Shia Rationality and the Challenge of Takfirism in the Islamic Revolution Leaders' Discourse

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Abstract

One of the major goals of the Islamic Revolution of Iran is the attainment of a new Islamic civilization rooted in Islamic rationality. However, this path is not without its challenges. Among these, intellectual challenges—often referred to as "rationality"—stand out as the most fundamental obstacle for any ideological system. This article, employing a qualitative approach based on document analysis, seeks to address the following key question: "At the regional level, what is the most fundamental intellectual challenge the Islamic Revolution faces in advancing its overarching goal of a new Islamic civilization, and what are the proposed solutions, especially in light of the views of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution?" The findings of this study highlight that Takfiri Rationality is the most fundamental intellectual challenge confronting the Islamic Revolution in the region. The key points of conflict between Takfiri rationality and Shiite rationality in the region can be examined through various aspects such as: "Literalism (Naql-centrism)", "Anti-intellectualism", "Monotheism and the practice of excommunicating other Islamic sects (Takfir)", "Belief in the infallibility and justice of the Companions" Rejection of religious imitation (Taqleed)". Criticizing such a rationality, Shia rationality emphasized on "The monotheistic nature of the Shiite school of thought, free from any form of polytheism and superstition", "The necessity of strengthening the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Resistance Axis", "The importance of eradicating ISIS, which promotes Islamophobia worldwide" Rejection of all forms of violence, terrorism, and extremist actions" and Condemnation of any efforts to sow discord among Islamic sects". Hereupon, operational solutions for dealing with the challenge of Takfirism are proposed in three categories, namely intellectual-scientific, cultural, political and military-security.

Keywords:

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Introduction

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 brought new values and norms for humanity on the way to the formation of the new Islamic civilization. In this context, the Supreme Leader of Iran has emphasized the necessity of mobilizing both elites and the general public to create a new Islamic civilization. He stated, "The overarching goal of the Islamic system is to achieve an Islamic civilization" (Speech, October 14, 2000). He further explained that the reason for establishing a new Islamic civilization is to create the foundation for realizing a virtuous life and achieving the ultimate objectives of human creation: "Islamic civilization is a space in which human beings can grow both spiritually and materially, and reach the desired goals for which the Almighty God created them" (Speech, September 5, 2013). In relation to this new Islamic civilization, several considerations must be taken into account. First, achieving the lofty goals of the Islamic Revolution—the establishment of a new Islamic civilization—will not be easy. Humanity and society will face numerous challenges, obstacles, and hostilities along the way. If we consider these difficulties as "crises or challenges," they can be broadly classified into two categories: 1) Natural Crises: These refer to crises that do not necessarily have human origins (e.g., earthquakes, floods, etc.). 2)Non-natural Crises: These arise due to human factors, with undeniable and significant human involvement (e.g., wars, the spread of ideological confusion, etc.). Non-natural crises occur on two levels: intellectual (in the realm of thought and ideology) and practical (in the social, cultural, political, and economic arenas). Since its inception, the Islamic Revolution has faced these crises, overcoming some of them successfully.

The second point is that, from the perspective of the Supreme Leader, the Islamic Revolution follows a developmental trajectory comprised of five stages: "We had an Islamic revolution, then we formed an Islamic system. The next stage is the establishment of an Islamic government, followed by the formation of an Islamic nation, and finally the creation of an international Islamic civilization" (Speech, October 27, 2004). According to the Supreme Leader, we are currently in the third stage of this process, which is the establishment of an Islamic government: "Today, we are in the phase of creating an Islamic government and an Islamic nation. We must establish a true Islamic government. Our current government—comprised of the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches—possesses a good share of Islamic truths and values, but it is not enough" (Speech, October 27, 2004). To move beyond this stage, the active participation of both elites and the masses is essential. Indeed, they must make the formation of a true Islamic government their main focus and exert effort to overcome

the crises ahead. The crises and challenges of the Islamic Revolution can be identified on three levels: national, regional, and global. It appears that the most significant regional challenge facing the Islamic Revolution, both intellectually and practically, is Takfirism. This research aims to analyze Takfiri Rationality—which serves as the Thought challenge of the Islamic Revolution at the regional level—from the perspective of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution. Therefore, the main question of this article is: "What is the most fundamental Thought challenge the Islamic Revolution faces at the regional level in advancing its major goals, specifically the new Islamic civilization, and what are the solutions, with emphasis on the views of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution?" The authors employ a qualitative research method based on document analysis to answer this question.

1. Conceptual framework

From a theoretical perspective, the key factor that helps define the nature of a particular ideology and distinguishes it from other intellectual traditions, and which leads to differences in behaviors and actions in practice, is the concept of rationality. Shiite rationality has been the intellectual foundation behind the occurrence and continuity of the Islamic Revolution's impacts. This rationality has been in intellectual and practical conflict with Takfiri rationality, which stems from Wahhabism, since the pre-revolutionary years.

1.1. Rationality

Rationality, in its simplest and most foundational definition, can be described as "the intellectual basis for action and its evaluation". Rationality can be categorized into two types: theoretical rationality and practical rationality.

- Theoretical rationality refers to aligning the degree of our commitment to a belief with the strength of the evidence and arguments that support that belief.

- Practical rationality, on the other hand, involves aligning our actions and decisions with the goals that emerge from theoretical rationality. This means ensuring that our actions are in harmony with the rational objectives we have derived intellectually (Rescher, 1988: 1-16).

1.2. Rationality and the Formation of Civilization

In response to the question, "What forms civilizations and distinguishes them from one another?", various answers have been proposed. However, it seems that civilizations emerge when certain forms of rationality become widespread, universal, and common among people. Likewise, civilizations

change as rationalities evolve, and they decline when those rationalities deteriorate. Therefore, any effort to understand, establish, reform, or transform civilizations depends on recognizing the rational foundations that shape them. The intellectual framework that guides a society plays a crucial role in the rise or fall of its civilization. A thorough understanding of these rational bases is essential for any meaningful action towards civilization-building or its transformation.

2. Implications of Takfiri Rationality and Its Conflict with Shiite Rationality

2.1. Literalism and Rationalism in Religious Knowledge

Wahhabism, as a factor in the decline of Islamic culture and civilization, opposes all forms of rationality and emphasizes the literal interpretation of the Quran and Hadith. They believe that all books of jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, mysticism, and interpretation, except their approved Hadith books, should be eradicated (Rashidi, 2013: 387). Wahhabi extremism is partly due to their fragmented approach to religious sources and interpretation, focusing only on the apparent meanings of certain Quranic verses and neglecting other sources such as the Prophet's (PBUH) behavior and the practices of the Imams (AS) (Haidari Mohtaj and Sakhavati, 2015: 101). According to Ibn Taymiyyah, rationality is only valid insofar as it does not contradict the apparent meanings of the Quran and Hadith (Labbani Motlagh, 2014: 318).

From the Wahhabi perspective, the only path to knowledge and understanding is through strict adherence to the literal texts of religious scriptures, coupled with the rejection of the authority of reason and a focus on the practices of the early generations (Salaf al-Salih). The result of this approach is a drift toward determinism, ultimately creating a foundation for authoritarian rule and ideological rigidity within the Islamic community. The ultimate outcome of such a view is the rejection and opposition to ijtihad (independent reasoning) (Jamshidi Rad, 2008: 183-185).

In contrast, the Islam envisioned by Imam Khomeini stands in stark opposition to the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, the Ahl al-Hadith, and the literalist Salafi movement, including its Wahhabi successors. Imam Khomeini's understanding of Islam not only does not oppose reason but also considers reasoning and reflection to be supportive of faith and religion. This approach aligns fully with the teachings of the Quran, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (Rashidi, 2013: 313).

2.2. Monotheism and Takfir of Islamic Sects

One of the central features of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideology is his emphasis on the concept of Tawhid (monotheism). He believed that achieving Tawhid required abandoning all customs and practices of various Islamic sects, as these were deemed by him to be acts of polytheism. Consequently, his followers identified themselves as "People of Tawhid." According to this perspective, many Muslims were considered to be polytheists and were subjected to takfir (excommunication) (Pakatchi, 2014, p. 36). The Wahhabi doctrine asserts that no person can be considered a true Muslim and monotheist unless they abandon practices such as seeking intercession through prophets, maintaining the graves of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Imams, swearing oaths by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), requesting needs from anyone other than God, holding funeral and mourning ceremonies, using special titles to honor the Prophet (PBUH) and the infallible Imams, and following the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams (Jamshidi Rad, 2010, pp. 185-186). Based on these beliefs, the Wahhabis attacked and destroyed the shrine and dome of Imam Hussein (PBUH) in 1861, resulting in the death of over five thousand people. They also demolished the graves in Jannat al-Baqi in Medina in 1926 (Labbani-Motlaq, 2014, pp. 322-323).

Ayatollah Khamenei has criticized certain actions of the Takfiri Wahhabis, such as the destruction of the grave of one of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) companions, arguing that their notion of shirk (polytheism) is misguided. He states, "Shirk is when a person becomes a tool for the policies of British intelligence and CIA, causing grief and distress to Muslims with these actions. They do not consider obedience and humility towards living tyrants as shirk; instead, they consider respect for the elders as shirk!" (Speech, Feburary 16, 2013). In Shia rationality, one cannot rely solely on the apparent meaning of verses and hadiths to practice religion in its various dimensions, as this may lead to misunderstanding. It is essential to employ both reason and tradition to attain a proper understanding of religion.

2.3. The Authority and Justice of the Companions

The Sunnah's validation of the companions' sayings is rooted in the belief in the justice of all companions. Sunni scholars not only consider all companions to be just but some even hold the view that all companions are infallible. In contrast, Shia Muslims disagree with this view. They consider Sunnah to include the words, actions, and approvals of the infallible Imams and, while respecting the Prophet's companions, view their sayings as

comparable to those of other scholars. Shia Muslims believe that the companions, despite their merits, are not immune from error, and their opinions cannot be considered binding for others. Additionally, certain verses (in Surah Al-Munafiqun and Surah At-Tawbah) refer to the hypocrisy of some companions, and authentic hadiths indicate the injustice of some of them (Nahj al-Balagha, 2011, Sermons 97 and 17) (Alavi-Mehr and Taqipour, 2010, pp. 104-105).

Critics of this view argue that, unlike some Sunnis, Shia Muslims maintain that mere companionship with the Prophet does not guarantee the justice of the companions. The criterion for accepting the justice of the companions is their actions and behavior aligning with the Quran and Sunnah. As Ali ibn Abi Talib (PBUH) judged some companions favorably and others unfavorably based on their conduct, historical evidence shows that some companions' hypocrisy and tyranny are well-documented, even though some just and pious figures were also among them. Thus, a brief companionship with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) does not necessarily place them among the pious and righteous (Taqipour, 2009, p. 216).

2.4. Rejection of Taqlid

The 12th century AH witnessed a new wave of opposition to taqlid among Salafi reformers, with rejecting taqlid being a central tenet of their teachings. The rejection of taqlid coincided with the opening of ijtihad (independent juristic reasoning) in Sunni circles during this period. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab wrote a treatise condemning taqlid, while his Salafi opponents criticized him for allegedly following the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Since the opposition to taqlid also led scholars like Al-Shawkani to advocate for ijtihad, he articulated his views on the prohibition of taqlid in a treatise titled "Al-Qawl al-Mufid fi Hukm al-Taqlid." Al-Alusi had more moderate views than Al-Shawkani; he rejected taqlid of scholars but also of the Imams, asserting that no exceptions exist in this regard (Pakatchi, 2014, pp. 92-94)

In critiquing the view that rejects the practice of taqlid (imitation) in Shia Islam, it is important to consider the rationality of Shia jurisprudence and the extensive evidence provided by various Qur'anic verses and Hadiths. Taqlid is not only permissible but also obligatory and a fundamental requirement of the religion according to Shia thought. One key piece of evidence supporting this stance is a narration from Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), which asserts: "Any jurist who has mastery over his own self, opposes his desires, and obeys the command of his Master, then the common people must follow him in imitation. Such qualities are found only in some of the

Shia jurists, not all of them". This narration underscores the selective nature of taqlid, emphasizing that it should be directed towards those who truly embody these virtues. Furthermore, various interpretations of the Qur'anic verse, "فَلَوْلا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ" (Quran 9:122), also support the legitimacy and necessity of taqlid. This verse highlights the importance of having a group of people who are well-versed in religious knowledge to guide and instruct others, thereby reinforcing the concept that following knowledgeable scholars is a valid and necessary practice within Shia Islam (Rahmani Sabzevari, 2010: 69-70).

3. Takfirism Challenges to the Islamic Revolution

To understand Takfirism, it is essential to first define the concept of American Islam as envisioned by the leaders of the Islamic Revolution. The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, explains that American Islam comprises two main components: Wahhabi Islam and secular Islam. Supported and influenced by imperialist powers, American Islam stands in stark contrast to true Islam. This article focuses on the second branch of American Islam, namely Wahhabism or Takfirism, as an intellectual challenge from the perspective of the Revolution's leaders.

Imam Khomeini described Wahhabism as a deviant movement in Islam, leading to foreign influence and the humiliation of Muslims. He asserted, "Do Muslims not see that today the centers of Wahhabism in the world have become hotbeds of sedition and espionage? On one side, they propagate a form of Islam that is aristocratic, akin to the Islam of Abu Sufyan, the Islam of filthy court scholars, the Islam of hypocritical and ignorant figures in scholarly and academic circles, the Islam of humiliation and misery, the Islam of wealth and power, the Islam of deception and compromise, the Islam of capitalist rule over the oppressed and the destitute — in one word, 'American Islam.' On the other side, they bow before their master, the global imperialist America" (Imam Khomeini, 2006:80-81). He further highlighted the danger of Wahhabism, noting that the damage inflicted by these court scholars is worse than that from America, as they isolate Islam under a false Islamic guise that is not openly apparent. (Imam Khomeini, 2006:53)

The Supreme Leader also contends that global imperialism plays a major role in creating, promoting, and supporting terrorism in the region. He acknowledges that the Takfiri movement has managed to distort the Islamic Awakening movement in recent years, transforming what was initially an anti-American and anti-colonial struggle into internal conflicts among Muslims. This, in turn, has served the goals of imperialism, colonialism, and

the Zionist regime. Despite its historical roots, Takfirism has recently revived and gained strength through imperialist plans and financial support from some regional governments and colonial intelligence agencies (Supreme Leader's Statements, September 4, 2014).

The Supreme Leader also distinguishes between authentic Salafism, which emphasizes adherence to the principles of the Quran and Sunnah, and the Salafism that promotes rigidity, sectarianism, and violence, which opposes modernity and rationality — foundational elements of Islamic civilization and thought. He cautions against a form of Salafism that leads to secularism and religious extremism, noting, "If Salafism translates into bigotry, rigidity, and violence among religions or Islamic sects, it will not be compatible with modernity, tolerance, and rationality — the pillars of Islamic thought and civilization — and will itself promote secularism and irreligiosity" (Supreme Leader's Sermons, November 14, 2011).

4. Manifestations of Takfiri Wahhabism

4.1. Anti-Shiism

Anti-Shiism and the propagation of doubts about Shiite beliefs are prominent manifestations of Takfiri Wahhabism. Emerging as a colonial offshoot in the Islamic world, Wahhabism seeks to hinder the spread of authentic Islam by undermining Shiite doctrinal and ideological foundations. Wahhabis, unable to achieve military success against Iran, resorted to creating doubts about Shiite beliefs as a method to undermine the Islamic Republic of Iran (Hersij & Toiserkani, 2013:109). Their campaign of skepticism stems from their fear of Shiite expansion, which is rich in ethical and religious teachings that Wahhabism lacks. Wahhabism denies practices like intercession, vows, and visiting graves, among others, due to a fundamental misunderstanding of these concepts (Hersij & Toiserkani, 2013:53-54). Notable figures like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of Al-Qaeda, considered Shiites as major obstacles to their goals and described them as disbelievers in disguise. The group ISIS, under his leadership, engaged in extreme and violent activities against Shiites in Iraq and Syria (Samiei-Isfahani & Sharifi Ilmeh, 2013:162). The Wahhabi agenda, identifying Shiites as their primary enemies, has been reflected in extensive anti-Shiite propaganda in Islamic world (Jamshidi Rad, 2008:188).

4.2. Undermining the Islamic Revolution and the Axis of Resistance

Takfiri Wahhabism also poses a significant challenge to the Islamic Revolution and the Axis of Resistance. Since the inception of the Islamic Revolution, they engaged in anti-Shiite and anti-Iranian actions. This was

particularly evident in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where Saudi Arabia supported extremist groups opposing Shiites and Iran, such as the Taliban, Sipah-e-Sahaba, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Mohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015:145-153). Saudi Arabia's interventions in Yemen also reflect their aim to undermine the Islamic Revolution by countering the influence of Shiite groups (Houthis) and supporting Salafi-Takfiri movements (Afshoun, 2016:58-65). Saudi involvement in Bahrain, supporting political repression and the killing of Shiites, further exemplifies their efforts to weaken the Axis of Resistance.

4.3. The Rise of ISIS and Islamophobia

The extremist group ISIS sought to establish a new state in the region and succeeded in seizing large territories in Syria and Iraq. What made this extremist group notorious was its violent interpretation of Islam and its brutal actions. ISIS emerged under the influence of both internal and external factors, including the teachings of Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia and the socio-economic and cultural crises in Syria and Iraq. The new power dynamics in the region have caused foreign powers to be concerned about their positions and have led to interventions that have influenced the formation of ISIS. Some believe that this group was created by the U.S. and its allies to sow discord between Shia and Sunni Muslims and to tarnish the image of Islam. Key ideological tenets of ISIS include considering Shias as infidels and justifying the use of the sword to achieve justice. The core of ISIS's jihadist movement is violence; they view any belief or practice outside their framework as heresy and consider killing infidels as jihad in the way of Allah.

4.4. Violence and Terrorist Activities

Another manifestation of the challenges posed by Wahhabism is the violence and terrorist activities associated with it. Wahhabism, particularly its Salafi-jihadi variant, has engaged in mass beheadings and executions based on erroneous and extremist interpretations, which has tarnished the sacredness of jihad among Muslims. In this context, by following extensive support from Wahhabis, Pakistan and Afghanistan became safe havens for extremist groups. In one year, there were 77 terrorist attacks and the killing of 635 Shia Muslims, with some referring to these actions as genocide against Shia Pakistanis.

4.5. Religious Sectarianism

Another dimension of Takfiri Wahhabism is the creation of religious sectarianism. The Supreme Leader of Iran has referred to the immense and unified power of the Islamic Ummah as a barrier to achieving the sinister goals of Western intelligence services and Zionism, who exploit sectarian divisions to further their nefarious aims (Speech, Feburary 9, 2013). He has identified doctrinal disputes as among the most dangerous types of conflict, clearly driven by the malign influence of imperialism. (Speech, Mrach 3, 2014). Enemies of Islam, including the U.S. and Israel, are seen as attempting to undermine the concept of jihad and resistance by fostering conflicts between Shia and Sunni Muslims (Speech, April 24, 2013).

Iran's demographic diversity, including various ethnic and religious groups, has been exploited by Wahhabism and Salafi groups to create divisions and disrupt national unity. These groups have established educational and propaganda activities and set up religious schools for Sunnis in neighboring countries. They promote extremist and violent ideologies, which prepare the ground for the establishment and expansion of armed sectarian centers in the future. One security consequence of the spread of Wahhabism for Iran is its use of cultural methods to undermine Shia-Sunni unity. This is despite the fact that none of the four Sunni schools of thought have doctrines similar to Wahhabism and are based on different ideological foundations. Another consequence is the potential for sectarian tensions in the Sunni-majority border provinces of Iran, challenging national security.(Hersij, Hossein, and Toiserkani, Mojtaba 2013, 80-83). ISIS has used the internet and social media to recruit from various nationalities, successfully attracting over 12,000 foreign fighters from about 81 countries. (Kasraei and Davari Moghadam 2015, 194). Most of the foreign members are from Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. Additionally, ISIS has recruited individuals from European, American, and even Australian citizens. (Kasraei and Davari Moghadam 2015, 203-207).

5. Practical Solutions to Counter Takfirism

5.1. Intellectual and Scholarly Approaches

5.1.1. The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought

The divisive activities of Takfiri movements, aimed at destroying the unity of Islamic sects, pose a significant challenge to Islamic solidarity. In response, organizations such as the Islamic Proximity Assembly (Majma' al-Taqrib Bayn al-Madhahib al-Islamiyya) can foster unity by focusing on common religious principles and promoting brotherhood among different

sects. One of the key figures in this movement was Ayatollah Boroujerdi, a prominent scholar who played a pivotal role in advocating for unity and bringing Islamic sects closer together. During the early activities of the Dar al-Taqrib Bayn al-Madhahib al-Islamiyya (The House of Proximity between Islamic Sects), established in 1948 CE (1368 AH), Ayatollah Boroujerdi corresponded with prominent Sunni scholars like Abdul Majid Salim and Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltut, which led to a historic milestone. Sheikh Shaltut, a respected Sunni scholar, issued a landmark fatwa recognizing the Shi'a school of thought as a valid Islamic school, allowing Muslims to follow Shi'a jurisprudence. This recognition was a significant achievement, as it was the first time a high-ranking Sunni scholar formally acknowledged the legitimacy of the Shi'a sect (Abolhasani, 2005: 109-112).

Ayatollah Boroujerdi's efforts extended beyond mere correspondence. He worked tirelessly to familiarize both Shi'a and Sunni scholars with each other's jurisprudential principles and hadith traditions. His work resulted in a mutual understanding, where several Sunni scholars, familiar with Shi'a teachings, issued fatwas that aligned with Shi'a views on certain issues (Abolhasani, 2005: 112). One of the most influential figures in promoting unity was Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltut, whose unparalleled contributions to the Taqrib movement (proximity of sects) are noteworthy. His participation in Dar al-Taqrib meetings, which included representatives from various Islamic sects, and his correspondence with prominent Shi'a figures like Ayatollah Boroujerdi and Ayatollah Hakim, as well as Sunni scholars from Kurdistan, exemplify his dedication to Islamic unity. One of his most valuable initiatives was the launch of a major scholarly project aimed at collecting hadiths common to both Sunnis and Shi'as with the goal of fostering closer relations between sects. The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, views the introduction of political disputes into the realm of Islamic sectarianism as a barrier to achieving Islamic supremacy. He regards Taqrib al-Madhahib as an immediate and essential objective, crucial to addressing the current needs of the Islamic world. According to him, practical proximity is the most important outcome of the Dar al-Taqrib, referring to the collaboration and cooperation among Muslims, regardless of sectarian differences, and without engaging in doctrinal conflicts. The benefits of sectarian proximity are also substantial. Taqrib creates a foundation for the dissemination of the message of different Islamic schools. It also facilitates an understanding of the value systems and approaches of different sects, making the path toward achieving consensus on fundamental principles and collective action across the Islamic world more accessible (Daneshyar, 2014: 89-90).

5.1.2. The Ahl al-Bayt (AS) World Assembly

Due to the rich ethical and religious teachings of Shi'ism, which have contributed to its growth within the Islamic world, Wahhabism has sought to undermine and distort Shi'a beliefs, attacking its followers and spreading misconceptions. To counter this, it is necessary to engage in thoughtful efforts aimed at clarifying and dispelling the doubts and misconceptions propagated by Wahhabi ideology. The Ahl al-Bayt (AS) World Assembly was established with this objective in mind. One of the key activities of the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly in confronting Takfirism is addressing doubts and answering questions raised by Wahhabi propaganda against Shi'a and broader Islamic beliefs. In response, the assembly has organized Shi'a studies courses and seminars focused on answering misconceptions. Through these initiatives, not only does the assembly promote and explain the foundations of the Ahl al-Bayt school of thought, but it also actively combats the misleading narratives spread by its adversaries (www.ahl-ul-bayt).

5.2. Cultural Strategies

5.2.1. Raising Public Awareness on the Nature of "British Shi'ism" and "American Sunnism"

"British Shi'ism" and "American Sunnism" represent counterfeit versions of Islam, created to distort the true image of Islam by portraying Islamists as violent extremists and fueling Islamophobia. These movements aim to establish a fake caliphate over the Islamic world. Thus, it is crucial to differentiate between authentic Islam and the Islam engineered by the UK and the US. Without proper clarification, radical Takfiri groups may present themselves as the true representation of Islam, causing deviations within the Islamic teachings.

The Supreme Leader of Iran has emphasized the role of American, British, and Israeli intelligence services in reviving and promoting Takfiri movements. He has called for the necessary awareness campaigns to expose the imperialist policies pursued by these countries. The Leader highlighted that the support for Takfiri ideologies comes directly from these foreign powers: "This Takfiri movement, although not new and having historical precedents, has been revived in recent years with the colonial designs and financial backing of certain regional governments, and with strategic planning by colonial intelligence services—like those of the US, the UK, and the Zionist regime" (Speech, september 4, 2014). Additionally, he has stressed that "British Shi'ism and American Sunnism are like two edges of the same sword; their goal is to provoke Muslims into fighting one another.

This message of division stems from a satanic agenda" (Speech, september 4, 2016).

5.2.2. Call for Islamic Unity and Cohesion

Wahhabism aims to prevent Muslim unity, which could obstruct its extremist agenda. Therefore, fostering unity within the Islamic world is seen as a strategic response. Imam Khomeini identified the root of Muslim suffering in sectarian discord and emphasized unity among Muslims, regardless of their sect. "Unity among Muslims—whether they are Shi'a or Sunni brothers, whether they are nations or governments—has always been our goal for them to stand together. If Muslims are united, no one will be able to confront them." (Imam Khomeini, 2006: 290). Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has warned against the dangers posed by extremist groups that seek to create discord between Shia and Sunni communities. He advocates for the recognition and management of differences and stresses that inter-sectarian understanding is crucial for overcoming division." "Another important recommendation is to avoid religious, ethnic, racial, tribal, and territorial conflicts. Recognize and manage differences. Understanding among Islamic sects is the key to salvation. Those who stoke the fire of religious division through takfir, even if they do not realize it themselves, are servants and tools of Satan." (Speech, July 26, 2011).

5.3. Political Strategies

5.3.1. Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) offers significant opportunities and capacities for the Muslim world. Within this framework, it is possible to address the demands of Muslims and provide a platform for defending the dignity and identity of Muslims. The OIC has numerous resolutions and approved documents discussing the phenomenon of terrorism and the fight against it. In these documents and resolutions, all forms and manifestations of terrorism are condemned, and international consensus for combating terrorism has been established. There is a clear distinction made between terrorism and legitimate struggles by countries against colonialism, occupation, racial discrimination, the pursuit of independence, and the right to self-determination. The global community is called upon to take comprehensive action to eliminate the causes and roots of terrorism (Bozorgmehr, 2009, p. 53).

The Supreme Leader views one of the capacities of the OIC as its role in fostering unity among Islamic countries. According to him, the OIC can eliminate any form of division and discord, including ethnic, religious,

and political conflicts. With proper planning, it can enable cooperation in various fields such as economic, cultural, and service sectors (Supreme Leader's Statements, December 21, 2008).

One of the OIC's achievements includes fostering collaboration and coordination among regional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), all of which are member states of the OIC. The aim of these collaborations is to enhance cooperation and harmonize trade tariffs to establish a free trade area among Islamic countries, which represents initial steps towards forming a common Islamic market. Other achievements of the OIC include the establishment of an Islamic shipping company, assistance to landlocked African countries, and organizing trade exhibitions to showcase goods and services from member states (Abdullahi, 2003, p. 53).

5.3.2. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) provides a valuable opportunity for taking constructive steps toward ending all forms of terrorism, including state-sponsored terrorism, which is increasingly supported by Western powers. The foundation of non-alignment is not based on geographical, racial, or religious unity, but rather on the necessity of unity (Supreme Leader's Statements, July9, 2012). This principle is reflected in the final document of the NAM summit, which emphasizes the cultural diversity of the movement and welcomed Iran's initiative for coexistence and cooperation among different religions, cultures, and civilizations (Yousefi, 2009, p. 256). From the perspective of the Supreme Leader, the convergence of Islamic countries and the utilization of the Non-Aligned Movement's capacity are essential for combating terrorism. He has called for all member countries of this movement to feel responsible and stand firm against the coercion and impositions of major powers. The Supreme Leader emphasizes that through the collective enhancement of resources and capacities, NAM members can play a historic and enduring role in rescuing the world from insecurity, war, and dominance. This goal can only be achieved through comprehensive cooperation among member states (Supreme Leader's Statements, July 10, 2012 and July 9, 2012). The final document of one of the NAM summits addresses terrorism explicitly. The members of the movement have condemned all forms of terrorist acts and have called for a distinction between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of nations to free themselves from colonialism, oppression, and foreign occupation for their freedom and right to self-determination (Yousefi, 2009, p. 253). The fight

against the terrorist group ISIS has been a focal point in the resolutions of NAM summits. The first NAM summit, held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955, set the stage for global peace efforts, and principles such as respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries were endorsed. These principles have been violated by ISIS in Syria and Iraq, where the group claims territories and seeks to establish a global caliphate, undermining the sovereignty of the Iraqi government in occupied areas (Taghavi Shavazi, 1995, p. 58-59; Salehi & Davari, 2016, p. 140-144). Given the large number of member states in NAM, which makes it the second largest organization after the United Nations General Assembly, the movement can serve as a prominent platform for global public opinion and address regional and international issues. Terrorism is one of the pressing challenges worldwide, and resolving it requires cooperation among various countries to develop effective solutions. NAM provides a framework for discussing and addressing such issues, fostering peace and sustainable security through its global reach (Alaei, 2012, p. 365-366).

5.4. Military-Security Strategies

Given Iran's regional, ideological, and strategic challenges, strengthening defensive diplomacy is crucial. Islam's ideological imperatives offer a strategic opportunity for Iran's security framework. Iran collaborates with Hezbollah, Hamas, and Syria, utilizing diplomatic and military efforts to address regional threats. Defensive diplomacy involves balancing, building trust, resolving tensions, and enhancing collective efforts to address conflicts and advance towards a peaceful and secure world. The support for Axis of Resistance to fight against ISIS and other insecurities derives from the need to counter extremist threats that challenge Iran's internal security and regional stability.

Conclusion

Takfirism represents a fundamental ideological challenge to the Islamic Revolution in the region. It operates through an extreme interpretation of religious knowledge, marked by a rejection of rationality, the imposition of a monotheistic worldview that excludes other Islamic sects, the endorsement of the legitimacy and justice of the companions of the Prophet, and the denial of any form of imitation. These elements collectively challenge Shia rationality and obstruct the realization of a new Islamic civilization. The manifestations of this challenge, particularly from the Wahhabi takfiri perspective, include: sowing Doubts in Shia Beliefs, weakening the Islamic Revolution and Resistance Axis, creating ISIS ,the establishment of ISIS and

dividing muslims. In this circumstance ,practical strategies to counter Wahhabi challenges are: The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought, The Ahl al-Bayt (AS) World Assembly, Raising Public Awareness on the Nature of "British Shi'ism" and "American Sunnism", Call for Islamic Unity and Cohesion, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Military-Security Strategies.

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