

Presenting the Theory of Maritime Civilization, a Criticism of the Sea Power Theory

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Abstract

Today, there is a need for a new approach toward the sea and sea-based sustainable development. Alfred Mahan, by presenting the theory of Sea Power, made the politicians pay special attention to the sea and navigation. Although Sea Power theory includes several positive points, it has been criticized by the researcher. By analyzing the theory of Sea Power through a critical approach, and by carefully examining the literature related to marine power, the researcher, while taking into account the experts' opinions, builds the theory of Maritime Civilization and present it instead of the Sea Power theory. The method of the present research is the content analysis and development of a specific approach, which is mainly due to the way in which the subject of analysis (content) is considered. In the verbal valuation of factors which are considered as the accepted attributes of the Sea Power theory, as well as the neglected factors, the views of eight marine science experts have been used. To present the theory of Maritime Civilization, a theory building framework was used. The framework includes three steps, from the Descriptive stage (Observation, Categorization, and Association), to the Normative stage, based on the theoretical basis of the research. The present study, while confirming the positive points of the Alfred Mahan's Sea Power theory, criticized the nature of thoughts behind the theory. By extracting the necessary terms from literature and research background confirming the positive and negative points of the Sea Power theory and by considering the framework of theory building in Management Science research, a theory called "Maritime Civilization" was presented instead of the Sea Power theory. The results of the study indicated that Sea Power theory has good positive points, however, Alfred Mahan's approach to the sea is an authoritarian and domineering perspective that, firstly, contradicts values and ethics; secondly, the present discussions about sustainable development and the Green Environment criticize the Sea Power theory. Thus, the theory of Maritime Civilization is presented, according to which

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the maritime civilization is a civilization in which the intellectual, scientific, industrial, social, economic and political movements are created in conjunction with the sea and the marine environment. Using a set of capacities and resources, this civilization seeks to enjoy a sustainable sea exploitation in order to turn the human and the marine community into a peaceful community. This is a preliminary theory, and for assessing its validity, the views of five experts from the Marine Science universities were used, which necessitates further investigation by other researchers in the future.

Keywords: Sea, Maritime Civilization, Sea Power

1. Introduction

The sea has always been the cradle of civilization throughout the history, and countries that have access to the sea, as well as the ability to use it, have been able to develop their power and influence in the world. Iran is also enjoying a great opportunity in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Makran coast and the Caspian Sea. The area of the Persian Gulf is slightly less than 240,000 square kilometers, which is the third largest gulf in the world. Moreover, the Gulf of Oman, with an area of about 900,000 square kilometers, is the Indian Ocean's extension in the Southwest Asia. The Caspian Sea, with an area of about 400,000 square kilometers, is also the largest lake in the world. It is worth mentioning that Iran, including the Persian Gulf islands, has a coastline of 5,800 kilometers, with 4,900 kilometers in the south and the rest in the north, and accordingly has a unique position in the region. Countries that enjoy having a sea encounter both the opportunities and threats because the strategic depth of each country is realized in the sea (Alipour & Hakimi, 2014). However, there should be a reflection in the following two paragraphs:

Over the years, our country has been very disrespectful and inattentive to the maritime issue. That is, we are the people who stopped progressing when we reached the water on one side of our borders; unlike the nations for whom the water was the same as the land, like the British! When Europeans reached their seawater, they put their feet in their boats and came to India! That is, the water and the land were no different for them! When the water and the land do not differ for a nation, such state will be ahead of other nations for five, six, or seven centuries. When they reach the sea, they walk into the water and move on! We did not behave like this! When we reached the sea, we stopped there; We have waited for those who seized the seas to occupy our waters and enter our lands! Hormuz Island, Bandar Abbas and Bushehr - the borders that are now in your hands - have been in the hands of foreigners for a long time (Khamenei, 2007).



We have seven or eight hundred years of maritime history. At the time, when our ships crossed the Persian Gulf to all parts of Asia, many of the countries that are now well-known for their maritime affairs did not even exist at all. Regarding this historical background, as well as our nation's abilities and high intelligence, and our skilled people and young people, why are we so backward that we get so happy when we make an achievement? During the centuries, our nation has been persecuted. Who has persecuted us? Have foreigners persecuted us? No, the corrupt rulers have. I do not blame the Portuguese, the Dutch or the British who seized our coasts and islands. Well, those countries and governments pursue their own interests; the great powers do such things; they occupy thousands of miles away from their own countries; they seized the Indian subcontinent; they captured the Eastern territories; nowadays, they do such things all over the world. They are not to be blamed. Those corrupt and autocratic powers, who lack any motivation and determination, should be blamed for failing to preserve the dignity of Iran and Iranian people. The enemy could easily take Bandar Abbas, Hormuz Island, Qeshm, and the rest of the islands. The Iranian nation did not deserve such oppression (Khamenei, 2010).

Iran's presence in the naval fields has had a good upturn, however, there has been a long recession in recent centuries, which has caused irreparable damages to the country. For over five centuries, maritime capability has created power for the leading countries in this field. Different periods of economic, industrial, scientific and technological progress, and even the domination of space, have not decreased the importance of marine and ocean affairs. The important role of seas and oceans in maritime transportation, military dominance, climate change and biological production has led them to have a decisive role in the future of humankind.

Based on researches and statistics provided by official authorities, Iran has a coastline of more than 5790 kilometers in the north and south (1: 2500 scale). The waters under the sovereignty are equivalent to one quarter of the country's total area. And more than 200,000 square kilometers of ocean and high seas are jointly exploitable. Thus, according to the marine sciences definitions, the Islamic Republic of Iran can be considered a maritime country (A strategic document for the development of higher education in the field of marine and ocean science and technology, 2013). This maritime nation requires the implementation of the Maritime Civilization theory.

In order to achieve a sustainable development and an endogenous perspective, the proper use of sea resources is required. We also need to pay attention to sea-based sustainable development, the basis of which is created by the implementation of Maritime Civilization. Examining Alfred Mahan's Sea Power theory, the researcher outlines the concept of civilization and

how it has been formulated, and presents the theory of Maritime Civilization, and proposes ways to implement Maritime Civilization in place of the Sea Power theory.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Research

2.1. Explaining the Concept of Civilization

The word "civilization" has no lexical equivalent in the traditional world. Perhaps the words "property" or "city" can be considered to be partly equivalent to the word. The root of the word "civilization" or "urban" or "city" is derived from the Arabic word "Medina" meaning "city." Of course, in Arabic the equivalent is "Al-Hazar". The Latin equivalent of the word "civilization" is rooted in "civis", which means the person living in the city, and "Civitas" that means the community in which one lives. In spite of its ambiguity, the term gradually created the field of Civilization Studies as an interdisciplinary field. Many attempts were made to examine the concept and history of "civilization" by social sciences scholars. Many theorists engaged in discussions on the main causes of the emergence, formation, transformation, and sometimes the degeneration of civilizations (JanAhmadi, 2007).

2.2. Idiomatic Meaning of Civilization

Civilization is a new and innovative concept; thus, when it is judged or issued, a percentage of error would be acceptable and reasonable in the judgment. "Civilization" is the word and concept created by the people of recent centuries, according to which the history of the human and geographical realm is examined from the artistic, scientific, and economic perspective. In the simplest form of literary definition, civilization means a complex and compound society. Sometimes it refers to advanced governments that have a high level of culture, science, and industry, and sometimes it refers to a specific community and culture at a specific time and place (such as Greek civilization). Civilization should be considered as a phenomenon consisting of all social, political, economic, and cultural events that occur throughout human history. Such social mentality for a human population makes it possible to understand every transformation in human society and can be separated from historical human experiences. Civilization, in its general form, can be regarded as a social order, through which cultural creativity becomes possible.

Perhaps the civilization of the great old empires, which were among the most civilized countries at that time, is not comparable to the present-day civilization of the world; and perhaps they cannot be called civilized in the modern sense. But human civilization must have been established from a starting point, which could gradually develop and progress to its present



form. The nature of civilization topic is beyond history, apart from historical and social developments; it should be considered a project, and because it is a temporal phenomenon, it can be called a process. In today's world, some Western theorists consider several civilizations to dominate the world, the largest of which are the civilization of Islam and Western civilization. However, it is obvious that these two civilizations are not restricted to linear boundaries and do not belong to a particular country. In today's civilized world, where its greatest civilizations are trans boundary, the desired civilizations can, without any war and bloodshed, enter the territories that have the necessary conditions to receive them, and are capable of transferring, modeling and exemplifying the civilization (Gorji, 2015).

Samuel Huntington defines civilization as "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity". Henry Lucas defines civilization as an interconnect- ed phenomenon that encompasses all social, economic, political, and even artistic and literary events. Another scholar writes about civilization: civilization is a term used to explain certain stages of social transformation. Arnold Toynbee believes that civilization is the product of the ingenuity of the innovative and creative minority. That is, the privileged class of society, who has genius, initiative and innovation, creates civilization in the course of society's developments and evolutions. Among other interpretations of Western scholars, the words of Alfred Weber, who considers civilization as a product of knowledge and technology, are closely associated with the idea of Will Durant. According to Will Durant, when general culture reaches a certain level, agricultural thought will be born. Indeed, he has adapted this definition from the literal meaning of civilization, meaning "urbanization"(Velayati, 2008). Considering the proposed definitions, the author believes that civilization is a movement towards development in the scientific, cultural, social, political, intellectual and ideological dimensions; and civilized people are liberal and peaceful individuals who have not been counted as rural and urban. Indeed, the civilized thoughts, or in other words, the great, irenic, and peaceful thoughts, will be the foundation of intellectual, scientific, industrial, social and economic movements in societies for the sake of human excellence.

2. 3. Effective Factors in the Creation and Expansion of a Civilization

Based on the presented perspectives, several features together can be the mainstay of civilization. The first factor, which provides the basis on which the pillars of civilization rest, is the issue of security and peace. In the next step, every civilization has its own national pride and solidarity on the path to its formation, which is the main spirit of civilization. At the later stage, the principle of collaboration and cooperation should be generally accepted. And thereafter, there is a need for morality, because the consideration of

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ethics would prevent the civilizations from falling down the slopes and abyss throughout their difficult path. In the next step, a civilization-building movement can become aware of the mysteries and facts if it observes the principles of tolerance, endurance and patience against different thoughts. Another feature of a civilization-building movement is the preservation of unity and integrity. The presence of faith, religion, and ideology also has an impact on the creation of civilization. Considering the above mentioned points, Will Durant categorized the elements that created a civilization into four factors:

- Economic factors of civilization: agriculture, economic organizations.
- Political factors of civilization: government, state, law and family.
- Moral factors of civilization: marriage, social ethics, religion and religious practices.
- The rational and spiritual elements of civilization: literature, science and art.

According to Will Durant, civilization begins where chaos and insecurity end. Civilization is the consequence of factors that either accelerates its progress or prevents it from moving forward (Will Durant,1958). The factors influencing the progress of civilizations can be summarized as follows(Jan Ahmadi, 2007):

- Science and knowledge development,
- Wisdom and rationality,
- Proper social structure,
- An active economic organization,
- Development of general welfare and the spread of justice,
- Compliance with the ethical norms which are derived from the context of society and are consistent with the human nature,
- Adherence to the principle of social unity and integrity,
- Development of social order,
- Collective compliance with social rules,
- Observing and respecting the rights of others,
- Observing the government and people's mutual rights,
- Avoiding the dictatorship of the government and avoiding oppression,
- Safeguarding the territory and strengthening the military force.

2. 4. Sea Power

Alfred Thayer Mahan, the inventor of Naval Strategy at the beginning of the century (1890), notes: The oceans and seas of the world cover three-quarters of the Earth's surface. Any country that has the power to command these great seas can command the world's wealth and consequently the world itself. The essential and necessary condition is the existence of a powerful navy that has operational and military bases inside the country and beyond the sea, complemented and supported by a great number of merchant fleets.



To maximize the efficiency of the theory, Mahan has identified several necessities described in his book, "The Influence of Sea Power upon History." A country which has an important strategic position, while having secure boundaries and also has access to one or more high seas, is at the top of his list. In addition, only those nations can employ large-scale naval strategies whose people are interested in maritime issues and have sufficient aptitude and experience. Government policies should actively employ all environmental merits to promote maritime power. In the analysis of naval powers, Mahan concluded that in order to equip states to become great naval powers, six essential attributes are necessary:

1. Proper geographical position,
2. Favorable climate and natural resources,
3. Sufficient extent of territory,
4. Enough population and manpower,
5. The presence of maritime spirit in people's culture and characteristics,
6. The government and statesmen's conscious beliefs and tendency toward the sea(Sayari & Tahani, 2015).

Today, the U.S. Navy believes that whatever the fate of Mahan's tactical ideas, his logic of sea power remains evergreen despite technological advances, changes to the geostrategic setting, and the onrush of time. U.S. also believes that it is eminently worthwhile for today's naval leadership to push for a revival of strategic study in general and of Mahan in particular. Otherwise the sea services may have to face unfamiliar intellectual territory in an increasingly contested Asia-Pacific. Strategists in rising sea powers such as China have become great followers of Mahan. Chinese strategists read and digest his concepts thoroughly, and try to press them into service for today's postmodern world (Holmes & Delamer, 2017).

3. Research Method

The present research, using content analysis, has a specific approach for analyzing the Sea Power theory's statements. This particular approach is mainly due to the way in which the subject of analysis (content) is considered. Therefore, an evaluative content analysis was carried out to indicate the orientation of the Sea Power theory. In this research, the rules are defined objectively. In other words, the verbal concepts of Sea Power theory are considered in the range of -3 to +3. For the verbal valuation of factors which have been the accepted attributes of the Sea Power theory, as well as the neglected factors, the views of eight Marine Science experts have been used.

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Alfred Mahan's Verbal Statements Regarding Sea Power	Verbal Value	Quantitative Value	Discussed Variable	Quantitative Valuation of Discussed Variable
The oceans and seas of the world cover three-quarters of the Earth's surface.	Importance of the Seas	+3	--	--
Any country that has the power to command these great seas can command the world's wealth and consequently the world itself.	Importance of Maritime Trade	+2	Control Over the World's Wealth (Colonial Perspective)	+3
The essential and necessary condition is the existence of a powerful navy that has operational and military bases inside the country and beyond the sea, complemented and supported by a great number of merchant fleets.	Maritime Security	+2	Dominating the Earth	+2
A country which has an important strategic position, while having secure boundaries and also has access to one or more high seas, is at the top of sea powers' list.	Importance of States Relationships with the Seas	+2	A country's lack of access to the sea and the quality of its sea power	+1
Only those nations can employ large-scale naval strategies whose people are interested in maritime issues and have sufficient aptitude and experience.	Interest in the Sea	+3	---	--
Government policies should actively employ all environmental merits to promote naval power.	Government Support for the Sea	+3	---	--
The government can, with its policy, support the natural growth of the people's industries and their willingness to go after the adventure and gain benefits through the sea, and can promote people's interest in maritime issue and its benefits. On the other hand, the government may take an improper action by preventing the progress that the people themselves might make if they	Government Support for Maritime Industry	+3	--	--



were free.				
Commanding the seas is necessary for every nation that wishes to be efficient in global contest and to enjoy maximum happiness and security in its homeland.	The Sea and the Nations Happiness	+2	Authoritarian and domineering approach towards the sea	+3
The powers that do not have access to the sea, however great they are, are condemned to destruction; because, as Mahan notes, the land is almost a rigid obstacle, while the sea is like plain and flatland.	Access to the Sea	+3	Attitudes towards the sea in countries without sea	+3
Mahan states that the term "sea power" has been deliberately selected for the title of the book in order to attract attention and become popular among the people. And the word "sea force" was deliberately abandoned because it was very weak in terms of attracting people's attention and getting into their minds.	The importance of power from people's point of view	+2	Forgetting Civilization	+3
The history of sea power, though containing all factors that contribute to the power and ability of the coastal people, is often about the history of military power.	The Importance of the Navy	+3	--	--
Mahan's goal was to indicate a relationship between the naval history and political history. Because he was fully confident that economic power and maritime dominance are hand in hand, and the possessor of such power has the opportunity to gain a more effective position in global affairs.	Sea Relationship with Politics and Economics	+3	--	--
Mahan acknowledges that his thoughts about the Navy were not innovative and three centuries ago, Raleigh and Bacon wrote about it. And even much earlier, ancient myths such as Thucydides, Xerxes, and	The Importance of Sea Power Throughout History	+3	---	--

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<p>Themistocles had realized the importance of these thoughts. However, Mahan succeeded more than any other writer in his special approach to this issue. And this method, in his own words, is a historical analysis through which the impact of sea domination upon the course of events is explained based on the current events over the years.</p>				
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Table 1: Content Analysis of Sea Power Theory

Based on the propositions in Table (1), we can examine variables that do not have positive connotation or are neglected in the Sea Power theory. According to the statisticians, these variables have their own particular value, which is a critique against Alfred Mahan's Sea Power Theory. Experts believe that Sea Power Theory has good positive points, however, Alfred Mahan's approach to the sea is an authoritarian and domineering view that, firstly, contradicts values and ethics; secondly, the present discussions about sustainable development and the Green Environment criticize the Sea Power theory. The variables the experts have come up with are as follows:

- The sea as a gift for mankind,
- Considering the next generation's needs from the sea and sea bed,
- The need for environmental ethics,
- Peaceful approach toward the sea rather than a domineering perspective,
- The sea as a symbol of the development for nations and states rather than disagreements and military conflicts,
- Authoritarian approach, or Alfred Mahan's domineering perspective toward the sea,
- Lack of attention to culture, ethics, and values of a maritime country in the Sea Power theory,
- Sea and communication along with respect among nations.
- Attention to the sea, marine science and technology, as well as marine equipment and industries in countries that do not have any access to the sea, which has not been addressed in the Sea Power theory.

4. Presenting "Maritime Civilization Theory" Within a Theory Building Framework in Management Science Research

A theory is, in fact, a kind of intellectual thought that can be expounded and explained. The theory proposes a set of suggestions for variables, and displays a consistent, compiled representation of the phenomena and their correlation. The theory makes the logic of the world believable, finds a rational explanation for the phenomena, and describes and predicts the



relations between the variables. Theory construction is one of the major and key activities in various sciences. The process of observation, analysis, explanation and interpretation of phenomena are carried out through the process of theory construction(Niaz Azari & Taghvai Yazdi, 2014).According to Paul and Clayton, the theory building process in Management Science research occurs in two descriptive and normative stages:

Descriptive stage: This stage consists of three steps:

Step 1. Observation: The researchers observe the phenomena and carefully record what they see (people, organizations, processes). Researchers in this stage often present what is termed "*constructs*".

Step 2. Classification: The researchers classify the phenomena in different classes and categories, usually describing these descriptive categorization schemes as "frameworks" or "typologies."

Step 3. Defining Relationships: Researchers explore the association between the category-defining attributes and the outcomes observed. The output of studies at this stage are "models."

Normative stage: When encountering an anomaly, that is, when the theory cannot explain the result, there is an opportunity to improve the theory. The discovery of an anomaly gives researchers the opportunity to reconsider the pillars of the theory pyramid. That is, to define the phenomena with greater precision. In descriptive theory building, classification is generally based on the attributes of the phenomena. Thus, the theory of Maritime Civilization, centered around the three steps of the descriptive stage as well as the normative stage of theory building process, is presented for the marine community and the marine science experts, as follows:

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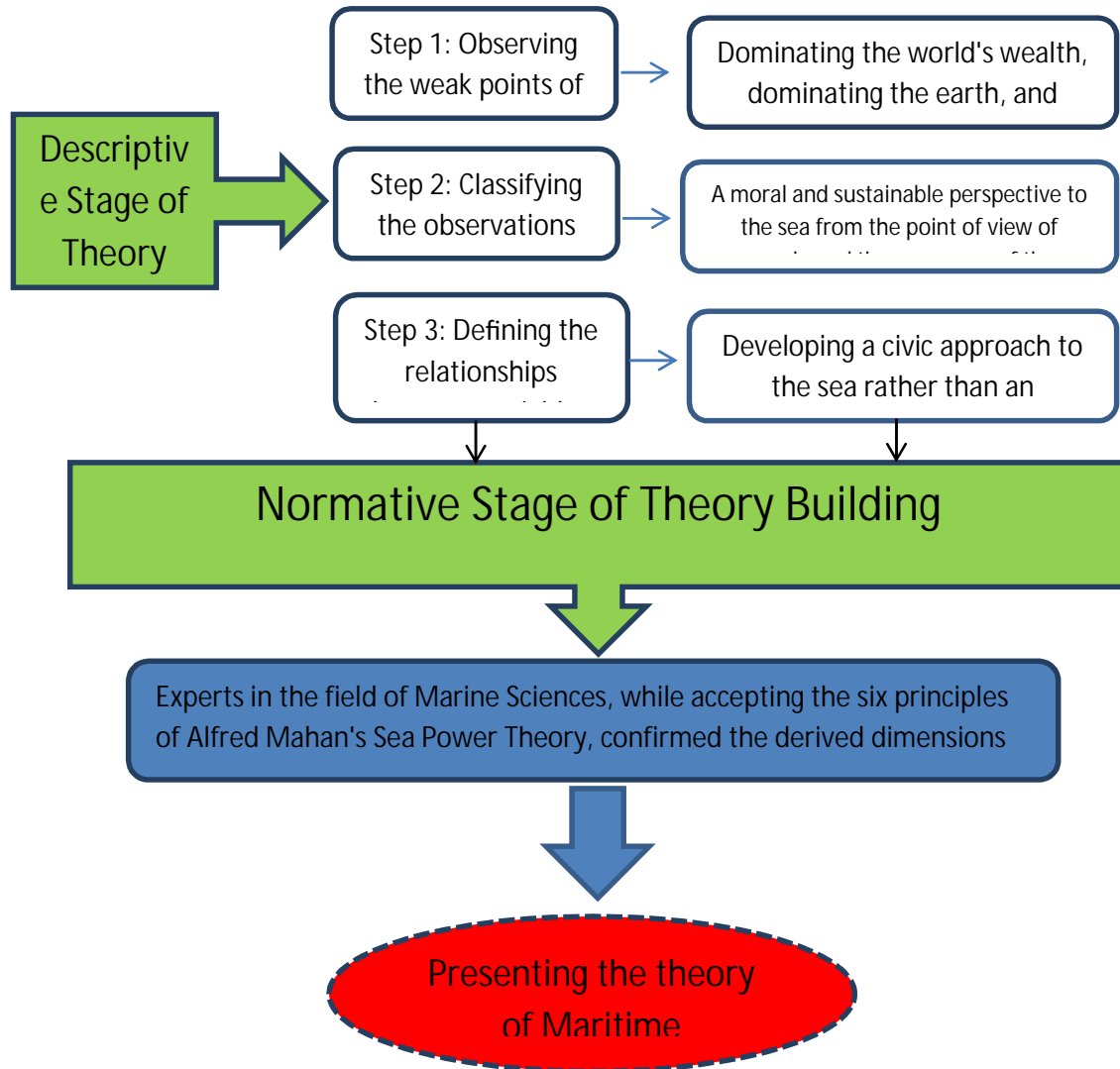


Figure 1: The stages of building the theory of Marine Civilization instead of Sea Power theory

5. Research Findings and Description of "Maritime Civilization Theory"

Considering the steps in Figure 1, as well as the civilization concept and the content of research literature, all indicators and pillars of Maritime Civilization are based on the sea and its advantages. Waters are source of wealth that necessitate a valuable approach toward the sea and its resources. Thus, Maritime Civilization can be defined as follows:

"Maritime civilization, based on a sea-based approach, is a civilization in which the intellectual, scientific, industrial, social, economic and political movements are created in conjunction with the sea and the marine environment. Using a set of capacities and resources that are directly related to the sea and taking a maritime thinking approach, this civilization seeks to



enjoy a sustainable sea exploitation in order to turn the human and the marine community into a peaceful community, and rise human toward perfection along with spiritual and material excellence." This was a preliminary theory, and for assessing its validity, the views of five experts from the Marine Science universities were used, which necessitates further investigation by other researchers in the future.

6. Research Results

The results of the present research indicate that the sea is a gift for mankind, rather than a superior attribute for power and sovereignty. While Mahan, presenting the theory of Sea Power, has a domineering and authoritarian, or in other words, a colonial approach to the sea, the researcher has a civic approach. Maritime states should employ the Sea Power pillars used by Alfred Mahan in order to develop civilization. Today, the sea can symbolize the development of peace, tranquility, culture, knowledge and ethics in the world. Thus, the Maritime civilization, based on a sea-based approach, is a civilization in which the intellectual, scientific, industrial, social, economic and political movements are created in conjunction with the sea and the marine environment. Using a set of capacities and resources that are directly related to the sea and taking a maritime thinking approach, this civilization seeks to enjoy a sustainable sea exploitation in order to turn the human and the marine community into a peaceful community, and rise human toward perfection along with spiritual and material excellence.

In this theory, sustainable sea-based development thought exists among senior state officials. Having a divine-centered attitude towards the water and the sea, not taking a domineering view towards water resources, and the friendship with the sea are crucial factors in this theory. Moreover, there is an interactive-centered, diplomatic-centered, and peace-oriented approach to naval fleet in addition to maritime combat. The social sea-based resources include a combination of merchant and military fleet, marine labor, marine experts, maritime cities and countries, and even countries that are not related to the sea but value marine science and technology. Many countries consider the sea as a great capacity for their development and authority. About 90 percent of the global trade is now carried out through the oceans.

In the present century, the marine and oceanic environments of the earth, the same as the atmosphere around the globe, have been regarded as new fields of human domination. For over five centuries, maritime capability has created power for leading countries in this field. Different periods of economic, industrial, scientific and technological progress, and even the domination of space, have not decreased the importance of marine and ocean affairs. The important role of seas and oceans in maritime

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transportation, military dominance, climate change and biological production has led them to have a decisive role in the future of humankind.

While Will Durant categorized the factors that created a civilization in four economic, political, moral, and rational and spiritual factors, Alfred Mahan begins with a brief discussion about the rise and decline of the great naval powers, and then fully explains the conditions for nations that are targeting the power in the seas. Mahan expresses his important and desirable conditions as follows:

- Geographical position,
- Physical conformation (including climate and natural resources),
- Extent of territory,
- Size of population,
- Character of the people,
- Character of government (government's tendencies and policies).

Considering the concepts of civilization and maritime civilization, as well as the analysis of the scholars' view, such as Alfred Mahan, we can refer to the factors leading to maritime civilization as follows:

- Being a maritime country,
- Presence of maritime thinking among governors and politicians,
- Sea-based policies,
- Geographical position,
- Population with a maritime thinking,
- Sea food products (sea climate),
- Population density along the water,
- Directing population towards the water,
- Positive attitude and strategic view of the governors towards the sea (government's tendencies and policies).
- Marine science and knowledge,
- Marine industry development,
- Convergence between merchant fleet, military fleet, marine industry and marine science education and research,
- The adherence of maritime communities to moral norms consistent with the human nature,
- Strong naval military power.

Recommendation

The main recommendation of the researcher is the revival of maritime civilization, or in other words, the implementation of the Maritime Civilization theory in Iran. Based on researches and statistics provided by official authorities, Iran has a coastline of more than 5790 kilometers in the



north and south (1: 2500 scale). The waters under the sovereignty are equivalent to one quarter of the country's total area. And more than 200,000 square kilometers of ocean and high sea are jointly exploitable. Thus, according to the marine sciences definitions, the Islamic Republic of Iran can be considered a maritime country. This maritime state requires the creation of a maritime civilization in order to develop a sustainable and comprehensive sea-based development. The most important reason for the revival of Iranian naval civilization is the existence of marine geography in this maritime country. In addition to the northern provinces of the country and the Caspian Sea, each of the islands and the southern coasts alone have the attributes of a maritime civilization. In the distant times, these areas were developing the maritime civilization, however, unfortunately over time, some of them were lagging behind the cycle of naval civilization.

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