

The Influence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran on Iraq

Mahdi Akhlaghinia

Naturally the Islamic Revolution of Iran has had many influences and consequences in the region's states and, especially countries which have the same religion of Shia, like Iraq and Lebanon.

The Saddam Hussein's regime war against Iran was a reaction it showed to counteract the influences of the Islamic Revolution in its territory.

Islamic Revolution of Iran has a single and independent identity which is differentiated from other ideological systems ruling the world and actually it is the revival of a sort of Islamic thinking rooted in Shiism and Iranian culture.

Succeeded by the blessing of 60,000 martyrs' blood and amidst the *independence, freedom and Islamic Republic* slogans, Islamic Revolution of Iran relied on faith, national determination and uprising of a successful clergyman to start a new chapter of widespread popular revolutions across the world.

After a period of ecstasy caused by independence-seeking and Islamic-nationalistic fights, when their Islam-mixed nationalism reached a superficial victory, Muslims in the Islamic States realized that they are still dependent and powerless. So, they started to seek for an incentive to reshape and flourish civilizationally. Moreover, Arabs' defeat by the Zionist Regime and demise of Gamal Abdel Nasser was a hard hit which had disintegrated the Arab Nationalism, which has been developed by Nasser. It was in this sensitive condition that the Islamic Revolution of Iran emerged with a different slogan and sensation from other Islamic movements.

The principles on which the Islamic Revolution of Iran is relied on are:

١. Monotheism and considering the right of ruling and law-making only for God and to be surrender to God's decision;
٢. Divine revelation and its fundamental role in declaring rules;
٣. Resurrection and its constructive role in the mankind's evolution to God;

- ξ. God's justice in creation and canonization;
- ο. Imamah and continuous leadership and its role in the Revolution's survival;
- Ϛ. Dignity and great worth of human being and freedom along with its responsibility to God;
- ϛ. Independence, freedom and unity;
- Ϝ. Denying to be oppressor or the oppressed and defending rights of all Muslims;
- ϝ. Ensuring mankind's happiness in the entire mankind society and strengthening independence, freedom and justice which all people of the world are entitled to have them all and defending all oppressed across the world.

Another important aim of Islamic Revolution of Iran was exporting Islamic thinking and world-view. The concept of exporting revolution is nothing but declaring the great Islamic values to others and its goal is nothing but promoting monotheism and calling the oppressed people to accept the true Islam.

Because of composition of its ethnical population and its cultural-religious proximity to Iran, Iraqi leaders felt more risks and dangers after establishment of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Iraq

Iraq is a Muslim county whose people mostly are Arab and a considerable share of its population is composed of minorities. About 55% of Iraqis are Shia, while about 20% of Iraq's population believes in the Sunni denomination. However, in Saddam Hussein's time, it was Sunni Arabs who ruled the country. Iraq has experienced many uprisings and riots and after gaining its freedom it has entangled with the civil war and coups several times. So, the ideology of revolution potentially was alive in this country and has reared men like Muhammad Baqir Sadr. Because of its Shiite hue, the Fundamentalism Movement in Iraq indicates a certain form of Islamic activity in the Arabic environment. This fundamentalism is considered as a protest staged by the 55 percent majority of Shia against the Baath regime in Iraq. It is necessary to avoid considering it as an sectarian war, because the Iraqi Kurds, who are Sunni, accompanied Shias to fight the Baath regime of Saddam.

Because of this, the Shia struggles in Iraq are very similar to struggles of Sunnis against the ruling system in Syria. As a religious mentor and leader of an emerging Islamic

movement, who had many advocates, Imam Khomeini arrived in Iraq in 1964. Because of his political and anti-regime activities in Iran, actually he had been exiled to Iraq in order to be far from the political environment of Iran.

Large Shiite communities in Iran and Iraq have developed a coexistence relationship between religious institutes of the two countries. For centuries, Iranian clergymen and pious people visit Al-Atabat Al-Aliyat in Iraq and Iraqi Shias considered the majority of Shia in Iran as a political supporter and advocate who is able to defend them against the Baghdad's Sunni rulers. This coexistence-like relationship has made closer the positioning of scholars and people in both countries. And this proximity had made the Iraq Shias a proper target for Iran's policies to overthrow the Baath regime in Iraq.

Thus, Iran's influence is considered as an important factor in strengthening the ideological and organizational determination of Shias in Iraq. Both before and after Islamic Revolution in Iran, there were many groups, who called themselves representative of Iraq's shias against the Baath rulers, and had close relations and ties with Iran. It is clear cut that such relations and ties were due to a sort of strong sympathy between them and Iranians.

The Islamic Dawa Party was the foremost revolutionary group in the Iraq's political current which was considered as the pivotal core of Shiism resistance in Iraq. There are disagreements about the roots of the Islamic Dawa Party. It seems that the Islamic Dawa Party has been founded by Ayatollah Seyed Muhammad Baqir Sadr in 1958-1959. A high-ranking clergyman at the top of one of the most important parties of Iraq, who had very close ties with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution demonstrates how influential was Iranian thinking and revolution in its neighboring country.

Within 1970's, Islamic Dawa Party started some activities across Iraq, especially in its Shia occupied areas, spanned in center and southern parts of this country. After a while members of this party and Iraqi people realized that there is an actual way to reach victory. In other words, when the scholars and members of this party saw a successful and actual example of Islamic revolution with Shiism roots in their neighbor, they became very hopeful and enhanced their activities across the entire territory of Iraq.

At the same time, they were enjoying the explicit support of the new revolutionary government in Iran. Anyway, the Islamic revolution in Iran was a new and serious role

model for Shiism movements in Iraq and other parts of the Muslim world whose ripples shook the legs of Iraq government.

In his *Islamic Movements and Islamic Revolution of Iran*, Dr. Kalim Seddighi, Arab Thinker, writes, “the Islamic movement is a collection of people who fight for god and their sole goal is eradicating blasphemy and establishing the God’s word over the earth.”

He also says, “The emergence of the Islamic Revolution led and guided other Islamic movements.” Inspired by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, he defines an Islamic movement as movement which is composed of scholars, students, youth and women across the world.

He points to the outcomes and fruits of the Islamic Revolution of Iran as follows:

١. Leadership
٢. Methodology (the actual method to perform the prophet’s behavior)
٣. Role of scholars
٤. Students and the youth as the soldiers of the revolution
٥. The worldwide issue (targeting the world blasphemy)

In conclusion he says “The Islamic Revolution may happen anywhere outside Iran, it means separating Islam and Islamic revolution from its Iranian element.

Despite these, the Iraqi government used to consider the Islamic Dawa Party as spies, who under influence of Imam Khomeini, Iran’s Leader, both before and after the Islamic Revolution Iran, tried to adjoin Iraq to Iran or actually intended to overthrow the ruling regime in Iraq. Therefore, Saddam sought for an excuse to suppress them and to hinder its activities as far as possible or demolish it completely. Thus, after riots of Muharram 1979, Saddam arrested Ayatollah Sadr and imprisoned him and then suppressed both people and Islamic Dawa Party. After a while, Muhammad Baqir Sadr and his sister, who played a key role in the campaigns, were executed by the Baath regime.

However, some believe that Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Sadr never intervened directly in the executive affairs of Islamic Dawa Party. It means that the party felt something like sympathy with them and used to behave based on their guides. Nevertheless most Shiite resources point to their powerful movement.

Why the Revolution Failed in Iraq

1. Coherence of Baath Party: Iraq's Baath was very competent and cruel. An authoritarian leader and vertical decision-making and also the close and familial relationships among leaders and commanders of the government have strengthened their harmony. Emphasizing the Arab nationalism, they tried to control the country's condition and were very successful in this regard. Unlike Iran, Islamic Dawa Party had not a clergy organization; although its founder was a clergy and had sympathy with clergies, but clergymen did not play a key role in its structure. In other words, people did not consider the Islamic Dawa Party as the symbol of clergy's consideration, which it has resulted in a vigilant behavior towards activities and decisions made by Islamic Dawa Party.

2. The clergy community of Iraq was small: Although many Shiites live in Iraq and most symbols of Shiism denomination, i.e. the Shiite Imams, are buried there and one of the most valid seminary schools of Shiism world, Najaf Ashraf Seminary School, is located in this country, the number of Shiite clergymen and scholars in contrast to Iraq's Shiite population is very small, which it in turn decreases the organizing capability of clergymen in Iraq.

3. Saddam's Carrot and Stick Approach: Saddam Hussein, the military leader of Baghdad Movement, had always used to follow a dual policy against the Shiite scholars and Shiite people in general. For instance, he fought against Imam Khomeini or Ayatollah Sadr and at the same time respected Ayatollah Khoie or used to go to Al-Atabat Al-Aliyat and to say his prayers there; so, he tried to develop a duality in decisions made by people and Shiite elites of Iraq and to perform his own policies.

4. Passivity of Ayatollah Seyed Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei: He didn't believe in the activities of Imam Khomeini, Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Ayatollah Muhammad Bagher Sadr in Iraq and never supported them.

5. Presence of Shiite people in the leadership and governmental team of Iraq: Saddam Hussein used Shiites and their relatives in the governmental positions. It paled the revolutionary motivations of Iraqi Shiites. However, after execution of Ayatollah Sadr and His sister, Bentolhoda Sadr, Islamic Dawa Party was not ruined and remained.

Imam Khomeini and Iraq Developments

It wasn't Ayatollah Sadr who actually realized the Islamic Government, but it was Imam Khomeini who materialized this idea. Imam Khomeini did not agree with all ideas of Ayatollah Sadr about the Islamic state. In 1943, in his *Kashfol Asrar*, Imam Khomeini verified this traditional Shiite idea which says clergymen need to support Muslim governments and states. He also insisted that Muslim states need to follow the Islamic rules, which have been interpreted by the clergymen.

After attacks of Iraq government to Shiites in 1969, many clergymen became disappointed of being able to convince the current governments to act based on the framework of the Islamic sharia.

In early 1970, in a speech in City of Najaf, Imam khomeini mentioned the political and radical idea of development of an Islamic state and asked clergymen to apply the political credit of Imam Zaman. He also said that a Faqih (jurisprudent) is superior to a ruler and pointed to some hadiths which indicated that clergymen are heirs of the prophet (PBUH).

In 1970, he showed in his speeches that he supports the guardianship of Jurisprudent ideology and extended range of actions, credits and authority of clergymen from religion to politics. He believed that the man who is selected as the ruling jurist (Valie Faqih) must be superior to other religious scholars in terms of knowledge and jurisprudence. Like Ayatollah Sadr, Imam Khomeini believed that Muslims must establish an Islamic state. Clergymen should stop taghia (prudent dissimulation). He said, "Anyone who claims that formation of an Islamic state is not necessary implicitly denies the necessity of performing divine rules, their universal and comprehensive nature and the eternal credence of faith, itself."

So it is obvious that how influential was the Islamic revolution of Iran in the Shiite society of Iraq. This influence got its climax in 1979 when not only Iraq, but also the entire Muslim World was shaken.

Source: Political Studies and Research Institute