

Islamic Revolution and the Cultural-Political International Changes and Transformations

Sulayman ‘Umran Kilimili

Topics of the article:

1. Cultural-political messages of the Islamic Revolution in the world;
2. The Islamic Revolution’s impact on the contemporary Islamic movements;
3. The Islamic Revolution and changing the concept of separation of religion and politics in the world; and
4. Victory of the Islamic Revolution notwithstanding the internal and external threats.

Cultural-political messages of the Islamic Revolution in the world

Subsequent to the fall of the ‘Islamic’ state in the wake of the First World War, the Muslims had been hopeless of establishing another Islamic state in the world. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran under the leadership of jurist-leader of the *ummah*, Imām Khomeinī, the Muslims of the world experienced a fresh awakening.

The Islamic Revolution shook the contemporary world and the the Third World in particular. It brought up a set of actions and reactions as well as new questions, while opening the eyes of people throughout the world on the truth of the transformations that can possibly happen in the Muslim world. Among these transformations are “self-confidence, resistance to all types of dominations, and resorting to the precepts and ordinances of Islam when dealing with the problems of life”.¹

In view of Imām Khomeinī’s intimate relationship with the conscience of the entire Muslim *ummah*, the allegiance paid to him by Muslims of various countries and regardless of nationalities and sects, and the enthusiasm he

¹ Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, *Dawlat-e Islāmī az Ti‘urī tā ‘Amal [Islamic government from Theory to Practice]* (n.p., n.d.), p. 12.

brought between them and the revolution, his revolution was the most important event of our contemporary period.

Through his movement and method, Imām Khomeinī broke down the elevated and formidable wall that divided the Sunnis and the Shī‘ah. Instead of only focusing on the concerns of the Shī‘ah, he was able to give attention to the problems of the Islamic *ummah*. With indubitable spirit, he stood against the enemies of Islam and thus, winning the approval and pleasure of the Muslims.

“Imām Khomeinī drew the Muslims’ attention to the broader and urgent problems and concerns, and brought to existence an open ground for the cooperation, solidarity and then unity of the Muslims.”¹ He raised the consciousness that the prevailing divisions and classifications such as Sunni and Shī‘ah as well as other sects are nothing but legacy of the time and the recent periods and the essence, accordingly, is that the Muslims of all sects should return to the pristine Islam.

With the application of the authentic and pure Islam, the Sunni-Shī‘ah issue becomes simple and insignificant. The ground for the coming into existence of a true Muslim worth the name who manifests in himself the principles of the Islamic mission is provided.

How could the above issue be not simplified with the existence of Islam given the fact the this religion possesses the highest degree of flexibility and tolerance even with respect to non-Muslim minorities, while observing a just and immaculate policy in which there is trace of neither ill-will nor trickery.

In its sublime positions with respect to the non-Muslim religious minorities, Islam has never resorted to guile and feigning slogans of rights and freedoms, nor opting for empty slogans and exaggerated promises. Rather, in its movement it has always employed rightful and clear method, which has emanated from the transcendence and self-reliance of Islam as a system. It takes into account social diversities and religious differences. It never remains negligent of the necessity of consolidating the pillars of security and stability in the society to achieve the secured future emanating from the nature of the policy of the religion of Islam and linked to its past.²

¹ *Goftemān-e Taqrīb [Discourse on Proximity]* (A collection of speeches delivered on the 6th International Islamic Unity Conference in Tehran), p. 662.

² Ja‘far Husayn-Nezhād, *Īrān dar Tangnā-ye Jaryānhā-ye Siyāsī-ye Mukhālīf [Iran at the Straits of the Opposing Political Currents]* (n.p.: n.d.), p. 145.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran occupies an outstanding status in the contemporary world. For, the hope of millions of Muslims and the downtrodden of the world is pinned on it. This revolution has not confined its focal point of attention merely on the Muslim people of Iran. Rather, it takes into account all people of the world, and this point can vividly be seen in the statements of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imām Khomeinī. In his immortal testament, he thus states:

O you downtrodden people of the world! O you Muslims and Muslim countries of the world! Rise up and fight for your rights! Do not be afraid of the propaganda machineries of the superpowers and their mercenary agents. Drive out from your lands your wicked rulers who hand over your earnings to your enemies and the enemies of Islam. You yourselves and the dedicated public servants should take charge of the affairs of your country. Gather together, all of you, under the dignifying banner of Islam and fight the enemies of Islam and of the downtrodden peoples of the world. Advance toward the realization of an Islamic sovereign government with so many free and independent republics. If you realize this, the arrogant powers shall retreat to their own places and all the downtrodden people will come to inherit the earth and attain guardianship over it. Looking forward to the day when Allah's promise shall be fulfilled.¹

Iran and its people, before staging the Islamic Revolution, were completely isolated from other peoples of the world but after the victory of this revolution the doors of contact and communication between the Iranian people and Muslim nations of the world were opened.

This was facilitated through intensive and extensive propaganda efforts and spread of Islamic propagation. Major programs for information-drive were launched. As such, the level of Islamic propagation went high; its scope widened; and encompassed different groups and strata. These responsibilities are shouldered by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and the Islamic Propagation Organization both inside and outside Iran.

Among the issues to which the Islamic Revolution consequently left a great impact in the world was the Muslims' enjoyment of the Imām's directives on the different Islamic rites. As an instance, the *hajj* rituals can be mentioned.

¹ *The Last Message: Imām Khomeinī's Last Will and Testament* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, 1998), p. 93. (with slight modification)

Before, the Muslims used to perform the *hajj* rituals with complete negligence of the philosophical essence of the ordainment of this grand annual religious gathering notwithstanding the following description of it in the noble verse of the Qur'an, thus: "*Allah hath appointed the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a standard for mankind;*"¹ thus, declaring the *hajj* as the most outstanding phenomenon for integration and declaring immunity from the polytheists. This is while in the past no trace of the discussion of the problems of the Islamic world and declaration of immunity from the polytheists could be witnessed, and the Islamic society was experiencing the hardest condition of life on the verge of all-dimensional attacks of the imperialists and Israel.

After the Islamic Revolution, by issuing annual *hajj* messages, Imām Khomeinī emphasized, as *hajj* organs, the necessity of attention to be paid by Muslims to the political problems of the Muslim world, to declaring immunity from the pagans and to the duty of the *hajj* pilgrim in connection therewith. Gradually, the great *hajj* congress was acquiring its real form. Each year the ritual of declaring immunity to the *mushrikīn*² was observed by tens of thousands of pilgrims from Iran with the participation of revolutionary Muslims from other countries. In the course of a magnificent march, slogans declaring aversion to America, the Soviet Union and Israel as prominent models of paganism and world impiety were sounded and voiced out, inviting thereby the Muslims to unity.³

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Imām Khomeinī... undertook the revival of the social rites of Islam and of the political spirit of the laws of Islam. Along this line, the political-devotional rituals of the Friday congregational prayers and the two great 'īds [feasts] of the Muslims were held all over Iran. The preachers and sermonizers in these prayers undertook the discussion of the issues and problems of the huge society of the Muslims within the country and abroad.⁴

¹ *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:97.

² *Mushrikīn*: atheists, polytheists, pagans, etc.

³ Ḥamīd Anṣārī, *The Narrative of Awakening: A Look at Imām Khomeinī's Ideal, Scientific and Political Biography (From Birth to Ascension)* (Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, 1999), p. 209. (with slight modification)

⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

The objectives of the Islamic Revolution are never restricted to the confines of its location, i.e. Iran. Rather, they are extended throughout the world, particularly to the Third World, which is deprived in every respect.

The evidence substantiating this claim is the very statements of the founder of the Revolution addressed to the people of the world in his purposeful testament as he says:

My recommendation and admonition to the nations of the Muslim countries is that they should not pin their hope on the foreign assistances in achieving an objective that can be embodied in Islam and the implementation of its laws. Rather, stand on your own feet and realize this vital affair that will bring about independence and freedom.¹

The people of the world found out from the trend of the Islamic Revolution that all strata of every nation can contribute in the revolution. For, in Iran the masses of people of every class, ethnicity, and religious, intellectual and creedal groups have contributed therein. This revolution was not confined to the workers. That which Marxism tried to point out in interpreting the Bolshevik revolution in Russia that the revolution belonged to the workers and peasants, in the case of the Islamic Revolution of Iran it was neither a revolution of the bourgeoisies, that which was attributed by Marxism to the French Revolution.

The Iranian revolution was the revolution of the entire people in which all strata of the people such as workers, traders, merchants, religious scholars, intellectuals, and others have their respective contributions. Besides, no political organization or party was supposed to be behind this revolution, which organizationally managed it and could assume its interests and achievements. Rather, it was a popular upheaval in which all the people—man and woman, young and old, weak and influential individuals—have their respective contributions commensurate to their own capability and status. Through their self-reliance and pivotal moves, they were able to bring it to fruition.

In spite of the existence of the military force and the powerful secret police organization named SAVAK, which was the backbone of the Shāh's regime; the aids that this regime used to receive from the foreign imperialists especially America in addition to the experienced apparatus of the regime as well as the abundant political experiences that their heads had; and the massive presence of expert foreign military-political advisers, this victory

¹ *Ṣahīfeh-ye Inqilāb-e Islāmī*, p. 39.

occurred. This unprecedented model in bringing to success a revolution urges us to pose this question: what was really the secret behind this mode, which has still caught the attention of the people of the world, astounding and waking them up with respect to the political truths and popular forces, which they had never taken into account.

Islamic Revolution's impact on the contemporary Islamic movements

The Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Imām Khomeinī has had an active influence on the contemporary Islamic liberation movements. The contemporary Islamic movement has left behind significant steps, which would not have been undertaken had it not been due the victory of the Islamic Revolution, making easy the difficulties and removing the hard conditions.

The Islamic movement had no strong base at its disposal for the activities and advancements, and to which to rely on. Thus, it used to undertake its activities and moves clandestinely. From the very day of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, this revolution has served as the strong base from where the Islamic movement can commence its activity, seek asylum to it and voice out from the media outlets of this base its state of oppression to the people of the world.

The Islamic movement has found in this revolution limpid and inexhaustible fountain from which by the help of God its material and spiritual needs are fulfilled. By the grace of God, every need that the contemporary Islamic movement had, such as material, propagational, approval, counsel, moving force, base, and places of asylum, has been provided in this propitious revolution. Contemporary Islamic movement in any part of the world is always in need of the revolution and the Islamic republic just as the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic cannot remain not in need of this movement in the Muslim world. Certainly, extending of the Islamic Revolution in the Muslim world and exporting its revolutionary values and organizational ideas to that world are done through the Islamic movement.

Contemporary Islamic movements with diverse sectarian tendencies such as Sunni and Shī'ah are lengthy bridges that connect the Islamic world to the Islamic Revolution and through which the Islamic Revolution makes advancement in its movement and extends itself to the Islamic world...

Undoubtedly, the Islamic Revolution will not be capable of performing its Islamic and global mission except by extending to the countries of the

Islamic world, to every village, township, mosque, home and printing house, and to the hearts, consciences and minds.¹

Imām Khomeinī had a noble position in dealing with the liberation movements of the world. This point can be witnessed in his prudent directives and continuous messages to the leaders of liberation movements. In one of his directives, the Imām says:

Through a unity springing from their faith and seeking help from the eternal power of God the Muslim nations should drive out these arrogant powers from their own countries. These nations should be aware of themselves, identify the downtrodden and be acquainted with the position of the big powers and the arrogant so as to be able to regain their lost personality and identity; free themselves from the sphere of influence of the satanic propaganda machineries; entrust their nations to the power of God; halt the advancement of the arrogant and keep them in their own place; make them aware of their disgraceful reality in facing the self-reliant people; free the world; and to cut off the hand of the tyrants. O you heroic brothers! O ye who freed their own countries! Make your nations aware and wakeful. Purge their minds of the menacing effects of corrupt propaganda which persisted for centuries and ruined their identity and personality in facing the West and the World Arrogance. Strive to make them forge unity with our Islamic movement as this movement is the movement of all the downtrodden.

Today, the dear Islam is facing unmanly onslaughts of the *kufr*. Before being an Iranian or regional movement, our movement is the movement of all downtrodden of the world.

O Muslims of the world! O revolutionary downtrodden! O boundless sea of mankind! Stand on your own feet and defend the existence of Islam, and your nations and countries. Israel took away Quds ash-Sharīf from the hand of Muslims but the governments showed nothing except heedlessness and dereliction...

In the way of rendering assistance to the great Islam, we give assent to all the downtrodden and we defend and support them as well as every organization that strives to free its country.²

¹ Muḥammad Maḥdī Āṣifī, *Dars-hāyī az Inqilāb-e Islāmī-ye Īrān [Lessons from the Islamic Revolution of Iran]* (n.p.:n.d.), pp. 85, 87.

² *Imām dar Rūyārūyī bā Ṣāḥyunīsm [Imām Khomeinī vis-à-vis Zionism]*, pp. 100-101.

The above statements are clear evidence that Imām Khomeinī has not confined his attention to the freedom of Iran and its people but has also paid attention to encouraging the liberation movements in every part of the world, calling on and urging the Muslims to free their respective countries from the arrogant (powers) so that the downtrodden could be able to assume power and leadership.

The Islamic Revolution occurred, and from the very moment of its inception it announced its solidarity with the downtrodden of the world and did not spare its assistance with respect to their problems. From that moment up to now, it has been their greatest assistant and aid in all vital aspects particularly along their freedom and deliverance. The revolution occurred, making the Muslims aware that arrogance and the arrogant have no place in the luminous Muslim world. The *ṭāghūts* and arrogant in any form and color they assume ought to be annihilated.

The Islamic Revolution and changing the concept of separation of religion and politics in the world

By invoking hundreds of explicit verses of the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), conduct of the pioneers of religion, and so narrations reported from the Infallibles ('a), Imām Khomeinī firmly believed that politics is part of religion. The separation of politics from religion prevalent throughout the past decades of the 20th century and thus took place as a result of the imperialists' propaganda has obviously left menacing impacts on the Muslim world and among the followers of other divine religions.

Imām Khomeinī regarded the religion of Islam as the doctrine for the guidance of mankind in all stages, dimensions and eras of individual and social lives, and as social and political relations are inseparable parts of human life, in his opinion, the Islam that is confined merely to devotional aspects and individual ethics and bar the Muslims from interfering in their own destiny and in social and political issues is a distorted form of Islam, and in the language of the Imām, it is an 'American Islam'. The Imām has founded and conducted his movement on the basis of inseparability of religion from politics.¹

The enemies of Islam have invented the idea of separation of religion from politics, advancing many arguments in this context to the extent that the masses of people were convinced of this belief. The enemies alleged

¹ Ḥamīd Anṣārī, p. 206. (with slight modification)

that every clergyman who distances from political issues will be nearer to the world of spirituality and can better perform his religious duties.

Gradually, these enemies have labeled as futile Islam the authentic and revolutionary Islam, which concerns with all the devotional and political, economic and social affairs, eliminating the pure Islamic mottos and pursuing the reviving of fanatical mottos that are traceable to the time prior to the advent of Islam.

For instance, they replaced the *hijrī* calendar with the monarchical calendar, making corruption and licentiousness rampant everywhere and drawing the young generation to the quagmire of decline and depravity. Suddenly, Imām Khomeinī emerged in the history of Islam, Muslims and Iran as a great man from the corner of the city of Qum. “*And a man came from the uttermost part of the city, running.*”¹ Yes, this heavenly human being and divine man rose up; was reared and became aware of his time under the auspices of the heavenly revelation.

He was a brave, strong and cheerful man who assumed the leadership of the *ummah*. The spirit of God was imbued in him. Like Jesus (‘a), in his own turn he appeared in the spiritual world thereby brought to existence the revolution.

Although the history of Iran bore witness to revolutions against dictatorial and despotic rulers whose leaders have been clergymen and religious scholars or at least have active participation in it, due to their lack of total concordance with the message of Islam or distance from the goal of establishing Islamic government these revolutions turned unsuccessful. In this revolution, meanwhile, the leader laid down the foundation of his objective in overthrowing the monarchical regime and establishing the Islamic government.²

Imperialism isolated the clergymen and religious scholars. It was done under the pretext of separation of religion from politics. Everyday, the imperialists used to sing the tune of the religion’s not being in need of the clergy, or sow the seed of hypocrisy and discord among the children of a nation. However, the existence of spiritual and religious force among the people used to abort the imperialist designs throughout history.³

After the Muslims were kept aloof from religion and abandoned the laws and ordinances of the Qur’an as well as the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ), the enemies of Islam from the East and West staged a psychological war on

¹ *Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:20.

² *Az Wilāyat-e Faqīh tā Ḥukūmat-e Mardumī [From Guardianship of the Jurist to the Popular Government]*, pp. 1-3.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

them, inculcating in their mind the idea of separation of religion from politics arguing that the two are in contradiction to each other and reconciliation between them is impossible. This is while the truth of the matter is something else.

In the immortal charter of the revolution, His Eminence Āyatullāh Sayyid ‘Alī Khāmene’ī thus states:

One of the extremely blasphemous phenomena of the present era is the very separation of this world from the hereafter, material life from worship, and religion from politics.

Unfortunately, the years of Muslims’ negligence and their distance from the Qur’an made the distorter hands successful in instilling false ideas on the minds under the name of religion... and in spite of the availability of proof and evidence substantiating the concordance of religion and politics, we can still witness individuals who sing the tune of the religion’s separation from politics as well as those who believe in this idea, which is repugnant to Islam...

It is clear that the tune singing the separation of religion from politics is composed by the same enemies of religion who have received a blow from the vibrant and live Islam. Through this weapon, they want to expel religion from the arenas of life in order to singly take control of the life issues and destiny of the *ummah* and thus no more afraid and dreadful of anybody.¹

However, the pure Muḥammadan Islam views politics as an inseparable part of religion, calling on all the Muslims to engage in, be aware of, and understand politics. This is the same thing that the Muslim nations must always learn from their jurist leader.²

The Imām highlighted the menace of the notion of separation of religion from politics which is coined and launched by the imperialists.

In a bid to annihilate religion and beguile the Muslims, they undertook this move so as to easily plunder the assets of Muslims, and this is the same thing that we witness today in the Islamic world.³

¹ *Manshūr-e Jāwidāni-ye Inqilāb [Immortal Charter of the Revolution]*, pp. 14-17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³ *Negāhī beh Bu’d-e Ma’nawī-ye Inqilāb-e Islāmī-ye Īrān [A Glance at the Spiritual Dimension of the Islamic Revolution of Iran]*.

Victory of the Islamic Revolution notwithstanding the internal and external threats

As what has been stated earlier, the history of Iran has witnessed many revolutions against dictatorship, despotism and colonialism such as the Constitutional Movement or the oil industry nationalization but all of these revolutions were doomed to failure due to inattention to the noble mission of Islam and distance from the objective of establishing the Islamic government.

The basic characteristic of this revolution, which distinguishes it from other movements that have taken place in Iran during the past hundred years, is its ideological and Islamic character. At the conclusion of the Constitutional Movement against despotism and the anti-colonial movement relating to the nationalization of the oil industry, the Muslim people of Iran learned from this costly experience that the clearly basic reason for the failure of these movements was their lack of an ideological basis. Although the Islamic line of thought and the leadership provided by militant religious leaders played the main and essential role in these movements in recent history, nonetheless, the struggles waged in the course of these movements floundered due to departure from genuine Islamic positions. Hence, under the leadership of the eminent *marji' at-taqlīd*, Āyatullāh al-'Uzmā Imām Khomeinī, the alert conscience of the nation realized the necessity of pursuing an authentic Islamic ideological course in its struggles. This time, the militant '*ulamā*' of the country, who, in conjunction with committed intellectuals and writers, had always been in the vanguard of popular movements, found new impetus through his leadership.¹

This revolution was characterized by two outstanding features, i.e. the absolute leadership of the Imām in this movement and its Islamic character motive along with the Islamic slogans it upheld from the beginning, and the specific objectives it determined for itself, and thus, opening a new chapter in the *jihād* of the Iranian people before the people of the world whose fruit is known to all as the 'Islamic Revolution'.²

One of the fundamental issues that served as the main bastion of the new system and bestowed vigor to the Revolution in overcoming all the problems, obstacles and sinister propaganda, was the drafting of the Constitution, which was ratified by the absolute majority of the Iranian people and determined the future programs and strategy of the country.

¹ *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Tehran: Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, 1997), pp. 1-2.

² See Anṣārī, p. 27.

The enemies of the Revolution both inside and outside the country, who did not witness it, were displeased at the success of this revolution as a revolution which has been led by a jurist. For, the astute leadership of this jurist was responsible for the collapse of the edifices of despotism and imperialism as well as the destruction of the *ṭāghūtī* regime's palace. This is the very principle that brought to existence the Islamic government, and like a formidable fortress against the influence of the enemies of the revolution, Islam and the Muslims, it will remain durable and resilient.¹

The Islamic Revolution faced various types of threats from both within and without Iran. For instance, the event in 1989 [1357 AHS] of the anti-revolutionary elements' setting on fire of wheat crops, agricultural products and granaries, which were all the products of the sweat and toil of the farmers, took place whose aim was to render a blow to the Islamic Revolution.²

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran was an outcry that took away sleep from the eyes of the enemies of Islam and made them understand that the Muslims are alive and determine themselves their own destiny. The victory of the Islamic Revolution and the awakening of the Muslims opened a new chapter in the confrontation of Islam with the West since the beginning of the call of Islam, and the conquest and victories of the Muslims. This revolution is a destiny-making event.

As this blissful revolution has entered a new era, its impacts and influence of the highest order can be actively seen on the arenas of Islam as well as in the domains of politics and *jihād*. It changed in favor of Islam most of the so-called fixed principles and accounts of political equations in the region and the world, and thus, as it has been said, making possible the impossible and transforming possible into impossible.

It is no doubt that given the premature image it assumes, this Islamic revolution is something that is greater than an aspiration in our contemporary life. Indeed that which we dreamt of performing in a long period was fulfilled by God, the Exalted, in a one and a half year period in a popular and all-embracing genuine revolution in the land of Iran under the leadership of an octogenarian descendant of the Most Noble Messenger (ﷺ) whose signs of his blessed countenance calls to mind the companions of the Messenger of

¹ *Az Wilāyat-e Faqīh tā Ḥukūmat-e Mardumī*, p. 3-4.

² Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Beheshtī, *Iqtisād-e Islāmī [Islamic Economics]* (n.p.:n.d.), p. 15.

Allah (s) who shouldered the sublime mission of Islam with determination, resoluteness, faith, and certainty of the promise of the God.

The fulfillment of this sublime aspiration on the life of Muslims, i.e. the reestablishment of the Islamic government, happened in a short period through a comprehensive revolution, and thus, uprooting the foundations of the oppressive and tyrant government and like a volcano, making the ground to explode under their palaces and thereby setting up the blessed government of Islam after a long period.¹

This revolution was planted on soil and firmly sprouted, which caused its resilience and endurance up to now. As the revolution emerged from the land of a subtle and untenable civilization, through the violent storms that the arrogant of the world will incite against it can possibly be uprooted and thus annihilated within a short period.

Yet, the Islamic Revolution was an outburst in a hard and solid base and relying on a potent civilization, which was able to withstand against all storms and typhoons, and it is still resilient and enduring.²

¹ *Dars-hāyī az Inqilāb-e Islāmī-ye Īrān*, p. 72.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.