

Ibn Khaldun's Contribution to the Study of the Social Dynamics of International Relations

İbn Haldun'un Uluslararası İlişkilerin Sosyal Dinamikleri Çalışmalarına Katkısı

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Abstract: This article is a study of the social and political works of Ibn Khaldun, a famous 14th-century Muslim historian, philosopher, and scholar. His insights into the field of social dynamics of international relations were widely acclaimed and still influence current scholars. Ibn Khaldun's method of history was distinctive, which is emphasizing how social institutions and human behavior shaped historical facts. The Muqqaddima, his seminal work, offered a thorough examination of the cycles and patterns of human behavior and the evolution of society, especially in the area of international relations. Ibn Khaldun's *Asabiya*, *Umran*, *Rural and Urban life*, *State*, and *Power* are his most fascinating works, and his *Umran* can be considered a universal civilization. His concepts still help us understand the complexity of human behavior and social development, especially in international relations.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, Historical Sociology, Contribution, Social Dynamics, International Relations

Öz: Bu makale, 14. yüzyılda yaşamış ünlü Müslüman tarihçi, filozof ve akademisyen İbn Haldun'un sosyal ve siyasi eserleri üzerine bir çalışmadır. Uluslararası ilişkilerin sosyal dinamikleri alanındaki görüşleri büyük beğeni toplamış ve günümüz akademisyenlerini hala etkilemektedir. İbn Haldun'un tarih metodu, sosyal kurumların ve insan davranışlarının tarihsel olguları nasıl şekillendirdiğini vurgulayan kendine özgü bir metottur. İbn Haldun'un ufuk açıcı eseri *Mukaddime*, özellikle uluslararası ilişkiler alanında insan davranışının döngüleri ve kalıpları ile toplumun evriminin kapsamlı bir incelemesini sunmuştur. İbn Haldun'un *Asabiye*, *Umran*, kırsal ve kentsel yaşam, devlet ve iktidar en etkileyici eserleridir ve *Umran*'i evrensel bir medeniyet olarak kabul edilebilir. Onun kavramları, özellikle uluslararası ilişkilerde insan davranışının ve sosyal gelişimin karmaşıklığını anlamamıza hala yardımcı olmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İbn Haldun, Tarihsel Sosyoloji, Katkı, Toplumsal Dinamikler, Uluslararası İlişkiler

1. Introduction

Ibn Khaldun, a North African historian, philosopher, and sociologist, is well renowned for his substantial contributions to the field of social dynamics. His works, which offer a distinct viewpoint on civilizational ties and the variables influencing their interactions, have been notably significant in the domain of international relations.

Ibn Khaldun's works are widely consulted and discussed in international relations, and his ideas have been used to develop new concepts for understanding international relations. In particular, the study of the international system has been influenced by his concepts of *Asabiya* and the cycle of the rise and fall of civilizations. Burton draws on Ibn Khaldun's work in his concept of "world society" which explores the significance of cultural exchange and mutualism in framing the international system (Burton, 1972).

In a similar spirit, academics like Cox and Wallerstein have drawn on Ibn Khaldun's writings to build critical viewpoints on international relations, highlighting the relevance of historical context and power dynamics in constructing the international system. Cox contends that we are able to use Ibn Khaldun's notion of *Asabiya* to comprehend the role of power in developing international relations (Cox, 1981). Wallerstein developed his idea of "world systems theory" using Ibn Khaldun's ideas, which stresses the significance of both political and economic influence in determining the global order (Wallerstein, 2004).

Ibn Khaldun's writings have served as a foundation for more contemporary scholars as they have created new methods for understanding the dynamics of international relations. Thus, David C. Kang creates a new method to study the rise of China, emphasizing the importance of historical and cultural variables in determining China's place in the world system (Kang, 2015).

Some scholars argue that Ibn Khaldun's ideas, especially his concept of *Umran*, can lay the groundwork for developing non-Western IR theory through his sociology and history (Sune, 2016). Western historians claim that Ibn Khaldun's social and political writings are important for the understanding of international relations and that he can be seen as a rival to Machiavelli in terms of the technical methods of theorizing due to his uniquely objective study of structures (Strange, 1995).

Ibn Khaldun contributed significantly to the study of social dynamics, especially in the realm of international relations, and his work remains influential in modern studies. His

theories on the value of social organization, the function of Asabiya, and the cycle of the rise and fall of civilizations have had an impact on the creation of newer frameworks for the understanding of the dynamics of the global system. In this context, Ibn Khaldun's work remains an important source of inspiration for those who are interested to grasp the complexities of the international relations and the elements that influence how it evolves.

Consequently, to track down the answers to the following questions, this paper will examine Ibn Khaldun's role in the investigation of the social dynamics of international relations, focusing on his fundamental concepts and the ways in which they keep influencing modern scholarship. How did Ibn Khaldun's concept of Asabiya and analysis of rising and falling civilizations contribute to understanding the evolution of international relations? How have Ibn Khaldun's ideas regarding leadership and social cohesion influenced the study of international relations?

2. Social Legacy of Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) a North African Arab historian, philosopher, and thinker who is regarded as the founder of sociology, economics, and historiography. His works are known for their emphasis on practical analysis and observation, and criticism of ideological and theoretical approaches to knowledge, especially his epic masterpiece "The Muqaddimah" (Ibn Khaldun, 1967). *Al Muqaddimah* is a great illustration of his book the world history, in which he codified innovative approaches to event comprehension, critique, and historical analysis. His ability to discern between fact and fiction while chronicling historical events along with his astounding sociology is his work's finest advantage (Ibn Khaldun, 1967).

During the nineteenth century, Ibn Khaldun's legacy gained notoriety in the western region, and his distinctive history and prolegomena were warmly embraced by academics and translated into numerous languages (Katsiaficas, 1999). The key theories of Ibn Khaldun's sociology are Asabiya, Urban and Rural society, and Social Change. All of these theories were developed by Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth century, and the subsequent sociologists recognize him as the founding father of sociology (Sümer, 2012).

2.1. Al Asabiya (Social Cohesion)

Asabiya is the characteristic of someone who defends his people or society from aggression, or it is the shared cause that unites people and receives their recognition and support, or it is the natural instinct of all individuals to speak up for their fellow

citizens. Asabiya is also referred to as "team sentiments" or "social cohesion." Hence, we might identify it as having the notion of social solidarity with a strong emphasis on unity, group awareness, and the sense of shared destiny and social harmony (Binti Ismail & Binti Abdul Rahim, 2018). Ibn Khaldun divided Asabiya into Cause Asabiya, or "legal Asabiya," and Pedigree Asabiya, or "blood relationship." He argues that Cause Asabiya has a wider impact than Lineage Asabiya because Cause Asabiya creates a society that creates the state, whereas Bloodline Asabiya functions as a particular group within society (Say, 2011).

Ibn Khaldun believed that humans depend on one another and behave like animals when left unfettered which would arise problems in society. Asabiya thus has a major influence on the creation and dissolution of societies and civilizations. On the one side, it can advance society and bring people together in order to foster social harmony and promote peace. On the other side, when people reject the concept of Asabiya it has a detrimental effect that disintegrates society. Ibn Khaldun has identified certain key characteristics of Asabiya, including correlative sentiments, unification of purpose, sharing of economic and social concerns, and unity of emotion and feelings (Soyer & Gilbert, 2012).

Ibn Khaldun Asabiya is founded on humanity and civilization. Asabiya explains how modern civilization and social structure function, and it tells individuals how to draw themselves to join the society. It is the foundation of sovereignty from which the state ascends and decays. He claims that people create society and are capable of structuring social interactions. Asabiya evolves society from one phase of civilization to the next and from rural to urban life. Asabiya can play a significant part in the decline and rise of civilization by causing birth, growth, maturity, decadence, senility, and death (Soyer & Gilbert, 2012).

The decisive role of Asabiya in the rise and fall of states can be seen in the cases of Turkey and Afghanistan. The Turkish nation bravely resisted external aggression on July 15, 2016 and saved Turkey from a military coup. Meanwhile, war-torn Afghanistan is the most glaring example of a weak Asabiya that forced the nation to confront severe obstacles and opened the door for the Soviet Union and the United States to invade Afghanistan.

2.2. Urban and Rural Society

Urban and rural societies focus on the inhabitants of the city and the desert. In Ibn Khaldun's view, human society is superior to animal society because humans are

endowed with wisdom and need a leader to guide and facilitate them. Humans are always struggling to find how to survive, they live together to coordinate and cooperate which leads to the creation of the state (Ibn Khaldun, 1967).

There are two types of societies: Badavi, who live in the countryside, and Hazri, who live in the cities. The Badavi people have the fearsome power of Asabiya because they are powerful and live in deserts where it is extremely difficult to find basic necessities. However, they still fight for their lives and try to meet all their demands. On the contrary, the Hazri people who live in urban civilization are completely different from the Badavi people. They depend on state security because they are unable to defend themselves against any external threat due to their weakness. Therefore, Asabiya is more prevalent in rural life than in urban life (Ibn Haldun, 2016).

2.3. Cyclical Theory

The cycle of history is rooted in the powerful Asabiya, which is crucial to the rise and fall of sovereign states. It illustrates how they come into being, grow stronger, lose power, and are overthrown by another strong power (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018). It should be noted that recurring patterns in social structure and culture are the focus of the cyclical theory of social change. As societies mature and move through three major stages of life: birth, development, and decay. The key foundations of social transformation are religion, leadership, and power. Society resembles human life as it passes through the primary stages of existence. According to him, the maximum age of a human being is 120 years, and the average age is 80 years. As a result, every community goes through a cycle of development in which each stage lasts for 40 years, which is half of the human life span. Thus, social change in the same civilization proceeds in a clockwise rhythm that can repeat itself every 120 years (Omonijo & Anyaegbunam, 2020).

In this context, Ibn Khaldun asserted that there is a cyclical relationship between the past and present as stated in his words: "The past and the present are alike as water is alike water, water falls down on the earth as rain, then goes to the river, then evaporates, and becomes rain again" (Sümer, 2012). In Ibn Khaldun's view, history is based on a circular process in which there is a descent and an ascent over time. Each society begins, grows, loses dominance, and is replaced by its successor. The fall of civilizations is a natural, unstoppable process; it happens, but Asabiya, which governs the process, is the primary cause (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018).

3. Ibn Khaldun in the Discipline of International Relations

It should be noted that Ibn Khaldun's ideas did not directly influence any existing theory of international relations, as his works and social theories predate the birth of the current field of international relations by centuries. Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldun's theories and observations have had an impact on scholarly discussions of how social and economic variables influence the growth and decline of civilizations and world order. Thus, some leading scholars have credited Ibn Khaldun with indirectly advancing the field of IR and consider his ideas to have begun realism.

IR is a Western invention that developed from a Western perspective and referencing Western thinkers such as Machiavelli, Kant, and Grotius. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun, a non-Western philosopher who pre-dated and influenced Machiavelli and other Western philosophers in the 14th Century, has been ignored, and there is no non-Western IR theory. Seyfi Say has argued that there is no non-Western IR theory, which is at odds with Western intellectuals who have been influenced by Ibn Khaldun.

Say contends that Ibn Khaldun's ideas are tied to IR concerns rather than to IR theories themselves. He claims that his discipline of *Umran* can be compared to civilization more broadly, including all aspects of social life that belong to all human beings and not just to Islamic or Christian civilizations. However, his *Mulk* or power establishes a sovereign state as the embodiment of civilization, consisting of rural and urban life. Nevertheless, his *Asabiya* is the main impetus that urges each individual to participate in building society (Say, 2011).

In Ibn Khaldun's view, civilizations will be transformed on the basis of the environment, and *Asabiya* is a good example of this transformation. This drives a peer group to fight to dominate its own territory. Thus, the change caused by nature and the physical environment teaches us how to really understand international relations. Say continues that Ibn Khaldun's thought tracks both internal and external components of sovereignty, as in the case of a state's internal affairs and its defense against external enemies, which may perceive IR as transcending the national-international division (Say, 2011).

Say claims that historicism has already begun to replace positivism in IR which allows scholars to move beyond state-centric analysis. Ibn Khaldun's historical perspectives on adaptations are based on specific circumstances and can be considered an essential reference to show change, dynamics, and regenerate IR. His *Umran* will also lead us to consider civilization as a key element in studying international affairs. Ibn Khaldun's

beliefs can combine idealism and realism by embracing the importance of power from a realistic perspective and differentiating between loyal and unfaithful, and fair and unfair powers (Say, 2011).

Studying international relations is used to explain Ibn Khaldun in two ways. First, sociology encompasses all kinds of systems and procedures that relate to people and society, including peace, war, diplomacy, trade, and intercultural engagement. Second, Asabiya builds nations, ethnic minorities, and civilizations that achieved internal integration and struggled for sovereignty alongside other societies and nations to depict events under international relations. It also reflects elements recognized as influencing international relations such as national psyche, morality, and societal perceptions of national identity (Say, 2011).

Ibn Khaldun's assessment examines the relationship between foreign policy and global relations in terms of four different variables such as social framework (Badavi–Hadari, Rural–Urban), national spirit (Asabiya), political regime structure (democracy, autocracy, bureaucratic oligarchy), and economic development (Umran). Hence, any state may pursue imperialism, status quo, or prestige–based strategies against other nations (Say, 2011).

According to Strange, Ibn Khaldun should be considered a distinctive motivational source and fundamental textual author in the IR discipline to Machiavelli. Ibn Khaldun made history a science by considering the factors that led to political reform in social and economic structures, his views emphasize the scientific aspect of frameworks and formations (Strange, 1995).

Pasha cites Ibn Khaldun's work as a solid link between hegemony and history in Western IR, showing that internal Islamic debate predates Western imperialism. However, he presented the Islamic world to be understood in the context of world history, and the scope of his thought extends to all of human civilization, anticipating post–positivism as current historicism. Ibn Khaldun's theory, in Pasha's view, adds to the humanist heritage in the field of international affairs freed from the Europeanizing rhetoric of the Renaissance. This means that his views on culture, civilization, politics, and society offer insights into how to build a new world order and how to deal with the issue of transforming Islamic countries in a globalized world (Pasha, 2017).

According to Cox, contemporary neorealism and Khaldun's ideology have little in common, but both envision post–Western societies. Khaldun provides a starting point

from which to understand Islamic civilization, which is relevant to the formation of any future international system. Ibn Khaldun tells us to consider how to deal with problems involving individuals of various ideologies, their primary causes, and appropriate solutions (Cox & Sinclair, 1992).

According to Stephen, Ibn Khaldun's classic work falls under the genre of "critical realism" in international relations theory. This is because his assessment is based on a profound realism that comes from political activity, experience, and knowledge of history. Rosenthal agrees that Ibn Khaldun's way of looking at social processes reveals an understanding of realism (Stephen & Mittelman, 1997).

Kalpakian argues that Ibn Khaldun's *Asabiya*, historical cycle, and ideas about the interplay of religion and power influence international relations. He also claims that a major re-evaluation of his theoretical frameworks will show how the contemporary identity, the hegemonic cycle, and the clash of civilizations have existed in the past. In addition, he contends that *Muqqaddima* has three distinct implications for international politics in the contemporary and post-modern eras. First, his ideas about cycles and economics remain relevant. Second, the discussion surrounding colonialism and anticolonialism is examined as it relates to *Muqqaddima*'s views. Finally, his methods are treated and examined from a theoretical point of view (Kalpakian, 2008).

3.1. Realism, Idealism and Nationalism

Ibn Khaldun was a realist, but he also embraced idealism to some extent as he noted that "slavery degrades human dignity and is against nature." Some scholars argue that Ibn Khaldun accepted the idea that idealism and realism should be judged in their own contexts and not be conflated. In fact, his political and social theories are based on the reality of the present situation rather than an idealized past or future. His theory combines politics and religion, and he is of the opinion that only the work of civilization does not oppress the people in terms of state welfare and prosperity (Say, 2011).

Even though nationalism and *Asabiya* cannot be considered identical phenomena, they are often similar and functional counterparts that push individuals to conduct the same purpose in separate ways. Thus, some scholars argue that *Asabiya* encompasses all nationalisms that represents Morgenthau's national universality. Moreover, *Asabiya* can be seen as related to the basic processes and manifestations of ethnic nationalism (Say, 2011).

Asabiya can emerge and serve as a sense of comradeship that eventually encompasses other societies, as Ibn Khaldun stated, "Asabiya will bring together many Asabiya's", much as distinct groups adopt Asabiya to create society. Modern nationalism is also able to operate within a specific community, which is defined as a nation. In this context, D. Hocaoglu claims that Ibn Khaldun's concept of Asabiya is in relation to the definition of nationalism, while Lahbabi claims that Asabiya is a dynamic bond and soul of the nation (Say, 2011).

3.2. Asabiya and Identity

Several philosophers have developed Asabiya in various forms, and they agreed with Ibn Khaldun under certain circumstances that the cohesiveness of society produces collective desires that lead to the pursuit of power. According to Robert Cox, Asabiya is the greatest intersubjective component that paves the way for a powerful collective society for establishing the State (Cox, 2002). In Lacoste's view, Asabiya is an imitation of military unity, which functions well with a class system. He suggests that it is the growth of a coherent group based on kinship ties between rural and urban societies (Yalvaç, 2016).

In Cox's view, Ibn Khaldun's Asabiya can be seen as a crucial technical tool in the examination of the concept of change in the global scene. Cox relies on Khaldun's theories for a re-evaluation of conventional concepts in the light of international relations (Cox & Sinclair, 1992). Moreover, Ibn Khaldun's Asabiya is rooted in two important principles: kinship and loyalty, referring to both royal power and blood ties or anything related. He asserts that the first is social cohesion, manifested in military power, and the second is wealth, which supports military power to make the whole structure bow to the king's sovereignty (Ibn Khaldun, 1967).

Hence, to construct a state, a leader must win the loyalty of the community through a strong Asabiya since the state crumbles anytime the Asabiya is weak. When a state falls, it loses its identity and is shunned by the international community. Asabiya can be seen as the state's engine since it is the primary cause of the state's rise and fall. Asabiya encourages states to collaborate with the international community by playing a significant role in international relations. In this way, the royal authority enhances society, and it lasts until all of the social groups and social cohesion have been dissolved.

3.3. History Cycle

The Khaldunian Cycle, in the view of the realists, revises the heritage of the Ancient Greeks and identifies the primary causes of state failure and the evolution of this cycle

over time (Ashworth, 2008). Ibn Khaldun's cycle of dynastic change differs from the idea of change found in liberalist and, to some extent, Marxist ideas. However, it is similar to the cycle of realist theory in the context of global change, making it the most vital component in the context of IR theory (Burchill et al., 2005).

According to Yalvaç, Ibn Khaldun's sociohistorical writings can fill the gaps left by some postpositivist and positivist approaches hampered by social change and social relations. Ibn Khaldun's work has implications for contemporary IR in three ways. First, it is difficult for Western scholars to theorize about critical forms of IR by referring to a non-Western study of IR. Second, historical sociology, emphasizing the constitutive role of internal social change, has become a major source of IR. Third, this recent development relies on historical materialism in international relations, which already lacks Marxism's conceptual extension of geopolitics (Yalvaç, 2016).

Consequently, Ibn Khaldun's historical and social work is considered relevant to all three IR debates, and his notion of rural and urban societies can be reflected a non-Western historical sociology of the modern world that can assess the uniformity of development and social change. His theory of history can also be seen as a technical tool for the understanding of IR theory, especially in relation to sedentary and nomadic societies (Yalvaç, 2016).

According to Ibn Khaldun, the state is comparable to a human being that has a limited life span of 120 years. There are two main factors that contribute to the collapse of the state and speed up the completion of the cycle to provide a conduit for the new state. The first is external and occurs when mercenaries commandeer the military to serve foreign clients and to facilitate the intervention of the state. The second is internal when the royal family begins overspending, which is undermining the nation's economy and breeding governmental and popular disloyalty (Kalpakian, 2008).

It should be emphasized that the primary goal of the dynastic struggle is to seize the throne by any means necessary, which drives governments to compete to establish a hegemony capable of making bids for global leadership. However, George Modelski has also noted that the cyclical theory of global hegemony departs from the Marxist tradition. According to him, the world has a dominant state system rather than a unified structure where all states function as one. He also constructs five long cycles of hegemony, each of which lasts for a maximum of 130 years and an average of one hundred years. In Modelski's view, the two main supporters of the cycle are descriptive

history and the intentions of power shifts. He affirms that the scope of a state is always limited for others by *Asabiya* and backs Ibn Khaldun (Modelski, 1978).

In this regard, Kalpakian asserts that the realist concept of change is cyclical and based on history and that Ibn Khaldun's cycle achieves the same goals as those discussed by Modelski. Ibn Khaldun also analyzes social change like other realists, but there are some discrepancies between Modelski, Western, and Khaldunian states. He believes that Ibn Khaldun's cycle is related to global relations and that the tradition of realism is also based on cycles in the past. Consequently, Ibn Khaldun's state cycle achieves the same realist goals. Ibn Khaldun's and Modelski's descriptions of the state are examples of related concepts, although the realists reasoning differs in key respects (Kalpakian, 2008).

4. Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun is the sole Muslim philosopher whose works have been excavated by Western thinkers and who has had a significant impact on Western political and social thoughts. Ibn Khaldun exceeds his forebears and Western thinkers with his own techniques and accepted reasoning that his history is not merely a tale but discerns truth from lies. Ibn Khaldun's writings are grounded on actual events since he virtually documented all of the heights and depths of North African monarchs. His work has greater value because it covers all social, economic, and political facets of people, society, power, and the state.

Ibn Khaldun's social concepts, especially his *Asabiya* and the cycle of change, which had never been proposed before him, were highly praised by his followers and continue to serve as models in modern sociology. On the one hand, his *Asabiya* is the cornerstone of society and unity that compels individuals to unite through social cohesion and defense against external aggression leading to the establishment of a state to govern society. On the other hand, his study of the cycle of change, commonly called the rise and fall of a state, is an extremely important empirical work that cannot be neglected. His idea is that the rise and fall of a state are similar to those of people, who have a limited life span and follow a clockwise pattern that ends their cycle and begins it again from the same point. *Asabiya*, which can be thought of as the engine driving all structures and activities, from urban to rural, as well as the rise and fall of a state, is the main factor in his sociological theory, which is actually interrelated and support each other.

Ibn Khaldun's ideas have undoubtedly invigorated the field of international relations and significantly influenced Western IR theory. Western academics have incorporated his work and used it as a technical instrument for the comprehension and examination of their theoretical conceptions. In this regard many academics agree that Ibn Khaldun's theories could serve as the foundation for non-Western philosophy. Ibn Khaldun has been overlooked as a thinker whose work contributed to Western philosophy, or there is no non-Western IR theory to reveal world order, which is regrettable because modern scholars interpret IR via Western lenses. Moreover, Ibn Khaldun's works contribute to the global problems of war, peace, diplomacy, trade, and foreign policy in terms of the social structure, the morals of the populace, the political framework of the system, and the economic growth of the state.

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