The Transcendent School of Security According to Motahari

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Abstract

This article aims to revisit and systematize the security thought of Ayatollah Mortaza Motahari within the framework of the "Transcendent School of Security." The main problem addressed by the article is the dominance of Western security schools that are grounded in materialist foundations, alongside the very limited contribution of the Islamic world to the production of security literature—despite its rich historical heritage and the inherently normative nature of the concept of security. This shortcoming is particularly noteworthy given the heavy dependence of security studies on indigenous values and contextual foundations. The main question of the study is: On what components and foundations is the Transcendent School of Security in the thought of Ayatollah Motahari constructed, and how can it offer a comprehensive model for security in Islamic society? The objective of this study is to systematically extract and reconstruct the full dimensions of the Transcendent School of Security from within the corpus of Motahari's works. This objective is pursued by elucidating the key components of this school—such as the concept of security, its dimensions, reference, levels, and methods of provision—in explicit contrast to secular (mundane) security schools. The method employed in this research is "theory analysis." Using an analytical-descriptive approach, the researcher examines and derives the foundations, concepts, and theoretical framework of the Transcendent School of Security from the entire body of Motahari's works. This method relies on re-reading his scattered ideas and organizing them into a coherent and integrated security theory.

The most important findings of the research are as follows:

1. Foundations related to the study of human nature: The Transcendent School of Security is founded on a philosophical-religious understanding of human nature, according to which human beings possess a "divine self" (supernatural innate nature) and an "animal self" (worldly instincts). True security depends on strengthening the divine self and remembrance of God, rather than merely eliminating material threats.

2. Concept of security: From Motahari's perspective, security is a "constructed," "broad" (encompassing both material and spiritual dimensions), and "relative" concept. It is inextricably linked to the "eternal survival" of human beings and refers to a state in which the individual or society is protected from threats so as to attain transcendent values and divine pleasure.

3. Dimensions of security: In this school, security has extensive dimensions that, in addition to conventional ones (political, social, economic, familial), place particular emphasis on the spiritual dimension and the inseparable connection between security and faith.

4. Referent of security: The primary and central referent of security in Motahari's thought is Islam itself. All efforts and sacrifices are made to preserve and realize the goals of this religion as the ultimate purpose of humanity.

5. Levels of security: Security is analyzed at two levels—"manifest" (material) and "inner" (spiritual and connected to faith)—with the inner level forming the foundation and basis of the manifest level.

6. Methods of providing security: Achieving security requires the simultaneous employment of "soft" instruments (such as faith, piety, belief in the Hereafter, knowledge, education, and unity) and "hard" instruments (such as power, jihad, and the fortification of places).

7. Strategic solutions: At the macro level, this school seeks to "change the existing insecure global order" and offers strategies such as granting primacy to the Islamic Revolution, confronting Zionism as a source of regional insecurity, solidarity with the oppressed (such as the people of Palestine), and belief in Mahdism as means to achieve global security.

Overall, this research demonstrates that Motahari's Transcendent School of Security transcends materialist approaches, viewing security as a multidimensional and transcendent phenomenon whose true realization depends on faith, justice, and rationality, and is oriented toward human felicity in the Hereafter.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Despite the dominance of Western security schools rooted in materialist foundations, the security literature of the Islamic world—despite its rich heritage originating from the formative developments of early Islam—remains underdeveloped. Given that the field of security studies is inherently normative and context-bound, this article seeks to rediscover the thought of Mortaza Motahari in order to present an Islamic and transcendent model of security that is commensurate with the requirements of the Islamic world. Previous studies (Lakzaei, 2010, 2017, 2018; Nasiri & et al., 2019) have explored specific aspects of Motahari's security thought, such as its foundations related to the study of human nature, its relationship with freedom, and methods for achieving security. However, the innovation of the present article lies in the fact that, for the first time, it systematically reconstructs and presents his hitherto scattered ideas as a coherent and integrated "Transcendent School of Security," complete with all the components of a fully-fledged security theory. In this research, security is analyzed not as a merely material concept but as a multidimensional and transcendent phenomenon that simultaneously encompasses both the material and spiritual dimensions of human life, ultimately linking individual and societal security to felicity in the Hereafter. Transcending conventional approaches, this theory offers a comprehensive model for realizing true security in Islamic society.

2. Theoretical Framework: Transcendent School of Security

The theoretical framework of this article reconstructs Motahari's thought in the form of the "Transcendent School of Security." This school stands in direct opposition to secular (mundane) security schools. Whereas the central signifier of secular schools is the "worldly survival" of human beings, the primary concern of the Transcendent School is their "eternal survival." Accordingly, the ultimate purpose of security is not merely the provision of material interests, but the realization of "existential security" on the path toward spiritual perfection. This distinction is rooted in the specific anthropology of transcendent philosophy, which posits a dual realm for human beings: the "divine self" anchored in supernatural innate nature, and the "animal self" centered on worldly instincts. The inner conflict between these two selves determines the security orientation of both the individual and society. From this perspective, true security is defined not by the mere removal of material threats, but by strengthening the divine self and the human being's connection

with God. Conversely, the dominance of animal desires leads to "self-forgetfulness" and reduces security to a limited and unstable level. On this basis, prevailing Western security schools—whether realist, liberal, or Marxist—are classified as secular schools. Because of their one-dimensional and materialist view of human nature, they ignore spiritual dimensions and interpret security solely in terms of power, interests, or economics, thereby failing to provide lasting tranquility. In what follows, the main components of Motahari's security theory will be examined in accordance with this transcendent framework.

3. The Concept of Security

Various definitions of security have been proposed, yet not only has no consensus emerged among security specialists on this matter, but some have even declared it undefinable. At the terminological level, there exists no agreed-upon meaning for security; a cursory review reveals that more than 150 different definitions of security have been put forward. One must therefore acknowledge that this multiplicity of definitions has made it exceedingly difficult to arrive at a unified conception of the term (Eftekhari, 2012, pp. 81–84). At the core of Motahari's security thought lies an emphasis on epistemological foundations deeply rooted in divine revelation and the practical conduct of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his household) and Imam Ali (peace be upon him). This approach serves not only as a theoretical framework but also as a practical model that constitutes the foundation of his security school. Accordingly, it is necessary to briefly elucidate the concept of security by reference to relevant Quranic verses. The Quran employs the term "amn" (security/safety) with multiple meanings, including: the absence of fear (Āl ʿImrān: 97), affirmation or belief (al-Baqara: 3), tranquility (al-Baqara: 239), absence of betrayal or treachery (al-Nisāʾ: 58), and the granting of protection or asylum (al-Tawba: 6). In summary, the general elements of the concept of security in the Qur'an are as follows: (1) Security is an expression of a divine tradition (*sunnah*) and a blessing through which people are tested. (2) Security is a conscious state. (3) The nature of security—as a feeling or perception—requires a living being (whether human or non-human); accordingly, Islam emphasizes that the lives of humans and other living creatures that have been subjugated for human service and benefit must be placed in a state of security. (4) Since security is a conscious state, it inherently contains assurance and the absence of expectation of adversity in the future. (5) Just as security can never be separated from time,

it cannot be separated from place either. To understand the importance of place as a fundamental factor in security, one must consider the interpretation of why certain sacred locations have been granted the attribute of "secure" by God, who has designated them as "secure sanctuary" (*ḥaram amn*) or "secure land" (Manjud, 1996, pp. 31–33). Based on the aforementioned verses, "security," in its simplest meaning and, more precisely, in its literal sense, denotes a state of tranquility and the absence of fear—a state from which no one is ever independent or self-sufficient. Nevertheless, when analyzing the concept of security, the following points must be taken into consideration:

1) Security is a constructed concept: From the author's viewpoint, security is regarded as one of the constructed concepts, in contrast to simple concepts. Simple concepts can be understood through brief, single-sentence definitions, whereas constructed concepts become more complex as explanatory sentences and definitional statements increase. For example, defining truthfulness as "speech that conforms to reality" is immediately comprehensible, but defining security as the absence of fear, tranquility, the absence of threat, or the preservation of values still leaves ambiguity, because such definitions instantly raise further questions about the nature of those values or the essence of threat. To define constructed concepts such as security, the corresponding construct must be presented. It appears that the construct of security consists of three fundamental aspects: A gains immunity from B in order to attain the state C or to remain in that state. How is this immunity achieved? According to the theory of the two natures, two conditions are conceivable: first, the positive aspect, which involves performing specific actions, acquiring certain qualities, or adhering to particular values; second, the negative aspect, which requires abstaining from improper actions, avoiding moral vices, and rejecting erroneous beliefs. Each school of thought and security theory builds this construct upon its own cultural and value system. In the present framework, the concept of security is inextricably linked to "eternal survival." Divine values are given precedence over material values. Accordingly, actions that lead to eternal survival and divine pleasure are performed, while every action that incurs divine wrath is avoided, in such a way that no one can assail the individual on this path—since eternal survival is of fundamental importance to human beings. Thus, within this paradigm, security means attaining a state in which A is protected from the harm, assault, or threat of B in order to reach C or to become firmly established in that desirable state. In Table (1), the aforementioned definition has been concisely applied to the derivatives of security.

Table 1- Derivatives of Security

No.	Type of Security	A (the subject)	Protected from harm/ threat B	To attain or remain in state C
1	Individual security	Individual	Whims of the soul, ignorance, wrong decisions of individuals, etc.	Peace and tranquility of life, property, honor, etc.
2	Public security	Society	Oppressors, corruptors, criminals, delinquents, etc.	Social justice, balance, rule of law, public order
3	Political security	Citizens	Tyranny, dictatorship, dependency, colonialism	Political participation, democracy, independence, freedom
4	Cultural security	Way of life based on beliefs, tendencies, and behaviors	Cultural invasion, imposition, destruction, superstitions, etc.	Excellence, identity, moral, religious, ethical, and behavioral values, etc.
5	Economic security	Economy (production, distribution, and consumption)	Sanctions, hoarding, poverty, etc.	Access to biological necessities, economic development, welfare
6	National security	Sovereignty, government, territory, and population	Enemies	Fulfillment of national goals and resources, independence, and any other vital value

2) Security is an expansive concept: An ontological analysis of security in the thought of Martyr Motahari reveals that, unlike prevalent security schools which adopt a purely material and this-worldly perspective and reduce security merely to the absence of material threats, he simultaneously addressed both the material and spiritual dimensions of security. From his viewpoint, the mere absence of threat is not sufficient for the realization of security; rather, positive actions in the form of religious programs are also essential. One of the fundamental distinctions of Motahari's viewpoint, in comparison with conventional security schools, is the inseparable link he establishes between security and faith. In explaining the spiritual dimensions of security, he draws a profound connection between security and faith. From his perspective, "faith" (*īmān*) is one of the derivatives of the root "amn" (security/safety). The term "muʾmin" (believer) is used in the Quran both for God and for believing human beings. When applied to God, it means "the Granter of Security," as in the verse: "He is Allah, than Whom there is no other god, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of Peace, the Bestower of Security (*al-Muʾmin*) …" (Qur'an 59:23). God is *al-Muʾmin* because He is the only utterly reliable support through reliance upon which a human being attains absolute security. When the same term is applied to human servants, however, it denotes "one who has attained security," as stated in the verse: "Say: He is the All-Merciful; we have believed in Him (*āmannā bih*) …" (Qur'an 2:163). The material dimensions of security are also explained through their inseparable connection with the spiritual dimension of security. Motahari emphasizes the profound relationship

between transcendent foundations and the worldly aspects of human life on the one hand, and both the negative and positive aspects of security on the other, because material security serves as an essential foundation for the realization of human dignity and felicity in the Hereafter. From his perspective, the actualization of these security dimensions requires the establishment of a government that simultaneously provides the conditions for preserving worldly security (including awareness and freedom) and security in the Hereafter (directed toward perfection and eternal felicity). Nevertheless, Motahari strongly opposes the confinement of human knowledge to the material realm alone and holds that purely material methods enable humans only to comprehend the limited world of nature and its properties, without offering any possibility of attaining knowledge that transcends these natural boundaries.

   3) Security is a relative concept: In Motahari's view, security and insecurity are relative inasmuch as blessing and affliction are relative. In his words, security is an instance of blessing, while insecurity is an instance of affliction. It is on this basis that the relativity of security becomes evident in his thought. Thus, the relativity of security means that it is measured against the prevailing value system of the political order, i.e., the ultimate ends that the provision of security is intended to serve. Security can sometimes be employed in pursuit of purely material and non-virtuous goals. Complete security unaccompanied by any form of insecurity usually leads societies away from moral values and breeds a kind of arrogance and lethargy. Certain governments and societies in the past reached their end and perished precisely in such a condition. Motahari believes that hardships and adversities have benefits for human beings. In other words, a certain degree of insecurity is necessary for the existential elevation of man. Consequently, insecurity is not entirely devoid of value; on the contrary, because of the role it plays in bringing forth human potential through overcoming difficulties, it is also regarded as valuable (Motahari, 2010 a, pp. 159–160; 2010 b, pp. 298–299). Conclusion: From Motahari's perspective, the concept of security is both expansive and relative. Its expansiveness stems from encompassing both spiritual and material dimensions, while its relativity arises from the fact that security can be value-positive or value-negative: security is positive when it serves the attainment of higher values, but takes on a negative character when its application leads to the neglect of other values. Security resembles blessing in that it is sometimes employed as a test for the faithful. Table (2) illustrates the conceptual construct he has in mind.

Table 2- Conceptual Construct

Negative Aspects of Security	Positive Aspects of Security
Non-aggression by external enemies	Strengthening inner power
Unbelief	Faith
Ignorance and instinct-dominated behavior	Education and upbringing
Tyranny	Freedom
Injustice	Justice
Severing family ties, theft, and hypocrisy	Kindness, charitable spending, and maintaining family ties
Betrayal	Trustworthiness
Regarding divine trials as calamity	Regarding divine trials as blessing

4. Dimensions of Security

Security has diverse dimensions. Among prevalent security schools, some—such as the realists—advocate a narrow conception of security, while others—such as the Copenhagen School—defend a broad conception. Narrow security means that security possesses only a military dimension. From the realist perspective, the international system is an arena of struggle, human nature is inherently sinful, states do not trust one another, and every country continually strives to acquire power. In broad security, by contrast, security is not limited to the military dimension but also encompasses political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Abdollahkhani, 2010, p. 62). In both approaches, the dimensions outlined for security remain entirely this-worldly. In Motahari's thought, however, attention is given to both the material and spiritual dimensions of security:

1. Political security: Political security is one of the major topics within the broader field of security, encompassing its own levels and more specific sub-topics. Sometimes, political security refers to the security of the political system (macro level), while at other times it refers to the security of individuals' political freedoms (micro level). Here, the intended meaning of political security is the latter. Political security means the provision by a country's governing authority of the necessary tranquility and reassurance to its citizens, achieved through guaranteeing their political rights to participate in determining their social and political destiny. Upon examining the complete works of Motahari, the topics of individuals' political security include: the right to express and advocate any political opinion, the right to be elected, and the right to vote.

A) The right to express any political opinion: One of the primary aspects of individual political security is that people must be able to: first, freely think about, research, and examine all political ideas and tendencies (freedom/ security of thought); second, adopt one of those ideas or tendencies (freedom/ security of belief); third, express and propagate the political idea or tendency they have chosen (freedom/security of expression). Security of thought, belief, and expression can be examined both in relation to the person of the Islamic ruler (the governing authority) and in relation to the foundational beliefs, ideology, theoretical basis, or source of legitimacy of the government. In addition, the effect that such thought, belief, and expression may have on public order must also be taken into account. Accordingly, if an individual's belief is in harmony with the established theory of the government, then naturally no particular problem or restriction on its expression is conceivable. Otherwise, such beliefs must not be disseminated in a manner that would undermine religion, disrupt societal order and security, or incite ethnic, religious, or political discord. In this regard, the general obligations to preserve the system, the prohibition against disrupting the system, and the prohibition of division and disorder may be cited as legal and religious grounds.

Motahari, while strongly emphasizing the right to freedom of belief and expression, regards intellectual security as contingent upon two fundamental conditions: first, that individuals be able to adhere to their beliefs without fear or anxiety; second, that they enjoy freedom in acquiring and disseminating information. He holds that intellectual security is not only compatible with certain ideological restrictions but actually requires that beliefs be grounded in rational reflection. From his viewpoint, Islam accepts only those convictions that arise from free contemplation and reasoning, not beliefs acquired through blind imitation or ignorance. Superstitious and ignorant convictions of this kind are not only unacceptable but function like chains binding human intellect and spirit, thereby depriving people of true intellectual freedom. Motahari further stresses the government's responsibility to protect the authentic beliefs of the people, maintaining that just as the state is duty-bound to meet material needs, it must likewise safeguard the true faith and genuine convictions of the populace (Motahari, 2010 c, p. 294; 2022 h, p. 18).

B) The right to be elected: Motahari regards the right to be elected as one of the pillars of political security, as it assures citizens that, through effort, they can attain the highest managerial positions. He critiques the Pahlavi political system for its imitation of Western models and insists on the necessity of establishing specific qualifications for candidates in order

to guarantee the genuine security of the people. Pointing to the lack of competence among representatives in various terms of the National Consultative Assembly, he argues that, to safeguard the interests of society—which ultimately consist in guiding humanity toward perfection—conditions such as justice and political piety (which cannot be realized without religious piety) must be required of candidates. He explicitly states that even for those who make decisions solely concerning the worldly affairs of the people, definite scientific and practical qualifications must be stipulated (Motahari, 2022 g, pp. 103–106).

C) The right to vote: Political security in Islamic thought requires the right of citizens to participate in determining their own political destiny in such a way that no external power can interfere with this right. In Shiite jurisprudence, this concept is expressed through the institution of *bayʿa* (pledge of allegiance), which nearly all jurists consider necessary for the establishment of legitimate government. Regarding the nature of *bayʿa* and political participation, two main theories exist: (i) the legitimacy-conferring theory, which regards popular participation as the source of a government's legitimacy; (ii) the efficacy theory, which emphasizes the people's role in the practical realization of governance. In the legitimacy-conferring view, although sovereignty ultimately belongs to God, this right has been delegated to the Islamic community so that it may choose its leader from among those jurists who possess the required qualifications. The difference between the two theories is largely theoretical, since in practice both insist on popular participation in the formation and administration of government. Motahari, adopting a practical approach, considers voting a form of delegation or representation (*wikāla*) and regards it as an indisputable right for both women and men (Motahari, 2022 f, p. 102).

2. Social security: In Motahari's words, social security can be classified in two ways: social security is sometimes confronted with threats lesser than outright rebellion and sometimes with threats greater than that. In fact, social security is divided into two categories: supra-rebellion security and sub-rebellion security. Supra-rebellion security is threatened by subversives or insurgents (*bāghī*), and the remedy for it is jihad. Sub-rebellion security is endangered by deviant individuals, and the remedy for it is enjoining good and forbidding evil (*amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*).

A) Supra-rebellion social security: Motahari, with his profound insight, identifies the most dangerous security threat to an Islamic society as the destructive collaboration between two groups: a hypocritical, power-seeking

minority that cunningly seeks to lead the society astray, and a well-meaning but fanatical majority that unwittingly becomes a tool in the hands of these hypocrites. Drawing on religious sources, he demonstrates that this devastating combination—a cunning minority and a gullible majority—has historically been the primary cause of Islamic societies deviating from the right path. Neither group can create insecurity on its own: the hypocrites are powerless without the cooperation of the naive masses, and the believing masses would not be led astray without the provocation of the hypocrites. This astute analysis reveals how a small group can, by exploiting people's religious sentiments, threaten societal security in a subtle yet extremely dangerous manner (Motahari, 2010 c, p. 70).

B) Sub-rebellion social security: Social security is sometimes endangered, but not to the extent that the very foundations of society are disrupted. The factors that jeopardize sub-rebellion social security are, in fact, social vices and crimes. Motahari refers to the principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil as the basis for constant reform and unrelenting struggle against corruption. This principle, as Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) describes it, constitutes the foundation and pillar of all other Islamic obligations; it keeps the Muslim in a state of perpetual intellectual revolution, eternal reform-seeking, and tireless, restless combat against corruption and depravity (Motahari, 2010 d, p. 122).

3. Economic security: Economic security consists of the absence of fear and anxiety, the attainment of assurance, and the creation of appropriate conditions and necessary foundations for economic activities aimed at the proper production of wealth, its distribution, and its consumption (Lakzaei & Khosravi, 2016, p. 109). Economic security is closely linked to social security. A threat to economic security can jeopardize both supra-rebellion and sub-rebellion social security. Motahari, by explaining some of the economic prohibitions, emphasizes that failure to observe God-centeredness in economic matters—which in reality means adherence to divine laws in the economic sphere—leads society into discord and decline. As a result, society's path shifts from elevation and perfection toward destruction and the dissipation of social wealth. This not only prevents the realization of other-worldly and transcendent security but also means that society fails to achieve even this-worldly economic security, which consists of equality among the members of a community (Motahari, 2010 d, p. 123). Economic security, when examined in light of its causing factors, manifests in two forms: just economic security and supra-just economic security. Just economic security is achieved through

the prohibition of oppressive economic activities, while supra-just economic security is realized through voluntary actions aimed at reducing poverty and economic disparities, such as charitable giving and almsgiving.

A) Just economic security: One of the components emphasized in economic security is the just distribution of wealth and economic opportunities, which in turn brings about justice in other spheres, including social and political security. From the Islamic perspective, this component eliminates poverty and creates the conditions for societal growth. Motahari critiques certain views that advocate working only to the extent of one's capacity and then sharing the fruits of labor collectively. He argues that Islam's objective is the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development of human beings to such a degree that selfishness disappears, helping one another becomes a universal moral trait, and society as a whole enjoys God's blessings equally. An issue unanimously condemned by all religions is usury (*ribā*). Motahari holds that usury is declared forbidden primarily because it causes extensive harm to society. Usury drives economic security out of society and replaces it with oppression, corruption, enslavement, domination, and coercion. In his view, usury is a form of exploitation; both usury and exploitation produce the same outcome and fall under the category of injustice. Injustice, in one sense, is itself the absence of security—meaning that when a person appropriates a right that does not belong to him, security is violated (Motahari, 2018, p. 57).

B) Supra-just economic security: Supra-just economic security has numerous factors, some of which are reflected in Motahari's words and are recounted here. One of the methods strongly emphasized in Islam—and carefully examined by Motahari from both causal and social perspectives—for avoiding usury and establishing economic security in society is interest-free loan (*qarḍ al-ḥasana*). In Motahari's view, *qarḍ al-ḥasana* not only prevents the problems and afflictions caused by usury but also creates a form of social convergence and solidarity (Motahari, 2022 a, Vol. 10, p. 81). Moral virtues such as contentment likewise have a positive effect on the attainment of security in the economic domain (Motahari, 2010 e, Vol. 1, p. 242). On the opposite side, moral vices such as greed and avarice destroy security in the economic sphere (Motahari, 2022 b, Vol. 2, p. 34).

4. Familial security: Motahari's central claim regarding the security of the family, and especially of women, is that "as long as the rule of lust prevails in the world, there will never be true chastity security." Examining the historical reasons for the emergence of veiling, Motahari analyzes the view of some

researchers who link the hijab exclusively to social insecurity. While acknowledging that historical insecurity contributed to extreme forms of covering, he considers this explanation insufficient for the philosophy of the Islamic hijab. He points out that during the Sassanid era, severe insecurity and assaults on women led to their complete concealment, yet Islam introduced the hijab as a divine command even in the relatively secure environment of pre-Islamic Arab society. Rejecting the claim that complete security exists in the modern world, Motahari cites alarming rape statistics from industrialized countries and stresses that as long as the dominion of lust governs societies, genuine security for women will remain unattainable. In his view, although the hijab functions as one of the mechanisms for ensuring family security, the primary reason for its legislation in Islam goes far beyond mere social insecurity and is rooted in divine wisdom (Motahari, 2022 c, p. 44).

5. The Referent of Security

The referent of security is a key component that determines the definition, ultimate purpose, and function of security, and it plays a decisive role in decision-making. The referent of security is the focal point of policy-making and must be preserved at all costs. What constitutes the referent of security depends on the worldview of the respective intellectual school, and it is precisely this referent that distinguishes one school from another. Realists regard the state as the referent of security and hold that a threat is directed at the state; when the state is threatened, the entire country becomes insecure. In contrast, there are schools that consider the individual to be the referent of security and expect the state to exist solely in order to provide security for the individual. From Motahari's perspective, the referent of security is Islam itself. The primacy of Islam as the referent of security means that Islam occupies the position of the normative reference point for security and, as a monotheistic value system and worldview, serves as the principal criterion for distinguishing security from threat. Accordingly, anything that conflicts with Islamic values and rulings is regarded as fundamental insecurity, and the ultimate purpose of security is the preservation of the religion and the realization of Islamic goals. Three pieces of evidence support this view: First, in situations of threat, Muslims are prepared to sacrifice their lives in defense of Islam, Islamic territory, or the Imam—and the Imam himself gives his life for Islam—as occurred on Ashura. Second, God has promised in the Quran to be its Protector, and the Quran is the instrument for preserving Islam. Third, Islam is not merely a means but an end in itself. In Motahari's view, Islam is

the very essence of life. Even if the people's material comfort is compromised, the duty of the government is to safeguard and realize Islamic goals as the ultimate goals of humanity. Consequently, Islam is not only the referent of security but also the ultimate end of human existence (Motahari, 2010 g, p. 249; 2022 a, vol. 10, pp. 83–84, 95–96).

6. Levels of Security

From Motahari's perspective, security and insecurity operate on two principal levels: the apparent (exoteric) level and the inner (esoteric) level. The apparent level encompasses all tangible manifestations of security and insecurity. In terms of origin, this level can be either natural or human: natural blessings and calamities such as floods, earthquakes, and storms, or human-generated security and insecurity such as war and peace. The inner, esoteric level—which also influences the apparent level—is far more important. This level is connected to the unseen realm (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) and, consequently, to faith. What was previously quoted from Motahari in the conceptual discussion of security—that the foundation and essence of security is faith—precisely points to this very notion.

   A. Analyzing security in purely material terms: Motahari examines individual security at the material level and refers to prevalent theories such as that of Bertrand Russell, who defines security solely in terms of individual rationality and foresight. In this view, ethics and human compassion have no place; only the calculation of material profit and loss matters. Russell holds that a person refrains from wrongdoing only because the consequences will rebound upon himself. Motahari concludes that this philosophy is fundamentally anti-ethical, because it provides no reason whatsoever to respect the rights of the weaker party except when power is equal. In this mindset, security is purely material and based exclusively on worldly interests, and threats are likewise defined only at this level. This approach—which may be termed "secular (or mundane) security"—lacks any ethical or humanistic foundation and rests entirely on utilitarian calculations (Motahari, 2011 b, p. 80).

   B. Analyzing security in material and supra-material terms: In contrast to "mundane security" (materialistic security), Motahari speaks of "monotheistic security" or "transcendent security," which rests upon a profound understanding of existence and faith in a Wise and Purposeful Creator. This perspective is accompanied by an optimistic view of the order of creation and sees the believing individual as living in a world whose laws are

just and directed toward goodness and perfection. Such a person assumes full responsibility for his own advancement or regression and continues moving forward with hope and motivation. By contrast, those who regard existence as cruel and meaningless constantly live in anxiety and psychological distress— as the Quran itself describes the constricted and darkened life of those who turn away from the remembrance of God. From Motahari's perspective, monotheistic faith not only brings psychological tranquility but also places the world at the disposal of the believing individual, because the order of existence itself supports those who walk the path of truth. Verses such as "If you help Allah, He will help you" (Quran 47:7) and "Indeed, Allah does not allow the reward of the doers of good to be lost" (Quran 9:120) emphasize the truth that effort in the way of goodness never goes unanswered. Thus, transcendent security rests upon two pillars: responsible human endeavor and certainty in divine support, which together ultimately lead to inner peace and hopefulness. This stands in stark contrast to the materialistic outlook, which regards the world as neutral and indifferent and reduces security solely to material calculations (Motahari, 2006, pp. 39–42).

7. Requirements and Threats

Security, like all other political and governmental issues, possesses both enabling factors and threatening factors. For security to be realized, society, the ummah, the nation, the family, and the individual must have a clear definition of it so that they can identify the factors that strengthen or threaten it and accordingly organize their positions and conduct. From the very beginning of his mission, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his household) established an unbreakable link between faith in God and salvation—of which security is an integral part—by declaring: "Say: There is no god but Allah, and you will prosper." Throughout the Meccan and Medinan periods, he consistently emphasized "the religion of Islam" and "monotheism" as the primary referent of security. This is clearly evident in his conduct, as he repeatedly risked his life in battles and confrontations solely to defend the faith. When examining the factors that provide or threaten security, it is essential to correctly define the criteria for friendship and enmity so that it becomes clear on which side one must stand and against which side one must struggle. If the distinction between friend and enemy becomes blurred or the boundaries cannot be discerned, security will be placed in grave danger.

   A. Criterion of enmity: The criterion of enmity, regarding which the Quran and hadith repeatedly issue the strongest warnings, is Satan and the

lower self (*hawā*). The reason is that if a human being's faculties fall under the control of Satan and capricious desire, the very person who is supposed to be the provider of security for himself and others turns into a creature who neither lives in security himself nor allows others to live in security. One of humanity's duties is to gain mastery over the lustful faculty of imagination; otherwise, this devil-like faculty will leave no opportunity for elevation or traversing the path of nearness to God, and it will nullify and waste all the powers and talents within the human being (Motahari, 2011 c, p. 108).

   B. Criterion of friendship: Motahari considers the primary criterion of friendship and security to be faith in God and nearness to Him. He maintains that without adherence to divine values, even material progress can itself become a threat. In his view, human beings who lack spiritual convictions are constantly driven to increase their material power, and this rivalry inevitably leads to conflict and societal insecurity. For example, knowledge—which can be a source of security—when separated from faith, turns into a threat against humanity itself. Motahari points to contemporary cases such as the United States and Israel to illustrate how scientific and technological power, in the absence of divine ethics, becomes an instrument of domination and the deprivation of security for others. Motahari stresses that although humanity has succeeded in subduing nature, it has still failed to master its own lower self, and this inner weakness remains the greatest threat to human security and felicity. Rumi likewise declares in his poetry that taming the lower self is a task beyond the reach of mere intellect and cleverness. The Prophet, too, emphasizes this inner danger with the words: "Your most implacable enemy is your own self which resides between your two sides." Thus, from Motahari's perspective, genuine security can be realized only under the shelter of faith and mastery over capricious desire. Without these, all material achievements will not only prove fruitless but will become destructive (Motahari, 2011 d, p. 13). Motahari, citing a hadith from Imam Ali (peace be upon him), points to the inseparable connection between religion and security. He analyzes the Imam's statement: "I will never forgive the loss of reason and the loss of religion," and draws the crucial conclusion that religion is the primary guarantor of both individual and social security. Imam Ali then explicitly states in the same hadith: "Separation from religion is separation from security," because a person without religion cannot be trusted; the possibility of betrayal and harm from such a person is ever-present. Motahari emphasizes that "a life accompanied by fear and insecurity is not a pleasant life" and demonstrates that religion functions as the factor that creates mutual trust and

stability in social relationships. On the other hand, he refers to another part of the same hadith in which the absence of reason is equated with the absence of life: "The loss of reason is the loss of life." This indicates that both reason (as the foundation of discernment) and religion (as the foundation of moral commitment) are indispensable for establishing a secure society. He situates this analysis within the framework of the Islamic theory of security and concludes that religion, as a long-term capital, not only brings about individual well-being but also lays the foundation for social security and justice. This perspective shows that genuine security depends on adherence to religious and ethical values, not merely on material and superficial measures (Motahari, 2010 e, vol. 1, p. 161; 2008, vols. 5–6, p. 25).

8. Methods of Attaining Security

In a general classification within Motahari's thought, we can identify two broad categories of mechanisms for providing security: soft and hard.

1. Soft instruments for achieving security: One group of security-generating tools mentioned by Motahari consists of soft instruments. These typically include insights, attitudes, and dispositions that bring about inner tranquility and external security for human beings. Motahari has spoken extensively on this subject; the most important of these elements are presented below.

A) Theism and faith: At the very center of this intellectual system stands faith in God, which Motahari describes not as a dry, lifeless belief but as a vibrant conviction filled with fervor, passion, and readiness for sacrifice. This faith causes a person to see himself constantly in the presence of God and thus to remain vigilant over his actions. The Quran, in verse 82 of Surah al-Anʿām, declares pure and sincere faith to be the guarantor of both security and guidance. Monotheistic faith, moreover, by negating any independence or ultimate reliance on anything other than God, prevents human beings from becoming attached to material things, which are a primary source of insecurity.

B) Belief in resurrection: The fear of death, which stems from instinct, is transformed into tranquility through belief in the Hereafter and the immortality of the soul. This belief restrains a person from oppression and the violation of others' rights, because it directs his attention toward eternal life and the reckoning in the next world. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) considers the remembrance of death to be a means of perfecting and ennobling the human being.

C) Piety or God-consciousness: Motahari regards piety (*taqwā*) as the key to righteousness and the provision for the Hereafter, which liberates a person from enslavement to whims and desires. This inner freedom forms the foundation of social security, because individuals who possess piety are not willing to betray or oppress others. Piety also creates immunity against moral adversities.

D) Belief in guardianship: Faith in the Imams (peace be upon them) as perfect exemplars of humanity creates both psychological security and behavioral security within society. A correct understanding of *wilāya* (guardianship or authority of the Imams) leads to avoidance of sin and steadfast adherence to ethical conduct.

E) Helping those in need: Sympathy and solidarity with the poor and the weak foster social cohesion and make society resilient against both internal and external threats. This approach is clearly evident in the conduct and way of life of the Imams (peace be upon them).

F) Commitment: Motahari, even when analyzing modern institutions such as insurance, regards the security-providing element as the criterion of legitimacy. The insurer's commitment, which removes the policyholder's anxiety, is in itself valuable and praiseworthy.

G) Knowledge: Knowledge is security-creating in two respects: first, it serves as a prerequisite for acting upon religious teachings; second, it frees society from dependence on foreigners. Motahari, citing the hadith "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim," considers the acquisition of sciences essential for the Islamic society to be obligatory.

H) Nurturing: Proper upbringing, by nurturing the highest human capacities and strengthening faith, prevents the occurrence of crime and wrongdoing. Increasing public awareness also enables people to actively participate in providing social security themselves.

I) Unity: The unity of Muslims, which is one of the greatest objectives of Islam, generates power and guarantees the security of the community. Numerous Quranic verses emphasize the necessity of avoiding division and the paramount importance of solidarity (Motahari, 2022 i, p. 162; 2010 f, p. 97; 2010 e, vol. 1, p. 308; 2018, pp. 131, 148; 2010 b, p. 117; 2010 c, p. 90; 2022 d, p. 8).

2. Hard instruments of attaining security: Undoubtedly, security cannot be fully achieved through soft instruments alone; hard instruments are also indispensable. Soft instruments serve as complements to hard instruments in

the realm of security. Relying exclusively on hard instruments is neither feasible in civilized and advanced societies nor desirable, as it would give the outward appearance of civilization a violent character. Consequently, both soft and hard instruments must be employed together to provide security. The exclusive use of hard instruments for maintaining security is reserved for the coercive power of the government and the state.

A) Power: Power is one of the most important factors in providing security; weakness in any of its dimensions (political, military, or economic) can lead to insecurity. Motahari, citing prominent Qur'anic verses, emphasizes that inability or failure to acquire power constitutes a dereliction of divine duty and offers no excuse. The progress of a society depends on possessing the necessary power to manage and properly utilize its resources; without power there can be no progress, and without progress there can be no security. In the Islamic perspective, true leadership belongs to one appointed by God who is capable of establishing both worldly and other-worldly security. The community's willingness to obey such a leader and to act upon his directives is the key to the realization of complete security. In the absence of a divinely appointed leader or in the absence of obedience to him, only worldly security may be preserved.

B) Jihad: Jihad is also presented in Islam as one of the hard instruments of security, but it constitutes only the second stage of *daʿwa* (invitation to faith). Initially, prophets approach people through invitation with wisdom and fair exhortation. Only when these methods fail do they resort to jihad, and even then it is an ethical act undertaken solely to defend truth and resist oppression. The Qur'an underscores the critical role of jihad in establishing security and restoring violated rights, and it calls upon Muslims to acquire strength, remain steadfast, and defend the oppressed (*mustadʿafīn*).

C) Securitizing places: Islam clearly highlights the importance of safe and free spaces. The Kaaba and its sanctuary represent the most symbolic secure space: a place for unity, resolution of disputes, and performance of religious rites. This concept was established in the time of Prophet Abraham and finds its modern reflection in international organizations such as the United Nations. Mosques, too, play a pivotal role as social and security institutions in Islamic societies. They are not merely places of worship but also centers for decision-making, cultural formation, and the resolution of social problems. The Prophet's Mosque in Medina during his lifetime served as the exemplary model of this multifunctional role, demonstrating how religious spaces can be used to foster cohesion, security, and justice within society. Thus, the mosque

functions as the backbone of all social and security institutions and contributes decisively to strengthening the foundations of the community (Motahari, 2010 h, p. 44; 2011 h, p. 209; 2010 i, p. 46; 1999, vol. 10, pp. 260, 274).

9. Strategic Solutions to Security

Strategic security solutions come into play when security doctrines, guided by underlying security theories, adopt broad, long-term orientations that determine a state's trajectory amid global developments. From one perspective, there exist two fundamental strategic orientations: preserving the status quo and changing the status quo. One set of strategic approaches gives priority to maintaining stability. The current structure of the international and regional system poses serious threats to the interests of major powers if fundamental changes occur. In contrast, the approach of changing the status quo essentially means pursuing systemic transformation that stands in sharp contradiction to the existing structures of the international and regional order. Adopting this approach signifies that security cannot be achieved by preserving the status quo and that, to this end, power must be maximized (Abdollahkhani, 2010, pp. 46–47).

We now proceed to examine Motahari's strategic approaches to establishing security at the national, regional, and global levels.

1. National security: At the domestic and micro level, Motahari stands out as one of the foremost defenders and intellectual architects of the Islamic Revolution. This role not only underscores the authentically Islamic character of the Revolution but also reflects profound dissatisfaction with the existing state of justice and security under the previous regime.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran, as its very name indicates, is a revolution of Islamic character that is guided and led according to the principles and standards of this religion. It serves as the herald of Islam and the presenter of God's final message to a world that is both turbulent and lost. The occurrence of this Revolution carried, in its own distinctive way, numerous profound messages and invalidated many prevailing theories. Motahari repeatedly explained the nature of the Islamic Revolution and, by comparing it with other revolutions, highlighted its superior qualities. He regarded the Iranian Revolution as a true and complete revolution. In his view, in the past few centuries only the great French Revolution and the October (Bolshevik) Revolution of Russia are comparable in scale to the Islamic Revolution of Iran—yet the essence of the Iranian Revolution is far deeper. The people of Iran rose up with empty hands, armed solely with revolutionary spirit, against

a regime that was extraordinarily powerful in comparison to them, and they succeeded in their uprising (Motahari, 2010 a, p. 202; 2010 c, p. 119).

2. Regional security: Motahari identifies Israel as the primary source of regional insecurity. He maintains that the Israelis have never been the legitimate owners of that land and entered it through force and deception. In his view, the Zionists pursue global ambitions. He points to figures such as Moshe Dayan, Levi Eshkol, and Golda Meir, who came from different parts of the world to Palestine while falsely claiming historical ownership of the land. Motahari notes that this group has displaced approximately three million Muslims and aims to establish a "Greater Israel" that could potentially extend as far as Iran. He argues that they are fully aware that a small state cannot survive in that region. Citing Abdolrahman Faramarzi, he warns that Israel might one day even lay claim to Shiraz by invoking Persian poetry that refers to it as "the realm of Solomon," and he mentions possible future claims on Iraq, the holy cities, and Khaybar. Finally, Motahari recalls Roosevelt's proposal to the then-king of Saudi Arabia to sell Mecca and Medina to the Jews. He concludes that this artificial and usurping entity, driven by such expansionist thinking, functions like a cancerous tumor that only increases division and insecurity in West Asia (Motahari, 2022 b, Vol. 1, p. 290).

3. Global security: Motahari proposes several key strategic measures for achieving global security: First, return to authentic Islam and the Prophetic Tradition, coupled with full alertness toward the historical enemies of Muslims, especially Zionism and the Israeli regime. He highlights the role of colonial Western powers in creating crises and establishing Israel as a deliberate means of fragmenting the region and striking at the Muslim world (Motahari, 2022 b, vol. 1, pp. 288–294). Second, genuine solidarity with the Palestinian nation as a religious obligation. According to the narrations, true believers must feel the pain of the Palestinian people and actively work for the liberation of Palestine. Motahari insisted that even during the mourning ceremonies for Imam al-Husayn, the cry of "Palestine" must occupy the central place (Motahari, 2022 b, vol. 1, p. 291; 2022 d, pp. 24–25). Three, vigilance against internal "fifth-columnists" and pseudo-insiders who collaborate with the enemies of Islam and sow insecurity among Muslims. Motahari believes that the greatest damage to Muslims has always come from within (Motahari, 2010 c, pp. 65, 124). And fourth, belief in Mahdism and the advent of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), which represents the ultimate realization of global security and the triumph of truth over falsehood. He regarded the Islamic awakening and the recovery of authentic

Muslim identity as the only effective response to secularism and liberalism, and as the sole path to genuine security (Motahari, 1999, vol. 10, p. 26).

10. Conclusions

The key components of the "Transcendent Security School" as derived from Motahari's thought are as follows:

1) In its simplest definition, security is a state of tranquility and the absence of fear. In a more sophisticated analysis, however, it is a constructed, expansive, and relative concept.

2) Motahari explicitly rejects the narrow conception of security. He recognizes multiple dimensions of security; it is not limited to the political sphere but also encompasses social, economic, and familial dimensions.

3) In Motahari's perspective, supported by clear evidence, the referent of security is Islam itself and its values.

4) Security possesses both material and supra-material levels; on the basis of Motahari's thought, a faith-centered security can be articulated.

5) Threatening and security-providing factors are determined according to the criterion of friendship and enmity that is itself rooted in faith.

6) The means of achieving security are divided into two categories: soft and hard instruments. Comprehensive security cannot be established by power alone; dispositions, attitudes, and values also play a decisive role in its realization.

7) Comprehensive security must be pursued at three levels: national, regional, and global. According to Motahari's thought, the establishment of comprehensive, faith-based security belongs to the category of theories that seek to change the existing status quo.

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