

## Recognising the Concept of Political Excellence in Ayatollah Khamenei's Thought

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### Abstract

Development and progress as a complex concept based on a process have various dimensions and levels usually studied in economic, political, social, and cultural development. Political development is one of the essential dimensions and indicators critical in theories and approaches to development in schools of thought and political sociology studies. While defining and clarifying the concept of "Political Excellence" and recognising the differences between it and the idea of "Political Development" and introducing the indicators of this exploratory concept, the present article examines them in terms of content from Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective. The main question is about the place of political excellence idea and progress in Ayatollah Khamenei's political thought. In response, it should be said that in his view, political excellence will be achieved by considering local conditions and domestic equipment, which is a new viewpoint and an acceptable model to replace with the concept of Western political development. Explaining the concept of political excellence, while considering the Western models of development unsuccessful, emphasising the indigenous Iranian-Islamic model of progress, he expressed seven signs and indicators for the desired model of political excellence and improvement, some of which, such as struggle, the spirit of risk-taking and discipline, the foundations of Islamic epistemology and attention to the two dimensions of human [body and soul], are the prelude to excellence and progress, and others, such as ensuring the independence of the country, producing the science and realising the social justice, is the result of excellence and improvement. In explaining the manifestations of political excellence and progress, he also expresses characteristics of the people such as awareness and insight, participation and presence in scenes and elections, and public monitoring and unity.

**Keywords:** Political Excellence, Political Progress, Ayatollah Khamenei, Independence, Political Development

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## Introduction

According to the notion that development exists in popular literature, development and progress have been one of the most controversial concepts in contemporary history; being developed means being Westernized. From this perspective, a developing or underdeveloped country can see its future in the developed country of today. Thus, development means westernisation in all its dimensions. This kind of development is not what Islam thinks of. It is noteworthy and worth mentioning that in the plan of the Islamic-Iranian model of progress, one of the issues emphasised is the difference between the concept of excellence and progress with Western development, which is also considered in this study. According to Ayatollah Khamenei, innovation, excellence, and progress are history's traditions, and human life has no meaning without them. Therefore, if development and progress are appropriately understood, they will no longer be misused or opposed. He says, "We should recognise development and progress, and see the progress model for our country, our society. There have always been two misconceptions about progress and evolution leading to progress. One wrong tendency is the betrayals committed in the name of progress and evolution, ... and on the other hand, there have been and are those who oppose any innovation and change. There have been these two opposing tendencies". According to him, political excellence and progress can be achieved based on a monotheistic worldview, revelation-oriented rationality, and components such as political participation, political independence, and the competence of agents. According to him, in the religion of Islam, not only is there no opposition to the transcendence and forward political and social movement of man, which raises him in the hierarchy of existence to the best of beings, but the fundamental mission of all Prophets and infallible Imams was nothing other than this matter. He believes in paying attention to the movement of society by explicitly distancing it from the two ends of the spectrum of extremism and heresy: "Prophets have come to build the world in a new way, to eradicate disorder, to bring about a resurrection in the ignorant environment of the time. Build a society based on monotheism, social justice, respect for human beings, freedom and legal equality between all groups and individuals, the denial of exploitation, tyranny and hoarding; giving field to human talents, encouraging thinking and learning, and in short, a society that is the cradle of human upbringing and excellence from all sides and with all its main dimensions which puts him on the path of his historical evolution from a significant turning point. This is the duty to which the prophets of God have been inspired to rise" (Khamenei, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 15-16). This arousal for the uprising is the

constant character of a transcendent society and the main distinguishing feature between the transcendent community and the developed society. The present article tries to recognise political excellence and progress from Ayatollah Khamenei's point of view through an analytical-descriptive method and documentary and library resources.

### 1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The religion of Islam emphasises reason and science, followed by criticism and innovation, Ijtihad and Tafaqquh [Knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence], deep thinking and having scientific ethics and spirit, scientific conscience, critical thinking, relying on reasons, arguments, evidence and documents; submission only in the face of truth, as well as dialogue, tolerance, accepting conflict of opinions, peace, tranquillity, harmony and a good debate<sup>۱</sup>. In Islam and Islamic culture, unlike Catholic Christianity and like modernity, there is a deep emphasis on human dignity and status, individual freedom and rights, intellect, science, the world, matter and nature, livelihood and wealth, work, production and trade, while the difference is that in Islam, all these cases have been considered and emphasised in a spiritual, religious and heavenly context and with a divine direction. The moral and spiritual context arising from the teachings, training, guidelines and worship functions of Islam can prevent the extremist and destructive orientations of those items, which are market-oriented, capitalist and secular extremist society and economy, have harmed man, nature, the world, human life, as well as world peace, security, and justice, and has caused meaninglessness, self-alienation, destruction of the environment, the commodification of everything, death of emotions and love of one another (Muwathaqi, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 104- 105). Where God Almighty addresses the Prophet in the Holy Quran; says: “I am, but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your Allah is one Allah: whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as a partner”<sup>۲</sup>, has made faith and decent action the only condition for human transcendence and them reaching the position of nearness to Himself [God]. It is clear to everyone that the meaning of decent action is human social action, behaviour in society, and relation with others. We find the best definition in Mulla Sadra's works if we want to precisely follow the concept of transcendence and political excellence in Islamic thought. In Sadra's view, motion means the gradual departure of the object from power to action. Power and actuality are the existential

۱. Quran 16:125.

۲. Quran 18:110.

levels of the thing, so movement means coming out of imperfection to perfection and coming out of weakness is intense and involves evolution (Mulla Sadra, 1999: 84). In this view, which is the summary of Islamic thought about the excellence and progress of man and society, both the course of the human self and his social movement is a permanent and uninterrupted matter that constantly takes him from the lowest to the highest ranks. In this sense, Islam is not an individualistic religion like what is interpreted today about Christianity. Still, it is social and political. Without this combination, it is impossible to reach the position of 'the Khalifatullah' [God's representative on earth], which is the ultimate point of human excellence. Contrary to what some have tried to consider Mulla Sadra's Four Journeys as a person-centred mystical movement, contrary to the name of these four journeys, a journey from the creation to the truth; a journey from the truth to the truth is the truth; a journey from the truth to the creation with the truth; a journey from the creation to the creation in the creation with the truth. In Sadra's school, the origin, process, and destination are the creation of God, that is, the community of human beings. The view of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on human progress and excellence is derived from Islamic thought. It is influenced by the same theory of Sadra, who believes: "The world, in the sense of the opportunities of human life, in the sense of the scattered blessings in the world, in the sense of the beauties and sweets, the bitterness and the calamities; is the means of human growth and evolution. From the point of view of religion, these are also tools for man to continue his path to excellence and development and the emergence of God's talents. The [material] world, in this sense, is inseparable from religion" (Khamenei, 2005 AD/1384 SH: Khamenei. ir).

This theory's primary and inspiring mediator during the Islamic Revolution and for Ayatollah Khamenei is this school's great commentator and agent, Imam Khomeini. Because when Imam, who had previously introduced Mulla Sadra as the greatest philosopher of theology and wrote works on the interpretation of Sadra's philosophy and mysticism, was asked that except for the Prophet and Imam Ali. Did they influence you and your personality the most? He mentions Mulla Sadra in philosophy (Khomeini, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 5/271). Therefore, the concept of excellence and progress has a special place in Islamic principles and teachings, and here we refer to some of its most essential principles in Islam:

A) Rationality; reason and its use in human decisions, behaviours and actions are fundamental from the Islamic point of view. The intellect emphasised in Islam is beyond the instrumental mind, whose particular

task is to measure and calculate economic, livelihood and daily affairs. This rationality in Islam is the fundamental rationality and, more precisely, "Wisdom," which is higher than the level of experience and experimental sciences. Instrumental intellect is along with wisdom and genuine reason. In Islamic literature, logic has been introduced as the inner argument of man;

B) Scientism and knowledge-centeredness, the promotion of science and knowledge to the extent referred to as light and enlightenment, indicates the fundamental importance of science. Considering it as a public obligation for the whole life span and wherever possible shows the remarkable value of science in Islam. The biography of the Prophet of Islam and the Impeccable Imams is full of the principle of scientism and the importance of its expansion and promotion in human social excellence. The flourishing of Islamic civilisation has been realised in a part of history in the light of the essence and advancement of science and knowledge;

C) Stability and perseverance in work; the principle of doing work with firmness and steadfastness is one of the basic principles and essential indicators of political excellence in Islam to the extent that the price and value of every human being depend on the work that he does well and worthily (Torabi, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 66-67);

D) Discipline, and in principle, development is possible with the order and stages of work. Therefore, society is highly dependent on demand in all walks of life to observe the chronological and practical order of decisions and actions in excellence and growth. Discipline has been a prominent feature of organisations based on economic merit and development optimising human material resources. The Holy Qur'an has repeatedly spoken of the discipline that governs the system of existence<sup>٣</sup> and has introduced obedience and discipline as the primary condition of society's progress and excellence<sup>٤</sup>. Also, while explaining the order in the life of the prophets, He has put order and beauty in a close connection<sup>٥</sup> and has also referred to order as timing;

E) Dignity and pride of the Islamic society. Dignity means strength and invincibility. Important indicators of the dignity of the Islamic community are the level of faith and Taqwa [righteousness] of the majority of society, the level of unity and solidarity in the spirit of cooperation between them, the excellence of modern knowledge and technology in terms of quantity and quality, the percentage of independence in various dimensions, self-sufficiency with monetary authority and readiness to face military aggression

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<sup>٣</sup>. Quran 7:54.

<sup>٤</sup>. Quran 18:72-73.

<sup>٥</sup>. Quran 52:20.

and cultural invasion (Torabi, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 67);

F) Legalism. For material calculations, planning and policy-making in excellence and progress to be feasible and effective by the people and the government, legal stability and the rule of law must be taken seriously. Calculations for the future will be codifiable when the future situation can be partially predicted with legal support. The Holy Quran has repeatedly spoken about the legality of society and its developments;

G) Interaction between government and society. In Islamic literature and teachings, the government institution has a fundamental duty to provide the grounds for the growth and excellence of culture in economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. On the other hand, the people and the public sector, about the principle of shared responsibility, must interact with the government, hold the government accountable, and interact logically within laws and regulations. The gap between the government, the public sector and the institute and institutions upset the balance in growth and excellence of society (Torabi, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 67-68);

H) Freedom. While believing that man was created accessible, Islam considers space the cause of changes, progress, revolutions and civilisations and introduces release as the cause of society's advancement towards construction and growth (Alikhani, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 206). While emphasising freedom of belief, the Holy Quran considers liberty and freedom of choice as duty conditions. It has introduced release from all kinds of captivity in the philosophy of 'Bi'thah' as the fundamental principle of transcendence of man and society;<sup>ř</sup>

I) Poverty alleviation of society. Achieving the transcendent goals that God Almighty has in mind for the creation of humanity will be better possible when man does not feel deficient in terms of physical and material needs. In the Holy Quran, God Almighty introduces poverty as the cause of the tendency of human beings to ugliness and deviation from the right path.<sup>Ÿ</sup>

In different places of the Holy Quran, poverty alleviation has been emphasised in Islamic politics and culture;

J) Social justice. Perhaps nothing has been emphasised and recommended as much as justice in Islam. While explaining and highlighting justice in the culture of religions, the Holy Quran emphasises adherence to justice in judgment<sup>^</sup> and speaks of the rights of the minority and the establishment of justice as the governing principle of the politics and manners of the prophets: In many Surahs of the Holy Quran, social justice is emphasised.

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ř. Quran 7:157.

Ÿ. Quran 2:268.

^. Quran 4:58 and 5:45.

The Holy Quran introduces justice and fairness as the purpose of the prophets.<sup>9</sup> It can be argued that justice is the fundamental concept and pillar of political excellence in Islamic society.

### 1.1. Political System

The concept of a political system is a new approach to understanding the political phenomenon and includes political institutions and all kinds of political activities in society. The political system is part of the general system and implies the internal dependencies of the various components of this system. The political system and political theory concepts have been developed in recent years. According to the social sciences, the "System" concept is first used in anthropology. In politics, Easton and Almond have a prominent role in developing the "System" theory (Alem, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 149). According to Easton, the political system is a system of action and reaction in any society by which binding or authoritative distributions are created (ibid., 1994 AD/1373 SH: 150). Three primary and general arguments are distinguished in this definition—distribution of values by policy tools, distribution of authority, and the great importance of authority distribution. The same composite components distinguish the political system from other systems. Easton's understanding of the political system is cohesive and pervasive. The political system is a social subsystem, even though he considers the party and group subsystem in the political system as "Part of the Political System" (ibid., 1994 AD/1373 SH: 150-151). Almond accepts Easton's definition but opposes the use of the word authoritarian. Political systems have several features, including:

A) The political system has a software and program aspect and is more similar to a comprehensive theory that pays attention to the organisation of various affairs of society; therefore, it is general and indefinite;

B) It is not limited to time and place. That is, it is not specific to a particular time and may fulfil at different times; as well, can use in other areas and communities;

C) The political system, whose approach is to establish political order and organisation, is thematically in line with the general concept of politics. In other words, political and communication affairs are considered a subset of social affairs; but it regulates and manages the affairs of society, including communication, economic and cultural experiences. Establishing a logical and inclusive relationship between these three areas is the nature of macro and political management, which is presented in the form of a political system;

D) In this definition, the critical issue of "Growth" has been considered

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<sup>9</sup>. Quran 57:35.

the goal of social change. Of course, growth, perfection, and prosperity are defined in a particular way in each political system's doctrinal and educational perspective. Sometimes growth and excellence are characterised by high human values and greater enjoyment of religion and material possibilities (Nosrati, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 40-41).

### **1.2. Excellence and Progress**

The words "Excellence" and "Progress" are normative-grammatical concepts. We must distinguish this word from other descriptive terms, such as change and development. The concept of excellence and progress has long been overshadowed by the concepts of development that have been honoured in industrialised and developing countries. At the same time, the concept of excellence and progress is proposed to clarify the active, potential and creative role of socio-cultural values in the concepts of growth and development. In the progress definition, human beings' material and spiritual needs in achieving development are considered together. Excellence and progress mean a development that, in addition to increasing economic production, accumulation of capital, environmental considerations and natural resources between generations, changes the social, political and institutional structure. It also emphasises the category of human dignity. Therefore, excellence and progress are tied to deep and achievable human values. Thus, excellence and progress are valuable and will be embedded in each society's culture, beliefs, and ideology. In other words, the excellence and development of countries, including development, are based on the values and cultures of their society. Progress includes material economic development and cultural excellence (spiritual and moral) (Sadra, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 85).

### **1.3. Political Excellence and Political Progress**

Excellence and progress are desirable development models formulated according to cultural and historical conditions and based on the belief of heritage and religious faith. It is Iranian because it is produced in Iran and is Islamic because it is based on Islam's theoretical and philosophical foundations. Therefore, excellence and progress are the movement forward and towards perfection, which in addition to the material dimensions, includes spiritual dimensions. This progress will be fulfilled if this balanced and proportionate movement moves forward. Political excellence and progress are how society and social institutions strive to embody Islamic values in the community to achieve perfection. More objectively, political excellence and progress are the behaviour of an individual or an organ or the whole society, using the best tools and a complete plan to achieve the goal of the political system as soon as possible (Mesbah Yazdi,



2009 AD/1388 SH: 181-182). Political excellence and progress are the leadership and management of the relations of individuals and organisations, the governmental affairs and the foreign relations of a country. This concept in our country, in addition to material and economic welfare, combined with cultural and spiritual growth and the rule of Islamic values, in a word, ensures the worldly and otherworldly happiness of citizens that is achieved through the practice of Islamic commands and regulations (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 183). The main framework for discussing political excellence and progress quantitatively and qualitatively is based on the greater participation of people in political affairs and their better understanding of political issues (ibid.).

## **2. Excellence and Progress from the Perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei**

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, the country and the revolution in the current situation need a concept of progress, a meaning derived from the Islamic divine teachings and based on Islamic jurisprudence and wisdom. According to him, the country's intellectual and cultural elites should propose a new concept, that is, beyond the standard pictures of "Development" and "Progress" mentioned by modernists, which are related to the historical-cultural ground of the modern West. Hence, they have considered using "Progress," which means individual and social excellence, instead of the joint word development. In this sense, excellence and progress are targeted programs for the growth of all levels of a particular country, so any development finds meaning focused on a cultural context. As a result, there is no program and pattern of generalisable development, and it is not practical for other countries and cultures (Haqqani, 2010 AD/1389 SH). Each country's historical, geographical, political, cultural, temporal, and spatial conditions should consider excellence and progress. According to Ayatollah Khamenei, the West divided the world into developed, developing and underdeveloped countries through a propaganda tactic. Maybe imagine that a developed country has advanced technology and knowledge and is undeveloped and growing in the same way; at the same time, it is not valid; the set title and the other two titles have a value load and a valuation aspect. A developed country means a western country with its characteristics, culture, customs, behaviour and political orientations. A developing means a country becoming westernised, and undeveloped also means a not Westernized country. Therefore, while emphasising learning the positive points of Western development, they do not accept development in the sense of westernisation because it is anti-value in Western culture. In his view, "When we say progress, development should not be associated with

the common Western concept." The intended progress may have common aspects with what is understood today as the concept of development in the world. Still, the word progress has meaning in our linguistic system, which should not be mistaken with development in today's Western verbal system. What we are looking for is not necessarily Western development. to become Western. There are positive points in the set of behaviours, actions, shapes and figures of the western developed countries that we will learn if we have to learn them; but in our opinion, there is also a set of anti-values things in it. Therefore, we do not accept the collection of westernisation or the so-called progressive westernisation; the progress we want is something else (Khamenei, 2009 AD/1388 SH: Khamenei. ir). The noteworthy point to consider in the above-mentioned is the leadership's attempt to seek a new concept in the development debate and recommend and emphasise conceptualisation in this area.

It is undeniable that every development is for humans and returns to them. Therefore, commonalities can be found between all development patterns. Still, suppose the product in its specific and contextual meaning refers to certain land and nation to achieve it. In that case, we should re-examine and recognise the characteristics of culture and context that each particular development pattern suggests (Haqqani, 2010 AD/1389 SH). While emphasising the necessity of using all the country's capacities in formulating a strategic model for the excellence and development of the Islamic-Iranian society, the Supreme Leader believes that a single model for excellence and progress in communities cannot be found. There is no single model for improvement [excellence] that we can see, go to, and create all the components of that model ourselves and implement in our country. Progress in our country - with our historical, geographical, and territorial conditions, our nation's situation, customs, culture and heritage - has its unique pattern. We have to search and find that pattern. That pattern will lead us to progress; other versions are not helpful; neither the American version of progress nor the European, none of these can be a desirable model for the development of our country. We have to look for our native model. Our art will be to be able to find a native model of progress tailored to our circumstances. Epistemological foundations affect the type of progress that is desirable or sublime. Every society and nation has epistemological, philosophical and moral foundations, which are the solid foundations and tell us what kind of progress is desirable and undesirable. According to our epistemological foundations, we can determine whether this progress is legitimate or illegitimate, desirable or undesirable, fair or unfair. Therefore, epistemological and moral foundations and principled and philosophical

thoughts are decisive in defining progress in a country. If we count the points of difference between progress with Islamic logic and Western development, we should not neglect the commonalities. There is also a common ground that these have been fully present in the development of the Western developed countries. The spirit of risk-taking, initiative, action and discipline are essential. In any society, without these, there will be no progress. These are also necessary (Khamenei, 2008 AD/1387 SH: Khamenei. ir). If we want to compile an Islamic model for the country's development, we must pay attention to its aspects. It does not mean merely material progress; the goal is material and spiritual progress. It is also found in Islamic sources. On the one hand, Islam emphasises work and effort and, on the other hand, defines requirements for the Islamic society and its citizens. In Islam, even economic work, if done with a specific intention and motivation, is accompanied by a spiritual and a special reward in the hereafter. Therefore, in the Iranian Islamic model of progress, both the country's and individuals' material and spiritual growth must be considered. However, the native conditions of Iran itself are also necessary (Haqqani, 2010 AD/1389 SH). Explaining the concept of excellence and political progress, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasises the role of teachers as the founders of excellence and political and cultural progress, introducing it as the concept of creating conditions in which human beings can think and understand the truth correctly. In such circumstances, misleading conspiracies and efforts will not work in that society; of course, this issue cannot be fixed by controversy and fuss and newspapers, but political [political excellence] and cultural development are founded only by the teacher (Khamenei, 1999 AD/1378 SH: Khamenei. ir). His intended model of excellence and progress is wholly rooted in Islamic ontology, epistemology and anthropology, and the first pillar is attention to the origin and then the resurrection. We took the model from Islam, and our people chose the Islamic system out of familiarity with Islam. Our people had read Islamic books and were familiar with the narrations and the Qur'an; therefore, they had some information about values, so they followed them. In the previous regime, these values were unknown. The revolution was to achieve those values (Khamenei, 2000 AD/1379 SH: Khamenei. ir).

### **3. Excellence and Progress, Model and Pattern of Indigenous Development**

Today, with the inefficiency of Western or Eastern development models for other countries, development based on each society's cultural and geographical characteristics has received serious attention from developing countries. Ayatollah Khamenei distinguishes between using the others'

experiences and following educational and inductive models and believes that the development model in the Islamic Republic of Iran, according to the Iranian people's cultural and historical conditions, is wholly indigenous and specific to the Iranian nation. The model of development in the Islamic Republic, regarding the cultural, historical, heritage and beliefs of these people, is an entirely indigenous model specific to the Iranian nation and should not be imitated anywhere; not from the World Bank, not the International Monetary Fund, not some left or right country; it has particular necessity everywhere. The difference between using others' experiences or following educational and inductive models is often abrogated. We should use experiences and knowledge. But the pattern, method and model must be chosen indigenously and internally (Khamenei, 2004 AD/1383 SH: Khamenei. ir). In his view, progress does not have an absolute meaning, a single pattern and model. Instead, different conditions affect the progress models creation. Accordingly, a progress model may be desirable for one country and exactly undesirable the same for another. He believes that progress in the Islamic Republic of Iran has its pattern with its historical, geographical, customs and culture. Therefore, we must look for our native model appropriate to our circumstances (Khamenei, 2008 AD/1387 SH: Khamenei. ir), the same political and social excellence model. Referring to the failure of Western models of progress and the fact that those models were formed with their conditions and principles, he believes that we must find improvement in the sense of political excellence with the Islamic-Iranian model. Western models are shaped by their circumstances, mental foundations, and principles, but they were unsuccessful. The Western model of progress is a failure model. Progress and development could enrich a few groups and a handful of families. But has enslaved, humiliated, and colonised other nations, created war and earned the government. It has spread corrupt morality within those countries, far from spirituality, prostitution, corruption, family destruction, etc. Therefore, it is not successful. We must find progress with the Islamic-Iranian model. 'Why do we say Islamic?' 'Why do we say Iranian?' we say Islamic because it is based on Islam's theoretical and philosophical foundations and the anthropological foundations of Islam. We say Iranian because it emerged from Iranian thought and initiative (Khamenei, 2007 AD/1386 SH: Khamenei. ir).

#### **4. The Islamic Revolution and the Formation of a Religious Government as a Model of Political Excellence and Progress**

In Ayatollah Khamenei's theory, discussing the excellence and progress model does not mean the decision to start progress in Iran. Instead, in his

view, the Iranian nation began its progress many years ago with the beginning of the Islamic movement. The formation of the Islamic system in Iran was the most significant and astonishing transformation, excellence and progress in Iran. Because a coup d'état and a hereditary and degenerate government became a real people's government. A new political system was formed based on Islamic teachings of the Shia type and Velayat-e Faqih. The Islamic political system in which the Supreme Leader, the executive and the legislature and the judiciary branches, the affiliated institutions and organs, and beyond all these, the people are its principles. Therefore, to approximate the mind and make the research objective, the discussion will be presented according to the structure of the political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was established based on the Velayat-e Faqih.

In his view, Iranian society began to move toward political excellence from the beginning of the revolution. According to him, progress in our country started with the revolution and the revolutionary movement. Under the pressure of dormant talents, a stagnant static society was transformed by a revolutionary movement without allowing any action in the deep sea of our national skills. Today, the formation of the Islamic Republic was a significant change, surprising and great progress. The nation could transform a hereditary government of a corrupt coup d'etat into a people's government, which is no higher than this, and it was a tremendous change and progress. With a theoretical discussion and a clear and disciplined definition of progress, we intend to create a shared belief first among the elite and then among all people. They should know what we are looking for and where we want to reach and that the various parts of the system know what they must do (Khamenei, 2007 AD/1386 SH). He believes the Islamic Revolution said a new word: the Islamic government. It did not follow the example of the East and the West. Of course, not accepting the model does not mean not using the positive points of Western or Eastern models. It also does not mean being complete and flawless, but over time it needs to complete and eliminate weaknesses (Khamenei, 1999 AD/1378 SH: Khamenei. ir). Revolution is a fundamental change based on values and a step forward. What happened in our country was the Islamic Revolution. The significant difference in the political, economic and cultural pillars of the society and a move on and action towards the progress of this country and this nation. Of course, in the revolutionary system, we did not use the East and the West model because we could not get a pattern of those whose systems we considered wrong and against the interests of humanity (Khamenei, 2000 AD/1379 SH: Khamenei. ir).

## **5. Indicators of Political Excellence and Progress According to the Ayatollah Khamenei**

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, a development is desirable and will be a model of the nation's excellence, which would be based on Islamic epistemological, moral and philosophical principles. It considers humans being two-dimensional, so build man's world and hereafter. It guarantees the country's independence, leads to producing science and knowledge, and fulfilling social justice. It should use some positive features of Western models, including the spirit of risk-taking and discipline. According to him, political excellence and economic progress are a prelude and means to reaching Islamic society to social justice, which is the goal of the model of the transcendent society (Khamenei, 1993 AD/1372 SH: Khamenei. ir). Regarding the political excellence and progress model, we first explain the theoretical foundations of political excellence and progress and then discuss the characteristics and components of political excellence. Features and political elements of the model of Islamic-Iranian progress are formed under the theoretical foundations derived from pure Islam and lead the political system to progress with lofty goals under the school of monotheism.

### **5.1. Epistemological Foundations**

Ayatollah Khamenei believes that we must consider society's bio-social and cultural conditions and its epistemological, philosophical, and moral foundations to achieve the desired progress and a transcendent community. These criteria and epistemological and ethical foundations affect the orientations and macro direction of improvement and excellence in the country and the political system. One who clumsily and irrationally chanted one day and shouted that we should go from head to toe and become European did not notice that Europe has a history, culture and epistemological foundations on which the progress of Europe is based that epistemological foundations. Maybe we don't accept some of those principles and misunderstand them. We have our own epistemological and moral foundations. According to our epistemological principles, we can determine which progress is legitimate or illegitimate, desirable or undesirable, just or unjust (Khamenei, 2009 AD/1388 SH: Khamenei. ir).

### **5.2. Humans Being Two-dimensional**

Ayatollah Khamenei expresses some progress characteristics based on the Islamic view and says it is based on the type of metaphysical view of man. Islam considers man a two-dimensional being who has both material and spiritual dimensions. He believes in "Islam as a two-dimensional being; with the world and the hereafter. It is the basis of all that needs to be considered

about progress; it is the main indicator. Our country and the Islamic society are advanced when they not only build the world of the people but should build their hereafter. Therefore, the balance between the world and the hereafter and looking at them is obligatory. It is a major progress indicator." (Khamenei, 2009 AD/1388 SH: Khamenei. ir) Humans being two-dimensional has a close relationship with political excellence and political progress; the belief in human beings as one-dimensional or two-dimensional plays a decisive role in the development of individuals and human societies. If one considers human existence only in the material and worldly dimension, as in the Western world, naturally consider human progress only in material and temporal prosperity development. Instead, when a school and intelligent system, in addition to the material dimension, consider the spiritual dimension as a genuine and eternal dimension of human beings; so, human progress and its indicators find a spiritual approach and pay attention to spiritual matters and needs put among the main concerns (Khaliliyan, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 73). Hence, in the discourse of Islamic transcendence and progress, in addition to the material and descending dimension of man, we must also focus on his transcendent and actual dimension. Because cultivating this human dimension fulfils the valid distinctions of man and flourishes his existential capacities. According to Ayatollah Khamenei's intelligent system, attention to being two-dimensions - material and spiritual dimensions - individual and social existence of man is the most crucial difference between the theory of political excellence and Western political development emphasises only the one-dimensional development of man.

### **5.3. Political Independence**

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, "Independence" is vital for achieving excellence and progress goals. "Independence" is essential in systems' political excellence and development. He always emphasises the need to guarantee independence, maintain decision-making power in the country's development model as an indicator, and not neglect and achieve apparent progress and compulsion to follow the West. Therefore, he believes that "Any progress model should guarantee the country's independence. It is considered an indicator. Any model designed for development that makes the country dependent degrades and pursues powerful, politically, militarily, and economically powerful countries are rejected." (Khamenei, 2009AD/1388SH: Khamenei. ir)

In his questioned model of political excellence, progress is accepted, which considers man as the only servant of God and his dependent He has no eyes or greed for foreign countries, especially Western societies. In explaining

the relationship between independence and political progress, and its relationship with the model of political excellence, we should pay attention to the fact that various historical, geographical, natural, human, temporal and spatial conditions affect the progress and excellence of a society.

It should be said that excellence and progress are not only profoundly linked to political independence, but the necessary condition for its emergence is political independence. Crossing a certain level of political autonomy provides the ground for progress and achievement of a transcendent society. Conversely, at different levels of development, the intensity of the growth of political independence varies. The lower level of countries' development shows less experience of their people gaining political independence. The low inexperience in political independence causes weaker support for progress and development (Taghizadeh Ansari, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 101).

#### **5.4. Social Justice**

Progress in the Islamic sense includes the transcendence concept, containing spiritual progress, and justice means giving every group or individual the right in society. Therefore, one of the rights is providing the necessary grounds and facilities to achieve the same spiritual progress in society. Just development is formed and becomes one of its examples (Shabannia, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 20). Ayatollah Khamenei believes in the relationship between justice and political excellence and society's progress: "In the social sphere, development must be tied to the people; people must be the centre of development. Justice is the main indicator. Planning and policy-making that ignores justice and fair distribution of wealth in society cannot provide our questioned vision and is not our desired plan." (Khamenei, 2003 AD/1382/05/15 SH: khamenei.ir)

Thus, he believes that political development without justice does not open the way for us but closes all the paths of man to reach transcendence and takes him away from the divine straight path, which is the only way to save human beings today.

#### **5.5. Struggle**

Transcendence and progress are not effortless and have many difficulties. Every turbulent current requires the strong will of a nation to reach the peaks of growth and excellence. Having the spirit of struggle and observing moral and religious principles is one of the requirements of this tortuous path. Ayatollah Khamenei believes that "If you want to progress, you have to fight; seeking convenience, isolation, incuriosity, looking at world events, and not entering the world's great arenas, will not bring progress to any country or nation. You have to go to the middle of the field, which is not necessarily a military battlefield. Political and moral battles are more important



today than military warfare. Today, many countries, governments and societies that are considered advanced in the world, if moral and political accounting, they will be humiliated." (Khamenei, 2009 AD/1388/02/27 SH: khamenei.ir)

### **5.6. Islamic Ruling**

According to the Islam political school, Ayatollah Khamenei believes that the characteristics of the Islamic ruler and Velayat-e Faqih are religious and spiritual norms. It is the opposite in the capitalist countries, which in their developmental theories, these characteristics depend on the powerful and wealthy faction. According to him, the index of the Islamic ruler is science, purity and wisdom. Science brings awareness; piety brings courage; insight ensures the country's interests and the nation. These are the main criteria regarding the Islamic political school (Khamenei, 2004 AD/1383/03/14 SH: Khamenei. ir). Thus, in his view, the Islamic government leader should have at least three main characteristics; jurisprudence, justice and righteousness, and management ability (having correct political and social insight). Accordingly, in the absence era of Imam Zaman, no one or group has the right to rule except a just jurist who, according to his jurisprudence, justice and management and with others' consultation and help, based on the requirements of the time, organise the elements of the Islamic government system firmly and dynamically.

### **5.7. Structural Separation**

Western development theories have based their discussion of the governmental function on absolute structural separation so that no unifying factor can reconcile them. However, Ayatollah Khamenei has emphasised the independence of all forces, the separation of powers, the word unity, and the faith brotherhood. He believes that the constitution determines the duties of each party. The executive branch manages the country and all the organisational affairs of the country and spends the large budget of the country. The legislature is responsible for legislating and overseeing the performance of government officials. The judiciary must prosecute law violators and fulfil their rights; so that no one can oppress or violate others. The leader's most important task is to determine macro policies try; that is, those things that determine the direction of the country and all laws, regulations, and practices must be in this direction (Khamenei, 2001 AD/1380 SH: Khamenei. ir). Therefore, in the approach to political excellence, Velayat-e Faqih is not an absolute and self-governing executive but a macro-policymaker of the country and a factor in creating unity among the three separate forces.

Ayatollah Khamenei believes that a transcendent and advanced government

is the *Karimeh* government; this government has a new message for the people of the world and is a symbol of religious democracy (Khamenei, 2001 AD/1380 SH: Khamenei. ir). In his view, the *Karimeh* government is dear and proud and has a firm belief in how the constitution and the duties and policies of the system have been set before it. It is impenetrable and does not see his property as light to make others light (Khamenei, 2001 AD/1380 SH: Khamenei. ir). This *Karimeh* government has some characteristics, including being active and practical, has attention to all dimensions and capacities of the country to create self-sufficiency, justice-making, making efforts to reduce and eliminate poverty and deprivation in the country, being trustworthy and honest through non-personal abuse of job opportunities and unnecessary squandering and unruly employment of relatives and preparation of formal documents, avoiding political turmoil and trying to establish peace and security in the country, having coordination and coherence in tasks and programs, and most importantly, pay attention to spirituality and morality (Khamenei, 2001 AD/1380 SH: Khamenei. ir).

### Conclusion

Political development in Western thought and schools differs significantly from political progress based on Islamic-Iranian propositions. Conventional political development is rooted in material theology. God Almighty is the origin and basis of political progress in political transcendence and Islamic-Iranian progress; therefore, power, government and rulers are accepted and approved by religious standards. Thus, the current political development is fundamentally different and, in some cases, opposed to political excellence and Islamic-Iranian progress. Political excellence and improvement are rooted in the religious principles and teachings of the Islamic school, in line with the goal of creation, guidance and salvation of human beings. Political excellence and progress in its Islamic-Iranian model and framework are formed under the Islamic theoretical foundations that lead to improving a political system with transcendent goals under the monotheistic school. In fact, because of the importance of the principles in development models in which pattern differences are derived, the model foundations of political excellence and Iranian Islamic progress are crucial. They have greater priority than in other cases. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is a divine and religious system, contrary to the current political development in the world, the theory of political excellence and its development is based on the principle of monotheism and God-oriented and the doctrinal foundations of Islam. It is opposite to

the patterns of political development in the West, where humanism and human-oriented are the basis of the work. The present study aimed to explain Ayatollah Khamenei's view on the idea of political excellence and progress by highlighting these differences between the theoretical foundations of Western political development and the macro approach of the Islamic school. By discussing the views and opinions of Ayatollah Khamenei at different times and situations, this paper concluded that Ayatollah Khamenei's understanding of development and progress is based on the principles and standards of the religion of Islam and society and provides for Islamic-Iranian organisation. This theory has results that can be used as a "Political excellence" concept as a conceptual exploration. In Ayatollah Khamenei's approach to political excellence, components and indicators such as independence, justice, political participation of the nation in the fate and decision-making of the country and the role of elites and rulers of the Islamic system in advancing the goals and aspirations of religious democracy are critical. His theory of religious democracy is also based on Islamic principles in which people have a high status. Therefore, the election of rulers by the people is a matter of Islamic law, and the validity of the people's vote has a religious origin. According to Ayatollah Khamenei, the political system of Islam is based on divine and Islamic principles in which the spirituality and materiality of society and individuals are considered together. Therefore, in his opinion, the political system is transcendent, advanced, desirable and legitimate, Islamic and of the Shia type and based on the principle of Velayat-e Faqih. This metaphysical system guarantees excellence in all directions and areas, including material, spiritual, political, cultural, economic and social, by observing indicators based on faith and piety. According to him, faith in God Almighty, purity, cultivation and self-improvement, self-confidence, patience and endurance are among the most important indicators and personal characteristics of agents and officials of the Islamic government that provide the path to political excellence of individuals and society.

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