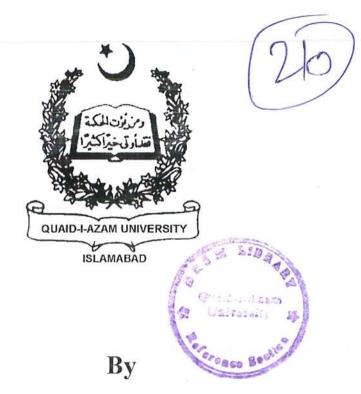# ROLE OF SHIITE ISLAM IN SHAPING
THE FOREIGN POLICY

By

Zaheer Abbas

SCHOOL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

QUAID-i-AZAM UNIVERSITY

ISLAMABAD Pakistan

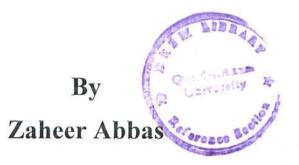**2009-2011**

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THE FOREIGN POLICY

A thesis submitted in the partial fulfillment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Philosophy

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FINAL APPROVAL LETTER

This is to certify that we have read the dissertation by Mr. Zaheer Abbas and in our judgment it is up to the standard of acceptance by Quaid-i-Azam University for the grant of degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) in International Relations.

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DECLARATION

I, Zaheer Abbas, student of M.Phil, School of Politics and International Relations hereby solemnly declare that this study entitled **"Role of Shiite Islam in shaping the Foreign Policy"** is the outcome of my individual research under the supervision of Dr. Lubna Abid Ali and that it has not been submitted concurrently to any other university for any other degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **"The Role of Shitte Islam in Foreign Policy"** is the record of the original work done by Mr. Zaheer Abbas under my guidance. The results of the research presented in this thesis have not previously constituted the basis for the award for any other degree to any other University.

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Chapter One

Ideological and Theoretical Perspective of Shia Islam

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Iran's Perception of the International System and Evolution of Iranian Current Political Structure

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the role of Shia Islam in influencing foreign policy making process and its implementation in Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). The form of Government formed as a result of the Islamic revolution based on Shia version of Islam, led by Ayatollah Imam Khomeini. The position of Rehbar, the supreme leader of Iran and the system of Vallayat e Faqih has great role as per the Constitution of IRI. The study had drawn a comaparitive study of Shia Islam and its political and theoretical perspectives that inform foreign policy decisions of the Islamic Republic. Institutions that influence the foreign policy decisions and perception to some extent is result of the 1979 Revolution. The study elaborates on varied aspects of the outcomes of Islamic Revolution and its impact on IRI's foreign relations in the Middle East and in the International System.

INTRODUCTION

1.   Title

Title of this thesis study is "Role of Shia Islam in Islamic Republic of Iran". The title mentioned on the title page is its initial incomplete version, due to misprinting submitted, at the start of the research as part of the research proposal. That too was "Role of Shitte Islam in Shaping the Foreign Policy of Iran". This flawed title is registered with examination section, which was not possible to change at the time of submission. However, I will try to request administration by end of final approval of this thesis by external supervisor. The researcher sincerely apologise for this inconvenience.

2.   Statement of Problem and its Significance

The term 'policy' in the context of state and its relations to other states are the decisions that define goals, set precedents or lay down courses of action to implement these decisions.[1] State have domestic and foreign policies which guides and defines politics of a certain class, institutions and structures that make and implement these policies. Foreign Policy is the policy of sovereignty of a state at best, shared in this globalised world. First known use of the term is to be said in 1804 as discussed earlier.[2] According to Dr. Raghunath Mahabir, foreign policy "is composez d of goals sought, values set, decisions made and actions taken by states and national governments acting on their behalf in the context of the external relations of national societies. It constitutes an attempt to design, manage and control the foreign relations in national societies."[3]

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[1] Kalevi Js. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, Englewood Cliff: Prentice Hall, 1972, pp 10 - 35

[2] Foreign Policy, *Webster Dictionary*, Available at http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/foreign%20policy (accessed on January 05, 2010)

[3] Available at http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_Foreign_policy_definition (accessed on March 10, 2010)

1

Foreign Policy of a state is understood as its policy that guides any state's relations with other countries and actors in the international system. It has certain goals and objectives, vision and targets through which state pursues through its discreet officials. Foreign policy of a state defines its nature of relations in the global political arena. It sets vision and guidelines for the state on how to respond and react or not to act in response to moves and actions of other state and non-state actors in the global politics.

Foreign policy of a state is aimed at pursuing vital interests, goals and objectives in competition with other states in the international political system which is influenced by other variables off which ideology is one. A state foreign policy is defined and influenced by certain determinants that vary from one state to another like national interests, geostrategic objectives and geography, domestic political culture, economy and experience of a nation state, and last but not the least the ideology and mindset of a the ruling and political elite. Ideology determines plays an important role shaping internal and external policies of a state.[4]

Foreign policy of Iran refers to inter-governmental relationships between Iran and other countries. Known as Persia until 1935, Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 after the ruling monarchy was overthrown and the Shah was forced into exile by Islamic revolutionaries who succeeded in establishing a theocratic system, based on the concept of *"Vallayat - e - Faqih"* i.e. the governance of the jurist consult which means government with the ultimate political authority vested in a learned religious scholar referred to commonly as the *"Rehbar"* (Supreme Leader). Supreme leader *'rehbar'* according to the constitution, is accountable only to the Assembly of Experts. It is the core of Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) Constitution, laws and its

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[4] Robert Wuthow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment and European Socialism,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 14 - 17

domestic and foreign policy making and implementing process. This study is looking at various aspects of this new political structure of the Republic that to great extent is the result of Islamic revolution established in 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini, who leaded the revolution. The "*Vallayat e Faqih*" system of IRI is derived from the beliefs and principles of Shia sect of Islam or Shi'ism and within that from *Usuli* school of thought which emerged in reaction to Akhbari school of thought prevailing amongst Shia Muslims after the Imam Mehdi disappeared by Allah's will in 874 AD according to the Shi'i beliefs. Imam Mehdi (AS) is the last *Imam*[5] of Shia Muslims who will appear again shortly before the day of judgement.[6] *Intezar*, means 'to wait' (for the return of Imam Mehdi (AS) to the world is key part of *iman* i.e. faith in Shi'ism.[7]

After Imam Mehdi's disappearance from this world has created a vacuum in Shia Islam which the *Akhbari* school in first two centuries after Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) death was able to sustain it till mid of eighteenth century AD. Later on by end of eighteenth century *Usuli* School challenged and prominent Shia *ulemas* (religious scholars) like Baqer e Behbahani and Akhund Mullah Muhammad challenged the *Akhabri* school.[8]

The newly born Islamic Republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini dramatically reversed the pro-Western foreign policy of the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The post revolutionary Iran's foundations are based on the fundamentals of Shia version

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[5] 'Imam' is an Arabic word literary means the leader or guide. The term has been used both for a divine spiritual leader and a learned scholar of Isla amongst Muslims. Like Imam Ali (AS), Imam Hussain (AS), Imam Jaafar sadiq (AS), Imam Mehdi (AS) who are divine leaders of Shia Muslims and Imam Khomeini, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and Imam Ghazali who were religious scholars or jurist consults of the Islam.

[6] Day of Judgment is referred as "Youm e Akhirat" in the Holy Qura'an which means a special day in life after death when the whole world will be destroyed including all creatures. It is so far common belief of all Muslims in the world. On this day God will hold accountable (reward and punish) all human beings and creatures for their doings in the given lives and wrong doings, which means violation of religious teachings. Life after death and belief in Youme Akhirat exists in different other religions of the world too with variations from each others.

[7] Arjomand, Said. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, Chicago, (University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp.175 - 225

[8] Ali, Lubna Abid. *Post Revolutionary Iran Foreign Policy*, Lahore, (Research Society of Pakistan, 2008), pp. 1-20

of Islam, derived from *Usuli* school wherein there is defined a maximum role for *mujtahid* (plural *mujtahideen*) i.e. a learned scholar who has expertise in the religious knowledge and practice. Shia Muslim must remain loyal to his / her Mujatahid in seeking guidance from his teaching in social and political spheres of life. These *mujtahideen* as experts in religion are responsible for guiding the Muslims in their religious, social, economical and political affairs as per the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and *Imam*. Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of *Vallayat e Faqih* is based on this fundamental aspect of Shia Islam. Thus the supreme leader 'rehbar' should be a 'mujtahid' who has immense powers under the IRI's Constitution and the country's political power structure. Since then Iran has oscillated between the two opposing tendencies of revolutionary ardor - eliminating western non-Muslim tendencies and promoting the Islamic revolution abroad - and moves towards pragmatism for normalization of foreign relations and economic development.

All states have ideology which distinguishes their foreign policy from each other. Iran's foundations are laid on an ideology which is also popular religion of the Iranian people and has followers almost in each Muslim country and across the globe. Iran's institutions are based on ideas and understanding which derive strength and legitimacy from Shia Islam. This research thesis is focused on explaining how far Iran's foreign relations with the neighboring countries of the region as well as the whole comity of nations are guided by principles of Shia Islam, especially the *Vallayat e Faqih*, incident of *Karbala* and the institution of *Imamat*. Furthermore its implications for the region, world and Iran itself are analyzed in detail.

Vallayat e Faqih system is in fact provide legal justification for the influential clergy and their allies to contribute intervene and influence the foreign policy making and implementation processes. This new governance system is temporal replacement for '*Imamat*' till the *intezar*

(waiting) is over and Imam Mehdi, the last divine Ímam of Shias, Imam Mehdi come again into this world as 'messiah' for the oppressed and guide for whole humanity.

On the other hand Sunni Islam, which has majority followers across the globe comparatively, is inspired with institution of *Khilafat* (caliphate) instead of *Imamat*. There is one fundamental difference amongst these two sects and its political philosophies. Caliphate was established in somehow so-called democratic way by Hadrat Abu Bakar elected as first caliph of Islam by few prominent companions of the Prophet (PBUH) shortly after His death. Then the decision was endorsed by many other factions and people in general. Muslim scholars have justified Abu Bakar's appointment as the successor of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), on the basis that he was very close friend of Prophet (PBUH), rendered lots of services to the community and in last days was asked by Muhammad (PBUH) to lead the prayers at Masjid e Nabavi. Whereas Shia Muslims believe that there is no room for democracy and appointment of anybody else as successor of Muhammad (PBUH), as His real cousin Ali bin Abi Talib (AS) was nominated from God to the Prophet (PBUH). Each Messenger or Prophet of Allah has a *'haq e vallayat'*, the compulsion that each Messenger or Prophet has to nominate his successor. Muhammad (PBUH) had nominated his successor Ali bin Abi Talib (AS) on the pointing of Allah Almighty, before his death. This fact is attested by hadith books whose authors are Sunni and Shia both [9]

What in fact Shia Islam is? And what is its role in foreign policy of Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) – is core question of my research. Historically, power games in the Middle East and Gulf are based on securing states' economic and security roles. Iran's future role in the region

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[9] Interview with Pakistani Shia Scholar Agha Amin Shahidi on *"Roots of Shia – Sunni Divide"*, Islamabad, August 2010

would hence depend upon the degree of strategic relationship with Shia political allies in the region, its support for these factions' role within the states' political structure and building political camps. A serious problem and destabilization of the region is obvious to happen as the Arab world and the US-Israel alliance will automatically use power and economic squeeze to isolate Iran. This in turn can lead to the economic crisis in the world as Iran's is one of the world's largest producers and supplier of oil.

Thus the role of Islam in international relations of Islamic Republic of Iran becomes inevitable to understand Iran's vision and understanding of how to deal with the rest of the word and politics in region. It has been explored in this study that how far Shia Islam is influencing decision making process of the Iranian Government while responding and dealing with issues of international importance. In addition this study has also identified the means or sources of influence of Shia Islam in Iran's foreign policy. Factors that contribute towards strengthening or otherwise limit it are analyzed in detail.

Iran's close relationships with Shia factions in the region are aimed at building a strategic linkage for establishing security as well as creating economic–cultural opportunities. Like in Iraq, one aspect of establishing this strategic linkage is the installation of a new generation of friendly elites at the level of states, who have no backgrounds or feeling of enmity toward Iran. Another is the creation of Iran-Iraq's coalition to cooperate for shaping new political-security arrangements in the Persian Gulf with inclusion of all littoral states. Similarly, advancing relations at the level of states for the first time can provide the grounds for developing Iran-Iraq's mutual economic activities in the region. In the long run the Sunni conservative regimes will try to sustain their influence in the region by suppressing internal uprisings and by inviting more Western intervention. This will lead to more anarchy and chaos in the region and deterioration of

the peace process in Gulf and Middle East. Shia community's quest for power in the region and the whole of Muslim world has a very long history that dates back to the times of Prophet and the first four Caliphs of the Muslim history. It is therefore crucial to analyze and understand the roots and influence of Shia ideology in shaping and determining Iran's foreign policy objectives and targets.

This study is an effort to explore how far ideology i.e. Shia Islam is playing role in shaping and guiding Iran's foreign policy goals, objectives and practice. This research will be useful for further academic research on role of religion (ideology) in foreign policy of a state. This study will be of great use in designing and developing research interventions to find out role of Islam in shaping and guiding foreign policy of Pakistan as like Iran Pakistan's foreign policy objectives are based on another version of Islam – the Sunni Islam, its implications for Pakistan, region and the world.

3.   Objectives of the study

To:

- Explore and investigate origins and role of Shia Islam, its theoretical and ideological perspectives in relation to IRI's foreign policy
- Investigate and the internal political power structure of IRI and its influence over foreign policy making and implementing process
- Review and analyse the concept of Vallayat e Faqih, its influence in IRI's foreign policy

4. Hypothesis

Inter-sect historical conflict within the Muslim world remained a salient feature of the recorded history. Islam and other revealed religions were born in this very region (Middle East and Arabia) of the world and continued to grow here. The power game for representing the larger Muslim masses across the globe always paved ways for external powers' intervention in the region.

Known as Persia until 1935, Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 after the ruling monarchy was overthrown and the 'Shah's was forced into exile. Factions of religious scholars (*Ulema and Mujtahideen*) established a theocratic system of government with ultimate political authority vested in a learned religious scholar, 'rehabar' - the Supreme Leader. Supreme leader has immense political powers according to the constitution and has huge influence in decision making process and Iran's relations with other states of the world.

5. Concepts and terms used in Hypothesis

Following concepts have been used in the hypothesis.

Foreign Policy – is the policy of a sovereignty at best is shared in this globalised world. First known use of the term is to be said in 1804 as discussed earlier.[10] According to Dr. Raghunath Mahabir, foreign policy "is composed of goals sought, values set, decisions made and actions taken by states and national governments acting on their behalf in the context of the external

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[10] What is Foreign Policy, *Webster Dictionary*, Available at
http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/foreign%20policy (accessed on March 10, 2010)

relations of national societies. It constitutes an attempt to design, manage and control the foreign relations in national societies."[11]

A country's foreign policy consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its goals within the systemic environment. The approaches are strategically employed to interact with other countries. In recent times, due to the deepening level of globalization and transnational activities, the states also have to interact with non-state actors. The aforementioned interaction is evaluated and monitored in attempts to maximize benefits of multilateral international cooperation. National interests' accomplishment can occur as a result of peaceful cooperation with other nations, or through exploitation. Its determinants include geography, ideology, foreign policy making process, external and internal political environment, public opinion, mindset of the ruling elite and history and experience of a nation state.

Islam - refers to Shia Islam i.e. Fiqah-e-Jaffria – Shia and Sunni are two dominant sects of Islam, with the second one having more number of followers throughout the world. There are differences in belief system of the two sects constituted upon the four companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Sunni Islam is not in conflict with the idea of combining of politics and religion. Muhammad Abdullah of Syria, Maulana Abul Ala al Maududi and Dr. Muhammad Iqbal gave the same ideology, only Khomeini substantiated the contours of Hukumat-e-Islami.

Revolution - refers to Shia Islamic Revolution, led by Imam Khomeini to oust Raza Shah Pehlvi, the last king of Iran.

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[11] *"What is Foreign Policy"*, Available at (http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_Foreign_policy_definition) on March 10, 2010

Influence - There are several definitions of influence given in literature but some of the most satisfying are as follows. According to encyclopedia of cultural anthropology influence refers to

- The power or capacity to produce a desired result
- The power to produce an effect by indirect means
- The strong effect exerted by one person or thing on another

Rehbar - Supreme religious and political figure in Iran is known as 'rehbar' who has tremendous powers and influence in decision making process of Iranian Government. Rehbar has great reverence and respect among the followers of Shia Islam to the extent that some people believe that any Shia disobeying decree of 'rehbar' is considered to be 'munkir' of Islam, means s/he remain no more Shia if defy what 'rehbar' say. Ultimate political authority is vested in him according to the constitution. Rehbar is accountable only to the Assembly of Experts.

6.   Key Questions

Following key questions would be tried to deal with during this study.

- What is an ideology, identity and culture? and why it is important to understand cultural meanings of a state's relations with other states in the world?
- Emergence of Shia Islam and its expanding influence in the Middle East particularly in Iran?
- Concept of "Wallayat e Faqih" and its political aspects
- What are the determinants of Iran's foreign policy?
- What is role of Shia ideology in Iran's foreign policy?

- What are implications of the Shia ideology's influence domestically and Iran's foreign policy for the region?

- What is difference between Shia and Sunni Islam and its political history and aspects?

7.   Literature Review

Research is made in order to inform people with new knowledge or discovery. However, it is not to be expected that everybody would willingly believe what I am tackling in my whole research work. It makes research credible, either supporting or disagreeing with the problem stated. This is where literature review comes in.

The wide body of literature examining Iranian foreign policy from 1979 to 2009 refers to a variety of theories of international relations to explain the reasons for Iranian state action. The fact that most of this literature is internally consistent should not come as a surprise. Social science, like the physical sciences, allows for a variety of internally consistent systematic explanations that lead to the same conclusion.[12] Unlike the physical sciences, however, there are rarely experiments that one can conduct in order to falsify the development of international relations theory.

The Shia Revival by Vali Nasar[13] effectively demonstrates the political and historical counterpoints to modern Iraq, asking Westerners to reconsider their assumptions about the Shia and recognize the delicate balance that must be maintained with the Sunnis. Throughout the Middle East, the presence of Sunni extremists retaliating against the Shia revival will pose the gravest danger to the United States.

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[12] Chris, Grubb. *Explaining Iran's Foreign Policy: 1979–2000*, (California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2009)
[13] Nasr, Vali. *Shi'Revival in Iraq, Washington Quarterly.* (2004): 7-24.

Realist explanations of Iranian foreign policy do not entirely discount the importance of internal politics, however. Trita Parsi's account of U.S., Israeli, and Iranian relations from 1979 through the first half of the present decade locates the foreign policies of each state within both inter and intra-state context. Oliver Roy claims unambiguously that, "There is no fundamental disagreement within the Iranian political establishment over Iran's ambition to be a major power, its need to have a nuclear capability, or over its ambition to weaken the Arab front. The argument is over the means."[14] The internal argument from this point of view is hardly irrelevant, while the overall direction of Iranian foreign policy is accounted for in a realist framework.

Analysis of internal ideological or factional explanations reveals a lack of light between ideological, factional, and hard-nosed realpolitik explanations for state actions. A number of authors refer to religious ideology as a mask of some sort for practical political motivations. Despite the attempts of Iran's clergy to claim the primacy of Islam over politics, it is clear that politics trumps religion in Iran's foreign policy. Ray Takeyh notes as much with respect to Iran's pursuit of "un-Islamic" nuclear weapons, though ultimately Takeyh claims that Iran's foreign policy is driven more by ideology than "rational calculation."[15] Oliver Roy's contention that there is little disagreement over the content of Iranian foreign policy (see above quotation) among the various regime factions reinforces similar views expressed by Parsi. Despite his claims tying expansionism to the rise of Ahmadinedjad; Arjomand states that Iran's international politics have been remarkably consistent. Similar to Roy's position, he contends that Iranian foreign policy has not changed so much as the means by which it is executed.

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[14] Roy, Oliver. *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East, trans. Ros Schwartz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
[15] Ray, Takeyh. *Guardians of the Revolution,* New York, (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Factional and ideological explanations for Iran's support to Hamas and Hezbollah abound. In his study of Hezbollah, Richard Norton attributes ideological revolutionary motivation to Iran's support of Hezbollah, while ascribing purely rational motivations of national self interest to Syria's support of the same.[16] Takeyh makes a similar claim, moderated by recognition of the fact that Syria and Iran both stood to gain from mutual alliance and support of Hezbollah.[17]

Kenneth Pollack maintains that Iran's support for terrorism in the 1980s served both ideological and practical foreign policy objectives.[18] His claim is predicated on the assumption that Khomeini was the driver of Iran's foreign policy, and had sufficient influence to, at times, trump genuine national interest in favor of ideological pursuits. If this is the case, one would expect to see much less ideologically driven foreign policy in the post-Khomeini era. In the absence of a carefully considered analysis of Iran's foreign policy goals, however, factionalism filled the explanatory void left by Khomeini's death.

Factionalist explanations for Iran's foreign policy caters to proponents of democratic peace and neoconservatives. Mehdi Moslem contrasts the rhetoric of Khatami and Khamenehi to illustrate the spectrum of ideological conflict being waged within Iran, and argues that Iran's seemingly inconsistent policies are the result of ongoing internal power struggles.[19] Similarly, Ehteshami and Zweiri explain Iran's putative shift to a more strident foreign policy, actively fighting the U.S. and Israel by proxy with Hezbollah and Hamas, in terms of the rise of Iran's

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[16] Augustus, Richard Norton. *Hezbollah*, Princeton, NJ, (Princeton University Press, 2007): pp. 34–35.
[17] Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution,* New York, (Oxford University Press, 2009): pp. 71 - 89
[18] Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, New York, (Random House, 2004): p.p. 198 - 210
[19] Mehdi, Moslem. *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, Syracuse, NY: (Syracuse University Press, 2002): pp. 1–2.

neoconservatives.[20] Ultimately, the policy prescriptions of advocates of ideological and factional explanations for Iran's foreign policy lead to meddling in Iran's internal affairs.

Factional, ideological, and realist explanations for Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons technology seek to explain the same behavior, but their corresponding policy prescriptions are very different. Within both factional and ideological explanations for Iran's pursuit of a nuclear capability, there is an assumption that regime change would affect Iranian policy. This notion is particularly appealing to neoconservatives and liberals sold on Kantian peace. While the realities of the Iraq war may have muted calls for regime change in Iran, recent successes in both Iraq and Afghanistan and disclosures of Iran's continued progress towards developing a weapons capability have reinvigorated neo-conservative and liberal advocates of regime change.

After comprehensive review of the available literature, I realized that many studies have explained the consequences of role of Shia Islam in shaping and guiding Iran's foreign policy but failed to sort out the sources and traces of this influence and the factors which helped Iran's ruling elite after 'Islami Inqilab' in legitimizing their actions in the region and world.

8.   Organization of Study

"Introduction" discusses the objectives and scope of the study besides a brief analysis of the literature review regarding Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) foreign policy. It also discusses the theoretical framework and research methodology of the study.

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[20] Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of Its Neoconservatives*, New York, (I.B. Tauris, 2007).

Chapter 2 discusses Shia Islam's ideological and theoretical perspectives, its evolution and events of Islamic history that helped in birth and gradual evolution of Shia Islam as a separate sect and school of thought in Islam.

Chapter 3 of the study describes in details the IRI's perception of the international system and evolution and influence of its current political structure over domestic and foreign policy issues. Vallayat e Faqih and its role in IRIs politics and foreign policy is major sub theme of this chapter.

Chapter 4 mainly deals with the questions of how foreign policy is made in Islamic Republic of Iran and what are the distinct phases of foreign policy behavior and dominant trends. It present an analytical summary of foreign policy during Imam Khomeini'sregime, President Hashmi Rafsanjani, Khatami and Mahmood Ahmadenijad.

Chapter 5 is comprised of conclusion and recommendations whereas Chapter 6 of glossary and bibliography.

9. Theoretical Framework

There are certain theories of International Relations which were found applicable in exploring and analyzing the role of ideology in shaping foreign policy of a state. Under Realism and its neo-realist variant is a positivist understanding of IR. According to realism there are concrete nations, national interests, national power etc. According to realism states are rational power (or security) maximizing unitary actors within an anarchic international system motivated by national survival.

Liberal advocates of democratic peace theory, as well as theorists subscribing to ideological and factional explanations for Iranian foreign policy, claim Iran's internal states of affairs are the causal mechanisms by which Iranian foreign policy is constructed.[21] Said Arjomand ascribes Tehran's expansionist policies to the rise of Ahmadinedjad and the Pasdaran.[22] Explicitly advocating the view that Iran's current foreign policy is tied to the internal regime politics, he claims that the split of the revolutionary political elite into hardliners and pragmatists, and the subsequent rise of the hardliners to power, drives both Iran's nuclear ambitions and increased regional mischief. Several studies of Iranian factionalism cite these as reasons for understanding the internal workings of Iran's foreign policy decision-making process.

From a realist perspective, the development of closer regional ties insulates Iran against threats from potential hostile regional coalitions. Further, security is advanced through the pursuit of popular programs that defy the international community, such as the nuclear program, support for Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as intra-regional economic and political engagement. Iran's state actions are firmly bound by selfish national interest in achieving security through regional hegemony, and are rational in accordance with a strict realist perspective, rendering appeals to the unique nature of Iran's internal politics to explain state behavior in seeking survival and advantage in relation to other states in the region and beyond.

However, when Iran's foreign policy behaviour's record is kept from 1979 to present day, (especially the Khoemeini period and the Ahmedinejad period) it is observed that some tenants of realism fail to explain Iran's moves in geopolitical chess board.

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[21] Kenneth M. Pollack, Daniel L. Byman, Martin Indyk, Suzanne Maloney, Michael E. O'Hanlon and Bruce Riedel, *Which Path to Persia*, Washington D.C. (Brookings, 2009). pp. 31 – 46.
[22] Said, Arjomand. *After Khomeini: Iran Under His Successors*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009).

How "national interest" is defined? Who defines national interest for what purposes? How can a state be "rational" in calculating and weighing its national interests? It should be noted that state is an abstraction. The states' elite (states' polity) is the real definers of national interest and the determinant of foreign policy. In this regard, it is observed that the Iran's ruling elite is radically overthrown by the 1979 'Islami Inqilab' in Iran. Then it follows naturally that the new regime's ideology should be analyzed to understand Iran's foreign policy.

According to realism, states are 'unitary' actors. However, when it is looked at inside the Iranian state it is observed that there are many pluralities, many contradicting foci of power, interests and bureaucracies. For instance, there is the Revolutionary Guards which leads the national nuclear programme, supports non-state actors (the Iranians call them "resistance organizations") like HAMAS and Hezbollah, there is the theocracy of Khamenei and many layers of Shiite clergy, there is the Bazaarists businessmen, the oil sector's interests etc...

I argue that constructivism and political/historical sociology is better suited in understanding Iran's foreign policy than realism, since Iran's foreign policy can not be comprehended by not referring to Iranian/ Shiite/Muslim/Islamist/Third World identities and how that identity than comes to shape Iranian "national interests" and Iranian national ambitions towards the Middle East and world at large.

Structuralism is of much use in this analysis. Since Iran is a major hydro-carbon producer and hydro-carbons are the driving engine of world-economy. However, as a typical underdeveloped/ third world country it is observed in historical glance that Iran could not control its natural resources. The Mossadiq's government's bold attempts in 1950's at nationalizing the Anglo-Persian oil company's assets are one of the major themes in Iran's anti-imperialist political

leanings. Today, Iran has full control over her natural resources however due to the Western embargoes it can not refine its oil even though it is an oil producer. This is one of the contradictions of Iran's power and weaknesses. Also, lately, Iran engaged in playing the Euro card against the American dollar, by shifting its assets and shifting to Euros in its sales of hydro-carbons. She announced her wish to set-up an oil bourse which would operate in Euros instead of dollars. This is typical of Iranian leadership of waging economic warfare against the US dollars, hence the USA.

Since realism and neo-realism are historically blind theories, political/historical sociology must be employed to comprehend the profound changes that have taken place throughout the revolutionary years and beyond.

Since Islamic Revolution (1979) though principles underlined in Constitution of Iran have been followed by Islamic Republic of Iran; but elected presidents have interpreted the principles variously. So, different approaches of foreign policy with different outcomes have been followed by presidents that had been chosen in presidential lections leading to changes in foreign policy of Iran since Islamic Revolution.

10.   Research Methodology

Methodology may entail a description of generic process or, metaphorically, may be extended to explications of philosophically coherent concepts or theories as they relate to a particular discipline or field of inquiry. It gives systematic and detailed description of procedure or process to be followed in conducting research. Methodology is an important aspect of any research. It is a source of getting valid and reliable data. Methodology shapes which methods or techniques should be used in the research. Each researcher depending upon the nature of the

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study and circumstances in the field, use different methods, tools and techniques in order to gather reliable and valid information to support his/her hypothesis.

Following headlines give account of steps undertaken in conducting this research work.

10.1. Problem Identification & Selection of Topic

Selection of topic is first necessary step before undertaking any research work. It gives one a clear idea what s/he want to conduct research about a puzzle which we call as problem. During last phase of my course work, I decided to select my topic for M.Phil research which was "Role of Shia Islam in Iranian Foreign Policy". Selection of topic was based on personal interest and background knowledge about the problem.

10.2. Reviewing existing and available literature

After selection of topic and problem identification, available literature from internet, Central Library QAU, seminar library IR department QAU and Maktab-e-Ahle Bait Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, Islamabad was collected and reviewed. I felt during a reviewing this literature that very little has been done by researchers on identifying origins of religion, identity and ideology's role in influencing and guiding state's foreign relations.

10.3. Conducting and Documentation of Research

After submission of research proposal and allotment of supervisor, I started to collect data and information from various sources and places. This phase is still in progress. Review of literature for developing proposal helped here in moving forward and locating places and sources from where information and data was expected. This was not only limited to secondary sources but also primary ones including interviews of experts on the topic. Archives of Iranian embassy

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and consulates in Pakistan and related research centers and institutes will be targeted for getting data and information. A draft thesis document will be produced at the end. It is composed of chapters explaining each and every aspect of the undertaken research study.

10.4. Research Findings

Upon successful development of draft thesis, it will be submitted to Supervisor for final approval. Viva-voce at the end of research work is conducted by external expert on the topic so as to evaluate the quality of work produced and actual contribution of the student into knowledge about the problem (as stated in research proposal). After passing through viva-voce and thesis approval by Supervisor, degree in Masters of Philosophy (International Relations) will be awarded.

10.5. Ensuring Objectivity

There is a simple rule which is easily understandable to a lay man too besides discussing IRI's foreign policy and that is that we as human beings receive and make impressions. Researcher should try to remain neutral and cast away its biases while wishing to search for facts. However, human beings could never be absolutely objective in analyzing and interpreting social issues and phenomena, especially when it comes to politics.

I personally believe in each sect of Islam as rational and politically correct as all have some basis for justification and legitimizing its principles. However, as part of my own socialization, education, exposure and experience and study I do consider and believe in Jaafri school of Islam i.e. Shia Islam as more rational and less violent than the dominant Sunni Islam.

Born in a traditional Wahabi cum Deobandi family of Waziristan may have deep imprints on my personality, thinking and the way I look at things around and interpret it. However, over the last six years of my years, I perceive myself as now greatly out of the affect of Sunni Islam and its social and political ideals. This partially happened as because of love for literature, its study and also because of my involvement in politics, believing much in ideals of social democracy and non-violence philosophies of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Mahatama Gandhi Ji than Islam. This could be a strength as well as limitation. However, I tried my best to remain neutral and to explore what was needed as per the research requirements, ethic and principles.

CHAPTER ONE

IDEOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

OF

SHIA ISLAM

1.　　Advent of Islam: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Establishment of First Islamic state "Medina"

"Read! In the Name of your Lord Who Created. He created man out of a leech- like clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Benevolent -- He Who taught by the pen, taught man that which he knew not." [Al-'Alaq: 1-5]

These were the first five verses of the Quran revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through Angel Jibreel, starting Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) prophethood.

It is common belief of all Muslims that Holy Qur'an is the last amongst revealed testaments of Allah Almighty and that Muhammad (PBUH) is the last Messenger. Interpretation and reflection of what Allah has narrated in Holy Qura'n was brought before the mankind through the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who actually is the prime addressee of this holy book of Muslims. That is the reason that Qura'n Karim is called "Kitab Ullah" i.e. book of God and Prophet Muhammad as "Kitab Ul Natiq".[23] To have faith in what the Prophet has said is equal to following what Allah Almighty had said to the mankind. It is because Prophet never taught anything to his followers from himself, rather what he said were words of Allah Almighty. Holy Qura'n is a divine book and could only be understood through a learned soul which is nominated by Allah.

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[23] Sibtain, Muhammad Syed, *Mushaf e Natiq almaroof be Hasbuna Kitab allah*, Ludhiana, (1940), pp. 33 – 35.

When Prophet himself was alive, he was the sole authority to interpret what is said in Qura'n before the people. After his death, there should be someone who could interpret the Holy Qura'n before the creatures of God. This aspect of Holy Qura'n is must be kept in mind as this forms to somehow the foundations of differences amongst the followers of Prophet Muhammad later, after his death.

For the first three years of his Prophethood, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), preached secretly within his family and relatives. Then Allah commanded him to preach Islam publicly. The majority of the Makkans (who were pagan idolaters) became very angry and started persecuting the Muslims. Only a few became Muslims in Islam's early days, but those Muslims were very strong in their belief, so the number of Muslims continued to grow. When persecution became unbearable, some Muslims migrated to Abysinnia (now Ethiopia), where a Christian king, named Najashi provided protection for the Muslims and later himself embraced Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued to preach Islam against his opponents who were in majority and very firm in their religious believes that they inherited from their forefathers. Prophet Muhammad in initial thirteen years, after he declared himself as "Messenger of Alllah" tried hard to convince his tribe Quraysh. Prophet Muhammad's uncle Abu Talib (AS), his younger son Ali (AS) and few other companions of Prophet supported and favored him, however majority of Makkah's (Prophet Muhammad's birth place) population continued to resist this new religion. He only succeeded in convincing few of the Arabs to embrace Islam as their new religion. During this time, Muhammad (PBUH) faced radical opposition from Quraysh and their allies in and around Makkah. He was stoned and cursed by many clans of Makkah and their

chieftains. Eventually Muhammad (PBUH) was forced to leave Makkah, his birth place when he came to know that influential chieftains of Quraysh are planning to kill him.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) migrated from Makkah to Yathrib (now Madina) in 622 AD[24] where he established the first Islamic state. For ten years Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not only the leader of the emerging Muslim Ummah in Arabia but also the political head of Medina. As the leader of Medina, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exercised jurisdiction over Muslims as well as non-Muslims within the city. The legitimacy of his rule over Medina was based on his status as the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam as well as on the basis of the 'Pact of Medina'. Muslim scholars refer to it as the Dastur al-Medina (The Constitution of Medina).

Dastur al-Medina was a tri-partite pact that was signed by the Muhajirun (Muslim immigrants from Makkah), the Ansar (indigenous Muslims of Medina and the Yahud (Jews). It is interesting to note that Jews were equal partners in the making of the first Islamic state and its constitution.

compact of Medina provides an excellent historical example of two theoretical constructs that have shaped contemporary political theory and should therefore be of great value to those scholars who are involved in the theorizing of the Islamic state. The Medina pact serves the dual function of a social contract and a constitution. Clearly the compact of Medina by itself cannot serve as a modern constitution. It would be quite inadequate since it is a historically specific document and quite limited in its scope. However it can serve as a guiding principle to be emulated rather than a manual to be duplicated. This first Islamic state established in Medina was

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[24] Jafri, Husain Mohammad, *The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam*, Pakistan, (Oxford University Press, 1976). Pp. 58 - 80

based on a social contract, was constitutional in character and the ruler ruled with the explicit written consent of all the citizens of the state.

The Constitution of Medina establishes the importance of consent and cooperation for governance. According to this compact Muslims and non-Muslims are equal citizens of the Islamic state, with identical rights and duties. Communities with different religious orientations enjoy religious autonomy which essentially is wider in scope than the modern idea of religious freedom. The constitution of Medina established a pluralistic state -- a community of communities. It promised equal security to all and all were equal in the eyes of the law. The principles of equality, consensual governance and pluralism are beautifully enmeshed in the compact of Medina.

Muslim historians and jurists have been familiar with this important document for centuries, and aware of its legal and theological implications for Islamic law. It was first brought to the attention of scholars in the West at the end of the nineteenth century by Wellhausen, who accepted it as an authentic document from the time of the Prophet. Since then, such leading orientalists as Goldziher, Gil, Serjeant, Goto, U. Rubin and J. B. Simonsen have studied various aspects of it.[25]

2.   Political Islam and State

Over the last few decades, Islam has become a central point of reference for a wide range of political activities, arguments and opposition movements. The term "political Islam" has been adopted by many scholars in order to identify this seemingly unprecedented irruption of Islamic religion into the secular domain of politics.

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[25] Khan, M. A. Muqtedar. *The Compact of Medina: A Constitutional Theory of the Islamic State: Mirror international.* May 30, 2001.

The claim that contemporary Muslim activities are putting Islam to use for political purposes seems to some extent true. Political parties and non state actors like Hizb Ul Tahrir, Al Qaeda and Taliban across the Muslim world who base their appeal on their Islamic credentials appear to exemplify this instrumental relation to religion. Yet a problem remains, even in such seemingly obvious examples: In what way does the distinction between the political and nonpolitical domains of social life hold today? Many scholars have argued that "political Islam" involves an illegitimate extension of the Islamic tradition outside of the properly religious domain it has historically occupied. Few, however, have explored this trend in relations to the expansion of state power and concern into vast domains of social life previously outside its purview -- including that of religion.

Islamic activism historically had involved trying to capture the state and control its machinery i.e. institutions. This is because state ruling classes as human beings are impressed by public opinion and domestic political demands of certain groups that represent religion. Then state has a certain mindset which is reflected in its political culture, laws, relations with other countries in the world. Feminists and contemporary Anthropologists argue that the state is also a gendered entity and its certain institutions are patriarchal in nature. That is one reason behind the gender based violence and its use in political affairs of the state. [26] They also argue that state certain institutions are gendered and very masculine in nature that provokes violence which also turns into violent conflict within and amongst the states. Feminists also argue that religion like gender has been widely practiced as a tool by nation states to justify internal human rights violations by state bodies or Government's inability to act otherwise as because of laws which are gender blind. Consequently conflicts and wars with other countries are mostly justified on the

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[26] Simeon, Dilip and Rahul Roy. *Conflict, Violence & Masculinities, Module II*, Nepal, (South Asian Network to Address Masculinities – SANAM, 2011).

basis patriotism or religion and combatant forces are exposed to propaganda campaigns that use music, war songs and literature to prepare people and those fighting on the front for war and to bear with its costs afterwards. The themes of such kind if war literature, songs and media programs if anlaysed, use a gendered language.[27] Combat forces during war use rape and killing civilians especially women and children as a tool of war. United Nations Security Council Resolutions does recognize this fact which is endorsed by many states of the world including Paksitan. [28]

Like state, religion's origins are also based in patriarchal values that are reinforced through human civilizations in the history. This holds true as in most of world countries, so far I know state is often identified as 'motherland' in school curriculum and media contents of which are approved by public institutions. Adolf Hitler perhaps being more violent and masculine tried to change this notion by adopting 'father land' for Germany. The vast majority of these movements involve preaching and other da'wa (missionary) activities, alms giving, providing medical care, mosque building, publishing and generally promoting what is considered in the society to be public virtue through community action. Nonetheless, these activities engage the domain we call the political both in the sense that they are subject to restrictions imposed by the state (such as licensing), and in so much as they must often compete with state or state-supported institutions (pedagogic, confessional, medical). The success of even a conservative project to preserve a traditional form of personal piety will depend on its ability to engage with the legal, bureaucratic, disciplinary and technological resources of modern power that shape contemporary societies.

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[27] Saigol, Rubina, "*Women Bodies in Arenas of Conflict*". *Module II*, Nepal: (South Asian Network to Address Masculinities – SANAM, 2011)
[28] UNSCR 1325 and 1820

While some would date the birth of political Islam to the life of the prophet, political and religious disagreements that have arisen since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 have their roots in the evolution of the contemporary Iranian state. In 1925, a young military officer, Reza Khan, led a coup that deposed the 131-year-old Qajar dynasty and founded the Pahlavi dynasty. After being named Shah, Reza Khan pursued relations with Germany, angering Britain and Russia, and prompting those powers to invade. British and Soviet troops left in 1946, but foreign influence only intensified with the advent of the Cold War. Nationalists, led by Mohammad Mossadeq, rose to power in 1951. But the CIA and British intelligence colluded to topple him two years later, restoring the exiled Pahlavi dynasty to power in the form of Reza Khan's son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.

The Shah repressed Iran's Islamists, however, and his restoration fostered anger among the general population. By 1979, this discontent boiled over into outright revolution, forcing the shah to flee. On February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini returned to Iran from exile in France—though most of his fourteen year absence was spent in the Shia holy city of Najaf, Iraq. He then proceeded to muscle aside the Communists and secular parties that had worked with the Islamists to overthrow the Shah, and assumed the levers of power, ending Iran's monarchy.[29]

It is important to recognize that Ayatollah Khomeini received the title of "Imam" (the one who lead the community of Momineen i.e. Muslims) as he used the religion – Shia Islam and its

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[29] Author: Greg Bruno. June 19, 2008 Available at http://www.cfr.org/iran/religion-politics-iran/p16599 (accessed on 15 Nov 2011)

various institutions like 'Azadari" which played main role in propagation of revolutionary ideas in Iran.[30]

Every state has its ideology that guides its internal and foreign policy behavior.[31] Iran founded by Imam Khomeini was founded on the basis of Shia Islam that is still manifested in its foreign policy declarations. Thus the revolution which Imam Khomeini brought was 'Islamic', very different from that of French Revolution. However, it is important to note here that the Iranian Islamic Revolution of Imam Khomeini was based on tenets of Shia Islam that is different from other version of Islam like Deobandism, Wahabism etc.

Thus state affairs are not separated from people's affair in Islam. As mentioned earlier that the Medina Constitution was a political pact signed among Mohajireen, Ansar and Jews, the author of which was Prophet Muhammad himself. In Islam, state and religion are not separate from each other rather interlinked in many ways. However, it is important to note that governing state and its affairs by the ruler and concerned institutions have been a source of rivalries and huge contradictions amongst the different schools of thoughts (sects) in Islam. Followers of various fiq'h (schools of thought) especially Shia and Sunni present a totally different view and devise systems which are based on two separate institutions i.e. Imamat and Khilafat respectively. They had never agreed on a single form of government and the Governor, wherein lies a huge space for research and exploration.

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[30] Lubna Abid Ali. *Post Revolutionary Iran Foreign Policy*, Lahore, (Research Society of Pakistan: University of Punjab, 2008).
[31] Ibid.

3.   Khilafat

Before we jump into discussion on what does Khilafat means and how this institution evolved throughout the recorded history of Islam, it will be useful to consider some verses from the Holy Qura'n and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), discuss briefly its relevance to concept of Khilafat and leadership amongst the Muslims.

Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that "He will, surely, make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will, surely, establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that after their state of fear He will grant them peace and security. They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then who disbelieve thereafter, they will be the rebellious ones. (24:56)"

The Holy Qura'n declares that the authority pertaining to a government is given to Hadrat Muhammad (PBUH). Those who follow him will prosper and those who deviate from it will be unsuccessful. For those who believe in Allah and his prophet should not question the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his actions and decrees. Prophet says nothing from him, but delivers what is delivered to him from Allah.

"We have believed. Say, you have not yet believed; but say instead, 'we have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allah is forgiving and merciful." (Suara Al Hujrat 49:14. Al Qura'n)

At another occasion, in Holy Qur'an, Allah says "And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from that." (Al-Hashr, 59:8)

Consequently, Allah, the Almighty says "But no, by thy Lord, they are not believers until they make you judge in all that is in dispute between them and then find not in their hearts any demur concerning that which thou decide and submit with full submission." (Al-Nisa', 4:66)

Yet at another place "When God and His messenger call the believers and say, come, we will decide your disputes, their response is that we hear and we obey. We have heard the command of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and we shall always obey him." (Al-Nur, 24:52)

The fact that Allah, the Almighty has, on one hand, linked submission to the decisions of the Holy Prophet PBUH) with faith, and on the other hand, called those people triumphant who say, "we hear and we obey", and do not go against his decisions, shows that the approval of God is in all these matters. If one does not obey these commands, then the punishment of God befalls him and renders him unsuccessful as per the words of the holy book of all Muslims i.e. Qura'n.

However, this does not apply to worldly matters where only natural consequences come forth. Another verse of Holy Qura'n support this argument as it translates "Those who follow him who is the Prophet of God, His Messenger, and the Immaculate one, about whom there are prophecies in the Torah and Gospel, know that he always enjoins on them good and forbids them from evil. It is as if he enforces a law on the people and guides them in what they should do and what they should not. He enjoins goodness and forbids them from evil. He gives appropriate instructions for human behaviour, speech and eating habits. He tells them what to do and what not to do; what to say and what not to say. Similarly, he removes the burdens from them which had become unbearable for them, and releases them from their shackles that have blocked their path to progress. (Al-A'raf, 7:158)

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"The punishment for those who fight against Allah and His Messenger, and strive to create disorder in the land, is only this that they be slain or crucified, or their hands and feet be cut off on alternate sides, or they be exiled." (Al-Ma'idah, 5:34)

Similarly the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also suggest something regarding who are in position to lead his followers, the Muslim Ummah after Him (Muhammad PBUH): For instance, the Holy Prophet said that "when three people go on a journey, they should appoint one among themselves as their leader" [32] so that he can lead 'salat' (prayers) and direct consultations to address the problems arise during a journey.

"Prophethood shall remain among you as long as God wills. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of prophethood for as long as He wills and then bring about its end. Kingship shall then follow to remain as long as God wills and then come to an end. There shall then be tyranny which shall remain as long as God wills and come to an end upon His decree." (Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal).

This question acquires greater importance when we find that the organizations of state and religion were combined in the early period of Islam. Along with a religious organization in effect, there was also a standing army and justices as well. They administered penal laws, collected ransom, distributed stipends, and appointed people to offices. Similarly, they had institutionalized Salat, Fasting, Hajj, and payment of Zakat.

Were the measures taken by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) for the development of an organization religious or not? If we were to declare that Islam does not present any specific type of organization, and that the Khilafat of Hadrat Abu Bakr, Hadrat Umar, Hadrat Usman and

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[32] Sunan Abu Dawud, Kitab-ul-Jihad, Babo Filqaumi Yusafiruna Yu'mmiruna ahada hum, Hadith No. 2610, by Abu Dawud Suleman bin AlAsh'ath As-Sajistani, publisher Darul Kitab Al-Arabi, Beirut.

Hadrat Ali (AS) were interim arrangements of the Muslims, and that whatever they did for the stability of the organization of the state was only done following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet, as per the belief of majority Muslim sects then the question would naturally arise: Were the steps taken by the Holy Prophet for the establishment of a state and organization only provisional measures, or did they bear the support of religious authority?

The sensitive issue, of what happened after the death of a Prophet, is stated in subtle words in texts of Ahle Sunnat, the majority sect in Islam. The common Muslim junta around the globe did not pay much attention to this issue. The Ahadith in Sunni texts show that the Sahaba (companions of Prophet) inquired from him about many problems and received information by putting questions, but the issue of succession was one which the Sahaba could not ask about nor could they think of it, for they thought that he would outlive them. Thus, this issue, to some extent, remained veiled, and the death of the Prophet confronted the nascent community of Muslims with a political crisis that found basis for continued rift and tussle amongst the followers of Ali (AS) and those of Hazrat Umar, Hadrat Abu Bakr, Hadrat Usman, Amir Moawia and Yazid Bin Moawia later on. This may sound valid to the believers of Sunni Islam and the world at large; however, as a researcher one can't ignore the incidents which followed Prophets' death. These are:

- Khum e Ghadeer and Prophet's declaration of Ali (AS) as 'Maula' of all believers
- Hadith e Saqlain and Hadith e Qartas
- Incident of Bagh e Fidak
- Jamal and Siffin wars between Imam Ali (AS) and Hadrat Ayesha
- Killing of Hadrat Usman (third caliph)
- Killing of Imam Hassan (AS)

- Killing of Imam Hussain (AS) – Incident of Karballa

These incidents hold extreme significance while exploring the birth and evolution of Shia Islam which is the official religion of Islamic Republic of Iran.

3.1. Abu Bakr elected as first Caliph (Khalifah) of Islam

The first kahlifa (caliph) of Islam was Hadrat Abu Bakar who belonged to the Quraysh tribe. Most of practicing Muslims are aware of the piety and status (manaqib) of Hadrat Abu Bakar amongst the Sahaba, however, a fundamental question that comes to mind is Whether Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself appointed Abu Bakar as successor to Him? Most of Sunni scholars argue that during last days of Prophet Muhamamd (PBUH) asked him to lead the prayers in Masjid e Nabavi, when Prophet Himself was unable to do so because of his sickness. Thus Prophet (PBUH) Himself pointed towards the fact that Abu Bakar should lead the community after his death.

Will The example set, group after group advanced to strike their hand on that of Abu Bekr, till none was left but Sa'd who still lay covered in the corner. Acknowledged thus by the men of Medina, there could be no doubt of Abu Bekr's acceptance by the Meccan "Refugees." He was not only one of themselves, but the Prophet when laid aside, by appointing Abu Bekr to take his place at the daily prayers, had in a manner already indicated him as his Vicegerent. And so homage was done on all sides to Abu Bekr. He was elected as Caliph or Successor of the Prophet (PBUH). He was succeeded by Hadrat Umar as second caliph, Hadrat Usman as third and Imam Ali (AS) as the fourth pious caliph of Islam. These four are known as "Khulfa e Rashidain', the four pious caliphs of Islam. Sunni Muslims around the globe consider their each action equal to that of 'sunnah' i.e. what the Prophet did and said. This notion of faith in the first

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four caliphs of Islam implies that any Muslim rejecting what these four caliphs did or said is equal to rejection of the very religion Islam.

However, history of Shia Islam and its present teachings and tenets differ greatly from the traditions and beliefs of Ahle Sunnat or Sunni Muslims. They consider Imam Ali (AS) as the real heir to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Here lies the fundamental difference between Shia and Sunni Islam. Shia rejected Caliph as their spiritual leader or the real successor to Prophet Muhammad, thus denied Khilafat and its principles till end of this very institution.

Shia Muslims rather believe in Institution of "Imamat" than that of "Khilafat". Shia Muslims believe that first Imam Ali (AS) was nominated by God himself through His Messenger at Ghadeer Khum. Later on each Imam nominated the next Imam before His demise, the last one of which is Imam Mehdi (AS) whose appearance is long awaited by Muslims of all sects.

3.2.   Ghadeer e Khum

Ten years after the migration (hijrah), the Messenger of Allah [peace and blessings be upon him and his Progeny] ordered to his close followers to call all the people in different places to join him in his last pilgrimage. On this pilgrimage he taught them how to perform the pilgrimage in a correct and unified form.

This was first time that the Muslims with this magnitude gathered in one place in the presence of their leader, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). On his way to Makkah, more than seventy thousand people followed the Prophet. On the fourth day of Dhu'l-Hijjah more than one

hundred thousand Muslims had entered Makkah. The date of this event was the 18th of Dhu'l-Hijjah of the year 10 AH (10 March 632 AD).[33]

After completing his last pilgrimage (Hajjatul-Wada'), Prophet (PBUH) was leaving Makkah toward Madinah, where he and the crowd of people reached a place called Ghadir Khumm (which is close to today's al-Juhfah). It was a place where people from different provinces used to greet each other before taking different routes for their homes.

In this place, the following verse of the Qur'an was revealed:

"O Apostle! Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you don't do it, you have not delivered His message (at all); and Allah will protect you from the people ..." (Qur'an 5:67)

The last sentence in the above verse indicates that the Prophet was mindful of the reaction of his people in delivering that message but Allah informs him not to worry, for He will protect His Messenger from people.

Upon receiving the verse, the Prophet (PBUH) stopped on that place (the pond of Khumm) which was extremely hot. Then he sent for all people who have been ahead in the way, to come back and waited until all pilgrims who fell behind, arrived and gathered. He ordered Salman Farsi (RA), to use rocks and camel tooling to make a pulpit (minbar) so he could make his announcement. It was around noon time in the first of the Fall, and due to the extreme heat in that valley, people were wrapping their robes around their feet and legs, and were sitting around the pulpit, on the hot rocks.

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[33] Ghadeer e Khum, Available at http://www.al-islam.org/ghadir/incident.htm (accessed on 12 July 2010)

On this day the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) spent approximately five hours in this place; three hours of which he was on the pulpit. He recited nearly one hundred verses from The Holy Qura'n, and for seventy three times reminded and warned people of their deeds and future. Then he gave them a long speech.[34]

The following is a part of his speech which has been widely narrated by the Sunni Mohadiseen (Traditionists – those who passed on from generations to generations the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) declared:

"It seems the time approached when I shall be called away (by Allah) and I shall answer that call. I am leaving for you two precious things and if you adhere to them both, you will never go astray after me. They are the Book of Allah and my Progeny that is my Ahlul Bayt. The two shall never separate from each other until they come to me by the Pool (of Paradise)."

Then the Messenger of Allah continued: "Do I not have more right over the believers than what they have over themselves?"

People cried and answered: "Yes, O' Messenger of God."

Then followed the key sentence denoting the clear designation of Ali (AS) as the leader of the Muslim Ummah. The Prophet (PBUH) held up the hand of 'Ali and said:

"Man Kun to Maula Fa Haza Ali on Maula"

"For whomever I am his Leader (mawla), 'Ali is his Leader (mawla)."

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[34] Ibid

The Prophet (PBUH) continued:

"O' God! Love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him."

Immediately after the Prophet (PBUH) finished his speech, the following verse of the Qur'an was revealed: "Today I have perfected your religion and completed my favour upon you, and I was satisfied that Islam be your religion." (Qur'an 5:3)

The above verse clearly indicates that Islam without clearing up matter of leadership after Prophet (AS) was not complete, and completion of religion was due to announcement of the Prophet's immediate successor. This is in contradiction with what the Sunni Ulema (scholars) argue that the issue of succession was not properly dealt by Prophet Muhamamd (PBUH) and that he did not appointed anybody in his life time as His successor.[35]

Immediately after the Prophet's speech, Hassan b. Thabit, the Companion and poet of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), asked for his permission to compose a few verses of poetry about Imam Ali (AS) for the audience. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Say with the blessings of Allah". Hassan stood up and said: "O' people of Quraysh. I follow with my words what preceded and witnessed by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). He then composed the following verses at the scene:

He calls them, (on) the day of Ghadir, their Prophet
In Khumm so hear (and heed) the Messenger's call,
He said: "Who is your guide and leader? (mawlakum wa waliyyukum)"
They said, and there was no apparent blindness (clearly):
"Your God, our guide, and you are our leader

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[35] Jafri, Syed Hussain. *The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000

And you won't find from among us, in this, any disobedient,"

He said to him: "Stand up O' Ali, for I am pleased to announce you Imam and guide after me (min ba'di imam(an) wa hadiy(an)), So whomever I was his leader (mawla), then this is his leader (mawla)

So be to him supporters in truth and followers,"

There he prayed: "Allah! Be a friend and guide to his follower

And be, to the one who is Ali's enemy, an enemy"

After his speech, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) asked everybody to give the oath of allegiance to 'Ali (AS) and congratulate him. Among those who did so was 'Umar b. al-Khattab, who said:

"Well done Ibn Abi Talib! Today you became the Leader (mawla) of all believing men and women."

Allah ordered His Prophet (PBUH) to inform the people of this designation at a time of crowded populous so that all could become the narrators of the tradition, while they exceeded a hundred thousand.

Narrated by Zayd b. Arqam: Abu al-Tufayl said: "I heard it from the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), and there was no one (there) except that he saw him with his eyes and heard him with his ears."

Some Sunni commentators further report that the first three verses of the chapter of al-Ma'arij (70:1-3) were revealed when a dispute arose after the Prophet (PBUH) reached Madinah. It is recorded that:

On the day of Ghadir, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) summoned the people toward 'Ali and said: "Ali is the mawla of whom I am mawla." The news spread quickly all over urban and rural areas. When Harith Ibn Nu'man al-Fahri (or Nadhr Ibn Harith according to another tradition) came to know of it, he rode his camel and came to Madinah and went to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said to him: "You commanded us to testify that there is no deity but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah. We obeyed you. You ordered us to perform the prayers five times a day and we obeyed. You ordered us to observe fasts during the month of Ramadhan and we obeyed. Then you commanded us to offer pilgrimage to Makkah and we obeyed. But you are not satisfied with all this and you raised your cousin by your hand and imposed him upon us as our master by saying `Ali is the mawla of whom I am mawla.' Is this imposition from Allah or from you?" [36]

The Prophet (PBUH) said : "By Allah who is the only deity! This is from Allah, the Mighty and the Glorious."

On hearing this Harith turned back and proceeded towards his she-camel saying: "O Allah! If what Muhammad said is correct then fling on us a stone from the sky and subject us to severe pain and torture." He had not reached his she-camel when Allah, who is above all defects, flung at him a stone which struck him on his head, penetrated his body and passed out through his lower body and left him dead. It was on this occasion that Allah, the exalted, caused to descend the following verses:

"A questioner questioned about the punishment to fall. For the disbelievers there is nothing to avert it, from Allah the Lord of the Ascent." (70:1-3)

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[36] Ibid.

3.3.   Hadith e Saqlain

The word 'saqlain' means weighty or heavy thing in Arabic. In his saying, the Prophet called the Qura'n and Ahl al-Bayt as the weighty things, and thus this tradition became known as Hadith al-Saqlain. This tradition was spoken on four major occasions, such as at Arfat (Tirmizi, 5:328), at Ghadir Khum (Nisai, 96:79), at Prophet's Mosque in Medina (Ibn Atiyyah, 1:34) and in Prophet's chamber during his last illness (Ibn Hajar, p. 89). This tradition however became more famous at Ghadir Khum. Besides, this tradition has been transmitted through more than a hundred channels by over 35 Companions of the Prophet. [37]

Zaid bin Arqan reported: When the Prophet was returning from the Valedictory Pilgrimage, he halted at Ghadir al-Khum and said, "I am about to be summoned (by God) and I will respond (to His call). I am leaving in you two weighty things: one of them is bigger than other; the Book of God, and my Ahl al-Bayt. Beware how you shall treat them after me, for they shall not part from each other until you join me on the day of judgment."[38]

3.4.   Hadith e Qartas

Hadith e Qaartas or the "hadith of pen and paper" is very famous and mark a clear distinction on the issue of succession to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This hadith supports the Shia view of Hadrat Umar and the Khilafat, therefore later Ummayad caliphs would have all the reasons on earth to try to get rid of this hadith. Yet it still made to the hadith books written under the Umayyad rule off which two are the most authentic books after Qur'an, according to belief of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jammat. These two books wherein the 'hadith e qartas' is described are Sahih

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[37] Mumtaz Ali Tajddin, *Encyclopaedia of Ismailism*. Available at http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/10350 (accessed at October 15, 2011)
[38] vide, Mustadrak, 3:109, al-Muslim, 15:180, Masnad, 4:367.

Muslim and Sahih Bukhari. Thus the authenticity of this hadith is confirmed according to most of Muslim scholars including Shia and Sunni both. Following is the translated text of Hadith e Qarats, as it appears in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim with slight omissions of the end part. However, according to Mushaf e Natiq, Hadrat Umar knew of "mansha e rasool (PBUH)" i.e. Prophet's will but asked the companions of prophet who were present at the occasion not obey what Muhammad (PBUH) is saying as He is suffering from the pain and near to death.[39]

In Sahih Bukhari, narrated Said bin Jubair[40]:

Ibn 'Abbas said, "Thursday! What (great thing) took place on Thursday!" Then he started weeping till his tears wetted the gravels of the ground . Then he said, "On Thursday the illness of Allah's Apostle was aggravated and he said, "Fetch me writing materials so that I may have something written to you after which you will never go astray." The people (present there) differed in this matter and people should not differ before a prophet. They said, "Allah's Apostle is seriously sick.' The Prophet said, "Let me alone, as the state in which I am now, is better than what you are calling me for." The Prophet on his death-bed, gave three orders saying, "Expel the pagans from the Arabian Peninsula, respect and give gifts to the foreign delegates as you have seen me dealing with them." I forgot the third (order)" (Ya'qub bin Muhammad said, "I asked Al-Mughira bin 'Abdur-Rahman about the Arabian Peninsula and he said, 'It comprises Mecca, Medina, Al-Yama-ma and Yemen." Ya'qub added, "And Al-Arj, the beginning of Tihama.")

Narrated Said bin Jubair[41]:

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[39] Syed Muhammad Sibtain,. *Mushaf e Natiq almaroof be Hasbuna Kitab allah.* (Ludhiana: 1940). 16 – 44.
[40] Sahih Bukhari .Volume 4, Book 52, Number 288.
[41] Sahih Bukhari .Volume 4, Book 53, Number 393.

That he heard Ibn 'Abbas saying, "Thursday! And you know not what Thursday is? After that Ibn 'Abbas wept till the stones on the ground were soaked with his tears. On that I asked Ibn 'Abbas, "What is (about) Thursday?" He said, "When the condition (i.e. health) of Allah's Apostle deteriorated, he said, 'Bring me a bone of scapula, so that I may write something for you after which you will never go astray.'The people differed in their opinions although it was improper to differ in front of a prophet, They said, 'What is wrong with him? Do you think he is delirious? Ask him (to understand). The Prophet replied, 'Leave me as I am in a better state than what you are asking me to do.' Then the Prophet ordered them to do three things saying, 'Turn out all the pagans from the Arabian Peninsula, show respect to all foreign delegates by giving them gifts as I used to do.' " The sub-narrator added, "The third order was something beneficial which either Ibn 'Abbas did not mention or he mentioned but I forgot.'

Narrated 'Ubaidullah bin 'Abdullah[42]:

Ibn 'Abbas said, "When the ailment of the Prophet became worse, he said, 'Bring for me (writing) paper and I will write for you a statement after which you will not go astray.' But 'Umar said, 'The Prophet is seriously ill, and we have got Allah's Book with us and that is sufficient for us.' But the companions of the Prophet differed about this and there was a hue and cry. On that the Prophet said to them, 'Go away (and leave me alone). It is not right that you should quarrel in front of me." Ibn 'Abbas came out saying, "It was most unfortunate (a great disaster) that Allah's Apostle was prevented from writing that statement for them because of their disagreement and noise. (Note: It is apparent from this Hadith that Ibn 'Abbes had witnessed the event and came out saying this statement. The truth is not so, for Ibn 'Abbas used to say this statement on narrating the Hadith and he had not witnessed the event personally.

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[42] Sahih Muslim: Volume 1, Book 3, Number 114:

This hadith is of great importance and significance here in our case as this had helped me (the researcher) in identifying from where the split occurred in the community, organized by Prophet of Islam, Muhammad Bin Abdullah (PBUH).

Coming lines will make it clearer that how the birth of Shia Islam took place and how it evolved historically as a separate disciplines from the majority practiced normative Islam.

4.   Shia Sunni Divide

It is not known precisely how many of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims are Shia. The Shia are a minority, comprising between 10 percent and 15 percent of the Muslim population — certainly fewer than 200 million.[43]

The Shia are concentrated in Iran, southern Iraq and southern Lebanon. But there are significant Shiite communities in Saudi Arabia and Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India as well.

Although the origins of the Sunni-Shia split were violent, over the centuries Shia and Sunnis lived peacefully together for long periods of time. But that appears to be giving way to a new period of spreading conflict in the Middle East between Shia and Sunni.

"There is definitely an emerging struggle between Sunni and Shia to define not only the pattern of local politics, but also the relationship between the Islamic world and the West,"[44] says Daniel Brumberg of Georgetown University, author of *Reinventing Khomeini*: The Struggle for Reform in Iran.

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[43] Mike Shuster. *The Origins of Shia Sunni Split*, Available at
http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7332087 (accessed on Dec 2, 2011)
[44] Ghosh. Palash R. *Shia-Sunni: A Deadly Ancient Schism in the Islamic World.* Available at
http://urdutahzeeb.net/articles/blog1.php?p=14533&more=1&c=1&tb=1&pb=1 (accessed on November 29, 2011)

That struggle is most violent and dangerous now in Iraq, but it is a struggle that could spread to many Arab nations in the Middle East. One other factor about the Shia bears mentioning.

"Shiites constitute 80 percent of the native population of the oil-rich Persian Gulf region," notes Yitzhak Nakash, author of *The Shi'is of Iraq.*[45]

Shia predominate where there is oil in Iran, in Iraq and in the oil-rich areas of eastern Saudi Arabia as well.

The original split between Sunnis and Shia occurred soon after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, in the year 632 as it was previously mentioned. The declaration of Prophet (PBUH) at Khumm e Ghadeer about Imam Ali (AS), the Hadith e Saqlain and Qartas, the wars between Hadrat Ayesha and Imam Ali (AS), the murder of Hadrat Usman, Imam Hassan (AS) and the cruel beheading of Prophet's grandson Imam Hussain (AS) at Karbala (Iraq) by the army of the then caliph Yazid b Moawia b Sufian are the few milestones that mark the birth of Shia as a separate school of though and practice amongst the Muslims of the world.

4.1. Shian e Ali (AS)

"There was a dispute in the community of Muslims in present-day Saudi Arabia over the question of succession," says Augustus Norton, author of *Hezbollah: A Short History.* "That is to say, who is the rightful successor to the Prophet?"[46]

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[45]The-Origins-of-the-Shia-Sunni-Split, Available at http://www.israelforum.com/board/showthread.php?15898 (accessed on Dec 10, 2011)
[46] Mike Shuster. *The Origins of Shia Sunni Split*, Available at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7332087 (accessed on 16 September, 2011)

Most of the Prophet Muhammad's followers wanted the community of Muslims to determine who would succeed him. A smaller group thought that someone from his family should take up his mantle. They favored Ali, who was married to Muhammad's daughter, Hadrat Fatimah (SA) and Prophet declared him as leader of Muslims after him at Gahdeer e Khum, as discussed earlier in detail. Also the various ahadith (Prophet's sayings) about Imam Ali (AS) and his family were the basis of support for Ali among the early followers of Islam.

That's why they were called Shiaan e Ali which means 'supporters of Ali'. The term Shia became popular at the time when Hadrat Usman (third caliph) was brutally killed by a political faction called "Kharijeen" in his home while he was reciting Holy Qura'n. Hadrat Usman sympathizers demanded Imam Ali (AS) who succeeded him as fourth caliph 'revenge for Usman's blood', which were out of Ali's (AS) reach by then. Supporters of Usman were called Shiat e Usman whereas those of Imam Ali (AS) were called Shiate Ali. Later on the term was strictly associated with followers of Imamat i.e. those of Imam Ali (AS) and the succeeding Imams in his family lineage.[47]

Shia believed that leadership should stay within the family of the Prophet (PBUH) and thus they were the partisans of Ali, his cousin and son-in-law. Sunnis believed that leadership should fall to the person who was deemed by the elite of the community to be best able to lead the community. And it was fundamentally that political division that began the Sunni-Shia split.

The Sunnis prevailed and chose a successor to be the first caliph. Eventually, Ali was chosen as the fourth caliph, but not before violent conflict broke out. Two of the earliest caliphs

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[47] Syed Hussain Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

were murdered. War erupted when Imam Ali (AS) became caliph, and he too was killed in fighting in the year 661 near the town of Kufa, now in present-day Iraq.[48]

The violence and war split the small community of Muslims into two branches that never reunited and agreed on a single personality as the successor of Prohet Muhammad (PBUH). The war continued with Ali's son, Hussein, leading the Shia. Imam Hussein (AS) rejected the rule of the caliph at the time and stood up to the caliph large army on the battlefield. He and 72 members of his family and companions fought against a very large Arab army of the caliph Yazid B Moawia. They were all massacred.[49]

Imam Hussain was decapitated and his head was carried in tribute to the Sunni caliph in Damascus. His body was left on the battlefield at Karbala. Later it was buried there and his shrine built on. Till this day thousands of Shia pilgrims visit Karballa and offer tribute the grandson of Prophet Muhammad and the cause for which he sacrificed his own life and those of his whole family.

It is the symbolism of Hussein's death that holds so much spiritual power for Shia Muslims around the globe even these days. This fact becomes more obvious during months of Moharam and Safar annually wherein Shia remember the sacrifice of Imam Hussain and the family of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at Karballa.

4.2.   Imamat and Khilafat

The Shia called their spiritual leaders Imam, Ali being the first, Hassan the second and Hussein the third. They commemorate Hussein's death every year in a public ritual of self-

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[48] Ibid
[49] Mike Shuster. *The Origins of Shia Sunni Split* Available at (http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7332087) (accessed on November 25, 2011)

flagellation and mourning known as Ashura. Shia unlike their sub-sect Islamili[50] believes in twelve Imams and are of the view that after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), only the chosen one i.e. God nominated amongst the Muhammad's family should guide humanity towards eternal peace and prosperity in this world and life after death. Due to this reason, Shia identifies themselves as "Isna Ashari", followers of 12 Imams. However the concept of Imamat was formally developed during Imam Jaffar Sadiq (AS) later on, the sixth Shia Imam.

The significance of the imams is one of the fundamental differences that separate the two branches of Islam. The imams have taken on a spiritual significance that no clerics in Sunni Islam enjoy. Suunis in contrary consider first four caliphs worthy of 'talqlid' i.e. following and deny the institution of Imamat. To Sunnis, Khilafat is more important in faith than Imamat.

By the year 1500, Persia was a seat of Sunni Islamic learning, but all that was about to change with the arrival of Azeri conquerors. They established the Safavid dynasty in Persia — modern-day Iran — and made it Shiite.

That dynasty actually came out of what's now eastern Turkey. They were a Turkic dynasty, one of the leftovers of the Mongol invasions that had disrupted the Middle East for a couple of centuries. The Safavid dynasty made it its political project to convert Iran into a Shia country. Shiism gradually became the glue that held Persia together and distinguished it from the Ottoman Empire to its west, which was Sunni, and the Mughal Muslims to the east in India, also Sunni.[51]

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[50] Ismaili sect that emanated from Shi'sm follow first five Imams as Shia believe in but separate at seventh Imam. According to Shia Imam Mosa Kazim (AS) was the seventh Imam whereas Ismaili Muslims say that Imam Muhammad Ismail was the real successor to sixth Imam. Descendents of Imam Ismail lives till day and Ismailis present Imam is His Highness Sir Agha Khan 50th in the lineage of Imam Ismail (AS).
[51] Esposito, John L. *Islam: The Straight Path*. New York. (Oxford UP. 2005), pp. 35 - 63

This was the geography of Shiite Islam that prevailed into the 20th century, till the time when Ayatollah Khomeini brought revolution in the present Islamic republic of Iran (IRI).

Doctrinally, the obvious difference between the two sects is the Shia Imamate as opposed to the Sunni Caliphate, the latter being selected and is answerable to the political and military leadership rather than to the authority stemming from Mohammed's line of succession. To the contrary, the Shia Imamate is divinely inspired and infallible as God's appointed representative on Earth. He must be in direct line of succession from Mohammed and, like his ancestor, acts as both political leader and spiritual guide. Both Shia and Sunni views of history perpetuate their positions of disadvantaged underdog and ruling class respectively. For the Sunnis, their early successes are a vindication of their righteousness and that God's favor is bestowed upon them. For the Shia, they view history as a long struggle to restore Islam united under an Imam who acts as an intermediary to God. Rather than use intermediaries, the Sunnis believe that they have a direct and personal relationship with God. Stemming from this come the basic differences in legal code: The Sunnis accept the consensus as a legal source whereas the Shia accepts only the divine authority of the Imam as supreme authority.

Sunni Islam has four general schools of thought that are not recognized by the Shias: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali with the first of these being the most prevalent and official. The emphasis here is on "reason and independent legal opinion in the development of Islamic doctrine and law."[52] The oldest school, mostly isolated to North and West Africa, is the Maliki which emphasizes the sayings and actions of Mohammed (Hadith and Sunnah). The shafi'i is considered the most legally rigorous and is most influential in Egypt, Yemen, East Africa, and South East Asia. The Hanbali, mostly isolated to Saudi Arabia and Qatar is the most

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[52] Gross Max, "*Fourteen Centuries of Islam*", *The Middle East Congressional Quarterly* (9th Edition, 2000).

conservative of the four and rejects all but the Qur'an, emphasizing the imitation of Arabian life in Mohammed's time.

While rejecting the Sunni versions, the Shiites have their own school of thought called Ja'afari which is concerned with the traditions of Mohammed's attempted and alleged appointment of Ali as his successor. Also important to the Shiites are certain symbols and practices that are only very superficial to the Sunnis. These refer to the Fourteen Pure or Perfect Ones who are, The prophet Mohammed; Ali, Fatima, and their sons Hasan and Husayn; and the remaining 9 Imams. The Shia celebrate various birthdays, death days and other important dates related to these individuals.

CHAPTER TWO

IRAN'S PERCEPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

AND

EVOLUTION OF IRANIAN CURRENT POLITICAL STRUCTURE

1.   Analytical Summary of Iranian Political History till 1979 AD

The current geographic boundaries that make Iran were once called Persia. Once a major empire of superpower proportions, Persia has been victim to various invasions in history and its territory altered throughout the centuries.[53] Invaded and occupied by Greeks, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, and others—and often caught up in the affairs of larger powers—Persia has always reasserted its national identity and has developed as a distinct political and cultural entity throughout the recorded human history.

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest major civilizations, with historical and urban settlements dating back to 4000 BC.[54] The Medes unified Iran as a nation and empire in 625 BC.[55] The Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC) was the first of the Iranian empires to rule from the Balkans to North Africa and also Central Asia. They were succeeded by the Seleucid Empire, Parthians and Sassanids which governed Iran for almost 1,000 years.

The Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) and the fall of the Sassanid Empire was a turning point in Iranian history. Islamization in Iran took place during 8th to 10th century and finally resulted in the decline of the Zoroastrian religion. However, each distinct culture

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[53] *Engineering an empire the Persians* Available at http://anthropology.net/user/kambiz_kamrani/blog/2006/12/05/ (accessed on October 2, 2011).
[54] *Xinhua, "New evidence: modern civilization began in Iran"* Available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-08/10/content_6508609.htm (accessed on May 3, 2011).
[55]   *Encyclopedia   Britannica   Concise   Encyclopedia   Article: Media*   Available   at http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9371723 (accessed on November 5, 2011).

introduced by external forces into this region which makes today Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) left its imprints. The today's Iran had absorbed tastes of various civilizations in history and the new Islamic cum Iranian civilization present a canvas of unique and diverse images that could be felt at each level.

Mongol invasions in the 13th Century ended the Abbasid Dynasty and, with it the institution of Khilafat. The collapse of the Mongol Empire created a vacuum ultimately filled by the Ottomans in Anatolia (modern Turkey) in the 15th Century, the Safavids in Persia in the early 16th Century, and the Mughals in India. The Ottomans were a foreign force (comprised of Turkish peoples from Central Asia). They adopted Sunni Islam, but did not claim to be religious leaders. The head of the Ottoman State was called the Sultan, a term used as early as the 11th Century by an earlier group of Turkish soldiers who recognized the suzerainty of the Abbasid Caliphs in religious matters but identified their leader as sultan, roughly "holder of power."[56]

After centuries of foreign occupation and short-lived native dynasties, Iran was once again reunified as an independent state in 1501 by the Safavid dynasty who established Shi'a Islam[57] as the official religion of their empire, marking one of the most important turning points in the history of Islam.[58] Iran had been a monarchy ruled by a Shah, or Emperor, almost without interruption from 1501 until the 1979 Iranian revolution, when Iran officially became an Islamic Republic on 1st April 1979.[59]

The Safavids were an indigenous religious movement in Persia, originally Sufis but leaning toward Shi'ism. They seized power in Persia in the first decade of the 16th Century, and

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[56] Yahya Noori, *Islamic Government and Revolution in Ira,* (London: Royston Ltd, 1985).
[57] R.M. Savory, *"Safavids", Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd edition.
[58] *"The Islamic World to 1600",* The Applied History Research Group, University of Calgary, 1998
[59] *"Iran Islamic Republic",* Encyclopedia Britannica

their seven-year-old leader was proclaimed king (Shah—an ancient Persian word for monarch dating back to antiquity) in Tabriz in 1501. During his reign, Shah Ismail forcibly imposed Shi'ism as the official religion of his realm, beginning the permanent connection between Persia and Shi'ism.

The Safavids initially claimed not only divine right to rule but also divinity for their rulers, reflecting the Sufi roots of the movement. Such views were incompatible with mainstream Twelver Shi'ism (Asna Ashari) so the Safavids quickly toned them down. Instead, they fabricated genealogies showing that they were not only descendants of the Prophet (sayyids), but also descendants of Imam Ali (AS). They claimed to be representatives of the Imam Mehdi (AS) during the occultation. They did not supplant the well-entrenched hierarchy of religious scholars, including marjas, who already claimed, collectively, to represent Imam Mehdi (AS) and that they were able to interpret God's word, the traditions of the Prophet and Imam Ali (AS) to guide their people during his hiding. Thus the Safavid Shahs were largely seen as temporal rulers while the religious scholars continued to serve as spiritual guides for the people despite the Savafids' pretentions.[60]

The fall of the Safavid dynasty in the 18th century led, following decades of chaos, to the establishment of secular rule in Persia, first under the Qajar Dynasty (1795-1925) and then under the Pahlavis (1925-1979). Neither of these dynasties claimed to represent Imam Mehdi (AS), still less to possess divine attributes themselves. The Qajars claimed divine right to rule; the Pahlavis were moderate and advocating for modernity and progressiveness but still devout Shi'a who retained some of the connections between kingship and religion while adding new tensions and nuances. In this regard, Persia was not far behind most European states—the monarchs of

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[60] Shaul Bakhash, *The reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

Constitution — whereby Ayatollah Khomeini became Supreme Leader, the 'rehbar' of the country — in December 1979. In between, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi left the country for exile in January 1979 after strikes and demonstrations paralyzed the country, and on February 1, 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Tehran to a greeting of several million Iranians. The final collapse of the Pahlavi dynasty occurred on February 11 when Iran's military declared itself "neutral" after guerrillas and rebel troops overwhelmed troops loyal to the Shah in armed street fighting. Iran officially became an Islamic Republic on April 1, 1979 when Iranians overwhelmingly approved a national referendum to make it so.

The ideology of revolutionary government was populist, nationalist and most of all Shi'a Islamic. Its unique constitution is based on the concept of velayat-e faqih the idea advanced by Imam Khomeini that Muslims —- in fact everyone —- requires "guardianship", in the form of rule or supervision by the leading Islamic jurist or jurists. Khomeini served as supreme leader, until his death in 1989.

Iran's rapidly modernising, capitalist economy was replaced by populist and Islamic economic and cultural policies. Much industry was nationalized, laws and schools Islamicized, and Western influences banned.

The Islamic revolution also created great impact around the world. In the non-Muslim world it has changed the image of Islam, generating much interest in the politics and spirituality of Islam along with "fear and distrust towards Islam" and particularly the Islamic Republic and its founder.

3.   Vallayat e Faqih

Ayatollah Khomeini revolutionized the traditional Shi'ite dogma on international politics by his new ideas on the velayat-e faqih system. His book "Hukumut e Islami" speaks of various aspects of this system of governance and statehood. The origins of the velayat-e faqih system can be traced back to the discourse between the usuli and the akhbari schools of thought in the 18th century mentioned above. It was Khomeini, however, who developed the concept into a political project and institutionalized it in the Islamic Republic of Iran. With his concept of the velayat-e faqih Khomeini radically broke with the traditional Shi'ite understanding of politics (Khomeini 1363/1979). Khomeini did not only restore Shi'ite traditions but actually initiated an ideological revolution within Shi'ism[62]. By virtue of this velayat-e faqih concept, the supreme leader, rehabar is "vali-e-faqih" - the legal leader of the Muslims around the globe. His function thus is equal to that of the Imam (successor to Muhammad as the lawful temporal leader of the Islamic community). In 1988, the constitution of 1979 was augmented when Khomeini provided the Faqih with powers greater than the Imam even. This is also known as "velayat-e-motlaqah-e-faqih" (absolute governance of the jurist). The velayat-e-motlaqah-e- faqih gives the supreme leader far-reaching power over all Muslims. The supreme leader is even exempted from prayers and the hajj (pilgrimage of Muslims to Mecca).[63]

Since the Islamic revolution, the velayat-e faqih system has been the main principle of the political power structure of the IRI and until now is one of the major obstacles to fundamental economic reform and democratization.

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[62] Said Amir Arjomand, "The Reform Movement and the Debate on Modernity and Tradition in Contemporary Iran" *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 34, (2002), 719-731.
[63] M Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

The foundations of the present Islamic Republic are based on this very concept of Valayat-e-faqih system, which finds its origins in the contors of "Hukumut e Islami" of Imam Khomeini. How political is Shi'ism? Has it really been a driving force of policy formulation in Iran in post revolution, or is it rather one component of the nationalist movement of Iran that, since the late 19th century against Western influences and domination in Iran?

Originally, in Islam there was no distinction between state power and religious thought. Prophet Muhammad, who was both the spiritual as well as the temporal leader of Islam, laid down the essential principles of the religion. After the death of Muhammad, the legitimacy of his successor became a dispute between the Shi'ite and the Sunni branches of Islam.[64]

As discussed earlier that Shi'ism became politically institutionalized in Iran when, in 1501, Shah Esmail I founded the Safavid Empire and adopted Shi'ism as the official state religion. This separated the Empire from and identified it in opposition to, its main competitor, the Sunni Ottoman Empire. Thus, since the Safavid Empire, Shi'ism has been serving as a means of national identity and state building.[65]

The politicization of Shi'ism can be drawn back to four developments: (1) the triumph of the usuli over the akhbari; (2) ijtihad; (3) marja-e taqlid; and (4) the khums. In the 17th and 18th centuries, a theological debate emerged among the Shi'ite clergy with regard to the right to interpretation (ijtihad). Two schools developed out of this debate, the akhbari and the usuli. The akhbari believe that, since the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam, there was no right to interpretation and that the hadith (tradition of words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) was

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[64] Ehteshami, A. and M. Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of the Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).
[65] Bakhash, S. "*Iran's Foreign Policy under the Islamic Republic 1979-2000*," in L.C. Brown (ed.) Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 247-258.

sufficient as legal source for Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). Therefore, it was not necessary to follow the interpretations of a mojtahed (highest learned clergy). In contrast to the akhbari, the usuli believe in ijtihad and the leadership of the mojtahed. The usuli argue that religion has to be interpreted based on current circumstances. The usuli ultimately won the dispute between the two theological schools and, therewith, legitimized policy formulation within Shi'ism[66].

The victory of the usuli over the akhbari paved the way for the creation of the modern Shi'ite clergy and the formation of an autonomous clerical body separate from the state. Only the mojtahed or ayatollah, and later, in the mid-19th century, the centralized leadership marja-e taqlid (source of emulation) had the right to ijtihad, and each believer had to follow his interpretation.

The centralization of power among the clergy was accompanied by financial centralization, and financial autonomy of the clergy from the state, through the concentration of the khums and zakat (religious tax) in the hands of the marja-e taqlid. The khums are unique to Shi'ism. Originally, the khums (which is one fifth of the annual net profit of a Shi'a Muslim) were paid by Iranians to local and provincial ulama (clergy). With the emergence of the marja-e taqlid, the khums became concentrated in his hands[67]. The khums bring the clergy and the rest of the Muslim population into direct contact. Members of the traditional economic sector, the bazaari, have, especially, been using the khums to increase their influence in politics.

Furthermore, the partial financial dependence of the clergy on the bazaari has made them reluctant to support policies that could go against the bazaari interests. At the same time, however, the independence of the clergy from the state, through the khums, has given them the

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[66] Farid Mirbaghari, "*Shi'ism and Iran's Foreign Policy.*" The Muslim World, Volume 94, 2004. pp. 555-563.
[67] Enayat, H. *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, (Austen: University of Texas Press, 1982).

freedom to act independently from the state, which has been particularly important during times of political crises, such as during the Tobacco revolt, the Constitutional revolution, the Oil Nationalization Movement of Prime Minister Mosaddeq and, finally, in the Islamic revolution. The politization of Shi'ism culminated in the 1960s and 1970s with the Iranian monarchy, the Constitutional revolution and the post-constitutional clergy being heavily criticized by intellectuals, of whom Ayatollah Khomeini and Ali Shari'ati are two outstanding figures Social movements also arose, such as the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran (now Mujahedin-e Khalq of Iran) [68]

Almost three decades after the Iranian Islamic revolution a discourse has evolved, between high-ranking clerics and intellectuals, on what role religion and what role the clergy should play in politics. These questions touch the very heart of Shi'ism. Even the concept of the velayat-e faqih is subject to debate in questions such as: Is there indeed a need for the velayat-e faqih system? Should it be absolute (velayat-e motlaqah-e faqih), limited, or should it only be symbolic and ceremonial? The answers to these questions have direct consequences for the legitimacy of the political system of the IRI. At the same time, it should not be forgotten, that Islam continues to play an important role in the daily lives of almost all strata of Iranian society: rural and urban; wealthy and poor[69] (Kamrava 2003: 104, 105, 111).

4.   The Political Power Structure of Iran

The Islamic revolution caused a fundamental change in the composition of the political elite in Iran, whose secular oriented members were replaced by Shia clergy. Post-revolutionary

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[68] Keddie, Nikki R. and Eric Hoogland. Eds. *The* Iranian Revolution and the Islamic Republic. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990

[69] Kamrava, M. and H. Hasan-Yari *"Suspended Equilibrium in Iran's Political System,"* The Muslim World, 94, (October 2004), 495-524

Iranian political elite introduced a semi-theocratic mode of rule based on the velayat-e faqih system (the Governance of the Jurist) – in 1988 reinforced by adding a new dimension the Absolute Governance of the Jurist, velayat-e motlaqah-e faqih institutionalized according to the constitution of 1979. On the other hand, the political institutions of the IRI are based on a modern state that finds its origins in the constitution of 1906. The political power structure of the IRI is composed of connected, but also competitive, formal and informal political power structures.

The formal political power structure consists of:

(1) Rehbar

(2) The religious supervisory bodies

(3) The republican institutions

(4) The religious foundations (bonyads).

Besides the formal power structure, there exists also an informal power structure. These are the different political factions which could be further divided into two sub categories i.e. the Conservative faction and the Pragmatist or the Reformist faction. Both these factions of political elite cut across the state institutions and their aligned institutions. As there are no legal political parties in Iran, it is the political factions that represent the different ideas on economic, socio-cultural, and foreign policy. Furthermore, the informal power structure consists not only of those people who have power according to their position in state institutions and bodies but also of those individuals that influence or attempt to influence the political discourse.

The rivalries among the different political factions have a great impact on policy formulation in IRI. While most state institutions in Iran are weak, due to the principle of the

velayat-e faqih, personal networks are strong. As a consequence, the formal system for policy formulation is often ignored or bypassed in favor of the informal power structure, based on personal networks and power relations.

4.1. The Formal Political Power Structure

The formal political power structure of the IRI is composed of the *supreme leader* and three sets of institutions:

(1) The religious supervisory bodies;

(2) The republican institutions;

(3) The religious foundations

4.1.1. Supreme Leader "Rehbar"

The power of the supreme leader is based on the velayat-e faqih system. The supreme leader is the ultimate decision-maker in the IRI. The office of the supreme leader was established when the constitution of the IRI was drafted in 1979. The supreme leader has the power to declare war, to mobilize the troops and to dismiss many senior position holders in the IRI. These senior positions include: the head of the judiciary; the head of state radio and television; the supreme commander of the IRGC; the supreme commander of the regular military and the security services; as well as the clerical jurists in the Council of the Guardian. He also appoints and removes the heads of the religious supervisory bodies.

4.1.1.1. Representatives of the Supreme Leader (Namayandegan-e Rahbar)

The most important institutions that are in the hands of the supreme leader and formulate his ideas are: the Office of the Representatives of the Supreme Leader (Namayandegan-e Rahbar), the Association of Friday Prayer Leaders, and the Special Court for the Clergy (Dadgah-e Vizheh-ye Rouhaniyat, SCC). These institutions are responsible for ensuring that the Islamic character of the regime remains intact[70].

The representatives of the supreme leader, who are chosen by the supreme leader, are present at every level of the political establishment. They are directly responsible to the supreme leader and have to assure that the institutions, to which they are assigned, act according to the supreme leader's wishes. The supreme leader's representatives can be found in every state, civilian, and military institution.

Also, within the military, the representatives have their own separate office, the Political and Ideological Bureau (Edare-ye Aqidati va Siyasi). At universities the supreme leader's representatives may intervene in the contents of courses taught and control the composition of the students matriculated.

4.1.1.2. Friday Prayer Leaders

Equally important are the *Friday Prayer leaders*, who are appointed by the supreme leader. While the executive branch of the government provides them with the budget they need, it has no control over the contents of the weekly Friday Prayers. The Friday Prayers have been very influential in setting the tone on important political issues, especially foreign policy issues. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and Head of the Expediency Council, Hashemi Rafsanjani,

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[70] M Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

have often made use of the Friday Prayers to bring their views to the public, especially on foreign policy issues, without seeking consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the president. The head of the judiciary and the leadership of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) are others who use the Friday Prayers as a platform to bring their views on foreign policy to the public.

4.1.1.3. The Special Court for Clergy (SCC)

The SCC is another example of an institution that functions outside of, and parallel to, the judiciary. It was created during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). Its responsibility lays in prosecuting dissident clergies i.e. those who give an interpretation of Islam that could undermine the official state ideology. It is one of the most powerful institutions of the regime, as it safeguards the ideological unity of the clergy. The SCC has imprisoned several prominent Reformist clergy, including: Abdullah Nuri, confident of Ayatollah Khomeini and former Minister of Interior; Mohsen Kadivar, candidate for president in 2005; and Hassan Yussefi-Eshkevari, cleric and founder of the Ali Shari'ati Research Center. It has also cooperated with the official judiciary to close down papers and imprison regime critical intellectuals[71],

4.1.2. The Religious Supervisory Bodies

The religious supervisory bodies consist of three decision-making and advisory institutions.

- The Council of the Guardian, (Shora-ye Maslahat-e Nezam);

- The Assembly of Experts (Majles-e Khobregan);

- The Expediency Council (Majma'-e Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam);

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[71] Kamrava, M. and H. Hasan-Yari *"Suspended Equilibrium in Iran's Political System,"* The Muslim World, 94, (October 2004), 509-512.

4.1.2.1.　Council of the Guardian

Council of the Guardian consists of twelve jurists (six clerical and six non-clerical). The six clerical members are selected from among the ranks of the Ulema (religion experts) and appointed by the Rehabr.

The six non-clerical members are appointed by parliament (majles) at the recommendation of the head of the judiciary. The Council of the Guardian determines whether laws passed by parliament are compatible with the shari'a (Islamic law). It also examines if presidential and parliamentary aspirants are qualified to run for office. The Council of the Guardian has supreme oversight of the elections for the majles, the Assembly of Experts, and the presidency. For example, it determines who may become parliamentary or presidential candidate.

4.1.2.2.　The Assembly of Experts

The Assembly of Experts is a council of 86 clerics that are elected by the Iranian people for an 8-year term. However, as said before, the Council of the Guardian first has to accept the candidates. The Assembly of Experts elects the supreme leader from its own ranks and dismisses him if he does not fulfill his duties the latter of which is very unlikely to happen.

4.1.2.3.　The Expediency Council

The Expediency Council was established in 1988 to act as a mediator between the majles and the Council of the Guardian, and to advise the supreme leader. The Expediency Council has 31 members that are appointed by the supreme leader from among the ranks of the Iranian

political elite.[72] In 1997, Hashemi Rafsanjani became Head of the Expediency Council, after having served two terms as president (1989-1997). In September 2007 he also became head of the Assembly of Experts. He is one of the most powerful members of the Iranian political elite.

4.1.3. The Republican Institutions

The republican institutions are the three governmental branches: the executive, the judiciary, and the legislative (majles). The Iranian people elect the members of parliament every four years. Since the death of Imam Khomeini, parliament's political importance has significantly increased. It drafts legislation, ratifies treaties, approves states of emergency, approves loans and the annual budget, and removes the president and ministers from office. [73]

4.1.3.1.   President of Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI)

Originally, the 1979 constitution divided the power over the executive between the president and the prime minister. Actual leadership over the executive was in the hands of the prime minister, who − in contrast to the president − was not elected by the Iranian people. The idea was that, by this division of power, a popular elected president could not undermine the authority of the supreme leader.

With the revision of the constitution in 1989 − when Rafsanjani became president − the office of prime minister was abolished and his tasks taken over by the president. The president is now the head of government with powers to appoint and dismiss ministers, subject to confirmation by parliament; control the Planning and Budget Organization (Sazeman-e Barname

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[72] W Buchta, *Who Rules Iran-The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington: Washington Institute of Near East Policy, 2000).p61.
[73] Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran: The Institutionalization of Factional Politics* (Gainesville, Florida University Press, 1996).

va Buje); appoint the head of the Central Bank; and chair the National Security Council (Shura-e Amniat-e Melli, NSC). The president can only be removed by a two-third majority in parliament. He can also be declared "politically incompetent" by parliament, after which the supreme leader can remove him from his post. Formally, the president is the second most powerful member of the Iranian political elite, behind the supreme leader. He is responsible for economic and socio-cultural but not foreign policy. The president has no control of the armed.

4.1.3.2. Majlis (Parliament)

A 290-member body of deputies representing all thirty of Iran's provinces, the Majlis introduces and passes legislation. Members are elected to four-year terms. Five seats are reserved for religious minorities. The approval of candidates, however, requires the blessing of the Council of Guardians, the most influential body in Iran. Hundreds of reformist candidates we barred from the 2008 election, political interference that drew widespread criticism from international monitors. Conservatives now dominate parliament. The clerical makeup of the Majlis has also changed in the last two decades. In the early 1980s, 51 percent of the Majlis were clerics. By 2002 they made up just 12 percent of the body.

4.1.3.3. Armed Forces

The armed forces in the IRI are composed of two main components: (1) the regular military; (2) the revolutionary military, consisting of (a) Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) with its paramilitary baseej militia, (b) the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF).31 The regular military and IRGC are formally subordinate to the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL). They are responsible for defending Iran's borders as well as for the provision of internal security. The LEF are formally subordinate to the Ministry of Interior.

The IRGC is a key institution in Iran due to its role as guardian of the revolution, and because many senior revolutionary guard officers have close personal and family ties to key members of the Iranian political elite. Current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as well as many of his cabinet members, used to be members of the IRCG. The IRGC plays, also, an important role in the selection, ideological indoctrination, professional development, and advancement of future senior civil servants. The baseej militia is the most powerful paramilitary organization in Iran. It was established in 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini as, an "Army of the 20 million", to protect the IRI against US influences and against "domestic enemies."

Though the republican institutions are modern, the popular will officially represented in these institutions is challenged and undermined by other formal and informal institutional mechanisms such as the religious foundations[74].

4.1.4. The Religious Foundations

The religious foundations are an integral part of the political-economic system of the IRI. Important foundations are: the Bonyad-e Mostazafan va Janbazan (Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled); the Bonyad-e Shahid (Martyrs' Foundation); and the Bonyad-e Astan-e Quds (Imam Reza Foundation). The supreme leader appoints the heads of the foundations.

The religious foundations are responsible to no one else but the supreme leader and his local representatives. They have control of large parts of the economy and are entrusted with safeguarding the Islamic and revolutionary principles of the IRI. At the same time, the foundations claim to be charities that provide financial help to low-income groups, families of martyrs, former prisoners of war, rural dwellers, guardian-less households, the disabled, and the

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[74] M. Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002). 34 -37.

handicapped. The foundations act in parallel to the official governmental institutions. For example, the Housing Foundation (Bonyad-e Maskan) operates along with the Housing Ministry providing housing to families in need. The Literacy Movement (Nehzat-e Savad –Amoozi) acts along with the Ministry of Education. The Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (Shoura-ye Ali-ye Enqelabe Farhangi) competes with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in setting the cultural policy, based on the supreme leader's guidelines. The same can be said about the Ministry of Culture and the Islamic Propaganda Organization (Sazman-e Tablighate Eslami), as well as the Land Allocation Committees (Hayat-Haye Vagozari-ye Zamin) and the Ministry of Agriculture[75].

The foundations are tax-exempt. Apart from their responsibility to the supreme leader there is no control by the government of the foundations' economic activities and expenses. The foundations have no public accounts, and no concretely defined legal status.

Despite their status as semi-public organizations, they act as giant private monopoly rather than as charities. The foundations are estimated to account for 35 percent of Iran's total gross national product. They control over 40 percent of the non-oil sector of the Iranian economy.

The foundations have been a great financial burden to the Iranian economy and one of the main obstacles to economic reform in Iran. The foundations have been involved in propagating the ideology of the IRI and the social security programs. The foundations mobilize tens of thousands of people, from urban and rural lower classes, for demonstrations that support the Islamic regime. They have supported: the establishment of schools, universities, and research

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[75] Kamrava, M. and H. Hasan-Yari *"Suspended Equilibrium in Iran's Political System,"* The Muslim World, 94, (October 2004).509.

centers; the publications of books and journals; the production of films; the organization of art and book festivals; as well as the establishment of ideological museums. They, therewith, contribute to the indoctrination of a great number of young intellectuals into the Islamic political ideology, as it was developed by Ayatollah Khomeini.

The foundations have become pivotal actors in the power struggle among different factions of the Iranian political elite, not only in terms of mass mobilization, ideological indoctrination and repression, but also as financial resources to the Conservative faction. This makes them not only economically important but also significant actors in forming the domestic policies in Iran[76]. This means the religious foundations belong to a type of organizations in the IRI that have the legal authority to directly, or indirectly, influence the operation of the government, and execute political power alongside or even above the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches of the government.

4.2. The Informal Power Structure

Besides the formal power structure there exists also an informal power structure. The informal power structure can be distinguished into two parts:

(1) The different political factions of the political elite that cut across the state institutions and their aligned institutions, such as the heads and members of state institutions, religious-political associations, the religious foundations, and paramilitary organizations. As there are no legal political parties in Iran, it is the political factions that represent the different ideas on economic, socio-cultural, and foreign policy issues;

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[76] Eva Patricia Rakel, *Power, Islam, and Political Elite in Iran. A Study on the Iranian Political Elite from Khomeini to Ahmadinejad* (2008). 121-125.

(2) Those people who have power owing to their position in state institutions, and individuals or groups outside the state apparatus, who directly or indirectly influence the political discourse.

After the Islamic revolution, the Iranian political elite were unable to produce a dominant revolutionary party. Although the regime was able to integrate a number of organizations (e.g. the religious foundations) into the power structure of the Islamic regime, there exists no institutional mechanism that would distribute power among the different political factions. The voters in Iran are seen as party members.

The people are mobilized through mosque networks and ideological propagation, with the parliament functioning as a "central committee" or "politburo of sorts." The fact that regular elections are held, has led to a certain degree of pluralism in the political system, with members of the political elite practicing "electoral politics" and showing "parliamentary behavior". According to Elaheh Koolaee, until now, however, Iran has not been ready for pluralism in the political system:

Each faction there are some people who have more power than others in setting the agenda for their respective faction, there is no clear leader in each faction. The factions are composed of individuals with similar views that hold several positions in the IRI's state (related) institutions or other organizations. Thus a faction is not a homogenous group but a loose coalition of groups and individuals;

Since the death of Imam Khomeini, the factions have often modified their views mainly for short-term political reasons. Additionally, not all members of a faction share the same views. In fact different opinions have often caused disruptions within factions, and the creation of alliances with other factions or new factions;

As a result of the loose alliances of groups within a faction, the factions have no coherent organizational structure and, also, no official political program. Members of a faction express their views in the media (newspapers, journals, television, radio), in parliamentary debates, confidential memos, Friday Prayers, etc.

CHAPTER THREE

PHASES OF IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR

1. Foreign Policy Decision-Making in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The main offices that are responsible for foreign policy in the IRI are the supreme leader, the president, the Council of the Guardian the foreign minister, the NSC, and the majles. The decision-making process on bills goes from foreign minister, to president, to the NSC, and finally to the supreme leader, who must sign all bills both on domestic as well as foreign policy issues. This is a rough sketch, as the exact power structure differs, depending on the priorities and the stature of the personalities and composition of factions involved.

An important source for developing foreign policy is the information gathered from abroad via the Iranian embassies, media sources, libraries abroad, individual citizens of other countries, think tanks, individual scholars, as well as the cultural attachés as part of the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization (ICCO), which is an independent body within the government.

1.1. Supreme Leader "Rehbar" and IRI's foreign policy

Like in all other domains, it is the supreme leader, who has the final say about foreign policy decision-making. He approves or disapproves foreign policy initiatives. Though, since 1989, the president and his office is the main foreign policy making organ in the IRI, foreign policy decisions have always to be made in accordance with the supreme leader. The foreign minister reports directly to the president. Foreign policy initiatives of the foreign ministry are always monitored through the president's office. The majles may not interfere in the executive

foreign policy decision-making process. But the majles discusses foreign policy issues and individual members can make public statements on regional and international issues. The government needs the majles approval to enter into international agreements, treaties, memorandums of understanding etc. This division of competencies, regarding foreign policy issues, has several times provoked disagreement between supreme leader, president, and foreign minister.

1.2. Factions of Political Elite and IRI's Foreign Policy

In the IRI the rivalry between different political factions of the political elite on foreign policy is grounded in different geopolitical visions. In general, two main groups of the Iranian political elite with regard to foreign policy orientation/geopolitical visions of the IRI can be distinguished. Reformist have a pragmatic approach and stance on foreign policy decisions. Although the three main political factions agree on certain fundamental principles (independence, equality, a greater role for Iran in international relations), they have, as will be shown in this chapter, different views on how to pursue these goals.

1.2.1. Conservatives

The first group is represented mainly by the Conservative faction of the Iranian political elite. It emphasizes the identity of the Islamic revolution and the return to Islamic values. In order to reach these goals, the IRI has to have a good partnership with Islamic countries and the Muslim masses, and also refrain from rapprochement with the US. The Conservative dominated group is more ideologically driven in its foreign policy outlook.

1.2.2. Reformists

The second group represents mainly the Pragmatist and Reformist factions. These factions see Iran as a nation state that has to play a key role in international relations. This group is convinced that international trade and political ties are major tools in safeguarding Iranian national interest. It therefore advocates establishing a good relationship with the West and especially the US.

2.   Foreign Policy during Imam Khomeini's Regime (1979-1989) – Revolutionary Phase

Since the establishment of the IRI in 1979, Iran's foreign policy orientation has undergone a gradual development from isolation towards pragmatism. In the 1980s, foreign policy issues were under Khomeini's and his office's responsibility. The two main political factions at that time – the Conservative faction and the Radical Left faction – as well as centers of power of the clerical establishment on many occasions followed their interests by implementing their own foreign policy agendas.[77]

In the first ten years after the revolution, particularly when the new republic's main foreign policy guidelines were formulated, the geopolitical vision of the IRI was dominated by two principal guidelines that emerged shortly after the revolution:

The first was summarized in the slogan: "Neither East nor West, but the Islamic Republic;" and the second guideline was the "Export of the Revolution."

It is not so clear which specific countries were included in "East" or "West." While, for example, relations with the US were very hostile, they were less so with the former Soviet

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[77] Ehteshami, A. *"The Future of Iran's Defence and Nuclear Policy,"* in W. Posch (ed.) Iranian Challenges, Chaillot Paper, 78, (2006): 79-81.

Union. At the same time, the IRI tried to maintain normal relations with the allies of the two superpowers, such as Western Europe and Japan.[78]

After all, the Islamic revolution was to a certain extent a reaction to the Shah's good relations with the US and his "Westernization" policies. Therefore, the intention of the revolution was not only to resist Western cultural influences, but on the contrary, to put emphasis on Islamic authenticity and identity. The revolutionary legacy in Iran had an important impact on foreign policy formulation which is accumulated in the position of "Rehbar" or Supreme leader, introduced by Imam Khomeini.

The new rulers in Iran saw the Iranian revolution as a model that would trigger further revolution in Islamic world. They sought to advance such revolutions in neighboring countries by rhetoric, financial support, and action e.g. Iran's increasing influence in Lebanon through its support of Hezbullah. For the new Iranian leadership Islam was a means for the world's exploited people to combat the great powers. It accused the West of having exploited the Iranian people and threatened the culture of Iran and all other Muslims for centuries. In his New Year's message on 21 March 1980 Imam Khomeini declared:

"Dear friends! Be fully aware that the danger represented by the communist powers is no less than that of America: the danger that America poses is so great that if you commit the smallest oversight, you will be destroyed. Both superpowers are intent on destroying the oppressed nations of the world, and it is our duty to defend those nations. We must strive to export our Revolution throughout the world, and must abandon all idea of not doing so, for not only does Islam refuse to recognize any difference between Muslim countries, it is the champion

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[78] Keddie, Nikki R. and Mark J. Gasiorowski. Ed. *Neither East Nor West,* New Haven and Lanodon: Yale University Press, 1990. Pp. 27 -33.

of all oppressed people. Moreover, all the powers are intent on destroying us, and if we remain surrounded in a closed circle, we shall certainly be defeated. We must make plain our stance toward the powers and the superpowers and demonstrate to them that despite the arduous problems that burden us, our attitude to the world is dictated by our beliefs".[79]

During the same New Year's speech Khomeini declared his support for resistance movements in the Third World: "Once again, I declare my support for all movements and groups that are fighting to gain liberation from the superpowers of the left and the right. I declare my support for the people of Occupied Palestine and Lebanon. I vehemently condemn once more the savage occupation of Afghanistan by the aggressive plunderers of the East, and I hope that the noble Muslim people of

Afghanistan will achieve victory and true independence as soon as possible, and be delivered from the clutches of the so-called champions of the working class" (Khomeini 1981: 287).

However, this guideline of the Export of the Revolution was strongest only in the first ten years after the revolution, and even then not as an ideological or revolutionary pursuit but rather as a survival strategy in the war with Iraq (Bakhash 2001: 248).

Most of the armed groups, which received financial support from Iran during the 1980s, were Shi'ite organizations in opposition to Saddam Hussein in Iraq or to other rulers in the Persian Gulf, or active in Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Above this, the almost unqualified support of Iraq by the Arab states and the West played a determining role in Iran's support of armed groups in the Middle East and beyond. In the 1990s, Iran supported Sunni groups such as the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, the National Islamic Movement in

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[79] Ayatollah Khomeini, "*Hukumat e Islami*"(1981), Pp.286-287

Sudan, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, the al-Nahda Party in Tunisia and the Jihad Group in Egypt. Furthermore, they also supported the Muslims in Bosnia in the 1990s and the Islamic MORO Movement in the Philippines in the 1980s. But, surprisingly, Iran did not intervene in the conflict between Russia and Chechnya in the 1990s; although part of the Iranian political elite consider religion an important determinant in foreign policy objectives. This supports the argument that IRI's foreign policy after Islamic revolution can't be labeled as purely guided by principles of Shia Islam.

After the Islamic revolution the Persian Gulf countries feared the rhetoric of parts of the Iranian political elite on the "Export of the Revolution" – especially those who had considered Iran as the guarantor of regional stability during the Shah period. Many Arab leaders saw their fears confirmed in the Islamic disturbances in Saudi Arabia in late 1979, particularly in Mecca, where armed Islamists in opposition to the Saudi ruling family occupied the Al-Masjid al-Haram (Sacred Mosque) for several days until security forces ended the occupation. These incidents and the fear of the "Export of the Revolution" caused reactions from the governments of the Persian Gulf countries. Whereby, the governments of the Persian Gulf countries followed calls for greater political participation among their citizens, with the result that in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE consultative assemblies were established. There was a general trend back to the cultural heritage of Islam, through including more Islamic components into the educational systems, and in daily life (e.g. the prohibition of alcohol) but above all a juridical system based on the shari'a.[80]

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[80] Marschall, C. *Iran's Persian Gulf Policy-From Khomeini to Khatami,* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003). 44.

When the war broke out between Iran and Iraq in September 1980, Western countries and the Soviet Union gave Iraq political and military support. The Western countries hoped that Saddam Hussein would be able to save the world from the "fundamentalists in Iran" (Tarock 1999: 43). At the start of the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf States also supported Iraq logistically and financially, though formally they had declared themselves neutral. They had no interest in ending the war, as they did not consider it a direct threat to their own security. This situation changed when, in May 1982, Iran retook Khorramshahr and entered Iraqi territory. From then on the Gulf States feared the spreading of the war to their own countries. They called for an immediate ceasefire and a compensation for Iran. Supreme Leader, Imam Khomeini rejected this proposal.

By 1984, a more pragmatic domestic and foreign policy orientation gradually emerged among the Iranian elite. A major aspect of the necessity to rethink the slogan Neither East nor West was the question of whether the revolution could still be exported by Iran considering the war with Iraq and the country's great economic problems. Even Ayatollah Khomeini seemed to legitimize this trend, when he stated in a speech to IRI foreign representatives on 28 October 1984:

"The superpowers and the United States thought that Iran [...] would be forced into isolation. That did not happen and Iran's relations with foreigners increased. Now, they argue that relations with governments are of no use and our relations should be established with the nations [...] This is contrary to wisdom and shari'a. We must have relations with all the governments" (cited in Kayhan 29 October 1984).[81]

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[81] Eva Patricia Rakel, *Power, Islam, and Political Elite in Iran. A Study on the Iranian Political Elite from Khomeini to Ahmadinejad* (2008). 128-135.

The international isolation of Iran during the war with Iraq forced Ayatollah Khomeini to listen to Speaker of Parliament and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Hashemi Rafsanjani, and accept United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 98, which called for a cease-fire with Iraq in July 1988, and helped reorient the IRI's international policy.

In the early revolutionary period of 1978, the Soviet Union neither sided with the Shah nor with the Iranian opposition. In late 1978 and early 1979 however, the Soviet Union decided to side with the opposition by stressing that the Iranian opposition was anti-imperialist and the Shah corrupt and a brutal dictator (Sicker 1988: 111). The Soviet invasion into Afghanistan in 1979 was considered as a threat by the Iranian government.

Nevertheless during the hostage crisis, when the US and EU member countries were imposing trade sanctions on Iran, the Soviet Union concluded a new economic co-operation agreement with Iran (Khaleej Times 25 and 27 April 1980). During the Iran-Iraq war, when Western countries sided with Iraq, the Soviet Union, though stating its neutrality, sided with Iran arguing that only the US could benefit if Iran and the Soviet Union were hostile to each other (The Guardian 22 March 1980; TASS 30 September 1980).

The Soviet Union halted arms sales to Iraq and offered arms shipments to Iran. Iran, however, was already receiving arms from Soviet allies like Syria, Libya, and North Korea (Sicker 1988: 118). When the Iranian military forces moved into Iraq the Soviet Union restarted arms sales to Iraq.

Furthermore, the relations between Iran and the Soviet Union were complicated when Britain handed over to Iran documents it had received from the Vice Consul of the Soviet Union in Tehran. These documents detailed the activities of the Soviet intelligence community in

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Tehran and included the names of members of the Tudeh Party. When Iran had received the documents it immediately arrested the members of the Tudeh party. In May 1983, 18 Soviet diplomats were expelled from Iran, marking the lowest point in Iran-Soviet relations since the Islamic revolution.

The cease-fire with Iraq, in 1988, gave the Iran-Soviet Union relationship a new impetus. In 1989, Rafsanjani, then still Parliamentary Speaker, went to Baku to sign an economic and trade agreement with the Soviet Union worth US$15 billion. This agreement was meant to start in 1990, with the restart of gas exports from Iran to the Soviet Union, and run for 10 years.

2.1.   Relations with the United States

The Iranian Islamic revolution came as a surprise to the US, transforming a regional ally of the US into an enemy. The first and most crucial event to complicate Iran-US relations was the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979. On 14 November 1979, the organization "Muslim Students following the Imam's Line" took 53 United States diplomats and staff at the US Embassy in Tehran hostage for 444 days, with backing from the Revolutionary Council. According to Gary Sick (1987: 698-699), the hostage taking was a means to consolidate Khomeini's power rather than being aimed directly against the US. It, thus, had its origins in internal developments in Iran and less so in US or other Western powers activities.

In a first reaction to the hostage taking the US government suspended military exports to Iran and put a ban on the imports of Iranian oil. There was no embargo on food shipments. During that period, 1979-1980, Iran imported almost 3 million tons of farm products (30 percent of its total needs) from the US. On 15 November 1979, the American Farm Bureau announced that it would support an embargo on food exports to Iran. In the coming months diplomatic

relations between Iran and the US worsened and in April 1980 Washington finally imposed a trade embargo on Iran. All imports and exports were banned (except for food and medicine). In 1984 the US imposed new sanctions on Iran under the Arms Export Control Act and the Export Administration Act accusing the country of international terrorism. The Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1988 and 1989 prohibited the shipment of arms to Iran and the Iran-Iraq Arms non-Proliferation Act of 1992 tightened the various prohibitions on technology transfer to Iran (Amuzegar 1993: 146-47).

In his State of Union speech on 23 January 1980, President Carter had announced the Carter Doctrine.[82] The Carter Doctrine was an answer to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. President Carter stated that the US would use force against anyone who would go against the US interests in the Persian Gulf region.[83] Carter had already deployed a small force in Saudi Arabia and the Indian Ocean in January and March 1979. AWACS were stationed in Saudi Arabia as well as B-52 bombers over-flying the Persian Gulf. The US navy stationed twenty-five ships in the Persian Gulf including three aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean (Palmer 1992: 106-107). By October 1980, the number of warships had gone up to thirty-two. This episode was the beginning of direct US military presence in the Persian Gulf.

When Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) took office, the departing President Jimmy Carter had not yet determined a foreign policy strategy towards the IRI, and also President Reagan failed to develop a consistent policy towards Iran. After the hostage taking at the US embassy in Tehran

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[82] Brzezinski, Z. Power and Principle: *Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977 1981*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1983) and Yergin, D. The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).
[83] The first US-led war against Iraq to reverse the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraq (1990 1991), can be considered a direct application of the Doctrine, as reaction to the actions of Saddam Hussein and the potential threat they posed to the security of oil from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (Bromley 2007: 79).

in 1979, the US probably would have preferred to put Iran aside, but as Hooglund (1991: 31-33) states the US could not ignore Iran for four main reasons:

In autumn 1986, Kuwait had asked the US to let part of its tanker fleet run under the American flag to prevent Iranian attacks. The US at first rejected this request. When the Soviet Union agreed to assist Kuwait and had also established diplomatic relations with both Oman and the UAE, the US gained the impression that the Soviet Union was increasing its presence in the Persian Gulf and accepted Kuwait's request. In late 1987, the US also decided to increase its naval presence in the region. By the end of the summer, the US had deployed twenty-eight ships in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. This was the greatest US naval presence in the area since World War II.

The end of the Iran-Iraq War did not change the Iran-US relationship. What did change however was the foreign policy orientation in Iran when Hashemi Rafsanjani became President. This had several reasons:

3.   Foreign Policy during Rafsanjani's Presidency (1989-1997) - Pragmatism

The rise of Ayatollah Khamenei to supreme leader and Hashemi Rafsanjani to president determined the formulation of Iran's new policy priorities based on national interest rather than ideology. Additionally, in July 1989, the Iranian constitution was adapted, giving the president more decision-making power. Now Rafsanjani could focus on economic development and post-war reconstruction.

The end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, the death of Khomeini in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the larger US military presence in the Persian Gulf since the Kuwaiti crisis in 1990-1991, had a major impact on Iran's basic strategic outlook.

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President Rafsanjani did not want to continue Khomeini's foreign policy and also did not promote the "Export of the Revolution." He considered the slogan counterproductive to solving the IRI's economic problems. Instead, President Rafsanjani aimed at reconstructing the Iranian economy through cooperation with advanced industrial states and Persian Gulf countries. The foreign policy reorientation during Rafsanjani's presidency included the establishment of a "Critical Dialogue" with the EU in 1992; active engagement with neighboring states to discuss the crises in Nagorno-Karabakh[84], Afghanistan[85], and Tajikistan[86]; and a cautious rapprochement with the Arab Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia as the most powerful GCC and Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) member country.

3.1 Relations with the Middle East

The security of the Persian Gulf became a top priority of President Rafsanjani's foreign policy. Iran needed the Persian Gulf countries to assure the free flow of oil. Iran depends on the Persian Gulf for its international trade. Iran's main ports, through which more than 90 percent of

[84] During the armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh, Iran was able to reach several short-term cease-fire agreements. Following the negotiations under the sponsorship of the "Minsk Group" of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in Florida in April 2001, the French head of the Minsk Group, during a visit to Tehran, invited Iran to take part in the negotiations (Tehran Times 26 April 2001: 1). Iran aims to re-establish the status quo in the Caucasus regarding its disputes with Azerbaijan on the division of the Caspian Sea and its concerns regarding the Azerbaijan-Turkey-Israel nexus in the Caspian region (Afrasiabi & Maleki 2003: 258).

[85] Iran played a constructive role at the Bonn meeting of the Afghan exiled leadership that led to the post-Taliban regime in Kabul, as well as the opposition Northern Alliance's bloodless takeover of Kabul. Concerning the former, Iran's observer at the Bonn summit, Mohammad Javad Zarif, was directly asked by US mediators to intervene when the talks stalled at one point (For more information on Iran's policy on Afghanistan after September 11 see Afrasiabi 2002: 15-17).

[86] In the Tajik civil war Iran played a decisive role in the reaching of a cease-fire agreement between the warring Tajik factions in Tehran in 1994. In August 1995, Iran hosted a peace summit with Tajikistan's president, Imamoli Rahimov, and Abdollah Nouri, the leader of Tajikistan's Islamic Movement. During this meeting both sides agreed to extend the cease-fire. In 1997, Iran participated in preparing the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord and Protocol on Mutual Understanding, which was signed by the President of Tajikistan and the leader of the United Tajik Opposition. Iran also hosted several other peace negotiations, a consultative conference, and two meetings between Rahmanov and Nouri (Kamouldin & Barnes 2001: 71, 92, Tarock 1997: 185-200).

Iranian international trade, including oil export, occurs, are all located on the Persian Gulf It also needed OPEC to stabilize oil prices to increase its oil revenues (Milani 1994: 335-336), on which Iran depended to carry out the economic reform program. Rafsanjani also hoped that good relations with Persian Gulf countries would increase investments from Arab countries and open up Arab markets for Iranian products. In fact, after the ceasefire, Iran was able to substantially improve its trade relations with its smaller Gulf neighbors, receive investment from Gulf countries, and create a free trade zone on its islands of Kish and Qeshm to attract FDI.

It is interesting to note that the regional policies of Iran during Rafsanjani's presidency resembled the policy of the Shah in the 1960s and 1970s, especially stressing Iran's role as a major power in the Persian Gulf region.

In November 1991, Rafsanjani suggested a joint regional market for economic and technical cooperation between GCC countries and Iran, which could possibly lead to a comprehensive security arrangement (FBIS/NES/55 14 November 1991). All political factions among the Iranian political elite supported the idea of a regional security arrangement.

They even considered the possible inclusion of the US into such an arrangement in the future. One of the principal figures involved in these discussions was Mohammad Javad Larijani, then a member of the majles, now Director of the Institute for Studies in Theoretical Physics and Mathematics in Tehran. He is also the brother of Ali Larijani, who was head of the SNSC until his resignation on 20 October 2007.

The improved relations between Iran and GCC countries during and after the Gulf crisis in 1990-1991, and the possible integration of Iran into a regional security arrangement discussed during the GCC summit in Qatar, raised Iran's hope of becoming an active party in Persian Gulf

security. But it soon became obvious that the GCC preferred the presence of foreign forces in the Persian Gulf to a regional security arrangement.

In February 1991, the six GCC countries, plus Syria and Egypt met in Cairo to discuss the possibility of establishing an organization for economic, political, and security cooperation and coordination (Egypt Ministry of Information, State Information Service March 1991: 15). One month later, the "six-plus-two" signed the Damascus Declaration according to which Syrian and Egyptian troops were to be stationed in the Gulf in return for US$10 billion (Milani 1994: 344). Cairo, in particular, was opposed to Iran's active role in a regional security arrangement[87] (The Independent 21 February 1991).

The Iranian political elite objected to its exclusion from the security debate and were very disappointed with the Damascus Declaration, especially Egypt's role in it (Gargash 1996: 144). Syrian President Hafiz Asad assured the Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati that Iran would play an important role in a post-Gulf War security order.

Even President George Bush stated that Iran was an important power and should not be treated as an enemy by Persian Gulf countries (Keesing's March 1991: 38119). Sultan Qabus of Oman, Head of the GCC committee for regional security arrangements, told Foreign Minister Velayati, a collective security arrangement should first include the GCC countries and later all Gulf countries (FBIS/NES/10 19 March 1991). Oman favored a regional security arrangement including Iran, probably as a counterweight to Saudi Arabia. During a visit to Tehran in March 1992, Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah talked about the possibility of

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[87] In 1978, Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accord, according to which Egypt accepted the existence of an Israel state and autonomy for the Palestinian areas. Many Arab countries were furious about Egypt's part in the Accord and withdrew from relations with the country. The Camp David Accord was an important obstacle to improve relations between Iran and Egypt.

giving Iran a consultative role in establishing a regional security arrangement (Gulf News 10 March 1992).

Already in May 1991, the Damascus Declaration had ceased to exist and Egypt began withdrawing troops from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. GCC countries then relied on Western military protection (Marschall 2003: 117). Negotiations to include Iran in a regional security arrangement most likely failed because of the four following reasons:

(1) GCC countries feared Iran's possible aspirations to becoming a dominant regional actor;

(2) The active opposition of the US to include Iran in such an arrangement;

(3) The different priorities of the Gulf states and their disagreement on a common threat made a collective security agreement impossible;

(4) The regional crisis that broke out in 1992 over three small but strategically important islands overlooking the Straits of Hormuz.

In 1992, a series of counter accusations from Iran and the UAE, over the ownership of the islands Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb[88], began after Iran had, in April and August 1992, expelled and denied entry to non-UAE citizens working on the jointly administered Abu Musa Island (Marschall 2003: 121). Until now the conflict has not been resolved.

After the Abu Musa crisis, the Persian Gulf countries turned towards the US for military protection. Each country searched unilaterally for its own security. A series of defense

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[88] The dispute over the islands dates back to the end of the 19th century when Britain, in 1887, took over the islands against Iran's claim that they were under its jurisdiction. When the British left the Persian Gulf region in 1971 the two countries agreed Iran would share sovereignty over Abu Musa with Sharjah, and have sole sovereignty over the two other islands. Iran accepted the formation of the UAE and the independence of Bahrain in May 1970, but expected that in return it would get complete control of the islands (Milani 1996: 97).

agreements were signed with the US; the first country to sign one was Kuwait in September 1991 (Bashir and Wright 1992: 110). The US not only sold huge amounts of modern weapons to GCC[89] countries, but also signed bilateral agreements that allowed the US to use their waters and carry out joint military training exercises (Milani 1996: 94). Iran felt threatened by the security agreements signed between Persian Gulf countries and the US. Deputy Foreign Minister Besharati stated:

"Our neighbors, one after the other, are signing defense agreements with Western countries. So why should we not buy military hardware" (Kayhan 3 December 1992)?[90] GCC countries, except for Kuwait, agreed that the US should not be permanently based in the region, but they did want them to remain engaged in the Persian Gulf in case of emergency (Katzman 1993: 199).

During a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), in early December 1997, the IRI obtained the presidency of the OIC thanks to the support of Saudi Arabia. The participation of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah in the Tehran meeting itself was considered a success in the rapprochement between the two countries. In February and March 1998 former President Rafsanjani visited Saudi Arabia. He was received by the King and the Crown Prince and spent 15 days there. Two weeks earlier, this honorary reception had been denied to US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright when she visited Saudi Arabia. The rapprochement policy between the two countries reached its peak in May 1999 during President Khatami's visit to

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[89] Between 1990 and 2002, US arms exports to the GCC countries increased to more than $97 billion(Hasbani March 2006).
[90] Compared to the other Persian Gulf countries, however, Iran bought a rather limited amount of arms. In 1991, Iran's estimated military expenditures were US$4.27 billion, compared to Iraq US$7.49 billion and Saudi Arabia US$35.44 billion. In 1996, Iran's expenditures were an estimated US$3.30 billion. Saudi Arabia's expenditures amounted to US$17 billion (International Institute for Strategic Studies The Military Balance, 1991/92 to 1997/98. London: Routledge, 1998).

Saudi Arabia (Reissner 1999: 47-49; Marschall 2003: 144). President Khatami's visit was made possible because of economic problems for both countries, due to the decline of oil prices to below US$13 per barrel. Iran and Saudi Arabia discussed the stabilization of oil prices, an agreement related to oil production and output, and decreasing the negative effects of oil price fluctuations through cooperation in OPEC.

3.2 Relations with Central Eurasia and Russia

The deterioration of Iran's relations with GCC countries during 1992, when no consensus could be found regarding a regional security arrangement, coincided with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which made a reorientation of Iran's foreign policy possible. Now, according to Ramazani, the slogan " Neither East nor West " was replaced by " Both North and South" or a so - called "de -Arabization" of Iran's foreign policy.[91]

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[91] Ramazani, R.K. *"Wider Conflict Threatens,"* The Daily Progress, (11 February 2007).

aimed at rebuilding the IRI through cooperation with advanced industrial states and Persian Gulf countries, and a liberal economic policy.

The foreign policy reorientation during Rafsanjani's presidency included the establishment of a "critical dialogue" with the EU; active engagement with neighboring states to discuss the crises in Nagorno-Karabakh, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan; and a cautious rapprochement with the Arab Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia as the most powerful GCC and Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) member.

In 1992, the Clinton administration passed the Iran Non-Proliferation Act, followed in 1996 by the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA),25 prohibiting investment in Iran's and Libya's energy sector. In late 2001, President George W. Bush extended the law until 2006. T e US intention behind ILSA was to pressure European and other countries to follow US economic policy towards Iran. President Clinton defended the sanctions as follows: "You cannot do business with countries that practice commerce with you by day, while funding or protecting terrorists who will kill you or your innocent civilians by the night" (quoted in the Guardian Weekly, 11 August 1996).

But it did not work out as the US had hoped. Many European countries opposed and even acted against the sanctions. For example, in July 1995, the French-based oil company Total and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed a deal for the development of offshore oil and gas fields in Sirri. T e same contract had been signed by the US Oil Firm Conoco, which had to cancel it owing to the sanctions. T e EU threatened to complain to the World Trade Organization (WTO) if Washington put the ILSA into effect. President Clinton established America's Persian Gulf policy almost immediately upon assuming office. During its first year, his administration

issued numerous policy objectives culminating, on 18 May 1993, in the "dual containment" policy towards Iran and Iraq. Th e objective of "dual containment" was to isolate these regimes politically, economically, and militarily. T e rationale for dual containment was the direct result of three events. First, the end of the Cold War allowed the US to pursue a more discriminate policy; previously, these two nations were used by the two superpowers as allies, with the Iraqi regime leaning toward the Soviets and Iran towards the US. Second, the political outcome of the war against Iraq over Kuwait; although the war was a clear military victory for coalition forces, its political aftermath was considered a failure by many observers because Saddam Hussein remained in power. Third, the Palestine-Israeli conflict and Iranian support for Hamas.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 marked a major change in the relationship between Iran and all Gulf states. Not Iran, but now Iraq was the immediate threat to the security and integrity of Persian Gulf countries. Iran was the first Gulf country to condemn the invasion Tus in 1990 Iran stood on the side of the West and Kuwait against Iraq. As Iran declared itself neutral during the Kuwait crisis and the war and even suggested mediating the conflict, Gulf states became more willing to cooperate with Iran.

The security of the Persian Gulf became a top priority of Rafsanjani's foreign policy, as Iran needed the Persian Gulf countries to assure the free flow of oil. Iran depends on the Persian Gulf for its international trade. Iran's main ports, through which more than 90 percent of Iranian international trade, including oil export, occurs, are all located on the Persian Gulf.

It also needed OPEC to stabilize oil prices to increase its oil revenues, on which Iran depended to carry out the economic reform program. Rafsanjani also hoped that good relations with Persian Gulf countries would increase investments from Arab countries and open up Arab

markets for Iranian products. In fact, after the ceasefire, Iran was able to substantially improve its trade relations with its smaller Gulf neighbors, receive investment from Gulf countries, and create a free trade zone on its islands of Kish and Qeshm to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

T e improved relations between Iran and Persian Gulf countries were evident during the GCC December 1990 Summit in Qatar, when the organization declared that it would welcome future cooperation with Iran and the country's participation in regional security arrangements.

It is interesting to note that the regional policies of Iran during Rafsanjani's presidency resembled the policy of the Shah in the 1960s and 1970s, especially stressing Iran's role as a major power in the Persian Gulf region. In November 1991, Rafsanjani suggested a joint regional market for economic and technical cooperation between GCC countries and Iran, which could possibly lead to a comprehensive security arrangement. The Shah had made similar suggestions in the 1960s. All political factions among the Iranian political elite supported the idea of a regional security arrangement. They even considered the possible inclusion US into such an arrangement in the future. One of the principal figures involved in these discussions was Javad Larijani now the head of the SNSC and Iran's chief negotiator with the EU concerning its nuclear program.

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In February 1991, GCC countries, Syria, and Egypt met in Cairo to discuss the possibility of establishing an organization for economic, political, and security cooperation and coordination. One month later, the "six-plus-two" signed the Damascus Declaration, according to which Syrian and Egyptian troops were to be stationed in the Gulf in return for US$10 billion, Cairo in particular was opposed to Iran's active role in a regional security.

The Iranian political elite objected to its exclusion from the security debate and were very disappointed with the Damascus Declaration, especially Egypt's role in it (Gargash 1996: 144). Syrian President Asad assured the Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati that Iran would play an important role in a post-Gulf War security order. Even President H. W. Bush stated that Iran was an important power and should not be treated as an enemy by Persian Gulf countries (Keesing's March 1991: 38119). Sultan Qabus of Oman, Head of the GCC committee for regional security arrangements, told Velayati that a collective security arrangement should first include the GCC countries and later all Gulf countries.

Oman favored a regional security arrangement including Iran, probably as a counterweight to Saudi Arabia. During a visit to Tehran in March 1992, Omani Foreign Minister Alawi talked about the possibility of giving Iran a consultative role in establishing a regional security arrangement (Gulf News 10 March 1992).

Already in May 1991 the Damascus Declaration had ceased to exist and Egypt began withdrawing troops from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. GCC countries then relied on Western military protection. Negotiations to include Iran in a regional security arrangement most likely failed because of four reasons:

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(2) The active opposition of the US to include Iran in such an arrangement;

(3) The different priorities of Gulf states and their disagreement on a common threat made a collective security agreement impossible; and (4) the regional crisis that broke out in 1992 over three small but strategically important islands overlooking the Straits of Hormuz.

In 1992 a series of accusations, claims and counterclaims between Iran and the UAE over the ownership of the islands Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb 28 began after Iran had expelled and denied entry to non-UAE citizens working on the jointly administered Abu Musa Island in April and August 1992.

After the Abu Musa crisis, the Gulf states turned towards the US for military protection. Each country searched unilaterally for its own security. A series of defense agreements were signed with the US; the first country to sign one was Kuwait in September 1991 (Bashir and Wright 1992: 110). T e US not only sold huge amounts of modern weapons to GCC countries, but also signed bilateral agreements that allowed the US to use their waters and carry out joint military training exercises.

Iran felt threatened by the security agreements signed between Gulf states and the US. Deputy Foreign Minister Besharati stated: "Our neighbors, one after the other, are signing defense agreements with Western countries. So why should we not buy military hardware". (Kayhan 3 December 1992) CC countries, except Kuwait, agreed that the US should not be permanently based in the region, but they did want it to remain engaged in the Persian Gulf in case of emergency.

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The deterioration of Iran's relations with GCC countries in 1992, when no consensus could be found regarding a regional security arrangement, coincided with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which made a reorientation of Iran's foreign policy possible. Now, according to Ramazani, the slogan "Neither East nor West" was replaced by "Both North and South" (Ramazani, 1992: 393), or a so-called "de-Arabization" of Iran's foreign policy.

From the Iranian point of view, a regional security arrangement was no longer limited solely to Persian Gulf countries, but also included the former Soviet republics of CEA. Iranian policy-makers stated that Iran should no longer focus on Persian Gulf countries if the latter were not willing to give up their American orientation. Iran should rather stress the importance of countries such as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, those of CEA, and China, which were more sympathetic to Iran (Marschall 2003: 119).

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Iran's position as a strategic player in the global oil business has increased. Iran is one of the five Caspian littoral states and is thus a strategic link between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian region, which increases the value of cooperating with it. With oil demands rising in East Asia in general and in China in particular, Iran tries to strengthen its position not only among regional producer countries but also in oil markets. At times, it might even pit the main consumers—the US, the EU, and China—against each other.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 was of great geopolitical importance for Iran. While roads to CEA and Europe had been totally blocked during the Soviet era, since 1991 the door towards Europe has been reopened. Iran recognized the independence of CEA countries in 1991, hoping it could profit economically by re-establishing good relations.

In general, it can be said that Iran's foreign policy under Rafsanjani remained Islamist-based, non-aligned, and pro-South. Iran's change in diplomatic policy is related to its devastating economic and military situation, but not to an overall reorientation in geopolitical outlook. During Rafsanjani's presidency, foreign policy was very much an extension of factional politics, resulting in incoherence, obstructionism, and multiple centers of decision-making. The continued primacy of revolutionary passions among some members of the Iranian political elite prevented a fundamental break with Khomeini's export of the revolution.

4. Iran's Foreign Policy during Khatami's Presidency (1997-2005) – Reformation Phase

Khatami, as a protagonist of the Reformist faction, was first elected in 1997 because he focused on domestic issues (the popular longings for changes in Iran's social and political

landscapes) instead of foreign policy propaganda. Under Khatami foreign policy was no longer used to cover up the economic crisis at home, but rather as a means to address domestic political problems.

Despite their somewhat varying visions of Iran's domestic politics, the Reformists and the Conservatives do not have totally different concepts of the country's foreign policy priorities. T e Reformists do not enter into debate with the Conservatives on such delicate and interrelated issues as weapons of mass destruction (WMD), terrorism, and the Israel-Palestine conflict. They do differ on how to achieve their goals. The Conservatives are preoccupied with using foreign policy to preserve and even strengthen the political regime without allowing the Reformist faction to pluck the fruits of this policy.

The Reformists, meanwhile, are mainly concerned with using foreign policy to improve the country's position in the global economy and to implement domestic reforms.

During Khatami's presidency, the Reformists were able to change policy in three difficult areas: (1) the Salman Rushdie affair; (2) improved relations with Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries (which had already begun to improve during Rafsanjani's presidency); and (3) better relations with the EU. The country now also plays a more constructive role in the former Soviet Republics of CEA.

The most important success of the first four years of Khatami's presidency was that he was able to improve Iran's position on the international scene, particularly with the EU. Even his internal enemies had to recognize his successful foreign policy, not least because of the necessity to secure Iran's oil income, which is central to the development of the country's economy.

The improvement of the international climate was particularly apparent in Khatami's interview with the American television channel CNN on 7 January 1998. Here he made clear his goal of improving Iran's relations with the US through a "dialogue of civilizations." In fact, the General Assembly of the UN, on 4 November 1998, proclaimed the year 2001 as the "United Nations Year" of Dialogue among Civilizations." Larijani, then member of the Committee for foreign policy of parliament and representative of the Conservative faction, stated: "The motto 'détente' is very interesting, the motto 'dialogue between civilizations' a pertinent view. The fact that we have a better image in the world and acknowledge the world is very encouraging. However, we are concerned about the inefficiency of the diplomatic establishment" (cited in SWB ME/3555 MED/6 8 June 1999).

Supreme Leader Khamenei undermined these attempts by continuing the support of Islamist radical groups in other Muslim countries, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza/West Bank (Timmerman 3 December 2001). Moreover, while Khatami wanted a dialogue with the US, Khamenei considered a "dialogue with America [. . .] even more harmful than establishing ties with that country" (Barraclough 1999: 12). As a result, though since 1997 Iranian foreign policy has changed in its orientation and instruments, its substance (Islamic, anti-Americanism, anti-Israel, and independence) has remained much the same. Khatami realized that his country needed good relations with Persian Gulf countries, especially with Saudi Arabia, in order to encourage regional peace and stability, a common policy in OPEC, investment by Gulf countries, keeping Iraq under control, and improving relations with Western countries (Marschall 2003: 142). On his first foreign travel in 1997, Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi went to several GCC capitals in anticipation of the OIC summit in Tehran in December 1997 (Baker

Institute 1998). The OIC summit was important for Iran; after years of tension, it gave Iran the opportunity to present itself in a friendly manner to Gulf countries.

5. Iran's Foreign Policy since Ahmadinejad's Presidency (since 2005)

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election augured a new tone in Iranian foreign policy orientation, away from Khatami's policy of "dialogue." While the 1997 presidential elections brought the Reformist faction to power, the 2005 presidential election split the Conservative faction between the old guards and hard-line populists or, as termed by the reformist newspaper Shargh, "neoconservatives". Ahmadinejad's election brought to power a marginalized minority branch of the Conservative faction, which had become radicalized after the Iran-Iraq war when it was excluded from policy-making by the then dominant factions of the Iranian political elite. Still, Ahmadinejad's victory was a victory for the Supreme Leader Khamenei rather than Ahmadinejad himself. Khamenei and his Conservative faction now control Iran's domestic and foreign policies. Khamenei's task will be difficult in light of the severe polarization that now exists in Iran. Iranian public opinion remains deeply polarized: 25-35 percent of the electorate now support Conservative candidates; 40-45 percent support Reformists or—with hesitation— Pragmatists or purposely boycott; perhaps 10 percent enthusiastically support Rafsanjani as a Pragmatist; and 20-25 percent are uninvolved in politics or do not participate in elections.[92] This polarization between Conservatives and Reformists, with only a small Pragmatists faction, renders Iranian politics potentially explosive and thus very worrisome, especially if Ahmadinejad's political opponents move toward establishing an alliance between Reformist and Pragmatist factions. And the security forces are likely to make strong efforts to contain any

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[92] Shargh 2005 (in Persian). July 2005, different issues, http://www.sharghnewspaper.com/840524/html/online.htm; Hamshari 2005 (in Persian), July, different issues, http://www.hamshahri.org/.

popular demonstrations that might occur. Khamenei restrains the Ahmadinejad government on socio-cultural policy, given how important this is to Reformist and Pragmatist Iranians, especially to the large majority of young Iranians. Ahmadinejad's government carries out crackdown on some dress-code violations and gender mixing, and the trend toward greater liberalization on these issues probably will end, at least for now. However, a reversion to the harsh standards of the 1980s seems unlikely. Iran's foreign policy is less extreme than many observers have predicted. Khamenei wants to avoid triggering US interference in Iran's domestic affairs. He also aims to maintain or expand Iran's economic relations with EU countries and avoid a US-EU united front against Iran. Consequently, it seems likely that Iran will try to string out its negotiations with the EU over its nuclear development program, and there is still some possibility that it will reach an agreement with the EU on this matter. In addition, Iran, the EU, and the US have similar interests in Iraq and Afghanistan, and especially concerning al-Qaeda, at least in the short term. T erefore, there is some possibility of cooperation on these matters. Nevertheless, Iran's foreign policy undoubtedly seems to be more hostile and less welcoming toward the West under Ahmadinejad than it would have been had Rafsanjani been elected.[93]

The rift within the Conservative faction will eventually lead to a power struggle. The question is how this rift can be used to solve the nuclear confrontation. An important factor would be a new American policy approach toward Iran: away from confrontation, toward dialogue, and including offers of economic assistance and greater access to international trade. This policy would have two main consequences: first, the Khatami's eight-year presidency showed that Iranians are responsive to international public opinion and that they have no desire to return to Iran's international isolation of the 1980s. It is in the interest of all that Iran is

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[93] Shargh 2005 (in Persian). July 2005, different issues, http://www.sharghnewspaper.com/840524/html/online.htm; Hamshari 2005 (in Persian). July, different issues, http://www.hamshahri.org/.

politically transparent. Increased trade relations and talks concerning a regional security arrangement would help to keep the dialogue going.

Second, improved international economic relations would only widen the rift among the Conservatives. Accepting greater international trade would go against the hardliners' ideological values and alienate them from their social base. Rejection would isolate the country and distance the majority of the Iranian population even further from its own government (Sohrabi 2006: 5).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   Conclusion

Islam is not a homogenous religion as perceived by majority in the West. Within Islam there are certain schools of thoughts and sects which differ with each other in practice and interpretation of Islam's political and social ideals. Though the prophet and the scripture (Holy Qura'n) are same but differences begin with the Prophet's death and continued to deepen and gradually evolve over course of history. One main difference emerged over the issue of succession after Muhammad's death amongst the newly Islamised Arab tribes. Few influential tribes rejected and denied Imam Ali (AS) to be next heir to Prophet as "Imam" of the Muslims and installed Hadrat Abu Bakar as caliph or Khalifah. Abu Bakar's reign formed foundations for Khilafat whereas Ali (AS) followers which are identified as Shiaan e Ali (AS) in the beginning consolidated Jaafri or Asna Ashari (Shi'ism) school of thought. Imam Jaafar Sadiq (AS) actually gave a proper shape to the beliefs and adherence of Shian e Ali (AS) in the shape of Shia Islam.

Sunni on other hands followed first four caliphs and their successors in the history as their spiritual leaders rather than Imam. Thus Sunni denied the institution of Imamat whereas Shia the Khilafat. Certain caliphs in history like Yazid Bin Moawia and Haroon Rashid and Umayad and Abbasid caliphs persecuted Imams and Saadat, the Ahle Bait (AS). Thus the political systems devised under Sunni Islam in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Taliban rule in Afghanistan, under Islamic Militia in Somalia or Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan and Al Qaeda (non state actors) are very different from that of Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), atleast in theory, if not in practice which is founded on the basis of Shia Islam.

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These two dominant sects of Islam never united on a single form of religious principles, public governance, laws and international relations. Resultantly, Sunni and Shias developed different understanding and response to affairs of states and its relations with other states in the global political system. Thus political aspects and implications of both these factions within Islam are hugely different, if studied, researched and analysed objectively.

Being the world's second largest exporter of oil, and having by far the largest population and population density in the geographical Middle East, Iran simply cannot be ignored, either regionally or internationally. Iran's geopolitical position at the crossroads of the Middle East, the Gulf Region, the Caucasus and Central Asia has made the country a key actor historically as well as in modern times, and both regionally and internationally. For the same reasons, Iran is deeply dependent on its foreign relations.

However, a lot has happened in the Islamic Republic since its charismatic founder and leader died in 1989, and even though the ideological teachings of the Revolution remain a central point of reference, Iran today faces great challenges, nationally, regionally and internationally, which require pragmatic solutions that are not always in accordance with these teachings.

Islamic Revolution of Iran, under the charismatic, resolute, enlightened, and revolutionary leadership of Imam Khumayni , was inspired by the approach of the political interpretation of the movement of Karbala and the late leader had, from time to time, spoken to this effect. A collection of his speeches has been compiled and published under the title Qiyame Ashura dar Kalam wa Payam Imam Khumayni (The Ashura Movement in the Words and the Message of Imam Khumayni), is a must read for those interested in understanding Khomeini's political vision.

Like at one occasion, he said:

"When the Leader of the Martyrs (A.S.) arrived in Makkah, and when he left Makkah under those circumstances, it was a grand political move; all the moves of the Imam (A.S.) were political moves - religio-political (Islami-siyasi) moves; and it was this very religio-political move that that eliminated the Bani Umayyah, and but for this movement, Islam would have been crushed"

Elsewhere Imam Khumayni says:

The Leader of the Martyrs (A.S.) had also come in order to take over the rulership; in fact he come for this (purpose) and this is an honour. Those who think that the Leader of the Martyrs (A.S.) had also come in order to take over the rulership; in fact he had come for this (purpose) and this is an honour. Those who think that the Leader of the Martyrs (A.S.) had not come to take over the rulership (are mistaken); no, they had come for the rulership because rulership must lie in the hands of the likes of the Leader of the Martyrs (A.S.), in the hands of the likes of those who are the Shiah (followers) of the Leader of the Martyrs (A.S.)

The Iranian Islamic revolution transformed the country's foreign policy of maintaining good relations with the US, Israel, Europe, and US-friendly Middle Eastern regimes to one of confrontation with the West and Israel and of supporting Middle Eastern resistance movements aimed at overthrowing proWestern and secular oriented governments. Since the Islamic revolution the Iranian government has, for the most part, continuously followed an anti-US, non-alignment, and pro-South foreign policy, though parts of the Iranian political elite have adopted different foreign policy approaches in the course of time in response to domestic and external developments. Khomeini followed a confrontational and isolationist foreign policy that was very

much influenced by his own interpretation of Shi'i ideological doctrine. The following two presidents, Rafsanjani and Khatami followed a pragmatist approach toward foreign policy. Rafsanjani adopted a more pragmatic foreign policy orientation not least because of his attempt to improve the devastating economic situation of his country and to attract foreign investment. Khatami's presidency inaugurated important changes in Iranian foreign policy, especially improved relations with the EU. Since Ahmadinejad's election foreign policy has again shifted and more on the footings of Khomeini's philosophy of Revolution and tenets of Shia Islam.

President Ahmadinejad, who seems to be a hardliner has used a very hostile tone, especially against the US and Europe. In a short term Ahmadinejad complicates Iran's foreign relations, especially towards the West.

In the long term, however, the existence of different political factions and the presence of competing power centers—not Ahmadinejad—are the main obstacles to overcoming the paralysis in strategic thinking and foreign policy decision-making.

Another variable inlfluencing IRI's foreign policy is the political eliet of Iran. Iran's foreign policy is closely linked to the policy preferences of the Iranian ruling political elite and whichever particular group of the elite has power over political decision-making at any given point in time.

Changes in foreign policy are not a reflection of reforming the IRI's basic structure, but of meeting domestic, regional, and international challenges. Fundamental foreign policy reorientation requires the reform of Iran's entire political system. Until now, however, the prime objective of both foreign and domestic policy has been regime survival. The eventual outcome of the factional struggle for power will have a great impact on Iran's role in international affairs and

its foreign policy strategy: how it views the world, what policies it will choose in order to pursue its interests, and which resources it makes available to pursue its foreign policy goals.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Ideology and Rationality in IRI's foreign policy

Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and especially during the war that followed against Iraq, the media of the Western world have associated Iran mainly with eclipsed and irrational religious fundamentalism. Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy has been shaped by the country's national, regional and international relations and that it has been motivated primarily by rational or ideological issues through certain phases. In this context, special attention should be paid to the development of Iran's relations with the West – especially the United States – which will be decisive to great extent for the course of Iranian foreign policy in future.

2.2. Employing terms Pragmatism, Ideology and Rationality

When employing terms like 'pragmatism' and 'rationality' in a foreign policy context, it is of course important to point out that what might seem rational or pragmatic in relation to one actor can have the opposite effect in relation to another in the analysis.

Rationality and pragmatism are thus obviously not absolute qualities. Rationality or pragmatism, although inconsistent with the ideological teachings of the Islamic Revolution, are employed in order to ensure Iran a beneficial outcome.

2.3. Sentimentality and a Political Interpretation of Karbala

One of the dimensions of the Karbala incident is its sentimental angle. There is no doubt that with the martyrdom of the family members of the household of the Prophet (S.A.W.) at the

hands of a Muslim ruler (Khalifa), his supportive political elite of the time and a strong army and the brutal nature of the incident, the Karbala episode inflicted deep wound in the heart of the Shia Muslims and the sentimental effects of that incident immediately manifested within the Shi'ites. The Tawwabin (Penitents) were the first group to have been affected by this aspect of the incident and since they considered themselves guilty for their earlier actions of failing to come to the Imam's help in Karbala - in this case they chose the path of martyrdom without any clear political aspirations. Second is the emergence of Sunnized Sufi Islam wherin Imam Ali (AS) is the 'wali' i.e. Patron of all Muslim saints (mostly Ahle Bait).

Thus, it would be important to trace the effects of this sentimental-literary move in the Shiah community. Since then the name of Imam Husayn (A.S.) became inevitably attached with mourning and the Ashura incident came to be considered as the most significant tragedy of history. Mourning and visiting the blessed tomb of the Imam (A.S.) promised unlimited thawab (Divine reward). This sentimental angle gradually grew in dimension and the martyrdom anniversaries of the other Imams (A.S.), too, came to be considered as days of mourning and bears a great political significance in domestic politics of Iran, which is one variable that affect foreign policy making process of IRI.

A review of the sentimental dimensions of the Karbala incident could help us to shed more light on the subject under discussion.

2. 4.   Shi'sm role in Iranian Foreign Policy

With the increasing inclination of the Shi'ites towards the compromising policy of taqiyyah and their acceptance of the ruling system, the issue of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (A.S.) as being a sacrificial move for the Ummah, was interpreted by the revolutionary Shiahs as a move

that breathed strength into their struggle. At the same time, mourning and weeping over the incident rather than relating to it as the source of political awareness, popularly became the only recognized objective of Imam Husayn's (A.S.) movement and struggle. This trend can notably be observed from the titles of most of the Maqtals and the narrations written on the Karbala episode, viz., the Miftah al-Buka (The Keys to Tears), Tufan al-Buka (The Storm of Tears), Muhit al-Buka (The Ocean of Tears), Muthir al-Ahzan (The Evoker of Sorrows), Luhuf (Height of Grief). Interestingly, one rarely comes across a narration of the incident, suggesting gallant retribution; and the overall inclination is to render a lamenting, elegy like narration of the incidents that took place in Karbala.

Imam Khomeini used the institution of 'Uzadari' i.e. Mourning and referred to the Karballa as a revolt against a tyrant. Throughout Shi'ite history there have been people who have emphasized on the political aspect of the Karbala movement However, it would be important to identify the popularly predominant approach towards this tragedy in Iranian domestic politics and its implications for IRI's foreign policy making and decisions.

2.5.   Analysing History of Islam

Shiah - especially in Iran - became more political and social-oriented after the period of the Safavids (1501 CE). This was as a result of a closer and more serious interaction in politics. There was active interaction in the Safavid era but the Qajar rule in Iran resented this trend. At the time when the constitutional monarchy was faced with the crisis of a constitutional movement and there were talks of finding an alternative, the issue of the power of Wilayah became more serious even though it did not come to be defined into a social theory. From the angle of active political participation, following the constitutional movement, the ulama'

exhibited a kind of serious reaction. This was both because of its isolation as well as the pressure of the ruling power to remove religion from the general scene and to restrict it. At the same time there were some people who kept this flame burning. Religious sentiments reached new heights during Pahlavi's regime and Ulema were in a better position to exploit the situation.

All these events of history suggests that Shia ideology's birth took place from a controversy over 'who should be successor to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)' and has been used by its followers for political gains that included self protection and ending their isolationism in political affairs of the Muslim world.

There is a need to explore more about the history and development of Shia Islam over the centuries.

2.6. Khilafat and Imamat are two separate ideologies / institutions of Political Islam

Majority of Muslim world is comprised of Sunni Muslims who believe in 'taqlid' of caliphs whereas the minority Shia believe in Imamat. Both these are two separate things and present separate views on issues of Governance, foreign policy and envision political ideals which are greatly different from each other. It is evident from the fact that both the institutions clashed from time to time for political reasons and followers of both schools were victims of violence at the hands of both. One example in this regard is the tragic incident of Karballa.

Thus for the sake of political analysis and research one should not forget to explore for the different views, perspectives and path ways defined by Khilafat and Imamat separately to manage the affairs of state and the common junta.

2.7.   IRI's support for Shia of the World

One interesting aspect of this study would have been the support of Iran after revolution for the Shias of the other countries in the world. I did not got time to explore about this side of IRI's foreign policy in my study, however felt the need for it. This will inform the researcher about to what extent IRI really is the champion and willing advocate of Shia's rights, plight and targeting in some countries like Pakistan.

This is also important to note that why IRI's political elite failed to export revolution to other parts of the Muslim world which are mostly accommodating Sunnis more in number than Shias.

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