

# **The Role of Clergy in the Islamic Revolution, (Case Study: The Discourse of Imam Khomeini)**

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## **Abstract**

With the onset of the Islamic movement led by Imam Khomeini, Shiite clerics who have a brilliant history followed Imam Khomeini to show a unique and unparalleled struggle to fight the Pahlavi regime. Therefore, Imam Khomeini, as a wise man who managed to associate political thought with social actions, played an indispensable role in the history of Iranian politics and political thought; so that, his discourse was the dominant discourse of the clergy in the Islamic revolution. In this study, being conducted in a discursive approach to examine the role of the clergy in the Islamic Revolution with the emphasis of Imam Khomeini's discourse within the framework of revolutionary theory, the following results were achieved: Imam Khomeini, with an emphasis on the central role of the discourse of the Supreme Leadership (Velayat-e faqih) based on justice, freedom, law, belief in the role of the nation, the link between the spirituality and politics, modified the inefficient ruling institutions and organizations, and provided an obligatory (positive) model to establish an Islamic state in a revolutionary process. This was due to the inner alliance of the clergy led by Imam Khomeini, and the external relations with political movements having sought to transform the society, which succeeded to fight directly with the former regime through revolutionary mechanisms. The main characteristic was the struggle at the society level in a logical trend from protest movements to legal and ultimately subversive struggles. In that historical period, the role of clerics led by Imam Khomeini was so legitimized that, in less than a year, the struggle led to the overthrow of a seemingly steady state, and replacement of the Islamic Republic system.

**Keywords:** Shiite clergy; Imam Khomeini; Imam Khomeini's discourse; Islamic revolution

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## **1.Introduction**

With the onset of the Islamic movement led by Imam Khomeini, Shiite clerics with a brilliant history followed Imam Khomeini to show an unparalleled and unique struggle to fight the Pahlavi regime. Following Imam Khomeini, the revolutionary clerics admitted that by a long- term movement they had to modify the inefficient ruling institutions and organizations and present a model of genuine Islamic struggles.

Accordingly, in the absence of the Imam Mahdi, the Shi'ite revolutionary clerics tried to establish an Islamic society and government, while respecting the Muslims and Islamic kings. They managed to do so with their political thoughts and social actions which led to the Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Imam Khomeini. In fact, the Islamic revolution was one of the aspects of the influence of Shi'a religion on the cultural and historical identity of the Iranians, and the result of the clerics' efforts in the previous centuries. The Islamic revolution reflected the connection of socio-political history of Iran with the religion of Islam.

Following the teachings of the Shi'i religion, the Shiite clergy solved the issue of establishing a religious system more easily. In fact, one of the Shiite theoretical factors regarding the formation of a religious system is the principle of religion for the Shiites, being manifested in Imam Khomeini's political thought.

Therefore, as a wise man who managed to associate the political thought with social actions, Imam Khomeini plays a unique and unparalleled role in the history of politics and political thought of Iran and Islam. His role is subject to extensive analysis.

**1.1 Research question:** How were Imam Khomeini's obligatory (positive) role to associate socio- political thought and actions realized?

**1.2 Hypothesis:** Imam Khomeini's wise and obligatory role in linking political and social thought and actions was manifested by the revival of the theory of Velayat-e faqih as a central point of articulation of the Islamic Revolution, and with an emphasis on elements such as a firm belief in the nation's role; the link between spirituality, politics, and government; social justice; freedom; and law.

**1.3** In the study, being based on qualitative data, the discourse of Imam Khomeini's political thought is analyzed using the library data collection method. The results are presented in this paper.

## **2. The role of clergy in Iran's contemporary history**

In order to better understand the position, role and discourse of the clergy during the Islamic Revolution, it is necessary to first mention briefly the role of the clergy in the history of contemporary transformations in Iran, from the tobacco movement to the nationalization of oil. Indeed, the difference between the role of the clergy in these transformations and the transformations after nationalization of the oil industry is in the type of thinking and attitude. Thus, the role of the clergy from tobacco movement to the nationalization of the oil industry is as follows:

1. Tobacco Movement: The order of tobacco bans by Mirza Shirazi led to the abolition of this privilege (Madani, 1982: 29).
- 2 - Constitutional Revolution: The role of clerics, particularly Ayatollah Seyyed Abdullah Behbahani and Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba'i in mobilizing the masses of people, as well as the role of Sheikh Fazlullah Noori and Ayatollah Naeini and the theory of the leader is clear in contemporary history of Iran.
- 3- Forest Movement and the role of Mirza Koochak Khan and the establishment of the Alliance of Islam.
4. The uprising of Sheikh Mohammad Khaybani in Azerbaijan
5. People's uprising in Tangestan and Deshtstan following the announcement of a fight against England. It was announced by Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Hossein Mujahedeh, known as the Mujahed (warrior), and led by clerics such as Reis Ali Delvari, Sheikh Hassan Chah Kootahi and so on (Talashan, 2002: 89-91).
6. Abolition of the 1919 contract between Sir Percy Cox and Vosuq al-Dawlah: Ayatollah Modarres played a significant role in this regard (Confidential documents ..., 1989: 58).
7. Opposition to Reza Shah's Republican: Ayatollah Modarres was the leader of the opponents (Madani, 1982: 109).
8. The uprising of Goharshad Mosque against the Unveiling, and the role of Sheikh Bohlul.
9. Nationalization of the Oil Industry movement and Ayatollah Kashani's contribution and support for it: In this period, the clerics can be divided into three categories: "The clerics led by the Ayatollah Boroujerdi, who mainly sought to strengthen the religious rather than political affairs. The second category of clerics, led by Ayatollah Kashani, who have been supporting Dr. Mossadegh by July 1952, began to oppose him. And the third group included the clerics who adhered to Mossadegh (Talashan, 2002: 150-57).

Given the role of the clergy in the history of the contemporary transformations in Iran, it seems that before the Islamic Revolution, the clergy, as an influential group, along with other influential groups such as the intellectuals, marketers, and so on, put the rulers under pressure to achieve their goals. It appears that among these groups, the role of the clergy is more important than other influential groups, due to its role and influence among the masses of people.

However, it seems that during the Islamic Revolution, the role of the clerics was expanded to the level of religious, political elites and a particular social movement. By transforming their political and social ideas and the establishment of a new structure, they sought to create an Islamic government within the framework of the Islamic law. Now, with this introduction and with a different perspective, we will examine the role of the clergy during the Islamic Revolution (Darini, 2000: 139, 149).

### **3. The Role of Clergy in the Islamic Revolution**

The clerics have played a significant role in the collapse of the Pahlavi monarchy and the establishment of the Islamic state (Darini, 2000: 145). The clergy's role in the socio-political movement during the Islamic revolution can be examined from both theoretical and practical perspectives. In fact, the intellectual movement and the historical practical movement of the clergy are examined in a trend that ultimately turned it into the leading socio-political and religious-revolutionary movement.

#### **3.1 The practical role and historical movement of the clergy during the Islamic Revolution**

In examining the practical role and historical movement of the clergy during the Islamic Revolution, it is necessary to address the clergy's practical measures since the coup of August 28th to the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution. The only difference between these measures and the preceding ones is in the type of thinking and attitude. Since this study focuses on the theoretical role of the clergy in the Islamic Revolution, with an emphasis on the discourse of the Imam Khomeini, only some of the major practical measures of the clergy during the Islamic revolution of Iran since the coup of August 28th to the 1979 revolution are briefly listed as follows:

The riots among the provincial associations; the White Revolution (or the Shah and People Revolution) and the clergy's opposition to it; the referendum bans by Imam Khomeini; the general mourning

Nowruz<sup>1</sup> in 1963 New Year's holiday (In Iran); Imam Khomeini's speech on Ashura<sup>2</sup> day in 1963 and the disaster of the Faizia school of Qom; the uprising of June 5, 1963; the capitulation of 1964 and Imam Khomeini's role in its abolition; the issuance of a declaration by Imam Khomeini declaring his position on the 2500th anniversary celebrations; the assassination of Hasan Ali Mansour by a member of the Mu'tafa-e-Islami population named Mohammad Bukharaei after obtaining a religious license from Ayatollah Milani (Talashan, 2002: 211-212); martyrdom of Hajj Mostafa Khomeini and holding different ceremonies to inform and aware thenation; insulting Imam Khomeini and the subsequent uprising of January 9<sup>th</sup>; the incident of February 18<sup>th</sup> in Tabriz; the ceremony in Yazd for the 40th day of some people's martyrdom in Tabriz ; the declaration on the New Year's holiday in 1978; the enlightenments made in Ramadhan in 1978; the great march on Fitr<sup>3</sup> feast in 1978; reactions of the clergy in the aftermath of Rex cinema disaster in Abadan city; role of the clergy in encouraging the students to join the revolution; ceremony of the 40th day of some people's martyrdom on September the 8<sup>th</sup> ; preventing schism in the management of the movement; issuing declarations and condemning the incident of November the 4<sup>th</sup> ; the great march of Tasua<sup>4</sup> and Ashura in 1978; the sit-in at Tehran University following the closure of the airport; the formation of the welcoming committee for Imam Khomeini; and the entrance of Imam Khomeini to Iran and the victory of the Islamic Revolution (Bahrami, 2006: 49 , 80).

### **3.2 Theoretical and intellectual role of the clergy during the Islamic Revolution**

Analyzing the theoretical and intellectual role of the clergy during the revolution, it is necessary to examine the steps that the clergy have taken to present their political views on the revolution and an alternative government. The steps could, on the one hand, criticize the traditional political views within the community of the clergy and the social deviations, as well (privative), and, on the other

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<sup>1</sup> Iranian New Year Holiday

<sup>2</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> day of Moharram (a lunar month) when Imam Hossein and his companions were martyred

<sup>3</sup> The last day of Ramadhan (a lunar month)

<sup>4</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> day of Moharram

hand, provide the religious community in Iran with religious incentives necessary for a full-fledged struggle (obligatory).

### **3.3. Dimensions of the theoretical and intellectual role of the clergy during the Islamic Revolution**

Based on the abovementioned, the theoretical and intellectual role of the clergy during the Islamic Revolution can be examined from two perspectives:

- A. The clergy's privative (negative) theories in the course of the revolution.
- B. The clergy's obligatory (positive) theories in the course of the revolution.

#### **3.3.1 Theories of the clergy in the course of the Islamic Revolution**

In general, clerics' privative theories can be regarded as a set of revolutionary and Islamic ideals that are in opposition to the existing socio-political conditions at the time. These ideals and privative theories have two aspects:

- A. Changing the internal realities of the clergy
- B. Changing the external realities of the clergy

##### **3.3.1.1 Changing the internal realities of the clergy**

Inner Reality: the non-revolutionary views among the clerics of the given period; that is, the visions that grew out of the coup on August 19<sup>th</sup>, made those who have failed, rethink and critique their own actions. Some of these losers were the clerics who necessitated making transformations in the present situation. In fact, using its authority, this group of clerics managed to encourage the clergy to join a revolutionary movement, and to organize it. As a result, after several decades, the clergy succeeded to take advantage of its traditional base, that is, leadership of the religious community in Iran. It was the consequence of the internal coordination of the clergy community and their conformity with other movements and political groups in society.

##### **3.3.1.1.1 Internal problems of the community of clergy**

There were some problems within the clerical community that were obstacles to the revolutionary nature of this group. However, the problems were resolved with the privative inner role of this revolutionary group. Some of the deviant viewpoints within the clergy community include: avoiding the Shiite clerics from politics, in the sense that the interference of religion and politics is a

betrayal of Islam, and the argument that the policy is bad and bastard by nature, and means lying (Al-Musawi al-Khomeini, Software: J 1/269 and J 13/429); avoiding social issues and just responding to individual questions (ibid., J 21/91); fighting against the ruling regime is not in the interest of Islam, and formation of any government in the era of absenteeism is illegitimate. (Bagheri, 1995: 59).

### **3.3.1.1.2 The reason for this kind of attitude**

After the clerics' frustration of the consequences of the constitutional and nationalist movements and in a search for a way to save the clergy from criticism, these viewpoints were reinforced. The natural consequence of these viewpoints was that the main duty of the clergy would have been guidance and propagation of the teachings of Islam. Although these theories were not formally significant in the seminary, but actually benefited from a situation in which nothing was done to change the existing conditions.

In such a situation, Imam Khomeini, as a jurist, declared his opposition to the existing government and policies in the chaos of the provincial associations, entirely based on religious rules. Hence, the difference between the attitudes of the Imam Khomeini, as a jurist, and some of the existing jurisprudential theories becomes clear. The theory based on which the provision of the revolution for the establishment of an Islamic state as obligatory, is itself obligatory. From Imam Khomeini's viewpoint, the social condition does not develop suddenly, but must develop (ibid : 60). Nevertheless, the internal problems of the clergy were much more, and the clerics realized that if they succeeded to change the view that 'the formation of any government in the era of absenteeism is illegitimate', or in other words, if, before doing anything, the condition of those sanctimonious was not determined, moving on the way of revolution would be nothing except a dream (Al-Musawi al-Khomeini, 1971: 197).

Therefore, during 1953 to 1978, one of the Islamic roles of the clergy within itself was a critical look at the status of the clergy, since the critical and revolutionary scholars could not accept that when the ratio of the communities of the Qur'an to its religious verses is more than the ratio of one hundred to one (ibid: 9), their jurist (ijtihadi) minds are related only to the face of a Muslim, not to the social feature of Muslims. And this situation

could not be a good backdrop for expressing an alternative political theory that was the goal of the revolutionary clerics (Sadr, 1980: 8).

### **3.3.1.2 Changing the outside realities of the clergy**

In the second part, another aspect of the clergy's privative theories, that is, changing the external realities, such as political and social issues, and issues such as freedom and justice are addressed. Freedom of the Iranian nation from the tyranny and suppression of the ruling was also a good issue for the improvement of the ideals proposed by the clergy in the Islamic state, and had a particular political role in provoking the Iranian nation to achieve this goal. Therefore, freedom was a term that, in the repressive conditions of the 1970s (in Iran), could get together the most opposed groups of the regime, who believed that everyone has just one ambition, i.e. establishment of freedom and equality. From the clergy's point of view, religious concepts have always meant freedom (Motahari, 1989: 159).

Although the clergy did not recognize freedom as a unique value for human beings, it respected freedom so much that, regardless of individuals' beliefs, prompted liberal individuals to move toward freedom and beat up repression (Motahari, 1982: 42).

Therefore, the most important responsibility of the revolutionary clergy was to create a revolutionary atmosphere in the society and to transfer its views to the nation. Undoubtedly, the clerics could make this major contribution, because they had relations with masses of the nation more than any other political movements did in the society (Ziba Kalam, 1993: 288).

The main topics in which the clergy was influential to inform the nation from the external dimension, include: the obviating of repression and tyranny; the obviating of oppression and aggression; the obviating of discrimination, inequality, and injustice; the obviating of moral and religious corruption and the prostitution; the abandonment of Western values and models from the society; the abandonment of Western values and models from the law; and basic transformation of the principles of the Pahlavi regime (Darini, 1998: 109 and 138). And thus, at some point in the contemporary history of Iran, the clergy found out that in order to resolve all the socio-political problems of the Islamic society, Islam should be introduced the same as it is. Such a demand required the thorough transformation of Pahlavi's political system (Al-Musawi al-Khamini, Software: J 1/120).

Therefore, the clergy played an important role in developing the ideals necessary for the emergence of a revolutionary movement in the society and, more importantly, directed such ideals toward the masses of people.

#### **4.Obligatory (positive) theories of the clergy in the Islamic Revolution**

Hitherto, we have described points of view and issues that were against the existing socio-political order, and with a new and optimal socio-political order, required a transformation in the status quo. However, in this section, we will study the clergy's positive opinions that played a role (roles) during the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of a new political order and the formation of the Islamic state. Thus, during the revolution, not only did the clergy consider the rejection of the Pahlavi regime and the status quo, but also acknowledged creating an alternative state. Here, we will look at the clergy's positive movements in the Islamic Revolution.

##### **Three intellectual groups and communities**

In a discussion of the positive views of the clergy in the course of the revolution, three different intellectual groups among this group of clergy thinkers can be mentioned, namely:

- 4.1. The First intellectual group: the idea of reformism
- 4.2. The Second intellectual group: the idea of revolution
- 4.3. The Third intellectual group: the idea of divine appointment

First, it should be pointed out that all of the three intellectual groups of the clergy have a common declared objective, namely, the preservation and continuation of Islam in Iran. Besides, none of them disagrees on the existence of a ruler and state. The basis of the intellectual groups' views is the narrations that say: "People need a ruler, either good or evil" (Motahari, 1994: 161).

##### **4.1 The First intellectual group: the idea of reformism**

Based on the idea of reformism, the clergy's involvement in the political relations means involvement in relations that were not suitable for the clergy's social and religious position. On the other hand, because the clerics are representatives of religion, their responses in minor socio-political issues can make Shiism and Islam vulnerable. Therefore, this intellectual group did not attempt to provide a theory for the Islamic state. Instead, they sought more to reform the rulers and the government's affairs than to transform and overthrow the government (Kadivar, 1997: 183-185).

#### **4.2 The Second intellectual group: the idea of revolution**

The revolutionary intellectual group believes in the transformation of the state. This belief is based on the idea and purpose of practice the divine duty to preserve the Islamic state (Lakazai, 2008: 96). In the viewpoint of this group, Islam requires clergy and scholars to respond to the shortcomings of the society, including socio-political problems (Al-Musawi al-Khamini, Software: J 21/129). Consequently, the idea of revolution naturally moved in the direction of theorizing in order to establish an Islamic state, and did not tolerate the tyranny of the ruling Pahlavi regime (ibid., 1994: 43-45). This intellectual group is very sensitive to the role of the nation in the formation of the state (ibid., software: J 212/4).

#### **4.3 Third intellectual group: The idea of divine appointment**

The third intellectual group emphasizes the divine legitimacy of the Islamic state, believes in the appointment of an Islamic ruler from the Almighty God and the infallible Imams through verses and narrations, and is more cautious about human achievements in the form of democracies. Theorists of this intellectual group believe that the trend can protect the Islamic state against potential risks by more emphasis on the divine legitimacy of the Islamic system (Mesbah Yazdi, 2009: 46-50).

Given that the preconditions for the idea of divine appointment have less formal relations with revolution, and is less relevant to the scope of this research, and the idea of reformism did not play a major role in the process of governing the clergy's positive views during the revolution, they will not be addressed in this research, because there needs to be an independent research to study them.

### **5. Intellectual theory of the Islamic Revolution**

In a discussion of the clergy's positive attitude in the course of the revolution, the intellectual theory of the revolution will be described and analyzed in this section. The intellectual group, being in line with the theory of the Islamic state, didn't accept the tyranny of the ruling Pahlavi government and was very sensitive to the role of the nation in the government formation.

#### **5.1. The clergy's positive role from Imam Khomeini's viewpoint**

Here, the clerics cannot be categorized into a particular intellectual group, because they may adhere to each of the three intellectual movements at different time intervals; such that, at some point in

history, Imam Khomeini believed in the idea of reformism, however his idea underwent a gradual change into the revolutionary thought. This is the strength of Imam Khomeini's political thought that was formed with the help of his precise knowledge of the circumstances, conditions and possibilities, and using the dynamism of Shiite thought principle, i.e., jurisprudent (Ijtihad) (Lakazai, 2008:97). Therefore, in this section, we specifically focus on Imam Khomeini's political thought and discourse regarding the Islamic revolution that is within the framework of the intellectual theory of revolution.

In examining Imam Khomeini's discourse, as part of the positive views of the clergy in the revolution, we will notice the center of the Imam's political school that is the combination of the long-standing Shi'a tradition with the new findings. Imam's political thinking is rooted in the Shi'a rational tradition and is based on the political system of the Shiite leadership.

### **5.2. Imam's discourse: Articulation and nodal point**

In addition to reviving the theory of the Supreme Leadership (Velayat-e faqih), Imam Khomeini introduced new elements such as: a firm belief in the role and position of the nation in the process of republicanism; constitution and elections; the link between spirituality, politics, and government; social justice and freedom, and combined them with the theory of the Supreme Leader as the nodal point of the Islamic Revolution discourse. The genre and the manifestation of Imam's articulation can be understood by, precisely, the Islamic Republic with the content of Islamism (and the theory of the Supreme Leadership as part of it), and the form of republican (and the role of the nation and election being a principle).

### **5.3. The Positive Dimensions of Imam Khomeini's Discourse in the Islamic Revolution**

The most important positive aspects of Imam Khomeini's discourse and political school in the Islamic revolution include:

The theory of the Supreme Leader; a firm belief in the role of the nation in government; the link between spirituality and politics; social justice, freedom and law; the link of society and people with religion; the link between people and the state; the link between science and religion; development of self-belief and political independence; the Islamic awakening movement in the Islamic world; awakening of human beings conscience in the world

(Palestine, etc.); the explanation of the foundations of the Mahdavi international community and the prophecy (waiting for the advent of Imam Mahdi); and enhancing the role of the masses and the oppressed in the administration of society (Bahrami, 2006: 97).

### **5.3.1. The idea of ‘the Supreme Leader’**

One of the most prominent positive theories in Imam Khomeini’s political discourse and thought is the idea of the Supreme Leader. It is Imam’s central political thinking. In Imam Khomeini’s viewpoint, the [concept of] Supreme Leader does not require much proof and justification, so that, its perception assures it, i.e., any person who understands Islam’s beliefs, even the preliminary beliefs, would promptly acknowledge it and consider it necessary, immediately after s/he imagined it (Al-Mousavi al-Khamini, no date: 463).

From the revolutionary intellectual group’s perspective, who believes in the role of the nation in the acceptance of the Islamic state, the notion of the Supreme Leadership is defined as follows: no one can be a leader to other people, unless they have chosen him based on the rules and conditions prescribed by God (Kadivar, 1997: 149). The group, who supported Imam Khomeini, sought to realize the objectivity and the effective political role of the belief that leadership (Imamate) after the long-term absence (of Imam Mahdi) leads to authority. This is based on the fact that leadership is basically the continuation of prophecy (Sadr, 1979:9-10). From Imam Khomeini’s view point, preserving the territorial integrity of the country and the unity of the word in the Islamic society, and realization of a united nation depends on understanding and preserving the status of the Supreme Leadership in the Islamic society.

### **5.3.2. Firm belief in the role of the nation in the Islamic state**

One of the main features of the positive theory and one of the important articulations of the Imam Khomeini’s discourse is a firm belief in the role of the nation in the Islamic state (Darini, 2000: 161). In Imam Khomeini’s political school, human identity is valuable, munificent, powerful, and efficient. Therefore, the people’s votes must play a fundamental role in the management of mankind’s fate and a society. Thus, in Imam Khomeini’s political school, a true democracy is Islam-driven. Based on Imam’s discourse, the people choose their own way of life and the officials in the country, by their own vote and will and faith. Alternatively,

Imam Khomeini even believed that nations can confront the world's aggressive powers by their votes and wills (Jahan Bozorgi, 2002: 86-88).

Sami Zabideh considers Imam Khomeini's political thought to be modern, since, based on it, nations play a significant role. The most prominent example of Imam's speech on the role of the nation may be the well-known sentence, "The criterion is the nation's vote." (Al-Musawi al-Khamini, Software ...:J 173/8). Elsewhere, emphasizing the notion of the Supreme Leadership, Imam Khomeini says: "The leadership of Muslim affairs and formation of a state depends on votes of the majority of Muslims, which is also mentioned in the constitution, and at the beginning of Islam was interpreted as allegiance to the Supreme Leader of Muslims (ibid: J 8 /). (regarding the issue of Imam Ali)

### **5.3.3. The link between spirituality and politics**

In Imam Khomeini's discourse, spirituality is intertwined with politics. Imam can be considered the embodiment of his own political school. In the political struggles of Imam, the main focus on Imam's behavior was his spirituality. In his early writings, Imam emphasizes the issue of the relationship between religion and politics. In his view, the idea of separation of religion from politics is imposed by the enemies of Islam and is now being mentioned by the imperialists. The essence of Imam Khomeini's political thought is the link between religion and politics. He considers Islam as a religion of politics, and believes that anyone who distinguishes religion from politics, they neither recognized religion nor politics (ibid.: J 18 / 89-88).

### **5.3.4. Social justice**

One of the main articulations of Imam's discourse is social justice, which is one of the main lines of thought in his political school. From Imam's view point, in all of the government's programs such as the legislative process, execution, and in judgment, social justice and the filling of the gaps between different classes of the nation should be the main purpose.

According to Imam Khomeini, the fundamental objective of the revolution is establishing social justice based on Islam. He says, "the Iranian nation's struggle will continue until the establishment of the Islamic Republic, which ensures the nation's freedom and independence of the country and provision of social justice" (ibid.: J 427/5). "Islamic justice is for all. No one is superior to others except in piety" (ibid:J 212/8). Moreover, he says, "Establish the

Islamic state, Islamic republic, and Islamic justice. With Islamic justice, everyone will live in freedom, independence and prosperity” (ibid.: J 6/77).

### **5.3.5. Freedom and law**

Imam Khomeini's political thought is based on the principle that all socio-political movements of any system should not deprive individuals of freedom, and the evolutionary and divine autonomy, and endanger their life and humanity. Imam says: "freedom is one of the foundations of Islam... Mankind is free by nature (ibid: J 2/166). A life without freedom is not life” (ibid: J 6/233). “The free will awarded to human beings by God is a divine gift. Freedom is a divine trust God has given us ... Freedom is a divine blessing” (ibid: J 400/4 and 345). In this way, Imam considers freedom as a natural and divine right for mankind, and does not consider mere freedom as mankind’s ultimate goal, but recognizes it as a means of a further evaluation. Hence, in order to preserve freedom in society and independence of the system and avoidance of tyranny or chaos and deviation, Imam Khomeini accepts freedom only within the framework of the Islamic constitution and the holy religion of Islam. He says: “the constitution leads to freedom and real democracy and guarantees the independence of the country (ibid: J 102/2 and 328).

### **Conclusion**

Generally, the Shiite clergy seem to be historical heirs, who for centuries, passed through the beliefs, customs and traditions forming the religious culture of the Iranian society and succeeded in gaining the position as potential leaders. Nevertheless, using this position, the clergy has succeeded to enact its leadership only in certain periods of history. The Islamic Revolution led by Imam Khomeini, is one of those historical periods.

The success of the clergy in the use of leadership has been always due to meeting two basic conditions: the first condition depends on the level of their integrity and unity, and the second condition depends on the level of their external association and coordination with the evolving political movements.

In this study, the theoretical and practical role of the clergy during 1953 and the revolution in 1978 was investigated with an emphasis on the theoretical aspect. The results indicated that the Shiite revolutionary clergy represented a new intellectual movement

among the Muslim scholars who succeeded in encouraging the young clerics to get involved in political issues.

On the one hand, such motives allowed the clerical community to rally against the existing political sovereignty, and, on the other hand, provided a political theory of the formation of an alternative state. Alongside such tendencies which were new in the political thought of the clergy, the clerics, under the leadership of Imam Khomeini, were able to achieve a mechanism for confronting the Pahlavi regime in most political events and, finally, to revolutionize.

In the course of the revolution, Imam Khomeini has managed to achieve a mechanism for a direct struggle with the government, the most important feature of which is to publicize the movement and expand it to an Islamic-level struggle. Furthermore, he managed to follow a trend of struggle that could find universal popularity; that is, a protest movement towards a legal struggle and from a legal struggle to a subversive one.

Therefore, following these steps and the progress of the revolution to an overthrowing struggle, the role of clerics, led by Imam Khomeini, was so legitimate that it was universal very soon. Thus, in less than a year, it led to the overthrow of a seemingly steady state, and replacement of the Islamic Republic system.

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