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# **State and Religion in Iran**

## **Impact of the Jurist Leadership on Internal and External Policies**

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**T**he purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of religion on Iranian decision-making. Also, the paper analyzes the religious implications of this on the Iranian regimes perspectives and vision, along with the ramifications this has on Iran's domestic and foreign policy management – leading to conclusions on the extent to which the regime can survive in the future.

## **First: Status of religion in Iran**

There is no doubt, that religion has been playing an integral role in the political, social and cultural life of Muslims. Iran had been inundated with religion before and after the Islamic conquest.<sup>(1)</sup> After Islam as a political entity overcame the Persian Empire, the Persian people converted to Islam and believed in a new culture and set of values. Persians became prominent scholars in all fields of knowledge; religion, philosophy, history, Arabic linguistics, politics, and arts. They worked shoulder to shoulder with Arabs and Turks in realizing the cultural and scientific successes, which become known as the “Islamic Golden Age”.

The ‘Shiite’ opposition parties initially emerged in Iran during the Umayyad period. When the Mughal occupied Iran, approximately between the 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> century, popular revolts broke out to counter this invasion, it is intriguing that the revolts involved a mix of Shiism and Sufism. The real turning point of Shiism was the emergence of the Safavid dynasty in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was the first dynasty which recognized as an official religion, the Twelver Shia and participated in its propagation throughout Iran.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Safavids ruled Persia from 1501 to 1722 and religiously legitimized its power by the Shia Twelver doctrine and clerics. Likewise, the Ottoman Caliphate used Sunni belief to extend its borders. The founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail Safavi, asked Arab Shia clerics of Jabal Amel in Lebanon, Iraq, and Bahrain, to come to Iran to teach Shiism.<sup>(3)</sup>

Beyond any doubt, the Shiite creed has been deeply rooted in Iran since the Safavid dynasty. The Twelver Shia and the guardianship of ‘*Ahl Al Bait*’ have become the heart of the Iranian identity, along with Persian nationalism, culture, religion, civilization, and history. The Iranian philosopher, Ali Shariati mentioned that Shiite doctrine and Persian nationalism are two foundations of Safavidism. He said, “exploiting the Shiite feelings and rituals and investing in the Iranian cultural and national norms contributed to Iran being completely dismembered from the great Islamic empire and Ottoman dominance.”<sup>(4)</sup>

## **Second: The identity of the Iranian Islamic Republic**

The Shia doctrine has made more vivid Iranian religious identity, its culture and is the bedrock of its policy, domestic and foreign. The role of religion has been critical in the political and cultural life of Iran since the Islamic conquest of Persia resulting in the establishment of the Safavid dynasty. This dynasty recognized the Twelver Shia as the official religion and importantly it became the basis of political and religious legitimacy. The final stage was the Iranian Revolution, which brought Khomeini to power and led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic stemming from Khomeini’s Juristic Leadership [*Velayat-e Faqih*] concept.

Since the Iranian revolution, religion has been strongly embedded as ever in Iran, as Islamic laws came into existence and Iranians were bound to the Juristic leader who

was viewed as the representative of the Infallible Imam through the Occultation. The relationship between the Juristic leader and Iranians developed, given the belief that the existing political system paved the way for Imam Mahdi to remerge.

Khomeini's justification for the *Velayat-e Faqih* was his conviction that a nation cannot be governed through the Occultation except with a Juristic leader. Khomeini said, "There is absolutely no need like appointing someone who can handle the *Ummah* (nation) affairs and maintain stability and security during the Occultation by following the Islamic laws; this cannot be done without a supreme guardian of Muslims -all over the Islamic world." He added, "The Jurist Leadership and government – though they are not represented by one particular person- according to the Islamic literature and logic must be altered. They cannot be ignored as they are a necessity for the Islamic society. What no rational man can deny is the importance of maintaining order and security and protecting Islam."<sup>(5)</sup>

Significantly, Khomeini dismissed the theory of Taqiyya and waiting for the emergence of Imam Mahdi, citing the weakness of the hadiths (Prophetic traditions) supporting such propositions. He said, "the necessity of implementing laws was not limited to the Prophet Mohammad, Islam is not confined to a time or place; it is a boundless necessity which must be fulfilled forever. What is allowed by the Prophet Mohammad is allowed forever, what is prohibited by the Prophet Mohammad is prohibited forever. It is not permissible to disobey the principles of Islam, neglect its teachings, leave 'Qisas', stop collecting taxes, or simply leave the Islamic nation without any defense. And the belief that Islam has come for a limited time or place, is contrary to the necessities of Islamic belief. Since implementing the laws and teachings of the Prophet Mohammad is an eternal necessity, having an executive and administrative government is essential. If we don't do this, complete chaos and corruption can spread very belligerently, also immorality and doctrinal deviation will plague the Islamic nation."<sup>(6)</sup> There is no way out but through the state of justice which can manage all walks of life."

Khomeini argued that since the Occultation has been ongoing for a very long period which can continue to last for hundreds and hundreds of years, establishing a government is very necessary. He said, "Will the Islamic laws be suspended whilst people do whatever they want? Isn't there anything restraining this chaos? Did Allah limit the Sharia for two hundred years, for example? Shall Islam lose everything after the minor Occultation? Anyone supporting the opinion refuting the necessity to establish the Islamic government actually disapproves and freezes the Islamic injunctions and disagrees with the inclusiveness and eternity of Islam."<sup>(7)</sup>

Khomeini stated that the *Faqih* handles the leadership of the government and he depended on many hadiths to approve the guardianship of the jurist over state affairs.<sup>(8)</sup> He believed that the powers of the jurist are as the Infallible Imam. He said, "the just jurist has the same political and governmental powers as those of the

Prophet Mohammad and Imams. He is the executor and arbitrator of Allah's laws. Also, He is the tax and revenue collector for the good of Muslims."<sup>(9)</sup>

Khomeini believed that the divine powers of the jurist are not bound nor restricted to the general framework of Islamic Laws. The government has the right to decertify any agreement with the Ummah if it may go against the interests of Islam and the state. Also, it may challenge any issue related to the people or not that violates the general interests.<sup>(10)</sup>

### **Third: The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

After ten years of developing the Jurist Leadership theory, Khomeini was successful in revolutionizing Iran and becoming the Supreme Jurist Leader. The government's constitutional framework was not clearly formalized, so Khomeini assigned the Assembly of Experts to write the constitution. The Assembly of Experts managed- post extensive research and discussions- to write a new constitution which was like the 1906 Persia Constitution. However, Khomeini's constitution swapped the Shah with an elected president and granted the '*Supreme Marja*' the highest position; the Jurist Leadership. The president had to be legitimized by the Juristic Leader [*Rahber* in Persian], or else he would not be legitimate and would be prevented from performing his assigned tasks. The parliamentary members had to be directly elected and the prime minister selected by the president and the government had to be approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly (ICA). The constitutional amendment council -comprised of 19 jurists and judges- supervised the '*Shura*' (consultative) council and scrutinized the full range of legislative and regulatory laws to ensure they aligned with the Islamic Sharia and constitution.<sup>(11)</sup> There have been consistent tensions between the constitutional amendment council and the ICA. For example, a legislative crisis broke out in Iran, when the constitutional amendment council refused to vote in favor of activating the labour law designed by the ICA. It was amended eight times during eight years under the pretext it violated Islamic Sharia. The Minister of Labour resorted to Khomeini to resolve this dilemma. He gave him the permission to implement the labour law agreed by the ICA without being ratified by the constitutional amendment council. Khomeini's permission widened the powers of the Minister of Labour. He implemented many regulations without the constitutional amendment council's ratification. This rattled Khomeini who rebuked- in a speech he delivered on Friday prayers- the Minister of Labour for exploiting the permission he had given him. In return, the Minister of Labour was provoked and sent a tough letter to Khomeini criticizing the 'boundless' absolute Jurist Leadership:<sup>(12)</sup>

In the letter he said, "your Friday speech shows that you do not believe the government, which is divinely granted the guardianship from God to Prophet Mohammad, surpassing all Islamic sub-provisions. You have misquoted my statement about the government's power within the framework of divine provisions.

If the government's power is confined to divine sub-provisions, the government's divine treatise is completely invalid, and the absolute Jurist Leadership passed by Prophet Mohammad is meaningless. The Jurist Leader can shut down mosques or even vandalize them like the demolition and burning of Masjid Dirar. The government can decertify the legitimate agreements -with the people -contradicting the interests of Islam and the country. Also, it can confront any issue whether related to the people or not that might cause any damage to Islam. It can prevent Hajj temporarily if assuming that would confront the general interests of the Islamic country- despite the fact that Allah (God) made Hajj obligatory. What has been said stems from real ignorance of the absolute divine leadership."<sup>(15)</sup> Some believe this letter, rather than checking Khomeini's powers, resulted in the powers of the Jurist Leader to expand and to be like that of the Prophet Mohammad and the Infallible Imams.<sup>(14)</sup>

Mohsen Kadivar argues that Khomeini's theory of the Jurist Leadership and Islamic state have played a vital role in making his political project come true. He exemplifies this through 4 points;

1- Khomeini believed that Islam is in need for a state in which Islamic laws can be implemented.<sup>(15)</sup>

2- Khomeini believed that the way for establishing the Islamic state was through public revolt and this would be led by competent jurists. The people shall support and follow them.<sup>(16)</sup>

3- Khomeini believed that the Islamic state grants the competent jurist the guardianship of political affairs like that of the Prophet Mohammad and the Infallible Imams.<sup>(17)</sup>

4- Khomeini asserted that the Islamic government and its laws are integral provisions surpassing overall sub-provisions. Also, that maintaining order is a religious duty.<sup>(18)</sup>

Khomeini managed to mix religion and politics. He made the establishment of an Islamic state a necessity the jurists must work for. Khomeini elevated the 'absolute' Jurist Leadership to the level of the Prophet Mohammad and the Infallible Imams. The Juristic Leader's powers are divine and he can make the government suspend any provisions if it is in the requirement of Islamic interests.

#### **Fourth: Khomeini's religious discourse**

Khomeini had been using religious discourse for mobilizing the Iranian people since he was preparing for the revolution. The successive Iranian leaders, like Khomeini, have utilized powerful religious language to provoke people's feelings, in particular, has been used in motivating the Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and the *Basij* (Mobilization Resistance Force), both of which have supported Iran's domestic and foreign policy.

Since the very beginning of the Islamic movement to overthrow Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Khomeini and other revolutionaries used religious language to provoke rivals and motivate people.

The previous Hezbollah deputy and supporter of Khomeini, Abdullah Qusayr, said, “Khomeini’s speeches, whether Friday sermons or lectures, always expressed a wakeup call or mobilization; this is the pillar of Khomeini’s revolution,” because he deeply believed in God’s promise as declared in the Quranic verse: “*O you who believe! If you help (in the cause of) Allah, He will help you, and make your foothold firm.*” (47:7), and he was convinced that once the Islamic *Ummah* has awoken, there is nothing impossible; strength will bloom out of weakness.<sup>(19)</sup> Khomeini said, “You have a great youth power that can raise Islam and your country to the peak of greatness and dignity and cut off evildoers from the Islamic world and from your own country. If this power is poured on the right path, it will be eternal and bound to the eternal divine power. Wake up, and wake up the sleepers.”<sup>(20)</sup>

Khomeini’s wakeup call was not only tied to clerics and educators, but it was a universal call, penetrating all strata of Iran and spread across the Islamic world. Khomeini believed in the universality of Islam; he stated, “All Muslims, particularly Muslim scholars, must endeavor to spread Islam to all nations all over the world.”<sup>(21)</sup> In another occasion, he added, “Oh, Muslims of the world and the vulnerable of the earth! wake up! take the lead of your own countries. How long will Moscow and Washington control you?”<sup>(22)</sup> Khomeini exploited the timings of Islamic rituals to send his wakeup call to the Iranian people and to Muslims worldwide, such as Ashura, Ramadan, Hajj, and Friday prayer.

The Palestinian struggle has always been a pivotal issue for all Muslims. The city of Jerusalem, particularly, holds significance to Muslims, as it is where *Masjid Aqsa* [Aqsa Mosque] is situated, the third-holiest site in Islam. Khomeini publicized the last Friday of every Ramadan to be the International *Quds* Day (Jerusalem Day). He sought to use Jerusalem, as means to mobilize Muslims and Arabs under his leadership. He linked Palestine to the oppressed people worldwide. He said, “Quds Day is not only for Palestine; it is the day of Islam. It is the day in which all vulnerable peoples must get united. It is the day in which oppressed people stand up in front of the arrogant oppressors. Quds Day is the day of Islam’s life, ... the day in which the oppressed should declare their existence against the oppressor.”<sup>(23)</sup>

### **Fifth: Islam in the Iranian Constitution**

The constitution emphasizes Iran as an Islamic Republic, this can be visualized by looking at some of the clauses within the constitution;

**Article I:** “The form of government of Iran is that of an Islamic Republic, endorsed by the people of Iran on the basis of their longstanding belief in the sovereignty of truth and Quranic justice.”<sup>(24)</sup>

**Article 2:** “The Islamic Republic is a system based on the faith in the exclusive attribution of sovereignty and the legislation of law to Him, and the necessity of surrender to His commands; divine inspiration and its foundational role in the articulation of the laws; the justice of God in creation and legislation; belief in the Imams (Imamate), continuous leadership, and its fundamental role in the continuity of the Islamic Revolution.”<sup>(25)</sup>

**Article 4:** all laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria. “This principle governs all the articles of the constitution, and other laws and regulations.”<sup>(26)</sup>

**Article 5:** During the Occultation of Imam Mahdi, “the sovereignty of the command [of God] and religious leadership of the community [of believers] in the Islamic Republic of Iran is the responsibility of the Faqih who is just, pious, knowledgeable about his era, and is recognized and accepted by the majority of people as leader.”<sup>(27)</sup>

**Article 7:** The consultation principle as discussed in the Quran is mentioned and lists the consultative bodies such as the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the Guardian Council, the district and village councils as the decision making and administrative organs of the country.<sup>(28)</sup>

**Article 8:** Inviting one to good, the promotion of virtue and the prohibition of vice, is a general and associated responsibility between the government and the people.<sup>(29)</sup>

**Article 12:** “The official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja‘fari school of [shi‘i] religion. This principle shall remain eternally unchangeable.”<sup>(30)</sup>

**Article 144:** “The Army must be Islamic, i.e. committed to Islamic ideology and the people. It must accept into its service deserving individuals who are true to the goals of the Islamic revolution and devoted to realizing them.”<sup>(31)</sup>

**Article 150:** “The Islamic Pasdaran Revolutionary Corps established in the early days of the victory of the revolution, will remain in effect to protect the revolution and its achievements.”<sup>(32)</sup> This article is supported, in the preamble to the constitution where it mentions that establishing and preparing the country’s armed forces, “the focus shall be on maintaining ideology and faith as the foundation and the measure... They will undertake the responsibility of not only guarding and protecting the borders but also the weight of the ideological mission, i.e. striving (jihad) on the path of God and struggle on the path of expanding the sovereignty of the law of God.”<sup>(33)</sup> According to Khomeini’s perspective, the IRGC’s remit is not only national security but also *Jihad* to spread Islamic sovereignty across the world and export the Iranian Islamic model- by force, if necessary.

### **Sixth: Imam Mahdi in the Iranian Islamic system**

The Twelver doctrine is pivoted on the belief of 12 infallible divine Imams, as successors of the Prophet Mohammad. It would not be an overstatement to say that, the Imamate is the main point of conflict between the Sunni and Shia. The Iranian Shiites have a deep spiritual relationship with Imam Mahdi, as he is the last Imam of



the 12 infallibles. They hold the belief that he will reemerge close to the end of time to 'spread justice all over the world as it is plagued with oppression'. Some Shiites, especially the Iranians, believe that Imam Mahdi exists, and try to communicate and meet him. The anecdotes and books recording the meetings with Imam Mahdi are voluminous, and Jamkaran Mosque in Qom is famous for accounts of interaction with Imam Mahdi.

Regardless of the literature about meetings with Imam Mahdi, all Iranian – whether Khomeini, Ahmadinejad, or Khamenei pay great attention to his appearance and prepare for his imminent arrival. Also, the IRGC, government officials, and supporters exert all energies in preparation for his [Mahdi's] emergence. Khomeini said;

“... spreading justice, in its real meaning, all over the world is more comprehensive than simply establishing the state of justice and equity. Whatever perversion man may have, mental, actual, or spiritual, the Mahdi will restore these perversions to their common meaning by implementing justice on man.”<sup>(34)</sup>

“Mohammad is the ‘End- (last) Prophet’ and Imam Mahdi is the last Imam of the twelve infallibles.... I cannot call him a leader, because he is greater than that, nor can I call him the first man, because there is no one to succeed him, therefore I can describe him with the words ‘the promised Mahdi whom God saved for mankind.’”<sup>(35)</sup>

Moreover, Khomeini spoke of the significance of Imam Mahdi's Occultation by saying, “The great achievement is spreading justice ‘in its real meaning’ across the world. No man God ever spared for this mission but Imam Mahdi... No man ever had the capabilities of the Mahdi who will spread justice all over the world where other prophets failed- though they were sent for this great mission. Allah has chosen the Mahdi to achieve the aspired goal which prophets and forefathers were hindered to attain.”<sup>(36)</sup> Khamenei delivered a speech on the anniversary of Khomeini's death saying, “The life of Imam Mahdi is just like that of the Prophet Noah who stayed among his people for 950 years as stated in Quran.” It was a direct message to those skeptical of Imam Mahdi's life to span around 1150 years. Also, Khamenei expressed his philosophy about the Occultation in a speech he delivered in Qom in 1991. He said, “before the era of the Awaited Savior, there will be no ease, one cannot seek comfort and tranquility. In Proverbs, it is narrated that “God will purify you” and “God will inspect you”, you will be rigidly examined and placed under pressure. Where and when is this examination? When there is a field of struggle.”<sup>(37)</sup>

He motivated his supporters while delivering a speech in 2002 saying “do not sit down and cry “urging them to be “the soldiers of Mahdi”. Also, he stated in another speech that “If Iranian people gain victory, history will change, preparing for the appearance of Imam Mahdi, the world will enter a new phase- this is dependent on our decisiveness and awareness.”<sup>(38)</sup>In a striking example, the representative for administrative affairs at the Jamkaran Mosque, Qom, Mohammad Hassan

Rahiman, claimed that he witnessed the secret meetings between Khamenei and Imam Mahdi stating they had met 13 times in the cellar of Jamkaran mosque. Also, that Khamenei weaves his wisdom and knowledge from the constant meetings with the absent Imam. He stated that during the 2006 Lebanon War, Khamenei went to the Jamkaran Mosque where he met Imam Mahdi and asked him to make Hassan Nasrallah victorious in the war with Israel. After that meeting, Hezbollah fighters won the battle.<sup>(39)</sup>

Some say Ahmadinejad communicated with Imam Mahdi, resulting in him undermining Khamenei and disobeyed his orders. This led him to be dismissed from the presidential elections in 2017.

During his last term of office in 2008, Ahmadinejad said that he personally met with Imam Mahdi. In June 2015, Iranian media outlets reported statements of Ahmadinejad accusing the West and the U.S. of seeking the arrest of Imam Mahdi. He also claimed that Western intelligence interrogated numerous individuals who had been in touch with Imam Mahdi and collected data saying, “the only [evidence] they lack is his picture.”<sup>(40)</sup>

Ahmadinejad’s claim of being in touch with Imam Mahdi influenced his political performance. He was strict in domestic and foreign policy, particularly, the nuclear deal. His government kept enriching uranium violating the international measures of quality and quantity. His policy was about to flare up a war with the U.S. or Israel. It is likely, that Ahmadinejad believed that war with the U.S. would lead to the reemergence of Imam Mahdi who would rise to guard Iran. In 2011, another domestic disagreement surfaced between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei. Khamenei assumed that Ahmadinejad sought to embed a new political system, stemming from his meeting with Imam Mahdi that would challenge the *Velayat-e Faqih*.<sup>(41)</sup>

### **Seventh: The clerics’ role in Iran’s decision-making**

The clerics play an essential role in Iran’s political and social system. They hold all the important political cards, starting from the Supreme Jurist Leader. The Assembly of Experts has the right in appointing and dismissing the Jurist Leader. The Constitutional Amendment Council ratifies legislation and vets presidential and parliamentary candidates. Moreover, the clerics might be presidents, ministers, or members in Consultative Assembly (ICA), social security council and the Expediency Discernment Council, along with their influential role in Hawza in Qom. This clarifies why Khomeini from the very beginning tamed most of the Qom Hawza. He was truly aware of the pivotal role of clerics and the Hawza in Iranian history. He, firmly believed there would be no state without clerics.<sup>(42)</sup> Therefore, he founded the Constitutional Amendment Council to hinder anyone – who is unwanted by the Jurist Leader.

### **Eighth: The role of the IRGC and the Basij**

The Iranian revolutionary constitution emphasized the importance of the IRGC and the Jurist Leadership. The constitution defines the core doctrine of the IRGC as an Islamic force, with its mission surpassing the boundaries of Iran to export the Islamic Revolution, support Muslims and liberation movements worldwide. After the passage of time, the IRGC mask fell off when it suppressed the uprising in Syria in the late 1980s. History repeats itself, as in the 2011 Syrian uprising the IRGC has played the same role, to maintain the interests and national security of Iran.

The organizations of the Iranian Revolution, the IRGC, Basij, and Ansar-e-Hezbollah are the regime's proxies to maintain law and to quell rebellions. The Quds Force, led by General Qassem Suleimani, is a powerful player outside Iran – in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine. It supports Palestinians, the Lebanese resistance, and the Axis of Resistance in Syria and Iraq. Previously it has supported the vulnerable people of Bosnia, international liberation movements, and anti-U.S. countries such as Cuba and Venezuela. The IRGC works parallel to the regular army of Iran. It has compulsory recruitment and its own- land, air, and sea forces. It has a military arsenal, tanks, submarines, fighter aircraft, a huge budget, and many institutions.<sup>(45)</sup> The IRGC and the Basij, play a vital role in maintaining internal security, protecting the revolution from internal rivals, safeguarding the gains of the revolution, supporting the oppressed and exporting the revolutions teachings to other countries.<sup>(44)</sup>

Some reports state that the IRGC's power makes it the de facto ruler of Iran, forcing the Supreme Leader to take their power into account. There is probably an over exaggeration in these reports, at least during the reign of Khamenei, who is a veteran Supreme Leader for 20 years and tightly controls the levers of power in Iran. Some experts predict that the IRGC will play a critical role in electing the next Supreme Leader post-Khamenei.

### **Ninth: The influence of religion in Iran's foreign policy**

After the 1979 revolution, Iran established a theocracy and institutionalized Islam as its ruling ideology. It strived to export its own Islamic model, the "pure Mohammadi Islam" to Muslim states. Iran propagated many revolutionary slogans to topple Arab regimes, such as, "the oppressed in front of the international oppressors"; "American is the Great Satan"; "Death to America, Death to Israel"; "Israel is cancerous tumor that should be cut off"; and "Death to Russia."

Khomeini considered himself the guardian and Imam of all. According to his perspective, his legitimacy and imamate stem from being the deputy of the 'absent' Imam Mahdi. His mission is to spread the 'Islamic Awakening' to all Muslims and to liberate the oppressed and vulnerable all over the world. Therefore, Khomeini called for Islamic unity between Shias and Sunnis unite the Islamic world under his leadership.<sup>(45)</sup>

The Iranian constitution indicates this unity considering Muslims as one nation, stemming from the Quranic verse, “*Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood. And I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore, serve me*” (21: 92). It is stated in Article 11, “all Muslims form a single nation and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is required to base its overall politics on the merging and unity of the Muslim nations. It must continuously strive to achieve the political, economic, and cultural unity of the Muslim world.”<sup>(46)</sup>

Furthermore, the preamble of the constitution states that the goal of establishing an Islamic government is to guide the humans towards God and to create the best conditions for their talents to bloom under God’s values. All sectors work together to develop their own society and pave the way to establish “the governance of the oppressed-on earth.” This is in accordance with the Quranic verse, “*And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed on the land. To make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs*” (28:5).<sup>(47)</sup> This is a spark preluding the reemergence of Imam Mahdi who will establish the government of Justice. Article 3 in the constitution states, “the organization of the nation’s foreign policy based on Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all Muslims, and unrestrained support for the impoverished people of the world,” and Article 154 states, “the Islamic Republic of Iran considers human happiness throughout human society as its ideal. It considers independence, freedom, and the governance of justice and truth as the right of all the people of the world. Consequently, while it completely abstains from any kind of intervention in the internal affairs of other nations.”

The aforementioned constitutional clauses justify Iran’s interference in other countries under the pretext of supporting Islamic liberation movements. It is considered, according to the regime’s view, a lofty goal to make mankind happy, independent, liberated and able to establish the government of justice. This contradicts the last two lines of Article 154, “it completely abstains from any kind of intervention.” Many Arab states accuse Iran of interfering in their domestic affairs by penetrating their sovereignty, threatening their security, funding and sponsoring opponent parties. These lines of article 154 have remained ink on paper and not practiced in reality.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt, that religion has widely influenced all walks of life in Iran, be it politics, culture, society or the army. Iran is a theocratic republic and the ideology of the Iranian state is a mix of democracy and theocracy; it comprises the fundamentals of the Infallible Imams, the principles of Hussein’s revolution, and the leftist concepts calling for liberating the oppressed from colonialism.

The decision-making process in Iran seems quite complicated and multilayered where various bodies and institutions overlap with one another to pass one order. However, over the passage of nearly 40 years of ruling, the authority is in the hands

of the Supreme Leader and his office, other bodies have their own tasks. But, the final word on essential issues relating to foreign and domestic policy is with the Supreme Leader and related powers such as the IRGC, Social Security Council, and the Qom Hawza.

Despite the importance of religion, reading between the lines discloses how pragmatic and realistic Iranian policy is in domestic or foreign affairs. Several lines of evidence confirm this pragmatic policy in Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Syria, and Iraq. For example, Khomeini supported the UNSC resolution 598, which called for an immediate ceasefire between Iraq and Iran, for the interests of his people. His famous remark, “taking this decision was deadlier than taking poison.” Without a doubt, these pragmatic decisions are jurisprudentially justified under necessities, interests, and under the rule: “

## Endnotes

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- (35) *Ibid*
- (36) *Ibid.*
- (37) Khamenei's speech on the anniversary of Khomeini's death, "Khamenei compares the long life of Imam Mahdi to that of prophet Noah. CNN Arabic, 2015-6-4, <http://cutt.us/7uyVo>
- (38) *Ibid.*
- (39) " Representative of the Supreme Leader witnessed 13 secret meetings with Imam Mahdi in the basement of Jamarkan Mosque", Quds of Arab, 2017-4-10 <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=701666>. See also, Mohammad Sayyad, Exploiting Mahdi's Stream in Iran's Political System, 2017 -7-23, Arabian Gulf Centre for Iranian

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(40) Mohammad Atter, "at the Awaiting for Mahdi: Hojjatieh refuse to establish a state before the appearance of Mahdi", Sasapost, 2015-12-11 <https://www.sasapost.com/hojjatieh>. See also Mohamm Sayyad, Op. Cit. Rashid Yalooch Mahdi's Stream in Contemporary Iran: Ahmadinejad and the Absent Imam, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, <http://cutt.us/9rCws>

(41) Mohammad Atter, *ibid*, and Rashid Yalooch, *ibid*.

(42) Mohammad Alsulami and Mohammad Sayyad, *The Jurist, Religion and Authority in Iran: The Dialectics of Shiite Political Ideology between Arab and Iranian Marja'yya*, ed. 1st, Arabian Gulf Centre for Iranian Studies, 2017, p. 135-137.

(43) Hala Rashid, "the Iranian Armed Forces: Huge Budget and Iran's Suppressing power", *Asharq al-Awsat*, cited in Hafryat, <http://cutt.us/wYrj>

(44) *Ibid*.

(45) Mohammad Alsulami (Ph.D.) and Mr. Mohammad Sayyad, *The Jurist, Religion and Authority in Iran*, Op. Cit. pp. 131-130

(46) *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, p. 43

(47) *Ibid.*, 30-29