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A Critique of Western Discourses on the Personality and Political-Quranic Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei

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ABSTRACT

The study of Western discourses on prominent Islamic figures and their intellectual contributions represents one of the most significant avenues for understanding the relationship between Islam and its impact on the contemporary world. Within this context, Ayatollah Khamenei, as one of the most influential leaders of the Islamic world, has occupied a central place in such discourses and attracted the attention of numerous Western scholars and intellectual circles. This has led to the emergence of multiple discourses, both positive and negative, which call for critical examination. Employing a descriptive–analytical method, this article aims to demonstrate the Quranic foundation of Ayatollah Khamenei's political-Quranic thought and character, while critiquing Western discourses about him. The findings indicate that these discourses frequently involve misunderstandings of the concept of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Guardianship of the Jurist). Certain critical currents also question his qualifications for supreme leadership, raising allegations of incompetence and intolerance toward criticism. Furthermore, Ayatollah Khamenei's influence on Iran's economic policies and his anti-Western stance constitute central themes in these discourses. By reviewing and critiquing these discourses and contrasting them with relevant Quranic verses and Hadiths—used as vital explainers of the Quran—the article concludes that the key shortcomings of Western approaches in this regard stem from political bias, prejudice, and a failure to understand the solid scriptural and traditional roots of Ayatollah Khamenei's thought and character.

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Introduction

The views and analyses of Western thinkers regarding prominent Islamic figures have always constituted a significant part of Islamic studies. These analyses aim to foster a deeper understanding of Islam and its role in the contemporary world, playing a crucial role in examining Islam's political, social, and cultural impacts. Among these figures, Ayatollah Khamenei, as one of the most influential personalities in the modern Islamic world, has garnered substantial attention from many Western scholars. His character, political thought, and role in shaping developments in Iran and the broader Islamic world have been the subject of diverse analyses in articles, books, and academic studies.

Notable works such as *Leaders of the Modern World* (2007) by John Murphy and *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei* (2015) by Yvette Hovsepian are examples of such studies, which introduce and analyze the personality and ideas of Iran's Supreme Leader. However, these works have yet to be seriously critiqued, reviewed, or translated into Persian, leaving them largely overlooked and unfamiliar to the Iranian academic community.

These perspectives, which include both positive and negative evaluations, are often shaped by cultural, political, and ideological contexts, resulting in varied depictions of Ayatullah Khamenei's political thought. This study aims to critically examine the perspectives of Western thinkers on the personality and political thought of Ayatullah Khamenei, identifying strengths and weaknesses in these views while addressing both their positive and negative aspects. Furthermore, it seeks to bring attention to the significance of these overlooked works and provide an in-depth analysis of their contributions to understanding this prominent figure.

To date, no work has been written that critically examines the views of Orientalists and Western thinkers on Ayatullah Khamenei. However, in recent years, several significant both positive and negative works have been authored by Western scholars about Ayatollah Khamenei, which remain largely overlooked and even unknown. Among these are *The Political Ideology of Ayatollah Khamenei* (2015) by Yvette Hovsepian-Bearce and *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the*

World in the Age of the Ayatollahs (2011) by Ray Takeyh. In addition, Mehdi Khalajī's articles (2018, 2023) published through various Western research institutes are among the most frequently cited sources in this field. These works, despite their importance, have not received the attention they deserve for critical analysis and evaluation. As such, the present article is the first of its kind to introduce and critically review a selection of these works.

1. Research works on the political thought of Ayatollah Khamenei

Western scholarship on Ayatollah Khamenei's personality and political thought encompasses a mix of positive and critical viewpoints, often reflecting the authors' institutional affiliations and geopolitical contexts. It is important to note that the categorization of these works into "positive" and "negative" is based on their overall approach and predominant content. However, even in works classified as positive, some negative or unfair elements may be present, and vice versa. Positive analyses typically highlight his ideological consistency and leadership in advancing the 1979 Islamic Revolution's principles, such as resistance to foreign dominance. In contrast, critical works frequently portray him as authoritarian, emphasizing perceived flaws in governance and foreign policy.

In the following, we will introduce and analyze a selection of prominent works from both categories.

1.1. Positive Works

Two significant works on Ayatullah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, offer valuable insights into his life, ideology, and leadership:

The Political Ideology of Ayatollah Khamenei: Out of the Mouth of the Supreme Leader of Iran (2015) by Yvette Hovsepian-Bearce provides a comprehensive analysis of Ayatullah Khamenei's political ideology. Based on an extensive examination of 500 speeches (from 1989 to 2013), and 100 interviews (from 1981 to 1989), and various published works in Iran, the book identifies Islamic supremacy, resistance to foreign powers, and progress as the core elements of his ideology. Hovsepian-Bearce explores several critical themes that

consistently shape Ayatullah Khamenei's domestic and foreign policies, including America, Palestine, Israel, Muslim unity, freedom, progress, the nuclear program, youth, and religious democracy. This work portrays Ayatollah Khamenei's ideological consistency, highlighting how he upholds revolutionary principles to position Iran as a beacon for the Muslim world. For example, Hovsepian-Bearce notes: "Khamenei has skillfully sustained Iran in the face of several factors including domestic and international opposition, crisis over Iran's nuclear program and severe economic sanctions that nearly collapsed the country's economy. His goal is extending this power not only to the Islamic world but also to any non-Muslim nation that is willing to accept the three central ideals of the Islamic Revolution: freedom, independence and justice" (Hovsepian-Bearce 2015, 1).

The book traces Ayatullah Khamenei's sociopolitical development through three critical phases: his pre-revolution activism, his post-revolutionary roles including the presidency, and his tenure as Supreme Leader following Imam Khomeini's death. Hovsepian-Bearce argues that Ayatullah Khamenei continues to adhere to the ideals of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, including the supremacy of Islam, the policy of "Neither East, Nor West," and enmity towards the U.S. and Israel. His primary foreign policy objectives include liberating Palestine, spreading the ideals of Iran's Islamic Revolution, and creating a global Islamic power.

Ali Khamenei (2007) by John Murphy, part of the Modern World Leaders series, offers a biographical perspective on the Supreme Leader. Murphy describes Ayatullah Khamenei's upbringing in a family characterized by strict piety and moderate poverty. He mentioned: "Sayyed Ali Khamenei, the future ayatollah of Iran, was born into a one-room house in the city of Mashhad. His parents were poor and very religious. His father, Sayyed Javad Khamenei, was a well-respected Muslim scholar, yet he insisted on living in an extremely simple, humble manner" (Murphy 2007, 12). The book traces his journey from a serious-minded religious student who caught the attention of Imam Khomeini to his eventual appointment as Imam Khomeini's successor and Grand Ayatullah of Iran.

Both works provide essential context for understanding Ayatullah Khamenei's influence on Iran's domestic and foreign policies. While

Hovsepian-Bearce's book offers a detailed analysis of Ayatullah Khamenei's ideology and its evolution, Murphy's work provides a more personal narrative of Ayatullah Khamenei's life and rise to power.

Murphy's book primarily provides a biographical account of Ayatullah Khamenei, adopting a generally positive tone, though at times it takes a neutral stance. In contrast, Hovsepian-Bearce's book may be considered somewhat critical due to its focus on ideological elements that are controversial in the international context. However, a precise evaluation of these books' approaches requires a thorough review and comprehensive study of their contents.

1.2. Negative Works

The book *The Regent of Allah: Ali Khamenei's Political Evolution in Iran* (2023) by Mehdi Khalajī explores the political transformation of Ayatullah Khamenei from his youth to his leadership role. The author examines his influence on Iran's power structure. Since Khalajī is a researcher at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, which holds anti-Iranian positions, his analysis and conclusions are undoubtedly influenced by political biases.

Several articles have taken a critical approach toward the personality and ideology of Ayatullah Khamenei. For example, Karim Sadjadpour in *Iran Primer: The Supreme Leader* (2010) examines Ayatollah Khamenei's role in Iran's power structure. Ray Takeyh in *Iran's Protesters Want Khamenei Gone* (2022) presents a negative view of his influence. ʿAbbās Milānī in *Khamenei's Muscular "Soft Power" in the US* (2023) highlights his impact on U.S. politics. Michael Rubin in *Iran's Supreme Leader Says Western Civilization Is the Enemy* (2024) criticizes Ayatollah Khamenei's views on Western civilization.

2. Misunderstanding of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* by Western Thinkers

Many Western analysts see *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) as a completely new idea created by Imam Khomeini. For Example, Ray Takeyh states:

> The position was the brainchild of the leader of the 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. While in exile in Iraq

> in the 1970s, he articulated the theory of Wilāyat al-Faqīh, or "guardianship of the jurist," whereby a religious leader would oversee all national affairs. This was an unusual idea, as Shiite Islamic law did not endorse the notion of direct clerical rule. However, Khomeini insisted that an Islamic government needed clerical supervision to ensure that it conformed to religious injunctions. (Takeyh, 2022)

However, the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is not a novel concept and has its roots in the Holy Quran and the hadiths of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a). This scriptural basis is underscored by Quranic verses such as:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ...﴾ (النساء/ 59)

"O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority among you…" (Quran 4:59)

﴿...وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾ (المائدة/ 44)

"…Those who do not judge by what Allah has sent down it is they who are the faithless" (Quran 5:44)

Furthermore, this principle is reinforced by Islamic narrations, most notably the *Maqbūlah* of ʿUmar ibn Hanzalah, where Imam Jaʿfar Ṣādiq (a) instructs believers to refer to those who narrate their hadiths and understand their rulings, stating: "…For I have appointed him as a ruler/judge over you. Thus, if he judges according to our ruling and his judgment is not accepted, this amounts to treating the judgment of God with contempt, rejecting us, and whoever rejects us has in fact rejected God; such a person stands at the boundary of associating partners with God (*shirk*)"[1] (Ṭūsī 1986, 6:301).

This matter can also be traced throughout the history of Shiʿa jurisprudence (*Fiqh*). Many earlier Islamic jurists, such as Sheikh Mufid (Mufīd 1989, 810), ʿAllāmah Ḥillī (ʿAllāmah Ḥillī 1967, 2:624), and Muḥaqqiq Karakī (Karakī 1988, pp. 142-143), and Ṣāḥib Jawāhīr (Najafī 1984, 21:396-397), and Riḍā Hamidānī (Hamidānī 1956, 14:291) believed in some form of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. This theory was

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1. «...فَإِنِّي قَدْ جَعَلْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاكِماً فَإِذَا حَكَمَ بِحُكْمِنَا فَلَمْ يَقْبَلْهُ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّمَا بِحُكْمِ اللَّهِ اسْتَخَفَّ وَ عَلَيْنَا رَدَّ وَ الرَّادُّ عَلَيْنَا الرَّادُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ عَلَى حَدِّ الشِّرْكِ بِاللَّه...».

particularly emphasized during the Safavid era as a jurisprudential justification for legitimizing governance.

However, what Imam Khomeini accomplished was the development and expansion of the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* into a comprehensive and practical system of governance. He elevated the theory from its traditional application in limited spheres, such as "*umūr-i ḥisbiyeh*" (e.g., guardianship over orphans or implementing legal punishments in the absence of an infallible Imam), to a level where a jurist possessing the requisite qualifications assumes leadership over the state and its major decision-making processes. This new interpretation of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* was comprehensively articulated in his [Imam Khomeini] book *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Islamic Government), (2002) published during the 1960s while he was in Najaf.

One primary reason for the misunderstanding of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* by Western thinkers like Ray Takeyh is the limited access to primary Shiʿi jurisprudential texts or an overemphasis on political analysis rather than the concept's theological and jurisprudential roots. Due to unfamiliarity with Shiʿi fiqh traditions or cultural biases, many Western analysts interpret *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* as a purely modern political construct invented by Imam Khomeini, whereas it has deep historical roots in Shiʿi jurisprudence, with Imam Khomeini transforming it into a comprehensive governance system.

2. Critique of Western Discourses on the Personality and Political-Quranic Thought of Ayatullah Khamenei

2.1. Debates on Ayatullah Khamenei's Qualifications for Supreme Leadership

Some critics argued that when Ayatullah Khamenei was chosen for this position, he did not have the necessary religious qualifications at that time and that his appointment was based more on political and leadership considerations. The following section will explore different opinions that question Ayatollah Khamenei's religious and scholarly qualifications when he was appointed as leader.

Mehran Kamrava (2008) in *Iran's Intellectual Revolution* believes that Ayatullah Khamenei's selection as the leader of the Islamic Republic was influenced more by political considerations than by his

scholarly and religious status. He claims that during his presidency, Ayatullah Khamenei had not yet reached the rank of Ayatullah, and his rapid promotion from "*ḥujjat al-Islām*" to this position was more a political decision rather than a reflection of his academic standing in the religious seminary (Kamrava 2008, pp. 109-110).

In his article published on the Council on Foreign Relations website, Ray Takeyh points out:

> In its original conception, the office of the supreme leader was to be held by a cleric known for his theological erudition. In 1989, when Khamenei was elevated to the post after serving as president, he lacked the requisite religious credentials, and the office became a more political one. (Takeyh, 2022)

The author of the *Ali Khamenei* article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states the following on this matter:

> As Khomeini's health declined and it remained unclear who would be both qualified to succeed him and sympathetic to his vision of velāyat-e faqīh, in 1989 he appointed a council to revise the constitution. Its work had not been completed by the time of his death in June, and it appointed Khamenei as the next rahbar, or leader. However, Khamenei did not meet the qualifications: he was not yet a senior cleric, having been accorded only the somewhat less lofty title of hojatoleslām. Moreover, he favoured a strongly centralized government under the leader, in part to forestall the influence of foreign powers in domestic politics. Changes to the constitution, approved in a referendum in July, loosened the qualifications, eliminated the post of prime minister and strengthened the presidency, and gave the leader significant power to oversee and intervene in political affairs. (Britannica, 2026)

Karim Sadjadpour states in his article:

> Khamenei lacks the popular support, charisma and theological qualifications that Khomeini enjoyed, but his ability to stay out of the limelight contributed to his political resilience -- until recently. He has consistently favored conservatives over reformers. His image as the great balancer has been seriously

> challenged by the disputed 2009 elections, his staunch defense of Ahmadinejad, and the crackdown on protesters. (Sadjadpour, 2010)

Furthermore, he adds:

> Ayatollah Khomeini died in 1989 just months after firing his heir apparent, leaving no designated replacement. With the help of Rafsanjani, Khamenei emerged as the default choice to become the new supreme leader. His appointment was opposed by some senior clerics who felt he was unqualified, but the Assembly of Experts eventually approved him. As supreme leader, Khamenei has constitutional authority over the judiciary, the regular armed forces and the elite Revolutionary Guards, and the state-controlled media. He also has effective control over Iran's second most powerful institution, the 12-member Guardian Council, which has the authority to vet electoral candidates and veto parliamentary decisions. (Khamenei appoints half its members, as well as the judicial chief who appoints the other half) (Sadjadpour, 2010)

Criticism

The primary flaw in Western analyses is a misunderstanding of the structure of titles and ranks in Islamic seminaries. In these seminaries, titles such as "*ḥujjat al-Islām*" and "*Ayatullah*" are primarily based on individuals' scholarly and social recognition among students and scholars, evolving gradually through academic contributions, teaching, and key roles requiring *ijtihād*. Ayatullah Khamenei was recognized as a *mujtahid* long before his appointment as Supreme Leader, as evidenced by his judicial positions and scholarly works, though his title of "*Ayatullah*" gained public prominence post-leadership due to the political nature of his prior roles.

To address critiques questioning his qualifications, historical evidence from the 1989 Assembly of Experts session refutes claims of inadequacy. Imam Khomeini, in a 1987 letter, affirmed Ayatullah Khamenei's jurisprudential expertise: "You are like a brother familiar with fiqh issues and committed to them... one of the rare individuals who shine like the sun" (Khomeini 2010, 20:455).

This statement by Imam Khomeini precisely points to two fundamental conditions for an Islamic ruler: 'knowledge of divine laws' and 'practical commitment to them.' The authenticity of this concept is clearly rooted in the Holy Quran. The first condition—the necessity of having knowledge and governing based on divine laws—is emphasized in several verses of *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (verses 44, 45, and 47), which consider a non-Islamic approach to running society as a cause of disbelief, injustice, and defiance:

﴿... وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ / الظَّالِمُون / الْفاسِقُون﴾ (المائدة/ 44، 45، 47)

"...Those who do not judge by what Allah has sent down it is they who are the faithless/the wrongdoer /the transgressors" (Quran 5:44,45,47)

The second condition, which is commitment to divine laws, requires the ruler to not only issue judgments based on Islamic law but also to personally adhere to and practice all religious commandments. In verse 124 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, the Holy Quran explicitly states that the position of leadership (Imamate) and governing the Islamic society will never belong to wrongdoers and those who oppress themselves or society through sin and a lack of religious commitment:

﴿وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (البقرة/ 124)

"And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust'" (Quran 2:124)

Post-appointment, scholarly sessions with leading jurists from the Guardian Council, including Ayatullahs Mu'min, Karīmī, and Shāhrūdī, confirmed his absolute *ijtihād* across all chapters of *fiqh*. Ayatullah Mu'min, who initially did not vote for him, later testified: "It became clear to all participants that he possesses the faculty of ijtihad and is a highly valuable scholarly figure" (Mashregh News, 2017, mshrgh.ir/820155). Ayatullah Karīmī emphasized Ayatullah Khamenei's superior merit for *Marjaʿiyyah*, stating: "In qualifications

for *marjaʿiyyah*, he not only lacks nothing compared to others but has more" (ibid).

Furthermore, analyses often assume Ayatollah Khamenei lacks popular support, whereas evidence such as his 95% vote in the 1981 presidential election demonstrates significant public backing (Wikipedia, s.v. "Iranian Presidential Election (Mehr 1981)").

The Assembly's 60 out of 74 votes in his favor, from qualified mujtahids, signify institutional acknowledgment of his scholarly and leadership qualifications. Ayatullah Khamenei's initial humility in opposing his selection—"We should weep blood for a society that even considers someone like me"—reflects profound modesty, not incompetence, aligning with Islamic virtues (Mashregh News, 2017, mshrgh.ir/820155). This is exemplified in the *Maqbulah* of Umar ibn Hanzalah, where Imam Sadiq (a) utilizes the phrase, "*fal-yarḍū bihī ḥakaman* فليرضوا به حكما" (Then they must accept/consent to him as a judge/ruler), thereby establishing public consent and societal acceptance as a fundamental prerequisite for the practical realization of the jurist's legitimate governance. These oversights in Western critiques stem from unfamiliarity with Shia seminary dynamics and geopolitical biases, ignoring contextual evidence of his scholarly and leadership qualifications.

Furthermore, the statements and analyses of Western scholars regarding Ayatullah Khamenei can be seen as an indirect acknowledgment of his scientific and practical qualifications for the leadership position. These assessments, highlighting his ability to integrate religious knowledge with managerial and strategic skills, indicate that Imam Khamenei's leadership is grounded not merely in political authority but in genuine scholarly and administrative competence. According to many Western analysts Ayatullah Ali Khamenei is not only a prominent religious leader but also possesses remarkable scientific and managerial abilities. Analyses show that he has successfully recognized the importance of science and technology, promoting scientific advancement as a core pillar of national development (Khar Center, 2025). His policies and programs, particularly in nuclear, defense, and emerging technologies, reflect his

strong managerial skills and deep scientific understanding (Khalajī, 2018). These qualities demonstrate that Ayatullah Khamenei's competence extends beyond religious knowledge, encompassing the ability to lead scientific institutions and harness science to advance the country.

Based on Western analysts, his scientific management is evident both symbolically and institutionally. For instance, initiatives such as the issuance of commemorative banknotes for the University of Tehran and symbolic scientific programs showcase the integration of science and governance (Linzmayer, 2015; Khar Center, 2025). Additionally, his strategies for developing education, supporting elite students, and creating advanced research opportunities demonstrate his commitment to the country's scientific growth and managerial excellence (Khar Center, 2025).

They mentioned that Ayatollah Khamenei has managed to place science at the service of national development and security. Prioritizing applied sciences and building capacity in strategic areas has strengthened the country's independence and authority (Khar Center, 2025). This approach illustrates that effective and scientific management can coexist with principled leadership, producing tangible positive outcomes for society.

In summary, Ayatollah Khamenei's scientific and managerial skills reflect his intelligent vision and careful planning. By leading scientific institutions, supporting research and innovation, and emphasizing the education of elite talents, he has created an environment conducive to national scientific progress and development that is both effective and aligned with national values and goals (Khar Center, 2025). These achievements highlight his capable and influential leadership in the fields of science and management.

3. Anti-Western Stance

Critics of Ayatullah Khamenei often highlight his staunch anti-Western and anti-American stance, which has been central to his political ideology throughout his leadership. They believe that Ayatullah Khamenei's policies consistently reflect a deep skepticism towards Western powers, particularly the United States, which he accuses of

attempting to undermine Iran's Islamic Republic. His opposition to the West is often framed in ideological and strategic terms, focusing on the perceived moral decline of Western civilization and the role of the US and its allies in opposing Iran's political system. Below are some key criticisms from Western thinkers and analysts in this regard.

Michael Rubin[2] is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where he specializes in Iran, Turkey, and the broader Middle East. in his analysis, He argues that from Ayatullah Khamenei's perspective, Western civilization is an ideological enemy. In his article titled "Iran's Supreme Leader Says Western Civilization is the Enemy" he states that Ayatullah Khamenei believes the United States seeks to weaken Iran not for political interests but for ideological reasons. According to Ayatullah Khamenei, Western values contradict the truth and logic of Islam, and this conflict is endless. Therefore, Iran must strengthen its defense capabilities to continue this civilizational struggle (Rubin, 2024).

Abbas Milānī [3] states in his article: "In the convoluted calculus of Khamenei's paranoid mind, these concepts cohere into a vision that sees the West, and particularly America, in decline, Israel in its death throes, Asia, particularly China, on the rise, and Islam, led of course by Mr. Khamenei, on the threshold of a "Historic Turn"—one that would bring about an end to the catastrophic era of Judeo-Christian Western hegemony and usher in the apocalyptic victory of Islam" (Mīlānī, 2023)

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[2]. **Michael Allan Rubin** (born 1971) is an American historian, foreign policy analyst, and Middle East expert. He works as a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). He received his PhD in history from Yale University, where his dissertation focused on the modern history of Iran. Rubin has taught at various universities and has also trained U.S. military personnel. Between 2002 and 2004, he served as an advisor on Iran and Iraq at the U.S. Department of Defense (Pentagon). He has published numerous books and articles on U.S. diplomacy, terrorism, and the history of Iran and the Middle East.

[3]. **Abbas Malekzadeh Milani** (born 1949) is an Iranian-American historian, Iranologist, and author. He works as a visiting professor of political science and is the director of the Iranian Studies program at Stanford University. He is also a senior research fellow and co-director of the Iran Democracy Project at the Hoover Institution. Milani received his PhD in political science from the University of Hawaii. Before moving to the United States, he taught at the University of Tehran and the National University of Iran.

He also mentions about Ayatullah Khamenei's anti-American Stand:

> For years, Ali Khamenei has argued that successive U.S. administrations have attempted to overthrow the clerical regime through coercive means. To him, Bush and Clinton, no less than Obama, Trump and now Biden, have all pursued the same policy of attempting to destroy the regime—either with an iron fist, or the same fist clad in a velvet glove. They have all failed. Thus, they have launched not just a "culture war" but created also a "Cultural NATO." In a talk given as early as November 9, 2006, Khamenei for the first time used the term Cultural NATO, going on at length—as is the pattern in the autumn of every "patriarch"—about a conspiracy, spearheaded not only by the US—in his neologism the "Greatest Satan"-- but also by "Zionists." He even alludes to George Soros in a tone that betrays his anti-Semitism and calls him "that Jew whose name I don't want to mention". These forces are, according to Khamenei, attempting to defeat Islam by advocating nihilism, materialism, individualism, and a rationalism devoid of Allah and faith. As Khamenei often repeats, for him Iran's negotiations with the US have been only a ploy to expose America's true hypocrisy and buy time for that "Historic Turn. (Mīlānī, 2023)

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* also states:

> Under Ahmadinejad's successor, the centrist cleric Hassan Rouhani, Iran changed direction in foreign affairs, moving rapidly toward reducing friction with the West. International negotiations toward an agreement to end Iran's nuclear research programs in exchange for the lifting of sanctions began within several months of Rouhani's election in 2013. Throughout the negotiation process, Khamenei maintained a skeptical public posture, voicing objections about aspects of the agreement that he saw as possible infringements on Iran's sovereignty. (Britannica, 2026)

Criticism

The critiques of the aforementioned analyses, particularly the views of figures like Michael Rubin and ʿAbbās Mīlānī, can be examined through three main pillars. These critiques show that their interpretations of Ayatullah Khamenei's positions are one-sided and sometimes detached from reality:

1. The Distinction Between Western Progress and Western Decadence

Western analyses often present a black-and-white, reductionist picture of Ayatullah Khamenei's view of the West, labeling it as a form of 'blind and ideological anti-Westernism.' However, his political-Quranic doctrine is structurally founded upon a precise distinction between Western 'scientific progress' and Western 'moral and political decadence.' Akbar Ganjī correctly points out that Ayatullah Khamenei values the scientific advancements, technology, and behavioral traits of the West, such as diligence and risk-taking; from his perspective, a wise society must learn positive civilizational traits while avoiding its destructive aspects (Ganjī 2013, 38). The jurisprudential and prophetic justification for this openness toward Western knowledge is rooted in the hadiths such as the well-known hadith: "Seek knowledge even if it be in China"[4] (Majlisī 1983, 1:177), which underscores the imperative of adopting scientific advancements globally and without prejudice.

Conversely, his adversarial stance toward the West targets not its progress, but its moral decay and political arrogance—characteristics that the Quran identifies as precursors to civilizational collapse. As *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (verse 16) states:

﴿وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا﴾

(الاسراء / 16)

> *"And when We desire to destroy a town We command its affluent ones [to obey Allah]. But they commit transgression in it, and so the word becomes due against it, and We destroy it utterly" (Quran 17:16)*

4. «اطْلُبُوا الْعِلْمَ وَ لَوْ بِالصِّينِ».

Furthermore, his skepticism toward hegemony and Western policies, often framed as a 'cultural NATO' or 'cultural warfare,' is not driven by paranoia but is rooted in tangible historical experiences—such as the 1953 coup and decades of foreign intervention—which cannot be dismissed as mere 'conspiracy theories.' Therefore, his discourse represents a Quranic-based framework that steadfastly rejects Western materialism and hegemony while fully appreciating its positive and scientific achievements.

2. Conflating "Zionism" with "Judaism"

One of the most common analytical errors in the West is conflating "Zionism" with "Judaism," whereas Ayatullah Khamenei has repeatedly emphasized the fundamental distinction between the two. His political-Quranic doctrine is grounded in a precise framework derived from verses 8 and 9 of *Sūrat al-Mumtaḥinah*. In these verses, God does not forbid believers from showing kindness and acting justly toward non-Muslims who do not fight them over religion:

﴿لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ﴾ (الممتحنة/8)

"Allah does not forbid you in regard to those who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes, that you deal with them with kindness and justice. Indeed Allah loves the just" (Quran 60:8)

However, He explicitly prohibits alliance with those who wage war against Muslims, expel them from their homes, and support their expulsion:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَى إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾ (الممتحنة/ ٩)

"Allah forbids you only in regard to those who made war against you on account of religion and expelled you from your homes and supported [others] in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them it is they who are the wrongdoers" (Quran 60:9)

Accordingly, the opposition to the Zionist regime is not driven by religious bigotry, but is a legitimate Quranic response to occupation and aggression, as the Holy Quran recognizes the right to reciprocal defense:

﴿فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (البقرة/ 194)

> *"So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you, and be wary of Allah, and know that Allah is with the God wary" (Quran 2:194)*

In his speech on November 13, 2019, Ayatullah Khamenei explicitly relied on these principles to clarify that the Islamic Republic's objective is the dissolution of the Zionist regime as an imposed and illegitimate entity, rather than hostility toward the followers of the Jewish faith:

> Repeatedly, Imam Khomeini and the officials of the Islamic Republic have talked about the elimination of the Israeli government; enemies interpret this in the wrong way. The elimination of the Israeli government does not mean the elimination of the Jewish people – we have nothing against them. It means the elimination of that imposed regime, the elimination of that illegitimate government. 'Eliminating Israel' means that the Palestinian people, who are the true owners of that land, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jew, will choose their own government. They will remove foreign intruders and criminals like Netanyahu from within their own land and manage the country themselves. This is what we mean by eliminating Israel, and this will happen. Some people doubt how this could happen, but after seventy years, countries like those in the Balkans gained independence after being under foreign control. This will happen, and nothing is impossible for God. We support the Palestinian people, we support Palestinian independence, we are not anti-Semitic. In our own country, there are Jewish people who live in peace and security. (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with Government Officials and the Guests of the International Islamic Unity Conference, 2019/11/15 [24/8/1398Sh]: https://khl.ink/f/44016)

This stance is entirely based on the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people, and framing it as anti-Semitism is merely an attempt to conceal the political reality of opposing occupation behind moral accusations. He has consistently proposed a just solution to the Palestinian crisis based on three conditions that align with both international law and Quranic justice: first, the departure of non-Palestinian Zionists from the land; second, the return of displaced indigenous Palestinians—including Muslims, Christians, and Jews—to their homeland; and third, a joint democratic process among the original inhabitants of all three religions to determine their own self-determination and political future.

3. Contradiction in Analyzing Strategic Flexibility

Western analyses frequently exhibit a glaring contradiction when examining Ayatullah Khamenei's diplomatic behavior; on the one hand, they portray him as an uncompromising and dogmatic opponent of negotiations, while on the other, they overlook his decisive role in authorizing and guiding the nuclear talks. In reality, his positions do not stem from a "rigid and inflexible ideology," but rather from a "strategic and Quranic rationality." His political framework regarding peace and diplomacy is anchored in verse 61 of *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, which states:

﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾ (الانفال/۶۱)

> *"And if they incline toward peace, then you [too] incline toward it, and put your trust in Allah. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing" (Quran 8:61)*

Based on this scriptural mandate, and despite his inherent skepticism toward U.S. intentions, he supported the JCPOA negotiating team to secure national interests and remove unfair pressures. His remarks on January 20, 2015, confirm this strategic flexibility:

> Although I was not optimistic about negotiations with the U.S., I did not oppose these specific negotiations. I agreed and fully supported the negotiators, and I continue to support them. If a deal is reached that protects the interests of the Iranian people and preserves their dignity, I will fully support it and welcome it. Everyone should know that if someone says we are against a deal

> or reaching a point of agreement, that is untrue and inaccurate. If an agreement is reached that secures the interests of the country, I will definitely support it. (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with the Eulogists of *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), 9/4/2015 [20/1/1394 Sh]: https://khl.ink/f/29415)

However, this flexibility does not equate to appeasement or naive trust. His Quranic doctrine dictates that the continuation of any diplomatic engagement depends strictly on the counterparty's adherence to their commitments. The Holy Quran explicitly warns in *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (verse 12) that if the enemy breaches their treaties, they must be firmly resisted:

﴿وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ﴾ (التوبة/12)

> *"But if they break their pledges after their having made a treaty and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unfaith indeed they have no [commitment to] pledges maybe they will relinquish" (Quran 9:12)*

Therefore, his profound skepticism toward the U.S. government is rooted in this structural recognition of hegemonic behavior and the historical track record of broken promises. He has consistently maintained that negotiations are reasonable and just only if the U.S. demonstrates practical sincerity.

Ultimately, by ignoring these jurisprudential foundations and historical realities, many Western analyses merely seek to reinforce a pre-conceptualized, ideological caricature of the Iranian leader, failing to comprehend the strategic complexities and nuanced distinctions embedded in his worldview.

4. Intolerance to Criticism

One of the criticisms often raised by Western analysts is that Ayatullah Khamenei is intolerant of public criticism, viewing dissent as a threat to the stability of the Islamic Republic rather than as a part of political debate. Karim Sadjadpour states in this regard: "Khamenei has always been notoriously thin-skinned. Until the 2009 election, public criticism

of the supreme leader was one of the few red lines in Iranian politics. It is still a virtual guarantee of a prison sentence" (Sadjadpour, 2010).

Criticism

The term *"*thin-skinned*"* suggests that Ayatullah Khamenei reacts personally to criticism. However, it is important to note that handling criticism in Iran's political system is often a group or systemic decision, not merely an individual reaction. Furthermore, a fair analysis must distinguish between "sympathetic criticism" and deliberate attempts at character assassination, slander, and creating internal unrest or instability. Many governments around the world take action against those who, instead of offering constructive criticism, seek to create social instability, riots, or sedition. Therefore, dealing with such individuals is not due to sensitivity or intolerance of criticism but rather to ensure public safety and social stability.

This fundamental distinction between constructive and destructive criticism is clearly rooted in Quranic teachings and prophetic traditions. In Islamic thought, sincere and helpful criticism is viewed as a form of goodwill and social responsibility. This is reflected in the famous hadith of Imam Sadiq (a): "The most beloved of my brothers to me is the one who presents my flaws to me as a gift"[5] (Kulaynī 1984, 2:639; Ibn Shuʿbah 2008, 366).

The Quran praises this reformist approach under the concept of 'enjoining what is right.' For instance, in *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (verse 114), the Quran states that private conversations hold no virtue unless they are meant for charity, righteousness, or making peace among people:

﴿لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِنْ نَجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ﴾ (النساء، 114)

> *"There is no good in much of their secret talks, excepting him who enjoins charity or what is right or reconciliation between people" (Quran 4:114)*

In this view, a constructive critic respects the dignity of leaders while seeking to improve society. In contrast, the movement of defamation and slander is a reproduction of the hostile methods that the Holy Quran describes when opposing divine prophets. Throughout history, arrogant

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5. عِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ رَفَعَهُ إِلَى أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عليه‌السلام قَالَ: «أَحَبُّ إِخْوَانِي إِلَيَّ مَنْ أَهْدَى إِلَيَّ عُيُوبِي».

powers have always used character assassination instead of logical debate. The Holy Quran explicitly refers to this systematic method in *Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt* (verse 52):

﴿كَذَٰلِكَ مَا أَتَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا قَالُوا سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مَجْنُونٌ﴾ (الذاريات/٥٢)

"So it was that there did not come to those who were before them any apostle but they said, 'A magician,' or 'A crazy man'" (Quran 51:52)

This strategy of destroying reputations, spreading rumors, and creating psychological warfare to cause internal unrest has a completely different nature from intellectual criticism. Its goal is not reform, but breaking public trust and causing instability.

Ayatullah Khamenei has always welcomed constructive criticism and has repeatedly emphasized the importance of fair and constructive criticism, regarding it as an essential tool for reform and the progress of the country. In 2004, he stated: "No institution should consider itself immune to criticism and free of faults; all institutions of the country must be subject to fair criticism, and all should correct their behavior in line with the objectives of the system and within its framework" (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with the Pilgrims and Residents of the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza, 20/4/2004 [1/2/1383 Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/3227). This explicit statement shows that openness to criticism, in his view, is not only acceptable but also a fundamental element of sound and reform-oriented leadership.

Ayatullah Khamenei has also clarified the distinction between constructive criticism and destructive behavior: "Criticism is good, destruction is bad; criticism is a service, destruction is betrayal—not betrayal to the government, but betrayal to the system and to the country" (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with the President and Members of the Cabinet 23/08/2008 [2/6/1387 Sh], https://khl.ink/f/3661). From this perspective, he considers fair criticism and offering solutions not as threats but as opportunities for improvement, and he himself, as a leader, welcomes such critiques. Furthermore, he has emphasized that "Criticism should not be confused with fault-finding, anger, or making excuses; yet criticism must be made. At the same time, one must also be open to criticism" (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with Students of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, 15/05/2007 [25/2/1386Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/3383).

Other statements by Ayatollah Khamenei indicate that criticism should not be confined to private settings; at times, it must be public in order to have a tangible reformative effect: "Sometimes criticism should be public; we do not always believe that criticism should be whispered in someone's ear; no, sometimes it must be public… Criticism must take place" (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with the Members of the Assembly of Experts, 06/09/2018 [15/6/1397Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/40421). He also regards criticism as a friendly act, stressing that its purpose is to help correct issues and promote the country's progress—not to destroy or antagonize: "We say no one should refrain from pointing out faults, from criticizing, or from objecting; why? Because healthy criticism and objection are certainly beneficial for the progress of the country's affairs. However, it must also be remembered that executive work is difficult" (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with the Officials and Staff of the Judiciary, 26/6/2013 [5/4/1392Sh], https://khl.ink/f/23006).

Moreover, Even He has made it clear that disagreeing with the leader's views does not mean being against *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. He, in response to a student who asked about the meaning of "anti-*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*," said:

> Anti clearly means opposition, meaning to resist and show hostility—not simply not believing in it. If I do not believe in you, that does not mean I am against you. Someone may not believe in something, but that does not make them its enemy. Criticizing specific views of the leadership is not the same as being against it. One should not act with hostility. (Khamenei, Speech at a Meeting with Outstanding University Students, Top University Entrance Exam Achievers, and Members of University Political and Cultural Organizations, 9/10/2007 [17/7/1386 Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/3404)

In one of his notable speeches, delivered on July 12, 1999, Ayatullah Ali Khamenei demonstrated an exceptional degree of tolerance and openness toward criticism, even when directed personally at him. Addressing the youth, he emphasized that emotional or violent reactions to opposing views only serve the interests of the enemies of the nation. He stated: "Even if someone insults the leadership, or burns or tears my picture, you must remain silent" (Khamenei, Statement

Following the Tehran University Dormitory Incident, 12/07/1999 [21/4/1378Sh], https://khl.ink/f/2959). This statement illustrates his remarkable self-restraint and commitment to reasoned dialogue over emotional confrontation.

Ayatullah Khamenei further clarified the distinction between defending values and engaging in undisciplined, extremist behavior. He asserted that any act of violence— "even if done in the name of defending religion or defending the leadership"—is wrong and must be condemned (Khamenei, Statement Following the Tehran University Dormitory Incident, 09/10/2007 12/07/1999 [21/4/1378 Sh], https://khl.ink/f/2959). Such remarks reflect his principled view that the defense of the Islamic system and its leadership must always remain within the bounds of morality, discipline, and rational conduct.

Therefore, the available evidence shows that the claim that Ayatollah Khamenei is intolerant of criticism is unfounded. He has consistently stressed the importance of fair criticism, offering solutions, and continuous reform, and he himself is receptive to critique. In his view, criticism is a constructive and strategic tool for serving the country and the system—not a threat or limitation to leadership and decision-making.

5. Ayatollah Khamenei's Influence on Iran's Economic Policies

Ayatollah Khamenei's role in the major policies of the Islamic Republic, including economic affairs, has always been a topic of discussion and debate. Some of his critics and opponents believe that Iran's economic structure is influenced by his decisions and the institutions under his authority. They argue that the concentration of power in these institutions has contributed to certain economic problems. The following section presents quotes and analyses that examine Ayatollah Khamenei's role in Iran's economic issues. For example, Karim Sadjadpour states in his article:

> The Iranian economy is largely state-controlled, and Khamenei has the most authority over how the country's oil revenue is spent. He also has control over the country's bonyads - charitable foundations with billions of dollars in assets - in addition to the millions more his office receives in charitable donations offered to Iran's holy shrines. (Sadjadpour, 2010)

Criticism

This analysis suffers from severe reductionism and completely ignores Iran's legal and jurisprudential frameworks. In response to these claims, the actual structure of Iran's economy and the Leader's role can be explained through the following four main pillars:

1. Oil Revenues and Specialized Management: The claim that the Supreme Leader directly controls how oil revenues are spent contradicts Iran's legal mechanism. According to the constitution, the government and the parliament (*Majlis*) are the primary decision-makers regarding the national budget and public revenues. From a jurisprudential and Quranic perspective, natural resources and public wealth are considered *Anfal* (public property). As Surah Al-Anfal (verse 1) states:

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (الانفال/1)

> *"They ask you concerning the anfāl. Say, 'The anfāl belong to Allah and the Messenger.' So be wary of Allah and settle your differences, and obey Allah and His Messenger, should you be faithful" (Quran 8:1)*

Although jurisprudentially the authority of *Anfal* belongs to God, the Prophet, and the ruling jurist, the Supreme Leader does not manage these resources individually or dictatorially. Instead, he delegates this responsibility to experts and ministries (such as the Ministry of Oil and the Planning Organization). These entities provide expert management, and the parliament, representing the people, strictly oversees them.

2. Charitable Foundations and Poverty Alleviation: Foundations like the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation operate under specific state laws, administrative codes, and statutes. The Leader does not have direct, personal involvement in their financial assets. In the Quranic worldview, supporting the poor is a divine duty imposed on the Islamic ruler. The Holy Quran repeatedly emphasizes this right, such as in *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* (verse 7):

﴿آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ﴾ (الحديد/ 7)

> *"Have faith in Allah and His Apostle, and spend out of that wherein He has made you successors. Those of you who have*

faith and spend [in Allah's way] there is a great reward for them" (Quran 57:7)

Therefore, the Leader's role in these organizations is macro-supervision to ensure these Quranic duties of helping the oppressed are fulfilled, rather than personal ownership.

3. Shrines' Donations and the Endowment Organization: The claim that public donations to holy shrines are directed to the Leader's office is entirely inaccurate. By law, these revenues and endowments are managed under the supervision of religious trustees, the *awqāf* (Endowments) Organization, and independent boards of directors. These funds are spent strictly according to the donors' intentions, such as maintaining mosques, helping pilgrims, and cultural activities, through a transparent and separate auditing system.

4. Specific Religious Offerings: Any religious offerings or funds that reach the Leader directly are, first of all, very small in amount. Secondly, based on Islamic jurisprudence, these funds are entirely spent on funding Islamic seminaries, helping the poor, and public welfare. They are never used for personal benefit or as a hidden government budget.

Conclusion

This study examined various Western perspectives and showed that Western analyses of Ayatullah Khamenei's personality and political thought are often biased by their own political views. The mainstream Western discourse usually explains his positions using simple clichés, such as political authoritarianism, religious stubbornness, or total hostility toward the West.

However, this paper proves that the main mistake of Western analysts is that they ignore the Quranic and Islamic principles that guide his decisions. As shown throughout the article, his macro-policies are deeply rooted in Quranic logic. For example: distinguishing between Zionism and Judaism (see *Sūrat al-Mumtaḥinah*), accepting negotiations while resisting broken promises (see *Sūras al-Anfāl* and *al-Tawbah*), and managing public wealth to help the poor (see *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd*). Because Western analysts do not understand these religious roots, they mistake his practical flexibility for behavioral contradiction. In reality, his actions follow a consistent model of Islamic statecraft.

Furthermore, his clear distinction between “constructive criticism” and “deliberate defamation” directly reflects Quranic warnings about how enemies historically attacked the reputation of divine prophets.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes that Ayatullah Khamenei’s complex role cannot be understood through a purely Western political lens. A fair and accurate assessment requires connecting political analysis with Islamic theology and the Quran. Only through this combined approach can we achieve a realistic and objective understanding of his role in Iran and the modern world.

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