The Role of Ethical and Spiritual Values in the Emergence, Continuity, and Advancement of the Islamic Revolution of Iran within the Intellectual Framework of the Two Leaders of the Revolution

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: The aim of this study is to explain the function of *ethical and spiritual values* across three critical stages of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, emergence, continuity, and advancement, based on the intellectual framework of the two leaders of the Revolution (Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei). Accordingly, the research seeks to answer the key question: 'What role do these values play in guiding the Revolution's transition from its formative phase toward civilizational development?' **Method:** Adopting a qualitative approach and employing a descriptive–analytical method, this study analyzes the content of official documents, writings, and speeches of Imam Khomeini and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, aiming to provide a deep, internal, and religion-based understanding of the phenomenon. **Findings:** The findings demonstrate that ethics and spirituality have functioned not merely as initial catalysts for revolutionary mobilization, but as foundational pillars for sustaining the political legitimacy of the Islamic system and as a robust barrier against secularization. Maintaining social equilibrium and enabling the Revolution to move beyond mere survival toward the realm of civilizational and cultural growth in the future is entirely contingent upon the continuity and institutionalization of this epistemic foundation. **Conclusion:** The final analysis indicates that the identity of the Islamic Revolution is defined through a triadic interconnection of ethics, spirituality, and politics. Consequently, the realization of any future-oriented strategy, the reproduction of soft power, and the achievement of the New Islamic Civilization are existentially dependent on the institutionalization of the same moral–spiritual foundation that constituted the Revolution's point of departure. Without it, civilizational development would be unattainable.

Introduction

The Islamic Revolution of Iran represents an exceptional phenomenon in the contemporary world due to its transformation from a political movement into a civilizational project. Emerging from profound intellectual, cultural, and spiritual developments within a society striving to revive its religious and ethical identity, the Revolution was rooted in a broader wave of Islamic awakening that had begun earlier in the twentieth century. Under the leadership of Imam Khomeini, this movement succeeded in dismantling a dependent and authoritarian political structure and establishing a new system grounded in faith, justice, and human dignity.

Examining the role of ethical values in the emergence, continuity, and advancement of the Islamic Revolution not only contributes to a deeper understanding of this historical event but also offers an analytical model for interpreting major social transformations that are formed and sustained on the basis of cultural–religious values. This necessity becomes even more evident when contrasted with classical revolutions, such as the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions, which have predominantly been explained through economic and structural factors. In contrast, the Islamic Revolution of Iran was fundamentally shaped around ethical–religious values such as justice-seeking, resistance to oppression, independence, and martyrdom, values that have remained central to its identity for over four decades and are deeply rooted in the Shiʿi value system.

Accordingly, a systematic and documented study of these ethical values and their modes of influence across the three stages of emergence (pre-revolutionary period), continuity (the Sacred Defense and early crises), and advancement (consolidation and sustainability) can assist policymakers, social scientists, and younger generations in gaining a more accurate understanding of the true nature of the Islamic Revolution and the factors underlying its durability, while also strengthening resistance against historical and theoretical distortions.

What fundamentally distinguishes the Islamic Revolution from other political movements is its deep and enduring integration with ethics and spirituality, an integration that has persisted from the initial revolutionary struggle through the phases of stabilization and growth of the Islamic system. These values did not merely function as motivational forces; rather, they evolved into criteria for guidance, legitimacy, and resilience of the political order. In this regard, the thought of Imam Khomeini, and its continuation within the intellectual framework of the Supreme Leader, constitutes a foundational source for understanding the role of ethics

and spirituality in the revolutionary process. Both leaders, drawing inspiration from the Qur'an and the teachings of the impeccable Imams (AS), viewed the Revolution not as a temporary event, but as a continuous process aimed at reconstructing Islamic civilization in the modern era.

Despite existing theoretical and empirical efforts in the field of revolutionary ethics, most studies have focused on a single phase, primarily the stage of emergence, while insufficient attention has been paid to the interconnectedness of the three stages of emergence, continuity, and advancement from the perspective of ethical and spiritual values. Understanding this continuity is essential for grasping the Revolution's sustainability and its civilizational orientation. On this basis, the present study seeks to analyze the intellectual framework of the two leaders of the Revolution in order to elucidate the authentic position of ethics and spirituality at the levels of genesis, persistence, and elevation of the Islamic Revolution, and to reconstruct a theoretical model linking ethics, spirituality, and civilization.

From a methodological standpoint, this research is descriptive–analytical in nature and is designed according to an inductive and exploratory approach. Its sources consist of the official speeches, writings, and interpretations of Imam Khomeini and the Supreme Leader. The data have been examined through thematic analysis and conceptual inference in order to extract an indigenous theoretical model for sustaining the path of spirituality in the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution.

Authors' Names	Research Title	Research Method	Year of Publication	Main Research Question	Research Findings
Akbari & Rezaei	An Analysis of the Indicators of the New Islamic Civilization in the Thought of the Supreme Leader (may his shadow be	Descriptive–Analytical	2015 AD/1394 SH	What is Islamic civilization and what are its main indicators?	From the perspective of the Supreme Leader, the expansion and advancement of the New Islamic Civilization require collective effort and wisdom, which

	prolonged)				emerge through ethics, hard work and diligence, faith in God, rationality, scientific capability, a flourishing economy, strong media, and effective international relations.
Karim Mehri	A Model of Spiritual Transformation Based on the Intellectual System of the Supreme Leader	Interpretive method and Grounded Theory methodology	2017 AD/1396 SH	What is the theoretical model of spiritual transformation from the viewpoint of the Supreme Leader?	Spirituality within the divine system of the Islamic Revolution has a multi-level function, encompassing the individual level and self-purification as well as the societal level and the formation of an Islamic state. Moreover, the victory of the Revolution, the endurance of the Islamic system, and the spiritual integrity of officials are impossible without reliance on this fundamental principle.
Abbas	A Model of	Descript	2019	What is the model	Spiritual leadership

Shafiei	Intelligent Spiritual Leadership Based on the Leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei	ive–Analytical	AD/1398 SH	of intelligent spiritual leadership based on the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei?	guarantees human growth and excellence and constitutes a key element in the civilizational management of the Revolution.
Mohammad Ehsani	The Islamic Revolution and Social Ethics in the Thought of Imam Khomeini (RA): From Theory to Practice	Descriptive–Analytical	2018 AD/1397 SH	What is the Islamic Revolution and social ethics in Imam Khomeini's thought?	From Imam Khomeini's perspective, ethics is the Islamic moral system articulated in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the conduct of the Infallibles (peace be upon them). Ethics, in his view, is comprehensive and attends to all dimensions of human life, worldly and otherworldly, individual and social, by offering practical prescriptions and prohibitions. The ultimate goal of ethics, according to Imam Khomeini, is spiritual and

					existential closeness to God Almighty; the greater this proximity, the greater the human being's value and perfection.
Rasouli Saad Abad & Moradi	Islamic Conduct and Spirituality in Life from the Perspective of the Supreme Leader	Descriptive– Analytical	2020 AD/1399 SH	What is Islamic conduct and spirituality in life from the perspective of the Supreme Leader?	Strengthening ethical and spiritual values is a prerequisite for the sustainability of the cultural identity of the Revolution in the path of the Second Phase of development.

A review of the conducted studies shows that although these works have identified components and indicators of spirituality within the intellectual framework of the two leaders of the Revolution, these components have been examined in a fragmented and one-dimensional manner. No comprehensive and integrated model demonstrating the logical and structural relationship among these levels has been presented. Furthermore, most of these studies focus primarily on identifying and describing general components of spirituality and do not deeply explain the role of ethical values in the survival and advancement of the Revolution. By contrast, the present study, using a qualitative research approach and the Grounded Theory method,[1] seeks, rather than beginning with a priori hypotheses, to extract data and concepts from the core texts and authentic discourses of the two leaders of the Revolution and then present them within an integrated intellectual system.

The data sources consist of the collected speeches of Imam Khomeini and the Supreme Leader concerning spirituality, ethics, the Islamic Revolution, and the New Islamic

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[1]. A qualitative and inductive approach in humanities research that, instead of starting from a pre-existing hypothesis or theory, focuses on the systematic collection and analysis of empirical data in order to derive and construct a theory grounded in the data.

Civilization. The Statement of the Second Phase of the Revolution has been employed as the central analytical framework. Accordingly, the main research question is: 'What is the role of ethical and spiritual values in the emergence, survival, and advancement of the Islamic Revolution of Iran within the intellectual system of the two leaders of the Revolution?'

1. Research Concepts

Before addressing the cultural theory of the Revolution, it is necessary to become familiar with spirituality and spiritual values. Spirituality is a term derived from *A'nawī* and originally stems from the Arabic root *'Anā*, which conveys meanings such as intention, attention, and conscious orientation toward a reality beyond the material world. In lexicographical and etymological sources, the term implies a movement from the "Outer World" to the "inner world" and refers to uncovering the existential truth of things in relation to the Exalted Creator (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 4, 146–149; Moein, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 2, entry 1776).

In the Islamic epistemological and theological tradition, spirituality is not merely a mental state or an emotional experience; rather, it is an existential and practical reality, one that originates from sincere faith, devoted servitude, and self-purification, elevating the human being from the level of instincts and material desires to the station of servitude, proximity, and divine worship (Khosropanah, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 170–171; Vali Abraghouei, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 70).

Within this horizon, Imam Khomeini regarded spirituality as "The fruit of faith and sincere servitude," and attributed the endurance of the Iranian nation to its "Spiritual purity and reliance on divine assistance." (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 21, 51; ibid: 18, 326) He considered the victory of the Revolution to be the result of the awakening of this latent spiritual capital within the soul of the nation and summarized all these elements under the concept of spirituality, stating:

"Our nation changed the course of history; they calculated everything, except one thing, and that was spirituality!" (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 6, 310)

From the perspective of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, spirituality means the revival of divine values within the fabric of individual and collective human life, values that, especially in the Second Phase of the Revolution, must consciously permeate all dimensions

of social existence. He emphasizes that spirituality is the inner struggle of the human being to overcome egoism and continuously move toward divine satisfaction. A spiritual society is one in which faith, trust in God, self-sacrifice, and confidence in divine promises are institutionalized as a way of life (Statements on 11 February 2019).[2]

From this viewpoint, spirituality is not synonymous with isolation or purely individual asceticism; rather, it represents a divine deepening of social, cultural, and political equations. Thus, spirituality is a dynamic and evolutionary process that begins with awareness and self-knowledge, leads to self-purification and moral refinement, and at the social level manifests itself as justice-seeking, sacrifice, service, beneficial knowledge, and societal development.

In summary, spirituality can be understood as a network of divine beliefs, inclinations, and actions encompassing faith in God, piety, trust, justice-seeking, sincerity, self-sacrifice, and readiness to give oneself in the path of truth. In the intellectual system of the two leaders of the Revolution, spirituality is not merely an individual or emotional experience; rather, it is a social and civilization-building reality that begins with the inner spiritual order of the human being, expands within society, and ultimately leads to the formation of a cultural and political system rooted in monotheism. In other words, spirituality in this framework constitutes the foundational force shaping the identity, resistance, and progress of the Islamic Revolution, a force that explains its past, gives meaning to its present, and directs its future.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Cultural Theory of the Islamic Revolution

Explaining revolutionary phenomena has always been one of the most challenging issues in the fields of social and political sciences. Various theorists, drawing on different approaches, from economic structuralism to sociological and cultural analyses, have sought to explain the causes of the occurrence, victory, and continuity of revolutions.

In the structural–functional approach, scholars such as Theda Skocpol (1979), in "States and Social Revolutions," emphasize the formation of revolutions as the result of structural factors such as state financial crises, international competition, military weakness, and the collapse of state institutions. Skocpol argues that revolutions arise from structural contradictions within society and the breakdown of state power, rather than from the will or ideology of revolutionaries (Skocpol, 1979: 86). However, this approach fails to explain why some

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[2]. https://farsi.khamenei.ir/newspart-index?id=41673&nt=4&year=1397&tid=1246#100942

societies experience revolutions under similar structural conditions while others do not. It also overlooks the role of cultural, ideological, and spiritual motivations of actors, and cannot adequately explain why individuals are willing to sacrifice their lives or participate in revolutions without calculating material benefit. Emotions, values, and collective identity are largely ignored in this framework.

In many sociological theories, revolutions are often understood as social and political fevers, rebellions, and disruptions of the natural order of society. Pitirim Sorokin considers the repression of instincts as a condition leading to revolution. Chalmers Johnson views revolution primarily as the result of a mismatch between environment and values, interpreting it as a consequence of the breakdown of equilibrium within the social system (Johnson, 1984: 23). Samuel Huntington defines revolution as a rapid, fundamental, and violent transformation of a society's dominant values and myths, political institutions, social structure, leadership, activities, and governmental policies (Nourbakhsh, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 37–43).

In contrast to these theories, which emphasize structural and material factors, some scholars have examined the formation of revolutions through a cultural approach. Cultural theories can be divided into two main categories: utilitarian and non-utilitarian. Utilitarian cultural theory is historically prior to other modern cultural theories and assumes that a good society is one organized in such a way as to minimize obstacles to individuals' pursuit of pleasure. Utilitarianism facilitates forms of social organization characteristic of modern capitalism and liberalism. In other words, individuals attempt to invest their skills, talents, and property where they can gain the greatest profit, treating cultural preferences as marketable commodities and assuming that individuals deserve to choose pleasurable cultural goods they desire (Milner, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 25–27).

However, with the expansion of cultural studies, rival theories emerged, often adopting a critical stance toward dominant Western culture, such as Critical Theory, Semiotics, Difference Theory, and Postmodernism.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran does not conform to Western cultural theories and has instead presented an independent theory in this domain known as the "Cultural Theory of the Islamic Revolution," which still requires extensive explanation. This theory is not based on a materialistic conception of culture; as such an approach reduces culture to a product dependent on the economic base. In certain respects, this theory may be close to the ideas of

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), the Italian thinker, who believed that culture is neither a superstructure nor merely ideological, but rather one of the fundamental processes of social formation (Milner, ibid: 57).

Gramsci argued that a social group ensures its dominance over others in two ways: "Through coercion and through moral and intellectual leadership."

The latter constitutes hegemony, whereby a class exercises authority over others by controlling their beliefs and worldview, that is, culture (Gramsci, 1971: 57).

In light of what has been stated, the cultural approach, with its emphasis on culture and the role of values, beliefs, discourse, and collective identity, provides an appropriate framework for analyzing revolutions in which spiritual and cultural factors play a central role. The Islamic Revolution of Iran, due to its religious–cultural nature, its emphasis on ethical values, and its use of religious symbols and networks, represents a clear example of such revolutions. It cannot be explained solely through economic factors or political structures without paying attention to its cultural and value-based dimensions.

Therefore, in analyzing the Islamic Revolution of Iran, cultural elements, especially ethical values rooted in religious teachings, have played a key role. These values not only explain the widespread popular participation in the Revolution, but also make the continuity and survival of the post-revolutionary system intelligible. Imam Khomeini, while emphasizing spirituality as one of the major objectives of the Islamic Revolution, explicitly states in this regard:

"The Islamic Revolution of Iran achieved victory by relying on values and new components such as God-centeredness, spiritual orientation, justice-seeking, uprising for the sake of God, support for the oppressed, duty-oriented action, and opposition to arrogance, features that are unique and possessed by none of the contemporary schools of thought." (cf. Imam Khomeini, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 21, 402)

The cultural theory of the Islamic Revolution emphasizes the role of culture as the driving engine and the groundwork for structural change. From this perspective, culture itself is revolutionizable, and Cultural Revolution precedes social and economic revolution. As Martyr Beheshti also emphasized:

"We first carried out a cultural revolution, and then we changed our social system." (Hosseini Beheshti, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 2, 18–19)

This statement indicates that deep cultural transformations, especially in spirituality and people's beliefs, paved the way for political and economic change. In this view, Islamic

culture, particularly Shiʿi culture, along with national elements, is introduced as the primary infrastructure of this Revolution, and spirituality plays a central role within it. Indeed, spirituality represents the precise point of distinction between the Islamic Revolution and other revolutions.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution believes that one of the honors of the Islamic Revolution is that it introduces Islamic values, monotheism, divine laws, and the spiritual values of Islam to the world. He emphasizes this dimension and states:

"The foundation of the Islamic Revolution is human cultivation, and human cultivation at its first level is the repair of the heart; the revivel of the soul. A world filled with gold, adornment, and material blessings, yet lacking humanity, ethics, and religiosity, will bring no pleasure even to the worldly people and will not provide comfort to humankind. Human comfort arises from the moral and spiritual disposition that must be drawn from religion and take root in it. A world without ethics, without spirituality, and without religion becomes exactly what you see today under the disgraceful and heavy shadow of superpowers and global aggressors, and you see what they have done, and continue to do, to nations; all of this is the result of religiosity." (Statements of the Supreme Leader on 10 January 1992)[3]

From the viewpoint of the leaders of the Revolution and its theorists, the revolution that occurred in Iran was a synthesis of justice-seeking, freedom-seeking, and spirituality. These three slogans emerged as the most central cultural concepts of the Revolution, giving meaning to human life and generating a desire for change among large segments of Iranian society. Emphasis on returning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and on reviving Islamic civilization, as the ethical and political foundations of the Revolution, constitutes another distinctive feature that laid the groundwork for Islamic unity and awakening beyond Iran's borders.

This Cultural Revolution led to rapid changes in attitudes, such as diminishing fear of death and embracing sacrifice, and brought about fundamental cultural transformations before any change in the political system occurred.

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[3]. https://khl.ink/f/2555

3. Research Findings

3.1. The Role of the Intellectual System of the Two Leaders of the Revolution in the Emergence of the Islamic Revolution

Throughout history, the dual concepts of spirituality and ethics have consistently been regarded as fundamental and intrinsic needs of human life. Spirituality, as the quest for meaning, connection with a transcendent truth, and understanding of humanity's place in existence, and ethics, as the normative system regulating individual and social relations, are considered the two wings that enable humanity to ascend toward perfection. One of the primary teachings of divine prophets and spiritual leaders has been concern for the moral guidance and spiritual elevation of societies.

3.1.1. Spirituality: The Backbone of the Emergence of the Islamic Revolution

According to the statements of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, the defining characteristic and primary mission of divine prophets was the infusion of spirituality into the body of society. He has consistently identified spirituality as the most fundamental step taken by prophets in building a monotheistic society:

"The main task of the prophets was to inject spirituality, ethics, and the religious spirit into the people." (Statements of Ayatollah Khamenei on 18 May 2001)

This perspective clarifies the relationship between spirituality and other dimensions of social life. Spirituality is not a marginal or merely ornamental matter; rather, it is the foundation and driving force that makes reform in other spheres, politics, economics, and culture, both possible and meaningful. In the process of the emergence of the Islamic Revolution, this theory became a lived reality. Imam Khomeini, before being a political strategist in the conventional sense, was a moral mentor and a gnostic figure that, by breathing spirituality into society and reviving religious beliefs among the masses, provided the greatest social capital for the Revolution.

Accordingly, spirituality and religious ethics constituted the central pillar during the formative stage (emergence) of the Islamic Revolution. From the late 1960s, and particularly with the intensification of the movement in the 1970s, Imam Khomeini focused his efforts on articulating ethical and spiritual concepts within the context of popular struggle. His

statements transformed the religious beliefs and spiritual motivations of the Iranian people and encouraged them to actively participate in the revolutionary movement. By emphasizing the concept of religious duty, he framed resistance against the monarchy as a divine obligation, thereby enabling widespread popular mobilization.

One of the key factors in this mobilization was belief in the value of martyrdom in the struggle against tyranny, which emerged as a central component of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 6, 491). According to Imam Khomeini, religious and spiritual beliefs played a pivotal role in the victory of the Islamic Revolution. These beliefs served as motivating and unifying forces that facilitated the collapse of the monarchy and the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

After the victory of the Revolution, spirituality and religious values continued to serve as one of the foundations of legitimacy for the nascent system. During the Sacred Defense (1980–1988), they played a decisive role in mobilizing forces and fostering motivation for resistance against foreign aggression. In numerous statements, Imam Khomeini emphasized that preserving spirituality, sincerity in action, and commitment to Islamic values was essential conditions for maintaining Iran's independence and its religious–national identity. In this regard, he stated:

"Only a people who possess spirituality can preserve their country; only such a people can save their nation and homeland. What brought our nation this far and granted it victory was precisely this spirituality." (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 17, 462)

In this statement, Imam Khomeini elevates spirituality from a personal virtue to a strategic principle for national survival. In his intellectual framework, the true power of a nation lies not in weaponry, but in the spiritual force and faith of its people.

3.1.2.   The Manifestation of Spirituality in *'Āshūrā* Symbols and Religious Identity

One of the most significant manifestations of ethics and spirituality in the emergence of the Islamic Revolution was the Muharram and Safar mourning rituals, especially in 1978. From an ethical and spiritual perspective, these rituals provided a platform through which people, influenced by *'Āshūrā*'s messages, moved toward resistance against the Pahlavi regime. The people reflected the message of Karbala in their everyday lives, and *'Āshūrā* culture became a moral and spiritual model of resistance to oppression, self-sacrifice, and freedom.

Martyr Professor Morteza Motahhari points to the unparalleled role of this element in mobilizing society:

"Today we must think that if Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (AS) were alive, what slogan would he choose if he wanted people to mourn for him?" He would say: "Shimr of 1,300 years ago is dead, recognize the Shimr of today." (Motahhari, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 273)

Motahhari's words indicate that, within the intellectual framework of the Revolution, the event of ʿĀshūrā is not merely a historical tragedy for mourning, but rather a paradigm of struggle and a source of meaning and motivation. Imam Khomeini astutely transformed ʿĀshūrā concepts such as "Hayhāt minnā al-Dhillah," (Far be it from us to accept humiliation) "Every day is ʿĀshūrā and every land is Karbala," and the confrontation between Ḥusayn and the Yazīd of the time into the core discourse of resistance. This transformed political struggle against the Pahlavi regime into a sacred religious and spiritual duty, endowing it with depth, fervor, and an immense social energy that no repressive force could contain.

Ayatollah Khamenei has repeatedly emphasized that, unlike revolutions driven solely by political or economic motives, the Islamic Revolution is rooted in faith in God, trust in divine promises, a spirit of sacrifice, and ethically grounded idealism. He regards the religious and spiritual nature of the Revolution as its principal distinguishing feature:

"This revolution is different from all other revolutions in the world."

(Statements of Ayatollah Khamenei on 11 February 2000)

This analysis highlights the essential difference between the Islamic Revolution and other major world revolutions, such as the French and Russian revolutions, which were largely founded upon materialist ideologies like liberalism and Marxism. The Supreme Leader identifies faith as the foundational element of the Revolution, present at all levels, from leadership to the masses. The people's deep faith, inclination toward divine justice, opposition to domination and moral corruption under the Pahlavi regime, and adherence to Qur'anic values collectively generated powerful spiritual motivations that mobilized the masses.

These characteristics distinguished the Revolution from materialist Western models and led to the formation of a cohesive collective identity grounded in religion and spirituality, an identity that remains the primary secret of the Revolution's emergence and endurance to this day.

3.2.   The Role of Ethical and Spiritual Values in the Survival of the Islamic Revolution

The findings clearly demonstrate that after the victory of the Revolution, its survival and continuity have been directly dependent on the preservation and deepening of the very spiritual values that had functioned as the driving force during its formative phase. In his statements, the Leader of the Revolution has cited prominent manifestations of this faith-based resilience, including the conscious and widespread presence of the people at critical national and religious junctures; the magnificent, million-person funeral procession of Martyr Qasem Soleimani, which transformed into an unparalleled referendum in support of the Axis of Resistance; and the continuous participation in annual marches that symbolize the renewal of allegiance to revolutionary ideals. These massive social actions are not merely emotional or short-lived reactions, but rather emerge from a deeply rooted faith and a profound belief in the authenticity of the Revolution's ideals. Within this framework, spirituality functions as a strategic asset that strengthens national cohesion against destructive pluralisms, generates active resistance in the face of escalating economic pressures and psychological warfare by enemies, and prevents the penetration and hegemony of secular values and alien cultures.

Imam Khomeini, regarding the ultimate objective of the Revolution, states:

"The ultimate goal of the Revolution is inner transformation and a spiritual revolution, not merely changing the name of the government from a monarchical regime to an Islamic Republic… Are we supposed to go about our business and feel at ease? No, we are still on the path. We have not yet implemented the content of Islam, the reality of Islam, in Iran. Yes, we all voted for the Islamic Republic, that is correct; but Islam does not come by votes alone. Formally, Iran is now an Islamic Republic by the vote of the people, but the content of Islam must be realized within this Islamic Republic. Simply saying 'Islamic Republic' while all its dimensions remain un-Islamic does not constitute Islam. Those who once claimed Islam, *Muʿāwīya* himself shouted "Islam," prayed in congregation, and even led prayers… We will reach the final destination on the day when everything we have becomes Islamic." (Imam Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 12, 415–418)

Based on Imam Khomeini's perspective, the "Survival" of the Islamic Republic is not a political–structural matter, but rather an existential and essential issue that is directly tied to spirituality. From his viewpoint, reliance on the "Form" of the system, namely the title "Islamic Republic" and the legal structure derived from popular vote, without infusing the "Content," which is inner transformation and a spiritual revolution, does not guarantee the system's survival. He conceives of the Revolution as a continuous and never-ending

"Process" of becoming Islamic, rather than a completed "Project" finalized in 1979. Consequently, any stagnation along this spiritual path signifies the beginning of decay. This inner transformation is not merely an individual moral recommendation, but a fundamental strategy for the system's survival through root-level confrontation with corruption, enhancement of efficiency, and deepening of substantive legitimacy. His crucial warning against "*Muʿāwīyan Islam*" addresses precisely this danger of "Substantive Distortion": "A system that preserves Islamic forms and rituals while being emptied of the spirit of justice and spirituality, thereby collapsing from within. Accordingly, in this line of thought, spirituality is not a peripheral matter but the foundation of strategic security and the existential condition for the survival of the Islamic Republic against its greatest threat, namely, identity alienation."

The continuity and resilience of the Islamic Revolution require a constant challenge by the Islamic Republic against erroneous cultural and social traditions. In a foundational discussion on cultural invasion in 1992 AD (1371 SH), the Leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, clearly articulated this two-sided confrontation:

"When the Islamic Revolution came, it struck the chest of the Western aggressor like a fist, pushed him back, and halted the cultural invasion. In the early years of the Revolution, you suddenly saw that our people, within a short period, felt profound changes in their morals and spirituality. Forgiveness increased. Greed and avarice decreased. Cooperation increased. Inclination toward religion increased. Extravagance decreased. Contentment increased. These are cultural matters, Islamic culture. This pertained to the period when the enemy's daily efforts to sow seeds of negative morality had been halted, and an inclination and attention toward Islam had emerged. Once again, the Islamic culture, ethics, manners, and moral traits that were embedded in our people's nature were revived. Of course, this was not deep; depth emerges when work on the issue continues for several years. This opportunity did not arise, and the invasion gradually resumed."

This quotation reveals the mechanism of "Cultural Purification" as one of the pillars of revolutionary endurance. From the Leader's perspective, the survival of the Revolution cannot be ensured solely through military or political struggle; rather, it requires an ongoing "Cultural Jihad" to replace entrenched negative moral traits with Islamic virtues. Here, spirituality plays the role of an immune system that generates resistance against cultural invasion and preserves the authentic identity of society. Thus, the Revolution's durability depends on deepening the very ethical transformation that characterized its initial phase.

In continuation of these remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei, while emphasizing the enemies' efforts to weaken the commendable Islamic ethics of the Iranian people, also points to internal factors and stresses the necessity of continuous "Collective Self-purification" for the Revolution's survival. In his intellectual framework, revolutionary endurance is a dynamic process rather than a fixed achievement. Survival is contingent upon a two-front struggle: "Confronting external aggression and purifying internal afflictions. This perspective shifts the responsibility for endurance away from governance alone and transforms it into a collective duty to institutionalize ethics at all levels of society, neglect of which will lead to the gradual erosion of revolutionary achievements." (cf. Statements of the Supreme Leader on 21/05/1992)

In recent years, however, Ayatollah Khamenei has adopted an assertive approach toward "Western Culture," which he considers the result of the Revolution's adherence to ethical values. For instance, regarding the issue of women, he states:

"They asked me: what defense do you have against what Westerners say about the issue of women in your country? I said: "We have no defense, we have an offensive! On the issue of women, we are claimants against the West; we accuse the West. They are the ones oppressing women, humiliating women, lowering the status of women; in the name of freedom, in the name of employment, in the name of assigning responsibility, they subject women to spiritual, psychological, emotional pressures and personal and dignitary insults. They must answer for this."

(Statements of the Supreme Leader in a meeting with elite women on 22 May 2011)[4]

As noted, the assertive approach of Ayatollah Khamenei in recent years is rooted in the Revolution's deep commitment to ethical values, and his remarks on the issue of women represent a clear example of this stance. When he decisively declares, "We have no defense, we have an offensive," this offensive does not arise from military or political power, but from a position of superior moral authority. The foundation of this challenge lies in invoking core ethical concepts such as "Oppression," "Humiliation," and "Violation of Dignity," which, in his view, occur in the West under deceptive labels such as "Freedom" and "Employment." In reality, it is this firm belief and commitment to the inherent dignity of women that grants him the confidence to shift the arena and place the West, rather than himself, on trial as the primary defendant in this moral crisis. Thus, this "Claim-making" is not a political assertion,

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[4]. https://farsi.khamenei.ir/newspart-print?id=12518&nt=2&year=1390&tid=3957

but the outcome of ethical values upon which the Islamic Revolution was founded from its inception, and which in its second forty years have ensured the endurance and moral superiority of revolutionary culture over other cultures, particularly Western culture.

3.2.1.   The Inseparable Link Between Spirituality and Justice-Seeking: The Backbone of Systemic Endurance

In the monotheistic worldview of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, spirituality and ethics are not merely personal emotions or individual experiences, but universal and system-building realities that define the moral, social, and political foundations of the Islamic system. This spirituality, which arises from deep faith in God, absolute servitude, and sincere devotion, possesses an inherent characteristic known as "Opposition to Oppression," which binds it inseparably to the concept of justice. According to this perspective, the coexistence of genuine spirituality with the acceptance of oppression, domination, or tyranny constitutes a fundamental contradiction. As he emphatically states:

"A spiritual person who compromises with oppression, with tyranny, with an unjust system of domination, what kind of spirituality is this? We cannot understand such spirituality." (Statements of Ayatollah Khamenei on 30 August 2005)[5]

This pivotal statement introduces "Revolutionary Spirituality" as the essence of the Islamic systems endurance. The survival of the Revolution depends on rejecting "Secular and indifferent spirituality" that retreats into individual isolation and reconciles with oppression. By defining spirituality as a justice-oriented and anti-oppression force, the Leader transforms the society's spiritual energy into a permanent power for confronting both internal injustice and external domination. This linkage prevents the Revolution from collapsing into conservatism and indifference, and keeps it constantly in a state of "Revolutionary Agency."

In Islamic logic, justice means placing everything in its proper position and preventing any form of transgression or oppression. A fundamental characteristic of this definition is the refusal to remain silent in the face of injustice and tyranny, as stated by Imam Ali (AS):

"The finest form of justice is supporting the oppressed." (Āmidī, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 2, 394; no. 2977)

Imam Ali (AS) further declares:

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[5]. https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=3304

"Had it not been for the presence of the people, the completion of the argument by the existence of supporters, and the covenant God has taken from scholars that they must not remain silent in the face of the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have cast the reins of the caliphate upon its shoulders." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 3)

As can be observed, these two pivotal statements from *Nahj al-Balāghah* fundamentally transform the paradigm of governance. Within this framework, governance is considered acceptable and legitimate only insofar as it effectively serves two principal objectives:

1. Establishing a system of truth and justice and combating all forms of falsehood in structure and practice;

2. Restoring the rights of the oppressed, eliminating class divisions, and actively defending the rights of the deprived against oppressors and affluent elites.

When Islamic spirituality is integrated with such a rational and ethical logic, the outcome is an unwavering commitment to supporting the oppressed and confronting the oppressors, not only at the domestic level but also on the global stage. This profound linkage between ethics, spirituality, and justice has also shaped the doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy. From the outset of the Revolution, principles such as supporting oppressed nations (including Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen), opposing the hegemony of major powers, and rejecting any humiliating engagement with oppressive regimes have constituted enduring pillars of the country's foreign policy. These principles are rooted in the same "Anti-oppression Spirituality" that refuses submission to the system of domination even under the harshest conditions of pressure and sanctions. Morality grounded in spirituality elevates foreign policy beyond purely materialistic and interest-driven calculations, endowing it with an idealistic and value-oriented identity. Within this framework, "Support for the Oppressed" is not a negotiable political tactic, but a divine obligation and an intrinsic component of the Revolution's identity.

3.3. The Impact of Ethical and Spiritual Values on the Advancement of the Islamic Revolution

Within the intellectual framework of the two Leaders of the Revolution, ethical and spiritual values are not merely factors for survival and preservation of the status quo; rather, they constitute the driving engine and propulsive force behind the stage of growth, development,

and flourishing of the Islamic Revolution. This perspective elevates spirituality from an individual virtue to a strategic variable for civilizational development. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, considers this achievement one of the most remarkable and even miraculous outcomes of the Revolution:

"The Islamic Revolution succeeded in significantly increasing spirituality and morality in the public sphere of society; this itself is another miracle of the active and forward-looking Revolution." (Statements of Ayatollah Khamenei on 11 February 2019)

This statement introduces an "Inverse Equation" relative to Western development paradigms. Whereas secular models regard development as a precursor to the decline of public religiosity, the revolutionary intellectual framework defines genuine societal growth and flourishing as contingent upon the deepening of spirituality and ethics. Accordingly, the indicator of progress in a revolutionary society is not merely gross domestic product or material infrastructure, but rather the "Caliber of spirituality and morality in the public sphere." This spirituality generates the social energy required for forward movement and for overcoming obstacles.

Martyr Professor Morteza Motahhari also emphasized this intrinsic linkage between spirituality and progress, considering it a necessary condition for realizing the Revolution's foundational ideals, such as justice. He stated:

"If we forget spirituality, we deprive the Revolution of a driving force," and in response to those who championed justice as their primary slogan, he asserted: "Without spirituality, justice is impossible." (Motahhari, n.d: 128)

Imam Khomeini located the root of this forward-driving power in an inner transformation and a collective transition from "Self-centeredness" to "God-centeredness" at the national level, a transformation that brought about victory and flourishing:

"This elimination of multiple inclinations and turning away from the self toward God, indeed, our nation turned away from itself and turned toward God. It disregarded the desires of the ego and focused entirely on establishing the Islamic Republic. This was orientation toward God; it was self-transcendence and attachment to God. This was the secret, the secret of the Revolution's victory and flourishing." (Khomeini: 1, 58)

In this analysis, Imam Khomeini identifies the "Transition from collective egoism toward divine will" as the core of the Revolution's soft power. Flourishing, in this view, is the product of a form of "Spiritual Engineering" in which individual and group interests are

subordinated to a transcendent ideal, namely, the realization of divine sovereignty. This "Purposeful Self-sacrifice" concentrates dispersed social energies at a focal point, generating an extraordinary capacity for growth and civilizational advancement that transcends material calculations.

In the Second Phase of the Revolution Statement, Ayatollah Khamenei offers a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon, elucidating Imam Khomeini's role as a gnostic leader and his impact on the faith-based foundations of society, while enumerating various dimensions of this spiritual growth:

"Imam Khomeini significantly elevated the level of spirituality and morality in the public space of society. The religious and ethical approach in the Islamic Republic attracted receptive and luminous hearts, especially among the youth, and the environment shifted in favor of religion and morality. The struggles of young people in harsh arenas, including the Sacred Defense, were accompanied by remembrance, supplication, and a spirit of brotherhood and sacrifice… Mosques and religious spaces experienced unprecedented vitality. Waiting lists for spiritual retreats (*I'tikāf*) filled with thousands of young people, professors, and students… and queues for jihadi service camps expanded, all during a period in which the growing moral decline of the West had marginalized ethics and spirituality across large parts of the world. This, too, is another miracle of the active and progressive Islamic Revolution and system." (Second Phase of the Revolution Statement on 11 February 2019)[6]

This passage articulates a macro-thesis concerning the "Dual and synergistic function of spirituality" in the post-establishment era of the Revolution. On the one hand, spirituality functions as a cultural immune system that inoculates society against the expanding tide of secularism and the moral crises of modernity, thereby safeguarding identity (defensive function). On the other hand, and more importantly, it becomes a generator of social energy for growth and flourishing. Contrary to passive interpretations that reduce religiosity to conservatism, this intellectual framework demonstrates how spirituality can be translated into constructive action and innovative models of development. Phenomena such as "Jihadi service camps," "Faith-oriented scientific movements," and "Duty-based social participation" are not merely cultural activities; rather, they represent manifestations of an indigenous model of governance and development in which "Spiritual motivation" replaces or complements "Material motivation."

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[6]. https://farsi.khamenei.ir/newspart-index?id=41673&nt=4&year=1397&tid=1246#100942

Accordingly, the Islamic Revolution has not only resisted the global trend of spiritual decline, but has also succeeded in creating a "Positive Dialectic" between religiosity and progress. Within this dialectic, the deepening of spirituality leads to the enhancement of society's material and scientific capacities, while these advancements, in turn, provide a platform for the further flourishing of divine values. From the perspective of the Leader of the Revolution, this achievement constitutes proof of the unique effectiveness of the civilizational paradigm of the Islamic Revolution in its phase of growth and maturation. In the strategic doctrine of the two Leaders of the Revolution, spirituality is elevated from a cultural virtue to a strategic catalyst for the transition from system-building to civilization-building. By defining a synergistic relationship between deepened faith and accelerated development, this paradigm supplies the driving force necessary for civilizational evolution. Ultimately, this "Positive Dialectic" between spirituality and progress not only demonstrates the effectiveness of the Islamic Revolution's model in the growth phase, but also provides the essential soft and hard infrastructures required to realize the ultimate goal: the formation of a New Islamic Civilization as an inspiring and competitive global model.

Conclusion

By analyzing the intellectual framework of Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, this study demonstrates that ethical and spiritual values are not peripheral variables, but rather the strategic foundation and the generating and sustaining cause of the Islamic Revolution across its three stages of "Emergence," "Survival," and "Advancement." The findings confirm that this doctrine, by elevating struggle to the level of a "Divine Duty" and redefining "Anti-oppression spirituality," has served as the driving engine and guarantor of national resilience. Accordingly, the linkage between politics and spirituality is defined as a vital and infrastructural principle for the Revolution's identity, cohesion, and macro-level orientation.

Strategic Implications and Practical Consequences

These findings constitute not merely a theoretical synthesis, but also carry undeniable strategic implications for preserving and advancing the Revolution:

- A Strategic Warning to the Governance System:

The most significant outcome of this research is a serious warning: "Any managerial approach that treats cultural and spiritual issues as "Secondary" or peripheral to economics and politics is directly weakening the vital artery and primary source of the system's soft power. Consequently, cultural and ethical policymaking must be placed at the center of macro-level planning as a matter of "National security necessity," rather than as a luxury."

- Providing a Criterion for Damage Assessment:

This study offers a key metric for diagnosing systemic vulnerabilities. The degree of "Disjunction between politics and spirituality" in the performance of officials and institutions can serve as an indicator for measuring deviation from original ideals and assessing the system's effectiveness against soft threats.

- Modeling for Cultural Actors:

For the cultural front of the Revolution, these findings emphasize that the most effective practical action lies not merely in surface-level activities, but in the reproduction and deepening of the same spiritual and ethical infrastructure that constituted the Revolution's generating cause. This requires a focus on collective self-purification, the promotion of justice-seeking, and the internal cleansing of society from entrenched negative residues.

Suggested Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study open up new horizons for researchers:
- **Survey-based studies:** Examining the degree of alignment and the gap between the "Doctrine of revolutionary spirituality" in the thought of the Leaders of the Islamic Revolution and the "Lived reality of religious faith" across different social strata in contemporary Iranian society;
- **Comparative studies:** Conducting a comparative analysis of the function of the "Spirituality factor" in the Islamic Revolution in comparison with other major world revolutions (both successful and unsuccessful), with the aim of identifying distinguishing features and the unique power-generating components of the Iranian model.

- **Institutional pathology:** Investigating the extent of success of responsible institutions in translating this intellectual framework into practical policies and effective executive programs, as well as identifying existing structural and functional obstacles.

Therefore, the final outcome of this research goes beyond a mere analytical proposition; it constitutes a roadmap demonstrating that the survival and dynamism of the Islamic Revolution depend on a continuous struggle (Jihad) to revive, deepen, and institutionalize the very ethical and spiritual essence that has been, and will remain, the point of its origin and the secret of its continuity.

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