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CHAPTER IV KHOMEINI: VELAYAT-E FAQIH

Ayatollah Ruhullah al-Musavi al-Khomeini's book 'Islamic government' or *Hukumat-I Islami*, better known as 'Governance of the jurists', *Velayat-e faqih*, is perhaps best understood as the Shi'a version of Qutb's Milestones. I will refer to this book by its most commonly used name namely simply Velayat. Written not as a book but rather as a series of lectures given in 1970, Velayat has laid the foundations for the revolution of 1979 and the ensuing Islamic republic of Iran. Velayat in terms of style can easily be compared to Milestones and the works of likeminded people who hoped to inspire a revolutionary movement for the revitalization of Islam. When compared to Qutb's Milestones some differences between these two *manifestos* appear, however, I will enter into those differences only insofar as they are relevant to the central theme of this book namely, the possible resemblance between secular totalitarian and *Islamist* legal-political philosophy. In the following analysis of Velayat I will use the same six point subdivision as used in my analysis of Milestones and refer to the parallels, if any, between Velayat and secular totalitarian ideologies.

Two observations should be made upfront. Firstly, whilst Qutb's Milestones is in essence a manifesto for the mobilization of the Islamic masses, it lacks any resemblance to a concrete program for the centralized and coordinated project of revitalizing Islam. Bypassing or completely ignoring the ulama of his day, the *imams of defeat*, Qutb asserts that Muslims themselves are quite capable of taking note of and implementing Islam in its broadest sense. This idea which echoes some of the central ideas of *salafi* Islam is therefore quite anarchic in character as it sees the individual Muslim as the foot soldier and the acting agent of the Islamic revivalist project. Both

Qutb and Khomeini are vehement in their denunciation of those ulama, *the imams of defeat*, who have relegated Islam to the backrooms of theological seminaries and have robbed it of its political *élan vital*. Both therefore echo ibn Taymiyyah's critique on the duality of state law and Islamic law and lament the demise of the supremacy and sovereignty of the Shari'ah. The revitalization of Islam which both Qutb and Khomeini seek to achieve is however dependant on two different actors.

Whilst Qutb maintains that any Muslim can read and understand the Shari'ah and its edicts and in principle should therefore take his place in the vanguard movement, Khomeini takes a more realistic approach. The nature of *velayat-e faqih* is very reminiscent of Lenin's '*what is to be done*' in its insistence on a vanguard consisting of professional revolutionaries.⁹⁰³ The revolutionaries in Khomeini's view are the *fuqaha* the Islamic jurists who unlike the masses have a thorough understanding of the edicts and mechanisms of Islamic law.⁹⁰⁴ The masses do have an understanding of Islam but rely on the leadership and guidance of the jurists to accomplish the task of Islamic revitalization. This is intimately linked to the second difference between Khomeini and Qutb.

Whilst Qutb's *Milestones* was written mainly for a Sunni audience, *Velayat* was written for a Shi'a audience. Apart from the numerical geographical and theological divide that exist between the Sunni and Shi'a, the difference which is of interest for this research lies in the particular political doctrine of Shi'a Islam known as the *imamate*. Whilst in principle in Sunni Islam any Muslim can become a caliph, the Shi'a and in particular the stream of the Twelvers, *Athnā'ashariyyah*, believe that this role is to be fulfilled only by the infallible

⁹⁰³ Lenin, *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement*, pp. 74-75.

⁹⁰⁴ *Fuqaha* is the Persian equivalent of the Arab term *ulama*.

descendants of Muhammad, the imams.⁹⁰⁵ Their vice-regency is called the *imamamte*. These descendants or imams not only assume the political leadership of the community but also have an understanding of Islam which is superior to all the prophets and second only to Muhammad himself. Thus they can interpret Islam and instruct every consecutive generation of Muslims with rightful guidance on both political and theological matters. Furthermore, the Imam is appointed by divine decree, *nass*, and not by any human congregation or by human consent.⁹⁰⁶ Sunni doctrine however, maintains that the caliph is not infallible and has no special qualities apart from being just and knowledgeable about Islam. He has no special power of interpreting Islam, which is the realm of the equally fallible ulama, and is chosen by the ummah and not by divine decree. His role was merely to implement the Shari'ah and assume political leadership. The imam in the Twelver sect of Shi'a Islam is thus a vastly different authority figure than the caliph in Sunni Islam. The centrality of this imam as a political and religious leader could in principle bear similarities to the *Führer Prinzip*. The *Fuhrer*, as we saw, combined both political and ideological leadership due to his ability to function as a conduit between mankind and the formula for self and world salvation on the one hand, and his capacity as the legislative and executive power of the state on the other. The idea of the *imamamte* however suffers from one serious setback. In Shi'a Islam the term 'Twelvers' is derived from the fact that the line of successors of Muhammad knows twelve imams. The twelfth one, Muhammad ibn al-Hassan, is also known as the hidden Imam, or the *Mahdi*.⁹⁰⁷ Since the disappearance or

⁹⁰⁵ The amount of Shi'a in the world's Muslim population is commonly held to be around 20%. Of those Shi'a around 80% belong to the Twelvers and the remaining 20% are distributed amongst the *Ismaili* and *Zaydi* sects. These last two agree on most elements of the Twelver doctrine but disagree on the exact line of succession from Muhammad.

⁹⁰⁶ S. H. M. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (London: Stacey Publishing, 2007). Chapter 11.

⁹⁰⁷ The twelfth imam, also known as the *Mahdi*, is considered to be hidden from mankind only to be revealed once again when the eschatological time

occultation of the last Imam in 939 BC the question arose on how to organize the state and what role religion should play in it without the guidance of the imam. With no infallible leader present to guide the community and to take the political reigns in hand, this question was answered in a myriad of ways, often times of a rather secular or quietist nature. The divide between state law and religious law in Shi'a Islam is therefore also a result of the occultation of the twelfth imam and not necessarily or exclusively the result of the forceful expulsion of Islam from the political realm by rulers whose preoccupation lay with worldly affairs and desires. Ayatollah Khomeini, however, disapproved of the quietist approach and endeavoured to reaffirm the dominance of the Islam over the state and its laws and practices even though the hidden imam remained hidden. In order to legitimize the rule of Islam over the state, Khomeini argued that the occultation did not entail that Islam itself should go into hiding as well. Instead of having Islam relegated to the small circles of the religious students and their seminaries, Islam should be brought back to the front of political life. Even if the hidden imam was not available, others should guide and rule in his place. This role was to be fulfilled by the jurists, the Shi'a variant of the ulama, namely the *fuqaha*. In this sense, Khomeini can be compared to the approach of ibn Taymiyyah who also sought to bring the ulama to the foreground of political life. The narrative in which the ailments of society are caused by the abandonment of Islam and of Islamic principles runs throughout the majority of all Islamists discourses both modern and medieval. Ibn Taymiyyah saw chaos in the form of the

prophesized in Islam has arrived. In that time the Mahdi will return from his hiding, the occultation, and return to the realm of humanity as the savior who will bring all of mankind into the fold of Islam. This is important to note since as I will show, Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has referred to the coming of the Mahdi as the harbinger of peace, whilst hiding the fact that his coming will be preceded by warfare and chaos, particularly against the Jews. Khomeini however shows very little interest in the concept of the Mahdi and it is only of consequence to our discussion of present day Iran in the end of this chapter.

success of the Mongol invasions into Muslim lands and the subsequent weakness if not treachery for worldly gain of his contemporaries when faced with the Mongol's impious rule. Khomeini and Qutb both reiterate this phenomenon in their views of the Islamic ummah as being under siege from Western infidel powers and the collaboration of the *imams of defeat* which are accused of weakening Islam in order to appease their colonial masters. In addition, and due to some degree to the advent of modernity, both Qutb and Khomeini also blame the internal enemy, Muslims themselves, for their failure to adhere to Islamic law and principles. It should therefore come as no surprise that many of the points of Qutb are reiterated by Khomeini and others like him. Unlike the Sunni's however, the Shi'a Twelver doctrine of the imamate gives Khomeini a clear political doctrine which is indigenous to Islam and which already has an infrastructure which can be mobilized in the process of the re-Islamization of the society.⁹⁰⁸ Whilst the hidden Imam is still in occultation, and divine leadership is therefore lacking, Khomeini seeks to reinstate the idea of an Islamic leadership through the guardianship of the jurists. Instead of living quietists lives devoted to studying Islam, the jurists, or fuqaha, should fully engage themselves in the affairs of the state. Velayat-e faqih therefore is a manifesto written to mobilize those fuqaha to assume the role history has accorded them, at least in the view of Khomeini. Where Velayat diverges from Sayyid Qutb's Milestones is in the latter's assumption that all of society is in a state of disbelief and all Muslims, being literate and to some degree educated, can assume the role of the ulama. Responsibility for reform and palingenetic revivalism is placed on the Muslims individually and as equals. Qutb's program for revivalism thus comes down to some sort of self-organizing mass movement which will reform and permeate society as a whole from the bottom up. Khomeini conversely argues that the Muslim masses

⁹⁰⁸ I again underscore that the term re-Islamization is used from the perspective of the Islamists who argue that only their particular creed is worthy of the name Islam.

have never really abandoned Islam but that the masses have been abandoned by the fuqaha. Velayat is therefore primarily directed towards mobilizing the fuqaha much in the same way Lenin appealed to the professional revolutionaries who would guide the common people. Khomeini, in short, is trying to instigate a revolt of the jurist in order to establish the guardianship of the jurists. As with all Islamists, this process of fabricating a new society starts with the discovery of the formula for self- and world salvation; namely, the Islamist interpretation of Islam and its actualization in the public realm.

4.1 The nature of Islam

As with Qutb and all other ideologues discussed in this research's analysis, Islam is seen not only as the guide to personal life, but also as the guide to every facet of life, both private and public. These two cannot be separated. Any instance on such a separation would be deemed a sign of *kufur*, or unbelief. Its totality represents the final answer in all questions of life both for the believer as for the non-believer.⁹⁰⁹ Because Islam is the formula for self- and world salvation,

⁹⁰⁹ "There is not a single topic in human life for which Islam has not provided instructions and established a norm " and "[..]Firstly, the laws of the Shari'ah embrace a diverse body of laws and regulation, which amounts to a complete social system. In this system of laws, all the needs of man have been met: his dealings with his neighbours, fellow citizens, and clan, as well as children and relatives; the concerns of private and marital life; regulations concerning war and peace and intercourse with other nations; penal and commercial law; and regulations pertaining to trade, industry and agriculture. Islamic law contains provisions relating to the preliminaries of marriage and the form in which it should be contracted, and others relating to the development of the embryo in the womb, and what food the parents should eat at the time of conception. It further stipulates the duties that are incumbent upon them while the infant is being suckled, and specifies how the child should be reared, and how the husband and the wife should relate to each other and to their children. Islam provides laws and instructions for all of these matters, aiming, as it does, to produce integrated and virtuous human beings who are walking embodiments of the law, or to put it differently, the law's voluntary and instinctive executors. [..]The Glorious

the concept of freedom is interpreted in the same way as we saw with Qutb. Freedom is no longer defined as the ability to choose one's own destiny with a minimum of outside interference, but rather as that quality of life which exists *only* if every facet of life is organized according to the Islamic system. Instead of having laws that provide for a stable open public realm in which man can move freely, Man must be stabilized in order for the law of movement to run freely through society instead of Any non-Islamic system, jahiliyaah, is therefore the antithesis of freedom and all actions that further the cause of jahiliyaah, such as the freedom to choose one's own destiny, thereby become actions that threaten the freedom of mankind. The law and the concept of legality therefore, which are normally designed to stabilize the public realm so that man can move freely, are inverted and now aim to stabilize man so that the Islamic system can move through society unopposed and unhindered by human opposition.⁹¹⁰ Of the authors I have analyzed, Khomeini makes the most direct and open reference to the essence of totalitarian lawfulness when he states:

Islam provides laws and instructions for all of these matters, aiming, as it does, to produce integrated and virtuous human beings who are walking embodiments of the law, or to put it differently, the law's voluntary and instinctive executors.⁹¹¹

It is the hallmark of totalitarian thought that man can and must be fabricated in such a way as to become the embodiment of the edicts of the law of nature or history. Only when this fabrication is complete, and mankind indeed has become the 'voluntary and instinctive executioner' can the law of movement roam freely through society. Whilst Khomeini depicts this fabrication of mankind as the fabrication

Qur'an and the Sunnah contain all the laws and ordinances man needs in order to attain happiness and the perfection of his state. [..]"Hamid Algar Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley, [Calif.]: Mizan Press, 1981), pp. 30, 43.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., p. 43.

of freedom, of returning mankind to that universal harmony which has been designed and planned for by its creator, it in reality entails a complete transformation of the essence of mankind itself. As we saw with Qutb, the biggest opposition to this concept of freedom is man's choice to live his own life with a minimum of outside interference. This can only hamper the transformation of mankind into those 'virtuous walking embodiments of the law'. The liberal concept of freedom which is based upon man's individuality must therefore be exchanged for the *Islamist* concept of freedom which reduces the individual man to a mere interchangeable specimen of the species. The Islamist *homo faber* therefore uses mankind as the raw material out of which the new Islamic man will be fabricated; not for the benefit of the individual man, but in order to unleash the law of movement throughout society.⁹¹² Only when this process is completed do the *Islamist* concepts of peace, freedom, harmony and equality come into being. This should be kept in mind when reading the works of Islamist ideologues since these concepts are often used to wilfully mislead a non-Islamic audience as to the goals of the *Islamist* movements.

In Qutb's *Milestones*, this idea of the totality of the law and the need to fabricate mankind takes the form of the three concepts *firtah*, *ubudiyaah* and *hakimiyaat*. Khomeini does not use these terms but their meaning runs through *Velayat* nonetheless. These three concepts in themselves represent a revolutionary movement against anything which is not Islamic and thus form the antithesis of freedom. In the eyes of the Islamists, Allah himself revealed the Quran as a revolutionary instrument against polytheism, unbelief and the distortions of the previous revelations by the Jews and Christians. The very coming into existence of Islam is therefore the starting signal of a revolutionary movement to free mankind. This movement for the

⁹¹² See also: .Arendt, *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, p. 304.

freedom of mankind is founded upon political action which finds its ultimate expression in jihad for the sake of Allah:

Give the people Islam, then, for Islam is the school of jihad, the religion of struggle; let them amend their characters and beliefs in accordance with Islam and transform themselves into a powerful force, so that they may overthrow the tyrannical regime imperialism has imposed on us and set up an Islamic government.⁹¹³

Whereas Qutb's *Milestones* is very much unclear about the political dimensions and practical implications of this revolutionary movement, Khomeini's *Velayat* is a manifesto detailing exactly these implications. For Khomeini, the formula for self and world salvation is the detailed blueprint for a political movement and this movement finds its ultimate expression in Islamic government. As such, Khomeini vehemently opposes all those 'Muslims' who hold that Islam has only meaning in the private life of the believer, merely providing rules for worship, and does not pertain to the ordering of society.

The ratio of Quranic verses concerned with the affairs of society to those concerned with ritual worship is greater than a hundred to one. Of the approximately fifty sections of the corpus of hadith containing all the ordinances of Islam, not more than three or four sections relate to matters of ritual worship and the duties of man toward his Creator and Sustainer. A few more are concerned with questions of ethics, and all the rest are concerned with social, economic, legal, and political questions—in short, the gestation of society.⁹¹⁴

As we will see in the next few paragraphs, Khomeini's view on Islam is that of a formula for self and world salvation which by its very nature represents a political movement demanding political leadership. It is

⁹¹³ Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 132.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

the lack of this leadership, and not so much a general lack of Islam amongst the common people, which lies at the foundation of the disorder perceived in the world. The restoration of this leadership, by the hands of the vanguard of the *fuqaha*, holds the key to a palingenetic movement which will obliterate the existential enemies and will bring mankind back into the fold of Islam.

4.2 Exile: the observation of disorder

Congruent with many other Islamist ideologues, the chief sign of the disorder in the world is the weak state of the Islamic world. This weakness is epitomized in two different phenomena. First of all by western colonial rule over, and influence in the Islamic world:

The influence and sovereignty of Islam in society have declined; the nation of Islam has fallen victim to division and weakness; the laws of Islam have remained in abeyance and been subjected to change and modification; and the imperialists have propagated foreign laws and alien culture among the Muslims through their agents for the sake of their evil purposes, causing people to be infatuated with the West [..].⁹¹⁵

The second sign of disorder is the non-implementation and false representation of the Shari'ah:

Has Islam not declined? Have the laws of Islam not fallen into disuse in the Islamic countries? The penal provisions of the law are not implemented; the ordinances of Islam are not enforced; the institutions of Islam have disappeared; chaos, anarchy, and confusion prevail—does not all this mean that Islam has declined?"⁹¹⁶ [..] All the penal provisions of Islam, which represent the best penal code ever devised for

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 54.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 80.

humanity, have been completely forgotten; nothing but their name has survived.⁹¹⁷

The disorder Khomeini sees in society is contrasted with the example of the prophet Muhammad. In the same way as Qutb modelled the perfect Islamic polis on the example of Muhammad in Median, so too Khomeini models his ideal society on this example. From the conduct of the prophet, Khomeini deduces that Islam without politics is not Islam at all. Politics lies at the very core of the Islamic message and a society that wishes to call itself Islamic must therefore be founded upon the full implementation of the order prescribed by the Quran and the Sunna, namely, the Shari'ah. This argument seems to me to be a very strong one since, indeed, Muhammad was not merely a prophet but also a legislator, judge, executioner and political and military leader of the community.⁹¹⁸ The frequency with which this argument is brought to the fore by Islamists seems to underscore its validity in certain circles. No Muslim will deny that Muhammad was the best human that ever lived and whose example should be followed to the fullest. Islamist thus argue that since, in their view, the example of the prophet includes a direct necessity for Islamic government, a Muslim would have a hard time convincing anyone that such concepts can be abandoned without crossing the border into apostasy.

I ask you, is that the way the Most Noble Messenger conduct himself? Did he content himself with reciting the Qur'an, then lay it aside and neglect to ensure the implementation of its penal provisions? Was it the practice of the successors of the Prophet to entrust matters to the people and tell them, "I have no further concern with you"? Or, on the contrary, did

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

⁹¹⁸ One could argue that the early polis in Medina does not allow for such modern differentiations and designations but one should also recognize that the Islamist and many of the orthodox ulama do consider these typologies to be valid either directly or through analogy.

they decree penalties for various classes of offender—whippings, stonings, perpetual imprisonment, banishment? Examine the sections of Islamic law relating to penal law and blood money: you will see that all of these matters are part of Islam and part of the reason for the coming of Islam. Islam came in order to establish order in society; leadership and government are for the sake of ordering the affairs of society.”⁹¹⁹

Referring directly to the quietist or even secular position adopted by many Shi’a ulama after the occultation the twelfth imam, Khomeini challenges these ulama and asks of them why the edicts of the Shari’ah have not been implemented. If the example the prophet was such that it showed the necessity of Islamic governance, then why is it that the ulama relegate Islam to the impotence of theological debate without practical implementation?

Since many of us did not really believe that Islamic society must be administered and ordered by an Islamic government matters have now reached such a state that in the Muslim countries, not only does the Islamic order not obtain, with corrupt and oppressive laws being implemented instead of the laws of Islam, but the provisions of Islam appear archaic even to the ulama. So when the subject is raised, they say that the tradition: “The fuqaha are trustees of the prophets” refers only to the issuing of juridical opinions. Ignoring the verses of the Qur’an, they distort in the same way all the numerous traditions that the scholars of Islam are to exercise rule during the Occultation.⁹²⁰

The last sentence is of course the key issue. The fuqaha are to Khomeini the rightful inheritors of the Imams right and duty to governance. Although they do not possess the same divine legitimacy

⁹¹⁹ Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 75.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

of the Imams or an equal power of interpretation, they are entrusted with implementing the Shari'ah as the vice regents of the prophets. Disorder therefore, is constituted by the idea that Islamic governance has gone into the same occultation as the hidden imam. The revivalist movement is therefore a movement towards attaining power and influence over society. The core aim of this movement is the implementation of the Shari'ah. In other words, every society which is not ruled by the Shari'ah, even though its members may be Muslim, is therefore in essence opposed to the goal of the Islamic revolutionary movement. This is an important point for it goes to show that appeasement is not possible out of principle either with the internal or external enemy. Only the subjugation of the whole of society to Shari'ah law can satisfy these movements and this should be kept in mind when listening to the complaints of maltreatment and unjust conduct aimed at the west in these writings. The very fact that a given society is not ruled by the Shari'ah constitutes 'maltreatment' and 'injustice'. Even more unnerving is the idea that a Muslim who keeps religion to himself, who does not act as the movement requires him to act, thereby becomes an 'agent' of oppression. In true totalitarian fashion, the very constitution of the ideology creates a class of enemies who are enemies not because of their active opposition to the movement, but because the ideology has deemed them to be enemies due to their lack of submission to its edicts. The war against existential enemies therefore has no relevance to any action from those enemies, they exist as enemies because the ideology exists, thus eliminating any possibility of appeasement or co-existence.

In the next paragraph I will describe the way in which Khomeini defines these classes of internal and external enemies.

4.3 The causes of Exile

The reasons for the disorder we just described can be attributed to two categories of existential enemies. As with Qutb the first category, the internal enemy, consists mainly of those forces that have

weakened or are seeking to weaken Islam. In particular, the *imams of defeat* or in Khomeini's terminology: the *Akhunds*.

4.3.1 Internal enemies

Khomeini in line with Qutb echoes the critique of Ibn Taymiyyah and other Islamic ideologues since him, that have accused certain ulama of robbing Islam of its vitality, of its necessity to become the dominant force in shaping the public realm and political life of the Islamic community. Whereas the powers that be in the days of Ibn Taymiyyah sought to appease foreign invaders or caliphs whose worldly ambitions outweighed the need for Islamic purity, Qutb and Khomeini blame these imams for conceding to the interests of foreign, mainly western powers, "Appetite and ambition make men subservient to royal courts; true tradition does not."⁹²¹ In Khomeini's vocabulary, which as we will come to see has striking if not outright odd similarities with the Marxist-Leninist vocabulary, these forces are referred to as Imperialists. As with regard to the servants of imperialism, Khomeini states that they:

have presented Islam in a totally different light. They have created in men's minds a false notion of Islam. The defective version of Islam, which they have presented in the religious teaching institution, is intended to deprive Islam of its vital, revolutionary aspect and to prevent Muslims from arousing themselves in order to gain their freedom, fulfil the ordinances of Islam, and create a government that will assure their happiness and allow them to live, lives worthy of human beings.⁹²²

⁹²¹ Ibid., p. 71.

⁹²² "[..]For example, the servants of imperialism declared that Islam is not a comprehensive religion providing for every aspect of human life and has no laws or ordinances pertaining to society. It has no particular form of government. Islam concerns itself only with rules of ritual purity after menstruation and parturition. It may have a few ethical principles, but it

This notion of a defective form of Islam runs through the entire discourse of Velayat. Concomitant with Milestones and other works by Islamic ideologues of the 20th century, the cause that is most often brought to the foreground as the root cause of disorder is this argument of a 'weak' Islam. Islamism therefore does not find its main *raison d'être* in foreign occupation or foreign meddling in internal affairs, as is often suggested; these are but the symptoms of an underlying disease. This disease *is* weak Islam. This is augmented by the fact that in Shi'a Islam the question of Islamic governance ran into a problem with the occultation of the twelfth imam. Since his occultation there has been no imam capable of assuming a comparable role of leadership in the religious and political sphere and therefore some have concluded that quietism or secularism are called for until the hidden imam, the Mahdi, returns, thereby postponing the formation of Islamic government indefinitely. Khomeini vehemently opposes this second form of internal enemies:

Present Islam to the people in its true form, so that our youth do not picture the *akhunds* as sitting in some corner in Najaf or Qum, studying the questions of menstruation and parturition instead of concerning themselves with politics, and draw the conclusion that religion must be separate from politics. This slogan of the separation of religion from politics and the demand that Islamic scholars should not intervene in social and political affairs have been formulated and propagated by the imperialists; it is only the irreligious who repeat them. Were religion and politics separate in the time of the Prophet? Did there exist, on one side, a group of clerics, and opposite it, a group of politicians and leaders? Were religion and politics separate in the time of the caliphs—even if they were not legitimate—or in the time of the Commander of the Faithful? Did two separate authorities exist? These

certainly has nothing to say about human life in general and the ordering of society."Ibid., p. 28.

slogans and claims have been advanced by the imperialists and their political agents in order to prevent religion from ordering the affairs of this world and shaping Muslim society, and at the same time to create a rift between the scholars of Islam, on the one hand, and the masses and those struggling for freedom and independence, on the other. They will thus been able to gain dominance over our people and plunder our resources, for such has always been their ultimate goal.⁹²³

As I have noted before, there are quite clear similarities between this type of thinking and secular totalitarian thinking. In the latter too, the demise of the race, *volk*, or class is attributed first and foremost to its own members who have abandoned the edicts of the law of nature and history and have failed to live up to the standards required of them by the ideology. The existential enemy is firstly and most threateningly an internal one. Much in the same way as the freedom of choice allowed for pure Aryans to breed with non-Aryans, thus causing the demise of the Aryan *Volk*, the imams of defeat and the proponents of weak Islam have caused people to abandon:

[..]almost all aspects of our duty, restricting ourselves to passing on, from one generation to the next; certain parts of Islamic law and discussing them among ourselves. Many of the ordinances of Islam have virtually become part of the occult sciences, and Islam itself has become a stranger; only its name has survived.⁹²⁴ As a result, many persons, particularly the educated, have formed misguided and incorrect notions of Islam.⁹²⁵

The imams of defeat, ironically called the *akhunds* by Khomeini, lie at the heart of this problem. It is they that have, in the view of Khomeini,

⁹²³ Ibid., p. 38.

⁹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 74-75

⁹²⁵ Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 28.

robbed Islam of its revolutionary character and strength.⁹²⁶ Velayat is an attempt to defeat the *akhunds* and their foreign masters and to revitalize those fuqaha who have not abandoned Islam. Unlike Milestones then, Velayat does not primarily address the ordinary Muslim or enlist the ordinary Muslim into the vanguard movement, but specifically addresses the class of experts in fiqh, the fuqaha, and urges them to take hold of the reigns of their society.^{927 928} Khomeini

⁹²⁶ "If someone wishes to speak about an Islamic government and the establishment of Islamic government, he must observe the principle of taqiyyah and count upon the opposition of those who have sold themselves to imperialism." Ibid., p. 34.

⁹²⁷ "It is our duty to preserve Islam. This duty is one of the most important obligations incumbent upon us; it is more necessary even than prayer and fasting. It is for the sake of fulfilling this duty that blood must sometimes be shed. There is no blood more precious than that of Imām Husayn ('a), yet it was shed for the sake of Islam, because of the precious nature of Islam. We must understand this matter well and convey it to others. You can be the true successors to the Prophet (s) as the guardians of Islam only if you teach Islam to the people; do not say, "We will wait until the coming of the Imām of the Age ('a)." Would you consider postponing your prayer until the coming of the Imām? [...] Do not sit here simply debating among yourselves. Study all the ordinances of Islam and propagate all aspects of the truth by writing and publishing pamphlets. It cannot fail to have an effect, as my own experience testifies." Ibid., pp. 75-76.

⁹²⁸ As such, Khomeini diverts from the anarchic character of Qutb's Milestones and instead offers a model for revitalization which leans heavily on the support of an already existing class of authority figures. The strength of this model is obvious, by addressing a class of experts one can be assured of incorporating men of knowledge and authority in the vanguard. Whilst Milestones addresses all Muslims, clergy and laymen alike, thus creating a problem of legitimacy, Khomeini ensures that his vanguard will be held in high regard precisely because of their status as faqih. The drawback however, is that this model is difficult to export beyond the boundaries of a society that has such a class of authority figures or that recognizes its importance. Outside of Shi'a Islamic societies, and those are few, the doctrine of the imamate and the guardianship of the jurists is a largely foreign figure that would be hard to integrate into the political landscape. Neither Qutb nor al-Zawahiri ever refer to a concept like the guardianship of the jurists. Rather, they emphasize a sort of guardianship of men of action, the mujahedeen. However, these are not necessarily men of intricate

then comments upon a the nature of the internal enemy, which resists this new class of militant fuqaha:

But if Islam commands its followers to engage in warfare or defense in order to make men submit to laws that are beneficial for them, and kill a few corrupt people or instigators of corruption, then they ask: “What’s the purpose for that war?”⁹²⁹

A similar style of debate can be seen in the work of al-Zawahiri when he defends himself against those whom he terms the *imams of defeat*. Khomeini thus argues that fighting in the way of Allah upsets many of those fuqaha who are subservient to the external enemy. The question which follows is that as to what should happen to these *akhunds*? Whilst Khomeini appears to approach them in a friendly manner at first, it becomes increasingly clear that society has to be literally purged of their presence.⁹³⁰

knowledge of fiqh. As we have seen, the *Salafi* ideal in which each Muslim is able to interpret the Quran and sunna on his own, might seem very progressive and able to mobilize a great number of people, but at the same time it opens the door to an equally great number of unqualified people who will be giving doubtful legal opinions, thus creating a sort of legitimacy vacuum that can just as easily create disunity and paralyze the whole movement. The appeal to the faqih seeks to avert these problems by focusing on at least some sort of centralized and hierarchical authority, but which comes at a cost, namely a limited appeal outside of the Shi’a ummah. There are several other factors which come into play here but they lie within the discrepancies between Shi’a and Sunni Islam, and beyond the boundaries of this book.

⁹²⁹ Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 34.

⁹³⁰ “First, we must advise these pseudo-saints and try to awaken them. We must say to them: “Can you not see the danger? Do you not see that the Israelis are attacking, killing, and destroying and the British and Americans are helping them? You sit there watching, but you must wake up; you must try to find a remedy for the ills of the people. Mere discussion is not enough. Simply pronouncing opinions on points of law is of no use by itself. Do not keep silent at a time when Islam is being destroyed, Islam is being wiped out,

4.3.2 The external enemy

The second category of factors that are attributed with the weak state of the Islamic community are the external enemies. These too can be subdivided into two categories namely the historical and the contemporary existential enemy.

Jews

More pronounced than in Qutb's Milestones, but less pronounced than in al-Zawahiri, the Jews figure as an historical force which has always been opposed to Islam. In a particularly clear example of Gnostic thinking Khomeini states that:

From the very beginning, the historical movement of Islam has had to contend with the Jews, for it was they who first established anti-Islamic propaganda and engaged in various stratagems, and as you can see, this activity continues down to the present. Later they were joined by other groups, who were in certain respects, more satanic than they.⁹³¹ [...] We see today that the Jews (may God curse them) have meddled with the text of the Qur'an and have made certain changes in the Qur'ans they have printed in the occupied territories. It is our duty to prevent this treacherous interference with the text of Qur'an. We must protest and make the people aware that

like Christians who sat discussing the Holy Ghost and the Trinity until they were destroyed. Wake up If our pseudo-saints do not wake up, and begin to assume their responsibilities after repeated admonition and advice, it will be obvious that the cause of their failure is not ignorance, but something else. Then, of course, we will adopt a different attitude toward them.[...] They must be exposed and disgraced so that they may come to lose whatever standing they enjoy among the people. If their standing in society is not destroyed, they will destroy the standing of the Imām of the Age and the standing of Islam itself. Our youths must strip them of their turbans. [...] I am not saying they should be killed; they do not deserve to be killed. [...] They do not need to be beaten much; just take off their turbans, and do not permit them to appear in public wearing turbans. The turban is a noble garment; not everyone is fit to wear it." Ibid., pp. 142-145.

⁹³¹ Ibid., p. 27.

the Jews and their foreign backers are opposed to the very foundations of Islam and wish to establish Jewish domination throughout the world. Since they are a cunning and resourceful group of people, I fear that —God forbid— they may one day achieve their goal, and that the apathy shown by some of us may allow a Jew to rule over us one day. May God never let us see such a day!⁹³²

Disturbing thought this passage may seem, I have made it clear in the chapter one that the basic position of Islam versus Judaism and Christianity is one of antipathy based on the claim that the Jews and Christians have corrupted or misrepresented the true revelations of Allah. Rather than inventing an enemy, Khomeini is merely repeating the standard doctrine which is proscribed by the Quran and Sunna itself. Whilst the Christians might escape most of Khomeini's wrath, a phenomenon which is the same in Qutb and al-Zawahiri, their role is not non-existent but comes into play much later in time. The Jews remain the archenemy as depicted in the canonical literature. Christians however needed to develop into a large political and material force before their role as an enemy outgrew that of their merely being 'those that have gone astray' as described in the Quran. They appear in Khomeini's Velayat as the force of Imperialism.

Western imperialism

Khomeini, nor any other of the *Islamist* ideologues, see the belligerent powers of their day, mainly imperialism and Zionism, a euphemism for Judaism, as seeking conversion of the Muslims towards their religion. Rather, the object of belligerency is material wealth at the expense of the Muslim masses.

The agents of imperialism are busy in every corner of the Islamic world drawing our youth from us with their evil propaganda. They are not converting them into Jews and

⁹³² Ibid., p. 127.

Christians; they are corrupting them, making them irreligious and indifferent, which is sufficient for their purposes [..]⁹³³

Here things become interesting as the language that Khomeini proceeds to use has very clear references to Marxist-Leninist thinking. Unlike Qutb, Khomeini betrays a close affiliation with this type of thinking which can especially be seen in his insistence on an Islamic variety of the Leninist professional revolutionary vanguard and his rejection of the anarchic Qutbist model. In the view of Khomeini, the community of Muslims is on the one hand robbed of its legitimate rights by the internal enemy, those who argue that Islamic governance is not needed or impossible, and on the other hand by western powers that have taken advantage of this weakness and lack of leadership by imposing their own corrupt imperialistic laws on the Muslims.

Through the political agents they have placed in power over the people, the imperialists have imposed on us an unjust economic order, and thereby divided our people into two groups: oppressors and oppressed. Hundreds of millions of Muslims are hungry and deprived of all forms of health care and education, while minorities comprised of the wealthy and powerful live a life of indulgence, licentiousness, and corruption. The hungry and deprived have constantly struggled to free themselves from the oppression of their plundering overlords, and their struggle continues to this day. But their way is blocked by the ruling minorities and the oppressive governmental structures they head. It is our duty to save the oppressed and deprived. It is our duty to be a helper to the oppressed, and an enemy to the oppressor. This is nothing other than the duty that the Commander of the Faithful ('a) entrusted to his two great offspring in his

⁹³³ Ibid.

celebrated testament: “Be an enemy to the oppressor and a helper to the oppressed.”⁹³⁴

Khomeini here echoes a vocabulary that is common in much of the post-colonial secular totalitarian literature of south-east Asia. When one reads the works of Mao, Kim il-sung or Pol Pot one will find basically the same structure of arguments and factors that are considered to have created disorder. These ideologies portray the disorder through a conspiratory worldview in which existential internal and external enemies extort and oppress the defenceless masses with capitalist and Imperialist corrupt laws through the hands of secretive societies of ‘agents’. The existence of such enemies and agents might not be completely fabricated since colonialism and imperialism have indeed been political historical factors in Iran and south-east Asia and have indeed been important elements in the formation of totalitarian thinking in the societies of the colonial ruler and the ruled.⁹³⁵ Apart from the legitimate critique of imperialism and colonialism however, It is just as much a hallmark of totalitarian thinking to posit that that all ailments of society, all perceived disorder, is to be blamed on external and internal enemies whose existence is contrasted with the imaginary ‘pure community’, ‘class’ or ‘*volks-gemeinschaft*’. In other words, the invention of the existential enemy is a necessary precondition for the invention of the pure community. Both are mythological entities that only exist within the realm of the ideology and its ideological thinking. Outside of the realm of the symbolic they have no real world substance or validity. However, it is in the nature of totalitarianism to ignore this fact and penalize any doubts concerning its validity, and in turn act as if the symbolic community was a real community with all of the consequences that it entails. As in the novel *1984*, Oceania had to be at war with either Eurasia or East-Asia, for if there was no war there could be no Oceania. All the policies of Oceania would become void

⁹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

⁹³⁵ See the often overlooked but important debate on Imperialism in part II of Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

without these enemies. This is the essence of the word existential enemy, for without this enemy the pure community cannot exist. In addition, at the same time, the whole existence, evolution and purpose of the pure community is built upon the necessity of vanquishing the existential enemy. This is the paradox that underlies the essence of totalitarian thinking. Whereas colonialism, imperialism and the agents thereof did in fact exist, the idea that these powers formed a single organism operating on a single agenda of extorting the Muslim community is both a necessity and product of ideological thinking needed to constitute the pure community and not a fact derived from real world experiences. If anything, the conspiratory way of thinking that is emblematic of totalitarian movements betrays its very essence, totalitarianism itself is a conspiracy designed to fabricate a reality modelled upon the fantasy of the world as an epic battlefield between the forces of good and evil. Irrespective of the actual conditions of human life, the totalitarian movement insists that there is an absolute dichotomy between good and evil and classifies the individual as enemy or friend on his very belief in the *validity* of this dichotomy.

The overlap between the vocabulary of post-colonial communist totalitarian movements and *Islamist* movements is quite obvious to this reader, and seems to explain the attraction the latter movements has on some communist movements in the non-Islamic world. The portrayal of the capitalistic imperialistic west as a force of oppression certainly does resonate all through the whole spectrum of communist movements. One of the foremost agents of the corrupting Western imperialists are the Jews and in particular the state of Israel. It is therefore no surprise that the Khomeini's message and vocabulary have had a strong appeal on those who oppose Israel from a communist perspective.⁹³⁶

⁹³⁶ Emerson Vermaat, *Nazi's, Communisten En Islamisten. Opmerkelijke Allianties Tussen Extremisten*. See also the website of the international socialist movement which features a number of articles that reflect the

All of the foregoing comes together in the following quote:

If the rulers of the Muslim countries truly represented the believers and enacted God's ordinances, they would set aside their petty differences, abandon their subversive and divisive activities, and join together like the fingers of one hand. Then a handful of wretched Jews (the agents of America, Britain and other foreign powers) would never have been able to accomplish what they have, no matter how much support they enjoyed from America and Britain. All this has happened because of the incompetence of those who rule over the Muslims [...] It is because we have been lacking in unity, strength, and preparedness that we suffer oppression and are at the mercy of foreign aggressors.⁹³⁷

Having observed the illness of the Muslim community and diagnosed its cause, the question arises on how to implement the formula for self- and world preservation. Unlike Qutb, who is rather vague about the political consequences of the movement for revitalization, Khomeini has a clear model which he wishes to put into practice. In the next two paragraphs I will discuss this model and the movement which is poised to put it into practice.

4.4 The belief that salvation and a return to Eden is possible

Whilst some may argue that Islam does not require an Islamic state, the arguments employed by Khomeini challenge this belief.

Khomeini's main argument for the need to establish an Islamic government capable of enforcing Islamic laws seems to me to be a very strong one. It hinges on three main aspects. First of all the

conflation of Khomeini's and Marxist thought on the issue of Israel.

<http://www.isreview.org/>

⁹³⁷ Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, pp. 46-47.

example of the prophet himself and his successors.⁹³⁸ Secondly, the nature of the Shari'ah.⁹³⁹ Thirdly, human nature.⁹⁴⁰ Just as Qutb reasons in Milestones, Khomeini's Velayat argues that based on prophetic example and the nature of the Shari'ah Islam requires its laws to be enacted in society for the benefit of mankind and in order

⁹³⁸ "In addition to conveying the revelation and expounding and interpreting the articles of faith and the ordinances and institutions of Islam, he [the prophet D.S.] undertook the implementation of law and the establishment of the ordinances of Islam, thereby, bringing into being the Islamic state. He did not content himself with the promulgation of law; rather, he implemented it at the same time, cutting off hands and administering lashings, and stonings. After the Most Noble Messenger, his successor had the same duty and function. When the Prophet appointed a successor, it was not only for the purpose of expounding articles of faith and law; it was for the implementation of law and the execution of God's ordinances. It was this function—the execution of law and the establishment of Islamic institutions—that made the appointment of a successor such an important matter that the Prophet (s) would have failed to fulfill his mission if he had neglected it. For after the Prophet (s), the Muslims still needed someone to execute laws and establish the institution of Islam in society, so that they might attain happiness in this world and the hereafter." *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁹³⁹ "The nature and character of Islamic law and the divine ordinances of the *shari'ah* furnish additional proof of the necessity for establishing government, for they indicate that the laws were laid down for the purpose of creating a state and administering the political, economic and cultural affairs of society. Second, if we examine closely the nature and character of the provisions of the law, we realize that their execution and implementation depend upon the formation of a government, and that it is impossible to fulfil the duty of executing God's commands without there being established properly comprehensive administrative and executive organs. Let us now mention certain types of provisions in order to illustrate this point; the others you can examine yourselves." *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹⁴⁰ "men are prey to defects; they are not perfect, and must need to strive for perfection. Moreover, they disagree with each other, having varying inclinations and discordant states. If God, therefore, had not appointed over men one who would maintain order and law and protect the revelation brought by the Prophet (s), in the manner we have described, men would have fallen prey to corruption; the institutions, laws, customs, and ordinances of Islam would be transformed; and faith and its content would be completely changed, resulting in the corruption of all humanity." *Ibid.*, p. 53.

to please Allah. Mankind itself however is by its very nature deficient. Freedom of choice will always lead to man seeking his own pleasures and straying from the path of Allah. The function of government is to make sure that man cannot do this, in other words, the law is there to force him to be free. Both Qutb and Khomeini therefore argue, albeit according to different lines of reasoning, that the legitimacy of the ruler depends on his implementation of the Shari'ah and not on popular consent. The Shi'a perspective on this issue of government is somewhat different from the Sunni perspective in that the occultation of the last imam has posed a problem of authority and legitimacy. Since the occultation, Shi'a Islam has gone into various forms of secularism or quietism. Khomeini however argues that this is the great disease that has caused the ailments of his day and instead issues the following profession of faith:

We believe in the Imamate; we believe that the Prophet appointed a successor to assume responsibility for the affairs of the Muslims, and that he did so in conformity with the divine will. Therefore, we must also believe in the necessity for the establishment of government, and we must strive to establish organs for the execution of law and the administration of affairs[.]Know that it is your duty to establish an Islamic government.⁹⁴¹

By using analogy and extrapolation, Khomeini deduces from prophetic example and the example of the imams after the prophet that the duty to uphold Islamic government is perpetual and not dependant on the actual existence of the imam in the current age. In other words, the viceregency of the imamate has been passed on to the community of believers in the absence of the imam.⁹⁴² Reiterating the

⁹⁴¹ "The same factors of necessity that led him to become the Imām still exist; the only difference is that no single individual has been designated for the task. The principle of the necessity of government has been made a general one, so that it will always remain in effect."Ibid., p. 37.

⁹⁴² Ibid., p. 53.

position held by Qutb and the ulama of medieval and classical Islam, Khomeini underscores that Islamic government is not democracy, theocracy or monarchy, but the direct rule of divine law over man.⁹⁴³ Khomeini echoes the totalitarian conception of sovereignty and authority which is apparent in all *Islamist* literature namely that all men, including the prophet himself are bound by divine law. The law therefore loses all connection to the realm of real world experiences and becomes a movement towards the immanentization of the transcendent which must be allowed to fabricate the immanent into the model of the transcendent.⁹⁴⁴ The belief that salvation from the disorder caused by the abandonment of Islam and the corrupting influences of the internal and external enemies is possible, therefore hinges on the implementation of the Shari'ah by the state. In order to achieve this goal the order of being will have to be changed and the acting agent of that change is the vanguard movement who have become the torchbearers of the prophet and the imams. As to the question whether this is possible or not Khomeini states:

Today, we have 700 million Muslims in the world, 170 million or more of whom are Shi'a. They are all ready to follow us, but we are so lacking in resolve that we are unable to lead them. We must establish a government that will enjoy the trust of the people, one in which the people have confidence and to

⁹⁴³ "It is constitutional in the sense that the rulers are subject to a certain set of conditions in governing and administering the country, conditions that are set forth in the Noble Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Most Noble Messenger (s). It is the laws and ordinances of Islam comprising this set of conditions that must be observed and practiced. Islamic government may therefore be defined as the rule of divine law over men." *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹⁴⁴ "Whenever the Prophet expounded a certain matter or promulgated a certain injunction, he did so in obedience to divine law, a law that everyone without exception must obey and adhere to. Divine law obtains both for the leader and the led; the sole law that is valid and imperative to apply is the law of God. [...] Individual opinion, even if it be that of the Prophet himself, cannot intervene in matters of divine law; here, all are subject to the will of God." *Ibid.*, p. 57.

which they will be able to entrust their destiny. We need trustworthy rulers who will guard the trust the people have placed with them, so that protected by them and the law, the peoples will be able to live their lives and go about their tasks in tranquillity. These are the things to which you should be devoting your thought. Do not despair; do not imagine that this task is impossible.⁹⁴⁵

The trustworthy rulers whom Khomeini refers to are the professional revolutionary Vanguards, the *fuqaha*.

4.5 The agent of salvation: the Revolutionary Vanguard

The change in the order of being which Khomeini proposes seeks to overthrow the entire fabric of society. Its basic premises are that the need for Islamic government is divinely ordained and eternally valid based on Quranic and prophetic example.⁹⁴⁶ Every form of being which does not correspond to these foundations is un-Islamic and needs to be overthrown.⁹⁴⁷ The model Khomeini proposes is as follows:

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

⁹⁴⁶ "According to one of the noble verses of the Qur'an, the ordinances of Islam are not limited with respect to time or place; they are permanent and must be enacted until the end of time. They were not revealed merely for the time of the Prophet, only to be abandoned thereafter, with retribution and the penal code no longer be enacted, or the taxes prescribed by Islam no longer collected, and the defense of the lands and people of Islam suspended. The claim that the laws of Islam may remain in abeyance or are restricted to a particular time or place is contrary to the essential creedal bases of Islam. Since enactment of laws, then, is necessary after the departure of the Prophet from this world, and indeed, will remain so until the end of time, the formation of a government and the establishment of executive and administrative organs are also necessary" Ibid., p. 41.

⁹⁴⁷ "It is the duty of all of us to overthrow *taghut*; i.e., the illegitimate political powers that now rule the entire Islamic world. The governmental apparatus of tyrannical and anti-popular regimes must be replaced by institutions serving the public good and administered according to Islamic law. In this

Let us overthrow tyrannical governments by: (1) severing all relations with governmental institutions; (2) refusing to cooperate with them; (3) refraining from any action that might be construed as aiding them; and (4) creating new judicial, financial, economic, cultural, and political institutions.

4.5.1 Overthrowing the old order

The first step toward changing the order of being is twofold: firstly, overthrowing the elements of the old order of being, and secondly reshaping of the own community into the model of purity envisioned by the movement.

The first victims of this movement towards re-Islamization are the elites who are seen as the representatives of the foreign body that has infected the Islamic community. This follows the age old practice of every revolutionary movement, for all power lies with the elite's and every attempt at a revolutionary remaking of society needs to transfer power from the old unto the new elite.⁹⁴⁸ Congruent with the disempowerment of those who are the symbol of foreign domination is the disempowerment of those elements of the old order that have paralyzed or weakened the movement towards purification, in this case the *akhunds*.⁹⁴⁹ I have shown in paragraph 4.3.1. how Khomeini envisages this process.

way, an Islamic government will gradually come into existence." Ibid., pp. 164-147.

⁹⁴⁸ "Most forms of corruption originate with the ruling class, the tyrannical ruling family and the libertines that associate with them. It is these rulers who establish centers of vice and corruption, who build centers of vice and wine-drinking, and spend the income of the religious endowments constructing cinemas". Ibid., p. 58.

⁹⁴⁹ "If a faqih sits in the corner of his dwelling and does not intervene in any of the affairs of society, neither preserving the laws of Islam and disseminating its ordinances, nor in any way participating in the affairs of the Muslims or having any care for them, can he be called "the fortress of Islam" or the protector of Islam?" Ibid., pp. 78-79.

As with secular totalitarian movements, the purification of society can be compared to the building of a new city. First the old city needs to be raised to the ground before a new city can be built on its ashes. The blueprint for this new city however is vastly different from the old. Whereas, in *Islamist* terms, the old city was built upon a model of man's whims and desires, the new city is built upon a strict observance of and submission to the edicts of Islam. The building blocks of this new city are the masses, and the overseers are the vanguard, the *fuqaha*. The building blocks themselves have to be imbued with the revolutionary spirit of Islamic purity in which all ties to the previous order have been severed and replaced with a frame of reference which is exclusively Islamic.

We too have difficult tasks facing us. We must improve ourselves spiritually and improve our way of life. We must become more ascetic than before and completely shun the goods of this world. All of you must equip yourselves to protect the divine trust that has been vested in your. Become worthy trustees, and hold the world in less esteem. [...] turn away from the desire for worldly gain, purify your souls, turn toward God Almighty, cultivate piety. If your purpose in studying is—God forbid—to secure your future livelihood, you will never become *fuqaha* or trustees of Islam. Prepare yourselves to be useful to Islam; act as the army for the Imam of the Age in order to be able to serve him in spreading the rule of justice.⁹⁵⁰

The exclusive claim which the ideology puts on the believer requires of the believer that he accepts that he is merely a vessel for the ideology's law of movement. He himself has to give up his sovereignty and his own autonomy and submit everything he is to the ideology: "The Prophet (s) has higher claims on the believers than their own

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

selves” (Quran 33:6),⁹⁵¹ this does not mean that the vanguard or the leadership of the new order has any real sovereignty of its own. They too are but submissive servants to a higher order, a task which they must assume even if they dislike it and which brings them no honour.⁹⁵² This attitude has to be artificially created and internalized before any attempt at the restructuring of society can be undertaken. It is comparable to the mindset which created the SS or the Bolshevik vanguard movements and I will briefly explain how Khomeini aims to achieve this internalization.

4.5.2 Fabricating a new order of being

As I remarked in the chapter on Qutb, there are many valid comparisons with the way in which a cult functions. Separation of the individual from his traditional surroundings is usually an exercise in the creation of artificial loneliness, which in turn as we saw in Part One is a precondition for the formation of totalitarian movements. This loneliness may be camouflaged by the social bonds of the new group to which the individual is initiated, but those new social bonds substitute “for the boundaries and channels of communication between individuals a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality has disappeared into one

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 65. See also pp. 143-144: “If a *faqih* anticipates that by his entering the service of an oppressive government, oppression will be furthered and the reputation of Islam soiled, he must not enter its service even if he is killed as a result. There is no acceptable excuse he can offer.”

⁹⁵² “The Commander of the Faithful said to Ibn ‘Abbās concerning the nature of government and command: “How much is this shoe worth?” Ibn ‘Abbās replied: “Nothing”. The Commander of Faithful then said: “Command over you is worth still less in my eyes, except for this: by means of ruling and commanding you I may be able to establish the right”—i.e., the laws and institutions of Islam—“and destroy the wrong”—i.e., all impermissible and oppressive laws and institutions” [...] “It is the duty of the Imams and the just fuqaha to use government institutions to execute divine law, to establish the just Islamic system, and serve mankind. Government in itself represents nothing but pain and trouble for them, but what are they to do? They have been given a duty, a mission to fulfill; the governance of the faqih is nothing but the performance of a duty.” Ibid., pp. 65-66.

man of gigantic dimensions.”⁹⁵³ It is precisely human plurality and spontaneity which caused Islam to weaken and which has to be replaced by uniformity of thought and action. The wholesale rejection of and isolation from the non-revolutionary and non-Islamic outside world is therefore the first step towards the indoctrination of this new morality. As with the national-socialist and bolshevist movements, the mechanism of indoctrination requires the ‘new converts’ to display their revolutionary spirit through actions which are aimed at the destruction of the old order:

First, the existence of a non-Islamic political order necessarily results in the non-implementation of the Islamic political order. Then, all non-Islamic systems of government are the systems of *kufur* since the ruler in each case is an instance of *taghut*, and it is our duty to remove from the life of Muslim society all traces of *kufur* and destroy them.⁹⁵⁴

These external measures of war aim to both eradicate all non-desirable elements and create amongst these new elites the solidarity of the trenches. I have made this reference to the *Islamist* mechanism of indoctrination as a form of trenchocracy in the previous chapter. It is flanked by creating those circumstances in which this new elite can be imbued by the revolutionary spirit unopposed.

It is also our duty to create a favourable social environment for the education of believing and virtuous individuals, an environment that is in total contradiction with that produced by the rule of *taghut* and illegitimate power. The social environment created by *taghut* and *shirk* invariably brings about corruption such as you can observe now in Iran [...] This

⁹⁵³ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 466.

⁹⁵⁴ Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 48.

corruption must be swept away, and its instigators should be punished for their deeds.⁹⁵⁵

One should note the barely veiled threats that Khomeini utters against his own people. Having divided the world into either the forces of good or the forces of evil, with no grey area in between, the new elites he addresses are told that they either should fight against the instigators of corruption or be labelled as instigators of corruption. Thus the normal field of human relationships, with all of its intricacies and undefined horizons is reduced to rubble and in its place the totalitarian dichotomy, which exists only in the realm of its own logic, is raised as the new standard of human existence.

4.5.3 The professional revolutionary Vanguard

It goes without saying that this destruction of the old order and the complete submission of the individual to the edicts of the ideology are events that hardly come about through the individual's voluntarily consent. As with secular totalitarian movements, men have to be moulded, prepared, and guided if not forced into this new role. The way to do this is through propaganda and indoctrination, and the acting agent that guides this process is the professional revolutionary Vanguard, the fuqaha. The model which Khomeini envisages is largely built upon the pre-existing model of the bolshevist revolution. This means that there is little trust in the masses ability to educate themselves. Rather, professional revolutionaries should pave the way for the instruction of the masses.⁹⁵⁶ The propagation of this new

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid.p.48

⁹⁵⁶ "It is our duty to work toward the establishment of an Islamic government. The first activity we must undertake in this respect is the propagation of our case; that is how we must begin. It has always been that way, all over the world: a group of people came together, deliberated, made decisions, and then began to propagate their aims. Gradually, the number of like-minded people would increase, until finally they became powerful enough to influence a great state or even to confront and overthrow it,[..] Gradually, the scope of this activity would be expanded until it came to

revolutionary creed should not be limited to elucidating the ritualistic tenets of Islam but rather should emphasize its social, economic and above all political edicts.⁹⁵⁷ This Vanguard, in Khomeini's view, should be seen as a highly militaristic class of elite soldiers that is fully imbued with the revolutionary creed and is entitled and destined to be the head of state. Whilst the masses owe allegiance to the Vanguard, the Vanguard owes allegiance to the Shari'ah alone.⁹⁵⁸

The two qualities of knowledge of the law and justice are present in countless fuqaha of the present age. If they come together, they could establish a government of universal justice in the world. If a worthy individual possessing these two qualities arises and establishes a government, he will possess the same authority as the Most Noble Messenger in

embrace all groups of society, and the people, awakened and active, would attain their goal" *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁹⁵⁷ "You teach the people matters relating to worship, of course, but more important are the political, economic, and legal aspects of Islam. These are, or should be, the focus of our concern. It is our duty to begin exerting ourselves now in order to establish a truly Islamic government. We must propagate our cause to the people, instruct them in it, and convince them of its validity. We must generate a wave of intellectual awakening, to emerge as a current throughout society, and gradually, to take shape as organized Islamic movement made up of the awakened, committed, and religious masses who will rise up and establish an Islamic government." *Ibid.* p. 126-127

⁹⁵⁸ "If the ruler is unacquainted with the contents of the law, he is not fit to rule; for if he follows the legal pronouncements of others his power to govern will be impaired, but if, on the other hand, he does not follow such guidance, he will be unable to rule correctly and implement the laws of Islam. It is an established principle that "the faqih has authority over the ruler." If the ruler adheres to Islam, he must necessarily submit to the faqih, asking him about the laws and ordinances of Islam in order to implement them. This being the case, the true rulers are the fuqaha themselves, and rulership ought officially to be theirs, to apply to them, not to those who are obliged to follow the guidance of the fuqaha on account of their own ignorance of the law." *Ibid.* pp. 59-60

the administration of society, and it will be the duty of all people to obey him.⁹⁵⁹

This model of the fuqaha as an elite corps of Vanguard soldiers is quite the opposite of the reality of the fuqaha in Khomeini's period.⁹⁶⁰ It therefore, in summary, is the function of this revolutionary Vanguard to pave the way for, and lead the eradication of the old order of being. It does this through the creation of parallel organizations which aim to substitute non-revolutionary and non-Islamic organizations with revolutionary Islamic ones, thus conquering society through non-violent, - i.e. propaganda and indoctrination, and violent means if necessary. As with Qutb's Milestones, Velayat's model for changing the order of being is quite similar with the secular totalitarian movements' modus operandi.⁹⁶¹

4.6 The mechanism of salvation: Jihad

As with Qutb, this final paragraph is devoted to the actual process of changing the order of being, namely through Jihad. Jihad as we saw

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁹⁶⁰ "Matters have now come to the point where some people consider the apparel of a soldier incompatible with true manliness and justice, even though the leaders of our religion were all soldiers, commanders, and warriors. They put on military dress and went into battle in the wars that are described for us in our history; they killed and they were killed. [...] and it is said that one should not wear military dress. If we want to form an Islamic government, then we must do it in our cloaks and turbans; otherwise, we commit an offense against decency and justice!" Ibid., p. 35.

⁹⁶¹ The use of propaganda and its potential mobilizing effect on the masses is explicitly named by Khomeini throughout Velayat. Khomeini on numerous occasions details how the propaganda of the 'imperialists' and their lackeys robbed the fuqaha and the Muslim masses of their Islamic revolutionary spirit and instilled within them 'false notions' of Islam. The idea that Islam is merely a private spiritual matter which has no political dimensions is the result of such propaganda and needs to be countered by propaganda of the 'truth'. Ibid., pp. 113-115. While the actual form of the propaganda to be utilized is never truly worked out in great detail, it runs through Velayat nonetheless as a commandment to the faithful along the same lines as in Qutb's Milestones.

can be subdivided into a number of activities ranging from hijra to da'wa and actual fighting. Khomeini first states that da'wa is an essential obligation.⁹⁶² This is not surprising since before one can attack a non-believer, it is essential that he or she has been invited to Islam. As with secular totalitarian movements, the individual Muslim is not allowed to merely remain passive. Linz stated that totalitarian regimes demand total mobilization "Citizen participation in and active mobilization for political and collective tasks are encouraged, demanded, rewarded, and channelled through a single party and many monopolistic secondary groups. Passive obedience and apathy [...] are considered undesirable by the rulers."⁹⁶³ The Vanguard movement acts as the party which in turn controls all of the parallel organizations which are aimed at ensuring active citizen participation. Khomeini voices this ambition as follows:

They want someone to stand up fearlessly and speak out. So, courageous sons of Islam, stand up! Address the people bravely; tell the truth about our situation to the masses in simple language; arouse them to enthusiastic activity, and turn the people in the street and the bazaar, our simple-hearted workers and peasants, and our alert students into dedicated *mujahids*. The entire population will become *mujahid*. All segments of society are ready to struggle for the sake of freedom, independence, and the happiness of the nation, and their struggle needs religion. Give the people Islam, then, for Islam is the school of *jihad*, the religion of struggle; let them amend their characters and beliefs in accordance with Islam and transform themselves into a powerful force, so that they may overthrow the tyrannical

⁹⁶² "If we believe that Islam is for all the people in the world, it becomes obvious to every rational mind that the Muslims, and particularly the scholars among them, have the duty of disseminating knowledge of Islam and its ordinances and acquainting the people of the world with them." *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

⁹⁶³ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, p. 84.

regime imperialism has imposed on us and set up an Islamic government.⁹⁶⁴

When Khomeini calls upon all citizens to become mujahids, those that strive or fight for Islam, he is in fact describing a total mobilization aimed at resisting non-Islamic rule and ultimately ending in the violent overthrow of all opposing forces. He concludes with the statement that neither the Vanguard nor the masses have to invent anything by themselves: everything from laws, governments and a blueprint for action has been provided for either by the Quran or by prophetic example.⁹⁶⁵ All that men have to do is submit themselves fully to this divine model of action and carry it out without regard for their own life or well being. The only thing which is lacking is physical power.⁹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, through the Vanguard movement and its parallel organizations, the accumulation of political, social and physical power is merely a matter of time. The secular totalitarian movement's history gives ample evidence for this point. In essence the Vanguard movement is the accelerator of the law of movement, it may start slow, appear even benign, but its sole reason of being is to perform this function. Therefore, as with the Sunni version we saw in Qutb, it might appear in the form of charitable organizations,

⁹⁶⁴ Ruhollah Khomeini, ed., *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 132.

⁹⁶⁵ "The entire system of government and administration, together with the necessary laws, lies ready for you. If the administration of the country calls for taxes, Islam has made the necessary provision; and if laws are needed, Islam has established them all. There is no need for you, after establishing a government, to sit down and draw up laws, or, like rulers who worship foreigners and are infatuated with the West, run after others to borrow their laws. Everything is ready and waiting. All that remains is to draw up ministerial programs, and that can be accomplished with the help and cooperation of consultants and advisers who are experts in different fields, gathered together in a consultative assembly." *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁹⁶⁶ "What we are lacking are the necessary resolve and armed power, and these, too, we shall acquire, God willing. We need the staff of Moses and the resolve of Moses; we need people who are able to wield the staff of Moses and the sword of the Commander of the Faithful." *Ibid.*, p. 138.

interfaith dialogue groups and so on, but behind this superficial façade lies the real face of the Vanguard movement:

we will leave anyone in his place who faithfully follows Islam.⁹⁶⁷

4.7 Summary

Velayat-e Faqih displays many of the signature arguments that we have found in Qutb's milestones. There are some differences which pertain mostly to the Sunni-Shi'a divide such as the role of the imams, the occultation of the hidden imam and the somewhat different appraisal of the role of the ulama – fuqaha. Whilst Qutb's analyses ends in an almost anarchic rallying call to all Muslims to take the reins of *ijtihad* and *hisbah* in their own hands, Khomeini in principle calls upon the fuqaha to reclaim their rightful position. This is reminiscent of Taymiyyah appeal to the ulama of his day. In terms of the six steps of the Gnostic speculation however, there seem to be very little differences of any significance. The world is in disorder due to the abandonment of Islam. This is caused by the internal enemy, the ulama of defeat and the following of man's own worldly desires instead of compliance to the formula for self and world salvation on the one hand, and the strength and animosity of the external enemy. More than Qutb, Khomeini emphasizes the role of imperialism and capitalism in a style which is highly reminiscent of Lenin's and bolshevist writings. It sometimes seems as though the bolshevist rallying call has been incorporated and outfitted with an Islamic vocabulary. The external enemy, in particular the Jew, is not defined by his actions but through a judgment derived from the logicity of ideological thinking, that is, the enemy is not an enemy because of his actions but because of his nature. How do we know his nature? Through the inner logic of the ideology. In this case, verses from the Quran and hadith about the nature of the Jews are intermingled with

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

a conspiratory worldview which defines actions from the real world as being a result of that nature. Imperialism and foreign meddling in internal affairs thus are not seen as the policies of that day or as actions by individuals but are seen through the prism of those canonical sources. Since these sources claim that there is eternal animosity between the Muslims and the Jews and Christians, no fact derived from reality can be allowed to falsify those claims. This can be clearly seen in the rhetoric used by the Iranian state against the USA, the head of unbelief, and Israel as respectively the great and small Satan. The image of the external enemy is not construed upon the external enemies' actions, but their actions are seen as the inevitable outcome of their nature. Differently put, the Jews are not evil because of the actions of Israel; the actions of Israel are evil because Jews are. The actions of Israel are merely a symptom of the underlying nature of the Jews. This underlying nature is not defined by real world experiences but purely through the inner logic of the totalitarian movements and is thus wholly separated from any real world facts. The consequences of this type of thinking, however, are very much connected to the realm of the real world experiences.

Disorder can only be alleviated by returning to the implementation of the formula for self and world salvation. This process can be peaceful, in theory, but violence is allowed if necessary. The history of the Iranian Islamic revolution has shown that Khomeini advocated and effected the purged of societies internal enemies at the cost of tens of thousands of lives. The Islamic republic of Iran, modelled upon the Velayat-e Faqih has created a political infrastructure which 'commands the good and forbids the wrong' and forces its citizens 'to be free' with all violent means necessary. Whilst a separate analyses of the Islamic republic of Iran's political nature would require a separate study altogether, I should comment on its nature in relationship to the empirical and normative standards of totalitarianism as devised in the first part of this book.

The internal political structure of Iran is incredibly complex. Power, whilst officially in the hands of the supreme leader, is in theory divided between many different offices. All essential functions of power are clerical positions or are occupied by the clerics, the *faqih*. The centre of power therefore lies in the hands of the clergy, in that sense the centre of power is monistic but not monolithic. All means of mass communication, education, social organization and to a degree even economic life either are controlled by the state institutes or derive their legitimacy from them. The security apparatus is divided between the army but its essential core is in the hands of the operational branch of the vanguard movement, the Revolutionary Guard. It is therefore not the state but the vanguard movement who wields true power. Those elements that do not belong to the core of the Revolutionary guard and the vanguard movement, such as dissident clergy, might in theory have positions of power, but those positions can be sidetracked if necessary since true power never left the hands of the vanguard. The vanguard itself is motivated in principle by the edicts of the fully developed ideology as we have discussed in this chapter. In principle the Islamic republic of Iran conforms to the definition of totalitarianism as formulated by Linz.⁹⁶⁸

⁹⁶⁸ "There is a monistic but not monolithic centre of power, and whatever pluralism of institutions or groups exists derives its legitimacy from that centre, is largely controlled by it, and is mostly a political creation rather than an outgrowth of the dynamics of the pre-existing society.

There is an exclusive, autonomous, and more or less intellectually elaborate ideology with which the ruling group or leader, and the party serving the leaders, identify and which they use as a basis for policies or manipulate to legitimize them. The ideology has some boundaries beyond which lies heterodoxy that does not remain unsanctioned. The ideology goes beyond a particular program or definition of the boundaries of legitimate political action, to provide, presumably, some ultimate meaning, sense of historical purpose, and interpretation of social reality. Citizen participation in and active mobilization for political and collective tasks are encouraged, demanded, rewarded, and channelled through a single party and many

As I have mentioned in my resume of the empirical and normative theories on totalitarianism, Linz's definition of totalitarianism is to me somewhat problematic. Whilst it offers clear criteria for the analysis of totalitarian *states* it is to me at odds with normative theories of Arendt Voegelin and Lefort which all emphasize that violence is the inescapable conclusion of the prophesied mission of fabricating the new society. The popular resistance and displays of opposition that followed the coup by Ahmadinejad have indicated a number of important weaknesses of the regime. First of all, dissent in the own ranks of the clergy and the institutes of power. Secondly; the mere possibility of opposition. Thirdly; the actual occurrence of opposition. Fourthly, the unreliability of the states security apparatus. And fifthly; the inability or unwillingness to root out opposition.

The elections of 2009 and the resulting coup by Ahmadinejad proved that Iran is at the very least not a democracy. Power lay firmly in the hands of the ruling vanguard apparatus and the ensuing protests were met with violence, persecution and oppression, often involving systematic murder and torture all in the name of safeguarding the power-as-one and employing the rhetoric of the people-as-one. Having said that, the five elements I just named do stand out as odd. In a fully blown totalitarian regime as North-Korea that stages the same bogus elections, such occurrences simply are impossible due to the measure in which society as a whole has been made impotent. Resistance in North-Korea is not only impossible, it is unthinkable. Not so in Iran. Resistance there not only existed on the level of the citizenry but also in the level of those who are in power. This resistance was not merely in thought but was able to go to the streets and rally mass support thus proving that power is not monopolized by the vanguard movement, that there are interest groups who have autonomous power and that the vanguard movement is unable or

monopolistic secondary groups. Passive obedience and apathy, retreat into the role of "parochials" and "subjects", characteristic of many authoritarian regimes, are considered undesirable by the rulers." Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, p. 75.

unwilling to reconstitute the power-as-one and the people-as-one. These recent events in Iran have close parallels to the weakening of totalitarian rule in Poland in 1968. Claude Lefort in his analysis of those events stated:

Finally in contrast to democracy, the totalitarian system is constituted and maintained only by excluding every form of contestation. In this sense, as soon as these forms find sufficient strength to express themselves, they renew the test of its legitimacy at the same time as they mobilize themselves for specific objectives. A right is invented which opens up a field of action and thought freed from the tutelage of power. Thus the polish workers expect not only those measures which would satisfy their demands: they are also giving themselves an unlimited capacity for taking initiatives. Their demand is not only for a specific object, but also for the right to make demands. In short, the popular dynamic is not developing within the limits of the regime. [...] this dynamic has already moved beyond the closed space of totalitarianism.⁹⁶⁹ [...]“The logic of totalitarianism is not to be found in the context of Poland. [...] the establishment of a democratic Communism, in which social conflict and opposition would be institutionalized. What we are observing, by contrast, is a *crack* in the totalitarian system.⁹⁷⁰

This crack in the totalitarian system however does not imply that the vanguard movement of Iran is not totalitarian. They very well might be and I suspect that their ambition to forcefully fabricate Utopia is still very much alive. However, the events unequivocally show that the vanguard movement is either unwilling or unable to enforce its program for the fabrication of Utopia. The hallmark of a vanguard in

⁹⁶⁹ Lefort and Thompson, eds., *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, p. 311.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

total power is exemplified by the fact that as opposition has become impossible terror *increases*.

Stalin [...]used extreme methods and mass repressions at a time when the Revolution was already victorious, when the Soviet state was strengthened,[...]When our Party was politically consolidated and had strengthened itself both numerically and ideologically.⁹⁷¹

Linz underlines this argument and states:

The more a regime attempts to transform the social order to create the “new man”, to change the values of the people, and the greater the speed with which it attempts to achieve those ends, the greater the perception of the resistance to those changes, the more the terror.⁹⁷²

Iran has displayed the opposite movement namely a decrease in the use of practical and ideological terror after power had been concentrated in the vanguard movement. I suggest therefore that the Islamic republic of Iran and its vanguard movement have left the totalitarian agenda as devised by Khomeini and instead opted for a model best described as clerical fascism. Instead of a guiding ideology it is marked by a distinct mentality. Power is centralized but not monopolized, smaller more or less autonomous centres of power contest for rulership and oppression is limited to practical terror. The vanguard of this movement may still return to a totalitarian phase that is by no means excluded. However, in the present conditions I cannot correlate the conditions in Iran with the definitions of totalitarianism as given by Arendt, Voegelin or Lefort. The ‘crack in the totalitarian system’ may be restored or it may not be. Seeing how modern totalitarian systems are confronted with internal laws that are designed to prevent breaches of the peace and internal mass scale oppression, the willingness to confront the regime on the side of

⁹⁷¹ Khrushchev, "On the Personality Cult and Its Consequences."

⁹⁷² Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, p. 112.

Democratic states, the undermining of the monopoly of mass communication by modern decentralized means of communication and the continued support for the opposition all are indicators that this regime has fundamental weaknesses from which it might not recover in the long run. It might continue to exist as a clerical fascist regime, maintain a delicate balance between survival and oppression, it might provoke external conflict in order to prepare the way for internal purges, but the genie, so to say, is out of the bottle.

In short, the Islamic republic of Iran seems to have lost those elements that are the hallmarks of totalitarian rule, at least for the time being. This brings us to a competing model for the actual practice of totalitarianism namely the decentralized transnational *Islamist* vanguard movement as epitomized by al-Qaeda.