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## The Leader's Position in Shiite Life

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### A. Preface

The position of the Leader in religious, political and social life in society, and the state in 'Twelver Shi'ism' (*al-shi'a al-ithna' ashariyya*) is most central and has become decisive in the Islamic Revolution undertaken by Khomeini in Iran. The leader constitutes, in fact, the central axis around which the Shi'a community revolves – in the past, the present, and the future.

The founding of Shi'a, which is credited to 'Ali, the fourth Caliph and cousin of Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was accompanied by traumatic events. These included the murder of 'Ali and his son Hussein, and the deep feeling of discrimination among 'Ali's supporters as a result of Islamic rule having been taken away from 'Ali and his son by the Sunni Umayyad government, and even before that by the first three Caliphs. According to Shi'a tradition, the only one worthy of being Muhammad's successor is 'Ali, his cousin, and 'Ali's progeny from Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad. This was the result both of a divine edict, and the legal transfer of the succession by Muhammad to 'Ali in a ceremony in front of a large Muslim crowd.

Belief in the Shi'a Leader – the Imam who is an offspring of 'Ali - and the implementation of the Shi'a leadership in particular, and of Islam in general, was the central factor in preserving the existence of the Shi'a, in its unity (in all the streams into which it split) and in its ability to stand up against the Sunni camp – both in its power and its scope in the Islamic World – that was rising up against it. Even if the Imam's dynasty ceased to exist with the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam, who is known by the Twelver Shi'a, amongst others, as the Hidden Imam – a temporary and partial solution was found for filling the leadership void by nominating a deputy for the Hidden Imam, who will rule until the return of the Hidden Imam. During the period of the Minor Occultation (*al-ghayba al-sughra*)<sup>1</sup> of the Hidden Imam, there were four deputies / agents. During the Major Occultation (*al-ghayba al-kubra*)<sup>2</sup> there were rulings that the religious leaders are the general representatives of the Hidden Imam. Even though there were rulings, according to which religious authorities were authorized to fulfill all the duties of the Imam – both religious and civil – in fact none of these were ever put into effect.

The complete consolidation of the concept of ruling jurispudent (*al-wali al-faqih*) by Khomeini brought about a situation where the Shiite religious authorities received all the rights of the Hidden Imam, also in positions having political connotations. In Khomeini's philosophy, the *wali faqih* was given the position of an Imam, and even that of a deputy of the Prophet Muhammad (Caliph), in addition to his position as a deputy of the Hidden Imam – until "the appearance and return" of the Hidden Imam. The Hidden Imam will, upon his appearance on earth, turn into the *Mahdi* and will impose Divine Justice and Islamic government throughout the world.

The apocalyptic vision of the future appearance of the Hidden Imam as the *Mahdi*

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the first disappearance of the Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad Ibn Hasan al-'Askari, which lasted 69 years.

<sup>2</sup> The second period of disappearance of the Mahdi, which started after the death of the 4<sup>th</sup> deputy (safir) Abu al-Hussein 'Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Samarri in the year 329 of the Hijra and continues till this day.

has enormous power to “move the wheels” of the Islamic State, both in the past and the present. First of all, this vision demands complete obedience to the current Imam’s instructions, as the representative of the Hidden Imam. Secondly, it is imbued with fanatical belief, since all efforts and actions are directed at one purpose, which is to hasten the appearance of the Hidden Imam, so that through his appearance, redemption will be brought to Islam and the world in general.

In this paper, we will present central elements of the Shi’a philosophy, throughout its development, in relation to the Leader, the necessity for him, his position, his characteristics and his mission. We will also present the meanings that are embedded in the position of *al-wali al-faqih* in the Islamic Revolution and the eschatological belief concerning the mission of the Hidden Imam after his appearance and return as the *Mahdi* in the world.

## B. The Necessity for a Ruler and the Position of ‘Ali as the Successor of Muhammad, and of the Twelvers

### *The Necessity for a Ruler*

According to Shiite literature<sup>3</sup>, human necessity requires the existence of Law and Government. The Law must achieve justice for all. The ruler (*hakim*) is essential to the application of the Law. There are oral traditions that talk about the necessity for the existence of a Ruler. In the book “*Nahj al-Balagha*” (attributed by Shiites to the Caliph ‘Ali), it says that when ‘Ali heard the words of Khawarij that there is no rule except for Allah’s, he said that this statement was true and that behind it was an untrue purpose. It is true that there is no rule except for Allah’s, however there must be a Ruler (Amir), whether he be pure or degenerate, for the believers to obey.

### **The Status of ‘Ali as the Heir of the Prophet and the Founder of the “Imama,” as well as His Spiritual Values**

A basic principle in the religious-political faith of the Shiites in Iran – which, in fact, constitutes a basis for the very existence of Shi’ism – is the transfer of inheritance to lead the Islamic nation from the Prophet Muhammad to the members of his family (*ahl al-bayt*) and more specifically, to Caliph ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib<sup>4</sup>. The Shiite tradition bases the veracity of its version of the handing down of power from Muhammad to Caliph ‘Ali and his descendants – the Imams – on an event that Muhammad conducted at a place called Ghadir Khumm. At this event, the Shiites claim, Muhammad declared to the community of believers that ‘Ali would inherit his rule. (This announcement of the succession of rule is referred to in Shi’ism as the Day of al-Ghadir (*yawm al-ghadir*), named after this place.) The event of Ghadir Khumm is considered in Shi’ism as the formative event constituting the basis for its establishment, its justification for being the faithful continuer of Muhammad’s path, its mission on behalf of Islam and all of humanity, and its lofty values,

<sup>3</sup> Lessons in Wilayat al-Faqih (*Durus fi Wilayat al-Faqih*), Jam’iyyat al-Ma’arif al-Islamiyya al-Thaqafiyya (Cultural Islamic Al-Ma’arif Association), October, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> The Shi’a attribute only to ‘Ali, who ruled as the fourth Caliph from 656-661, the title of Amir al-Mu’minin, whereas the Sunnis give this title also to the three Caliphs that preceded him.

as embodied in the personality of ‘Ali.<sup>5</sup> Shi’ism also deduces from certain passages in the Qur’an the divine command to Muhammad regarding the transfer of rule from him to ‘Ali, as well as the principle of the *Imama* in the sense of granting leadership to humanity.<sup>6</sup> The idea that ‘Ali inherited the rule from Muhammad is ingrained in the Shiite consciousness, in the sacred concept of *wilayat ‘Ali* (or *al-wilaya*), which means the rule of ‘Ali and his spiritual patronage.

A senior religious figure in Hizballah even states that the principle of *wilayat ‘Ali* is the equivalent of the entire religion of Islam. In his view, without the existence of the *wilaya*, the religion of Islam loses all value, as if it had never been brought down to Allah and conveyed by Muhammad his messenger. Based on these beliefs, Muslims are required to demonstrate their loyalty to ‘Ali and his offspring.<sup>7</sup>

Shi’ism attributes to ‘Ali exalted qualities of great spirituality, absolute religious devotion and fear of Heaven, which in fact constitute the peak of human spirituality. According to Shi’ism, ‘Ali received the highest spiritual authority and patronage, in addition to the reigns of power. Khamene’i states in his commentary on the event that took place at Ghadir Khumm that the Prophet Muhammad appointed ‘Ali as his heir at this event because of his lofty spiritual qualities and his outstanding Islamic and human values. From this, he derives a model of the character of the leader a community and society should appoint. In his view, authoritative leaders should be appointed according to criteria of noble and lofty Islamic, social and spiritual qualities and characteristics. According to Khamene’i, the Iranian state implements this model and is now returning to “its Islamic identity” thanks to the criteria of the leader defined at al-Ghadir. However, Khamene’i states that the Islamic nation does not devote sufficient attention to Islamic values and places the weight of responsibility of leadership on its elected officials, while the West is trying to compel the Muslims to change their way of life and conducts attacks against the Iranian people due to its adherence to its Islamic culture.<sup>8</sup>

Khamene’i points to the special personality of ‘Ali as reflected in the book attributed to him in the Shiite tradition – “Peak of Eloquence” (*nahj al-balagha*). Khamene’i calls ‘Ali: “a heavenly man,” and “a perfect model of Islam.” Based on the “Peak of Eloquence,” which enables us to get to know ‘Ali as a person of knowledge and morality, Khamene’i states that the Islamic society should develop the Islamic person (through education) according to the character of ‘Ali. He says in summary that much time has passed since Muslims have followed the path illuminated by the “Peak of Eloquence” and now is the time to return to this path and disseminate it throughout the entire Islamic world.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Baqiyat Allah, January 2005.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Qur’an, Sura 5:67.

<sup>7</sup> For an interview with the Islamic sage Ja’far Murtada on the Day of al-Ghadir and *wilayat ‘Ali*, see: Baqiyat Allah, January 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Baqiyat Allah, January 2005.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Ali Khamene’i, *Returning to Nahj al-Balagha* (‘Awda Ila Nahj al-Balagha), al-Dar al-Islamiyya, Beirut, 2000, pp. 43-45, 55-56. The book contains three lectures of Khamene’i about *Nahj al-Balagha* (“Peak of Eloquence”), a collection of ‘Ali’s speeches that deal with all aspects of life).

In summary, the concept of *wilayat 'Ali* expresses, therefore, 'Ali's authority to rule as well as his qualities and spiritual patronage.

### ***The Doctrine of the Twelve Imams – Sole Repositories of Truth, Intercessors with Allah, Redeemers of Mankind, Infallible and Omnipotent***

Around the Caliph 'Ali (who is called the Commander of the Faithful – *amir al-mu'minin*) and his descendants (the eleven Imams), who are portrayed as Muhammad's true heirs, the Twelver stream of Shi'ism (*al-shi'a al-ithna' ashariyya*) developed, named for the twelve Imams. This stream is dominant in Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and other states in the Middle East. There are other streams in Shi'ism: the al-Zayyidiyya (in Yemen) and the al-Isma'iliyya. The Isma'iliyya stream believes that the successor of the Sixth Imam should have been Isma'il and not Musa Kazim, as the Twelvers believe, and that after the death of Isma'il, while his father was still alive, the rule should have passed on to his son Muhammad al-Maktub. This community is primarily found in Southeast Asia, with a minority in Iran.

## **C. The Leader in the History of Islam in General, and in Particular in Shi'a**

### ***The Mission of the Leader as a Generator of the Spiritual – Moral Revolution***

Shi'a ideological literature considers only a few individual leaders from among the Islamic world to be ground-breakers, who can be numbered among the founders and proponents of political and spiritual revolutions that placed their imprint on the fate of the Islamic nation. According to this literature's version, these "super-leaders" excelled in their high personal characteristics and virtues, and acted under divine inspiration, as emissaries of a supreme power and as its executor, in order to bring about these revolutions. Muhammad is the perfect, most sublime example of this kind of a "super-leader", as he is God's emissary, harbinger and founder of the Islamic faith. Imam 'Ali and his son the Imam Hussein, the successors of Muhammad to the leadership of the Islamic Nation, are presented in this literature as leading leaders that brought about a renewal of Islam and set it upon the path that constitutes, according to Shi'a, the true and original path of Islam. Their descendents – the ten Imams – are described as having super-natural characteristics and as being immune from erring and sinning, as were their forefathers the Imams 'Ali and Hussein. The Twelfth Imam – the Hidden Imam – will appear, according to Shi'a belief, and become known as the *Mahdi*, who will lead the world by means of the just Islamic government that will arise throughout the world and impose divine justice. According to Shi'a ideological literature, in our generation a revolutionary 'super-leader' has also appeared - the Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Revolution. Khomeini has been presented as someone of the same stature as the prophets who received divine inspiration, and as *al-wali al-faqih*, received the title of general representative of the Hidden Imam, which makes the mystical, almost super-natural status attributed to Khomeini into reality. His successor – the Imam Khamene'i – is, in his footsteps, also credited with this exalted title.

Sheikh Mahmud Karnib, a senior Hizballah official, proposes an ideal model of a leader, who must first of all serve as a guide, and primarily actualize a spiritual and moral mission. He bases this leadership model on the Qur'an:<sup>10</sup> "O Prophet! Surely we have sent you as a witness, and as a bearer of good news and as a warner and as one inviting to Allah by his permission, and as a light-giving torch."

According to Karnib, the leader's mission, based on these passages, is to bring the people from darkness into light, through a number of duties that he is to fulfill – "Witness, herald, warner and inviting to God." In order for him to fulfill these duties he must "be a light-giving torch". In other words, he must be a guide that has the virtues and qualities to lead the nation along the correct path. Karnib points to Muhammad on one hand and Khomeini on the other hand as those who exemplify by their personalities this model. Muhammad exemplified this when he led, as God's emissary, the spiritual *Hijra* of all his followers, from the dark *Jahiliyya* period to the enlightened age of Islam, thereby founding the Islamic Nation. Khomeini had fulfilled his destiny by leading the Islamic Nation, through the Islamic Revolution, "from a society sunk in materialism and atheism and submissive to arrogance (a nickname applied to the West) to a world of morality, oneness with God, independence, freedom and victory". These two "super-leaders" – Muhammad and Khomeini – from two extremes of history, succeeded in fulfilling their spiritual-moral missions, in the face of enormous dangers on one hand and negligible chance of success on the other hand, only due to complete dependence upon Allah, courage, audacity and willingness to take upon themselves risks.<sup>11</sup>

The leader Khamene'i chose to focus in his articles and speeches on the image of the Imam Hussein Bin 'Ali, the man behind the '*Ashura*' events, who left his mark on the Shi'a. Khamene'i credits the revival of Islam to Hussein: "Thanks to his jihad, his blood that was spilt and the revolution he led". Thus Khamene'i credits the '*Ashura*' events – identified with Hussein – with the inspiration that drove the wheels of the Iranian Revolution.<sup>12</sup>

The almost super-natural characteristics attributed to the 'super-leader' and founder of the revolution, along with his portrayal as operating under divine inspiration, had a great influence on the relationship of the Shi'a and the Iranian Islamic Revolution towards the image of the leader, his leadership abilities, his virtues, his position in setting policy and even the fate of the nation and reciprocal relations between the leader and the people.

### ***The Reciprocally Advantageous Connection between the Leader and the People***

The deputy secretary general of Hizballah, Na'im Qasim, insists on the importance of the existence of a fruitful and reciprocally advantageous connection between the leader and the people, as a central condition for the success of necessary changes and achieving victory over enemies. At the center of this reciprocally advantageous connection lies the necessary systematic obedience of the people to their leader. He presents three

10 Q'uran, Sura 33:45-46.

11 Sheikh Muhammad Karnib, "Hijra to Allah", *Baqiyat Allah*, February 2002.

12 Speech by the Leader the Imam 'Ali al-Hussein al-Khamene'i, on the Occasion of the Holy Month of Muharram (Khitab al-Qa'id bi-Munasabat Shahr al-Muharram al-Haram), a pamphlet from Hizballah's Central Unit of Information, Beirut, April 17, 1999.

examples from ancient history and from present time, in order to emphasize the importance of this reciprocally advantageous connection:<sup>13</sup>

- The failure of the Shi'a to achieve control over Islam during the period of the Imam Hasan, the son of 'Ali – the fourth Caliph. Qasim places the blame for this failure on the lack of one out of three components included in the necessary formula for achieving victory. The missing component is the existence of a people that is ready to sacrifice itself in order to achieve ideals. Despite the fact that the other two components of the formula – Islam, and the leader in the shape of the Imam Hasan the Infallible (*al-ma'sum*) did exist during the time of the Imam Hasan, the Shi'a suffered defeat by the Sunni due to the lack of readiness to sacrifice amongst the Shi'a at that time.
- The victories of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Resistance. These were achieved on one hand – due to a very inspired and powerful leadership, having Khomeini's rare virtues, and on the other hand – the readiness to sacrifice among the peoples that acted according to the Leader's edict, despite the price of sacrifice that they paid in both cases.
- The deaths of two of the founders of Hizballah – Sheikh Raghieb Harb and 'Abbas el-Musawi. These events clearly emphasized the reality where the leaders and the common people act on the same battlefield and share a common fate. This fact serves to further solidify the camp.

### ***The Linkage between the Imam and the Intellectual Elite***

The Iranian leader Khamene'i insisted upon the linkage between the Imam and the intellectual elite. Khamene'i, who takes care in his political articles to reach the necessary conclusions and learn lessons from Shi'a history, and especially from the Karbala event – brought up in one of his articles the mutual linkage that exists between the leader – whom he calls Imam – and the intellectual elite (*al-khawass*) in the Islamic State.<sup>14</sup>

First of all, he decreed that in every society and state, there are two classes: The intellectual class and the uneducated class – the common people. The intellectual class is the important and most central, which constitutes the principle backbone of the nation, and upon which it will rise or fall. The intellectuals act from an understanding and awareness of their actions, through an analysis of their steps before taking them. They are divided into two types: the first type is a class of intellectuals that take the path of truth, distance themselves from the nonsense of this world and fulfill their responsibilities to society – in the way that the intellectuals in Iran do today. The second type are the intellectuals that are addicted to the nonsense of this world – materialism, wealth, prestige and luxury goods – and that choose the way of the lie.

Khamene'i sees the Imam's leadership, his choosing the straight path, his plans and his personal abilities as factors of major importance in the successful management of the Islamic

13 An interview in the monthly journal *Baqiyat Allah*, February 2001.

14 Khamene'i, *The Lessons of History: The Uneducated and the Intellectuals, the Lies and the Truth* (Ibar min al-Ta'rikh, 'Awam wa-Khawass, al-Batil wa-al-Haqq), The Baqiyat Allah Center for Research and Distribution, Beirut 1999, pp 23-37.

Nation's affairs, its successful defense against its enemies, and strengthening its existence. In addition, he makes a clear differentiation between the Imam – the leader of the Shiite sect – and the Sultan – the leader of the Sunni sect. The Imam is a talented man, whose people follow him in faith and security. On the other hand, the Sultan is an oppressive leader, who rules his people through power, and as a result, his people do not accept his leadership. The Umayyad regime replaced the Imam's regime with a monarchic government that ruled the Islamic Nation for 90 years. The heads of the Abbasid regime that rules after the Umayyads saw themselves as the successors of Muhammad, but in reality they were kings who spent their time in acts of corruption and debauchery.

Despite this, Khamene'i is convinced that the Islamic Nation will not be able to exist and survive unless the leadership of the Imam is accompanied by an educated and virtuous elite that chooses to follow the straight and true path. He studies the need for the existence of this necessary political condition, i.e. an elite of this type, as part of the lessons of the Karbala event, during which the Shi'a suffered a defeat – the Imam Hussein died a martyr's death, and the Islamic entity that he created collapsed in the face of the enemy – the Umayyad Caliph Yazid. According to Khamene'i, this downfall came about primarily since the Shi'a intellectual elite did not fulfill the criteria of a moral elite that follows the path of truth and protects it. In his opinion, a similar situation exists in our times, in all the Islamic countries governed by Sultans, with the exception of the Islamic Republic of Iran where "the intellectual elite follows the path of truth and the way of Allah and adheres to the Qur'an, the *Sunna*, the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) and Islamic Values." Nonetheless, Khamene'i warns that the Karbala event will be forgotten in Shi'a history, unless an intellectual elite exists from among the "people of truth".

It appears that Khamene'i is trying to place the blame for the Shi'a's lack of success in establishing an Islamic Nation after the death of the Imam 'Ali on the lack of a class of intellectuals "that follow the true path". This, while trying to defend the leadership of the Imams, the progeny of 'Ali, and especially the Imam Hussein, and to clear them of all blame and responsibility for "this calamity". As is commonly known, these Imams are seen in Shi'a as "infallible" and having almost unlimited abilities.

### ***The Leader as a Personal Example for Carrying Out Jihad***

Traditional Shi'a, in effect, froze the Muslims' obligation to carry out jihad, by decreeing that only the *Mahdi* has the right to declare a jihad, and as long as the *Mahdi* has not appeared, in the person of the Hidden Imam, no leader has the right to declare a jihad. The Islamic Revolution has significantly changed the way that traditional Shi'a related to jihad. It has declared that jihad is an essential necessity for Muslims, in order to protect their rights. It emphasized the need for declaring jihad, and to carry it out, when a need exists to protect Islamic land that is under threat of occupation, or to liberate Islamic land that is already occupied by a foreign enemy.

The literature of the Islamic Revolution and of Hizballah made use of the founding fathers of Islam and of Shi'a in order to strengthen the awareness of the need to carry out jihad and to join in its service under the proper circumstances. They have

presented them as a perfect example of carrying out the jihad obligation, and demanded to follow in their path.

A series of articles – written by senior Hizballah officials – published in one issue of a Hizballah journal, deal with a number of aspects where God's emissary surpassed himself in the field of carrying out jihad<sup>15</sup>:

- Excellence in Jihadi characteristics – showing steadfastness and ability to withstand suffering in times of battle, and refusing to retreat from the battlefield, as difficult as that may be.
- Complete preparedness to sacrifice one's soul (*shahid*).
- Spreading the spirit of jihad among one's followers.
- Showing leadership – as an Imam, as a guide, and as a military commander – in all Jihadi actions.
- Standing at the head of the holy warriors (*mujahidin*) and personal involvement in all theaters of the jihad.
- Establishing a philosophy for jihad and "holy warriors" on the legal, religious, moral and concrete planes in Islam.

### **The Holiest of Jihads: The Example of Hussein Bin 'Ali**

Khamene'i presents the model that Hussein Bin 'Ali laid out:

In an article by Khamene'i, the Iranian leader depicts the jihad in two aspects: The first is the personal aspect – The individual must fulfill the will of Allah and be prepared for martyrdom (*shahada*). The Imams of Shi'ism determined that martyrdom is an honor bestowed by Allah. Martyrdom is the action upon which all military activity is based. The jihad is one of the gates to the Garden of Eden. This is the routine type of jihad and martyrdom (*istishhad*) expressed by falling in regular battle against the enemy. According to Khamene'i, the most sacred and important jihad occurs when the *mujahid* is in a completely alien setting (*jihad fi al-ghurba*). The most prominent case of this type of jihad in Shiite history is the jihad Imam Hussein waged against his enemies at Karbala, when operating in an alien setting. This jihad is the essence of the '*Ashura*'. This type of jihad exists when the person heads out to the battleground and the society around him is alien, an enemy or ignores him. The emphasis of this particular aspect of jihad is designed to motivate Hizballah fighters operating outside of their country and in an external setting, especially when operating on their own. The second aspect of jihad pertains to organizations, especially military and security organizations. Khamene'i states that they must operate according to an organizational and disciplinary outlook and motivation that serves the jihad. In summary, he says that devotion to the *Shari'a* gives a real identity to the jihad and serves as a guarantee of victory.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Imam's Role in Establishing the Islamic State according to the Imam al-Sajjad**

The Iranian leader Khamene'i primarily refers to the role of the Imam in establishing the Islamic State, and its traditional

15 Ismaili Hariri, "The Emissary: The Mujahidin's Guide"; An Interview with Sheikh 'Ali Damoush, "The Emissary - the Military Commander"; Sheikh Hasan al-Hadi, "The Prophet's Jihadi Personality"; Sheikh Hasan Fu'ad Hamada, "Sacrifice in the Prophet's Conscience", all articles are published in Baqiyat Allah, April 2006.

16 'Ali Khamene'i, The Jihad (Al-Jihad), The Imam Khomeini Cultural Center (Markaz al-Imam Khomeini Al-Thaqafi), Beirut, 2004.

appearance, in his comprehensive article on the history of the Imam al-Sajjad<sup>17</sup> and his religious philosophy.<sup>18</sup> It appears that the main purpose of this article was to present the position and role of the Imam in Shi'a, as someone who holds the reigns of religious and political power in the Islamic State and constitutes the highest authority in running the religious and political affairs in this country. This presentation serves Khamene'i, in order to promote three additional supplementary goals: The first goal – strengthening the concept of *al-wali al-faqih*, that the Imam Khomeini consolidated in its present form (see below), while not specifically naming it. Khamene'i in effect finds support for this concept in the principles that, according to him, the Imam al-Sajjad left in his writings on the principles of government in Shi'a. The second goal – strengthening Khomeini's legitimacy and that of the Revolutionary Islamic Government that was established in Iran, by presenting them as following in the footsteps of the Shiite Imam. The third goal – de-legitimization of Sunni governments throughout Islamic history, based on the assertion that Sunni leaders and their administrations did not meet the necessary standards according to Islamic law (*Shari'a*), and in effect, stole the primary position in Islam from the Shi'a and its leader the Imam.

### **The Imam's Concept and His Roles in Government**

In his article on the history of the Imam al-Sajjad, Khamene'i dedicates an important chapter also to an explanation of the Imam's position, roles and authority in Shi'a. Concerning the definition of the position, he bases this on high authority – the Imam al-Sajjad and the other Shi'a Imams – and declares that these figures saw the concept of Imam as "a person that is responsible for teaching the people and guiding them in matters of religion and in the running of their affairs, and also in secular matters, in other words, a person acting as a replacement (*khalifa*) for the Prophet". Khamene'i adds that "from the Imam's point of view, the concept of government (*wilaya*) is identical to the concept of *Imama* which means "managing the affairs of the people" (who are led by the Imam). According to Khamene'i, the Islamic Revolution in Iran tool upon itself this concept of the Imam – as opposed to the concept of Imam that was common before the time of Khomeini – and concludes that "the Imam is the leader of society, i.e. a person that teaches it religion and that runs our secular world." Khamene'i studies the Imam's duties in managing people's affairs, from the example of the stories of Imam al-Sajjad's life, and his leadership. The Imam al-Sajjad displayed vitality and much activity. He especially preached to "believers"<sup>19</sup> – whom Khamene'i defines as followers of al-Sajjad, opponents of the Umayyad regime who believe in the ideas of "*ahl al-bayt*" – keeping one's hands clean, avoid luxurious living and corruption, and follow jihad. The purpose of Imam al-Sajjad's preaching to these believers was to train them as cadres that would in the near future set up an Islamic Government.

17 The Imam 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, son of the Imam Hussein, born in Medina in the year 658. Died in the year 712 or 713 at the age of 57 or 58. Served as an Imam in the years 61-95 of the Hijra.

18 Research on the History of the Imam al-Sajjad (Baht hawl Sirat al-Imam al-Sajjad), the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, no date.

19 It should be noted that the term "believers" in Shi'a literature refers to Shiites, whereas the term "Muslimin" refers to Muslims outside of the Shi'a framework.

Concerning the Imam's authority, Khamene'i quotes Imam al-Sajjad who decreed that "it is obligatory to follow these orders, and to obey him, and to obey those whom Allah has ordained must be followed." From this, Khamene'i concludes that "obeying the Imam in matters of religion and state has become obligatory for us."

To summarize this subject, Khamene'i states that the Shi'a Imam has authority over matters of religion and state, and that his orders should be obeyed. He compares the Imam's authority with the broad authority that the Prophet had in all matters of religion and state.<sup>20</sup> Khamene'i dismisses a current position that, according to him, is that the Imam during the period of "absence" (i.e. the period when the Twelfth Imam is hidden, which continues to this day) is only a religious sage. Khamene'i acts to strengthen the basis of the concept of *al-wali al-faqih*, which Khomeini shaped, and he himself holds this title. He finds support for this position in the philosophies of some of the twelve Imams, and at their head, the Imam al-Sajjad. Khamene'i settles accounts with the *Sunna*, and protests against the historical injustices that the *Sunna* caused the Shi'a by keeping them from power. He protests that the Umayyad regime usurped, unjustly, the management of the Muslims' affairs from the true owners of this regime – the Shiite Imam.

### Establishment of the Islamic Government

Khamene'i notes in his article that both the Imam al-Sajjad as well as the other Imams had one primary and final goal – the establishment of the Islamic Government (*al-Hukuma al-Islamiyya*). However, al-Sajjad was of the opinion that in his time, the conditions for the establishment of an Islamic Government were not ripe, and that foundations should be laid that would prepare for its establishment at a later date. Al-Sajjad set out three projects for advancing this goal:

- Preserving "the original Islamic philosophy", i.e. in the Shi'a mould, in order that it will not be lost over time, and imparting it on the Islamic public. Al-Sajjad himself carried out an immense philosophical project, known as "*al-sahifa al-sajjadiyya*". In the framework of this project, he wrote down "The Original Islamic Thought" on major subjects, including the oneness of God, the prophecy, man's moral standing and his linkage to Allah.
- Assimilation of the acceptance among the people to recognize the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) as the true successors of the Prophet and the rightful inheritors of regime (*wilaya*), the leadership (*al-Imama*), and the government (Hukuma). Explanation of this subject was, in the time of al-Sajjad, dependent on the explanation that the government of the Umayyad-Sunni Caliph 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan (685–705 CE) was not that which was in Islam's best interests<sup>21</sup>.
- Establishment of apparatus and institutions that will be the basis for political activity. Al-Sajjad and his

followers were not able to carry this out, and were satisfied with strengthening the apparatus that were in existence since the time of "*amir al-mu'minin*" 'Ali.

## D. The Development of the Concept of *al-Wali al-Faqih* in Shi'a History According to Shi'a Literature

### General

Shi'a literature presents the concept of *al-wali al-faqih* as one that was designed and implemented in one way or another throughout Shi'a history, according to the political conditions that the Shi'a lived under.

Among the Shi'a religious sages that specialize in the *Imama* rule of the twelve infallible and sin-less Imams that are part of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*), there is a general consensus that the twelve Imams are those chosen by the Divine prophecy and Muhammad to serve as Caliphs (replacements) after him.<sup>22</sup> From the point of view of the Shi'a religious sages, the twelve afore-mentioned Imams embodied completely the necessary talents and abilities needed by religious sages that held power – *al-wali al-faqih*.

In two articles that were published in the Hizballah Religious literature, an attempt was made to show that after the era of the twelve Imams, a Shi'a religious literature developed that gradually developed the concept of *al-wali al-faqih* in all matters concerning his position, and the abilities needed by *al-wali al-faqih* and the breadth of his authority. From all of the articles, it becomes clear that in effect, the Shi'a religious literature preceded Khomeini in consolidating the concept of *al-wali al-faqih*, even if this literature was not yet mature and complete.

Sheikh Hasan Fu'ad Hamada, a Hizballah religious philosopher, states that after the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam on God's orders had been determined, the concept of *al-wali al-faqih* developed (as a result of these circumstances) among the Shi'a in order to avoid a leadership vacuum and in order to implant an alternative regime operating within the framework of the *Imama*. At the head of the *wilayat al-faqih* government stands *al-wali al-faqih*, who serves as the representative of the Hidden Imam during the period of his absence. The main duty of *al-wali al-faqih* is to continue to operate according to the Divine plan, until the appearance of the Hidden Imam – the *Mahdi* - who will complete the implementation of this plan (see below).<sup>23</sup>

In his article, Sheikh Kazim Yasin<sup>24</sup> presents the development of the concept of *wilayat al-faqih* in the philosophy and tradition collected by prominent Shi'a religious sages: starting from the second half of the fourth century after the *Hijra* and up to the 10<sup>th</sup> century after the *Hijra*, the religious sages discussed within

20 Khamene'i also bases this on the Shi'a Imam al-Sadiq, who according to him, would declare to the people that the Prophet is the Imam, thereby ordaining that the Imam is the person that manages the matters of religion and state.

21 At the basis of this concept lies the Shi'a's position that the government in Islam is passed on from Muhammad to his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, and from 'Ali to his descendants. Thus, the Shiites believe only in the rule of 'Ali and his descendants the Imams as the legitimate rulers of the Islamic Nation. The Shiites also deny the legitimacy of the rule of the three honest Caliphs - Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman - who preceded the fourth Caliph, 'Ali.

22 According to the Shi'a, the Prophet's friends erred by accepting the leadership of the three first Caliphs of Islam, that preceded 'Ali, the founder of Shi'ism.

23 "The Position of Wilayat al-Faqih in Preparing the Ground for the Appearance of al-Hujja," (Dawr Wilayat al-Faqih fi al-Tamhid li-Zuhur al-Hujja), Baqiyyat Allah, Beirut, September 2005.

24 "The Rule of the Jurisprudent in the Philosophy of the Founders," (Wilayat al-Faqih fi Aqwal al-Salaf al-Salih), Baqiyyat Allah, Beirut, September 2005.

the academic-political framework of the *Imama* philosophy. They approved the rule of the infallible Imam and expressed a desire to achieve it. They related to the Sultans (who were the heads of the Sunni Caliphate) as illegal and oppressive rulers. Their interest in the subject of government and political activity was limited to the judicial framework and implementation of Islamic punishments (*al-hudud al-Islamiyya*).

From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries of the *Hijra*, senior Shi'a religious sages first recognized a "temporary government". Al-Karaki (the chief justice and Sheikh al-Islam in the court of the Safavid ruler) and others recognized the Safavid government that reigned in Isfahan under the name "the Imamic school", from a point of view of religious sages' responsibility to carry out canon law. Al-Karaki referred to *al-wali al-faqih* as the representative of the Hidden Imam. Despite this, he did not succeed in formulating a complete political concept about *al-wali al-faqih*, due to a conflict between himself and the Safavid rulers. In al-Karaki's time, there were other religious sages that used expressions that referred to the Rule of the Jurisprudent (*wilayat al-faqih*). However, the most important among the religious sages were Sheikh Ahmad al-Naraqī (who died in the year 1245 of the *Hijra*) who wrote a document on *wilayat al-faqih* and established basic foundations for *wilayat al-faqih*, such as public interests, arranging affairs of this world and the next, the role of the religious sage, in addition to the subject of government and the Sultanate. Based on verbal evidence, he decreed the granting of complete power to the religious sage (*al-faqih*). He also ruled, on the basis of rational evidence, that he (*al-faqih*) was the representative of the Imam during the period of the absence. In addition, he ruled that the Rule of the Jurisprudent covers two areas: the powers that had been held by the Prophet and the Imam, and affairs in the area of religious worship.

A wide-reaching teaching pamphlet distributed among Hizballah followers on the subject of *wilayat al-faqih* (see below) presents, among other things, the application of the concept of the Rule of the Jurisprudent (*wilayat al-faqih*) in Shi'a history. The pamphlet notes that during the period of the twelve Imams, this concept was indeed applied by the twelve Imams, but under the power of the divine nomination given to them on one hand, and their abilities and characteristics that prepared them to be religious sages and to be leaders with the management abilities to run a country on the basis of Islamic law, on the other hand. However, the pamphlet ignores the government's plans if and when the concept of *wilayat al-faqih* will be applied during the Major Occultation (that will cease, according to Shi'a belief, with the reappearance of the Hidden Imam) and until the establishment of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which Imam Khomeini brought about within the framework of this concept. The pamphlet only states that the Hidden Imam placed the Rule (*wilaya*) during the period of the Major Occultation in the hands of religious sages having suitable abilities and characteristics, in order that they fulfill to the best of their abilities the position of general representative of the Hidden Imam. He directed the people to obey these sages in all matters of government, state and leadership of society. He ruled that the religious sages will act in accordance with the best interests of Islam.

Sheikh Hassan Fuad Hamada notes that since the start of the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam, only one successful attempt has been made, within the framework of *wilayat al-faqih*, to achieve a notable success that acts "to promote the return of the Hidden Imam". According to him, this great achievement, within the activities of *wilayat al-faqih*, was achieved in our generation and found expression in the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, by the Imam Khomeini. The most important developments achieved by this country and its young regime, that were led in the beginning by the founder (Imam Khomeini) and later by the Imam Khamene'i are: preparing the way for the "country of all-encompassing justice" so that the countdown started (for the appearance of the Hidden Imam – the *Mahdi*, who will establish this country) and the enormous influence of the Islamic Revolution on the world of Islam in particular, and the whole world in general. The revolution and the state went through tens of tests, and they developed their powers in a way that made it seem that they were preparing the final stages before the blessed appearance (of the *Mahdi*). Khomeini gave expression to this when he said that the Iranian people's revolution was the starting point for the great revolution of the Islamic world, under the flag of the Hidden Imam.<sup>25</sup>

Following are the main points in the development of the concept of *al-wilayat al-faqih* and the characteristics required of someone who fills the role of *al-wali al-faqih*, according to the above-mentioned pamphlet.<sup>26</sup>

#### ***Al-Wali al-Faqih during the Period of the Twelve Imams***

The Shi'a literature presents *wilayat al-faqih* as a concept that was shaped and applied in one form or another throughout Shi'a history, according to the circumstances under which the Shi'a lived.

During the period of the rule of the twelve "infallible and sinless" Imams (*al-ma'sumun*), the concept of *wilayat al-faqih* as applied in its religious and political aspects. The Imams held positions in the regime (*wilaya*) and also in the field of religious jurisprudence, and they had characteristics and abilities in these fields. People would turn to them concerning both of these. They were a source of authority (*marja'iyya*) for the people in two dimensions: on the authority of their knowledge of Islamic canon law (*Shari'a*) that originated with Allah, and concerning execution of the Islamic Socio-Political program for running people's lives and for organizing their relations between themselves – i.e. running the government. These Imams appeared one after another, on the basis of divine nomination that specified them by name, until the period of the disappearance of the Hidden Imam.

#### ***Al-Wali al-Faqih during the Period of the Major Occultation***

During the period of the Minor Occultation, the Hidden Imam nominated four deputies by name, who served one after another, and each of them represented the Hidden Imam. The era of the deputies that were nominated by name by the

25 Ibid; "The Position of Wilayat al-Faqih in Preparing the Ground for the Appearance of al-Hujja," (*Dawr Wilayat al-Faqih fi al-Tamhid li-Zuhur al-Hujja*), Baqiyyat Allah, Beirut, September 2005.

26 Lessons in Wilayat al-Faqih (*Durus fi Wilayat al-Faqih*), Jam'iyyat al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyya al-Thaqafiyya (Cultural Islamic Al-Ma'arif Association), October, 2005.

Hidden Imam came to an end during the period of the Major Occultation, which started with the death of the fourth deputy. [During the Major Occultation], the Imam's deputies were nominated on the basis of ability and not according to their names. The people were always guided by the religious sages (*al-faqih*) who were suitable for filling this task, based on certain abilities that they possessed. The ideal situation occurred when a religious sage (*al-faqih*) having managerial abilities, was also the source of authority (*marja' taqlid*) for the people that he guided and managed. In other words, the ideal situation was when a personality/religious sage had characteristics, source of authority and managerial abilities such as the infallible and sinless Imams had, in both the above-mentioned fields: knowledge of religious law and running the government.

There is a difference between a source of authority (*marja' taqlid*) and *al-wali al-faqih*: a source of authority is satisfied with presenting Divine laws in general to the people that approach him with questions of religious law, after having arrived at them by searching through the sources (*masadir shar'iyya*). He refrains from making decisions on questions of Islamic canon law that were referred to him, and only presents the laws that are relevant to the questions, and leaves to the presenter of the question the decision concerning what to do and how to behave on the basis of the laws presented to him. On the other hand, *al-wali al-faqih* must have political, social and managerial skills in order to fulfill his position in the government. He is responsible for the general management of Islamic society, and the gamut of religious rulings that he decrees includes issues of government, society and state, and what are known as "laws of rule (*ahkam al-wilaya*)". The rulings that the *wali al-faqih* issues cover a range of topics that includes: legal matters connected to quarrels, public issues of the highest importance connected to the running of the country, such as declaring jihad, concluding peace agreements, etc. He decides if conditions for jihad exist or not, and if it is in the Muslims' interest to conclude Peace, or not. He also decides about matters of public safety. *Al-wali al-faqih* issues legal rulings after checking and identifying between the interests and the damages, i.e. it is his duty to decide what is permitted and what is forbidden, according to this check. It is not his duty to present the laws *per-se* without checking and identifying, as is the duty placed on the source of authority (*marja' taqlid*). In effect, there is no contradiction between the *marja' taqlid* and the *wali faqih* since each of them deals with issues that are different from those of his counterpart.

### The Characteristics of *al-Wali al-Faqih*

The Characteristics required of *al-wali al-faqih* are:

- Expertise in religious law – the leader (*al-wali*) in charge of applying the Islamic regime needs to be a religious sage, an expert in religious law and its sources.
- Integrity – integrity includes: Islam, faith, steadfastness in Allah's laws and fostering these laws. A high degree of integrity is required of the leader. Only a righteous man is capable of dispensing justice as required.
- Executive abilities – the personal ability to manage affairs and to oversee their execution in the required format, time and place. Will power, determination and courage to take essential decisions.

Khomeini's personality personifies all the characteristics required of *al-wali al-faqih*, since he is a modest person, makes do with very little and is courageous. Khomeini exemplified these characteristics in initiatives and actions which eventually lead to the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

### Unity in Government

During the time of the "Major Occultation", the question of who would be the ruler/leader (*wali*) from among the religious sages that had the required characteristics, was posed – whether all of them or just one of them. The answer is that the Muslim's best interests require the Unity of Government, i.e. the placing of one personality only at the head of the government. The arguments for this – based on the Qur'an and the sayings of the Imams – are:

- The regime (*wilaya*) is a branch of the *Imama* – in the same way that the situation requires that there be only one Imam (i.e. the twelve Imams), a ruler (*wali*) is required who is the Imam's representative, only a single man. This holds true also for *al-wali al-faqih*.
- The Islamic Nation is one nation, as set out in the Qur'an.
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq declared that the Muslims will have one head. Multiple rulers lead to corruption and damages and divisions among the people of the nation. In addition, this causes inability to reach decisions such as deciding to go to war, in the event of an attack on the nation.

## E. The Concept of the Rule of the Jurisprudent (*Wilayat al-Faqih*) and Its Integration into the System of Rule in the State

The concept of *al-wali al-faqih* (ruling jurisprudent) that Khomeini developed has been implemented in practice in Iran.

A booklet used in Hizballah training courses teaches a lesson about the essence of the concept of *wilayat al-faqih*. According to this lesson, "*wilayat al-faqih* is not merely a conceptual theory discussed by scholars. Rather, it is a reality, a way of life and a regime on which Islamic society is based, with the goal of attaining victories, one after another."<sup>27</sup>

The booklet presents an allegorical interpretation of traditions that appear in the Qur'an<sup>28</sup> and in the teachings of the Imams, that "verifies" that the government which has, in effect, been established by a decree from Allah to the Prophet and the Imams, has also been given to *al-wali al-faqih* during the period of the disappearance of the Hidden Imam. According to what is written in the booklet, an additional important principle is inferred, which is – obligatory obedience by the general public to *al-wali al-faqih*, an obligation which derives from the obligation to obey the Prophet and the Imams. According to this interpretation, the essence and the areas of the regime that were transferred to *al-wali al-faqih* include: management of Islamic society, application of Islamic laws and deciding what is permitted and what is forbidden, and ensuring the material

27

Ibid.

28

Quran, Sura 5:5; Sura 4:59.



and moral interests of the people. The ruling that *al-wali al-faqih* is the natural successor of the Imam's regime during the period of the disappearance of the Hidden Imam, is a result of the argument that simply applying Islamic laws requires the presence of a man who is a religious sage, that is capable of carrying out this assignment.

In his essay *al-Jihad*, the leader of Iran, Khamene'i, explains the essence of the position of the *wali faqih* as "great divine benevolence on the one hand, and as a central axis of the Islamic movement on the other hand, during the period of the disappearance (of the Hidden Imam). This is because *wilayat al-faqih* will dispel dangers, identify the interests of the nation, which will march together in one direction, since the *wali faqih* is the guarantee of the continuation of this march and non-deviation from it." In other words, Khamene'i – in line with his predecessor Khomeini – attributes to the *wali faqih* a mystical status of substitute / representative of the Hidden Imam during the period of his disappearance and until his appearance as *Mahdi*, which will bring redemption to the world. This status empowers the *wali faqih* with mystical capabilities for protecting the revolution from its enemies and advancing it safely and correctly toward the realization of its goals.<sup>29</sup> For emphasis, Khamene'i cites excerpts from Khomeini that demand from the fighters and the Republican Guard – which constitute the main stronghold of the regime of the Islamic Revolution – that "the issue of *wilayat al-faqih* flow in their veins and that [they] take upon themselves its constant supervision."<sup>30</sup>

Another series of lessons by Khamene'i, which was translated from Farsi to Arabic for Hizballah personnel, explains the importance of the revolutionary idea that Khomeini formulated. Here he emphasizes that according to Khomeini, the disappearance of the Hidden Imam – the leader of the Muslims who will appear in the future – must not create a vacuum of leadership and sound rule that guides and directs the Muslims. In accordance with Khomeini's teaching, these lessons challenge traditional Shiite views that prohibit an active leadership and fateful decisions (such as a declaration of a jihad campaign) as long as the Hidden Imam has yet to appear. The lessons teach that a collection of laws for reforming the society is not enough, and there is a need for a government that takes action. Khamene'i argues that "no society can organize its affairs except under the existence of law and a ruler who ensures that this law is executed." He states: "The establishment of a government is a duty; if not, many laws would stop operating – for example, in the areas of jihad and defense of the Muslim states and their property, and in the area of implementing the laws."

Based on this outlook, it becomes a duty to establish a leadership headed by the *wali faqih*, which will manage the affairs of the Muslims. Khamene'i notes the need for the existence of a government / regime based on the ultimate authority of Caliph 'Ali. In this context, Khamene'i states that there is opposition to the concept advocated by the branch that opposed 'Ali in his day – the Khawarij. This ancient branch of Islam claimed

29 The Shiite tradition ruled that Islamic sages are *al-na'ib al-'amm* (the general representative) of the Hidden Imam, and that they are entitled to assume only some of the authorities of the Hidden Imam. Contrary to this view, Khomeini's concept of *wali faqih* determined that Islamic sages, with an emphasis on the religious jurists in particular, are entitled to also fill the political roles of the Hidden Imam.

30 'Ali Khamene'i, *The Jihad (Al-Jihad)*, The Imam Khomeini Cultural Center (Markaz al-Imam Khomeini Al-Thaqafi), Beirut, 2004.

that there was no need for a government and proclaimed the following slogan: "There is no rule except Allah" (*la hukm illa li-Allah*). 'Ali stated in response to the challenge this group posed to his rule: "The people need a ruler." He agreed that the rule only belongs to Allah, but argued that this does not mean that society must remain without someone to direct it. According to him, it is a natural, social and human need to have someone lead a society, regardless of whether he is good or bad."<sup>31</sup>

The concept of *al-wali al-faqih* (ruling jurist) made an impact on Hizballah's ideology. Hizballah views this idea as an ideal pattern of leadership for running the state. The organization also regards acceptance of this view as identification with the very heart of the Islamic Revolution and as a declaration of absolute loyalty to the leader of Iran, who embodies in his personality and education, as a religious sage, the behavior of the *wali faqih*. Against this background, the organization has assimilated the idea of the *wilayat al-faqih* in the system of information and indoctrination it operates – in the framework of studies and courses – among its adherents.

The decision of the Hizballah organization regarding the *al-wali al-faqih*, which is a controversial issue in the Shiite world, is clear. In Hizballah publications, Khamene'i is given the title of "substitute / general representative" (*al-na'ib al-'amm / al-na'ib bi-al-haqq*) of the Hidden Imam.

Further evidence of acceptance of the Khomeinist revolutionary concept of *al-wali al-faqih* by Hizballah and its dissemination among the ranks of the organization can be seen in the organization's training booklets. One such example is the booklet used in the Hizballah training course that teaches about the essence of the concept of *wilayat al-faqih*, as mentioned above.<sup>32</sup>

This series of lessons presents two models for implementing the idea of *al-wali al-faqih*: The first model is an existing state such as Iran, where the only source of rule in the Islamic regime is the *wali faqih*. The three branches – legislative, executive and judicial – enjoy independence, but their authority to rule derives from the *wali faqih*. The second model is the rule of the *wali faqih* in a setting where there is no state. As Khamene'i explains, "He [*al-wali al-faqih*] rules over the Muslims whether a state exists in the country or not." Obedience to those appointed by the *wali faqih* is obligatory for all people as long as the directives of these appointees remain within the domain of their authorities in the framework of the foundations of Islamic law. It seems that the second model suggests the situation in which Hizballah operates in Lebanon – a state where the rule is divided between Muslims and Christians and is not subject to the rule of the *wali faqih*. This model apparently grants legitimacy to Hizballah to accept the authority of the *wali faqih* – the leader of Iran, Khamene'i – and to enforce obedience to the leader of Hizballah as the representative of Khamene'i in Lebanon.<sup>33</sup>

31 'Ali Khamene'i, *Returning to Nahj al-Balagha ('Awda Ila Nahj al-Balagha)*, al-Dar al-Islamiyya, Beirut, 2000.

32 Lessons in *Wilayat al-Faqih (Durus fi Wilayat al-Faqih)*, Jam'iyyat al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyya al-Thaqafiyya (Cultural Islamic Al-Ma'arif Association), October, 2005.

33 The leadership of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts Organization traditionally sends blessings on Islamic and Shiite religious holidays to the community of scouts, including a special blessing for three people: the Hidden Imam (who bears the title of Master of the Era and the Times - *sahib al-'asr wa-al-zaman*), his substitute / representative (Imam Khamene'i), and the Secretary General of Hizballah (Hasan Nasrallah - who bears the title *sayyid al-mujahidin samahat hujjat al-Islam wa-al-Muslimin*). See: Al-Bayan, Beirut, November 2002.

The mystical / apocalyptic idea derived from the idea of *al-wali al-faqih* is that his leadership and policy constitute a guarantee for expediting the appearance of the Hidden Imam, and thus for bringing redemption nearer. This means that the decisions of the *wali faqih* should be obeyed and executed in order to advance the appearance of the Hidden Imam and consequently to realize this Shiite ideal.

In summary, the leadership of Hizballah uses the idea of *wilayat al-faqih* – from which it derives its authority – in its propaganda in order to promote its vital interests:

- Establishing the legitimacy of Hizballah's leadership and the party's ruling institutions;
- Strengthening the patterns of discipline and obedience to Hizballah's leadership on the part of the "resisting society";
- Boosting motivation among the members of the "resisting society" and fighters of the "Islamic resistance" to carry out the directives of Hizballah's leadership.

## F. The Hidden Imam –The Eschatological / Apocalyptic View

The eschatological / apocalyptic view of the Hidden Imam – the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad Ibn Hasan al-'Askari – whose return is awaited by the world: The *Mahdi* disappeared twice – the Minor Occultation (*al-ghayba al-sughra*, which lasted 69 years) and the Major Occultation, which began after the death of the fourth emissary (*safir*) al-Samari in the year 329 of the *Hijra* (the four emissaries witnessed the Imam's appearance) and continues to this day. The Shiites believe that it will continue until the end of days, and then the Imam will return as the *Mahdi* in order to re-establish justice in the world.

The deeply rooted Shiite belief in the Hidden Imam and the *Mahdi* – whose return (*faraj; raj'a*) is due to impose justice in a world ruled by injustice and exploitation – was developed and shaped by the Islamic Revolution. In its updated form, it has become the central motif in the ideology of both the Iranian Revolutionary and Hizballah.

Sheikh Hasan Fuad Hamada declared that the primary goal of the Hidden Imam is "the establishment of the Just Islamic Government" (also known as the All-encompassing State of Justice) over the entire world, elimination of corruption, oppression, and falsehood, and realization of the Prophets' dream. Allah prepared the Hidden Imam for this divine, blessed goal and promised him that his religion would be victorious over all the religions. Even if the Imam left this world, and is close by Allah, no-one other than him can carry out this task. Imam Khomeini once said that we will not be able to destroy all the "arrogant ones" (the West) in the world, and establish the "All-encompassing State of Justice". Achieving this goal requires the appearance of the *Mahdi*, but we must act to the best of our abilities in order to achieve this goal<sup>34</sup>.

34 The position of Wilayat al-Faqih in preparing the ground for the appearance of al-Hujja.

This view of the Hidden Imam was shaped by the fathers of the Revolution in a way that was designed to serve a political interest that accords nearly unlimited authority to the leader of the Revolution. According to this view, the leader's authority derives from the delegation of authorities by the Hidden Imam. (Thus, the leader is given the title of *na'ib* – that is, the substitute / representative of the Hidden Imam.)

This view of the Hidden Imam also serves the activist approach that the Revolution seeks to instill in its supporters: The believers are called upon to demonstrate activeness<sup>35</sup> and to do all they can to accelerate the return of the Hidden Imam<sup>36</sup> and not to wait passively until his appearance. Khamene'i determined that "the ground is ripe for the appearance of *wali al-haqq*" (an alias for the *Mahdi*). He called upon the entire community of believers to act according to the principles of the '*Ashura*' in order to bring rapid reform to the world and, by implication, to expedite the coming of the *Mahdi*.<sup>37</sup> In discussing the *Mahdi*, Na'im Qasim employs the Qur'anic concept of *baqiyyat Allah* in the sense of "the remnant that Allah left behind"<sup>38</sup> – which is attributed in Shi'ism to the *Mahdi*. In the following text, he clearly expresses the idea of action aimed at hastening the coming of the *Mahdi*: "Many of those who do not understand the Islamic culture and its philosophical and theological content wonder how we believe that the future is for the benefit of the believers (i.e. the Shiites). Were it not for our belief in *al-Imam al-Mahdi*, we would not maintain faith and hope. This is an inseparable part of his promise to grant us victory. The important thing for us is to keep sight of this promise and [to feel] hope in *baqiyyat Allah* (Allah will hasten his appearance) in every step and action we undertake in our daily lives. This is so we can live the principle in a practical way and overcome the difficulties that delay our action and our victory for the sake of the future victory of Allah's law over heresy and deviance."<sup>39</sup>

### Obedience and Discipline

Sheikh Nabil Qawuq devotes an article to a very central issue in the ideology, and patterns of behavior, hierarchy and management of the Islamic Revolution and of the Hizballah organization. This is the issue of instilling the principles of obedience and loyalty among Hizballah personnel and officials, and concretely, obedience and loyalty to the leader of the Islamic Revolution and the leader of Hizballah. Obedience is defined as a central pillar of the Islamic regime.<sup>40</sup>

The importance of attaining this goal is emphasized and brought home in its presentation in the article as a central factor for "the success of the path of the Iranian Islamic Revolution on the one hand, and the Islamic resistance on the other hand, and their

35 A central principle in Khamene'i's doctrine deals with legitimizing Shiite activism. Most Shiite theologians advocated a passive approach, arguing that Shiites should wait for the return of the Hidden Imam and, until then, use the principle of *taqiyya* (dissimulation) - the obligation to conceal the faith in time of danger. This obligation has special importance for the Shiites because they have often been a persecuted minority. See: Shaul Shay, p. 25.

36 The Hidden Imam has a number of titles, such as "the exemplar" (*al-hujja*) and "the ruler of justice" (*wali al-haqq*).

37 Speech by the Leader the Imam 'Ali al-Husseini al-Khamene'i, on the Occasion of the Holy Month of Muharram (Khitab al-Qa'id bi-Munasabat Shahr al-Muharram al-Haram), a pamphlet from Hizballah's Central Unit of Information, Beirut, April 17, 1999.

38 "That which Allah leaveth with you is better for you if ye are believers" (Qur'an, Surah 2:248).

39 *Baqiyyat Allah*, December 2005. Heresy here refers to Christianity / Judaism. Deviance refers to Muslims - with an emphasis on Sunnis - who do not follow the ways of Shi'ism.

40 "Obedience to the Leader," (Ta'at al-Wali), *Baqiyyat Allah*, Beirut, February 2002.

reaching the shores of victory and security.” This means that obedience and loyalty to those in authority must continue and serve as guidelines for the Islamic Revolution and the “Islamic resistance” in order for them to realize their objectives.

Obedience and loyalty to those in authority – which is elevated to the level of a sacred duty – are based on a number of pillars that are interdependent. The first is the pillar of obedience to God – the source of delegation of authority:

- Obedience to Allah and submission to Him
- The principle of *al-wilaya*, which means recognizing the rule of ‘Ali and loyalty to him
- Obedience to *ahl al-bayt* (the Prophet’s family), which is tangential to the principle of the *al-wilaya*
- The role filled by the Hajj in illustrating obedience and as an example of obedience to those in authority (the obedience of Ibrahim and Ishmael to the divine decree to sacrifice Ishmael)
- *Wilayat al-faqih*: the principle Khomeini formulated and instituted regarding the status of the *wali faqih* and obedience to him. This principle is presented as directly derived from the aforementioned principles and foundations.

The Shiite tradition and the innovations of Khomeini in the area of *al-wali al-faqih* serve as a concrete means of unequivocally imbuing Hizballah personnel in general, and the organization’s fighters in particular, with the duty of completely fulfilling the principle of obedience to their leaders and commanders at all ranks of the organization’s hierarchy. This principle is taught in the training and indoctrination apparatus of the organization’s personnel, starting in the youth movements, through training courses, and culminating in the training of fighters.

## G. Summary and Implications

The Islamic Revolution in Iran was in no small measure a result of a combination of a religious-revolutionary concept of a Leader personality with mystic aspect – *al-wali al-faqih*, representative of the Hidden Imam – and the charisma of a popular leader, in the form of Khomeini. This is in addition to other influential factors – internal and regional. The question is, whether this combination is capable of surviving over time, whether it is sufficient by itself to preserve the impetus of the Islamic Revolution in the Islamic world and in the world as a whole, and what the points of strength and weakness are of this combination.

This question needs to be examined first of all from the point of view of the leader who succeeded Khomeini – ‘Ali Khamene’i – to what extent he succeeded in taking Khomeini’s place as an authoritative leader capable of inflaming the masses, and one that is capable of preserving the impetus of the Islamic Revolution both at home and abroad. There is a general consensus that Khomeini’s leadership personality is a rare phenomena and perhaps unique, and that Khamene’i needed to anchor his authority on the support of people and institutions from within the Iranian leadership. This question will reappear when a successor to Khamene’i will take his place.

According to analyses that appear in the Shiite literature concerning failures and successes of Shiite regimes, it appears that the leadership – with all its importance – is only one component of the power of the Shiite state. The existence of a public that believes in Shi’a values and is prepared to sacrifice, and is also loyal and obedient to the leader – is a no less important component of this power. In this connection, warnings by the leader Khamene’i and the deputy secretary-general of Hizballah, Na’im Qasim have been heard that existential disasters – such as the example of the Karbala disaster – may reappear and descend upon the Shiite Islamic State, if the people, and in particular the intellectual elite, do not preserve a high level of preparedness for sacrifice and motivation. There is not doubt, that the war that was imposed upon Iran by the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was a difficult test for the Iranian people, especially since it happened only shortly after the Iranian Revolution broke out. It seems that success in this test by the Iranian Revolution is credited to no small degree to Khomeini’s leadership that was wise enough to initiate its end.

There is no doubt that centers of power in the Islamic Revolution, and at their head the Revolutionary Guards and the army, had a primary importance in the fact of the existence of the current regime under its current leadership. So far, they have demonstrated loyalty to the regime and the leadership, but this loyalty may be undermined under circumstance of economic / social collapse, or by traumatic Iranian involvement in a military adventure.

The apocalyptic / eschatological belief of the revolutionary regime, anchored in Shi’a traditions, constitutes for the leadership an important means for increasing motivation and mobilizing the public, through these centers of power, towards realization of the revolution’s goal. This belief expedites promises that all achievements and progress in realizing the revolution’s goals bring the return of the *Mahdi* closer, since only he is capable of fulfilling the Shiite / Islamic ideal of establishing “the Shiite Kingdom” over the whole world, and not only over the Islamic world. In this connection, this belief is used as a basis for the steadfastness of the Iranian leadership to achieve unconventional military abilities, and in particular, nuclear arms.

This belief carries within it the potential for the leadership to slip into an adventurous policy with no thought of dangers – a policy that may cause on one hand the spark of violence on a regional scale, and on the other hand, a mortal blow to the Islamic Revolutionary regime.

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