

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SHI'A DOCTRINE AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT: The Iranian revolution of 1979 was a major revolution of the 20th century. It was on par with the Russian revolution of 1917 and Mao Ze Dong's revolution in China in 1949. This revolution was driven by religious figures led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini against the ruling regime, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, a regime that had the strongest military in the Middle East and was supported by the United States. Khomeini's call for a revolution and the overthrow of the Shah of Iran's rule was met with great enthusiasm throughout Iran. With enormous popular power the revolution succeeded and the Shah of Iran was forced to leave his royal throne. Iran's form of government was changed from a monarchy to a republic under the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This study is intended to analyze whether there is a correlation between the Shia doctrine of the Imamate and the concept of wilayat al-faqih with the success of the great revolution. The results of the study show that the Shia doctrine of the Imamate and wilayat al-faqih contributed greatly to the success of the revolution.

KEYWORDS: doctrine, imamate, revolution, Shia, wilayat al-faqih

I. INTRODUCTION

The escalating feud between Iran and Israel at the end of 2024 and Iran's determination to be ready to wage open war against Israel, supported by the United States and NATO countries, reminds us of the Iranian revolution that took place in 1979.

It was the great revolution of the 20th century. Prof. Dr. H. Muhammad Amien Rais, M.A., Ph.D. Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (MPR-RI) for the period 1999-2004, aligned this revolution with the Russian revolution of 1917 and Mao Ze Dong's revolution in China in 1949. The parallels lie in the weight of the revolution, which had a very broad impact that spread internationally, crossing the territorial boundaries of the revolution. (Sihbudi, 1989:11).

This great revolution driven by the mullahs under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989) succeeded in overthrowing the power of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi who was known to be very strong and tough. The peak of the revolution occurred on February 11, 1979. With the fall of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's power, Iran's government, which was originally in the form of a kingdom, was transformed into a republic under the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

At the time of the revolution about 37,000,000 (91.9%) of Iran's 40,250,000 population adhered to Shiism. And Shia has very strong historical roots in this country for a long time (Sihbudi, 1989: 55). Therefore, it is strongly suspected that there is a correlation between Shia teachings and the success of the revolution.

The study of the correlation between Shia teachings and the Iranian Revolution is interesting for at least five reasons: *First*, the revolution was called an Islamic revolution. This naming shows that Islam dominated the motivational aspects and mentality of the revolutionaries and was the trigger for the fundamentalists to fight to overthrow the Shah of Iran's regime which was considered to be against Islam. Islam, in the Iranian context, is none other than Shia because the majority of the population is Shia. *Second*, post-revolutionary Iran emerged with a new government format in the form of a republic called the Islamic Republic of Iran. The inclusion of the name Islam, once again, is a strong indication that the religious aspect dominates this revolution. *Third*, the Iranian revolution was driven by the mullahs with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as the central figure. The mullahs are clerics who are religious leaders, but fantastically able to organize a revolution and succeed in overthrowing a regime that had the most formidable military power in the Middle East at that time. The obedience of the revolutionaries to the mullahs that made the revolution a great success was inseparable from the Shia doctrine that they embraced. *Fourth*, one of the factors that caused the Iranian people to be unhappy with the Shah of Iran was his modernization stance and movement. These attitudes and

movements were considered incompatible with Islamic teachings. Therefore, in the name of Islam, the revolution took place. *Fifth*, religion in Shia teachings cannot be separated from politics. The struggle to establish a government that is in accordance with the teachings of Islam - in this case Shia - is part of the demands of the Shia teachings themselves.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research is library research with a qualitative descriptive approach. The author collects and analyzes a number of library materials related to the problem discussed. In collecting this literature, the author prioritizes works written shortly after the Iranian revolution occurred so that the data contained in them are still fresh and accurate. The data obtained are then classified and verified, then analyzed qualitatively. The focus of this research is directed to the correlation between Shia teachings and the success of the 1979 Iranian revolution with the aim of analyzing the extent to which Shia teachings contributed to the success of the revolution.

III. SHIA DOCTRINE AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

If we look at the figure of Imam Khomeini as the main figure of the revolution in his capacity as a charismatic cleric, not as a military officer who is skilled in the battlefield, then the Iranian revolution certainly has a very close relationship with Shia teachings. Without the support of Shia doctrines that were believed to be true by the Iranian people, it was impossible that the Shah of Iran's regime, which was so strong and sturdy, would fall. The most dominant and important Shia doctrines that supported the success of the revolution were the doctrines of Imamah and wilayat al-faqih. From these two doctrines came the extraordinary spirit of jihad and the willingness to die in blood on the battlefield for the sake of devotion and obedience to the Imam.

The Shia practiced by the people of Iran is Ithna `Ashariah or 12th Shia, also known as Ja`fariah or Imamiyah. This sub-sect of Shia believes in the existence of 12 Imams who are role models and followers. The Imam for them is a special person who has the right to be the leader of Muslims. Leaders other than the Imam are illegal leaders and are not obliged to be obeyed (Enayat, 1982: 176) Therefore, all Islamic governments since the death of the Great Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) - except for a few years of the reign of Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him) - are illegitimate governments (Al Khatib, 1984: 225).

The Imam's position in the Shiite view is very high, not only has the right to be the leader of the people, but also has a myriad of privileges. Al-Hur al-Amili, one of the authors of a book on Shia said that the Imams, for the Shia, are more honorable than all creatures, more honorable than the prophets, the previous testaments, and others (Mun`eim an-Nemr, 1988: 102).

A similar statement was conveyed by Prof. Dr. Ihsan Divine Zahir, M.A. According to him, the Shiites consider these imams to be super beings above the level of prophets and apostles. In fact, they believe, according to Zahir, that the priests are like "God" who knows the age of humans and the time of death. The priests were considered "ultimate kings" who could subdue all creatures. The natural world will feel afraid and tremble because of the greatness of the priests. All angels, prophets and apostles are subject to Shia imams and no one is equal to these imams. (Zahir, 1983: 86).

Al-Hur Al-Amidi and Ihsan Ilahi Zahir do not explain the source of the Shiites' extraordinary trust in this imam. It seems that the expressions of these two figures are a conclusion after both of them studied Shia teachings about the Imamate, but it seems that the two authors' expressions are a bit excessive and do not provide confirmation of the opinions of the Shia figures themselves.

Muhammad bin Ya`qub Al-Kulaini, one of the Shiite figures whose narration of hadiths is believed by the Shiites to be on par with Imam Bukhari among the Sunnis, narrated from Al-Ridho, one of the Shiite Imams, that Al-Rida said, "The Imamate is in the level of the prophets, the inheritance of those who received a will. Imamah is the successor of Allah, the successor of the prophet, the position of *emirulmu`minin*, and the legacy of Hasan and Husein. Imamah is the control of religion, the muslim system, world order, and the greatness of the believers (H.M. Rasyidi 1984: 20). In another part of the book *Al-Kafi* written by Al-Kulaini, it is stated that the priests are like the Messenger of Allah but they are not prophets. Within the boundaries of marriage they are different from the prophet, but in other respects they are like the Prophet *sallallaahu`alaihiwasallam* (H.M. Rasyidi, 1984:26). The above statement by Al-Rida and Al-Kulaini shows that Imams for Shiites do not occupy a higher position than prophets but are equal to prophets and apostles.

Regardless of the issue of the priest's height or level with the prophets and apostles, what is clear is that the imam, for the Imami Shiites, has a very special position and is in a class of his own. Belief in imams is not just a *furu`iyah* (branch) belief but is also the basic stance of the Shia Imamiyah (Al-Khatib, 1984:25). Belief in the imam is the most important creed for Shiites. Imamah is not a matter of *furu`* (branch), but is one of the *ushul al-din* (basics of religion), in fact, for them, imamah is the main and most important pillar of religion after nubuwwah. (Arif Tamir, 1991: 93). Their belief in the priest is a creed. They are called Shia Imamiyah precisely because of their belief regarding the Imam. In fact, knowing the names of the priests is one of the pillars of faith (H.M. Rasyidi 1984: 11).

According to Ibn Khaldun, all Shia schools of thought agree that the Imamatus does not include public interests (*al-masalih al-`ammah*) where the issue is left to the opinion of the people and the election is based on their will, but the Imamatus is a pillar of religion (*rukun al-din*) and a pillar of Islam (*qa`idah al-Islam*). The Prophet must not forget it and must not leave the problem to the people, but the Prophet is obliged to appoint an imam for them. The imam is protected from committing major and minor sins. Indeed, Ali bin Abi Talib was appointed by the Prophet as imam. (Ibn Khaldun, 1992: 196-197). In their belief, the imam is *ma`shum* (protected from sin) physically and mentally, both before and after being appointed as a imam. (Abu Zahrah, t.th.: 48).

They have the principle, "We are the Shiites of Ali and his loyal followers. We will save those who save them, fight those who fight them, make enemies of those who fight them, and honor those who respect them." This principle was implanted in the hearts of Shia believers as a positive response to the Prophet's prayer, O Allah, protect those who protect Ali and enemy those who oppose him. (Al-Gaththa, 1990: 147).

For Shiites, the Imam is a great teacher (*al-mu`allim al-akbar*) because he inherited the knowledge from the Prophet through Ali bin Abi Talib and his descendants. The inherited knowledge includes outer knowledge and inner knowledge, which is born from the verses of the Al-Quran and its *ta`wil*. (Al-Ibadi, 1993: 263).

With the Shiite doctrine of Imamatus, high group solidarity emerged among the Shiites, which is the most important element for the realization of great power in a country. Ibn Khaldun said that victory lies with the side that has stronger group solidarity and whose members are more able to fight and are willing to die for the common good. (Ibn Khaldun, 1992: 54).

With the Shia's trust in the Imam being such, the Imam's position in mobilizing and directing the Shia is very potential. Moreover, for Shiites, the Imam's orders also mean God's orders because the Imam received inspiration from God when issuing these orders.

Even though trust is an aspect of mentality, it has a huge influence on a person's physical movements. With strong encouragement and belief in something, people can do anything. In fact, lives are willing to be sacrificed for the sake of a belief. This kind of potential was exploited and played well by the mullahs, especially Imam Khomeini, when they set in motion a revolution to overthrow the Shah of Iran. This can be clearly seen, among other things, in the speeches and slogans or chants shouted by the revolutionaries. The slogans or chants were, for example, "Khomeini's program aims to destroy Yazid", "Our movement is like Imam Husein's movement", and "Our leader is Khomeini". (Gavahi, 1988: 90).

Obedience and devotion to the Imam as per Shia doctrine was a major asset and was crucial in determining the success of the 1979 Iranian revolution. This obedience and devotion was shown by the majority of the Iranian people to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as the driving force and leader of this great revolution. Khomeini's position was even equated with Ali bin Abi Talib, Husein, and Imam Al-Mahdi. (Gavahi, 1988:210). Because of this, Imam Khomeini had very large and strong support.

Murtada Mutahhari, one of the Shiite figures, said that Khomeini was not only a qualified leader but also played an intellectual and spiritual role for the Iranian people (Gavahi, 1988: 215).

This is where Khomeini's advantages lie. He is not only a worldly leader but also an *ukhrawi* leader. Therefore, according to Mutahhari, even with all his skills as a leader, he will not succeed in the revolution if he does not have a spiritual role. It was even further said, if Khomeini did not use the title of religious leader and leader of Islam, if not because the Iranian people had a very deep feeling of respect for the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bait*) and if not for the fact that the Iranian people believed that Khomeini the same as Ali bin Abi Tholib and Husein, it was impossible for a major revolution to occur (Gavahi, 1988: 25).

On the other hand, the Shiites' strong belief in the Imam that it was the Imam who actually had the right to be leader, also led to their anger towards the Shah of Iran. If they believe that rulers other than Imams are illegal--- as they reject Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman---then clearly the rule of Shah Reza and his son Muhammad Reza Pahlevi is also illegal, because neither of them are imams. Moreover, during his reign the Shah of Iran tried to reduce the influence of the Islamic religion which was deeply rooted among the Iranian people, including by changing the Hijri Islamic calendar to the Persian calendar. In fact, he also provided flexibility for the influence of Western culture. According to Muhammad Reza Sihbudi (1989: 33), the Shah became king in an Islamic country that had no concern for Islam. He appreciated Cyrus the Great more than the Prophet Muhammad *Sallallahu `AlaihiWasallam*.

The Shah of Iran's attitude, combined with other factors that the people did not like, further encouraged and aroused the people's strength to oppose his rule. It could be said that people's hatred for the Shah had reached its climax so that revolution could not be avoided. Thus, the emergence of Khomeini as a leader in his capacity as Ayatollah Ruhollah has become the "only" alternative and hope to free Iran from the grip of dictatorship and un-Islamic actions.

Doctrinally, the monarchy system does not conflict with Shia teachings - even though Khomeini criticized the monarchy system of Reza Shah Pahlavi's regime and the overthrow of the monarchy was made one of the themes in his campaign - but what the Iranian people opposed was precisely the attitude and behavior of the Shah himself. What is clear, the important thing related doctrinally is the fact that the Shah of Iran is not an Imam, while for the Shiites, only the Imam has the right to be a leader.

Another aspect of Shia teachings that is closely related to the Iranian revolution is the *wilayat al-faqih*. What is meant by *wilayat al-faqih* is the power given to a religious figure who is truly pious to give a fatwa on behalf of *Imam Al-Muntazar* (the awaited Imam). (Sjadzali, 1990: 215).

In the Shiite Islamic faith of *Asyariyah*, the number of imams who must be believed is 12 people. The first Imam was Ali bin Abi Talib, then Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib, Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib, Ali Zainal Abidin bin Husain, Muhammad Al-Baqir bin Ali, Ja'far as-Sadiq bin Muhammad al-Baqir, Musa al-Kazim bin Ja'far as-Sadiq, Ali Ar-Rida bin Musa al-Kazim, Muhammad al-Jawwad bin Ali Ar-Rida, Ali al-Hadi bin Muhammad al-Jawwad, al-Hasan Hasan al-Askari bin Muhamad al-Jawwad, and the last imam, namely the 12th imam, is Muhammad al-Mahdi bin Al-Hasan al-Askari who is known as the title Imam Mahdi or *Imam al-Muntazar* (the awaited Imam).

According to Shia belief, this last Imam disappeared in 260 Hijriyah when he was about five years old. The Shiites believe that this Imam will one day emerge to lead the Muslim community with justice and will bring the Muslim community to progress, glory, peace and happiness.

Even though Imam Mahdi disappeared (unseen), for around 69 years from 260 Hijriyah to 329 Hijriyah (941 AD) he still remained in touch with his *nawwabs*. It was these *nawwabs* (substitutes) who conveyed the Imam's messages and fatwas to his followers. The number of *nawwabs* was four, namely, Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari, Abu al-Qasim al-Hussein bin Ruh al-Khullani, and Abu al-Hasan, Ali bin Muhammad al-Samiri (Fattah, 1988: 15).

The period since Imam Muhammad Al-Mahdi disappeared (unseen) until the death of Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Muhamad al-Samiri (329 H/ 941AD) is called the *gaibahsugra* period; while the period from the death of Abu al-Hasan Ali bin al-Samiri until the reappearance of Imam Mahdi at the end of time is called the *gaibahkubra*.

If during the *gaibahsugra* period, Imam Mahdi was still in contact with his followers through the *nawwab*, then during the *gaibahkubra* period that relationship was lost. In Shia teachings, there must be a leader who always provides guidance and guidance to them. Therefore, it is necessary to appoint leaders who are truly pious and able to understand and implement the laws of Allah *subhanahuwata'ala*. This figure is given the mandate or area to give *fatwas* and instructions on behalf of the Imam. This authority is called the *wilayat al-faqih*.

Initially the *wilayat al-faqih* only had authority to handle certain areas, but in subsequent developments this authority expanded to include state management or political matters (Sjadzali, 1990: 15-16). Khomeini even explicitly stated that the function of *wilayat al-faqih* was to carry out the unseen duties of an imam, namely leading the Muslim community. The task only ends when the awaited Imam appears. With the functions and duties as expressed by Khomeini, it means that *wilayat al-faqih* handles all the problems of the people.

According to Khomeini's concept, *wilayat al-faqih* is a person appointed by Allah *subhanahuwata'ala* to supervise the lives of Muslims. The person must be someone who is knowledgeable (Gavahi, 1988: 113). Thus, the possibility is closed for non-ulama to become *wilayat al-faqih*. With this *wilayat al-faqih* concept, the position and position of the ulama who holds it is above anyone else in the government structure.

It was on the basis of the concept of imamate in Shiite doctrine and *wilayat al-faqih* that Khomeini set in motion the revolution. This plan of government in the form of *wilayat al-faqih* was also offered by Khomeini in his struggle to overthrow the Shah of Iran. This is reflected in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In the preamble to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran it is stated as follows:

The plan of the Islamic government based upon *wilayat al-faqih*, as proposed by Imam Khumayni at the height of the period of repression and strangulation practised by the despotic regime, produced a new specific, and streamlined motive for the Muslim people, opening up before them the true path of Islamic ideological struggle, and giving greater intensity to the struggle of militant and committed Muslims both within the country and abroad.

The statement in the preamble to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran above shows that *wilayat al-faqih* is a very important aspect in providing motivation for the Iranian people to carry out the struggle. Therefore, after the revolution was successful, a form of government based on the principles of *wilayat al-faqih* government was manifested in the constitution. This can be seen, among other things, in article 5 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

During the Occultation of the *Walial-Asr* (may God hasten his reappearance), the *wilayat* and leadership of the Ummah devolve upon the just [*adil*] and pious [*muttaqi*] *faqih*, who is fully aware of the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability, will assume the responsibilities of this office in accordance with Article 107.

As long as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was still alive, *wilayat al-faqih* was held by Imam Khomeini. Therefore, his power is enormous in determining Iran's direction and policies. After Imam Khomeini died on June 3, 1989, he was replaced by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who remains the supreme leader of Iran.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Shia doctrinal dimension of the Iranian revolution played a very important role. In fact, it was integral to the success of the revolution. Without the Shia doctrine that firmly placed the position of the imam and his successor in a very high and exalted place, it would have been difficult for Khomeini to produce a major revolution like the one that took place in Iran in 1979. However, the Shia aspect was not the only thing that determined the success of the revolution. The neutral attitude of the armed forces at the height of the revolution and various other factors also contributed to the combination of these factors that produced this great work. The case of the Iranian revolution shows that ideology cannot be ignored in politics. It not only influences, but can also change an established order. The Shah of Iran probably never expected that the power backed by the strongest modern armed forces in the Middle East coupled with the support of the super power of the United States would be overthrown by an old man who looked weak and sickly, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Muhammad Reza Shah Fahlevi does not seem to realize that behind the wrinkled skin, bleached hair and beard, and robes of this old man lies a great power that no other human being in the world possesses, namely the *Imamah* and *wilayat al-faqih*. With these two Shia doctrines, all the potential of the Iranian Shia is at his control.

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