Conference Paper

Strategic Thinking of Ayatollah Khomeini in the Iranian Islamic Revolution

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ABSTRACT

The Iranian Islamic Revolution is one of the most critical events in the study of international relations. This revolution overthrew the ruling regime and gave rise to the Islamic Republic of Iran as a country that applies Islamic teachings as the basis of the state. The Iranian Islamic Revolution also signaled the relevance of the role of Islamic movements in socio-political movements. In addition, the Islamic Revolution of Iran also signifies the trend of desecularization that has characterized international relations for decades. The Islamic Republic of Iran has survived more than four decades despite external pressures. Ayatollah Khomeini was a critical actor in the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini's thoughts inspired the Iranian people to resist the regime's oppression. Ayatollah Khomeini's thoughts also inspired the Iranian people to accept the form of Iran as an Islamic state. This paper explores the relationship between Ayatollah Khomeini's strategic thinking and the Iranian Islamic Revolution. The method used in this research is qualitative by analyzing Ayatollah Khomeini's statements on religion and revolution.

Keywords: Revolution, religion, Shia, strategist

Introduction

In the Islamic world, several Islamic ideologues are spearheading several movements to restore the grandeur of Islam. Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Quthb, Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, and Abu a'la al-Maududi struggled with their respective methodologies, as is well known. Nonetheless, these Muslim ideologues failed to comprehend the idealism of the movement they supported. Hasan al-Banna was shot to death; the Egyptian government regime executed Quthb; Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani died before his excellent idea of restoring the caliphate was realized; and Maududi, who aspired to establish the Islamic state, was entrapped in Pakistan's domestic political reality. In addition, revolutionary methods such as those introduced by Quthb and several similar Islamic groups led to counterproductive actions by the Islamic movement. Their actions prompted the government to take repressive measures.

Consequently, the Islamic movement in that era declined. Oliver Roy refers to this phenomenon as the transition from revivalism to neo-fundamentalism within the Islamic movement. This phenomenon indicates that these Islamic movements have shifted from employing violent movement tactics to being extremely docile, inclined to cooperate with conditions, and more focused on forming personal religiosity. This trend is demonstrated by the post-Quthb Muslim Brotherhood movement led by Hudaibi, whose guiding principle was "We are da'i (Islamic preachers), not qadi (Islamic judges)."

On the other hand, the efforts of extremist organizations, such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant (ISIS), have failed to achieve their objectives. The struggle of these armed groups to establish an Islamic state or a caliphate did not garner the support of the larger community. In contrast, groups employing such extreme strategies have encountered

considerable opposition from both the Islamic and Western worlds. Counterterrorism and deradicalization measures are implemented to prevent these "extreme" groups from achieving their aims.

The opposite trend occurred in Iranian Shia Islam. When the Sunni Muslim movement weakened, the Shia Muslim movement in Iran experienced significance. It could even succeed in forming an Islamic state based on the principles of Islamic teachings from the Shia madhhab. The Iranian Islamic Revolution brought down the dictatorial Shah of the Iran regime and replaced a state system. As is known, Iran has been a monarchical state for several centuries. The Iranian Islamic Revolution replaced the existing monarchical order with a state based on clerical leadership and Islamic teachings. Therefore, the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran became an exciting phenomenon amid the trend of global political secularization and the failure of other Islamic movements to form a state order based on Islamic teachings. Another exciting thing about the success of the Iranian Islamic Revolution is that it affects Iran's internal affairs, the Middle East region, and the Islamic world in general. The Iranian Islamic Revolution revived the spirit of Islamic identity not only limited to the Shia world but also affected the Sunni Muslim movement. Some leaders of the Sunni movement, although disagreeing with some Shia's religious principles, still see the importance of the Iranian Islamic Revolution as an inspiration. They believe the revolution shows that the Islamic movement can be successfully realized and is not a utopian idea.

The Iranian Islamic Revolution has also inspired Islamic movements in the Arab world. Even the success of the Iranian Islamic Revolution sparked the sending of a delegation from the Hizbut Tahrir group to offer the concept of the caliphate to the leader of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. Iran's Islamic Revolution has survived to be manifested in its form as the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has lasted more than four decades. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has been subjected to embargoes and pressures in various forms from the Western world, it has remained steadfast in maintaining the identity of the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Important principles such as government under the guidance of clerics are still maintained in Iran today. Ayatollah Khomeini became an influential cleric who played a significant role in Iran's Islamic Revolution. This paper intends to elaborate on Ayatollah Khomeini's role as a movement strategist who encouraged the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Material and Methods

This qualitative study collects data from literature and other relevant sources. This article examines Ayatollah Khomeini's strategic reasoning. This investigation analyzes and draws conclusions based on Ayatollah Khomeini's statements from various types of literature. The characteristics of a strategist are as listed below. A strategist has a comprehensive comprehension of the situation he encounters. After identifying and abstracting the situation, a strategist can restructure the extant conditions' elements to find a solution. Strategists can find inventive solutions to the problems they confront. The capacity for analytical thought is essential to this endeavor. The stages can be simplified as follows: identifying concrete phenomena, grouping problems, abstracting problems, and deciding on an approach. (Ohmae, 1982). In a sociopolitical context, a strategist must have extensive knowledge of the social and political issues facing the movement, the ability to identify the movement's strengths and weaknesses and the sociopolitical environment that affects it, creativity in designing innovative and effective strategies, the ability to communicate and lead effectively, and the ability to adapt strategies to changing conditions.

In social movements, individuals or collective actors must develop cognitive capacities to comprehend people, the environment, and the social movement's outline and mobilize people to participate in the social movement's outline. These social skills pertain to persuading others to participate in collective action. This ability is utilized by those who wish to maintain the status quo while establishing a new order. Those who wish to maintain the current situation persuade others to do so. As for those who wish to alter the established order, this ability is used to construct

a group identity. This ability also creates coalitions or sufficient authority to establish a new order. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011).

Results and Discussion
The strategic role of Ayatollah Khomeini

Iran effectively transformed a monarchy into a republic led by a religious leader as a result of the revolution. The Islamic Revolution in Iran began with a lengthy chain of causes. The revolution began in 1977 and culminated in 1979 with the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. Numerous causes contributed to the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It was caused, among other things, by the Shah of Iran's mismanagement of the country. With his legacy of secular vision, the Shah of Iran aspired to transform Iran into a modern Western-style state. The Shah of Iran enacted numerous policies to accomplish this objective, including the White Revolution, industrialization, secularization, and Westernization. However, these policies were enforced and implemented from the top down. In addition, the Shah of Iran had an authoritarian leadership style and was rumored to have possessed a covert police organization called SAVAK.

The policies of the Shah of Iran tended to be contradictory. For instance, the White Revolution's land reform policy of the White Revolution, which prioritized the welfare of farmers, was followed by an industrialization-focused development strategy. Industrialization caused a significant migration from rural areas to urban areas.

Consequently, there was a decline in the number of agricultural employees who moved to urban areas as migrant laborers. Industrialization diminished the number of positions in the agricultural sector and produced a labor force in the industrial sector. Urbanization caused destitution and slums in the main cities of Iran. The social system of the Iranian people has also been altered by industrialization. The middle class and the clergy opposed the policies of the White Revolution because they believed that land reform would diminish their sources of income. In the 1970s, the Shah of Iran neglected to address Iran's economic problems, inflation, and unemployment (Harmon, 2005).

Students, laborers, the middle class, and farmers, among others, began to oppose the Shah of Iran due to this circumstance. During the reign of the Shah, Iran was also known to have adopted many Western cultural elements that conflicted with the Iranian people's traditional and religious values. The Shah of Iran also courted controversy with his preference for imperial identity over religious identity. The Shah of Iran, for instance, rechristened himself emperor and supplanted the Islamic calendar with the Persian imperial calendar. In addition, the Shah of Iran celebrated his birthday and the birthday of the Persian empire in Persepolis. The Shah of Iran invested over $100 million in these endeavors.

Regarding foreign policy, the Shah of Iran was also controversial. Under the regime of the Shah of Iran, Iran was viewed as being too near to the United States and Israel, two countries viewed as enemies of Muslims. These various policies provided the impetus for widespread opposition to the Shah of Iran's regime (Harmon, 2005).

Some academicians and clerics were able to perceive the unrest of the populace. Ayatollah Khomeini was one of the influential individuals who understood the situation, acted appropriately, and responded to the oppression of the Shah of Iran's government. Since the late 1940s, Ayatollah Khomeini had been a vocal opponent of the Shah of Iran's regime. Ayatollah Khomeini may have concluded that the Shah of Iran's future behavior and policies to secularize and Westernize Iranian society would not differ from those of his predecessor. Additionally, the Shah of Iran opposed clerics who were not considered progressive.

The vision of Ayatollah Khomeini was vindicated when the Shah of Iran's regime viciously assaulted the clergy, claiming that the clergy lacked a long-term vision for the country's future. The regime of the Shah of Iran even mobilized its forces against religious institutions and exiled several clerics, including Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khomeini was compelled to relocate to France, Turkey, and Iraq. Despite his exile, Ayatollah Khomeini continued communicating his

concepts to his Iranian adherents via recorded media. Messages of resistance were disseminated via audio recordings, then distributed in Iran's religious centers. People's sympathy for the clerics, particularly Ayatollah Khomeini, was sparked by the Shah of Iran's regime's policy of exiling them.

Ayatollah Khomeini was a vocal opponent of the Shah of Iran's regime, which helped Ayatollah Khomeini gain widespread support among the Iranian people. This broad support peaked in 1977 when Mustafa, Ayatollah Khomeini's son, died and the Shah's secret police, SAVAK, was accused of murdering him. In addition, Iranian military forces killed 88 demonstrators in January 1978. The incident sparked a tremendous surge of revolution, with Ayatollah Khomeini exiled as France's prominent leader. The revolution reached its zenith in 1979 when the Shah of Iran was deposed and Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran. Finally, Ayatollah Khomeini effectively established the Islamic Republic of Iran following a referendum conducted by the Iranian people.

The strategic thinking of Ayatollah Khomeini

In sociopolitical matters, a need exists for strategists. It is not necessary to passively await the advent of a "savior" to fight for a sociopolitical agenda; rather, a strategist who can respond to complex sociopolitical realities is required. This strategy can also be applied to the Iranian Islamic Revolution, where Ayatollah Khomeini mobilized opposition to the governing regime as a strategist.

The Iranian people resided under the Shah of Iran's regime during the lifetime of Ayatollah Khomeini. People were oppressed and dissatisfied with the policies and figures of a Shah deemed unfavorable to the Iranian populace. The Iranian people found the policies of the Shah of Iran, which sought to make Iran one of the most developed nations in the world, to be counterproductive. People face extreme destitution, unemployment, urbanization, inflation, and identity crises. However, Iranian society is also confronted with the actuality of the authoritarian Shah regime, which is reinforced by SAVAK units.

Ayatollah Khomeini demonstrated his abilities as a political strategist. Ayatollah Khomeini could interpret the sociopolitical situation of Iranian society at the time. The problems encountered by Iranian society at the time were multifaceted and spanned multiple sectors. The laborers, peasants, students, technocrats, and clerics of Iran's society confronted various problems on their own. Nonetheless, Ayatollah Khomeini could identify the core of these intricate issues. In essence, Ayatollah Khomeini read about the turmoil of Iranian society due to the loss of identity brought about by the industrialization, modernization, and westernization programs, as well as the failure of the three programs' success. These three programs are the root causes of many societal problems. Shah Pahlevi's ambition to make Iran a technologically sophisticated nation capable of competing internationally proved counterproductive.

On the other hand, the majority Shia population of Iran tended to await the advent of the 12th Imam, for whom the Shia community had been waiting for millennia. The 12th Imam is Imam Mahdi, who, according to the Shia community, is God's prophesied Imam. The Imam is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad who will deliver peace and justice to humanity. Nevertheless, the Imam is currently in occultation. The Shia are more likely to believe in messianic visions than to engage in a unified and concrete resistance against the Shah of Iran.

This vision was altered by Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khomeini embraced the concept of Imam Mahdi, but he believed that the people's problems must be resolved without waiting for the Mahdi's advent. Ayatollah Khomeini can act strategically by transforming the passive waiting for the arrival of Imam Mahdi by Shia adherents into an active waiting against injustice in preparation for the arrival of Imam Mahdi at the end of the world. While waiting for the advent of Ayatollah Khomeini Mahdi at the end of time, it is essential to have a government based on clerical authority. During the occultation, this government based on clerical authority is positioned as a representative of Ayatollah Khomeini Mahdi, not as a replacement for the Mahdi. The sociopolitical movement must therefore be active. In another speech, Ayatollah Khomeini

criticized some who passively awaited the arrival of Imam Mahdi to establish Islam. As Ayatollah Khomeini (2000) said:

"It is our duty to preserve Islam. This duty is one of the most important obligations incumbent upon us; it is more necessary even than prayer and fasting. It is for the sake of fulfilling this duty that blood must sometimes be shed. There is no blood more precious than that of Imām Husayn ('a), yet it was shed for the sake of Islam because of the precious nature of Islam. We must understand this matter well and convey it to others. You can be the true successors to the Prophet (s) as the guardians of Islam only if you teach Islam to the people; do not say, "We will wait until the coming of the Imām of the Age ('a)." Would you consider postponing your prayer until the coming of the Imām? The preservation of Islam is even more important than prayer."

Still related to this statement, Ayatollah Khomeini also stated that since God did not indicate a specific name to form an Islamic government during the occultation of Imam Mahdi, the religious community in this statement, Ayatollah Khomeini criticized the understanding of some parties who became pacifists waiting for the arrival of Imam Mahdi to uphold the teachings of Islam. On the contrary, Ayatollah Khomeini reminded that Imam Husayn's struggle against the oppressive government exemplifies how Muslims should remain active in the struggle.

In this case, there is an intersection between Khomeini's thoughts and Ali Shariati's. Ali Shariati has the same concept of dividing Shia into two "schools." The first "school" is Safavid Shi'ism, taught by traditional Shia scholars. According to Shariati, this Shia is more attached to the legitimacy of royal power and the establishment. According to Shariati, Shias must return to the original Shia, namely Ali's Shi'ism, a genuine Shia sect based on the teachings of the Prophet and the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt. Ali's Shi'ism teaches its followers to be progressive, dynamic, and agile. Both Khomeini and Shariati emphasized that the Mahdi's non-return to the world does not mean that people do not think about politics but, on the contrary, act concretely for what is happening. Therefore, Ayatollah Khomeini was actively engaged in Iranian politics. Ayatollah Khomeini offered a solution to Iran's problems. The solution offered is to return to the identity of Imam Ali's Shiism as a dynamic, revolutionary Shiite movement that can solve the people's problems.

The methods carried out by Ayatollah Khomeini were quite strategic. Ayatollah Khomeini knew the situation of the Iranian people, most of whom were Shia. Therefore, as a great Shiite cleric in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini used Shiite symbols in the struggle against the Shah of Iran's regime. Some of the steps Ayatollah Khomeini took during his exile through his followers in Iran would spread the ideas of revolution through congregational prayers, Friday prayer sermons, and community gatherings commemorating death rituals. As an illustration, more specifically, Ayatollah Khomeini spread the idea of revolution through the celebration of Ashura Day by the Iranian Shia community. Ashura Day is a celebration of the death of Imam Hussein AS (Grandson of the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad), who was massacred by Yazid bin Muawiy-yah's troops in the 8th century AD. The celebration has so far only been interpreted as a kind of mourning assembly in memory of Imam Husayn's death. However, for Ayatollah Khomeini, the Ashura assembly is a reminder of the struggle against oppression. The momentum of the Day of Ashura is the momentum against the oppression of the tyrannical ruler.

One of Ayatollah Khomeini's statements related to this can be seen in the Ayatollah's speech on November 28, 1978, where the date coincided with the beginning of the month of Muharram, the month in which the events of Ashura occurred several centuries ago. In his speech, Ayatollah Khomeini stated that the month of Muharram is a time of heroism. This month symbolizes the resistance of Imam Husayn against the tyrannical regime of Yazid bin Muawiyah. The month of Muharram reminds us that any despotic power must be resisted. Resistance must be waged even when the forces are unequal, and we must sacrifice ourselves and our blood (Khomeini, 2005).

Furthermore, Ayatollah Khomeini analogized the injustice of Yazid bin Muawiyah to Shah's regime in modern Iran. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shah of Iran's regime has committed injustice and arbitrariness against the entire Iranian people and violated the Shari'ah in various

fields. Therefore, Ayatollah Khomeini called on all components of society - such as journalists, teachers, merchants, farmers, and the working class, to resist the injustice of Shah Pahlevi. Khomeini's followers interpreted the commemoration of the Ashura event as a momentum to spread the idea of resisting the tyranny of the Shah of Iran and identifying the Shah of Iran with Yazid bin Muawiyah (Khomeini, 2005).

On another occasion, Ayatollah Khomeini emphasized that Islam is a revolutionary religion with a message of liberation. Islam is a religion that challenges all forms of oppression and colonialism. Muslims have no other choice but to fight the tyrannical government regime. Surrendering to injustice is worse than the injustice itself. Ayatollah Khomeini also reminded us that historically, Friday prayers could mobilize the people and inspire them to join the fight in defense of religion. Anti-Islamic forces in whatever form are atheist forces and instruments of Satan. Muslims have no choice but to fight such forces. On a practical level, the Ummah must fight against government regimes that are not based on the teachings of Islam. Such government regimes are the source of defiance, oppression, deviation, and injustice. Every Muslim worldwide must lead the revolution to victory (Salemson, 1985).

As a strategist, Ayatollah Khomeini also provided a state concept. Ayatollah Khomeini proposed wilayat-faqih, a state based on clerical authority, as a concrete step. In 1970, when Ayatollah Khomeini was in exile, the concept of wilayat faqih was published. Following the collapse of the Shah, the Iranian people supported this idea. A referendum on the form of the post-Shah Iranian state revealed that more than 99 percent of Iranians supported the Islamic state's fundamental structure and constitution.

The conception of the state is found in a series of speeches given by Ayatollah Khomeini between January and February 1970, when he resided in Najaf. The speeches were subsequently incorporated into the book Islamic Government: Jurist Governance. Fundamentally, the book asserts that an Islamic system of government is required to implement Islamic law. Only an Islamic state is capable of implementing Islamic sharia (Khomeini, 2000).

Other forms, such as Western states and monarchies, cannot implement Islamic sharia. Imposing Western-style laws on Iran is a source of the difficulty. Ayatollah Khomeini is regarded as kufr in all non-Islamic governmental systems. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, this form of the Islamic state is neither a monarchy nor an empire, and there is no oppression or pillage. This state's constitution and legislative sources must be based on Islamic law. Ayatollah Khomeini rejected the separation of religion and politics. This separation system is considered an atheistic system. Implementing laws based on religious teachings requires the participation of religious authorities in a country. Real leaders of the nation are religious leaders. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, clerics serve the same function as the sacred Imams in protecting the sharia. Establishing a government and enforcing the law, therefore, requires the formation of a state. Ayatollah Khomeini also emphasized that during the occultation of Imam Mahdi, the Islamic order must be maintained so that the need for government remains. The establishment of an Islamic state also functions to liberate Islamic territories under colonialist control. This idealistic proposal for an Islamic state went counter to the actuality of the Shah of Iran's oppressive regime.

Ayatollah Khomeini also presented several narratives that contradicted the Shah of Iran's administration, such as in Iran-Israel relations. Ayatollah Khomeini believed that relations with Israel could not be legitimated because Israel is an illegitimate state that colonizes Palestinians. Various types of literature document Ayatollah Khomeini's resolute pronouncements. In 1971, Ayatollah Khomeini urged Muslims worldwide to fight Israel, which had been identified as a common enemy. Ayatollah Khomeini made an intriguing connection between Israel and the Shah of Iran's regime. Ayatollah Khomeini stated that the Zionist controlled Iran's political, military, and economic aspects with the assistance of the Shah of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini subsequently called on all Muslims to combat Israeli imperialism and the tyrannical regime that had become an agent of the Israeli state.

Ayatollah Khomeini's participation in the revolutionary movement as a strategist is also noteworthy. Due to exile, the Ayatollah was absent from the nation for several years. However, Ayatollah Khomeini did not cease advocating revolutionary concepts to the Iranian people. Moreover, when Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled to France, he saw this as an opportunity to appear internationally and disseminate information about what was happening in Iran under the Shah of Iran's regime. Ayatollah Khomeini intended to return to Iran after the Shah's overthrow in January 1979, despite opposition from the Iranian prime minister at the time. Ayatollah Khomeini dared to return to Iran and greet millions of his supporters. Ayatollah Khomeini proclaimed the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which the Iranian people adapted via referendum. Additionally, Ayatollah Khomeini was designated Iran's paramount leader. At the time, Ayatollah Khomeini was regarded as a spiritual-political leader who deserved to guide the Iranian people. As a paramount leader, Ayatollah Khomeini led the Islamic Republic of Iran with extensive authority. Ayatollah Khomeini successfully established Iran as one of the regional hegemons in the Middle East. Ayatollah Khomeini became one of the world's most influential individuals. His revolutionary thoughts helped radicalize the Islamic world (Coughlin, 2010).

Ayatollah Khomeini knew what problems existed, what objectives were to be accomplished, and how they were to be accomplished. Ayatollah Khomeini did not want to wait for the Mahdi's arrival alone to address the existing problems. The act of awaiting the Mahdi is not passive. In contrast, waiting for the Mahdi should be conducted actively. Ayatollah Khomeini participated in the Islamic Revolution alongside the Iranian people. Ayatollah Khomeini proposes a concrete solution, namely a form of wilayat faqih state. Shia symbols became a crucial aspect of Ayatollah Khomeini's fight. Ayatollah Khomeini benefited from his position as a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through the line of Imam Musa al-Kazim because his ideas were associated with the Shia identity in Iran. This principle inspires courage, inventiveness, and principled steadfastness as indispensable qualities for a strategist.

Conclusion

Ayatollah Khomeini's actions were those of a modern-day strategist. Ayatollah Khomeini recognized that the Shah of Iran's attempt to make Iran a globally competitive nation through modernization, westernization, and industrialization was counterproductive. Ayatollah Khomeini knew and could identify the numerous problems in Iran, derived the problem's essence from a sequence of events, and devised a comprehensive solution. Additionally, Ayatollah Khomeini could establish a collective identity, utilize religious identity, and communicate with various people segments. Ayatollah Khomeini utilized his social skills to form coalitions and establish a new order to replace the old order. Through a referendum, Ayatollah Khomeini convinced the Iranian people of his ideological offer to establish an Islamic state. Ayatollah Khomeini actively propagated the resistance narrative against the Shah of Iran regime. Ayatollah Khomeini utilized numerous religiously-based metaphors and symbols to glorify the resistance revolution.

Acknowledgment

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