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DURHAM UNIVERSITY

# Uṣūlī Shiʿism and State Approaches to Islamic Unity: the Ecumenical Movement in Post-Safavid Iran

by

FAHAAD J M M ALENEZI

**Thesis Submitted Infulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Durham University**

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INSTITUTE OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

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2 3 JUN 2009

# Abstract

## *Uṣūlī* Shi'ism and State Approaches to Islamic Unity: The Ecumenical Movement in Post-Safavid Iran

**By Fahaad J. M. M. Alenezi**

Since the upheaval of 1979, the Iranian Islamic Revolution has grasped the interest of scholars and spurred the writing of numerous academic works which have investigated all aspects of this event. However, these previous studies have entirely disregarded the relationship between the establishment of the *Uṣūlī* School of Twelver Shi'ism which corresponded to the rise of the Safavids at the beginning of the 16th century and the frequent endeavors to revive the principle of the Islamic *umma*'s unity in modern and contemporary history, involving six calls for Islamic unity from Iran in the post-Safavid era, with four of those calls officially initiated by the state. The significance of this subject matter is that its investigation would shed light on different dark corners not only of modern Iranian history but also the radical developments in the political dogma of Twelver Shi'ism which transformed the Shi'ites from total political absence of *intiẓār* to the revolutionary activism of *wilāyat al-Faqīh*.

This research, hence, aims at exploring the Iranian calls for Islamic unity within a framework of the *Uṣūli* School of Shi'ism developed as part of the modern Iranian history, as the stronghold of Twelver Shi'ism since the rise of Safavids. Accordingly, various stages of such theological and political attempts to promote calls for Islamic unity, as well as the motivations for such attempts with their historical implications and conceptual frameworks are critically discussed and thoroughly analysed.

In designing the research, the case study method was utilised to individually approach the four initiatives officially promoted by the state for Islamic unity throughout the modern history of Iran, prior to relying heavily on historical analysis to establish the connections between these attempts while extrapolating the developments in the political attitudes of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism.

After conducting a critical analysis, this research argues that the Islamic unity movement in post- Safavid Iran passed through two different stages: in the first, it was utilised by the Iranian *uṣūlī ulamā* as a policy to absorb the catastrophic outcome of the fall of the Safavid state and was activated as a pragmatic policy befitting the new regime's quest for legitimacy. Its ultimate aim was to preserve the accomplishments it had achieved during the Safavid era: its influential role in state affairs as the single means to secure the *uṣūlī* identity of Twelver Shi'ism in Iran. However, the movement in the second stage became a natural outcome in addition to the sustained political dimensions that had initially aimed to turn away from the isolation of *intiẓār* by politicizing Twelver Shi'ism, eventually leading to genuine conceptual reforms to the long lasting traditional doctrines, which can also be found in the post-revolution policies in Iran.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Colin Turner, for his invaluable support, encouragement, supervision and useful suggestions throughout the course of this research. His moral support and continuous guidance enabled me to complete my work successfully.

I am grateful for the warm welcome and cooperation I have received from three Iranian experts during my trip to Tehran. First, I really appreciate the kindness of Rasūl Jaʿfaryān, Managing Director the Library of Ayatollah Ali Sistānī in Qum, who provided me with copies of some valuable sources related to my subject matter, as well as a copy of his work, *Maqālāt tārīkhī*. Secondly, Sayyid Jalāl Mīr Āqāy, at the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought, he was willing to answer all questions asked without hesitation regarding the aims and activities of the Council. Dr. Abd al-Karīm al-Shīrāzī, the President of University of Islamic Schools of Thought, also made some helpful comments. He was so generous as to offer a short induction for the university activities.

I am as ever, especially indebted to my parents for their love and support throughout my life. I am particularly grateful to my wife for her relentless support and encouragement. I would like to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to my sister and brother for both their financial and less tangible support during my studies.

## Declaration

I hereby declare that no portion of the work that appears in this study has been used in support of an application of another degree in qualification to this or any other university or institutions of learning.

## Copyright

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# Note on Transliteration

In this work, I adopt the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* transliteration systems for Arabic and Persian with few alterations. The *tā' marbūṭa* in Persian words is written as "at" (i.e *risālat*) while in Arabic it is inscribed as "a" (i.e. *risāla*), and the Persian *iḍāfa* after the *ta-yi marbūṭa* will be shown as "–yi" or "–i" according to the context. Also, the Arabic article "al" is being used for both the *qamarī* and *shamsī* forms in which the *tashdīd* (double) required for "*al shamsiyya*" is disregarded (i.e. *al-Shīʿa* instead of *ash-Shīʿa*). Furthermore, all words referring to Islamic or Arabic concepts, names and official titles that do not have commonly accepted English forms will be translated according to their Arabic forms.

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# Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Unity of the Islamic nation is one of the sacred principles that Islam has called for since its outset. The belief in this principle does basically comply with God's commands in which He has asserted the unity and brotherhood of all Muslims and demanded that they preserve this unity in numerous locations in the holy *Qur'ān*. For example, verse 92 in chapter 21 of *al-Anbiyā* (sing. *Nabiyy* means Prophets) places the recognition of unity of the *umma* as equivalent to the recognition of God: "Verily, this brotherhood of yours [your *umma*] is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other)."[1] Likewise, verse 52 in chapter 23 of Believers affirmed the significance of the unity of the *umma* to the extent that preserving such a unity is a sign of complying with God's command and showing a fear of the Almighty: "And verily this Brotherhood of yours [your *umma*] is a single Brotherhood [*umma*], and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other)."[2] Furthermore, God demands the preservation of the unity of Muslims in chapter 49 of Champers: "The Believers are but a single Brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy."[3]

The unity of the Islamic nation appears to be among the major issues to which the *Qur'ānic* discourse gives more attention and in which the Almighty does not only guide Muslims towards matters that would strengthen their unity but also

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1 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'ān*: translation and commentary (Birmingham: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1946), 21:92.

2 The *Qur'ān*, 23:52.

3 The *Qur'ān*, 49:10.

forbids them other matters that could lead to their division. In other words, God clearly set the rules that preserve the unity of Muslims. One of the rules is that obedience to the teaching of God and his Prophet and the bearing of hardship during its implementation will spare Muslims from the risk of dispersal: "And obey Allah and His Messenger, and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and persevering. For Allah is with those who patiently persevere."[4] Also, Muslims' cooperation with each other in good deeds would preserve them from God's resentment since it expresses their true fear of Him: God states, "Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancor. Fear God, for God is strict in punishment."[5] Furthermore, favor the *Qur'ān* that represents an escape-line stretched from Heaven to Earth as mentioned in *ḥadith al-Thaqalayn* (tradition of the two heavy weights) for it gathers the whole teaching of God and His messenger:

> And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His Signs clear to you: that ye may be guided.[6]

In fact, the Prophet of Islam had touched on this issue in his traditions on several occasions. On one such occasion he states:

> Do not you O Muslims, be jealous of each other, do not increase the price of your goods to cheat other people, do not hate each other, do not bear enmity against each other, and do not try to unreasonably excel one another. And be the slaves of Allah who are brothers to each other. A Muslim is a brother to every Muslim. So do not commit injustice to your

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4 The *Qur'ān*, 8:46.

5 The *Qur'ān*, 5:2.

6 The *Qur'ān*, 3:103.

brother, and do not deny him any help. Do not belittle him. *Taqwā* is in here (the Prophet pointed to his chest three times). It is sufficient evil for a Muslim to harm his own brother in Islam. A Muslim's blood, properties, and honor are inviolable to another Muslim.[7]

In another *ḥadīth*, the Prophet says

> The Parable of the believers who love each other, are merciful and compassionate, they are like a body, if an organ becomes ill, the other organs feel the illness too.[8]

Also, the Prophet had clearly explained the concept of the Islamic Brotherhood and illustrated the duties of a Muslim towards his other Muslim brothers:

> A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim – he does not wrong nor does he forsake him when he is in need; whosoever fulfills the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfill his needs; whosoever spares a believer from a distress, Allah will spare him from one of the distresses of the Day of Resurrection; and whosoever, conceals a fault of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection.[9]

In spite of the sanctity of unity of the *umma* for all Muslims regardless of their sectarian belief, this sanctity failed to protect this unity, which began to disintegrate politically following the fall of the Umayyad State in the first third of the second century thanks to the actions of most of the Islamic sects. With the rising of the Abbasids in the East, for instance, the Sunni Umayyads established their second state in Andalusia in the western side of the Islamic world. From then onwards the Islamic world experienced a new stage in its history when the

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7 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, ḥadīth* no. 6707.

8 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, ḥadīth* no. 6751.

9 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, ḥadīth* no. 2482.

*Khārijīs* established two sectarian-oriented states in North Africa: al-Midrāriyya state was established by Midrār ibn al-Yasa' in Sijilmāsa in 140 A.H. and followed the Ṣifrī Khārijī doctrine and al-Rustomiyya state founded by Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rustum in Tāhart in 156 A.H. which was based on the *Ibāḍī* doctrine. Then, it was the turn of the Shi'ites to become involved in the sectarian race to fragment the unity of the *umma* when the *Zayydī* Shi'ites' state was first instituted by Idrīs ibn Abdullah in Walīlī in 789/172 before it was moved to the newly-established capital city of Fez; then the Fatimids created their own state in North Africa and proclaimed the Ismā'īlī doctrine of Islam as the state religion in 910/297; and the other *Zayydī* state of Ṣalīḥiyya that was founded in the city of Jibla by the Ṣāliḥī family in 1047/438.

Remarkably, two aspects came to the fore in this sectarian chaos that had swept through the unity of the *umma* in the medieval Islamic period. Firstly, Twelver Shi'ism had maintained the quietness and passiveness and entirely isolated itself from the *de facto* state during the time of the Imams and lasted until after the *ghayba* (occultation of the twelfth Imam). For that reason, Shī'ī dynasties such as the Buwayhids and Ḥamadānis preserved loyalty to the Sunni Abbasid caliphate.[10] During that time the *Akhbārī* School[11] of jurisprudence dominated Twelver Shi'ism in which the role of the *ulamā* was merely to act as narrators to the traditions of the Prophets and the Imams with no desire to become involved directly or indirectly in politics or state affairs. Secondly, a survey of the same

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10 Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: the Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (University of California: Berkeley, 1969), 4.

11 The *Akhbārī* School of Jurisprudence was the methodologically orthodox Twelver Shi'ism that relied on the Qur'ān, the Prophet's *ḥadīth*, and the Imams' traditions as the only means for extracting the *aḥkām* of Sharī'a (ordinances); the *Akhbārī* School represented the conservative orientation that preserved the inclination towards *intiẓār* during the *ghayba* (occultation). After the rise of the Safavids, the *akhbārī ulamā* had entered the bitter jurisprudential debate with the newly established *Uṣūlī* School (reformist) that had lasted for three centuries before it was resolved in favor of the latter; see Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shī'ī min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Dār al-Shūrā wal-I'lām: London, 1997), 389-96; also, David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Longman, 1988), 158-61.

period reveals no serious approach had been conducted to alleviate the sectarian contentions that were frequently arising between the ordinary Sunni and Shīʿī followers.

It was not until 1500 AD that the founder of the newly established state, Shah Ismāʿīl I, proclaimed Twelver Shiʿism as the official state religion. Thus Twelver Shiʿism could be said to have taken its share for the first time in destroying the unity of the Islamic nation. The Safavid state set up a political alliance with the newly established *uṣūlī* school of Twelver Shiʿism in which the *ulamā*, unlike their counterpart *akhbārīs*, legalized the reliance on the *ʿaql* (reason) in reviewing the traditions of the Imams in order to compose independent legal opinion, *ijjtihād*; the *uṣūlī ulamā*, with the claim of being the representatives of the Hidden Imam, authorized the temporal rulers of the Safavid dynasty with unprecedented political legitimacy, to rule the Shīʿī community on their behalf during the occultation of the Hidden Imam, while the state in its turn imposed the *uṣūlī* version of Shiʿism in Iran and granted the *ulamā* of this school the right to religiously lead the community and politically participate in the state's affairs.[12]

Although it appears that the exceptional legitimacy of the alliance between the Shīʿī *ulamā* and the Safavid state was partially based on their claim of descendency from the 7th Imam, Musa al-Kāẓim, and the establishment of Twelver Shiʿism as the official religion of the state meant that the *ulamā* of the *uṣūlī* Twelver Shiʿism benefitted from unprecedented influence not only in religion but also the state's affairs; it does indeed represent a momentous shifting paradigm in the traditional attitude of passivity and quietness of Twelver

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12 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 28; also, David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Longman, 1988), 158-61.

Shi'ism towards "earthly" government that had characterized the relations of the Imams with the existing authorities since the tragic massacre of *Karbala* in 61 H.C., when Imam Ḥusayn along with several members of *Ahl al-Bayt* were martyred by Yazīd's army. This attitude had lasted after *al-Ghayba al-Kubrā* (greater occultation of the Twelfth Imam, Mohammad ibn al-Ḥasan in 326 H.C.) during which the *akhbārī* teachings prevailed over the followers of Twelver Shi'ism.

## 1.2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Iranian history had attracted the interest of scholars since the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry in 1953 by the then Prime Minister, Mohammad Muṣadaq, and this interest greatly increased after the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Since then, a great deal of research has been conducted dealing with modern Iranian history from various angles; however, none of it does comprehensively approach the endeavours of the Iranian state to revive the unity of the Islamic *umma* in the context of the modern and contemporary history of Iran. This is a matter that must provide adequate answers for unresolved queries regarding the change that has taken place in modern Shi'ism and its attitude to the state and Sunni Islam, which will portray a clearer picture and better understanding of several historic events as well as contemporary incidents.

Significantly, the official Iranian approaches to the issue of Islamic unity and its impact on the political activities and developments of Twelver Shi'ism in the post-Safavid period has been totally neglected despite hints of such an issue in several studies; for that reason, the absence of a substantive literature review in this study for the issue matter might be justified on one hand, and emphasis the value of this approach as unprecedented attempt on the other hand. In other

words, the present study aims be a genuine contribution to the field and could divert the attention of scholars to the significance of this issue and stimulate them to conduct further research. Indeed, the previous studies could be placed in two major categories: the first contains studies that approached modern Iranian history in general, while the second includes research dealing with the efforts at Islamic unity in particular. Predominantly, the research in the field of modern Iranian history falls into the first category and pays no attention to the issue concerning the present study - although a few of them do obliquely point to the significance of such a subject. For example, Hamid Algar, in his valuable work *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: the Role of the Ulamā in the Qajar Period*, noticed the problems that Twelver Shi'ism has been facing since the fall of the Safavid state in which Twelver Shi'ism is supposed to retain the quietness and passiveness as a minority that was dominant before the rise of the Safavids and is continuing to the present time – a matter that was incompatible with the emerging desire to maintain the gains obtained by the Shi'ites under the Safavid state when Iran became the stronghold and homeland for *uṣūlī* Twelver Shi'ism, and the *ulamā* acquired a political role and heavy involvement in the state's affairs. However, Algar did not make an effort to explore how the Shi'ites could get out of this dilemma. And what were the means that they adopted to circumvent this problem? Hamid Algar states:

> Yet one essential element of pre-Safavid Shi'ism survived to be passed on, after temporary obscurity, to the Qājār Period and beyond: the necessary and inescapable illegitimacy of the state. One might maintain that a Shi'i state itself is a contradiction in terms, since the essence of Shi'ism demands a minority status for its adherents, who are in opposition, often quiescent, but unyielding, to de facto authority. The real triumph of Shi'ism is possible only through the return and

> manifestation of the hidden Imam, when legitimacy will return to the world and be fulfilled.[13]

Additionally, David Morgan recognised the significance of the 18th century as the period of potential developments in Iranian Shi'ism although this requires additional investigations as he failed to notice the recurrent calls for Islamic unity in the middle and at the end of this century as one of the major significant changes in attitude of modern Shi'ism. He illustrates this point as follows:

> Thus it was that the eighteenth century, a period whose political history was for the most part dismal and anarchic even by the exacting standard of the Persian past, was in other respects of great creative significance. The permanent importance of the changes within Shi'ism which took place hardly needs further emphasis. Knowledge of what happened in the eighteenth century, as well as in the earlier centuries of Islamic Persia, is an essential prerequisite for anyone who wishes to understand the evolution of Persia during our own day.[14]

Even the prominent Shī'ī scholar, Shaykh Mohammad Jawād Mughniyya, who dealt with the development of Shī'ī political thought in his work *al-Shī'a fī al-mīzān,* believes that Shi'ism has passed through three phases. The first phase was propagation Shi'ism (23-132), which started from the death of the Prophet and lasted until the fall of the Umayyad dynasty. The second phase was the crystallization of Shī'ī jurisprudence, which lasted throughout the lifetime of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. The third one is the stage of defending Shi'ism, which began at the time of Shaykh al-Mufīd and his student al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and

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13 Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: the Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (University of California: Berkeley, 1969), 5.

14 David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Longman, 1988), 160.

lasted until the time of Shaykh al-Ḥillī.[15] However, Shaykh Mughniyya totally disregarded the relationship between repeated calls for Islamic unity and Twelver Shi'ism that has become a phenomenon in the post-Safavid period and which chronologically and historically corresponds with Mughniyya's categorization and could be considered as the fourth stage in the development of Shi'ism, covering the era from the fall of the Safavids until the present time.

The studies in the second category dealt directly with the Iranian involvement in Islamic unity. In addition to being very few in number, they are not very comprehensive approaches, merely considering one case of those calls and failed to highlight the significant motivations that have frequently provoked such attempts. For example, Ernest Tucker dedicated his valuable work, *Nādir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*,[16] to Nadir Shah's efforts to incorporate Shi'ism into the Islamic *umma* as the fifth Islamic School of Jurisprudence and with which the Shah was attempting to legitimise his newly established sovereignty. Wilfried Buchta too has contributed to the category in writing a chapter about the Iranian endeavors of Islamic rapprochement in the post-Khomeini era.[17] Unlike the preceding studies, Rainer Brunner conducted deep investigations into the issue of Islamic rapprochement in the 20th century in his historiographical work, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*;[18] however, he focussed on the Sunni contributions to the subject matter, mainly the efforts of al-Azhar, as is clearly reflected in the title. He highlighted the part taken by some Shi'i

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15 For more information see Mohammad Jawād al-Mughniyya, *al-Shī'a fī al-Mīzān* (Beirut: Dār al-Jawād li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashir wa at-Tawzī', 1989), 96-114.

16 Ernest Tucker, *Nādir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006).

17 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001).

18 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic ecumenism in the 20th century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

Iranians such as Nadir Shah, but failed to place them in the Iranian historical context, though acknowledging that the calls for Islamic unity have always been a reflection of the development in the relationship between the *ulamā* and the state:

> The most significant of these was the clear connection between theological pronouncements and the specific political scene of the moment... Pan-Islamic appeals or the behaviour of Shiite scholars in the Iraqi pilgrimage sites can only be understood against the backdrop of the prevailing politics, a situation that was to remain unchanged in the *taqrīb* debates of the twentieth century.[19]

However, the most significant approach to the issue of Islamic unity is the work of the late Ayatollah Mohammad Mahdi Shams al-Dīn, the former president of the Islamic Shi'i Supreme Council in Lebanon, although he made no reference to the Iranians' involvement in the subject. Ayatollah Shams al-Dīn designated a chapter in his work, *al-Tajdīd fī al-fikr al-Islamī al-mu'āṣir*,[20] to representing the relationship between the Imamate and the principle of Islamic unity, in which the former represents the divine right of the Imams while the latter represents their sacred duty. Ayatollah Shams al-Dīn claimed that the Imams had always sacrificed their right to rule for the sake of preserving the sacred principle of Islamic unity, concluding this chapter with an appeal to interested scholars, in which he not only urged them to pay more attention to this subject but also evaluate, revise and criticise his approach.[21]

The previous approaches to this subject matter – in which Nadir Shah and Imam Khomeini's attempts had particularly seized the attention of scholars in the field

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19 ibid, 44.

20 Ayatollah Mohammad Mahdi Shams al-Dīn, *al-Tajdīd fī al-Fikr al-Islamī al-Mu'āṣir* (Beirut: Dār al-Manhal, 1997).

21 *ibid*, 155-77.

while ʿAbbās Mīrzā and Khāmina'ī's were most likely unobserved – have mainly focussed on the political dimension and totally overlooked the radical developments in traditional Twelver ideology that were in one way or another preceding or corresponding with those attempts. In fact, the repeated Iranian calls for Islamic unity have been indisputably a later corollary for the rise of the *uṣūlī* School of Thought in Iran in the 16th century and the link between the two should not be disregarded; the rise of the *uṣūlī* School essentially aimed to put an end to the deadly passiveness of *intiẓār* by practically politicizing the jurisprudence of the Twelver Shiʿism. Indeed, the *uṣūlī ulamā* as the common element in all attempts could have been the key stimulators of all the calls for Islamic unity since such calls have been conducted recurrently by the Iranian state regardless of the nature of the ruling regime. The *ulamā*, on the one hand, might have utilised the need for Islamic unity as a legitimate ploy to justify their endeavours to maintain the political achievements and influential role that they were granted under the Safavids; hence, the call for Islamic unity carried the required legitimate cover for the newly rising regimes – a matter that emphasises the need for the *ulamā's* active participation to manage such a religious issue. On the other hand, the efforts to jurisprudentially legitimize the political role of the Twelver *ulamā* during the *ghayba* inevitably led to sparking off the gradual but non-stop process of conceptual reconsiderations of the traditional principles of Twelver Shiʿism when a reformist tendency had targeted several historical doctrines and several points of disputes that had isolated Twelver Shiʿism Islam from their Sunni counterparts were either virtually overcome or became somehow diluted. This may have revived the hopes and provoked the efforts to restore the lost unity.

## 1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Consequently, the aim of the present study is to critically analyse the Iranian calls for Islamic unity in the post-Safavid era within the simultaneous context of

the progressive political scheme of *uṣūlī* Twelver Shi'ism. In addition, this study aims to contextualise and analyse the various stages of this movement, including the post-revolution version, in modern Iranian history and to provide biographical accounts of the Iranian individuals that were the key-players in the Islamic ecumenical efforts, *Juhūd al-Taqrīb*. Although biographies of some of them, such as Nadir Shah, and Imam Khomeini, have already been published, they have paid no attention to their contributions to the issue of Islamic unity that had a noticeable impact in shaping their political careers. Furthermore, there are no English biographical accounts of 'Abbās Mīrzā Qājār and Ayatollah Khāmina'ī dealing with their involvement in Islamic ecumenism.

In fulfilling these aims, the following objectives are developed:

(i) to provide conceptual definitions and analyses of the related historical events and their theological and political sources;

(ii) to provide a jurisprudential basis for the Shi'ite involvement in the call for Islamic unity according to the Imams' traditions and their attitude towards the *de facto* authority of their time, as the infallible Imams gave priority to unity of the Muslim community over their divine right for political leadership;

(iii) to critically discuss and analyse the four attempts to promote Islamic unity in modern Iranian history within their historical, theological and political contexts;

(iv) to evaluate the impact of these attempts in changing some of the traditional concepts of Twelver Shi'ism, such as the attitude towards earthly authority and direct involvement in political affairs, which eventually led to the development and later implementation of *walāyat al-faqhi.*

## 1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As the aims state, this research attempts to answer a number of questions, such as what are the authoritative sources in the jurisprudence of the Twelver Shi'ism that correspond to and claim the same position in the unity of the *umma* asserted in the abovementioned *Qur'ānic* verses? Although the Shi'ites generally acknowledge the same holy *Qur'ān*, they have their own interpretations that differ from the Sunni ones for several *Qur'ānic* verses. Why could those authoritative sources have not been activated before the rise of the Safavids or under their rule? In other words, had the Shi'ites violated those provisions when they committed themselves to quietness and adopted passive behaviour towards the de facto state before the rise of the Safavids? Why have the calls for Islamic unity been linked with Iran in the modern history of that country? What could have been the permanent cause that provoked the reiterated calls for Islamic unity? How could the call for Islamic unity most likely become the point of agreement in the state's political agenda in the post-Safavid era despite the essential differences and changeable nature in political orientation and religious ideology among the ruling regimes in this period? The central and significant question of this study is could those calls for unity within the Islamic *umma* methodologically and systematically be placed in the one framework to compose a specific pattern that could reveal significant and as yet undiscovered characteristics of modern Shi'ism?

## 1.5. CONTRIBUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study also intends to achieve important objectives. First of all, it is not only the Western scholars who have neglected this topic; a survey of the Islamic and Arabic libraries will reveal the lack of interest among Muslim scholars regarding the efforts towards Islamic ecumenism in general and Iranian endeavors in particular. It is hoped therefore that this research will shed light on this

neglected but significant aspect of modern Iranian history in order to stimulate other research in the field.

Abu al-Dardā' narrated that the Prophet said: "Do you want me to tell you what has a better rank than prayer, fasting and charity? They [the Prophet's companions] said: yes. The Prophet then said: reconciliation among adversaries (*'Iṣlāḥ thāt al-Bayn*)."[22] Hence, it is hoped that the analysis in this research would help to remove the fears and suspicions that have been enveloping the reaction of the Sunni world towards the Iranian calls for Islamic unity since the fall of the Safavid state in the 18th century. Generally speaking, the Sunni Muslims have received those invitations with a sceptical and distrustful attitude since they believe that those calls carry a hidden agenda in which the Iranians' primarily aim is to deploy Shi'ism in the Sunni world and thus achieve political and economical control within it. Presenting the motivations of these endeavors within the context of a challenge within inner-Shi'ism and the political relationship of the *ulamā* with the state would provide a better understanding to the Sunni Muslims and hopefully subdue their doubts and panic.

## 1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Accordingly, this study aims to individually analyze the four efforts to revive Islamic unity that have been officially implemented by the Shī'ī Iranian state. As a result, this will be methodologically based on a descriptive approach and historical analysis as the main means for the case study method employed. Mitchell has defined case study as follows:

22 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd, ḥadīth* no. 4921.

> In its most basic form a case study may refer to the fundamental descriptive material an observer has assembled by whatever means available about some particular phenomenon or set of events.[23]

It is true that the period of time that separates these attempts are fairly long especially the first three ones: Nadir Shah had ruled almost fifty years before ʿAbbās Mīrzā's time, while more than a century separates the latter from Imam Khomeini's era. However, it is not the intention of this study to meticulously and chronologically cover the events of the century and a half in question but to track the progress in Twelver Shiʿism ideology that might have directly impacted the scheme of Islamic unity before independently scrutinizing each case in an attempt to bridge the gap between all these efforts and in so doing attempt to discover the pattern that might possibly accommodate them and which might offer scholars a better understanding and highlight the unseen dimensions of the situation. Mitchell, who categorized the method of case study into three types - an apt illustration case study, social situation case study, and extended case study - asserts that such an ongoing approach could be viable when he explains the significance of the last type, the extended case study. This

> ...deals with a sequence of events; sometimes over quite a long period...The extended case study enables the analyst to trace how events chain on to one another, and therefore how events are necessarily linked to one another through time.[24]

The descriptive methodology enables us to contextualize the study in the wholeness of the mentioned cases, which is concerned with

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23 J. Clyde Mitchell, "Case and Situation Analysis," in edits. Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley and Peter Foster, *Case Study Methods* (London: Sage Publication, 2000), 168.

24 *ibid*, 171.

conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail, beliefs, points of views, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times, descriptive research is concerned with how what is or what exists is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event.[25]

Thus, descriptive research fits well into the aims of this study, which is an attempt to interpret the historical events and their present consequences. The analytical nature of this descriptive study is further substantiated by adopting an exposition method, which aims at explaining and analyzing the cause and effect or the meaning of an event or an idea. While the historical nature of the study is demonstrated through analyzing the events in their own contexts - such as calls for Islamic unity being located in their own historical context - exposition provides an opportunity to explain and analyze the reasons and consequences of such calls for Islamic unity within the wider context of modern Iranian history by also looking into the cause and effects of the events mentioned.

The descriptive and exposition method enables us to interpret the events in their natural settings. Thus, textual analysis of the historical events through an interpretative method constitutes the main research method of this study. The interpretative method is, hence, utilized to give meaning to the historical events here by attempting to provide an interpretation of the accounts of other.[26] In this, the mode of analysis is the textual material available on the subject matter. In other words, textual material as the interpretations of the others is interpreted with the objective of presenting the social (historical) reality within the context of their present implications.

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25 Louis Cohen and Lauwrence Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 1994), 67.

26 Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

It is important to also highlight the axiological consequences as part of the research methodology, as it is necessary to point out that the present author is a Sunni Muslim and was raised in a community where the Salafī doctrine dominates, with its preoccupied negative image of Shi'ism as the sect of infidelity and hypocrisy. This could have an inevitable influence on the author's opinion and analysis. However, the effects of the bias in question could be controlled to some extent by the present author's strong belief in the significance and possibility of the revival of Islamic unity; this belief is excluded by the need to activate realistic jurisprudence, *fiqh al-wāqi'*, in which Muslims should acknowledge that the point of disagreement, imamate or caliphate and all its pretenders, no longer exists while the recognition of the miserable political and economical conditions of the Islamic *umma*, not to mention the sanctity of the divine order, all impose the exigency for the revival of such a unity.

Indeed, an increasing concern has been developing during the conduct of this research since the outbreak of the sectarian killings among Sunnis and Shi'ites of Iraq in 2006. The sectarian debates and controversy on the internet and satellite TV channels have been gripping the attention of the author where each fighting group referred to academic studies and articles in its efforts to support its cause and justify its wrong doing. This alerted the author to the possibility that others may utilize this study to validate sectarian enmity in the future which will be a deviation from the original attention of the present researcher that mainly aimed to present the significance of the concept of Islamic unity in the development of Twelver *uṣūlī* Shi'ism.

## 1.7. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This study consists of five chapters that are chronologically organised. The first chapter will be dedicated to exploring the jurisprudential basis for the issue of Islamic unity in Twelver Shi'ism and will deal with the attitude of the infallible Imams, mainly the first Imam, Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, toward the *de facto* authorities of their time. This will be inevitable to emphasise the significance and exigency of Islamic unity to Twelver Shi'ism since the traditions of the Imams have been considered authoritative by the consensus Twelver *ulamā*. Also, it will be a suitable opportunity to correct some of the misinterpretations of the Imams' positive behaviour towards the state that were commonly misconstrued as an action of *taqiyya* (the concealment of the true belief) when the Imams' actions and sayings are placed in the context of maintaining the unity of Muslims.

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 are devoted to the efforts for Islamic unity under the monarchical states. In the introduction to chapter 2 an attempt will be made to sufficiently survey the provocative cause that paved the road to the surpassing of the historical dilemma of the Twelver Shi'ism, namely the doctrine of *intiẓār* and motivated the rising of the *uṣūlī* school of Shi'ism under the Safavid dynasty in which it played the most significant role in promoting the calls for Islamic unity in the post-Safavid era as a response to the challenges which not only threatened the *ulamā's* political influence in state affairs but also the sectarian identity of Iran as well that was promoted by the Safavids. The rest of chapter 2 will focus on Nādir Shah's attempt to establish the *Ja'farī Madhhab* as the fifth school of Islamic jurisprudence and the key role that the *uṣūlī ulamā* had played in it.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the endeavours of 'Abbās Mīrzā Qājār to promote rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire. At this stage, the *uṣūlī ulamā* encountered a new challenge that was presented by the founding of the Qājār

dynasty, when the *ulamā* employed the issue of Islamic unity as a means of maintaining their political influence in state affairs and overcoming the reluctance of the new Shah, Fatḥ Ali, to recognize their authority. The *ulamā* found astray in ʿAbbās Mīrzā who was facing several challenges to his legitimacy as a crown prince. (It should be emphasised that part of this chapter is a modified summary for a Masters thesis presented to the University of Texas at Austin, entitled "The History of ʿAbbās Mīrzā Qājār" that has been updated and rewritten).

The following chapters will be dedicated to exploring the efforts to achieve Islamic unity and the *al-Taqrīb* movement under the Islamic Republic, which developed throughout two different periods. In the first period, the efforts to revolutionarily revive Islamic unity dominated the Iranian political agenda and discourse, energized and supported by the founder of the IR, Imam Khomeini (1979-89). Therefore due to its significance, a survey of Imam Khomeini's political views and striving for Islamic unity will be approached in depth in chapter 4.

The second period started when Khāmina'ī was elected in 1989 as Imam Khomeini's successor and the new *Rahbar* (Supreme-leader) of the IR of Iran. From then on, the term *al-Taqrīb* replaced Islamic unity in Iranian political discourse, and its endeavours no longer were random initiatives but become centralised when the new leader established independent institutions to promote and supervise *al-Taqrīb* policies. Therefore, chapter 5 will be devoted to exploring these institutions and investigating their aims and objectives.

# Chapter 2

# BETWEEN THE ABSOLUTE RIGHT AND THE SACRED DUTY: RECONSIDERATION OF THE IMAMS' PRACTICE OF *INTIẒĀR* IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC UNITY

## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Unlike their Sunni brothers, the Twelver Shi'ites deem the traditions and narratives of their Twelve Imams infallible and absolutely authoritative. This holiness and authoritativeness for their Imams which distinguished the Imamate Shi'ites from the vast majority of Muslims is based on two sacred principles. First, the Shi'ites believe in the infallibility of *ahl al-Bayt* (the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima, his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the sons of Ali and Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn), and this infallibility was inherited by the nine following Imams after the incident *al-Ṭaff* (battle of Karbala) in which Imam Ḥusayn and a number of his family members and companions were killed by the army of the second Umayyad caliph, Yazīd, on the 10th of Muḥarram 61 H.C/ October 10, 680 C.E. All the nine infallible Imams were derived from the descendents of Imam Ḥusayn. The Twelver Shi'ites demonstrate the infallibility of their Imams by invoking the *Qur'ān* and the Prophet's traditions; verse 33 in chapter 33 asserts

> *And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only*

> *wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.*[27]

The term *ahl al-Bayt* has been widely controversial not only among the Sunnis and Shi'ites but also among the *Ṣaḥaba* (the Prophet's companions), for a group of companions such as Abdullah ibn 'Abbās and Ikrima believed it refers to the Prophet's wives because it is compatible with the context of the verse that talks about the spouses of the Prophet, while other companions such as Umm Salamā (the Prophet's wife), Umar ibn Abī Salamā (the stepson of the Prophet), Abu Sa'īd al-Khudarī, Wāthila ibn al-Asqa', Ḥakīm ibn Sa'd and others affirmed that the term *Ahl al-Bayt* meant Ali, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn; however, the Shi'ites, who deny the former opinion and acknowledge the latter one, find the support for this claim in several *ḥadīths*. For example, Abu Sa'īd al-Khudarī narrated that the Prophet said: "This verse is aimed at five: myself, Ali, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and Fāṭima."[28] Also, Umar ibn Abī Salamā, the Prophet's stepson, narrated that

> When the verse (*Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to give you a (thorough) purifying*) was revealed to the Prophet in the house of Umm Salamā, the Prophet called Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and covered them with a cloak along with Ali who was behind him; then the Prophet said: O God, these are the people of my House, so keep away the uncleanness from them and purify them with a thorough purifying. Umm Salamā was witness; she then said: Shall I join them? The Prophet said: you are where you stand and you will be benefited.[29]

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27 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'ān*: translation and commentary (Birmingham: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1946), 33:33.

28 Check the interpretation of the verse (33:33) in Mohammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, edits. Maḥmūd and Mohammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1957).

29 *Sunan al-Tarmathī*, *ḥadīth* no. 3129.

Second, the holy status of *ahl al-Bayt* is also confirmed by *ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn* in which the Prophet placed *ahl al-Bayt* in an equivalent position with the holy *Qur'ān* – the unique issue that has received the consensus of all Muslims as the speech of God who promises to protect them from being corrupted by satanic attractions- and who are tightly connected and equally designated to lead Muslims to the path of the truth. The Prophet said in this *ḥadīth*:

> I left among you the two heavily weighted pillars; each one is greater than the other: *Kitāb Allah* (the holy *Qur'ān*), a stretched robe from heaven to earth; and *'itratī Ahlu Baytī* (my descendents) that will never be detached until they reach me at the pond (*al-Ḥawḍ*) [on the Day of Judgement].[30]

Accordingly, the traditions of the Infallible Imams that include their sayings and attitudes have been unanimously accepted by the Twelver Shi'ites. However, the Imams' political attitude towards the *de facto* authorities of their times has been widely accepted, outside the context of Islamic unity, by the Shi'i and Western scholars alike as an action of *taqiyya* which resulted in the establishment of inaccurate interpretations to the doctrine of *intiẓār* that failed to recognize the developmental stages that this doctrine had passed through before it finished with the concepts of quietness and passiveness in which the exaggerating in the employment of *intiẓār* has exceeded its intended political framework to dominate all aspects of life of the Twelver Shi'ites after the *ghayba* (the Occultation). For example, Hamid Algar dropped a hint for the practice of such a *taqiyya* through which Twelver Shi'ism refused to accept the legitimacy of the state but still rejected any move against it since the time of the infallible Imams - a matter that continued in Iran during the Safavid regime and survived in the post-Safavid era. He maintains:

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30 *Musnad Ahamad*, vol. 3 *ḥadīth* no. 10779; Imam Khomeini, *Kitāb Waṣāyā: Waṣiyyat-I Nāmiy-i Siyāsī 'Ilāhī*, edit. Hujjat al-Islām Thabīḥ Allah Ali-Zāda (Tehran: Intishārāt Fardūsī, 2002), 16.

Moreover, both activist and quietist attitudes to prevailing authority could be deduced from the Imami belief, but it is clear that the latter came gradually to dominate the mainstream of Shi'ism, leaving its trace also on Safavid and post-Safavid Shi'ism of Iran. Insofar, as any attitude to the state and existing authority can be deduced from the teachings of the Imams, its combines a denial of legitimacy with quietist patience and abstention from action.[31]

However, Algar's claim appears questionable due to the fact that the political attitude of the newly established *Uṣūlī* School became a shifting paradigm in the historical position of Twelver Shi'ism towards the existing state in which the Safavid *ulamā* had not only kept close ties with the state but were also actively involved in the state's affairs from the Safavid era onwards. Indeed, the *uṣūlī ulamā* had striven to preserve their direct involvement in state polity and their representation was frequently recorded in the major political events from the fall of the Safavids. This could be deemed as a clear retreat from the principle of *intiẓār* (the waiting for the return of the Twelfth Imam, the Mahdi, to set up a legitimate and lawful government), a principle that had been dominating the behavior of traditional Twelver Shi'ism since *al-Ghayba al-Kubra* (the greater occultation of the Mahdi in 326 H.). For that reason, Turner raises the question:

> How can belief in the article of Twelver Shi'ite faith known as *intizār*, according to which there is no just rule save that of the Hidden Imam, be reconciled with the existence of the current Islamic regime in Iran or, for that matter, any Islamic government obtaining before the awaited return of Muhammad b. Hasan al-'Askari?[32]

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31 Hamid Algar, *Religion and state in Iran 1785-1906: the role of the ulama in the Qajar period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 2.

32 Colin Turner, "Still Waiting for the Imam? The Unresolved Question of Intizār in Twelver Shi'ism," *Persica XV* (1993-1995), 30.

Turner continued the questioning of the authenticity of the Safavid Twelver Shi'ism inclination to the doctrine of *intiẓār* and criticizing the contradiction between the traditions of the Imams regarding the attitude toward the usurping rulers which were supposedly composed the basis for the faith of the Twelver Shi'ism on one hand and the actual behavior of the *ulamā* in Iran towards the *de facto* authority since the rise of Safavids until the present on the other hand. He argues:

> Self-preservation in the face of oppression from an alien majority, the practice of *taqīyya* in all circumstances, patient submission to the will of God and hope in the imminent return of the Imam – all of these may have been pertinent to the Shi'ite community during the life time of the Imams; however, this kind of *imtihān* is difficult to reconcile with the conditions obtaining in Safavid Iran, where the Twelver Shi'ites were no longer a minority, where *taqīyya* had been rendered theoretically unnecessary, and where belief in the return of an Imam would obliterate injustice and tyranny sat uneasily alongside the notion that the Safavid rulers were a reflection of the Divine. The *imtihān* remained, nevertheless, a component of *intizār* and thus an article of the Twelver Shi'ite faith, despite the fact that its preconditions had been altered drastically.[33]

In fact, Turner's inquiry is legitimate for the conspicuous contradictions in the attitude of Twelver Shi'ism in Iran in which the traditional jurisprudential base warned believers against neither taking part in anti-state activities nor interacting with the *de facto* authority – instead they should always aim for passiveness and quietness. Yet the virtual and heavy involvement of the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism in the state polity under the Safavids and afterwards reflects an opposite implementation for such a base – underlining the necessity for reconsideration of the Imam's traditions of *intiẓār* by placing them in the context of the Imams'

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33 *ibid*, 33.

efforts to fulfill their sacred duty of preserving the unity of the Islamic *umma*; as this would not only provide a better interpretation for these traditions that might not only remove the confusing clashes between the theory and its implementation but also assert the importance given by the Imams to the issue of Islamic unity. In addition, it would be an inevitable approach to understanding the reformation and development in the political ideology of Twelver Shi'ism that was ignited by the rise of the *Uṣūlī* School of jurisprudence under the Safavid rule that activated the *ijtihād* (independent legal opinion).

However, it seems necessary to emphasize that the probability of the practice of *taqiyya* (concealing the genuine belief) should be excluded due to its inflated consideration that possibly caused the creation of such a current misleading and inconsistency in the Imams' traditions in the first place; for that reason, Ayatollah Mohammad Mahdi Shams al-Dīn urged scholars to re-examine the practice of *taqiyya* excluded from the Imams' political attitude when he opposed the hyperbolic employment of *taqiyya* in interpretation for the attitude of the infallible Imams' and their followers towards the existing authority that he placed within the framework of preserving the sacred unity of the Islamic *umma*; he merely deemed the Imams' behavior a reflection of their legal duty in which they always favored the unity of the Islamic *umma* over any other consideration. He urges:

> ...the careful examination for the narratives that deals with the organization of the political issues for the Islamic society among which the narratives of *taqiyya*, the dealing and working with the usurpers certainly lead the faqīh to the fact that the Imams had the unity of the nation over any other consideration. As well, the supplications of the Imams that were well-documented such as *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajādiyya* express

> the same position and orientation of the fallible Imams on a theoretical and practical level.[34]

In view of that and in response to the call of Ayatollah Mohammad Mahdi Shams al-Dīn, this chapter is an attempt to survey the traditions of the infallible Imams that might reveal their attitude towards the *de facto* state and re-read them in the context of Islamic unity and outside the scope of the alleged *taqiyya* in which they would not only provide a better interpretation for the change in the political behavior of Twelver Shi'ism but also offer more understanding of the jurisprudential basis on which frequent involvement of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in the calls for Islamic unity might stand.

## 2.2. IMAM ALI AND THE RĀSHDĪ CALIPHS

The significance of the unity of the Muslim *umma* for Imam Ali could be drawn from his relationship with the actual authority of his time which was symbolized by the first three caliphs. Such a relationship could be possibly revealed by what we have received from his sermons, letters and sayings which were collected by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī in a work entitled *Nahj al-balāgha*.[35] Fortunately, while the authenticity of this source is unquestionable by the Shi'ites is also widely acceptable to Sunnis. For that reason, this source will be exclusively approached to highlight the Imam's attitude towards the state.

Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, the first of the twelve Imams according to Twelver Shi'ism, was the cousin of the Prophet, and he was raised by the Prophet himself. He was the

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34 Ayatollah Mohammad Mahdi Shamsu-Dīn, "al-Waḥda wa al-Imama," in *al-Tajdīd fī al-fikr al-Islamī al-Mu'āṣir* (Beirut: Dār al-Manhal, 1997), 175.

35 Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balāgha: sermons, letters and sayings*, trans. Syed Ali Raza, vol. 1, 2 (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2007).

second to accept the call of Islam after Khadīja, the Prophet's wife. Also, he jeopardized his life for the Prophet when he replaced the Prophet and stayed in his bed to trick the infidels of Quraysh and provide the opportunity for the Prophet and his companion, Abu Bakr, to flee from Mecca to Medina. After he migrated to Medina, he became the Prophet's son-in-law when he got married to Fāṭima, the Prophet's youngest daughter. The virtues of Imam Ali were innumerable and undeniable and that made him an eligible successor to the Prophet in leading the Islamic community. Indeed, Imam Ali himself believed that he was the one eligible to succeed the Prophet; that was obvious from his reaction when he heard the news of what had happened in the meeting of *Saqīfat banī Sā́ida* , held immediately after the death of the prophet in which a debate intensified between *al-Muhājirīn* (the immigrants) and *al-Anṣār* (the supporters) over who had the right to succession which resulted in a pledged allegiance for Abu Bakr to be the successor of the Prophet. Imam Ali, in sermon 67, stated:

> He enquired what the Anṣār said. People said that they were asking for one chief from among them and one from the others . Amir al-mu̓minīn said: Why did you not argue against them (anṣār) that the Prophet had left his will that whoever is good among [the] anṣār should be treated well and whoever is bad should be forgiven . People said: What is there against them in it ? Amir al-mu̓minīn said: If the Government was for them, there should have been no will in their favour. Then he said: What did the Quraysh plead? People said: They argued that they belong to the lineal tree of the Prophet. Then Amir al-mu̓minīn said: They argued with the tree but spoiled the fruits.[36]

On another occasion, Imam Ali clearly declared his god-given right to the leadership of the Muslim community when he emphasized in sermon 144:

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36 *ibid*, 253-54.

> Where are those who falsely and unjustly claimed that they are deeply versed in knowledge, as against us, although Allah raised us in [to a high] position and kept them down, bestowed upon us knowledge but deprived them [of it], and entered us (in the fortress of knowledge) but kept them out. With us guidance is to be sought and blindness (of misguidance) is to be changed into brightness. Surely [the] Imams (divine leaders) will be from the Quraysh. They have been planted in this line through Hāshim. It would not suit others nor would others be suitable as heads of affairs.[37]

Despite the fact that Imam Ali had refrained from swearing allegiance to Abu Bakr for six months[38] although the latter had received the loyalty of the majority of the Muslim community, he refused the offer of his uncle al-ʿAbbās ibn Abdul al-Muṭṭalib and Abu Sufyān ibn Ḥarb to swear allegiance for him and challenge the legitimacy of Abu Bakr. Indeed, he considered Abu Sufyān's recommendation as a sort of sedition among Muslims, so he warned his adherents from drifting towards such an action and maintained in sermon 5:

> O People! Steer clear [of] through the waves of mischief by boat of deliverance, turn away from the path of dissention and put off the crowns of pride. Prosperous is [the] one who rises with wings (i.e. when he has power) or else he remains peaceful and other enjoy ease. It (i.e. the aspiration for Caliphate) is like turbid water or like a morsel that would suffocate the person who swallows it. One who plucks fruits before ripening is like one who [has] cultivated in another's field.[39]

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37 *ibid*, 528.

38 Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59.

39 Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balāgha: sermons, letters and sayings*, trans. Syed Ali Raza, vol. 1 (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2007), 74.

During the time of Abu Bakr's caliphate that lasted for two years, Imam Ali most likely maintained a passive role in the life of the community. Syed Jafri deemed such an attitude by Imam Ali was required for the supreme interests of the newly-established Islamic state that was facing unprecedented difficulties after the death of the Prophet, when the majority of the Arab tribes renounced Islam, which meant the new Caliph had to mobilize the Muslim armies and engaged with these tribes in several wars before he successfully subdued the rebelling tribes to the rule of the Islamic state.[40]

Abu Bakr on his deathbed nominated Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to succeed him. After the death of the first caliph, Imam Ali continued to favor the sacred unity of the Muslim community over his own right to leadership, so he was among the first group of companions to swear allegiance to the new caliph. In fact, Imam Ali played an active administrative role during Umar's caliphate in which he likely became the *de facto wazīr* (minister) and trusted consultant for the second caliph. For instance, Umar appointed Imam Ali as his vice for ruling Medina, the capital city of the new Islamic state, when the former travelled to Jerusalem to sign the pact for the city's surrender.[41] This turned out to be a suitable opportunity for the Imam to seize power and retrieve his usurped right to rule; however, he consciously let it pass as usual just to preserve the solidarity of Islamic state, passing through a crucial period when the armies of the believers were confronting the banners of infidels on both the Eastern and Western fronts.

On another occasion, Imam Ali had the chance to get rid of Umar when the latter consulted him about joining the Muslim army that was conducting a campaign against the Byzantine Empire in Syria. Imam Ali protested against the caliph's

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40 Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59.

41 *bid*, 65.

intention foreseeing dangerous consequences for the future of the Islamic state. In sermon 134 he stated:

> Allah has taken upon Himself for the followers of this religion the strengthening of boundaries and hiding of the secret places. Allah helped them when they were few [in number] and could not protect themselves. He is living and will not die. If you will yourself proceed towards the enemy and clash with them and fall into some trouble, there will be no place of refuge for the Muslims other than their remote cities, nor any place they would return to. Therefore, you should send there an experienced man and send with him people of good performance who are well-intentioned. If Allah grants you victory, then this is what you want. If it is otherwise, you would serve as a support for the people and a returning place for the Muslims.[42]

Imam Ali wasted another opportunity to regain the leadership by supporting the Caliph's intention to participate in the war against the enemies of Islam, but he held the same position and re-emphasized his objection to such a tendency; the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, was concerned about the numbers in the army that was preparing to campaign on the Persian front and sought the Imam's advice in taking part in this army. Imam Ali's advice revealed great talent in military techniques and, more importantly, a keenness in protecting the caliph's life. He demonstrated this in sermon 146:

> The position of the head of government is that of the thread for beads, as it connects them and keeps them together. If the thread is broken, they will disperse and be lost, and will never come together again...Avoid battle, because if you leave this place the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions till the unguarded places left behind by you will become more important than those before you. If the Persians see you

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42 Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balāgha: sermons, letters and sayings*, trans. Syed Ali Raza, vol. 1 (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2007), 504.

tomorrow they will say, "He is the root (chief) of Arabia. If we do away with him we will be [live] in peace." In this way this will [thus] heighten their eagerness against you and their keenness to aim at you. You say that they have set out to fight against Muslims. Well, Allah detests their setting out more than you do, and He is more capable of preventing what He detests.[43]

Imam Ali's contributions as a loyal advisor and mentor for the leadership of the Islamic state were appreciated by the Caliph who publicly admitted his inability to solve several issues without the assistance of Imam Ali Umar said: "Had there not been Ali, Umar would have perished."[44]

Perhaps the best evidence for the significance of the unity of the Islamic *umma* to Imam Ali was noticed after the election of Uthmān who was nominated by the *shūrā* - a group of six companions were selected by the dying Caliph to choose one among them for the position of the caliphate - to succeed Umar and when the Muslims were gathering in the mosque to swear loyalty to the new Caliph, the Imam publicly declared:

> You have certainly known [been aware] that I am the most rightful of all others for the Caliphate. By Allah, so long as the affairs of Muslims remain intact and there is no oppression in it, save on myself(,) I shall keep quiet(,) seeking reward for it (from Allāh) and keeping aloof from its attractions and allurements for [to] which you aspire.[45]

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43 *bid*, 533-34.

44 Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 61.

45 Sermon 74, Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balāgha*: sermons, letters and sayings, trans. Syed Ali Raza, vol. 1 (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2007), 272.

After the third Caliph, Uthmān, was killed in provincial rebellions, the Muslims of Medina, which included several companions such as al-Zupayr ibn al-ʿAwwām, Ṭalḥa ibn Abdullah, ʿAmmār ibn Yāser and others, went to Imam Ali and begged him to accept the position of caliph. However, the Imam was reluctant to accept the offer and asked them to find another qualified candidate, although in fact it was the very opportunity that he was waiting for to claim his rightful position. He advised them:

> Leave me and seek someone else. We are facing a matter which has (several) faces and colours, which neither hearts can stand nor intelligence can accept. Clouds are hovering over the sky, and faces are not discernable. You should know that if I respond to you I would lead you as I know [according to my interpretation of *Qur'ān* and knowledge in the Prophet's traditions] and would not care about whatever one may say or abuse. If you leave me then I am the same as you are [I will be like anyone among you]. It is possible I would listen to and obey whomever you make in charge of your affairs. I am better for you as a counsellor than as a chief.[46]

Undoubtedly, the Imam's reluctance was justifiable and exposed his great insight aware of the fact that he might well be associated with the assassination of the third Caliph by his political rivals especially the Umayyad, Uthmān's clan - a matter that could lead to a civil war among the Muslim community. Imam Ali's concerns turned out to be a reality, when he accepted, under pressure from the Medina community, the post of caliph. Muʿāwiya, Uthmān's cousin, refused to pledge allegiance to Imam Ali, demanding that either the new Caliph retaliate

46 *bid*, Sermon 92, 360.

from the killers of his predecessor or he would consider him an accomplice with them in their crime, on which case Mu'āwiya threatened to take revenge.[47]

Imam Ali described the critical conditions the Islamic state was passing through at the time of his nomination after the assassination of Uthmān when he had no other choice but to comply with his religious duty and safeguard the sacred unity of its people. He said in one of his famous sermons known by al-Shaqshaqiyya:

> At that moment, nothing took me by surprise, but the crowd of people rushing to me. It advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena (,) so much so that Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were getting crushed and both the ends of my shoulder garment [cloak] were torn. They collected around me like [a]the herd of sheep and goats. When I took up the reins of government one party broke away and another turned [became] disobedient while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Allāh saying:
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> *That abode in the hereafter, We assign it for those who intend not to exult themselves [on] in the earth, nor (to make) mischief (therein); and the end is (best) for the pious ones. (Qur'ān, 28:83)* Yes, by Allāh, they had heard it and understood it, but the world appeared glittering in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them. Behold, by Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allāh with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the

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47 In response to this unjust accusation, Imam Ali said: "Umayyads' knowledge about me did not desist them from accusing me, nor did my precedence (in accepting Islam) kept off these ignorant people from blaming me. Allāh's admonitions are more eloquent than my tongue. I am the contester against those who break away from Faith and the opposer of those who entertain doubts. Uncertainties should be palced before Qur'ān, the Book of Allāh (for clarification). Certainly, people will recompensed according to what they have in their hearts; check Sermon 75, Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balāgha*: sermons, letters and sayings, trans. Syed Ali Raza, vol. 1 (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2007), 272.

> oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed [,] I would have cast[ed] the rope of the Caliphate on its own shoulders [literally means: I had neither striven for the nomination to the Caliphate nor would it affect my humble and equal treatment of my fellow Muslims if I became the caliph], and would have given the last one the same treatment as the first one. Then, you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat.[48]

The aforementioned sermon could be deemed as the most significant piece in *Nahj al-Balāgha*, since it shows the eloquent rhetoric of the Imam Ali in which he not only demonstrated the basis on which he inevitably had to accept the caliphate but also justified the wars that he conducted against his fellow Muslims. On the one hand, Imam Ali clearly stated that his acceptance of the caliphate was not a restoration of his divine right to leadership (as the Shi'ites like to believe), but rather he was complying with his religious duty to uphold the existence of binding requirements for assuming this post, namely the recognition of the majority of the community (*ḥuḍūr al-Ḥāḍir*), the presence of backing forces (*wujūd al-Nāṣir*) and the divine assignment of the *ulamā* to assure the achievement of social justice. The nomination for post of Caliphate was then obligatory as the Imam's legal duty, so he would have been deemed legally guilty if he refused to fulfill his duty.

Additionally, Imam Ali, in the same sermon, pointed out that he was protecting the unity of the Islamic State by engaging in civil wars against other Muslim troops. Four months after the Imam's nomination, Ṭalḥa ibn Ubaydallah and al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām, who were both candidates for the caliphate before 'Uthmān's election, defected after they had sworn the oath of allegiance to Imam Ali in Median. They joined 'Āisha, the Prophet's wife, in Mecca and

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48 *ibid*, Sermon 3, 52-54.

marched along with other defectors and a great army against Ali's troops in Basra under the pretext of bringing the murders of 'Uthmān to justice . Therefore, the Imam had no choice but to swiftly move to defend his subjects and enforce the troops in Basra. The engagement of the two armies, said to be at Basra in 36/656, became known as *ma'rakat al-Jamal* (the Battle of the Camel) in which Imam Ali's army was victorious. Also, the Imam was fighting Mu'āwiya, who had resigned as governor of Syria, because Mu'āwiya had refused to acknowledge the caliphate of Imam Ali so he had executed his deposition order. The army of the Caliph met with the Syrian troops in the Battle of *Ṣaffīn* on the banks of the River Euphrates in Syria in 37/657. This battle ended with a proposal from Mu'āwiya's camp to arbitrate God's law, which Ali accepted. However, this news of arbitration sowed the seeds of discord in Imam Ali's army which resulted in a defection of some of his troops, accusing the Imam of betraying the legitimate principle of Islam. These defectors became known as the *Khawārij* (from the sing. Arabic term *Khārijī,* meaning outside the law); they organized themselves and began to launch terrifying campaigns against Ali's subjects, so the Imam eventually had no option but to put an end to the danger they were causing. Hence, he marched against them and defeated them in the Battle of *Nahrawān* in 38/658.

In short, it seems noticeable that Imam Ali from the outset realized that among the companions for this position his right to the succession of the Prophet was the most suitable. Yet he made no moves to actively claim this usurped right, and in fact wasted numerous opportunities to regain it, choosing instead to preserve the sacred unity of the Muslims' community over his absolute right. Indeed, this suggests that the Imam's concerns of jeopardizing the unity Muslim community made him hesitate in accepting the offer of taking on the caliphate. Nevertheless, he finally agreed and stood up for his religious obligation when he

realized that his reluctance would be more dangerous for Muslim unity in these momentous times.

## 2.3. IMAM ḤASAN AND MUʿĀWIYA IBN ABĪ SUFYĀN: THE RENOUNCING OF THE CALIPHATE

While he was preparing to conduct another campaign against Muʿāwiya, Imam Ali was assassinated in Kūfa in 41, and the people swore allegiance to Imam Ḥasan, his elder son and the second Imam according to Twelver Shiʿism. The intention of the new Caliph was to pursue his father's efforts to reunite the Islamic State; however, he realized that he did not have sufficient power to overwhelmingly subdue Muʿāwiya – indeed this would merely lead to more killings and division among Muslims. Meanwhile, Muʿāwiya's deputies arrived at Imam Ḥasan's camp carrying an initiative from Muʿāwiya to the Imam to relinquish the caliphate and stop the bloodshed of Muslims. When he received these deputies, Imam Ḥasan gathered his followers and delivered a sermon in the mosque in which he compared the zeal of his father's forces in *Ṣaffīn* and weakness and unwillingness to fight of his troops; he, then, told them about Muʿāwiya's offer and asked them to choose between dying for their cause or accepting the offer and relinquishing the caliphate. The people started shouting at him to accept the offer.[49] Despite the Shiʿi claim that the reconciliation with Muʿāwiya was forced on him by the betrayal of key figures among his associates and officers who were bribed by Muʿāwiya that was threatening the Imam's life,[50] Imam Ḥasan, had to opt between his right to rule as the legitimate caliph and his duty to protect the sacred principle of Muslim unity that was about to be sacrificed by a civil war, so he followed in the footsteps of Imam Ali and sacrificed his right for the sake of the supreme interest of the Islamic state. Imam Ḥasan resigned himself from the post of caliphate after he had held it for

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49 Ibn al-ʾAthīr, *al-Kāmil fi al-tārīkh*, vol. 3 (Beirut, 1385/1965), 406.

50 *Imam Hussein and the day of ashura*, (Tehran: al-Balagh Foundation, 1990), 18-19.

six months. Indeed, the conditions that Imam Ḥasan's resignation imposed on the peace treaty might have revealed his strong position for negotiation and perhaps resistance and suggested that his real intention seemed to be to secure the unity of the *umma*; according to the reconciliation document, Muʿāwiya had been committed of seven conditions[51] as follows:

1. Imam Ḥasan relinquishes the caliphate in favour of Muʿāwiya who should rule over the Muslims according to the teaching of the *Qur'ān* and the traditions of the Prophet and his Rightly-Guided Caliphs.
2. Imam Ḥasan is the elected caliph after Muʿāwiya, but Ḥusayn would take over this position if anything happened to Ḥasan.
3. Muʿāwiya should not persecute the people of Medina, Ḥijāz and Iraq for their role in Imam Ali's caliphate.
4. Muʿāwiya and his appointed governors of the provinces promise neither to curse Imam Ali from the pulpits of mosques nor to point to him with offensive statements.
5. The security of all people wherever they are should be preserved.
6. Imam Ḥasan alone is in charge of administering the *Bayt al-māl* (public treasury) of the city of Kūfa.
7. Muʿāwiya should promise not to confiscate the properties of Imam Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, their followers and their supporters.

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51 *ibid*, 19-20; For more information also consult M. G. Faḍl Allah, *Ṣulḥ al-Imam al-Ḥasan: asbābuhu wa natāijuhu* (Beirut: ?, 1973); Ḥasan ʿAbbās Ḥasan, *al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shiʿi: al-'Uṣūl wa al-Mabādi'* (N. A.: al-Dār al-ālamiyya lī al-ṭṭibāʿa wa al-nashir wa al-tawzīʿ, 1988); Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, The Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

## 2.4. IMAM ḤUSAYN AND THE KINGSHIP OF YAZĪD

After the resignation of Imam Ḥasan, the conflict over the caliphate was resolved in favour of Muʿāwiya who gave his entire intention to consolidating his rule and extending his authority. The new Caliph followed the policy of carrot and stick by which he managed to mobilize those who supported his political schemes and get rid of opponents, namely the adherents of *ahl al-Bayt*. It became obvious that the ultimate aim of Muʿāwiya's policies was to pave the way to establish an monarchical regime for the Umayyad family in which he created a new Islamic ruling system that totally changed the political traditions of the Prophet and his Rightly-Guided Caliphs - a matter that was earlier predicted by the Prophet when he stated "*awwal man yughayyir Sunnatī rajulun min banī umayya*"[52] (My tradition will be first changed by a man from the Umayyad family). Muʿāwiya's unjust and aggressive dictatorship[53] that was contrary to the conditions of Imam Ḥasan's resignation, with which he had promised to comply, led to unrest and contention among Muslims. Yet Imam Ḥusayn chose to preserve his oath of loyalty to Muʿāwiya despite several calls upon him from the adherents of *Ahl al-Bayt* to rise against the latter's dictatorship and otherwise unjust rule.[54]

After the demise of Muʿāwiya, Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya assumed the caliphate according to the meticulous scheme of his father. This resulted in a situation the Islamic *umma* had never experienced before in which the Muslims' dilemma was

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52 Mohammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥa*, *ḥadīth* no. 1749, vol. 4 (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maārif, n.a), 329.

53 The injustice of Muʿāwiya and his aggressive behavior was epitomized in the killings of several innocent Muslims who merely rejected his financial and political policies and expressed anti-regime views among those was the widely considered as the pious monk among the Prophet's companions, Ḥijr ibn 'Adiyy al -Kindī, who Muʿāwiya ordered to beheaded along with some of his followers because he refused to curse Ali ibn Abi-Ṭālib and his sons. Muʿāwiya, himself, admitted his wrongdoing and regretted his own conduct when he says "I never killed anyone without knowing why I killed him except Ḥijr who I do not know the quilt by which I punished him" refer to ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, *Abū al-Shuhadā: al-Ḥusayn ibn Ali* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilāl, 1969), 43; also see Imam Hussein and the day of ʿĀshūra, (Tehran: al-Balagh Foundation, 1990), 37-8.

54 ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, *Abū al-Shuhadā: al-Ḥusayn ibn Ali* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilāl, 1969), 40.

apparent not only in Muʿāwiya's treachery to Imam Ḥasan's resignation agreement when he preceded to create an innovative and anti-Islamic system of hereditary monarchy but also in passing the authority on to the religiously and administratively unqualified Yazīd, who was famous for his debauchery and addiction to wine while lacking any knowledge of governance and politics.

Imam Ḥusayn, however, preferred not to act against Yazīd at this stage although he avoided complying with Yazīd's demand (delivered to the Imam by the governor of Medina, Walīd ibn Utba) to perform the *bayyʿa* (the oath of allegiance) and attempted to buy time by convincing the governor to postpone the oath until the next day under the pretext that the legitimacy of allegiance requires the oath to be publicly sworn.[55] Apparently, Imam Ḥusayn was aware that if he pledged allegiance to Yazīd he would virtually grant him the needed legitimacy. Such an action could be used in Umayyad propaganda to subdue all the more qualified claimants and convince ordinary Muslims to follow the Imam's step. For that reason, Imam Ḥusayn along his household immediately managed to flee from Medina on the same night and sought a save haven in the neighborhood of the *Kaʿba* (the most respected and holy shrine of Islam to which all Muslims face in their daily prayers) in Mecca.

While in Mecca, Imam Ḥusayn politically committed himself to quietness and spent most of his time in religious duties. Indeed, a survey of the sources of this period shows no single evidence for any anti-Yazīd activity or propaganda on the part of the Imam or his adherents during his stay in Mecca, which lasted for four months, notwithstanding the suitability of this period to recruit and mobilize insurgency against the unjust Umayyads' authority. This is all the more surprising as it corresponded with the season of *ḥajj*, the greatest Islamic annual

55 Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, The Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 176.

ritual that consists of a large number of Muslims gathering from all over the Islamic provinces.[56] Perhaps there were two reasons that might have precluded the Imam from rising up at this stage: He might have acknowledged the sanctity and prohibition of location and date in of his staying in Mecca,[57] where al-Ka'ba or *Bayt Allah al-Ḥarām* (the prohibited house of Allah) is located, together with the forbidden months[58] both of which were totally unbefitting to any hostility, which would be deemed a great and merciless sin. On the other hand, the Imam perhaps was following in the footsteps of his father, Imam Ali and his elder brother, Imam Ḥasan in practicing what could possibly be called the 'positive' *intiẓār* (waiting) in which Imam Ḥusayn, although he disapproved of Yazīd's authority, preferred not to become the motivator to spark off any disorder that would jeopardize not only the Umayyad's regime but also the established unity of the Islamic *umma* as a whole. In other words, rather than leading the insurgency himself against Yazīd's nomination, for which he would be held responsible for all the blood shed of Muslims who might die for his cause, he might have chosen to merely observe the situation and leave the initiative for opposition to other claimants – especially as his right to the caliphate was guaranteed and unchallengeable according to the conditions of the reconciliation agreement between Imam Ḥasan and Mu'āwiya and had received the consensus of Muslims who praised it. Indeed, his residing in Mecca at this time supports such a probability since Mecca was the gathering point of the Muslims' caravans from all Islamic provinces that were heading towards Mecca for the 'umra (worshiping visit) and *hajj* (annual pilgrimage), thus as far as the Imam's

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56 *ibid*, 178.

57 Imam Ḥusayn left Madina to Mecca on the 28th of Rajab where he spent the months of Shàbān , Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and dul-Qi'da, and he left Mecca toward al-Kūfa on the 8th of dhul-Ḥijja.

58 The forbidden months are four according to the Islamic Calendar, namely Muḥarram (1), Rajab (7), dul-Qi'da (11), and dhul-Ḥijja (12). The holiness of these months could be traced back to the religion of Prophet Ibrahim which became part of the Arabs' culture prior to Islam. After Islam, the sanctity of these months is emphasized even more in several Qur'ānic verses such as 2:194, 217, 5:2, 97, and 9:5.

situation was concerned it served as the major centre for information as those caravans could bring the reactions of their people to Yazīd's nomination.

Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr had preceded the Imam to Mecca and prepared his own base to denounce Yazīd's authority and establish his own caliphate. Amazingly, the sources of this era indicate that during his stay in Mecca Imam Ḥusayn did not criticize or underestimate ibn al-Zubayr's ambition, nor did ibn al-Zubayr challenge the Imam's right to the leadership of the Islamic community. However, one might inquire what had happened to make the Imam consider an uprising against Yazīd's authority at this time and four months after his nomination. Jafri claimed that Imam Ḥusayn's kinship to the Prophet and Yazīd's pressure on him to pledge allegiance had stimulated the Imam's movement;[59] still, Jafri's claim might be refuted by the fact that such a kinship could not provoke the Imam to revolt against Muʿāwiya's rule after the death of Imam Ḥasan, when he formulated the plan to have his son Yazīd inherit the throne, in spite of the numerous calls that were expressed in the letters of Kūfan and Basran adherents urging him to rise at the time. Neither did the Imam use such a relationship to gather supporters and stimulate insurgency against Umayyad kingship while he was staying in Mecca – a matter that Jafri himself honestly acknowledged, as stated above. On the other hand, there is no single evidence of Yazīd's pressing demand for homage to Imam Ḥusayn during the Imam's residency in Mecca. Significantly, Imam Ḥusayn's intention to challenge Yazīd's authority seems to be inspired by two variables. Firstly, Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr's unconcealed and serious ambition to rise up against Yazīd's regime in Mecca if Imam Ḥusayn chose not to act and left the city. Secondly, he had received thousands of letters from his adherents in Kūfa and Basra from Muʿāwiya's time, urging the Imam to denounce Muʿāwiya's authority, but all these calls had fallen

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59 Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 181.

on deaf ears as far as the Imam was concerned as he had committed himself to the pledge of allegiance that he gave to Muʿāwiya. However, the contents of the letters sent to the Imam this time expressed a serious and resolute intention to overthrow the political status quo, with the authors denouncing Yazīd's authority by isolating and boycotting and even offering their willingness to oust his appointed governor of Kūfa; they also urged the Imam to join them since they no longer had a leader and to establish the caliphate based on his grandfather's genuine *sharīʿa* in the capital city of his father, Imam Ali. For example, one of the letters signed by several of the Imam's adherents, among which was the Prophet's companion, Sulaymān ibn Ṣurd al-Khuzāʿī, reads:

> We thank God for casting down the tyrannical rule of your enemy, who had usurped the power to rule this community without any right, allowed the possession of God to pass into the hands of the powerful and rich, and killed the best men [an allusion to Ḥijr b. ʿAdī and his supporters] while allowing the worst of the people to remain alive. We invite you to come to Kūfa, as we have no Imam to guide us; and we hope through you God will unite us on the path of truth. We do not go to Friday congregational prayers to pray with Nuʿmān b. Bashīr, the governor of Kūfa, nor do we assemble with him on the occasion of the *Eid* (Feast). If we hear that you are coming to us, we will oust the governor from our city. Peace and mercy of God be upon you.[60]

The significance of this letter lies in two potential and critical points. First, it emphasizes that in reality the city of Kūfa was suffering from a vacuum of leadership beside the uncompromising determination of the Imam's adherents to challenge the regime which could lead to bloody chaos. Second, such a vacuum in leadership consequently disrupted the implementation of the pillars of *sharīʿa* thus representing a serious threat to Muslim unity. In such conditions, Imam

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60 Quoted in *ibid*, 178.

Ḥusayn became legally obliged to intervene to restore unity, guide the people and secure the right implementation of *sharī'a*. Still, Imam Ḥusayn was not rushing to accept the Kūfans' offer due to the bitter preceding experience with his father and brother, Imam Ali and Imam Ḥasan respectively. Hence, he sent his cousin Muslim ibn 'Aqīl to Kūfa to investigate the situation there and report to him on the credibility of their commitment to his cause and the adequacy of such support in achieving the ultimate goal. Imam Ḥusayn responded to the Kūfān calls in a significant letter that reads:

> From Ḥusayn ibn Ali to the public of the believers and Muslims. Hānī and Sa'īd conveyed to me your letters, and they were the last among your messengers to come to me. As I have understood all that you narrated and stated and the opinions of the majority among you: that you have invited me to come to you because you have no Imam to guide you, and that you hope my arrival there will unite you along the right path and in the truth. I am sending my brother , cousin and the trusted member of my household, Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, to report to me about your affairs. If he confirms what you have already mentioned in your letters, has received the consensus of your nobles and the majority among you, I will come soon since the Imam is merely the one who strictly follows the Book of God, rules virtually with justice, rightly secures the implementation of *sharī'a*, and honestly devotes himself to the service of God.[61]

Significantly, Imam Ḥusayn's action indicated that any future movement on his part against the *de facto* authority was conditionally connected to the existence of genuine and sufficient support; otherwise he might have acted differently if his cousin and deputy to Kūfa, Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, reported negatively. Indeed, Imam Ḥusayn's decision to retreat to Medina when he discovered that the Kūfans had betrayed him and failed to support him might emphasis such a claim. The Imam evidently expressed such a decision in his speech addressed to the Kūfan

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61 Ahmad al-Kātib, Taṭawur al-fikr al-siyāsī al-Shi'i: min al-shūrā ilā wilāyat al-faqīh (London: Dār ash-Shūra, 1997), 19.

soldiers in the Umayyad army just one day before the outrageous massacre of Karbalá on the 10th of Muḥarram, stating:

> O people of Kūfa! You sent to me your delegations and wrote to me letters saying that you had no Imam and that I should come to unite you and lead you in the way of God...You wrote that we, the *Ahl al-Bayt*, are more qualified to govern your affairs than those who claim things to which they have no right and who act unjustly and wrongfully...But if you have changed your minds, have become ignorant of our rights, and have forgotten your delegations and repeated appeals to me to come for the sake of your religion...I shall turn back.[62]

## 2.5. THE IMAMS DURING THE KINGDHIP

### 2.5.1. IMAM ALI IBN AL-ḤUSAYN (AL-SĀJJĀD)

Imam Ḥusayn's ambition was demolished, and he was killed along with all his companions in the reprehensible massacre of Karbala. This tragic end that had so shaken the feeling of Muslims had an even greater impact on the remnants *of ahl al-Bayt*, mainly Imam Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn, also known by Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and al-Sajjād (d. 93/712), the Fourth Imam according to the doctrine of Twelver Shiʿism. Imam Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn was an eye -wetness at the battle of Karbalá , and the only male left alive from Ḥusayn's descendants, as a serious illness had spared his life from the swords of Yazīd's soldiers. After the battle of Karbala, he had been taken captive along with the women of *Ahl al-Bayt* to Yazīd's court in Damascus before being released and returned to Medina, the city of his grandfather.

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62 Quoted in Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 186.

Apparently, Imam Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn's bitter experience of Karbala which had exposed the Umayyad regime's brutal and ruthless tendency against the Prophet's grandson despite the sanctity he enjoyed among Muslims, led to his total reluctance to get involved in politics; instead he committed himself to worship and religious education. In fact Imam Sajjād expressed such a desire when the Kūfans and Shi'ites of Basra offered him their allegiance and urged him to take revenge on his father in one of very rare traditions that might reveal his political orientation: he showed himself to be firmly standing against any sort of anti-authority activities when he stated:

> By Allah, no one among us [is] to rise up before the [coming] of the Mahdi [al-Qā'im], lest he be like the fledgling that flew from the nest before its wings were straightened out and was picked up by children who began toying with it.[63]

Indeed, three significant points could be extracted from this tradition. First of all, the tradition carries the tone of a petition but not a demand. Secondly, it is clearly exclusively addressed to the *ahl al-Bayt*. Finally and most importantly, the tradition implicitly warns against false calls urging the *ahl al-Bayt* to rise up against the usurping authorities and gives promises to provide the required support and when the confrontation happened in the battlefield these promises would turn to no more than lies; then Ḥusayn's scenario would be repeated. For that reason, The Imam was firm in his resolution not to heed several calls to claim the caliphate – a matter that eventually led to the election of Sulaymān ibn Ṣard al-Khuzā'ī, one of the grand companions of the Prophet, to be the Amir of

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63 Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending discourses in shici law on the tradition of wilayat al-faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29:3, (June 1996), 256.

the Shi'i community of Basra and entrusted to conduct campaigns against the Umayyad troops.[64]

Noticeably, the ultimate gist of the aforementioned tradition divulges in the Imam's efforts to protect the unity of the Islamic state regardless of the legitimacy of the actual ruler, and there is clear evidence that Imam Sajjād was only too aware of the safety and integrity of the Umayyad state when he dedicated a great *du'ā'* (supplication) in which he pleaded with God to protect this state and its army and defeat its enemy. The *du'ā'* reads:

> O Lord, bless Mohammad and his descendants, fortify the Muslim frontiers with Thy Majesty. Support their defender with Thy strength. Lavish gifts on them----------out of Thy Bounty.
>
> O Lord, bless Mohammad and his descendants. Increase their number, sharpen their weapons. Guard their surroundings. Protect their environs. Keep their company united. Regulate their business. Let their (supply of) provisions be uninterrupted and Thyself alone look after their affairs. Strengthen them with victory. Help them with fortitude. Be kind in devising a stratagem for them.
>
> O God, bless Mohammad and his descendants. Make them know what they do not know. Show them what they do not see...[65]

In other words, the Imam's total refusal to get involved in the challenge over the political leadership and his attitude towards the Umayyad regime seems to be odd, not only because it was the regime that killed his father along with seventy members of *ahl al-Bayt* and their adherents, but also because it could be

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64 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shi'i min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (London: Dār al-Shūrā lī al-Dirāsāt wa al-Iʿlām, 1997), 20.

65 Imam Zīn al-'Ābidīn Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn, *Ṣaḥīfiyy-i sajjādiyya*, Supplication 27, trans. Sayyid Ahmad Muhani (Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organisation, 1984), 243-245: also, for the Arabic and Persian collection and translation check Imam Zīn al-'Ābidīn Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn, *Ṣaḥīfiyy-i sajjādiyya*, trans., Mohammad Mahdi Riḍāī (Qum: Nashr Jamāl, 1382), 144-47.

deemed to be a deviation from the political line of the first three Imams in dealing with the *de facto* authority. However, the Imam's attitude might have been greatly affected by the radical alteration in the political system when the question of the political leadership of the Muslim community was settled in favour of Yazīd, and the concept of dynastical 'caliphate' became a reality after the battles of Karbala and al-Ḥarra, in which Yazīd's army cruelly subdued the revolt of the people of Medina in 63 H. Indeed, Imam Sajjād realized that any sort of opposition would merely provoke the brutality of the regime, shed the blood of Muslims, threaten the unity of the Islamic state, and most importantly jeopardize the lives of *ahl al-Bayt*, the second pillar of Islam according to *ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn* stated above, not to mention that it would also have no promising outcome as far as changing the political status quo was concerned. Hence, Imam al-Sajjād might have wisely deemed that the supreme interest of Islam and Muslims in such circumstances required waiving the right to claim the caliphate and instead implement a period of political quietness in which the early 'positive' state of *intiẓār*, that implied the hope to peacefully hold the position of caliphate through the *shūrā* (consultation) turned out to be far away; hence it had to be substituted with a new form of what could be called a 'politically rational' *intiẓār* that was definitely compatible with former state of *intiẓār* in the ultimate goal in preserving the unity of Muslim community but different in its complete withdrawal from the active involvement in political affairs.

### 2.5.2. IMAM MOHAMMAD IBN ALI (AL-BĀQIR)

The conceptual and practical modification in the doctrine of *intiẓār* - unlike the case of the fourth Imam whose excessive worshipping consumed most of his time, so he left very few traditions - could be easily traceable in several traditions attributed to the fifth and sixth Imams, Mohammad al-Bāqir and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq respectively. The new state of the 'rational' *intiẓār* seems to be crystallised into a legal basis that precluded any involvement in anti-state activities and reflected

the Imams' tendency to voluntarily give up their right in the political leadership and their absolute unwillingness to forcibly restore such a right. However, it is necessary to emphasise that the methodology applied by early scholars of Twelver Shi'ism in collecting the traditions of the Imams is lacking in good documentation that gave great attention to the time and the occasion of each tradition as it the case in the well-documentation of the *Qur'ān* and the Prophet's *ḥadīths* (especially those collected by the Sunni scholars); hence, the political significance and the conceptual modification of the traditions of *intiẓār* would be hard to apprehended if they were interpreted out of the context of their time and occasion.

In the concept of 'rational' *intiẓār*, the responsibility for the restoration of the *ahl al-Bayt's* political leadership seemed to be adjourned and given over to the Mahdi. Significantly, the two Imams, who in their time witnessed the challenge among the different branches of *ahl al-Bayt* over the issue of the imamate - such as the case of Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn (al-Sajjād) and his father's half brother Mohammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya - Mohammad al-Baqir and his brother Zayd ibn Ali, and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and bani al-'Abbās, may have attempted to hit two targets. On the one hand, they aimed to put an end to the calls and pressure coming from their followers to rise against the *de facto* authority. On the other hand, making the armed claim for the caliphate an exclusive right for the Mahdi would be enough to topple the legitimacy of other claimants who were using *ahl al-Bayt* as a slogan to attract their adherents and exploit their sentiment for *ahl al-Bayt* to achieve the pretenders own political objectives.

According to Twelve Shi'ism, the fifth Imam Mohammad ibn Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 114/733), also known by al-Bāqir, inherited the position of imamate after the demise of his father in 93/712. His Imamate had lasted for nineteen years during which he was contemporary with five Umayyad caliphs, al-Walīd ibn Abd

al-Malik (705-715), Sulayymān ibn Abd al-Malik (715-717), Umar ibn Abd al-ʿAzīz (717-720), Yazīd ibn Abd al-Malik (720-724), and Hishām ibn Abd al-Malik (724-743). During al-Bāqir's time, relations between the *ahl al-Bayt* and the Umayyad dynasty could be described as cold and cautious, for while the *ahl al-Bayt* were committed to political calm, the Umayyads nevertheless kept a vigilant eye on them. However, that relationship dramatically changed in the last decade of al-Bāqir's imamate when Hishām ibn Abd al-Malik assumed the post of caliph for oppression against the *ahl al-Bayt* and their followers had been resumed following uncertain allegations of preparing to revolt against the Umayyad authority.

This new stage of oppression revived the calls for the restoration of the usurped right among the *ahl al-Bayt*. Imam Zayd, the younger brother of Imam al-Bāqir, led those calls and began preparations for an uprising. However, Imam al-Bāqir in his turn not only adhered to his father's line and firmly stood against his brother's intention but also made every effort to persuade Zayd to change his mind. Nevertheless, a dispute over the legitimacy of the revolution at this critical time had developed and turned into a challenge over the requisite qualifications for the post of Imamate. Ahmad al-Kātib has conveyed the dialogue over this critical issue between Imam al-Bāgir and Imam Zayd when the latter presented to his brother the Kūfāns' letters in which they were telling him about their gathering to support his cause and insisting on him making a stand against the Umayyad kingship. It reads:

> Imam al-Bāqir asked: were those letters initially sent from the Kūfans or merely responses to your letters?
>
> Zayd replied: they initiated the correspondence as they recognise our right as the relatives of the Messenger of God for which God declares the compulsory of our love and obedience in His Book, and because of the stress and scourge we are experiencing.

Then Imam Baqir begged him: ... not to be hastened by those who have no certainty...for they will be helpless against God's Will. Do not rush, for God will not accelerate His Will, and do not try to precede the Will of God for if you did this, you would be killed by the scourge.

Imam Zayd in an angry tone said: The Imam among us is not the one who stayed in his home, *arkhā sitrih* (dropped down his curtain), and failed to conduct the *jihād*; the Imam, but the one who secured his *ḥawwzatih* (his property), put every single effort into fighting for the sake of God, defended *ráiyyatih* (his subjects), and protected his *ḥaramih* (his sanctuary).

Imam al-Bāqir: Do you know my brother of any evidence that supports your argument in the Book of God [*Qur'ān*] or the Prophet's traditions? If so, give an example...If you have evidence from God, and you were certain of your issue and knew what you are taking on, suit yourself; otherwise, do not conduct something you have doubt about, but do not challenge a kingship that has not yet reached its point of demise... Brother, I beg you in the name of God: do not be the one who will be crucified in al-Kanāsa.[66]

Although, al-Kātib probably believed that this dialogue was made up by the Imamī Shi'ites of the 4th century to protest against the followers of Imam Zayd, al-Bāgir's stand thoroughly corresponded with the political line of Imam al-Sajjād, and the message extracted from the dialogue delivered exactly the same content in the tradition attributed to Imam al-Sajjād[67] stated above, reflecting clear suspicion about the credibility of the alleged followers and foreseeing the total failure of a revolt and the horrific fate that would await the rebels.

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66 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shi'i min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (London: Dār al-Shūrā lī al-Dirāsāt wa al-Ilām, 1997), 28-9.

67 Indeed, al-Majlisī in Biḥār al-Anwār attributed the same tradition to Mohammad al-Bāqir; see Mohammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1983), 139.

Even though the traditions, which assert the virtue of *intiẓār* and are attributed to Imam al-Baqir, reveal nothing about the occasion and the date of each one, they are most likely to have come from this period when Imam al-Bāqir's essential concern could have been attempting to prevent his followers joining Imam Zayd in his intended uprising and thus sparing the lives of his adherents from what would undoubtedly be a severe retaliation on the part of the Umayyads. In one of his famous traditions, Imam al-Bāqir provided one of the motivations in which he frequently invited his adherents to maintain political calm when he stressed the strength and coherence of the Umayyad regime and prophetically predicted its longevity:

> I advise you to maintain the fear of God, stay in your home, be with the ordinary people, and be careful not to join those rebels among us [*ahl al-Bayt* but here he points to Imam Zayd] for their rebellion lacks a legal basis and will gain nothing. Be aware that the kingship of the Umayyads will be a long one, and no one will be able to deprive them of it.[68]

In *Biḥār al-Anwar*, al-Majlisī states another tradition in which Imam al-Bāqir explicitly illustrated that *ahl al-Bayt* might be held accountable for their followers' political activities, and he urged his followers not to give any legal excuses to the authority to persecute and kill *ahl al-Bayt*. The tradition reads

> Jābir said: We went to Abī Ja'far [Imam al-Bāqir] in a group of people to bid him farewell after we had already finished the ritual of *ḥajj*. We asked him to advise us. He said: The stronger ones among you should help the weak; the wealthy should assist the poor; a man should give sincere advice to his brother as he would advise himself; keep our secrets; and do not give an excuse to the people [the regime] to behead

68 *ibid*, 136.

us [i.e. by your involvement in rebellions against the *de facto* authority].[69]

## 2.5.3. IMAM JAʿFAR IBN MOHAMMAD (AL-ṢĀDIQ)

Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (83/702-148/765) had assumed the imamate and became the sixth Imam according to Twelver Shiʿism after the death of his father in 115/733. Imam Jaʿfar has been recognised by the Twelver Shiʿites as the founding father for the school of jurisprudence of *ahl al-Bayt*. The Imam was a contemporary of the last five caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty, Hishām ibn Abd al-Malik, al-Walīd ibn Yazīd ibn Abd al-Malik, Yazīd ibn al-Walīd ibn Abd al-Malik, Ibrāhīm ibn al-Walīd ibn Abd al-Malik, and Marwān ibn Mohammad. He also witnessed the rise of the Abbasid dynasty and the rule of the first two Abbasid caliphs, Abu al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ and Abu Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr.

Imam Jaʿfar lived in one of the most critical times of Islamic history characterised by a revolutionary trend when a number of revolts against the Umayyad dynasty and later the Abbasids broke out in different provinces of the Islamic state. In fact, revolution against the *de facto* authority seems to have been the favourite alternative for all the opposition groups during this period,[70] and the members of the *ahl al-Bayt* of this period proved to be no exception. For example, Imam Zayd ibn Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn started preparing a revolt against the Umayyads during the imamate of his brother al-Bāqir, but it was not until the early years of al-Ṣādiq's imamate when he actually led the insurgency in Kūfa in 122/739. Yaḥyā ibn Zayd conducted a failed uprising in 125/742. Additionally, there was Abdullah ibn Muʿāwiya ibn Abdullah ibn Jaʿfar (al-Ṭayyār), who had chosen Isfahan as headquarters for his opposition to the Umayyads before he

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69 *ibid*, 122-23.

70 Ḥasan ʿAbbās Ḥasan, *al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shiʿi: al-Uṣūl wa al-Mabādiʾ* (n.a: al-Dār al-Ālamiyya li-Ṭibāa wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawwzī, 1988), 277-79.

declared his revolution in 128/745; that spread widely in the eastern provinces and in fact formed a serious threat to the Umayyad regime. Also, Mohammad ibn Abdullah (al-Maḥḍ) ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (also known as *dhī al-nafs al-zakiyya* literally meaning "the man of the great soul" who had revolted against the Abbasids in Medina and succeeded in controlling several provinces of the Islamic state before he was killed and his uprising was harshly suppressed in 145/762. Finally, we have Ibrahim ibn Abdullah ibn al-Ḥasan (al-Maḥḍ)'s unsuccessful rebellion against the Abbasids that took place in Basra after the killing of his brother Mohammad in the same year.

The revolts led by *ahl- al-Bayt* posed a serious challenge to the imamate of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and the tendency of 'rational' *intiẓār* that he was adopting. This was because the rising of any of the members of the *ahl al-Bayt* created a great confusion among the Shi'ites at the time and it was difficult for ordinary Shi'ites to recognise the *bona fide* Imam among several rebelling seniors of their tribe – a matter that claimed the lives of a large number of Shi'ites. This was the case with Sālim ibn Abī Ḥafṣ and a number of his companions such as Kathīr al-Nawā Ismā'īl ibn Nāfi', al-Ḥakam ibn Uyayyna, Salama ibn Suhayl, and Abī al-Miqdād Thābit al-Ḥaddād who were among the first to call for Ja'far's imamate after al-Bāqir's demise; however, they soon joined Imam Zayd's uprising.[71]

During such gloomy circumstances, Imam Ja'far strived to pursue the same orientation of the 'politically rational' *intiẓār* and showed his inclination to the trend adopted by his father and grandfather when he expressed no interest in getting involved in the challenge over the political leadership on several occasions. For example, Abu-Muslim al-Khurāsānī, the leader of the Abbasid troops that defeated the Umayyad army and abolished their dynasty, sent to

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71 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shi'i min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (London: Dār al-Shūrā lī al-Dirāsāt wa al-Ilām, 1997), 35.

Imam Ja'far offering allegiance to him and urging him to stand for the political leadership of his movement; however, the latter turned down this offer and refused to directly or indirectly attach himself to this movement.[72] In fact, Imam al-Ṣādiq's major concern at this point might have been how to spare the lives of the Shi'ites of *ahl al-Bayt* by identifying the true path and getting them all safely out of this revolutionary chaos. For that reason, a good number of the traditions of *intiẓār* in the encyclopedic work of the traditions of the Twelver Shi'ism Imams, *Biḥār al-anwār*, unsurprisingly are attributed to Imam Ja'far. In one of these traditions that was repeated by different narrators and in slightly different forms, the Imam demanded that his Shi'ites maintain complete calm and imprison themselves in their homes when any uprising breaks out; the tradition reads:

> Abī al-Murhaf narrated that Abī Abdullah said: *al-maḥāḍīr* had perished, *halak*; I [Abī al-Murhaf] said: what is *al-maḥāḍīr*? He replied: those who are hastening (i.e. the establishment of the government of truth)...the citadel is steadily fixed on its base; commit yourselves to your home; for the turmoil, *fitna*, will merely hurt those who provoke it in the first place, and God will protect you from their malice.[73]

According to al-Majlisī, the interpretation of *thabata al-ḥiṣn* (the citadel is steadily fixed) is an indication from the Imam of the stability and longevity of the Umayyad regime, which carries with it a number of significant indications. First of all, the tradition is pointing to the Umayyad reign and the Imam perhaps was pointing to his uncle Zayd with the word *maḥaḍīr,* those who had revolted against the Umayyads a few years after Imam Ja'far had assumed the Imamate, and using the word *halak* in its past tense form indicates that the tradition seems to date from the time after this revolt had been suppressed. Apparently, Imam

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72 Ramḍān Lāwind, *al-Imam al -Ṣādiq: ilm wa aqīda* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1991), 88; also; *Ahl al-Bayt: Maqāmuhum, Manhajuhum wa Masāruhum* (Tehran: al-Balagh Foundation, 1986), 141.

73 Mohammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1983), 138.

Ja'far was warning his followers of the terrifying end awaiting Zayd and his adherents for hastening the establishment of the rule of rightness before its divinely scheduled time, despite the fact that Imam Ja'far had recognised Imam Zayd's knowledge and piety. Akhavi affirms "the Sixth Imam, warns the Shi'ah against resuming Zayd's rebellion, even though he acknowledged that Zayd was 'learned and honest'.[74] In fact history itself held witness to the Imam's incorrect prophecy of the Umayyads' stable and long lasting reign when it fell in less than a decade later at the hands of the Abbasids. However, perhaps the Imam by declaring such a prophecy hoped that his adherents would give up the idea of armed revolution if they knew that the Umayyad demise not to be in the near future, thereby emphasising the practical meaning of the 'rational' *intiẓār*. Significantly, Imam Ja'far called the rebellion of the "learned and honest" Zayd a *fitna* that is deemed one of the greatest sins according to the divine definition, in which it is "worse than slaughter,"[75] "perversity,"[76] "hypocrisy,"[77] "unbeliever."[78]

Still, the tradition attributed to Imam Ja'far that is held to be "the most pertinent, the political aspect of *intiẓār*,"[79] and is predominantly recognised as the legal basis on which the absolute prohibition of political involvement during the occultation of the Mahdi stands is the one that reads:

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74 Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shici Law on the Tradition of Wilayat al-Faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29:3, (June 1996), 256.

75 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: translation and commentary* (Birmingham: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1946), 2:191, 217.

76 *The Qur'ān*, 3:7.

77 *The Qur'ān*, 4:91.

78 *The Qur'ān*, 9:49.

79 Colin Turner, "Still Waiting for the Imam? The Unresolved Question of Intizār in Twelver Shi'ism," *Persica* XV (1993-1995), 36.

> Each flag that is raised (i.e. by a rebel) before the rise of the Mahdi will have been raised by an idol (*ṭāghūt*) who wants to be worshipped instead of God.[80]

Again, this tradition has been extensively misleading due to the lack of comprehensive interpretation that places it in its historical context and simultaneously gives great consideration to the link between it and other relative ones attributed to the sixth Imam. The significant key that would resolve the political puzzle posed by this tradition lies in the connection between the two Arabic words "*Mahdī*" and "*rāya,*" which literally means a flag that is technically raised to declare war or insurrection. Initially, the *word* "*rāya*" was stated but in it plural form "*rāyāt*" in the Prophet's several apocalyptic *ḥadīths*, unlike what Turner believed when he doubted the authenticity of the traditions of foretelling the nature of Mahdi in *Biḥār al-anwār*;[81] those *ḥadīths* most likely received the consensus of the Sunnis and Shi'ites alike, when the Prophet was telling about the black flags that would be raised in the East in *Sunan ibn Māja*, or in Khurāsān in *Musnad Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal* to establish a preliminary state of the Mahdi; ibn Māja mentions the *ḥadīth* in several forms and from different narrators among which are the following:

> Abdullah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Juź al -Zubaydī said that the Prophet said: "people rise from the East, pave the way, (*yuwaṭṭi*) to al-Mahdi." This means his authority.[82]

Also,

> Abdullah said: As we in the presence of the Prophet, the kids of Banī Hāshim came. When the Prophet saw them, his eyes overflowed with tears and his colour changed. I said: We still see in your face something

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80 Mohammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1983), 143.

81 Colin Turner, "Still Waiting for the Imam? The Unresolved Question of Intizār in Twelver Shi'ism," *Persica* XV (1993-1995), 45.

82 *Sunan ibn Maja*, *ḥadīth* no. 4226.

we dislike. We, *ahl al-Bayt*, God wanted the joy of the hereafter life [paradise] for us rather than the present life, and my household (*ahlu Bayti*) after me will suffer from scourge, expulsion, and displacement till people will come from the East along with black flags (*rāyāt sūd*); they will ask for prosperity (*khayr*) but their request will be denied; then they will fight for their cause; afterwards they will be granted what they had asked but they will never accept to retreat until they pass it [the flag of leadership] to a man from my household who will rule the world with justice and remove all signs of grievance; whoever would be present among you at that moment, he should come to them even if you march over snow.[83]

While the *ḥadīth* in Musnad Ahmad reads

> Thawbān said: the Prophet said: if you see the black flags are coming from Khurāsān join them for God's caliph, al-Mahdi, will be within.[84]

Additionally, there is one tradition attributed to the fifth Imam, al-Bāqir, regarding the people who rise from the East in which he delivers a slightly similar content of the *ḥadīth* documented by Ibn Māja stated above. The tradition reads:

> Abī Khālid al-Kābilī said: Abī Ja'far said: I see people in the East, rising up to claim their rights but failing to do so. They rise up again but fail a second time. Once more they brandish their swords; this time they are given that which they have sought, but they do not accept it until they are well established and hand it [the flag as a symbol of leadership] to no one but merely to your man [the Mahdi]. Their slaughtered ones will

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83 *Sunan ibn Maja, ḥadīth* no. 4220.

84 *Musnad Ahmad, ḥadīth* no. 21353.

> be martyrs if I realize that I will put myself at the service of that man [the Mahdi].[85]

The prophecy of the black flags or the people who will start the revolution from the East or Khurāsān, located east of Medina, the hometown of the Prophet and Imam Ja'far as well, was widely recognised among ordinary Muslims at that time. For that reason, the Abbasid movement, that was led by Abu Muslim al-Khurāsānī and succeeded in putting an end to the rule of the Umayyad dynasty in 132/749, had successfully utilised this prophecy. It was significant that they selected Khurāsān to be the starting point and the black flags as a symbol of their movement, with which they effectively recruited a large number of adherents among those who had some sympathy for the cause of *ahl al-Bayt* as well as others aggrieved by the injustice and tyranny of the Umayyad regime. Indeed, the influential Abbasid propaganda might have found some echo among Imam Ja'far and his close Shi'ites. Al-Majlisī narrates:

> Abbān and I went to Abī Abdullah when the black flags rose in Khurāsān; we said: what do you see? (i.e. advise us what to do?); then he said: stay home, and when you see us gathered around a man, then rise with us with weapons.[86]

Significantly, Imam Ja'far from the above cited tradition appears to believe in the prophecy of the black flag, and perhaps he experienced the same feeling of excitement as his Shi'ites; however, the excessive exploitation of this prophecy which most likely became a phenomenon during his time, composed a serious threat for the stability and unity of the Islamic state and the lives of its people. Indeed, Imam Ja'far witnessed several attempts, as stated earlier, where the coming of the Mahdi and the raising of black flags had been employed in one

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85 Mohammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1983), 243.

86 *ibid*, 138-39.

way or another to serve the political ambition of a number of claimants to the caliphate among the *ahl al-Bayt*. For example, Abdullah ibn Mu'āwiya ibn Ja'far wished to cast his movement with the legacy of this prophecy when he started his rebellion against the Umayyads in Isfahan. Also, Mohammad ibn Abdullah al-Maḥḍ outspokenly claimed *Mahdism* when he relied on his kinship to the Prophet and the similarity between his names, Mohammad ibn Abdullah with the Mahdi's name. Apparently the theory that deems the twelfth Imam, Mohammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Asskarī as the Mahdi, had not developed yet. Furthermore, the Abbasids in their turn utilised all the significant aspects of this prophecy onto their movement. And one could not anticipate how many pretenders would rise before the appearance of the actual Mahdi. Hence, Imam Ja'far realized the significance of this prophecy for ordinary Muslims in strengthening their capacity to patiently endure tyranny and oppression by the usurping regimes in the hope of a better future - and this is what the concept of the saviour Mahdi who will bring justice and put an end to oppression is all about. In the earlier cited tradition attributed to him, in which he considered any flag raised before the rise of the Mahdi would be a flag raised by *ṭāghūt*, he may have principally aimed at prohibiting and delegitimizing any armed rebellion that attempted to politicise the prophecy of Mahdism, which would not only be dangerous for unity and peace within the Islamic state but also deprive devoted ordinary Muslims of their dreams and hopes and exploit innocent lives – a matter that the Imam could have considered an abuse of the Prophet's *ḥadīth* and violation of the sanctity of one of the principles of Islam. For that reason, Imam Ja'far was not exaggerating when he drew a similarity between the individual who committed this sin and the *ṭāghūt*.

Indeed, the military option to resolve conflict over the political leadership, i.e. the caliphate, had been firmly ruled out since the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, and the Imams not only decisively denied any compliance with the frequent calls to rise against the usurping authority but also remarkably stood against the idea of

rebellions and clearly warned their devoted Shi'ites from taking part in these revolts. Hence, it might be consistent to believe that the tradition of the flag of *ṭāghūt* did totally concur with the policy of "rational" *intiẓār* applied by the Imams in the post-Karbala period in which the prohibition and illegalization did not target the political ambition itself but rather the violent means that would be necessary to achieve such an ambition , and perhaps the conduct of the eighth Imam, Ali ibn Musa al -Riḍā, who had voluntarily accepted al -Ṁámūn's offer of the post of *wilāyat al-ȧhd* (the heir to the caliphate), provides clear evidence of the validity of this belief. For that reason, Norman Calder perhaps got closer than any other scholars to this conclusion when he notices:

> ...the denial of any immediate threat to de facto powers (the rightful ruler being absent) rendered possible a variety of approaches to the government of the day.[87]

Still, in this stage of "rational" *intiẓār,* though they promoted the state of political acquiescence among their followers towards the *de facto*, the Imams encouraged their Shi'ite followers to be a part of the larger Muslim community and enthusiastically participate in its activities, namely those gatherings that characterize the conceptual and physical meaning of the unity of the Islamic *umma* such as prayers, fastening during the holy month of *Ramadan*, and celebrating the *Eids*. For instance, Abd al-Karīm bī Āzār Shīrāzī delivered a tradition attributed to Imam al-Bāqir in which he called on his Shi'ites to join the rest of the Muslim community in the of Ramadan fasting and celebration of the Feast. The tradition reads:

> Ziyād ibn Mundhir narrated that Imam al-Bāqir once was asked when the Shi'ites should fast (i.e. do the Shi'ites need to disagree with *āma* [Sunnis] on the beginning of the month of *Ramadan*); the Imam firmly

87 Norman Calder, "Accommodation and revolution of the imami Shi'i jurisprudence: Khumayni and the classical tradition," *Middle Eastern Studies* 18, (1982), 4.

responded: the fasting begins on the day when the people [Sunnis] fast, and the celebration of the *Eid* (Feast) on the day when the people [Sunnis] celebrate.[88]

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq as well in one of his traditions attempted to persuade the Shi'ites to maintain their attendance at the *ṣalāt al-Jamā'a* (congregational prayers) of the Sunnis when he made them aware of the rewards of these prayers, describing them as almost equivalent to the prayers of the Prophet. The tradition reads:

> Whosoever among you prayed in the first column among them, it is as if he attended a prayer led by the Prophet in the first column.[89]

## 2.6. CONCLUSION

The positive and rational connotations of *intiẓār* had been totally lost in the legislative chaos that had shaken the foundation of Imamī belief after the demise of the Ḥasan al-'Asskarī, the eleventh Imam, in 260/873, without having an heir to inherit the Imamate. This placed his adherents in confrontation with the concept of the divinity of the imamate, which was supposedly to last until the Day of Resurrection. Though it was said that the dispute over the figure of the new Imam had fragmentized the Imami Shi'ite community into fourteen factions,[90] the bulk of the Shi'ites, who from now on would be known as the Twelver Shi'ites, managed to extract themselves from this chaotic situation by the invention of the questionable theory of the Hidden Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam, whose life passed through two different stages of disappearance: *ghaybā ṣughra*

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88 Abd al-Karīm bī Azār Shīrāzī, *Risāl-yi Navīn: ibadāt va khūd sāzī ḥāvi fatāwā-yi Imam Khomeini*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Daftar Nashr Farhang Islāmī, 1376), 268.

89 *ibid*, 268.

90 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shi'i min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (London: Dār al-Shūrā lī al-Dirāsāt wa al-Ilām, 1997), 113.

(the lesser occultation, lasting from 260/873 to 329/94 during which his guiding instructions were delivered to the faithful via four consecutive deputies), and *ghaybā kubrā* (the greater occultation that will last until such a time when the earth is so overcome by oppression and tyranny that the Hidden Imam will return to restore justice and fairness). During the *ghaybā kubrā*, the Hidden Imam will have recognized the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism, who are the narrators of the Imams' traditions, as guidance for the community of the faithful:

> For the incidents that happen, refer to those among you who narrate our traditions as they are my proof against you, and I will be the proof of God against them.[91]

The radical change in political circumstances during the second age of the Abbasid caliphate in which the political unity of the Islamic state was virtually no longer existent – a matter that encouraged other Muslims sects , such as the Sunnis, Zaydis, Ismáilis, and Khārijis to develop their own political theory and establish accordingly their independent regimes in different parts of the Islamic world. However, the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism excessively enforced the practice of a new negative mode of *intiẓār* along with its necessary *taqiyya* (the concealment of the genuine belief), and deemed not only the establishment of an earthy government but also other Islamic rituals (such as Friday prayers, the collection of *Zakāt*) as an exclusive right for the Mahdi that must be suspended until his return – a matter that placed the Shi'ites in a quarantine. Nevertheless, the *ulamā's* prohibition of the establishment of the state during *ghayba* has led to a new deadly quandary in which the creation of the Islamic state seems to be a prelude to pave the way for the rise of the Mahdi according to the Imams' traditions of *"al-rāyāt al-sūd"* that have been discussed above.

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91 *ibid*, 155.

# Chapter 3

# THE ROLE OF THE UṢŪLĪ ULAMĀ IN NADIR SHAH'S ECUMENICAL INITIATIVE

## 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Nadir Shah's attempt to unify the Muslim community by uniting the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence with the Shi'ite Ja'farī rite, which led to the convening of the controversial Najaf conference, was the first such attempt in Muslim history. As a result, it rightly occupies the attention of scholars of Muslim and Iranian history alike. However, the genuine motives of Nadir Shah puzzled scholars then and continue to do so today. Most considered Nadir Shah's attempt to have been aimed at two targets: firstly, he wished to block any attempt at either the restoration of Safavid authority or the revival of the Safavid state using any of their claimants; secondly, he wished to guarantee a peaceful coexistence and political stability not only among his subjects but also his troops in such a bi-doctrinal state.[92] Still, other scholars, although uncertain about Nadir's sectarian orientation, believed that his approach amounted to no more than conversion of his Shi'i subjects to Sunnism.[93]

Despite the validity of some of these interpretations as to Nadir's political motives, the quasi-unanimity among the previous studies in which the emphasis

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92 David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Longman, 1988), 155; Hamid Algar, "Shi'ism and Iran in the eighteenth century", in T. Naff and R. Owen (edits), *studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (London, 1977), 288, 292, 299; Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic political thought: the Response of the Shīī and Sun ni Muslims to the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmilan Press ltd., 1982), 40; and Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 28.

93 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: critical study based mainly upon contemporary sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938) 101, 278-79; John R. Perry, *Karīm Khān Zand: a history of Iran, 1747-1779* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 1-2; and, James Fraster, *The History of Nader Shah* (Dehli: Mohan Publication, 1973), 140.

was placed on the disagreement of the *uṣūlī ulamā* with Nadir's initiative and which deemed their participation in the process as merely a practice of *taqiyya* (dissimulation), appear to be inaccurate and need to be reconsidered due to the fact that the *uṣūlī ulamā's* role and their motivated aims and attained objectives have not as yet been approached comprehensively. Accordingly, the previous studies remain deficient and inadequate in portraying a three-dimensional picture because of the unjustifiable neglect of the three critical and correlated factors. First of all, it is the political motive behind the initiative that mainly seems to attract the attention of scholars to the extent that they have failed to pay proper attention to the significance of the principle of the unity of the Islamic *umma* in the *sharī'a* which could provide by default the justification for any efforts in this regard. For that reason, it has been remarkable that the significance of such Islamic principles, according to the Holy *Qur'ān*, the Prophet's *hadīths*, and the Imams' traditions had been entirely overlooked – a matter that was thoroughly illustrated in the introduction and chapter 1.

Furthermore, the previous studies of the subject have failed to evaluate the geo-political significance of Persia and the Persians in apocalyptic Islamic events, according to the promise in the *Qur'ān*, the prophecy of the Prophet's *ḥadīths*, and the epic traditions of the infallible Imams that pointed to Khurāsān as the starting point and to the Persians as the prospective people for the required precursor state that would be responsible for preparing the drama of the Mahdi's return. This might have initially provoked the establishment of the *uṣūlī* school of Twelver Shi'ism under the Safavid's ruling and eventually motivated the involvement of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in Nadir's ecumenical policy, as an attempt to survive the tragic consequences of the Afghani invasion following which they lost their Safavid sponsor-state, and involved the newly established regime in order to preserve their influential role in the Iran polity. This chapter will be dedicated to investigating the under-emphasised role and probable impact of the *uṣūlī*

*ulama* on Nadir Shah's initiative for Islamic reconciliation. For that reason, it seems to be necessary to note that Nadir's life and career will be outside the scope of the article, as only the relevant events and information will be highlighted. In addition, a brief survey of the rise of the *uṣūlī* school of Twelver Shi'ism under the Safavid rule will be set out.

## 3.2. THE RISE OF THE UṢŪLĪ SCHOOL OF SHI'ISM

Although several studies have examined the founding of the Safavid regime in Iran together with its twin, namely the *uṣūlī* school of thought of Twelver Shi'ism, these previous studies seem to have considered the relationship between the two phenomena to be based exclusively on the mutual interest: the Safavid dynasty adopted Twelver Shi'ism as the official state religion and allowed the *uṣūlī ulamā* to promote their teachings, while the latter assisted in providing the unprecedented but necessary legitimacy for the newly established regime. However, a fundamental question that has been left unanswered regarding the legitimate basis on which the *ulamā*, known today as the *uṣūlīs*, had built their argument, is why it not only cooperated with an earthly state but also officially became a part of the system – that same system that had been historically considered a usurping authority for the right of the Hidden Imam by the consensus of the Twelver *ulamā*. In other words, the doctrine of *intiẓār* (waiting for the return of the Mahdi to establish the divinely just state, meanwhile repudiating the legitimacy of the *de facto* authority) had dominated the thought and attitudes of the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism since the *ghayba* (occultation) of the 12th Imam, Mohammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Asskarī, in 329/940, and forced the Shi'ites to commit themselves to a political tranquillity that lasted for centuries. The legitimacy of such an attitude relied on a single tradition, attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq, according to which the Imam prohibited any rebellion and called any rebel a *ṭāghūt.* Nevertheless, no attempt has been made to investigate the legal or jurisprudential reasons for the radical change

which took place in the *ulamā's* attitude towards the earthly state of the Safavids – a change that eventually divided Twelver Shi'ism into two disputing schools, the traditionalist *akhbārī* and the reformist *uṣūlī*.

There could have been two reasons that motivated such a radical change. On one hand, it is possible that the *uṣūlī ulamā* had re-interpreted the Traditions and favoured those which saw the Safavid regime as precursor to the rise of the Hidden Imam over the Tradition which prohibited all political activism prior to his return. Indeed, the 'traditions of the black flags' are famous and acknowledged by most of the Islamic sects and significantly they correspond with several of the Prophet's *ḥadīths.* Meanwhile, the 'taghūt Tradition' has a weak chain of transmission and is open to numerous interpretations. It may be that the Safavid *ulamā* might have found that the teachings of the latter tradition, i.e *ṭāghūt*, referred to the period in which it was transmitted, namely the era of Ja'far al-Sādiq himself, and was therefore no longer relevant, despite the fact that generations of *ulamā* had used this Tradition to promote political quietism amongst the believers. Quietism had been promoted since the occultation of the Twelfth Imam in which the ultimate goal of *ulamā* at that crucial moment might have been to secure the theory of *imama* and surpass the environment of distraction which followed the occultation of the Imam and seriously threatened the existence of the *madhab* (sect) as well as the solidarity of its believers.

The second motive may be related to the geographical and racial importance of the Safavid movement. Geographically, the Safavids although they had originally instigated their movement from North-western Persia in the province of Azerbaijan, they soon directed their expanding campaigns to East Persia, towards the province of Khurāsān. The Safavid intention was widely accepted as an attempt to avoid direct conflict with the Ottoman Empire, especially after the sound defeat of their troops at the hands of the Ottoman army at the battle of

*Chāldīrān* in 1514. However, Shah Ismā'īl had succeeded in bringing the entire province of Khurāsān under Safavid rule in 1510, and the city of Herat became the seat of the crown-prince.[94] Hence, there was likely to have been an attempt by Shah Ismā'īl, after he had declared Twelver Shi'ism as the official state religion, to take advantage of the prophecy of *al-rāyāt al-sūd* so as to win the support of the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism and attract the sympathy and loyalty of ordinary Shi'ites.

Moreover, Persians enjoy a prestigious position in Islam as the true believers, and the holy *Qur'ān* on a number of occasions carries the divine promise that they would replace Arabs in the defence of Islam if the latter failed to handle their mission. For example, Verse 38 of Chapter 47, the Al-Mighty states "*If ye turn back (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another people; then they would not be like you.*"[95] In the interpretation of this verse, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922) conveys a *ḥadīth* narrated by abū Hurayyra who said: when this verse was revealed to the Prophet, Salmān al-Fārisī was sitting beside him, and the companions inquired who those people were. The Prophet tapped his hand on Salmān's shoulder and said: From this man and his folks, O who hold my life in his hand, if belief was hanging on the highest star (*thurayyā*), it would be reached by Persian men.[96] The same *ḥadīth* was stated in the interpretation of this verse in the work of the Shi'i scholar al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/); al-Ṭabarsī in his work *Majma' al-bayān fi tafsīr al-Qur'ān* copied the same *ḥadīth* except that he replaced the term *dīn* (religion) with the term *imān* (belief).[97] Also, this *ḥadīth*

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94 Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 35-36.

95 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'ān: translation and commentary* (Birmingham: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1946), 47:38.

96 Check the interpretation of the 47:38 in al-Ṭabarī's work *Jāmi' al-bayān fi tafsīr al-qur'an* which is available online, thanks to the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought that provides all the books of *tafsīr* for the major Islamic sects;
http://altafseer.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=47&tAyahNo=38&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1.

97 http://altafseer.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=3&tSoraNo=47&tAyahNo=38&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1.

was re-emphasized in the explanation of the Verses 3 and 4 of Chapter 62, in which God says:

> *3. As well as (to confer All these benefits upon) Others of them who Have not already joined them: In Might Wise.*
>
> *4. Such is the Bounty of God, Which He bestows on Whom He will: And God is the Lord of the highest bounty.*[98]

Perhaps, the rise to power of Shah Ismā'īl at a critical moment in Islamic history when any significant Arab political influence was absent – the two heavyweight powers in the Islamic world at the time were the Ottoman state in Anatolia and the Mamlūk state in Egypt – together with the fragmentation of the Islamic *umma* was cognizant of the divine promise to the people of Persia. Although there was no concrete evidence to confirm such a theory, some of the Shah's early actions may suggest such an intuition. For instance, the Shah included the province of Fars in his newly established state when he conquered the Southwest of Iran in 1508 and was keen to adopt Persian culture and promote the Persian language, as well as Twelver Shiism, despite his Azarī origin. Rula Abisaab, even if she paid no attention to the dogmatic dimension of Shah Ismā'īl's attitude, notices:

> Although the Arabic language was still the medium for religious scholastic expression, it was precisely under the Safavids that hadith compilations and doctrinal works of all sorts were being translated to Persian. The 'Amilis (Lebanese scholars of Shi'i faith) operating through the Court-based religious posts, were forced to master the Persian language; their students translated their instructions into Persian. Persianization went hand in hand with the popularization of 'mainstream' Shi'i belief.[99]

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98 *The Qur'ān*, 62: 3 and 4.

99 Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Iran and Pre-independence Lebanon" in Houchang Esfandiar Chehabi, *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years* (London: I.B.Tauris,2006), 76.

Shah Ismā'īl virtually managed to break open the cage and escape the critical impasse of the legitimacy of rule when he established the state in Iran, based on his claim of authorization from Imam Mahdi together with a dream vision of Imam Ali, in which the Imam ordered Ismā'īl to rise and declare Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of his new state.[100] Meanwhile, the utilization of the apocalyptic *ḥadīths* and epic traditions such as that of the Eastern black flags (*al-Rāyāt al-Sūd*) and the highlighting of the Persian aspects of the regime might have portrayed his state as one that would indeed prepare for the Mahdi's return. This might have become the legal basis for the *ulamā,* to refrain from the traditional doctrine of *intiẓār*. Accordingly, Shah Ismā'īl eventually secured the unprecedented recognition of some of the Shi'i *ulamā* who could well have found in Ismā'īl's movement the long-awaited relief from the dilemma caused by the conflict between the traditional doctrine of *intiẓār* and the state required for the Mahdi's reappearance. As a result, a number of the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism, mainly from Jabal 'Āmil, in modern Lebanon, joined his court to assist in promoting the new sect, to the Sunni dominated populace of Iran, among which was *al-Muḥaqqiq* Ali ibn 'Abd al-'Ālī al-Karakī, who reached Iran in 1510.

Noticeably, al-Karakī legitimized *'aql* (reasoning) as an indispensable tool to extract the legal opinions from the traditions in which the role of the *faqīh* had been changed from merely being a narrator of the traditions and the ordinances of the infallible Imams into a figure who is eligible to review, edit, reform, re-interpret and establish new ordinances. For that reason, al-Karakī was granted the title of *al-Muḥaqiq* (this Arabic term literally means "the editor;" however, the technical application in al-Karakī's case seems to be more comprehensive and include several tasks such as reviser, re-interpreter, analyst, and reformist).

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100 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shī'ī min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Dār al-Shūrā wa al-I'lām: London, 1997), 376.

Accordingly, several jurisprudential ordinances that had firmly been established previously were revised and re-interpreted: for instance, al-Karakī revived the ritual of Friday Prayer that had been banned since the *ghayba* although he required the attendance of the Imam or his *nā'ib* (the eligible *faqīh*) as a prerequisite to consider the holding of such prayers compulsory;[101] also, he legitimized the state's right to collect the *char* (land tax) and allowed the *fuqahā* to accept financial aid and allowances from the temporal ruler.[102] Since then Twelver Shi'ism was divided into two conflicting schools of thought when the traditionalists who stick with traditional *naql* (narrating) became known as the *akhbārīs,* while the newly established school that activated the role of *'aql* in addition to the *naql* was called the *uṣūlī*.

The Safavid era left two extraordinary trends that would be a shifting paradigm in the relations not only between Sunni and Shi'i Islam but also between the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism and the state in Iran and coincidently became attached to the same key figure of modern Twelver Shi'ism who has been widely considered the founder of the *Uṣūlī* School, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī. It is said that al-Karakī instituted a political alliance with Shah Ismā'īl and participated greatly in the brutal conversion of Iranian Sunnis to the official sect of the new sate; also, he adopted one of the *ghulāt* (extremists) conducts, mainly the *sabb* (curse) of the first three *al-Khulafā al-Rāshidīn* (rightly-guided Caliphs) and explicitly introduced it to the public in his continuous sermons, which fanned the flame of sectarian strife among Muslims and negatively reflected on the Shi'ites abroad. Turner states:

> The ritual vilification of the first three 'rightly guided' Caliphs (*al-khulafā al-rashidūn*), Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, was rigidly enforced...in each town to ensure that people adhered to the new anti-Sunni instruction.

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101 *ibid*, 362.

102 Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah?* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 83-84.

> Karaki is reported to have taken part personally in the antics of these vigilant squads... Karaki attacked Sunnism blatantly from the pulpit of every mosque in which he preached. It is reported that his open attacks on the first three caliphs had repercussions in Mecca and Medina, where punitive measures were taken in revenge against the Twelver scholars resident there, a group of whom promptly wrote a letter of protest to Karaki.[103]

Al-Karakī's conduct not only created an immovable stigma on Islamic unity which marks the Safavid era as symbolic of the sectarian hatred in Muslims' memories, but also provoked an immediate reaction by the counterparts within the Sunni *ulamā,* such as *Shaykh al-Islām* Kemāl Pashzāda (d. 940/1533), who was the highest ranking of the Sunni clergy at the time. *Shaykh al-Islām* might have been stimulated by the anti-Sunnism practices in Iran when he issued a *fatwa* against Shah Ismā'īl and his troops known as *qizilbāsh*. In this *fatwa*, *Shaykh al-Islām* deemed the Shah and his *qizilbāsh* troops as *murtaddīn* (apostates from Islam), so he considered their lands *dār ḥarb* (a place permissible for war). Thus, it is fully legitimate according to *sharī'a* law that those people who curse the Prophet's caliphs, spouses or companions, should be killed and confiscated and their women enslaved; accordingly, he considered the *jihād* (holy war) against them in this case as *farḍ-'ayn* (compulsory), so he urged the *sultan* to conduct a war against the Safavids.[104] Eventually, this *fatwa* provided the needed legitimacy for the Ottoman *Sultan*, Silīm (918-926/1512-1520), to conduct a campaign against the Safavid state in (920/1514) when his army defeated the Safavid troops in the Battle of Chaldiran and conquered their capital city of Tabriz.

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103 *ibid*, 84.

104 According to Allouche, the *fatwa* was issued twice, in Turkish and Arabic, but he claimed that the Turkish copy is missing; for the Arabic copy of the *fatwa* check Adel Allouche, *The Origin and development of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict (906-962/1500-1555)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983), 170-73.

Theoretically, the *fatwa* was of limited significance as it merely addressed the Shah and his fighting forces and it was geographically restricted to the lands under the Shah's control. Significantly, although there is no single reference to the Shi'ites or Shi'ism throughout the *fatwa*, its impact affected not only the Safavid Shi'ites but also extended to the Shi'ites abroad, and the letter of protest sent to al-Karakī from several Shi'i scholars was clear evidence of such an orientation. So this *fatwa* represented a radical shift in attitude between Sunnism and Shi'ism in modern history, and would have paved the way later for several *fatwas* that openly accused Twelver Shi'ism of heresy and set the stage for mutual enmity and hatred between the Sunni and Shi'i sects of Islam.

Though Turner's assertion of al-Karakī's role in the coercive conversion of the Iranian Sunnis and the antagonistic attack against Sunni ideals and principles, other scholars denied such an allegation and instead blamed Shah Ismā'īl and his *qazilbāsh* followers for the enforcement of the Shi'itization policy of the Iranian Sunnis. For example, Rula Abisaab not only declares al-Karakī's acquittal from this claim but also asserts his disagreement with such a policy when she states:

> Al-Karaki preferred to refute Sunnite theological beliefs publicly among Sunnites and Shi'ites so as to bring converts to Twelver Shi'ism based on their freely chosen, unequivocal adherence to the rightful cause of the Imams. Al-Karaki believed this would initiate a wave of conversions to Shi'ism in Herat and achieved several subtle goals: the more peaceful spread of Shi'ism; the decrease in military use; and an increased respect for the *mujtahid*'s role on both popular and court levels.[105]

105 Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: religion and power in the Safavid empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 16-17.

Ahmad al-Kātib, furthermore, partly supported Abisaab's opinion when he pointed to a clerical opposition against Shah Ismā'īl's sectarian policies and a dictatorship led by al-Karakī and deemed the latter's departure for al-Najaf during Shah Ismā'īl time (where he had settled for years before being summoned by Ismā'īl's successor Ṭahmasb I), as a clear evidence for such opposition. Moreover, al-Kātib pointed out that al-Karakī's bitter experience with the religiously uncommitted Shah Ismā'īl and his claim of being deputy of the Hidden Imam could have motivated the former to develop the theory of *al-Wilāya al-'Āma* of the *fugahā* (the general custodianship of the *ulamā*) during the *ghayba* (the occultation of the 12th Imam).[106] By creating such a theory, al-Karakī might have indeed aimed to withdraw the religious legitimacy from Shah Ismā'īl and put an end to his extremism, which ended with the Shah's claim of Mahdism, according to Savory.[107]

The genuineness of *al-Wilāya al-'Āma* as a radical development in the political thought of Twelver Shi'ism became a point of disagreement among the scholars when Turner named al-Karakī as the founding father of the theory, while Sachedina claimed that *al-Wilāya al-'Āma* was historically practiced by the jurists, mainly the four deputies of the Hidden Imam, in the lesser occultation "assumed the functional role of the Imams."[108]

Yet, in addition to firmly establishing the *ulamā* as the legitimate representative of the Hidden Imam, the indisputable contribution of al-Karakī is that he not only initiated and normalized a new pattern of relationships between the *uṣūlī ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism and the *de facto* state, traditionally seen as an illegitimate

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106 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shī'ī min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Dār al-Shūrā wa al-I'lām: London, 1997), 377-80.

107 Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 23-24.

108 Abdul Aziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamate Jurisprudence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 48-49, 119-20.

and usurping one, but also expanded the *ulamā's wilāya* to include political affairs. Hence, al-Karakī advocated a new type of *wilāya* that this author refers to as *al-wilāya al-tafwīḍiyya* (delegated authority). According to al-Karakī, the *wilāya* (authority) of the *ulamā*, as the legitimate representatives of the Hidden Imam, have the right to conduct all the executive functions of the Imam during his occultation; their authority includes the rights to delegate the political executive functions to a temporal ruler, and to allow this ruler to operate the political machinery of the state on their behalf. Consequently, the significant statement that emphasizes the supremacy of the *ulamā* '*al-'ulamā ḥukām 'alā al-mulūk'* (the *ulamā* rule over the kings) could have been a reflection of al-Karakī's theory of *al-Wilāya al-'Āma,* which sees the supremacy of the *ulamā* as the legitimate representative of the Hidden Imam, and the authority of the political rulers as stemming from the legitimacy of the *ulamā*. Hence, this statement had been widely circulated and commonly known in Iran in the 19th and 20th centuries, whenever the interests of the state clashed with those of the *ulamā.* In other words, the *ulamā,* according to al-Karakī's claims, are eligible to politically rule the community by means of a proxy, by granting permission to the temporary rulers to practice their political authority on their behalf. Seeing as the *ulamā* had been nominated for this *wilāya* by the divine authority of the Hidden Imam, none would be religiously eligible to dismiss them from this position, except the Imam himself. For that reason, Shaykh Ahmad Ardabīlī, as Algar asserted, had openly brought this fact to Shah 'Abbās's attention when he emphasized that "he [Shah 'Abbās] was ruling over a "borrowed kingdom" (*mulk-i 'āriya*)."[109]

Al-Karakī's vision of the *ulamā's* leading role as the legitimate representative of the Hidden Imam, al-Mahdi, moved from theory into practice when Ṭahmasp I,

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109 Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: the Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 22.

Shah Ismā'īl's son and successor, issued a *farmān* (royal decree) in which he acknowledged al-Karakī's supremacy as the *nā'ib* (deputy) of the Hidden Imam, ordered the Safavid officials to comply with al-Karakī's instructions,[110] and bestowed on him the title of *khātam al-mujtahidīn* (the Seal of Jurisconsults).[111] The *farman* reads:

> In complying with the tradition of Imam Ja'far in which he said "*search [among you] for he who narrates our traditions, scrutinizes our ḥalāl (permitted issues) and ḥarām (prohibited matters), and knows our judgments and accept him to be your judge as I made him the governor over you.*" Whosoever refused to obey his rule, would be considered to have disregarded the rule of God and to have denounced our authority and he would be in a position on the threshold of *shirk* (polytheism). Accordingly, disobedience of the rules of the *ulamā*, the keepers of the Prophet's *sharī'a,* has the same status as *shirk*; therefore, disobeying the seal of the Jurisconsults, the heir of the Prophet's sciences, and the deputy of the infallible Imams [al-Karakī], and whoever failed to follow his teachings would certainly be deemed accursed, held accountable, punished and expelled from the state.[112]

Obviously, following this procedure Shah Ṭahmasb I, who inherited the throne from his father at age nine, could have intended to subdue the unleashed *qizilbāsh* leaders, who in fact had enjoyed wielding authority in state affairs during the early years of Ṭahmasb's reign.[113] The Shah's *farman* might have reflected an earlier arrangement with al-Karakī, based on mutual interests according to which Ṭahmasb I acknowledged al-Karakī's religious supremacy as the *nāíb* of the Hidden Imam while the latter enforced the Shah's political

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110 Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 37.

111 Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: religion and power in the Safavid empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 18-19.

112 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shī'ī min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Dār al-Shūrā wa al-I'lām: London, 1997), 381.

113 *ibid*, 380-81.

authority by authorizing him to rule the state on his behalf. Whatever the arrangement, al-Karakī held the post of *Shaykh al-Islām* with unlimited authority, using this position to achieve two goals. Firstly, he used his new authority to propagate his innovative *uṣūlī* theology across the country and entrench it by nominating the prayer leaders of towns and villages to educate the people in the doctrine of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism.[114] Secondly, meanwhile he took advantage of his influence within the court to remove his theological opponents[115] as was the case with Amir Ni'matulla al-Ḥillī, an Iraqī noble and scholar, who had been entrusted with the post of *ṣadr* by the Shah; al-Ḥillī's support of legal traditional views of the *akhbārī* Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Qaṭīfī on several matters such as the Friday prayer, land tax and the legalization of accepting financial aid from the rulers clashed with al-Karakī's teachings and thus cost him his post, eventually leading to his exile to Baghdad.[116] On another occasion, al-Karakī managed to persuade Shah Ṭahmasb to oust the Persian noble Mir Ghayāth al-Dīn Manṣūr al-Dashtakī from the post of *ṣadr* as he had objected to al-Karakī's involvement in determining the direction *of the qibla*.[117]

Al-Karakī's vision of the *ulamā's* leading role as the legitimate representative of the Hidden Imam, al-Mahdi, moved from theory into practice when Ṭahmasp I, Shah Ismā'īl's son and successor, issued a *farmān* (royal decree) in which he acknowledged al-Karakī's supremacy as the *nā́ib* (deputy) of the Hidden Imam, ordered the Safavid's officials to comply with al-Karakī's instructions,[118] and bestowed on him the title of *khātam al-mujtahidīn* (the Seal of Jurisconsults);[119] the *farman* reads

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114 Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah?* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 82.

115 *ibid*, 87.

116 Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: religion and power in the Safavid empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 17.

117 Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah?* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 92.

118 Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 37.

119 Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: religion and power in the Safavid empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 18-19.

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Obviously, Shah Ṭahmasb I, who inherited the throne from his father at age nine, could have intended from this procedure to subdue the unleashed *qizilbāsh* leaders, who had enjoyed the actual authority in state affairs during the early years of Ṭahmasb's reign.[121] The Shah's *farman* might have reflected an earlier arrangement with al-Karakī, based on the mutual interests according to which Ṭahmasb I acknowledged al-Karakī's religious supremacy as the *nā́ib* of the Hidden Imam while the latter enforced the Shah's political authority by authorizing him to rule the state on his behalf. Whatever the arrangement, al-Karakī held the post of *Shaykh al-Islām* with unlimited authority, using which he managed to achieve two goals. On one hand, al-Karakī utilized his new authority to propagate his innovative *uṣūlī* theology across the country and entrench it by nominating the prayer leaders of towns and villages to educate the people in the doctrine of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism.[122] Meanwhile al-Karakī took advantage of his influence

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120 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shi'i min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Dār ash-Shūrā wa al-ilām: London, 1997), 381.

121 *ibid*, 380-81.

122 Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah?* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 82.

within the court to remove his theological opponents[123] as was the case with Amir Nimatulla al-Ḥillī, an Iraqī noble and scholar, who was entrusted the post of *ṣadr* by the Shah; al-Ḥillī's support to legal traditional views of the *akhbārī* Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Qaṭīfī on several matters such as the Friday prayer, land tax, and the legalization of accepting financial aids from the rulers clashed with al-Karakī's teachings and thus cost al-Ḥillī his post and eventually led to his exile to Baghdad.[124] On another occasion, al-Karakī managed to persuade Shah Ṭahmasb to oust the Persian noble Mir Ghayāth al-Dīn Manṣūr al-Dashtakī from the post of *ṣadr* in response to his objection to al-Karakī's involvement in the determination of the *qibla* direction.[125]

## 3.3. THE DILEMMA OF THE UṢŪLĪ ULAMĀ

As has been emphasized above, the establishment of the *Uṣūlī* School of Twelver Shi'ism was motivated by the rise of the Safavid state in Iran, in which the *ulamā's* association with the state and the legitimacy granted to its rulers was based on the hope of this state for being the prelude state that would pave the way for the Mahdi's return, according to the traditions of the Imams. It seems significant that this view survived and found adherents among the *uṣūlī fuqahā* in the second half of the 17th century, just a few years before the fall of the Safavid state. For example, Mohammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (1037-111/1627-1699), the author of the encyclopedic work of the Imams' traditions, *Biḥār al-anwār*, clearly states:

> It was while I was engaged in my work [*Biḥār al-anwār*] that I came across two traditions in which (the Imams) foretold the appearance of this exalted dynasty (*dawla*) and gave to the Shi'ites the glad tidings that this glorious dynasty [the Safavids] would be connected (*ittisāl*) in

123 *ibid*, 87.

124 Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: religion and power in the Safavid empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 17.

125 Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah?* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 92.

> time to the government of the Hidden Imam of the House of Mohammad.[126]

Al-Majlisī cited those traditions that may have predicted the establishment of the Safavid state as the prelude to the rise of the Mahdi in his work *Bihār al-anwār*. The first tradition, attributed to Imam al-Bāqir, was one in which the Imam was predicting to his Shi'ite followers that people who will rise from the East and engage in several wars to defend their right to justice and prosperity will eventually hand the flag to the Mahdi.[127] Al-Majlisī believed that the Imam in this tradition was pointing towards the Safavid state and this good omen for the state would last until the return of the Mahdi.

In another part of his work, al-Majlisī documented a tradition attributed to Imam Ali, in which he revealed a long story about the events that will happen on the eve of the Mahdi's return. The Imam said:

> When someone rises in Khurāsān and brings under his domination the lands of the Kūfans (*arḍ Kūfan*)[128] and the two doctrines (*millatān*) and goes beyond the island of Banū Kāwān, someone from our line rises in Gīlān and the Ābur and Daylam join him. The flags of the Turks will flutter for the cause of my son in different countries...If Basra is destroyed, and the prince of princes rises...if thousands are mobilized in organized rows, and the ram kills the lamb[129]...then the *qā'im* will rise.[130]

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126 Quoted in Colin Turner , "Still Waiting for the Imam ? The Unresolved Question of Intizār in Twelver Shiism ," *Persica* XV (1993-1995), 43-4.

127 Mohammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 2 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1983), 243.

128 Kūfa but perhaps it was changed to this form due to the necessity of what is called in Arabic saj' to match the rhythm of Khurāsān and Millatān.

129 The Ram is used by Arabs to signify a great and brave leader while on the contrary the lamb symbolized a weak and insecure man.

130 Mohammad Bāqir, *al-Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 52 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1983), 236.

Al-Majlisī, in his explanation of this tradition, attempted to politically exploit it to legitimize Safavid rule. He reckoned that the one who would rise in Khurāsān is either Hulāku or Changiz Khān, and Kāwwān is an island in the Gulf of Basra. He also believed the one who rises in Gīlān is Shah Ismā'īl and claimed that Ābur is a village near Astrābād while the ram is Shah 'Abbās I, who killed his son Ṣafī Mirza, symbolized by the lamb.[131]

Al-Majlisī's conviction seems to have had major significance because he held the office of *Shaykh al-Islam* during the reign of Shah Sulaymān and Sultan Ḥusayn, which was considered the highest rank of official clergy in the Safavid state. Hence, his convictions might be interpreted as a reflection of the dominant view among the *uṣūlī ulamā* at the time. In contrast, the picture seems to be entirely different during al-Majlisī's period, in which the political weakness of the Safavid state with its irreligious and feeble rulers in the second half of the 17th century coincided with the growing influence of the *uṣulī ulamā* in the state polity, encouraging the latter to argue that the ruler must not only be a *sayyid* (the Safavid rulers claimed to be *sayyids* as the descendants of the 7th Imam) but also a *faqīh*.[132] Indeed, the situation suggests that the body of the *uṣūlī ulamā* might have been politically divided at the time into two conflicting currents over the future of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism in Iran. The first current, what this author could term as that of the "conservatives," was represented by the state's official *ulamā,* led by al-Majlisī, who were striving to promote loyalty to the Safavid dynasty and preserve the status quo of the political system. Thus, there is little doubt that al-Majlisī in his commentary, advocating the need to legitimize Safavid rule, was not only refuting the *fuqahā's* criticism of the immorality of the Safavid rulers, as

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131 *ibid*, 236-37.

132 For more information refer to Said Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: religion, political Order, and societal Change in Shiite Iran from the beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 105-108.

Turner believes,[133] but also defending and justifying his supportive and loyal position in relation to the Safavid state.

The other current, which could be described as 'pragmatist', was led by anti-Safavids among the *uṣūlī ulamā* who aimed to deprive the Safavids of any religious legitimacy in the hope of establishing the legal basis that might bring about the intended political change. The pragmatists could have perceived the political *status quo* as a sign of the inevitable fall of the Safavid state, the protectorate of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism, which would amount to a serious threat for the existence of *uṣūlī* Twelver Shi'ism in Iran. In addition, the pragmatists might have been provoked by the *akbārī* revival, which became dominant in the sacred shrines of Iraq and reached several Iranian towns and villages. It is possible that they construed the association of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism with the uncharismatic and sinful Safavid Shahs as undermining their credibility and weakening their authoritative role. This might have caused a decrease in the popularity of the *uṣūlī* Shi'ism among the believers.

As a result, al-Majlisī's interpretations of the Imam's traditions, through which he had attempted to legitimize the Safavid state as a prelude for the Mahdi's return, became the target of unreserved criticism. For instance, Mir Lawhī in his polemic work, *Kifāyat al -muhtadī fi márifat al -Mahdi*, accused al-Majlisī of seeking personal fame and rebutted al-Majlisī's false interpretations of the Imam traditions when he said that Shah Ismā'īl neither rose from Gīlān nor the East but from Azerbaijan in the West; also, Changiz Khan never conquered Multan and so on.[134] Indeed, this work, as the title suggests, implicitly disputes the legitimacy of Safavid rule by attacking al-Majlisī's innovative fantasy that aimed

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133 Colin Turner, "Still Waiting for the Imam? The Unresolved Question of Intizār in Twelver Shi'ism," *Persica* XV (1993-1995), 45.

134 *ibid*, 45-46.

to legally establish the link between the founding of the Safavid state and the Mahdi's return, by means of which al-Majlisī attempted to reinforce the decreasing popularity of the Safavids.

Accordingly, one could imagine the extent of disappointment and bitterness that the *uṣūlī ulamā* experienced when the Safavid state was demolished the invading Afghans in 1722, only a few years after the demise of al-Majlisī himself, which could have increased the differences between the two *uṣūlī* groups. What made it even worse was that the invader Afghans were extremist Sunnis whose opposition to Safavid domination was initially ignited by an anti -Shiites *fatwa* in which Twelver Shi'ism were accused of heresy and disbelief [135] - a matter that would open the possibility sectarian revenge and jeopardize the future of *uṣūlī* Twelver Shi'ism in Iran to such an extent that it could potentially uproot its presence. In addition, the Iraqi hosts succeeded in spreading *akbārī* teachings among the Iranian arrivals fleeing the Afghani invasion to the Iraqi shrines in al-Najaf and Karbala, in their search for a safe haven,[136] thus increasing the burden of the *uṣūlī ulamā*.

### 3.4. NADIR SHAH AND THE ECUMENICAL APPROACH

Nadir's early life is obscure, which creates a major controversy amongst Western scholars but he was from the Afshārs, a Shii Turkish tribe inhabiting the province

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135 Peter Avery, "Nādir Shāh and the Afsharid Legacy," in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and C. P. Melville, *The Cambridge History of Iran: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), 12; L. Lockhart, *The-Fall of the Savavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 86; Also, Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 23.

136 Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 13-16.

of Khurāsān in the North East of Persia[137] and was born in the village of Dastgird in 1100/1688[138] to a poor peasant called Imam Qulī Beg. Nadir's fortune dramatically changed when he joined the Safavid army and entered the service of Bābā Ali Beg Kūsā Aḥmadlū, a strong Afshārī chief and the Safavid governor of the town of Abīvard, during the regime of Sultan Ḥusayn.[139] Nadir was a "fairly close kin"[140] to Bābā Ali Beg Kūsā, so he served him with zeal and courage for which he was promoted in Bābā Ali Beg's entourage where he then served until the Afghani invasion.

After the Afghani invasion, Nadir Qulī settled in the *Kalat* (castle) near Mashhad, which became the headquarters for his intended movement to liberate his country. Nadir attempted to recruit the Afshārs, Kurds and other tribesmen in his preparation to achieve his goal. However, he also relied on hundreds of families of the Jalāyir tribe to make up a group to raid Khurāsān, but lost his new recruits after they left him and joined the troops of Mālik Mahmud, the Afghani governor of Mashhad.[141]

Nadir Qulī became a military activist against the Afghan invaders mainly in the province of Khurāsān and conducted unsuccessful attempts to recapture

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137 Peter Avery, "Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy", in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville (eds.), *the Cambridge history of Iran*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991),4.

138 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 18,20; also, Muḥammad Kāẓim, *ʿĀlam Ārā-yi Nadirī*, Muḥammad A. Riyāḥī (ed.), (Kitāb-farūshī Zuwwār, 1364), 7; Peter Avery, "Nādir Shāh and the Afsharid Legacy", in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville (eds.), *the Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3; al-Suwaydī ,the Judge of Baghdad who moderated the al-Najaf Conference, asserted that Nadir Shah was in his eighties, and he had lost some of his teeth when he met him in 1156/1743, thus implying that Nadir Shah could have been born in the 1660s refer to Mohammad Bahjat al-Azarī, *Dhrā'iʿ al-ʿAṣabiyāt fi Ithārat al-Ḥurūb wa Ḥamlāt Nadir Shah ʿalā al-Irāq fi Riwāyat Shāhid ʿAyān* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Majamaʿ al-ʿIlmī al-Irāqī, 1981), 38.

139 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 20.

140 Peter Avery, "Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy", in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville (eds.), *the Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 8.

141 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 22.

Mashhad. He then supported the Ṣafavid Shah Ṭahmasp II in his efforts to restore the throne of his ancestors. The Safavid army was under the leadership of Ali Khan, who failed to repel the invaders, but the situation was dramatically changed when Nadir Qulī replaced him as chief of the army. Nadir then carried out the arduous task of restoring independence to the country: after great efforts, he successfully expelled the Afghans from Isfahan when he defeated Shah Ashraf in the course of three battles and retook the capital city of the Safavids.[142] In 1729, Nadir Qulī revived the Safavid dynasty and installed Ṭahmāsp II on the throne.

After several campaigns and a long struggle with the Ottomans and Russia, Nadir managed to restore most of the territories of the Safavid state. However, his endeavors were wasted as the irresponsible and immature Shah Ṭahmasp conducted a campaign in 1731 against the Ottomans, without agreement from Nadir, who was attacking Herat. Ṭahmasp's troops were soundly defeated, and he was forced to sign an inequitable peace agreement with the Ottomans in 1732, according to which he lost most the lands that Nadir had recently recovered from the Ottomans.[143] The treaty provoked the wrath of Nadir, who announced his repudiation of the deal and threatened the Ottomans with a resumption of hostilities if they did not return the captured territories. Nadir then retreated to Isfahan and used the treaty of 1732 as a pretext to replace Tahmāsp II with his infant son; he had him crowned as ʿAbbās III while he appointed himself as the regent of the *de facto* ruler of Persia.[144]

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142 Roger Savory, *Iran Under The Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 253.

143 *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, vol. 1 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939), 596.

144 ʿAbbās Ismāʿīl Ṣabbāgh, *Tarīkh al-ʿIlāqāt al-ʿUthmāniyya al-Irāniyya: al-Ḥarb wa al-Salām bayn al-ʿUthmāniyyīn wa al-Ṣafawiyyīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāis, 1999), 216.

Further actions were expected from Nadir for he was merely waiting for a suitable opportunity to remove the feeble Ṭahmāsp. numerous occasions he sought to underestimate Ṭahmasp and provoked the inexperienced and helpless Shah into irresponsible actions, merely to satisfy his self-esteem. For instance, Nadir married Ṭahmasp's sister, Raḍiyya Begum, in May 1730 without securing the Shah's permission.[145] On another occasion, Nadir sent the Shah along with his family to Qazvin and denied the Shah's claim to have his share of the money that Nadir had obtained from the inhabitants; despite the Shah's clear discontent.[146] Subsequently, Ṭahmasp became convinced by his advisors to conduct a campaign against the Ottomans, in which he would claim all the credit for the success.[147]

As the regent of Shah ʿAbbās's III reign, in fact Nadir had been the *de facto* ruler of Persia since 1732. During this period he secured the title of *wakīl*. Although Nadir's political ambitions for the throne were obvious, he was likely anticipating some opposition to his intended move, especially from army officers still loyal to the Safavid dynasty.[148] For that reason, Nadir waited to set the stage for a smooth and successful transition by replacing the pro-Safavid provincial governors with his own adherents and increasing the non-Persian constituents of the army.[149] In 1733, Nadir had instigated a discussion of the peace agreement with the Ottomans after his aggressive campaign against Iraq, when he realized that then was the time to reap the rewards of his extensive career. In 1736, he summoned all the state officials and nobles, army commanders, *qāḍīs* and *ulamā* and the governors of the provinces and towns for

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145 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 42.

146 *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, vol. 1 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939), 595.

147 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 55.

148 *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, vol. 1 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939), 595.

149 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 63.

a meeting on the Plain of Meghan in Azerbaijan, where a *qūriltāy* (national council) was to be assembled.[150]

### 3.4.1. THE ASSEMBLY OF MUGHĀN AND NADIR'S INITIATIVE OF THE JAʿFARĪ MADHAB

The assembly was held in the Plain of Meghan in March 1736. During the event, Nadir expressed his desire to retire after he had defeated the enemy and restored all the erstwhile territories to the Safavid state. He then ordered the attendees to crown whoever deserved the honor. The crown was offered to Nadir himself. Nadir initially showed hesitation but accepted the offer to ascend the throne, with two ultimatums. First, the throne must be hereditary and pass to his descendants. Second, he would adopt the *Jaʿfarī madhab* according to which the Shiʿites should abandon all practices that are intimidating to Sunni Muslims, mainly the *sabb* (vilification) of *al-Khulafā al-Rāshidīn* (namely the first three rightly-guided Caliphs), *rafḍ* (the denial of their legitimacy), and the third testimony recited in the call for prayers *Ali walī Allah* (Ali is the friend of God). The attendees agreed, and the assembly issued *wathīqat Meghan* (the document of Meghan) in May 1736. Nadir was crowned and took the title of Nadir Shah. Upon his return to Mashhad, Nadir issued a *farman* to the people of Iran that relayed the contents of the aforementioned *wathīqa*.[151]

While he was in Meghan and immediately following his coronation, Nadir sent delegations to the Ottomans to inform them of this fact and to carry his proposal for a peace agreement, which consisted of five demands:[152]

1. The *jaʿfarī madhab* should be recognized as the fifth *madhab* of Islam.

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150 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 38.

151 James Fraser, *the History of Nadir Shah* (Delhi: Mohan Publication, 1973), 123-27.

152 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 101.

2. A corner should be designated in Ka'ba for the followers of the *Ja'farī madhab* like for the other four *madhāhib*.

3. A Persian *amīr al-Ḥajj* (the leader of the pilgrimage caravans) should be appointed and treated equally with his Syrian and Egyptian equivalents.

4. An exchange of prisoners from both sides and a prohibition on them being bought or sold.

5. An exchange of permanent embassies.

Nadir Shah's embassy to the Ottoman Empire, under the leadership of Nadir's prospective Ambassador, 'Abd al-Bāqī Khān, reached Istanbul on March 9, 1736. From the beginning, the negotiations between the Iranians' embassy and the Ottoman officials were heading for a dead-end due to the fact that each side had a different perspective on the intended peace agreement. While the Ottomans were focusing on the political dimension that would lead to the establishment of permanent peace on their Eastern frontiers,[153] the Iranians were more interested in discussing Nadir Shah's religious proposal by means of which they wanted to get the Ottomans' recognition of the *Ja'farī madhhab* as the fifth school of Islamic law. The Iranian negotiators did achieve a partial success when they had won the freedom of Iranian prisoners after prolonged indecision by the Turkish side. However, the Iranian embassy's effort turned out to be fruitless as it failed to persuade the Ottomans to acknowledge Nadir's innovative *madhhab*.

Meanwhile, Nadir Shah invested his time in expanding the borders of his newly established state beyond the historical frontiers of the Safavids. In 1738, he attacked the traditional enemies of Persia, the Afghans, and placed their major cities of Ghazna, Kabul and Peshawar under his control.[154] He also led a

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153 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 51.

154 David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797*(London: Longman, 1988),154.

campaign to the Indian Subcontinent and captured Delhi after defeating the Indian army at the battle of Karnal in 1739; he sacked the Mogul's treasure and returned with a huge booty.[155] Nadir Shah secured his authority and entrusted the Mogul Muhammad Shah to rule on his behalf.[156] The same policy was followed when Nadir Shah conducted a campaign against the Uzbeks of Transoxania and occupied the cities of Bukhara and Khīva in 1740, after which he assigned the Khan of Bukhara as a subject governor.[157]

### 3.4.2. AL-NAJAF CONFERENCE

As was mentioned above, Nadir Shah's embassy to the Ottoman Empire had failed to persuade the Ottoman officials to adopt his ecumenical policy, which enforced the *Ja'farī madhab* as the official religion of his newly established regime. However, Nadir's delegation did achieve a minor success when the Ottomans officially recognized Nadir as the Shah of Persia in the preamble to the draft of the proposed peace treaty and agreed to exchange permanent ambassadors with the Persians.[158] The Ottomans then sent an embassy to Nadir to discuss the terms of this treaty. The Ottoman delegation's departure from Constantinople was simultaneous with the departure of the Iranian embassy and reached Isfahan when Nadir Shah had already instigated his long campaign against the Afghans[159] that led him to eventually conquer India and subdue the Uzbeks.[160] Nadir summoned the Turkish ambassador, Muṣṭafā Pasha, to meet him in Nadirabad in 1737 where he was camping after having occupied Qandahar; Muṣṭafā Pasha handed Nadir the letter from the Ottoman Sultan, in

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155 For a comprehensive account of Nadir Shah's campaign to India consult *L. Lockhart, Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 129-62.

156 Sir Jadunath Sarkar, *Nādir Shāh In India* (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1973), 77.

157 David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797*(London: Longman, 1988),154.

158 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 106.

159 *ibid*, 106 and 121.

160 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 78.

which the latter expressed his apology for his inability to accept some points in Nadir's proposal, namely the issue of *Ja 'farī madhab* and the erection of the fifth pillar in Ka'ba for the followers of the new *madhab*.[161] Although Nadir Shah confirmed that the two points the Sultan had discarded were the most significant points of his proposed peace treaty, he nonetheless assigned Ali Mardān Khan Shāmlū to be his Ambassador to the Ottoman court.[162] This might point to the possibility that Nadir Shah wished to temporarily alleviate any contention on the Iranian-Turkish frontiers while involved in his central Asian campaign.

After he had settled the situation in the East during his campaign in central Asia and added three sultanates to his realm, Nadir Shah turned in 1743 to the West so as to militarily settle the suspended issues of his ecumenical initiative, conducting his third and last campaign against *Irāq al-'Arab* (Mesopotamia). Scholars have differed over the motivation for this campaign – Tucker believes that Nadir aimed to bring the Ottomans to the negotiating table and enhance his position in such negotiations,[163] while Lockhart implicitly blamed the letter of the Ottoman Sultan for increasing Nadir's determination to invade Iraq, as the letter clearly quoted the *fatwa* of the Ottoman *Shaykh al-Islām* that legally allowed the killing of Persians for their innovative religion, which contradicted Islam.[164] Nadir Shah nevertheless seems to have been forced to take such a step for three critical reasons. First of all, his failure to subdue the people of Darband and Shīrawān during his Caucasus campaign of 1741, in which he was almost killed after becoming the target of an assassination attempt,[165] could have pushed

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161 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 120-21.

162 *ibid*, 121.

163 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 80.

164 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 229.

165 Peter Avery, "Nādir Shāh and the Afsharid Legacy," in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and C. P. Melville, *The Cambridge History of Iran: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), 44.

Nadir to reinforce his self-perception as an unbreakable figure to his army and enemies alike. Also, he had repeated to the Ottomans his religious demands in letters sent to them during the embassy of Ḥajjī Khan Chamishgazak in 1741; however, the Ottomans' decisive and uncompromising response delivered by the embassy of Munīf Afandī and Naẓīf Muṣṭafā Afandī in 1742[166] left Nadir with no alternative but to fiercely impose such demands. In addition, Nadir's old age may have been the critical element in his decision to seek the ultimate resolution to this significant dispute, before he would be unable to act; for instance, Abdullah Afandī al-Suwaydī, who met Nadir Shah during the conference of al-Najaf, noticed that "age has left its trace on his [Nadir] face, his front teeth have fallen, so he was approximately in his 80's so his beard was dyed black but looked nice."[167]

The upshot of all this was that Nadir Shah resumed the war with the Ottomans, conducting his last campaign in 1743, during which his troops conquered Kirkuk and placed two of the three major cities of Iraq under siege – namely Mosul and Basra.[168] However, Nadir Shah was forced to seek a compromise with the Ottoman Empire due to the appearance of the Safavids imposters in the political arena. Sam Mirza, the first imposter, was backed by the Lazgis forces, and killed the governor of Shīrawān while the other impostor, Ṣafī Mirza, who enjoyed the Ottomans' support, was reported to be heading for the Persian borders.[169] The Ottomans, therefore, demanded the retreat of Nadir's army as a pre-condition of

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166 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 223-24.

167 Abdullah ibn Ḥusayn ibn Marʿī al-Suwaydī (1174/1761), *al-Nafḥa al-Miskiyya fī al-Riḥla al-Makkiyya*, unpublished manuscript, The Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, King Saud University, Collections of Ḥajj ʿĀrif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī of Medina, Classification No. 900/261, 15.

168 For a comprehensive description of this campaign refer to L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 223-37; and for the siege of Mosul consult Robert Olson, *the Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persians Relations 1718-1743: a Study of Rebellion in the Capital and War in the Provinces of the Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1975).

169 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 231.

Nadir's proposal of peace with Ahmad Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, who was the Ottomans' representative in the negotiations – a matter that Nadir Shah immediately complied with.

### 3.4.2.1. The Kurdān Treaty of 1746

On his way to meet Ahmad Pasha in Baghdad, Nadir Shah visited the shrine of Imam Musa al-Kāẓim, the seventh Imam according to Twelver Shi'ism, and the tomb of Abū Ḥanīfa, the founder of the Sunni Ḥanafī School of law. In Baghdad, Nadir Shah and Ahmad Pasha drafted a peace treaty after brief discussions; it was no more than a confirmation of the Zahāb peace treaty of 1639.[170]

The treaty, called the Kurdān peace agreement, included an introduction of three articles and an appendix.[171] The introduction highlighted that this treaty was merely the ratification of the unsigned agreements of 1733 and 1736. Article 1 shows the Ottomans' commitment to put in place all measures to assure the protection of Iranian pilgrims. Article 2 asserts the significance of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries for the assurance of peace and co-operation; within the framework, the ambassadors should be exchanged every three years and the host country would be responsible for the accommodation and living expenses of guest ambassadors. Article 3 confirms the commitment of both countries to free all prisoners of war and allow them to return home. The appendix emphases three points: the recognition of the limits and frontiers established under Sultan Murād IV, the fact that the Persians should relinquish the innovations of the Safavids and show respect to the rightly-guided Caliphs and lastly, that the two parties were committed not to provide political asylum for the opponents of the other party. However, this treaty was

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170 For Zahāb Treaty of 1639 check J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the near and middle east: a documentary record: 1535-1914*, vol. 1 (Princeton: D.Van Nostrand Co., 1956), 21-3.

171 *ibid*, 51-2.

contingent on the Sultan's approval. The Kurdān treaty was officially accepted by the Ottoman authority on September 4th, 1476 – only nine months before the assassination of Nadir Shah on June 19th, 1747.[172]

### 3.4.2.2. The Conference of al-Najaf

Surprisingly, the Kurdān treaty ignored the question of the *Ja'farī Madhab* and the related issues, such as the place in the Ka'ba and the Iranian leader for *ḥajj* caravans that had dictated Nadir's relations with the Ottomans since his coronation in 1736 and which raised the question of Nadir relinquishing his religious demands. Lockhart considered these to be merely temporary measurements put in place before subduing the uprisings against the authorities in Persia:

> It seems most probable that his main object was merely to "amuse" the Porte and so gain time until the rising in north-west Persia had been suppressed, when he would fling his full weight against the Turks on the borders of Anatolia.[173]

However, Lockhart's view lacks consistency as it clashes with the sequence of later events that concluded with holding a conference of the Iranian Sunni and Shi'i *ulamā* at al-Najaf, not to mention failing to consider Nadir's age, that forced him to avoid long-term plans. For that reason, the only probable explanation for the exclusion of Nadir's religious demands from the Kurdān treaty is that he might have reached a marginal compromise with Ahmad Pasha off the record and the official agreement was to satisfy Nadir's ego, presenting him as the victor, able to fulfill the promises he had made before the people, meanwhile avoiding the repeated denial of the Ottoman Sultan and his officials, that could

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172 *ibid*, 51.

173 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 234.

preclude or postpone the signature on the peace treaty. Perhaps conclusions can be drawn from Ahmad Pasha's concession to hold the conference of the Iranian *ulamā* in al-Najaf which is located in his domain and his emblematic participation in the conference by sending Abdullah Afandī al-Suwaydī to represent him. In relation to this, Brunner comments that "no delegation from the Ottoman side was present."[174]

After signing the draft of the peace agreement with Ahmad Pasha, the governor of Baghdad and the official representative of the Ottoman Empire in the negotiations, Nadir Shah left for al-Najaf, where he paid *ziyāra* (a religious visit to be paid by a believer to the Imams' shrines according Twelver Shiite doctrine) to Imam Ali's shrine in al-Najaf. After he performed the rituals of the *ziyāra*, he demanded the dome of the shrine be gilded.[175] Nadir Shah then ordered the conference to be held and requested that Ahmad Pasha send a Sunni *faqīh* to represent him at the conference and to play the role of the judge in the debate between the Sunni and Shi'i *ulamā* of Nadir's realm. Al-Suwaydī was nominated by Ahmad Pasha personally and received the approval of Nadir Shah.[176] The scholars of the era most likely believed that al-Suwaydī's scholastic reputation as one of the prominent *fuqahā* of Iraq at the time was the rationale for his nomination. For instance, Hala Fattah asserts: "Because Abdullah al-Suwaidi's reputation had already garnered him much fame outside of his native Baghdad, the Iraqi *'ālim* was hand-picked by the wali of Baghdad..."[177] However, if that was the basis on which al-Suwaydī was selected, Ahmad Pasha should have named the Ḥanafī *Mufti* or Shāfi'ī *Mufti* of Baghdad who were more suitable for

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174 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 31.

175 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 81.

176 Hala Fattah, 'Representations of Self and the Other in Two Iraqi Travelogues of the Ottoman Period,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 30:1 (Feb., 1998), 56.

177 *Ibid*, 56.

such a mission – a question which was raised by al-Suwaydī himself to the Pasha's messenger.[178] Indeed, al-Suwaydī seems to have been carefully selected for this mission due to two considerations. He had previously engaged in a debate over the same issues with one of the Shi'ite *ulamā* in Baghdad in 1718, which had ended in al-Suwaydī's triumph, according to his adherents.[179] Furthermore, al-Suwaydī, unlike the two *muftis* who had occupied their posts by *farmans* issued by the Sultan, was merely a lecturer in *astānat quṭb al-'ārifīn wa sulṭān al-muwaḥḥidīn* (the school of pole of knowledge and the Sultan of monotheists) Abī Ṣāliḥ Muḥyī al-Dīn Abd Alqādir al-Jīlī as he asserted in his work[180] and had not yet held any official post in the administrative system of the Ottoman Empire. His presence at the conference would not be deemed as the official representation of the Ottoman Empire. Apparently, Ahmad Pasha through this act aimed to satisfy Nadir Shah while avoiding the provocation of resentment on the part of the Ottoman Sultan.

Al-Suwaydī recorded the details of his observations and documented his participation at this conference in the preamble to his travelogue, *al-Nafḥa al-miskiyya fī al-riḥla al-makkiyya.*[181] His account undoubtedly become a significant first hand source, not only shedding light on the events of the conference but

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178 Abdullah ibn Ḥusayn ibn Mar'ī al-Suwaydī (1174/1761), *al-Nafḥa al-Miskiyya fi al-Riḥla al-Makkiyya*, Unpublished Manuscript, The Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, King Saud University, Collections of Ḥajj 'Ārif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī of Medina, Classification No. 900/261, 13.

179 Ali al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt Ijtimāiyya min Tārīkh al-'Irāq al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 1 (Qum: Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1413), 137.

180 Abdullah ibn Ḥusayn ibn Mar'ī al-Suwaydī (1174/1761), *al-Nafḥa al-Miskiyya fi al-Riḥla al-Makkiyya*, unpublished manuscript, The Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, King Saud University, Collections of Ḥajj 'Ārif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī of Medina, Classification No. 900/261, 29.

181 There are two copies which exist of al-Suwaydī's manuscript travelogue; one is among the collections of al-ḥājj 'Ārif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī of Medina that is available among the collections of King Saud University; also, there is another copy of this manuscript in the British Museum in London under the classification number 23385. The information of the event in al-Najaf attributed to al-Suwaydī is excluded from the copy of the document in Medina on which the present author relied and cited as Abdullah ibn Ḥusayn ibn Mar'ī al-Suwaydī (1174/1761), *al-Nafḥa al-Miskiyya fi al-Riḥla al-Makkiyya*, Unpublished Manuscript, King Saud University, Collections of Ḥajj 'Ārif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī of Medina, Classification No. 900/261.

also on the more mundane details of this period, including a thorough description of his journey for the annual ritual of *ḥajj*.

The details of the conference are beyond the scope of this research since they have been widely covered; however, the importance of al-Suwaydī's account, in spite of his typical anti-Shi'ism tone, is due to the fact that it sheds light on the positive and active participation of the *uṣūlī ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism in the debate over the disputes; it evidently denies the claim that any settlement over these issues was reached according to 'the will of the tyrant, Nadir Shah.'[182] According to al-Suwaydī, the debate with the Shi'ite *ulamā* took place immediately upon his arrival and he was received respectfully by the *Mullā bāshī*, Ali Akbar, in the latter's tent. The *Mullā bāshī* himself instigated the discussion as he openly criticized the *Mufti* of Bukhara for adopting the title of *baḥr al-'ilm* (the sea of science) and dared him to refute three pieces of evidence[183] with regard to Imam Ali's right to the caliphate; he claimed that no one, not even among the virile Sunni *ulamā,* would be able to deny this evidence. Apparently, the *Mullā bāshī* attempted to indirectly urge al-Suwaydī to become involved in the debate; therefore, al-Suwaydī had no choice but to respond to the *Mullā bāshī's* challenge that aimed to test his scholarship, querying the evidence cited and successfully managing to refute it, piece by piece. This forced the *Mullā*

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182 Ali al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt Ijtimā'iyya min Tārīkh al-'Irāq al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 1 (Qum: Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1413), 137-38.

183 The Mullā Pāshī referred to two *Qur'ānic* verses and one *ḥadīth*; 3:61 "*And whoso disputeth with thee concerning him, after the knowledge which hath come unto thee, say (unto him): Come! We will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray humbly (to our Lord) and (solemnly) invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie;*" 5:55 "*Your (real) friends are (no less than) Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) believers- those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship);*" also, the Prophet's *ḥadīth* in which he addressed Imam Ali saying: "your status, for me, is as Hārūn's for Muses except there will be no prophet after me."

*bāshī* to eventually acknowledge al-Suwaydī's scholarship and to blame his own insufficiency of Arabic for his misunderstanding of the evidence.[184]

Additionally, it seems notable that the Sunni *ulamā* expressed themselves freely during the conference and the behavior of the *baḥr al-ʿilm* Hādī Khawāja, the Mufti of Bukhara, towards the Shiʿites during the conference as documented by al-Suwaydī emphasized such a view – a matter that was entirely ignored by adherents of the theory of the despotic will. According to Abdullah al-Suwaydī, the *Mullā bāshī* introduced him to the *baḥr al-ʿilm* in the general meeting that took place at the tomb of Imam Ali, explaining to the *baḥr al-ilm* al-Suwaydī's mission, with which the latter had been entrusted by the Shah, namely to serve as an arbitrator between the Sunni and Shiʿi *ulamā* over the disputes and remove all the Shiʿi practices contradicting *sharīʿa* and bringing about the accusation against Twelver Shiʿites of being *kuffār* (disbelievers). The *Mulla-bāshī* then asked the *baḥr al-ʿilm* to enumerate these issues. The latter set out four issues: *sabb al-Shaykhīn* (the curse of the first two caliphs), *taḍlīl al-ṣaḥaba* (accusing the Prophet's companions of being apostates), the *mutʿa* (temporary marriage) as permissible, and favoring Imam Ali over the first three caliphs. The *Mullā bāshī* answered that they would remove the *sabb*, recognize that all the companions are *ʿudūl* (just), that *mutʿa* is *ḥarām* (prohibited), and acknowledge that the most important figures after the Prophet were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthmān, and Ali respectively. Still, the *baḥr al-ʿilm* refused to acknowledge Twelver Shiʿīsm as one of the Islamic sects under the pretext that whoever committed the sin of *sabb al-Shaykhīn* is *kāfir* even if he repents, as his repentance would never ever be accepted according to the *ḥanafī madhab*. This was the case until the mediation of the Afghan *Mufti,* who explained to the *baḥr al-ʿilm* that he

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184 Abdullah ibn Ḥusayn ibn Marʿī al-Suwaydī (1174/1761), *al-Nafḥa al-Miskiyya fi al-Riḥla al-Makkiyya*, Unpublished Manuscript, The Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, King Saud University, Collections of Ḥajj ʿĀrif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī of Medina, Classification No. 900/261, 16-19.

should accept these Shi'i *ulamā* as fellow Muslims, because he had no evidence for their involvement in *sabb* previously and they did commit themselves from then on to ceasing the *sabb*.[185]

Significantly, al-Suwaydī's account reveals another factor encouraging the present author to believe that the *uṣūlī ulamā* were probably the most zealous among the other attendants regarding the reason for calling the conference, the recognition of the *Ja'farī madhab,* which was reflected in the large number of high ranking *uṣūlī ulamā* who participated at it. There were no traces of any involvement from the *akhbārī ulamā* of the two shrines, al-Najaf and Karbala, contrary to Cole's undocumented assertion of their association.[186] In fact, the representations of the Iranian Sunni *ulamā* could be considered humble and restrained in comparison to their fellow patriot Shi'i counterparts. Al-Suwaydī was diligent enough to document the names and numbers of most of the attending *ulamā* from Nadir's realm. He states:

> The Iranian *ulamā* gathered at the tomb of Imam Ali; they were approximately seventeen of the *ulamā,* no Sunni among them but the *Mufti* of Ardalān. I asked for a pen and paper and I wrote the names of the famous among them. They were: Mullā bāshī Ali al-Akbar; Aghā Ḥusayn *Mufti al-Rikāb*; Mullā Mohammad, the Imam of Lāhijān; Aghā Sharīf, *Mufti* of Mashhad; Mirza Burhān, the Judge of Shīrāwān; Shaykh Ḥusayn, the *Mufti* of Arūmiyya; Mirza Abū al-Faḍl, the *Mufti* of Qum; Ḥājj Ṣādiq, the *Mufti* of Jām; Sayyid Mohammad Mahdi, the Imam of Isfahan; al-Mullā Ṭālib, the *Mufti* of Māzindarān; Sayyid Mohammad Taqī, the *Mufti* of Qazvin; Ḥajj Mohammad Zakī , the *Mufti* of Kermanshah; Mullā Mohammad Mahdi *Nā'ib al-Ṣadāra* of Mashhad; Mullā Mohammad Ḥusayn, the *Mufti* of Sīzwār; Shaykh Mohammad al-Tamāmī, the *Mufti* of

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185 *ibid*, 20-21.

186 Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 17-8.

Shiraz; Mullā Mohammad Ṣādiq, the *Mufti* of Khalkhāl; Mirza Asd Allah, the *Mufti* of Tabriz; Sayyid Bahā' al-Dīn, the *Mufti* of Kerman; Mohammad Mu'min, the *Mufti* of Astrabad, Sayyid Ahmad, the *Shāfi'ī Mufti* of Ardalā (may God be merciful with his soul) and other *ulamā.*

Then, the Afghan *ulamā* came and I wrote their names: the respectful Shaykh Mullā Ḥamzā al-Qaljā'ī, the *Ḥanafī Mufti* of the Afghans; Mulla Amīn al-Qaljā'ī ibn Mullā Sulaymān, the Ḥanafī Judge of the Afghans; Mullā Adīnā al-Khāfī al-Ḥanafī; Malāta al-Afghani al-Ḥanafī, the teacher in Nadirabād; Mulla Nūr Mohammad al-Afghani al-Qaljā'ī al-Ḥanafī; Mullā Abd al-Razāq al-Afghani al-Ḥanafī, and Mulla Idrīs al-Afghani al-Abdalī al -Ḥanafī.

After a while the *ulamā* of Transoxiana arrived, and they were seven....I wrote their names: al-'Allāma Hādī Khawāja, known by *baḥr al-'Ilm ibn* 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Bukhari, the *Ḥanafī* Judge of Bukhara; Mirza Abdullah Ṣadūr al-Bukhari al-Ḥanafī; Qalandar Khawāja al-Bukhari al-Ḥanafī; Mullā Āmīd Ṣadūr al-Bukhari al-Ḥanafī; Yādshah Mīr Khawāja al-Bukhari al-Ḥanafī; Mirza Khawāja al-Bukhari al-Ḥanafī, and Mullā Ibrahim al-Bukhari al-Ḥanafī.[187]

According to Nadir's will, the *ulamā* present at the conference issued the resolutions of their gathering in a *wathīqa* (document) which has been known as *wathīqat* al-Najaf. This *wathīqa* documented the concessions by the Shi'i *ulamā* committing themselves to stop using the *sabb* for the first two caliphs, acknowledging that all the Prophet's companions were just, and the giving preference to the rightly-guided caliphs in order of their succession while the Sunni *ulamā* recognized Twelver Shi'ism as one of the Islamic sects as long as they remained committed to the stipulations agreed upon in this document. The

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187 Abdullah ibn Ḥusayn ibn Mar'ī al-Sueaydī (1174/1761), *al-Nafḥa al-Miskiyya fi al-Riḥla al-Makkiyya*, unpublished manuscript, The Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, King Saud University, Collections of Ḥajj 'Ārif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī of Medina, Classification No. 900/261, 19-20.

*wathīqa* carries severe penalties for whosoever violates the decisions, including through God's curse and the Shah's revenge, although there was no mechanism for monitoring any violation of the regulations of the document of al-Najaf and holding accountable those who committed the irregularities. At the end of the document, all the attending *ulamā* including al-Suwaydī signed their names and printed their seals.[188]

## 3.5. THE IMPACT OF THE UṢŪLĪ ULAMĀ ON NADIR'S ECUMENICAL INITIATIVE

Nadir Shah's political agenda, on which his ecumenical initiative was based, had become a point of contention among the scholars in the field. For example, Lockhart believed that Nadir Shah "may have conceived the project of making himself a head of the united Moslem world."[189] Enayat, however, believed that it was the bloody sectarian hostility in the earlier decade that had forced Nadir Shah to adopt this policy.[190] Algar suggested that Nadir's aim was to satisfy the Sunni majority in his army and thus guarantee their loyalty.[191] On the other hand, Brunner was of the opinion that "Nādir Shāh... tried to break the influential position of the Shiite clergy in their own country and obviate any potential Ṣafavid renaissance."[192] However, Morgan asserted that Nadir's ultimate goal was to abandon the policy of the state-sponsored Shi'ism which characterized the Safavid era.[193] Nevertheless, Tucker argued:

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188 For a full description of *wathiqat* al-Najaf refer to al-Suwaydī's work *ibid*, 22-24.

189 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 279.

190 Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought: the Response of the Shī'ī and Sunnī Muslims to the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmilan Press ltd., 1982), 40.

191 Hamid Algar, 'Shī'īsm and Iran in the Eighteenth Century', in T. Naff and R. Owen (edits), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (London, 1977), 288.

192 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 29-30.

193 David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London, Longman, 1988), 154-55.

Nadir's principal agenda (as had been Ashraf's) was to establish a "new order" of legitimacy that transcended the Safavids: a new system in which it would be possible and desirable to refine Iran's status with respect to other Muslim powers.[194]

In contrast, scholars unreservedly emphasized the *uṣūlī ulamā's* disagreement with Nadir Shah's ecumenical initiative and perceived their participation in this initiative merely as a practice of *taqiyya*, to avoid the ruthless Shah's punishment. For instance, Lockhart affirmed that the *ulamā's* acceptance was driven by the fear of sharing the fate of *Mulla-Bāshī,* who was strangled because of his pro-Safavid comments.[195] Furthermore, Brunner pointed out the grammatical mistake that a Persian *mullā* made in pronouncing the name of the second caliph, while he was delivering the Jum'a sermon in the Kūfa Mosque, as clear evidence of a "tried-and tested *taqiyya*" thus revealing the disagreement of the *ulamā* with Nadir's policy.[196] Also, Litvak observes:

> A conference of Sunni and Shi'i 'ulama' which he [Nadir Shah] convened in Najaf in 1743 produced an imposed agreement to that effect [recognizing the *Ja'farī madhab*], but its impact was short-lived as neither the Shi'i 'ulama' nor the Ottomans could reconcile themselves to it. Nadir Shah's policies collapsed with his assassination in 1747.[197]

Indeed, the claim that the effective participation of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in Nader Shah's initiative was motivated by the fear of the Shah's oppression and was merely a practice of *taqiyya* lacks accuracy and requires reconsideration. In the

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194 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 58.

195 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 99.

196 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 31.

197 Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq: the 'ulama' of Najaf and Karbala'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13.

light of the historic epoch through which *uṣūlī* Shi'ism was passing, the extensive involvement of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in the process of Nadir Shah's reconciliation initiative was no less significant than the association of the founding fathers of *uṣūlī Shi'ism*, namely al-Karakī and other 'Āmlī *ulamā*, with Shah Ismā'īl at the beginning of the establishment of the Safavid state in the early 16th century. This involvement not only preserved the influence of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in the Iranian polity but also strengthened the *uṣūlīs*, allowing them to oppose and eventually demolish the overwhelming domination of their historical rivals, the *akhbāris*, who had been in control of the holy shrines in Iraq and attempted to penetrate into the Iranian provinces. In other words, if the *uṣūlīs'* association with Nadir Shah could be measured in terms of profit and loss, it could be suggested that the *uṣūlīs'* contribution might have gone beyond mere participation in the event, but rather being instrumental in its orchestration.

As stated above, the critical environment at that time with regard to *uṣūlī* Shi'ism may have left the 'pragmatist' current of the *uṣūlī ulamā* with no choice but to join Nadir's movement, because of coinciding interests. On the one hand, Nadir's military victories compelled him to pursue political ambitions. On the other, the *uṣūlī ulamā's* awareness of their inability to stand alone against the overwhelming domination of the *akhbārīs* might have led them to search for a sponsor-state to replace the Safavid one, which was in its death throes. Hence, the number of *uṣūlī ulamā* who held official positions within Nadir's state and advocated his policies may provide ample evidence of the co-operation that existed between the two sides. For example, Mirza Ibrāhīm was entrusted with the position of *Qāḍī - 'Askar* (military judge), while Shaykh abū al-Qāsim Kashani occupied the post of *Shaykh al-Islām*, and *mullā* Ali Akbar was the *Mullā-Bāshī*.[198] These three clerics were part of the embassy Nadir Shah had sent immediately

198 Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 17.

after the Assembly of Meghan Plain to discuss his proposals with the Ottoman *ulamā*.

The historical conflict between the *akhbārī* and *uṣūlī* schools of Twelver Shi'ism flared up once more in the second half of the 17th century thanks to the weakness of the Safavid state, where the former had the upper-hand and succeeded not only in dominating the *'Atabāt*, the shrine cities of Iraq, but also in expanding their influence to Iranian territories. Indeed, the conflict reached its peak in the 1730s, when the presence of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism in the two holy shrines of Iraq was hardly noticed.[199] During that time, enmity to *uṣūlism* in Karbala and al-Najaf became unprecedented, as individuals would come to physical harm if discovered to have *uṣūlī* affiliation;[200] Cole reports

> Al-Bahrani's neo-*Akhbaris* considered *Usulis* to be ritually impure, touching *Usuli* works with handkerchiefs to shield their fingers from any polluting effects. More serious, anyone walking in the street with *Usuli* literature beneath his arm risked violent assault...At this point, the *Akhbaris* had the important gangster or *luti* contacts, and could employ these to intimidate *Usuli* rivals.[201]

Consequently, the conference of al-Najaf had granted *uṣūlī* Shi'ism the best opportunity for a secure presence in the sacred shrines of Iraq, under the protection of Nadir's army in which the *uṣūlī ulamā* had invested to reinforce their influence – a theory significantly corroborated by the selection of al-Najaf to hold such a meeting, despite the fact that it was organized by the Iranian

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199 Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq: the 'ulama' of Najaf and Karbala'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14.

200 Hamed Algar, "Religious Forces in Eighteenth – And Nineteenth – Century Iran," in Peter Avery(edit.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 712.

201 Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 19.

government, attended by Iranian *ulamā*, and ultimately targeted reconciliation among Iranian subjects. Remarkably, this could explain the fact that about seventy of the *uṣūlī ulamā* from all over the Iranian provinces arrived, in comparison with a mere fourteen Sunni clerics, equally divided between the Afghans and Bukharis.[202] In fact, the attendance of the *uṣūlīs* exceeded the number needed to perform the dialogue with Sunni clerics. Accordingly, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the later triumph of *uṣūlism* over its historical rival, *akhbārism* that began to be crystallized in the 1760s and 1770s[203] could be credited, in part, to the al-Najaf conference, as it led to the restoration of the presence of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in al-Najaf and Karbala, that eventually promoted the domination of the *uṣūlī* school of reasoning over the historical reliance on the *akhbārs* (Imams' traditions).[204] The case of *Aghā* Mohammad Bāqir Isfahani Bahbahānī might provide concrete evidence for such a claim. *Aghā* Bahbahānī, born in Isfahan, had moved to al-Najaf after the Afghani invasion. In al-Najaf, *Aghā* Bahbahānī initially adopted *akhbārism*. He moved again to Bahbahān in Iran after Nadir Shah's last campaign against the south of Iraq, which was ended with the al-Najaf conference. Bahbahānī reverted to *uṣūlism* while in Bahbahān. Less than two decades after the al-Najaf conference, Bahbahānī moved to Karbala and facilitated the teaching of *uṣūlism*.[205] Also known as *al-waḥīd* (the unique), al-Bahbahānī has been widely admired for his debating talent and for refuting the dogma of *akhbārism* during the second half

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202 Abd al-Raḥman ibn Abdullah al-Suwīdī, *Ḥadīqat al-Zawrā fi Sīrat al-Wuzarā'*, edit. Īmād Abdul-Salām Ra'ūf (Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī, 2003), 536-38.

203 Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 27.

204 Ali Ḥusayn al-Jābirī, *al-Fikr al-Salafī 'ind al-Shī'a al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya limawqif al-Fikr al-Salafī fi al-Islām 'umūman wa 'ind al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya 'alā wajh al-Khuṣūṣ min Manṭiq wa Falsafat al-Yūnān* (Qum: Dār Ḥayā al-Iḥyā, 1409), 393-94.

205 For a brief biography of al-waḥīd al-Bahbahānī refer to Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq: the 'ulama' of Najaf and Karbala'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14-5; also, Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 15-22.

of the 18th century leading to its demise in the holy shrines of Iraq, and the fact that *uṣūlīsm* has since dominated until recent years.

The involvement of the *uṣūlī ulama* in Nadir's initiative cannot be considered a practice of *taqiyya*, as some scholars argue,[206] due to the fact that Nadir's five points proposal would ultimately benefit Twelver Shi'ism more than their Sunni counterparts. For example, the alteration in the sect name from Twelver Shi'ism to *Ja'farī* would not change the fact that it would secure not only the acknowledgement of the Sunni majority as the fifth school of thought but also allow it to establish Shi'ism as the largest school of thought, in terms of the number of followers, if Sunnism was fragmented into its four schools. Furthermore, Nadir's proposal would ensure that Shi'ites received equal treatment, such as having their own corner in the Ka'ba and an Amīr to lead their pilgrimage caravan. Indeed, the Shi'ites would yield much less than they would gain, as their compromises would not contradict their fundamental principles. According to Nadir's *Ja'farī madhhab*, the Shi'ites had to recognize the caliphate of the first three rightly guided caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthomān) and to relinquish the practice of cursing them. In relation to the first point, the Shi'ites accepted that they would merely follow and imitate Imam Ali, who had voluntarily pledged his own allegiance to them. According to *Nahj al-balāgha*, Imam Ali acknowledged Umar as a just Caliph when he mourned him in great sorrow, stating: "He [Umar] left this life with purity and little defect, and he performed the obedient duty of Allah and feared Allah as He deserves."[207] For the issue of *sabb* (cursing the first three caliphs), it has been said that the *sabb* was renounced years earlier than Nadir's initiative by the Safavids, who signed two peace agreements with the Ottomans in 1590 and 1639. In these treaties,

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206 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 31.

207 Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balāgha: sermons, letters and sayings*, trans. Syed Ali Raza, vol. 2 (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2007), 222.

they promised to abandon the *sabb*;[208] however, the previous treaties - as well as Nadir's initiative - lacked an effective mechanism to enforce the Shiites' commitment to stop the practice of *sabb,* as stated earlier. Furthermore, the *sabb* is prohibited in the doctrine of Twelver Shi'ism according to Shaykh Yusuf al-Baḥrānī, the well-known *akhbārī* theologian who was living in Shiraz in the 1730s.[209]

Interestingly, Lockhart proclaims "if he [Nadir] ever had any religious beliefs at all, they were neither deep-seated nor sincere",[210] not to mention Nadir's inadequate religious background. However, it appears remarkable that no one among the historians of the era has raised the significant question of the source of inspiration for his ecumenical initiative, and no scrutiny was seriously given to the source of Nadir's concept of *Ja'farī madhab* and its technical details. Indeed, Nadir, as a layman in the field of Jurisprudence had no capacity to articulate such an initiative, and thus the credit for such an approach could be attributed to the other key players. A few sources have indirectly suggested that Ali Pasha, the Ottoman Ambassador sent to Nadir to negotiate the peace treaty, was the instigator of Nadir's later Move; according to Jarād, the conversation between Ali Pasha and Nadir took place in the latter's camp on the Plain of Meghan while he was waiting for guests to assemble for the *qūriltāy.*[211] Nevertheless, the claim implicitly pointed to Ali Pasha as the initiator of Nadir's initiative yet it lacks coherence, since the meeting of Nadir and Ali Pasha occurred only a few days before the *qūriltāy* – when Nadir was determined to

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208 Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran : a developing nation in world affairs, 1500-1941* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 18-19.

209 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2006), 40.

210 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 100.

211 Jarād reported a long conversation regarding this issue, between Nadir and Ali Pasha, by which Nadir summoned the *ulamā* and asked them to find a resolution for this issue; for more information see Mohammad Husayn Kamandī Jarād, *Zandagī Parr Ma Jarā Nadir Shah Afshār* (Tehran: Intishārāt Badaqa Jawīdān, 1382 SH.), 511-21.

secure the wished for outcome when he introduced his initiative as a condition for taking the crown. This explanation appears to be invalid for two reasons. First, the alleged attitude of the Turkish Ambassador obviously contradicted the Ottomans' historical tendency toward Shi'ism that eventually resulted in the rejection of Nadir's ecumenical proposal. Second, it seems to conflict with the most likely consensus among the sources, including those supporting this view, which affirms Nadir's meticulous planning for the Meghan Assembly. For that reason Nadir's dialogue with Ali Pasha seems to be merely an attempt on his part to discern the Ottoman reaction to his intended initiative.

Indeed, vigilant tracking of the sequence of events in Nadir's political scheme may show a significant resemblance with the events of the tradition attributed to Imam Ali, in which the Imam emphasized the revolutionary movement that would rise in Khurāsān, as a sign of the Mahdi's return:

> When someone rises in Khurāsān and brings under his domination the lands of the Kūfans (*arḍ Kūfan*)[212] and the two doctrines (*millatān*) and goes beyond the island of Banū Kāwān. Someone from our line rises in Gīlān and the Ābur and Daylam join him. The flags of the Turks will flutter for the cause of my son in different countries... If Basra is destroyed, and *amīr al-umarā* (the prince of the princes) rises...If thousands were mobilized in organized rows, and the ram killed the lamb[213]...Then the *qā'im* will rise.[214]

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212 Kūfa but perhaps it was changed to this form due to the necessity of what is called in Arabic saj' to match the rhythm of Khurāsān and Millatān.

213 The Ram is technically used by Arabs to point to the great and brave leader while the lamb, on the other hand, symbolised the weak and insecure.

214 Mohammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, v. 52 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1983), 236.

This tradition had been utilized by al-Majlisī to legitimize Safavid rule, for he strived to connect key individuals of the Safavid Dynasty, such as Shah Ismā'īl and Shah 'Abbās, to the apocalyptic figures of this tradition. Hence, this tradition may have been utilized by the *uṣūlī ulamā* to subdue Nadir, for their spiritual influence as the representatives of the Hidden Imam with the sole rights to interpret the religious texts and employ him to undermine their traditional rivals, the *akhbārīs*. Accordingly, Nadir seems to be convinced that he was no more than the revolutionary of Khurāsān, who would prepare the scene for the Mahdi's return, therefore he had to conquer Kūfa, the stronghold of the *akhbārī* authority at the time, not to mention make frequent attempts to invade the city of al-Basra via the Gulf of Basra, in which his army in both the 1735 and 1743 campaigns utilized vessels built in Ḥuwayza to move the troops to the other shore and to lay siege on the city.[215] Also, he had to control the *millatān* (sing. *milla*) which surely referred to Shi'ism and Sunnism, since the term *milla* is mostly used to point to the people of Islam (*ahl al-milla*), as opposed to the term *dhimma*, a reference to Christians and Jews (*ahl al-dhimma*). This was exactly what Nadir was aiming for in his ecumenical initiative. Furthermore, according to the same tradition, Nadir had to subdue the Turkish rulers (*rāyāt al-Turk*) in the region – a need that could explain his expansionist campaigns beyond the historical borders of the Safavid state, such as when he annexed the Mongol state of India and Turkistan to his state. Indeed, Nadir clearly stated to Abdullah Afandī al-Suwaydī, the judge of Baghdad, during the al-Najaf conference that he was the Sultan of the Turks [*amīr al-umarā*] when he said: "I am proud that while I am sitting on my throne I am representing four Sultanates; I am the Sultan of Iran, the Sultan of Turkistan, the Sultan of India, and the Sultan of Afghanistan."[216]

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215 L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 234-36.

216 Abd al-Raḥman ibn Abdullah al-Suwīdī, *Ḥadīqat al-Zawrā fi Sīrat al-Wuzarā'*, edit. 'Imād Abdul-Salām Ra'ūf (Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī, 2003), 545.

Nadir's obsession and strong belief in visions and omens may support the view that he himself became a subject of the *ulamā*s influence, which may have inspired him to use the prophecy and depict himself as the Khurāsānī revolutionary. For example, as early as during his campaigns against the Afghans in the province of Khurāsān he had a vision in which he saw a water-fowl and a white fish with four horns. In this dream, he managed to shoot the bird and after his companions failed to capture the fish, Nadir caught it with no effort. The dream was interpreted to Nadir as a sign of attaining Imperial power in the future.[217] Although Sir John Malcolm argued that the interpreters of Nadir's dream were simply "flattering astrologers", this reflects Sir John's limited knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and culture. Indeed, the interpretation of dreams and visions is one of the fundamental tasks of the *mullas* and learned men, since dreams and visions are supposed to be analyzed according to the *Qur'ān* and the Prophet's *ḥadīths*. The vision purportedly seen by Nadir's father could serve as another example of the attempts to subject Nadir to the *ulamā's* political and religious agendas. Apparently, this story could have been made up after Nadir had established himself as a key military leader in the Safavid state. Avery narrated that Imam Qulī, Nadir's father, saw in his sleep a vision in which there appeared

> ...a sun whose radiance covers the whole earth and which rises from his collar. It sets in the district of Khabūshān...when he [Imam Qulī] found that his brother had had the same dream about him, the two men were emboldened to seek an interpretation from a "poor village Mulla". The Mullā gave them the obvious interpretation, even to the world-conqueror's death near Khabūshān.[218]

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217 Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*, vol. II (London: John Murray, na.), 5-6.

218 Peter Avery, "Nādir Shāh and the Afsharid Legacy", in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville (eds.), *the Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6.

Nadir's policy of confiscating some of the Shi'ite endowments has been widely received as concrete evidence of his oppression and aggressive attitude towards the Shi'i *ulamā* and that perhaps he utilized force to comply with his religious agenda, leaving the *ulamā* no alternative but to perform the *taqiyya* and avoid his anger. However, having in mind that the *awqāf* (religious endowments) at the time of Nadir Shah belonged to or were administered by different theologian currents and their political alliances, no single study has thoroughly investigated Nadir's policy in this respect and surveyed the confiscated *awqāf* to determine which was the group targeted by this procedure. Hence, the confiscating policy could be placed in the context of Nadir's efforts to strengthen the position of his allies' pragmatic party amongst the *uṣūlī ulamā* in the Shi'i community, by weakening the mutual opponents of the conservative party of *uṣūlism* that maintained pro-Safavid sentiments and the historical theological rival of the *uṣūlīs*, namely the *akhbarīs.* In other words, it is likely that the confiscated *awqāf* could have belonged to either the conservative party of *uṣūlism* or the *bāzāris* (traditional merchants) attached to the *akhbārī ulamā,* which represented the financial source for the *ulamā* of *akhbārī* Shi'ism. Perhaps this view serves as elucidation of Brunner's confusing statement in which he attempted to implicitly point to corresponding interests between Nadir's confiscating policy and his allies within *uṣūlī* Shi'ism. He states:

> Nādir Shāh's intention was twofold: on one hand, he tried to break the influential position of the Shiite clergy in their own country and obviate any potential Ṣafavid renaissance. The confiscation of Shiite waqf lands, which were theoretically inalienable, aimed at helping to achieve this. In the entire process, however, he took great care not to appear anti-Shiite but only anti-Ṣafavid.[219]

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219 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 29-30.

Additionally, the supportive stance of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in relation to Nadir Shah's ecumenical policy, which continued in the post-Nadir era, may reflect their complete satisfaction with and commitment to it. For instance, Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Ali, the Imam *Jum'a* of Isfahan from 1746 to 1787, expressed his objection to *mullā* Ḥaydr Ali's treatise of 1751, that not only opposed Nadir's policy but also declared all Muslim groups other than *Imamī* (Twelver Shi'ism) ritually *najas* (impure) and as being outside the Islamic circle. Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn wrote a refutation to *mullā* Ḥaydar's in which he affirmed that Sunnis were also Muslims.[220]

## 3.6. CONCLUSION

In summary, Nadir Shah's ecumenical initiative, by means of which he strived to impose the recognition of the *Ja'farī madhab* as the fifth Islamic sect, was nothing more than a pragmatic policy that seemed to be meticulously crafted by the Iranian *uṣūlī ulamā* in their efforts to contain the devastating consequences of the Afghani invasion. However, previous studies have widely undervalued the role of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in Nadir's religious policy by ignoring two key issues: the importance of the unity of the *umma* in Islamic *sharī'a* that has been emphasized repeatedly in the *Qur'ān*, the Prophet's *ḥadīths* and Imams' traditions, and the promised role of Khurāsān province and the Persians in the establishment of the Islamic state, that will pave the way for the Mahdi's return, as has been believed by Sunnis and Shi'ites alike. This could have motivated the rise of *uṣulī* Shi'ism in the first place, immediately after the establishment of the Safavid state by Ismā'il Shah, who legitimized his movement based on the

220 Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 18.

claim of being a descendent of Musa al-Kāẓim, the seventh Imam of Twelver Shi'ism, and the consent granted to him by the Mahdi.

For that reason, the fall of the sponsor-state of the Safavids was a critical moment for *uṣūlī* Shi'ism, as it also faced several threats that could have seriously jeopardized its existence in Iran: the invasion of extremist Sunni Afghans, who were motivated by anti-Shi'ism *fatwa*, bringing about this collapse and the overwhelming domination of their traditional rival of *akhbārī* Shi'ism in two sacred shrines of Iraq and parts of the Iranian provinces.

Apparently, the challenges that the *uṣūlī* Shi'ism had encountered led to a division within its *ulamā* into two groups, conservatives and pragmatists. On the one hand, the conservatives maintained a strong sentiment towards the Safavid dynasty and strived to preserve the political alliance with them, in the hope that this dynasty would be revived and restored to power. On the other hand, the pragmatists have been conscious of the corruption and decay that was dominating the Safavid state; for this reason, the fall of the state had not surprised them. Hence, the pragmatists, for whom the major concern was the protection of *uṣūlī* existence in Iran and the preservation of its accomplishments, appeared to be skeptical regarding the revival of a powerful Safavid state. Thus, they either had to stand for the executive authority as the Mahdi's representative or to seek a stronger alliance instead. The last choice seems to have prevailed.

The pragmatic *uṣūlīs* found their target in Nadir, who held a key position at the head of the army and exhibited both courage and ambition. Nadir, who was a Shi'ite and came from a humble background, was at the time the *de facto* ruler of Persia. Due to the lack of legitimate cover, Nadir was unable to accomplish his ultimate political goal of ascending to the throne. Hence, the religious

legality of the *Ja ʿfarī madhab* and the noble cause of Islamic ecumenism became the Trojan horse, by means of which the *uṣūlī ulamā* struck two birds with one stone: the pragmatist *uṣūlī* would get rid of the negative aspects of the association with the Safavids that would jeopardize their future existence, at the lowest cost; the *uṣūlīs* would not have to resort to painful sacrifices that could affect the basic principles of Twelver Shi ʿism. This policy would be suitable for containing Nadir and gradually bring him under the influence of the *uṣūlī ulamā* as the representative of the Hidden Imam and the exclusive interpreter of the faith. Therefore, they had to convince him that the declaration of innocence from Shah Ismā ʿīl's apostate innovations that isolated the Shi ʿites from their fellow Muslims and expressions of desire to re-incorporate them in the Islamic body would provide the legitimate pretext that Nadir needed to overthrow the Safavid regime and ascend the throne of Iran. It seems that the *uṣūlī ulamā* took advantage of Nadir's background, such as his Khurāsānī origins, strong beliefs in prophecies, and his unlimited political ambition, to subtly inspire him with the scenario of the Khurāsānī revolutionist who would form a vast Islamic realm and enjoy the honor of preparing the scene for the return of the Hidden Imam, the Mahdi. This scenario had been efficiently exploited by the *uṣūlī ulamā* to resolve their dilemmas after the collapse of the Safavid state, without sacrificing the deep-rooted principles of Twelver Shi ʿism.

# Chapter 4

# ʿABBĀS MĪRZĀ AND THE QĀJĀR-OTTOMAN RAPPROCHMENT

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the 19th century, Iran came under the rule of the Qājār dynasty which succeeded in controlling most of the territories which were once under the Safavids. However, the newly established empire encountered numerous critical situations which would threaten its sovereignty and unity. Firstly, the Russian invasion of the Northern provinces of the Qājār Empire was the most serious hazard that had ever faced Iran's sovereignty, when the Russian Czar adopted an expansionary policy to achieve Peter the Great's dream of gaining access to a warm water outlet: the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea in southern Iran. Furthermore, such aggressive action later on served to stimulate the interest of other imperial powers in the Qājār Empire such as Napoleonic France and Great Britain. For instance, Napoleon became more interested in Persia as offering the most accessible route to strike Britain's most valuable colony in India – the so-called Pearl in the British Crown - in his efforts to take revenge for his humiliating defeat in Egypt. In the same context, Great Britain had no alternative but to defend its interests in India, so the Qājār Empire increasingly became a significant player in the British imperial agenda. In addition the traditional sectarian rivalry between the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Shiʿite Iranians was another intimidation to the dominion of the Qājār Empire.

With the death of *Aghā* Mohammad Shah, the founder of the Qājār dynasty, in 1796, he was succeeded by Fatḥ Ali Khan who since that time became known as Fatḥ Ali Shah. Fatḥ Ali Shah nominated his fourth son ʿAbbās Mīrzā, who was

also the governor of Azerbaijan, to the position of the Crown Prince of the empire in 1798 according to the wishes of *Aghā* Mohammad Shah's last will. ʿAbbās Mīrzā (1789-1833) soon became the de-facto ruler of the empire when he was charged by the Shah to deal with the Russian invasion.

In his attempts to halt the continuous defeats and retrieve the lost territories from the hands of the invading Russian forces, ʿAbbās Mīrzā had to adopt and activate all the necessary policies and reforms on both domestic and foreign levels to protect the unity and the sovereignty of the Qājār Empire. Acting immediately, he conducted several campaigns against the raiding Russians. He also benefitted from the dispute between France and England and managed to involve them in his wars with Russia, not only obtaining French and British assistance but managing to accomplish several reforms to modernize Persia. Additionally, ʿAbbās Mīrzā launched numerous correspondences with the Ottoman Empire to unify their efforts and engage them in what he called *jihād*, the Holy War, against the infidel Russians. At this crucial point, the *uṣūlī ulamā* seized the opportunity to penetrate and re-enforce their political influence on the court of the new dynasty through the crown prince, the *de facto* ruler, and surpass the skeptical Shah who was favorable to the *shaykhiyya* teachings. This chapter is dedicated to a survey of why ʿAbbās Mīrzā began his efforts at Qājār-Ottoman rapprochement. How did he handle such an enterprise? What was the outcome of his efforts at *al-Taqrīb* and what was the role of the *uṣūlī ulamā*? Therefore, it is necessary to shed light on the political conditions within the Iranian arena at the time to demonstrate ʿAbbās Mīrzā's efforts at *al-Taqrīb* and the role the *uṣūlī ulamā* might have played in these efforts.

## 4.2. THE LEGITIMACY OF THE CROWN PRINCE

Each one of Fatḥ Ali Shah's elder sons had been entrusted with a governorship of one of the empire's provinces.[221] For example, Mohammad Ali Mīrzā was named as the governor of Kerman Shah. Ḥusayn Ali Mīrzā was entrusted with the province of Pars. Mohammad Vali Mīrzā became the governor of Khurāsān. ʿAbbās Mīrzā was given the governorship of the most important and the richest province, that of Azerbaijan.[222] Strangely enough, Persian sources state nothing about Mohammad Qulī Mīrzā, and why he was deprived of a governorship in favor of his younger brother.

In addition to being the governor of Azerbaijan, ʿAbbās Mīrzā was nominated as crown prince of the throne (*Nā'ib al-Salṭana*) in 1798.[223] Although Ann Lambton claims that this nomination was in 1818,[224] it seems that she was confused between the designation of ʿAbbās Mīrzā for the post of the crown prince in 1798 and his nomination to manage foreign affairs which would indeed occur in 1818. Also, Fatḥ Ali Shah made public the selection of the crown prince in 1818 as a supportive policy to backup crown prince in his preparation for the second war against Russia. This selection raises two substantial questions: why would Fatḥ Ali Shah have preferred ʿAbbās Mīrzā above his other sons, especially the elder ones? And what was the impact of this nomination on the other sons?

Most sources suggest that Fatḥ Ali Shah was following the last will of *Aghā* Mohammad Shah: that no one but Abbās Mīrzā should be the crown prince.[225] As mentioned previously, *Aghā* Mohammad Shah aimed in his will to create a

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221 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 13.

222 Robert G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1866), 170-3.

223 Mostafa M. Tabari, *ʿAbbās Mīrzā Qājār Sharh Haal wa Syaasat wa Khadamaat-e Ou* (Tehran: Intishaaraat Ibn Sinaa, 1353), 21.

224 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 13.

225 Mustafa M. Ṭabari, *ʿAbbās Mīrzā Qājār* (Tehran: Intesharat Ibn Sīnā, 1353), 20-1.

legislative precedent for the lineage to the throne in the Qājār dynasty which emphasized that the mother of the candidate prince should be a Qājāri princess. However, Mohammad Qulī Mīrzā whose mother was a Qājāri princess too, should have been in a superior position for crown prince because he was older than ʿAbbās Mīrzā.

This suggests another reason for the selection of ʿAbbās Mīrzā as crown prince. In other words, *Aghā* Mohammad's last will might have laid out more particulars than the condition regarding the heir's mother. According to reliable Persian sources, *Aghā* Mohammad Shah made two connected orders in his last will: the first being that ʿAbbās Mīrzā must be the crown prince, and the second that ʿAbbās Mīrzā must marry Dhul-Qiʿada the daughter of Amir Mīrzā Mohammad Khan-i Qājārs Devehlū. By focusing on the connection between them, it becomes obvious that *Aghā* Mohammad's wish was that the mother and the wife of the crown prince must be from the Devehlū clan of the Qājārs. With this stipulation, *Aghā* Mohammad might have intended to strengthen his old coalition with the Qājār Devehlū, the same coalition that had played a major role in the defeat of *Aghā* Mohammad Shah's strongest opponents and in the establishment of his own rule over all of Persia. In fact, Aghā Mohammad might have intended to reward the Qājār Devehlū with this final request.

Additionally, *Aghā* Mohammad Shah might have aimed to guarantee a broad base of support for his selected crown prince, so that no one would be able to challenge him over the throne after the death of the next Shah. In short, Aghā Mohammad sought a peaceful and smooth transition of power and wished to prevent any kind of hostility over the Qājār's succession, so he could be assured that his dynasty would last longer.

The nomination of ʿAbbās Mīrzā for the position of the crown prince, however, caused severe animosity between him and those elder brothers who considered themselves more deserving of this position. The brothers expressed their dissatisfaction on many occasions. For instance, Watson notes

> One occasion the Shah ordered that at the public reception which he was to hold on the following day no one of the princes excepting Abbass Meerza was to appear before him wearing a sward. The morrow came, and with it came the princes to attend upon their sovereign. All, save Mahomed Ali Meerza [the Shah's elder son], appeared unarmed, but the Shahzadeh wore his sward as usual, and when he was asked by the Shah why he had not obeyed his command he replied that there was only one way of making him obey it, and that way was to take his sward by force. He further announced his readiness to fight with his brother Abbass then and there, and to abide by the event of the duel.[226]

## 4.3. RUSSO-IRANIAN WARS

The Russo-Iranian wars in fact opened the path to foreign interference in Iranian local affairs. Since the Qājār territories were the arena of these wars, and the Russian invasion sparked off the conflict among the imperial powers, it will be very significant to review the political, economical, and military conditions of the Qājār empire as well as that of the Russian empire at the beginning of the 19th century in order to recognize the causes of these wars and comprehend their outcome.

Persia was passing into an époque of great chaos at the end of 18th century. The Qājār Empire had just been established in 1779 by *Aghā* Mohammad Shah who had restored stability and imposed his authority over the whole country;

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226 Robert G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1866), 171.

however, such stability could not last longer when the Shah was assassinated in 1797, and the empire entered into greater chaos. Fatḥ Ali Shah inherited the throne of his uncle although he had experienced initial opposition from some pretenders, such as Ṣādiq Khan the Turkish tribal leader who was in fact accused of being responsible for Aghā Mohammad's assassination.[227] Lacking the experience and charisma of Aghā Mohammad Shah, Fatḥ Ali was unable to impress his authority over the whole empire, so several revolts took place around the country. For instance, Hercules II, the governor of Georgia, had announced his subservience to the Russian emperor since 1795.[228]

Hardly surprisingly, this political mess had a strong impact upon the Iranian economy. Commerce was depressed because of the lack of security on the trading routes which consequently caused the stoppage of exchange trade among the main commercial centers in Iran. Lambton emphasizes that "commerce which had been developed under the Safavids had been severely damaged by the disorders which had followed the fall of that dynasty."[229] Agriculture, also, was overwhelmed by the political turmoil during the 18th century. The rivalries among local rulers destroyed many fertile lands. These rulers, furthermore, excessively increased taxes on the agricultural crops in order to fulfill their military adventures. As a result, peasants, who were unable to pay such high taxes, quitted their fields and looked for other kinds of living instead.

On the military level, the Qājār Empire had no army in the modern sense of the word. Its army was composed of a small medieval squadron which served basically as imperial guards. In the case of a war or conducting a campaign, the Qājār army mainly depended in its recruitment on what the provinces

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227 Hasan-e Fasaa'ī, *Farasnaama-ye Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 78.

228 Kamāl M. Ahmad, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh Iran al-Ḥadīth* (Baghdad: Arkaan Publisher, 1985), 25.

229 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 33.

provided.[230] Such a system was useless for several reasons. First of all, this army would be deficient as regards discipline to the general leadership since the loyalty of its soldiers would be to their local commanders. Obviously, such an army would lack appropriate military training since it only assembled occasionally. Finally, the governors of provinces would keep the professional fighters for their own interests and send inexperienced ones instead, which might include barbers, bakers, and fruit sellers.[231] In addition the Qājār army lacked any modern weaponry system: it depended instead on the traditional medieval weapons such as swords, horses and camels to supplement the few old fashioned artilleries.

On the other hand, Russia was entirely different. Politically, it experienced real stability when the Romanov family seized power in Russia in the beginning of the 18th century, and it succeeded, through its emperors, in unifying and expanding its territories. At the same time, Russia had a strong industrial economy which was at its peak when Russia invaded the Qājār's territories in 1804. According to Kamāl, Ahmad, Russia had a thousand considerably large industrial companies at the end of the century.[232] This flourishing economy, therefore, supported the creation of a modern army following the European system which was provided with the most recent military supplies.

Its blooming economy and huge army prompted Russia to adopt an expansionist policy. This policy was stimulated by the need for primary sources for its developing industry, and new markets to sell the Russian goods, and this included the warm water ports from which to distribute these goods around the world. Therefore, Russia directed its imperial policy towards Iran because it was

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230 *ibid*, 22.

231 Kamāl M. Ahmad, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh Iran al-Ḥadīth* (Baghdad: Arkaan Publisher, 1985), 33.

232 *ibid*, 11.

a shortcut to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf, its vast surface would provide Russia with the necessary primary sources for its industry, and its commercial location would be suitable markets for Russian goods. Russia, as well, wished to control the Iranian silk trade and change its route to pass through Russian territories rather than Ottoman lands, so Russia would be able to deprive its southern enemy of a significant financial source.

Russian interest in Iran was shaped during the time of Peter the Great (1682-1725), in the early 18th century. Peter the Great conducted a campaign against Iran in the summer of 1722 which was concluded in signing a treaty with the Safavid Shah Ṭahmasp in Petersburg in 1723. According to the Petersburg treaty, Iran ceded Baku and Darband to Russia and promised that it would not allow the Ottoman Empire to intervene in Iranian affairs. At the same time, Russia would be committed to protect Iran from any Afghani aggression; however, Iran must provide the Russian army with supplies and camels.[233]

Yet the Petersburg treaty was unable to stand for long because Nadir Shah cancelled it in 1732. Nadir Shah took advantage of the Russian-Ottoman war at that time, and signed two new treaties with Russia, one in Rasht in 1732 and the other in Ginga in 1735. Consequently, Nadir Shah restored all Iranian land that was granted to Russia by the Petersburg treaty of 1723; however, Russia was granted some special economic considerations as a substitute, such as customs exemptions for its goods.[234] At that time the Russian empire became engaged in war with the Ottoman Empire, so its interest in Iran was temporarily suspended.

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233 *ibid*, 19.

234 *ibid*, 21.

With the establishment of the Qājār Empire, the relationship between Iran and Russia went off on a different tangent. *Aghā* Mohammad Shah's desire to control all the territories of the Safavid Empire crossed swords with the Russian imperial policy; therefore, Georgia became the conflict zone between those two empires. However, the death of Catherine II in 1796 and *Aghā* Mohammad Shah in 1797 interrupted any hostilities between the two nations for a while.

The tension revived when the Czar George XIII of Georgia voluntarily ceded his crown in the favor of the Russian emperor on September 28, 1800.[235] This impolitic action drove George's younger brother, Alexander, to oppose him. But Alexander, who was vehemently against his father's crown being given to someone out of the family, was not in a sufficiently strong position to stand against the Russian forces alone. Therefore, he sought military aid from the Ottomans who were unwilling to create a new dispute with their powerful northern neighbor.

Eventually, Alexander composed a coalition with the tribal chief of the Avars and the Khan of Karabāgh who both welcomed him and expressed their desire to join his efforts to expel the Russian troops from Georgia.[236] Although the sources do not mention it, why did those two leaders participate in such a coalition? It seems that they considered the Russian presence in the region a direct threat to their authority, so they wanted to expel the Russian troops from the area as a protective procedure. When the coalition forces encountered the Russian army at Ganja in 1804, they were defeated and left the battlefield to the Russians, and Seeseanov, the Russian commander, entered Ganja by force and killed Jawād Khan-i Qājār Ziyādlū, the governor of Ganja.[237] Seeseanoov, acting on the

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235 Robert G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1866), 142.

236 *ibid*, 143.

237 Hasan-e Fasaa'ī, *Farasnaama-ye Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 107.

assurance from Mohammad Khan-i Qājār Quyūnlū of Erevan that he would surrender the town without a fight, made his way to Erevan.[238] When the news was received in Tehran, Fatḥ Ali Shah appointed ʿAbbās Mīrzā as commander-in-chief of the Qājār army and dispatched him to rescue Erevan. In 1804, the Qājār army encountered the Russian troops at Etchamiazdeen, the residence of the Patriarch of the Armenian Church. Although the fight lasted for three days no one side gained a crucial victory. When General Seeseanoov and his troops reached Erevan, Mohammad Khan, the governor of the town, changed his mind and refused to surrender the fortress. When the Qājār army faced Russian troops again at Erevan, it experienced a humiliating defeat, and the Qājār soldiers were forced to flee the battlefield.

ʿAbbās Mīrzā collected together the remains of his troops and realized that with his ill - equipped army he would not be able to engage with the disciplined and well-trained Russian troops armed in addition with what seemed in contrast to be horrendous cannons, so he espoused a new approach in order to halt the Russians: he opted for guerilla tactics. Watson elucidates: "The crown prince became convinced that his irregular troops could not successfully encounter disciplined infantry in the open field: he, therefore, gave orders for night attacks upon the Russians in their entrenched position."[239] Although this tactic did not restore the occupied lands to the Qājārs, it seems that it was the only possible means whereby ʿAbbās Mīrzā could compensate for his lack of a modern army. It was also ʿAbbās Mīrzā's aim to invest the superiority of his army in such a tactic since it traditionally depends on the chivalry.

The first Russo-Iranian war ground on for nine years (1804-1813) due to several reasons. First of all, the challenge among imperial powers played a significant

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238 Robert G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1866), 143.

239 *ibid*, 145-46.

role in failing to come up with any effort to stop the war. For example, when Napoleonic France having achieved crucial victories in Eastern Europe advanced towards Russia's western frontiers in 1807, the outcome was victory for the Russians; on the strength of this they then proposed a treaty with the defeated Qājār Empire which could have concluded the war between the two countries. Nevertheless, the French convinced Fatḥ Ali Shah to reject the Russian proposal unless Russia returned all Iranian lands that had been occupied by Russia, and this of course was unacceptable to Russia.[240] The British, in their turn, brought about the failure of the Russo-Iranian negotiations for a peace treaty in 1810 and 1812 in spite of the great and sincere efforts of ʿAbbās Mīrzā to put an end to the war.[241] Yet eventually Russia, which was preparing for a combined Franco-Ottoman attack, found itself unable to concentrate on the Iranian front as well and halted the war. With British mediation, Russia and the Qājār Empire signed the Treaty of Gulistān[242] on October 12, 1813. Accordingly, the Qājār Empire submitted to Russia all their territories north of the River Arras.[243]

ʿAbbās Mīrzā, who had meanwhile trained and equipped his army with British aid since 1813, intended to restore the Iranian lands and avenge Iranian dignity, although the Russians were determined to prevent further hostilities from breaking out. Meanwhile, he sought the support of the *ulamā*, the religious leaders, to grant him a *fatwa*, (religious permission) for a *Jihad* against Russia which he could have used to stimulate Iranians to participate in a war. ʿAbbās Mīrzā eventually obtained such a *fatwa* from *Aghā* Sayyid Mohammad, who himself became a consultant to the crown prince along with other *mujtahids* and

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240 Hasan-e Fasaa'i, *Farasnaama-ye Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 120.

241 Kamāl M. Ahmad, *Dirāsāt fi Tārīkh Iran al-Ḥadīth* (Baghdad: Arkaan Publisher, 1985), 51.

242 For more details refer to Robert G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1866), 205.

243 Denis Wright, *the English among the Persians* (London: Heinemann, 1977), 15.

joined the Qājār army in this war.[244] Thus again ʿAbbās Mīrzā proclaimed war against Russia in 1826. Taking advantage of the sudden attack, the Qājār army achieved some victories in the beginning of the war and restored Shūshā and Ganja to Iran.

However, when Russian troops were reorganized and received new aid, the Iranian army was obliged to retreat before Russian counter attacks. Ultimately, Russian forces invaded the northern province of Azerbaijan and with the fall of Tabriz in 1828, the path was open to continue to Tehran. Yet, the British who would not allow Russia to occupy Iran and thus threaten their interests in India, intervened and exerted strong pressure upon Russia to end the war. As a result, ʿAbbās Mīrzā and General Paskevich, the Russian commander, signed the peace treaty of *Turkmānchāy*[245] in 1828. Accordingly, the Qājār Empire agreed to pay five million Robles in gold as reimbursement for breaking the treaty of Gulistān.[246]

This humiliating defeat for Iran was due to numerous causes. First of all, it had happened because of the niggardliness of Fatḥ Ali Shah who repeatedly refused to spend an adequate amount of money on his army. Also, as we have seen above, the Qājār army because of its miserable conditions was no match for the modern Russian troops. Umpton states: "The Persians were badly defeated for a number of reasons, among which were the Shah's refusal to provide enough money for the army; the erratic leadership of the princes in command; and the lack of discipline of the troops, who tended to be distracted from their main purpose by the lure of booty."[247] It is also worth noting that unrest in domestic

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244 Hasan-e Fasaa'i, *Farasnaama-ye Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 174.

245 For more information about this treaty refer to *Ibid,*, 182-5.

246 *Ibid,* 184.

247 Joseph M. Umpton, *The History of Modern Iran, An Interpretation* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1961), 6.

affairs could have prevented ʿAbbās Mīrzā from giving full concentration to the war. Additionally, the interest of the imperial powers at that time played a major role in such an outcome. For example, the Qājārs would not have been faced with such a disgraceful defeat in the first war if the British had provided them with some military support, or at least political back-up. Umpton points out that "Great Britain, in alliances with Russia, was also engaged in the Greek war of independence and for this and other reasons took no steps to aid Persia."[248]

ʿAbbās Mīrzā himself might have been partly responsible for the outcome of the second Russo-Iranian war in spite of any positive effort he had made for he engaged his country in another hopeless war against Russia despite the fact that the Qājār army was far from being able to stand up to the Russians. One may inquire why ʿAbbās Mīrzā took such an unwise decision for war at this particular time. Although there is no certain answer to this question, it seems that there are many probabilities that could have motivated him. First of all, ʿAbbās Mīrzā could have believed that his efforts in modernizing his army over the previous thirteen years were enough to gain them victory. Besides, the friendship treaty of Erzurum, which he himself had concluded with the Ottoman Empire in 1823, might have made him to believe that the Ottomans might conceivably join him in such a war especially if he pushed the religious angle. He might also have embarked on this war following accusations of being responsible for the first defeat, so he attempted to prove to his opponents that he was capable of obtaining victory. Furthermore, ʿAbbās Mīrzā perhaps might have suffered from an undisclosed illness, which Watson implied when he mentions "...the misfortune to hear the death of his English physician, Dr. Cormick, who had attended him during twenty-three years, and who, by his professional skill and his intimate acquaintance with the prince's constitution, might perhaps have

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248 *ibid*, 5.

been the means of saving his life."[249] This could justify why Fatḥ Ali Shah had two crown princes in the same time along the Qājār history: ʿAbbās Mīrzā the first crown prince, and Mohammad Mīrzā, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's elder son, the second crown prince.[250]

## 4.4. ʿABBĀS MĪRZĀ AND THE BRITISH-FRENCH ENMITY

Due to the frequent defeats in the war with Russia, ʿAbbās Mīrzā searched for military aid from the other super powers. Therefore, he attempted to activate an Anglo-Iranian political treaty which was signed between Fatḥ Ali Shah and the envoy of the British government of India, Captain John Malcolm in 1800. However, the British refused to provide the Qājār Empire with such help since the political treaty restricted British aid to the Qājār rulers except in the case of a French or Afghan attack.[251]

ʿAbbās Mīrzā attempted to use imperial rivalry between Great Britain and Napoleonic France, so he turned to France for aid. Although there is no clear evidence in the sources to suggest that he initiated a direct contact with the French, his long letter to Napoleon revealed his enthusiasm for the French proposal.[252] For example, he mediated to free the French envoy that was carrying letter from Napoleon when he was caught and was imprisoned by the Turkish governor of the Erzurum in 1805.[253] Moreover, ʿAbbās Mīrzā honorably received the mission of Mohammad Rafīʿ Afandī, the Turkish envoy, who was carrying a Turkish proposal for an alliance among Iran, France, and the

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249 Robert G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1866), 268-9.

250 Hasan-e Fasaa'i, *Farasnaama-ye Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 222.

251 Denis Wright, *The English among the Persians* (London: Heinemann, 1977), 5.

252 Muṣṭafā M. Ṭabarī, *ʿAbbās Mīrzā Qājār Sharḥ Ḥāl wa Siyāsat wa Khadāmāt-i Ou* (Tehran: Intishārāt Ibn Sīnā, 1353), 134-43.

253 Kamāl M. Ahmad, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh Iran al-Ḥadīth* (Baghdad: Arkaan Publisher, 1985), 34.

Ottomans, in 1807; ʿAbbās Mīrzā sent a letter to the Ottoman deputy, *Qāʾim Maqām Ottomani* and welcomed such an alliance.[254]

According to Fasaaʾī, the negotiations between France and the Qājārs began when Napoleon sent a letter to Fatḥ Ali Shah offering a treaty of friendship in 1806.[255] In this letter, Napoleon stated that the enmity with Russia would be a solid base for French-Iranian cooperation. A treaty with France was concluded when "the French Ambassador, Brigadier-General Gardane, arrived in Tehran with 70 artisans, master artisans, army instructors and engineers"[256] in 1807. According to this treaty, Napoleon promised to return Tiflis, the province of Georgia, and the district of Azerbaijan to the Qājārs by means of war or peace and he would yearly provide the Qājārs with military aid which was to include instructors, engineers and supplies. In their turn, the Qājār rulers should grant permission to the French army to march through Iranian lands in case of a French invasion of India.

Apparently, the French used this treaty professionally to achieve their goals regardless of Iranian interest. First of all, they aborted any Russian attempts to put an end to the war with the Qājār Empire, by promising the Iranians to free all their occupied territories. Since invading India was the main French object at that time, it appears that France was looking for Russian support to accomplish its eastern ambition, so the French might have employed their treaty with Iran to apply strong pressure upon Russia to be more cooperative with them. This purpose was achieved when the two imperial powers, France and Russia signed a friendship treaty of Tilsit in 1807 that also overlooked any benefits to Iran.

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254 Mohammad Nāṣīrī, *Asnād wa Mukātabāt Tārīkh-i Iran (Qājār-i),* Vol. 1 (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān, 1338), 78-9.

255 Hasan-e Fasaaʾi, *Farasnaama-ye Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 118.

256 *ibid*, 120-1.

Since the French-Iranian treaty became worthless, ʿAbbās Mīrzā turned to the British who were also affected by this treaty. Indeed, the treaty of Tilsit caused great chaos among the British who saw it as a direct threat to their interests in India, so both London and India dedicated their efforts to prevent such a threat. As a result, the significance of Iran was restored to an important position in British foreign policy as the first defensive line to protect India from any French advance. However, this attempt to protect the British interest in India via the Iranian gate produced a great rivalry between London and India to dominate British influence over the Qājār Empire, so two British envoys, Malcolm and Jones, were sent to Iran in order to bring about a friendship and alliance treaty with the Qājār rulers. Wright affirms "rivalry between London and India for control over policy towards Persia - a rivalry that was to persist for many years - contributed to the appointment of both men [John Malcolm and Harford Jones]".[257]

Brigadier-General John Malcolm, who had concluded a political treaty with the Qājārs during his visit to the country in 1800, was sent from the British government of India in 1808. When he arrived in Bushier, Malcolm demanded that General Gardane and all French officers should depart from the country before he would advance to the Qājār capital to discuss a new treaty. But the Qājār rulers considered his demand as an attack on their sovereignty, so they refused Malcolm's order. Hence, John Malcolm left for India with no achievement.

The second British envoy was Sir Harford Jones who was sent from England. Sir Harford had been the representative of the East India Company in Baghdad for two years, and he had visited Iran twice when he gained knowledge of

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257 Denis Wright, *the English among the Persians* (London: Heinemann, 1977), 6.

Iranians.[258] Upon his arrival in Tehran in 1809, Sir Harford Jones successfully drafted a preface to a friendship and alliance treaty with the Qājārs which was sent to London to be scrutinized.[259] In 1812, Gore Ouseley, a British Ambassador to the Qājār court, arrived in Tehran and signed a defensive treaty with the Qājārs which was based on Harford's preliminary treaty of 1809. According to this, Great Britain had undertaken to support the Qājār Empire against any European attack and to pay it a subsidy of 200.000 *Tumān* annually from the treasury of the government of India as long as Iran was engaged in war with Russia - which would have implied a British desire to use Iran as a cat's-paw against Russia. The British had agreed to provide Iran with military ammunition such as artillery and muskets and British officers to reorganize and train the Qājār army. In return, the Qājār rulers denounced the treaty with France and expelled all the French representatives from Iran. They also promised to prevent any European power from using Iranian soil to launch any attack against India. Furthermore, the Qājār rulers would be committed to provide military support if the Afghans or any European power attacked India.[260]

'Abbās Mīrzā who officially became in charge of Iranian foreign policy in 1810 might have played a major role in clenching the rivalry between John Malcolm and Sir Harford Jones in favor of the latter, although Watson urged that Harford Jones should also demand that the Qājārs must expel the French mission from Iran as a prior condition of any discussion on the British proposal of a friendship treaty.[261] The Qājār records showed that 'Abbās Mīrzā had sent a letter to Sir Harford Jones in which he discussed the conditions of the Russo-Iranian war.[262] However, there is no mention of any sort of contact between 'Abbās Mīrzā and

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258 *ibid*, 5.

259 *ibid*, 7.

260 For more information refer to Denis Wright, *ibid*, 7.

261 Robert G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1866), 159-60.

262 Mohammad Nāṣirī, ***Asnād wa Mukātabāt-i Tārīkh-i Iran (Qājārī),*** Vol. 1, (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān, 1338), 122-3.

John Malcolm. Therefore, it seems that ʿAbbās Mīrzā had preferred to conduct the negotiations with Sir Harford Jones rather than John Malcolm who might have been considered far too wily by the Qājār rulers from their previous experience with him when he concluded what turned out to be the worthless political treaty with Iran in 1800.

In 1814, the British-Russian rapprochement at that time obliged the British to revise their defensive treaty of 1812 with the Qājār Empire. Mainly, the British aimed to rid themselves of their obligation to train the Iranian army. Therefore, they concluded a new treaty with Iran in 1814 which was known as the Tehran treaty.[263]

The British put a great deal of effort into bringing an end to both Russo-Iranian wars in 1813 and 1828; however, they lingered to aid the Iranians when the latter had claimed the British support in 1826 according to the Tehran treaty. Although the British officers had participated in putting together the plan for the Iranian counter attack against Russia in 1826,[264] they refused to get involved in any further military operations. They reiterated the somewhat ambiguous terms of the Tehran treaty to wriggle out of their duties towards Iran, emphasizing that the Qājār Empire was ineligible to obtain such military aid because it was responsible for initiating the hostility against Russia while the Tehran treaty dictated that British military aid would only be provided in the case of Iran coming under attack.

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263 Denis Wright, *the English among the Persians* (London: Heinemann, 1977), 15.

264 Kamāl M. Ahmad, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh Iran al-Ḥadīth* (Baghdad: Arkaan Publisher, 1985), 65.

## 4.5. IMPLEMENTING THE NIẒĀM-I JADĪD

The Russian invasions of the northern provinces of the Qājār Empire and the humiliating loss that the Qājār army had experienced at Russian hands opened ʿAbbās Mīrzā's eyes to the backward state of the Qājār Empire and motivated him to adopt a series of reforms to modernize his empire. Additionally, it was his hope that such reforms would help to enforce the authority of the central government against the increasing power of the provincial governments. These reforms initially began with the development of the Qājār army; however, ʿAbbās Mīrzā promptly recognized that sufficient modernization of an army requires several noncombatant related changes. As a result, he expanded the reforms into a program entitled the *Niẓām-i Jadīd* which included dispatching students abroad, Introducing printing, and regulating the taxation system. However, for the time being only the military reforms was to be attempted while the rest of the program seemed to be relegated to the back burner.

### 4.5.1. THE MILITARY REFORMS

As we have seen, the Qājār army was following a very backward system in the early 19th century. The traditional chivalric method was dominant throughout the military, not to mention the archaic use of sword and lance. Therefore, it was not surprising that such an army would not be able to stand against such comparatively well-developed troops as the Russians. For that reason, the *Niẓām-i Jadīd* was tentatively applied by ʿAbbās Mīrzā to help bring the Qājār army up to European military standards in a desperate effort to avoid the frequent humiliating defeats that his army had suffered at the hands of the Russian army. However, it is controversial when the first attempt to modernize the Qājār military system took place. On the one hand, Lambton believed that the military reforms were launched for the first time in the Qājār Empire with French assistance, when General Gardane arrived in Tehran in 1807, although she admitted that some of the European approaches were learned from Russian

internees. For example, she stresses, "Some knowledge of European tactics was brought by Russian deserters and renegades, but the first serious attempt at military reform was made under the guidance of French officers who accompanied General Gardane's mission."[265] On the other hand, the Qājār sources revealed that the Qājār army had been armed with modern weapons since 1804, when Fāṭḥ Ali Shah ordered two armories to be built in Azerbaijan and Fars. Fasaa'ī states

> In that year [1804] royal decrees were issued [by Fāṭḥ Ali Shah] to the effect that hundreds pieces of artillery should be cast of copper and brass, with all accessories in the province of Azerbaijan and Fars, and to be delivered after completion. In accordance with this order, the crown prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā had the gun assigned to fabricate under the provision of Mīrzā ʿīsā, known as Mīrzā bozorg vizier at Tabrīz. Hosīn Ali Mīrzā, governor of Fars, had the guns assigned to his province with all the accessories, manufactured under the supervision of Charāgh Ali Khan-e Navā̀ī, vizier of Fars.[266]

Nonetheless, Fasaa'ī gave no explanation for the way that the Qājārs had obtained knowledge of how to manufacture artillery. Apparently, the modernization of the Qājār troops took place prior to the arrival of the French mission, but it was a modest attempt and that was the reason for ʿAbbās Mīrzā seeking further help from the French.

ʿAbbās Mīrzā succeeded in concluding a treaty with the French in 1807, and with the arrival of the French mission, the military reforms began. According to the Franco-Qājār treaty of Finkenstien of 1807, Napoleon agreed to help the Qājār Empire with all necessary means to modernize its troops following European

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265 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 22.

266 Hasan-e Fasaa'i, *Fārsnaama-ya Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 109-10.

guidelines, so he composed his mission to reflect such a commitment. The French General Gardane was appointed to lead this mission, and it consisted of fourteen experts in all military fields such as engineering, mapping, artillery, cavalry and infantry.[267] The French mission assisted with organizing and training the Qājār troops. According to Vanessa Martin, the French suggested that half of the Qājār troops follow the French military model of infantry and artillery.[268] Additionally, the French translated references in military approaches and theories of defense, sketched a geographical map of Azerbaijan, and established a mortar smelter.[269] Indeed, it had a significant impact upon ʿAbbās Mīrzā's program of modernization. First of all, a French officer tutored him himself.[270] Also, he became acquainted with all military matters, since the French mission included officers from all military fields. It is possible that ʿAbbās Mīrzā had outlined his *Niẓām-i Jadīd* according to this experience. However, French-Qājār relations came to an abrupt end with the Franco-Russian peace treaty of Tilsit (1 July 1807) which led to an annulment of the treaty of Finkenstien (4 May 1807) and the expulsion of the French mission.

ʿAbbās Mīrzā then looked for British assistance with the departure of the French and worked towards for the Anglo-Qājār treaty of 1810. By this the British undertook to provide the Qājār Empire with training for officers, and in weapons and munitions.[271] But the British, unlike the French, also sought a political role in the Qājār Empire and avoided engaging heavily in the military reforms, although

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267 Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform In Qājār Iran* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001), 20.

268 Vanessa Martin, An Evaluation of Reform and Development of the State in the Early Qājār Period, *Die Welt Des Islams* 36:1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 3.

269 Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform In Qājār Iran* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001), 20.

270 Vanessa Martin, An Evaluation of Reform and Development of the State in the Early Qājār Period, *Die Welt Des Islams* 36:1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 4.

271 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 22.

some British officers did guide the Qājār troops. According to Ringer, a British envoy was amazed by the progress that the Qājār army had made, observing that English officers led the uniformed army with shaven chins.[272] However, from 1815 their role had been mostly to provide weapons and funds, for they had removed nearly all their officers from Iran because of the dispute with the Qājārs over the subsidy that the British had provided to the Qājārs according to the 1814 treaty. Perhaps the British might have been anxious about provoking Russia, which would foil them from playing the role of peacemaker in the war between Russia and Persia when needed. Also, the British might well have feared that enforcing the Qājār army would threaten their interests in India if the Qājār Empire reached an agreeable peace treaty with Russia and claimed their historical rights in Afghanistan and some Indian territories.

In order to continue military reforms after the withdrawal of the British officers, ʿAbbās Mīrzā took advantage of Napoleon's deterioration in 1814 and employed some of his French officers who had fled to the east.[273] According to Ringer, ʿAbbās Mīrzā ordered a number of elite youth to study military subjects with a French officer in the crown prince's court.[274] This might have reflected ʿAbbās Mīrzā's desire to popularize his program among the Qājār elites, especially tribal chiefs who were historically the military leaders of the army, by involving their youth in the military reforms which could bolster up their traditional authority. Additionally, ʿAbbās Mīrzā dispatched five students to be educated in England in 1815; among them three were assigned to study in military majors such "engineering and fortification, the duties of an artillery and cavalry officer, [and

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272 Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform In Qājār Iran* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001), 23.

273 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 23.

274 Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform In Qājār Iran* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001), 23.

the] art of [a]gunsmith." [275] The variety of subjects that these students were commanded to study reveals that this could be considered an early sign of ʿAbbās Mīrzā's wish to introduce the *Nizām-i Jadīd,* which embraced unarmed reforms.

### 4.5.2. OBSTACLES

As was to be expected, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's attempt to introduce the *Nizām-i Jadīd* encountered robust resistance from Fatḥ Ali Shah's court and the Qājār elites for one reason or another. The tightfisted Shah showed no enthusiasm for these reforms because of its high costs that that forced ʿAbbās Mīrzā to request Sir Harford Jones to mediate with the Shah and enlighten him to the necessity of developing the Azerbaijani forces.[276] ʿAbbās Mīrzā then had to fund his *Nizām-i Jadīd* according to his own financial means; however, they were limited and were almost consumed by the Qājār-Russian wars which had a negative impact on the *Nizām-i Jadīd*. Martin notes, "The main problem behind the relative failure to reform and modernize government was of course financial."[277]

The Qājār princes contested the *Nizām-i Jadīd* because they believed that these reforms would strengthen ʿAbbās Mīrzā's authority and increase his chances for accession. Mohammad Ali Mīrzā, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's brother and the governor of Fars who challenged ʿAbbās Mīrzā's claim to the throne of the Qājār, was also opposed to the *Nizām-i Jadīd* since he assumed that the newly trained army would pave the road for ʿAbbās Mīrzā to seize the throne. He criticized ʿAbbās Mīrzā's military reforms on several occasions and accused him of following the

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275 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 202.

276 Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform In Qājār Iran* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 20-21.

277 Vanessa Martin, An Evaluation of Reform and Development of the State in the Early Qājār Period, *Die Welt Des Islams*, vol.36, no.1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 10.

innovations of disbelievers, forcing ʿAbbās Mīrzā to refer to the *Qur'ān* to justify his actions. Lambton confirms:

> Muhammad Ali Mīrzā, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's brother and rival, attempted to cast odium on the latter and his efforts to form a modern army by seeking to show that in adopting the customs of infidels ʿAbbās Mīrzā was subverting the religion of Islam. In order to counteract this, ʿAbbās Mīrzā caused a passage of the Qur'ān [prepare whatever you could of strength, and of horses to overawe Allāh's foe and yours][278] favorable to the improvement of the means of the defense in the cause of religion to be copied and disseminated through the country.[279]

Military leaders, especially tribal chiefs and governors, also stood against the new order because they believed it was directed at eliminating their own authority. According to the new military reforms, these leaders would lose their previously held positions as the only source of providing the Qājār army with its soldiers. Also, European officers in the desired army would replace them. Financially, the central government would be directly responsible for collecting the taxes according to the new taxation system which would prevent these leaders from gaining their usual profits, not to mention the additional burden that they would pay in the form of new taxes to cover the cost of these reforms.

Additionally, the *ulamā* were resistant to the *Nizām-i Jadīd*. First of all, they had countered the military reform, stating it conflicted with Islamic traditions. In other words, they might have viewed the military reforms as a path to smuggle secular beliefs into the Islamic territories. Also, perhaps the *ulamā* opposed some military customs which seemed to them humiliating to Islamic sensibility or tradition, such as shaving beards and being under a Christian officer's leadership.

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278 *The Qur'ān*, 8:60.

279 Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 104-5.

The *ulamā* too could have seen the military reforms as an enforcement of the role of the central government, which could reduce their power or perhaps be used against them, and that would explain the uprising against ʿAbbās Mīrzā in Tabrīz in 1828 which was led by a Shiʿi *mujtahid*. Although Ringer suggested that the policy of dispatching students abroad had faced no opposition due to the small number engaged,[280] the *ulamā* might have opposed this policy as well for two reasons. First, it would diminish their unchallengeable monopoly over higher education in the Shiʿi seminaries. Second, it would put the student in direct contact with secular ideas, so they might have looked at it as another tool to spread secularism among Muslims.

## 4.6. ʿABBĀS MĪRZĀ AND THE QĀJĀR-OTTOMAN RAPPROCHEMENT

Hostility had been initiated between the Ottoman Empire and Iranians since 1501 when Shah Ismāʿīl had officially announced the Shiʿi *ʾIthnā ʿAshrī madhhab* (Twelver Shiʿism) as the religious sect of the newly established Safavid Empire, which later led to the battle of Chāldīrān between the two Muslim empires in 1514. Since then, sectarian enmity and mistrust has engulfed relations between the Ottoman Empire and whoever ruled the Iranian Plateau.

Iran's repetitive defeats at the hands of Russians, however, had left ʿAbbās Mīrzā with no choice but to seek help from the Ottoman Empire and he did manage to establish a friendly and co-operative relationship with the Ottomans. Such a relationship would be extremely supportive to ʿAbbās Mīrzā in his delirious struggle against Russia and allow him to achieve two targets, tactical and strategic ones. Tactically, the adopted policy would allow him to alleviate and secure Iran's frontiers with the Ottoman Empire, so he could direct all his

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280 Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform In Qājār Iran* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 41.

resources towards the Russian front rather than having to cover two fronts. Strategically, ʿAbbās Mīrzā was depending on the historical hostility of Russia and the Ottomans as the two empires had previously engaged in a number of wars against each other.[281] Therefore, ʿAbbās Mīrzā hoped to reach a mutual defensive agreement with the Ottomans by which he could involve them directly in what he called *Jihād*, the Islamic holy war, against the infidel Russian Empire.

The Qājār's *Asnād*, the state official registry, reveals that ʿAbbās Mīrzā had sent numerous letters to several Ottoman officials of different ranks in the period from 1799 to 1831. The authenticity of these letters is unquestionable since they are well-documented by Dr. Mohammad Naṣīrī in his great work, *Asnād wa mukātabāt-i tārīkh-i Iran (Qājār-i)*.[282] Dr. Naṣīrī presents these letters along with the Qājār and Ottoman registration numbers as well as the original manuscripts. Additionally, all the information, which was extracted from these letters, coincide with what can be found in other historical accounts of this era, and that would avoid any suspicion of forgery.

Although these letters are widely accessible for historians, no single study has utilized them to shed light on ʿAbbās Mīrzā's use of religion in the service of his political rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire. Even Algar in his work, in which he dedicates a whole chapter to ʿAbbās Mīrzā's relationships with the *ulamā*, failed to present such an aspect and paid no attention to the significance that religion played in ʿAbbās Mīrzā's political rapprochement. Consequently, such a tendency to utilize religion in the political process when dealing with the Ottoman Empire as suggested by those letters will be the focus of the next pages. To achieve such a goal, these letters will be thoroughly examined for their explicit and implicit religious indications and analyzed according to their

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281 Since 1676, the Russian and Ottoman empires had engaged in ten wars.

282 Mohammad Naṣirī, ***Asnād wa*** *Mukātabāt-i Tārīkh-i Iran (Qājār-i),* Vol. 1,2 (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān,1338).

historical significance. Therefore, the letters covered will be chronologically divided into two parts according to the major events of the time. Although ʿAbbās Mīrzā had sent more than sixty letters to the Ottoman officials, a few letters will be under the scope of this study since they serve our purpose, while the rest deal with administrative issues and do not have any significance here.[283]

### 4.6.1 THE FIRST RUSSO-IRANIAN WAR (1219/1804-1229/1813)

The Qājār's *Asnād* (official registry) showed that the first contact between ʿAbbās Mīrzā with the Ottomans could be traced back to 1214/1799. In a letter addressed to Sayyid Khalīl Pasha, *Qā'im-Maqām*, and entitled "The war of Iran and Russia,"[284] ʿAbbās Mīrzā updates the Ottoman official with the latest news about the Qājār-Russian conflict, and the victories that the Qājār's army gained against the Russian forces and captured the city of Nakhjawān. He also expresses his happiness at the arrival of the ships that Great Britain had provided to the Ottoman Empire. In his letter, ʿAbbās Mīrzā describes the conflict as a war between *ʿasākir al-Islām* (the soldiers of Islam), who were supported by God, and the infidels. Additionally, he asserts that he is waiting for the happy news of the unification the two Muslim states and promises that he will defend the borders of the two states, the Qājār and Ottoman, and he will push away and subdue the infidels who have strayed, meaning Russia.

This letter is exceptionally significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it reveals that this war in fact had historical roots although the Russo-Iranian war actually started officially in 1804/1219. The Russo-Iranian dispute initiated with the establishment of the Qājār state in 1796 and Aghā Mohammad Shah, the

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283 Dr. Naṣīrī includes sixty seven letters from ʿAbbas Mīrzā to the Ottoman officials in his two volumes work, a few letters will be investigated due to their significant relevance to the subject matter.

284 Mohammad Naṣirī, *Asnād wa Mukātabāt-i Tārīkh-i Iran (Qājār-i)*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān,1338), 26-27.

founder of the Qājār dynasty, had launched two campaigns to retrieve Georgia from the hands of the Russians before he was assassinated in his second campaign in 1797, and the scrimmage that was mentioned in the letter was an example of a series of similar incidents that could have paved the road to war.

Secondly, the letter proves an early inclination to utilize religion to gain the Ottomans' sympathy and involve them in the war against Russia which he could foresee. Therefore, ʿAbbās Mīrzā applies effective terms such as "soldiers of Islam", "strayed", "infidels", "God's support", "unifying the two Muslim states", and his promise to protect the borders of the two empires to invoke an Islamic feeling among the Muslim Ottomans so that they would seek to ally themselves with their fellow Muslim Qājārs against Russia, seeing it as a compelling religious duty.

Thirdly, it implicitly indicates the mistrustful nature of the relationship between the Qājārs and the Ottomans during the early stages of the Qājār dynasty rule. ʿAbbās Mīrzā conveys his pleasure at the news that the Ottomans had received ships which ʿAbbās Mīrzā thought, or might have been convinced by the Ottomans, that were sent as British military aid as part of the British-Ottoman defensive alliance which was reached on 5th January, 1799. In fact the warships were a Russian subsidy in compliance with the Russo-Ottoman defensive alliance which was signed in Istanbul on 23rd December, 1798. According to a secret article of this agreement, Russia had to "provide the Ottoman government with a fleet of twelve ships of line and, if required, an army of 75,000 to 80,000 men."[285]

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285 J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East; A Documentary Record: 1535-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1956), 65.

Finally, the letter is very important since it solves the controversy among scholars of Qājār history over the issue of ʿAbbās Mīrzā's nomination for the position of the Crown Prince. For instance, Lambton claims that this nomination was in 1818,[286] while Naṣīrī insists that ʿAbbās Mīrzā was nominated in 1223;[287] however, Ṭabarī suggests the nomination took place in 1798.[288] This letter, on the other hand, sustains Ṭabarī's argument since ʿAbbās Mīrzā without the position of the Crown Prince could have lacked legitimacy to issue such a letter. Furthermore, it would have been an unwise decision to postpone the nomination of the Crown Prince for a long period since it could have inflamed the conflict over that position among the sons of Fatḥ Ali Shah.

When the war started in 1219/1804 ʿAbbās Mīrzā sent another letter to Mahmud Ṭayyār Pasha, Wālī Erzurum.[289] In this letter, ʿAbbās Mīrzā informs the governor of Erzurum that he led the army of the conqueror, the Shadow of God Fatḥ Ali Shah, in a campaign and first entered "Shurūr-Irawān" (meaning Shīrwān or Iravān), to organize and set straight the city affairs, and then blockaded the infidel Russian forces and their allies (the Georgians) on the 28th Ṣafar 1219/ Friday 8th June, 1804. His intention was to go on to destroy the surrounding forces and head towards Tiflis "to annihilate the souls of the strayed followers of Satan from our borders" (Satan being the Russians and the followers being the Georgians). ʿAbbās Mīrzā informs Mahmud Ṭayyār Pasha that he has dispatched Sayyid Naqd Ali Khan Ghulām to secure peace at the Iranian-Ottoman borders. Finally, he emphasizes that the harmony and rapprochement between the Qājārs and Ottoman was fulfilled and denies any sort of tension.

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286Ann K. Lambton, *Qājār Persia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 13.

287 Mohammad Naṣīrī, *Asnād wa Mukātabāt-i Tārīkh-i Iran (Qājār-i)*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān, 1338), 27.

288 Moṣṭafā M. Ṭabarī, *Abbas Mīrzā Qājār Sharḥ Ḥāl wa Siyāsāt wa Khadamāt-i Ou* (Tehran: Intishaaraat Ibn Sinā, 1353), 21.

289 Mohammad Naṣīrī, *Asnād wa Mukātabāt-i Tārīkh-i Iran (Qājār-i)*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān, 1338), 39-40.

The letter reveals several key issues in the Russo-Iranian war as well as in the Qājār-Ottoman relations. First of all, ʿAbbās Mīrzā attempted to emphasize the sacred Islamic dimension of the war against Russia. For example, he depicted his father, Fatḥ Ali Shah, as *Islam Panāh* (the protector of Islam), and remarkably used a term that was historically known among Sunni caliphs *ẓillu Allah* (the Shadow of God), when he referred to his father, Fatḥ Ali Shah. Although this title literally means the Shadow of God, it technically suggests that the caliph is the representative of God on Earth, unlike the traditional view of the caliph as being a successor of the Prophet (*Khalīfat Rasūl Allah*). This theory, which called the divine right of ruling, had a Sunnī origin and was first introduced to Islamic political literature by the Abbasids during their time of weakness to strengthen their authority by claiming infallibility. ʿAbbās Mīrzā also employed terms that carried religious indications such as *kuffār* (infidels), and *taba ʿat iblīs* (the followers of Satan). His aim might well have been to provoke Islamic fanaticism in the Ottomans as being brothers in religion.

The letter is very significant too as a reflection on ʿAbbās Mīrzā's early desire to engage the Ottoman Empire in his war against Russia. As a result, he initially wanted to guarantee tranquility at the Qājār-Ottoman frontiers; therefore, he nominated Naqd Ali Khan as a peace maker to alleviate any problem arising that could threaten the promising amicable relations with the Ottoman Empire. Thus, ʿAbbās Mīrzā would have proceeded further in his developing rapprochement policy.

Another key issue could be excluded from this letter. It establishes a connection between ʿAbbās Mīrzā and Nadir Shah's policies towards the Ottoman Empire when ʿAbbās Mīrzā surprisingly affirms that the harmony and rapprochement had already happened, and there was nothing that could agitate any quarrel and hostility between the two Islamic states. In fact no agreement had been signed

between the Qājārs and the Ottomans at that time. This suggests that ʿAbbās Mīrzā was aware of Nadir Shah's attempt at Islamic ecumenism when he held the al-Najaf assembly that led to the Kurdān peace treaty of 1746, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Accordingly, this letter could have been a circuitous acknowledgement to that treaty by ʿAbbās Mīrzā.

As shown by the Qājār *Asnād*, ʿAbbās Mīrzā carried on no further no correspondence with the Ottoman Empire since the previous letter in 1804. There were two possible reasons for such a cessation. First of all, the Russian campaigns against Iran resulted in failure in the first year of the war,[290] whereas the Qājār army gained several victories which ʿAbbās Mīrzā might not have mentioned in his contacts. Alternatively he could have suspended the correspondence as he had been disappointed about the Ottoman-Russo defensive alliance treaty of 1805 which was terminated in 1806.[291]

Yet the contacts between ʿAbbās Mīrzā and the Ottomans were resumed in 1807 when Mohammad Shafī Afandī, an Ottoman clerk, arrived at ʿAbbās Mīrzā's court in Tabriz carrying an Ottoman proposal to form a tripartite military alliance: the Ottomans, Qājārs and France against their common enemy, Russia. The political circumstances of the time in the region were emboldening for such a military coalition: Iran had been in a defensive war against Russia to restore its occupied territories since 1804, the Franco-Russian war in Eastern Europe had not yet come to an end, and the Ottomans had been engaged in a war against Russia since 1806 which lasted till 1812.

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290 Murriel Attkin, *Russia and Iran, 1780-1828* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 101.

291 J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East; A Documentary Record: 1535-1914*, Vol.1 (London: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956), 72-77.

For his part, ʿAbbās Mīrzā had been striving for such a move since his first contact with the Ottomans in 1799; hence, he zealously activated several steps to meet the terms of that proposal. First of all, he accepted the Ottoman offer with a swift response to the *Qā'im Maqām Ottomanī*.[292] In his letter, ʿAbbās Mīrzā stresses the necessity of such a coalition between the two Islamic states in the interests of Islam and expresses his willingness to attend the planned conference. Moreover, he signed the treaty of alliance (Finkenstein) with the French in 1807.[293] ʿAbbās Mīrzā also took advantage of this proposed coalition with the Ottomans to agitate the *ulamā* of *ʿatabāt* in Iraq and Isfahan to issue a *fatwa* for *jihād*, the proclamation of holy war, and he collected all these *fatwas* in a volume called *risāla-yi Jihādiya*.[294] Those *fatwas* were extremely significant for ʿAbbās Mīrzā's cause. First of all, his elder brothers, governors of the other Qājār provinces, were reluctant to supply him with his needs of men and ammunitions due to jealousy; however, he employed these *fatwas* to put pressure on them since according to the previous *fatwas* it became a religious duty to support him. ʿAbbās Mīrzā gained wider support too when he mobilized the public with the *fatwas*. It could also be said that he legitimized his rapprochement with the Ottomans from a religious point of view.

Although this plan of the tri-coalition was quickly aborted by the previously mentioned Tilsit treaty between the French and Russians late in 1807,[295] ʿAbbās Mīrzā conveniently neglected the French withdrawal and made every effort to continue in his cooperation with the Ottoman Empire, dispatching a letter to

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292 Mohammad Naṣīrī, *Asnād wa Mūkātabāti Tārikh-i Iran (Qājār-i)*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān, 1338), 78-9.

293 Finkenstein treaty was previously mentioned in more details in this chapter, for more information see J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East; A Documentary Record: 1535-1914*, Vol.1 (London: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956), 77-81.

294 For more information refer to Hamid Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran, 1785-1906, the Role of the Ulama in the Qājār period* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 79-80.

295 J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East; A Documentary Record: 1535-1914*, Vol.1 (London: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956), 77.

Ibrāhīm Pasha,[296] the Governor of Erzurum, in 1810 in which he drew Ibrāhīm Pasha's attention to the security disturbance in the areas of Akhesqa, Bayazīd and Qāriṣ. ʿAbbās Mīrzā warned Ibrāhīm Pasha that the infidel Russians could take advantage of that disturbance to launch an unexpected attack which would make the situation even more complicated. He thus urged him to send one of his army leaders to restore order on the Eastern frontiers informing Ibrāhīm Pasha that he from his side had already dispatched the army of Islam under the leadership of Ali Khan with artillery towards Qāriṣ to be at the service of the Ottomans. ʿAbbās Mīrzā mailed another letter with the same content to Khalīl Pasha,[297] *Qā'im Maqām* Ottoman in 1810.

In July 1810 (*Jumadī al-Akhir* 1225), ʿAbbās Mīrzā contacted Sayyid Mohammad Pasha, the Head of Ottoman Clerks , regarding the mission of Zayn al -ʿĀbidīn Khan who had been dispatched to Istanbul by ʿAbbās Mīrzā in that year to settle a quarrel arising among the Iranian merchants in Istanbul.[298] Despite the fact that the apparent purpose of ʿAbbās Mīrzā's letter was urging Mohammad Pasha to ease Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn's mission, he seized the opportunity to highlight the Qājār-Ottoman rapprochement emphasizing that the unity between the two Islamic states was crucial for the sake of Islam and Muslims. There were two significant points in this letter. First, ʿAbbās Mīrzā again mentions that the efforts of rapprochement move along according to *Sharāyiṭ-i Ahnāmiy-i Mubāraka* (the conditions of auspicious convention) by which he might have been referring to the al-Najaf Covenant that had been reached by Nadir Shah and discussed in the previous chapter. Second, ʿAbbās Mīrzā appears to the first to use the phrase *Jamíiy-i Islamiya* (the Islamic confederation) in modern history. It seems noteworthy since ʿAbbās Mīrzā used the term *Jamía* in its Arabic

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296 Mohammad Naṣīrī, *Asnād wa Mukātabāt-i Tārīkh-i Iran (Qājār-i),* Vol. 1, (Tehran: Entisharāti Kihān, 1338), 103-4

297 *ibid*, 112-13.

298 *ibid*, 111.

meaning by which he could have represented its political and religious characteristics rather than the Persian meaning of the word that limits it in social meaning. ʿAbbās Mīrzā's phrase, *Jamiʿiy-i Islamiya*, became increasingly important when Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghani raised it as a slogan for his *taqrīb* (ecumenist) endeavours in the third quarter of the 19th century.

A new letter was sent to Khalīl Pasha,[299] *Qā'im-maqām*, in 1810 by ʿAbbās Mīrzā in which he begged him to put an end to the obstacles that impeded the military supplies due to the lack of coordination. He was anxious too to keep the Ottomans informed when he enlightens the *Qā'im-maqām* with the Russian offers for peace.[300] General Trumosov had proposed a peace treaty to be concluded between the Qājār state and Russian empire in a long letter to ʿAbbās Mīrzā in 1809,[301] urging ʿAbbās Mīrzā to accept his offer and not to count on the Ottomans and British for support and help; however, the offer was turned down as was mentioned previously.

ʿAbbās Mīrzā intensified his correspondences with the Ottoman Empire in 1813 when he made six contacts with different Ottoman officials: *Shaykh al-Islām* Sayyid Ḥusayn Afandī, *Qā'im Maqām Ṣadārat* Ottoman, Khurshīd Pasha *Ṣadr Aʿẓam* Ottoman, and *Kid-Kudāī dawlat* Ottoman. One could inquire what might have been the cause that had driven ʿAbbās Mīrzā to such conduct. Obviously, ʿAbbās Mīrzā might have become very persistent due to the political change in the Russo-British relations when the Russian entered into a war with France, the long-standing enemy of Britain. As a result, the British played a mediating role and exerted huge pressure on ʿAbbās Mīrzā to put an end to the war with Russia. British pressure very much displeased him so he consequently turned to

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299 *ibid*, 128-30.

300 *ibid*, 82-9.

301 *ibid*, 82-9.

the Ottomans because they were the only available source from which he could gain both political and military support. It has also to be borne in mind that he might have aimed to update the Ottomans with the latest political and military developments in the Iranian arena and assure them to his commitment for the mutual co-operation.

Among all previous mentioned letters, the one addressed to *Shaykh al-Islam* could be considered the most significant. ʿAbbās Mīrzā wrote to the Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire, Sayyid Ḥusayn Afandī, who was the highest ranking religious leader in the Sunni Islamic world at that time.[302] ʿAbbās Mīrzā congratulated him on retaking Medina, the second sacred shrine of Islam and the capital city of the Prophet of Islam where his grave is located, from the Wahhābīs, and hoped that would have opened the path to rescue the holiest city of Mecca as well.

Wahhābism, a fundamentalist Sunni movement, had been established in 1745 in Najd in the centre of the Arabian peninsula; although the opponents of that movement bestowed the term Wahhābism upon it after its founder Shaykh Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, the movement, which follows the *ḥanbalī madhab*, was directed to fight against the increasing performance of polytheism and heterodoxies among Muslims and return to the pure Islam as practiced by the Prophet and his companions.[303] Wahhābism became widely known after it was adopted by the al-Saʿūd family of al-Dirʿiyya, and it eventually controlled most of the Arabian Peninsula and Ḥijāz where the two holiest Islamic shrines,

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302 *ibid*, 149-50.

303 Jan J. Burby, *The Arabian Peninsula,* trans. Najdat Hājar (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-ʿArabiya, 2001), 48.

Mecca and Medina, are located and from which it was spread throughout the Islamic world.[304]

At the command of the Ottomans, the Egyptians launched two campaigns against the Wahhābis. The first campaign was led by Ṭusūn Pasha, the younger son of the Egyptian Sultan Mohammad Ali Pasha, who effectively conquered Medina in 1811 and the rest of Ḥijāz by 1813, though Ṭusūn Pasha was satisfied with his achievements and could not proceed further due to strong Wahhābī resistance. However, the Wahhābīs were finally defeated by Ibrāhīm Pasha, who led the second Egyptian campaign, and succeeded in putting an end to the Wahhābī state in 1818 when he destroyed al-Dir'iya, the Wahhābis' capital city.[305]

This letter is very significant for two reasons. First, it might have been the first time that a Shi'i prince addressed the Sunni's highest cleric (*Mufti*), so it could be considered a historical initiative and a shifting paradigm in the relationships between the two biggest sects of Islam, Sunnis and Shi'ites - although Nadir Shah had predated 'Abbās Mīrzā in making contact with the Sunni *ulamā*, he never had direct contact with such a higher clerical rank. Second, it reveals the hostility between the Qājār Empire and this fundamentalist Sunni group which 'Abbās Mīrzā called *kuffār* (infidels), *mushrikīn* (polytheists), ending his letter by calling the Wahhābīs Bedouins (A'rāb, singular A'rābī) to emphasize their hypocrisy according to the *Qur'anic* verse that criticizes the Bedouins for being the most extreme infidels and most hypocritical.[306] This was an extreme view because 'Abbās Mīrzā might have considered these fundamentalists a real threat

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304 al-Jamīl al-Ḥaj, *al-Mawsūa al-Muyassara fī al-Fikr al-Falfalsafī wa al-Ijtimāī* (Beirut: Maktabat Libnān, 2000), 675.

305 For more details refer to Mohamad M. Abdullah, *Imārāt al-Sāḥil wa Umān wa al-Dawla al-Sūūdiya al-Ūlā: 1793-1818,* Vol. 1 (Cairo: al-Maktab al-Maṣrī al-Ḥadīth, 1978), 247-253.

306 The *Qur'ān*, 9: 97.

to his efforts to unify the Muslims' endeavors against the enemies of Islam. In other words, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's aim, from his efforts of rapprochement with the Ottomans, was to achieve the unity of all Muslims regardless of their sectarian differences, which he believed to be the only method to stop the new Russian crusade against Islamic territories. However, the fundamentalists awakened a sectarian enmity when they disbelieved other Islamic sects, and their harsh expiatory policy led them to conduct a massacre against the Shiʿite holy shrine of Karbala on April 21, 1802.[307] The expansion of this extreme movement began to threaten Oman, so the Sultan Sayyid Saʿīd, the Imam of Oman and Masqat, who had come under the Qājār protection by paying annual tribute to the governor of Fars for several years, asked for Qājār military assistance against the Wahhābīs from Ḥusayn Ali Mīrzā *Farmān Fārmā* (governor) of Fars . Ḥusayn Ali Mīrzā accordingly dispatched some of the Qājār troops to Oman, and Ṣādiq Khan-i Qājār Devehlū was entrusted with their leadership. The Qājārs, along with the Oman Imam's force, encountered the Wahhābīs in 1810. Despite the fact that the Wahhābis had the upper hand at the beginning of the battle, the Qājār troops and the imam's forces successfully defeated the Wahhābī army and pushed them back to Najd.[308]

### 4.6.2. THE TREATY OF ERZURUM I OF 1823

Finally, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's endeavors yielded few tangible results when the treaty of Erzurum I concluded the negotiations between the Ottoman Empire and the Qājār Empire in 1823, and was signed by ʿAbbās Mīrzā and Raʾūf Pasha, the commander of the Eastern Ottoman troops in the Turkish city of Erzurum.[309] Indeed, the treaty was no more than a re-ratification of the *Zahāb* peace

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307 For more details see Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay* (New York: Oneonta, 2002), 24-5; also, Hasan-e Fasaa'i, *Fraasnaama-ya Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 103.

308 Hasan-e Fasaa'i, *Fraasnaama-ya Naaseri*, trans. Heriber Busse, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 134-5.

309 For more information refer to Mohammad Ḥ . al-ʿAydarus, *al-ʿAlāqāt Al- ʿArabiyya Al-Irāniyya 1921-171* (Kuwait: Dhāt al-salāsel, 1985), 110-12.

agreement between the Ottomans and the Safavids of 1369 that had also been re-confirmed by Ahmad Pasha and Nadir Shah in 1746 under the title of Kurdān,[310] as was discussed in chapter 2. Although this treaty temporarily put a halt to the clashes on the borders between the two empires, it fell short of ʿAbbās Mīrzā's ambitions as he was looking for a political and militarily strategic coalition with the Ottomans against their common enemy, Russia. However, this treaty was very significant for two reasons. First, it calmed the tension on the Qājār-Ottoman borders, so ʿAbbās Mīrzā was able to give his full attention to the war with Russia. Second, it canonized the treaty of Kārūn that had been signed between the Ottoman Empire and Nadir Shah in 1746, which had established the mutual frontiers between the Ottomans and the Afshārs who ruled the Iranian plateau at that time.[311]

## 4.7. ʿABBĀS MĪRZĀ AND THE UṢŪLĪ ULAMĀ

As discussed in the previous chapter, the most significant outcome of the al-Najaf conference was the re-emergence of *uṣūlī* Shiʿism in the two sacred shrines of Iraq, al-Najaf and Karbala that had been under a strong *akhbārī* influence. It was during the 1760s and 70s that *uṣūlī* Shiʿism had succeeded in asserting itself in those cities over the *akhbārīs* mainly thanks to the efforts of al-Waḥīd al-Bahbahānī who managed to impose the logical tendency (*ʿaql*) of the *uṣūlī* school upon the traditional akhbāri doctrine of *naql* (transmission) after a series of long debates with the *akhbārī ulamā*, mainly Shaykh Yusuf al-Baḥrānī.[312] Perhaps the death of the latter as the senior *akhbārī* in 1772 may have hastened the decline of *akhbārī* influence in Iraqi shrines. Also, the *uṣūlī*

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310 J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the near and Middle East: a documentary record: 1535-1914*, vol. 1 (Princeton: D.Van Nostrand Co., 1956), 21 and 51.

311 Mohammad Ḥ. al-ʿAydarus, *al-ʿAlāqāt Al-ʿArabiyya Al-Irāniyya 1921-171* (Kuwait: Dhāt al-salāsel, 1985), 110.

312 Ali Ḥusayn al-Jābirī, *al-Fikr al-Salafī ʿind al-Shiʿa al-Ithnā ʿAshriyya: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya limawqif al-Fikr al-Salafī fi al-Islām ʿUmūman wa ʿind al-Ithnā ʿAshriyya ʿalā wajh al-Khuṣūṣ min Manṭiq wa Falsafat al-Yūnān* (Qum: Dār Ḥayā al-Iḥyā, 1409), 393-94.

were sustained by Karīm Khan Zand's occupation of al-Basra that lasted for three years (1776-79) when he imposed the Shi'i traditions of prayers and Friday sermon.[313] However, the *akhbārī* preserved to some extent an influential existence in Bahrain, Qaṭīf and Aḥsā.[314]

At the start of the 19th century, the *uṣūlī ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism had to deal with two major challenges. One was the rise of the Wahḥābī movement founded by Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb in Najd in the Arabian Peninsula during the second half of the 18th century. He had condemned the popular practices of glorifying and visiting the tombs and shrines of the Prophet's family members and companions.[315] As a result, Twelver Shi'ism became one of the prime targets for this movement. Indeed, the Wahhābī campaign led by Sa'ūd ibn Abd al-'Azīz sacked the holy city of Karbala on 22nd April, 1802, that corresponded to the 18th of *dhī al-Ḥijja* 1216, the day of the Shi'i celebration of *Eid al-Ghadīr*,[316] on which the Shi'ites believed Imam Ali was publicly entrusted by the Prophet Mohammad to be his successor. The invading troops plundered the treasures of the shrines of Imam Ḥusayn and his brother 'Abbās, demolished the tombs and conducted a massacre against the people of Karbala that took the lives of 5,000 victims.[317] The booty from Karbala might have attracted the Wahhābis for more treasures when they attacked al-Najaf; however, the people of the city who had been put on high alert by the news of the massacre of Karbala, valiantly defended their city after heavy fighting with the *Ahab's*.[318] Four years later, the Wahhābīs launched a second attack against al-Najaf, but the city was saved by

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313 Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 15.

314 Ali Ḥusayn al-Jābirī, *al-Fikr al-Salafī 'ind al-Shi'a al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya limawqif al-Fikr al-Salafī fi al-Islām 'Umūman wa 'ind al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya 'alā wajh al-Khuṣūṣ min Manṭiq wa Falsafat al-Yūnān* (Qum: Dār Ḥayā al-Iḥyā, 1409), 394.

315 John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University press, 2003), 333.

316 Ali al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt Ijtimā'iyya min Tārīkh al-'Irāq al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 1 (Qum: Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1413), 190.

317 John Barrett Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795-1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 100.

318 Ali al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt Ijtimā'iyya min Tārīkh al-'Irāq al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 1 (Qum: Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1413), 191.

the firm resolution of its people and the courageous and wise leadership of Shaykh Ja'far al-Janāḥī, who succeeded in mobilizing both the students of the seminaries and ordinary people to drive back the attacking Wahhābīs.[319] The Qājār state took a firm stand against the massacre of Karbala that was set out in the harsh letter sent by Fatḥ Ali Shah to the *Wālī* (governor) of Baghdad. In it he threatened Sulaymān Pasha that the Iranian troops would march against him and attack Baghdad if he failed to make a commitment to punish the Wahhābīs, restore the stolen treasures, free the prisoners and compensate the families of the victims. Sulaymān Pasha, aiming to satisfy the Shah and avoid any clash with the Qājāri army, promised to compensate lives and properties lost and put to death the local commander of the Turkish garrison of Karbala.[320]

However, Fatḥ Ali Shah (1795-1833) despite his supportive stand with the Shi'ites of the Iraqi shrines against Wahhābī aggression, himself became second challenge for *uṣūlī* Shi'ism since his succession to the Qājār throne he had shown a noticeable tendency towards *akhbārism,*[321] so he welcomed the visit of Mīrzā Mohammad al-Akhbārī to Iran and granted him a prestigious status at his court. This alarmed the *uṣūlī ulamā*, namely Shaykh Ja'far al-Janāḥī, who in his response to the developing relationship between Mīrzā Mohammad al-Akhbārī and Fatḥ Ali Shah composed a treatise entitled *Kāshif al-ghaṭā 'an ma'āyib Mīrzā Mohammad 'adū al-'ulamā*[322] and sent it as a gift along with an authorization to Fatḥ Ali Shah to rule Iran on his behalf as a representative of the

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319 Ali Ḥusayn al-Jābirī, *al-Fikr al-Salafī 'ind al-Shi'a al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya limawqif al-Fikr al-Salafī fi al-Islām 'Umūman wa 'ind al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya ʿalā wajh al-Khuṣūṣ min Manṭiq wa Falsafat al-Yūnān* (Qum: Dār Ḥayā al-Iḥyā, 1409), 397.

320 Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq: the 'ulama' of Najaf and Karbalá* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121-22.

321 Ali Ḥusayn al-Jābirī, *al-Fikr al-Salafī 'ind al-Shi'a al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya limawqif al-Fikr al-Salafī fi al-Islām 'Umūman wa 'ind al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya ʿalā wajh al-Khuṣūṣ min Manṭiq wa Falsafat al-Yūnān* (Qum: Dār Ḥayā al-Iḥyā, 1409), 398.

322 Since then Shaykh Ja'far became known as Kāshif al-Ghaṭā.

Hidden Imam.[323] Under pressure from the *uṣūlīs*, Mīrzā Mohammad had to leave Iran and settled in Kāẓimayya in Iraq where he was killed along with his elder son in 1816.[324] The expulsion of the Akhbārī did not end the tense relationship between the *uṣūlī ulamā* and the Shah, who in his efforts to weaken the influence of *uṣūlīsm* in his state summoned Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā'ī[325] to Tehran and gave the order that all the demands of Shaykh al-Aḥsā'ī must be executed; as a result, Shaykh Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghaṭā had to travel to Iran in an attempt to restrain al-Aḥsā'ī's influence on the Shah, who refused to receive him.[326]

Under these circumstances, the *uṣūlī ulamā* had no choice but to approach crown-prince 'Abbās Mīrzā who enjoyed vast authority to the extent that he was deemed the *de facto* ruler of the Qājār realm at the time. 'Abbās Mīrzā, in spite of the tentative allegation of being a devotee of Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā'ī,[327] seemed to be interested in securing the *ulamā*'s support for his ongoing struggle with his elder brothers who were striving to destabilize his authority and questioning his policies; he may have aimed also to take advantage of the influential role of the *uṣūlī ulamā* on the community to mobilize the Iranian populace for the war against the Russian invaders - the war in which he alone was in charge - and support his efforts, namely the implementation of the

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323 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shi'i min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Dār ash-Shūrā wa al-ilām: London, 1997), 394.

324 Ali Ḥusayn al-Jābirī, *al-Fikr al-Salafī 'ind al-Shi'a al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya limawqif al-Fikr al-Salafī fi al-Islām 'Umūman wa 'ind al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya ala wajh al-Khuṣūṣ min Manṭiq wa Falsafat al-Yūnān* (Qum: Dār Ḥayā al-Iḥyā, 1409), footnote no. 1, 398.

325 Al-Aḥsā'ī claimed to have direct connection with the infallible Imams through visions, and later he introduced his theory of *al-Rukn al-Rābi'* (the fourth corner) in which he claimed that there should be one perfect Shi'a at any time who must be imitated as he represents the fourth pillar of Imān after God, Prophet, and the Imam. Al-Aḥsā'ī's followers are known as Ṭāifat al-Shaykhiyya; for more information about the Shaykhiyya doctrine refer to Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shi'i min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Dār ash-Shūrā wa al-ilām: London, 1997), 396-97.

326 *Ibid*, 396.

327 327 Hamid Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran, 1785-1906, the Role of the Ulama in the Qājār period* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 74, note no. 2.

*Niẓām-i Jadīd* which according to Algar faced no resistance or critique from any of the *ulamā*.[328] Cole notes that

> Usulism, with its doctrine that the ulama can legitimate Friday prayers (said, in fact, in the name of the secular ruler) and its position on state-related functions such as defensive holy war, proved more amenable to the need of the rising rulers in Iran...[329]

ʿAbbās Mīrzā was keen to appear as a just ruler who was religiously devoted, paying serious intention to the matters of *sharīʿa* and the affairs of his subjects in order to assure the support of the *ulamā*; Algar states

> He attended Friday prayer in the congregational mosque of Tabriz; and every Thursday evening the ulama would meet at his invitation in one of the mosques of Tabriz to discuss the implementation of the sharīʿat. Any case that had not reached settlement elsewhere was referred to these meetings for an authoritative judgement.[330]

In view of that, it might appear that the *uṣūlī ulamā* not only supported ʿAbbās Mīrzā's rapprochement with the Ottomans but also played an effective role in its process, and there were a number of indications supporting such a belief. Initially, enhanced relations between the Qājārs and Ottmans corresponded with the interests of the Iraqi Shiʿites whose major concern was the increasing threat of the Wahhabis, themselves taking advantage of the growing weakness of the Mamlūks' authority in Baghdad. Accordingly, the Qājār-Ottoman rapprochement would positively reflect on the security of the shrines in Iraq, for co-operation between the two states could commit the Sunni Ottomans to provide the

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328 *ibid*, 76.

329 Juan R. Cole, "Shiʿi Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18:1 (1985), 27.

330 Hamid Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran, 1785-1906, the Role of the Ulama in the Qājār period* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 74.

necessary shelter for the Shi'ites of Iraq from the attacks of the Sunni Wahhābī, especially as the Shi'i protectorate state of the Qājārs was passing through a crucial stage in its war with the Russians. This view was confirmed in the letter of 'Abbās Mīrzā to the Ottomans regarding the Wahhābī danger discussed above. Also, the strong link between 'Abbās Mīrzā and the *uṣūlī ulamā* that lasted until the humiliating defeat of 1828 during which time 'Abbās Mīrzā committed himself to discuss with the *ulamā* all the related issues of the *sharī'a*, and the principle of Muslim unity is one of the most important purposes of *sharī'a*; hence, the *ulamā* could well have taken part in composing 'Abbās Mīrzā's letters to the Ottomans. For instance, the role of the *ulamā* could be suggested by the noticeable religious contents of the letters of the layman young crown prince where several religious terms were employed – such as *jihād, jami'iyy-i Islāmiyya, kuffār* (Russians), *taba'at iblīs al-ḍālīn, thughūr* (frontiers), *ijtihād, walī al-'Amr* and *dawlat al-Islām*. Moreover, there is the *fatwa* that Shaykh Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghaṭā issued during the war against Russia in which he, as the representative of the Imam, authorized Fatḥ Ali Shah to conduct *Jiḥād* (holy war) against the infidel invaders.[331] Having in mind the consideration that *Jihād* is absolutely prohibited during the occultation of the Imam according to the doctrine of Twelver Shi'ism, the only exception to this rule is the state of defense when an enemy is critically threatening the *bayḍat al-Islām* (the heart of the Islamic stronghold), so Shaykh Ja'far perhaps wanted in this *fatwa* to embarrass the Ottoman Sultan, who as the caliph of the Muslims was legally responsible to defend the *dār al-Islām* (Islamic dominion). Thus, the Shaykh ultimately aimed to enforce 'Abbās Mīrzā's endeavors striving for military coalition with the Ottomans against the mutual infidel enemy. Another significance of this *fatwa* lies in the fact that it revealed the Shaykh's total satisfaction and full support for the crown-prince's policies since he was single-

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331 Abdul Aziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamite Jurisprudence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 21-2; see also Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending discourse in Shi'i Law on the Doctrine of the Wilayat Al-faqih", *Iranian Studies* 29:3, (1996), 234.

handedly administering the war. Indeed, ʿAbbās Mīrzā utilized this *fatwa* as a pressurizing means against his brothers who maintained their religious suspicions against his military reforms and always delayed their response to his frequent pleas for aid.[332]

Yet, the appreciation and respect that ʿAbbās Mīrzā had expressed to the *ulamā* was turned upside-down after the humiliating defeat which his troops suffered at the hands of the Russian army in the war of 1826, after which he fled the battle field leaving the capital of his governing province, Tabriz, to fall without noticeable resistance into Russian hands. ʿAbbās Mīrzā placed the disappointing outcome of this war on the shoulders of the *ulamā* for failing to do their assigned duty, which was to use their influence to mobilize the people, and surrendering the city of Tabriz after such a short Russian siege. As a result, he sent a letter to his *Qā'im-maqā* (prime minister) stating his exceedingly low opinion of the *ulamā* and demanded that he should immediately disassociate himself from them. Algar affirmed that

> Ultimately, Abbās Mīrzā came to regret bitterly his policy of close association with the *ulamā*. Writing to Mīrzā Abu-l-Qāsim, the *qā'im maqām,* after the surrender of Tabriz to the Russians by Mīrzā Fattāḥ, he ordered him to cease all associations with the *ulamā* to "shake himself free of their dust," and instead to cultivate the company of capable men of affairs. The *ulamā* were no more useful "than overfed horses who have forgotten their function of running.[333]

Since the founding of *uṣūlī* Shiʿism in the early 16th century, al-Karakī's theory of *wilāya āma* of the *fuqahā* had dominated *uṣūlī* political thought in which the

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332 Hamid Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran, 1785-1906, the Role of the Ulama in the Qājār period* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 80.

333 *ibid*, 80.

political authority of the *ulamā*, as the representatives of the Mahdi, was accredited by the *ulamā* themselves to the temporal rulers. However, the *ulamā* felt aggrieved by their bitter experience with Fatḥ Ali Shah and his son and crown-prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā, when the former had tried to undermine the influence of *uṣūlī ulamā* in Iran by corresponding with their historical enemy, the *akhbārīs,* while the latter utilised their influential status to serve his own cause before he dumped them in a disgraceful way. Such an experience may have motivated *mullā* Ahmad al-Narāqī (d. 1828) to develop his own political theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh* (the Guardianship of the jurists) that he introduced in his work *ʿAwā'id al-ayām fī bayān qawāʿid al-aḥkām* (literally, the Revenues of Days in Declaration of the Rules of Provisions). Unlike al-Karakī's, al-Narāqī argued that "only the qualified jurist [*mujtahid*] could be the legitimate ruler in the absence of the Imam [*ghayyba*], and that government led by the jurist would be the only legitimate kind."[334] He also granted the qualified *mujtahid* with the same authority as the Prophet and the Imam unless otherwise excluded by clear evidence or the census of the *ulamā*.[335] To authenticate his argument, Shaykh al-Narāqī provided nineteen different valid evidence from the Prophet and the Imams' *ḥadīths* and narratives.[336] For example, he cited two prophetic *ḥadīths* as transmitting proofs that formed the legal basis for *fuqahā* ruling. In one of the *ḥadīths*, the Prophet said: "O God, be merciful to my caliphs... who will come after me and narrate my *ḥadīths* and traditions"; while the Prophet asserted in the other *ḥadīth* that "the *ulamā* are the inheritors of the Prophets".[337] Nevertheless, al-Narāqī's theory was said to be ignored due to the political

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334 Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of the New Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 117; see also, Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shiʿi min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīhh* (Dār al-Shūrā wa al-İlām: London, 1997), 400-3.

335 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qabānchī, *al-Madhab al-Siyāsī fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā, 1985), 202.

336 Shahrough Akhavi, "contending discourses in Shiʿi Law on the Doctrine of Wilayat Al-faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29: 3-4, (1996), 234.

337 Ahmad al-Kātib, *Taṭawwur al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Shiʿi min al-Shūrā ilā Wilāyat al-Faqīhh* (Dār al-Shūrā wa al-Iʿlām: London, 1997), 401.

circumstances at the time – when the *ulamā* were in a weak position.[338] Indeed, al-Narāqī's theory did not even receive sufficient acceptance from the *ulamā* of his time; on the contrary, it raised controversy among the *uṣūlī ulamā* over his logical evidences that have lasted till recent days. Imam Khomeini, who had adopted and developed this theory since the late 1960s, was reluctant to accept al-Narāqī's argument without further research, as will be illustrated in the next chapter.

## 4.8. CONCLUSION

In short, the political motives of both ʿAbbās Mīrzā and the *uṣūlī ulamā* had dominated any ecumenical efforts with the Ottomans and totally overshadowed the religious dimensions of the issue at this stage. The rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire was merely a policy among other measures that the young Qājārī Crown-prince conducted to legitimize his nomination for the post in the light of the robust challenge that this nomination received from his elder half-brothers. He also wished to accomplish his mission to protect his country by such measures. On the other hand, the involvement of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in this process was a result of their quest to strengthen their influence in the Qājār court and thus halt Fatḥ Ali Shah's frequent attempts to replace the *uṣūlī* orientation of Persia with *akhbārism,* not to mention that any Qājār-Ottoman rapprochement would commit the Ottomans to provide Twelver Shiʿism with the needed protection for the shrines of Iraq and their Shiʿites against the growing threat from the Wahhābīs.

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338 Hamid Enayat, "Iran Khumayni's Concept of the 'Guardianship of Jurisconsult," in James P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 162-3.

# Chapter 5

# IMAM KHOMEINI AND THE ISLAMIC UNITY

## 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters explored the attempts at Islamic unity and *al-Taqrīb* that had been officially conducted by the temporal monarchical regimes. This phase of Islamic unity and *al-Taqrīb*, however, has been activated since the success of the Islamic revolution in 1979, (almost a century since the previous attempt by ʿAbbās Mīrzā), by the theocratic state. In unprecedented status since the time of Imam Ali, the first Imam of the *ʾIthnā ʿAshrī madhhab* (Twelver Shiʿite sect), Imam Khomeini, the founding father of the Islamic Republic, enjoyed both the highest political and religious authority as he occupied the position of *rahbariyya* (political leadership) and was *al-marjiʿ al-Aʿalā li-attaqlīd* of the Shiʿite (the highest source of imitation) at the same time so both authorities were combined in Khomeini's invented position of *walī al-faqīh*; this compound Arabic term has been converted to English in several forms such as "supreme-leadership," "the rule of jurisconsult," "guardianship of the jurist," "mandate of the jurist," "trusteeship of the jurist," "the discretionary authority of the jurist," "and the governance of the jurist."[339] The office of the *walī faqīh* still holds a position at the peak of the state's authorities in Iran and is now occupied by the Imam's successor, Sayyid Ali Khāminaʾī. However, the new supreme-leader no longer enjoys the same religious legitimacy as the Imam, due to the alteration of the constitution in 1989 in which the condition of religious *Marjiʿiyya* was dropped from the qualifications of this position, even with the absolute authority that he has obtained by the thereto amendments.

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339 Shahrough Akhavi, "contending discourses in Shici Law on the Doctrine of Wilayat Al-faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 3-4, (Summer/Fall 1996), 231.

In this theoretically based and revolutionary-oriented phase, the endeavours of Islamic unity and *al-Taqrīb* have been stimulated by the use of classical religious motivations and slogans that were evident in previous attempts such as:

1. All Muslims practice the five pillars of Islam: (1) *al-Tawḥīd*, the belief in one God; (2) *Nubuwa*, the belief in the prophecy of Mohammad; (3) *Iqāmat al-Ṣalah*, the practice of the five daily prayers; (4) *Itā' al-Zakāt,* alms giving; and (5) *Ḥijj al-Bayt*, the pilgrimage to the holy sites of Ḥijāz, Mecca and Medina.

2. All Muslims fundamentally share and profoundly sanctify the same Book, the Holy *Qur'ān,* as the main source of legislation, and pray in the same direction to the *qibla*.

Additionally, there are new challenges that are facing the Islamic nation in the contemporary time:

1. The Palestine Question

The occupation of Palestine in 1948 has become the major challenge that faces the Islamic nation in modern history and which motivates its calls for Islamic unity to liberate what Palestinians regard as their capital, Jerusalem, a city shrouded in holiness for all Muslims regardless of their sectarian differences since it was the place from which the Prophet Mohammad ascended to the seven heavens, and the first *qibla* for Muslims. In addition it is where the third Islamic *Ḥaram* (inviolable precinct), *al-Aqṣā* mosque is located.[340] Hence, the sanctity of Jerusalem is reflected in its Arabic name *al-Quds,* which means Holiness, derived from the Arabic infinitive *qaddāsa* (sanctify or being sacred). Unlike the previous attempts, the Palestinian question has significantly become a new issue of unity

340 The first Ḥaram of Mecca where the Ka'ba (bayt Allah al-Ḥarām) allocated, and the second Ḥaram is the Nabawi mosque where the Prophet Muhammad is buried, located in Medina.

for all Muslims since the second half of the 20th century. The Iranian scholar, Zāmil Sa'īdī states:

> The Palestine question is an Islamic as well as Arab issue, and it concerns all Muslims who would never relinquish it....The Palestinian case could become a point of unity among Arabs on the one hand and Arabs and other Muslims on the other ...The unifying dangers that were the outcome of occupying Palestine, that threaten the Arab countries and the Iranian Islamic Republic as well as other Islamic countries, could unify these countries in their efforts to protect their national and regional security and defend their sacred principles and values for which Palestine and noble *Quds* are the vanguards.[341]

2. The Propagation for the Restoration of Political Unity of the Islamic *Umma* under the Rule of the *Fuqahā*

The call for Islamic unity at this stage has been motivated by the Western hold on the Islamic World that divided the Islamic nation into several weak countries in order to exploit its wealth and ease its control. In his effort to find a resolution to such a miserable situation, Imam Khomeini reconsidered the early years of Islam, during the time of the Prophet and his Rightly-Guided Caliphs, as the Golden Age and the ideal to which Muslims referred to devise the provisions of Islam. Imam Khomeini reached the conclusion that Islam with all its aspects represents a combination between religion and politics, as indeed it was during the idealistic era when the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs assumed the religious authority as well as the political leadership. He also identified that the power and dignity of Islam are based on a triangle of three correlative props: the united state that would enforce the Islamic provisions and protect the unity of the Islamic nation; the qualified *faqīh* whose presence is necessary to interpret

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341 Zāmil Sāīdī, *al-'Alāqāt al-'Arabiyya al-Iraniyya: al-itijāhāt ar-rāhina wa afāq al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥḥda al-'Arabiyya, 1996), 642.

the Islamic provisions; and a united nation which is able to defend itself. Accordingly, Imam Khomeini developed what later turned out to be a somewhat unclear political scheme, which he first introduced in his work *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, to revive those qualities, but he put it into practice soon after the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. The Imam's political scheme is basically an attempt to revive the concept of the leadership as it was practiced during the time of the prophecy and the rightly-guided caliphs, but in a modern modified form in which the Imam acknowledged the political status quo of the Islamic nation and because it was divided into several national-states, he called for the establishment of an Islamic federal state to include all the present Islamic countries. He also recognised the sensitivity that the concept of the caliphate might cause for the Shi'i Muslims; hence, in order to attract the attention of his Shi'i followers and gain their support, he borrowed the term of *wilāyat-i faqīh* from the heritage of Shi'ism to avoid any direct mention of the caliphate.

Remarkably, the IR totally disregarded the previous efforts made under the temporal state while it had an odd attitude towards the individual attempts that were initiated by Iranian Shi'ite clerics in the twentieth century, such as al-Afghani and al-Qumī. Al-Afghani was widely respected and highly admired among the governing cleric elite in revolutionary Iran.[342] However, the IR dealt differently with al-Qumī who lived in Tehran after the revolution. Al-Qumī, the founder of *Dār al-Taqrīb* in Cairo, not only was neglected but also aggravated till he left the country for France, where he died in a mysterious car accident in 1991.[343] Such an attitude raises a question about the motivations that stood behind this neglect of al-Qumī by the IR. Shaykh al-Qumī's strong ties with the Pahlavī's regime could have been the reason for the ambivalence of the

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342 The Islamic Republic honoured al-Afghani in the 100th anniversary of his death in 1996 for which Majma' al-Taqrīb held a conference and published a biography of his life and achievements.

343 For more information refer to Ayatollah Muntaẓirī's memoir at <http://www.ansar.org/arabic/montaziri03.htm>

revolutionary clerics towards him.[344] However, Brunner defended al-Qumī and stated that he was despatched to Cairo by the Grand Ayatollah Ḥusayn Borujerdī according to Ayatollah Montaẓirī, who identified al-Qumī as Ayatollah Borujerdī's deputy-at-large in the Islamic World.[345] Muntaẓirī personally attended a meeting between Ayatollah Borujerdī and al-Qumī in which the latter was demonstrating the achievements of *Dār al-Taqrīb*.[346] Al-Qumī's close relations with Ayatollah Borujerdī provided a solid ground for the IR's misbehaviour since he was one of the *fuqahā'* who strongly disagreed and resisted the direct involvement of clerics in politics and the state.[347] Such a position was not only heavily criticized by Imam Khomeini but he also encouraged the Iranian youths to attack "the *fuqahā* of the court" who preached for this submissive view.[348] As a matter of fact, Imam Khomeini stressed on a number of occasions that he condemned such a view, and approached Ayatollah Borujerdī along with Ayatollah al-Ḥijja, Ayatollah al-Ṣadir and Ayatollah Khunsārī, inviting them to stand against it.[349] In addition, another reasonable interpretation for the IR's behaviour towards al-Qumī is that the IR's leadership could have been attempting to deny any connection with *Dār al-Taqrīb* especially at the outset when it was accused by some Sunni hardliners[350] of preaching for Shi'ism among a Sunni dominant population,

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344 Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavī Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 99 and 103.

345 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004),141 note (86); an Arabic version of al-Montaẓirī's memoirs was published in five series in the Middle East Newspaper, check <http://www.ansar.org/arabic/montaziri01.htm>

346 <http://www.ansar.org/arabic/montaziri03.htm>

347 According to Ayatollah Muntaẓirī, Imam Khomeini's support and protection of Nawāb Ṣafawī and his organization Fidā'iyīn Islam was a point of dispute between Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Borujerdī, See <http://www.ansar.org/arabic/montaziri03.htm>

348 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūmah al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981), 132-145.

349 ibid, 139-40.

350 Muḥib al-Dīn Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Khuṭūṭ al-'Arīḍa li al-Uṣūl allatī qām 'Aalayhā Dīn al-Shī'a al-Imamiyya al-Ithnā Ashʿ wa*, edit. Mohammad Naṣīf (Publisher and place (NA), 1380/1960); also, Nāṣir bin Abdullah al-Ghafarī, *Maṡalat al-Taqrīb Bayn ahl-Assuna wa al-Shī'a, vol. 1,2* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭība li al-Nashir wa al-Tawzī', 1413/1992).

although the IR honoured Shaykh Mahmud Shaltūt,[351] al-Qumī's Sunni counterpart in *Dār al-Taqrīb*, for his genuine efforts to support Islamic unity when he issued the unprecedented *fatwa* in 1959 proclaiming the Twelver Shi'ite as the fifth considerable school of Islamic jurisprudence that a Muslim might follow in worship. However, the attitude towards *Dār al-Taqrīb* has been dramatically changed under the leadership of Khomeini's successor, Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī when he expressed "the sincere wish to found *Dār al-taqrīb bayn al-madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* (House of Reconciliation between the Islamic Sects) and [I] want to realize this wish,"[352] and the journal of the newly established institution was named *Risālat al-Taqrīb* after al-Qumī's journal; yet the name of Shaykh Mohammad Taqī al-Qumī has been avoided unless it is inevitable.[353]

## 5.2. IMAM KHOMEINI'S POLITICAL SCHEME: A STRIVE FOR A THIRD WAY

> *At this great pilgrimage gathering, an occasion that should serve to benefit Islam and the Muslims, we see that certain poison pens in the service of imperialism have for several years been seeking to sow dissention in the ranks of the Muslims , here in the very land that witnessed the revelation, and in a manner entirely contrary to the aims of the Prophet (upon him be peace ). Pamphlets like al -Khutut al-'arīḍa*[354]

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351 The IR honoured Shaykh Shaltūt by calling a major street in Tehran and Sunnī Ḥawzah (school of theology) in Kurdistan after him; Fahmī Huwīdī, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 355.

352 Quoted in Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History (Boston: Brill, 2001), 338.

353 Rainer Brunner, Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 382-3.

354 *Al-Khuṭūṭ al-'Arīḍa li al-Uṣūl allatī qām 'alayhā Dīn al-Shī'a al-Imamiyya al-Ithnā 'Ashriyya*, (the lines on which the basis of the Religion of the Twelver Shi'ism were established), is an anti-Shi'ism pamphlet first published in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) in 1961/1380 by the well-known Sunnī Shaykh Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb in response to the calls for Islamic rapprochement by Dār al-Taqrīb in Cairo, and it has been republished and distributed several times in the Hajj session in Saudi Arabia. In addition it was republished twice in Damascus while the fifth edition was republished in Cairo. In this work, Shaykh Muḥib al-Dīn considers Shī'ism a different religion that cannot be reconciled with Sunnī Islam, and he numerated the rituals and practices that he thought clashed with the pure Islamic dogma such as the revision of the *Qur'ān*, the concept of *rija*, the *sabb* and other differences.

*are being published and distributed here in order to serve the imperialists, who hope to use lies and slander to separate a group of 170 million people from the ranks of the Muslims. It is surprising that the authorities in Hijaz would permit such misleading material to be distributed in the land of revelation. The Muslim peoples must shun such divisive and imperialist-inspired books and publications, and reject those opponents of Islamic unity.*[355]

The above quotation is a part of Imam Khomeini's first message on February 6th, 1971 to the Muslims of the world who were performing the annual Islamic ritual of pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) in *Mecca*. Remarkably, the concept of Islamic unity, which Imam Khomeini calls for in the above message, is believed to be an innovation in Imam Khomeini's political discourse and dogma. The Imam had been involved in the Iranian political arena since 1943 when he published his work *Kashf al-asrār*, (the Revealing of Secrets) in which he expressed his aspiration for the future role of Islam in Iran. In this work, while he denies the accusation of the *ulamā's* ambition for political authority, he praises the '*mashrūṭiyya*' (the constitutional government) for being a better means to achieve justice; Imam Khomeini's work, on the other hand, implies an anti-Sunnism sentiment when he unconventionally criticises the Sunni "falsified" foundation,[356] which will be thoroughly discussed below along with his revised tolerant views that corresponded with his new compelling views on Islamic unity.

Although Imam Khomeini had became a prominent figure in the Iranian political arena since 1963 when he led mass opposition against Shah Mohammad Reza's "White Revolution," there was no clear indication which suggested a genuine diversion from his previous stand on the Pahlawī's regime as well as on Sunnism. It appears noticeable, however, that his revolutionary work *Ḥukūmat-i Islāmī* (*al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* in Arabic) bears a shifting paradigm not only in the Imam

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355 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writing and declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 196.

356 Imam Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrār*, trans. Mohammad al-Bindārī (Ammān: Dār 'Ammār, 1988), 193.

Khomeini's previous political visions against the regime in Iran but also in his attitude towards Sunnism in general.

Yet one might inquire: had his new moderate tendency towards Sunnism been genuine or a modification to serve his political agenda? Could that reflect the impact of Sunni political thoughts on the Imam's political views? What caused this shift in the Imam's views against Sunnism? Or had his call for Islamic unity been influenced by/or correlated with the radical change in his political views and deeds, towards the Pahlavī's regime in particular and the other royal and principality systems in the Islamic World in general, mainly the polemical theory of *wilayat al-faqīh* and the revolutionary Islamic state?

On one occasion, *Ḥujjat al-Islām* Mohammad Khātamī claimed the genuineness of the Imam's attitude towards Sunni Islam when he asserted in an interview with Wilfried Butcha in 1993 that "after the revolution, in a small circle of his closest pupils, Khomeini did utter repeatedly his extreme dislike for any offences against the Sunnis."[357] Khātamī's statement though not inconsiderable, might be an underestimate for three possible reasons: first, Khātamī was one of Khomeini's close and enthusiastic adherents, which could affect his objectivity. Second, he offered no rational justification for the Imam's harsh attack on the great Sunni figures in *Kashf al-asrār*. Khātamī, after all, represents the reformist and moderate current in the Iranian polity and his statement could have been employed to serve his political agenda.

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357 Wilfried Butcha, "Tehran's Ecumenical Society (MAJMA' AL-TAQRĪB): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?," in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times, Religious Culture & Political History*, edit. R. Brunner and W. Ende (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 333, note (3).

Additionally, it has been suggested that Imam Khomeini could have become politically 'Sunnatised' when he called for an Islamic state and *wilayat al-faqīh*. For instance, Hamid Enayat considered Imam Khomeini's views of the Islamic state brought him closer to Sunnism than Shi'ism when he argues "Khumayni's thesis stands opposed to popular Shi'ism and comes close to Sunnism."[358] Enayat believes that Imam Khomeini was influenced by the views of some of the Sunni intellectuals and clerics such as Mohammad Rashīd Reza and Abu al-'A'lā al-Mawdūdī,[359] but he never provided further demonstrations for such a claim. Colin Turner agrees with Enayat's view; however, he is meticulous in his use of words which implicitly point to the jurisprudential rule in which *al-ḍarūrāt tubīḥ al-maḥḍūrāt* (in the case of necessity the prohibited is to be allowed) when he differentiates between theory and practice:

> The occultation of the Imam was in fact a veritable millstone around the necks of the Twelver fuqahā, the dilemma it posed them being that although society must be governed in some way, until the arrival of the Mahdi all governments are illegal. This led naturally to a compromise, and to a stance which is in practice much nearer to the Sunnite attitude to authority and government than perhaps most Twelver Shi'ite would have cared to admit.[360]

Apart from the two studies of Wilfried Butcha[361] and Rainer Brunner[362] that briefly shed light on the IR's policies towards Islamic unity (although they place

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358 Hamid Enayat, "Iran Khumayni's Concept of the 'Guardianship of Jurisconsult", in James P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 163.

359 For more information see Hamid Enayat, "Iran Khumayni's Concept of the 'Guardianship of Jurisconsult," in James P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

360 Colin Turner, "Still waiting for the Imam? The Unresolved Question of Intizār in Twelver Shī'ism," *Persica* XV, 1993-1995, 41-2.

361 Wilfried Butcha, "Tehran's Ecumenical Society (MAJMA' AL-TAQRĪB): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times, Religious Culture & Political History*, edit. R. Brunner and W. Ende (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

them in the context of the Iranian national interest), no attempt has been made to examine the genuineness of Imam Khomeini's call for Islamic unity with a careful reference to its political and jurisprudential shift in the Imam's visions correlated to the unobserved dimension of Imam Khomeini's Islamic federal scheme to resist Western hegemony in which the single Islamic state, a sole leadership and a united nation are the three corners of this tripartite scheme. Politically this makes Imam Khomeini not only a revisionist for Shi'ism but also an orthodox revivalist for Sunnism as well. However, Islamic unity had a wider comprehensive meaning in Imam Khomeini's scheme than being confined to the Iranian national interest, as it called for the establishment of one Islamic federation state, under one leader and was to include undivided Islamic nations. In other words, the political restoration of Islamic unity had been the cornerstone of the Imam's revolutionary scheme while the Imam's other two concepts, namely the Islamic state and *wilāyat al-faqīh*, not only reflects such a unifying desire but also represents the only possible means to achieve it.

As a result, two key issues should be considered in order to reveal such a dimension and proffer adequate answers for the aforementioned questions. First, Imam Khomeini's had been heavily and directly involved in politics since 1963 when he led the opposition to resist the Shah's Westernised policies of the "White Revolution" which followed the Western line and emphasised imperial hegemony not only in Iran but also the Islamic world; therefore, it seems significant to trace the development and/or the change in Imam Khomeini's political thought and the impact of that on his attitude towards Sunni Islam and his call for Islamic unity in which a survey of the Imam's earliest and latest works, *Kashf al-asrār* and *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, will be inevitable. Second, the efforts of Islamic unity that had been conducted during the Imam's

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362 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

leadership should be examined and thoroughly evaluated to elucidate how genuine his attempt was.

## 5.3. IMAM KHOMEINE: FROM REACTIONARY TO REVOLUTIONARY

Evidently, Imam Khomeini's *wilāyat-i faqīh* in its sketchy theoretical framework never departed from modern political Shi'ism, and its roots could be traced back to the Safavids' era and the rise of the Shi'i *uṣūlī* school of thought when the idea that required the ruler should be both a *sayyid* and *mujtahid* was on the table of discussion.[363] Since the conversion of Persia to Twelver Shi'ism at the start of the sixteenth century by Shah Ismā'īl I, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, the *uṣūlī*[364] Shi'i *fuqahā* had developed several political theories amongst which three are noteworthy of a brief discussion due to their influential role in the development of Imam Khomeini's questioned theory of *wilāyat-i faqīh*: the *wilāya āma* (the general custodianship of the *ulamā*) of *al-Muḥaqiq* al-Karakī, the *wilāyat al-faqīh* (the Guardianship of the *ulamā*) of *mullā* Ahmad an-Narāqī

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363 Meir Litvak, Shi'i scholars of nineteenth -century Iraq: The ulamā of Najaf and Karbalā (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), 13; Juan R. Cole, "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," Islamic Studies 18:1 (Winter 1985), 5; Said Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: religion, political Order, and societal Change in shiite Iran from the beginning to 1890 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 105-108.

364 The *usūlī* school, that was established in the early 16th century during the reign of Shah Ismā'īl by the *'alāmah* al-Karakī, legitimised the *fuqahā* to exercise the *'ijjtihād* (independent religious judgement) on which the 'usūlīs depended to emphasise the political right of the qualified *faqīh* to rule during the *ghayyba* of the hidden Imam; while the traditional Twelver Shi'ism, or the *akhbārī* school, restricted the role of the *fuqahā* in narrating the Prophet and the Imams' tradition and prohibited any involvement in politics for they believed it is a usurpation of the right of the hidden Imam, but they referred instead to the theory of *intiẓār* (the waiting for the Mahdi's return) and the practice of *taqiyya* (the concealment of the true belief). For more information consult Juan Cole, "Shi'i clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: the Akhbari-Usuli conflict reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18, no. 1 (December 1985), 3-34; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (I. B. Tauris, 2004); also C. P. Turner, "Still Waiting for the Hidden Imam? The Unresolved Question of Intizār in Twelver Shi'ism," *Persica* XV, 1993-1995, and David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Longman, 1988).

(that have already been discussed in chapters 2 and 3 respectively) and the *mashrūṭiyya* (the constitutional government) of Mīrzā Nā'īnī.

The despotism was the major concern of *Mīrzā* Mohammad Ḥusayn Nā'īnī (1860-1936); alternatively, he proposed a constitutional government in his work *Tanbīh al-umma wa tanzīh al-milla* (literally, Alerting of the Nation and Purifying the Religion)[365] that was first published in 1909 in Baghdad then in Tehran in 1910; he also blamed despotism for the backwardness of the Islamic nations.[366] This book was republished in 1955 by Mahmud Ṭaliqānī, one of Khomeini's revolutionary assistants who was assassinated soon after the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, after "Nā'īnī himself took the unusual step of collecting and destroying the remaining copies of his book not long after its publication."[367]

Nā'īnī utilised the Shi'i *uṣūlī* jurisprudential methodology that was based on *Qur'ān*, *Ḥadīth*, and *'aql* (reason)[368] to compose his argument in which he legitimised the replacement of despotism with a constitutional government, for

> ...there remains no room to doubt the necessity of changing a despotic regime into a constitutional one. This is true, because the former consists of three sets of usurpations and oppressions: 1) it is usurpation of the authority of God and injustice to Him; 2) it is usurpation of the *Imam's* authority and oppression of the *Imam*; 3) it also involves oppression of the people. By contrast, a constitutional system is only oppression of the *Imam*, because his authority is usurped. Thus, a

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365 Akhavi translated this title as " the Admonition to the Islamic community and rectification of the nation"; see Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending discourses in Shici Law on the Doctrine of Wilayat Al-faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 3-4, (Summer/Fall 1996), 234.

366 Wajīh Kawtharānī, *al-Faqīh wa as-Sulṭān* (Beirut: Dār ar-Rashīd, 1989), 186-93.

367 Said Amir Arjomand, "The State and Khomeini's Islamic Order," *Iranian Studies* 13, no. 1 (1980), 152.

368 *ibid*, 150.

constitutional regime limits three sets of oppressions to one; consequently it is necessary to adopt it... In order to remove the oppression done to the *Imam*, there is but one solution. As we said before, the function of the ruler in the new regime is like that of the function of the supervisor of the *awqaf*. The person in charge of the *awqaf*, even though he may have illegally occupied the office, can seek the sanction of the lawful authority, i.e., the *'ulama,* to make his own function lawful. If he gains the *'ulama's* approval, then there will remain no usurpation of the *Imam*.[369]

Even though he had carefully reviewed Nā'īnī's work, Said Amir Arjomand frankly admitted that he is still uncertain about the author's real purpose in publishing it. Arjomand clearly states

> It is true that the *Tanbih al-Umma* was revived 45 years later by a staunch opponent of the present regime, Mahmud Taliqani. But the book's revival was entirely due to its vehement attack on tyranny — indirectly identified with the shah's regime. What were totally obscured were the chief intentions of its author: the propagation of constitutionalism, and the legitimization of parliamentary democracy as the mean for bringing modern government under the normative governance of the Shi'ite political ethic. Since its revival, the book has remained the object of the keen attention of the religious opposition while the chief concerns of its author have receded even further into obscurity.[370]

Yet Wajīh Kawtharānī had a second look at Shaykh Nā'īnī's work in the hope that it might divulge Shaykh Nā'īnī's intention that had seemed so incomprehensible to Arjomand; thus Kawtharānī could justify Shaykh Nā'īnī's

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369 Quoted in Said Arjomand, *ibid*, 151-52.

370 *ibid*, 162-3 note: 12.

destruction of the first edition of this work. According to Kawtharānī, Shaykh Nā'īnī classified despotism into two types, temporal and religious, in which the former claims legitimacy from power and coercion while the latter, depends on deception and trickery.[371] Hence, he called for *mashrūṭiyya* (constitutional government) in which the function of the parliament is compatible with Islamic *shūrā* (consultation) in order to put an end to despotism when it might be possible to "limit the ruler's arbitrary power and grant people limited sovereignty."[372] Defending his proposal, Shaykh Nā'īnī deemed the *mashrūṭiyya* as a replacement for the prerequisites of *'iṣma* (infallibility) of the Twelver Shi'ite Imams and *'adāla* (equity) of the Sunni Caliphs to make justice achievable.[373] However, he attacked the "*mu'ammamīn*" (literally "the people with turbans" referring to the *ulamā*, in which he meant the clergy) who had been resisting the constitutional movement, for deceiving the *umma* and described them as *ulamā al-Sū'* (evil clerics), *luṣūṣ al-dīn* (thieves of religion), and *muḍilī ḍu'afā al-Muslimīn* (misleaders of ordinary Muslims).[374]

Although Vanessa Martin mistakenly asserted that Shaykh Nā'īnī's political views "emerged largely from the Iranian political context rather than the Islamic theoretical background,"[375] Nā'īnī's views undoubtedly influenced by the Syrian political activist Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī's work, *Ṭabā'i' al-'istibdād* (the Nature of Despotism) which was translated from Arabic to Persian during the constitution movement of 1905 and become widely circulated. Therefore, Shaykh Nā'īnī's theory significantly showed a high awareness of the Muslims' miserable reality in a wider scope and reflected the Muslims' general suffering,

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371 Wajīh Kawtharānī, *al-Faqīh wa as-Sulṭān* (Beirut: Dār ar-Rashīd, 1989), 188.

372 Quoted in Neil Shevlin, Velayat-e Faqih in the Constitution of Iran: the Implementation of Theocracy, (*Journal of Constitution Law*, Fall 1998, Vol. 1:2), 361.

373 Wajīh Kawtharānī, *al-Faqīh wa as-Sulṭān* (Beirut: Dār ar-Rashīd, 1989), 192.

374 *ibid*, 189.

375 Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of New Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 104.

both Shi'i and Sunni, at the hands of temporal and religious despotism, against which they strived for justice when the simultaneous constitutional movements broke up in the Shi'i Qājār Persia (1905) and Sunni Ottoman Turkey (1908); thus Shaykh Nā'īnī believed that his *mashruṭiyya* might provide a unique resolution of the problems confronting the Islamic nation as a whole, and he implicitly pointed out that the *mashruṭiyya* could serve as a basis for achieving Islamic unity since the actual source of disunity, namely the Imamate and Caliphate, no longer existed.[376]

Remarkably, the political thought of Imam Khomeini had passed through two politically active stages separated by a gap of tranquillity. In the first stage, Imam Khomeini's political views might have appeared to be merely vague, perhaps because he was emotionally impacted by refuting reaction when he published his work, *Kashf al-asrār*.

Although Moin believed that Imam Khomeini had distanced himself from politics since then and focussed on his theological studies, he pointed to Khomeini's friendships with active Islamist figures such as Ayatollah Kashānī, the political activist cleric who had supported Muṣadaq's coup against the Shah, and Nawwāb Ṣafawī, the leader of the organisation of *fidā'iyān Islām* (men ready to sacrifice themselves for the cause of Islam).[377] Ayatollah Muntaẓirī, the former designated successor of Imam Khomeini and one of his closest friends, not only asserted this in his memoirs but also added that Imam Khomeini was influenced by Nawwāb Ṣafawī's political views and had a strong sympathy for his cause in which the Imam's relationship with the late Burujerdī became strained when Imam Khomeini once offered a safe haven to some members of *fidā'iyīn Islam*

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376 Wajīh Kawtharānī, *al-Faqīhh wa al-Sulṭān* (Beirut: Dār ar-Rashīd, 1989), 191-2.

377 See Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 67-69.

in the *ḥawza* (Islamic seminary).[378] Significantly, Nawāb Ṣafawī introduced Imam Khomeini to *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (the Brotherhood of Islam) and their political dogma; Amir Taheri affirms

> The man who introduced Khomeini to the Ikhwan and their ideas was a young mullah by the name of Mohammad Nawab-Safavi who was both admired by his extreme good looks and feared for his power to mesmerize a crowd. The two men spent long hours together. Nawab-Safavi believed that the philosophy of the Ikhwan - based on the purification of Islamic society by ridding it of "corrupting individuals" by carefully planned assassinations – had to be modified to take into account the specific features of Shi'ites society in Iran.[379]

It was not until 1963 when Mohammad Reza Shah introduced his "White Revolution" a set of political reforms aimed at modernising Iranian society that Imam Khomeini profoundly involved himself in the political arena and stoutly opposed the Shah's proposed policies. As a result, Imam Khomeini was exiled to Turkey in 1964 before he finally settled down in the holy city of Najaf in Iraq. From then onwards, Imam Khomeini concerned himself with developing comprehensive Islamic political views among which he introduced the theory of *wilāyat-i faqīh* and revived the *Qur'ānic* concept of Islamic unity that he delivered to his students in a series at Najaf seminary, and which was later collected and published in the early seventies in the seminal work *Ḥukūmat-i Islāmī: wilāyat-i faqīh* (Islamic Government: the Guardianship of the Jurist).

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378 Muntaẓirī's memoirs at <http://www.ansar.org/arabic/montaziri02/htm>

379 Amir Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah* (Bethesda: Adler & Adler, 1986), 98.

### 5.3.1. THE REACTIONARY WORK OF KASHF AL-ASRAR (THE REVEALING OF SECRETS)

Imam Khomeini published his early work, *Kashf al-asrār* in 1941. This was a refuting response to Ali Akbar Ḥakamī-Zāda's published article, *Asar-ī Hizār Sāla*, during Reza Shah's regime in which he "accused the ulamā of encouraging superstitious practices among the Iranian people to perpetuate their own powers, and for being the main cause of the country's backwardness."[380] Imam Khomeinī implicitly pointed to Ali Akbar Ḥakamī-Zāda and his article when he stated

> ...some of our writers make it their mission in life to attack religion, religiosity, and the men of religion [clergy] with no intention but to bring about quarrels. They use their hired pens to write papers [against religion] and spread them...forgetting that weakening relationships between those people with religion, religiosity, and men of religion is a terrible criminal act that will achieve nothing but destroy Islamic countries.[381]

Furthermore, Imam Khomeini revealed the reasons behind the composition of this work in which he aimed to refute each one of the allegations of the anti-clerical writers, namely Ali Akbar.

> Thus, let us get to the gist of the matter, and provide an answer to each one of the sayings of those who resembled the *Wahhabis* and their examples to expose their lies and reveal their betrayal.[382]

Apparently, Imam Khomeini was most likely defending the clerical views that were had been attacked by Ali Akbar rather than propounding his own political views. For example, he aimed to falsify Ali Akbar's claim that "the *faqīh*'s right to

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380 Vanessa Martin, *Creating An Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of New Iran* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000), 103-4.

381 Imam Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrār*, trans. M. al-Bandārī (Amman: Dār 'Amār, 1988), 15-16.

382 *ibid*, 26.

hold authority has no jurisprudential basis"[383] and to expose Ali Akbar's ignorance in jurisprudential matters when he cited several considerable Shi'i sources where the evidence for the *wilāyāt-i faqīh* could be found, such as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's *Ikmāl al-dīn* (Completing the Religion), Shaykh al-Ṭūsī's *al-Ghayba* (the Occultation), and Ṭabarsī's *al-Iḥtijāj* (the Objection); nevertheless, Imam Khomeini showed objectivity when he acknowledged elsewhere that the theory of *wilāyat-i faqīh* is a controversial issue among Shi'ite scholars. He stated that

> ...*wilāya* of the *mujtahid*... has been the subject of discussion among *mujtahids* since the first day in regard to it is a foundational issue or not and to the limits of the *wilāya* and its sphere. This [issue] is one of the branches of jurisprudence for which the various disputing groups bring forward evidence based on *ḥadīths* attributed to the Prophet and the Imams.[384]

Additionally, Imam Khomeini reminded his audience that the constitutional government (*mashrūṭa*) had already approved the implementation of Islamic laws which it had never opposed or precluded its development[385] even though Imam Khomeini seemed to be conservative in dealing with the *mashrūṭa* to which he never showed his full admission; rather he selectively demanded to apply only one article from the 1905 constitution[386] since it had clearly emphasized Islamic law as the source of legislation, and "Every legislation opposed to the *sharī'a* (Islamic law) is not considered a legitimate law."[387] On the other hand, Imam Khomeini emphasized that the ulamā merely hoped for the implementation of Islamic rules.

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383 *ibid*, 206.

384 *ibid*, 204.

385 *ibid*, 236.

386 David Menashri, *Iran: Decade of War and Revolution* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990), 51, note (6).

387 Imam Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrār*, trans. M. al-Bandārī, (Amman: Dār 'Amār, 1988), 237.

We [Khomeini himself and clerics in general] are, as we pointed out earlier, not saying that authority must be handed to the *faqīh*; however, authority should be administered according to divine Laws which will not be achievable without being overseen by the *faqīh*.[388]

In this work the traditional sectarian antagonism towards Sunni ideals was noticeable. For example, Imam Khomeini initially accused the meeting of *Saqīfa* of being the source of all the differences and disputes among Muslims in which the Prophet's companions gathered immediately after his death and elected Abu Bakr al-Ṣidīq to succeed the Prophet in the leadership of the Muslim community.[389] Then, he enumerated the violations to the instructions of the holy *Qur'ān* that had been committed by the *Shaykhīn"*, the first two Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb such as preventing the Prophet's daughter Faṭima benefiting from her father's inheritance, the denial of Ali's right in succeeding to the position of his cousin and father-in-law, the prohibiting of *muṫa* (temporary marriage) ...etc. It seems obvious from the outset that Imam Khomeini was strongly provoked by Ali Akbar Ḥakamī-Zāda's article which, according to Vanessa Martin, indirectly falsified Shi'ism and declared his admiration for Sunni Islam for practicing a belief based on accurate traditions.[390] Although we have no access to Ali Akbar's article, it could be understood from *Kashf al-asrār* that he had conducted a comparison between the Iranian version of Islam and the Wahhābī version that has been practiced in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, going on to praise the latter for applying true Islam. Imam Khomeini's attack, therefore, was aimed at revealing what he thought to be anti-Islamic innovations of Wahhābism to refute Ali's claim rather than attempting to revive the historical sectarian disputes among Muslims; hence, he bluntly accused Ali Akbar of being

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388 *ibid*, 236.

389 *ibid*, 130.

390 *ibid*, 143.

a mouthpiece for Wahhābism.[391] Imam Khomeini, however, was defending the legitimacy of the Shi'ism entity more than disdaining the first two caliphs or Sunnism when he criticized some of the *Shaykhīn*'s misinterpretations of the *Qur'ān* that the Shi'ite had historically denied. Indeed, Imam Khomeini showed respect to the first two caliphs when he used the favorable title, *Shaykhīn* (singular *Shaykh*), that Sunnis like to address them by, unlike the conventional Shi'i authors who widely called the first two caliphs by abusive titles such as *ṣanamayy Quraysh* (the two idols of the tribe of *Quraysh*) and *al-Jabt wa al-Ṭāghūt* (which means Satan and despotic respectively) and in their polemic writings.

Yet Imam Khomeini seemed in this work to be reluctant to voice his support for any one of the recognized opinions of that time due to the needs for further research.[392] Significantly, this is clear evidence that the political dogma of the Imam, mainly the theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, had not yet developed at the time.

### 5.3.2. THE REVOLUTIONARY ORIENTATION OF AL-HUKŪMA AL-ISLĀMIYYA (THE ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT)

Thirty years later, Imam Khomeini published his seminal and revolutionary work of *Ḥukūmat-i Islāmī: vilāyat-i faqīh* (Arabic *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya: wilāyat al-faqīh*, Islamic government: the governance of the jurist).[393] Originally, this work was a collection of seventeen lectures in Persian that he gave between 21 January and 8 February, 1970 that corresponded with the period between 13th of *Dhīl-qi'da* to the 1st of *Dhīl-ḥijja* to his students of the religious sciences at

391 *ibid*, 19-20.

392 *ibid*, 204.

393 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981).

Shaykh al-Ansārī mosque[394] in Najaf (where he had been exiled since his uprising against Mohammad Reza Shah's Westernizing policies in 1964); later on this work was transcripted and published in different languages such as Arabic, French, Turkish and Urdu in 1978.

In this work, Imam Khomeini introduced his widely controversial concepts of the Islamic state and the *wilāyat al-faqīh* in which he called for the establishment of an Islamic state under the leadership of the *fuqahā.* He began with a vehement attack against the West for the fragmentising of the Muslim *umma*: "the Western powers divided the Islamic nation into several states and appointed to each one of these states one of their agents,"[395] and he explicitly criticised the secular aspects of the governments in the Islamic world that had been introduced by the Western imperial powers and adopted by their lackeys. He then blamed Western Imperialism for the misery of the Islamic nation having exploited Muslims' wealth. Additionally, he claimed that the imperial powers had launched a campaign against Islam, accusing Islamic laws of being cruel and inapplicable, and propagating secularism to marginalise Islam and subdue its resistance.[396] Hence, he referred to the golden age of Islam during the time of the Prophet and his Rightly-Guided Caliphs as providing evidence that there is no separation between religion and politics in Islam:

> Had religion been isolated from politics during the Prophet's age? Were there at that time specialists in religion and other specialists in politics? And at the time of the Caliphs, and of Imam Ali were politics separated

394 This mosque is called after Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī (d. 1864), Shaykh al-Narāqī's student who enjoyed the title of *al-marji' al-muṭlaq li-attaqlīd* (the absolute source of imitation ). al-Anṣārī disagreed with his teacher and restricted *wilāyat al-Faqīh* in supervision over the financial affairs and the administration of the Islamic endowments; for more details refer to Shahrough Akhavi, "contending discourses in Shici Law on the Doctrine of Wilayat Al-faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 3-4, (Summer/Fall 1996), 237; also; Hamid Enayat, 'Iran Khumayni's Concept of the 'Guardianship of Jurisconsult',' in James P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 161.

395 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981), 35.

396 *ibid*, 7-16.

from religion? Were there a designated institution for religion and another institution for politics?[397]

Additionally, he revealed that the monarchical system is an innovation and contrary to Islamic provisions and recalled the event at *Karbala* when Imam Ḥusayn revolted against Yazīd's succession and lost his life in an unequal battle just to oppose the newly introduced and innovative monarchisms.

Imam Khomeini also maintained, making reference to the golden age of Islam that the presence of Islamic government had been unanimously agreed upon even at the peak of their differences after the Prophet's death.

> There was no single Muslim who had doubted the necessity of the continuation of an Islamic government after the Prophet's death. All were in accord on this point, but the difference was on who would rule this government; hence, the government existed after the death of the Prophet and during the time of Imam Ali with all its executive and administrative institutions.[398]

Consequently, he called for the establishment of an Islamic state and claimed the right of the *ulamā* to rule this state according to *wilāyat-i faqīh*. To support this claim, he made several references to the Prophet and the Imams' *ḥadiths* and narratives among which is a narrative known as *maqbūlat* (accepted) Ůmar ibn Ḥanẓala, attributed to the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, when he asked Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq to whom should the Shi'i followers refer to solve their disputes?

> Imam Ja'far ordered him to refer to a person who recites our traditions, learned in our permitted (*ḥalālunā*) and prohibited (*ḥarāmunā*) issues,

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397 *ibid*, 20-21.

398 *ibid*, 27.

> and acquainted with our judgments...they should accept his ruling as I appointed him a ruler over you [the Shi'ite community].[399]

Remarkably, Imam Khomeini reasserted his claim of *wilāyat al-faqīh* by recognising a controversial *ḥadīth*. This *ḥadīth* had received the *ijmā'* (the consensus) of the Sunni *'ulamā'*. Also, Abu Bakr al-Ṣidīq (the first Caliph) had referred to this *ḥadīth* when he made the decision to prevent the Prophet's daughter (Faṭimā) from inheriting her father's properties; however, the Shi'ite historically opposed the first caliph's unjust decision and refused to accept this *hadīth* due to the weakness of the narrator. Imam Khomeini, however, deemed the strength of this *ḥadīth* lies in the unquestionable text since it was reiterated by another high credential source, Abī Ali ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim.[400] Furthermore, Imam Khomeini emphasised that Shaykh an-Narāqī had adhered to this *ḥadīth*.[401] According to Abī al-Bukhtarī, that Abī Abdillah (Imam Ja'far) reported the Prophet had said"...the *ulamā* are the heirs of the prophets since the prophets do not leave *dīnār* or *dirham*, but they left knowledge..."[402]

Imam Khomeini's *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* undoubtedly reveals clear shifting paradigm in his political views and attitude towards the Pahlavī regime and Sunnism as well. Despite the fact that Imam Khomeini had been a key opponent to the Pahlavi regime since 1963, Shahrough Akhavi notices:

> In fall1962/ spring 1963, Khomeini abandoned his quietism of the last two decades by denouncing the proposed changes in the provincial election law...Nonetheless, he still seemed to be holding out the possibility of cooperation, if the Shah would "come to his senses" and orient public policies in favour of the national independence and respect

399 *ibid*, 86-7.

400 *ibid*, 93.

401 *ibid*, 94.

402 *ibid*, 93-4.

> for the religious traditions. In other words, he was not yet willing to burn all his bridges with the secular authorities, and he did not yet advocate executive rule by the clergy.[403]

Thus, the Imam explicitly instigated Iranian youths to overthrow the dictator and urged them to disgrace the regime's clerics.[404] He, also, attacked the traditional religious institutions associated with the regime for preventing Iranians from rising up against tyranny[405] for which a number of Western scholars, such as Hamid Algar, believed that this work was mainly addressed to Iranian audiences[406] It is evident, however, that Imam Khomeini throughout this work was discussing the wretched situation of the Islamic nation as a whole and the use of the Shi'i emblems was merely due to the fact that his audience were Shi'i *ḥawza* students among which were hundreds of Iranians, together with the political conditions of the time when he was under close observation by the secret police of the Iraqi Ba'this.

Instead, he proposed a gradual programme to establish an Islamic government which would be the only possible means, from his point of view, to revive true Islam and resist Western hegemony that was exploiting the resources of the Islamic world, and eventually would lead to a restoration of Islamic unity. Indeed, Imam Khomeini designated his proposed scheme in a way that could be implemented in any Islamic country and explained his political ideas in this work in a moderate tone in which his sectarian orientation become hardly identified.[407] He neither claimed nor anticipated the establishment of an Islamic state himself

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403 Shahrough Akhavi, "contending discourses in Shici Law on the Doctrine of Wilayat Al-faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 3-4, (1996), 235.

404 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981), 143-5.

405 Ervand Abrahamian, *Khoeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 11.

406 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941-1980),* tran. and ann. Hamid Algar ( Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 25.

407 David Menashri, *Iran a Decade of War and Revolution* (Holmes & Meier: New York, 1990), 16 note (11).

and that would need time before it could stand in reality; however, his attempt was merely a step on the thousand mile journey.

> We did not expect that our instructions and endeavours would be fruitful within a short time, since the establishment of the Islamic state requires sparing no effort over a long period. We saw a number of wise people who placed a foundation stone on which others will build a building, albeit after two hundred years.[408]

For that reason, Imam Khomeini attempted to discard his early attacks on Sunnism when he emphasised the necessity of Islamic unity in order to establish an Islamic government and confront the imperial attacks of the West on the Islamic territories. For example, the Imam urged Muslims of the world to be vigilant about the conspiring role of the imperial powers against Islamic unity reminding them

> ...colonialism divided our Muslim homelands and allotted the Muslims different identities. At the rise of the Ottomans [Sunnis] as a united state, the colonialists strived to fragmentise it. The Russians and English with their other alliances set up a coalition and fought the Ottomans, and then shared the booty as you know.[409]

As a result, the Imam offered a salvation to exit this miserable situation that the Islamic nation is experiencing when he appealed for the restoration of Islamic unity:

> ...the only means to unify the Islamic nation, liberate our lands, and overthrow the traitorous governments is to establish our Islamic

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408 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981),128.

409 *ibid*, 34-35.

> government. The establishment of an Islamic government, then, aims to achieve and preserve Islamic unity.[410]

Furthermore, the Imam called for the protection of the miserable victims of injustice of the Western powers and their domestic lackeys:

> We are instructed to rescue the deprived and aggrieved people, we are ordered to help them and antagonise their oppressors as it was stated by the commander of the faithful [Imam Ali] to his sons: be opponents of the unjust (*ḍālim*) and supporters of the wronged (*maḍḍlūm*).[411]

This work raises the exigency of the establishment of the Islamic state according to the theory of *wilāyat-i faqīh* in which Imam Khomeini was strongly influenced by the political views of Shaykh s Narāqī and Nā'īnī, explicitly accrediting them as the major sources for his theory when he asserts:

> As I mentioned to you that the late (*marḥūm*) Narāqī believes that [the practice of] all the affairs that the Prophet had dealt with are handed over to the *fuqahā,* except for the issues relating to his prophecy that were restrictedly confined to him. The late Shaykh Nā'īnī used to say: this whole issue [*wilāyat-i faqīh*] could be excluded from *maqbūlat* Umar ibn Ḥanẓalah.[412]

Significantly, Imam Khomeini neglected pointing to Shaykh Karakī who was widely accepted among the Shi'i clerics as the founder of the theory of *wilāya āma* while he paid tribute to Shaykh Nā'īnī, who was an adherent of the *mashruṭiyya*. This suggests that the Imam could have intentionally attempted to

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410 *ibid*, 35.

411 *ibid*, 36.

412 *ibid*, 116.

distance himself from the Safavid heritage with all of its antagonism and hatred against Sunni Islam in which Shaykh Karakī played the major provocative role.[413]

In summary, Imam Khomeini's work, *Ḥukūmat-i Islāmī*, represents the gist of the Imam's accumulated political experiences; they are framed in a political Islamic scheme to revive Islamic unity in order to get rid of the miserable situation of subordination to the Western superpowers that divide the Muslim people and exploit their wealth. Accordingly, Islamic unity symbolises the cornerstone of this scheme in which an independent Islamic state under the leadership of the Muslim *ulamā*, as the inheritors of the Prophet and the guardians of the religion, should be established to repulse Imperial Western values, Vanessa Martin discerns

> Khomeini was otherwise much concerned about foreign influence in Iran, and in the Muslim world as a whole, with which he became more preoccupied from the time of his residence in Najaf...the economy was subordinated to the interest of the West, rather than those of Iran... He attacked the Western dominance through compliant regimes, and saw the answer as Muslim unity...In particular Sunnis and Shi'a should unite and forget their differences.[414]

Yet Vanessa Martin, likewise other scholars who discussed this subject such as Norman Calder,[415] did not fully investigate the impact of the Imam's call for Islamic unity that caused the shifting paradigm in his new political dogma of *al-*

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413 For Shaykh Karakī's role in inciting antagonism and hatred against Sunnism see Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah?* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 84.

414 Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 114-15

415 Norman Calder missed the associated connection between Imam Khomeini's calls for Islamic unity on the one hand and the new political dogma of his thorough approach to the *Ḥukumat-i islāmī*, see Norman Calder, "Accommodation and Revolution of the Imami Shi'i Jurisprudence: Khumayni and the Classical Tradition," *Middle Eastern Studies* 18, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982).

*Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*; indeed, there is a significant correlating relationship between the call for Islamic unity as the ultimate aim and the newly-proposed concepts of the Islamic state and the *wilāyat-i faqīh* as the only possible means to guarantee this political unity. Approaching such a relationship would clearly illustrate the potential alteration in Imam Khomeini's political thought from his previous stand in *Kashf al-asrār* which should be recognised as his genuine contribution that made him not only a revisionist of modern political Shi'ism but also orthodox according to the criteria of traditional Sunnism.

Remarkably, Imam Khomeini seemed to be theoretically successful in accommodating the political dilemma of the legitimate government that had isolated the Shi'ites from playing an active role in the *umma's* political affairs since the death of the Prophet when Twelver Shi'ism recognised no legitimate government but Imam Ali's short-lived and unstable regime; accordingly, the Twelver Shi'ites most likely placed all Islamic history outside the realms of legitimacy- a matter that reflected the political thought of Twelver Shi'ism and led to the historic lack of an idealistic form in Islamic government. Therefore, Imam Khomeini, throughout his work, subtly designated a gradual methodology that cohesively emphasised Islamic unity while discussing his political views. First of all, he referred to the age of the Prophecy and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs as 'the golden age of Islam' and the authoritative era from which all Muslims extract Islamic precepts; the government in such an age, commencing with the infallible Prophet and concluded by the infallible Imam, was to form the idealistic model that would appeal to both the Sunni and Shi'i Muslims. In other words, he employed the fact that the legitimacy of the era of rightly-guided Caliphs is unquestionable for Sunni Islam while the active participation of Imam Ali in government affairs during the time of the Caliphs, that ended with the rule of Imam Ali himself, would legitimise this era in the eyes of the Shi'ites to create an authoritative example for all Muslims to strengthen Khomeini's appeal.

Then, Imam Khomeini, as mentioned above, asserted the concurrence among Muslims over the necessity of an Islamic government, but he admitted that disagreement came about among Muslims after the Prophet's death over who should be the successor. As a result, the exigency of an Islamic government at all times has received the census of all Muslims regardless of their political and sectarian orientation, in order to assure the activation and implementation of *sharī'a*.

Thus, Imam Khomeini managed to introduce a new interpretation to the concepts of *Imama* (imamate) and *khilāfa* (caliphate) in order to bypass the historical question of the leadership without intimidating the essential principles of each sect. In affirming the just *faqīh's* right to rule the Islamic state and practice the political and executive authority of the Prophet, he divided the *wilāya* (authority) into two different notions: *wilayat-i i'tibārī* (authority based on practical function) and *wilāyat-i takwīni* (genetic authority). The former is a functional authority by which the *faqīh* will be practically able to administer the political and executive affairs of the Islamic state, but he has to fulfil two conditions of *al-'adāla* (justice) and *al-'ilm bi al-Qānūn al-Islāmī* (being knowledgeable in Islamic law), while the latter is a divinely prestigious status that is merely designated for the infallible Imams and that has no contradiction with the Imams' ability to assume the *wilāyat-i i'tibārī*.[416] Significantly, Imam Khomeini's new interpretation seems to find a compromise to implicitly legitimise the rule of the first three caliphs so this work clearly provides further evidence for his reunifying tendency. Sayyid Ayyād Jamāl al-Dīn, the Iraqi cleric and MP, who opposed Khomeini's *wilāyat al-faqīh*, unintentionally pointed to this tendency in Imam Khomeini's political dogma while he was attempting to denounce it; he argued that fallible Imam Khomeini claimed the authority of the infallible Prophet

416 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981), 45-53.

and Imams, so we should first acknowledge the caliphate of the fallible Abu Bakr in order to accept Khomeini's innovative *wilayat al-faqīh*.[417]

Coincidently, the *ḥadīths* to which Imam Khomeini referred in his work to support his argument are most likely recognised by both Sunnite and Shi'ite – something that has attracted none of the scholars which might significantly highlight the Imam's call for Islamic unity. For example, the *ḥadīth* of *ṣaḥīḥat* Qaddāḥ[418] in which the *ʾulamā* are considered the heirs of the Prophets is cited in the *Sunan* al-Tarmadhī (2606), *Sunan* Abī Dawūd (3257), and *Sunan* al-Dārmī (360). Also, another *hadīth* in which the death of a Muslim *faqīh* Islam would be like opening a chink in the Islamic fortress[419] is cited in *Sunan* al-Dārmī (326).

## 5.4. ISLAMIC UNITY FROM THE THEORY TO THE IMPLEMENTATION

It has been said that Imam Khomeini's *Ḥukūmat-i Islāmī* became the manifesto for the Islamic Revolution in Iran,[420] and the success of this revolution had become the touchstone for the Imam's political scheme in which the call for Islamic unity became the cornerstone. Since then, the issue of Islamic unity has become the main theme of the Imam's frequent speeches that were publicly delivered. For example, he admitted that both Shi'ites and Sunnis had been involved in preventing the unity of the Islamic *umma* in a speech addressed to the Muslims of the world on July 11, 1979 in which he declared

417 Sayyid Ayyād Jamāl al-Dīn declared this in a recorded interview with Al-Arabiya Satellite Channel; the interview was broadcast on Friday 14.12.2007 and published on its website at the URL <http://www.alarabiya.net/programs/2007/12/16/43008.html>

418 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981), 93.

419 *ibid*, 62.

420 Hamid Enayat, 'Iran Khumayni's Concept of the 'Guardianship of Jurisconsult',' in James P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 164.

We confess that Shi'ite and Sunni brothers, because of the evil hands involved, whether intentionally or unintentionally, were unable to establish the unity which Muslims must have when confronting atheists and polytheists.[421]

In another speech delivered on July 19, Imam Khomeini deemed the troubles that the Islamic countries have been experiencing have resulted in the disunity of the Islamic nation; he affirms

> If Muslims would act in accordance with the Command of God Almighty, "Hold fast to the covenant of God and do not be divided" (3:103), all their difficulties, their political, social and economic difficulties would have been resolved and no power would be able to counter them. But unfortunately, due to negligence of some, the inattention of others, and the ignorance of still others, they have remained deprived of this fact. As long as this Divine Command is not realized, Muslims must expect (to be faced by) further difficulties.[422]

Also, the Imam warned on December 27, 1980 of the conspiracy of the superpowers and their domestic lackeys to preserve the racial break up of the unity of the Islamic nation which they had brought about against Allah's will. He illustrates it thus:

> The plan of the great powers and their affiliates in Islamic countries is to divide up the various Muslim groups that God the Almighty has joined in brotherhood and has called the believers to brotherhood. (The plan) is to divide one from the other, to create hostility among them in the name of the Turkish, Kurdish, Arab or Persian nation. This is in direct contravention with the course of Islam and the course of the Holy Quran.

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421 Imam Khomeini, Excerpts of Imam Khomeini's Speeches on the Unity of Muslims, (London: Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.a), 7.

422 *ibid*, 7.

All Muslims are brothers and equal with each other. None of them should be divided from the other. They should all fall under the banner of Islam, under the banner of monotheism. Those who sow discord among Muslims in the name of ethnic groups and nationalism are the host of Satan, the supporters of the great powers and the opponents of the Holy Quran.[423]

However, the Imam's serious inclination was ultimately accomplished when he clearly articulated and firmly established the aims and means of his political scheme in the newly composed constitution of the IR in 1979.

### 5.4.1. THE WILĀYAT AL-FAQĪH (THE JURIST GUARDIANSHIP)

It has been declared in the Iranian Constitution that the founding of the Islamic state under the leadership of the *Wilāyt al-Faqīh* has been designated to be implemented not only in the Iranian Republic but also beyond its borders. In its preamble, the constitution stresses

> When the tyrant was at the peak of his tyranny and control over the people, Imam Khomeini introduced the concept of Islamic government based on the notion of the Mandate of the Clergy, which gave a new, distinguished and harmonic motivation to Muslims and paved the way for a genuine ideological Islamic struggle. This idea [the Islamic government under the Mandate of the Clergy] consolidated the revolutionary efforts of those devoted Muslims who were fighting both at home and abroad.[424]

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423 *ibid*, 10-11.

424 Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Iran*iyya (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 274.

The concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh* had been the hallmark of Imam Khomeini's political dogma that he called for from his exile in Najaf in 1970 and which is inculcated and firmly established in the newly composed constitution of the IR of 1979.[425] Article (5) asserts the significant mission of the *walī al-faqīh* in leadership of the *umma* during the occultation of the Imam.

> During the occultation of the *Walī al-ʿAṣr* (may God hasten his reappearance) [the hidden Mahdi], the leadership of the *umma* is to devolve upon the just and pious person who is fully aware of the circumstances of his age, courageous, resourceful, possessed of administrative ability, acknowledged by the majority of the people and admired for his leadership, and he will assume the responsibilities of this office in accordance with article 107.[426]

The *wilāyat al-faqīh*, as the supreme position, occupies a position at the peak of the pyramids of political and executive authorities in the IR according to article (57) that declares

> The powers of government in the Islamic Republic are vested in the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive powers, functioning under the supervision of the religious leader and the leadership of the Umma, in accordance with the forthcoming articles of this constitution. These powers are independent of each other.[427]

Accordingly, chapter 8 in the constitution is dedicated to demonstrate and explicate the theory of *wilāyat-i faqīh* and elaborate the prerequisite conditions of the *walī faqīh* (the supreme leader) and his authorities as well as the role of the

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425 The Iranian constitution of 1979 was adopted on 24th October 1979, effective since 3rd December, 1979 and amended on 28 July, 1989.

426 *ibid*, 78.

427 The collective leadership was cancelled in the amendment of 1989; see Nīfīn A. Musʿad, *ibid*, 78-9.

council of experts in nominating the *walī faqīh*. Clause 1 of article 107 emphasises

> After the venerated source of imitation and the greatest leader of the "universal" Islamic Revolution and the founder of the Iranian Islamic Republic, His Eminence Ayatollah *al-Uẓmā* Imam Khomeini, who the vast majority of people acknowledged for his leadership, the nomination of the [new] leader will be entrusted to the experts who were elected by the people. Those experts shall study the cases of all qualified *faqahā* according to articles 105 and 109 and elect for the leadership among them the most learned in jurisprudential doctrine or social and political issues or he who has obtained the endorsement or prominently enjoys one of the characteristics mentioned in article 109; otherwise, the experts shall appoint three or five *fuqhā* and introduce them to the populace as the members of the council of leadership. The elected leader or the council of leadership will fulfil the guardianship (*wilāyat al-Amr*) and carry all the related responsibilities.[428]

Additionally, article 109 indicates the requirements the *walī fagīh* must possess:

> The necessary scientific competence and piety for *iftā́* (the ability to issue legal opinions) and *Marji ʿiyya* (source of emulation), political and social efficiency, courage, and sufficient administrative ability for the leadership.[429]

Article 110 emphasises the functions and authorities of the supreme leader as follows:

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428 *ibid*, 80; also see Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qabānchī, *al-Madhab as-Siyāsī fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā́, 1985), 214.

429 Nīfin A. Musʿad, *Ṣunʿ al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-ʿIilāqāt al-ʿArabiyya-al-Iraniyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2001), 304.

1. To draw up the general policies for the regime of the Iranian Islamic Republic after consultation with *Majlis Tashkhīṣ Maṣlaḥat-i Niẓām* (the Council for Defining the Interests of the Regime).
2. To supervise the execution of the general policies of the regime.
3. To issue the order for a general referendum.
4. To hold the general leadership of the army.
5. To declare war and peace.
6. To appoint, dismiss and accept the resignation of:

   a). the *fuqahā* of the council for preserving the constitution

   b). the supreme executive of the judicial system

   c). chief of the general staff

   d). the elected President of the Republic

From the aforementioned articles, the *wilāyat al-faqīh* seems to be a smart resolution to escape the historical polemic of the contradiction between the concept of *intiẓār* (waiting for the return of the Mahdi to establish a just and legitimate government) and the prerequisite of the establishment of the Islamic state that will prepare for the Mahdi's return. This practice of *intiẓār* has paralysed Shi'i political jurisprudence for centuries[430] in which the Shi'ite *fuqahā* have been isolating themselves and their community from any direct involvement in state polity no matter what the sectarian orientation of the *de facto* authority in awaiting the return of the hidden Imam.

Furthermore, there are a number of concrete clues to strengthen the belief that Imam Khomeini's concept of *wilāyat-i faqīh* is an authentic attempt to restore the political unity of the Islamic *umma* by the revival of the Sunni notion of the

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430 Colin Turner, *Still waiting for the Hidden Imam?,* 41-2.

caliphate in which there is a real possibility that the post of *al-walī al-faqīh* would be assumed by a Sunni *faqīh,* due to the fact that the Sunnis will compose the majority of the population of the Imam's intended Islamic federal state. For example, qualified Iranian Sunnis are eligible to run for the election of *Majlis-ī Khubarā* (the Council of Experts) which is in charge of electing, observing the performance, and discharging the *walī faqīh*; according to Shaykh Mohammad Isḥāq Madanī, the Iranian President Advisor for Sunni Affairs, there are three Sunni members representing the Iranian Sunnis in the Council of Experts.[431] Also, one of the grand Iranian Sunni *ulamā* and the Imam of *Jum ʻa* of the city of Saqaz, Shaykh Abd al-Qādir Zāhidī, had represented the people of the Kurdistan Governorate in the Council of Experts until his death at the age of 100 in 2005.[432]

The *wilāyat-i faqīh* appears to be virtually identical to the traditional Sunni Caliphate in terms of the exigency, functions and qualifications of the caliph and in which the issue of leadership has become the key to unity rather than being a historical component of discord between Sunnism and Shi ʻism. In other words, the concept of the *wilāyat-i faqīh* seems to be an offspring of a dialectic marriage between the Shi ʻi Imamate and Sunni Caliphate that alternatively entailed by the *de facto* absence of both original notions in modern Islamic polity. Indeed, the abovementioned required conditions of the *walī faqīh* had already received the consensus among the Sunni *ulamā* as the prerequisites for the position of the *Khalīfa* (caliph). For example, the Sunni *faqīh* al-Mawārdī provides all those qualifications required for the caliph in his work *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya.*[433] The link between Imam Khomeini's *wilāyat-i faqīh* with the Twelver Shi ʻism does not

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431 http://www.fnoor.com/fn1739.htm.

432 *Al-Wifāq Newspaper*, December 21, 2005.

433 Abī al-Ḥasan Ali ibn Ḥabīb al-Baṣrī al-Baghdādī al-Mawārdī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya fi al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyya*, eidit. Khālid al -ʻAlamī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al- ʻArabī, 1990), 31-32; see also, Ibn Khaldūn, *the Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, edit. N. J. Dawood (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 154-60.

exceed the name while its contents do totally reflect Sunni political jurisprudence.

Additionally, there are obvious differences in the prerequisites between the office of the *walī faqīh* and the office of the President in which the qualifications of the former make it available to all eligible Muslim *fuqahā* regardless to their sects, as was illustrated above, while the conditions of the latter restricted it to Iranian nationality and Twelver Shi'ism. Significantly, among the several conditions required for the Presidency of the Iranian Islamic Republic, clause 1 of article 115 insists that he should be of Iranian origin and hold Iranian citizenship, and clause 5 asserts that he should be a believer and devoted to the principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official sect (*madhab*) of the country (Twelver Shi'ite).[434]

Beside, it unchallengeable that the condition of the *Marji'iyya* is the only aspect that gives the office of the *walī faqīh* its Shi'i characteristic; however, a discussion of the draft of 1979 revealed that Imam Khomeini strongly opposed adding the *Marji'iyya* to the conditions of the *walī faqīh,* although he failed to enforce his view.[435] He prepared for this by issuing *fatwas* that emphasised the significance of the political qualification on the leader's character, which led to the resignation of the Imam's designated successor Ayatollah Muntaẓirī who lacked to this qualification.[436] The Imam's wish was finally achieved in the amendment to the constitution in 1989 when he recommended the abolition of this condition in a letter he sent on 9th May, 1989 to the special commission entrusted with the amendment of the constitution. Additionally, the council of

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434 Nīfīn A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Iraniyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 307.

435 Olivier Roy, "The Crisis of Religious Legitimacy in Iran," *The Middle Eastern Journal* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 206.

436 Ayatollah Muntaẓirī's dismissal and Imam Khomeini's *fatwas* will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

experts in charge of drafting the constitution of 1979 turned down on 7th November, 1979 an article suggesting that "the leader and the members of the leadership council of the Islamic Republic must be Iranian citizens and [resident] in Iran."[437]

It is true that article 12 affirms that Twelver Shi'ism is the official sect, and this article is unalterable forever any circumstances; however, this article has existed in the Iranian constitution since it was first introduced by Shaykh Faḍlullah Nūrī in the constitution of 1905. Also, it clearly states that this article is designated to be confined to Iran but not the Islamic Republic not to mention that this article emphasises total respect for the other Islamic sects which includes *Ḥanafī*, *Shāfi'ī*, *Mālikī*, *Ḥanbalī*, and *Zaydī*, and the rights of their followers to freely practice their rituals accordingly.[438]

Finally, Imam Khomeini clearly declared in his political will that his intention was to create an Islamic federation to include all the independent Islamic Republics in the Islamic world.[439] Such an objective is firmly established in article 11 which clearly declares that "Muslims are one nation according to the Holy *Qur'ān*, and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran must establish all its general policies on the basis of the solidarity and unity of the Islamic peoples and continue efforts to achieve political, economical and cultural unity in the Islamic

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437 Quoted in Said Amir Arjomand, 'Shi'ite Jurisprudence and Constitution Making in the Islamic Republic of Iran,' in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1993), 150.

438 Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya al-Iraniyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 283.

439 Imam Khomeini, *Kitāb Waṣāyā: waṣiyyat nāmiy-e siyāsī 'ilāhī*, edit. Ḥujatol Islām Thabīḥ Allah 'Alī-Zāda (Tehran: Intishārāt Fardūsī, 2002), 22-3.

World."[440] For that reason, the designation of articles 5 and 12 perhaps aims to preserve the Shi'i identity of Iran.

Above and beyond, the appellative of *Rahbar* (Arabic *Murshid*) that Imam Khomeini opted for as the official title of the supreme leader perhaps created another link to modern Sunni political thought. The General-Guide (*al-Murshid al-'Āmm*) is a title that was invented by Imam Ḥasan al-Bannā the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. It was said that Imam Khomeini praised al-Bannā's role in reviving the call for Islamic unity, and he refused to be called the General-Guide for it should be preserved for the first inventor, al-Bannā.[441] After the success of the Islamic Revolution, the IR named a public square *Maydān-i Imam-i Shahīd* Ḥasan al-Bannā in commemoration of al-Bannā.

### 5.4.2. THE PROTECTION OF THE MUSTAD'AFĪN

To present the humanitarian dimension and to emphasise the universal message of Islam, Clause16 of article 3 affirms that one of the main aims of the IR is to organise its foreign policy according to Islamic criteria and fraternal commitments towards all Muslims and aimed at full protection of the oppressed people of the world (*mustaḍ'afīn*).[442] Article 154 asserts that the IR of Iran supports the legitimate struggle of the *mustaḍ'afīn* (the oppressed) against the *mustakbirīn* (the arrogant) at any place in the world while not interfering in the

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440 Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya al-Iraniyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 283.

441 This is asserted in an interview with al-Waṭan, the Kuwaiti newspaper, by the Consultant al-Dimirdāsh al-'Uqālī, who was one of al-Bannā's disciples who was converted to Shi'ism and the leader of the Shi'i community in Egypt; the interview was published on 20th September, 2007; to review it check the URL http://www.alwatan.com.kw/Default.aspx?MgDid=546730&pageId=35 (last visit on 8.12.2007 at 11.00 AM).

442 Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya al-Iraniyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 281-2.

internal affairs of other countries.[443] However, who are these *mustaḍ ʿafīn*? And why is such significance given to acknowledge their rights and protection in the constitution of IR?

Noticeably, the term *mustaḍʿafīn* (singular: *mustaḍʿaf*) is derived from the Arabic root *ḍaʿf*, and the passive form of this term could be technically used as an equivalent to the other Arabic word *maẓlūmīn* (singular: *maẓlūm*); however, the former has replaced the latter, which Imam Khomeini had used in *Ḥukūmat-i Islamī*, in the his political discourse; that could be deemed additional evidence for Imam Khomeini's efforts to escape the Shiʿi template in which the Iranian Islamic Revolution was placed by its enemies, since the term *maẓlūmīn* has been historically associated with the Shiʿi characteristic of *maẓlūmiyat Ahl al-Bayt* - the unjust treatment of the Prophet's household after his death in which Imam Ali and his descendants were deprived of their right to the caliphate, Faṭima, the Prophet's daughter and Ali's wife, not only miscarried her son, Muḥsin, due to mistreatment by the so-called enemies of *Ahl al-Bayt* but she was also robbed of her right to inherit from her father when the first caliph confiscated a *fadak*, a ranch that the Shiʿites claimed the Prophet had granted to his daughter during his lifetime.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, it has become one of the effective slogans, and it has been widely used in Iranian political propaganda. Despite this fact, some scholars still seem to be confused when they refer to the term *mustaḍ ʿafīn* to denote an un-Islamic influence on the Islamic Revolution. Fuller and Franke argue:

> His [Imam Khomeini's] championship of the *mustaḍ ʿafīn* (the oppressed) against the *mustakbirīn* (the arrogant) at a general level reflected the

443 *ibid*, 315.

radical ideology of Ali Shari'ati, who in turn was influenced by the concepts of other Third World ideologists such as Franz Fanon in a broader call for a struggle of the Third World to shake off the forces of imperialism and the exploiting West.[444]

The term *mustaḍ'afīn* seems to be more significant in practice than *maḍḍlūmīn* due to the *Qur'ānic* application that grants legitimacy, according to God's commands, to the Islamic state to intervene and protect Muslims whenever and wherever they suffer from injustice and oppression; for example, verse 4:75 asserts:

> And what reasons have you not to fight in the way of Allah, and of the weak among the men and women and the children, who say: Our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and grant us from Thee a friend, and grant us from thee a helper.[445]

The verse describes Muslim women, children and elderly people that had lived among the infidels in Mecca and emphasises the divine demands urging the newly established Muslim state in Medina to fight the infidels of Mecca to free their weak Muslim brothers and sisters and put and end to their suffering.

Initially, Imam Khomeini deeply comprehended the influence of the West in the Islamic World in which the Western superpowers are indirectly ruling Islamic countries via their domestic lackeys. Under such circumstances, the Imam anticipated that any attempt to change the status quo would not be tolerated. Once an attempt succeeded in any country, that country would face dire consequences that would lead to the total isolation and freezing out of such a

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444 Graham E. Fuller and Rend R. Franke, *The Arab Shi'a: the Forgotten Muslims* (London: MacMillan, 1999), 75-77.

445 The Holy *Qur'ān*, 4:75.

turncoat country, and Iran would be no exception. Hence, he alerted the nation to this in his speech on the eve of the Iranian New Year of 1980 when he openly stated

> ...all the superpowers and all powers have risen to destroy us. If we remain in an enclosed environment we shall definitely face defeat. We should clearly settle our accounts with the powers and superpowers and should demonstrate to them, despite all the grave difficulties that we have, that we shall confront the world with our ideology.[446]

## 5.4.3. THE IMAM'S OTHER ACTIVITIES IN PROMOTING ISLAMIC UNITY

Imam Khomeini believed that the revival of Islamic unity is a duty of all Muslims, governments and individuals: "I hope to God that all Muslims will be awakened and united and become brothers and stop all clashes among themselves. Governments should stop raising disputes and people should be united."[447] Nevertheless, he realised that *al-wḥda al-Islamiyya* (Islamic unity) would not be achieved without active participation and continual discussion among Muslims. Therefore, he launched several additional initiatives to activate the involvement of all Muslims from all over the world in this process. First of all, he firmly instituted Islamic unity in the IR constitution as one of the major aims the country would strive to attain: Article 3, for instance, states several objectives that the IR is committed to achieving among which is clause 15, about the expansion and strengthening the Islamic brotherhood and collective cooperation amongst all people. Additionally, article 11 declares that according to the *Qur'ānic* verse that clearly states "*Your [Muslims] nation is one nation and I am your God, thereupon worship me*", Muslims are considered one nation; hence,

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446 *Merip Reports*, June, 1980, 22.

447 Shaykh Na'īm Qāsim, "al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya fi al-'Ālam al-Mu'āṣir wa dawr al-Taqrīb fi Ta'mīqihā," edit. Sayyid Jalāl Mīr 'Aqāy, in *al-Ḥukūma min Wijhat Naẓr al-Madhāhib al-Islamiyya* (al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Mathāhib al-Islāmiyyah: Tehran, 1411 H.Q), 438.

the Government of the Iranian Islamic Republic on the base of the Islamic solidarity and unity of the Muslim people and continue the efforts to achieve the political, economical and cultural unity of the Islamic world.[448] Furthermore, article 12, as stated earlier, clearly emphasises that "other Islamic doctrines that consist of *Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, Ḥanbalī,* and *Zayydī* are totally respectful, and their followers are free to practice their rituals according to their doctrines" although it declares that the official doctrine of the IR is the *Ja'farī 'Ithnā 'Ashrī*.[449]

In addition, Imam Khomeini adopted several measures to highlight his call for Islamic unity, which not only heavily activated his religious authority but also by issuing religious *fatwas* (legal opinions) pushed forward Islamic unity and also encouraged his close disciples and assistants to initiate and conduct activities that might serve this purpose.

### 5.4.3.1. RESTORATION OF THE JUM'A (FRIDAY PRAYER)

The *Jum'a* prayer is one of the greatest Islamic rituals which Muslims perform at Friday noon every week and in which they gather to listen to a sermon given by a qualified cleric. The significance of the *Jum'a* prayer is emphasised in the *Qur'ān* in which a chapter is dedicated to elucidate the aims and objective of this prayer and to urge believers to maintain the performance of this great ritual. The topics of the *Jum'a* prayer are varied and cover all aspects of Muslim life: religiously, politically, economically, culturally, and socially. For that reason, *Jum'a* prayer has traditionally been a suitable time to discuss any significant issues affecting the Islamic community.

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448 Nīfīn A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya al-Iraniyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 283.

449 *ibid*, 283-4.

Yet, the *Jum'a* had been changed from an occasion of unity in which all Muslims, regardless to their sectarian differences, were gathering to pray for one God, in one place, at a given time, facing one direction and reciting the same *Qur'ān*, to a point of dispute, when the Twelver Shi'ite had suspended this prayer after the occultation under the pretext that performing it and appointing its leading clerics, were exclusive rights of the hidden Imam. Thus, it had become one of the major differences between Shi'ites and Sunnis for which the latter have accused the former of being *mubtadi'īn* (sing. *mubtadi'*), committing innovation.

Imam Khomeini, however, in his work *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, blames the suspension of the *Jum'a* for bringing about an atmosphere of weakness, corruption and failure; therefore, he points to the necessity of *Jum'a* of its restoration:

> If we had continued to perform the *Jum'a* till nowadays, with its lectures and zeal, with its spirit and its unlimited interests, we would not have come to this situation you see now. We should make every effort to resurrect such meetings and utilise them [the meetings] for guidance, education, enlightenment and leadership towards righteousness and success.[450]

Consequently, Imam Khomeini designated a study for the *Jum'a* prayer in his jurisprudential work *Taḥrīr al-wasīla* (the Delineation of the Means), in which he elaborated the significance of the *Jum'a* prayer, its prerequisites, who should perform it, and when exactly it should be performed.[451]

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450 Imam Khomeini, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Tehran: Kitāb Khānah Buzurq, 1981), 126.

451 Imam Khomeini, *Taḥrīr al-Wasīla*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Muntaẓar li Ṭṭibā'a wa an-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1985), 209-18.

The IR, for instance, hosted the conference of the *Jum'a* prayer Imams in Tehran in April 1984 when Islamic unity was the key issue of the discussion. Remarkably, several Imams representing different Islamic sects from all Islamic countries attended the conference and alternately led the prayers during the conference.[452]

After that, four conferences were held in Tehran during Imam Khomeini's life in which different issues related to Islamic unity were discussed. For example, the first conference was dedicated to Islamic unity while Imam Khomeini and Islamic unity again were addressed in the second conference. The third conference shed light on the principles of Islamic unity, and the efforts of *al-Taqrīb* among the Islamic sects was the focus of discussion in the fourth conference.[453] In addition, the Organization of Islamic Information, charged with propagating Islamic unity issued two magazines, *al-Tawḥīd* (Theism) and *al-waḥdahh al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Unity) to serve its goals.[454]

### 5.4.3.2. Legitimacy of Congregational Prayers led by Sunni Imams

Imam Khomeini issued a *fatwa*, a religious opinion, in a letter to his representatives on the occasion of the hajj (annual pilgrimage) of 1979 in Mecca. He urged both the Iranian Shi'ites and all other Shi'ites around the world to participate in *Ṣalāt al-Jamā'a* (congregational prayer) which were led by Sunni Imams and practice the *Hajj* rituals according to the Sunni jurists' instructions. Such a practice had been widely prohibited by Shi'i *ulamā* in the past - among them the Imam himself.[455] For that reason, the Shi'ite had to either pray

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452 Fahmī Huwīdī, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 337-8.

453 Sayyid Jalāl Mīr 'Aqāy, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Mathāhib al-Islāmiyyah: Ahdāfih wa Manhajih wa Munjazātih* (Tehran: Fajr al-Islām, 2004), 33-4.

454 Fahmi Huwidi, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 337.

455 *ibid*, 335-6.

individually, or they could participate in *Jamā'a* prayers according to *taqiyya practice* (the expedient concealment conventions). When he issued his *fatwa*, Imam Khomeini was asked if it was a sort of traditional *taqiyya*. He explained that he had not implemented the traditional concept of *taqiyya*, but his *fatwa* was a brief aphorism to propagate mutual accordance among all Muslims and abandon any sort of antagonistic attitude that had divided them and been the cause of disputes amongst them for ages, especially in such a sacred occasion, *the Hajj*. Imam Khomeini claimed that there are two types of *taqiyya*: the *taqiyya 'iḍḍṭirārī*, the exigency expedient concealment of the convention, and *taqiyya mudārātī*, the considerate concealment of the conviction. He elucidated that the former, the traditional and popular one among Shi'ites, was used in a situation in which it could jeopardise the follower's life, property, or honour if he exposed his bona fide convictions, while the latter was used to show deference and respect to the other sects of Islam, particularly the Sunni, for the sake of Islamic brotherhood and unity.[456]

The significance of this *fatwa* lies in the fact that it is considered as a shifting point in the Shi'ites' attitude towards Sunnis. Since it was the first time in the historical dispute between the Shi'i and Sunni sects of Islam that a high ranking Shi'i cleric, such as Ayatollah *al-'Uẓmā* Imam Khomeini, had called upon the Shi'i public to join their Sunni brothers in the *Jamā'a* prayer, which had been one of the major sources of dispute. Thus, it appears to be a defection from the traditional *fatwas* that had the consensus of the Shi'ite ulamā, who had regarded the prayer of a Shi'i as invalid if conducted by a Sunni Imam unless he practised *taqiyya*; in this case the prayer should be repeated individually. Imam Khomeini's *fatwa* aimed to incorporate the Shi'i community with the rest of the

456 Abdul-Karim Bi-Azarshirazi, *Risāl-i Nawīn : Ibādat wa Khūdsāzī: Ḥāwī Fatāwī Ḥazrat Ayatollah al-'Uẓmā Imam Khomeini*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Daftar Nashr Farhang Islāmī, 1376 H.S.), 265-70.

Islamic body by removing one of the key issues that had isolated them from the other Muslims for centuries.

This *fatwa* also conveyed a changing pattern in Imam Khomeini's views. In his early work, *Kashf al-asrār,* he recognised just a single type of *taqiyya* as "when a man says something opposite to reality, or he does something against *sharī'a* (the Islamic Laws) to protect his life, honour, or properties."[457] This is the same compulsory one, *'iḍḍṭirārī taqiyya* that is understood from the *Qur'ānic* verse: "*Let not the believers take disbelievers for their friends in preference to believers. Whosoever doeth that hath no connection with Allah unless (it be) that ye but guard yourselves against them, taking (as it were) security. Allah biddeth you beware (only) of Himself. Unto Allah is the journeying*"[458] and *"Whosoever disbelieveth in Allah after his belief - save him who is forced thereto and whose heart is still content with the Faith - but whosoever findeth ease in disbelief: On them is wrath from Allah. Theirs will be an awful doom,"*[459] to prove the legitimacy of practicing such a *Taqiyya*. In addition, Imam Khomeini suggested a situation of a Shi'i person performing the *wuḍū'*, ablution, among Sunnis as an example of when the *taqiyya* should be put into practice[460]. However, his work did not mention the other type of considerate one, *taqiyya mudārātī.* When comparing the two opinions, it seems obvious that there is only one type of *taqiyya*, which is the *'iḍḍṭirārī* one, but it was modified by Imam Khomeini for the sake of Islamic ecumenism.

Nevertheless, Imam Khomeini's *fatwa* paved the way to the restoration of the *Jum'a* prayer officially in all Iran, in spite of the opposition of the other *fuqahā* in

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457 Ayatullah Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrār*, trans. Mohammad al-Bindārī (Amman: Dār 'Ammār, 1988), 147.

458 The Holy *Qur'ān* 3:28.

459 The Holy *Qur'ān* 16:106.

460 Ayatullah Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrār*, trans. Mohammad al-Bindārī, (Amman: Dār 'Ammār, 1988), 147-8.

the holy city of Najaf, led by Ayatollah al-Khū'ī who adhered to the traditional opinion, according to which the *Jum'a* prayer is prohibited in the absence of the hidden Imam.[461] The *Jum'a* prayer having been abandoned for centuries had resulted in the Shi'ites being accused of heresy by other Islamic sects, especially the Sunnis. Again, Imam Khomeini succeeded in removing another hurdle that could have impeded the process of Islamic unity.

### 5.4.3.3. The Image of the *Rāshidī* (rightly-guided) Caliphs in the Iranian Schools' Texts

On the pretext of usurping the right of Imam Ali, the cousin's and the Prophet's son-in-law, in succession, the Shi'ites have cursed the prophet's companions, mainly the three Sunni *Rāshidī* (rightly-guided) caliphs: Abu Bakr al-Ṣidīq, Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and Uthmān ibn 'Affān and consequently rejected the righteousness of their caliphate. That has been one of the major sources feeding the disputes between the Sunni and Shi'ite sects of Islam. Imam Khomeini had originally followed the same route and his early work *Kashf al-asrār,* is full of accusations and criticisms regarding the *Rashidī* caliphs, particularly Abu Bakr al-Ṣidīq and Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. For instance, Imam Khomeini selected some phrases from Imam Ali's work, *Nahj al-balāghah*, to emphasise Imam's resentment of the Rashidī caliphs due to their usurping of power in relation to the succession.[462] Moreover, he pointed to Sunnism as a false doctrine established during the meeting of *Saqīfāt* banī Sāida,[463] when Abu Bakr al-Ṣidīq was elected by the majority of the Prophet's companions, in the absence of Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, to be the prophet's successor. In addition, Imam Khomeini claimed that Abu Bakr, the first caliph, violated the *Qur'ānic* instructions on different occasions; as we have already mentioned, depriving

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461 Fahmī Huwīdī, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 337.

462 Imam Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrār*, trans. Mohammad al-Bindārī, (Amman: Dār 'Ammār, 1988), 186-7.

463 *ibid*, 193.

Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, of her rightful inheritance.[464] Furthermore, Imam Khomeini held that the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, disobeyed the holy *Qur'ān* when he prevented temporary marriage, although God allowed it in the holy *Qur'ān*.[465]

However, the attitudes towards the Sunni sect in general and the *Rāshidī* caliphs in particular positively changed after the Iranian revolution in accordance with Imam Khomeini's new tendency for rapprochement between the Sunni and Shi'i sects of Islam for the sake of Islamic unity. Such a change becomes clearly noticeable in the schools' textbooks in Iran dealing with Islamic history and culture. Fahmī Huwaydī reviewed eleven such textbooks that were assigned to different grades in the Iranian educational system after the revolution; he noticed that Sunni intellectuals had composed the textbooks of the Sunni dominating provinces, so they corresponded to the Sunni version of Islam. As a result, these texts honour the *Rāshidī* caliphs and lay stress on their efforts and achievements. In addition, the texts of the Shi'ite majority areas deal respectfully with *Rāshidī* caliphs although they deeply venerate the Imams and assert the Imams' right to succeed the Prophet.[466] Also, the school texts stress the significance of the unity of the Islamic nation in several lessons and the strong links that Iranian people have with the Islamic nation. According to Ghulam Hadad, the book of social instructions for the fourth grade, published in 1374 A.H., had a lesson entitled *al-umma al-Islāmiyya* (the Islamic Nation) which it stated that

> .. the Islamic nation is composed of all Muslims around the world who all believe in one God, the Prophet Mohammad, the holy Qur'ān, and they all pray towards the same direction, the Ka'ba;...Muslims in Iran are an

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464 *ibid*, 132.

465 *ibid*, 136.

466 For more details refer to Fahmi Huwidi's valuable field study in his work, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 339-51.

> indivisible part of the Islamic nation and we [Iranians] seek to strengthen our relations with all Muslims around the world.[467]

The significance of such a step is not only to alleviate the frequent sectarian clashes in Iran but also to increase the solidity of the Iranian nation by extracting the seeds of hatred and dispute among the other Muslims, not to mention the ultimate goal of developing a new moderate generation in which the conception of Islamic unity is steady and deep-rooted.

### 5.4.3.4. The Week of Islamic Unity

For centuries, the date of the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad, *mawlid al-Nabī*, has been another example of the differences between Sunni and Shi'i Islam, since the former believe the Prophet was born in the 12th of *Rabī' al-Awwal* according to the Islamic calendar while the latter suggest the 17th of the month. Ayatollah Muntaẓirī, the vice and nominated successor of Imam Khomeini, proposed in November 1981 to take advantage of such a sacred occasion for all Muslims to emphasise Islamic unity rather than it being a point of dispute. Therefore he called for an annual celebration during the period from the 12th to the17th of *Rabī' al-Awwal,* the week of Islamic unity.[468] Accordingly, the IR held the first week of Islamic unity in January 1982, when speeches were delivered and seminars were held to remind all Muslims that "they have one religion, one Holy Book and one Prophet, and whosoever highlights the differences among Muslims is an enemy who is mitigating against their general interests of the Islamic *umma*."[469] Still, this unifying initiative was regarded with

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467 Ghulām A. Ḥadād, *The Image of Arabs in the Iranian Schools' Texts*, ( Beirut: the Centre for Arabian Unity Studies, 1996), 288.

468 Ayatollah Muntaẓirī's memoirs at http://www.almontazeri.net.setar.html.

469 From an interview of Ayatollah Muntaẓirī with Fahmī Huwīdī, see Fahmī Huwīdī, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 338.

suspicion by some of their Sunni compatriots who accused the Iranian authorities of using this week to preach Shi'ism in the Sunni areas.[470] Other scholars placed this initiative in the context of a sectarian challenge and enmity between the Shi'ite *fuqahā* and the Saudi Wahhābī school, since it was introduced shortly after a *fatwa* issued by the Saudi Mufti, Shaykh Abd Al-'Azīz ibn Bāz, a well-known anti-Shi'ism Wahhābī cleric, "pronouncing the widespread custom of celebrating the Prophet's birthday a heretical innovation."[471]

### 5.4.3.5. Imam Khomeini and the Palestine Question

In spite of the religious status of Jerusalem for all Muslims and the anger and bitterness that Muslims around the world expressed in response to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Iranian regime of Mohammad Reza Shah challenged the feeling of Muslims and officially established diplomatic ties with the State of Israel on 18th March, 1950 and Iran became the second Islamic country after Turkey to take such a step. However, the Shah soon after announced a cut in these diplomatic ties and closed the Israeli embassy because of the resistance of the members of parliament during the Mosadiq's cabinet and public rejection.[472]

Yet, the Shah announced in 1960 that Iran had acknowledged the State of Israel for eleven years, and the withdrawal of his representative from Israel did not mean any change in relations between the two countries.[473] The secret relations between the Shah's regime and Israel continued, and diplomatic cooperation was in progress on different levels. Politically, the Shah convened with several Israeli

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470 Fahmī Huwīdī, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 355.

471 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism Between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 381-2.

472 Amīn Muṣṭafā, *Iran wa Falasṭīn bayna 'Ahdīn* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-'Arabī lī al-Abḥāth wa at-Tawthīq, 1996), 30.

473 'Abdurahmān Aṡad, *at-Tasallul al-Isra'īlī fī Āsyā* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-'Arabī lī al-Abḥāth wa at-Tawthīq, 1967), 40.

officials on different occasions. For example, he separately met Isaac Rabin and Moshe Dayan three times and once with Shimon Perez and Menachem Begin.[474] Economically, Iran and Israel reached a petroleum agreement which was signed by the Shah and David Ben-Gurion in December, 1961. The Shah not only provided Israel with its needs of Iranian petroleum but he also resisted and criticised Arab attempts to use petroleum as a political instrument to neutralise the West in the Arab-Israel dispute in the early seventies. Commercially, the exchange of trade between Iran and Israel grew twelve fold during the period from 1958 to 1963, and Iran became the third major Asian importer of Israeli goods in 1967 for which el-ʿĀl, the Israeli national airlines, ran several weekly flights to Tehran. Militarily, Israel assisted in arming and training the Shah's army. For example, the squad of the Shah's special guards were provided with Uzi, the well-known Israeli machine guns, and the Iranian paratroops received their training in Israel, not to mention the anti-aircraft guns that Iran bought from Israel.[475]

However, the Jerusalem question and Palestinian misery had became central to Imam Khomeini's political discourse and attacks against the Shah's governments since the early years of his political career. In an interview with the magazine of the *Fatḥ* organization that was published in 1968, the Imam declared his full support for Palestinian resistance and issued a *fatwa* permitting his followers to pay alms (*zakawāt*), donations and dowries (*ṣadaqāt*) to sustain the Palestinian fighters (*fidā'iyīn*)[476] – and this despite the fact that Shiʿism has had no real existence in Palestine since the majority of the population are Sunni Arabs with a small Christian Arab minority.

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474 Samuel Sijef, *al-Muthalath al-Iranī: al-ʿIlāqāt as-Siriyya bayn Isra'īl, Iran, wa al-Wilāyāt al-Mutaḥida*, trans. Ghāzī as-Sàdī (Amman: Dār al-Jalīl, N.A), 76.

475 For more details about Iranian-Israeli petroleum, commercial and militarily relations refer to Amīn Muṣṭafā, *Iran wa Falasṭīn bayna ʿAhdīn* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-ʿArabī lī al-Abḥāth wa at-Tawthīq, 1996), 14-17.

476 Fahmī Huwīdī, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 374-5.

In a letter to the pilgrims dated 6th February 1971, the Imam urged pilgrim Muslim pilgrims to think about their brave Palestinian brothers and provide them with all the possible help they needed when he state:

> Consider the poor and needy in the Islamic lands. Turn your attention to the liberation of the Islamic land of Palestine from the grasp of Zionism, the enemy of Islam and humanity. Do not hesitate to assist and cooperate with those heroic men who are struggling to liberate Palestine.... It is those disputes between the heads of Muslim states that have allowed the problem of Palestine to arise and that do not permit it to be solved.[477]

Additionally, Imam Khomeini illustrated the role of imperial powers in the occupation of Palestine and Israel's superiority over the Arabs and Muslims. He explicitly pointed to that in a message to Muslim students in North America dated 10th July, 1972:

> Israel was born out of the collusion and agreement of the imperialist states of East and West. It was created in order to suppress and exploit the Muslim peoples, and it is being supported today by all the imperialists. Britain and the U.S., by strengthening Israel militarily and politically and supplying it with lethal weapons, are encouraging Israel to undertake repeated aggression against the Arabs and Muslims and to continue the occupation of Palestine and other Islamic lands. The Soviet Union, by preventing the Muslims from arming themselves adequately,

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477 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 195-6; also, Amīn Muṣṭafā, *Iran wa Falasṭīn bayna 'Ahdīn* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-'Arabī lil 'Abḥāth wa at-Tawthīq, 1996), 43.

> by its deceit, treachery, and conciliatory policy, is guaranteeing the existence of Israel.[478]

The Palestine issue continued to be one of the Imam's biggest concerns after the revolution. Therefore, he immediately reminded Muslims, in a letter to the pilgrims of Mecca in the first year after the revolution on 24th of September1979, of their religious duties towards Jerusalem and the role that they should prepare for in the battle against Israel.

> Today the first *qibla* of Muslims has fallen into the grasp of Israel, that cancerous growth in the Middle East. They are battering and slaughtering our dear Palestinian and Lebanese brothers with all their might. At the same time, Israel is casting dissention among the Muslims with all diabolical means at its disposal. Every Muslim has a duty to prepare himself for battle against Israel.[479]

Shortly afterwards, Imam Khomeini instigated several measures to affirm the solidarity of the Iranian revolution towards the Palestinians and their legitimate cause. First of all, he cut off all relations with the State of Israel. Then, Iranians welcomed the leaders of the Palestinian resistance and offered them the political and financial support which they needed. In addition, the IR granted Yasser 'Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), who was

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478 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and declarations of Imam Khomeini,* trans. Hamid Algar, (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 210; See Amīn Muṣṭafā, *Iran wa Falasṭīn bayna Ahdīn*, (Beirut: al-Markaz al-'Arabī lil Abḥāth wa at-Tawthīq, 1996), 44.

479 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar, (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 276.

the first and the only Arab leader to meet Imam Khomeini, the site of the Israeli embassy in Tehran, to become the Palestinian embassy.[480]

One of the Imam's achievements to serve the Jerusalem cause was his announcement of the International Day of Jerusalem and the founding of the Jerusalem army. He called upon all Muslims around the world on 8th August 1979, a few months after the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, to gather and show their solidarity with Palestinian legal rights on the last Friday of *Ramadan.* According to the Imam it should be annually celebrated and he called it the International Day of Jerusalem (*yawm al-Quds al-ʿĀlamī).* To emphasize the significance of this call, Imam Khomeini declared "those who do not participate in *yawm al-Quds* are dissenting from Islam and agreeing with Israel."[481] The Imam aimed to emotionally and financially utilise the holy month, especially the last ten days in which Muslims intensify their worship and donations to charities, to keep the case alive, in order to continue the general mobilisation of all Muslims, and to divert some of the donations to support the Palestinians and their cause. In addition, he aimed to build an army of twenty million soldiers which he called *Jaysh al-Quds*, the Army of *al-Quds,* to prepare for the decisive battle against Zionism and its alliance with the Imperial powers (*Mustakbirīn*).

### 5.4.3.6. EXPORTING THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

Imam Khomeini's call to export the Islamic Revolution to the other Islamic countries received greater intentions and massive reactions than his other

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480 For more details about the post-revolution Iranian-Palestinian relations refer to David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publisher, 1990), 103-4; see also, Fahmī Huwīdī, *Iran min al-Dākhil* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lit-Tarjamah wi al-Nashir, 1991), 386-7.

481 Imam Khomeini's declaration of *yawmul-Quds* (a day that was designated by the Imam to emphasize the sanctity of Jerusalem in 1979 which corresponds annually with the last Friday of Ramdhan) quoted in Ḥusayn Nūr al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī, *Nahj al-Imam wa Taḥrīr al-Quds* (Beirut: Dār al-Hādī, 2002), 161.

political views, and this has become the favourite issue for anti-Khomeinism and the propaganda about the Islamic revolution which has restricted the Imam's dogma to this point. Indeed, it has been widely utilised to discredit Imam Khomeini's call for Islamic unity and present it as an anti-Islamic attitude that reveals Khomeini's sectarian antagonism against the Sunni majority, and by which the Iranian Islamic Republic aims to use the Shi'i minorities in the Islamic countries in general and the Gulf states in particular to serve Iranian national interests. Fuller and Francke explicitly claim:

> .. Iran as a state tends to view Shite communities in the Gulf as objects to be manipulated for the Iranian state's interests. As the Soviet Union once felt free to sacrifice (or defend) the interest of communist parties around the world, depending on the immediate tactical needs of the Soviet state, so too, Iran is ready to use or ignore, the interests of the Arab Shi'a depending on the immediate needs of Tehran's foreign policies.[482]

Indeed, the exporting of the Islamic Revolution, in the Imam's view, was merely a manoeuvre by which Muslim people would get rid off the regimes of Western lackeys and pave the way to establish an Islamic federation state; Menashri pointed to Khomeini's plan when he says

> Initially, Khomeini viewed all governments (particularly in Muslim countries) as illegitimate in principle, and declared his intention to conduct relations with people over the head of their leaders.[483]

In fact, exporting the revolution could have been a natural reaction of self-defence by which the IR attempted to confront the anti-Islamic Revolutionary

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482 Graham E. Fuller and Rend R. Franke, *The Arab Shi'a: the Forgotten Muslims*, (London: MacMillan, 1999), 80.

483 David Menashri, *Revolution at the Crossroads: Iran's Domestic and Regional Ambitions* (Washington D. C.: The Washington Institution for Near East Policy, 1997), 70.

endeavours that had been activated by the superpowers and the governments of the Islamic countries, mainly the neighbouring Gulf States, since 1979. The superpowers looked on the Islamic Revolution as a serious threat to their economical and strategic interests in such a significant region that widely considered the major provider of energy to the Western countries, so they exerted all efforts to foiling it or at least containing its influence within Iranian borders. Imam Khomeini, aware of these intentions, delivered a public speech to the Iranian people on the Eve of the Iranian New Year of 1980, in which he warned Iranians about the West and their allies in the region trying to obliterate the Islamic revolution. He states:

> It is our duty to stand up to the Superpowers and we have the ability to stand up against them...all the superpowers and all the powers [the regimes of the Islamic countries] have risen to destroy us. If we remain in an enclosed environment we shall definitely face defeat. We should clearly settle our accounts with the powers and superpowers and should demonstrate to them that, despite all the grave difficulties that we have, we shall confront the world with our ideology.[484]

## 5.5. THE IMAM'S POLITICAL WILL[485]

Since he introduced the theory of his political ideology in *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, Imam Khomeini had affirmed his deep-rooted belief in his political visions and clung desperately to his call for Islamic unity till the last moment of his life. When he firmly established those visions in the Islamic Republic constitution of 1979, he elaborately granted them the necessary legitimacy for

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484 Imam Khomeini: "we shall confront the world with our ideology," in *Merip Reports* (June, 1980), 22.

485 This will is published online in Arabic: http://www.moqawama.org/imam100/will/willtext.htm and for the English version refer to the URL http://www.irna.com/occasion/ertehal/english/will/; also, it is published in textbook form designated for the students of the University of Islamic Freedom (Dānishgāh-e Āzād-e Islāmī) check *Kitāb Waṣāyā: waṣiyyat-i nāmiy-i siyāsī, ʾilāhī Imam Khomeini*, edit. Ḥujjat al-Islām Thabīḥ Allah Ali-Zāda, (Tehran: Intishārāt Fardūsi, 2002).

practical application. Then, he made his political dogma the subjects of his political will that he designated in letter form, addressed not only to the Iranian people but to the Islamic nation as a whole. The will carried the Imam's recommendations in all fields of life in which it becomes the written document of what so called *khaṭṭ-i Imam* (the political line of the Imam).

Amazingly, this will had been written six years before the Imam's death in 1989 since it was dated 1st *Jumādī al-Awwal,* 1403 A.H. which corresponded to 14th February, 1983 according to the Gregorian calendar. One might inquire about the reasons that lay behind writing the will at this early time especially when the Imam was enjoying stable health and had no medical complaint at the time. This strengthens the belief that he could have anticipated his assassination, so he attempted to record his recommendations preceding a sudden disappearance, especially after the failure of the previous assassination attempt. Hamid Algar reveals:

> Indeed, in 1981, the Saudis gave $10 million to a colonel in the Iranian Air Force to stage a coup which was to include the bombing of the residence of Imam Khomeini in north Tehran; the coup was promptly discovered and foiled.[486]

Also, the Imam perhaps was inspired to make this move by several assassinations that targeted some of his close assistants. First, he lost his close friend and one of the leading figures of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Mahmud Ṭāliqānī, who had been assassinated immediately after the success of the Islamic revolution in 1979. Then, a number of the Imam's associates along with other high-ranking cadres of the *Jimhūrī Islāmī* (the Islamic Republican Party) were killed in a bomb which destroyed the party building while the party

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486 Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism: a critical essay* (New York: Islamic Publication International, 2002), 48, note, 40.

cadres were holding a regular meeting in which the president of the IR at the time and the Imam's successor, Ayatollah Khāmina'ī, was severely injured.

As always, Islamic unity was the means and the end in Imam Khomeini Islamic programme. Hence, it was not surprising that *al-waḥda al-Islāmiyya* became the essence and core of his political will; indeed, he repeatedly emphasised this issue in several places. First of all, he referred in the introduction of his will to one of the Prophet's *ḥādīths* (traditions) that is well-known among Muslims as *ḥadīth al-Thuqalayn* (the two burdens). In it the Prophet says:

> I left among you the *Qur'ān* (*Kitāb Allah*) and my descendents ( *'itratī Ahl Baytī*) which will never be separated till they reach me at the pond (*al-Ḥawḍ*) [in the Day of Judgement].[487]

In his explanation to this sentence "they will never separate till they reach me at the pond" in the *ḥadīth*, Imam Khomeini explains:

> [the *Qur'ān* and *Ahl al-Bayt*] are tied together and if anything happened to one of them it must happen to the other one, and neglecting one of them is neglecting the other one, until those two neglected reach the Prophet at the pond; but could the pond be a point where pluralism connects with unity and drops could disappear in the sea? Or the pond could be something unimaginable to the mind and human Gnosticism?[488]

Then, the Imam reminded his readers that this *ḥadīth* is authoritative for its *matin* (text) has received the census of both Sunni and Shi'i *ulamā* despite the fact that the chains of relaters become a point of disagreement. Also, the *Qur'ān,* which must be the point of unity for all Muslims, became either totally

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487 Imam Khomeini, *Kitāb Waṣāyā: Waṣiyyat-i Nāmiy-i Siyāsī 'Ilāhī*, edit. Ḥujjat al-Islām Thabīḥ Allah Ali-Zāda, (Tehran: Intishārāt Fardūsī, 2002), 16.

488 *ibid*, 17.

neglected or used as a source of division and disagreement. Therefore, Imam Khomeini accused unjust governments and evil-minded clerics (*mo'amamīn*), who were worse than the followers of idols (*atbā' al-Ṭāghūt*), used the *Qur'ān* to support oppression and corruption and to justify injustice of the tyranny that resists Almighty God.[489] They neutralised the *Qur'ān* by using the *Qur'ān* itself:[490] the oppressive rulers and the clerics of their courts are deactivating the *Qur'ānic* verses that call upon Muslims to resist all sorts of tyranny (*Ṭāghūt*) by emphasising the other *Qur'ānic* verses that obliged Muslims to be obedient to *ulī al-Amr* (sing. *walī Amr* literally means the actual rulers).

Seemingly, the Imam was pointing to the *fatwas* (legal opinions) that attempted to secure the status quo of the political order and prevent it changing in both Sunni and Shi'i Islam. On the one hand, there is a *fatwa* that prohibited revolution against a Muslim ruler no matter if he was just or a dictator, unless he prevented Muslims from performing their daily prayers.[491] On the other hand, another *fatwa* deprecated the clerics' direct involvement in politics.[492]

Imam Khomeini expressed his pride in the characters and emblems of Shi'ism such as the Imams and *Nahj al-balāgha* (the Manner of Eloquence, a book alleged to be a collection of the Imam's speeches), *du'ā 'Arafāt* (a supplication of God refers to al-Ḥusayn ibn Ali, the third Imam), *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya* (the sheet of supplications attributed to the fourth Imam, Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn, well-known as *al-Sajjād*, the frequently prostration which means spending most of his time at prayer), and the *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Faṭimiyya* (a book claimed to be written by

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489 *ibid*, 21.

490 *ibid*, 17.

491 This *fatwa* is widely recognised among Sunni scholars especially in modern history where Muslims have been suffering under tyrannical regimes.

492 This had been the dominant view in traditional Shi'ism before Imam Khomeini introduced his theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, and it still has its supporters among the Shiite clerics.

Faṭima al-Zahrā, the Prophet's daughter).[493] Clearly, Imam Khomeini attempted to refute any accusation of committing innovation or abandoning Shi'ism by his radical clerics, who have been opposing his political dogma and efforts of rapprochement with Sunni Islam. The Imam stated that "we are proud that our *madhab* [sect] is *Ja'farī* [called after Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the Sixth Imam], and of our jurisprudence (*fiqhunā*), which is one of his legacies"[494] for it was unpopular amongst the Shi'ites to call themselves *Ja'fari*, but they preferred to use either *'Ithnā 'Ashrī* (Twelvers) or *Imamī* (Imamates). Yet the Imam could have targeted the Sunnis in this statement, since Imam Ja'far is highly respected among the Sunni Muslims as one of the great Imams of Islam and widely accepted as a well-known jurist among other Islamic jurists, such as the founders of the schools of Sunni jurisprudence, Imam Abu Ḥanīfa al-Númān (the founder of the *Ḥanafī madhab*), Imam Mālik ibn Anas (the founder of the *Mālikī madhab*), who was a contemporary of Imam Ja'far and had a close tie with him, Imam Mohammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (the founder of the *Shāfi'ī madhab*), and Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (the founder of the *Ḥanbalī madhab*). Additionally, Imam Ja'far had descended on his mother's side from Abu Bakr al-Ṣidīq, the first Sunni caliph, so he historically became a collective character among all Islamic sects,[495] grounds on which Nādir Shah called for Islamic unity in the eighteenth century (that has already been discussed in chapter 3). Indeed, the mention of this statement in the Imam's will is an affirmation of Khomeini's genuine belief announced in one of his public speeches soon after the success of the Islamic Revolution in which he deemed the *Ja'farī* doctrine no more than one of the Islamic schools of jurisprudence. For example, Imam Khomeini in August 30, 1979, called upon the Sunnis to consider Shi'ism as the fifth school of Islamic jurisprudence:

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493 Imam Khomeini, *Kitāb Waṣāyā: Waṣiyyat-i Nāmiy-i Siyāsī 'Ilāhī*, edit. Ḥujjat al-Islām Thabīḥ Allah Ali-Zāda (Tehran: Intishārāt Fardūsī, 2002), 22-23.

494 *ibid*, 23.

495 Muṣṭafā al-Shak'a, *Islām Bilā Madhāhib* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Maṣriyya al-Libnāniyya, 1991), 192.

Our Sunni brothers must not suspect that in Islam a difference exists between you and us [Shi'ites], just as there are four religious sects among the Sunnis. How is it that these sects, although separate from one another, are brothers and not enemies? This is also the fifth sect where no enmity is involved, all are brothers, all are Muslims, all are the followers of the *Quran* and all are subordinate to the Holy Prophet, may the peace and mercy of Allah be upon him and his descendants.[496]

In another place, the Imam renewed his strong belief in the significance of the *Jum'a* (Friday) Prayer and the *Jamā'a* (collective) prayers for Islam and all Muslim people, stressing

> My advice to the tyrannised peoples and the beloved Iranian people...never be inattentive to Fridays and collective Prayers as they are a manifestation of the political dimension of prayer.[497]

Once more, Imam Khomeini affirmed his good intention towards *al-Khulafā al-Rāshidīn* (the rightly-guided Caliphs) and indirectly exculpated them from the aforementioned accusation of exploitation of the holy *Qur'ān* for political ambitions when he asserted that the divergence from the message of the holy book began after the assassination of Imam Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib.[498] Indeed, he praised them (the rightly-guided Caliphs) for imitating the Prophet's example in trying to spread social justice, although the Islamic state during their time controlled a vast area. He declares:

> Although the Prophet established a government similar to the other government [of his time], it was essentially driven by the motive of

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496 Imam Khomeini, *Excerpts of Imam Khomeini's Speeches on the Unity of Muslims* (London: Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.a), 15.

497 Imam Khomeini, *Kitāb Waṣāyā: Waṣiyyat-i Nāmiy-i Siyāsī 'Ilāhī*, edit. Ḥujjat al-Islām Thabīḥ Allah Ali-Zāda (Tehran: Ìntishārāt Fardūsī, 2002), 25.

498 *ibid*, 17.

> stretching social justice, and the earlier Muslim Caliphs who controlled vast governments did likewise; the government of Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, also was driven as well by that motive to a wider extent.[499]

Obviously, Imam Khomeini blamed the *Umayyad* state for deviating from the line and conduct of the Prophet and his rightly-guided caliphs. In this opinion, he concurred with the vast majority of Muslims, Sunnis, who acknowledged the first four caliphs for being committed to the Prophet's line corresponding to the Prophet's *ḥadīth* "the caliphate will last for thirty years after my death, then it will turn into a dictator kingship;"[500] thirty years after the Prophet's death *Mu 'āwiya ibn Abī Sufiān* established the *Umayyad* dynasty and rule. Hence, those caliphs have been unanimously eulogised by the title of *Rāshidīn* (orthodox or rightly-guided).

Imam Khomeini also emphasised the fact that the Islamic Republic was established by God's grant and support, that Islam comes at the top of the duties of the government, and he hoped that other Islamic countries would imitate the Iranian model, then peoples and countries would reach an accord that would allow them to cut themselves free of the hands of the superpowers. However, if unjust governments do not comply with the people's will, they should be forced to submit since the essence of the Muslims' misery are those governments attached either to the West or the East (i.e. the communist USSR at the time).[501]

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499 *ibid*, 36.

500 It is well-known as *ḥadīth* Safina, one of the Prophet's companions, and it is cited in *sunan* al-Tarmadhī (2390).

501 Imam Khomeini, *Kitāb Waṣāyā: Waṣiyyat-i Nāmiy-i Siyāsī 'Ilāhī Imam, edit. Ḥujjat al-Islām Thabīḥ Allah Ab-Zada* (Tehran: Intishārāt Fardūsī, 2002), 44.

Imam Khomeini called upon the oppressed people (*mustaḍ'afīn*) of the world, Islamic states and the Muslims of the world to stand up and restore their rights by their own efforts and not to fear the uproarious propaganda of the superpowers and their associates. He states "You should repulse those unjust rulers who handed over your income to the enemies of beloved Islam." Furthermore, he urged them to step further to establish a federal Islamic state to include numerous free and independent Islamic Republics in which

> ...you will halt the oppressors (*mustakbirīn*) and achieve the Imamate of the oppressed (*mustaḍ'afīn*) who will inherit the earth according to divine promise [*And We desired to bestow a favour upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the leaders, and to make them the heir. And to grant them power in the land, and to make Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts see from them what they feared (Qur'ān 28: 5-6)*].[502]

## 5.6. CONCLUSION

In short, Islamic unity was the cornerstone of the Imam's political dogma. At the outset, he was provoked to become heavily involving in politics by his enmity to Western attitudes towards his country and intrusion in Iran and other Islamic countries, against which he stood in 1963 and was later exiled. Observing in pain how weak and scattered was the Islamic world; he believed that Islamic unity was the only remedy for the prevailing status quo that allowed the enemies of Islam to strengthen their influence and interference in Islamic countries. In researching how to achieve Islamic unity, Imam Khomeini developed his theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh* and *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* which are the appropriate methods to achieve the ultimate goal, Islamic unity. In other words, the leadership of the jurist and the existence of the Islamic state are the legs on which the rest of the body, Islamic unity, stands.

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502 An English version of Imam Khomeini's political will at the URL http://moqawama.org/imam100/will/willtext.htm.

Consequently, he introduced and demonstrated his political dogma in his work *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, published in the late 1970s. After he had succeeded in establishing the Islamic Republic in 1979, Imam Khomeini firmly elaborated and legitimised his political views in the newly written constitution. Accordingly, the IR under the leadership of the Imam exerted all feasible efforts to achieve Islamic unity.

As we have seen, Islamic unity was the core of his political will in which he demonstrated his political line, urging Muslims of the world to follow in order to achieve the much sought goal of Islamic unity.

Undoubtedly, the death of Imam Khomeini in 1989 was a serious challenge to the future of possible Islamic unity. The Imam had exceptional characteristics and qualifications such as political charisma, religious authority as *al-Marji' al-A'lā* of the Twelver Shi'ism, and a long revolutionary history, which together made him the central character and allowed him to promote these efforts in spite of the sectarian-oriented war with Iraq.

However, such conditions that the Imam had enjoyed were unavailable to the elected successor, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, who not only lacks political charisma but also the religious legitimacy for which his leadership has become a subject of debate. Accordingly, the activities which might have led to Islamic unity were influenced by this change, and the revolutionary call for this to happen was evaluated and replaced with a pragmatic rapprochement policy after the demise of Imam Khomeini. Hence, the efforts of *al-Taqrīb* under the leadership of the Imam's successor, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, will be the focus of the following chapter.

# Chapter 6

# THE EFFORTS FOR ISLAMIC UNITY IN POST-KHOMEINI IRAN: KHĀMINAʾĪ'S PRAGMATIC APPROACH OF AL-TAQRĪB

## 6.1. INTRODUCTION

As stated in the previous chapter, the call for Islamic unity was the cornerstone of Imam Khomeini's political scheme and through it the Imam attempted to export the revolutionary model of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the other Islamic countries in order to achieve his ultimate target of creating a strong Islamic federation, able to revive revolutionary Islam, liberating the Islamic nation, putting an end to Western hegemony, and implementing the universal message of Islam. Additionally, the Imam enforced this unifying tendency in the constitution of the IR of 1979 in order to guarantee that the call and efforts for Islamic unity would continue henceforth.

Evidently, the Imam's call for Islamic unity had three major aspects. Firstly, it was mainly oriented to the Muslim peoples rather the governments that were accused of furthering the interests of the West. Secondly, revolutionary Islam was seen as the only alternative to get rid of the status quo and restore Islamic unity. Thirdly, the call for Islamic unity that was adopted in the IR during the Imam's time was based on three precepts: the entrenchment of the principle of Islamic Unity in the constitution as one of the major targets the IR has to make every effort to achieve; the employment of religious *fatwas* (legal opinions) issued by Imam Khomeini himself, his religious authority, and the proposals for Islamic unity put forward by the Imam's disciples. Khomeini approved of Ayatollah Muntaẓirī's *Isbūʿ al-waḥa al-Islāmiyya* (the week of Islamic unity) and

Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī's *mu'tamar A'immat Ṣalāt al-Jum'a* (the conference of the leaders of the Friday prayer).

After Imam Khomeini's death in 1989, however, the concept of Islamic unity (*waḥda*) and the revolutionary approach needed to accomplish it have been remarkably modified in the "second Islamic Republic", as some scholars like to call it,[503] under the leadership of his successor and the recent *walī al-faqīh* (Supreme-leader) Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī. Although he frequently emphasises in his public speeches[504] that this loyalty and enthusiasm for the Imam's political line (*Khaṭṭ-i Imam*) is assured and promises to be committed to the Imam's political scheme in which Islamic unity undoubtedly represents the backbone, *Ḥujjatul al-Islām*[505] Ali Khāmina'ī nevertheless seems to be prevented from following in the footsteps of Imam Khomeini in this matter due to his personal qualifications and the outcomes of the revision of the 1979 constitution. This saw a separation between the *Rahbariyya* (political leadership) and the *Marji'iyya* (spiritual leadership) adopted, not to mention the negative and fruitless outcomes of the Imam's revolutionary approach that not only revealed the unwillingness of Muslims around the world to accept and support such a call but also caused catastrophic consequences to the Islamic Revolution and Iranian people that resulted in waging an unjust war against Iran and consumed all its energies for eight years. Accordingly, *Ḥujjat al-Islām Sayyid* Ali Khāmina'ī, who was elected by *Majlis Khubarā* (the Assembly of Experts) to the position of the Supreme-leadership on 3rd June, 1989 and novelty enjoyed an absolute political

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503 Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *After Khomeini: the Iranian Second Republic* (London : Routledge, 1995); also Henner Furtig, "Iran: The Second Islamic Republic?", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 20:3 (spring 1997).

504 Ali Khāmina'ī's belief in Imam Khomeini's political views was reflected in a speech he delivered in one of the meetings of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP). This speech was published in a pamphlet entitled Khaṭṭ-i Imam in which it is presented as a manifesto to the members of the IRP; see Sayyid Ali Khamina'ī, *Khaṭṭ-i Imam* (Tehran: Ḥizb-e Jumhūrī Islāmī, 1980).

505 A science degree that is granted to the students in the ḥawza, the religious Shi'i seminary, when they successfully become acquainted with a certain number of books in Islamic theology. This Arabic term literally means authoritative source and might be an equivalent to a Master's degree in the modern Western educational system.

authority, lacked the significant characteristics that his predecessor had possessed mainly the religious legitimacy as *al-Marji' al-A'lā* (the highest source of imitation of his time for the Shi'ites), the political charisma, and the revolutionary reputation that he had acquired from his long struggle against the Pahlawi regime by which his political discourses were authoritative and his sectarian reforms to propagate the Islamic unity were widely indisputable.

Hence, *Ḥujjat al-Islām* Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī faced a serious dilemma since he is constitutionally, as the Supreme-leader, obligated to make every effort to propagate and achieve the aims of Islamic unity. However, he lacked both religious legitimacy and popular recognition that are a must to deal with such a sensitive jurisprudential and sectarian issue being deemed unqualified. To escape this problematic situation, Khamina'ī has been heavily relying on his constitutional powers from which he obtains an absolute political authority, and subtly established two institutions, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb Bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islamiyyah* (the International Council for Proximity among the Islamic Schools of Thought) and *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li Ahl al-Bayt* (the House of the Prophet World Assembly), through which he might achieve several significant targets. Constitutionally, the new supreme-leader would overcome one of the responsibilities under which he is obligated to activate all possible means to propagate and achieve Islamic unity. Domestically, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb Bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islamiyya* would be an effective means to increase the Supreme-leader's popularity among the Sunni Iranians and protect the solidarity of the Iranian people. Also, the supreme-leader would prevent his religious rivals challenging his political authority by taking advantage of this significant theme by centralising the Islamic unity issue in his own hands. On the other hand, the Supreme-leader might have aimed at employing *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li Ahl al-Bayt* to put forward his *Marji'iyya* among the Shi'i minorities by popularising his role as the *walī Amr al-Muslimīn* (Guardian of Muslims) in

which he presents himself as the eligible protector and defender of their rights in their communities, not to mention the financial and political benefits that the Supreme-leader would gain from these minorities.

This chapter is dedicated to surveying the endeavours at Islamic unity post-Khomeini when the revolutionary strategy of the concept of Islamic unity was modified to the pragmatic tactic of the notion of *al-Taqrīb* under the leadership of Khomeini's successor, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, due to his personal and spiritual qualifications and the ineffectiveness of the previous approach. Hence, inescapable issues such as a brief biography of Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, the constitutional alterations of the office of *wali faqīh* and the power transition, and its impact on the implementation of the new notion of *al-Taqrīb* will be investigated in depth.

## 6.2. THE NEW RAHBAR[506]

Sayyid Ali al-Ḥusaynī al-Khāmina'ī was born in 1939 in Mashhad, where the shrine of the eighth Imam Ali al-Riḍā is located, to the late Ayatollah Sayyid Jawād Ḥusaynī Khāmina'ī. His early life was humble due to the poor circumstances of his family:

> My father was a well-known man of religion who was very pious and a bit of a recluse. We had a difficult life. I remember that sometimes at night we didn't have anything in the house for dinner. Nevertheless my

506 This biography is mainly obtained, unless otherwise mentioned, from the official websites of the Office of the Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamina'ī, http://www.al-imam.org/pages/nobtha/nobtha.html and http://www.leader.ir/langs/EN/index.php?p=bio; also, refer to David Menashri, *Iran a Decade of War and Revolution* (Holmes & Meier: New York, 1990), 350-351, and Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya al-Irāniyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 86-7.

mother would scrape up something and that dinner would be bread and raisins.[507]

## 6.2.1. HIS EDUCATION

Sayyid Ali started his education at the age of four when his father sent him to study at a *makktab*, a traditional old-style primary school, in which the alphabet and the Holy *Qur'ān* are studied. Then, he enrolled along with his elder brother in the *Dār Ta'līm al-Diyānat*, a newly opened Islamic school where he finished his primary education. He began studying Arabic Grammar when he was at high school, which he continued after transferring to a seminary education under the supervision of his father and other scholars.

During this intermediate stage in additional to his father who taught him Jurisprudence and its principles (*fiqh* and *uṣūl*), Sayyid Ali was taught by several scholars such as the late Aghā Mīrzā Mudarriss Yazdī who taught him part of the book of *Sharḥ al-lam'a*,[508] and the late *ḥājj* Shaykh Hāshim Qazwīnī with whom he studied the *Rasā'il* and *Makāsib*.[509]

At the age of eighteenth, he started his higher Islamic education (*dars-i khārij*) in Jurisprudence and its principles under the late grand *marji'*, Ayatollah *al-'Uẓmā* Mīlānī, in Mashhad. Then he went to the seminary in the holy city of Najaf in

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507 http://www.al-imam.org/pages/nobtha/nobtha.html.

508 Al-Rawḍa al-Bahiyya fī Sharḥ al-Lam'a al-Dimashqiyya is one of the commonly required sources at the Suṭūḥ level (the second phase in the seminary educational system ). The original source of al -Lam'a al-Dimashqiyya was written by Mohammad ibn Jamāl al-Dīn Makkī al-'Āmilī (d. 1384 C.E./786 H.) who is known as al-Shahīd al-'Awwal (the first martyr), and the Sharḥ (demonstration) was composed by Zīn al-Dīn al-Jab'ī al-'Āmilī (d. 965 H.) who is known as al-Shahīd al-Thānī (the second martyr).

509 Al-Rasā'il and al-Makāsib are required sources for the Suṭūḥ level; the former is also known as the Farā'iḍ al-'Uṣūl while the latter consists of three sections ; al-Makāsib al-Muḥarrama (prohibited benefits ), al-Bay' (selling), and al-Khayārāt (alternatives). The author of both sources is the well -known Shaykh Murtaḍā ibn Mohammad 'Amīn al -Tastarī al-'Anṣārī (d. 1882 C.E./1281 H.).

1957and continued lessons in *Dars-i Khārij* under such well-known teachers as Sayyid Muḥsin Ḥakīm, Sayyid Mahmud Shahrūdī, Mīrzā Bāqir Zanjānī, Sayyid Yaḥyā Yazdī, and Mīrzā Ḥusayn Bajnūrdī. In 1958, Sayyid Ali moved to the holy city of Qum to further his studies in Dars-i Khārij in jurisprudence and philosophy, attending lectures by some of the grand teachers in of the time in that seminary such as the late Ayatollah *al-'Uẓmā* Burūjardī, Imam Khomeini, Shaykh Murtaḍā Ḥā'irī Yazdī, and Allāma Ṭabaṭabā'ī. However, he was obliged to suspend his studies at the seminary of Qum in 1964 and return to Mashhad due to his father's illness. In Mashhad, he maintained his studies of *fiqh* and *uṣūl* under the supervision of Ayatollah Mīlānī and taught religious subjects to young seminary and university students.

### 6.2.2. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Although Sayyid Khāmina'ī acknowledges that he was a student of Imam Khomeini in jurisprudence and its principles and in revolutionary and political ideas, his first political ideal was the well-known revolutionist and founder of the organisation of *Fidā'iyīn Islām*, Sayyid Mujtabā Nawwāb Safawī[510] who deeply influenced him in his revolutionary and political inclinations. This started in 1952 when Nawwāb Safawī along with some of his supporters visited the Sulaymān Khān Madrasa in Mashhad and delivered a lecture on embracing Islam and its rules. He also awakened the Iranian people to the machinations of the Shah's regime and the British government. Sayyid Khāmina'ī, who was one of the young students of the *madrasa*, substantiates this in his own words:

> It was at that very moment, because of Nawwab Safawi that the consciousness of Islamic Revolutionary activism sparked inside me. I

510 Nawwāb Safawī was one of the Islamic activists who opposed the Shah's regime and supported Muṣadaq's movement. When the movement was failed in 1953, Nawwāb Safawī was arrested and executed.

> have no doubt that it was Nawwab Safawi who first kindled the sparks (of revolutionary Islam) in my heart.[511]

When the Shah introduced his pro-American plan, 'the White Revolution' in 1963, Sayyid Khāmina'ī was in Qum and joined the opposition led by Ayatollah Khomeini against the Shah's policies. Then he was sent by Imam Khomeini in May 1963 on a mission to the province of Khurāsān carrying the Imam's message to Ayatollah Mīlānī and other clergymen to join the opposition against the Shah and proclaim against his policies in the month of *Muḥarram*; he continued to Birjand where he delivered the sermon of the ninth of *Muḥarram* (2nd June, 1963) himself after which he was arrested for one night and conditionally released that he would never preach again. However, he was rearrested following the event of the fifteenth of *Khurdād*[512] in Birjand and transported to Mashhad where he remained in police custody for ten days under brutal torture. In January 1964 (*Ramaḍān* 1383), he had delivered speeches in Kermān and Zāhidān against Mohammad Riḍā Shah's policies and American interference in Iran before being arrested by *SAVAK*[513] and sent to Tehran, where he faced all sorts of torture for two months. From then onwards, Sayyid Khāmina'ī came under close surveillance of *SAVAK*, and was arrested several times. Recalling his experiences with *SAVAK*, he describes how

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511 http://www.al-imam.org/pages/nobtha/nobtha.html.

512 On 3rd June, 1963 Imam Khomeini gave a speech in Fayḍiyya seminary school in Qumm that was attended by thousands of his students and supporters in which he criticised the Pahawī regime accusing it of merely being an American puppet and Israeli servant. This speech had ignited the light of demonstrations in several Iranian cities. The demonstrations were severely subdued by the Shah's forces, and thousands of people were killed and injured on 5th June, 1963 that corresponded with the 15th of Khurdād 1342 H. Shamsī; see *Kayhān International*, February 10, 1985, 11.

513 SAVAK was short for Sāzimān Iṭṭilā'āt va Amniyyat-i Kishvar (the Shah's domestic security and intelligence organisation); since its establishment in 1957 till the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, *SAVAK* had been known for its ruthless reputation and brutality by which thousands of Iranians were tortured and executed accused of participating in anti-regime activities.

> The situation had ripened to an armed revolution in Iran since 1348 [1970]. The sensitivity and severity of the former regime against me had increased. Because of the circumstances they were no longer able to ignore people such as me. In 1350 [1972], I was again taken to prison, for the fifth time. The harsh attitude of SAVAK indicated that the system (regime) was very afraid of an armed revolution being accompanied with a sound Islamic ideology. They could no longer believe that my intellectual activism and propagation in Mashhad and Tehran had nothing to do with the developing situation. After being released, the attendance at my classes on the exegesis of the Qur'an and private classes on ideology and other subjects increased.[514]

Between 1972 and 1975, Sayyid Khāmina'ī delivered lessons and lectures in the exegesis of the *Qur'ān* and Islamic ideology in three mosques in Mashhad: *Karāmat*, *Imam Ḥasan*, and *Mīrzā Ja'far*. These lectures and lessons were attended by thousands of politically active students. He also taught the well-known work of Imam Ali, *Nahj al-balāgha*, in which he shed light on the Imam's political views and wisdom. His teaching sessions became popular among the revolutionary minded students to the extent that his reputation spread to the surrounding cities. Accordingly, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī was arrested by *SAVAK* in winter 1975 and imprisoned in the central prison of Iran before being released in the fall of 1976. Then he returned to Mashhad and continued anti-government political activities although he had to keep a low profile due to observation by *SAVAK*. Eventually, Sayyid Ali was rearrested and sentenced to exile in Iran-shahr for three years before his return to Mashhad in the mid-1978, during the public unrest against the Pahlavi's regime.

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514 http://www.al-imam.org/pages/nobtha/nobtha.html.

### 6.2.3. OFFICIAL POSITIONS

From his headquarter in Paris, Imam Khomeini formed a revolutionary council consisting of the key figures of the Islamic Revolution among whom was Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī. From then onwards, Sayyid Ali was in charge of several positions. For example, he was one of the founders of *Ḥizb-i Jimhūrī Islāmī* (the Islamic Republican Party) formed in February 1979, which had become the ruling party before its dissolution after the Iraqi-Iranian war in 1988. He was also appointed Secretary of Defence in 1980 in which he supervised the Revolutionary Guards. In addition, he had been entrusted by Imam Khomeini to lead the Friday Prayer from 1980, and he was elected as Tehran representative in the *Majlis-I Shūrā* (the Consultative Assembly) in 1980. Sayyid Ali also became Imam Khomeini's representative in the High Security Council in 1981. He had survived an assassination attempt in *Abuthar* Mosque in June 1981 before being elected to the presidency of the Islamic Republic - a position he held for two terms till 1989. In addition, he was appointed chairman to the Constitution Revising Committee in 1989, charged with reviewing the constitution and proposing the necessary revisions. After the death of Khomeini, Sayyid Ali was elected by the majority of the *Majlis-i Khubarā* (the Council of Experts) to the position of *Waliy al-faqīh* (Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution).

## 6.3. THE POLITICIZATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE WALĪ FAQĪH IN THE POST KHOMEINI ERA: AN INEVITABLE SECULARISATION[515] OR A REVIVAL OF IMAM KHMEINI'S ORIGINAL CONCEPT?

Sayyid Khāmina'ī's relationships played a major role in his ascending to the position of the *waliy al-faqīh* after the death of Imam Khomeini on June 3, 1989. In the 1950s, Khāmina'ī had met Hāshimī Rafsinjanī when they had paid a visit to the holy Shi'ite Shrines in Iraq together, and their friendship had

515 Olivier Roy, The Crisis of Religious Legitimacy in Iran, *The Middle East Journal* 53:2 (Spring 1999), 201.

strengthened when Khāmina'ī moved from Mashhad to live in Qum; Khāmina'ī and Rafsinjānī both joined a secret organisation opposed to the Shah's regime in Qum in the 1960s called *Jamiyyat Iṣlāḥ al -Ḥawwza* (the Organisation of the Seminary Reforms), meeting other members such as Qadusī, Rabānī Shīrāzī, Ali Mashkīnī, and Azarī Qumi. When the organization was discovered by the Shah's police, Sayyid Ali along with his close friend Rafsanjani fled from Qum to Tehran where they had lived in the same house for a whole year.[516]

After the Success of the Islamic Revolution, Sayyid Ali and his close friends, Rafsanjani and Ali Mashkīnī, established an influential political alliance, which David Monashri called the 'religio-politicians.'[517] This alliance occupied the key executive and legislative offices of the Islamic Republic during the Imam's life. Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī was elected to the Presidency of the Islamic Republic in 1981, a position he held until the death of the Imam in 1989; Hāshimī Rafsanjani became the Speaker of the *Majlis-i Shūrā Islāmī* (the Parliament), and Shaykh Ali Mashkīnī was entrusted to the position of the speaker of the Experts Council.

It had been widely anticipated that the absence of Imam Khomeini would create a huge emptiness in the Iranian political arena that could ignite a challenge over his position among the different fragments of the Iranian clerical institution.[518] The possibility of such an expectation had increased since March 28, 1989 when the Imam officially discharged his close friend, that he had once called 'the flower of his life', Ayatollah Ḥusayn Ali Muntaẓirī from his position as *Qā'im-*

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516 Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Irānyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 86-87.

517 David Monashri made a distinction between the theologians and the religio-politicians as "...persons who gained prominence on the basis of their religious scholarship and authority are deemed theologian, whereas those who exercise authority as a result of their political power are referred to as religio-politicians;" David Menashri, *Revolution at Crossroads: Iran's Domestic and Regional Ambitions*, Washington D. C.: The Washington Institution for Near East Policy (1997), 7, note. 2.

518 Shireen T. Hunter, "Post-Khomeini Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1989/90), 133.

*maqām Rahbarī* (the vice of the supreme-leader and the designated successor of the Imam) to which he was officially appointed by the *Majlis-i Khubarā* (the Council of Experts) on November 22, 1985, leaving this post vacant and entrusting nobody despite his unstable medical condition.[519]

Neil Shevlin claimed that the Khāmina'ī-Rafsanjani axis, which would be endangered if Ayatollah Muntaẓirī occupied the position of supreme-leadership, set the scenario for Ayatollah Muntaẓirī's dismissal.[520] Indeed, Ayatollah Muntaẓirī asserted this claim in his memoirs and blamed the coalition of 'religio-politicians' for the loss of his position. He revealed that they nominated him to this post in the first place in spite of his disinclinations, and they zealously strived to guarantee his election by the council of experts. He clearly states

> I severely opposed this idea [a designated successor to the Imam] since I deemed it a humiliation to the Imam who is still alive, so there is no need to appoint a successor to him; therefore, I wrote a letter to the head of the council of experts, Shaykh al-Mashkīnī, requesting him not to continue with the process of my election. However, he responded that Shaykh Rafsinjanī and Mr. Khāmina'ī have great determination to proceed on the pretext that my election would secure the future of the Islamic revolution and the regime, and Shaykh al-Mashkīnī added that they expressed a high commendation to you.... Later, I knew that they were determinant to knock me down at a suitable moment.[521]

Indeed, the dismissing of Ayatollah Muntaẓirī was due to Imam Khomeini's initial vision of the position of the *waliy al-faqīh* (Supreme-leadership) in terms of the requirements and qualifications. The Imam, as discussed in the previous chapter, during the drafting of the constitution of 1979 had opposed confining

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519 Said Amir Arjomand, "the State and Khomeini's Islamic order," *Iranian Studies* 13:1 (January 1980), 158.

520 Neil Shevlin, "Velayat-e Faqih in the Constitution of Iran: the Implementation of Theocracy," *Journal of Constitution Law* 1:2 (Fall 1998), 375-6; also, Shireen T. Hunter, "Post-Khomeini Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1989/90), 133.

521 See Muntaz□ri's Memoirs at the URL http://alfajer.org/vb/showthread.php?t=8911; also, the URL http://www.ansar.org/arabic/montaziri02/htm.

this position with any sectarian and national condition such as the *Marji 'iyya* that clearly represented the Shi'i characteristic of Supreme-leadership, but he rather put the emphasis on political competency. As Roy witnesses "...a marja' could be a Guide only if he is first a 'political man', as Khomeini explicitly stated in a speech in March 1989."[522] For that reason, the election of Ayatollah Muntaẓirī as *Qā'im-maqām Rahbarī* could have been an inevitable and temporary measure to suit the crucial circumstances that the Islamic Revolution was passing through at the time when- Khomeini had lost most of his sincere and revolutionary adherents in the explosion that struck the headquarters of the *Ḥizb-i Jimhūrī-yi Islāmī* (Islamic Republican Party IRP) apart from the fact that Khomeini himself, as also mentioned in the previous chapter, had been the target of a failed assassination attempt. However, Ayatollah Muntaẓirī, although he had already acquired the *Marji 'iyya*, lacked the necessary political competency - a matter that finally led to his dismissal.

Consequently, Imam Khomeini had started issuing a number of *fatwas* during the last months of the Iraqi-Iranian war to prepare the Iranian public for the dismissal of Ayatollah Muntaẓirī and the amendment of the 1979 constitution in which the major alterations were directed to strengthening the power of the *waliy al-faqīh* and his own absolute authority. Hence, he issued a *fatwa* on 7th December, 1987 and clarified it, a month later 8th January, 1988, in which he affirmed that the government of the *wali al-faqīh* has absolute authority over the people to the extent that allows it to impede the divine ordinances. Forthrightly he states:

> The government [of the *faqīh*] can unilaterally abrogate legal [*shar'i*] agreements that it has made with the people...The government can---when it sees fit to contravene the good of the Islamic country---prevent

522 Olivier Roy, "The Crisis of Religious Legitimacy in Iran," *The Middle East Journal* 53:2 (Spring 1999), 206.

the pilgrimage,[523] which is one of the important divine duties...If the government can exercise its authority only within the bounds of the peripheral divine laws, then the bestowal of the divine ordinances through the absolute deputyship upon the Prophet...would be hollow and meaningless.[524]

Khomeini issued another *fatwa* on 6th February, 1988 in which he established a new institution by the name of *Majma'-i Tashkhīṣ-i Maṣlaḥat-i Niẓām* (the Council for the Identification of the Interests of the System); while the announced aim for this council has been to resolve clashes between the Parliament and the Council of Guardians composed of the qualified *fuqahā* and aims to observe the compatibility of Parliament's enactments of Islamic Laws, the ultimate objective seems to be the undermining of the latter since it has only six representatives among fourteen members of the Council for the Identification.[525]

Akhavi believed that Imam Khomeini's *fatwas* resulted in placing the *imamate* in a higher position among other principles of Shi'ism and legitimizing the encroachment on the constitutional powers of other authorities.[526] However, Akhavi seems to have misread the Imam's intention. Apparently, Imam Khomeini had earlier decided on a constitutional revision in which his ultimate aim was to reactivate his genuine vision of the concept of *wali faqīh* in terms of qualifications and authority that he had failed to emphasize in the 1979 constitution, so the *fatwas* were mainly oriented to justifying the dismissal of

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523 Imam Khomeini activated this fatwa when he suspended the annual ritual of Ḥajj and prevented the Iranian pilgrims from performing this divine ordinance in 1988, objecting to the Saudis' decision to reduce the quota of Iranian pilgrims from 150,000 to 40,000; see Nīfīn A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Irānyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 58.

524 Quoted in Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shici Law on the Tradition of Wilayat al-Faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29:3 (June 1996), 264.

525 *ibid*, 265.

526 *ibid*, 265.

Ayatollah Muntaẓirī and paving the way for radical constitutional amendments in the position of the *wali faqīh*.

Khomeini had dismissed Ayatollah Muntaẓirī from his position as the *Qā'im-maqām Rahbarī* on 27th March, 1989 before he announced the intention to revise the constitution. As a result, a special commission of twenty members[527] was set up according to the Imam's order on April 25, 1989 to reconsider the revision of the constitution of 1979; amongst its members were Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī (the President), Ayatollah Ali Mashkīnī (the Speaker of the Council of Experts) and Hāshimī Rafsanjani (the Speaker of the Parliament).[528]

Although the aforementioned council proposed several revisions to the constitution of 1979, the amendments that had been made for the qualifications necessary for the office of the *wali al-faqīh* were undoubtedly considered the most significant. A noticeable separation between the political and religious authorities was adopted when the major two conditions of the *Marji 'iyya* (source of emulation) and the recognition of the majority of the populace were dropped according to Imam Khomeini's demand expressed in a letter addressed to the commission dated 9th May, 1989.[529] Thus the Islamic Republic becomes a "constitutional theocracy" where the leadership bestows on a merely "constitutional *faqīh*."[530] Also, the collective leadership which article 107 had stipulated in the constitution of 1979 in case no single *faqīh* achieved the required conditions of the leadership was dropped. Additionally, the council strengthened the position of the *waliy al-faqīh* according to article 57 which

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527 Fifteen of those twenty members were nominated by Imam Khomeini while the Majlis (Parliament) appointed the other five members; see Neil Shevlin, "Velayat-e Faqih in the Constitution of Iran: the Implementation of Theocracy," *Journal of Constitution Law* 1:2 (Fall 1998), 376, note 198.

528 *ibid*, 376.

529 Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shici Law on the Tradition of Wilayat al-Faqih," *Iranian Studies* 29:3 (June 1996), 267, note. 117.

530 Olivier Roy, "The Crisis of Religious legitimacy in Iran," *The Middle East Journal* 53:2 (Spring 1999), 214.

emphasizes the absolute political authority of the *waliy al-faqīh*.[531] The new amendments received the consent of the Iranian populace in a national referendum on July 28, 1989, together with the presidential elections which were brought forward from August to July.[532]

Still, it has been admitted that the alterations in the qualifications for the office of *waliy al-faqīh* were a necessity for the post-Khomeini era. According to Nīfīn Mus'ad, the high qualifications of the *waliy al-faqīh* in the 1979 constitution were intentionally designated to match Imam Khomeini's status, but after the Imam's demise the lowering of the ceiling of the prerequisites for this post became inevitable.[533]

The constitutional amendments paved the way to Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī's nomination for the post of Supreme-leader; however, the support that he received from his 'religio-politician' allies in the council of experts resolved the competition over this post in his favor when he was elected on June 3, 1989 (only one day after the demise of Imam Khomeini) in which he gained the vote of a two-thirds majority of the *Majlis-i Khubarā* (Council of Experts).[534] Patrick Clawson and Mehdi Khalaji reveal the role of Rafsanjani, despite what were perceived as the somewhat weak qualifications of the new leader, when they affirm:

> When revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died in 1989, a backroom deal brokered by Rafsanjani put then-president Khamina'ī in

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531 Nīfīn A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Irānyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 77-85; also, Neil Shevlin, "Velayat-e Faqih in the Constitution of Iran: the Implementation of Theocracy," *Journal of Constitution Law* 1:2 (Fall 1998), 376-79.

532 Shireen T. Hunter, "Post-Khomeini Iran," Foreign Affairs (Winter 1989/90),135; also, Neil Shevlin, "Velayat-e Faqih in the Constitution of Iran: the Implementation of Theocracy," *Journal of Constitution Law* 1:2 (Fall 1998), 378.

533 Nīfīn A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Irānyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 80.

534 Shireen T. Hunter, "Post-Khomeini Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1989/90), 134.

his place. Khamina'ī's religious credentials were widely ridiculed at the time.[535]

In fact the election of Ayatollah Khāmina'ī's leadership raised legitimate and legal inquiries. Hypothetically, the leader in a theocratic regime, who is supposed to be the shadow of God on earth, should be at least one of most learned clerics if not the superior among them. This did not apply to the case of *Ḥuijjat al-Islām Sayyid* Ali Khāmina'ī, the new *wali al-faqīh* who was soon granted the degree of Ayatollah after his election, although most of the senior Shi'ite *ulamā* still deemed him scientifically unqualified for the position of Ayatollah *al-'Uẓmā*[536] that allowed him to hold the *marji'yya*; for that reason. For that reason, David Monashri mistakenly concluded that Khāmina'ī had certainly to imitate one of the living Ayatollahs as a Shi'ite *muqallid* (follower) for which he subtly followed the 100 year old Ayatollah Arākī who was too old to be a serious threat to Khāmina'ī's political authority.[537]

Even though Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī had been considered qualified according to the new amendments when he was elected to the post of the Supreme-leadership on 3rd June, these amendments were not officially in effect until 28th July, when the results of the general referendum were announced. Hence, the legality of his election did become questionable and raised noticeable opposition among the clergy outside the Council of Experts. Among this opposition was the well-known Ayatollah Azarī Qumī who strongly protested and denied Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī's leadership, nominating Ayatollah *al-'Uẓmā* Bahjat instead, justifying

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535 Patrick Clawson and Mehdi Khalaj, "How Supreme is Iran's Supreme Leader?," *Policy Watch* # 1262, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, (23 July, 2007), 1.

536 Literally means the great verse of God, and it is the highest theological degree in the Shiite seminary system that is roughly equivalent to a Professorship in the Western educational system.

537 David Monashri, *Revolution at the Crossroads: Iran's Domistics and Regionals Ambitions* (Washington D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1997), 40.

his objection on God and the Prophet's denial of such a leadership.[538] In 1990, also, Ayatollah Muntaẓirī who was the former-designated successor attacked the ruling clerics and indicted them of betraying Islam, so he was put in home-imprisonment.[539]

In such circumstances, the supporters of the new supreme-leader repeatedly used every possible means to assert the legitimacy of his leadership, and the Council of Experts re-emphasized the legitimacy of Khāmina'ī's election on several occasions and proclaimed this election 'a good decision.'[540] Furthermore, his supporters recalled the words of praise and commendation of Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī by the late Imam Khomeini; on one occasion, the adherents of the new *Rahbar* publicly broadcast an old letter from Khomeini addressed to Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī in which the Imam deemed the election of Khāmina'ī for Presidential Office a blessing from God, being as he was a mujāhid committed to the straight line of Islam and very knowledgeable in both religion and politics. The Imam also considered Khāmina'ī one of the pillars of the IR when he stated: "I consider you one of the strong cornerstones of the Islamic Republic, acquainted and committed brother in doctrinal issues, and protector of the doctrinal principles of the absolute authority of the *faqīh.*"[541] Additionally, Ayatollah Khāmina'ī not only received the vow of loyalty from the constitutional authorities (executive, judicial, and legislative), but also the two branches of the military, namely the army and the Revolutionary Guards, declared their allegiance as did the state's elite well-known clergy among whom was Ahmad, the son of Imam Khomeini, who congratulated Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī and

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538 Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Irānyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 85.

539 Feredoun Hoveyda, "the Second Death of Ayatollah Khomeini," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* IX: 2, (Winter/Spring 2003), 207.

540 Nīfin A. Mus'ad, *Ṣun' al-Qarār fī Iran wa al-'Iilāqāt al-'Arabiyya-al-Irānyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2001), 85-6.

541 http://www.moqawama.org/_leragibkhitab.php?filename=2005060.

proudly expressed his happiness for the unity of the leadership that "blinded the enemies of the Islamic regime."[542]

Noticeably, there were two significant factors present in the revision of the 1979 constitution and the succession of Imam Khomeini. On the one hand, the abolition of the two prerequisites of *Marji'iyya* and the recognition of the majority of the people, the characteristics that attached the concept *walī al-faqīh* to Shi'ism, could provide another evidence and place this concept in a broader non-sectarian Islamic context by which it could have equally opened the office of the *wali faqīh* for the other qualified Sunni *fuqahā* regardless of the sectarian belief, and sustain the claim that this concept could have been designated for a role that expanded beyond Iranian borders, as has been discussed in depth in the previous chapter.

On the other hand, the revision of the 1979 constitution in general and particularly the reformulation of the office of the *wali faqīh* after ten years of actual implementation of the concept, carries another significance which could have been considered an evaluating attempt at the outcome of such an implementation. Hence, the strengthening of the political authority of the *wali faqīh* while degrading his religious qualifications seems to be a conclusion of this evaluation. For that reason, this attempt could have provided the legitimacy for the new *waliy al-faqīh* to reasonably review all the correlated policies in which the revolutionary policy of Islamic unity (*al-waḥda al-Islamiyya*) perhaps becomes a priority.

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542 Shireen T. Hunter, "Post-Khomeini Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1989/90), 134, 136.

## 6.4. THE NEW PHASE OF AL-TAQRĪB: A GENUINE DEPARTURE FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY WAḤDA OF THE KHAṬṬ-I IMAM OR A PRAGMATIC OVERHAUL?

Constitutionally, the new *waliy al-faqīh* Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī was expected to activate and promote both domestically and internationally the principle of Islamic unity. He publicly announced his full commitment in the *Khaṭṭ-i Imam* (Imam Khomeini's political line); however, the lack of the jurisprudential legitimacy and political popularity,[543] as a result of the separation between the *Marji'iyya* and *Rahbariyya* in the amendments of the 1989 constitution, became the stumbling block that seemed to impede the new Supreme-leader from identically tracking the revolutionary approach of Imam Khomeini in this respect. Actually, the energetic nature of the Imam's previous approach turned out to be fruitless and created severe reactions that resulted in the Isolation of the Islamic Republic from its Islamic milieu. Therefore, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī was realistic in developing his own tactics to accomplish the strategic objective of Imam Khomeini within his own potentials. Accordingly, he initially used the call for Islamic unity to guarantee the solidarity of the Iranian people and present the Iranian nation as an example model for this intended Islamic unity, where he had to rely on his political constitutional authority. He had exclaimed such an intention four months after his election in a speech delivered to the first conference on Islamic unity and the third conference in a row that was held in Tehran in the period from 12th to 17th October, 1989. In it he stated:

> Indeed, when we emphasize our wish for achieving a unity between our Sunni and Shii brothers and between all different *madhāhib* (sects), so

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543 Hoveyda asserts "the official pollsters also discovered that Ayatollah Khamina'ī, the powerful "Supreme Leader", was the most unpopular figure in the country"; see Feredoun Hoveyda, the Second Death of Ayatollah Khomeini, *Brown Journal of World Affairs* IX: 2, (Winter/Spring 2003), 207.

> we call primary for a unity between the different groups (*firaq*) within the Iranian people.[544]

Furthermore, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī clearly expressed the desire to revise the current revolutionary policy to promote Islamic unity to a new *modus vivendi* approach[545] in the same speech when he explained his understanding of this much wished-for Islamic unity;

> The second meaning of unity is that the different Islamic groups (*firaq*) should try to come closer to one another. They have to understand each other better and must try hard to discern by a mutual comparison of their *madhāhib* how large the measure of their agreement is. There are many *fatwa* of *fuqahā* (religious jurisprudents) and *ulamā* that can promote the *taqrīb* between the *madhāhib*, when they are analyzed as the basis of the scientific criteria of the *fiqh* (jurisprudence). That is the reason why we have a sincere wish to found *Dār al-taqrīb bayn al-madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* (House of Reconciliation between the Islamic Sects) and want to realize this wish.[546]

One might inquire if this could be a significant retreat from Imam Khomeini's political line in which Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī replaced the Imam's concept of *waḥda* (unity) with a new concept of *al-Taqrīb* (rapprochement)? Indeed, the Arabic term *al-Taqrīb* appears to be different from the other Arabic term of *waḥda* not only in terms of the literal meaning but also in its perception of reality and effective mechanism that was imposed due to two essential motives. Firstly,

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544 Quoted in Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History (Boston: Brill, 2001), 337.

545 Ibid, 337.

546 Quoted in Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 338.

the new approach seemed to be more suitable for the new supreme-leader's de facto authority which lacked the required religious legitimacy (*Marji 'iyya*). Unlike Khāmina'ī, the religiously qualified Imam Khomeini, in his great effort to restore Islamic unity (*waḥda Islāmiyya*), heavily depended on his religious legitimacy as the *marji' A 'lā* (the highest source of emulation of Shi'ism of the time) when he employed the religious *fatwas* to eradicate some of the long sectarian conflict that had formed the major obstacle to preventing or maybe delaying such a unity. According to Abd al-Karīm bī Azar Shabb, Sayyid Khāmina'ī was aware of the difference between the two terms of *waḥda* and *taqrīb* and he chose the latter.[547]

Secondly, the disappointing outcome of Imam Khomeini's confrontational approach imposed such a modification. The Imam's clarion call for Islamic unity provoked the hostility of governments in the Islamic world- particularly the surrounding countries - against the Islamic Republic. These governments viewed such a policy as a serious threat to their existence. Also at the same time, it turned out to be ineffective in achieving its genuine target in transferring the Islamic revolution beyond the Iranian borders. Brunner notices:

> One reason for this shift in the concept of the country's foreign policy may be seen in the apparent failure to spread the revolutionary spirit anywhere abroad.[548]

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547 Dr. Abd al-Karīm bī Azar Shabb, who is an active member of al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya, asserts this in an interview with Risālat al-Taqrīb, see the URL http://www.taghrib.org/arabic/nashat/elmia/markaz/nashatat/elmia/matboat/resalataltaghrib/15/12.htm Also, Ayatollah Taskhīrī, the present Secretary-General of Majma' al-Taqrīb, distinguishes between the two concepts of al-Waḥda and al-Taqrīb in his work máa al-Mu'tamarāt al-Dawliyya ḥawla al-Waḥda wa al-Taqrīb; check Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Taskhīrī, máa al-Mu'tamarāt al-Dawliyya ḥawla al-Waḥda wa al-Taqrīb (Tehran: Kitābkhānah Millī Irān, 2003).

548 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and restrain* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 384.

Surprisingly, one of the proposed institutions was initially granted the no less meaningful title *Dār al-Taqrīb* that was established by Mohammad Taqī al-Qumī in Cairo in the 1940s although the name of its founder was being evaded as much as possible[549] thanks to the IR's undervaluing attitude towards Shaykh Mohammad al-Qumī during the time of Imam Khomeini, (as already discussed above) when it appeared to be another deflection from Imam Khomeini's political line.

### 6.4.1. MU'TAMAR ATBĀ' AHL AL-BAYT

Within a year of his election, Sayyide Ali Khāmina'ī put his ideas into practice, and Tehran hosted *mu'tamar Atbā' Ahl al-Bayt* (the conference of the Followers of the House of the Prophet) on Monday 21st May, 1990 (or 25th of *Shawwāl* 1410 in the Hījrī calendar);[550] more than three hundred Shi'i clerics and intellectuals participated from all over the Islamic world.

Significantly, there were two possible reasons behind the hosting of this conference. On the one hand, it could be utilised as an opportunity to evaluate Tehran's previous plan to promote Islamic unity ten years after its implementation. On the other hand, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, who lacked the necessary religious credentials to deal with such a jurisprudential issue as we have seen, could have been trying to obtain religious backing from the Shi'i clerics and intellectuals attending the conference for his proposed *taqrīb* policy rather than seeking such religious support from the traditionalist Shi'i *marji's* living in Iran, a matter that might shake his already questionable authority in the

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549 *ibid*, 382-3.

550 This date was stated on the Official website of al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li ahlul-Bayt at URL http://www.Ahl al-Bayt.org while Wilfried Buchta cited different date in which he asserted that the conference was held a month earlier in the period between 20-24 April, 1990; see Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 338.

eyes of the populace and jeopardise his future plan to claim *al-Marji'iyya al-'Uẓmā*. Sayyid Khāmina'ī's plan succeeded when the final declaration of the conference adopted his rapprochement policy: paragraph 2 of the declaration presented the delegates' request for the Supreme-leader, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, to establish *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* (the International Council for Proximity among the Islamic Schools of Thought); also, they appealed for the founding of another institution by the name of *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li Ahl al-Bayt* (the World Assembly for the People of the Prophet's House) that was documented in paragraph 9 of the same declaration. [551]

## 6.4.2. AL-MAJMA' AL-'ĀLAMĪ AL-TAQRĪB BAYN AL-MADHĀHIB AL-ISLĀMIYYA (THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PROXIMITY AMONG THE ISLAMIC SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT)

At the instigation of Ayatollah Ali Khamina'ī who pretended to be complying with the request of the aforementioned conference, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya*, the International Society for Proximity[552] among the Islamic Schools of Thought,[553] was established on 4th October, 1990. As Farid Mirbaghari notices "On many occasions, what is thought to be a foreign policy is actually conducted for domestic consumption...."[554] Significantly, this date means that the *Majma'* was established two months after Iraq had invaded Kuwait and the US forces and its Western allies had a physical presence on the opposite shore of the Persian Gulf, which raises the question of whether the

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551 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 338.

552 The official employment of the translated literal meaning of the Arabic term taqrīb (proximity) in the title of this institute is inaccurate and does not reflect the intended conceptual meaning of the term; therefore, I rather prefer the use of some other English equivalents that give better clarification for the concept of *al-Taqrīb* such as rapprochement, reconciliation, and the Christian term ecumenism; another lingual mistake occurs in the official website address of the Majma' when they use the wrong transliterated word taghrib, which literally means westernising, instead of the correct form of the word taqrīb. See the URL http://www.taghrib.org.

553 The name of the society has been changed recently to *The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought*.

554 Farid Mirbaghari, "Shi'ism and Iran's Foreign Policy," *The Muslim World* 94 (October 2004), 555.

founding of this institution was an Iranian reaction to the development of the political events of the time – not to mention another remarkable event at the domestic level corresponding with the election of the members of the Assembly of experts. So the *walī Amr al-Muslimīn* Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī could have been aiming to influence the Sunni votes and direct them to preferable candidates of this election. In the following section, unless otherwise stated, the analysis will heavily rely on a pamphlet that has been published by *Majma' al-Taqrīb* in Tehran in 2004 to present the story of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*, how it worked, and the significant role that it meant to play.[555]

To begin with, *Majma' al-Taqrīb* identifies *Madhāhib islāmiyya* (Islamic sects) according to its strategy,[556] as the well-known jurisprudential schools that employ a harmonious judgemental system based on the holy *Qur'ān* and the Prophet's Traditions (*Sunna*). For that reason, *Majma' al-Taqrīb* recognises only eight jurisprudential schools among the Islamic sects eligible to be involved in *al-Taqrīb* activities of the *Majma'*: the *Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Malikī, and Ḥanbalī* from the Sunnī side, and the *'Ithnā 'Ashrī, Zaydī*, and *Buhara*[557] from the Shi'i side in addition to the *Ibāḍī*.[558]

According to its statute, the constitution of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* contains twenty-nine articles to organise and control its work at domestic and international levels.

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555 For more details refer to Sayyid Jalāl Mīr 'Āqāy , *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya: Ahdāfih wa Manhajih wa Munjazātih* (Tehran: Fajr al-Islām, 2004); also, this pamphlet is published online on the official website of Majma' al-Taqrīb at the URL http://www.taghrib.org/arabic/nashat/esdarat/kotob/arabic/books/lamha/index.htm (last visit 12 of December 2007).

556 This strategy was edited and approved by the Supreme Council of the Majma' in its meeting on 23rd and 24th December, 2002.

557 it is a group derived from the Shi'ite Ismā'īliyya; the followers of this sect are mostly located in the indian Peninsula, and its name Bahara means merchants in the Hindu language.

558 Sayyid Jalāl Mīr Āqāy, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya: Ahdāfih wa Manhajih wa Munjazātih* (Tehran: Fajr al-Islām, 2004), 25.

Among these there are a number of significant articles worth reviewing. For instance, article 1 identifies *Majma' al-Taqrīb* as an international, academic, and cultural Islamic institution founded by Ayatollah al-'Uẓmā Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī in 1411, which has its own legal and independent identity and it is managed according to this constitution. Article 2 nominates Tehran as the main site of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* with the possibility to establish other branches and offices in different cities and countries as needed . Article 3 emphasises that the supreme supervision and observation over *Majma' al-Taqrīb* is granted to the *walī Amr al-Muslimīn*, the Superior Guardian of Muslims, Ayatollah al-'Uẓmā Ali Khāmina'ī. One might inquire about the legitimacy and aims of this article if *Majma' al-Taqrīb* supposedly represents all Islamic sects and each sect has its own definition and representation for the term, *walī Amr al-Muslimīn*.

Also, article 5 numbers the objectives of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* according to which it has six main goals:

1) Helping in reviving and spreading Islamic culture and teaching and defending attacks on the holy *Qur'ān* and the Prophet.
2) Seeking all available paths to achieve the acquaintance and understanding among the *ulamā*, Intellectuals, and leaders in the Islamic world and in different fields such as ideologies, jurisprudence, society, and politics.
3) Preaching the idea of *al-Taqrīb* among Muslim intellectuals and the elites to pass it on to the masses in the Islamic world and alert them to the antagonistic conspiracy to rupture the unity of the Islamic nation.
4) Aiming to arbitrate and propagate the principle of interpretative judgement and inference among the Islamic sects.
5) Making every effort to create coordination and establish a united Islamic front against the informational conspiracy and cultural attack of the enemies of Islam according to the uncontested Islamic principles.

6) Denying the sources of mistrust and suspicious among the followers of the Islamic sects.

Additionally, article 6 reveals the methods that *Majma' al-Taqrīb* would rely on to achieve it goals and objectives:

1) To recognise and communicate with different Islamic organisations, centres, and individuals in terms of creating the basis for mutual activities.
2) To compose and publish academic and social books, journals and research studies that focus on the mutual subjects among Islamic sects.
3) To find and expand the activities of the theological schools and universities in the field of Islamic sciences.
4) To hold conferences and participate in all relevant activities.
5) To join the membership of the international organisations that might serve the objectives of *Majma' al-Taqrīb,* such as the Islamic League and United Nations.
6) To institute *at-Tqrīb* groups all over the world.
7) To support the centres, institutions and individuals who favour and adhere to the notion of *at-Taqrib*.
8) To establish centres and branches in important areas as needed.

Article 7 of the constitution explains that *Majma' al-Taqrīb* consists of three boards: the General Assembly, the Supreme Council, and the Secretary-General, and the articles 8 – 25 explain the mechanism of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* through which the three boards function. Accordingly, the role of the General Assembly is consultative, and its members are elected by the Supreme Council for six years from among the jurisprudents, intellectuals and leaders of Islamic sects from all over the world who adhere to the ideology of *al-Taqrīb* among the Islamic sects: article 8. Although the General Assembly is supposed to gather annually according to the *Majma'* constitution, it was not until 1996 when the *Majma'*

was able to hold the first meeting for its General Assembly due to undefined difficulties.[559]

Articles 13 – 20[560] are dedicated to defining the role and functions of the Supreme Council. For example, article 13 states that the Supreme Council plays the legislative role and all of its members are elected by *walī al-Amr* (the Supreme Guardian of Muslims) for six years from among jurisprudents, intellectual, and Islamic characters from all Islamic sects. This article has three paragraphs:

(1) The Secretary-General is a member of the Supreme Council

(2) The members of this council are members of the General Assembly as well

(3) The membership in the Supreme Council is renewable

Article 14 emphasises that the Supreme Council of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* is in charge before *walī al-Amr* according to its authority and responsibilities, while article 15 asserts that the Supreme Council is composed of a minimum of fifteen members and maximum of twenty-one. According to article 16 the president and vice-president are elected by the majority of its members every two years. Significantly, the meeting of the council is officially considered by the attendance of the majority of members in Iran, and its decisions will be recognised by the acceptance of the majority of the delegates according to article 17. The present Supreme Council has twenty-one members:[561]

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559 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 340.

560 Sayyid Jalāl Mīr Āqāy, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya: Ahdāfih wa Manhajih wa Munjazātih* (Tehran: Fajr al-Islām, 2004), 18-20.

561 Ibid, 12-13.

1. The President of the council Ayatollah Sayyid Mohammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm (Iraq)[562]

2. The Vice-president Shaykh al-Mūlawī Mohammad Isḥāq Madanī (Iran)

3. The Secretary-General Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Taskhīrī (Iran)

4. Ayatollah Mohammad Wā'iẓ-Zāda Khurāsānī (Iran)

5. Shaykh Abd al-Hādī Awang (Malaysia)

6. Shaykh Ahmad Mohammad al-Shāmī (Republic of Yemen)

7. Ayatollah Mohammad Ḥusayn Faḍl Allah (Lebanon)

8. Ḥujjat al-Islām Dr. Abd al-Karīm bī Azar Shīrāzī (Iran)

9. Ḥujjat al-Islām Ḥasan Rabānī (Iran)

10. Shaykh Ahmad ibn Ḥamad al-Khalīlī (Oman)

11. Dr. Abd al-Raḥīm Ali (Sudan)

12. Dr. Mohammad Salīm al-'Awwā (Egypt)

13. Ayatollah Mohammad Āṣif Muḥsinī (Afghanistan)

14. Dr. Sayyid Ja'far Shahīdī (Iran)

15. Ḥujjat al-Islām Mohammad Ḥasan Akhtarī (Iran)

16. Ḥujjat al-Islām Mahmud Ahmadī Irāqī (Iran)

17. Shaykh Mohammad Shaykh al-Islām (Iran)

18. Ḥujjat al-Islām Sayyid Sājid Naqawī (Pakistan)

19. Dr. Mohammad al-'Āṣī (Syria)

20. Ḥujjat al-Islām 'Abbās Ali Sulaymānī (Iran)

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562 He was assassinated on his way out after one of the Jum'a prayers in Najaf and the council has not elected a replacement for him yet.

21. Ḥujjat al-Islām Musa al-Mūsawī (Iran)

According to article 21, the Secretary-General represents the highest executive position in *Majma' al-Taqrīb*; the Supreme Council of the *Majma'* is responsible for nominating candidates to the position of Secretary-General to the *walī al-Amr*, who is authorised to entrust one among them to the position for four years. Ayatollah Khāmina'ī chose *Ḥujjat al-Islām* Wā'iẓ-Zāda Khurāsānī, a Shi'i scholar from Mashhad, for the position of Secretary-General of the *Majma'*. Wā'iẓ-Zāda Khurāsānī was born in Mashhad in 1925. During the 1940s and 1950s, he studied *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* in Qum under some of the well-known *ulamā* of the time, such as Ayatollah *al-'Uẓmā* Burūjerdī, Ayatollah Arākī and Ayatollah Golpāygānī. After his return to Mashhad, Wā'iẓ-Zāda Khurāsānī resumed the management of *Mishkāt*, the theological Journal of the rich and powerful Imam Riḍā Foundation in Mashhad, becoming the Editor- in - Chief.[563] The recent Secretary-General of the *Majma'* is Shaykh Mohammad Ali Taskhīrī who has been in the post since 2004; Shaykh Taskhīrī, also served as Secretary-General of the *Majma' Ahl al-Bayt* from its founding till 1999.[564]

*Majma' al-Taqrīb* acknowledges five legitimate sources of its financial income for *Majma' al-Taqrīb*, as article 26 explains: a) endowments; b) the numerous activities of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*; c) financial aids from legal and intrinsic sources; d) loans and e) all the other sources that the Supreme Council approves. However, the financial sources for the large budget of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* appear to be questionable since none of the aforementioned sources is clearly defined, which suggests that the Supreme-leader may be the sole sponsor for this

563 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 338 note (20).

564 A brief biography of Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Taskhīrī will be provided below.

institution. Buchta asserts "the Society [*Majma' al-Taqrīb*] acknowledged that it is sponsored by the *walī-ye faqīh* and some undefined charitable organisations."[565]

From the fore-mentioned articles, it appears that the representation of the Shi'i and Iranian delegates have been dominant in the Supreme Council of *Majma' at-Taqrīb* responsible for its legislative and executive functions for out of twenty-one members in the Supreme Council eleven are Iranians, and twelve of the Council members are Shi'ites, not to mention the chief of this Council and the Secretary-General both are Shi'ites. For that reason, it has been widely considered that *Majma' al-Taqrīb* has been essentially oriented to serve Iranian national interests and it also means that Iran stands to gain a stronger influence not only among the Shi'ite communities abroad but also the Muslims of the world. Hence, it has been said that the *Majma'* is merely a useful and effective instrument for Iranian foreign policy through which the Islamic Republic would politically use Shi'i minorities to serve that national interest, spread Shi'ism in the Sunni Islamic countries, and prepare the way for the Iranian intelligence services to recruit secret agents in different countries including the West,[566] and so strengthen the political role of the Iranian Republic in both regional and international affairs. The fact that *Majma' al-Taqrīb* is under the direct supervision and observation of the *walī Amr al-Muslimīn*, the Superior Guardian of all Muslims, who is constitutionally in charge to formulate Iranian foreign policy, has made such a claim even more compelling.

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565 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 341.

566 Shmuel Bar, "Sunnis and Shiite: Between Rapprochement and Conflict," *Current Trends in Islamic Ideology* 2 (2005), 90.

However, this claim seems to be either superficial or perhaps politicized to a certain extent to maintain the present political siege that has been imposed on the Islamic Revolution since its success in 1979 through the intimidation of the neighboring Sunni community and their governments, alarmed at the so-called Shi'i expansion at their expense. On the contrary, it would indeed be more appropriate to look at the founding of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* as an outcome of evaluating the IR's policies for its previous revolutionary approach regarding the issue of Islamic unity that implemented the export of the Islamic Revolution as the appropriate means to achieve their ultimate objective of establishing the Islamic federal state; such an evaluation became inevitable after the demise of Imam Khomeini and the election of a new leadership perceived to be lacking the religious and political authority of Imam Khomeini. The new Supreme-leader, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī had to develop new policies appropriate to his capacity and at the same time bypass the mistakes of previous policies. For example, Imam Khomeini's charismatic leadership made his policies unchallengeable and his decisions authoritative so they received the support of the vast majority of Iranians and the Shi'ites of the world - even though they led to some catastrophic outcomes such as the war with Iraq, something Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī is pleading for. Additionally, it could have been that the new Supreme-leader had evaluated the reason for the failure of the previous revolutionary approach as the propagation of Islamic unity, and reached the conclusion that the Islamic world was still suffering from symptoms of long sectarian conflict. The bloodshed which had marked Islamic history had generated a situation of mistrust between the various Islamic sects on the one hand, and a sort of sectarian reclusiveness that closed the channels of intellectual dialogue among Muslim scholars on the other hand - not to mention the role of Western colonialism in promoting this status quo through consolidating the concept of "the national state" – so the restoration of Islamic unity merely becomes a sort of unrealistic idealism of the imagination.

Accordingly, Ayatollah Khāmina'ī had to develop a progressive tactic based on founding a transitional preceding stage that will pave the road for the ultimate restoration of Islamic unity. Efforts would be focused on the re-establishment of confidence among the different Islamic sects with priority given to highlighting the aspects of agreement and disregarding the marginal controversial issues; this hopefully would normalize relations among all Muslims and revive the culture of Islamic unity by creating the necessary popular grass roots for it to come about. So with this in mind, Ayatollah Khāmina'ī, in one of his public speeches, revealed the intention of founding *Majma' al-Taqrīb*, identifying the concept of the unity that the new institution has been designated to accomplish:

> The second meaning of unity is that the different Islamic groups (*firaq*) should try to move closer to one another. They have to understand each other better and must try hard to discern by a mutual comparison of their *madhāhib* how large the measure of their agreement is. There are many *fatwa* of *fuqahā* (religious jurisprudents) and *ulamā* that can promote *taqrīb* between the *madhāhib*, when they are analyzed as the basis of the scientific criteria of *fiqh* (jurisprudence). That is the reason why we have a sincere wish to found *Dār al-taqrīb bayn al-madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* (the House of Reconciliation between the Islamic Sects) and want to realize this wish.[567]

Significantly Ayatollah Taskhīrī, the Secretary-General of the *Majma'*, explicitly pointed to the transitional nature of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* when considered the strategy of *al-Taqrīb* is only a manoeuvre to achieve Islamic unity.[568] Indeed, Taskhīrī's testimony is compatible with the content of article 28 which implies an

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567 Quoted in Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 338.

568 Ayatollah Taskhīrī asserted this view in a speech delivered before the 'Multaqā al -Taqrīb fī al-Fikr wa al-Waḥdā fī al-'Amal (Forum of Rapprochement in Thought and Unity in Action) that was held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 4th September, 2007; see the URL http://news.taghrib.org/news.php?action=fullnews&id=318 (last visit 12th January, 2008).

extraordinary possibility for the termination of this institution and gives the impression of its impermanence:

> At the dissolution of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*, all its movable funds and immovable are placed at the disposal of *walī Amr al-Muslimīn* (the Guardian of Muslims) for utilizing them in the interests of the Islamic *Umma*.[569]

In addition, the large representation of Iranian and Shi'i figures in the Supreme Council of the *Majma' al-Taqrīb* has been presented as evidence for utilising this institution to promote Shi'i propaganda while serving Iranian national interests. However, it seems that this Iranian and Shi'i dominance in this council is inevitable due to a number of practical reasons. First of all, the Supreme Council represents the executive administration of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* and is mainly in charge of managing daily activities, so the members of this council have to be residents of Tehran to carry out their duties, as was the case with Ayatollah Mohammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, the Iraqi high ranking cleric who chose Tehran as his optional exile. Also, the membership in the Supreme Council would appear to be undesirable by most of the Muslim *ulamā* and intellectuals who are activists in *al-Taqrīb* endeavours, since this membership is voluntary for which the member will not receive any income. More significantly, the members of this council have to maintain direct and frequent contact with *wali Amr al-Muslimīn*, Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī, which could be politically sensitive for them and for security reasons put them under suspicion by their government, especially the non- Iranian Sunni countries.

To do its mandated role, *Majma' al-Taqrīb* institutionalised a number of schemes through which it launches numerous periodic activities.

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569 Sayyid Jalāl Mīr Āqāy, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya: Ahdāfih wa Manhajih wa Munjazātih* (Tehran: Fajr al-Islām, 2004), 22.

### 6.4.2.1. The Annual Conference on Islamic Unity

*Majma' al-Taqrīb* holds an international conference to discuss Islamic unity and the paths to strengthen it from 12th to 17th of *Rabī' al-Awwal* every year. The significance of this date is due to the fact that the twelfth of *Rabī' al-Awwal* represents the Prophet's birthday according to the Sunni sources, while Shi'ite sources affirm that the Prophet was born on the seventeenth of the same month; therefore, the week from 12th to 17th of *Rabī' al-Awwal* is seen as the perfect time of year for this conference to emphasis the status of the Prophet Mohammad among all Muslims as a symbol of Islamic unity. It also sends a clear message that some differences among Islamic sects are manageable when good deeds prevail. Another significance of this date lies in the fact that the seventeenth of *Rabī' al-Awwal* is the birthday of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who was the seventh Imam for the Twelver Shi'ites and widely respected among Sunnis, as he was the Master of the Imams of the Sunni schools of thought. Furthermore, the conference is politically employed as a replacement for the annual week of Islamic unity that was instigated by Ayatollah Muntaẓirī during the time of Imam Khomeini.

*Majma' al-Taqrīb* has already held twelve conferences, in addition to the four conferences, the week of Islamic unity, held prior to its foundation.[570] Several prominent *ulamā* members and intellectuals have attended these conferences from Iran and other Islamic countries representing all various Islamic sects.

### 6.4.2.2. Periodicals and Journals

*Majma' al-Taqrīb* issues several publications in Arabic and Farsi in which they discuss all relevant subjects to *al-Taqrīb* and Islamic unity. For instance, *Risālat al-Taqrīb* is a quarterly periodical that is published in Arabic, called after the

570 The 17th, 18th and 19th conferences were respectively held in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Journal once published by *Dār al-Taqrīb* in Cairo till early the 1970s; the first volume of this periodical was issued in Ramadan, 1413, and forty volumes of this specialised periodical have been published so far.

Additionally, *Akhbār al-Taqrīb* is a monthly Journal published in Farsi for updated news and information of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*'s efforts and activities; however, it was replaced with another monthly Farsi publication called *Pīk Taqrīb* after forty issues, and ten issues of the new Journal have been presently printed.

As well, *al-Majma'* publishes an annual periodical in Arabic and Persian entitled *Viza Nāma Taqrīb*, designed to publish the papers of participants at the annual conference on Islamic unity; eleven issues of this Journal have appeared so far, but three of them had been printed before the establishment of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*.

### 6.4.2.3. The University of the Islamic Schools of Thought (*Jami'at al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya*)

The plan to found an inter-sectarian Islamic university (*Jami'at al-madhāhib al-islāmiyya*) could be traced back to November 1992 when the former president Ḥāshimī Rafsanjani expressed the intention of the Iranian government to establish such a university. This intention was activated by the Supreme-leader Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī who issued his commands to found the University of the Islamic Schools of Thought in 1413/1992 which were to contribute to improving *al-Taqrīb's* endeavours by raising new generations of preachers, researchers and teachers who are well-acquainted with all Islamic doctrines and sincere to *al-Taqrīb's* concept, so it was attached to *Majma' al-Taqrīb*. Although the pamphlets of *Majma' al-Ṭaqrīb* and its official website confirm this as the official date of its establishment, the plan was postponed several times, however, and it

was not until the late 1990s when this university first opened to students: indeed, the university was founded after 12th September, 1994 when Buchta interviewed Dr. Ḥasan Ṭabarā'iyān, the designated head of the university in Tehran, who put the blame on financial difficulties for the postponing of its opening.[571] Moreover, the University of the Islamic Schools of Thought consists of three colleges: the College of Islamic Doctrines, the College of the Sciences of *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*, and the College of Theology, Philosophy and Religion. The university has a Board of Trustees which is composed of eight members: the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Secretary-General of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* (who is the head of the Board of Trustees), the Minister of Research and Technology, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Islamic Culture and Guidance, two faculty members nominated by the Secretary-General of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*, and the university Chancellor.

### 6.4.3. AL-MAJMA' AL-'ĀLAMĪ LĪ AHL AL-BAYT (THE HOUSE OF THE PROPHET WORLD ASSEMBLY)

Although the founding of this institute, *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī lī Ahl al-Bayt* (the House of the Prophet World Assembly) has received no attention from the Western scholars in the field, Wilfried Buchta's study *Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' al-Taqrīb): a veritable ecumenical revival or a Trojan horse of Iran?*[572] and Rainer Brunner's *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th century: the Azhar and Shiism between rapprochement and restrain*[573] appear to be the only exceptions; however, the researchers could have been confused with some inaccurate information which might have affected their interpretations and misled their analysis regarding the date of the establishment, the aims and objectives of this

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571 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History (Boston: Brill, 2001), 342.

572 Wilfried Buchta, *bid.*

573 Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and restrain* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

institution, and its relationship with the aforementioned Ecumenical Society (*Majma' al-Taqrīb*) in terms of disputes and cooperation. Given the paucity of studies, the official website of *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī lī Ahl al-Bayt*[574] will be consulted as the major source for the present approach with some reference to the invaluable and exclusive information that Buchta and Brunner's studies provided.

According to *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly's website, the Supreme-leader of the IR agreed to institute *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī lī Ahl al-Bayt* (the House of the Prophet World Assembly) at the request of the delegates who attended the conference of *'atbā' Ahl al-Bayt* that was held in Tehran on Monday, 21st May, 1990. Accordingly, the first meeting for the General Assembly of *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī lī Ahl al-Bayt* was held in Tehran between 15th and 18th of *Shábān* 1414 A.H. (which is 28th to 31st March, 1994). This date reflects the official establishment of this institution, a point that Buchta and Brunner appeared to miss and perhaps mistakenly confused it with the date of the conference of *atbā' Ahl al-Bayt* of 1990 - notwithstanding that Buchta cited the request to establish both *Majma' al-Taqrīb* and *Majma' Ahl al-Bayt* in paragraphs 2 and 9 of the final declaration of the aforesaid conference, as previously explained.[575] However, the founding of *Majma' Ahl al-Bayt* was significantly delayed for more than four years since the first appeal to establish it, made at the conference of *Ahl al-Bayt* in 1990 - unlike *Majma' al-Taqrīb* that was established less than six months after the conference. Such a delay could raise several inquiries, such as had it been purposely scheduled? What were the reasons behind this delay? And what was the necessity for establishing a separate institute for the *madhab* of *Ahl al-Bayt*

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574 See the official Website at the URL http://www.ahl-ul-bai.org.

575 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in *Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 338.

(mainly the *Ja'farī* and *Zaydī*) if they were already included with the other Islamic sects under the umbrella of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*?

Buchta claimed that the conservative Shi'i clerics who participated in the conference might have been vigilant to Khāmina'ī's need for their support, so they imposed their will to create another institution for *ahl al-Bayt's* followers to act as the conservatives' retaliation to Khāmina'ī's proposed inter-sectarian institution (*Majma' al-Taqrīb*), which they could use to hinder the activities of the latter or at least have an influential role in directing its policies. He leaned on the fact that two well-known members of the *Ahl al-Bayt Assembly*, Ayatollah Mohammad Taskhīrī (the Secretary-General of this institute) and Ayatollah Mohammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, served on the Board of Directors of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* to support his view.[576]

Yet, Buchta's claim does not seem to be unquestionable for a number of reasons. First of all, the conference of the followers of the Prophet's House was held at the instigation of the new supreme-leader Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, who initially aimed to escape the criticisms of the traditionalists and was looking for jurisprudential cover for his modified policy of a call for Islamic unity, not to mention the fact that the traditional clerics, who deemed the ruling according to the concept of *wilāyat-i faqīh* as no less than an assault on the right of the hidden *Imam* and distortion of the fundamental principles of Shi'ism, had distanced themselves from dealing with state affairs. Additionally, the participation of Ayatollahs Mohammad Taskhīrī and Mohammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm in the executive administration of *Majma' al-Taqrīb* was due to their well-known activities in the field of Islamic unity that preceded the establish of the *Majma'*. Last but not least, knowing that *Majma' al-Taqrīb* had been established four

576 *ibid*, 351.

years before the founding of *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly, so the nomination of a member of the Board of Directors of the former as the Secretary-General of the latter perhaps turns Buchta's evidence upside-down: *Majma' al-Taqrīb* not only could have benefited from *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly but also had a greater impact on directing its activities, as will be evident when the aims and activities of this institution will be surveyed later in this chapter.

Even though the founding *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly has been officially directed towards the followers of the Prophet's house in general, it does reflect an inner challenge in Twelver Shi'ism between the traditionalists and the religio-politicians or what might be called the "Khomeinists", the followers of the *Khaṭṭ-i Imam* in which the latter may have aimed to ultimately achieve three respectively correlating objectives. First of all, *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly has been designated to preach for Imam Khomeini's political dogma among the Shi'ites of the world and mainly the followers of the traditional Twelver Shi'ism, since this dogma was not only revolutionary in its political aspects but also revisionist in terms of introducing new jurisprudential views. Such an intention could be inferred from the officially broadcast aims of this institution. According to the official website of *Ahl al-Bayt* world assembly, the institution is founded to achieve several purposes:

1) To establish a connection with the followers and defenders of *Ahl al-Bayt* in all countries, regardless of their origins and groups.
2) To propagate for the great individuals of *Ahl al-Bayt*
3) To disseminate the ideologies and knowledge of *Ahl al-Bayt*
4) To aid the followers of *Ahl al-Bayt* with financial support and improve their living conditions
5) To provide the followers of *Ahl al-Bayt* with jurisprudential and legal recommendations

6) To print and disseminate the publications and precious cultural heritage about *Ahl al-Bayt*
7) To establish economical co-operation among the followers of *Ahl al-Bayt*

Having succeeded in this, the second target was to be automatically accomplished when the assembly met to choose the leader and the *Marji'iyya* of Imam Khomeini's successor, Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī, who claimed the title of Ayatollah immediately after his election.[577] Buchta, in a clear contradiction with his aforementioned claim, noticed such a goal when he stresses

> The *ahl al-Bayt* assembly pursues one main objective, namely to gain control over the political, social and religious affairs of the Shii communities throughout the world in order to centralize them under the leadership of the Iranian *walī-ye faqīh* Ali Khāmenėī.[578]

The third purpose, although it might be considered subsidiary, seems to be significant: the recognition of Khāmina'ī's *Marji'iyya* (source of imitation) would bring additional funds to his annual revenues from *khums* and *zakāt* of the new followers, and such a considerable revenue would enrich the separate and independent budget of Ayatollah Khāmina'ī and help him to fulfil his political, constitutional and religious commitments. In other words Ayatollah Khāmina'ī could have used this amount to financially support numerous activities among them the activities of *Majma' al-Taqrīb*. It became known that the *Majma'* depends on the economic aid received from Ayatollah Khāmina'ī, as *walī Amr al-Muslimīn*, to cover the expenses of its activities. For instance, the establishment of *Jami'at al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* had been postponed several times in spite of the fact that such a project was first announced in November 1992, but the

577 Olivier Roy, "The Crisis of Religious legitimacy in Iran," *The Middle East Journal* 53:2, (Spring 1999), 207.

578 Wilfried Buchta, "Tehran Ecumenical Society (Majma' Al-Taqrīb): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?" in *Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende edits., The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 351.

financial shortages caused frequent delays, as already mentioned; however, it appears remarkable that the university project was finally accomplished after *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly had been founded.

Also, the activities of this institution perhaps provide further indication for the economic motivations for this institute. According to its official website, *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly conducts various activities in different areas such as productivity, service and commerce and takes advantage of the donations of benevolent people to support its aims and objectives. As a result, *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly utilises its website to market its economical activities and application forms for different activities are provided, such as religious tourism to Mecca, Medina, and the Shi'ite sacred shrines, membership of the Shi'i Muslim Merchants' Association, booking qualified guides to escort during the *ziyārat* (visit to the sacred shrines of *Ahl al-Bayt* inside Iran and abroad). Additionally, its website supplies donation forms for different kinds of charities, such as *mawqūfat* (sing. *waqf* means endowment) and *nadhūr* (sing. *nadhr* means vow or votive donation).

Ultimately one might wonder about the reasons for delaying the establishment of the *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly for a period of four years, after *Majma' al-Taqrīb* was founded in 1990. Placing *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly in its historical context would merely propose two reasonable possibilities for this delay. Since *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly has been essentially oriented towards non-Iranian Shi'ite, this puts forward the proposal that the could have been due to the unsatisfactory relationship between the Islamic Republic and the Iraqi Shi'ites, the largest Shi'i community outside Iran, because of the Islamic Republic's disappointing response to the Iraqi Shi'ites' request for support during their uprising against the *Ba'thī's* regime of Saddam Ḥusayn in March, 1991; then the Iranian

government ignored their request for intervention or at least provide the needed aid. Roy notices

> ...the lack of support for the Iraqi Shi'is during the 1991 Gulf War crisis...shows that the clerical links which were instrumental in mobilizing the Shi'i communities in favour of the Islamic Revolution, have either been destroyed or have become alienated from the Iranian government.[579]

Such a claim is supported by the appointment of Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Taskhīrī[580] to the position of Secretary-General of this institution. Ayatollah Taskhīrī, who is of Iranian origin, was born in the holy city of Najaf in 1944. He was among thousands of the Iraqi Shi'ites expelled from Iraq by Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's Arabisation campaign in the early 1970s; he has held a number of key positions since the success of the Islamic Revolution, among which is the senior adviser to Ayatollah Khāmina'ī and the doyen of the influential Ḥaqqānī seminary.[581] Ayatollah Taskhīrī had served as the reporter for *Mu'tamar Ahl al-Bayt* held in 1990, before he was nominated to the position of the Secretary-General of *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly in 1994. Vali Nasr shed light on the efforts of Ayatollah Taskhīrī and his *Ahl al-Bayt* institution to promote Iranian influence among the Iraqi Shi'ites when he asserts

> Taskhīrī briefly returned to an-Najaf in 2004 to oversee the work of his ahl al-Bayt foundation which has invested tens of millions of dollars in the construction of projects and medical facilities in southern Iraq and promotes cultural and business ties between Iran and Iraq. He is now back in Tehran where he wields considerable power over the government's policy toward Iraq.[582]

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579 Olivier Roy, "The Crisis of Religious legitimacy in Iran," *The Middle East Journal* 53:2, (Spring 1999), 211.

580 Ayatollah Taskhīrī is serving now as the Secretary-General of Majm' al-Taqrīb; for more information refer to the URL http://www.taghrib.org/arabic/aminalaam/index.htm (last visit January 5th, 2008).

581 Vali Nasr, "When the Shiite Rise," *Foreign Affairs* 85: 4, (July/August 2006), 62.

582 *Ibid*, 62.

Perhaps the issue of *Marji ʿiyya* is another reason for the delay in establishing the *Ahl al-Bayt* Assembly because the efforts of the new Supreme-leader had repeatedly failed even among the Iranian populace to secure support for him amongst adherents as Ayatollah *al-ʿUẓmā* (the highest source of imitation) after his election in 1989. Therefore, Ayatollah Khāmina'ī might have purposely waited for the demise of the two Grand Ayatollahs Gholpygānī (d. 1993) and Arākī (d. 1994) who were enjoying dominant and unchallengeable *Marji ʿiyyas.*[583]

## 6.5. SELF-COMMITMENT IN AL-TAQRĪB AND PROMOTING THE FATWAS

The Iranian government has been repeatedly accused of using *at-Taqrīb* policy as a *Trojan horse* to preach for and expand Shiʿism in the surrounding Sunni countries; however, Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī, who represents the acme of authority in the IR, has shown serious commitment to the issue of *al-Taqrīb* on several occasions. For instance, Shaykh Abd al-Razāq Rahbar Bukhārī Turkumānī, the leader of the Iranian Sunnis and a member of *Majmaʿ al-Taqrīb*, in an interview with al-Rāyy, the Kuwaiti newspaper, praised Ayatollah Khāmina'ī's efforts in promoting *al-Taqrīb* policy - Khāmina'ī himself had translated some of the publications of the Muslim Brotherhood - and has always shown respect for the Rashidī Caliphs, especially Abu Bakr and Umar.[584]

On another occasion, Hamid Algar, the well-known scholar, was an eyewitness at a meeting in which Ayatollah Khāmina'ī expressed his disapproval of the

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583 Olivier Roy, "The Crisis of Religious legitimacy in Iran," *The Middle East Journal* 53:2, (Spring 1999), 207; see also, Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and restrain* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 384.

584 For the interview refer to the Kuwaiti newspaper al-Rāyy at the URL http://www.alraialaam.com/Archive/03-05-2007/ie5/local.htm#01 (last visit on 12th December, 2007).

aggressive reaction of some Afghani Shi'i organisation to the Taliban's antagonistic attitude. This is how he put it

> The following should in fairness be mentioned. In an audience with Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamina'ī in June 1997 at which the present writer was present, two representatives of an Afghan Shi'a organization complained of the allegedly inadequate assistance Iran was providing them in their struggle for survival. In his response Ayatullah Khamina'ī reproached the organization in question for employing in its conflict with the Taliban the same brutality of which they justifiably stood accused. He had in mind presumably the massacre of the Taliban garrison in Mazar-I Sharif that had occurred the previous month; this could be classified as either a sensible precaution or an act of revenge, given the mass killings of Shi'is in which the Taliban had already engaged elsewhere in Afghanistan.[585]

After he had firmly established his *Marji'iyya* (religious authority), Ayatollah Khāmina'ī has directly participated in promoting the efforts of *al-Taqrīb* by issuing various *fatwas* (legal opinions) whereby he is not only responding to the accusations of politicizing this issue but also attempting to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, Imam Khomeini, who had resorted to the *fatwas* in an effort to promote Islamic unity. For example, he emphasizes Imam Khomeini's *fatwas* regarding the *Jamā'a* (congregational) prayers behind a Sunni Imam and *Friday* Prayer on different occasions. In a response to questions asking for the legality of participating in the congregational prayers in *Mecca* and *Medina* during the *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage) and *'umra* (frequent religious visits to the holy city of *Mecca*) and if it is acceptable to separately perform the prayers in hotels' rooms,

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585 Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism: a critical essay* (New York: Islamic Publication International, 2002), 57-8, note. 49.

Ayatollah Khāmina'ī replied that the congregational prayers are enough and praying individually in hotels is unacceptable.[586]

On another occasion, he was asked by one of his followers studying in a Western country if it is permissible for a Shi'i to attend the *Jum'a* Prayer led by a Sunni Imam and among Sunni people. Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī replied "There is no objection in participation to preserve Islamic unity and the union of Muslims."[587]

However, his *fatwa* regarding the cursing of the companions of the Prophet including the Caliphs that he issued on 23rd November, 2006 is undoubtedly deemed the most significant. Giving a response to a question asking about the religious legality for the *sabb* (cursing) of the *Ṣaḥāba* (Prophet's Companions) and *al-Khulafā al-Rashidīn* (the Rightly-Guided Caliphs), Ayatollah Khāmina'ī replied, "Any word, deed, or behavior that provides a pretext for our enemies or leads to division between Muslims is legally prohibited of course."[588] The importance of this legal opinion lies in the two points; on the one hand, it has been an unprecedented step since the establishment of the IR in 1979, that explicitly forbids the *sabb* against the caliphs and the companions - despite the efforts that have been discussed in the previous chapter to emphasis the highly respectful status of the caliphs and the companions in Iranian school texts. On

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586 Kitāb Manāsik al-Ḥajj (the book of Pilgrimage Rituals), under the subtitle Miscellaneous questions 3 and 9; an e-copy form of this book is published on the official website of the Supreme-leader at the URL http://www.leader.ir/langs/AR/index.php?p=speech&id=3126# (last visit 28th January, 2008).

587 http://www.alwihdah.com/view.php?cat=4&id=7.

588 This *fatwa* was published on the 23rd of November, 2006 in the wide spread Egyptian newspaper, al-Ahrām, which pointed to the Iranian authority's demands for this fatwa to be circulated and sent to several media. Also, the fatwa was re-published on the official website of the International Union for Muslim Scholar IUMS (al-Itiḥād al-Ālamī li-*Ulamā* al-Muslimīn) on the 2nd of December, 2006 along with the IUMS's welcome and praise to such a long waited step; refer the IUMS's site at the URL http://anonymouse.org/cgi-bin/anon-www.cgi/http://www.iumsonline.net/english/articles/2006/12/04.shtml (last visit January 15th, 2008).

the other hand, it is not restricted to the *sabb* but inclusive of all other sayings, intentions and actions that might irritate sectarian hatred among Muslims.

## 6.6. CONCLUSION

In short, Ayatollah Ali Khāmina'ī was forced to modify the revolutionary approach to restore Islamic unity that had been implemented by his predecessor Imam Khomeini because of his questionable religious authority and the failure of the previous policy, so he heavily relied on his constitutional authority to develop an indirect but affective programme to achieve the ultimate goal of the restoration of Islamic unity. In this pragmatic programme, Ayatollah Khāmina'ī acknowledged the impossibility of immediately restoring the unity of the Islamic *umma* due to the long history of hostility among the Islamic sects that creates a culture based on mistrust and enmity, so it was planned to utilise this programme to pave the way for the culture of unity by relieving the restraints and restoring trust among the Islamic sects as well as presenting the numerous points of agreement that all Muslims share, regardless of sectarian orientation, and thus create a suitable basis for mutual cooperation. Accordingly, this pragmatic programme was firmly articulated in the statute of *al-Majma' al-'Ālamī li al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* that was founded in October 1990 at the instigation of Ayatollah Khāmina'ī.

# Chapter 7

# CONCLUSION

The unity of the Islamic *umma* has been one of the greatest principles of Islam that has been repeatedly emphasized with all of its political dimensions in the holy *Qur'ān* and the Prophet's *hadīths*. Albeit their assurance of being one of the Islamic sects, the Twelver Shi'ites had surrendered themselves to the political quarantine of *intiẓār* since the occultation of their twelfth Imam in 329 H. when they had likely committed themselves to live in small scattered cantons within the larger community of the Sunni majority. During this era, the Twelver Shi'ites abandoned or modified most of the Islamic rituals that called attention to the unity of Muslims such as the congregational daily prayers, Friday prayer, and the celebrating of the Muslim festivals. Furthermore the *ghulāt* (extremists) among the Twelver Shi'ites began to accuse the majority of Muslims, the Sunnis, of being *kuffār* (disbelievers) and introduced the *sabb* (cursing) of the first two caliphs for usurping Imam Ali's right to the caliphate.

However, the Iranian *ulamā* of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism have repeatedly taken part in the endeavours calling for a revival of Islamic solidarity throughout the *umma* since the fall of the Safavid state. Significantly, such a phenomenal involvement of the Iranian *uṣūlī ulamā* in this process failed to grab the attention of scholars, though a few shy glances were directed at a few approaches, which were ostensibly considered merely a practice of *taqiyya,* without consulting the legal view of the subject matter according to the jurisprudence of Twelver Shi'ism. Such a claim was no more than a generalization despite the fact that only two out of four official attempts have been briefly highlighted by a small number of studies, namely that of Nadir Shah and Khomeini; accordingly, an individual

approach for each case and placing it in its historical context seems to be inevitable to avoid such a generalization.

Although Twelver Shi'ism shared with other Muslims groups the two sources of legislation, namely the holy *Qur'ān*, and the Prophet's *ḥadīths*, the ulamā of Twelver Shi'ism, indeed, are distinguished from other Islamic sects in solely relying on the traditions of the Imams as the only authentic channel through which they receive the right interpretation of the holy *Qur'ān* and the accuracy of the Prophet's *ḥadīths*. For that reason, a sufficient knowledge of the legal position of the theme of Islamic unity is initially required in order to judge the genuineness of the frequent appearance of the Iranian *uṣūlī ulamā* in the state approaches to Islamic ecumenism.

Hence, an attempt was made in chapter 1 to extrapolate the legitimate opinion regarding the unity of the Muslim *umma* from the Imams' attitude towards the *de facto* authority of their time as it was documented in the primary and secondary sources of Twelver Shi'ism. In view of that, it becomes noticeable that the Imams considered the unity of the *umma* their sacred duty and for which they were willing to sacrifice their legitimate right to the caliphate as long as the essential principles of Islam were preserved. The Imams' attitude was represented in the positive *intiẓār* of the first two Imams, in which they preserved their active and interactive role with the authority as well as their fellow Muslims and waited to restore peacefully their right to the caliphate. However, the third Imam had acted differently and rebelled against the incompetent authority when the principle of the caliphate was drastically replaced with the kingship of Umayyad dynasty, and the qualifications needed for the caliph were ignored and this led to the division of the *umma*. Nevertheless, the gloomy end of the third Imam imposed the kingship as an indisputable reality; accordingly, since then the Imams practically adopted what could be

considered the rational state of *intiẓār* in which they appeared to dismiss the claim of their right to the caliphate because of the undue exploitations of such a legitimate cause by members of *ahl al-Bayt* and others to serve their political ambitions, despite the devastating consequences that led to the loss of thousands of Muslims' lives and cracked the solidarity of the Muslim *umma*. Yet the chaos that followed the death of the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAsskarī, in 260/873 without a known successor, imposed a diversion in the doctrine of *intiẓār* from its ultimate objective. It was negatively utilized by the *imāmī ulamā* as a segregating instrument to prevent any political activities and isolate Twelver Shiʿism from the main Muslim body in their efforts to rescue the theory of the *imamate* that was supposed to be transmitted through Imam Ḥusayn's line without interruption until the day of resurrection; accordingly, the *imāmī ulamā* claimed the existence of a twelfth Imam who went into occultation and will return at some point in the future to fight unfairness in a corrupt world and restore justice. At that crucial moment, the *imāmī ulamā* had no choice but to adopt such modifications in an attempt to preserve the *imāmī* community from being fragmented.

As demonstrated in chapter 2, the negative *intiẓār*, indeed, has placed the *ulamā* of Twelver Shiʿism in a dilemma when it clashes with other apocalyptic *ḥadīths* of the Prophet and Imams' traditions that had received the consensus of all the Muslim *ulamā* including that of Twelver Shiʿism. According to those *ḥadīths* and traditions, the rising of a precursor Islamic state from Khurāsān or the East will be a prerequisite for the Mahdī's return. Such a dilemma had lasted until the establishment of the Safavid state by Shah Ismāʿīl, who claimed descent from the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kāẓim, at the beginning of the 16th century and proclaimed Twelver Shiʿism as the official religion of the newly established state, when a group of the *ulamā* within this sect, mainly the Shiʿi *ulamā* of *Jabal* ʿĀmil (in modern Lebanon), found in this temporal state the resolution to escape

the historical cul-de-sac of the doctrine of *intiẓār* and granted them hope for the Mahdī's return, they served it enthusiastically. Among those *ulamā* was *al-muḥaqiq* al-Karakī who introduced the *ijtihād* based on *'aql* (reasoning) in order to legitimize his association with the Safavid state and justify his disregard for the doctrine of *intiẓār*. Al-Karakī's teachings of reasoning led to the introduction of his theory of *al-Walāya al-'Āma* and became the manifesto according to which the *uṣūlī ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism have been firmly established as the representatives of the Hidden Imam and had enjoyed unprecedented influence in state polity under Safavid rule that was invested to transform Iran into the stronghold of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism.

The failure of scholars to notice the two different phases that Islamic ecumenism had passed through has been a natural outcome for their disregard of the relationship between the fall of the Safavid state and the role of the *uṣūlī ulamā* in instigating frequent calls for Islamic ecumenism and the long-term impact of this movement on the development of political thought of Twelver Shi'ism. Indeed, the Iranian *uṣūlī ulamā* had utilized the legitimacy of the principle of Islamic unity to surpass the consequences of the fall of the sponsor state of the Safavids, which had seriously threatened the existence of Twelver Shi'ism in Iran, and maintained their influential status in state affairs by containing the newly established temporal regimes that were in need of such legitimacy.

The Safavid state had practically fallen since the invasion of the extremist Sunni Afghans in 1722 which corresponded with the overwhelming domination of the *Akhbārī* School of Twelver Shi'ism, the historical rival of *uṣūlism*, in the Shi'i shrines of Iraq and parts of Iran. Meanwhile, Nadir Qulī became the *de facto* ruler of Iran in 1731; however, he was unable to establish his own rule due to the lack of legitimacy, so he used the infant Safavid Shah 'Abbās III to exercise authority. As a result, the initiative of Islamic ecumenism was merely a

pragmatic means that granted Nadir the necessary legitimate cause to overthrow the heretic dynasty of Shah Ismā'īl. Meanwhile the *uṣūlī ulamā*, as the sole interpreters of the faith, enjoyed influential status in Nadir's realm, using it to restore the domination of *uṣūlī* Shi'ism in the holy shrines of Iraq – not to mention that such a policy somehow absorbed the radicalism of the Afghans.

As surveyed in chapter 3, the *uṣūlī ulamā* likely encountered the same situation with the founding of the Qājār state when the new Shah, Fatḥ Ali, revealed his clear determination to revive and promote the *akhbārī* teaching in Iran in spite of the numerous attempts made by the *uṣūlī ulamā*, mainly Shaykh Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghaṭā, to contain the Shah and relieve him of the growing influence of the *akhbārīs*. Consequently, the *uṣūlī ulamā* had to direct their efforts towards the crown prince, 'Abbās Mīrzā, who was striving to affirm the legitimacy of his nomination for the post of crown prince. 'Abbas Mīrzā not only welcomed the *ulamā's* approach but also granted them a distinguished position in his court, maintaining a weekly meeting with them to solve unsettled problems to implement the *sharī'a.* He also ultimately aimed to utilize the *ulamā's* influence among the Iranian populace to increase the popularity of his policies in the war with Russia, and in the *Niẓām-i Jadīd* and rapprochement with the Ottomans and surpass the difficulties raised by his half-brothers who were questioning his competency for the post. The religious contents of 'Abbās Mīrzā's letters to the Ottoman officials undoubtedly revealed the key role the *uṣūlī ulamā* had played in the ecumenical discourse. After he had overcome the challenges he had faced, the crown prince's hitherto friendly and respectful attitude towards the *ulamā* soon changed and he went on to use them as a scapegoat for his humiliating defeat in the war with Russia.

Remarkably, the calls for unity of the Islamic *umma* under the temporal states were dominated by a political motif that aimed to ensure the survival of Iran as a

stronghold for *uṣūlī* Shi'ism. But in fact there was a lack of jurisprudential development that could promote such calls as well as a realistic mechanism to achieve their ultimate goal. Yet fresh ecumenical efforts under the Islamic Republic of Iran seem to be a dialectical outcome of correspondence between the political motif and a natural development in political jurisprudence of *uṣūlī* Twelver Shi'ism, which happened to be stimulated by direct contact and interaction between the *uṣūlī ulamā* and the political elites – not to mention the unofficial efforts of al-Taqrīb conducted by middle ranking clerics, namely al-Afghani and al-Qumī, who opened a contact channel to approach the *'other,'* the Sunnis, and create an impartial atmosphere for substantive dialogue. As was emphasized in chapter 4, Imam Khomeini keenly adhered to Shaykh Nā'īnī's concept of *mashrūṭiyya* and criticized Shaykh Narāqī's theory of *wilāyat al-Faqīh* under the pretext of its needing further instigation – as he had asserted in his first work, *Kashf al-srār* which also carried unfriendly critiques of the first three rightly-guided caliphs. Khomeini gradually approached the political arena through his friend *Nawwāb Safawī*, the founder of the *Mujāhidī Islām*, who enthusiastically discussed with Khomeini the ideology of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Imam Ḥasan al-Bannā in Egypt in 1928. However, the political jurisprudence of the founder of the Islamic Republic had already been formulated when he engaged in the political struggle against the Shah's regime from 1963 which led to his exile to Turkey in 1964 before he eventually settled in al-Najaf. At that point the Imam was only too aware of Western hegemony on the Islamic World that was responsible for the same troubles Muslims encountered in all Islamic countries, so in his opinion any local remedies would be worthless. Unsurprisingly that was a dialect which became the core of Imam Khomeini's political dogma. Accordingly, he composed his work, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, in which he emphasized the legitimacy of the *fuqahā's* government or what became known by *wilāyat al-faqīh* as the guarantee for unity of the Islamic *umma*. Significantly, the Shi'i orientation was hardly noticed in this work although it was addressing the Iranian case. Imam Khomeini's endeavors really

began with the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 when his work, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, was utilized as a program for the newly established Islamic Republic. In spite of the numerous references to Islamic unity that were promoted by the Imam's speeches and *fatwas*, his major accomplishment was the founding of the jurisprudential and constitutional basis that asserted the significance of the unity of the Muslim *umma*. In the second period of striving for Islamic unity, since his election in 1990 Imam Khomeini's successor, Sayyid Ali Khāmina'ī, has contributed to the creation of institutional mechanisms that will assure the continuous promotion of Imam Khomeini's dogma for Islamic unity which was thoroughly surveyed in chapter 5.

In reflecting on the distinguishing nature of both the endeavors calling for Islamic unity and their political discourses, it became obvious that the rise of the Safavid state corresponded with several calls to release Shi'i thought and jurisprudence from the clinical death sentence that had been imposed upon them by the tradition of *ghayba* and the doctrine of *intiẓār* (passive waiting for the return of the Mahdi) - not to mention the contradictions in these traditions with others that portray the conditions suitable for the Mahdi's return. Such wranglings had placed the *ulamā* of Twelver Shi'ism as well as the believers in a serious dilemma. Consequently, it seems to be about this time when a number of the *ulamā* increasingly gave voice to the need to activate all the necessary means to develop Shi'i jurisprudence so that it would pave the road to them having direct involvement in political issues and state affairs and eventually lead to the creation of a just Islamic government – a pre-requisite for the return of the Mahdi according to the traditions of *al-rāyāt al-Sūd* of Khurāsān. Hence, it was the first adoption of *'aql* by al-Karakī that became a genuine departure from traditional *akhbārism* that had been dominating Twelver jurisprudence since the Greater Occultation. Eventually, al-Karakī utilized *'aql*, to grant the *uṣūlī ulamā* the upper hand in the leadership of the Shi'i community, which according to his

theory of *al-Wilāya al-ʻĀma* (the general deputyship), duly appointed them as the legitimate representatives of the Hidden Imam. However, the fall of the Safavid state had a catastrophic consequence on the *Uṣūlī* School as the *ulamā* then faced a serious challenge to preserve their hitherto influential role in the state's affairs and safeguard the new sectarian identity of Iran as the stronghold of *uṣūlī* Twelver Shiʻism.

For that reason, it is strongly believed that the Islamic unity movement in post-Safavid Iran has passed through two different stages. The movement in the first stage had been utilised by the Iranian *uṣūlī ulamā* as a pragmatic policy to absorb the catastrophic outcomes of the fall of the Safavid state which had sponsored it, and was merely activated as a political slogan that suited the quest of the new regime for legitimacy. Meanwhile its ultimate aim was to preserve its accomplishments achieved during the Safavid era, when the *ulamā* had indeed attained an unprecedented influential role in state affairs as the single means to secure the newly established *uṣūlī* identity of Twelver Shiʻism of Iran. However, the movement in the second stage, namely the Khomeini era, turned out to be a natural development and logical outcome for the earlier calls for Islamic unity when the *uṣūlī ulama* might have been influenced by Sunni political thought via direct interaction with their Sunni counterparts. This impact also corresponded with the efforts that had initially aimed at escaping from the passiveness of *intiẓār* and the politicization of Twelver Shiʻism that had taken place since the rise of the *Uṣūlī* School during the Safavid era and which eventually led to genuine conceptual reforms to the long-lasting traditional doctrines. This indeed, establishes the differences and also commonalities between the two efforts, one being historical the other being a contemporary call for Islamic unity.

In concluding, in the light of the discussion presented in this research, it is the hope that this study will attract the interest of scholars of the field and stimulate

further researches to cover untouched dimensions of the subject matter, such as a serious attempt to find a framework to the response of the Sunni counterparts to the Shi'i calls for Islamic unity that should be placed in the context of the political development of the national and ethnical awareness that has been contemporary with the growing hegemony of the West over the political centres of decision making in the Islamic world.

In line with the search for unity between Shi'i and Sunni traditions, it is important to state that the belief in the apocalyptic *ḥadīths* and traditions of the Mahdi's appearance is shared by all Islamic sects; this belief also set the motivation for several rebellions and opposition to the *de facto* authority throughout Islamic history. However, the impact of this belief on the development of Islamic political thought in its wider dimension has been totally neglected[589] as well as the probability for such a belief to surpass the sectarian differences and establish a mutual ground for future co-operation.

589 A new publication discussing the apocalyptical dimension of Iranian Shi'ism was released, on 28th February 2009, at the time when this thesis to obtain a Ph.D. from Durham University was being submitted; see Abbas Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

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An English version of Imam Khomeini's political will http://www.irna.com/occasion/ertehal/english/will/

Arabic version of al-Montaẓirī's memoirs was published in five series in the Middle East Newspaper, check <http://www.ansar.org/arabic/montaziri01.htm>

Imam Khomeini's will is published online in Arabic: http://www.moqawama.org/imam100/will/willtext.htm

The Official Website of the Islamic Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS) http://anonymouse.org/cgi-bin/anon-www.cgi/http://www.iumsonline.net/english/articles/2006/12/04.shtml.

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