

# **Injustice in the World Order: The Revolution of Islamic Republic of Iran as a Response\***

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## **Introduction**

The importance of the theme of this conference cannot be overemphasized considering the injustice which pervades the world order as of today. The role of Imām Khomeinī can also not be underestimated in view of the fact that the revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was a struggle against injustice that characterizes the world order. This is what has informed the title of my paper, “Injustice in the World Order: The Revolution of Islamic Republic of Iran as a Response”.

At the beginning of this lecture, I will cite Professor Shujā‘at Khān<sup>1</sup> whose finding in a recent study he conducted I consider relevant to our subject. He asserts that the richest 25% of the world’s population live in industrially advanced countries receiving 75% of the world’s income whereas the poorest 75% live in the less developed countries getting 25% of the world’s income. Having virtually monopolized the production and trading of the manufactured goods, the West left the Third World countries in a state of economic dependence. While the people in the West are wealthy, healthy, educated and productive, the people in the Third World are poor, illiterate and less productive. It is this imbalance in the conditions of the nations of the world which makes the world order unjust. The West is often held responsible for this state of affairs in view of the dominant role it plays in polity, economy, diplomacy and commerce of the Third World nations.

The pertinent question to ask is to what extent is the West responsible for this state of affairs? And of what significance is the revolution of the Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Shujā‘at A. Khān, “Two Pathways to Development: Capitalist vs. Islamic Approach,” in *Hamdard Islamicus* (Karachi: Hamdard Foundation, 1998), vol. 21, p.7.

Republic of Iran in this context of the present world order? These and other related issues are what this paper is set to examine.

### **Perception of the existing world order**

There are two contrasting models that are of particular relevance for consideration when examining world order and more specifically world economic order, namely the 'benign neglect' and the 'malign neglect' doctrines.<sup>1</sup> The former views the economic link between the rich and the poor nations as primarily beneficial for the poor nations. In this model the laissez-faire view that private greed will produce public good translates on the international platform into the notions that while the different actors in the world economy pursue their interests the result will invariably be to benefit the developing countries. Hence, the investments of the multinational corporations in these countries are to increase the countries' incomes, diffuse technology and harness their domestic savings. Private investment is regarded as motivated by the desire to spread the fruit of modern technology and enterprise to the developing countries. In particular, the foreign aid programs are conceived as humanitarian in origin, reflecting the Western ideals of liberalism and the enlightened objective of sharing the world's resources with the poor countries: It is also argued that exchange of commodities and services in trade will reflect the principle of division of labor and bring gains from trade to these countries. Furthermore, it is believed that the migration of the skilled labor instead of constituting a troublesome brain will help to remove impediments to progress such as inadequate remuneration of the educated elite.

The 'malign neglect' on the other hand views the impact of the links between the rich and the poor nations as primarily detrimental to the latter group.<sup>2</sup> According to this school of thought, international aid leads to the perpetuation of the role of developing countries as producers of primary, unsophisticated products that relegate them to secondary and inferior position in the international division of labor. Furthermore, the terms of trade of the primary-product-exporting-developing countries have declined and will continue to do so, conferring gains on the developed and inflicting losses on the developing countries. It is also argued that the brain drain to the developed countries deprives the developing countries of the scarce skill and the talents that make economic progress possible. Moreover, foreign aid is

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<sup>1</sup> Jagdish A. Bhagwati (ed.), *The New International Economic Order: The North-South Debate* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

seen as a national extension of the imperialists' designs on the poor nations aimed at creating dependence.

The 'malign neglect' doctrine is in our view a more acceptable model as it presents a more accurate description of the type of relationship between the developing and the developed nations of the world. It is the relationship that grew out of the West's policies of imperialism, colonialism and even neo-colonialism.

### **Dimensions of injustice in the world order**

The world order as it stands today is a product of domination of the countries of the South by the countries of the North. The domination as rightly observed by Āyatullāh Sayyid 'Alī Khāmene'ī<sup>1</sup> prevails not only over world economy but also culture, education, polity, and international relations. Let us examine some of these.

### **Economy**

The policy of the superpowers is to make the economy of the Third World nations dependent on their economy. The Third World countries are made to remain perpetually producers of raw materials for the developed countries who process them and export them back to the Third World countries at prohibitive rates. The economic poverty, hunger and loss of life in the several Third World countries are as a result of superpowers' exploitation, repression and usurpation. Also exploitive is the aspect of the international aids. The worth of the aids is drastically reduced by practices such as aid-tying which compel the aid recipients to buy from the donor nations at artificially high prices. Their worth is further reduced as some of the aid funds are nothing but loan to be repaid with stringent conditions making repayment almost impossible. More often than not the aid donors insist on examining and endorsing the entire set of economic policies of the recipient nations and in the process impose ideological solutions to the problems of those nations. When the developing nations realize the inherent difficulty in the repayment of their debts they appeal passionately to the donor nations to cancel their debt or reschedule its payment. Of course, such appeals are hardly considered; instead they stipulate conditions which the debtor nations would be unable to meet. For instance, after Nigeria has returned to democratic rule, the government of that nation had expected that

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<sup>1</sup> Sayyid 'Alī Khāmene'ī: "Human Rights and the Present World Order" in a *Al-Tawhīd*, vol. 4, no. 4 (Tehran: Sāzmān-e-Tablighāt-e Islāmī, 1987), p. 54.

her debts would be cancelled by her creditors but this has turned out to be an unrealizable dream.

Rather than meet the demand, the IMF, dancing to the tune of the superpowers, has started to set conditions that the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo should demonstrate transparency and accountability in governance before such request could be considered! This is a clever way of turning down the request.<sup>1</sup> All these lead to the inevitable gap between the developed and developing countries which could hardly be bridged. For long time to come Africa, in spite of her plenteous resources would remain dependent on the developed nations in consequence of various forms of exploitations to which it has been subjected. The Latin America and also many Asian countries in the same vein would remain subjugated in spite of their potentials for greatness.

### **Polity**

Most countries of the Third World are not truly independent because their affairs are managed in most cases by the puppet governments installed by the superpowers that are only out to promote their selfish interest. Seeing themselves as powerful nations they rely on their political, military and economic might to oppress and exploit less privileged nations and governments. They interfere in their domestic problems, plunder their wealth, insult their culture and tradition, and trample on their rights. When a government of the Third World country is stable, it is stable at the pleasure of the superpowers. If such governments are too progressive such that the interests of the big powers are jeopardized, they are ready to bring down such uncooperative regimes even if they are democratic in nature. The world order is such that it protects the rights of some nations on account of their wealth and strength while some nations' rights are violated on account of their weakness and poverty. This is why the satellite launched into the space by the big powers are moving in their orbits around the globe and gathering minutest details and probing into the secrets of other countries.<sup>2</sup>

### **Culture**

Cultural subjugation of the weak nations by the powerful nations is another characteristic feature of the world order. After colonizing most countries of the Third World, the imperialists imposed their culture on their subjects. In the Muslim world this meant abandonment of the *sharī'ah* as a

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<sup>1</sup> Nigerian television news broadcast at 9:00 pm on January 10, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Khāmene'ī, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

way of life in favor of the culture of their colonial masters. In my country, Nigeria for instance, particularly in the northern part, which is predominantly Muslim, *sharī'ah* had governed the life of the people for a millennium in all its ramifications—political, economic, social, moral, and spiritual—before the annexation of the territory by the British at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The only aspect of the *sharī'ah* left untampered with was that dealing with *ahwāl ash-shakhsīyyah* (aspect of personal status) which is the pattern in most Muslim states. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, each attempt made to widen the scope of application of the *sharī'ah* during constitutional reviews, was always resisted not only by the Christians but also by uninformed Muslims. This state of affairs had made the *sharī'ah* a controversial issue in Nigeria for more than three decades. However, a recent development in one of the States of Northern Nigeria is likely to change the course of history in the country. This is the declaration for full application of *sharī'ah* by the Zamfara State government on September 19, 1999. It is also interesting to note that more States in the Federal Republic of Nigeria have signified their interest to adopt the *sharī'ah*. The Federal Government is certainly in a dilemma over the issue. When President Obasanjo was in the United States and confronted with a question on the *sharī'ah* issue in Nigeria, he replied that the action of Zamfara State government is 'unconstitutional'. Apparently he had to say this in order not to offend his big brother President Clinton because when he got back to Nigeria he maintained perfect silence over the issue. It would appear that full application of the *sharī'ah* has come to stay in Nigeria today at least in some States that are homogeneously Muslim whose governments have indicated their interest in the *sharī'ah*. These States Governments are ready to call off the bluff of the superpowers who may want to challenge their action in view of their anti-Islam posture. We are surprised when we see some Nigerian Muslim leaders criticizing this development about *sharī'ah* in Nigeria because it is a development which as far back as 1988 this writer had postulated its possibility in a paper presented at the Conference of Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies and published in *Bulletin on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relation in Africa*. The views we expressed therein is here partly quoted:

...Since federal system of government enables each region or State to have full control of its affairs it should be possible for any State of the federation that prefers the Islamic system of government to adopt it. Adoption of the system at the State level in our view does not in any way constitute a threat to national unity and neither does it make the nation drift toward

confederation since the kind of relationship that exists between the federal and the State government would still be maintained. Plebiscite could be conducted in the States opting for an Islamic system to determine whether or not they actually want the system. Only States which are more or less homogeneously Islamic in their religious belief like Sokoto, Kano, Borno, and Bauchi should be allowed to operate the system if it is their wish.<sup>1</sup>

One way to interpret the happening in Nigeria vis-à-vis *sharī'ah* is to see the Muslims' action as setting the machinery in motion for their liberation from cultural subjugation by the West which I see as taking a cue from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### **Education**

Education is the basic tool to make a nation develop, be it scientifically, technologically or industrially. The scientific and technological breakthrough of the developed countries is due to the high quality of their education, while the backwardness of the Third World countries in science and technology is due to the poor quality of their education. This is the imperialists' design to make the Third World countries dependent on the developed nations. The education bequeathed to the Third World countries is the type which does not train the citizens according to the needs of their nation; rather the training is designed to make the students learn the ideology of the West as well as Eastern ideology. The universities of the Third World countries are made to concentrate on liberal arts rather than impart knowledge that would lead to discoveries in science and technology. This is what happened throughout the long period of colonization. Here in Southern Africa it is a common knowledge that the educational legacy of the apartheid regime would need a drastic reform to be able to meet the needs and aspirations of the people. What we are saying in essence as evident in the foregoing is that the world order is unjust to the countries of the Third World because they are made to be economically disadvantaged, politically dependent, educationally backward<sup>2</sup> and culturally subservient and this leads us to the significance of the revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> Opeloye M.O., "Problems of Desecularizing Nigeria's Political Order" in *Bulletin on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relation in Africa* (Birmingham: Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak College, 1988), vol. 6, no. 2, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Messages and Speeches of Imām Khomeinī* (Tehran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1979) p. 31.

### **Significance of the Islamic Revolution in the context of the world order**

Imām Khomeinī would forever be remembered in the annals of history for leading a successful revolution that brought Islam back to its former glory in the ancient nation of Iran. The 15-year old struggle which started on June 3, 1963<sup>1</sup> culminated in the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in February, 1979, thus bringing to an end 2,500-year old dictatorial regime.

For a period of fifty years before the Islamic revolution, Iran like many countries of the Third World had been a victim of the unjust world order. The country had suffered terrible injustice in the hands of internal and external powers. The oppression, injustice and pressure encompassed the cultural, military, economic and social aspects of the lives of the people of Iran.<sup>2</sup> The revolution therefore was a struggle to rescue Iran from the tentacles of the world-devourers and tyrants.

The objective of the revolution was to make the tyrannized people of Iran serve Islam, to return Islam to the country, to curtail the influence of the superpowers, to put an end to the rule of the dictatorial government, and to establish a government under the banner of Islam.<sup>3</sup>

In his work entitled *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* [Governance of the Jurist], Imām Khomeinī deals extensively with the nature and importance of Islamic government.<sup>4</sup> This he has done to correct the erroneous notion held by the imperialists that Islam does not have a specific form of government or governmental institution and also to enlighten the Muslims.

According to him, monarchy and hereditary succession constitute an aberration in Islam because they have no support in the *sunnah* of the Prophet of Islam.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of government as laid down by the Prophet

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<sup>1</sup> On June 3, 1963, Imām Khomeinī delivered a historic speech in Qum, repeating former denunciations of the Shāh's regime and warning the Shāh not to behave in such a way that the people would rejoice when he should ultimately be forced to leave the country. Two days later, he was arrested at his residence and taken to confinement in Tehran. His arrest prompted a major uprising in many Iranian cities, which resulted in the deaths of not less than 15,000 people in the span of a few days when the Shāh's troops opened fire on unarmed demonstrators. The date on which this uprising began was 5th June or 15th Khordād according to the solar calendar used in Iran and became known as the uprising or movement of 15th Khordād. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Messages and Speeches of Imām Khomeinī*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> "The Testament of the Islamic Revolution: Imām Khomeinī's Last Counsel," in *Al-Tawhīd* (Tehran: Sāzmān-e-Tablīghāt-e-Islāmī, 1989), vol. 6, no. 4, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> See Ḥamīd Algar (trans.), *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist* (Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, Autumn 2002). [Trans.]

<sup>5</sup> Sa'īd Najafiyān, "Imām Khomeinī: Life and Works Part 2," in *Al-Tawhīd* (Tehran: Sāzmān-e-Tablīghāt-e-Islāmī, Tehran), vol. 8, no. 1, p. 98.

Muḥammad (ﷺ) and contained in the Qur’anic ordinances is to establish a just order so that chaos, corruption and anarchy could be prevented. *Sūrah 57:25* in this regard declares: “*Verily We have sent our messenger with clear signs and sent down with them the book and the balance so in order that man might establish justice.*”

The nature and character of Islamic ordinances indicate that the laws were made for the purpose of creating a state, and for the purpose of administering the political, economic and cultural affairs of the society.

According to the Imām, if encroachment by the oppressive ruling classes on the right of the weak is to be prevented, if ruling minorities are not to be permitted to plunder and corrupt the people for the sake of pleasure and material interest, if the Islamic order is to be preserved and all individuals are to pursue the just path of Islam, if innovation and the approval of anti-Islamic laws by sham Parliaments are to be prevented, if the influence of the superpowers in the Islamic lands is to be destroyed, to have a government based on Islamic foundation is a necessity. An Islamic government would ensure the unity of the Islamic *ummah*, it would liberate the Islamic homeland from the occupation and penetration by the imperialists and their puppet government. Islamic government is therefore antithetical to political dependence, because governance based on Islamic system of polity is superior to any other system.

The Islamic Revolution was also to redress the unjust economic order. The regimes of Riḍā Khān<sup>1</sup> and Muḥammad Riḍā brought to power by the imperialists (the British and their allies) created two classes of people—the oppressed and the oppressors.<sup>2</sup> While millions of people were deprived of the basic necessities of life, the minorities comprising of the wealthy and the powerful citizens live a life of luxury, indulgence, licentiousness and corruption. Israel’s takeover of Iran’s economy was encouraged by the

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<sup>1</sup> Riḍā Khān, the founder of the Pahlavī dynasty in Iran, likewise known as Riḍā Shāh and the father of Muḥammad Riḍā, staged a coup in Iran in 1299 AHS [1920] based on a plan devised by the British. In the year 1925, he was crowned. Before staging a coup, he was the commander of a unit of “Cossacks” in the city of Qazvīn. In 1941, when Iran was occupied by the Allied Forces, Riḍā Shāh abdicated, as was ordered by the Allied leaders, in favor of his son, Muḥammad Riḍā Pahlavī whom the Allied leaders deemed an appropriate person to rule over Iran. The political atmosphere, resulting from these changes, paved the way for a five-year-long liberalization. These charades were being organized based on the plans by the British government and executed by their agents. The British also ordered Riḍā Shāh into exile on Mauritius Island south of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Riḍā Shāh finally died in 1944 in Johannesburg, South Africa. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Dar Rawḍah*, 1993, p. 27.

Pahlavī hegemony. Imām Khomeinī warned against the danger of concentrating on the observances of rituals without paying attention to economy. To do so would mean giving the imperialists the liberty to do whatever they wanted with the economy. The Imām says and I quote:

If you pay no attention to the policies of the imperialists and consider Islam to be simply the few topics you are always studying and never go beyond them, then the imperialists will leave you alone. Pray as much as you like, it is your oil they are after—why should they worry about your prayers? They are only after your minerals and want to turn your country into market for their goods. That is the reason the puppet governments they have installed prevent us from industrializing and instead, establish only assembly plants and industry that is dependent on the outside world.<sup>1</sup>

The import of the Imām’s statements is that a Muslim’s faith is not complete if observances of rituals are not combined with discharge of socio-economic responsibilities. This in my opinion interprets, in a way, *Sūrah al-Mā‘ūn* (107:1-7) which reads:

*“Have you seen him who denies religion (or recompense)? It is he who harshly repels the orphan and does not urged others to feed the needy, woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer and put on show of piety but refuse to give even the smallest help to others.”*

The Islamic Revolution did not spare the education sector because it was another sector heavily dependent and highly colonized. The university curriculum was designed to train students to be pro-West and pro-East rather than train them according to the needs of the nation. After 50 years of university education prior to the Revolution the system did not attain self-sufficiency in science, medicine and technology. The university curriculum was deficient in Islamic ethics and Islamic education. According to the Imām, if the products of the university system had been desirable Iran would have a garden, there would have been no need to wage war or stage revolution.<sup>2</sup>

With the help of the Almighty Allah, the revolution of the Islamic Republic has not only been a success; it is also achieving its goals in spite of the malicious propaganda of the imperialists aimed at destabilizing the

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<sup>1</sup> Najafiyān, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Aleedin Pazargadi (trans.), *Educational Revolution* (Qum: Foreign Department of Bonyād-e Bi‘that, 1986), p. 24.

government of the Islamic Republic. This I can say with some degree of authority having visited Iran and seen things by my eyes. Imām Khomeinī's last counsel contains enough admonitions for the Muslims to remain resolute and steadfast.<sup>1</sup> If the success of any revolution is to be preserved, abstention from division and adhering to unity are the basic conditions. Imām 'Alī<sup>2</sup> ('a) is reported to have said as recorded in *Nahj al-Balāghah*<sup>3</sup> and I quote: "Surely every nation which endeavored in unison for a common idea became firm and reinforced... Every nation enjoyed unity of purpose. God removed

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Tawhīd*, vol. 6, no. 4, p. 69f.

<sup>2</sup> Ḥadrat Amīr: Imām 'Alī ('a), the leader of the Muslim world was born in 600 CE to his mother by the name of Fāṭimah and a father by the name of Abū Ṭālib (Prophet's uncle), and from the age of 6 he grew up in the Prophet's house. He was the first man to accept Islam and promised to aid the Prophet (ṣ). In the early days of his mission when, at God's command, the Prophet was inviting his kith and kin to Islam, at a gathering, he announced to them: "He among you, who accepts my Faith will succeed me." He repeated this declaration three times and each time, only 'Alī ('a) declared his faithfulness. On the eve of the *hijrah* or migration, notwithstanding the plot of the Quraysh against the Prophet's life, 'Alī ('a) slept in the Prophet's bed and thus proved his fidelity to him. The Prophet selected him as his brother and when returning from the last *hajj* pilgrimage, at a place called Ghadīr, introduced 'Alī ('a) as the master and guardian [*walī*] of the Muslims, after himself. 'Alī was the companion of the Prophet during his loneliness and his aid in his struggles and in time of dangers. After the Prophet's spiritual ascension, for about 25 years, 'Alī ('a) kept aloof from government administration and leadership. During this period he was the observer and overseer who prevented deviations and defections. After the murder of the 3rd Caliph, 'Alī's disciples and a group of people swore allegiance to 'Alī ('a) and elected him as the caliph. The Imām's period of administration lasted for 4 years and 9 months. 'Alī obliterated the changes that had been made after the Prophet (ṣ) and restored things to their earlier conditions. Opposition elements, whose personal interests were threatened, rose pretending to take revenge for the 3rd Caliph's death. Bloody civil wars followed that lasted throughout the reign of 'Alī ('a). Finally the unique man of history was martyred in the altar at Kūfah, Iraq.

For further information on the Imamate of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, see Yousuf N. Lalljee, *'Ali the Magnificent* (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1987); Muḥammad Jawād Chirri, *The Brother of the Prophet Mohammad (Imām 'Ali)*, (Qum: Ansariyan Publications); George Jorda, *The Voice of Human Justice*, trans. M. Fazal Haq (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1990), and visit: <http://www.al-islam.org/faq>. [Trans.]

<sup>3</sup> *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Peak of Eloquence) is a collection of speeches, sayings and letters of the Commander of the Faithful, Imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ('a) compiled by Sharīf ar-Rāḍī Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 406 AH/1016). Contents of the book concern the three essential topics of God, man and the universe, and include comments on scientific, literary, social, ethical, and political issues. Except the words of the Glorious Qur'an and of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), no words of man can equate it in eloquence. So far, more than 101 exegeses have been written on the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, indicating the importance of this treatise to scholars and learned men of research and investigation. For more information, visit: <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul>.

disorder and degeneration from the midst and directed them to the signs of religion.”<sup>1</sup>

**Conclusion: Challenges for other countries of the Muslim world**

The big question to be posed as a challenge for the other nations of the Muslim world is how they can liberate their nations from the injustice inherent in the world order? The answer is a straight forward one; they are to take a cue from the action of the Islamic Republic of Iran by rejecting the ideologies of the imperialists. It must be admitted as asserted by Āyatullāh Sayyid ‘Alī Khāmene’ī that there can be not true Islamic government in the countries of the Muslim world where any of the big powers has domination.<sup>2</sup> These countries should cease to be pseudo-Islamic states and prove to the world that Islam as a way of life chosen for mankind by Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, has put in place the socio-economic order superior to those of the West and East.<sup>3</sup> And it is an ideology which can liberate mankind from the injustice of the present world order because it is based on justice and not on domination. The big powers know that fact and that is why any mention of Islam is a source of worry for them. The West particularly sees Islam as the next threat after the collapse of communism. The West’s liberalism, communism, socialism and all other isms have gone through their tests and proved their incapacity. This is an indication that the collapse of capitalism too is imminent being another artificial ideological system. This being the case, Islam is the natural successor as indicated in the word of Allah in *Sūrah an-Nūr* (24) verse 55 which reads:

*Allah hath promised such of you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed others); and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe no thing as partner unto Me. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the miscreants.*

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<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad M. Reyshahrī, *Key to the Community of Revolution in Nahj al-Balāghah* (n.p., n.d.), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid ‘Alī Khāmene’ī, “Islamic Government: Objectives and Hurdles,” in *Al-Tawḥīd* (Tehran: Sāzmān-e Tablīghāt-e Islāmī, 1985), vol. 2, no. 4, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> See T. M. ‘Azīz, “An Islamic Perspective of Political Economy,” in *Al-Tawḥīd*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1992). It is a lucid presentation of Islamic economic system as a superior alternative to the existing system.