



The Cultural and Value-Based Nature of the Foreign Policy of the Islamic State from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini (r. a)

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Abstract

This study aims to explain and analyse the nature of the foreign policy of the Islamic state as conceptualized by Imam Khomeini (r.a). A review of Imam Khomeini's views and perspectives on the foreign policy of the Islamic state demonstrates that its primary nature is rooted in cultural and value-based elements. Consequently, all other dimensions of foreign policy are defined within the framework of Islamic culture and values. This perspective underscores the importance of soft power in the foreign policy of the Islamic state. The present study employs a descriptive-analytical method, utilizing documentary and library research, to address the core question: "What is the nature of the foreign policy of the Islamic state from the perspective of Imam Khomeini (r.a)?" The hypothesis examined is that the foreign policy of the Islamic state, from Imam Khomeini's viewpoint, has a cultural and value-based essence. The findings reveal that Imam Khomeini's theoretical foundations concerning humanity, politics, and the fundamental elements of the Islamic state's foreign policy, including its strategies and objectives, are inherently linked to culture and spirituality. Understanding the nature of foreign policy from Imam Khomeini's perspective serves as a guide for decision-makers and policymakers in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Keywords: Imam Khomeini, culture, foreign-policy.

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Introduction

The study of the foreign policy of the Islamic state from Imam Khomeini's perspective is an integral part of his broader thought system. Understanding this perspective can significantly contribute to the conceptual and theoretical exploration of the foreign policies of Islamic states, including Iran. Foreign policy, as a concept, is influenced by both domestic and international environments, aiming to secure a country's national objectives and interests in the external domain. Here, the worldview regarding the international environment plays a critical role in shaping foreign policy. If the essence of politics is perceived through a realist lens as the pursuit of material power, then foreign policy assumes a materialistic nature. However, if ethical aspects are emphasized, foreign policy becomes largely value-based. Since the foreign policy of the Islamic state, according to Imam Khomeini, is fundamentally cultural and value-oriented, its strategies and objectives must also reflect this nature. The hypothesis of this article posits that the foreign policy of the Islamic state, as well as its strategies and objectives, are inherently cultural from Imam Khomeini's perspective. Using qualitative content analysis of Imam Khomeini's writings and speeches, this study employs a descriptive-analytical method based on documentary research to address the main question: "What is the nature of the foreign policy of the Islamic state from Imam Khomeini's perspective?" Hence, the importance of culture and its role in the strategies and objectives as constitutive elements of the foreign policy of the Islamic state from Imam Khomeini's viewpoint is examined.

Literature Review and Research Innovation

Despite the publication of numerous works on Imam Khomeini's thought and foreign policy in recent years, one aspect that requires more attention is his value-based and cultural approach to foreign policy. Although there is an abundance of books, articles, and documents on the foreign policy of the Islamic state and Imam Khomeini's political thought, the specific cultural nature of the foreign policy of the Islamic state has not been comprehensively analysed in an independent and cohesive study. Instead, existing works often include scattered and general references. This study is the first to systematically analyse Imam Khomeini's thought from this particular perspective.

Conceptual Framework

Since the 1970s, the role of culture in international relations and foreign policy has gained significant importance. Scholars such as Samuel Huntington, Edward Said, Francis Fukuyama, and Marcel Merle have emphasized the role of culture in the foreign policies of nations. Similarly, constructivist theories and the tools of soft power highlight the significance of culture in foreign policy. Based on

Imam Khomeini's intellectual, political, and social foundations, this study seeks to explore his cultural perspectives on the foreign policy of the Islamic state. The research employs a descriptive-analytical and qualitative method.

The Concept of Culture

The term "culture" has numerous meanings in lexicons. It refers to education, knowledge, science, manners, customs, a collection of sciences and arts, and linguistic dictionaries of one or more languages (Aryanpour, 1973: 12). In Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, culture signifies knowledge, science, and moral virtues, aligning with ethical traits. The term also parallels concepts like intellectual refinement and class identity, denoting attributes such as being well-mannered, erudite, studious, socially adept, and morally upright (Ruh al-Amini, 1995: 145). The most prevalent sociological definition of culture is provided by Bruce Cohen, who describes it as: "Culture refers to the ways of life that individuals in a society learn, participate in, and transmit from one generation to the next. It encompasses cognitive, material, and organizational elements." The cognitive dimension includes values, ideologies, and knowledge. The material dimension encompasses technical skills, arts, tools, and other physical objects used by members of a society. The organizational rules of culture include norms, systems, and customs expected to be followed during daily activities (Julius, 1997: 631, 267). Undoubtedly, the essence of society lies in its culture, and social scientists assert that the foundation of culture is rooted in values. Values give a society its unique identity and governing principles. Cohen explains that values are deep-seated beliefs a social group refers to when determining what is good, bad, or ideal (Bruce Cohen, 1993: 73). Hence, the foundation of culture rests on values, as society is essentially the embodiment of the interactions and behaviours of individuals, which take shape only through reliance on culture. The underlying system of behaviour is defined by values (Maryaji, 2018: 65-66).

Material and Non-Material Culture

Culture can be divided into two categories: material and non-material (or spiritual). Material culture refers to tangible, observable phenomena that can be measured quantitatively and scientifically. Non-material or spiritual culture encompasses qualitative aspects that cannot be easily quantified or compared, such as customs, ethics, beliefs, literary, artistic, and intellectual works, as well as general knowledge. These elements, often transmitted through language and writing, form the spiritual culture of a society, constituting its cultural identity. Losing or borrowing these elements threatens the ethnicity and nationality of any social group. Imam Khomeini's view of culture is fundamentally rooted in Islamic teachings. Islam regards humans as the noblest of all creations and defines the goal of culture in human society as the spiritual growth of the

community, guiding them toward closeness to God and ultimate perfection. Imam Khomeini considered the primary aim of Islamic culture to be the purposeful development of individuals in all dimensions of their being (Imam Khomeini, 2000, Vol. 8, p. 52). Thus, Imam Khomeini regarded culture as a collection of religious beliefs and values that pave the way for the spiritual flourishing of society.

Definition of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is defined as the set of policies, measures, methods, and positions adopted by a government in dealing with foreign matters and issues within the framework of the overarching objectives of its political system (Mohammadi, 2011: 18). In other words, foreign policy reflects a government's goals and strategies on the international stage in its relations with other states, societies, international organizations, movements, foreign individuals, and global events (Moradpour Dehnavi, 2016: 18).

1. The Importance of Culture from Imam Khomeini's Perspective

Imam Khomeini considered culture the foundation of all matters and believed that a deviation in a country's culture would lead to a deviation in all other areas. He stated: "If there is a cultural deviation in a country, even if all its organizations and authorities adhere to human and divine paths, value the independence and freedom of the nation, and pursue those ideals, cultural deviation will eventually dominate and lead everyone into deviation, willingly or unwillingly" (Esfandiari, 2006).

From Imam Khomeini's perspective, the importance of culture stems from two primary reasons:

- 1) Its role in shaping the identity and existence of society and individuals.
- 2) Its influence on the progress or decline of societies.

He emphasized that culture is the highest and most fundamental element that defines the existence of a society. Furthermore, he asserted that culture is the origin of all prosperity and adversity for a nation. In his thought, culture has a profound scope encompassing all behaviours and attitudes. While culture is commonly defined as the collection of traditions and customs within a society, Imam Khomeini viewed Islamic culture as transcending these conventional definitions provided by scholars. He described culture as a "factory where humans are manufactured" stating: "Culture is a factory for creating human beings... Culture is a shadow of prophethood" (Imam Khomeini, 1999, Vol. 6, pp. 236–237). Imam Khomeini regarded culture as a strategic matter, declaring: "The head of all reforms is the reform of culture" (Imam Khomeini, 1999, Vol. 10, p. 356).

1-1. A Cultural Approach to Society and Politics

Although Imam Khomeini, based on Islamic teachings, considered humans as the centre of existence and the purpose of creation as the happiness and perfection of humanity, he acknowledged the profound impact of society on human integrity or corruption. He believed that the primary goal of all prophets was the reform of society and that individuals, no matter how significant, must sacrifice themselves for the welfare of society. He articulated: "All prophets came for the reform of society. Every one of them emphasized that the individual must be sacrificed for the community. No matter how great the individual is - even the highest individual whose worth surpasses all else in the world - if they come into conflict with the interests of society, that individual must be sacrificed. Imam Husayn made this sacrifice, offering himself and his companions for the principle that the individual must be sacrificed for society, and society must be reformed" (Imam Khomeini, 1999, Vol. 15, p. 217). Although from Imam Khomeini's perspective, society takes precedence over the individual and is prioritized, this is ultimately for the individual's own happiness and perfection. The emphasis on the importance of society stems from the profound impact it has on the righteousness or corruption of the individual. (Fouzi, 2005: 133) Moreover, the cultural approach highlights the centrality of a society's identity, which is closely tied to its culture. Among the various elements constituting identity, Imam Khomeini places significant emphasis on the role of culture, considering it the most critical element of a society's identity and existence. He states: "The culture of any society fundamentally constitutes the identity and existence of that society." (Imam Khomeini, 1999, vol. 15, p. 160). For Imam Khomeini, the ideal culture is one rooted in Islam and Islamic values. Hence, he underscores the role of culture in society, even referring to the Islamic Revolution as a cultural revolution. He advocated for shaping and nurturing Iranian society based on Islamic culture, asserting that unless a society's culture is reformed, the society itself cannot be reformed. (Imam Khomeini, 1999: 135-136). From Imam's viewpoint, human beings are divine creations placed in the world to fulfil divine goals. Humans possess an innate nature endowed by God, containing both positive and negative, divine and satanic potentials in latent form. (Imam Khomeini, 1999: 146-147) He considers humanity itself as the root of all successes and failures, happiness and misery. Human perceptions are almost boundless, and their objectives and aspirations are similarly limitless. As Imam Khomeini articulates: "Humans are not like animals that are confined to an animalistic limit. Humanity surpasses the boundaries of the animal and even the rational, ascending to a station that cannot be adequately expressed." (Imam Khomeini, 1999, vol. 4, p. 186). Humans, therefore, have the potential to achieve the highest levels of perfection and spiritual ranks.

1-2. Imam Khomeini's Cultural Approach to Foreign Policy

Imam Khomeini's cultural approach to foreign policy stems from his epistemological, ontological, and anthropological principles. In foreign policy, the behaviour of its agents is of primary concern. Based on his anthropological principles, Imam Khomeini offered a distinctive perspective on existing politics. He connected foreign policy and the behaviour of its agents to individuals who are either self-disciplined and pious or corrupt and oppressive. Guided by his mystical and ethical worldview, Imam Khomeini placed great emphasis on the inner nature, dispositions, character, and actions of humans. In his works, Imam Khomeini addressed humanity in various contexts: as an individual, as a leader or policymaker, and as members of a society. He observed that these individuals, based on their positions, could influence domestic and foreign policies to varying degrees. (Sotoudeh, 1999: 261–262) Regarding human creation, he stated: "Know that humanity is a marvel with two dimensions and two realms: the external, worldly, physical realm, which is the body, and the internal, mystical, spiritual realm, which belongs to another world." (Imam Khomeini, 1996: 5). Imam Khomeini identified three internal forces within humans—imagination, anger, and desire—as the sources of all virtuous and evil traits as well as the origins of all spiritual forms. Excess or deficiency in any of these is harmful. Referring to a narration from Imam Sadiq (pbuh), "Anger is the key to all evils," Imam Khomeini explained: "Most significant turmoil and heinous actions result from anger. In a state of mental stability, one must fear their angry state." (Imam Khomeini, 1996: 133, 137). He linked the aggressive foreign policies of puppet states and major powers to their inner forces and lack of self-discipline. Critiquing such behaviours, he remarked: "Whoever gains power oppresses others, and whoever resists them faces even greater brutality. A slight disagreement leads to wars and chaos. This force of anger in humans is such that if one gains absolute power over a nation, they will desire another. Power only amplifies this force. Anyone who denies this can observe themselves and the statesmen and powerful figures in this world, such as monarchs and wealthy individuals. Humanity is always drawn to what it does not possess." (Imam Khomeini, 1996: 19) Imam attributed the foreign policy orientation during the Pahlavi era to psychological issues in Reza Shah, his son, and corrupt politicians. He remarked: "Their actions stem from an internal issue: humanity is inherently limitless. Their aspirations are infinite and unending. When someone is enslaved by these infinite aspirations and sees a superpower preserving their material desires and dominance over their nation, they care little for the people's welfare. They belong to the privileged and powerful class, which knows no boundaries in their greed for wealth and status." (Imam Khomeini, 1985: 160–161) He identified aggressive foreign policies and the

interference of major powers in Third World and Islamic nations as the result of rulers who, in their pursuit of power and material gain, disregard their people's welfare. (Imam Khomeini, 1985: 175) From his perspective, the turmoil in today's world, including wars and bloodshed, is caused by undisciplined individuals. (Sotoudeh, 1999: 264) Imam Khomeini linked both World Wars and other global disasters to the presence of weapons in the hands of corrupt individuals. He asserted: "When a politician lacks moral and human principles, they become a thug—not a neighbourhood thug, but one who wreaks havoc on vast regions of the world. The Prophetic saying, 'When a scholar is corrupt, the world is corrupted,' finds its ultimate manifestation in such political scholars. If these individuals were removed, the world would be more peaceful." (Imam Khomeini, 1999, vol. 18, pp. 237–238) According to Imam Khomeini, if a self-disciplined individual, one who follows the Prophets' teachings, were to lead, the foreign policy would adhere to the principle of "neither East nor West." This principle is deeply rooted in the "straight path" philosophy. He explained the concept of the "straight path" in foreign policy as follows: "The Almighty Lord, in the capacity of the All-Encompassing Name and the Lord of Humanity, is on the straight path, as stated: 'Indeed, my Lord is on a straight path.'" (Imam Khomeini, 1996: 531). Imam Khomeini, while discussing the verse, "Is he who walks prone on his face better guided, or he who walks upright on a straight path?" (Surah Al-Mulk, verse 22), said: "*In the traditions regarding this verse, the 'straight path' has been interpreted as referring to the Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali) and the Holy Imams, peace be upon them.*" (Imam Khomeini, 1996: 533). Imam considered the believers to be followers of the Perfect Human (Insaan e Kamil), who place their steps where his steps are and traverse their path under the light of his guidance and the lamp of his knowledge. (Imam Khomeini, 1996: 531). The starting point for Imam's perspective on politics is humanity and its behaviour. From his viewpoint, just as there is a straight path for humans, there is also a straight path for governments and rulers, which is manifested in foreign policy as the "Neither East nor West" doctrine. If a government follows the straight path, its strategies, principles, goals, and foreign relations will continue the mission of the prophets, peace be upon them. While considering the domestic and international environmental factors influencing foreign policy, Imam emphasized strengthening public beliefs, raising awareness among nations, and awakening the masses to achieve the goals of an Islamic state's foreign policy. (Setudeh, 1999: 274). In this regard, principles like invitation, loyalty and disassociation, the principle of "La Tanfiz," softening hearts, opposition to oppression and submissiveness, and the establishment of a new world order based on Islamic teachings and human nature become central. These principles play a pivotal role

in shaping the foreign policy strategies and goals of the Islamic government, as discussed further below.

2. The Role of Culture in Foreign Policy Strategies from Imam Khomeini's Perspective

2-1. The Strategy of Unity and Alliance

This strategy involves states or groups of states accepting mutual commitments through alliances or coalitions (Qavam, 2003: 180). According to the principle of “La Tanfiz” (denying the authority of non-believers over Muslims), the Islamic Republic (Islamic State) believes that no Muslim should be under the domination of a non-believer. This principle, rooted in Islamic identity, creates both opportunities and constraints in foreign policy. On the one hand, it facilitates relations with other Islamic countries, and on the other, it imposes limitations on adopting international norms and dealing with non-Muslims. This element significantly influences the identity, behaviour, and actions of the Islamic government’s foreign policy (Pourahmadi, 2010: 345). A review of Islamic sources reveals that the only way to achieve the lofty goals of an Islamic government - which are essentially the goals of Islam - and the only path toward forming a unified global community (“*Indeed, this nation of yours is one nation*”), is through unity and solidarity among Islamic countries. Imam Khomeini strongly emphasized the importance of unity among Muslims, repeatedly highlighting it in his statements. He considered it one of the aspirations of Muslims and one of the programs of the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy as a model for an Islamic state. On this subject, he stated: “*We are prepared to defend Islam and Islamic countries and their independence. Our program, which is Islam’s program, is the unity of Muslims, the union of Islamic countries, and brotherhood with all Muslim groups worldwide. It includes alliances with all Islamic governments globally against Zionism, against Israel, and against imperialist powers...*” (Imam Khomeini, 2008, vol. 1, pp. 336-337). The Imam aspired for a world where an Islamic state composed of independent republics could be formed. He envisioned the creation of a global mobilization of Muslims. In one of his warnings, he said: “*If a global mobilization of Muslims had been established, would anyone dare to show such audacity and wickedness toward the spiritual descendants of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh)*” (Imam Khomeini, 2008, vol. 2, p. 244). An Islamic government, like the one in Iran, can pursue the global goals of Islam by participating in the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and international organizations. This is achievable through the strategy of unity and alliance. From Imam’s perspective, the only way to save Muslims and the oppressed of the world from foreign powers and superpowers

is through unity among Muslims. It is only under the shadow of unity that they can voice their oppression to the world and pursue their national and religious interests globally. Additionally, by adopting the strategy of unity, they can pave the way for establishing a global unified community, which is the ultimate goal of Islam. Thus, the strategy of unity can serve as the general direction of foreign policy for Islamic states in their relations with other Islamic countries. (Khorasani, 2003: 90). The strategy of unity from Imam's perspective has a cultural and value-based nature. In Islamic culture and Imam's vision, the goal of the unity strategy is the solidarity of the Islamic community to achieve a global Islamic government and the dominance of monotheism and divine laws over human society. In Islamic culture, the purpose of unity and alliance is not merely materialistic or worldly; it is aimed at the dominance of divine values, human prosperity, and the happiness of this world and the hereafter. Under this strategy, every Muslim is obligated to respond to the cries for help from any oppressed individual anywhere in the world and cannot remain indifferent. From Ima Khomeini's perspective, in addition to uniting the Islamic community against non-believers to negate their domination and elevate Islam and Muslims, he emphasized the unity of all the oppressed of the world - regardless of religion or creed - against the oppressors and arrogant powers of the East and West. Achieving this goal depends on the awakening and cultural awareness of Muslim nations and the oppressed. In other words, achieving unity without a cultural policy is impossible because the essence and core of this strategy are based on cultural foundations. For the Islamic state's foreign policy to achieve its objectives, it must strengthen cultural infrastructures and cultural authenticity.

Strategies of Neutrality and Non-Alignment from Imam Khomeini's perspective:

2-2. The Strategy of Neutrality

A neutral state is one whose political independence and territorial integrity are guaranteed by a collective agreement among major powers, provided that the state refrains from using military force against others unless in self-defence. Such a state should not join military alliances or allow others to establish military bases on its territory (Ghavvam, 2003: 146-147). Neutrality is a strategy that an Islamic state can adopt, considering two variables: the structure of the international system and whether the counterpart is Islamic or non-Islamic. Through this approach, the Islamic state can pursue its Islamic objectives and national interests. States may be compelled by developments in the international system to adopt or abandon neutrality. Therefore, the neutrality strategy is temporary and adjustable. The neutrality pursued by an Islamic state in its

foreign policy is positive neutrality, as it ensures independence, security, territorial integrity, and sovereignty according to the time (Khorasani, 2003: 93). Neutrality in an Islamic state cannot solely have material objectives. Adopting this strategy aligns with the interests of Islam and the preservation of the Islamic community, particularly during times of crisis and war. In such conditions, the primary criterion for neutrality is the benefit of Islam and the Islamic Ummah. Based on the “Umm al-Qura” theory, the preservation of “Umm al-Qura” (the central hub of Islam) becomes a priority. However, considering the cultural dimension of neutrality, adopting negative neutrality, particularly concerning Islamic nations and oppressed peoples, is not feasible. Instead, the Islamic state should take responsibility to resolve crises or end wars. This reflects that the neutrality strategy is not solely for gaining material benefits or power within the framework of realist literature. The Islamic state must always prioritize values, ethics, and the ultimate goals of foreign policy.

2-3. Real Non-Alignment (Neither East nor West)

The non-alignment strategy emerged among newly independent Third World countries following the Bandung Conference in 1955. These nations aimed to maintain independence in the bipolar international system without granting political or military concessions to either bloc and sought to act as players in global politics. However, over time, many of these countries became dependent on either the Eastern or Western bloc (Abdolrashidi, 1986: 82). The “Neither East nor West” policy emerged during a period when the international system was dominated by a bipolar structure, with the U.S. leading the capitalist system and the Soviet Union heading the communist bloc. At that time, no country in the world was entirely free from dependence on these two superpowers. Amid these challenges, Imam Khomeini introduced a novel strategy in foreign policy: “Neither East nor West.” This policy, which has both political and cultural dimensions, emphasizes independence from power blocs. While the policy’s political aspect seeks independence from dominant blocs, its essence is rich in cultural significance. Reflecting on Imam Khomeini’s perspective on this policy clarifies its cultural dimensions. Under the framework of “Neither East nor West,” Imam Khomeini introduced a new orientation of non-alignment, rejecting Marxist and capitalist ideologies and establishing an Islamic global governance system. Imam Khomeini linked the “Neither East nor West” policy to the concept of the Straight Path (*Sirat al-Mustaqim*), emphasizing that its success depends on the unity of nations. He stated: “We can stand against the entire world and say we neither follow the ‘path of those who incur God’s wrath’ nor the ‘path of the misguided.’ We go neither East nor West. This is achievable only if we all unite and become one hand” (Imam Khomeini, 1999,

Vol. 19, p. 327). Imam Khomeini emphasized that for the “Neither East nor West” policy to bear fruit, Islamic countries and oppressed Third World nations must unite and fulfil their needs without dependency on the East or West. He invited all nations, not only Islamic ones, to adopt this policy: “I now recommend to the noble and oppressed nations and the dear Iranian people to adhere firmly and resolutely to this divine straight path, which is neither connected to the atheist East nor the oppressive Western unbelievers” (Sotudeh, 1999: 266, quoted in *Sahifeh-ye Enqelab*, p. 5). Imam Khomeini highlighted that the “Neither East nor West” policy distinguishes the Islamic Revolution of Iran from other revolutions. It aligns with the ‘Straight Path’ and has brought miraculous victories. In a message marking the opening of the second session of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, he stated: “This Islamic Revolution is not an ordinary revolution. It relies on neither of the two poles of East or West and has its unique characteristics. By adhering to the Straight Path of ‘Neither East nor West,’ it has stood against both poles and achieved miraculous victories” (Imam Khomeini, 2008, Vol. 18, p. 462). Imam Khomeini consistently urged adherence to the “Neither East nor West” policy, warning that neglecting it would lead to destruction of the nation. He criticized those who deviated from this policy and called for their isolation within society: “Preserve the ‘Neither East nor West’ policy in all internal and external affairs. Guide those who, God forbid, incline towards the East or West. If they refuse, isolate them.” (Imam Khomeini, Vol. 12, pp. 363-364). A study of the “Neither East nor West” strategy reveals its connection to Islamic culture and values, aimed at safeguarding Islam and the Islamic community from Eastern and Western ideologies. According to Imam Khomeini, if a refined individual—someone nurtured under the guidance of prophets—leads political affairs, their foreign policy orientation will naturally align with “Neither East nor West,” rooted in the Straight Path (Sotudeh, 1999: 265). This person would rely on none but God’s infinite power to achieve their goals. Examining this comprehensive foreign policy strategy shows that realizing other aspects of foreign policy, including its principles and objectives, depends on implementing the “Neither East nor West” strategy. This policy, which has both political content and a cultural essence, forms the foundation of the Islamic state’s foreign policy. Its adherence is vital for preserving the Islamic system. Considering the complexities of the modern international system and the expansionist ambitions of both Eastern and Western powers, the “Neither East nor West” strategy remains the only approach to protect an Islamic state from the influence of foreign powers seeking to dominate weaker nations. This strategy is essential for preserving the integrity of the Islamic system (Khorasani, 2003: 102-103).

3. The Role of Culture in the Objectives of the Islamic State's Foreign Policy According to Imam Khomeini

The objectives of the Islamic State's foreign policy can be categorized into short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. Short-term objectives hold primary priority due to their vital nature. Imam Khomeini emphasized the preservation of Islamic identity and the territorial integrity of the country, with other goals following thereafter. This discussion briefly addresses some of these objectives.

3-1. Short-Term (Vital) Objectives

3-1-1. Preserving National Independence

Promoting a culture of independence and anti-arrogance is among the cultural goals emphasized by Imam Khomeini and forms a cornerstone of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic. The Islamic Revolution achieved independence from both the Eastern and Western blocs, relying on self-determination and popular support to stand firm against major powers. By exposing the exploitative nature of great powers, the Revolution shattered their invincible myth and created a distinction between the oppressed and the oppressors. It also raised awareness among oppressed nations, paving the way for independent and liberation movements (Dehshiri, 2003: 9). From a divine and Islamic perspective, Imam Khomeini argued that Islam not only supports the independence of Muslim nations but is also a system that advocates for independence. He stated that if an Islamic government is established, the influence of both Eastern and Western powers will be curtailed. Often, Imam summarized this notion, asserting that Islam inherently ensures national independence and outlined reasons for the unity of religion and politics. He stated: *"If you question why we fight for the independence of the nation, stand against America, and sacrifice our youth in this path, our response is that such objections should first be directed at the Holy Prophet (pbuh), who fought against the polytheists and disbelievers. Then, they should be directed at Imam Hussain (pbuh), who calmly moved from Medina to Karbala. We consider ourselves an extension of their mission and will continue their path. If they were mistaken, then we too are mistaken, and we admit it."* (Imam Khomeini, Vol. 4, p. 101) Thus, the first argument lies in the practices of the Prophet and the Imams. The second argument comes from the Quranic verses that encourage Muslims to resist foreign invasions and stand against oppressors and disbelievers. Imam Khomeini elaborated: *"The Quran explicitly states that God never grants authority to non-believers over believers. There should never be any leniency or pathway for such dominance:*

﴿لَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا﴾

no pathway at all should exist for the oppressors and these corrupt powers over Muslims.” (Imam Khomeini, Vol. 4, p. 317). Imam Khomeini deemed the preservation of the Islamic State’s independence essential, encompassing cultural, political, economic, and military independence. This article focuses on cultural independence, as Imam considered it foundational for other aspects of independence. Without a robust and independent culture, political or economic independence cannot be sustained. Regarding cultural independence, he stated: “*Culture is the foundation of independence and the identity of a nation.*” (Imam Khomeini, Vol. 10, p. 433). He further emphasized: “*The greatest transformation must occur within culture.*” (*Sahifeh Imam*, Vol. 7, p. 473). According to Imam Khomeini, culture has the power to lead a nation either to ruin or to the pinnacle of greatness and strength. It is through culture that a country’s independence is preserved, and cultural dependency is the root of all misfortunes. Given the significance of culture and its profound impact on individuals and societies, Imam Khomeini prioritized it and called for a return to Islamic values while rejecting Western cultural dominance. He remarked: “*Pay attention to culture, strive to rediscover yourselves, we have lost ourselves.*” (Imam Khomeini, Vol. 10, p. 42). He tied independence to intellectual detachment from the West and emphasized cultural independence. Therefore, he placed cultural reform at the forefront of all reforms. For Imam Khomeini, cultural independence was the cornerstone of a nation’s sovereignty. Without cultural self-belief and confidence, political, economic, and military independence cannot be achieved. Consequently, he attributed Iran’s triumph over tyrants and colonialists to its reliance on Islamic culture. From Imam Khomeini’s discourses, it is inferred that culture plays a foundational role in societal and political transformations. To bring about societal change and achieve independence, it is essential to focus on cultural and intellectual self-reliance while upholding divine and human values. Without cultural self-awareness and confidence, independence remains elusive. By introducing the slogan “*Neither East nor West, the Islamic Republic,*” Imam Khomeini sought to establish the independence and non-alignment of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the level of its foreign policy. This independence and detachment from major Eastern and Western powers served as a cultural model, significantly impacting Islamic countries and oppressed nations.

3-1-2. Preserving Borders and Territorial Integrity

Preserving the country’s borders and territorial integrity is another vital objective of the Islamic State. In Islamic jurisprudence, defending the territory of the Islamic State (*Dar al-Islam*) is considered one of the most significant duties of the government and the Islamic community, classified as a communal obligation (*wajib kifayi*) (Sotudeh, 2006: 93). In his work *Al-Bay’*, Imam

Khomeini - discussing the *jurisdiction and authority of the Guardian Jurist (Wali al-Faqih)* - regarded the preservation of the Islamic system as a divine obligation, stating: “*Protecting the borders of the Islamic State from foreign invasions and preventing aggressors from dominating it is both rationally and religiously obligatory.*” (Imam Khomeini: Jurisdiction and Authority of the Guardian Jurist, p. 23). In his book *Wilayat al-Faqih*, under the topic of national defence laws, and referencing the verse “*And prepare against them whatever you are able of power...*” (Quran 8:60), he stated: “*This verse commands us to be as strong and prepared as much as possible so that enemies cannot oppress or invade us.*” (Imam Khomeini, 2006: 38)

3-2. Medium-Term Objectives:

3-2-1. Unity of the Islamic Ummah

One of the strategies colonialists employ to infiltrate other nations is to disrupt the unity among their diverse groups. This is because, to dominate a nation, it must be kept weak. A nation’s weakness against external infiltration is only possible if its unity and cohesion are shattered. No matter how large the population or land area of a nation may be, if it is fragmented and lacks cohesion, it cannot stand against others. Unity is a fundamental principle of Islam and one of the essential Quranic criteria for human social life. The Holy Qur’an not only places the call for unity at the forefront of its universal mission, urging everyone to hold firmly to the “rope of Allah” together (Quran 3:103), but also prohibits division and discord. In Islamic thought, an ummah is formed by individuals who share common beliefs and accept a shared political organization and system based on those beliefs and ideals. Unity is an integral element of an ummah and inseparable from its concept (Amid Zanjani, 2001 [1380 AH], vol. 5, p. 184). The Qur’an emphasizes unity in numerous verses, advising Muslims to adhere to it:

✦ “Indeed, this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.” (Quran 21:92)

✦ “Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.” (Quran 3:103)

✦ “And do not be like those who were divided and differed after clear proofs had come to them, and for them is a great punishment.” (Quran 3:105)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Imams (pbut) have narrated many traditions about unity and avoiding discord. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) stated, “Unity brings mercy, and division leads to punishment,” and elsewhere remarked, “Do not dispute, for those before you who disputed were destroyed” (Jannati, 2002 [1381 AH], p. 397). Imam Khomeini also emphasized the unity of the Islamic Ummah, saying: “Today and in the future, what must concern the

Iranian nation and Muslims worldwide is neutralizing the divisive and destructive propaganda. My recommendation to Muslims, especially Iranians in this era, is to oppose these conspiracies and strengthen their cohesion and unity by any means possible, thus disappointing the disbelievers and hypocrites.” (Imam Khomeini, vol. 21, p. 177). The theoretical and practical approach of Imam Khomeini towards other Islamic sects is based on the noble verse: “Indeed the believers are brothers” (Quran 49:10). In his historic messages, he addressed all Muslims, both Sunni and Shia, emphasizing that the unity of the Islamic Ummah is a medium-term goal essential for achieving the long-term objective of establishing a global Islamic government. Imam Khomeini stressed unity among Muslims globally and identified Islamic culture, divine values, and human ethics as the basis of Muslim solidarity and cohesion—not merely material or worldly issues. Accordingly, he emphasized the concepts of brotherhood and the term “ummah.”

3-2-2. Supporting the Oppressed and Deprived Nations

Support for oppressed and deprived nations is deeply rooted in religious instructions. The Holy Qur’an states: “And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and for the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, ‘Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?’ (Quran 4:75)

Imam Khomeini believed: “Islam has come to save the oppressed” (Imam Khomeini, vol. 2, p. 22).

3-3. Long-Term Objectives:

3-3-1. Establishing an Islamic Government Worldwide

Islam is a universal religion, and its mission is not confined to a specific nation or ethnicity. Imam Khomeini described the Islamic Revolution as a continuation of the movements of the Prophets, saying: “Islam does not belong to a specific group; it is for all humanity. Prophets were sent to guide humanity, and the Prophet of Islam was sent for all humans.” (Imam Khomeini, vol. 10, p. 446) He also stated regarding the universality of Islam: “Islam is not for one country or a few countries, not for a specific group or even just for Muslims. Islam is for humanity. Its addresses are ‘O people’ or ‘O believers,’ and sometimes ‘O mankind.’ Islam seeks to encompass all humanity under the umbrella of justice.” (Imam Khomeini, vol. 11, pp. 29–30). The movement towards establishing a global Islamic government, which is the aspiration of Muslims worldwide, is among Imam Khomeini’s long-term objectives for the foreign policy of the Islamic state. Achieving this goal requires independence in all its dimensions and serious efforts towards Islamic unity so that, God willing, a global Islamic government can be realized.

3-3-2. Establishing Global Justice

Justice is one of the core elements of the identity of an Islamic state, evident in its decisions and foreign policy directions. In the Islamic worldview, “establishing global justice” is an unquestionable and fundamental goal. The Qur’an explicitly states: “Indeed, We sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and We sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may uphold justice.” (Quran 57:25)

This Qur’anic statement, emphasizing “justice for all people” with the term “al-naas” (humanity), underscores the global mission of the Prophets. Imam Khomeini’s perspective on the global mission of Islam is rooted in this Quranic expression. He asserted that the purpose of sending Prophets was to establish social justice (Imam Khomeini, vol. 18, p. 43) and introduced the establishment of a just global government as the essence of the philosophy of Imam Mahdi’s (pbuh) reappearance (Imam Khomeini, vol. 20, p. 190). Imam Khomeini also emphasized the responsibility of revolutionary Muslims to support the oppressed worldwide in achieving governance. He remarked: “God Almighty states that We sent Prophets with clear proofs, signs, and the scale so that people may establish justice; social justice should prevail among them.” (Imam Khomeini, vol. 15, p. 213). The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) formed a government like other governments of the world, but with the goal of expanding social justice. Similarly, the government of Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) was motivated by the same aim, as recorded in history (Imam Khomeini, vol. 21, p. 406).

Conclusion

An analysis of the macro and micro objectives of the Islamic government in the domain of foreign policy reveals that each of these objectives derives meaning within the framework of its cultural and value-based goals. These values, inherently human and divine in nature, fall within the responsibilities and mission of the Islamic government. Fundamentally, the philosophy behind the establishment of an Islamic government is to realize grand divine-human objectives pursued by the prophets and Imams (pbuh). From this perspective, material goals, power, or national interests are not ultimate ends in an Islamic government. Instead, these objectives are understood in relation to intellectual, cultural, and spiritual aspirations. Overall, the Islamic Revolution, by promoting Islamic values, spirituality, morality, and God-centeredness, revived Islamic teachings and strengthened the culture of returning to one’s true self under the sovereignty of Islamic principles. The Islamic Revolution, by fostering spirituality, increasing people’s inclination toward spiritual values, and expanding the religious culture in Islamic countries, sought to revive and institutionalize the spiritual values of Islam. It aimed to spread moral, spiritual,

and intellectual identity within Muslim societies and cultivate religious individuals, thereby leading to inner revolutions and transformations in individuals and society. By creating intellectual and spiritual change in people and communities, their demands and expectations of governments also shift. Consequently, the goals of governments are shaped by the evolving demands of their people, which are, in turn, influenced by their new intellectual and spiritual transformations based on Islamic and human values. In this manner, the foreign policy objectives of the Islamic government, such as the unity of the Islamic world, support for the oppressed, and the establishment of a global Islamic government, can be practically realized. Imam Khomeini's approach to foreign policy was a cultural one, characterized by the concept of "soft power." From this perspective, the realization of the foreign policy of the Islamic government, as a value-based and cultural state, is achievable through the application of soft power. Thus, the foreign policy goals of the Islamic government are aligned with the principles of soft power.

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