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The Balance of Ecumenism and Sectarianism: Rethinking Religion and Foreign Policy in Iran

Introduction

Counter-intuitively, religion has been understudied as well as undervalued as a factor of foreign policy in the Islamic Republic of Iran.[1] This emerges, for instance, from a prevalent dichotomy that contrasts ideology and pragmatism as core foreign policy orientations in the Islamic state,[2] and the conviction stemming from it that at least since Ayatollah Khomeini's demise in 1989, the latter course reigns supreme.[3] The duality of 'ideological' and 'pragmatic' in these analyses is often construed on a par with that of radical and moderated policy—the latter associated initially with ᶜAli Akbar Hāshemi-Rafsanjāni's speakership of parliament in the mid-1980s—and also frequently portrayed as coterminous with more and less religious views.[4] The passing from ideological radicalism to pragmatic moderation is thus seen as illustrative of the larger secularising development of the Islamic Republic, a thesis that has been undeterred by the neoconservative reversal of 2005-2013.[5]

Each of these terms, however, and each of the observed currents, is problematic when seen as an evolutionary stage rather than merely as a reversible tendency. It is not obvious, for instance, how radical policy and inflexible ideology might both be implied   in cases such as that in which 'the Zionist

construct' became a key supplier of 'arms and medicine during the Iran–Iraq war, and a buyer of Iranian oil – with the knowledge of the revolutionary leader'.[6] Such 'pragmatic radicalism' on the part of the Iranian state crosscuts the above-mentioned distinctions, as does the relative label 'ideological-moderate' that applies to significant parts of the presidency of Mohammad Khātami (1997–2005).

More important for the present discussion, religion tends not to crosscut but overlap with the various policy types. Religion has often fed into both ideology and radicalism in Iran's foreign relations since the revolution—although Aboɔl-Hasan Bani-Sadr's presidency in 1980–1981, among other cases evinced secular layers to radical ideology—but religion is equally central to policy that counts as moderate or pragmatic. Indeed, cooler concerns for external efficacy in the state, being more about means than ends, need not be inspired less by religious views than badges stuck on the lapel. The pragmatic approach was set in motion through Khomeini's speech in October 1984, which stipulated that '(w)e should act as (…) in early Islam when the Prophet (…) sent ambassadors to all parts of the world to establish proper relations (…). We should have relations with all governments with the exception of a few'.[7]

The conceptual problems that emerge from these homological sets—of ideological:pragmatic::radical:moderate—and their secularising assumptions indicate a failure to conceive of foreign policy in the Islamic Republic as expressing a fundamentally religious system. Whether in its constitutive

discourse, its institutional structures or inter- and transnational alliance behaviour, Iran's foreign policy belies the 'false secularity' undergirding the Westphalian concept of interstate order.[8] It may be against this background of misread secularity that international relations have for so long cut religion out as a factor for analysis,[9] and one may similarly find a reason here for the stated neglect of religious ideology as a constitutive force of foreign policy in Iran.

In Michael Freeden's morphological analysis, ideologies consolidate through conceptual interrelation.[10] There often are hierarchical aspects to such consolidation, as in the ranking of core, adjacent and peripheral concepts.[11] Furthermore, hierarchy may also occur across opposed variants within an ideological family, through the 'encompassment of the contrary' cementing the whole—the Dumontian insight into ideological integration.[12]

Shiite Islamism within the Islamist ideological family[13] includes core concepts such as Islamic rule, justice and divine sovereignty. Their association with adjacent concepts such as 'the guardianship of the jurisconsult' and Shiᶜa empowerment anchor the ideology in clericalist and lay variants. More ephemeral, peripheral concepts such as revolutionary export and 'mother of the cities' specify these general frames as outward and inward foreign policy orientations, respectively. In the same vein, the sectarian and ecumenist key variants of Shiite Islamism are particularised at the ideological perimeter by their embodiment in institutions such as the *Majmaᶜ-e ahl-e beyt* and the *Majmaᶜ-e taqrib*—see below.

The following explores ecumenism—seeking commonality or integration among Islamic Schools (*mazāheb*)—and sectarianism—promoting Shiism as a separate Islamic identity—as policy moulds in Iran in the revolutionary decade (1979–1989), the reformist interlude (1989–2005) and the period of radical reassertion (2005–2013). The analysis aims to isolate core tendencies in each of these eras from the complexities of the Islamic Republic's historical record. The first epoch saw ecumenism foregrounded ideologically in Islamic universalism—aimed at the global reign of Islam—and diluted in sectarian organisation. The second period contained pan-Islamism—for the political unification of Muslim lands—within religious nationalism, while transnational religious organisations integrated sectarian and ecumenical first principles. The third era was characterised by the dissonance of a reasserted ecumenism and the emergence of an explicit, strong sectarianism.

In each of these cases, particular balances of ecumenism and sectarianism obtained. Core instances of ecumenism have been encompassed within frameworks of sectarian leadership, alliances and organisation, while an ecumenised Shiism has been at the basis of sectarian policy orientations. One sees examples in these cases of hierarchical totalisation through the encompassing of opposed ideological variants. In other words, the alternation of fore- and background in these policy orientations, of more inclusive and more sectarian paradigms, always articulates ecumenised but unmistakably Shiite Islamism.

Khomeinist Universalism as a Shiite Project

The universalist themes in Khomeinist ideology, especially that of 'export of the revolution' (*sodur-e enqelāb*), are well established and mostly seen as contrasting with sectarianism.[14] Among its eye-catching articulations were protestation and propaganda in the name of the 'oppressed' during the hajj, a setting that Khomeini had desectarianised through a fatwa in September 1979 allowing Iranian Shiites 'to pray behind a Sunni imam in Mecca and Medina'.[15] Iran's Constitution of December 1979 held it to be the duty of the Islamic Republic to engender and further the unity of the Islamic world.[16]

Khomeinist revolutionary discourse presented a politically sharpened unitary vision of the faith, over and above the fact that citing sectarian differences had long been 'regarded by many Shi'is as an attempt to isolate them and even as part of an imperialist plot to foment division in Islam'.[17] However, it is equally remarkable that Khomeinism's 'universal call (was) based on the particularities of Shi'i Islam'.[18]

This paradox of universalism was enshrined in the Constitution's Article 12, which was ecumenist in recognising the Sunni and Zaidi schools, but also proclaimed Twelver Shiism the religion of state and president—inviting protest from foreign Sunni Islamists sympathetic to ecumenism[19] and hampering Iran's claim to the patronage of global revolution (Article 154). Moreover, the universalist revolutionary export had Shiite particularist frames that were visible principally in two aspects of foreign policy: the core religious imaginary and

doctrine guiding the war with Iraq, serving both its justification and the
mobilisation of the populace,[20] and the sectarian inscription of Iran's foreign
alliances.

Dichotomous terms central to the Iranian leaders' ideology, such as 'belief'
(*imān*)/Islam and 'unbelief' (*kofr*), 'disinherited' (*mostazᶜafun*) and 'arrogant'
(*mostakbarun*), and 'truth' (*haqq*) and 'falsehood' (*bātel*)—the last two being
terms in which Hoseyn's battle at Karbalāᵓ had also been couched—served from
the outset as an overarching ideological frame. From early on, it was 'part of the
justification of the war' to export the revolution to Iraq and establish an Islamic
government.[21] Iran's President since October 1981, ᶜAli Hoseyni Khāmeneᵓī
stated in March 1982 that the outcome of the war should be not only that Iraq
would be an Islamic state, but also that it would be ruled under the principle of
velāyat-e faqih and Khomeini's leadership.[22] More broadly, Iraq 'would be
absorbed into Iran or administered as an independent—vassal—Shi'i state (while
the Persian) Gulf States were expected to sue for peace and line up to await their
conversion into Islamic republics'.[23]

The sectarianism of Iran's revolutionary export was reinforced by its foreign
alliances. The view is now often shared that most 'armed groups that received
support from Iran during the 1980s were Shi'i'.[24] Similarly, the revolution was
often carried abroad through Iran's foreign Shiite clients, regardless of the
competition that might also define their relations.[25] Revolutionary export first
reached contiguous or nearby territory where Shiite majorities experienced

disenfranchisement—Iraq and Bahrain—and, at a later stage, a territory where Shiites formed the largest minority in a majority-less state—Lebanon.[26]

The first foreign minister associated with the export of the revolution, Musavi, made headlines with pan-Islamic themes,[27] but its primary vehicle was of a sectarian bent. The Council for the Islamic Revolution coordinated five regional subdivisions or (Supreme) Revolutionary Assemblies:[28] of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI or SCIRI);[29] of Lebanon (AIRL); of the Arabian Peninsula (OIRAP or AIRAP); of Africa and the Arabian Maghreb (SAIRAAM); and of Asia (SAIRA).[30] The principal groupings, the first three, each saw central roles for Shiite personalities or parties: Hojjatoleslām Bāqer al-Hakim headed SAIRI/SCIRI, Islamic AMAL and Hezbollāh were central to AIRL, and OIRAP/AIRAP was reputedly led by Hojjatoleslām Mohammad-Taqi al-Modarresi.[31]

The most enduring alliance struck by the Islamic state, with Syria, was rooted in pre-revolutionary religio-political encounters, besides in common regional interest, and came to exemplify contradictions of its Islamic universalism. The fatwas of two revolutionary clerics, Hasan Mahdi al-Shirāzi and Musā Sadr, legitimising the ᶜAlawis as Twelver Shiites, 'probably paved the way for future collaboration between the Alawis of Syria and the Shia represented by the (…) Islamic Republic'.[32] After the Islamic revolution, the Damascene shrine complex of Sayyida Zaynab became a transnational hub of Twelver Shiism where Iran

constructed the second largest *hawza*, and the Syrian and Iranian regimes promoted 'pilgrimage as a religious dimension of their strategic alliance'.[33]

The earliest Iranian–Syrian meetings discussed support for the Iraqi opposition, especially in the Shiite South, and, in November 1979, for the Shiite opposition in Iraq, but Iran and Syria did not 'seal' their alliance until spring 1982.[34] Shortly before the arrival in Tehran of the Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddām, in late February 1982, Asad's regime had concluded its destruction of Hama, quelling the Muslim Brotherhood's uprising. Iran's foreign minister, ᶜAli Akbar Velāyati, fiercely condemned the Muslim Brothers on 4 March, in a statement that evidenced the first major crack in the Islamic Republic's universalist facade. This episode greatly damaged Iran's ecumenist and pan-Islamic credentials.[35]

Iraq was the 'primary target' for revolutionary export, due especially to its contiguous territory harbouring a subject Shiite majority.[36] The centrality of Iraq to the Islamic Republic's foreign relations was further reflected in the exceptional political contributions to the Iranian state by Shiites from Iraq. In actions reminiscent of the Safavid era, when foreign ᶜolamā relocated to Iran to assist in the build-up of the religious state, the Islamic state incorporated several Iraq-born Shiites, who subsequently played key roles in the *nezām* and were often involved with revolutionary export. Key among these were Ayatollah Mahmud Hāshemi-Shāhrudi, who among other sensitive functions was the head of Iran's judiciary between 1999 and 2009, and Ayatollah Mohammad ᶜAli Taskhiri—see below.[37]

Just as support of the Iraqi Shiite opposition saw Syrian–Iranian coordination, mediation by the ᶜAlawite regime was crucial to the Islamic Republic's incursions onto Lebanese soil. Both at the height and arguably a low point in Iran's foreign reach in the 1980s, Iranian officials or their ideological partners abroad ventured views of Shiite land in Lebanon as part of the Iran-led, transnational Islamist state. December 1982 saw the proclamation at Baalbek of the Islamic Republic of Lebanon.[38] Its draft constitution from 1985 held that 'in the absence of the Hidden Imam, the source of all authority is the Virtuous Jurist […], who will appoint the chairman of the Lebanese Governance of the Jurist Commission, a local ayatollah'.[39] Such transnational conceptions of the Shiite Islamist state remained long after 'moderation' had set in in Iran. Within months of the Taif accord of October 1989, which stipulated Syria's retreat from Lebanon and the deconfessionalisation of its state, Iran's ambassador to Syria, Mohammad-Hasan Akhtari, 'stressed that Iranian officials regard Lebanon, especially the Islamic area of it, as part of the Islamic Republic'.[40]

The Shiite articulation of Iran's foreign ties was forthright in the case of several Gulf states—especially Bahrain and Kuwait—where revolutionary export was significantly shaped by Khomeini's personal deputies, liaising with Shiite Islamist parties.[41] Thus, the 'Arab Gulf (became) an arena for Shiᶜi radicals of many outside nationalities—Iranian, Iraqi, and Lebanese',[42] and revolutionary export to Lebanon, Iraq and the Gulf became intermixed. Saudi Shiites were radicalised via these transnational—but especially through Mohammad-Taqi al-Modarresi,   Iraqi-dominated—networks[43]   and   after   the   uprising   in

November/December 1979, 'the bulk of OIRAP's leadership relocated to Iran.'

With their 'Iraqi mentors', they became champions of the Islamic Republic's

political model.[44]

Significant ties to Afghan parties developed later than relations in the Levant

and the Gulf. As in these areas, Iran supported specifically Shiite groups 'rather

than resistance organizations generally or even the Sunni Islamic fundamentalist

groups'.[45] However, this situation crystallised only gradually, on account of the

initial lack of credible Shiite contenders to carry the torch of its revolution.[46] The

first organisation deemed worthy and a recipient of largesse was the Sāzmān-i

Nasr-i Islāmi-yi Afghānistān. But in 1982, Iran's discontent with its operations

led to the launch of an Afghan branch of the Islamic Republic's Pāsdārān.[47] After

the Soviet retreat in 1989, 'Iran decided to unite all the Shi'a components' and to

that end created and supported Hizb-i Wahdat in the central Hazarajat area.[48]

In South Asia, the Islamic revolution left the most visible traces in Pakistan.

Exceptionally, Iran's direct investment in Shiite communities in the region

followed botched efforts to reach out to Sunni Islamist parties.[49] Key

organisational bonds with Pakistani Shiites had, however, been welded in the

aftermath of the revolution.[50] Through Iran's transnational Shiite missionaries,

such as the AMAL-trained Revolutionary Guard commander Mohsen Zamāni, the

Imāmia Student Organization was resurrected.[51] The Tahrik-i Nifāz-i Fiqh-i

Jaᶜfariya was led from 1984 by ᶜAllāma ᶜĀrif Huseyni (d. 1988), who acted from

1985 as Khomeini's *wakil* in Pakistan[52] and turned the movement 'into a militant

body (aspiring to) Islamic revolution—modelled after that of Iran and following Khomeini's authority'.[53]

The Islamic Republic showed 'persistence' in its 'revolutionary foreign policy' in the 1990s,[54] but in the Gulf, the pattern of popular demonstrations, violent confrontations and acts of terrorism had largely subsided by the mid-1980s. Iran's acceptance of UN Resolution 589 and the cease-fire with Iraq of July 1988 are sometimes seen as marking 'the failure of the Iranian attempt to export its revolution by military means'.[55] With the Liberation Movements Bureau closed, its leader Hāshemi executed and 'subcontracting' Shirāziyyin under pressure, revolutionary export was recast in a more conventional role, as means of extending the national state interest first and foremost, as opposed to global Islam[56]—although views of the Iranian state interest were still mediated by Shiite national identity.

Inversions of Ecumenism and Sectarianism

Iran's mission towards the Islamic world continued, for instance, via two pan-Shiite and ecumenist organisations. In April 1990, a 'World Conference on the People of the Prophet's House' in Tehran announced the creation of two international bodies with apparently clashing ecumenist and sectarian remits: the World Society for Rapprochement between the Islamic Sects and the World Society for the People of the Prophet's House[57]—hereafter, in abridged Persian form, *Majmaᶜ-e taqrib* and *Majmaᶜ-e ahl-e beyt*.

The Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib was established in October 1990 and presented as an
important regime institution.[58] A perceptive reflexion holds that the Majmaᶜ
aimed to reduce Iran's isolation after 1979, especially from the Sunni-Arab world,
while aspects of its organisation made this objective unlikely to succeed. These
included 'the predominance of the Shiis on (its) board (and the) total financial
dependency on its founder and protector, Supreme leader Khāmeneʾī, and his far-
reaching powers in filling its leading posts'.[59] This observation of the Society in
2001, of supreme Shiite oversight and sectarian directorship, still holds true of its
modus operandi in the second decade of the 21st century.[60] As revolutionary
export often did in Khomeini's era, ecumenical politics thereafter aimed to
encompass Sunni–Shiite rapprochement within a religiously defined hierarchy of
Shiite leadership.

The Society's latest démarche concerned the Arab Spring, which mostly
involved 'downtrodden Muslims', according to its flagship journal *Al-Taqrib*
('rapprochement'). The journal recalls that Khāmeneʾi had called the uprisings an
'Islamic awakening', and that all Islamic movements needed to identify with 'the
existing revival so as to be a part of it in an integral and authentic fashion'—i.e.
subordinate themselves to Khāmeneʾi's leadership.[61]

The issue of proper Islamic leadership is argued with reference to Imam ᶜAli's
letter to Mālik al-Ashtar, followed by a warning that the sectarian divide was the
greatest stumbling block for its acceptance. Among several ways forward, the
journal then points to the Ayatollah Javādi-Āmoli, who had suggested during a

feqh lesson in February 2011, while commenting on a prayer of the sixth Imam Jaᶜfar al-Sādeq, that the true meaning of the term 'Shiites' was not sectarian but should embrace all Muslims.[62] Shiite leadership claims were supported by the case for a vanguard *taqrib*, in other words, that was already embodied within an ecumenical Shiism, readymade for the remainder of the umma to embrace.

While energetically pursuing ecumenist objectives over the decades, organising international conferences and issuing a range of publications, the Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib has not tangibly brought about Sunni–Shiite rapprochement. The Sunni world outside Iran remains by and large unmoved by Iranian-led Shiite overtures, and it has been observed pertinently that ecumenism 'remains an intellectual exercise, with almost no place in the intimate dialogue between Shi'i *ulama* and Shi'i believers'.[63] In contrast, the second World Society, for the People of the Prophet's House, would tap into deeper reservoirs.[64]

The Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt continued the apparent new trend of the Islamic Republic, despite ecumenist initiatives, of establishing foreign ties on an explicitly Shiite basis. From the early 1990s, for instance, Iranian activity aimed at Shiite conversion (*estebsār*) surfaced in the former Soviet Union.[65] In April 1989, a new Organization for Islamic Message Propagation had been founded, dedicated to 'spreading Shiᶜa Islam'. The state body was overseen by Mohammad ᶜAli Taskhiri, who would also become the Society's first director.[66]

The main objective of the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt has been 'to gain control over the political, social and religious affairs of the Shii communities throughout the

world (and) to centralise them under the leadership of the Iranian *walī-ye faqīh* ᶜAlī Khāmeneᵓī'.[67] Thus, the Society has been unapologetic of its sectarian mission. It declared that it worked 'for the international dissemination of the Shii *fiqh* whose superiority to that of the Sunnis it wishes to prove by peaceful propagandistic means'.[68] Beyond the Islamic world, the Society intimated global ambitions. An article published on its news site under the current Head, Hasan Akhtari, claimed that the West was turning towards Islam and that Christianity's natural affinity with the *mazhab* provided an opportunity to spread Shiism.[69]

The emergence of the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt has been associated with the resurgence of a traditionalist Shiite stratum in Iran that was uncomfortable with the Ecumenical Society.[70] Irrespective of its clear sectarian mission, however, it would be a misconception of the organisation to construe its sectarianism as being *opposed* to ecumenism. Its main objectives, such as 'the establishment and strengthening of unity among all the sons of the Islamic umma', are mostly stated in transsectarian language.[71]

The fact that the Society's remit extends beyond the sectarian divide is reflected also in its leadership. First, there has been significant staff overlap between the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt and the Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib. Taskhiri, currently a member of the Supreme Council of the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt, has served as Secretary-General to both societies; Arāki is a present member of the Supreme Council[72] and Secretary-General of the Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib. Moreover, the current Secretary-General of the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt, Akhtari, while not having served

in the Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib, has an elaborate 'universalist' profile. Thus, one notes his insistence on Islamic unity and 'gathering the sects together'.[73]

Where the above-mentioned principles of the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt all ranked 'the followers of the Ahl-e Beyt' alongside other members of the umma or subsumed the Shiites within it, the Shiites' organisation harboured a different, hierarchical view on inter-sectarian relations. This hierarchical understanding emerged from Taskhiri's insistence, as Secretary-General not of the Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib—whose practice his message echoed—but of the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt, 'that Iran's Shi'is have a legitimate, historical right to exert political and intellectual-religious leadership over Muslims worldwide'.[74]

In sum, ideological tension exists not only between but also within these two state organisations—revealing inversions of ecumenism and sectarianism. The Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt couples a sectarian name and a Shiite world remit with largely universalist first principles, hosting a Secretary-General whose media presence has ecumenist overtones and a first leader avowing the Islamic umma, rather than the Shiite world only, as the field of application for Shiite leadership. The Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib, on the other hand, whose raison d'être is ecumenist rapprochement, maintains a largely sectarian Board and depends on funding and supervision at the apex of the Shiite state. Both Societies remain in the service of Shiite universalism, in, respectively, more ecumenist and sectarian articulations. They encompass Sunni rapprochement within religiously defined hierarchies of

Shiite leadership, and place ecumenical Shiite direction at the helm in the umma's struggle.

Religious Conceptions of Political Moderation

Before Velāyati was appointed to lead the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt, he had been the Islamic Republic's longest-serving foreign minister and was associated with the moderating turn in its foreign policy.[75] By the mid-1980s, Velāyati and Speaker of Parliament Rafsanjāni were among the main advocates of a diluted take on revolutionary export and the principle of 'neither East nor West'.[76] They built on Khomeini's inception of a pragmatic foreign policy, often thought to be on a par with moderation, in October 1984.[77] Khomeini had modelled his course on the example of the Prophet, who had 'sent ambassadors to all parts of the world to establish proper relations'.[78] In November 1988, after the ceasefire with Iraq, Deputy Foreign Minister Beshārati signalled Iran's desire for improved relations with Saudi Arabia, hitherto its Islamic nemesis, stating that 'our holy shrines (…) and our Ka'ba are there. The Prophet is buried in Saudi Arabia. Can we ignore it?'[79]

The reorientation towards state interests and limited nationalism, especially after Khomeini's death, is sometimes conceived as a secularisation of the Islamic Republic.[80] Key foreign policy statements, however, revealed *religious* nationalism. While the religious quality of the 'Islamic nation' remained—by definition—transnational, the political articulation that became more pronounced

prioritised it for Iranians within the state borders. Ideologically, this 'still allow(ed) Iran to serve as the nucleus for a large Islamic order. But in the pursuit of such an order' it had 'to operate within the constraints of *realpolitik*'.[81]

Religious nationalism became explicitly a corrective to pan-Islamist foreign policy.[82] Central to this development was Mohammad-Javād Lārijāni's new gloss on the Qurʾānic concept of *omm ol-qorā*, or 'mother of the cities', which 'acquired broader currency' under Rafsanjani's presidency.[83] The theory 'prioritises national capacity building at the expense of (…) revolutionary action in the external sphere' and 'positions Iran at the centre of the Islamic world, on account of (its) Islamic and revolutionary credentials'. Indeed, the concept 'cautions against the policy of (*bast*) or expansion (i.e. revolutionary export), calling instead for the consolidation of resources (…) within Iranian borders'.[84]

Religious nationalism was not in principle at odds with Islamic universalism, but reprioritised Shiite Iran tactically. In the event of a conflict between *omm ol-qorā* and revolutionary export, Lārijāni declared, the 'protection of (the former) should be preferred'.[85] Concurrently, *omm ol-qorā* 'equates the defence of Iran to the wider defence of Islam'[86] and might also be read within 'the radical rhetoric of the Islamic revolution'. According to this theory, said Lārijāni, both revolutionary export and defence of the ummah 'as a unified community (*wāhida*) (are) engrained in the prestige of the Mother of Cities'.[87]

It may seem plausible at first sight that '(s)tripped of its ideological content, this concept [of *omm ol-qorā*] was a thinly disguised attempt to inject nationalism

(…) in(to) the country's ill-defined foreign policy doctrine'.[88] However, in its appeal not to ethnic or civilisational markers but to Iran's Shiite-Islamic nation on a transnational mission, *omm ol-qorā* theory implies a specific, indelible religio-geographical identity. This emerges for instance in *Resālat* newspaper's rendering of the theory, which states that '*velāyat-e faqih* and (its) government (…) are the basis (for) the foundation of Islamic republics in the *omm ol-ghorā*. The agent of Islamic unity is that same leadership of *velāyat-e faqih*'.[89]

Besides (religious) nationalism, trans- and internationalist orientations remained important to Iranian policy, both in rhetoric and in practice, in the moderating intervals from 1989 to 2005.[90] On the one hand, radical transnationalists repeatedly subverted reformist foreign policy under Rafsanjāni and Khātami, as they had in the 'left-liberal' era.[91] On the other hand, state leaders themselves kept to religious internationalist views. Thus, after 'direct export of the revolution was abandoned in the 1990s, foreign policy was to maintain an active idealistic presence in the world'.[92]

The new expediency led to remarkable quietism toward some Shiites abroad, as during the sectarian uprising in Iraq in 1991, Khāmeneʾi's judgement being that intervention was 'not recommended';[93] the massacre of Hazaras in Afghanistan in 1997 and 1998;[94] and the brutalisation of Bahraini Shiites from 2011.[95] Following détente, the policy of Shiite mobilisation in the Persian Gulf was officially abandoned under Khātami. If 'the Shiite factor' became 'of less

importance' in Iran–Gulf relations,[96] however, the Islamic Republic was far from
cutting foreign Shiism loose, let alone abandoning its broader Islamic mission.

Contrary to the theorised 'self-secularization of the *faqih*-headed revolutionary
Islamic state' in post-Khomeini Iran,[97] based on the distancing of the religious
state and presumed inert traditional religion, Khātami's ideology was steeped in
Shiism's dynamic modernist reworking.[98] The larger foreign policy frames under
Khātami, too, reflected evolving, politically appropriated religious ideology.[99]
Although Iran had discontinued some 'of the confrontationist policies (…) of the
first decade of the revolution', for instance, '*tabligh* and *dawat* continue(d) to
provide (…) strategic means to realize the preferences of the state'.[100] Besides
coercion, 'propagation' and 'invitation' had been part of the repertoire of Iran's
revolutionary export since 1979,[101] but they also concerned 'traditional'
proselytisation and could be traced in political usage from the Safavid ascent
onward.[102]

During Khātami's presidency, the ideological constancy under strategic flux
emerges for instance from an interview in 2003 given by the chairman of the
Expediency Council, which 'designs [Iran's] Grand Strategy' and 'proposes
guidelines for foreign policy'.[103] Rafsanjāni confirmed the line of his own
presidency, valuing national independence over fighting oppression. The new
emphasis remained within the bounds of 'Islamic values', however; the political
horizons remained unchanged. Islam's transformation into a 'predominant world
power' (*qodrat-e mosallat-e jahāni*) was now reframed as a long-term aim.[104]

Rafsanjāni also voiced continued sectarian partiality in foreign relations, challenging the portrayal of Iran's policy since the late 1990s as 'confessionally neutral'.[105] With the current democratic trend in the world, he felt, there was reason for optimism among Shiites in Shiite majority countries, who would become rulers. As for Shiites in minority situations, '(t)he world accepts that we, as a Shiite country, help Shiites in other places'.[106]

Ecumenism and Sectarianism in Collision

Two tendencies mark analyses of ecumenism and sectarianism in Iran's foreign policy since Khomeini's demise in general and Ahmadinezhād's presidency (2005–2013) in particular. One emphasises transsectarian outreach, for instance, as rooted in Khomeinist universalism and to counter sectarian isolation,[107] or in non-sectarian motives to Iran's Shiite ties abroad.[108] Correspondingly, Iran's Supreme Leader has strongly advocated ecumenist universalism, opposing sectarianism, and his stance became more pronounced under Ahmadinezhād from August 2005 (see below). Besides the Leader, the government was seen to be '(a)nimated by the same ecumenical spirit (as it) tried to build a bridge between Shiᶜa and Sunni believers by organizing inter-faith gatherings in Iran'.[109]

The second perspective highlights sectarian anchors, claiming, for instance, that the retrenchment to the Shiite realm resulted from the failure of attempts at revolutionary export beyond it. Early Sunni enthusiasts for Khomeinist

internationalism were often alienated when they realised that Shiite leadership was central, both theologically and organisationally, to the outwardly transsectarian project.[110] Another argument, associating the return of sectarianism with Ahmadinezhād's presidency, holds that Iran's foreign policy had universalist guises for sectarian motives.[111] In contrast with the reading of Iran's 'resistance' agenda in terms of transsectarian aims, its targeting of Israel and Washington across sectarian divides is here seen as a ploy to enhance Shiite Iranian power. Great power status would only be conceivable for Shiite Iran where Sunni resistance to the Shiʿa revival could be rolled back.[112]

The two seemingly conflicting valuations are complementary in the context of Ahmadinezhād's presidency, which saw both ecumenist and sectarian attitudes come into sharper focus. The ninth and tenth governments stand out in the history of the Islamic Republic not only because of their president's colourful personality, but also for the religio-political elevation of his function. Ahmadinezhād's mentor, the Ayatollah Mesbāh-Yazdi, held that '(w)hen the president receives his edict from the Guardian-Jurist(,) obedience to (the former) is the same as or on a par with obedience to God'.[113] The budding conflict between presidency (*riāsat-e jomhuri*) and leadership (*rahbari*) that arose from this reassessment, and Ahmadinezhād's exploration of its limits, created new fault lines in Iran's foreign policy, unravelling hierarchical integration in the balance of ecumenism and sectarianism.

Messianic Challenges to Clerisy

Among mainstream (*osuli*) Shiism's key dilemmas is the imposition of clerical authority on a religiosity of 'expectation' (*entezār*), and many have been its messianic challenges. In the Islamic state, messianism surfaced in the *Anjoman-e hojjatiye*, until the Society was dissolved in 1983,[114] but it remained a social force. Under Khātami, according to the former state official Hajjāriyān, 'nearly twenty messianic sects appeared'.[115] This 'proliferation', moreover, 'first served as a counterforce' to reformism.[116] Thus, Ahmadinezhād's Mahdism did not come unannounced. Two aspects, however, made it intrinsically startling. First, on the state level, such Adventism had probably not occurred since the 14th century, under the Sarbadārs.[117] Second, messianism emerged unexpectedly centre stage from under the Leader's wing—irrespective of the esoterism in his Mashhadi background[118]—and turned into a populist discourse with anti-clerical overtones, against him.

Ahmadinezhād's floating of messianic themes from the onset of his presidency, cloaking his reign in the Mahdi's aura, proved to be deeply divisive. Among the prominent clergy who spoke out against Ahmadinezhād's 'superstitious' discourse during his first tenure were ᶜAbdolkarim Musavi-Ardabili, Yusef Sāneᶜi and Nāser Makārem-Shirāzi.[119]

Outside the government, within the state, Ahmadinezhād's revolutionary Mahdism resonated, for instance, in the Guards' affiliated 'Centre for Strategic Studies and Doctrine of Security Without Borders' (*Markaz-e motāleᶜāt-e*

estrātezhik va doktrin-e amniyat bedun-e marz), whose Head, Hasan ᶜAbbāsi,

combined activist Mahdism with an apocalyptic stated belief in the imminence of

a third world war.[120] ᶜAbbāsi was considered a 'principlist' theoretician, even if

the president himself fell from ᶜAbbāsi's favour after he had embraced Mashāᵓi's

'deviation'—see below—and kept the *rahbar* at bay.[121]

   In ᶜAbbāsi's discussion of Mahdism and foreign policy, which, remarkably,

was available on the presidential website in June 2013, active Mahdism implied

preparation for the apparition. It held that Shiites' striving had given rise to a

Shiite state in the world—the Islamic Republic. Unlike Ahmadinezhād, ᶜAbbāsi

made no effort to moderate sectarian reason by ecumenisation: Shiism had been

transformed 'from a secret (…) movement into an open front' and was considered

among 'the players on the world stage.' However, 'the arrogant powers pull the

world to the abyss of extinction and plunder (it) in a puppet show assembly

named the (United) Nations.' In this context, 'the Shiite front, too, in laying the

groundwork for Mahdism, has traversed geographical boundaries and erected a

perimeter for itself that is named the border of belief and religious school

(*mazhab*)'.[122]

   Another Shiite articulation of an Islamic perspective to Iran's foreign policy

was present from the outset in Ahmadinezhād's government. This concerned the

ideological foregrounding of the theme of 'justice' (ᶜ*adl*), more than under his

predecessors.[123] ᶜ*Adl* is more than a blurry third-worldist slogan, or an ecumenist

topic; it is central to Shiism. The theme's significance for the Iranian state under

Ahmadinezhād is shown in its self-representation as 'the justice-centred government' (*dowlat-e ᶜadālat-mehvar*).[124] Furthermore, it is argued in a discourse analysis of the ninth and tenth governments—in a claim that brings out another core topos in Shiite thought, linking justice and the Imamate—that their 'justice-seeking principlism' (*osulgerāʾi-ye ᶜadālat-khvāh*) is based on *velāyat*.[125]

During Ahmadinezhād's second term in office, from August 2009, his ties with Khāmeneʾi soon unravelled, in public. This was reportedly presaged by several incidents in the president's first term, including the instance when 'as Ahmadinejad was about to leave Ayatollah Khameneh'i's office, he had quipped, "(Ayatollah Khameneh'i) thinks that I am his President, but I am the Twelfth Imam's President"'.[126] There had been other indications that Ahmadinezhād felt himself to be autonomously authorised religiously. In March 2008, his Chief of Cabinet had spoken of the era of the president as that of 'the lesser advent' (*zohur-e soghrā*)—of the Twelfth Imam—while Ahmadinezhād claimed in May that his government worked under the Mahdi's 'management' (*modiriyat*).[127]

The public decline in the relationship between the Islamic Republic's two main representatives pivoted in particular on the president's patronage of his in-law, the iconoclast Esfandiyār Rahim Mashāʾi, in prestigious functions including the vice-presidency. Together, on account of a speech by Mashāʾi in August 2010, Ahmadinezhād and Mashāʾi were associated with promoting 'Iranian Islam' (i.e., *maktab-e Irāni*). This notion coupled patriotic sentiment—occasionally lauding pre-Islamic Iranian glory as well as Iran's Islamic nation—with Shiism and, in

rarer cases, with Mahdism.[128] For Ahmadinezhād, 'Iranian Islam' meant explicitly

Shiism, inseparable from Iran, which had played a unique role in seeking its rule

and predominance.[129] The challenge of 'Iranian Islam' lay not only in the radical

idea, but also in that, lacking 'formal training in Islamic jurisprudence, Mashaei

(…) claimed to be a pioneer in 'new Shiite teachings' and (thereby angered)

senior Shiite clerics'.[130] Among the clerical support lost to the president in his

new conflict with Shiite orthodoxy was that of the Ayatollahs Mesbāh-Yazdi and

Jannati, the Guardian Council Chairman who had stood by Ahmadinezhād's

contested re-election in June 2009.[131]

Both the president's appropriation of Mahdism and his autonomous floating of

'Iranian Islam' represented challenges, beyond Islamic Republican *velāyat-e*

faqih theory, to the wider Osuli narrative asserting clerical leadership in post-

Occultation Shiism. The Ahmadinezhād camp's occasionally explicit dabbling

with anti-clericalism further alienated the Shiite clergy. For instance,

Ahmadinezhād was reported to have 'publicly chastised his rivals in the

government (in September 2009) for "running to Qum for every instruction,"

adding that "administering the country should not be left to the (Supreme) Leader,

the religious scholars, and other (clerics)"'.[132] Mashāʾi was observed to echo these

views.[133]

Opinions diverge on the foreign policy effects of Ahmadinezhād's Mahdism

and 'Iranian Islam'. There is some merit to the view that he and Mashāʾi voiced 'a

nationalist rhetoric (challenging) the internationalist aspirations of the Islamic

Republic', which 'call for mobilization (…) of the entire umma (…) without regard to modern, political borders'.[134] However, the contrast between nationalist:inward::internationalist:outward stances can be overdrawn—and in Ahmadinezhād's case more than in Mashāʾi's. Ironically, the president was faced with a 'crypto-messianic' challenge[135] by the dissident Ayatollah Kāzameyni-Borujerdi, who advocated international harmony and objected to Iran's 'antagonistic foreign policy'. His 'stance was in sharp contrast to Ahmadinezhad's rhetoric'.[136]

Even Mashāʾi's discourse retained the vanguardist attitude towards the umma of the preceding foreign policy ideologues in the Islamic Republic. 'Without Iran, Islam would be lost', he declared in August 2010, and 'if we want to present the truth of Islam to the world, we should raise the Iranian flag'.[137] In other words, while his discursive interventions may be considered as a retreat from an activist global orientation, they remained a religious-nationalist re-articulation of Islamic internationalism. Shortly after Mashāʾi gave his speech (in the same month), Ahmadinezhād appointed him as his 'special envoy' for the Middle East—the primary theatre of Iran's Islamic internationalism since the revolution. This function was one among a range of regional missions, created by Ahmadinezhād allegedly to 'improve relations hurt by the clergy's isolationist mentality'.[138]

Ahmadinezhād's positioning of Mashāʾi was seen as an attempt to extend the former's power in the realm of foreign policy,[139] and he was relatively successful in view of the weak record of his predecessors. (Starting his tenure with a power grab, he had dismissed numerous ambassadors, including the most important, and

caused Hasan Ruhāni's resignation as Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council).[140] Khāmeneʾi and the foreign minister, Manuchehr Mottaki, objected to the appointment, but the president reacted only by changing Mashāʾi's title to that of 'representative'. He remained on the offensive, spectacularly dismissing Mottaki in December 2010 while the latter was on a foreign mission, and as a replacement installing ʿAli Akbar Sālehi—a man from his own camp.[141]

Independently of the foreign ministry, Ahmadinezhād had soon developed an 'unprecedented foreign policy'. The tone was set in 'a national address shortly after his inauguration, (in which he declared): "Our revolution's main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the Mahdi".' This and similar millennial views were seemingly rooted in his involvement early in the revolution with the Hojjatiye Society.[142] The charge of *hojjatiye* influence in the government, repeatedly heard in the early days of Ahmadinezhād's tenure, recurred in the Pāsdārān newspaper *Sobh-e Sādeq* during heated exchanges in 2011 between the Revolutionary Guards, rising to the Leader's defence, and the president.[143]

Remnants of the *hojjati*s' predilection for Mahdist quietism seemed to appear early on, when Ahmadinezhād contrasted his new line with the past policy of Khātami, stating that 'today, instead of implementing "the ideology of development" (*maktab-e toseʿe*), based on materialism and liberalism, we should pay attention to "the ideology of awaiting" (*maktab-e entezār*), and from this perspective we can define our domestic and foreign relations'. In terms of policy, Iran's new government would 'seriously protect that which causes the spread (…)

of the culture of expectation and of *mahdaviyat*'.[144] Contrary to the quietism that is associated with the *hojjatiye* tendency, however, this millennial mindset was related to Ahmadinezhād's activist 'adventures in foreign policy'.[145]

Although revolutionism was key to Ahmadinezhād's studied pose in foreign affairs, the heritage of Khomeini's ecumenism was given remarkably low profile. A speech in Qom in January 2006, addressing 'a gathering composed mostly of Shiite clerics'[146] comes close to demonstrating that Ahmadinezhād aspired to global Shiite leadership for Iran: 'If we want to administer the world,' it said, 'and we do have such a duty, we must (also) be able to (do so) intellectually and scientifically (…) Just (as) the people of Qom were (at) at the forefront in the revolution, (so also) they should (…) be vanguards today in providing answers to needs.' Therefore, 'we extend our hand to the elites and the ᶜolamā of Qom and hope that in this era, Qom (will) perform its revolutionary responsibility well'.[147]

The fact that Mahdism recurs throughout Islamic history in both Sunni and Shiite shapes indicates that the new millennialism could have justifiably included ecumenist markers. The president made it clear, however, that his redeemer was exclusively the Twelfth Shiite Imam and omitted any transsectarian clues. Just like 'Iranian Islam', therefore, but exhibited to the world, the Mahdism of Ahmadinezhād was a sectarian articulation of foreign policy. Among the political implications, then, his messianism for the first time in the Islamic state raised an explicitly sectarian flag on foreign policy.[148]

There were no immediate consequences of the sectarian discourse issuing from the heart of the state for its foreign alliances, which initially retained the ecumenist–sectarian duality. If the Sunni Islamist leader Mashᶜal abhorred Shiite messianism, it did not show in his declaration in December 2005 that Hamas would defend Iran as part of 'a unified front against the enemies of Islam'.[149] By the end of Ahmadinezhād's second term, however, the resurgence of sectarianism region-wide had put the universalist alliance under serious strain.

In contrast, if any theme marked Khāmeneʾi's foreign policy focus, it was Islamic universalism, countering sectarianism and fostering ecumenism. Except for a range of political statements on Islamic unity since 2005, the Leader issued a notable fatwa in October 2010 prohibiting Shiites from 'insulting any of the companions and wives of the Prophet, who were respected by Sunnis'. Since 2011, furthermore, there has been a wave of ecumenist narrative on 'Islamic Awakening'.[150] As indicated, *Al-Taqrib* brings to mind that Khāmeneʾi had called the Arab Spring an Islamic awakening, and that all Islamic movements needed to identify with 'the existing revival so as to be a part of it in an integral (…) fashion'—that is, they needed to subordinate themselves to his leadership. Genuine Islamic leadership is argued with reference to Imam ᶜAli's letter to Mālik al-Ashtar, followed by a warning that the sectarian divide is the greatest stumbling block for its acceptance.

At no other time in the Islamic Republic was Iran's publicly declared foreign policy so contradictory as to the balance between ecumenism and sectarianism.

This reflected the autonomisation of the presidency, under a wily and ambitious
incumbent with contrary ideological inclinations, as a foreign policy centre.
(Ironically, while it had been among the core but unrealised political ambitions of
the reformist president Khātami to empower the presidency, it was the self-styled
'fundamentalist' (*osulgarā*) Ahmadinezhād who—if only temporarily—
accomplished it.[151]) There were two competing versions of Iran's Shiite
externalisation at large, the one unapologetically sectarian in advocating 'Iranian
Islam' and populist Mahdism, but in the context of a transsectarian vision of an
Iranian-led umma, wilfully ignoring the other, the main line, which was
outwardly ecumenist but constructed around *velāyat-e faqih* and the core of
clerical Shiite leadership.

Conclusions

Contrary to the many analyses of Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy as
fractured, kaleidoscopic or Byzantine, the vantage point of Shiite Islamist
ideology allows one to represent it in a systemic fashion. It has been argued in
this article that the Islamic Republic's state Shiite Islamism has integrated
through hierarchisation, containing the permanent tension between its two
dominant and contradictory frames: ecumenism and sectarianism.

The analysis developed here has not denied utilitarian purpose to policymakers
or material interest to the state, but allows for the argument that regime ideology
contextualises both.[152] One may validly perceive the Islamic Republic through the

lens of ideological entrepreneurs that engage in competition to arrive at an
'identity equilibrium' – as has been each balance of ecumenism and sectarianism,
but consistently within the bounds of Shiite Islamism.[153] Even *causes célèbres* of
'secular' *raison d'état* in the Islamic Republic – Chechen Muslims abandoned to
waves of Russian punishment and the support for Christian Armenia against
Muslim-majority Azerbaijan – align with Iran's dominant foreign policy doctrine
of *omm ol-qorā*, which delineates Shiite state interest.[154]

Shiite Islamism alternated fore- and background in ecumenic and sectarian
variants across the revolutionary decade (1979–1989), the reformist interlude
(1989–2005) and the era of radical reassertion (2005–2013). Iran's constitution
anchors a paradox of Islamic universalism in the sectarian frames containing
Khomeini's transsectarian message. In the revolutionary period, universalist
policy had sectarian drivers evident in the imagery and aims of the war with Iraq
and, especially, in the Shiite nature of Iran's foreign alliances.[155]

The balance shifted towards sectarianism in the reformist era, as seen in the
open coexistence of two leadership organisations, for *taqrib* and the *ahl-e beyt*,
with relatively more ecumenic and sectarian remits. These moderated
articulations of Shiite universalism encompassed Sunni rapprochement within a
religiously defined hierarchy of Shiite guidance and placed ecumenical Shiite
leadership at the helm in the umma's global struggle. Similar rebalancing was
evident in the emergence of religious nationalism, with continued inter- or
transnationalist articulations of key foreign policy perspectives. Religious

nationalism in the shape of *omm ol-qorā* theory was not in principle at odds with Islamic universalism, but reprioritised Shiite Iran tactically. Moreover, just like ecumenic Islamic universalism, the new religious nationalism retained Shiite clerical authority at its core.

Finally, in the era of radical reassertion, with clashes between presidency and leadership, both ecumenist and sectarian concepts came to the fore, unravelling hierarchical integration in the balance of ecumenism and sectarianism. Shiite Islamism resurfaced in two contending foreign policy frames—each in itself a particular ecumenist and sectarian hierarchy. The 'Iranian Islam' and populist Mahdism of one was boldly sectarian, though mobilised for a transsectarian umma, while the other, the main tendency to date, was committed to an Islamic ecumene but anchored in clerical Shiite authority.

This essay was mostly composed in 2013 at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and has benefited from the comments of colleagues and reviewers.

[1] See N. Lafraie, *Revolutionary Ideology and Islamic Militancy. The Iranian Revolution and Interpretations of the Quran* (London [etc.]: Taurus Academic Studies, 2009), pp. 2-3, 187. While numerous Persian-language publications explore religion and foreign policy in Iran (e.g. ᶜE. ᶜEzzati's *Zheʾopolitik-e shiᶜe va amniyat-e marzhā-ye jomhuri-ye eslāmi-ye Irān* (Tehran: Alborz, Farr-e Dānesh, 1388/2009-2010); B. Akhavān-Kāzemi, 'Moʾalefehā-ye siāsat-e khāreji dar goftemān-e osulgerāʾi-ye ᶜadālatkhvāh', *Hokumat-e eslāmi*, 54 (1388/2010), pp. 39-58), dedicated English-language treatments (e.g. S. Hunter, 'Iran's Islamic World View and Its Impact on Foreign Policy', in *Iran and the World. Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); I. Salamey and Z. Othman, 'Shia Revival and Welayat Al-Faqih in the Making of Iranian Foreign Policy', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 2 (2011), 197-212; W. Buchta, 'The Failed Pan-Islamic Program of the Islamic Republic: Views of the Liberal Reformers of the Religious "Semi-Opposition"', in Nikki R. Keddie and Rudolph P. Matthee (Eds) *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), pp. 281-304) remain few.

[2] E.g. R. K. Ramazani, 'Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy', *Middle East Journal*, 4 (2004), pp. 549-559; N. Ter-Organov, 'Islamic Nationalism in Iran and Its Ideological, Military and Foreign-Policy Aspects', in Moshe Gammar (Ed.) *Community,*

Identity and the State. Comparing Africa, Eurasia, Latin America and the Middle East (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 132-141. An alternative categorisation is seen, for instance, in Buchta's systematic establishment of encompassing Iranian political distinctions (*Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2000), pp. 11-14).

[3] E.g., K. Barzegar, 'Iran's Foreign Policy in Post-invasion Iraq', *Middle East Policy*, 4 (2008), p. 53; A. Tarock, *Iran's Foreign Policy Since 1990. Pragmatism Supersedes Islamic Ideology* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1999).

[4] E.g. H. Amirahmadi, 'Emerging Civil Society in Iran', *SAIS Review*, 2 (1996), 87-107; but cf. A. Ehteshami, 'The Foreign Policy of Iran', in R.A. Hinnebusch and A. Ehteshami (Eds) *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States. The Middle East in the International System* (Boulder, Colo:: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), pp. 286-288.

[5] E.g. Y. Matsunaga, 'The Secularization of a Faqih-Headed Revolutionary Islamic State of Iran: Its Mechanisms, Processes, and Prospects', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 3 (2009), pp. 468-482.

[6] W. Posch, *Dritte Welt, globaler Islam und Pragmatismus. Wie die Außenpolitik Irans gemacht wird* (Berlin: SWP, 2013), p. 18.

[7] S. A. Arjomand, *After Khomeini. Iran under his Successors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009b), p. 136.

[8] C. M. Warner and S. G. Walker, 'Thinking about the Role of Religion in Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 1 (2011), p. 121; E. S. Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[9] Cf. I. Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy. Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 3; J. Fox and S. Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[10] See M. Freeden, 'The Morphological Analysis of Ideology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 125.

[11] See M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory. A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 75-91.

[12] L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and Its Implications* (Chicago [etc.]: University of Chicago Press, (1966) 1980); cf. K. M. Rio and O. H. Smedal, 'Totalization and detotalization. Alternatives to hierarchy and individualism', *Anthropological Theory*, 3 (2008), pp. 233-254.

[13] See M. L. Browers, 'The secular bias in ideology studies and the case of Islamism', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1 (2005), 79-93.

[14] E.g. J. L. Esposito, 'The Iranian Revolution: A Ten-Year Perspective', in John L. Esposito (Ed.) *The Iranian Revolution. Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida international University Press, 1990), p. 31.

[15] Cf. ME/6823/A/1, 9 September 1981; Buchta, 'Failed Pan-Islamic Program', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, p. 283; cf. W. Buchta, *Die Iranische Schia und die islamische Einheit 1979-1996* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1997), pp. 74-80.

[16] H. Algar, *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980), p. 31; R. K. Ramazani, 'Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Middle East Journal*, 2 (1980), pp. 181-204; cf. R. Savory, "The added touch". Ithnā ᶜAshari Shiᶜism as a factor in the foreign policy of Iran', *International Journal*, 2 (1986), p. 413; Arjomand, *After*

Khomeini, *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 134; A. Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics. The Question of the Islamic Republic* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007), pp. 57-58.

[17] M. Kramer, 'Introduction', in Martin Kramer (Ed.) *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder; London: Westview Press; Mansell Pub. Ltd., 1987a), p. 5.

[18] M. Zonis and D. Brumberg, 'Shi'ism as Interpreted by Khomeini: An Ideology of Revolutionary Violence', in Kramer, *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 17, pp. 57-58.

[19] Cf. S. A. Arjomand, 'Constitution of the Islamic Republic' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 2011 [1992]); Buchta, 'Failed Pan-Islamic Program', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, p. 285.

[20] S. Gieling, *Religion and War in Revolutionary Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p. 176; cf. Kramer, 'Introduction', *op. cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 8.

[21] Gieling, *Religion and War*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 20, pp.176; Ch.3; 142; cf. 157; S. Chubin, 'The Islamic Republic's Foreign Policy in the Gulf', in Martin Kramer (Ed.) *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder; London: Westview Press; Mansell Pub. Ltd., 1987), p. 166.

[22] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Monitoring Report, ME 6992/i, 31 March 1982, cf. S. Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs. Iran and the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 234.

[23] Chubin, 'Islamic Republic's Foreign Policy', *op. cit.*, Ref. 21, p. 166.

[24] A. Ehteshami and O. Roy cited in E. P. Rakel, 'Iranian Foreign Policy since the Iranian Islamic Revolution: 1979-2006', *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, 1-3 (2007), p. 167.

[25] See f.i. R. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran. Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (New York, N.Y.: Times Books, 2006), p. 65; L. Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics. Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf* (London; Paris: Hurst & Co; Centre d'études et de recherches internationales, 2008), p. 180.

[26] Kramer, 'Introduction', *op. cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 17.

[27] See R. K. Ramazani, 'Iran's Export of the Revolution: Politics, Ends, and Means', in John L. Esposito (Ed.) *The Iranian Revolution. Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990), p. 44; FBIS-SAS-81-128, 6 July 1981; FBIS-SAS-81-188, 29 September 1981; FBIS-SAS-81-159, 18 August 1981; FBIS-SAS-81-148, 3 August 1981.

[28] A. Rahnema and F. Nomani, 'Islamic Republic's Foreign Policy', in *The Secular Miracle. Religion, Politics, and Economic Policy in Iran* (London: Zed Books, 1990), pp. 317-325.

[29] A. Baram, 'Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi'ite Fundamentalism in Iraq', in Martin E. Marty and Scott Appleby (Eds) *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamic Character of Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1994), p. 548.

[30] Rahnema and Nomani, 'Islamic Republic's Foreign Policy', *op. cit.*, Ref. 28, pp. 317-325.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 317, 318, 320; cf. Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, pp. 232-233.

[32] Y. Talhami, 'The *Fatwa*s and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2 (2010), p. 191.

[33] P. G. Pinto, 'Pilgrimage, Commodities, and Religious Objectification: The Making of Transnational Shiism between Iran and Syria', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 1 (2007), p. 112; cf. Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, p. 197; Kramer, 'Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism', *op. cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 251.

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[34] J. M. Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran. Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), pp. 18, 26, 13; cf. J. M. Goodarzi, 'Syria and Iran: Alliance Cooperation in a Changing Regional Environment', *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, 2 (2013), p. 41, FBIS-SAS-82-050, 15 March 1982).

[35] Cf. Buchta, 'Failed Pan-Islamic Program', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, p. 290; FBIS-SAS-82-056, 23 March 1982.

[36] See E. Karsh, 'Geopolitical Determinism: The Origins of the Iran-Iraq War', *Middle East Journal*, 2 (1990), pp. 265-266; A. Von Dornoch, 'Iran's Violent Diplomacy', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 3 (1988), pp. 256-257; cf. V. Nasr, *The Shia Revival* (New York [etc.]: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), p. 222; Hunter, 'Iran's Islamic Worldview', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, p. 41.

[37] See Nasr, *Shia Revival*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 36, p. 223; Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 192. Reflecting on what Iran's political elite presents as 'the Islamic Awakening' in the Middle East, Shāhrudi stated in August 2011 that 'the system of the Islamic Republic does not aim to restrict the Islamic Republic to just its own territory' (http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/169579-/politics/parties, accessed 13 July 2013). Just like Shāhrudi, Āyatollāh Mohammad ᶜAli Taskhiri is among the 'returnees from Iraq' (*moᶜāvedin-e ᶜErāq*). His political career overlaps partially with that of Shāhrudi and has similarly included high office (see W. Posch, *Iran and the Shia of Iraq* (Paris: The European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2005); Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 179; Nasr, *Shia Revival*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 36, p. 224).

[38] See G. Kepel, *Jihad. The Trail of Political Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), pp. 126-127; cf. M. Deeb, 'Shia Movements in Lebanon: Their Formation, Ideology, Social Basis, and Links with Iran and Syria', *Third World Quarterly*, 2 (1988), pp. 692, 697; E. Hooglund, 'Iranian Views of the Arab-Israeli Conflict', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1 (1995), p. 92; M. Panah, *The Islamic Republic and the World. Global Dimensions of the Iranian Revolution* (London [etc.]: Pluto Press, 2007), p. 74.

[39] E. Sivan, 'The Islamic Resurgence: Civil Society Strikes Back', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2/3 (1990), p. 363.

[40] BBC/SWB/ME/0631/A/1, 5 December 1989, cf. J. Calabrese, 'Iran II: The Damascus Connection', *The World Today*, 10 (1990), p. 189.

[41] In Bahrain since before the revolution, Hādi al-Modarresi served as *vakil* to Khomeini; in Kuwait since at least August 1979, his appointee was Hojjatoleslām ᶜAbbās Mohri (J. Kostiner, 'Shiᶜi Unrest in the Gulf', in Martin Kramer (Ed.) *Shiᶜism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder; London: Westview Press; Mansell Pub. Ltd., 1987), p. 177), 'the main broker of revolutionary zeal' in Kuwait (Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, p. 167). Hādi al-Modarresi, heading the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, and his brother Hojjatoleslām Mohammad-Taqi, who reputedly led AIRAP, and in various guises in Iraq, Kuwait and Iran, the Islamic Action Organization, 'became the main brokers of the [export] of the Islamic revolution to the Gulf monarchies' (*ibid.*, p. 164).

[42] Kostiner, 'Shiᶜi Unrest', *op. cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 183.

[43] A precursor in name of the IAO, the Message Movement (*al-Haraka al-risāliyya*), headed by Mohammad-Taqi al-Modarresi, spread 'from the mid-1970s onwards' in Saudi Arabia (L. Louër, 'Shiᶜi Identity Politics in Saudi Arabia', in Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald (Eds) *Religious Minorities in the Middle East. Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation* (Leiden [etc.]: Brill, 2012), p. 226; *Transnational Shia Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, pp. 124, 145-146, 210).

[44] Louër, 'Shiᶜi Identity Politics', *op. cit.*, Ref. 43, p. 230. Another key manifestation of Shiite Islamism in Saudi Arabia since 1987 (*The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia* (Amman; Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2005), p. 4)⸻years after the Shirāziyyin's side-lining in Iran's revolutionary export⸻is Saudi or Hijāzi Hezbollāh (*Hizbullāh al-Hijāz*). 'Hezbollah [in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Gulf] is clearly the product of [Iran's] endeavour to assert its control over the foreign movements that proclaimed their commitment to […] Khomeini's path' (Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, p. 211).

[45] Z. Khalilzad, 'Iranian Revolution and Afghan Resistance', in Martin Kramer (Ed.) *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder; London: Westview Press; Mansell Pub. Ltd., 1987), p. 262.

[46] Khomeinists found the Afghan parties in their midst politically suspect and 'did not favour significant military support' (*ibid.*, pp. 264-265). The state instead 'threw its support to Hizb-i Islami Afghanistan, [Hekmatiyār's] Sunni fundamentalist party.' Such was the case by August 1980 (D. B. Edwards, 'The Evolution of Shi'i Political Dissent in Afghanistan', in Juan Ricardo Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (Eds) *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 225-226). The initial Iranian stance has been viewed as a 'holding option' as much as an endorsement (*ibid.*, p. 226).

[47] Edwards, 'Evolution', *op. cit.*, Ref. 46, p. 227.

[48] O. Roy, *Islamic Radicalism in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2002), pp. 7-9.

[49] V. Nasr, 'The Iranian Revolution and Changes in Islamism in Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan', in Nikki R. Keddie and Rudolph P. Matthee (Eds) *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), pp. 328, 334-335.

[50] Cf. M. Abou Zahab, 'The Regional Dimension of Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan', in Christophe Jaffrelot (Ed.) *Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation* (London: Zed Books, 2002), pp. 116-117.

[51] Nasr, 'Iranian Revolution', *op. cit.*, Ref. 49, p. 335; cf. Abou Zahab, 'Regional Dimension', *op. cit.*, Ref. 50, p. 117.

[52] H. Abbas, 'Pakistan', in Assaf Moghadam (Ed.) *Militancy and Political Violence in Shiism. Trends and Patterns* (Abingdon [etc.]: Routledge, 2012), p. 167.

[53] Nasr, 'Iranian Revolution', *op. cit.*, Ref. 49, pp. 336, 339.

[54] Panah, *Islamic Republic*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 38, p. 158.

[55] Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 216.

[56] Cf. Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, p. 211.

[57] W. Buchta, 'Tehran's Ecumenical Society (*Majmaᶜ al-Taqrīb*): A Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran', in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende (Eds) *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times. Religious Culture & Political History* (Leiden [etc.]: Brill, 2001), p. 338.

[58] Its importance to the state was underscored in a speech by president Rafsanjāni to the Islamic Unity Conference on 8 October that addressed Khāmeneᵓi's 'raising again the idea of a center for proximity (…) for the Islamic ummah' in accordance with Khomeini's objectives (FBIS-NES-90-195, 9 October 1990), cf. S. E. Cornell, *The politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan* (Washington. D.C.; Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program (Johns Hopkins University; Uppsala University), 2006), pp. 44-45, indicating its significance to Iran's foreign policy practice in the case of Azerbaijan.

[59] See 'Tehran's Ecumenical Society', *op. cit.*, Ref. 57, pp. 349, 350.

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[60] The first Secretary-General, serving for over a decade, was Hojjatoleslām (and later Āyatollāh) Mohammad Vāᶜez-Zādeh Khorāsāni (*ibid.*, pp. 339, 338; http://www.shia-news.com/fa/pages/?cid =1274 (accessed 14 June 2013). He was succeeded on 31 *shahrivar* 1380/22 September 2001 by Āyatollāh Mohammad ᶜAli Taskhiri, who similarly served   for   over   a   decade (http://www.taqrib.info/persian/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1351:1 391-04-25-07-10-35&catid=53:dabirekoll&Itemid=72   (accessed   14   June   2013); http://www.shia-news.com/fa/pages/?cid=1274 (accessed 14 June 2013)). The current *dabir-e   koll*   since   20   *tir*   1391/10   July   2012   (http://www.shia-news.com/fa/news/38009(…) (accessed 14 June 2013)) is the Najaf-born Āyatollāh Mohsen Mohammadi.

[61] 'Editorial', *Al-Taqrib. A Journal of Islamic Unity*, (2011), pp. 10, 5. Possibly in response to widespread disbelief of Iranian claims to spiritual ownership of the Arab Spring, Al-Taqrib states that Khāmeneᵒi's label did not so much reflect 'facts on the ground' as offer a 'prescription cum warning.'

[62] *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 13.

[63] Kramer, 'Introduction', *op. cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 5.

[64] In Buchta's late 20th-century estimation, the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e Beyt was 'far more powerful' than the Majmaᶜ-e Taqrib (*Who Rules Iran?*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 51). The scope of the former's operations was evidenced by a great many international activities, including, by its own reckoning, in dozens of affiliated organisations abroad, a university (Dāneshgāh-e Ahl-e Beyt), a news agency, a bank, mosque building, conferences drawing hundreds of participants, outreach during international book fairs, and many publications including journals and close to a thousand book titles in many languages (http://www.ahl-ul-bait.org/fa.php/page,196A13620.html, accessed 17 June 2013). By late May 2013, however, many of its international activities had been suspended, on account of budgetary pressures (http://shiayan.ir/539/, accessed 17 June 2013).

[65] This had focused first on Azerbaijan and Tajikistan; it was followed by missionisation in other Central Asian republics and Russia (D. Lisnyansky, 'Tashayu (Conversion to Shiism) in Central Asia and Russia', in Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani, Eric Brown and Hassan Mneimneh (Eds) *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2009), p. 109).

[66] Panah, *Islamic Republic*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 38, pp. 152, 200. Hojjatoleslām (and later Āyatollāh) Mohammad ᶜAli Taskhiri was the first Secretary-General of the Majmaᶜ-e Ahl-e   Beyt,   which   was   founded   in   *dey*   1369/December   1990 (http://abna.ir/data.asp?lang=1&Id=287520 (accessed 17 June 2013)). The second head of the Majmaᶜ in the period from *mordād* 1378/July–August 1999 to *mehr* 1381/September–October 2002 was ᶜAli Akbar Velāyati, and the Society was led between *mehr* 1381/October 2002 and *farvardin* 1383/April 2004 by Mohammad Mehdi Āsefi. The current *dabir-e koll* since *farvardin* 1383/April 2004 is Mohammad Hasan Akhtari (http://www.ahl-ul-bait.org/fa.php/page,196A13620.html (accessed 15 June 2013); cf. S. Bar, 'Sunnis and Shiites-Between Rapprochement and Conflict', in Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani and Eric Brown (Eds) *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* (Washington, D.C.: Hudson   Institute,   2005),   p.   90; http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/hamnews/1383/830126/news/elmif.htm (accessed 17 June 2013)).

[67] Buchta, 'Tehran's Ecumenical Society', *op. cit.*, Ref. 57, p. 351.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 351; cf. Lisnyansky, 'Tashayu', *op. cit.*, Ref. 65, p. 111.

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[69] 'Farānse, jomhuri-ye eslāmi mi-shavad. Gozāreshi az roshd-e eslām dar orupā [reprint from ABNA,1388/2009, 18 *ordibehesht*/8 May] ', *Tābnāk* (19 *ordibehesht*/9 May 1388/2009) http://-www.tabnak.ir/fa/pages/?cid=46948 (accessed on 9 August 2013).

[70] Buchta, 'Tehran's Ecumenical Society', *op. cit.*, Ref. 57, p. 351.

[71] In full, these goals are '1) the regeneration and spread of the culture and knowledge of the pure Mohammadan Islam and protection of the *harim* of the Qorˀān and the *sonnat* of the Prophet and the Ahl-e Beyt; 2) the establishment and strengthening of unity among all of the sons of the Islamic umma; 3) the protection of the existence of the world's Muslims and the rights of the followers of the Ahl-e Beyt; 4) the development of the material and spiritual infrastructure of the followers of the Ahl-e Beyt in the world; 5) assistance for the development and improvement of the cultural, political, economic and social situation of the followers of the Ahl-e Beyt throughout the world; and 6) delivering the followers of the Ahl-e Beyt from media oppression and scientific exclusion' (http://www.ahl-ul-bayt.org/fa.php/page,196A13620.html (accessed 25 June 2013)).

[72] http://www.ahlulbaytportal.ir/fa.php/page,shora.shora (accessed 25 June 2013).

[73] http://abna.ir/data.asp?lang=3&Id=387113; http://abna.ir/list.asp?lang=1&gId=2418 (accessed 7 February 2013). Akhtari was twice ambassador to Syria (1984–1997 and 2005–2008) and had been 'involved in standing up Lebanese Hezbollah in the 1980s' (W. Fulton, J. Holliday and S. Wyer, *Iranian Strategy in Syria* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of war and AEI's Critical Threaths Project, 2013), p. 34). He stated in 2008 that '(t)he resistance of Palestine and of Lebanon are mentally and symbolically the legitimate children of the Islamic Republic of Iran' ('Hezbollāh va hamās farzandān-e enqelāb-e Irān', *Eˁtemād* (2008/1387), http://www.magiran.com/-npview.asp?ID=1627811).

[74] Similarly, in the words of Taskhiri, the Society not only sought to 'implement the Iranian claim to leadership over all Shi'i communities in the world' but also attempted 'to attain nezarat kardan (supremacy) over all Islamic groups active in the areas of culture, propaganda, economics, society, and politics via peaceful propaganda and persuasion' (Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 51).

[75] E.g. D. Menashri, 'Khomeini's Vision: Nationalism or World Order?', in David Menashri (Ed.) *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World* (Boulder [etc.]: Westview Press, 1990), p. 49.

[76] Cf. E. P. Rakel, *The Iranian Political Elite, State and Society Relations, and Foreign Relations since the Islamic Revolution* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2008), pp. 151-152.

[77] Cf. Menashri, 'Khomeini's Vision', *op. cit.*, Ref. 75, p. 47.

[78] Cited in Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 136.

[79] Menashri, 'Khomeini's Vision', *op. cit.*, Ref. 75, p. 53.

[80] See e.g. Amirahmadi, 'Emerging Civil Society', *op. cit.*, Ref. 4, p. 99.

[81] Cf. Menashri, 'Khomeini's Vision', *op. cit.*, Ref. 75, pp. 53-54.

[82] See 'Tanesh-zodāˀi dar siāsat-e khāreji, mured: jomhuri-ye eslāmi-ye irān (1367-78)', *Majalle-ye Siāsat-e Khāreji*, 4 (1378/1999), p. 1042.

[83] M. Abedin, 'The Domestic Determinants of Iranian Foreign Policy: Challenges to Consensus', *Strategic Analysis*, 4 (2011), pp. 615, 627; cf. A. Nabavi, 'The Range in Iran's Idealistic Foreign Policy: Ebbs and Tides', *International Politics*, 3 (2009).

[84] 'Domestic Determinants', *op. cit.*, Ref. 83, pp. 615, 616; but cf. C. Marschall, *Iran's Persian Gulf Policy: From Khomeini to Khatami* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 45.

[85] Nabavi, 'Range', *op. cit.*, Ref. 83, p. 7.

[86] Abedin, 'Domestic Determinants', *op. cit.*, Ref. 83, p. 616.

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[87] *After Khomeini*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 134.

[88] Abedin, 'Domestic Determinants', *op. cit.*, Ref. 83, p. 616.

[89] *Negāhi bar doktrin-e omm ol-qorā va jāygāh-e ān dar siāsat-e khāreji-ye Irān* (Resālat, 8 ordibehesht 1386/28 April 2007).

[90] See Panah, *Islamic Republic*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 38, p. 156.

[91] Cf. Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 70; M. Terhalle, 'Revolutionary Power and Socialization: Explaining the Persistence of Revolutionary Zeal in Iran's Foreign Policy', *Security Studies*, 3 (2009), pp. 583-584.

[92] This 'entailed support for Islamic movements and the establishment of institutional and organizational means for the propagation of the message of the Revolution abroad' (Panah, *Islamic Republic*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 38, pp. 153-154).

[93] See D. Menashri, 'Irans Regional Policy. Between Radicalism and Pragmatism', *Journal of International Affairs*, 2 (2007), p. 156.

[94] V. Nasr, 'Regional Implications of Shi'a Revival in Iraq', *The Washington Quarterly*, 3 (2004), p. 12.

[95] See S. Chubin, *Iran and the Arab Spring: Ascendancy Frustrated* (Geneva, Cambridge, Jeddah: Gulf Research Center, 2012), pp. 23-24.

[96] 'Dritte Welt', *op. cit.*, Ref. 6, p. 27.

[97] Matsunaga, 'Secularization', *op. cit.*, ref. 5, pp. 480-481.

[98] See S. A. Arjomand, 'The Reform Movement and the Debate on Modernity and Tradition in Contemporary Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4 (2002), p. 730.

[99] Khātami endeavoured to present the policy as a realization of Khomeini's ideals, as in the latter's 'ambassadors speech', and 'to show that (his political) conceptualizations (…) were taken from (…) Scripture and the Holy Prophet('s) tradition' (Nabavi, 'Range', *op. cit.*, Ref. 83; cf. J. Amuzegar, 'Iran's crumbling revolution', *Foreign Affairs*, 1 (2003), p. 50). Khātami's ideological legacy is particularly bound up with his second term in office (2001–2005) and his launching of 'Dialogue among Civilisations' (Nabavi, 'Range', *op. cit.*, Ref. 83), which mirrored *taqrib* policy in projecting an Islamic world unified in essence but relying on Iranian clerical leadership. Throughout his double term in office, Khātami remained committed to *velāyat-e faqih* (H. Majd, *The Ayatollahs' Democracy. An Iranian Challenge* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2010), p. 266), which he stated, in May 1997, was 'the basis of our political and civil system' (D. Menashri, 'Whither Iranian Politics? The Khatami Factor', in Patrick Clawson, Michael Eisenstadt, Eliyahu Kanovsky and David Menashri (Eds) *Iran Under Khatami. A Political, Economic, and Military Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), p. 15). It was only within this loyalist framework that he elaborated on notions of religious 'democracy' (*mardomsālāri*), telling Iranians that '(r)eligious rule of the people is our model for the world of humanity' (ME/D4068/MED, 10 February 2001).

[100] Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 16, p. 70.

[101] Cf. R. K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran. Challenge and Response in the Middle East* (Baltimore: 1986), p. 26ff.

[102] Cf. R. Savory, 'The Export of Ithna Ashari Shi'ism. Historical and Ideological Background', in David Menashri (Ed.) *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World* (Boulder [etc.]: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 18, 21; A. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe. Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 434, cf. 232ff.

[103] A. Maleki, 'Decision Making in Iran's Foreign Policy: A Heuristic Approach', *Journal of Social Affairs*, 73 (2002), p. 9.

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[104] The Chairman contrasted his line with the Constitution, which did not differentiate in degree between these principles ('Vākāvi-ye ruykardhā dar howze-ye siāsat-e khāreji. Mosāhebe bā Āyatollāh Hāshemi Rafsanjāni', *Rāhbord*, 27 (1382/2003), pp. 8, 9).

[105] Posch, 'Dritte Welt', *op. cit.*, Ref. 6, p. 27.

[106] 'Vākāvi-ye ruykardhā', *op. cit.*, Ref. 104, p. 27. Rafsanjāni's line is also recognised in Khātami's 2001 national address in commemoration of the revolution. It portrays the revolution for the most part as a national liberation, and Khomeini's leadership of 'the Islamic movement' as based on his personality, which manifested 'religious knowledge, Islamic mysticism and *Shi'i identity*' (author's emphasis) (ME/D4068/MED, 10 February 2001).

[107] Buchta, 'Tehran's Ecumenical Society', *op. cit.*, Ref. 57; cf. A. W. Samii [Samii, Abbas William], 'Iranian Foreign Policy: Not So Revolutionary Anymore', *Christian Science Monitor* (12 February 2007).

[108] E.g. A. Saad-Ghorayeb, 'Questioning the Shia Crescent', *Al-Ahram Weekly* (19-25 April 2007).

[109] M. Mozaffari, *Islamist Policy* (Aarhus: Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, 2009), p. 13.

[110] Some of these developments are seen for instance in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (see R. Matthee, 'Egyptian Opposition on the Iranian Revolution', in Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (Eds) *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 255-265; cf. I. E. Altman, 'The Brotherhood and the Shiite Question', in Hillel Fradkin, Husain (on leave) Haqqani, Eric Brown and Hassan Mneimneh (Eds) *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2009), p. 48; M. Khalaji, 'Dilemmas of Pan-Islamic Unity', in Fradkin, Haqqani, Brown and Mneimneh, *Current Trends*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 65; 'Shia Revival and Welayat Al-Faqih', *op. cit.*, Ref. 36, p. 201).

[111] 'Shia Revival and Welayat Al-Faqih', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, p. 202; Nasr, *Shia Revival*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 36, pp. 225-226; 'When the Shiites Rise', *Foreign Affairs*, 4 (2006), p. 66.

[112] Nasr, *Shia Revival*, *op. cit.*, 226; cf. K. Sadjadpour, *Reading Khamenei. The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), p. 19; R. Takeyh, 'Time for Détente With Iran', *Foreign Affairs*, 2 (2007), p. 24; M. Kazemzadeh, 'Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 2 (2007), pp. 431, 439.

[113] A. Rahnema, *Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics. From Majlesi to Ahmadinejad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 20; cf. J. Haynes, 'Religion and Foreign Policy Making in the USA, India and Iran. Towards a Research Agenda', *Third World Quarterly*, 1 (2008), p. 157.

[114] See A. Vali and S. Zubaida, 'Factionalism and Political Discourse in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Case of the Hujjatiyeh Society', *Economy and Society*, 2 (1985), 139-173; cf. M. Khalaji, *Apocalyptic Politics. On the Rationality of Iranian Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008), p. 6.

[115] Khalaji, 'Apocalyptic Politics', *op. cit.*, Ref. 114, p. 17.

[116] A. Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shiʿism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 236.

[117] *Ibid.*, p. 244; cf. H. Halm, *Shiʿism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 71.

[118] See Khalaji, 'Apocalyptic Politics', *op. cit.*, Ref. 114, p. 20.

[119] Rahnema, *Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 113, pp. 71-72.

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[120] Cf. http://www.rajanews.com/detail.asp?id=76433 (accessed 19 July 2013); http://mahdibiya.ir/post-655.aspx, 27 Bahman 1390/16 February 2012 (accessed 19 July 2013).

[121] http://www.roozonline.com/english/news3/newsitem/archive/2012/september/24/article/coun-try-in-horrible-condition-ahmadinejad-sole-culprit.html (accessed 19 July 2013). See http://digarban.com/node/8994 (accessed 19 July 2013) for sharp criticism. Throughout his provocations of Shiite orthodoxy, Ahmadinezhād mostly retained the support of crucial levers in the Revolutionary Guards: General 'Mohammad Ali Jafari even averred publicly in October (2009) that preserving the government "is more vital than performing daily prayers"' (J. K. Choksy, *Ahmadinejad Bucks Religious Establishment* (2010). With relations between Ahmadinezhād and the Leader much deteriorated by April 2011, however, the same Jaᶜfari threatened 'revolutionary action' (ᶜamal-e enqelābi) against 'the deviating current' (joryān-e enherāfi) (B. Rafiᶜi, 'Enteqād-e Sepāh az nā-sepāsi-ye Ahmadinezhād', *Ruz* (7 ordibehesht/27 April 1390/2011).

[122] *Doktrin-e mahdaviyat; moqaddameᵓi bar doktrin-e maᶜsumin dar sākht-e siāsat-e khāreji,* ([transcribed speech] 1392/2013 [8 Tir/29 June]): http://www.ourpresident.ir.

[123] Cf. e.g. S. J. Dehqāni, 'Goftemān-e osul-gerāᵓi-ye ᶜadālat-mehvar dar siāsat-e khāreji-ye dowlat-e Ahmadinezhād', *Dofaslnāme-ye Dānesh-e Siāsi*, 5 (1386/2007), p. 68.

[124] E.g. Hamadāni, *Estrātezhi va moᵓalefehā-ye siāsat-e khāreji-ye dowlat-e ᶜadālat-mehvar. Az bidāri-ye eslāmi tā bidāri-ye ensāni,* 1392/2013 [19 Tir/10 July]): http://www.ourpresident.ir.

[125] Akhavān-Kāzemi, 'Moᵓalefehā-ye siāsat-e khāreji', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, p. 40. Spelling out foreign policy of the 'justice-centred government', an article on the presidential website indicates that it retains the Shiite understanding of Iran as *omm ol-qorā*, but also revives 'revolutionary export' (*sodur-e enqelāb*) - carefully avoiding readings of the concept that imply Iranian hard power (Hamadāni, 'Estrātezhi', *op. cit.*, Ref. 124). The pervasiveness of the Shiite theme in the Islamic Republic beyond the Ahmadinezhād administrations is seen in "the Iranian leadership's repetitive public pronouncements about the 'injustice' of the contemporary international order [which stem] from Shi'ism's emphasis on the primacy of social justice and establishing a humane and non-exploitative world order" (M. Dorraj and N. Entessar, *Iran's Northern Exposure. Foreign Policy Challenges in Eurasia* (Doha: Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 2013), p. 7).

[126] Rahnema, *Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 113, p. 81.

[127] Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 116, pp. 243-244.

[128] See http://jahannews.com/vdcir5arzt1av52.cbct.html (12 *ordibehesht* 1392/2 May 2013), accessed 16 August 2013; cf. G. Abdo and A. Aramesh, 'Clash Over Mashaei Reveals Fissures Within the Iranian Regime', *The Huffington Post* (26 April 2011).

[129] See 'Barnāmerizihā-ye gozashte mobtanā bar farhang-e eslāmi-irāni nabude ast', *Khabargozāri-ye Fārs/Fars News Agency* (3 ābān/24 November 1389/2010).

[130] Abdo and Aramesh, 'Clash', *op. cit.*, Ref. 128; cf. S. Ghazi, 'Ahmadinejad's clique under fire despite call for calm', *AFP* (6 June 2011).

[131] N. Sohrabi, *The Power Struggle in Iran. A Centrist Comeback?* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, 2011), p. 4.

[132] Choksy, 'Ahmadinejad Bucks', *op. cit.*, Ref. 121.

[133] He had for instance 'riled the mullahs by criticizing prophets like Noah and Moses as ineffective administrators akin to the contemporary clergymen who wield power in Iran' (*ibid.*).

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[134] A. Alfoneh, 'Khamene'i's Balancing Act', *Middle East Quarterly*, 1 (2011), p. 75.

[135] B. Rahimi, 'The Sacred in Fragments', in Negin Nabavi (Ed.) *Iran: From Theocracy to the Green Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 67.

[136] Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam*, *op. cit.*, 249; cf. 'Range', *op. cit.*, Ref. 83.

[137] Sohrabi, 'Power Struggle', *op. cit.*, Ref. 131, p. 4.

[138] J. K. Choksy, 'Ahmadinejad's Crusade', *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, 21 (2011).

[139] Sohrabi, 'Power Struggle', *op. cit.*, Ref. 131, p. 4.

[140] See S. H. Mousavian, *the Iranian Nuclear Crisis. A Memoir* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), p. 188, documenting, based on Ruhāni's verbal account, the latter's resignation after a row with Ahmadinezhād; cf. Kazemzadeh, 'Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy', *op. cit.*, Ref. 112, p. 444, claiming that Ahmadinezhād had persuaded Khāmeneʾi to dismiss Ruhāni. The author kindly referred me to http://www.aparat.com/v/oun2l in support of his statement (email 20 November 2016).

[141] Sohrabi, 'Power Struggle', *op. cit.*, Ref. 131, p. 4.

[142] Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, pp. 157, 156.

[143] http://www.yalesarat.com/vdcc.mq0a2bq0ela82.html (accessed 6 July 2013).

[144] http://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php?/news2/print/4192 (accessed 15 July 2013), reporting on a speech in September 2005, cf. Kazemzadeh, 'Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy', *op. cit.*, Ref. 112, p. 442.

[145] Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 157.

[146] Kazemzadeh, 'Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy', *op. cit.*, Ref. 112, p. 431.

[147] http://isna.ir/fa/news/8410-08682 [...] (accessed 1 July 2015), cf. *Ibid.*, p. 431.

[148] Cf. S. Peterson, 'Waiting for the rapture in Iran', *Christian Science Monitor* (21 December 2005).

[149] Kazemzadeh, 'Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy', *op. cit.*, Ref. 112, p. 438.

[150] See P. Mohseni, *The Islamic Awakening: Iran's Grand Narrative of the Arab Uprisings* (Waltham, MA: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, 2013), pp. 3, 1.

[151] Bakhash noted during Ahmadinezhād's administration that the latter had "built up a base of support in the security and military services, independent of the supreme leader" (S. Bakhash, 'The Six Presidents', in *The Iran Primer. Power, Politics, and US Policy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), p. 15) and Arjomand observed 'an assertive and strong presidency' (*After Khomeini*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 149). In replacing Lārijāni as Chairman of the Supreme National Security Council in October 2007, 'his most significant act of defiance of the supreme leader,' Ahmadinezhād had acted on his constitutional right as Iran's president in the realm of foreign policy (S. A. Arjomand, 'Constitutional Implications of Current Political Debates in Iran', in Ali Gheissari (Ed.) *Contemporary Iran. Economy, Society, Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009a), p. 268). Khātami's rallying around the constitution, on the other hand, did not render him an either de jure or de facto strengthened presidency (M. Mahdavi, 'Rethinking structure and agency in democratization: Iranian lessons', *International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory*, 2 (2008), p. 151; cf. A. W. Samii, 'Dissent in Iranian Elections: Reasons and Implications', *Middle East Journal*, 3 (2004), pp. 415-417). Ahmadinezhād's fortunes turned sharply during his second term in office, and Bakhash, amending his earlier statement, emphasizes that after repeated clashes with Khāmeneʾi, "he did not succeed" in luring state agencies away from loyalty to the Leader (S. Bakhash, 'The Seven Presidents', in *The Iran Primer. Power, Politics, and US Policy* (Washington, DC: United

States Institute of Peace, 2015), http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/seven-presidents (accessed 12 October 2016)).

[152] For typical constructivist positions on each theme along similar lines, see, for instance, Risse's (T. Risse, 'Social Constructivism and European Integration', in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Eds) *European Integration Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 159) and Adler's (E. Adler, *Communitarian International Relations. The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 13) renderings of actors' contextual rationality, and Hopf (T. Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security*, 1 (1998), p. 176) and Warnaar (M. Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad. Ideology and Actions* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 14) on the problematic of interests.

[153] Laitin's rational choice argument on identity formation in these or similar terms for a different geopolitical setting (D. D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation. The Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 22-23) is frequently referenced by leading constructivists (e.g., E. Adler, 'Constructivism and International Relations', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons (Eds) *Handbook of International Relations* (London [etc.]: Sage, 2002), p. 103; M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, 'Taking Stock. The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1 (2001), pp. 410-411), and parallels the latters' proposal for query-dependent 'staged analysis' that favours either 'rational choice' or 'social knowledge' (M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, 4 (1998), p. 911), suggesting its broad resonance in international relations theory. They also stress the normalcy of stable core identity (cf. Finnemore and Sikkink, 'Taking Stock. The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *op. cit.*, Ref. 153, p. 400), as this essay argues integrative religious ideology in the Islamic Republic.

[154] For a theoretically sophisticated position on clashing interests and ideology, see B. Shaffer, 'The Islamic Republic of Iran: Is It Really?', in Brenda Shaffer (Ed.) *The Limits of Culture. Islam and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2006). For statements on the significance of *omm ol-qorā* doctrine to Iran's foreign policy, see, for instance, M. ᶜAli Islām, 'Bāz tanzim-e ravābet-e irān va rusiye zaruri ast [interview with Dr. Jahāngir Karami]', *Khabar Ānlāyn* (2 Dey/23 December 1389/2010) and M. Khalili and A. ᶜAbbāsi Khoshkār, 'Barābar-sanji-ye mafhumi-ye āmuzehā-ye se-gāne-ye siāsat-e khāreji-ye jomhuri-ye eslāmi-ye irān. Omm ol-ghorā, tamaddon-e irāni va eᵓtelāf/ettehād', *Faslnāme-ye tahqiqāt-e siāsi-ye beynolmelali*, 21 (1393/2015), p. 185. *Omm ol-qorā* theory temporizes value implementation for the greater good of the umma, which it holds dependent on the security of its Iranian centre (see Haqiqat in *ibid.*, p. 191; M. J. Lārijāni, *Maqulāti dar estrātezhi-ye melli* (Tehran: Markaz-e tarjome va nashr-e ketāb, 1369/1990), pp. 20, 49) – e.g., by deprioritising foreign Muslims in distress (see 'Negāhi', *op. cit.*, Ref. 89). Such reasoning informed Iranian policy towards Chechnya (e.g., see F. Farhi and S. Lotfian, 'Iran's Post-Revolution Foreign Policy Puzzle', in Henry R. Nau and Deepa Ollapally (Eds) *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan and Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 140, on J. Dehqāni-Firuzābādi's perspective; cf. 'Vākāvi-ye ruykardhā', *op. cit.*, Ref. 104, pp.

8, 9), which had the crucial security relation with Russia as a stake (e.g., Shaffer, 'Islamic Republic', *op. cit.*, Ref. 154, pp. 227-229; cf. A. W. Samii, 'Iran and Chechnya: Realpolitik at work', *Middle East Policy*, 1 (2001), p. 48). Fear of irredentism lay at the basis of Iran's positioning in the Nagorno-Karabakh war (S. E. Cornell, 'Religion as a Factor in Caucasian Conflicts', *Civil Wars*, 3 (1998), p. 59). The Islamic Republic gave "priority to domestic state interests over religious solidarity [but s]uch an approach does not mean that the radical vision that accompanied the 1979 revolution was abandoned" (S. Mishal and O. Goldberg, *Understanding Shiite Leadership. The Art of the Middle Ground in Iran and Lebanon* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 57). Indeed, the brief wartime alliance with Armenia in defiance of Islamic amity intersected Iran's sustained and at times influential effort to turn the secular-minded Shiism of its Azerbaijani co-religionists into a pro-Islamic Republican one (e.g., see Cornell, *The politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 57, pp. 43-45; A. Goyushov, *Islamic Revival in Azerbaijan* (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2008), pp. 73, 78).

[155] Shiite Islamist ideology in Iran's foreign policy has necessarily been a recipient of international change as well as a guide to achieve it (e.g., in the case of various remnants of left-wing revolutionism - see E. Abrahamian, *Khomeinism* (London [etc.]: I. B. Tauris, 1993), p. 23). One may theoretically account for such foreign impact with reference to events at the perimeter of an ideology that may be "decoded and absorbed by it—in acceptance, rejection, or obfuscating mode" (Freeden, 'The Morphological Analysis of Ideology', *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. 126). The topic of international influence has been bracketed in this essay and deserves systematic exploration but should not, in light of the integrative constancy of Shiite Islamism in the Islamic state, be presumed to be a decisive force.