

IMAM KHOMEINI'S CONCEPTION OF *MUSTAD'AFIN* AND MODERNITY'S CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

A Postmodernist Reading

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By using 'thin' and 'thick' words purely derived from Islamic metaphors and signifiers, Imam Khomeini castigates the West's claim for meta-narrative and pretension to universality. He deconstructs its appropriation of the cultural production of voiceless "others" and setting of the rules of the game - same/other, the West/the Rest, civilization/barbarism. Contrary to Muslim apologists, eclectics and hybridists' clichés of articulating Islam within the Western logocentric logic, the Imam articulates an overarching discourse in the idiom of Islamic truth regime with almost no reference at all to Western political doctrines. In particular, the Founder of the Islamic Republic's Qur'anic notion of *mustad'afin* (downtrodden) vis-à-vis that of *mustakbirin* (the arrogant) is a discourse outside modernity's logic of the Westphalian nation-state sovereignty. As guiding principles of its foreign policy, Iran tries "to prepare the way for the formation of a single world community... and to sustain the continuity of the struggle for the liberation of all-deprived and oppressed peoples (*mustad'afin*) throughout the world" (Preamble of the Constitution). It considers its ideal "the realization of human felicity

throughout human society”, and “independence, freedom and the rule of justice and Truth to be the right of all people of the world” (Article 154 of the Constitution). In sum, the notion of *mustad’afin* is a pursuit of what Rorty called ‘final vocabulary’. It is to turn upside down the table of “self/other” project. It is a tale of both de-centering and re-centering – the de-centering of modernity and re-centering of Islam.

KEYWORDS: Imam Khomeini; *mustad’afin*; postmodernism; Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran

INTRODUCTION

The Theoretical Landscape

Positivism is a philosophical movement characterized by an emphasis upon science and scientific method as the only sources of knowledge and a sharp distinction between the realms of fact and value. Its proponents believe that there are only two sources of knowledge: logical reasoning and empirical experience. Broadly speaking, it is a position which maintains that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe the phenomena—including international relations—that we experience.¹

The late 1970s saw the emergence of post-positivist theories in International Relations (IR). Post-positivism is a broad term that encompasses a diverse range of theoretical perspectives that share in the rejection of one or more aspects of positivism. Positivism/rationalism and post-positivism/reflectivism represent the basic methodological divide in IR concerning the nature of the social world (ontology) and the relation of our knowledge to that world (epistemology). The ontological dimension concerns the nature of social reality: is it an *objective* reality ‘out there’ or is it a *subjective*



creation of people? From this dimension, IR theories can be classified into *explanatory* and *constitutive*. An *explanatory* theory is that which sees the world as something external to our theories of it while a *constitutive* theory is that which maintains that our theories help construct the world. The epistemological aspect deals with the ways in which we can obtain knowledge about the world: can we scientifically *explain* it or must we instead interpretatively *understand* it? From this aspect, IR theories can be divided into *foundational* and *anti-foundational*. The *foundationalist* position holds that all truth claims about some feature of the world can be judged true or false while the *anti-foundationalist* approach upholds that truth claims cannot be so judged since there are never neutral grounds for doing so.²

One of these post-positivist/reflectivist theories is postmodernism, which made its entrance in the field in the mid-1980s and it is traceable to post-World War II French philosophers, foremost of whom were Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.³ Its precise definition is debatable not only between its friends and foes but also among its proponents.⁴ As Akbar Ahmed asserts, “Postmodernism in the end may just turn out to be a journalistic cliché, an undefined catch-phrase, and not really the herald of a new phase in human history.”⁵ “Nevertheless, parsimoniously defined as “incredulity towards metanarratives,”⁶ postmodernism is notably dismissive and suspicious of modernity’s meta-theories that claim universality and stability. In other words, it denies the possibility of foundations for establishing the truth of statements existing outside of discourse.

One recurring theme in postmodernism is about the power-knowledge relationship elaborately dealt with by Foucault who regards the two as mutually constituted, i.e. all power requires knowledge and all knowledge relies on and reinforces existing power relations implying that there is no such thing as ‘truth’ existing outside of ‘regimes of truth’. In looking at history to reveal how certain regimes of truth have dominated others,



Foucault proposes an approach known as ‘genealogy’.⁷ The regimes of truth which this approach affirms reflect the ways in which through history both power and truth develop together in a mutually sustaining relationship. In other words, statements about the social world are only ‘true’ within specific discourses. As such, postmodernism is concerned with how some discourses and thus some truths dominate others.⁸

Another recurring theme concerns the textual strategies it employs. According to Derrida, textual is the way in which the social world is constructed. For him the world is constituted like a text such that interpreting the world reflects what he calls “the textual interplay at work,” or the concepts and structures of language. In order to expose these textual interplays, he advances two ways, viz., *deconstruction* and *double reading*.⁹ Anchored in the idea that seemingly stable and natural concepts and relations within language are in fact artificial constructs, arranged hierarchically such that in the case of opposites in language one term is always privileged over the other, *deconstruction* is a means of showing how all theories and discourses rely on artificial stabilities produced by the use of seemingly objective and natural oppositions in language; for example, light/darkness, knowledge/ignorance, white/black, friend/enemy. In order to show how these stabilizations operate, Derrida subjects the text to *double reading*, the first being a repetition of the dominant reading to show how it achieves its outward coherence and the second being the demonstration of the internal tensions within a text that result from the use of ostensibly natural stabilizations. His aim is not to come to a ‘correct’ or even ‘one’ reading of a text, but to show how there is always more than one reading of any text.¹⁰

Statement of the Problem

By using ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ words purely derived from Islamic met-



aphors and signifiers, Imam Khomeini castigates the West's claim for meta-narrative and pretension to universality. He deconstructs its appropriation of the cultural production of voiceless "others" and setting of the rules of the game – same/other, the West/the Rest, civilization/barbarism.

This paper examines the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy principles in the light of a postmodernist reading of the Islamic Republic's Founder's use of the Qur'anic concept of *mustad'afin* (the downtrodden) which, the author argues, is a doctrine upon which some of these principles are based. Although the Arabic word *mustad'afin* may also be translated as the 'abased,' 'oppressed,' 'weak,' 'disinherited,' 'deprived,' or 'disenfranchised,' in this paper it is translated as the 'downtrodden' as it is the closest in conveying the dynamic implication of the word.

Contrary to Muslim apologists, eclectics and hybridists' clichés of articulating Islam within the Western logocentric logic, the Imam articulates an overarching discourse in the idiom of Islamic truth regime with almost no reference at all to Western political doctrines. In particular, the Founder of the Islamic Republic's Qur'anic notion of *mustad'afin* (downtrodden) vis-à-vis that of *mustakbirin* (the arrogant) is a discourse outside modernity's logic of the Westphalian nation-state sovereignty. As guiding principles of its foreign policy, Iran tries "to prepare the way for the formation of a single world community... and to sustain the continuity of the struggle for the liberation of all-deprived and oppressed peoples (*mustad'afin*) throughout the world" (Preamble of the Constitution). In sum, the notion of *mustad'afin* is a pursuit of what Rorty called 'final vocabulary'.

In the foregoing pages, I review the *problematique* of modernity's logic of anarchy vis-à-vis sovereignty in the context of IR theories. Then I situate the Qur'anic concept of *mustad'afin* in the anarchy *problematique*. It is followed by an elaboration of Imam Khomeini's citation of the concept and finally its incorporation in Iran's foreign policy principles as reflected in Iran's constitu-



tion. I conclude by discussing the contribution of this concept in understanding modernity's logic of nation-state sovereignty, not to mention the theoretical challenge it poses toward it.

MODERNITY'S ANARCHY PROBLEMATIQUE

Like other post-positivist or reflectivist theorists, postmodernists seek to make scholars aware of their conceptual prisons, the most important of which is that of modernity itself and the whole idea that modernization leads to progress and a better life.¹¹

In the study of international relations, a leading postmodernist, Richard Ashley,¹² has performed a double reading of the concept of anarchy by providing first a reading of what he calls 'anarchy problematique' according to the traditional positivist literature, and then a second reading that shows how the seemingly natural opposition between anarchy and sovereignty that does the work in the first reading is in fact a false opposition. By radically disrupting the first reading, Ashley shows just how arbitrary is the 'truth' of the traditional assumptions made about anarchy and the logic of state action that it requires.¹³

This Ashley does by posing two questions: (1) what happens to the anarchy problematique if it is not so clear that fully present and completed sovereign states are ontologically primary or unitary? (2) what happens to the anarchy problematique if the lack of central global rule is not overwritten with assumptions about power politics?¹⁴

The general effect of the anarchy problematique which depends on what Ashley terms 'double exclusion,'¹⁵ Devetak argues, is the confirmation of the opposition between sovereignty and anarchy as mutually exclusive and exhaustive. In particular, it represents "a domestic domain of sovereignty as a stable, legitimate foundation of modern political community" and "the domain beyond sovereignty as dangerous and anarchical."¹⁶



MUSTAD'AFIN AND THE ANARCHY PROBLEMATIQUE

From the insights gained from Ashley's double reading of the concept of anarchy, it can be argued that the Westphalian state-centrism has no *a priori* essence of its own. Rather, it is a product of its historical constitution and reconstitution as the primary mode of subjectivity in world politics. In line with the genealogical approach, this question can be raised: How and by virtue of what political practices and representations is the sovereign state instituted as the normal mode of international subjectivity? Answering this question leads us to the postmodernist conclusion that state-centrism is not the only 'truth' in the global village but just one of the existing regimes of truth.

Simply put, state sovereignty does not necessarily mean progress, stability and normalcy and the realm outside it does not necessarily represent backwardness, instability and abnormality. Another mode of global subjectivity that can be put forth in this context is the Qur'anic concept of *mustad'afin* and Imam Khomeini's call for the establishment of a global movement of the *mustad'afin* regardless of religious affiliations and national identities. It is a regime of truth in the international relations discourse which has a conception of the legitimate use of violence, identity, boundaries of the political space, and statecraft different from that of modernity's state-centrism.

The word *mustad'afin*, along with its singular form *mustad'af* and its derivatives *yustad'afun* and *astud'ifu* (being abased and oppressed), is mentioned at least 12 times in the Qur'an:

“Why should you not fight in the way of Allah and the *abased* men, women, and children, who say, ‘Our Lord, bring us out of this town whose people are wrongdoers, and appoint for us a guardian from You, and appoint for us a helper from You?’”¹⁷



“Indeed, those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves, they (the angels) ask, ‘What state were you in?’ They reply, ‘We were *abased* in the land.’ They say, ‘Was not Allah’s earth vast enough so that you might migrate in it?’ The refuge of such shall be hell, and it is an evil destination.”¹⁸

“Except the *abased* among men, women and children, who have neither access to any means nor are guided to any way.”¹⁹

“They seek your ruling concerning women. Say, ‘Allah gives you a ruling concerning them and what is announced to you in the Book concerning girl orphans –whom you do not give what has been prescribed for them, and yet you desire to marry them— and about the *weak* among children: that you should maintain the orphans with justice, and whatever good you do, indeed Allah knows it well.”²⁰

“The elite of his people who were arrogant said to those who were *abased*— to those among them who had faith — ‘Do you know that Salih has been sent by his Lord?’ They said, ‘We indeed believe in what he has been sent with.’”²¹

“We made the people who were *abased* the heirs to the east and west of the land which We had blessed, and your Lord’s best word [of promise] was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because of their patience, and We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people had built and what they used to erect.”²²

“And when Moses returned to his people, angry and indignant, he said, ‘Evil has been your conduct in my absence! Would you hasten on the edict of your Lord?’ He threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head, pulling him towards himself. He said, ‘Son of my mother, indeed this people thought me to be



weak, and they were about to kill me. So do not let the enemies gloat over me, and do not take me with the wrongdoing lot.”²³

“Remember when you were few, *abased* in the land, and feared lest the people should despoil you, and He gave you refuge, and strengthened you with His help, and provided you with all the good things so that you may give thanks.”²⁴

“And We desired to show favor to those who were *abased* in the land, and to make them *imams*, and to make them the heirs.”²⁵

“The faithless say, ‘We will never believe in this Qur’an, nor in what was [revealed] before it.’ But if you were to see when the wrongdoers are made to stop before their Lord casting the blame on one another. Those who were *abased* will say to those who were arrogant, ‘Had it not been for you, we would surely have been faithful.’”²⁶

“Those who were arrogant will say to those who were *abased*, ‘Did we keep you from guidance after it had come to you? No, you were guilty [yourselves].’”²⁷

“Those who were *abased* will say to those who were arrogant, ‘Rather [it was your] night and day plotting, when you prompted us to forswear Allah and to set up equals to Him.’ They will hide their remorse when they sight the punishment, and We will put iron collars around the necks of the faithless. Shall they be requited except for what they used to do?”²⁸

From the above-quoted verses of the Qur’an, the following noteworthy points can be deduced:

1. The word *mustad’afin*, along with its singular form *mustad’af* and other derivative words, is an oft-repeated term in the



Qur'an. As Manuchehr Muhammadi explains, "The term *mustad'af* means 'one who is kept weak' and 'one who is considered weak' and it can be divided into two categories: (1) impotent and unwary downtrodden and (2) wary downtrodden";²⁹

2. The word *mustad'af* is juxtaposed with its opposite word *mustakbirin* (the arrogant and oppressors);
3. The word *mustad'afin* is used to describe a condition of the faithful as a result of the treatment of the *mustakbirin* and faithless toward them;
4. The word *mustad'af* refers to an all-dimensional state of abasement and oppression – intellectual, ideological, political, economic, emotional, etc. "Any state of being a victim of tyranny and oppression in any form, and exploitation of the ideas and accomplishments of others is a form of *istid'af* (the state of being *mustad'af*)."³⁰ As such, the concept does not refer to the socialist notion of class conflict on the control over the means and mode of production, but rather to the general state of being below the intrinsic function of every human being to be God's vicegerent on earth (*khalifat Allah fi'l-ard*);³¹
5. Similarly, the word *mustakbirin*, which is the opposite of *mustad'afin*, refers to an all-dimensional state of being arrogant and oppressor – outwardly, ideologically, politically, economically, etc. This does not necessarily represent the 'capitalists' in the socialist jargon. "[It] is not specifically economic domineering; rather, any type of domineering is included and whose pillar and foundation is rebellion against, and disobedience to, God, which can be manifested in the political, economic and cultural dimensions or their aggregate in the society."³² It, therefore, means the general attempt to assume a status of sovereign and demigod above the human being's innate role of being God's vicegerent on earth.³³



6. There is an expectation for the *mustad'afin* to gain victory over the *mustakbirin* and to become global leaders (*imams*) in the future.

In sum, apart from modernity's mode of international subjectivity centered on state sovereignty, the Qur'anic concept of *mustad'afin* offers another mode of subjectivity involving an idea of global rule whose notion of sovereignty, identity, boundaries and statecraft represents a different regime of truth.

IMAM KHOMEINI'S CONCEPTION OF MUSTAD'AFIN

'Final vocabulary', Richard Rorty asserts, refers to a set of words and phrases each of us resorts to when giving accounts of our hopes, beliefs and desires. It is the vocabulary one used in telling his story. It is considered 'final' for beyond it, "there is only tautology, violence or silence."³⁴

'Islamism' or the assertion of global Muslim subjectivity, according to Bobby Sayyid, is indicated by an increasing number of Muslim communities that have begun to experience changes in what Rorty would call their 'final vocabularies' by narrating "their personal identities and the destiny of their communities by referring to a language derived from what they understood to be their Islamic heritage."³⁵

For Sayyid,

Islamism... is a project which attempts to transform Islam from a nodal point in discourses of Muslim communities into a master signifier. In particular, the Islamist project is an attempt to make Islam a master signifier of the political order. It is the struggle to establish which signifiers will constitute the unity and identity of a discursive universe which is central, since the transformation



of a signifier into a master signifier is what makes possible the constitution of unity and the identity of the whole and its parts.³⁶

By using ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ words purely derived from Islamic metaphors and signifiers, Ayatullah Khomeini castigates the West’s claim for meta-narrative and pretension to universality. He deconstructs its appropriation of the cultural production of voiceless “others” and setting of the rules of the game—same/other, the West/the Rest, civilization/barbarism. Contrary to Muslim apologists, eclectics and hybridists’ clichés of articulating Islam within the Western logocentric logic, the Ayatullah articulates an overarching discourse in the idiom of Islamic truth regime with almost no reference at all to Western political doctrines.

As Zubaida observes, the discourse of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution is conducted exclusively in the idiom of Islamic political theory without citing any modern political doctrines. In short, he writes as if western thought did not exist.³⁷ And there is no room for “Islam-is-real-democracy” and “Islam-anticipates-socialism” premises in his narrative:

He makes no attempt to try and locate Islam within a tradition of progressive history, in which major developments are re-described as being originally inspired by Islam... There is no obvious attempt to incorporate or even engage with political concepts associated with the discourses of nationalism, Marxism [and] liberalism. It is only with Khomeini that the role of western discourse as universal interlocutor appears to be shaken. Khomeini’s political thought, alone among Muslim thinkers of the last hundred years, does not try to have a dialogue with western discourse. He does not try to argue with or against western political theory.³⁸

Many ‘modern’ concepts such as constitutionalism, the rule of law, (Islamic) republic, universal suffrage, freedom, presidency, separation of powers, and parliamentary legislation are undeni-



ably taken up later by the Iranian Constitution. However, modernity is not presented as the ‘master signifier’ of these concepts. The master signifier is one to whom other signifiers refer and are unified by. As the signifier of the totality that guarantees and sanctions unity, it acquires a universal dimension and functions as the place of inscription for all other signifiers.³⁹

This point is succinctly captured in Imam Khomeini’s statement “Islamic Republic – nothing more, nothing less” when there was a national debate on the name of the Iranian republic to be established after the victory of the Islamic Revolution. Some parties and figures were in favor of such names as “the Islamic Liberal Republic,” “the Islamic Democratic Republic,” “the Islamic Socialist Republic,” etc. By that statement, the Imam showed his advocacy for “republic” with Islam (“Islamic”) as its sole master signifier and not any of such ‘master signifiers’ as liberalism (“Liberal”), democracy (“Democratic”) and socialism (“Socialist”).⁴⁰

As Sayyid surmises,

...Khomeini does not offer a point-by-point consideration of why an Islamic republic would be better than western governmental practice, he does not offer arguments against western political theory; he simply states the virtues of an Islamic political order.⁴¹

Sayyid is also of the opinion that

Khomeini’s strategy is emulated by Rorty who declares: ‘Conforming to my precepts, I am not going to offer arguments against the vocabulary I want to replace. Instead, I am going to try and make the vocabulary I favour look attractive by showing how it may be used to describe a variety of topics.’⁴²

The Leader of the revolution motivated by “the spirit of the world without spirit”⁴³ also pronounces the illegitimacy of “national West” (Pahlavism) and “regional West” (Zionism) (from



the Iranian and Muslim contexts, respectively) on universal moral grounds such as justice, equality and human rights. The Imam debunks the legitimacy of Pahlavism on many grounds, among which are the absence of democracy in the state, the state as a menacing threat to Islam, foreign domination in the economic and political spheres, the bazaar's state of bankruptcy, and the massive poverty.⁴⁴

In condemning Zionism, he says: "This degenerative tumor that has, with the backing of major powers, been planted in the heart of Muslim countries and whose roots threaten daily the Muslim countries, must be removed."⁴⁵

In particular, the Founder of the Islamic Republic's notion of *mustad'afin* or the abased, downtrodden and oppressed peoples throughout the world is a discourse outside modernity's logic of the Westphalian nation-state sovereignty, defying the seemingly stable sovereignty/anarchy, stability/instability, civilized/barbarian, and citizen/non-citizen binaries.

Advocating the awakening and rising up of the *mustad'afin* throughout the world, Imam Khomeini thus says:

"O downtrodden people of the world! Arise and be united together; drive out the oppressors from the scene as the earth belongs to God and the oppressed are His inheritors."⁴⁶

"The downtrodden in all lands should retake their due rights by mighty fist and not expect others to give these to them for the arrogant do not remit what belongs to others."⁴⁷

"The deprived and the oppressed of history should themselves rise up and not wait for the oppressors to release them from bondage."⁴⁸



The Imam also posits that the way for the realization of world peace and deliverance from oppression and tyranny is the ultimate defeat of the *mustakbirin* in the world:⁴⁹

“The ‘*id* or the day of festivity for the downtrodden is the day when the arrogant are buried.”⁵⁰

“We pray to God, the Exalted, for the success of all downtrodden nations of the world in the achievement of victory and total freedom from the tyrants of the world, especially the world-devouring America.”⁵¹

“World peace and prosperity depends on the annihilation of the arrogant and oppressors. So long as these uncultured power-seekers exist on the surface of the earth, the disinherited and deprived cannot obtain the inheritance [of power and authority in the world], which has been promised to them by God, the Exalted,”⁵² and “Government of the barefooted is rightful and just.”⁵³

To this end, Ayatullah Khomeini advances on many occasions the idea of the formation of a transnational party for the *mustad‘afin* as the means to eliminate all forms of trouble⁵⁴ and corruption.⁵⁵ On one occasion, he categorically says:

“I hope that a party in the name of the downtrodden in the entire world will appear and all the downtrodden do participate in this party, removing all the problems in their way; they would rise up against the arrogant and plunderers of the East and West and no longer let the arrogant oppress the downtrodden of the world.”⁵⁶

Along this line, the Ayatullah is of the opinion that the public mobilization on Quds Day is a prelude to the formation of the Party of the Downtrodden.⁵⁷



Even in his last will and testament, the Imam does not also lose sight of the fate of the *mustad'afin* as he even prays for their ultimate triumph:

“O you downtrodden people of the world! O you Muslims and Muslim countries of the world! Rise up and fight for your rights! Do not be afraid of the propaganda machineries of the superpowers and their mercenary agents... If you realize this, the arrogant powers shall retreat to their own places and all the downtrodden people will come to inherit the earth and assume guardianship over it. Looking forward to the day when Allah’s promise shall be fulfilled.”⁵⁸

MUSTAD'AFIN IN IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is unique in many respects. As far as the Islamic concept of *mustad'afin* is concerned, the Constitution is perhaps the only constitution in the world which explicitly acknowledges it and the ultimate triumph of the *mustad'afin*. Iran’s Constitution is also categorical in the rejection of the state’s sovereignty purely emanating from the people by stipulating an ‘intermediary sovereignty’ of state as stated in Article 56: “Absolute sovereignty of the universe and Man belongs to God, and it is He Who has made the human being master of its own social destiny.”⁵⁹

The Preamble gives an indication of Iran’s advancement of *mustad'afin*’s ideal of the elimination of injustice and inequity in the world, thus:

With due attention to the Islamic content of the Iranian Revolution, as a movement aimed at the triumph of all the *mustad'afin* (oppressed) over the *mustakbirin* (oppressors), the Constitution



provides the necessary basis for ensuring the continuity of the Revolution at home and abroad. In the development of international relations in particular, the Constitution tries, with other Islamic and popular movements, to prepare the way for the formation of a single world community [in accordance with the Qur’anic verse] “*Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord. So worship Me*”⁶⁰ and to sustain the continuity of the struggle for the liberation of all deprived and oppressed peoples throughout the world.⁶¹

Article 3, Section 16, also provides:

In order to achieve the objectives specified in Article 2, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran must direct all its resources to... [f]raming the country’s foreign policy on the basis of Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all Muslims and unflinching support to the world’s oppressed (*mustad’afin*).

Iran’s foreign policy principles are derived from the following two provisions:

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon rejection of all forms of domination—both the assertion of it and submission to it—preservation of the country’s all around independence, its territorial integrity, defense of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with hegemonic superpowers, and the maintenance of peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States.⁶²

The realization of human felicity throughout human society is the ideal of the Islamic Republic of Iran and it considers independence, freedom and the rule of justice and Truth to be the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of



other nations, it supports the struggle of the *mustad'afin* for their rights in every corner of the globe.⁶³

In the words of the Islamic Republic's Founder, "Relationship between a nation that has risen up to free itself from the clutches of international pilferers and the world-devourers is always in the interest of pilferer and disadvantageous to the oppressed."⁶⁴ He also said: "We have the duty of saving the oppressed and the deprived people."⁶⁵

It can thus be gleaned from the above-quoted provisions of the Constitution that a central theme of Iran's foreign policy principles is the doctrine of the ultimate victory of the *mustad'afin* over the *mustakbirin*. Iran is a sovereign state but it does not accept modernity's essentialist conception of the Westphalian state. The establishment of the Islamic Republic, for its founder, is not the ultimate ideal but just an initial step toward the attainment of that ideal through what is called 'the rule of gradualism' (*qa'ideh-ye tadarruj*).⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

The late 1970s saw the emergence of post-positivist theories in International Relations. One of these post-positivist theories is postmodernism which is traceable to post-World War II French philosophers, foremost of whom were Foucault and Derrida. Elegantly defined as "incredulity toward meta-narratives," postmodernism is dismissive of modernity's meta-theories that claim universality and stability.

By using 'thin' and 'thick' words purely derived from Islamic metaphors and signifiers, Imam Khomeini castigates the West's claim for a meta-narrative and its pretension to universality. He deconstructs its appropriation of the cultural production of voiceless "others" and setting of the rules of the game—same/other,



the West/the Rest, civilization/barbarism. Contrary to Muslim eclectics and hybridists' clichés of articulating Islam within the Western logocentric logic, the Imam articulates an overarching discourse in the idiom of Islamic truth regime with almost no reference at all to Western political doctrines. There is no room for “Islam-is-real-democracy” and “Islam-anticipates-socialism” premises in his narrative.

In particular, the Founder of the Islamic Republic's conception of *mustad'afin* or the oppressed peoples in the world and their ultimate victory over the *mustakbirin* and assumption of global political power in the future is a discourse outside modernity's logic of the Westphalian nation-state sovereignty. It defies the seemingly stable sovereignty/anarchy, stability/instability, civilized/barbarian, and citizen/non-citizen binaries. The Leader of the revolution motivated by “the spirit of the world without spirit” also pronounces the illegitimacy of “national West” (Pahlavism) and “regional West” (Zionism) (from the Iranian and Muslim contexts, respectively) on universal moral grounds such as justice, equality and human rights.

As guiding principles of its foreign policy, Iran tries “to prepare the way for the formation of a single world community... and to sustain the continuity of the struggle for the liberation of all-deprived and oppressed peoples throughout the world” (Preamble of the Constitution). It considers its ideal “the realization of human felicity throughout human society”, and “independence, freedom and the rule of justice and Truth to be the right of all people of the world” (Article 154 of the Constitution).

In sum, the concept of *mustad'afin* is a pursuit of what Rorty called ‘final vocabulary’. It is to turn up side down the table of “self/other” project. It is a tale of both de-centering and re-centering—the de-centering of modernity and re-centering of Islam.



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NOTES

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2. Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1990); Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 217-248; Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, "Alternative Approaches to International Theory," in John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 271-293.
3. Smith and Owens, 285; Lene Hansen, "R.B.J. Walker and International Relations: Deconstructing a Discipline," in Iver B. Neumann and Ole Waever, *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?* (London: Routledge, 1997), 316-317.
4. Richard Devetak, "Postmodernism," in Scott Burchill, et al. *Theories of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 181.
5. Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicaments and Promise* (London: Routledge, 1992), 9.
6. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xxiv.
7. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1982).
8. Devetak, 182-183.
9. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
10. Devetak, 186-188.



11. See, for example, J. Vasquez, "The Post-Positivist Debate," in Keene Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995): 217-240.
12. Martin Griffiths, *Key Thinkers in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2003), 207-211.
13. Devetak, 188-189.
14. *Ibid.*, 189.
15. Richard K. Ashley, "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique," *Millennium*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1988), 257.
16. Devetak, 189.
17. *Surat al-Nisa'* 4:75. In this paper, the translation of all Qur'anic passages is adapted from 'Ali Quli Qara'i, *The Qur'an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation* (London: Islamic College for Advance Studies Press, 2004).
18. *Surat al-Nisa'* 4:97.
19. *Surat al-Nisa'* 4:98.
20. *Surat al-Nisa'* 4:127.
21. *Surat al-A'raf* 7:75.
22. *Surat al-A'raf* 7:137.
23. *Surat al-A'raf* 7:150.
24. *Surat al-Anfal* 8:26.
25. *Surat al-Qasas* 28:5.
26. *Surat al-Saba'* 34:31.
27. *Surat al-Saba'* 34:32.
28. *Surat al-Saba'* 34:33.
29. Manuchehr Muhammadi, "Imam Khomeini and the International System," in *Imam Khomeini and the International System: A Collection of Articles*, trans. Mansoor Limba (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2006), 119.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Istid'af wa Istikbar az Didgah-e Imam Khomeini* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, Summer 1380 AHS), ii.
32. "Imam Khomeini and the International System," 119.
33. *Ibid.*



34. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73.
35. Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 2.
36. *Ibid.*, 48.
37. Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State* (London: Routledge, 1989), 13.
38. Sayyid, 113-114.
39. *Ibid.*, 45.
40. Murtada Mutahhari, *The Concept of Islamic Republic*, trans. Muhammad K. Ali (Tehran: Foreign Department of Be'that Foundation, 1982), 15-22, 40-45.
41. Sayyid, 114.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Michel Foucault Politics, Philosophy and Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-84* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1988), 218.
44. See Imam Khomeini's speeches since 1953 in *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 1.
45. Imam Khomeini, *Pithy Aphorisms: Wise Sayings and Counsels*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2004), 127.
46. *Ibid.*, 74. This point refers to *Surat al-Nur* 24:55 wherein God has promised to those who believe and do righteous deeds that the earth would be their inheritance.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, 75.
49. *Imam Khomeini and the International System: A Collection of Articles*, trans. Mansoor Limba (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2006), xv.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 12, 227.
52. *Ibid.*, 144.
53. *Ibid.*, vol. 13, 544.
54. *Ibid.*, vol. 9, 331.
55. *Ibid.*, vol. 12, 144.



56. Quoted in Maryam as-Sadat Mirza Husayni, “Theoretical Viewpoints of Imam Khomeini in the Realm of Foreign Policy,” in *Imam Khomeini and the International System: A Collection of Articles*, 77.
57. *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 9, 280.
58. Imam Khomeini, *The Last Message: Imam Khomeini’s Last Will and Testament* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, 1998), 93, with slight modification.
59. Chapter 7, National Sovereignty and Powers Derived from It, Article 56.
60. *Surah al-Anbiya’* 21:92.
61. Preamble, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
62. Chapter 10, Foreign Policy, Article 152.
63. Article 154.
64. *Pithy Aphorisms*, 121.
65. *Ibid.*, 120.
66. Muhammad-Rida Dehshiri, “Ways of Attaining the Ideal International Order from Imam Khomeini’s Viewpoint,” in *Imam Khomeini and the International System: A Collection of Articles*, 55, 61.



