Published online: 14 August 2023

Submit your article to this journal

View related and/or other articles in this issue

Leadership in Modern Shīʿī Thought
Examining the Theory of Imam Khomeini

Zahra Azhar

LEADERSHIP IN MODERN SHĪʿĪ THOUGHT: EXAMINING THE THEORY OF IMAM KHOMEINI

Zahra Azhar[*]

Abstract: Leadership of the Muslim nation is one concept that Shīʿī scholars in Iran have seriously theorised, especially since the Safavid era. In Shīʿī thought, this concept is tied explicitly to the idea of occultation and the leader being talked about is considered the deputy of the Imam of the time. Imam Khomeini (d. 1989) put forward one of the most important and latest theories in this matter. His theory was revolutionary and hotly contested among Shīʿī *ulamā* (scholars). Khomeini's theory is critical because it was the basis of theories after him and practically implemented in contemporary Iran. This article tries to explain the Imam's theory about leadership of the society during occultation and examine its features, elements and critiques.

Keywords: *Leadership*, *Imam Khomeini*, *Wal-yi Faqih*, *Shīʿī political thought*, *Wal-yi Amr*

INTRODUCTION

Imam Khomeini's leadership theory among Shīʿī scholars, known as the "*Wilayat al-Faqih*" theory, represents one of the most recent developments in this field.[1] Other prominent Shīʿī and Sunni scholars have described and criticised this theory, making it an important and widely discussed topic in Muslim societies.[2] The significance of this theory can be understood in two ways. First, it constitutes one of the most recent theories of Islamic political leadership, serving as a foundation for subsequent theories. Second, the practical implementation of the theory during Imam Khomeini's leadership of the Muslim *umma* (community) in Iran has been evaluated in theory and practice.

The article examines Imam Khomeini's theory of leadership, focusing on two key components: the foundation of his theory and his idea of the Islamic leader's characteristics. It employs a methodology that combines literature and theoretical analysis, drawing on primary Arabic and Persian documents selected based on specific criteria. The interpretation presented in this study is not the sole interpretation of Imam Khomeini's theory and the study

---

[*]   Zahra Azhar finished her PhD in public law at Shahid Beheshti University. Her main interests and fields of study are Islamic law, constitutional law, philosophy of public law, history of political thought and justice education. She is a lecturer in public law and Islamic law.

[1]   Imam Khomeini's seminal work on political theory, *Wilayat e-Faqih* (also known as *Hokumat e-Eslami*, or *Government of the Legal Scholar* or *Islamic Government*), has been translated into English by Hamid Algar. This highly influential treatise can be accessed at http://www.al-islam.org/islamicgovernment/.

[2]   Amr G. E. Sabet, "Wilayat Al-Faqih and the Meaning of Islamic Government," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

acknowledges potential limitations and other variations. Moreover, the present discourse is centred solely on the theological tenets and convictions of the Twelver Shi'a school of thought and does not delve into the beliefs and practices of Shi'a Ismailis and Zaidis. It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this scope and recognise the diversity within the larger umbrella of Shi'a Islam. In the context of this article, the term "Shi'a" (n.) or "Shī'ī" (adj.) is used specifically to refer to the Twelver Shi'a denomination.

As per Sharia, the leader embodies divine intent and societal order.[3] They serve as the centrepiece, guiding force and community focal point. The leader is responsible for managing economic activity, ensuring fairness in administering justice and maintaining the state's and its institutions' security and stability. Their authority provides the foundation for human interactions and social organisation.[4] In Shī'ī thought, the idea of a leader possessing spiritual and material qualities is of utmost importance. This thought is reflected in the designation of the 11 successive heads of the family of Imam Ali as *Imams*, meaning "infallible spiritual leaders."[5] The community of Twelver Shi'a considers the 12 Imams as evidence of God's presence and their unique link to divine guidance. Their leadership is the doctrine behind Shi'a's separation from the Sunni majority.[6] Sunni Muslims follow the Caliphate and view the first four Caliphs as legitimate leaders responsible for upholding Islamic law and guiding the Muslim community, while Shī'ī Muslims reject the legitimacy of the first three Caliphs and believe that Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, should have been his rightful successor, with the Imams as the rightful leaders of the Muslim community.[7]

Hence, the question of leadership is a matter of paramount importance to Shī'ī jurists. These scholars have been engaging in various forms of discourse on the topic, including through their written works, lectures and speeches. This issue holds significance for the Twelver Shi'a community, as it is tied to belief in occultation, and the leader of the Islamic society is regarded as the *naeb* (representative) of the *Saheb al-Zaman* (owner of the time), the Twelfth Imam. The leader must demonstrate his connection to the *Saheb al-Zaman* and possess divine origin. The disappearance of the Twelfth Imam heightens the tension between the ideals of the divine and realities of the world. With the absence of the Twelfth Imam, the Shī'ī community was bereft of a leader who held divine authority and the capability to govern society. As a result, interpreting religious teachings became a critical competency for those who would serve as religious leaders. This required extensive training and specialisation in

---

[3]   Shaul Mishal and Ori Goldberg, *Understanding Shiite Leadership: The Art of the Middle Ground in Iran and Lebanon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), II.
[4]   Ibid.
[5]   For a succinct overview of Twelver Shī'īsm, see Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi`i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
[6]   Ibid., 25.
[7]   The differences between Sunni and Shī'īte beliefs regarding the Caliphate reflect broader theological and political differences between the two groups. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Sunni and Shi'i Islam," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, trans. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975); Akbar S. Ahmed, *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 130-158.

fiqh (jurisprudence) and its interpretation, leading to the emergence of a distinct group of scholarly leaders within Shīʿī society.[8]

BACKGROUND

Since the Safavid era (1501-1736), the discussion of leadership in the Muslim community, its characteristics, the extent of the leader's authority and related topics have gained widespread popularity among Shīʿī scholars.[9] Before the Safavid era, Shīʿī scholars regarded rulers as tyrannical, regardless of whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim (both were categorised as non-Shīʿī), and refrained from engaging in discussions about the leadership and governance of Muslim society, as this was considered "collaboration with tyrants," which is strictly forbidden.[10] However, with the advent of the Safavid dynasty, which established the first powerful Shīʿī empire in Iran, the rulers and jurists sought to provide more robust legal resources and justifications for Shīʿī governance and leadership.[11] Regarding the leader of the Muslim community, who in Shīʿī thought is equal to the representative of the Imam of the time, and takes over the leadership of the Muslim *umma* during the Imams' absence, there have been extensive theorisation by Shīʿī jurists in at least three essential periods in Iran.[12] These three periods include the Safavid era, the beginning of these theories; *Enghelāb-e Mashrūteh* (the constitutional era) (1905–1911), in which there was a tendency to combine Sharia with intellectual ideas; and the Islamic revolution (1979), which, due to the introduction of modern concepts in *ulamā*'s rulings, Islamic jurists tried to reveal the compatibility or non-compatibility of these concepts with Shīʿī jurisprudence. In this era, the effort to Islamism or, at some points, return to *salaf* (authentic or original Islam), which had already started in Sunni-majority countries, caused the discussion of returning to the Muslim *umma* to be seriously raised and theorised. This movement has been influenced by prominent figures such as Hassan al Banna (d. 1949) in Egypt, Mawdudi (d. 1979) from India, Qutb (d. 1966) in Egypt and Al Turabi (d. 2016) from Sudan.[13] These individuals and their movements

---

[8]   Mohammad Ali Mir Ali, "Legitimacy of Cooperation with the Oppressive Ruler in Shia Political Jurisprudence," *Scientific Quarterly of Shia Studies* Scientific 14, no. 53 (2007); Ahadollah Qolizadeh Barandagh, "The Foundations of Cooperation between Scholars and Governments (with Emphasis on Faiz Kashani's Thought)." *Kausar Maarif* 17 (2019).

[9]   Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Rasul Jafarian, *Safavid in the Field of Religion, Culture, and Politics: The First Volume* (Qom: Research Institute of the Field and University, 2000).

[10]   Rasul Jafarian, *The History of Shiism in Iran from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Safavid State* (Tehran: Elm, 2007), 1-100; Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press, 2003), 3-47.

[11]   Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai Far, *The Kingship Regime from the Perspective of Shia Thought: Safavid and Qajar Periods* (Tehran: Nei Publishing House, 2004), 44-70.

[12]   Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam. Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 32-65; Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, the People, and the Faqih: On Khomeini's Theory of Sovereignty," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[13]   Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, eds., *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), vol. 32.

have significantly impacted their respective countries' political, social and religious landscapes. Their ideologies and teachings have inspired a new generation of Islamic thinkers and activists, shaping the discourse of Islam and its role in contemporary society.[14] In the era leading to the Islamic Revolution, Shīʿī jurists, led by Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Montazeri, were trying to end the monarchy in Iran by presenting a new theory of government and leadership[15] and, as Khomeini believed and asserted on several occasions, leading Shi'a, among others, towards happiness, prosperity and unity with God.[16]

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a major milestone in Middle Eastern history as it led to removal of the Iranian monarchy under the leadership of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (d. 1980). What sets this revolution apart is the fact it marked a rare instance of Islamists successfully overthrowing the existing political authority and taking over the government. This was remarkable in the context of Shīʿī Islam, where religious scholars had traditionally maintained a politically neutral stance towards the government. Ayatollah Khomeini was a highly respected and influential Shīʿī jurist, known for his extensive knowledge and status as a leading *mūjtahid* (Islamic legal scholar or Islamic jurist) in the Shīʿī religious establishment. His leadership played a pivotal role in the Revolution.

During Riza Shah's leadership, the *Hawza* (Islamic seminary) was dominated by religious scholars with quietist political orientation. Not until 1961, upon the death of Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Borujerdi, the most influential scholar of his time, was the regime challenged with any vigour from within the *Hawza*. Khomeini emerged as a vocal opponent of the government, leading the charge against government initiatives in the early 1960s. He was arrested, which fuelled further protests, leading to his exile in 1964. Khomeini spent many years in exile, during which he continued to be a vocal opponent of the Pahlavi regime.

Khomeini skilfully combined themes of Islam and Iranian nationalism, an implacable hostility toward the United States, and the role of the *ulamā* as the guardians of Islam and leaders of national resistance against foreign encroachments in his challenge to the *Shah* of Iran. Khomeini believed the *ulamā*'s representativeness of the hidden Imam extends to all facets of his functions, including the political. Khomeini's vision of an Islamic state guided by the *Wal-yi Faqih* (Guardian Jurist) defined the new Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the movement succeeded in its objective of overthrowing the regime of the *Shah*.[17]

Khomeini's movement succeeded in its objective of overthrowing the *Shah*'s regime and replacing it with a radically different government. However, there was not much consensus on the movement's objectives beyond that. Khomeini emerged as the ultimate arbiter in all

---

[14]   Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Anthony F. Roberts (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 2003), 1-22.

[15]   Babak Rahimi, "Democratic Authority, Public Islam, and Shi'i Jurisprudence in Iran and Iraq: Hussain Ali Montazeri and Ali Sistani," *International Political Science Review* 33 (2012).

[16]   For a critical overview of Imam Khomeini's desired society, see Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Disenchanting Political Theology in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Reform, Religious Intellectualism, and the Death of Utopia" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2014), 34-55.

[17]   For a more detailed background of the Islamic revolution, see Amin Saikal, *Iran Rising – The Survival and Future of the Islamic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 1-43.

matters of public policy and the Shi'a *ulamā* gradually consolidated its control over key political positions in the state. The case of Iran is significant not only because the *ulamā* led the Islamist movement but also because it had direct implications for long-established trends in Shīʿī political theology. The movement's success has led to speculation on the sort of society that would come about should Islamist movements succeed in their political aspirations.

DIVINE LAW AND ITS COMPLETENESS IN IMAM KHOMEINI'S THEORY

Imam Khomeini's theory of leadership, governance and administration of society is built on the foundation of the completeness of divine law. This was first expounded in his book, *Kashf al-Asrar* (Discovering the Secrets), which marked his first public emergence in Iranian society.[18] The book was written in response to the publication of *Asrar-e Hezarsaleh* (Millennial Secrets) by Hekamizadeh in 1944[19] and presented the foundations of the theory shown on "*Kitab al-Ba'i*" also known as the theory of the absolute authority of the jurist. This theory discusses the concepts of divine appointment and the absolute authority of the jurist. These ideas are also followed in the books *Wilayat al-faqih and Jihad Akbar* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist and Greater Jihad) and *Khums* (literally means one-fifth, a type of Islamic tax) plus numerous speeches and letters by the Imam.

Imam Khomeini believed the way to prosperity and salvation in this world and the afterlife could not be achieved through laws established by humans. Instead, it was necessary to return to the teachings of Islam as a complete set of divine rules.[20] The completeness of divine law also implies God's plan to ensure implementation of these rules in society, which is achieved through the leadership of the Prophet, Imams and their representatives, i.e., the Islamic jurists or *Faqih*. This approach connects the community to the sacred source of power.

He proposed that political power should rest in the hands of *Fuqahā* (Islamic jurists), who possess the interpretative skills necessary to govern society. According to Khomeini, a virtuous society must be founded on interpretation and only the interpretation of religious teachings provides the foundation for such a society.[21]

---

[18]   Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, "Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini: A Clerical Revolutionary?" in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014).

[19]   The book was written in 1943 and published in the 12th issue of *Parcham* magazine belonging to Ahmad Kasravi, a well-known anti-jurist scholar. Hakimizadeh's main goal was to criticise Shīʿī rituals. He raised 13 questions in this book and asked Shīʿī scholars to answer them. Four questions – related to the Imamate, limits of the Mujtahid in the age of occultation, law and legislation, and the eternality of Islamic laws – caused the issue of the administration of society and Islamic government to once again become a debate for scholars and jurists,or "*Fuqahā*"', as political philosophers. See Rasul Jafarian, *Iran's Religious-Political Streams and Organizations: From the Ascension of Mohammad Reza Shah to the Victory of the Islamic Revolution, 1357-1320* (Tehran: Elm, 2004), 43-83; Rasul Jafarian, "Ali Akbar Hekamizadeh in four scenes (1366-1276 CE)," *Historical Articles and Treatises* 8 (2018).

[20]   Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Disenchanting Political Theology," 43.

[21]   Michael Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 122-146.

Imam Khomeini's views on the completeness of the divine law encompass three aspects. First, the rules of Islam provide solutions for all aspects of human life. Second, the rules for ensuring the implementation of these solutions are also present within the divine laws. Third, due to their completeness and absoluteness, all divine rules, including those for the administration of society, are permanent and binding. These aspects of Imam Khomeini's thoughts will be further examined in the following discussion.

The Permanent Establishment of Rules

Imam Khomeini held a distinctive perspective on the role of legislation in shaping society. He believed the post-World War era, characterised by the proliferation of human-made laws in Europe, was marked by societal upheaval and unrest. In contrast to Constitutional theorists in Iran, he viewed Europe as uncivilised and characterised by violence and chaos.[22] This, in his opinion, was due to the inherent imperfections of human laws, which were unable to guide toward prosperity and fulfilment of spiritual and material needs.[23]

In contrast, he viewed Islamic law not only as a means to ensure prosperity but also as a form of education for individuals to become virtuous and perfect beings.[24] He believed this law was sufficient in guiding individuals toward fulfilling their spiritual and material needs.[25] According to him, the rules of Islam were intended to create individuals who embody and automatically execute the Sharia. Thus, in his view, the rules of Islam were superior to human-made laws in terms of their ability to shape society toward prosperity and fulfilment.[26]

Obedience to the divine law, according to him, is people's obligation, because God is the creator and owner of the entire world.[27] He believes that:

> [M]an does not have such a right [the right to legislate], and any law that he establishes is nothing but a piece of paper, and according to the wisdom, no one's decrees are binding on anyone except the decree of the God of the world, who, all the creatures of the world, are His creation and property. Wisdom considers his order to be binding to everyone, and it must be obeyed.[28]

---

[22] "Europe is not a civilized nation at all" and "what is in Europe is full of riots and savagery." Ruhollah Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar* [Discovering the Secrets] (Tehran: Imam Khomeini Editing and Publishing Institute, 1999), 272.

[23] Such a law "is not enough to manage the spiritual and material life of man" or there is a better law to fulfil this purpose. Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar*, 312.

[24] Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar*, 181-182.

[25] Ibid.

[26] According to Imam, the laws of Islam are for the "education" of humans. The education of "a perfect and virtuous person, a person who is a moving and embodied law and a voluntary and automatic executor of the law." Ruhollah Khomeini, *Wilayat al-faqih and Jihad Akbar* [Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist and Greater Jihad] (Tehran: Imam Khomeini Editing and Publishing Institute, 1998), 28.

[27] Muslims believe God created the world with all its laws intact and whole, so this is one of the religious duties of humans. Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar*, 221.

[28] Ibid., 289.

He believes the rules established by God encompass all aspects of human life, from the most significant to the most minute details, and are always applicable.[29] These eternal rules, in his opinion, are a source of endless prosperity for humanity in this world and the next.[30]

However, while Imam Khomeini views Islamic law as superior to human-made laws, he also acknowledges their interpretation and application are the work of human beings, specifically the Islamic jurists or "*Faqih*." This raises the question of how one can trust the interpretation and application of divine law to fallible human beings. As Abdolkarim Soroush argues, the notion of absolute and infallible jurists is problematic because it promotes blind obedience to their interpretations of Islamic law, which can lead to the suppression of individual freedoms and critical thinking. He contends the role of Islamic jurists should be one of guidance rather than absolute authority and their interpretations should be subject to critical examination and debate.[31] Moreover, Khomeini's emphasis on the primacy of divine law overlooks the role of human agency and social dynamics in shaping societies. Asef Bayat, similarly, contends that implementing Sharia in modern societies requires a deep understanding of social and cultural contexts, which cannot be achieved through strict adherence to divine law. He argues for a more flexible and pragmatic approach to Islamic jurisprudence that considers modern societies' diverse and changing needs.[32]

Additionally, treating non-Muslims in an Islamic state is a complex issue that requires careful consideration. While Islamic law has provisions for protecting non-Muslims, such as the payment of the *jizya* (poll tax), there have been instances throughout history where non-Muslims have faced discrimination and persecution in Muslim societies. Critics argue the imposition of Islamic law on non-Muslims can lead to violations of their rights and freedoms. Moreover, the notion that only Islamic jurists are qualified to lead society raises questions about the representation and inclusion of non-Muslims in decision-making processes.[33]

The Permanent Appointment of the Successor, the Completion of the Mission

Khomeini considered establishing an Islamic government to be an essential component of guaranteeing the validity and sovereignty of divine law. In his view, a Muslim ruler who is well-versed in the interpretation of divine law is necessary to manage the affairs of the

---

[29]   "The God of Muhammad (PBUH) who is the lawgiver has determined laws in all matters of life and every detail of human issues and for all periods." Ibid.*,* 8.

[30]   Ibid.

[31]   Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 83-98; Abdolkarim Soroush, "The Necessity and Possibility of Islamic Democratic Society," in *Islam and Democracy in Iran: Eshkevari and the Quest for Reform*, ed. Ziba Mir-Hosseini (I.B. Tauris: 2006); Abdolkarim Soroush, "The Conservative and Reformist Interpretation of Islam," in *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, ed. Gerhard Bowering (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[32]   Asef Bayat, "Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question?" *ISIM papers no. 8* (Leiden: Amsterdam University Press, ISIM, 2007), 440-443.

[33]   See Nader Hashemi, "Islam, Human Rights, and the Legacy of Khomeini," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2011); Mohsen Kadivar, "The Jurisprudential Basis of the Principle of Democracy in Iran: A Theological Perspective," *Democratization* 23, no. 1 (2016); Ali Mirsepassi, "Islamic Democracy and its Limits: The Iranian Experience since 1979," *Middle East Journal 62*, no.1 (2008).

society and protect the system of Muslim countries in the absence of the *Imam-e Asr* (Imam of the Age).[34] Khomeini deemed the survival of Islamic rules and their implementation critical for preserving order in society. Arguing there is no higher need than "survival of Islamic rules," he raises the question:

> Which need is higher than the need of the society to determine the person who is responsible for managing the affairs of the society and protecting the system of Islamic countries during the absence of *Imam Asr* (AS)? …The survival of Islamic rules and their implementation is only possible in the hands of an Islamic ruler, who is in charge of politics and affairs.[35]

Furthermore, the Imam held that the appointment of a successor was synonymous with completing the Prophet's mission.[36] The appointment of a successor ensured the eternal survival and durability of divine law, which were considered the foundation of a virtuous society. So, he concluded that establishing an Islamic government was necessary to ensure the implementation of divine decrees, as, without it, the society would devolve into chaos and disorder.[37] In other words, he believes the permanent validity of Islamic law justifies the necessity of forming an Islamic government to implement this law. Otherwise, society will go towards chaos and disorder.[38] Therefore, in his opinion, just as divine law is permanent, God also permanently appoints their executor or society leader.

The Permanent Establishment of the Divine Government

Khomeini believed that governance during the time of the Prophet and Imams was with them, which God has made obligatory for all mankind to obey through the text of the Qur'ān.[39] He argued the same reasons that prove the necessity of *Imamah* after Prophethood also prove the necessity of ruling during the occultation.[40] He maintained it is impossible to imagine that God left the Muslim community alone for such a long period.[41] Thus, the installation of the divine government was done by God through the prophets and Imams.[42]

In his message coinciding with *Eid al-Ghadir*, the Imam states the Prophet, who wanted to leave the world, appointed a successor and successors until the occultation, and the same successors appointed the "*Imam of the Umma*." He argued they did not leave the *umma* to be confused but appointed an Imam and leader. As long as the Imams were present, they were the community's leaders, and after them, the *Fuqahā* are the nation's leaders.[43] However, this

---

34   Sabet, "Wilayat Al-Faqih," 70.
35   Khomeini, *Wilayat al-Faqih*, 28.
36   Ibid.
37   Ibid., 26.
38   Ibid.
39   Ibid., 185.
40   Ibid., 28.
41   Ibid.
42   Ibid., 30.
43   "Today is the day of his installation to the *Imamah of the ummah*. Of course, no one else is even
        comparable to him, and after the Holy Prophet, there is no one better than him in any sense, and there will
        never be. But in the later levels, when this *ummah* should be guided, the Holy Prophet, who wanted to
        leave the world, appointed the successor and successors until occultation, and the same successors also

doctrine departs from traditional Shi'a practices, where political authority was historically vested in the Caliph or Sultan, not the *ulamā*, including the mainstream Shī'ī Orthodox.[44]

Imam Khomeini believed the divine government is a permanent establishment created by God and sustained through the Prophet, Imams and *Fuqahā*. This government is based on divine law, which is complete and permanent, and includes rules for implementing its provisions through a designated leader. These beliefs form the basis of the theory of *Wilayat al-Faqih*, which has significant implications for the Islamic political system. On various occasions, he tried to explain *Wal-yi Faqih* as the successor of the hidden Imam and elaborate on his characteristics as a perfect human who can lead the community towards unity with God.[45]

Khomeini's views on the relationship between Islamic law and the Islamic State were ambiguous and evolved continuously. In his 1970 lectures, he argued it is the mandate and obligation of the jurist to see that God's law is implemented with exactitude. However, he also suggested that Islamic law is a tool and instrument for establishing justice in society and for man's intellectual and moral reform. This view is more malleable than the former and is what Khomeini affirmed before his death.

In 1988, Khomeini rebuked the then-President of Iran for taking too narrow a view of the powers of the government concerning Islamic law. Khomeini argued the government, which is a part of the absolute vice-regency of the Prophet of God, is one of the primary injunctions of Islam and has priority over all other secondary injunctions, even prayers, fasting and hajj. On this view, the state, as guided by the guardian jurist, was the arbiter of where the interests of Islam lay and how they were best served. The edicts of the state became its most authoritative expression and there was no clear distinction between Islam and Islamic law, on the one hand, and the will of the state, on the other.

The doctrine of the preeminent jurist's overarching authority has proved contentious among the Shī'ī *ulamā*. Some prominent religious scholars have maintained a notably dispassionate attitude toward Khomeini's doctrinal innovations. In Iran, few explicit challenges to the *Wilayat-e Faqih* occurred while Khomeini was alive, as a result of the coercive powers of the revolutionary state. However, there were several other high-ranking scholars and Ayatollahs in the *Hawza*, the religious establishment in Iran, who also criticised Khomeini's theory of *Wilayat-e Faqih*. One of them was Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri (d. 2009), who had been designated as Khomeini's successor but fell out of favour due to his criticism of the government's policies. Montazeri openly expressed his concerns about the

---

appointed the Imam of the *ummah*. In general, they didn't leave this *ummah* to themselves to be confused, they appointed an imam for them, and they appointed a leader. As long as the imams were present, they were the leaders of the nation, and after them, Fuqahā are the leaders of the nation." Ruhollah Khomeini, *Sahifa-yi Nur* [The Book of Light] (Tehran: Center for Editing and Publishing the Works of Imam, 2000), vol. 5, 154.

[44]   David Menashri, "Ayatollah Khomeini and the Velayat-e Faqih," in *Militancy and Political Violence in Shiism: Trends and Patterns*, ed. Assaf Moghadam (New York; London: Routledge, 2011), 72.

[45]   Ali-Ahmad Rasekh, "Agents of the Hidden Imam: Shiite Juristic Authority in Light of the Doctrine of Deputyship" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2015), 32-53.

potential abuse of power under the *Wilayat-e Faqih* system and advocated for democracy and greater protection of human rights.[46] Another prominent critic was Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani (d. 1979), who was one of the founding fathers of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Taleghani, who had played a key role in the Revolution, was a strong advocate of social justice and the rights of the poor. However, he was critical of the government's authoritarian tendencies and called for more transparency and accountability.[47]

In 1982, Ayatollah Kazem Shari'atmadari (d. 1986), a prominent religious scholar in the Qom establishment, was accused of supporting a plot to overthrow the revolutionary regime. Shari'atmadari was known for his criticism of Khomeini's doctrine of *Wilayat-e Faqih*, as well as many of his policies.[48] Shari'atmadari and Ayatollah Ali Mohammad Dastgheib opposed the government's interference in the judiciary and the violation of human rights.[49]

Despite their criticism, these scholars and Ayatollahs remained loyal to the Islamic Republic and its revolutionary ideals. They believed the *Wilayat-e Faqih* system could be reformed and the government should adhere to the principles of Islamic democracy and social justice.

It was clear that Khomeini was aware of the significant opposition to his beliefs among some scholars within the Hawza. In his lectures of 1970, he cautioned against those who espoused political quietism, labelling them as "pseudo-saints" who were aligned with "imperialists and oppressive governments." He even urged people not to acknowledge these individuals as legitimate religious scholars and to prevent them from carrying out their duties in that capacity.[50]

Wal-yi Amr as the Shadow of Allah

The metaphor of the "shadow of Allah" has played a crucial role in Shīʿī political thought, particularly during the Safavid era.[51] This concept is also central to the teachings of Imam Khomeini, who used it on various occasions and through different literature to emphasise the leader's proximity to God.[52] This metaphor underscores the idea that the leader, like a shadow, is closest to the source and will remain so until the existence of the original, which is Allah. This idea holds significant implications for the leader's authority, responsibility and duty in shaping society and guiding its members toward righteousness and virtue. By being

---

[46]   Sussan Siavoshi, *Montazeri: The Life and Thought of Iran's Revolutionary Ayatollah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 234-68.

[47]   For example, Mahmoud Taleghani, "The Social Message of Islam," *Al-Tawhid: A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Thought and Culture* 7, no. 1 (1991).

[48]   "Prominent Cleric Blasts Iranian Government for Violating Human Rights," *New York Times*, April 15, 1999.

[49]   See Kadivar Mohsen, *Estizahe Rahbari (Impeaching Iran's Super Leader: Assessing the Supreme Leader's 21 Years in the Office)*, 2nd ed. (Mohsen Kadivar, 2014), webbook edition, https://kadivar.com/13562/.

[50]   Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution I: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941–1980)*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press,1981), 141-145.

[51]   On the history of this concept, see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*; Donald Newton Wilber, *Iran: Past and Present: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[52]   See Manochehr Dorraj, *From Zarathustra to Khomeini: Populism and Dissent in Iran* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1990), 120.

seen as the shadow of Allah, the leader is expected to embody divine qualities and act as the intermediary between God and the people, ensuring the implementation of God's will in society.

Imam Khomeini's concept of the shadow of Allah encompasses the idea of a leader who is closely connected to the divine source and reflects the righteousness of God. This idea is rooted in the duality of "tyranny" and "truth," and the leader, as the shadow of Allah, is tasked with promoting truth and combating tyranny. The leader's actions, if approved by the principles of Islam, are considered to be the actions of God, making the leader the closest creature to God.[53]

According to Imam Khomeini, the shadow of Allah must remain connected to the source of righteousness and align with the Prophet and Imams. The leader's behaviour and actions are crucial in determining their status as the shadow of Allah or the devil. In this sense, the leader's role as the shadow of Allah is not limited to political authority but also includes moral and spiritual responsibility.

Imam Khomeini believed the rightness of man and society depends on the leader's behaviour, which serves as the "scale" for determining the righteousness of a society.[54] He stated, "The king is the shadow of Allah; if he transgresses in one direction, he becomes the devil's shadow. The shadow depends on the source in everything, and it has nothing by itself."[55] This idea highlights the importance of a leader who embodies the principles of Islam and guides society toward truth and righteousness. Thus, the shadow of Allah concept in Imam Khomeini's thought emphasises the role of the leader as a mediator between God and society and the importance of a righteous leader in creating a virtuous society.

In the context of the metaphor of the shadow of Allah, the leader is seen as an individual who lacks personal authority, with characteristics that align with the shadow of God. As a result, they are viewed as infinite beings, capable of transcending their limitations, and are deemed fit to manage the affairs of society and hold leadership positions.[56] This is because their actions are believed to align with God's will. Such a leader is referred to as "the top of the cone of the world,"[57] a concept that was widely discussed in Iran's Assembly of Constitutional Experts and the Constitutional Revision Assembly after the 1979 revolution.

As with any theological concept, the idea of the shadow of Allah has been subject to criticism and debate within Islamic scholarship. One of the main critiques is that this concept can be exploited for political purposes, particularly in the hands of authoritarian leaders who claim to have a special connection to the divine. In practice, this can lead to a dangerous

---

[53]   Khomeini, *Sahifa-yi Nur*, vol. 5, 152.
[54]   Ibid., vol. 12, 169.
[55]   Ibid.
[56]   Ibid.
[57]   Ibid.

concentration of power in the hands of a few, who can use the idea of divine authority to justify their actions, regardless of their impact on society.[58]

Moreover, the idea of the shadow of Allah can also be seen as an attempt to elevate the position of the leader beyond that of a human being, which can lead to a dangerous cult of personality. By portraying the leader as the closest creature to God, this concept can create unrealistic and unhealthy expectations of perfection, making it difficult for leaders to admit to their mistakes or shortcomings. Another critique of the shadow of Allah concept is that it can lead to a narrow and exclusive view of leadership. By emphasising the importance of a single, divinely appointed leader, this concept can neglect the importance of collective decision-making and democratic processes in governance. While the concept of the shadow of Allah has played an important role in Shīʿī political thought, it is important to critically examine its implications and potential pitfalls. Blindly accepting this concept can lead to a dangerous concentration of power, cult of personality and neglect of democratic processes in governance.[59]

The Country of Saheb al-Zaman and its Belongings

In Imam Khomeini's thought, *Saheb al-Zaman* is the connecting point of the country's administration with the permanent, absolute and legitimate source of power. The connection of the administration to *Saheb al-Zaman* is realised through the metaphor of ownership and belongingness to the country. However, being the shadow of Allah is realised through the unification of the leader in *Imam-e Asr* as the shadow of Allah.[60] For this reason, in Imam Khomeini's thought, *Saheb al-Zaman* is interpreted as "the owner of the country" to become a more familiar and tangible metaphor.

The term "owner of the country" or "principal owner" has been used many times in the sayings and writings of Imam Khomeini. Apart from the fact it implies removing the effects of the tyrannical rule, this issue means that *Baqiyat Allah*'s (The Remainder of God) guidance and guardianship should encourage everyone to perform their duties, or they are under his supervision and must be accountable to *Saheb al-Zaman*.[61] In other words, all the affairs of the country must be approved by him.[62] Also, one of the other direct effects of the country belonging to *Saheb al-Zaman*, in the words of Imam Khomeini, is the bold use of the "trust" metaphor in the sense that the responsibilities and positions in the affairs of the country and the Islamic Republic as a whole are a trust with the officials and people, which ultimately must be returned to its original owner.[63] But perhaps it can be said the most important perception that can be understood about the country belonging to *Saheb al-Zaman* is the binding nature of the rulings issued by the representative of Imam and the "obligatory"

---

[58]   Arjomand, *The Shadow of God.*
[59]   Ibid.
[60]   Khomeini, Sahifa-yi Nur, vol. 5, 173.
[61]   Ibid., vol. 8, 85.
[62]   Ibid., vol. 12, 121.
[63]   Ibid., 128.

or "*wajib*" nature of the appointments made by *Wal-yi Faqih* as a leader of *the umma*.[64] Imam Khomeini states his appointments are due to the right of Sharia, the authority of Sharia and general jurisprudence, and this right has been granted by God.[65] In this regard, he stated, "This state, which has been designated as a *Shari'a* governorship, is a *Shari'a* state, not just a legal one, that is, everyone is obligated to obey the *Shari'a* state and its *Wajib*."[66] Using the metaphor of ownership regarding the belonging of the country to the Imam of the time and the necessity of following the rulings of the jurist as the shadow of God and the vicegerent of the infallible Imam, causes the ruler's relationship with the people to become a relationship of worship, which not only in this world causes prosperity, but also in the hereafter.

Imam Khomeini's concept of jurisprudence or "*fiqh*" as an intermediary between God and society is a complex and deeply rooted idea in Islamic philosophy. To understand this idea, we need to unpack it step by step.

The first aspect of this idea is the role of *fiqh* as a mediator between God and society. In this sense, *fiqh* represents the Islamic legal framework that governs human behaviour. Through the rulings and guidelines established by *fiqh*, individuals can connect with God and understand their obligations towards Him.

The second aspect of this idea is the concept of the shadow of Allah and the "shadow of *fiqh*." According to Imam Khomeini, the shadow of Allah refers to the legitimate leader of society, while *fiqh* represents the Islamic legal framework that guides the leader's decisions. The leader would be considered the shadow of *fiqh* in this concept. The shadow of *fiqh* acts as a check on the leader's power, ensuring they do not violate God's will and work in society's best interest. So, the leader would be the executor and evaluator.

The third aspect of this idea is the connection between *fiqh* and Allah. In Imam Khomeini's view, *fiqh* and Allah are equivalent concepts that have become identical. This means the Islamic legal framework, as established by *fiqh*, represents the will of God and the two concepts are inseparable.

Therefore, by contrasting the two systems of thought, it seems that being the shadow of *fiqh* in the *fiqh* system is equivalent to being the "shadow of the law" in the legal system. In other words, "state" will correspond to Allah. As a result, the state and Allah imply a single concept, i.e., the simultaneous existence of the two is impossible. A combination that is never possible in Shīʿī jurisprudence and Imam Khomeini thought. The personality born in the thought of Imam Khomeini will result from the sameness of jurisprudence that is *fiqh* and God. A character called the shadow of Allah or shadow of *fiqh* is the only one who can lead the Muslim community or *umma*; the person who will be the embodiment of God on earth and will make Him visible.

Imam Khomeini's idea of *fiqh* as an intermediary between God and society has several possible criticisms. One criticism is that it assumes a singular, unified interpretation of

---

[64]   Ibid., vol. 4, 207; vol. 5, 76.
[65]   Ibid., vol. 17, 263; vol. 3. 236.
[66]   Ibid., vol. 3, 251-253.

Islamic law. In reality, there are many different schools of Islamic thought, each with its interpretation of Islamic law. This raises questions about whose interpretation of *fiqh* should be considered authoritative and whether it is possible to have a single, unified Islamic legal framework that represents the will of God.[67] Moreover, it can lead to a narrow and rigid interpretation of Islamic law that leaves little room for flexibility or adaptation to changing social and political circumstances. This can be particularly problematic in modern contexts where societies and technologies are rapidly evolving.

Additionally, some critics argue that the idea of the shadow of Allah and shadow of *fiqh* can be used to justify authoritarianism and suppression of dissent. Suppose a leader's legitimacy is based solely on their adherence to Islamic law. In that case, it may be difficult to challenge their authority, even if their decisions are harmful or unjust.[68] Finally, this concept can lead to the marginalisation of women and minority groups within Muslim societies.

Characteristics of an Islamic Leader

According to Imam Khomeini, the Islamic leader must possess two key specific attributes: expertise in Islamic law and justice. Additionally, he considers reason and resourcefulness as general conditions for a leader in the Islamic government.[69] In his book, *Wilayat al-Faqih*, Khomeini emphasises the importance of tact and sufficiency as integral characteristics of an Islamic leader, stating these qualities are encompassed within the broader requirement of knowledge and understanding of the law. He further asserts the leader must have comprehensive understanding of the law and be competent in the administration and leadership of the Islamic state. He adds:

> Of course, the attribute of sufficiency and competence, which is essential for a ruler, is included in the first condition, that is, knowledge in its broadest sense, and there is no doubt that the ruler of the Islamic society must also have this attribute. In his opinion, if someone puts forward aptitude as the third condition of the ruler, it is also acceptable.[70]

Khomeini's emphasis on knowledge of the law, justice, reason and resourcefulness highlights the importance of the Islamic leader being well-rounded, possessing a strong moral character and having a thorough understanding of Islamic law and regulations to effectively govern the Muslim society.

Khomeini's views on the characteristics of an Islamic leader are enshrined in two critical provisions of the Iranian Constitution: Article 5 and Article 109. Article 5, commonly

---

[67]   Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran," in *Women, Religion, and Space in China and Beyond*, ed. Xiaoxin Wu and Wei Zhu (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[68]   Nader Hashemi, "Iran's Islamic Revolution at 40: From Theocracy to 'Normalocracy'?" Al Jazeera, February 12, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/2/12/irans-islamic-revolution-at-40-from-theocracy-to-normalocracy.

[69]   "The conditions that are necessary for a ruler are directly caused by the nature of Islamic governance. After general conditions, such as reason and resourcefulness, there are two basic conditions, which are: 1- knowledge of law and 2- justice." Khomeini, *Wilayat al-faqih*, 73.

[70]   Khomeini, *Wilayat al-faqih*, 23.

referred to as the "*Wilayat al-Faqih* Article," states that during the absence of the Imam of the Age, "the leadership of the *Ummah* is to be assumed by a just and pious jurist who is well-informed about the current situation, resourceful, courageous, and has the necessary administrative skills to carry out the duties outlined in Article 107."

Article 109 outlines the essential qualifications and conditions for the leader, which include:

1. Scholarship in the field of Islamic jurisprudence, required for performing the functions of a mufti in different areas of *fiqh.*
2. Justice and piety, crucial for the leadership of the Muslim *umma*.
3. Political and social acumen, prudence, courage, administrative abilities and the capability to lead.

It also adds that if multiple individuals fulfil the above qualifications, preference will be given to the one with superior jurisprudential and political insight.[71]

Khomeini's perspective on the characteristics of an Islamic leader, as enshrined in the Iranian Constitution, has faced significant criticism. One of the main critiques is that Khomeini's idea of an Islamic leader, a *Faqih*, is too narrow and restrictive. It excludes individuals who may possess other valuable skills and qualifications necessary for effective leadership, such as political or economic expertise. Critics argue this approach limits the potential pool of leaders, which can negatively affect the country.[72]

Moreover, Khomeini's emphasis on the *Faqih*'s religious expertise and interpretation of Islamic law has raised concerns about the potential for religious intolerance and authoritarianism. Some argue that the *Faqih*'s authority to interpret and apply Islamic law could lead to the oppression of minority groups or those who do not share the same interpretation of Islam.[73]

Additionally, Khomeini's emphasis on a leader's characteristics, such as piety and morality, has been criticised as being too subjective and difficult to assess objectively. This could result in a biased selection process for leadership positions and the exclusion of individuals who may possess other valuable qualities.[74]

Finally, Khomeini's idea of an Islamic leader has been criticised for lacking a clear system of checks and balances. The *Faqih*'s authority and power are not well-defined or limited, which could lead to abuse of power and corruption.

---

[71]   All English translations of the constitution are quoted from "Iran (Islamic Republic of)'s Constitution of 1979 with Amendments through 1989," Comparative Constitutions Project, April 27, 2022, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iran_1989.pdf.

[72]   Fatima Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (Boston: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1992), 51.

[73]   Vanessa Martin, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 127.

[74]   Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Islam and Constitutionalism since the Nineteenth Century: The Significance and Peculiarities of Iran," in *Constitutional Politics in the Middle East: With special reference to Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan*, ed. Saïd Amir Arjomand (London: Hart Publishing, 2008).

While Khomeini's perspective on the characteristics of an Islamic leader has its merits, it also faces significant criticism for its potential limitations and risks. The Iranian Constitution's Articles 5 and 109 reflect Khomeini's ideas but raise concerns about the potential for exclusion, intolerance, subjectivity and lack of accountability in the leadership selection process.

CONCLUSION

Imam Khomeini's theory of leadership in Muslim society was introduced as a response to the dire state of humanity following the atrocities of world wars. Although one of the goals of this theory was to lead society toward perpetual wellbeing, some issues must be scrutinised while analysing it.

First, he based his thoughts on a simple but fundamental premise that Islam already sets down all the necessary rules for a better life, and in fact, it is a self-sufficient system of thought. This brings about two results: first, there is no need to rely on other sources to justify the conditions for leadership in Islam. Second, during the practical implementation of this theory in contemporary Iran, there were several references to general and mostly non-Islamic prerequisites for a leader, which Islam can approve. Therefore, emphasising the self-sufficiency of Islamic rules could have resulted in the non-functioning of the institutions designed to implement Islamic regulations.

Furthermore, Khomeini's ideas were based on the role of a person as the shadow of God, which led to the complete disregard of theories in political Islam other than ownership. This concept is so central to his system of thought that criticising it may weaken the entire theory. Ownership creates a linear hierarchy between Allah, Imam and *Faqih*, leaving no place for the *umma* in this structure. As a result, this structure has an inherent paradox regarding leadership in an Muslim society. The theory is introduced to lead society, but has little capacity to recognise the collective concept of the *umma*.

By leaving the leadership to the *Faqih*, he becomes the source and executor of Islamic rules. This means there is no independent and dependable third viewpoint to assess and evaluate the conduct of the leadership. Additionally, the *Faqih* is always the source of his authenticity, while in the case of the Imam, the source of authenticity is God. This hinders the possibility of an impersonal personality of leadership in Muslim society. As Montazeri argued, the theory gave too much power to the Supreme Leader and limited the role of elected officials and the judiciary. He also criticised the restrictions on freedom of expression and the treatment of political dissidents.[75]

---

[75]   Hossein-Ali Montazeri's criticism of Khomeini's theory of *welayat-e faqih* can be found in his book: Hossein-Ali Montazeri, Mabānı̄ Fiqhı̄ Ḥukūmat-i Islāmı̄ (the Jurisdictional Foundations of the Islamic Government), translated into Persian by Maḥmūd Ṣalawātı̄ and Abuʾl-Faḍl Shakūrı̄, 8 volumes, 1367 shamsı̄ (Tehran, Sarāʾyı̄ publication). Other sources that discuss Montazeri's critique include Nikki Keddie and Yann Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1999).

However, the question of creating a modern state with an independent legal personality that is compatible with Islamic rules remains unanswered. While Khomeini's theory of leadership in Muslim society was meant to lead society toward perpetual wellbeing, several issues need to be considered and addressed to achieve this goal. They include developing a comprehensive legal framework that reconciles Islamic jurisprudence with modern legal concepts and practices, ensuring accountability and transparency in governance, promoting social justice and equality, safeguarding individual rights and freedoms, and creating a thriving economy that benefits all members of society. These are complex and challenging issues that require careful consideration and implementation to ensure the successful integration of Islamic principles and modern governance practices. These critics, along with others, have raised concerns about the limitations of *Wilayat-e Faqih* in ensuring democratic governance and protecting the rights of citizens and have called for a re-examination of the theory and its implementation. As Mohammad Khatami, a former President of Iran, has argued, the theory should be reinterpreted to allow for greater participation and representation by the people, and it should be compatible with democratic principles.[76]

---

[76]   Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, 172-174.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adib-Moghaddam, Arshin. "Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini: A Clerical Revolutionary?" In *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, edited by Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, 1-18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Ahmed, Akbar. *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007.

Arjomand, Saïd, "Islam and Constitutionalism since the Nineteenth Century: The Significance and Peculiarities of Iran." In *Constitutional Politics in the Middle East: With Special Reference to Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan*, edited by Saïd Amir Arjomand, 33–62. London: Hart Publishing, 2008.

Arjomand, Said. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam. Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Babayan, Kathryn. *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran.* Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press, 2003.

Bayat, Asef. "Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question?" *ISIM Papers no. 8*. Leiden: Amsterdam University Press, ISIM, 2007.

Comparative Constitutions Project. "Iran (Islamic Republic of)'s Constitution of 1979 with Amendments through 1989." April 27, 2022. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iran_1989.pdf.

Dorraj, Manochehr. *From Zarathustra to Khomeini: Populism and Dissent in Iran*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1990.

Euben, Roxanne, and Muhammad Zaman, eds. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*. Vol. 32. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Fischer, Michael, and Mehdi Abedi. *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

Ghamari-Tabrizi, Behrooz. "The Divine, the People, and the *Faqih*: On Khomeini's Theory of Sovereignty." In *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, edited by Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, 211-38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Hashemi, Nader. "Iran's Islamic Revolution at 40: From Theocracy to 'Normalocracy'?" Al Jazeera, February 12, 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/2/12/irans-islamic-revolution-at-40-from-theocracy-to-normalocracy.

Hashemi, Nader. "Islam, Human Rights, and the Legacy of Khomeini." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2011): 41-50.

Jafarian, Rasul. "Ali Akbar Hekamizadeh in Four Scenes (1366-1276 CE)." *Historical Articles and Treatises* 8 (2018): 525-682.

Jafarian, Rasul. *Iran's Religious-Political Streams, and Organizations: From the Ascension of Mohammad Reza Shah to the Victory of the Islamic Revolution, 1357-1320*. Tehran: Elm, 2004.

Jafarian, Rasul. *Safavid in the Field of Religion, Culture, and Politics: The First Volume*. Qom: Research Institute of the Field and University, 2000.

Jafarian, Rasul. *The History of Shiism in Iran from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Safavid State*. Tehran: Elm, 2007.

Kadivar, Mohsen. *Estizahe Rahbari (Impeaching Iran's Super Leader: Assessing the Supreme Leader's 21 Years in the Office)*, 2nd ed. Mohsen Kadivar, 2014. webbook edition. https://kadivar.com/13562/.

Kadivar, Mohsen. "The Jurisprudential Basis of the Principle of Democracy in Iran: A Theological Perspective." *Democratization* 23, no. 1 (2016): 88-107.

Keddie, Nikki, and Yann Richard. *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Kepel, Gilles. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Translated by Anthony F. Roberts. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002

Khomeini, Ruhollah. *Islam and Revolution I: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941–1980)*. Translated by Hamid Algar. Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press,1981.

Khomeini, Ruhollah. *Kashf al-Asrar* [Discovering the Secrets]. Tehran: Imam Khomeini Editing and Publishing Institute, 1999.

Khomeini, Ruhollah. *Sahifa-yi Nur* [The Book of Light]. Tehran: Center for Editing and Publishing the Works of Imam, 2000.

Khomeini, Ruhollah. *Wilayat al-Faqih and Jihad Akbar* [Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist and Greater Jihad]. Tehran: Imam Khomeini Editing and Publishing Institute, 1998.

Martin, Vanessa. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005.

Menashri, David. "Ayatollah Khomeini and the Velayat-e Faqih." In *Militancy and Political Violence in Shiism: Trends and Patterns*, Assaf Moghadam, 49-69. New York; London: Routledge, 2011.

Mernissi, Fatima. *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World*. Boston: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1992.

Milani, Mohsen. *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*. Routledge, 1994.

Mir Ali, Mohammad. "Legitimacy of Cooperation with the Oppressive Ruler in Shia Political Jurisprudence." *Scientific Quarterly of Shia Studies* 14, no. 53 (2007): 119-142.

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. "Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran." In *Women, Religion, and Space in China and Beyond*, edited by Xiaoxin Wu and Wei Zhu, 215-233. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Mirsepassi, Ali. "Islamic Democracy and its Limits: The Iranian Experience since 1979." *Middle East Journal* 62, no.1 (2008): 47-66.

Mishal, Shaul, and Ori Goldberg. *Understanding Shiite Leadership: The Art of the Middle Ground in Iran and Lebanon*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Moin, Baqer. *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*. London; New York: IB Tauris, 2009.

Momen, Moojan. *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Nasr, Seyyed. "Sunni and Shi'i Islam." In *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke, 342-357. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Newman, Andrew. *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006.

"Prominent Cleric Blasts Iranian Government for Violating Human Rights." *The New York Times*, April 15, 1999.

Qolizadeh Barandagh, Ahadollah. "The Foundations of Cooperation between Scholars and Governments (with Emphasis on Faiz Kashani's Thought)." *Kausar Maarif* 17, no.7 (2019): 3-26.

Rahimi, Babak. "Democratic Authority, Public Islam, and Shi'i Jurisprudence in Iran and Iraq: Hussain Ali Montazeri and Ali Sistani." *International Political Science Review* 33 (2012): 193-208.

Rasekh, Ali-Ahmad. "Agents of the Hidden Imam: Shiite Juristic Authority in Light of the Doctrine of Deputyship." PhD diss., Concordia University, 2015.

Sabet, Amr. "Wilayat Al-Faqih and the Meaning of Islamic Government." In *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, edited by Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, 69-87. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, Eskandar. "Disenchanting Political Theology in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Reform, Religious Intellectualism and the Death of Utopia." PhD diss., Oxford University, 2014.

Saikal, Amin. *Iran Rising – The Survival and Future of the Islamic Republic.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Savory, Roger. *Iran Under the Safavids.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Siavoshi, Sussan. *Montazeri: The Life and Thought of Iran's Revolutionary Ayatollah*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Soroush, Abdolkarim. *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Soroush, Abdolkarim. "The Conservative and Reformist Interpretation of Islam." In *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, edited by Gerhard Bowering, 239-255. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Soroush, Abdolkarim. "The Necessity and Possibility of Islamic Democratic Society." In *Islam and Democracy in Iran: Eshkevari and the Quest for Reform*, edited by Ziba Mir-Hosseini, 94-115. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.

Tabatabai Far, Seyyed. *The Kingship Regime from the Perspective of Shia Thought: Safavid and Qajar Periods*. Tehran: Nei Publishing House, 2004.

Tabataba'i, Muhammad. *Shi'ite Islam*. Translated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975.

Taleghani, Mahmoud. "The Social Message of Islam." *Al-Tawhid: A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Thought and Culture* 7, no. 1 (1991): 3-10.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan, ed. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.

Wilber, Donald. *Iran: Past and Present: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.