



# The Islamic Revolution of Iran and Its Main Characteristics

The most eloquent and comprehensive word for providing an accurate introduction of the Islamic Revolution is the definition given by the late leader and founder of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini, who said: "There is no doubt that the Islamic Revolution of Iran has been different from other revolutions in terms of its emergence, struggles involved and even its terms of the motives behind this revolution and uprising. And there is no doubt that this is a gift that has been bestowed from God to this plundered and oppressed nation". (Imam Khomeini, Sahifa Imam, 21, 402)

A review of the causes and factors of the Islamic Revolution, if

carried out properly, will reveal that, in its essence, this revolution has certain unique characteristics that distinguish it from other revolutions and uprisings of the world. Therefore, these characteristics must be carefully examined and taken into consideration in order to have an accurate understanding of the true nature and essence of the Islamic Revolution, on the one hand, and the threats and challenges facing it, on the other.

## 1 - Inspired by True and Pure Islamic Teachings

The origin of the Islamic Revolution of Iran was the pure Muhammadan Islam and pure Islamic teachings (the Holy Qur'an and

the tradition) and this is what has prevented it from deviation. Even though this feature was and is very clear for the thinkers and scholars and the revolutionary people who were closely involved during the revolution, many political analysts and theorists of the world who have not had a right perspective and understanding of the true and pure Islam, have failed to come up with a correct analysis of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

John D. Stemple, the political attaché of the US Embassy in Iran at the time of the Islamic Revolution, and the author of the book "Inside the Iranian Revolution" has in a part of his book, considered lack of understanding the religious fac-

tor as one of the major obstacles in preventing the Islamic Revolution. According to him, three factors contributed to failing to make a decision as to what stance should be adopted vis-à-vis the revolution that was in progress and the most important of these factors was the lack of a proper understanding of the role of religion as a political weapon. The Westerners, even those who lived in Iran, were unaware of the fact that the pressures and anxieties caused by corruption and economic turmoil could be the path to a popular uprising by resorting to Islamic symbols and teachings. The most difficult thing to perceive was the fact that a religious movement and a political current like the one led by (Imam) Khomeini(RA) could be formed. Making a review of the various aspects and dimensions of the political-religious structure of Shiite Islam is not an easy task.

The flamboyant presence of the element of pure Mohammadan Islam in the process of the Revolution and the formation of the political structure of the Islamic Republic was the main fundamental characteristic that has been completely hidden from the minds and views of theorists and political designers of the world. Under such conditions in which all the minds, views, thoughts, research, hypotheses, and penmanship were focused on materialistic political ideas - minus religion - and Liberal Democracy was seen as the endpoint of human aspirations and the end of history, the return of pure Islam as a divine school in the area of the administration of society on the basis of which

the Islamic Republic system was formed, is considered a great political phenomenon that can never be ignored by anyone, especially thinkers, scholars, and political analysts. Undoubtedly, having a correct understanding and perception of this important phenomenon will need time and the practical confrontation between the political thought of pure Islam and the material thought minus religion in the world arena.

### 2 - Having Divine Leadership

The lively presence of the pure Muhammadan Islam in all aspects of the Islamic Revolution - based on methodical ijihad - which is indeed is the driving force of Islam, and the leadership of a very learned Islamic scholar (who is vested with the responsibility of leading and guiding the Islamic Ummah during the age of occultation) was the other characteristic that guaranteed the success of this Revolution. This characteristic has, on the one hand, generated a wave of confidence and stability in the masses of the revolutionary people of Iran and, on the other hand, has protected the revolution from deviation and has also removed theoretical and practical obstacles from the path of revolution. The prophet-like leadership of Imam Khomeini (ra), who is counted as the clear manifestation of true Islam in this age, guaranteed the full-fledged presence of true Islam in all stages of the Islamic Revolution, and this added another characteristic to this Revolution; distinguishing it from the revolutions that have occurred in the history of the world.

In her book "Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran", the famous American Iranologist, Nikki R. Keddie, emphasizes that the Iranian revolution was a phenomenon that did not fit even with the models and expectations of those who were well acquainted with the existing situation in Iran. It was the first time that an established religious leader had become the passionate leader of a revolution against a monarchy. By the same token, Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, who has spoken extensively about the Iranian revolution, described the leadership of Imam Khomeini in the Islamic Revolution in his book entitled "What Are the Iranians Dreaming About" saying that the character of Ayatollah Khomeini is like a myth. Today, no head of state or political leader, even with the support of all the media in his country, can claim that his people have such a strong personal and strong connection with him.

The truth of the matter is that Imam Khomeini's character and personality was a mixture of such qualities as strong faith, righteous deeds, strong willpower, moral courage, firmness, wisdom, clarity of mind, eloquence, spiritual purity, intelligence, prudence, and piety; qualities and virtues the collection of which can rarely be gathered in a great man over centuries. Indeed, his unique and unattainable personality and his high human status were far from being conceivable and seemed mythological.

### 3 - Being Popular

Being popular, in the true sense of the word, is another prominent

and exemplary characteristic of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Although many political parties and groups with different ideologies and thoughts had been involved in the process of political struggles against the monarchial regime, there is no doubt that the consciousness, understanding, enthusiasm, and the mass movement by millions of Iranians from all classes and social strata formed the identity of the revolution - right from the beginning of the movement to the final victory and even after that - as a 100% popular revolution, which completed its various stages with the same characteristics.

In his book "Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution" the American sociologist, John Foran, has described this characteristic of the Islamic Revolution of Iran by stating that the theoretical framework and the consequences of the recent study experience lead us to the fact that the social forces involved in the process of the revolution have been another example of an urban, popular and multi-class coalition. The revolution was accompanied by massive and large-scale demonstrations by the people against the (monarchial) government; demonstrations that brought the largest masses of human history to the streets.

This characteristic of being popular was not only specific to the period of the formation of the Revolution but has also been a strong, unique, and identifying feature of this movement after the victory of the revolution and the formation, the establishment, and the stability of the Islamic Republic and in

the course of all the ups and downs of the past four decades.

The Islamic Revolution has astonishingly improved the political foresight of the Iranian people and their view of international affairs. Political analysis and understanding of the international issues such as the crimes of the West, especially the United States, the issue of Palestine and historical oppression on its people, the issue of incitement to war, and the interference of bullying powers in the affairs of other nations and the like are no more exclusive to a particular class called intellectuals. This kind of intellectualism has spread among the general public throughout the country and in all walks of life, and such issues have become clear and understandable even to adolescents and young adults.

#### 4 - Prominent Cultural Aspect

Another characteristic of the Islamic Revolution is its prominent cultural aspect. Undoubtedly, class gaps, the construction

of aristocratic palaces alongside densely populated urban slums, and undue discrimination in the distribution of national wealth shook the foundations of the Pahlavi dynasty, but what plunged millions of people from all walks of life into the arena of the Islamic Revolution and made them determined in this way, was the fierce and comprehensive opposition of the Pahlavi regime to Islamic values and national culture and traditions and its political dependence (on certain powers) and the promotion of anonymity and excessive moral promiscuity in the Iranian society of that time.

Therefore, Islamism, attention to national culture and values, severing dependence on the Eastern and the Western and reliance on national power and the rule of divine values in society are some of the main cultural features of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which distinguishes it from other uprisings and even great revolutions of the world. The prominence of the cultural dimension of the Islamic Revolution of Iran has resulted in the emergence of a theory among the general theories of revolutions, which has been called "Cultural Theory of Revolutions". This prominent cultural dimension has led to the publication of hundreds of books and articles around the world about the Iranian Revolution that have analyzed this revolution from its cultural perspective and this is because it is not hidden from any observer that the most outstanding aspect of this Revolution is its cultural aspect.

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