



The Global Impacts of the Islamic Revolution of Iran

By: Dr. Mohammad Reza Dehshiri, Senior Diplomat and the
Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Senegal

The victory of the “Islamic” Revolution of Iran towards the end of the 20th century has made the various aspects and dimensions of this revolution the subject of a number of research projects. Certain characteristics and the time and space in which it took place as well as the level of its effects have been instrumental in making this revolution the focus of attention of many scholars of political science. In a world in which religion was considered a thing of the past the revolutionary return of religion in a “revolution in the name of God” based on Islamic teachings – that too in a country like Iran, which was going through the process of a monarchical form of modernization in the preceding three decades and by comprehensive support from the United States of America – was quite astonishing. Iran and its surrounding areas were considered one of the most important centers of fossil energy in the world, which was of great significance to the world economy. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, this important pulse was now in the control of revolutionaries whose worldviews differed from those of the big powers. These revolutionaries had found something that many in the Muslim world had been looking for throughout the course of their history. And this added to the natural influence of a revolution that had taken place in the name of Islam on the Islamic lands. Moreover, the Islamic Revolution had taken place in Iran with a very strategic position in the region and was very naturally widening the gap between the Muslim world and the West and this, in turn, was

adding to its influence. The geopolitical and geostrategic conditions of Iran added to the depth and extent of such influences. The search for an alternative to liberalism and socialism in developing countries in the later part of the 20th century turned the Islamic Revolution of Iran into an objective and meaningful role model for this ideal and cause, therefore, increasing its importance and reflections.

The study of the various dimensions of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the theoretical framework within which it took place reflect upon the fact that although the Islamic Revolution of took place within a particular geographical territory, it had an impact on international relations and as a unique socio-political phenomenon, the Islamic Revolution of Iran (a revolution with such characteristics of being Islam-oriented, culture-oriented, peacefulness, spirituality, and independence-oriented) and a politico-cultural discourse with four dimensions of being trans-national, liberating, universal, and inspiring has had several impacts on international relations including the revival of political Islam, evolution, and strengthening of Islamic movements, the elevation of the status and role of Islam in society, ideological confrontation with liberal secularism, revival of the role of religion, elevation of the evolutionary role of culture, nullification of the theory of single rationality, weakening of the secular state-nation, deconstruction of the international system and weakening of the secularism as discourse.

These ten impacts of the Islamic Revolution on international rela-

tions has drawn the attention of scholars of international relation to this challenge and resulted in certain reconsiderations with regard to existing theories in the form of criticism, reform in the existing theories, and the invention of new theories. The influence of the Islamic Revolution on theories on international relations has, both, directly and indirectly, resulted in the strengthening of theories of revolution in international relations, the emergence of the theory of political Islam in theories on international relations, efforts towards understanding theories on Islamic movements and theorization on religion in five different concepts of religion as a security threat, culture, the essence of international relations, dominant discourse on international relations and international political theology.

With regard to the structural aspect of the Revolution, it is important to study the causes of its emergence, examine the nature of interactions among players and the process of the influence of actors on the system of international decision-making, and such norms as justice, freedom, independence, identity, legitimacy, and security. Similarly, as regards the power of the Islamic Revolution in the area of discourse-making reference may be made to combining individualism and socialism, objective idealism, unity between seminaries and universities, religious democracy, linking wisdom and religion, and amalgamating tradition and modernity.

In the case of the influence of the Islamic Revolution on changes in the nature of power on such issues as the importance of culture and contemplation, the relationship



between objective and subjective power, the superiority of soft power over hard power, the importance of the mental power sans objective and functional power, emphasis on identity as a positive power, importance to efficient manpower as an instrument of soft power and the importance to persuasive power need to be pondered upon.

Another effect of the Islamic Revolution of Iran was that it descended on Western and Eastern materialistic theories and emerged as a new thought. This revolution, which, unlike other revolutions of the modern world, was of spiritual essence, challenged the very foundation of worldly and materialistic approaches dominating the global system of interactions and caused a wave of hope and enthusiasm among the oppressed nations and Islamic societies. Thus, from its very onset, it faced opposition, sabotage, mis-propaganda, and political

pressures from the domineering powers of the world. However, in spite of all pressures and after more than four decades from the emergence of this unique phenomenon, which may be referred to as the “miracle of the 20th century”, the world is witnessing its influences, especially in form of the growing trend of opposition to the domination of arrogant powers.

A brief glance at the global reflections of the Islamic Revolution of Iran explains how the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, as one of the most important phenomena of the 20th century, has caused certain fundamental changes in Iran and the region as well as at the global level. These changes and reflections in the world have taken place in different areas like the regional and international orders, Islamic countries of the region, and people and thinkers. This revolution has also had consider-

able reflections among Muslim minorities as well as non-Muslims in the Western world. It has also had its reflections on Islamic and non-Islamic movements, international organizations, and foreign policies of the big powers.

As a new phenomenon in the contemporary world, the Islamic Revolution of Iran introduced a new discourse that influenced the various theoretical, structural, and behavioral dimensions of the international order the tangible impacts of which in many areas of the are undeniable.

In conclusion, a look at the influence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran on the phenomenon of political Islam explains that the term political Islam was born after and because of this revolution. In other words, with the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic awakening entered a new and objective phase and looked up to this revolution as a model of an Islamic state. This is because following the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Islam came to be recognized as the foundation for a modern state and a school of thought that can enter the world of politics and play an influential role. The author is of the opinion that the Islamic Revolution and the land of its birth have become the center of political Islam in today's world and its influences have been spreading to both Islamic and other lands. Backed by the achievements of the Islamic Revolution of Iran political Islam has come to be one of the most influential factors in world politics at regional, international, and global levels.