

# Theoretical Viewpoints of Imām Khomeinī in the Realm of Foreign Policy

Maryam as-Sādāt Mirzā Ḥusaynī

## Introduction

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran under the leadership of Imām Khomeinī (*r*) led to a modern transformation in the context of Iranian political issues including both the domestic and foreign policies. On the domestic dimension, there are changes in the government structure, way of managing the country and entrusting the affairs to the people while on the foreign and international dimension, there are the behavioral and normative changes. Both dimensions can be summed up as basing on the pure Muḥammadan Islam. Thus, the Iranian foreign policy after the Islamic Revolution has generally differed from what were current and prevalent during the former regime. These changes are caused by the guidelines, which the late Imām used to express in decrees and directives, messages and admonitions, writings, speeches, and interviews on different subjects and events.

In this article we intend to examine some important and influential instances of his ideas and viewpoints in the realm of foreign policy on different conditions and circumstances. Before embarking on the main discussion, I deem it appropriate to touch first on the description of politics and the elements of foreign policy from Imām Khomeinī's viewpoint.

## Definition of politics from Imām Khomeinī's viewpoint

“Politics is that it should guide the society, find its way, consider all the interests of society, and guide them to that which is for their welfare.”<sup>1</sup>

“Politics means management of the country based on the religious and spiritual welfare of the people.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 9, 239.

### **Elements of foreign policy from Imām Khomeinī's viewpoint**

Generally, the following elements in the context of foreign policy can be inferred from his speeches and opinions:

1. Non-reliance on the global powers, which has been manifested in the Imām's policy of "Neither East nor West";
2. Negation of domination and subservience to domination;
3. Preservation of the existence and territorial integrity of the country, and observing the long-term interests of the system;
4. Invitation toward the monotheistic values and fundamentals of Islam;
5. Defense of the integrity and reputation of Islam in the international gatherings;
6. Expression of sympathy to the downtrodden of the world and inviting them to unite with one another;
7. Invitation toward the unity of Muslims;
8. Strategic campaign against the Quds-occupying regime;
9. Harmonious coexistence and forging of equitable and friendly relations with countries of the world and negation of isolationism; and
10. Introduction of Islam as a comprehensive, perfect and practical religion.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to explain that a number of these elements have been abundantly discussed in books, articles, university theses, interviews, and others. Detailed explanations concerning them have been given and almost everybody is familiar with them. In this article, there is an effort to avoid repeating redundancies. Instead of those that have been said, those that have not yet been said will be dealt with. It is also tried that this paper be free from repetitive and boredom subjects. The subjects that have been rarely discussed or generally remained uncharted terrain will be treated instead.

### **Isolationism or active participation in international relations**

One of the principles on which the Imām used to stress in the realm of foreign policy was the policy of "neither East nor West". Regarding the concept of "neither East nor West" policy, as it has been earlier explained in

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Muḥammad Ṣādiq Mazīnānī, "Risālat-e Siyāsī Ḥawzeh-hā dar Andīsheh-ye Imām Khomeinī [Political Mission of the Islamic Seminaries in the Thought of Imām Khomeinī]," *Faṣlnāmeḥ-ye Ḥawzeh [Islamic Seminary Quarterly]* nos. 94-95 (Dey 1378 AHS), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on the principles and elements of foreign policy, see Muḥammad Maḥlūjī, *Jilveh-hā-ye Siyāsat-e Islāmī [Forms of Islamic Politics]* (n.p.: n.d., 1372 AHS).

many books and essays, we will thus avoid repeating it. We will only deal on the aspect of incorrect understandings of this principle.

The incorrect understanding that many common people have with respect to this principle is that in view of the fact that unbelief is prevalent in the international system and many countries especially the industrially advanced ones are not so much in good terms with religion, it is better for us not to have any relationship with them and close our borders to them on all aspects: cultural, economic, political, and social. This is while the Imām has never had such an intention on this principle. Rather, on the contrary, he believed that by applying the principle of *da'wah* as the first principle in the foreign policy of Islam and with highly active and extensive presence in all contexts, we must forge peaceful relationship (not that of wolf and ewe) with all countries (except with the Zionist regime and countries that cannot comprehend the concept of equitable mutual relationship). By enhancing different political, social, cultural, and even economic aspects with the application of Islamic fundamentals, we could introduce the universality and superiority of the religion of Islam and its prosperity-endowing laws to the world. Without having relationship with the world, how and through which means could we introduce Islam? Can we export the Revolution and introduce Islam by resorting to the use of force, aggression and war? By forging relationship with even non-Muslim and secular countries, can we gradually and in practice ensure the welfare of Islam, which is its introduction and globalization, as well as the interests of the nation as the *umm al-qurā'*?

We should not imagine that whatever is there in other countries is evil and harmful. Instead, we should know that many of the scientific, technological and economic advancements in the world are also useful for us. Through the correct methods, we should choose, select and possess these accomplishments. At a time when communications are so extensive and easy with the existence of global networks (such as the Internet), satellites and others, whether we like it or not, communications will exist. Now that we have no option but to communicate with other countries of whatever creed, it is better for us to think of a correct and effective communication, not an undesirable and imposed communication. Thus, this interpretation of the sayings of the Imām who was a farsighted and future-oriented leader is not correct at all. His interpretation never means shutting down of borders. His inclination to pursue the universal objectives of Islam and perform the proper Islamic duties toward the Muslims and even non-Muslims are generally inconsistent with having no communication. The Imām believed that the

international system is exactly like a city whose various districts have relations with each other. We should not seclude. Rather, just as the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) used to forge relationship by dispatching envoys and preachers, we should act and forge relationship with other countries.

### **The Constitution's answer to the ambiguities**

Another source and reference of foreign policy-making is the Constitution, which has been approved and stressed by the Imām. An accurate study of the articles pertaining to foreign policy will point to us the fact that the Constitution is oriented toward forging, improving and consolidating relations with other international players, especially the Muslim and Third World countries. In this instrument there has never been a discussion of the severance or lessening of relations except in cases that are discordant with the religious principles. In Article 152 of the Constitution, peaceful relations with non-belligerent states, not only Muslim or neighboring countries, have been stipulated.<sup>1</sup>

In its various articles and paragraphs, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has described methods of dealing, principles of relations and foreign policy of the statesmen of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the domain of practice. We will briefly deal on some of these principles:

In Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution, negation of all forms of oppression—infliction of it as well as submission to it—and of dominance, its imposition as well as its acceptance; political, economic, social, and cultural independence of the country; complete elimination of imperialism; and framing of the country's foreign policy on the basis of Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all Muslims of the world and unflinching support for them have all been emphasized.

In Article 11, in accordance with the injunction of the noble verse of the Qur'an, "*This community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me,*"<sup>2</sup> it is the duty of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to formulate its general policies on the basis of the alliance and unity of Muslim nations. In Article 14, treating well in accordance with ethical norms and Islamic justice and fairness the non-Muslim individuals—so long as they

---

<sup>1</sup> Article 152 of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Constitution states: "The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon rejection of all forms of domination—both the assertion of it and submission to it—preservation of the country's all round independence, its territorial integrity, defense of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with hegemonic superpowers, and *the maintenance of peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States*". (emphasis added) [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Sūrah al-Anbiyā'* 21:92. [Trans.]

do not engage in conspiracy and hostile measures against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran—have been recommended.<sup>1</sup>

In Articles 152 and 153, defense of the rights of all Muslims; non-alignment with hegemonic powers; maintenance of peaceful relations with all non-belligerent states; and rejection of any kind of agreement resulting in foreign control of the country's affairs have been indicated. In Article 154, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers as its ideal the realization of human felicity throughout human society, and independence, freedom and the rule of truth and justice as the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the struggle of the *mustaḍ'afīn* against the *mustakbirīn* for their rights in every corner of the globe.<sup>2</sup>

### **Imām Khomeinī's answer to the ambiguities**

Imām Khomeinī reckons seclusion and the policy of isolationism as repugnant to reason and religion. Apart from emphasizing on forging relationship with all states (except for few countries for reasons that are completely logical), he views closing down of borders for the countries and severing diplomatic relations with them as tantamount to annihilation, perdition and burial of the country. He criticizes the proponents of isolationist policy, saying:

That which the spiteful and ignorant people sometimes express shows that they either do not understand or that they have ill-will. For, so long as a person is not ignorant or does not oppose the essence of the system, he cannot say that the system should withdraw from the world. We are not antagonistic to any nation. On account of the primordial nature, we want to befriend all states; we want to have good relationship with mutual respect to all. In case we need a certain item (available outside) and they need another item (available with us), we could exchange, provided that these states do not oppose us.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This kind of treatment is in compliance with the noble verse of the Qur'an, "*Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and justly with those who have not fought with you because of your religion and who did not expel you from your homes.*" *Sūrah al-Mumtaḥanah* 60:80. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> 'Abdur-Raḥīm Gavāhī, *Majalleh-ye Siyāsāt-e Khārijī [Foreign Policy Magazine]*, 11<sup>th</sup> year, no. 3 (Summer 1376 AHS), pp. 561-562.

<sup>3</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 10, p. 352.

The Imām used to emphasize peaceful and friendly relationship, considering it as part of the necessities of social and political life. Having constant relationship was considered preferential than its abandonment on the condition that this relationship is based upon mutual respect, and the interests and welfare of both parties, not only one, are taken into account.

From our familiarity with the comprehensive, future-oriented and realistic personality, we have no expectation from him but this.

We want to befriend all nations of the world. On account of the primordial nature, we want to befriend all states of the world and to have good relationship with them; with mutual respect, we want to have good relationship with all.<sup>1</sup>

In the view of Imām Khomeinī, relations that cause dominance are rejected. Hence, concerning this, he says:

“If trade relations with the non-Muslims cause fear on the domain of Islam, then abandonment of these relations is obligatory for all Muslims.”<sup>2</sup> Here the difference between political and cultural-spiritual predominance of the enemy has no meaning.

If political relations that will be forged and established between Muslim states and foreign states would lead to the dominance of the non-Muslims over the lives, territories and properties of the Muslims, or cause them political servitude, establishment of relations then is forbidden. The contracts to be concluded are void. It is incumbent upon all Muslims to guide (their) rulers and persuade them to abandon such political relations, though they are by means of negative resistance.<sup>3</sup>

### **Unity of the downtrodden of the world as an important foreign policy mission in the thought of Imām Khomeinī**

As the leader of deliverance for all the downtrodden of the world—be they Muslims or not, monotheists or not—the Imām was always wishing for the felicity of all humanity and used to feel sense of responsibility for all. He illustrated this divine global duty both in his message to Gorbachev<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>3</sup> Rūḥullāh Khomeinī, *Tahrīr al-Wasīlah*, 1<sup>st</sup> printing, vol. 1, p. 485.

<sup>4</sup> See *A Call to Divine Unity: Letter of Imām Khomeinī, the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution and Founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Mikhail Gorbachev, Leader of the Soviet Union (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, Ed. Mansoor Limba (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, Winter 2003/4).

as well as in his sense of responsibility in delivering the communist people, in the severance of relationship with the former apartheid regime of South Africa though most South Africans are not Muslims as well as with other Muslims without taking into account the color, race, language, religion, and class. We can clearly see that he discusses the issue of unity of the world's downtrodden as the most important and fruitful way in confronting the arrogant of the world. He regards unity, oneness of voice and support for one another against oppression in the entire world as the only way of eliminating oppression in the world of the oppressed. So, he adopts an important strategy in this context, saying:

I hope that a party in the name of the downtrodden in the entire world will appear and all the downtrodden do participate in this party, removing all the problems in their way; they would rise up against the arrogant and plunderers of the East and West and no longer let the arrogant oppress the downtrodden of the world.<sup>1</sup>

In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic (Article 11), by invoking the noble Qur'anic verse, "*This community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me,*"<sup>2</sup> the principle of unity among Muslims has been stipulated as an urgency in foreign policy. It states,

It is the duty of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to formulate its general policies on the basis of the alliance and unity of Muslim nations, and to make consistent effort for the realization of the political, economic and cultural unity of the Muslim world.

Endorsing the unifying strategy of the Imām, we can read the following in one of the periodicals:

During the entire period of his struggles that took place in Iran, Imām Khomeinī set up his Islamic project on two principles, unity and Palestine. He had never been negligent even for a moment in thinking for the realization of Islamic unity and its importance. He brought out the Islamic unity from the leathern bag of slogans and wishes and transformed it into a serious and real practical design so that the Muslims could realize it.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Dar Justijū-ye Rāh-e Imām az Kalām-e Imām (Daftar-e Awwal) [In Search of the Way of the Imām Khomeinī through the Pen of Imām Khomeinī (1<sup>st</sup> Section)]* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr Publications, 1362 AHS), p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Sūrah al-Anbiyā'* 21:92. [Trans.]

The Imām correctly believed that designing the Islamic unity project and calling on the Muslims without a strong support and explanation of its principles and fundamentals, or designing Islam as a global mission, is not an easy job. Hence, through writing various books on different issues, his speeches and stances, he strived diligently to correct the existing deficiencies and prejudices that brought about ambiguities for the Muslims' understanding of Islam.

### **Admonition to the governments and nations to sympathy and unity**

As what we know, in the international scene and system the decision-making and implementing units are the states. The states are [supposedly] the mouthpiece of their nations. If all the downtrodden of the world are supposed to have unity, it can be attained faster and easier through the governments. Because of this, it is necessary for the states to sympathize and have single voice with their own nations in order to realize unity. Thus, we can observe that the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran pays close attention to this issue. He invites them to unanimity and oneness of voice so that owing to it they could solve the problems and not let the enemy to dominate.

If there were Islamic unity of expression, if the Muslim governments and nations were united, for the nearly one billion Muslims to be under the sway of the superpowers would have no more meaning. If this power is transformed into a great divine power, no power will be able to overcome it.<sup>1</sup>

If the nations and governments would like to achieve victory and their Islamic objectives in all their dimensions, which are the felicity of humanity, they have to hold fast to the Rope of Allah; they have to refrain from disunity and discord; they have to obey the command of God, the Exalted: "*And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves*" (Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān 3:103).<sup>2</sup>

The next step or stage is the realization of unity among the downtrodden states. Through this unity as well as their efforts they could eliminate the oppression of the arrogant in the world; in the international gatherings and scenes, they could render helpless the oppressors by adopting a single stance

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 6, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

and make themselves a great power. Concerning this, the Imām puts more emphasis on the unity among Muslim states, saying:

The Muslim states should be like a single state, like a single society, having one flag, one book (the Qur'an), and one Prophet. They are supposed to be always united and have love with one another in all aspects. If these aspirations come true that the Muslim states are united in all aspects, there is hope that they could overcome their problems, and a greater power would confront other powers.<sup>1</sup>

The Imām regards the success of the colonialists in colonizing the deprived nations as springing from the discord and division among the Muslims and leaders of the Muslim countries.

It is the time when the claws of colonialism have penetrated the remotest part of the Muslim countries. It is the time when the colonialists have mobilized all their forces and facilities in the way of creating discord among the Muslims and heads of Muslim countries. Through whatever means at their disposal, they strive to prevent the Muslims from abiding with and practicing the teachings of Islam. In such a way, the colonialists could easily achieve their inhuman objectives, the colonization of the deprived class.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Negation of nationalism and ethnocentrism**

The most important factor that prevents the Muslims and the downtrodden of the world from attaining unity of action is nationalism and ethnocentrism, which Imām Khomeinī negates and regards as elements for the discordance and hostility of the Muslims. As what we know, now the Islamic world has suffered enormous losses due to these imperialist weapons. So much amount of blood has been spilled and facilities wasted for this. Having imperialist roots, the sectarian conflicts in Pakistan and Afghanistan are clear manifestations, which unfortunately have continued and amounted to fratricide, genocide, instability, and insecurity in the region. In this manner, the imperialists let the Muslims be preoccupied with these affairs; they could easily plunder their resources and make their weapons manufacturing companies more flourishing. An instance of which is the war between the Arabs and Persians initiated by Ṣaddām—a war that has made them instruments of discord and confusion and sacrificed the youth of both

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Dar Justijū-ye Rāh-e Imām az Kalām-e Imām (Daftar-e Awwal)*.

countries who could play a key role in the reconstruction of their countries and could liberate their countries from the state of dependency on the dominant powers. Other examples are in Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, the sectarian wars in Lebanon, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Among the problems that the plotters have designed (as the imperialist agents do in promoting it) for the creation of discord among the Muslims are ethnocentrism and nationalism. Nationalism against other Muslim nations is an issue that Islam, the Qur'an and orders of the Holy Prophet oppose. The same nationalism that amounts to the animosity among Muslims and rift in the ranks of the believers is contrary to Islam and the interests of Muslims, and is among the tricks of the foreigners who suffer from Islam and its spread.<sup>2</sup>

From among the vivid experiences of this period in which nationalism led to the weakening and defeat of Muslims, one can mention the Arab nationalism that Jamāl 'Abdun-Nāṣir (of Egypt) promoted. Through such a propaganda and irrational feelings he was not able to win the support of many non-Arab countries during the Arab-Israeli war. This affair has led to their defeat and the Israel's acquisition of more power.

“Time and again, I state that this nationalism is the root of the Muslims' misery. For, this nationalism puts the Iranian nation against other Muslim nations and the Iranian nation vis-à-vis others.”<sup>3</sup>

That which has made the Muslim states wretched and presently makes them drift away from the auspices of the Holy Qur'an is the problem of racism.<sup>4</sup> This race is Turkish; this race is Iranian; this race is Arab. The problem of racism is reactionary.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Jawād Manṣūrī, *Nazarī beh Siyāsāt-e Kharijī-ye Jumhūrī-ye Islāmī-ye Irān [A Glance at the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran]* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr Publications, n.d.), pp. 51-56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 13, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> For 'racism' the Imām actually used the term, *nezhādbāzī*, which literally means 'playing with the card of race or ethnicity'. [Trans.]

<sup>5</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 1, p. 89.

## **Maṣlahat in foreign policy from Imām Khomeinī's viewpoint**

### **Definition of maṣlahat**

As the etymologists have defined *maṣlahat*, it literally and technically means 'interest' [*manfa'at*].<sup>1</sup> The term *maṣlahat* or name of place [*ism-e makān*] means position or place of goodness or interest [*ṣalāḥ*] and its opposite is corruption [*ifsād*].<sup>2</sup>

Abū Ḥamīd Ghazzālī ash-Shāfi'ī<sup>3</sup> has described *maṣlahat* as acquisition of benefit or interest and getting rid of injury or damage to the extent that the religious aims are preserved.<sup>4</sup>

Imām Khomeinī had always put at the top of his agenda both the interest and honor of Islam and the nation. Amidst the various problems and on different circumstances he used to emphasize it. All the elements of foreign policy, in the view of the Imām, are cases that are in pursuit of ensuring the national interests, honor and pride of Iran, and the interest of Islam. It cannot be said that the Imām was only pursuing the advancement and reintroduction of Islam and nothing else (even if it is really such, still it has no contradiction with guaranteeing the long-term interests of the people). All the principles on which the Imām used to emphasize are in the long run national interests and the welfare of Islam; these principles used to ensure both the two as in the principles of self-reliance in all aspects (non-reliance on the East and West), negation of domination (both its assertion and submission to it), peaceful coexistence, relations with mutual respect, etc.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Nāṣir Taqawī, *Ḥukūmat va Maṣlahat [Government and Interest]* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr Publications, 1378 AHS), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Ḥujjat al-Islām Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad ibn Ghazzālī aṭ-Ṭūsī was born in Iran in 1058 at Ṭūs, Khorāsān, where he died in 1111. Al-Ghazzālī is recognized by many as a great theologian of Islam and the final authority for Sunnī orthodoxy. Starting his religious life as orthodox, al-Ghazzālī soon turned to Sufism. He spent many years roaming from place to place before eventually going to Baghdad to preach and teach. It was there that he composed what many see as his masterpiece, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* [The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion]. His other well-known works include: *Fātiḥat al-'Ulūm*; *Taḥāfut al-Falāsīfah*; *Al-Iqtisād fī'l-'Iṭiqād* and *Kīmīyā-ye Sa'ādat* [The Alchemy of Happiness] which is *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* re-presented on a smaller scale for Persian readers. Al-Ghazzālī was, however, among a number of classical Sunnī authorities who attempted to legitimize both the hereditary caliphate and the usurpation of power by military dynasties, by means of their political theories. The influence of these theories has far outlived the circumstances that produced them and it continues to affect the political attitudes of Sunnī Muslims, although it is now diminishing.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

One of the greatest teachings of the founder of the Islamic Republic to the Iranian nation and the global Muslims is the lesson of honor-seeking.<sup>1</sup> Taking into account the honor in foreign policy means that in the international decision-making, interest should be assessed in such a way that the honor of the country and Islam is not slighted and such decisions would not bring abjectness to the Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, taking into account the honor of the country and Muslims, observance of the principle, “Neither East nor West”, and maintenance of the country’s independence—none of which should give way to the negligence of the country’s interests. Peculiar discretion should be applied and detailed strategic programs implemented. By considering the most vital interests, all the objectives must be ensured.

The Imām believed that we ought to have a detailed program so as to achieve our goals and interests of the deprived nation of Iran, and he frequently used to remind the officials of the system of this point.<sup>3</sup>

Along this line, we will deal with the most important pertinent modus operandi of the Imām:

### **Thwarting the enemies’ conspiracies**

With his profound insight, the Imām used to pay attention to this subject. In particular cases, he used to remind and guide the government officials, give warning to the unwary individuals involved in these issues, and thwart the enemies’ conspiracies. At the time when some individuals were entertaining the idea of isolationism by asking: “For what that we want to have relations with other countries?” or at the time when some individuals were considering the necessity of forging relations with other countries as abandonment of the objectives and ideal principles of the Revolution and Islam, or in replying to those who used to stress on the relationship with nations only and reject the relationship with states, the Imām thus states:

The superpowers and America were imagining that Iran—through the revolution that it has launched and its desire to achieve independence and freedom, which is not a new issue and is contrary to the conduct of all governments—will have no option but to withdraw; once it withdrew, it cannot be able to live. You have witnessed that it did not. Iran’s relations with the foreigners have increased. Now, they arrived at the point: “What

---

<sup>1</sup> Honor-seeking [*‘izzat-talabī*]: Striving to maintain or revive the honor of Muslims. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Nāṣir Taqawī, “*Maṣlahat dar Siyāsāt-e Khārijī* [Interest in Foreign Policy],” *Foreign Policy Journal* 12 no. 3 (Autumn 1377 AHS), p. 589.

<sup>3</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 20, p. 239.

we have to do with these states? They are all oppressors, so on and so forth. We should (only) have relations with the nations.” This is again a new plot, very dangerous issue and well-calculated mischief. Just as at the early period of Islam when the Prophet used to send envoys to the different places to establish relations, we should act and we cannot afford to see or say, “What business do we have with the states?” This is contrary to reason and religion. We should have relationship with everybody. Yet, it has some exceptions with which we still do not have relationship.<sup>1</sup>

**Preminent *maṣlahat* in foreign policy: *maṣlahat* of the nation or *maṣlahat* of the *ummah*?**

All that had been said were overall frameworks of assessing interest in foreign policy. From the statements of the founder of the Islamic Republic, we have grasped the kernel of the matters. Yet, the point is that at all times, interest assessment is not that easy such that merely knowing these frameworks and principles, we could choose and diplomatically announce our primary interests, which must be based on one of the two. It is because in some cases, these very principles—in one perspective—are pressed on one another. As what has been said earlier, in the first stage at the times of overlapping with one another, the preservation of honor as a sublime interest has a lofty value and a stronger basis in relation to other interests. However, another postulation and form is possible and that is, if in regard to an issue the honor of the nation overlaps with the honor of the Islamic world, or in other words, if the interest of the nation and the interest of the *ummah* are overlapping with each other—under this condition, which of the two should prevail over the other?

In the political linguistics, the term ‘nation’ [*millat*] for the common people means a country with the internationally recognized geographical limits and borders. What we mean by ‘nation’ is the same with the well-known conception of the term. The concept of ‘nation’ has divergent conceptions in the Qur’an as well as in the Islamic philosophy and sociological viewpoints. However, what we mean by *ummah* is the same Islamic *ummah*, which transcends beyond geographical frontiers, and racial, lingual and ethnic distinctions, and embraces all Muslims—regardless of the schools of thought—the followers of the religion of Islam. The answer to the put forth question depends upon the type of thinking and intellectual basis of the answerer.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 73.

In general, three views can be pointed out in this regard:<sup>1</sup>

**First view**

In this view, the interests of Muslims have never been given attention. Only the country's interests are taken into account. The most fanatic proponents of this idea are the patriotic (most of the monarchists). If in case, as a mere empty rhetoric, they talk about Islam, they are more inclined to express and advance the services rendered by Iran to Islam. For this group, usually, Xerxes, Cyrus, Darius, and the history of ancient Iran hold more importance than the history of Islam. It is so obvious that for them, in principle overlapping between the interests of the nation and *ummah* will not take place. In whatever case, it is the nation, homeland and country (that shall prevail).

Of course, it should be mentioned that usually in sensitive conditions and at the 'touchstone of experience', these claimants of patriotism easily turn back from homeland and surrender. The latest instance of this touchstone was the case of the three Iranian islands and the problem created by the World Arrogance through the United Arab Emirates for the Islamic Republic. Due to political motives, a number of this so-called patriotic group has easily expressed in one of their publications their readiness to relinquish the three islands and in principle, to view Iran as the usurper of these islands!

The nationalists and pseudo-religious intellectuals, as they never pay attention to the interests of Muslims, are also included in this group. The difference of this group with the patriotic and monarchists is its religious image. It is exactly because of this that we stated this view of the patriotic as the fanatic ones. Shallowness in religious understanding on one hand, and the intensity of nationalist fervor on the other hand, have made this group not to allocate any place for the interests of Muslims in foreign policy. The emergence of differences between the heads of the provisional government and the flag bearers of the Islamic movement during the early period of the Revolution (especially on the issue of foreign policy and relationship with America) was exactly caused by this way of thinking and view. In many instances, the Imām has pointed out this characteristic of the nationalists—that is, disregard for the interests of Muslims. He once said:

...And drive away from yourselves the nationalists, who are unaware of Islam and the interests of Muslims. Their damage to Islam is not less than

---

<sup>1</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Nāṣir Taqawī, *Maṣlaḥat dar Siyāsat-e Khārijī*, p. 593.

the damage of the world-devourers. They wrongly present Islam and open the door for the plunderers.<sup>1</sup>

### **Second view**

Proponents of this view are forces within the system and in relation to foreign policy they have a pragmatic outlook. In the view of this group, the interests of the Islamic *ummah* are worthy of respect but the interests of the country are more preferential. According to this view, such that we could be able to implement in our country the Islamic laws under the supervision of the jurist guardian is enough. In the international dimension, we are responsible in solving the problems of our country, and not responsible in removing the difficulties of all Muslims. Of course, in cases we have the capability, it is possible for us and there is no damage for our country's interests, we will render assistance to our Muslim countries. In the international gatherings (provided it is not detrimental to our country), we will always be their supporters. Therefore, in this view the country's interests are the priority, and the regard for the Muslims' interests is more explained by the sympathy and compassion for them.

### **Third view**

This view which is more than a view and theory should actually be called a doctrine. It is the doctrine of Imām Khomeinī in foreign policy. In view of what we can witness in the words and actions of the Imām, he regarded the expansion of the influence of Islam in the whole world as a duty and grand strategy in foreign policy. He used to give priority to the interests of Islam and the Muslims (interests of the *ummah*) over the interests of the nation, in case of overlapping. Of course, this preference has a significant and essential prerequisite. That is, if that nation and country was viewed as the model and vanguard of the Muslim world and in such circumstances the existence and survival of such model—which in the political vocabulary of Islam is called the *umm al-qurā*—was in danger, the interests of the *umm al-qurā* exceptionally takes priority over the interests of the *ummah*. Not only the *umm al-qurā* but also the other Muslims and Muslim countries should render assistance so that the standard-bearer of the Islamic *ummah* should not be destabilized or totally be annihilated.

According to this view, the *umm al-qurā* country is also responsible to deal with problems and concerns of the Muslim world, which in the description of the Qur'an is 'a single community' [*ummatan wāḥidah*], and it

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 19, p. 199.

should embark on solving their problems. Imām Khomeinī thus expresses this responsibility as one of the permanent principles of Iran's foreign policy:

We should exert our utmost effort in establishing relations with the people of the world; in addressing the problems and concerns of the Muslims; and in supporting the combatants, hungry and deprived. We should view it as part of the principles of our foreign policy. We declare that the Islamic Republic of Iran is always the protector and place of refuge for the free Muslims of the world. As a military stronghold, Iran provides the need of the soldiers of Islam and acquaints them with the religious fundamentals and Islamic training as well as the principles and methods of struggle against the systems of unbelief and polytheism.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, a country like Iran, which is the forerunner of the Islamic world against the front of unbelief, should have a strong defense force as that of the *umm al-qurā* country and in capacity of supervisor and vanguard of the Islamic *ummah*, it should have a strong and firm economic build-up.

A point that is present in this discussion is that if we accept the assumption that the *umm al-qurā* should have such peculiarities and specified duties with respect to the entire *ummah*, and on the other hand, the entire *ummah* has also duty toward it, only then this issue can be put forth: Now, which country is the *umm al-qurā*? As you (Iran) claim that you are the *umm al-qurā*, on what basis and reference that you assert so?

As what we know, Imām Khomeinī led and brought to victory the Islamic Revolution in Iran—a revolution, which in many respects, is different from other revolutions in the world. One remarkable difference of this revolution is its global outlook especially the importance of the destiny of all Muslims of the world and the advancement of Islam from the viewpoint of its founder. Thus, the Imām used to view Iran as the center for the advancement and spread of Islam as well as the safe haven and refuge of Muslims of the world. In fact, once again the echo of *Lā ilāha illallāh* [There is no deity but Allah] reverberated from the rooftop of Iran. In the view of the Imām, Muslim nation of Iran and many Muslims of the world, today's Iran is the *umm al-qurā* of all Muslims. Recognizing and determining the interest in foreign policy with this viewpoint concerning Iran will be so much different unless we would treat Iran merely as a country and confined to its national interests. On one hand, there are many leaders in other countries who claim the right of leadership of the Islamic *ummah*. Each of them

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 20, p. 238.

regards his own country as the Muslims' *umm al-qurā* and himself as partner in the destiny of other Muslims and sympathetic to their interests. Examples of these claimants are the rulers of Arabia (especially the family of Sa'ūd which has this claim since the time of their rule), Ṣaddām of Iraq, the late King Ḥusayn (ex-king of Jordan), and even rulers of Pakistan before. Hence, we want to know the manner of distinguishing the real *umm al-qurā* from the pseudo-*umm al-qurās*. Indeed, we want to know the characteristics of the *umm al-qurā* so that on the basis of which we could have a proper recognition of it.

### Characteristics of the *umm al-qurā*

In the Holy Qur'an the city of Mecca is described as the *umm al-qurā* as it has been decreed to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) by God so that he could warn (urge them to fear God) the people of it and its environs: "Thus We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur'an: that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that it is a holy city [*balad al-ḥarām*] and the locus of the Sacred House of Allah [*bayt allāh al-ḥarām*]<sup>2</sup>—that is, the land of Mecca is the holiest place on the surface of the earth—is indubitable. Basically, if the land of Mecca were not superior to other places, God would not have built His House there and set up the *qiblah* [point of direction] of His final religion toward it. However, by invoking the above quoted noble verse some people associate the *umm al-qurā* of today, in the political sense of the term, to the present state and political geography of that place while some of our *la-Akhbārī*<sup>2</sup> countrymen (Iranians) are sensitive to our consideration of Iran as the *umm al-qurā* of the Islamic world. They are negligent of the fact that first, what is meant by *umm al-qurā* in such a discussion is the responsibility of a country toward the entire Islamic *ummah*. Second, this conception of *umm al-qurā*, which is in fact a sort of 'vanguardianship' of the Islamic *ummah*, has certain characteristics and peculiarities. Mere claim cannot make

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sūrah ash-Shūrā* 42:7.

<sup>2</sup> *Akhbārī*: follower of Akhbarism [*akhbariyyah*], a movement, which started within the Shī'ah world about four hundred years ago. Its originator was Mullā Muḥammad Amīn ibn Muḥammad Sharīf al-Astarābādī (d. 1033 AH/1623-24). He openly attacked the Shī'ah *mujtahids* in his work *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyyah*, vehemently contesting the *Uṣūlīs'* claim that reason is one of the sources of *fiqh*. The *Uṣūlīs'* hold the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, reason, and *ijma'* [consensus] as valid sources for deduction of the rules of the *sharī'ah*. The *Akhbārīs* accepted the validity only of the *Sunnah* and rejected the rest. Understanding the Qur'an, they claimed, is beyond the capacity of a commoner, being restricted exclusively to the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a). [Trans.]

a country the *umm al-qurā*. Among these characteristics and peculiarities, we will deal with the most important ones:

### **Leadership and government system**

As what has been earlier said, among the heavy responsibilities of the Islamic government is to guide the people toward the true happiness and implementation of the divine laws and limits. Therefore, it is evident that the leader and ruler of this government—who will also be the leader of the Muslim world—should have precise information on the religious sources and laws. As such, the authentic leader of the exemplary Islamic government is a person who should have a profound religious knowledge as well as the highest understanding and capability of management. Correct views and accurate decisions on sensitive and critical circumstances of the Islamic world can play a remarkably key role in facing problems. Similarly, having the sense of unity-orientation, which can lead to ‘Islamic integration’ and ‘unity of the *ummah*’, and aloofness from sectarian-religious fanaticisms, which is repugnant to unity, considered as among the meritorious characteristics and peculiarities of a model leader of a country, which aspires to be (or capable of becoming) the *umm al-qurā* of the Islamic world.<sup>1</sup>

Now, imagine that in countries where the qualification of the rulers is not based on Islamic merit and worth, and the criteria such as blood, gene and hereditary system are discussed, and on the other hand, the ruler and governors of the country do not have the least knowledge of the principle of religion and *sharī‘ah* (regardless of sects). Could such governments be correctly considered authentic Islamic governments? How much for that country to be the *umm al-qurā*?

Granting that the government system is based upon the criteria of the Western countries (such as force and coup d’état by a military junta) or the heads of such governments acquired their legitimacy totally through the ‘enlightened’ Western liberal democracies and at the same time do not have the least knowledge of religion and religious issues, and even pursued all his studies in non-Muslim counties in non-religious fields, could such persons identify the true interests of their society and the interests of the Islamic *ummah* and remove the corruptions therein? Could such individuals design a strategy for Islamic unity, cause the integration of the diverse schools of thought in Islam, and form a formidable front against the front of unbelief? Definitely, the answer of any intelligent person to this question will be

---

<sup>1</sup> *Maṣlaḥat dar Siyāsāt-e Khārijī*, p. 594.

negative. Therefore, in considering the government system and its consistency with the ruler's acquisition of power is one of the key criteria in identifying the authoritative and meritorious Islamic government. It must be seen whether the rulers of that country possess the merit, worth and status of administering the *umm al-qurā* or not.<sup>1</sup>

### **Observance of the limits and preservation of the Islamic precepts in the society**

Undoubtedly, societies that are exerting the least effort in preserving the Islamic rites and at times even in the societal level and mass media of that country open corruption and vulgarities can be observed, do not deserve to administer the Islamic world, which is supposed to move toward virtue and spirituality. Definitely, such countries cannot be model for the *ummah* in attaining moral and social virtues. Based on this criterion, the country having the highest merit and worth to be the *umm al-qurā* is the one having the utmost attachment to religious principles and implement these principles on its societal level.<sup>2</sup>

### **Courage and audacity in fighting unbelief**

Through the heavy responsibility it has in setting free the oppressed, deprived and exploited Muslims, the *umm al-qurā* of the Islamic world should have the courage and audacity in confronting the arrogant and tyrants. How could the countries showing in practice that they are under the yoke of the arrogant claim that they are delivering the Islamic *ummah*? Without doubt, countries having the highest affection with the archenemy of Islam cannot and would not be able even to sympathize with the Muslims and remedy the sufferings of the deprived.

### **Defense of the limits and boundaries of Islam in the international forums**

One of the important responsibilities of the *umm al-qurā* is the protection of the reputation and identity of Islam in the world. The *umm al-qurā* is supposed to be sensitive to the issues, honor and blemish involved in the onslaught against the principles and sanctities of Islam. At the times when the enemies of Islam intend to render a blow to its principles and sanctities, the *umm al-qurā* is not supposed to remain silent but to utilize every means to defend them and nip in a bud every evil intention. In case of manifestation of these evil motives, it should discuss them in the international gatherings in

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the best possible manner and uproot them. As what we have observed, at the diverse events that befell Islam, the Muslims and the Qur'an, many countries and their leaders that do claim leadership of the Islamic *ummah*, have complete silence, show their own limited actions, or in a way compromise with the elements of despise such as on the Palestinian Question, the blasphemous *Satanic Verses*, genocide of the Bosnian Muslims, etc. This is while throughout the life of the Imām, Palestine had been one of his primary concerns and the Islamic Republic of Iran is still the leading champion of the Palestinian rights in the world. On the blasphemous *Satanic Verses* conspiracy, with total courage and audacity the Imām again thwarted this conspiracy (which can be discussed at length) and issued an edict on Salman Rushdie's apostasy and execution. In many other cases, the Islamic Republic of Iran had been and continue to be the champion of the Muslims and Islam.

### **Endeavor in the propagation of the rich ordinances and culture of Islam**

Another distinguishing feature of the *umm al-qurā* is the endeavor to introduce and disseminate the decrees, laws, ordinances, and culture of the true religion of Islam in the world through various methods and in different occasions. Through dialogue, understanding, propagation, *ta'līf al-qulūb* [winning the endearment of others], and the like, there should be attempt to acquaint the world with the completeness and happiness-endowing feature of Islam. The most important means along this way is the culture of Islam. Unfortunately, Muslim countries so far have not done quite satisfactory measure in this context and the Western propaganda has influenced them. Instead of disseminating the culture of Islam, either they have forgotten or practiced it very rarely. Instead of disseminating it, they embraced the Western culture with open arms. It was only after the Islamic Revolution and the Imām's directives on the export of revolution through culture and cultural propagation that the name of Islam became alive again in the world. In reply to Samuel Huntington's theory on the 'clash of civilizations', which not only was not welcomed by the people of the world but also earned the displeasure of many scholars and sociologists of the world, in the recent years, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran has proposed the idea of dialogue among civilizations, which apart from being lauded by the wholesome and pure natural disposition of the world, was welcomed by the United Nations, which named the year 2001 as the 'Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures'.<sup>1</sup> Summit conference was held for this occasion,<sup>1</sup> which was

---

<sup>1</sup> The UN General Assembly in September 1998 unanimously approved President Sayyid Muḥammad Khātāmī's proposal to designate year 2001 as such. See *Salam*, 24 May 1998;

again an honor for the Muslims and Iranians, and the source of this idea was nothing but the salvation-endowing guidelines of the Holy Qur'an, dear Islam and the late Imām.

### **Possession of geopolitical and strategic capabilities**

Although this criterion as an isolated condition is not so much considerable, as an advantage and privilege it is so important. Countries that have small population and manpower as well as insignificant area either have a poor geopolitical location as they do not have the necessary capability and power willy-nilly to organize the Islamic *ummah*, or at least it can be said that they will face difficulty and be so much vulnerable in confronting the enemies.

What have been enumerated above are the most important characteristics and features through which a country could acquire the aptitude, capability and merit of being the *umm al-qurā*. Therefore, we can conclude that being the *umm al-qurā* of a country depends upon the realization of these conditions and qualifications. Hence, it cannot necessarily be permanent and fixed. Through this explanation, a country can be the *umm al-qurā* at a certain time and no longer be so at another time. The implication is that to be the *umm al-qurā* cannot be inherited from one generation to another unless the corresponding attributes and conditions have also been transferred and inherited, and such a country has still the distinction and merit of being the *umm al-qurā* on the basis of the mentioned standards.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the explanations presented concerning the 'umm al-qurā-ness' of a country, it can be concluded that from the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution under the Imām's leadership up to the present, few years after his

---

"President Khatami's Speech at the UN General Assembly on 20 September 1998," *President Khatami's Website*, <http://www.president.gov.ir/year2001/khatamiun.htm>; *Salam*, 22 and 23 September 1998.

For Khatami's endorsement of and continuous campaign for a constructive 'Civilizational Dialogue' as the ideal rule of the game in the relations among nations, see *inter alia*, "Khatami's Address Before UNESCO General Conference on 29 October 1999," *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 208-216; Khatami's speech at Lome, Italy on March 3, 2000. [Trans.]

<sup>1</sup> Addressing the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, Khatami expounds on the civilizational dialogue paradigm, thus: "If the role model of dialogue among civilizations and cultures is assessed from an ethical angle, one will immediately understand that it is essentially a call for the people of the world to abandon their attachment to wield power and instead resort to a determination that pursues love. In this case, the net result of the idea of dialogue will be unanimity and benevolence." See *Iran Daily*, 6 September 2000. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Maṣlaḥat dar Siyāsāt-e Khārijī*, p. 598.

demise, the distinctions of *umm al-qurā* have totally existed only in Iran and nowhere else. We hope it would always remain as the champion of the oppressed and source of hope of the Muslims. For, every thinking, idea and school needs protectors that will protect, advance and consolidate it. Because of this, there should also be a physical base through which program for the advancement, propagation and assistance of the Muslims and the deprived be formed. This base is to be attributed to the *umm al-qurā*. For, keeping in view the welfare and interests of the base, its survival is necessary, and the protection and preservation of the *umm al-qurā* is exactly the interest of Islam. In the light of this explanation, there is no contradiction between the interests and welfare of the people (Iran) as the *umm al-qurā*, on one hand, and the interests and welfare of Islam, on the other hand.

For further clarification of the issue, let us benefit from the words of the Imām:

“Our foreign policy is based upon the preservation of freedom, independence, interests, and welfare of Islam and the Muslims.”<sup>1</sup>

With total decisiveness, he deems the preservation of the interests and welfare of the people as among the undeniable duties:

“Our policy is always based upon the preservation of freedom, independence and interests of the people. We will not sacrifice this principle for the sake of something else.”<sup>2</sup>

For the Imām, the objective behind forming a government is solely to guarantee the interests and welfare of the people. Prior to the victory of the Revolution, he says the following in reply to a question on the objective behind the formation of a government:

“The future government has no commitment except to the nation and for the preservation of their interests and welfare.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it can generally be concluded that *maṣlahat* [interest] in foreign policy is first the interest of Islam, then the interest of the people or nation. Of course, regarding the greater interest of Islam, as what has been stated at the beginning of the chapter, only those who would comprehend the viewpoint of the Imām on the Islamic basis, concepts and objectives could understand and grasp this issue. Outside this framework, they could never accept this preference. Another point which seemingly needs to be explained is that the interest of Islam is itself the interest of the people. That is, Islam by itself does not need interest, and the Islamic school has described a

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 3, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 177.

program for their happiness and prosperity. Ultimately, the interest of Islam is the interests and concerns for the happiness of mankind. The Imām pays attention to this covert aspect of the Islamic school. He considers the long-term objectives in identifying the interests, and regards himself obliged to provide felicity for all human beings, not only for the people of a particular country like Iran.

### **Political violence in the international scene and the idea of export of revolution**

As what have been explained throughout this paper, on different occasions and in diverse ways and expressions, the most important objective of Imām Khomeinī in the struggle against tyranny and oppression as well as in leading to victory the Revolution was the deliverance of Islam, which through the defunct Pahlavī regime and its detailed programs and propaganda, was supposed to be uprooted from the Iranian society. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, since the Imām as a Muslim regarded it his mission to follow the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) in advancing and propagating the salvation-endowing teachings of Islam, he was always trying to introduce once again and revive Islam throughout the world. It is the Islam, which through the efforts of the enemies and propaganda of the colonialists during a long period, only its name remained, and its school, creed and function were also became instruments in most countries at the service of oppressing and colonizing the Muslims. The Imām's objective was the reinstatement of the pure Muḥammadan Islam in place of the 'American Islam'. He presented this objective under the name of 'export of revolution'. One of his fervent aspirations was the total prevalence of Islam as well as the Islamic values and laws.

In this limited space, in view of the extensiveness of the dimensions of revolution exportation, a comprehensive study of it from Imām Khomeinī's viewpoint cannot be done.<sup>1</sup> In this study there has been an attempt to examine one of the important dimensions of revolution exportation as it has brought ambiguity on the minds of the people and at times highlighted by the enemies of the Revolution to portray a bad image of the Revolution and Imām Khomeinī. Similarly it is worth dealing with, as political violence, dialogue and mutual understanding among civilizations are the hot issues of the day.

---

<sup>1</sup> For further information of the 'revolution exportation', see *Imām Khomeinī on Exportation of Revolution*, trans. Ḥamīd Tehrānī (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, 2001). [Trans.]

Imām Khomeinī was a very kind and compassionate person, and had a countenance full of affection. Constant munificence and purity at all circumstances were conspicuous on his face and expression. There was distinct charisma on his visage—full of amity, fondness and concern for the people. He had never been like many leaders who would get angry and shout when furious and annoyed. At worst circumstances he could still afford to speak calmly and serenely. The enemies of Islam and America the Great Satan’s portrayal of a harsh and despotic image of the Imām was a grave injustice on the rights of this great upright man of the world. His style and personality throughout his life negate the theory of some individuals who believe that every means should be utilized in introducing and exporting the Revolution or in reviving the Islamic values. He himself never expected to let others follow and admire the Islamic Revolution through force and compulsion. Just as in the consolidation of the Islamic Republican system, in spite of knowing that the people would follow suit whatever he approves of, he had never taken away from the people their right to choose or deprived them of their will. Thus, we find out that a referendum was held and 98.22% of the eligible voters freely voted for the establishment of the Islamic Republic. How is it possible for a person who does not permit himself to take away the choice of others in whose hearts he occupies a special place to resort to force and violence in the international system in a bid to export the Revolution?

The Imām had an absolute conviction in the noble verse, “*There is no compulsion in matters of religion,*”<sup>1</sup> believing that there should be an exertion of effort to introduce the authentic image and message of Islam so that at the time of their natural readiness, the people of the world would be inclined to Islam.

In reviving the Islamic values, the Imām has never resorted to violence even against the Shāh’s regime. Initially, he gave counsel, advice and admonition to the Shāh and his government officials, exhorting them to reform the system and preserve the eminence and authority of the Muslim people of Iran. Thus, in this study a selection from the Imām’s statements on the export of Revolution devoid of any kind of compulsory and violent actions but through legitimate ways will be analyzed.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:256. [Trans.]

### **Culture as the most effective means of conveying message**

It can be said that the Imām is the first person who opened the door of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, laying value to it as well as viewing it as the most important means for understanding and communications. Hence, he believed that cultural activities should be done to export the revolution. As what is known to us all, cultural work and violence can never go hand in hand.

As we know, persons or countries that want to impose their own culture on others utilize instruments that are completely opposite to violence and negate it. By depicting a good image of their culture and ideas, as well as proving the superiority of their culture through the allurements of that culture, they try to draw other toward them. In doing so, they strive to dominate the heart, soul, and mind of the people. This affair can never be realized through force and violence. Creation of fear, dread and awe makes the people disgusted and uninterested. The Imām states:

When we say, 'We want to export the Revolution', we want that this thing, which has appeared, this spirituality which has emerged in Iran, to be exported. We do not use swords and guns, or attack anyone. It has been a long time that Iraq is fighting against us and we are not attacking them. They attack and we defend ourselves. Defense is a necessity. We want to export our revolution, our cultural revolution, our Islamic Revolution, to Muslim countries. If this revolution is exported, no matter where, the problems are solved.<sup>1</sup>

The Imām believed that if Islam as it is and as it has been stated in the Qur'an and the Islamic commandments is introduced and implemented in Muslim countries especially in the Islamic Republic, it will find its proper place and there is no need for cannons and tanks.

We, who say, that we want to export Islam, it does not mean that we board the planes and invade other countries. We did not say that, nor are we able to do so. But what we can do is that, by utilizing the equipment that we have, through the radio and television, the press, through people who go abroad, we introduce Islam the way it should be. If Islam were to be introduced the way it is, it would be accepted by all. The innate nature of man is pure. Man accepts things that are said, based on his pure innate nature, and this is what frightens the powerful. Hence we have a very important duty. Not only us, but also all of Muslims, and not only you, but

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 12, p. 283.

also all the strata committed to Islam, and living in Iran and abroad. We have a monumental duty, and that is to introduce Islam to the people and the world, as it is, as God Almighty has said, as it appears in our *ḥadīths* and the Qur'an. This in itself can be more effective than thousands of cannons and tanks.<sup>1</sup>

In the opinion of the Imām, the main objective is guidance and rectification. Thus, if the establishment undertakes such reform and enlightenment, the objective has been realized. It is only in case of the establishment's violation of the Islamic values and precepts that to revolt against them is justifiable.

Concerning the use of violence and arms, and the application of language and logic, dialogue and knowledge in rendering service to humanity, the Imām says, "We hope the whole humanity attain such a lofty station of progress to transform guns into pens. Pens and speeches have rendered so many services to humanity while guns have not."<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere, in rejecting violence and giving importance to proper propagation and invitation, he again states:

We who say that we want to export our revolution, we do not want it by sword; rather we want it to be done by promotion. We want to neutralize the propaganda campaigns that the communists and others are waging against us, with proper promotion, and say that Islam has everything.<sup>3</sup>

### **Awakening of the governments and nations as the objective of the export of revolution**

When we say that our revolution must be exported everywhere, they should not misinterpret it to mean that we want to take over other countries. We consider all Muslim countries as brothers. [The borders of] all countries should stay as they are. We want that the same thing that happened in Iran—the awakening that occurred in Iran, causing them to distance themselves from the superpowers [by] ending their control over the [natural] resources—would happen in all the nations and all the governments. This is our dream. The meaning of exportation of revolution is that all nations would wake up, all governments would wake up, and would save themselves from this predicament that they face: They are being

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 18, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 13, p. 228.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 18, p. 80.

dominated; they are living in poverty while their resources are being plundered.<sup>1</sup>

I have repeatedly said that we are not seeking war with anyone. Today our revolution has been exported. Everywhere they are talking about Islam and the deprived (people) view Islam as [their] source of hope. You must introduce Islam as it is with proper propagation. When the nations learn about Islam, they inevitably become attracted to it. We do not want anything but the implementation of Islam's decrees in the world.<sup>2</sup>

In stating the Islamic position on the rejection of violence, believing in the fact that the value of Islam is dependent on the wish and aspiration of human beings, the Imām says, "Islam does not accept dictatorship; whoever is a dictator is not a Muslim."<sup>3</sup>

Through his admonitions and invitation to the rulers of Muslim countries to adopt a proper course of action and to make supreme the divine laws, the Imām first emphasized the upper revolution (among the political elites of the Muslim states). In case of the Muslim ruler's lack of insight, he viewed revolution as the only way for the deliverance of the Muslim nations and the basic prerequisite for the realization of Islamic values.

The Imām's aim in the export of revolution was first the awakening and change of the people's mentality to be set free from oppression. In his talks, he always used to elucidate the religion of Islam, explaining its universality so that through the expression of its true nature, it could be presented in the world and the revolution exportation be realized.

While indicating to man how to worship God, the school of Islam also shows him how to live and how to regulate his relations with his fellow human beings and the Islamic society as well with respect to other societies. There is no movement or action of an individual or society concerning which Islam has not ordained a decree. I hope the Islamic government in Iran be formed and the benefits in such a government be illuminated for the humanity. In such a way, they would understand first of all, what Islam is, what kind of relations would be between the governments and nations, how would be its mode of implementing justice, and that the highest person in the country has no disparity at all in lifestyle with that of the subject.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 13, 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 15, 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 252.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 23, p. 84.

The Imām regards the revolution exportation as a religious mission based upon the conduct [*sīrah*] of the Prophet (ﷺ):

We, who started the movement, did so for the sake of Islam. The republic is an Islamic Republic. A movement, which is for the sake of Islam, cannot be limited to one country. It cannot even be limited to Muslim countries. The movement for Islam is the same as the movement of the prophets. The movement of the prophets was not just for one place. The Most Noble Messenger (ﷺ) was from Arabia<sup>1</sup> but his mission was not [just] for Arabia. It was not limited to Arabia. His mission was for the whole world.<sup>2</sup>

“I hope you would succeed in implementing Islam in all Muslim countries and the truths of Islam in the world.”<sup>3</sup>

### ***Hajj* as an important instrument in achieving the foreign policy objectives of Islam**

Anchored on the injunction of verse three of *Sūrah at-Tawbah*, which has been conveyed to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) by God, thus: “*And a proclamation from Allah and His Messenger to all men on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage that Allah is free from obligation to the idolaters, and (so is) His messenger,*” and similarly addressed to Prophet Abraham, the Friend of Allah [*khalīlullāh*], the people are invited to come and observe what is good for them. These interests are interests of the society—political, social and cultural interests. Let them come and see that you (Abraham) as their prophet offered in the way of God the most beloved in your life. All the progeny of Adam should imitate you. Let them see how you broke the idols and abandon everything but God.

It was for years and perhaps centuries that this mammoth political-social-devotional congress, which could have realized all the objectives of the Islamic school, had only been observed in its devotional-individual aspect. Its true mission, which was true belief in God, eschewing every kind of polytheism and association of partners with God, collaboration of efforts, and elimination of the Muslims’ problems has been relegated to the abyss of oblivion until such time that Khomeinī, the idol-breaker, entered the vista of

---

<sup>1</sup> The birthplace of the Prophet of Islam was the city of Mecca, and the place where he passed away was the city of Medina. Both cities are among important cities of today’s Saudi Arabia, to which millions of Muslims flock each year. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 10, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 17, p. 86.

the Islamic world's issues and concerns, and pointed out the mission of the day to the Muslim society through his actions, words and writings.

During the year 1362 AH *hajj* pilgrimage Imām Khomeinī revived the Sunnah of the Prophet and utilized this grand Islamic gathering as the most important instrument of foreign policy, or we better say, Islamic foreign policy. During the last few years of his blessed life, the Imām conveyed in his various messages sent to the annual *hajj* gathering all the aspects that can be discussed in this congress and be utilized, or we better say, he conveyed in those messages the charter of the Islamic government. Here we will mention three important points of the messages that encompass all the problems and concerns of the Islamic world and are approximately all the possible aspects of the *hajj*'s political and devotional rites.

1. Islam possesses a rich human development-oriented culture that draws the nations toward advancement devoid of any inclination to the left and right, and without considering the color, language and region. It guides human beings in religious, moral and practical dimensions, and urges them to seek knowledge from cradle to grave. In the political sphere, Islam guides the countries to aspire for and establish a wholesome government without resorting to lies, ruses and deceitful conspiracies. It tightens friendly relations with other countries that are committed to peaceful living devoid of tyranny and oppression. It produces a sound economy free from dependency, for the benefit of all, for the welfare of all people, and giving importance to the needy and weak. It strives to further improve the agriculture, industry and trade. In the military domain, it gives military training to all those competent to defend the country during emergency cases. During these circumstances it optionally, and at times compulsorily, mobilizes the masses. At normal times, it gives training for the defense of the borders, administering the cities, security of the highways, maintenance of public order, and discipline of the trained faithful forces.<sup>1</sup>
2. While repeating, *labbayk* [Here I am],<sup>2</sup> say 'no' to all idols and cry out 'no' to all the *ṭāghūts*<sup>1</sup> and small *ṭāghūts*. While circumambulating God's

---

<sup>1</sup> *Payām-e Imām beh Zā'irān-e Baytullāh al-Ḥarām* [Imām Khomeinī's Message to the Pilgrims to the Sacred House of Allah], 5/25/1364 AHS.

<sup>2</sup> *Labbayk* [Here I am]: In full, *Labbayk, allāhumma labbayk, labbayka lā sharīka laka labbayk, innal-ḥamda wan-ni'mata laka wal-mulka lā sharīka laka labbayk* ["Here I am, O Lord, here I am, You indeed have no partner, here I am. No doubt, all praise and bounties are Yours, and so is the absolute Domain. You indeed have no partners, here I am"]. Recited in Arabic, it is the *talbiyyah*, proclaimed immediately after wearing the *ihram* (white garment) that signifies the beginning of the *hajj* rituals. [Trans.]

sanctuary, which denotes love to the Truth (God), disengage your hearts from the rest, and purge your soul of fear of other than the Truth, and along with your love for God, express your hatred of the small and big idols, the *tāghūts* and their affiliates, as God, the Exalted, and His friends have expressed hatred of them, and all the freedom-loving people of the world do hate them. While touching the Black Stone [*hajar al-aswad*],<sup>2</sup> pledge to God to declare enmity with the enemies of God, His messengers, and the liberated and pious men, and never yield to them, no matter who and where they might be, and take away the fear and sense of inferiority from your hearts, for the enemies of God and above them all, the arch Satan, are themselves wretched, though being superior in their tools of murdering, suppression and perpetration of crimes.

While perambulating [*sa'ī*] between Ṣafā<sup>3</sup> and Marwah,<sup>4</sup> try, with all sincerity and righteousness, to acquire the (pleasure of the) Beloved, for, by acquiring Him all the worldly woven webs shall be ruptured; the doubts and mistrusts collapsed; carnal whims and desires expired; material bonds untied; liberties flourished; and all the ties and attachments to the Satan and *tāghūt*, which subject the servants of God to captivity and obeisance, shall be detached. Proceed to Mash'ar al-Ḥarām<sup>5</sup> and 'Arafāt<sup>6</sup> in a state of cognition and gnosis, and at each station cultivate your heart-felt confidence in God's promises and the governance of the downtrodden. Silently and serenely meditate on the divine signs, determine to save the deprived and the downtrodden from the grips of the World Arrogance and pray to Almighty God, at these noble stations, to open up deliverance for all.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Tāghūt*: literally, an idol; figuratively, one who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself, whether explicitly or implicitly. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Hajar al-aswad*: a black stone located in the eastern pillar of the *Ka'bah*, 1.5 meters above the ground placed on the wall. *Hajj* pilgrims try to touch this stone during the circumambulation for blessing and luck. [Trans.]

<sup>3</sup> Ṣafā: a hill in Mecca which is an extension of Abū Qubays Mountain to the east of the Masjid al-Ḥarām. Traversing the distance between this place and Marwah (another place in Mecca) is another devotional *hajj* rite and is termed *sa'ī* [literally: effort, trial, attempt]. [Trans.]

<sup>4</sup> Marwah: a mount located at a point between the east and the southeast of Mecca, north of Ṣafā. [Trans.]

<sup>5</sup> Mash'ar al-Ḥarām: the place where the *hajj* pilgrims spend the night on their return from 'Arafāt and offer their *maghrib* [dusk], '*ishā'* [night] and *subuḥ* [dawn] prayers. [Trans.]

<sup>6</sup> 'Arafāt: a plain about 21 kilometers north of Mecca at which the pilgrims' stay from noon to sunset on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Dhū'l-Ḥijjah (Day of 'Arafāt) is one of the *hajj* rites. [Trans.]

Then, you proceed to Minā<sup>1</sup> and comprehend the righteous wishes, i.e. sacrificing your most beloved thing for the sake of the Absolute Beloved. Let it be known to you that unless you abandon these beloved things, above which are love of the self and then love of the world, you cannot gain access to the Absolute Beloved. It is at this state that you must repel the Satan and make him retreat. While observing divine decrees, repeat the act of repelling the Satan and his entourage, and make them all retreat.

And the prerequisite of all rituals and stations to achieve the natural [*fiṭrī*] wishes and human hopes is the gathering of all Muslims at these stages and stations of the unity of expression of all Muslim groups without the distinction of language, color, tribe, sect, country, and region, and the fanaticisms of the Age of Ignorance.<sup>2</sup>

3. *Hajj* is the center of knowing God in which the gist of the policy of Islam in all angles of life should be sought. *Hajj* is the harbinger of the creation and establishment of a society free from material and spiritual vices. *Hajj* is the manifestation and recurrence of love-engendering scenes of a human being and society in the world. The *hajj* rites are the rites of life. As the society of the Islamic *ummah* of whatever race and nation should be Abrahamic so as to be joined and united with the *khalīl* [friend] of the *ummah* of Muḥammad and be a single hand, *hajj* is the organization, training and formation of this *tawḥīdic* [monotheistic] life. *Hajj* is the arena of demonstrating as well as the mirror of assessing the talents, and material and spiritual potentialities of the Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

### Conclusion

Both in theory and practice, the Imām exerted his utmost effort to remove the ambiguities and flaws that are depicted in the realm of foreign policy of the Islamic country and forging of relationship with other countries. The theoretical dimension of the Imām's thought in the field of foreign policy is examined in this article. The Imām strove hard to revive the political and social precepts of Islam, which had been either relegated to the limbo of oblivion or not been implemented. He tried to illustrate an image of Islam in which Islam was introduced as the most complete religion, most

---

<sup>1</sup> Minā: a place in Mecca where the pilgrims slaughter their sacrificial animals. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Payām-e Imām beh Zā'irān-e Baytullāh al-Ḥarām* [Imām Khomeinī's Message to the Pilgrims to the Sacred House of Allah], 5/16/1366 AHS; *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 20, p. 8. [Trans.]

<sup>3</sup> *Payām-e Imām beh Zā'irān-e Baytullāh al-Ḥarām* [Imām Khomeinī's Message to the Pilgrims to the Sacred House of Allah], 4/29/1367 AHS.

precise code of living, most advanced culture and civilization, and as the means for the salvation and happiness of humankind. The Imām expressed this objective through various means such as writing books and essays, speeches, stances, and decrees in all aspects—cultural, economic, political, social, and legal.

All thrusts of foreign policy in the view of the Imām are cases that pursue the protection of the national interests, honor, and dignity of Iran as well as the interests of Islam. The principles which the Imām emphasized used to guarantee in the long run both the national interests and the interests of Islam.

For the purpose of introducing the correct image of Islam, delivering the people, exporting the Revolution, and the Iranian nation's acquisition of positive experiences, the Imām was inclined to promote cultural activities in the world. In doing so, awakening and awareness among the people of the world can be fostered. Resorting to violence and force was unacceptable for the Imām. In my opinion, although the blessed life of the Imām was obviously so short, in such a short period he was able to fulfill his mission. Whatsoever is to be conveyed was conveyed; whatever is to be illuminated was illuminated. Hence, in reviving the Islamic values the Imām was able to succeed in allowing the people pay attention to their interests and welfare. Now, it is our turn to preserve these values and endeavors of the Imām, God willing.