

REREADING THE HISTORICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL COMPONENTS
OF IRANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE IDEOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF THE
FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN IRAN

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Abstract. Mehdi Bazargan is one of the famous personalities of the national-religious movement of Iran. Among the leaders of this intellectual and political movement, she is a unique personality who is well-known both in the field of thought and in terms of her long record of political activity. Bazargan is considered an opinionated person in the field of political and religious thought. One of her intellectual and practical concerns during her life has been preserving the national identity of Iranians and ways to defend it. The present article, with an analytical method and referring to the remaining works and writings of Bazargan, seeks to answer this basic question: what components did Bazargan pay attention to in defending the Iranian national identity? The findings of the research indicate that during her intellectual and political life, Bazargan paid attention to four basic components to defend the national identity of Iranians. These four components, in order of importance, are: trying to create a civil and democratic society, compatibility of Islam and Iranian nationality, maintaining the country's independence and defending national interests.

Keywords: national identity, Mehdi Bazargan, Iranian identity, national-religious.

Introduction

National identity as a political and social phenomenon is a new age phenomenon that first became popular in Europe in the 17th century and then spread to the East and other lands in the late 19th century. National identity emerged when the nation was formed in its current meaning. Some researchers believe that the nation is a human group that has a common past, a plan for the future, and a claim to sovereignty. Therefore, the nation includes five main dimensions: psychological dimension, cultural dimension, territorial dimension, political dimension, and historical dimension (Giberna, 2008: 81). Therefore, it can be said that national identity, which has found its own conceptual form in the twentieth century and after the political formation of the international system, has various definitions. In one definition: National identity is considered to be the same feeling of belonging and commitment to the national community and to the whole society, and it can be said that national identity means that the individuals of a society feel a kind of common origin within themselves (Yousefi, 1379: 27-26). In another definition, "National identity is a set of material, biological, cultural and psychological signs and effects that cause societies to differ from each other; therefore, national identity is the main synthesis and

communication links between specific local identities and general transnational identities” (Hajiani, 1379: 197). As can be seen from the definition of national identity, this concept has several constituent elements. Among the most important of them, we can mention national, religious, social and human values (Zuhiri, 1381: 201). There are differences of opinion among scholars of different sciences about the elements of national identity. In geography, emphasis is placed on common territory and history, in social sciences on common language and religion, and in political sciences, on common political structure, nationality, nation, and civil society. Also, among philosophers, common cultural and historical unity is emphasized, and among social psychologists, more emphasis is placed on the concept of our identity, common feelings, and collective consciousness as the foundation of national identity. Some researchers consider each individual's national identity to be formed as part of his or her total identity in relation to the society to which he or she belongs or feels he or she belongs (Ravasani, 2001: 31). Given that some researchers consider land ties, blood ties, and cultural ties to be the three main pillars of national identity (Naderpour, 1994: 441), others, rejecting racial and blood foundations and not accepting the cultural dimension, have claimed that national identity also has economic dimensions and therefore believe that national identity is a combination of religious, class, and historical elements (Ravasani, 2001: 7). Therefore, national identity cannot be considered to have a single component, and considering the aforementioned definitions, specific functions can be attributed to the constituent elements of national identity and their different dimensions, including creating national cohesion and solidarity, creating national awareness, and determining the mechanisms of political culture. Since the Qajar era (1175-1304), especially during the Constitutional Movement, the national identity of Iranians was influenced by the introduction of new Western ideas and the growth of nationalism. Since one of the important issues of Iranian thinkers in the contemporary period has been the preservation of Iranian identity in the face of the invading Western culture and civilization. Mehdi Bazargan is one of these thinkers who has paid special attention to Iranian national identity and how to defend it. By examining Bazargan's thoughts and ideas in the midst of his speeches, positions and works left behind, we can identify his attachment to Iran and the components and elements of Iranian national identity.

Background

Various studies have been conducted on Bazargan's political thought. Among these works are the book "In the Struggle for Freedom; A Journey through the Life, Works, and Thoughts of Mehdi Bazargan" by Yousefi Eshkvari (1997), Masoud Ghaffari's master's thesis (1985) entitled "The Ideal Government in the Political Thought of Engineer Mehdi Bazargan", the article "Government in the Political Thought of Mehdi Bazargan" by Ghaffari and Mohammadzadeh (1986), Hadi Vakili's master's thesis (1990) entitled "The Intellectual Origins of Engineer Mehdi Bazargan's Thoughts", the article "Analysis of Mehdi Bazargan's Scientist Discourse" by Hersij and Rouhani (1992), and the book "Socio-Political Thoughts of Engineer Mehdi Bazargan" by Mohammad Basteh Negar (1994). What distinguishes the present study from the aforementioned and other similar studies is the attention paid to the issue of Iranian national identity in Bazargan's thought and the components of its defense from his point of view, which have received less attention in the aforementioned and other similar studies. The present article, using an analytical method and referring to the documents left behind from the positions, declarations, speeches,

performance, daily notes, letters, books of Mehdi Bazargan and the works written about him, seeks to answer the fundamental question of which components Bazargan used to defend the national identity of the Iranians. To answer this question, we will first briefly examine Bazargan's biography, relying on his struggle record in the years before the Islamic Revolution (1978), and then analyze the components he considered in defending the Iranian identity.

Bazargan; A Look at His Life and Times

Mehdi Bazargan was born in Tehran in 1285. His father, Haj Mirza Abbasgholi Islambolchi, was a very religious merchant from Azerbaijan. Bazargan was raised in a strict religious environment (Abrahamian, 2013: 420). He completed his primary education at the "Tharvout" and "Sultani" schools in Tehran and his secondary education at the "Central Teachers' College" there. According to Nejati, "his primary education period coincided with the difficult years after the [First] World War and the famine and illness that followed, which led to insecurity and chaos in the country and caused a lot of dissatisfaction and discomfort, and caused political, religious and social unrest among the people" (Nejati, 2018: 1/61). In 1931, he went to Paris to continue his studies. There, he was still bound by religious ceremonies and daily prayers. His insistence on completing religious duties sometimes even annoyed his non-religious friends. After graduating in 1936, he returned to Iran and began teaching at the Tehran Technical College. After Reza Shah abdicated and the country's political space opened up, he entered political activities and participated in the formation of the "Engineers' Association" and then the "Iran Party" and was one of the founding members of these two institutions. In addition, Bazargan also helped form the "Islamic Students' Association" at Tehran University (Abrahamian, 2013: 420). Bazargan's deep anti-communist beliefs led him to withdraw from that party in 1946 in protest of the alliance between the "Iran Party" and the "Tudeh Party". In addition to teaching at the university from 1947 to 1951, he collaborated with Mohammad Mossadegh (the leader of the Iranian oil nationalization movement) and finally became the head of the Tehran Technical College in 1951 (Abrahamian, 2013: 422). With Mossadegh's appointment as prime minister, Bazargan was sent to Khuzestan in June 1951 as one of the members of the British Oil Company's divestiture committee. After the British had taken over the oil facilities in Khuzestan, on June 19, 1951, the aforementioned delegation elected Mehdi Bazargan as the first president of the National Iranian Oil Company and entrusted him with the management of the company's affairs (Nejati, 1987: 164). Bazargan's good reputation, aversion to pretense and hypocrisy, incorruptibility, attachment to freedom, national sovereignty and democratic principles, respect for the law and sincere support for the movement to nationalize Iranian oil led Mossadegh to call him the only patriotic man in Iran (Nejati, 1998: 1/624).

After the coup of 18 Mordad 1953 and the overthrow of the national government of Mossadegh, the Shah and the coup government agreed to a new agreement called a "consortium" with Western governments to resolve the oil issue. Bazargan was among the few national and religious figures who publicly wrote to the parliament and announced their opposition to this agreement (Nejati, 1987: 617-620). With the coming to power of the government of Ali Amini (1961-1965) and the weakening of police rule in 1961-1963, the Shah's critics found an opportunity for renewed political activity. Bazargan also took advantage of this opportunity and, together with religious members of the National Front, founded the Freedom Movement of Iran.

The Freedom Movement's manifesto emphasized: We are Muslims, Iranians, constitutionalists, and Mossadeghites. We are Muslims because we do not consider the principles of Islam to be separate from politics. We are Iranians; Because we respect our national heritage.

We want a constitution; because we want freedom of thought, expression, and assembly.

We are Mossadeghi; because we want national independence (Abrahamian, 2013: 422).

The Freedom Movement was officially banned in 1963; but it continued to hold secret meetings in Tehran and organize students abroad, especially in North America and France (Abrahamian, 2013: 422).

With the spread of the revolutionary uprising of the Iranian people in 1977-1978, Bazargan, like many other political leaders opposed to the Shah, increased his political activities.

In the fall of 1978, he and 29 other political activists formed the Iranian Committee for the Defense of Freedom and Human Rights, and as a first step, they sent an open letter to the UN Secretary-General, explaining that the regime regularly resorted to torture of opponents, military trials, and arbitrary arrests to bring them to their knees (Abrahamian, 2013: 425). In November 1978, Bazargan traveled to Paris to meet with Imam Khomeini, and announced on behalf of the Freedom Movement: The people's demonstrations last year showed that the people follow Ayatollah Khomeini and want a government based on Islam to replace the monarchy (Abrahamian, 2013: 481). Bazargan's good political and religious reputation among the people and his long history in the arena of struggle against the Shah's rule caused Imam Khomeini, on the eve of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, to agree to the proposal of the Revolutionary Council to appoint Bazargan as the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of the Islamic Revolution.

His appointment decree states: "Due to the trust I have in your firm faith in the sacred school of Islam and the information I have about your background in Islamic and national struggles, I appoint you... to form a provisional government." (Imam Khomeini, 1379: 6/54). Of course, the Islam envisioned by Bazargan and his associates in the freedom movement had liberal traits and had fundamental differences from the Islam envisioned by Imam Khomeini and many of his followers. John Foran writes about this: "Islam, according to the freedom movement, had liberal, constitutionalist, and nationalist traits... He admired Western science and some of the Western social ideals such as democracy and humanism; but he believed that Islam was compatible with these ideals" (Foran, 1401: 547). These intellectual differences caused the gap between these two figures and their supporters to widen after the victory of the revolution, and eventually led to Bazargan's separation from the path of the Islamic Revolution and Imam Khomeini. Bazargan and his liberal supporters wanted to draft a constitution based on the model of the Fifth Republic of France. The republic they wanted was nominally Islamic but democratic [liberal] in content (Abrahamian, 1400: 289). He and his supporters wanted to include a third option called "Islamic Democratic Republic" in the referendum to determine the new government.

Imam Khomeini strongly opposed it and stated: Islam is everything. It is a pity to put another word next to the word Islam, which is complete (ibid., 1400: 290). Bazargan and his supporters were even opposed to including the principle of Velayat al-Faqih in the constitution, and during the discussion of this principle in the Assembly of Constitutional Experts, he and seven other members of the interim government wrote to Imam Khomeini demanding the dissolution of

the Assembly, because in their view, the Constitutional Experts were seeking to elevate the scholars to the position of the ruling class (ibid., 1400: 297).

Meanwhile, Carter (the then US President) granted permission for the Shah to enter the US for treatment. This led to the occupation of the US embassy in Tehran by students known as the Imam's Line and the hostage-taking of embassy members for 444 days. Bazargan resigned from the post of Prime Minister in protest of this action of the students and the approval of their movement by Imam Khomeini (ibid., 1400: 298). From this time on, Bazargan's period of political seclusion began; but unlike many political critics of the time, he never refused to leave the country. Finally, Mehdi Bazargan died on 10 January 1994 during a medical trip in Zurich, Switzerland, and according to his will, his body was transferred to Iran and buried in the Bayat tomb near the shrine of Hazrat Masoumeh (PBUH) next to his parents. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution (Ayatollah Khamenei) also issued a message of condolence, without mentioning Bazargan's intellectual and political differences with the late Imam (may Allah have mercy on him), and praised his struggles for the Islamic movement of the Iranian people, especially his efforts to promote Islamic ideas with new methods (Ayatollah Khamenei, 5/11/1373). Since the subject of this article is not a critique and review of Mehdi Bazargan's political career, we will suffice with these brief references to his life and times and pass over them.

Bazargan's Components in Defending Iranian National Identity

By referring to Bazargan's remaining works and also the works written about him, it can be inferred that the components he considered in defending Iranian identity, in order of importance, were:

1. Efforts to create a civil and democratic society
2. Compatibility of Islam and Iranian nationality
3. Attention to the country's independence
4. Defense of Iranian national interests

Efforts to create a civil and democratic society

Among the approaches that are evident in Bazargan's political thought and can be considered in the area of national identity, is his attention to civil society, public thoughts and opinions, freedom, the rights of the nation, and democracy. It should be noted that civil society is not a political ideology or an idealistic idea, but rather, civil society, like the idea of democracy, is a tool for researching the sovereignty and participation of the people and their presence in decision-making and the exercise of their rights. Bazargan also paid special attention to civil society and its affiliated institutions. According to Saeed Barzin, the idea of human freedom is a fundamental element in Bazargan's Islamic ideology (Barzin, 1995: 328). Bazargan believed that "freedom is the capital of humanity for this world and the hereafter and the means of growth, progress and happiness" (Barzin, 1971: 265). He wrote about his great interest in freedom and democracy: "Freedom is a divine and eternal gift, associated with the creation and caliphate of man and essential for his salvation, health and eternal happiness... If freedom is taken away, nothing but tyranny and dictatorship or suffocation, captivity and destruction will come in its place. The protector and guarantor of freedom cannot be anything other than the people themselves or national sovereignty through elections and continuous monitoring of the people... and otherwise the wicked will prevail" (Bazargan, 1982: 3/93).

He writes elsewhere: "I was born in the era of freedom and constitutionalism or the fight against tyranny. I live with this thought and ultimately I hope to die while freedom and the constitution have truly ruled the country" (Bazargan, 1971: 2-3). Also, the declaration of the Iranian Freedom Movement states: "The people are concerned about security, tired of tyranny and oppression, suffering from the hardship of livelihood and ashamed of the disgrace, theft and betrayal of the ruling body that has unfortunately tarnished the name of Iran and Iranians. They want a better fate and freedom from disgrace and calamity and the establishment of a national government that will create a clean, prosperous and free Iran" (Bazargan, 1982: 1/42).

Bazargan's fascination with freedom and the rule of law did not remain only in the realm of thought. Rather, he also sought to create institutions to realize such a society in practice. The Iranian Freedom Movement and the Iranian Society for the Defense of Freedom and Human Rights were among such institutions. Bazargan himself writes about this: "We saw that the suppressed freedom movement had disappeared and that justice had been replaced by oppression and corruption. The situation in the country was like a house on fire, and everyone, big and small, had to find a solution and extinguish the house" (Bazargan, 1999: .(28-27/1

Compatibility of Islam and Iranian Nationality

One of the important aspects of Bazargan's thought, which is closely related to the national identity of Iranians, is his Islamism. Throughout history, Iranian national identity has always been in constant connection with a religious worldview, and religion has been a manifestation of Iranian religion and identity. However, in the contemporary period, with the arrival of Western ideas in Iran, especially secularism and nationalism, some Iranian intellectuals, influenced by the historical experience of Europeans, believed that nationalism was fundamentally incompatible with religion, because nationalism is particularistic and pursues a limited goal; while religion is not like that and has universal goals. In addition, the goal of nationalism is to achieve national sovereignty and is in conflict with any factor that limits this sovereignty, including religion (Katam, 1978: 166). On the opposite side of these secular nationalists was a group of Islamic fundamentalists who considered nationalism and the defense of Iranian nationality to be contrary to Islamism and religion. In between these two groups, there were those who believed that religious and national values were compatible with each other. This group, which later became known as the "national-religious," according to Katam, "sought to reconcile nationalist values with religious rules and claimed that nationalist values somehow also exist in the religion of Islam" (ibid., 1978: 166).

Bazargan, as a religious intellectual, also belonged to this third group (national-religious). Not only did he not consider Iran-friendship and Islamism to be contradictory; he also emphasized the mutual service of Iran and Islam to each other. Barzin writes about this: "When Bazargan left France [and returned to Iran], several basic elements played a role in his intellectual structure, one of which was religious thought, the dominant concept of which was national identity..." (Barzin, 1995: 41). Bazargan himself writes about the connection between Iranism and Islamism: "It has been propagated that being interested in Iran and defending the rights and dignity of the Iranian nation and the independence and elevation of the country, which is nationalism, is opposed to worshipping God... Defending the homeland and fellow countrymen is not only not a sin, but jihad has become obligatory for that... Therefore, we should not separate nationalism and Iranism from being Muslim and consider Islam to be anti-Iranian" (Bazargan, 1982: 24-22/2).

He expresses a similar opinion elsewhere and writes: "Defending one's home and soil, or on a larger scale today, defending one's homeland and country, is not only not considered rejected and sinful in Islamic law and religion, but it is recognized in the books of the prophets and in the Holy Quran as the only reason for jihad and permission for war" (Barzgan, 1982: 101/3). The Freedom Movement's manifesto also emphasizes the connection between Iranian nationality and Islamic religion, stating: "We are Muslims, Iranians, subject to the constitution and Mossadeghi." The definition of a Muslim emphasizes: "We are Muslims not in the sense that we consider fasting and prayer to be our only duty, but rather that our entry into politics and social activity is a matter of national duty and a religious assumption, and we do not consider religion to be separate from politics... We are Muslims in the sense that we have believed in the principles of justice, equality, sincerity, and other social and human duties before the Great French Revolution and the Charter of the United Nations were proclaimed" (Freedom Movement of Iran, 1982: 17/1).

In his book "The Iranian Revolution in Two Moves," Bazargan also writes about the ideology of the Freedom Movement: "The Freedom Movement of Iran was established in 1961 as the first political party that was based on religious duty and ideology consistent with and derived from Islam after many years of preparation and to fill the void left by the majority of Muslims in the struggles of Iran" (Bazargan, 1984: 19). Elsewhere, he writes about the philosophy of the formation of the Freedom Movement: "The reason for the existence or establishment and activity of the Freedom Movement of Iran was based on Islam and as a religious duty, and it is the first political party in Iran and perhaps in the world that took its ideology, principles, and purpose from Islam and, by the command of Islam, has dedicated itself to serving Iran and the Iranian nation" (ibid., 1984: 44). Mohammad Rahim Eyazi, one of the founders of the Freedom Movement, also emphasized the Islamic nature of the movement and wrote: "One of the outstanding points in the formation of the Freedom Movement was the selection of Islamic principles and beliefs as the ideology of the party, and this was the first political party to be formed based on the school of Islam" (Eyazi, 2006: 117). Such positions and statements of Engineer Bazargan caused researchers such as "James Beale and William Roger Lewis" to introduce him in their article as "many truly religious Iranians, including Engineer Bazargan and other followers of the Freedom Movement, are attached to Islamic philosophy and liberalism, Islamic society, and national society, and in fact it seems that the society supported by Bazargan is the same national society of Iran" (James Beale and William Roger Lewis, 1993: 67). Of course, Bazargan opposed extreme nationalism and even considered it a form of polytheism, and he wrote about it: "Nationalism is then doomed to take on a negative aspect, that is, to separate individuals under different headings and create hostile relations between them... Nationalism at its extreme level... in such a way that the main goal and above all rights, values, and deities... is polytheism and is the result of ignorance, pride, and lack of growth... However, recognizing nationality, ethnicity, and country and giving primacy to the relationships, inheritances, and obligations that each human being has towards the environment, people, and the world in general, is, at all levels, a matter that... is proven and documented from the perspective of the Quran, Islamic tradition, and other monotheistic religions" (Bazargan, 1982: 3/103-99). Of course, it goes without saying that the Islam envisioned by Bazargan and his associates in the freedom movement was an Islam compatible with modern rationality and with liberal traits.

Foran writes about this: “According to the freedom movement, Islam had liberal, constitutionalist, and nationalist traits. Bazargan believed that Islam was compatible with rationality and could provide a solution to all the problems of contemporary society. He admired Western science and some of the Western social ideals, such as democracy and humanism; but he believed that Islam was compatible with these ideals and should be a guide to the politics of societies” (Foran, 1401: 547).

Attention to the country's independence

Defending the country's independence, its territorial integrity, and the rejection of foreign domination is another component of Bazargan's goal in defending Iranian identity. According to Yousefi Eshkevari, Bazargan had a deep belief in Iran's desire for independence and believed that complete independence, breaking the chains of dependence, breaking the chains of captivity, and ultimately rejecting foreign domination are the rights of all ethnic groups and nations, including the Iranian nation, which has the right and should have an honorable and just life under independence, complete with prosperity, security, comfort, and dignity. However, in this regard, he opposed and fought against colonialism or foreign domination, which he preferred to use the latter term (Yousefi Eshkevari, 1997, 1/150). Bazargan considers attention to independence as one of the natural and innate characteristics of humans and writes: “When we consider independence as a manifestation of the nature of individuals, we must take it as a trait and characteristic that originates from within individuals like love and affection” (Bazargan, 1378, 8/120). Bazargan believed that one of the ways to achieve independence was to revive the “spirit of initiative” in the people. He writes about this: “A country whose people are innovative and creative certainly has self-esteem and that country is independent and has the power to provide the means to maintain independence” (Ibid., 1378, 8/141). One of Bazargan's goals in establishing the Iranian Freedom Movement was to pave the way for the creation of this spirit of initiative and national self-confidence. In his book “Nationalism in Iran,” Richard Kattam, while referring to the rise of Iranian nationalist thought in the movement to nationalize Iranian oil led by Mohammad Mossadegh, writes: “The freedom movement considered itself the most worthy and legitimate manifestation of Mossadegh's movement” (Kattam, 1978: 448). Suzanne Siavashi believes: As a supporter of Mossadegh, one of Bazargan's main goals was an independent Iran and a democratic government (Siavashi, 2001: 96). In a speech on the occasion of the establishment of the Iranian Freedom Movement, Bazargan said: “If the country belongs to everyone, we should all work hard, think about it, grieve for it, and have an opinion about it. Iran will never be repaired by an American, Arab, or Englishman. What a tragedy and what a natural humiliation, the thoughts of those young people and people who, under the pretext of the deterioration of the country's situation and health and comfort, prefer to reside and work in European and American countries rather than serve in the homeland and accept hardship (Iran Freedom Movement, 1982: 1/13). In Bazargan's view, independence did not only have a political aspect, but also its economic, financial, judicial, cultural, and psychological aspects were significant. In this regard, he writes: “Before political independence, there must be spatial independence, economic independence, and especially intellectual and spiritual independence. As long as a nation does not have intellectual and spiritual independence, it is impossible to achieve other independences” (Bazargan, 1999: 4/400-401).

Bazargan paid special attention to cultural independence and was against being fascinated by and blindly imitating Western culture. According to Yousefi Eshkevari, Bazargan considered the fight against Westernization and imitation of Western culture as his own duty (Yousefi Eshkevari, 1997, 1/344). Bazargan himself also writes about this: "Modernization and development that is imitation is nothing but a pleasure and maintains and strengthens the state of need and backwardness, and the bonds of captivity are strengthened" (Bazargan, 1999: 8/124).

Bazargan writes about how to escape imitation: "The first step in fighting imitation is to know it and refrain from following it. "We should consider imitation as a disgrace to ourselves, like begging. On the scale of the nation and the state, we should consider it as betrayal and betrayal" (ibid., 1378: 8/129). Of course, Bazargan's emphasis on independence does not mean xenophobia; rather, his goal is to try to gain awareness of the country's national interests and defend them in all respects. He writes in this regard: "Any greed or destruction from a foreigner or colonialist is a natural thing... A foreigner and a predator are lying in wait to see a weak point and neglect and attack... It is our duty to first eliminate weak points and neglect and secondly to protect and defend, and if necessary to attack, following the verse: "Indeed, Allah does not change what is in a people, even if it is in themselves" (ibid., 1378: 8/275). It is worth noting that Bazargan did not consider patriotism and striving for independence to be contrary to religion; rather, he considered it a requirement of faith and piety. He has quoted in this regard: In response to those who considered his interest in the homeland, independence, and pride of Iran to be contrary to worship of God and to the universal message of Islam, he wrote: "Feeling a sense of responsibility and duty towards one's birthplace, parents, children, neighbors, co-religionists, and fellow countrymen, and being grateful for historical works and services, not only does not contradict worship of God and being a pure Muslim, but it is also considered a requirement of faith and piety" (Bazargan, 1982: 2/24).

Defending the National Interests of Iranians

In relations between states and even nations, the national interest plays a decisive role.

Politicians of each country try to make decisions that will bring the greatest benefits to their country and at the same time cause the least harm to their country. As a national thinker and politician, Bazargan always paid special attention to the national interests of Iranians and their all-round defense. Bazargan believed that in foreign relations, there should be a fair relationship and that national interests should be respected and that these relationships should not be detrimental to the national interests of the country. He wrote about this: "We are extremely insistent on the dignity, independence, and excellence of our country; but I am not against communication and interaction with other nations and living in a world where mutual ties and needs are becoming stronger day by day" (Nehdat Azadi Iran, 1982, 1/17). In line with this view, he supported the movement to nationalize Iranian oil and its leader, Mohammad Mossadegh. After the approval of the law on nationalization of Iranian oil, the most important task of the Mossadegh government was to establish the National Iranian Oil Company instead of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and to cut off the British colonialists from Iran's oil resources. After the complete dispossession of Britain, the Mossadegh government recognized Bazargan as the best candidate for the position of CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company because he paid great attention to the national interests of the Iranians and defended them comprehensively.

Throughout his life, he considered cooperation with the movement for nationalization of Iranian oil and defending the national interests of the Iranians to be among his honors. For example, Bazargan said on one of the anniversaries of the nationalization of Iranian oil: "The dispossession was a success and honor for Iran and Iranians" (Nehdat Azadi Iran, 1982: 2/42). He also writes elsewhere about this: "I really wanted to describe the names and work of all those who brought pride and hope to this country, so that we could be proud of being Iranians" (Bazargan, 1999: 294). Nejati also stated in this regard: "Mehdi Bazargan knew the secret of the success of the founders of the British company's dispossession, which led to the evacuation of their forces from Iran, in their love for freedom, their homeland, and the pride and salvation of Iran that was in them" (Nejati, 1377, 1/296). Bazargan continued to defend Iran's national interests after the coup of 18 Mordad 1332 and the overthrow of Mossadegh's national government. He wrote a letter to the members of parliament in protest against the new Iran-West oil contract (consortium) and warned them against approving such a contract - which was against the law on the nationalization of Iranian oil. Yousefi Eshkvari writes in this regard: "Engineer Bazargan, as one of the credible and active leaders of the national resistance movement, was very sensitive and active in relation to the issue of oil and the new contract. Because the issue of the contract negated the independence of the country and was to the detriment of the country" (Yousefi Eshkevari, 1376: 1/217). This public protest caused Bazargan to be removed from all government positions and even deprived of teaching at the university; but this incident did not hinder his firm determination to defend the national interests of the Iranians and not only did he not express regret for this action; but he was always proud of his record in defending the national interests of Iran, especially the country's oil interests (Bazargan, 1378: 294).

Conclusion

Mehdi Bazargan is one of the prominent figures in contemporary Iranian history who has played an important role in contemporary Iranian history, both in the field of thought and in the field of practical politics. One of his fundamental concerns throughout his intellectual and political life has been the national identity of Iranians and the criteria for defending it. He has paid attention to various criteria and components in defending the national identity of Iranians. The most important of these components, in order of importance, are:

1. Efforts to create a civil and democratic Iranian society
2. Compatibility of Islam and Iranian nationality
3. Attention to the independence of the country in all its aspects
4. Defense of the national interests of Iranians

Bazargan adhered to these four components in defending the Iranian national identity throughout his political and intellectual life. Education in Europe and fascination with some Western schools of thought such as liberalism did not prevent him from being indifferent to the teachings of Islam and Iranian nationality. On the contrary; He believed in the compatibility of Islamic teachings with Iranian culture and nationality, and the compatibility of the two with modern Western ideas. From this perspective, he also defended the national identity of Iranians and saw no contradiction between Islamism, patriotism, and modernity.

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