

## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

### Iran Real Politics and Political Motivation of Shiite

#### İran Reel Politigi ve Şiiliğin Motivasyonu

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#### Öz

İran devlet geleneğinde önemli bir yer tutan Şiilik inanç sisteminin ülkenin iç ve dış politikasına etkide bulunduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Protesto ve ağıt kültürüne dayanan bu inanç sisteminin etkileri İran devlet geleneğinde tarihsel bir arkaplana dayanmaktadır. Fatımilerden, Safevilere ve günümüze kadar etkilerini gözlemleyebileceğimiz bu inanç sistemi Müslüman dünyasında farklı bir yol izlemiştir. Şii devlet anlayışı Hz. Muhammed ve Hz. Ali'nin kurdukları devlet hariç diğer devletleri hak devleti olarak görmemektedir. Sünnilikteki halifelik anlayışından farklı olarak Şiilikte imamet anlayışı geliştirilmiş, imam hem dini hem de siyasi lider olarak kabul edilmiştir. Şiilik tarih boyunca kendilerini Sünnilerden farklı gören ve zaman zaman da Sünnilerle savaştan siyasi, dini ve kültürel inanç manzumesidir. Günümüzde Şiiliği en radikal biçimde uygulayan devlet olan İran İslam Cumhuriyeti'ni geçmişten gelen marjinal devlet siyasetini devam ettirmektedir. İslam'ın farklı bir yorumu olan bu inanç sistemi günümüzde rejimini Şiilerin yaşadığı coğrafyalara ihraç etme çabasıdadır. Müslüman dünyasında azınlıkta kalan Şiilik genelde Şii Hilali denilen coğrafyada etkinlik kurmaya çalışmaktadır. Bu projenin getirisi olduğu kadar maliyeti de fazladır. Çünkü dışarıya aktarılan fonlar ülke içinde yoksullaşan halk tarafından tepkiyle karşılanmaktadır. Ülkeye uygulanan ambargolarla ekonomisi kötüye giden ülke Ortadoğu'da var olabilmek için gayrisafi hasılasının büyük çoğunluğunu savaş ekonomisine harcamaktadır. İran'ın bu çalışmalarıyla Batılı ülkeler karşısında caydırıcı bir unsur olabilmesi nükleer silah üretme çabasında olduğu düşünülmektedir. Özellikle ABD, Batı ve İsrail ile çatışan İran devleti bu projeyi güvenliklerinin garantisi olarak görmektedir.

Çalışmamızın amacı İran Şiiliğinin politik motivasyonunu, inanç sistemini ve reel politigini açıklayabilmektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İran, Humeyni, Devrim.

#### Abstract

We can say that the Shia belief system, which has an important place in the Iranian state tradition, has an impact on the country's domestic and foreign policy. The effects of this belief system based on protest and lament culture are based on the historical background in the Iranian state tradition. This belief system, which we can observe from the Fatimids to the Safavids and the present day, has followed a different path in the Muslim world. The Shia state understanding does not see other states as the divine state except for the state established by Mohammed and Ali. Unlike the caliphate understanding in Sunni, the understanding of imam in Shiite has been developed. Imam has been recognized as both a religious and political leader. Shiism is a set of political, religious and cultural beliefs that have seen themselves different from Sunnis and have fought Sunnis from time to time. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the most radically practicing state of Shia today, continues its marginal state policy from the past. This belief system, which is the different interpretation of Islam, is in an effort to export its regime to the geographical regions where Shiites live. In the Muslim world, Shiism remains a minority and tries to establish activities in a geography called Shiism Crescent. This project has a high cost as well as a return. Because the exported funds are met by the people impoverished within the country. The country, whose economy deteriorates with the embargoes applied to the country, spends the vast majority of its gross

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product to the war economy in order to exist in the Middle East. It is thought that Iran set efforts to produce nuclear weapons can be a deterrent to Western countries with these efforts. In particular, the Iranian state, which conflicts with the USA, the West and Israel, sees this project as a guarantee of their security.

The aim of our study is to explain the political motivation, belief system and real politics of Iranian Shiite.

**Keywords:** Iran, Khomeini, Revolution.

## **Introduction**

Iran's Pahlavi period was a period when the USA and the West were valuable allies. We can say that the USA had done everything it wanted for Iran except for the Musaddik period covering 1951 to 1953. Under the rule of the Pahlavis, the left was rapidly on the rise and efforts were made to take measures. The first example of this is the AK Revolution. In this revolution, the peasant land was tried to be owned and some of the powers of the ulema were taken away. The Shah's attempt prepared his own end and heralded the February 1979 Shiite Islamic Revolution. Ali Shariati, especially from the Islamic left, was the ideologist of the revolution and became one of the action men of the anti-Shah movement. The ideas of Ali Shariati will also affect Khomeini later. The Khomeini conflict of oppressors and oppressed was actually adapted from Ali Shariati. When the Iranian Revolution of 1979 took place, the interesting point is that leftists and secularists also joined this revolution on the frontline. However, all these post-revolution elements will be liquidated by Islamists. The problematic of what kind of post-revolutionary government would be established remained on the agenda. Khomeini initially brought liberals to power, but as a result of disagreements, liberals were liquidated just like leftists. The Islamists, who took power, established the militia forces and ensured the revolution, settled in Iran. After the Islamists came to power, there was a crisis of hostages with the United States, and Khomeini based its populist discourses on anti-US and anti-Westernism. Iran was no longer a friendly country for the USA and the West. Shortly after the revolution, the Iran-Iraq War took place and the regime was left alone in the international arena. Because it supplied weapons to the USA and Western Iraq, including the Soviet Union. At this point, the Iranian regime, which has been in new searches, has tried to get support from China. After the war, Iran has not forgotten what has been done to its own country and has made its discourses even harder. Iran, which tried to soften its policy after the death of Khomeini, did not correspond to the USA and the West. Because at that time the Gulf War broke out and the USA turned its attention to another direction. Although the liberal Khatami, which came after the Rafsanjani to power, increased the hopes for the improvement of the relations, the expectations were in vain as a result of the insistence of the clergy in Iran, especially in conservative foreign policy. Ahmadinejad who came to power after Khatami, was a conservative statesman. It was also claimed that he was from the Hücçetiye community. His discourses were based on anti-US and Israeli opposition. He advocated the continuation of nuclear activities. The era of Ahmadinejad was also a time when the internal turmoil and opposition raised the voice. The Greens

Movement took 5 million people to the streets in Tehran. The Greens movement opposed Iran's export of country resources due to its regime export policy. They wanted the economy of the country to improve and more freedom. But this street movement was sternly suppressed, and the leaders of the movement were placed under house arrest. (<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr>) The Shiite ideology was used effectively during this period. Ulema increased its privileges. Although Rouhani, who came to power after Ahmadinejad, defended softness in the international environment, Trump, who came to power after Obama, tried to isolate Iran. He suspended the agreements made during the Obama era.

The Shiite paradigm is important in Iran's domestic and foreign policy. We can say that the central government, which tries to keep the culture of protest and lament alive in order to mobilize the public in domestic politics, is trying to provide funding to the countries of its own sect in foreign policy through different channels and it is trying to create confusion in these countries. These works of Iran have gathered reactions not only in the USA, but also in other Sunni Muslim countries. According to Muslim countries, Iran was not a reliable country inasmuch as according to Iran, other Sunni Muslim countries, especially Saudi Arabia, were dangerous. As a result of their influence efforts in the Middle East, Iran and Saudi Arabia are in constant conflict. Among Muslim countries, Turkey is the country where Iran's relations are the best. The peace process Turkey and Iran carry out in Syria is promising in terms of the relations of two countries.

### **1. Political Motivation of Iranian Shiite**

“The text of Ruşen (Barkın), who said "We should know our neighbors not by their masks but by their insides", was published in the newspaper Vatan in 1924; Later, this article of Ruşen Barkın was republished in Turan Periodical by Prof. Dr. Fethi Gedikli, who simplified the work of "the inner face of Iran", published as a booklet in Ankara in 1926. In this study, striking facts about Iran are determined. Ruşen Barkın says the following in his 1924 article: “Iran is a country that we have to get to know the most and the best. As the heaviest blows hitting us have come from there, our way of strength and development that will lead us to bliss also passes there. However, if there is a country that we know the least and wrongly, it is also Iran. We must admit that we know France more and better than Iran. Iran has remained an unknown world for us so far. Although Iran has been a disaster quarry for centuries, it still looks like an unknown world with us.” (Barkın, 2014: p. 71)

In 1959, the Al-Azhar Sheikh's acceptance of the Ja'fari jurisprudence the fifth sect would accelerate Iran's attempts to turn the Shia policy into power, and confrontational rhetoric that would make reconciliation difficult would be adopted. (Nar, 2015: p. 49) In February 1979, the movement under the leadership of Khomeini in exile in the Shiite Islamic revolution was successful, and the revolution was completed with Khomeini's return to Iran. The developments after the Islamic revolution in Iran seemed to herald the radical change. Iran would initiate the radical change process in domestic and foreign policies. In their observations, political historians find that the policies pursued by the Shah regime mimic Western modernization; they even find that the worldview is the same as

Kemalism. With the Shia Islamic ideology in Iran and the secular policies of the Shah regime, the Twelver Shia theology will reflect on Iran's domestic and foreign policy as a dominant understanding.

After the Shia Islamic revolution in February 1979, the expectation of the lost imam syndrome would turn into motivation, and Khomeini's "Velayet-e Faqih" theory would be a function that reinforces the political power of the Iranian ulema. When Khomeini's Velayet-i Fakih theory is included in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this will attract the reaction of the Shia ulema and other Shia groups and will be one of the problems that increase the conflicts. With the prominence of the Velayet-i Fakih theory, which divided the Iranian Shia into two, the opposition, led by Ayatollah Shariatmadari (1904-1986) and Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani (1912-1979), argued that the problems of the ummah are not the responsibility of a single faculty, but also the responsibility of the whole Fuqaha, and they opposed Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Mahmud Telekani argued that the Prophet Muhammad and his caliphs did not have any relation with the state administration and that they prepared the ground for the state. (Üstün, 1999: p. 49) When we list the criticism of the opposition, the first one is as follows: Divine religions are far from the government. Religion only deals with individual and servitude duties. The people are free in political, economic, social and economic matters. The Prophet and Ali acted on the basis of consultancy in political and social affairs and were based on the public's view. (Üstün, 1999a) The second one is as follows: The concept of Velayet-i Fakih should be mentioned in the Qur'an. The periods when religion and politics are intertwined are the periods of the prophets and imams. The instance, where politics is separated from religion, is a period of absence (gaybet dönemi). Velayet-i fakih gives rise to unconditional domination. It has authority over the Constitution. This theory requires that the people, the state, and institutions be in full obedience to it. In addition, it has a priority over all provisions and sharia. (Üstün 1999a) Ignoring the criticism of important religious scholars of the Shia believers, Khomeini and his team tried to keep their sectarian belonging feeling alive by translating the Shia politics into domestic and foreign policies. Khomeini would successfully use the rhetoric of legitimacy with this theological approach. Shia Muslims are divided among themselves as political and sectarian minorities. (Bingöl, 1999: p. 9) The Islamic Republic of Iran has turned Islam, the religion of peace, into a bully position, causing Islam to invalidate itself and to destroy its teaching principles until its most basic basis. From the Umayyads (661-750) to the Abbasids (750-1258), we can not talk about a single form of Islamic government that does not shake and contradict Islam in the Islamic context. (Dabashi, 2008: p. 232) The claim that the Prophet's advice and instructions that he gave before his death had not been followed would have led to the birth of Shiite. The development of conditional sense of hatred in the Muslim people who are interested in populist rhetoric will be the reason for separations and conflicts from the Islamic world. The income gap, which can be observed especially in Tehran and Tabriz, stands out as a prominent gap against the asceticism and modesty suggested by Shiite, that we can describe as a belief system of dead and shrines. (Nar, 2015a) In addition, we can say that the collection

of zakat and charity and the payment of the salaries of the mollas, large spending on gaudy and exaggerated mausoleums turned into a kind of religious exploitation that lowered the living standards of the poor people.

The motivation to expand its influence, which is the most important reason for the instability of Iranian Shiite Islamic ideology, causes tensions in international relations. Iran, which tries to mobilize Shiite groups living in other Islamic countries, is trying to realize the dreams of forming a Shiite crescent today. The reflection of this project in Iran on international relations leads to the exclusion of Iran in the world arena.

If we list the causes of political and historical conflicts in the Middle East-based region, the first is to control the oil resources, the second is radical Islam (Wahhabi Salafism) fanaticism, radical Shia Islamic fanaticism, and the third is the state of Israel established in the middle of the Muslim Arab world. The desire to expand the political influence of the beliefs of both Shiite and Saudi-based Wahhabi Salafism are issues that undermine their reconciliation. The character that determines the characteristics of both beliefs is to denounce each other. The title given to the Sunnis by the Shiites is Yazidists. At the same time, it is the ritual of insults and humiliation to the friends of the Prophet (the Companions) whom the Sunnis respected with the formula Tavella-Taberra (Eröz, 1977: p. 36). The accusation of Wahhabi-Salafism with Sunni Muslims in infidelity is the reflection of the same characteristic style.

When we look at the historical background of Iranian Shia, it is based on the process that started after the death of Muhammad. According to them, the administration is the natural right of those who come from the Ahl al-Bayt line. In this context, they created symbols and rituals in line with the concepts and comments they developed. It is the Safavid state that has turned Shiism for the first time into an official state ideology in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. This state will constitute an important and valid motivation factor in unity and vitality as a political project.

The Ottoman Empire, which is the bastion of Sunni Islam, and the Safavid State had a conflict and fought after a while because of the struggle for religious influence. The propaganda and rebellions made by the Shia missionaries in the Ottoman lands will seriously shake the Ottoman State. Many Turkmen tribes will cross the ranks of Shah Ismail and become the striking force of the Safavid State. (Kütükoğlu, 1962: p. 2) The Iranian Safavid state wanted to spread the Shiite sect and to create an obstacle to the Ottomans by establishing a sectarian line in political competition by making people accept Shiite. A special tribal unit called Şahseven, which will organize the confusion that Alevi chiefs who helped Shah Ismail set up the Safavid dynasty in Iran, would be established in Iran. (Tapper, 2004: p. 72) The Turkmens who took refuge in Iran from Teke-eli were so many that even Shah Ismail was frightened from this, he had to separate them partly. (Refik, 1932: p. 3) However, Shah Ismail was not willing to accept the Sunnis' survival among the Persian communities. He saw building a

homogeneous Shia Iran as a political goal. Shah Ismail brought Shiite clergymen from Bahrain, Iraq and Lebanon to spread the Shiite sect and apply it to the public, in order to homogenize the dense settlements throughout Iran from the Sunnis. (Bingöl, 1999a) During this period, while the Shia clergy strengthened their social base, they began to emerge as a strong figure on the political platform and to make their events felt. In this process, they succeeded in building a system in their favor for the establishment of religious institutions of the Shia clergy, and the establishment of their social and political order as religious authority.

The developments in the Iranian Shia from Iranian Safavids have pushed the administrators and madrasah scholars in the Ottoman world into fanaticism, especially because of the Shia propaganda of the Safavid administration, the Ottoman clergy took a sectarian stance. Ulama who preached in Istanbul mosques, remained distant to the people of science who are free-thinking, open to the outside world and ready to learn. (Yalçın, 1976: p. 119) After the Ottoman-Safavid conflict, after the signs informing that the dangerous seeds began to settle and multiply in the Ottoman culture and thought, the great Ottoman intellectual named Taşköprülüzade complained that the old interest in the theological field among the ulamas in the madrasahs disappeared in general, and that the scientific level started to drop in the madrasahs. (Yalçın, 1976a) In addition, both Europeans and Russians wanted Iran to gain strength and spread of Shiite in that period. Europeans considered the Shiite-Sunni conflict as an important phenomenon that could limit the Ottoman Empire. According to them, Iran's Shiitization would break the link between the Ottoman and Central Asia.

## **2. Real Politics of Iranian Shiite**

With the Shia Islamic revolution, Iran took its place in the political arena and used its domestic and foreign policy in the direction of the Shia ideology. Iran has taken its place as an effective actor in the geopolitics of the Middle East region. Iran's attempts to expand its sphere of influence in Iraq, Syria and the Persian Gulf in the conflict in the Middle East would be seen as a political vision of Iran's Shia geopolitics. In 2004, King Abdullah expressed the term "Shia Crescent". (Keskin, 2008: p. 30) The concept of "Shia Crescent" draws attention to the movement of the Shia in the geopolitical area starting from Iran, from Afghanistan to Pakistan, covering Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, and that Iran has dreams of establishing the Persian Shia Empire. (Keskin 2008a) The support of the Shiite Houthi in Yemen by Iran and Saudi Arabia's intervention in the Yemeni civil war with the Ten Gulf Countries on 26 March 2015 means that the Iranian Shiite and Arab Wahhabi Salafism by proxy acted in the field. Iran's follow-up of Shia-weighted sectarian policies, especially in Iraq and Syria, Iran's cooperation with organizations against Turkey such as PKK, the PYD and Goran movement in northern Iraq and Syria, being the country that gives the strongest support to the Al-Assad regime are important in the development of political relations between the two countries. (Alaca, 2015: p. 69)

Hafiz Assad conveyed a message to Khomeini and congratulated the Iranian people's successful coup against the Shah regime. Syria is the first country to recognize the Iranian Shia Islamic revolution. They sent his brother Rifat Assad to Tehran to discuss cooperation with Iraq (Saddam). (Goodarzi, 2006: p. 18) Iran's geopolitics, which included the acceptance of keeping Iran's nuclear program under international control, and the liberation of embargoes (Obama Period), attempted to expand the political maneuver area. In this context, Iran tried to maximize its national interests, one of the main elements of foreign policy. (Bilgin, 2015: p. 15) However, trying to understand the development processes of interstate relations with a single method and theory can produce misleading results. The conceptual approach, called real politics, justifies the legitimate demands of the peoples that take precedence over the priority of the interests in the relations of the states with a perspective putting forward in the framework of global conscience, equality and justice. The rhetoric of Iranian Shia's distinction between the outer enemy and the inner enemy is effective on the Shia public opinion. It seems always possible that the tension and military power created by these populist discourses bring fascism. It is understood that the Iranian clergy elites were fussy whenever the US presidents described Iran as the "Evil Axis". Iranian elites understood that they should have a nuclear weapon as a prerequisite for being able to stand against the US and Israel; because North Korea was an example in this context.

It was also a fact that the United States reflected the New-Conservatism to Iran and strengthened the seat of the clergy here. In this context, it is useful to mention the nuclear tension that reached a verbal peak between Iran and the USA in 2006. (Dabashi, 2008: p. 251) It is the warrior tribalism that connects the most radical clergy-class members in Iran with the most stubborn New-Conservatives in the US, and is almost identical in terms of disturbing essentialism. The parlous increase in nuclear weapons is due to two types of fanaticism; while one of them is the homeland of the USA, the other one is of Iranian Clergy and is called as "fundamentalism" (uslgarai). (Dabashi, 2008a) The Shia Crescent concept divided Iran into five regions geopolitically after the 1979 Shiite Islamic Revolution:

*1-Middle East*

*2-Arabian peninsula*

*3-Anatolia and the Balkans*

*4-Central Asia and the Caucasus*

*5-Indian subcontinent and Indian Ocean countries, (Samkani, 1988: p. 3-54)*

Iran is one of the most important power centers of the region with its important position in the Middle East, its demographic structure and military power. Although the Eastern Block adopted the anti-US strategy in 1979 and wanted to push Iran out of the system, it continued to be an important actor in the international platform, especially in terms of regional balances. According to the Russians,

Iran is a pure continental state with all the strategic, economic and ideological possibilities as it is the core of the Eurasian Block. (Dugin, 2003: p. 260)

By creating Iranian Shiite rituals on a sectarian basis, they created a sociological and psychological environment by separating them from Sunni with different practices. It is the factor that further increases the importance of Iranian geopolitics, where the Shiites have a strong “rebellion culture”. Iran is aware of the fact that it has control of its geographic location and energy routes, which have a strategic position among fixed and variable strategic targets. Also, it cannot be passed to Asia without stopping by Iran. It is at the crossing point to Central Asia, the Caucasus, India and China. Due to its two thousand years of historical experience, it is observed that they have applied the rules of state diplomacy in their relations with many countries. It is seen that Iranian foreign policy is capable of using the Shiite rhetoric in the regions where Shiites are the majority. Iran leaves the Shiite rhetoric and conveys messages on more universal Islamic values while addressing the Islamic World. In their relations with the third world countries, the style, which is the spokesperson of the oppressed and exploited peoples, is exhibited. In general, Iran follows a pragmatist policy. Iran was the Muslim country of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, but it also stood by Armenia despite being a Shiite. The most important part of the Turks living in Iran are Azeri. Especially, a significant part of the Turks living in the South Azerbaijan region still live the dream of the South Azerbaijan State they established in 1925. Because Iran will not be appropriate in terms of domestic politics due to its lineage and sectarian affiliation with Azerbaijanis, it will not strengthen Azerbaijan by supporting Azerbaijan despite being Shiite like them in the region; because if Azerbaijan can act this way, it will help Azerbaijan to further increase their sympathy to Turkey and Azerbaijan living in their territory. Likewise, Armenians are given ample opportunities within Iran, and opportunities for activities such as memorial services they do against Turkey are provided on the anniversary of the events of 1915. This obviously shows a neighborly effort to weaken Turkey and in the political arena.

Iran, which needs the support of Russia, did not want to spoil its relations with this country. No attitude has been put forward that would disturb Russia, neither in the Caucasus nor in Central Asia. The real political practice of Iran did not show any reaction against the inconceivable use of force and violence of the Russians in the Chechen-Russian War, and even made a statement that this problem was the internal affairs of Russia. Iran has become Russia's largest partner and a very valuable market in the Middle East. Although the cooperation between these two countries in the field of nuclear energy has attracted great attention in recent years, the more important issue is that Russia intends to sell large amounts of conventional weapons to Iran, including all-round aircraft and submarines. (Takeyh, 2009: p. 96)

While the secular nationalism of the Baath regime in Syria continues, on the other hand, Iranian Shiites accuse Syrian Nusayri with infidelity. There are great sectarian differences of opinion

among them. Despite this, Iran has not shown any reaction to the killing and to the forced displacement of thousands of Sunni Muslims in Syria. Political names such as Korkut Özal, who interpreted Khomeini's Iranian Islamic Revolution, accepted Ayatollah Khomeini's residence in Paris as a conspiracy of the West for the Sunni world. (Özcan, 2008: p. 132-133)

The fact that we are in a period where polarization gradually becomes tense in the Shia and Sunni world is clearly seen. Although Ayatollah Khomeini says that the sectarian issue is intended to be used as a demolition tool and a trap against the Muslim world, Iran did not stay away from this trap. (Özcan, 2008a) It is possible to see Iran's real policy practices and pragmatist diplomacy in many areas. In the 1980s, while Israeli officials tried to persuade the US to sell arms to Iran, they emphasized that Tehran's aggressive language should not be a problem because Tehran's policy behind the scenes is different. (Çağlayan, 2012: p. 234) In order to balance the power of the USA, Iran's real politics has improved its relations by approaching Russia and China. It is known that Israel provided arms and spare parts to Iran in the Iran-Iraq war. The Iranian Revolution reorganized the relationship between religion and politics within the pragmatist framework. The revolution has always manifested itself, if not always, as an alternative, at least as another form of truth, and has expanded the area of the state by overriding the Shia clergy. The revolution also identified two forms of ideas, which have always been in conflict throughout history, namely Shiism and nationalism. In short, the revolution has strengthened the nation-state. (Roy-Khosrokhavar, 2013: p. 14) The reason why Iran's relations with the USSR and the Russian Federation were bumpy and Khomeini did not prefer to approach "Neither East nor West" (Reza-Kellner, 2017: p. 203-204) was that the USSR and China were atheists in the east. (According to Khomeini) However, this approach was short-lived and Iran got closer to China in its war with Iraq and even started to supply its military needs and spare parts from China. Iran has put its foreign policy on the real political basis of its relations with the Iran-Iraq war and rearranged it. Iran has begun to see Beijing as a valued partner trying to highlight multi-polarity within the international system. (Reza-Kellner, 2017a) China became the first commercial partner of Iran after its commercial expansion, and Tehran has reached an important position that largely meets China's oil needs. In the fall of 2013, Iran was among the countries to be included in the "Silk Road" giant project launched by the Chinese administration. China supported Iran's right to develop "Peaceful Nuclear Activities" and offered "Diplomatic Umbrella" to ease sanctions. Moscow and Beijing joined the "P5 + 1" group and played an important role in the negotiations on the 14 July 2015 agreement. (Reza-Kellner, 2017a) Russian and Chinese diplomats have been instrumental in moderating their ideological tendencies by analyzing Iran's pragmatism well. Iran sees itself as the ruler of the region where it is located with the power of its history and civilizations. The best way to understand Iran's policy is to study three regions well: the Persian Gulf, the Arab East, and Eurasia. (Takayh, 2009: p. 73) The Persian Gulf is the most important strategic priority of Iran. It forms the lifeblood of the Iranian economy. Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon are based on the ideological and

strategic priorities of Iran as the Arab East. It seems unlikely that a non-Arab Shiite Iran will be an important actor in the Arab east. (Takayh, 2009a) Iran, which determines its policies in line with its interests in different regions, acts in cooperation with Russia and China in Eurasia and does not produce adverse policies for the interests of these countries.

### 3. Shia in Iran

The debate about who will be the Caliph after the death of the Prophet (632 AD) was the first source of the division of Islam. The fact that the Prophet did not point to the caliph to replace him before his death caused the caliphate to be seen as a political institution rather than a religion in the Sunni tradition. The caliphate authority has been left to the will of the Ummah (Muslim People) or there is an Icmā that it can be elected by the notables by voting (Bayah). Ideologists of the Shia faith interpret the concept of Imamate (Ruler) in a way that represents both religious and political will. In other words, the administrator has to follow the line from Hz Ali. Hz Ali was chosen as the fourth caliph (656), but after he was killed at 661, those who loved Hz Ali started the lineage of imams (Ahl Al Bayt) with their two sons Hasan and Hüseyin over the Ali symbol. The killing of the third Imam Hussein in Karbala has had traumatic consequences on the peoples of Hz Ali and Ahl Al-Bayt, who have blessed the ideology of martyrdom, and its existence has always been felt in the Shiite faith as a developed concept. *The slogan of "Every day Ashura, everywhere Karbala "* has led Khomeini to reinterpret the life and martyrdom of Hz Hussein and conceptualizing historical events, he made an important contribution to the Shiite belief system with the words "Hz Hussein will not die anymore" (Arjomand, 1988: p. 181) The belief in Shiism is at a time when it has not yet established its theories and theology on an institutional basis. In the belief world of Shiite, the Twelve Imams, following Hz Ali, are both rulers and religious leaders. The Twelfth Imam Mahdi disappears in Samarra in 874. Mahdi is not dead in the belief of Shiism, he will come to Earth again, he will eliminate evil and persecution, and establish justice. Mahdi, which is a very strong belief in Shiite, is an important concept in creating a religious infrastructure. The belief was united in preserving unity and vitality among the Shiites. It resembles the symbolism of Christ in Christianity. The worship of the Mahdi (Mehdeviyat) is in an improved dimension. It is necessary to consider the Mahdi and Karbala creeds as efforts to create common belief awareness of Iranian Shiite. The tombs of the founders of the Shiite faith, which are considered sacred, are in Iraq. Najaf, Karbala, Kazemeyn, Samarra are in the Iraqi territory. The most important center of Shiite teaching is Najaf. Evangelists who advocate for the Messiah in the USA and Israel to come to the world as soon as possible, and the Hucettiye community, which advocates for the coming of the Mahdi to the world as soon as possible, intersected on the same plane. The main philosophy in both groups is to create the belief that the more chaos in the world, the closer the coming of the Messiah or the Mahdi. (Adibelli, 2017: p. 99) In the jurisprudence of the Shia belief, Imam (Imamiyet) is seen as a superhuman figure who can directly perceive and interpret the divine message in terms of representing both religious and political will. (Berber, 2012: p. 325;

Husain, 1990: p 289) From the view that this spiritual mission that only Hz Ali and his descendants can end with Muhammad al-Mahdi, the truth and necessity of a class that will guide the religious issues of Shia society and clarify the solution of the problems has been revealed. However, making the monopoly of information unique to imams enabled the events that developed in the post-Islamic Revolution to become a political model. According to the Iranian ulama, no administration is legitimate except for the power that Mehdi will establish in the process that started with the coming of the Mahdi at a time when the evil and ruthlessness increased. The Shiite state theory consists of ignoring any state established after the death of the Prophet Mohammed except the state of the first imam Ali bin Abu Talib. (Algar, 1988: p. 19-20) The factor that underlies the tradition of rebellion and opposition in the Shiite political ideology is that the Mahdi will come in the most intense period of evil, and according to this understanding, the Shia take power and take a fair administration. Shiite has come to the fore as a protest faith since the early days of Islam. Throughout the turbulent history, it has lost nothing from its political potential, both politically and instructively. (Dabashi, 2008a) The belief in Shia has evolved as a religious institutionalization throughout the history of Islam and has constantly developed new concepts. In particular, Ulema got stronger in this process. "Mujtahids" belong to Ulama group who have the power to interpret the Quran and Sunnah. The obligation to connect to an altar with an understanding called "Marji Taqlid" for the Shia Muslim people to understand and live their religion well was one of the principles of the Shia political theory. Ulema have gained important privileges on social, economic and political issues with this institutionalization. "Merce-i Taklid" granted to mujtahids are the payments that are obliged to pay to mujtahids. At the same time, the person cannot distribute his zakat upon his own request, the zekat will be distributed by mujtahids on behalf of that person. Due to their organization through foundations, ulamas have created an economically strong, autonomous structure independent of the state. They created important sources of income by transferring the fees they received from the Spritual Courts to the foundations. Social and cultural changes initiated by Khomeini have found application without questioning. Theda Skocpol, who gave the codes of Khomeini's Shia Iranian Islamic revolution, says: "*Khomeini began to say that the nature of Monarchy is against Islam. Another point that he emphasized and rejected was the close relations of the Shah with the USA and Israel. He called on other scholars and the masses to resist the Shah's policies. In this process, he used highly effective symbols to achieve his goals. He identified Shah with the devil and Yazid. He paid more attention to religiously important memorial days. Mass prayers, funerals for protesters who were killed, memorial ceremonies of the martyrdom of Hz Huseyin created favorable conditions for the mobilization and direction of the people.*" (Skocpol, 1992, p. 71-74) The Shia Islamic Republic was built on the Imamet model. The state, like the other state, was composed of two essential components: Structure and Function. Structures were either adapted or modified to perform Islamic functions. The function of Islamic structures was to operate in accordance with the directives of the Quran. For this reason, there should not be any components that were contrary to Islam in their creation. Many structures such as the Constitution, the parliament and political parties (Islamic Republic Party) were

created. (Hüseyn, 2009: p. 215) The revolution process was over with the consolidation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the return of Khomeini to Iran by plane from Paris. What kind of government would be formed in Iran remained uncertain for the whole world. Khomeini's first move to eliminate this uncertainty was to assign Mehdi Bazargan, known for his liberal Islamic thought, to form the government. The revolution team led by Khomeini created the Revolutionary Council and Central Committee to prevent internal confusion and counter-revolution. Militia forces such as Pasdaran and Basij (guards responsible for protecting the revolution) from local committees were activated and organized around mosques and tombs. This move is considered a strategic initiative to prevent counter-revolutionary forces and opponents. The trials of revolutionary courts and co-ordination with other institutions have been succeeded. The discussions within Iran ended with a referendum held on April 1, 1979. With 99% of the vote, the name of the state became the Islamic Republic of Iran and "Assembly of Experts" (Majlis-i Hubregan) was elected to prepare the draft Constitution in August. (Abhahamian, 2017: p. 213-214)The reason for the conflict between Bazargan and Khomeini was Bazargan's desire to synthesize Islamic values and liberal understanding. Khomeini rejected Mehdi Bazargan's thoughts. Khomeini said: "*The country needs Islamic Republic; neither a democratic republic nor a democratic Islamic Republic. Those who come up with such a demand do not know anything about Islam. There is no need to put a name like democratic in front of Islam. Because Islam is everything, it means everything. Adding another word to the already perfect word "Islam" is sad.*"(Fallaci, "Interview with Khomeini", New York Times, 21.10.1979) After all, Khomeini was a mixed order between Velayet-e Faqih and Bazargan's French republic system, between divine rights and human rights, between theocracy and democracy, between the voice of the people and the voice of the right, and between spiritual authority and popular sovereignty.

#### **4. Confusion in the Real Policy of Iran**

In 1957, action was taken within the scope of the atomic program for peace in order to establish the industrial society of the Shah period and have a say in the region with the powerful army for the first time. (Sezgin-Tansi, 2015: p. 48) In the early stages of the Iran Islamic Revolution, the nuclear weapons program fell from the agenda due to belief-centered thoughts, but with the change of this idea in 1989, the nuclear program came back to life. (Sezgin-Tansi, 2015a) Veleye Faqih Ali Hamenei said "*The production of nuclear weapons, which leads to mass deaths of innocent civilians in Islamic religion, is haram. Iran cannot do such an initiative and activity*". Nuclear weapons, the most destructive and illegal force in human history, was first used by America over Japan. Nuclear power used by powerful states as a trump card and threat is a powerful tool used to establish sovereignty as well as being an intimidation against third world countries against the global system revolts. Israel, which is located in the middle of the Arabian Sea, is known to have an important nuclear weapon depot. It cannot be said that a world armed with nuclear power is absolutely safe. There is a situation where the nuclear war, which will start with the push of a crazy country leader at the push of a button, can completely destroy our world. There is a difference between the "ideal political" voiced by Hameney

and the "real political" advocated by Ahmadinejad. It is important that Christian theologians, Jewish religious leaders and Muslim religious scholars raise their voices and exert pressure on the country leaders to stop the nuclear arms race that will drag our world into disaster. In addition, the international arms race is one of the reasons that cause the peoples of the country to become poor. Today, the vast majority of countries' gross revenues are spent on armament. The money earned by the arms producing countries in large sums was stolen from the welfare of the people. The nuclear arms race almost completely overturned conventional weapons, the regular army and front-based combat capabilities. The demands of the USA and the Western world from third world countries are their integration into the global economy. The contradictions of the Iranian theocracy that develop outside the global system provide the appropriate material for acquiring nuclear weapons. It is an inevitable process for Iran, whose economy is only dependent on oil, to be included in the liberal economy. The USA and the West support Israel's efforts to corner Iran by using its power on the international platform and to create a large-scale coalition. Doctrines of the Israeli security system bear the traces of fantasy-sized and orientalist experts. Israel has close relations with top level people in the Israeli Security system, such as Bernard Lewis and Elie Kedourie. (Shahak, 2003: p. 79) The doctrine of Kedourie has been carried out by Israel since the 1950s. According to this doctrine, there is no tolerance for the presence of any power other than Israel in the Middle East. The power of any Arab state to become a leader in the Middle East should have been destroyed. Kedourie's ideas were based on permanent Israeli rule over Palestinians. Moreover, Kedourie's "Christ" understanding on Israeli territory is used in the Israeli Security system. (Shahak, 2003a) The anticipation of the Orthodox Shia belief in Mahdi is parallel with Israel's motivation for Christ-supported motivation. Both countries base their foreign policy parameters on this understanding. From time to time, we saw stiff exits in Ahmadinejad's foreign policy. The meaning of this should be sought in the creation of the environment of chaos for the coming of the Mahdi. Ahmadinejad said: "The main task of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to speed up the return of the Mahdi and prepare a suitable ground. We should even define our economic, cultural and political policies upon the return of the Mahdi" (Nacji, 2008: p. 93)

### **Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations**

Iran is a country with different genetic codes from other countries in terms of politics, sociology and culture. This country, which has thousands of years of state tradition, follows different strategies in foreign and domestic politics. Iran, a valuable ally of the West and the USA during the Shah, can intimidate Israel, the West and the USA today. Shia teachings also play a role in the background of the politics they pursue. Iran, following a different policy in the world geopolitics together with the protest belief Shiite, is able to have a voice in the international system as a regional power today. Iran, which is also rapidly executing its nuclear program, has great reactions especially from the historical bloc of the West, USA and Israel. However, the Iranian state, which ignores these reactions, thinks that it is necessary to have a nuclear weapon to have a say in the region. It is also

certain that Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon will pave the way for possession of this weapon in other countries of the region, and that the race for arms will increase rapidly.

We cannot say that the USA's constant evaluation of Iran as the "Evil Axis" has had a big effect on Iranian elites. Iran has been constantly threatening the USA and Israel openly, and they boldly say that these two countries will go down in history in the future. The word of Khomeini, "Israel will definitely be erased from the earth" (Hunter, 2010: p. 63), was also said in this way. The fact that the Iranian state rejects the Jewish genocide and often voices this issue is controversial is a reaction of some circles.

The Iranian state, which has ideologically strong foundations due to its unique understanding of the state, people and imam, can confidently challenge superpowers. International powers, who are aware that Iran is not a country that can be easily occupied, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, have been looking for a way of reconciliation with Iran so far.

To mention the internal issues of Iran, there are many opponents within the country who think that the Islamic Revolution has deviated from its purpose. Opponents who question and absorb the system within the country oppose irrational populist rhetoric. The people, who reacted to the deterioration of the country's economy with the embargoes, are now tired of the lament culture and think that the economy should be recovered as soon as possible. In particular, the number of people who want the privileges of the ulema to be abolished is not small. Those who react to the costly spending of the country to export the regime think that these expenditures should be used to increase public welfare.

As a result, Iran has to deal with internal and external problems from the historical background. We can say that the way for the country to solve its internal problems is through foreign policy. The Iranian state, which is isolated in the international arena, has to develop policies that will minimize its problems with its pro-active and neighbors. Otherwise, it may not be expected that an isolated state promises hope for the future.

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