, bombings, and disruption of biological and economic systems. The people's responses here are marked by fear, seeking refuge, migration, survival anxiety and emergency reactions, mostly physiological and psychological responses rooted in distress and escape.

Iran as a social system takes shape through human, cultural, economic, institutional, and linguistic ties. War in this layer disrupts the mechanisms of society and education, public services, communication, the market, media, and collective trust are all impacted. In this space, people may experience social fatigue, isolation, or temporary solidarity. The potential for social action (solidarity, civil resistance, narrative-making) begins from this layer.

Iran as a national-historical narrative interprets itself through conflicts, colonialism, uprisings, revolutions, movements, and historical transformations. War at this layer activates the people's historical memory: representing experiences of invasion, occupation, resistance, coups, sanctions, and more. People here oscillate between political disillusionment and a sense of historical responsibility. Responses at this level may lead to either the reconstruction of identity or the deepening of historical distrust.

Iran as a symbolic, mythical, spiritual, and ritual heritage continuously regenerates itself through its myths. War at this level reactivates the myths of wound and salvation, suffering and liberation, sacrifice and selflessness. People at this level may exhibit actions that are meaningful, ethical, or epic. This layer provides the grounds for rebuilding trust, fostering inner resistance, and reviving collective ethics. War here targets Iran's existential identity. If Iran collapses at the mythic layer, its reconstruction will be extremely difficult. But if the people remain connected to this layer (even in the heart of war) their action may lead to a renewed creation, like the phoenix rising again from its ashes.

CONCLUSION

Which layer do wars target? And how deep do they penetrate? Wars assault geography and target the political system, placing the people as intermediaries-exposed to devastating attacks-in order to pressure the political order by threatening their lives. The assumption is that such threats and pressures will mobilize people against the state, revealing latent discontent. The real hardships of the people are seized upon as grounds for protest, and dissatisfaction with the political and social system challenges the state-

society relationship. The overt reaction of the people to war is discontent, and once that discontent is redirected toward the political establishment, it inevitably and necessarily leads to the weakening or collapse of the system. Such a scenario could very well be one of the strategic logics behind launching a destructive war. However, such a scenario may provoke a type of response that is unpredictable-similar to what was witnessed during the twelve-day war. In that conflict, despite exhibiting typical behavioral and psychological reactions appropriate to human nature, the people expressed an active, resilient, and socially self-preserving form of agency. The origins and nature of this agency can become the subject of various analyses and inquiries across multiple levels and layers.

What is often overlooked is that Iran, drawing on its deep strategic-historical and mythological reserves, has shown its capacity not only to preserve its collective self and continue its existence, but also to regenerate itself from within crises. From out of voids, losses, and deep fissures, it has shown the ability to rebuild its collective identity by drawing on the latent possibilities hidden within its own vulnerabilities, weaknesses, and unmet needs-much like the Simorgh, it can reconstruct itself anew and give rise to creative forms of action.

The Iranian human being possesses a profound flexibility-one who bends under immense pressure and endures hardship, who displays astonishing resilience and stubborn resistance, yet lives amid disorder, even accommodating social deviation. From an external perspective, this may appear as widespread dysfunction or deep anomie. But at critical junctures, when danger is sensed, a process of rebirth begins.

The long history of Iranian social life is dependent on many internal and external factors, which require further elaboration elsewhere. The prolonged state of stagnation and acquiescence to current social conditions may, paradoxically, herald a dazzling regeneration founded on endogenous renewal. Iran's history and mythology will reproduce its people. If we connect the turning points of Iranian history, we see that at each juncture, Iran has reemerged on the basis of a reimagined collective self. The people's response to the twelve-day war, and their social action in relation to Iran, was not in defense of the power structure, but in defense of The Public sphere, the collective self, and a meaningful way of life. It not only demonstrated the people's resilience, but also, in a striking way, revealed their historical-mythical agency as a powerful image of the greater The Public called "Iran." This remarkable emergence, born from within, will lead to a regeneration of the contemporary collective self.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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