Imam Khomeini's Foreign Policy: Conceptual Framework, Perspectives and Challenges

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Abstract

The study of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the specific features of the Islamic Revolution and its reflection that has profound effects on the strategy of the region and the world is of specific importance. Undoubtedly, current Iran's foreign policy is based on the political ideas of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which, in order to understand and realize it better, his thinking model in the context of foreign policy with other countries should be investigated more. Imam Khomeini, stating this important theory that "the source of conflicts and disagreements is selfishness, and yet peace will be an unreachable wish of humanity", had firm belief in the fundamental ethics, accountability and realist idealism in the foreign policy. By understanding all of the above components, one can inquire into the depth of Imam Khomeini's thought in drawing up a road map for peaceful coexistence despite the belief in the establishment of a divine sovereignty, mutual respect for the sovereignty of the countries, despite the belief in exporting the Islamic Revolution, and the teleology of the Islamic Revolution along with non-interference in the internal affairs of countries.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Iran, Imam Khomeini, Islamism, Political Thought

1. Introduction

Although the Islamic Republic has been born of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Islamic Revolution is beyond the Islamic Republic system and lacks restrictions that a political structure might be faced with. The ideas of the Islamic revolution were able to move towards a deeper experience of human life relying on slogans and tendencies beyond the racial, class and national boundaries. In other words, the nature of the Islamic ideals, according to James Rosenau, is the Deterritorialization, and not the Demarcation. In this regard, Imam Khomeini was the creator of a discourse of Islam that was rooted in the ancient tradition. His new recitation of Islam conveyed an ideological figure to it that reflected other modern and liberating social-political discourses. At the center of the discourse of Imam Khomeini, there was a transcendental religion called Islam. The rich content of such religion- as recent studies also proved (Darabinia et al., 2017) -embraced all the angles of human lifeand regarded politics not as a successor, but as a companion of religion and established a synergy process between them (Fraser, 1989). Fundamentally, sociologists express three main factors for the emergence of a leader in various societies: 1. creating capacity and planning new thoughts by the leader; 2. to stand in the opposition position; 3. a specific social-political situation that allows the acceptance of the new leader's claims(Goldstone, 1980). Imam Khomeini, having the abovementioned factors and putting Islamic idea in the discourse domain, led to the domination of Islamic thought. Indeed, Islamism did not mean ignoring the existing realities in the international arena, but sought to highlight Islamic discourse in international relations. Imam Khomeini introduced Islamism as a stabilizing element and placed it at the head of a functional hierarchy.

Imam's charisma was to restore the people to the nature which was hidden under the teachings of the West and under the bulk of thought, ethnic, national and racial schools and trends (Khomeini, 2015; Khomeini, 2002). Imam Khomeini drew a universal message for the Islamic Revolution that has an idealism and idealistic ideology. The theme which Michael Focault called the soul of the spiritless world (Foucault, 1988).

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Some authors, of course, consider the geo-strategic and geo-ideological power of the Islamic Revolution as well as the extent of the realm of Islam as the cause of the influence of Imam Khomeini's message and ideas in the international arena (Hunter, 1992). The audience of Imam Khomeini was firstly the awakening conscientiousness of humanity, which in the last decades of the twentieth century suffered from getting away from spirituality and religion. Secondly, the Islamic world, which in the last few centuries had been regretting its leading civilization, and thirdly, the Iranian people who were oppressed by the Pahlavi regime (Foran, 2003).

Imam Khomeini, who was at the head of religious position, and also had leadership characteristics, with the aim of stirring the polarity of the ruling world system and drawing the "Third Way" for the oppressed peoples and liberation movements, as well as revealing the imperial nature of both capitalist and socialist blocks, sought to play a role (Sreberny, 1994). Imam Khomeini introduced a new model of Islamic-based political system and changed the basis of existing international structures at a time when the slogans of modernity and falsity were raised by individuals, introducing the modern liberal democratic structure as the highest form of life (Fukuyama, 2006). This led to the emergence of the fourth generation of international theorists focusing on the cultural factor. They, differed from the third generation, were scholars who were a structuralism and deterministic generation. Imam Khomeini, from the point of view of the fourth generation theorists, was introduced as the leader of Islamism in the international arena whose ideas indicated the emergence of a discourse other than common discourses. The narration, referred to as "Khomeinism" in the international arena (Abrahamian, 1982;Abrahamian, 1993).

2. Conceptual Framework

The system of international relations which is composed of dynamic concepts has undergone many changes in its new meaning, regarding its elements and type of relationship, so that its concept varies in recent years from the last century (Slaughter, 1998). Although this term, in addition to the governmental agents, refers to the increasing role of non-governmental organizations in the international relations, the main actors in this field are still governments, and the level of discussion analysis focuses on the behavior of actors (Thomas, 2005). The international system is a set of international actors governed by particular patterns of behavior with specific rules. Another component of the international system is a process that has a determinant role on the behavior of countries (Sardashti, 2016). Therefore, as the international system is influenced by its most important agent, that is human beings, in the form of governmental and non-governmental actors, the relations between these actors are described as peaceful or hostile relations. The realists, who have a pessimistic view of the nature of human societies, regard the international system as merely the stage of conflict between demands and the constant struggle of political units to gain more power and preserve it in any possible way (De Mesquita, 2013). From a realistic perspective, human nature does not inherently accept perfection. For this reason, the statesmen are obliged to resort to the principle of "Balance of Power" in order to prevent disagreements or reduce disputes. According to the mentioned considerations, the principles of realism can be enumerated as Statism, Power Oriented, Equilibrium, Rationality, and the Anti-Revolutionary Evolution Approach. Ultimately, this approach is a Confliction Policy type.

Contrary to the pessimistic realist narration is the idealistic narration with a combined look. This approach has taken a Cooperation and Integration Policy. Indeed, the idealists know any violent attempts to advance political purposes as disobedient, and propose strengthening rights and consolidating international organizations to prevent war and to establish lasting peace (Kinsey, 2016). The society that the idealists are contemplating is a society in which appropriate laws are set up to regulate relationships, the laws that do not neglect the legitimate rights of anyone, and no member of the international community will concern of being invaded (Smith, 2016). Along with these two narrations, another narration was raised in the international arena by Imam Khomeini called "Islamic Attitude", that doubt the international system and introduced a new discourse on Islamic principles. Islamic attitude toward the international system was influenced by the look at the nature of man and his purposes. In Islam, what are original are spiritual values. Values with their evolutionary movement lead human and society towards stability, peace and justice. This approach that knows the nature of human beings with the combined good and evil forces is a pattern in which the combination of two modes of convergence and divergence, understanding and contradiction forms the basis of the relations between political units. The design of this Islamic pattern leads to analyze the international relations based on comprehensiveness, while avoiding the extremes existing in the previous approaches.

In fact, the approach based on Imam Khomeini thought, due to its content, such as the emphasis on the role of religion, independence, liberty, social justice and immersive development, is a unique example among the revolutionary ideologies and is a successor to approaches dominating international arena. For this reason, it has enjoyed a special attraction especially among Muslims in the world (Dehshiri, 2008).

Since the Islamism approach has defined a universal and border-crossing character for itself, and has an idealistic and idealism ideology, the mission of this approach is also transcendental and is based on the guidance and prosperity of the whole mankind (Byman, 2001). With the emergence of this approach, a new discourse was created against dominant discourses in the global arena, which attracted the looks towards it and its result has been the widening of the realm of audiences and supporters of this view.

3. Historical Foresight in Imam Khomeini's Thoughts

Drawing up the Islamic ideals and making them applied was one of the most important actions of Imam Khomeini, which led to the teleology and design of border-crossing goals for the Islamic Revolution. With the goals set forth, he sought to create the Islamic state. In this regard, the ideas of Imam Khomeini can be classified into two categories of national and transnational goals.

4. National Goals

One of the main goals of Imam Khomeini as national goals is self-protection in relationship and competition with international actors. This goal is a Territorial and Internal plan that seeks to track and increase national values and capitals in relations with other countries. These goals are:

4.1. Preservation of national security and country existence
4.2. Preservation of territorial integrity
4.3. Preservation of national sovereignty and independence
4.4. Preservation of Islamic republic system
4.5. Preservation of National Identity
4.6. Achievement of international reliability

The mentioned goals more sought to preserve the security and integrity of the country and the survival of the structure of political system of Iran, and considered the preservation of Iran as a safeguard of Islam. Thus, in the thought of Imam Khomeini, the preservation of the life of Iranian nation and the survival of the structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran were regarded as the most important national, security and material goals.

5. Transnational Goals

In Imam Khomeini's view, transnational or Islamic goals consider ideological and cultural dimension more. By proposing these goals, he called for organizing an international desirable worldwide for Islam and Iran. In fact, the goal of Imam Khomeini was to emphasize the promotion of the foundations of the Islamic Revolution in the international arena. These goals are:

5.1. Protecting the territory of Islam
5.2. The exportation of the Islamic Revolution
5.3. Providing human prosperity
5.4. Creation of a single world community (Ummah)

These categories of goals are explained in a long-term perspective. In fact, the deconstruction of the present status of world, the establishment of foreign policy on norms and values, the necessity of exporting the Islamic Revolution and supporting the anti-imperialist movements of the world and replacing the "Ummah" instead of "Nation-State" were at the supreme transnational goals of Imam Khomeini (Zarif, 2014).

The alternative policy plan, entitled as "Neither the East nor the West," is understandable in respect of the transnational and teleological goals of Imam Khomeini, and emphasized on the existence of triple elements of self-reliance, seeking independence, and Islamic awakening to make it applied. He believed that the policy of "Neither the East nor the West" means providing a third way for the Islamic revolution and having intellectual autonomy guarantees Iran's independence. Imam Khomeini did not know the purpose of "Neither the East nor the West" policy as not communicating with others, and proclaimed: "We do not want to live in a country that is isolated from the world; it is unreasonable; today the world is like a family and a city" (Khomeini, 2002). In this approach, ideology has priority over geo-strategy, and principles such as seeking justice are the criteria for politicians' behavior in the Islamic revolution.

In fact, from Imam Khomeini's point of view, the policy of "Neither the East nor the West" indicates that our method and style in foreign policy is neither an oriental nor a western one, we want to be independent and not under the control of any government. We do not want Lord and Peasant relations and dependence, because dependence on any political and economic forms is the manifestation of the lack of independence "(Ramazani, 1966).

Ultimately, the purpose of the "Neither the East nor the West" slogan is to negate foreign domination, not to break the link with other countries, because today the rejection of political relations with countries means denying the identity of country (Ramazani, 1986). Considering the necessity of using soft power to achieve national and transnational goals, according to the ideas of Imam Khomeini, it can be classified as follows.

6. Imam Khomeini's Applied Strategies in the National Arena

6.1. Establishment of Islamic State

The purpose of the establishment of Islamic state is to set up a religious government in which an original recitation of Islam takes place and the Islamic justice-centered society is realized.

6.1.1. The Original Recitation of Islam and the Establishment of Divine Sovereignty: The revival of forgotten Islamic concepts and values was one of the initiatives of Imam Khomeini. The rule of colonialism and the weakness of Muslims have led to an ineffective interpretation of many of the political-social concepts and principles of Islam. Imam Khomeini considered the realization of divine aspirations as a means to achieve the spiritual excellence of mankind. In the theoretical aspect, he realized the idea in theoretical terms by designing the theory of divine sovereignty and in practical terms by fighting the Imperial regime.

6.1.2. Formation of the Islamic Society: The establishment of Islamic society was one of the demands of people in the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Imam Khomeini also considered the formation of an Islamic government in which social justice and Islamic rules are performed necessary for the protection of the Islamic community.

6.2. Independence and Negation of Dependence on Dominant Powers

The negation of domination inside is synonymous with the negation of tyranny and it is equal to the negation of dependence on foreign powers and the liberation from their colonialist policies outside. To gain independence, it should be independent in terms of thought and idea. In terms of Imam Khomeini, independence and the lack of dependence are issues that need to be applied to empower the countries.

6.2.1. Negation to Tyranny: Imam Khomeini considered resistance to oppression as one of the solutions derived from religious teachings. By resorting to the "Principle of Monotheism," he believed that "man should be surrendered only to the essence of the Almighty, and should not obey any human being" (Khomeini, 2002). Accordingly, the elimination of any tyranny was raised as one of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution.

6.2.2. Denial of Aliens' Domination: The formation of a government based on the real independence on aliens had a great contribution in his statements. Imam Khomeini, with an emphasis on Political Independence, which meant the free will of decision making of the nation to determine its own destiny and the lack of interference of aliens in the fate of people, believed that rationally it cannot value the life under the control of others, because "the value of life is to have freedom and independence " (Khomeini, 2015).

7. Imam Khomeini's Applied Strategies in the International Arena

Imam Khomeini believed that a functional approach should be considered for the Islamic thoughts in the international arena. Regarding this, the strategies that create opportunity prescribed by him in the international arena are:

7.1. Denial of Tyranny and Colonialism: One of the goals of the Islamic Revolution is to adopt the strategy of exclusion against colonialism. This can be understood from the transnational and transcendental nature of the Islamic Revolution. Imam Khomeini believed: "Our duty is to fight against oppression" (Khomeini, 2002). Perhaps the key point to express this strategy is this statement by Imam Khomeini, who said: "The nation of Islam is the follower of school whose programs is summarized in two Quranic words: "does not oppress and does not accept oppression." (Khomeini, 2002). It can be said that the main purpose of adopting the strategy of the denial of tyranny and colonialism is to preserve the dignity and respect of the Muslims.

7.2. Supporting the Oppressed and the Liberation Movements: This principle, from Imam Khomeini's point of view, complements the strategy of tyranny and colonialism, because there is a practical relationship between the struggle against the arrogant and the support of the oppressed. In other words, there are two ways of confronting

arrogant: first, struggling against the dominators, which is the most important factor in the backwardness of the nations. Second, supporting and protecting the oppressed nations (Ehteshami, 2002).

7.3. Supporting Muslims: From Imam Khomeini's point of view, supporting Muslims in any part of the world is a duty and should be placed on the agenda as a religious value and the most important duties of the Muslims. The protection of Muslims' rights can be realized at several levels. First, at the Islamic world level, this is in the form of supporting Islamic liberation movements. Second: supporting Muslims who are fighting the domination system, and third: defending the rights of Muslim minorities in non-Islamic countries.

7.4. Peaceful Coexistence: Imam Khomeini considered the law in all matters and problems and believed that everyone should be in peace according to the law. In other words, non-aggression and the lack of expansionism were among his principles, and he said: "What is the ultimate goal of Islamic education is global peaceful coexistence" (Khomeini, 2015).

7.5. Mutual Respect and Non-Interference in the Internal Affairs of Countries:

One of the policies of the Islamic Revolution is the lack of interference in the internal affairs of other countries and mutual respect, in a way that Imam Khomeini states: "The Islamic State wants to have an understanding and a proper relationship with all nations and all states, provided that they mutually respect the Islamic State" ((Khomeini, 2002).

It can be said that the strategy of Imam Khomeini in the international arena is Realistic Idealism. This model, while emphasizing on peacemaking, stresses the use of power in the interests of humanity. In the solution of Imam Khomeini, various methods and practices are in the direction of a unit value called Islam, and moralization and legalism are defined in accordance with the of Islamic and national interests (Ramazani, 1992). Imam's approach emphasizes on the interaction of the nation and state, and the international system and is based on components such as: the integration of geo-strategy and geo-ideology, the interconnection of domestic policy and foreign policy, the elimination and absorption strategy, national and transnational goals, spiritual and material strengths, and the combination of truth and reality.

8. Perspectives and Challenges of Imam Khomeini's Thought

8.1. Perspective of Imam Khomeini's Thought

Imam Khomeini, despite the dominance of Western civilization, presented a new method for reviving Islamic values in the world. The rapid growth of atheism thoughts and the tendency towards a secular political-intellectual system led some scholars to believe that isolation is the destiny of all divine religions. Imam Khomeini, by creating a new religious discourse, was able to lead the world to a different period from the past towards an arena with the privileged religious and spiritual features. The French thinker Michel Foucault, about the Iranian revolution and how it happened, says: "Shi'i is precisely a form of Islam with its internal teachings and content that distinguishes between external obedience and profound spiritual life. Shias consider Islam as a revolutionary force; that is, the will to return to a spiritual experience, an experience they think they will achieve in Islam. It was based on this idea that Imam Khomeini, at a time when religion was regarded as the opium of people, turned it into the soul of spiritless world" (Foucault, 1988). Imam Khomeini disrupted the world's equation which was based on the monologue and unit discourse and by designing a spiritual and inner life for humanity and offering an effective model of Islamic state, practically, in the words of "Herbert Marcuse", challenged one dimensional human and one dimensional life, and declared that the secular space of the West could not last forever, and that Western humans would once be tired of living in material space, and would inevitably return to spirituality (Esposito, 1991). From the viewpoint of Imam Khomeini, modern human beings have ended the separation of materiality from spirituality. Imam Khomeini transferred the boldness and courage of criticizing against powers to other leaders of the world and other countries and put the functioning of the international system under question. The perspective of Imam's thoughts can be described as follows:

8.1.1. Unity of Islamic and Liberalism Countries
8.1.2. Practical Reform of the Bipolar System of the World
8.1.3. Critique of the International System Structure by Countries
8.1.4. Modifying the Global Imagination of the Superpowers

In the intellectual system of Imam Khomeini, the formation of a Single Global Ummah leads to global peace and security. In fact, his view is to reach the Single Global Ummah. In other words, the ultimate vision of Imam Khomeini's thinking is the realization of world peace.

It is under the formation of a Single Global Ummah that the complete victory of the good forces on evil and the world peace and sustainable security would be realized. In order to achieve this vision, he believes that the two main factors of "Mobilizable Moral" and "Active Self-Consciousness" must challenge Westernization and fortify the "Return to Self" discourse [4].

8.2. Challenges

Considering the confrontation of Imam Khomeini in facing with powers and bringing a revolution to victory and leading Islamic awakening in the international and regional arena, it is also important to investigate its challenges as follows:

8.2.1. Distortion and Forgetfulness of Religious Concepts: With the gradual getting away of Islamic societies from the genuine Islamic and just-seeking doctrines, this school is slowly deviating and suffers with a crawling revolution from within. Discourses such as justice, at best, suffered from distortion and, at worst, are forgotten (Khomeini, 2002).

8.2.2. The Rulers of Islamic Countries: Another challenge facing the awakening movement is some of the political elites and the heads of Islamic countries. They do not see the association of Islamic thoughts with political issues in line with their policies. In fact, according to Imam Khomeini, the Muslims' problem is their governments. These are the governments that have brought Muslims to this day. Imam Khomeini has considered the devious governments dominating Islamic countries as the agent of evil powers that enter into the path of misleading people from Islam path.

8.2.3. Division: Imam Khomeini does not see unity as a tactic or an expediency tool to advance the political goals of the revolution. But he has defined unity as an Islamic principle and has known the success in fighting the main enemy and success in liberating self-depravity depending on solidarity (Khomeini, 2002). Indeed, Imam Khomeini considered the problem of division for Islam as one of the most serious damages.

8.2.4. Frozen Thinking of Sanctimonious People: From the viewpoint of Imam Khomeini, the sanctimonious people create obstacle in the path of recognizing religious thoughts and Islamic awakening. This group, pretending to have religion, brings a great blow to the body of Islamic political units. He emphasized that Islam has experienced the greatest blows from these sanctimonious people throughout its lifetime history (Khomeini, 2002).

8.2.5. The Intellectual-Like People: As the frozen thinking is one of the challenges and obstacles for awakening, the attachment to the powers of the East and the West prevent nations from approaching Islam. Imam Khomeini says intellectuals should not take intellectual standards from Western data. He considered the duty of a true intellectual to introduce Islam correctly and to help the continuation of the rule of Islamic justice. Imam Khomeini's critiques of the intellectuals were as follows: indifference toward Islam, Westernization, self-depravity, ignorance of Islam, and the separation from people.

Imam Khomeini knows the mentioned challenges the causes of threats and the reduction of opportunity making capacities for the growth and development of Islamic thoughts. He believes that in the absence of Self Reinforcement systems, serious damages will hit the Islamic ideas. His first and the most important solution in addressing the challenges, is to confront "False Self-Denial", which is the first step towards real self-knowledge. From the perspective of Imam Khomeini, the culture of the West, the East, and nationalism have created false identities (Tehranian, 1980). According to him, knowing that the East itself has a rich culture as the Westerners used in the past can be of particular importance. Therefore, relying on the culture of Islam, the struggle against westernization and breeding independent people must be considered. Imam Khomeini, by networking and systemization of Islamic thought, could lead a revolution that we observe its reflections in the contemporary world, especially in the new Middle East. Indeed, the approach of Imam Khomeini made the deterministic view dominating the world changed and replaced it with the Islamic and humanistic view and, in fact, brought about a new biological environment that destroyed the one-dimensional look of the past.

9. Conclusion

Imam Khomeini's strategy was in line with creating and using tools of providing opportunity and developing capacity to expand his Islamic thoughts. The tools considered by Imam for alternative identification in the international arena included both hardware and software powers. Indeed, while defining the national and internal goals, he defined transcendental goals as an important strategy in promoting and expanding Islamic teachings.

Achieving mentioned goals required two necessary pre-requisites. First, the oppressed nations organize themselves and, secondly, try to improve their intellectual capability. Imam Khomeini, with a proper understanding of the diverse and contradictory nature of the international arena, brought a new, mixed-natured approach by combining these perspectives. Indeed, the approach of Imam Khomeini emphasizes the interaction between the nation and state and the international system and is based on the ideas such as: the synergy of politics and religion, the integration of geo-strategy and geo-ideology, political rationality and revolutionary Islam, the link between domestic politics and foreign politics, the balance of national and transnational goals, spiritual and material power, and the combination of truth and reality. One of the obvious examples of this realistic idealist approach of Imam Khomeini can be the attitude of the universality of Islam, and at the same time, the emphasis on the necessity of defending the revolution and Iran as a duty, the emphasis on supporting the liberation movements in different countries in line with the need for having relations with states. Therefore, Imam Khomeini's realistic idealism indicators can be divided into two parts: 1. Theory: With principles such as the linkage of internal and external politics, the combination of spiritual and material power, rationalism while moralizing, coexistence and confronting arrogant, and the integration of geo-strategy and ideology, and 2- Practical: With examples such as institutionalized peacemaking, mutual cooperation, legal balance policy, the legitimate use of force and the unity of the Islamic world. Imam Khomeini, while emphasizing on the self-consciousness and mobilization of people as two prior elements, introduces the way of gaining strength in the international arena and attaining the goals of Islam in three principles: self-false denial, familiarity with Islamic teachings, and reliance on indigenous abilities.

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