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Examining and Explaining the Gap in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Between the Sovereignty Structure and the Government During the Period 1979–1981

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine and explain the gap in foreign policy between the governments of Mehdi Bazargan and Abolhassan Banisadr and the sovereignty structure in the Iran. In this regard, the main research question is formulated as follows: What were the gaps between the sovereignty structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the governments of Bazargan and Banisadr in the domain of foreign policy? In response to this question, the article advances the hypothesis that the foreign policy of the Bazargan and Banisadr governments was grounded in preservation-oriented realism, in contrast to the sovereignty structure's realistic idealism. Furthermore, the sovereignty's offensive perspective aimed at transforming the global order stood in opposition to the defensive outlook and balance-of-power preservation pursued by the governments of Bazargan and Banisadr. In addition to the above, another major gap concerned the sovereignty's support for the occupation of the United States embassy, as opposed to the diplomatic efforts of the Bazargan government and its fear of international isolation. Another point of disagreement was the sovereignty's emphasis on the exportation of the revolution based on the universalism of Islam, contrasted with the opposition of the Bazargan and Banisadr governments grounded in the principle of non-intervention. Finally, tensions also emerged between Banisadr and the sovereignty structure regarding the management of the Iran–Iraq War. The present article employs content analysis and relies on constitutional documents, the perspectives of political leaders, and scholarly texts based on the theory of realistic idealism. The findings demonstrate that these gaps ultimately led to the dismissal of governments and directed Iran's foreign policy toward an independent, ideological, and anti-hegemonic identity. The innovation of this article lies in its integration of international relations theories with Islamic revolutionary discourse and its comprehensive analysis of the structural tensions of that period. The findings emphasize that the confrontation between the “interests of the Islamic Ummah” and “national interests” transformed Iran into a revolutionary actor within the international system.

Keywords: *Iranian foreign policy, “Neither East nor West,” export of revolution, anti-imperialism, national interests, Islamic interests, war.*

Introduction

Foreign policy, as a reflection of the identity and national interests of states in the international arena, is always influenced by internal and external structural and ideological factors. In newly established political systems,



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especially after revolutions, this domain often becomes the site of confrontation between conflicting discourses among sovereign and executive institutions. The Islamic Republic of Iran was no exception to this rule after the victory of the Islamic Revolution. The gaps between the “sovereignty structure” and the “Provisional Government” led by Bazargan, as well as the Banisadr government, in the sphere of foreign policy are among the key issues that require scientific analysis based on prevalent theoretical frameworks in international relations. This article seeks to examine the gaps between the sovereignty structure and the governments of Bazargan and Banisadr in international relations by drawing, on the one hand, on the theory of realistic idealism of the sovereignty structure under Imam Khomeini’s leadership and, on the other hand, on the realist approach of the Bazargan and Banisadr governments, with emphasis on national interests, security, and the balance of power. Accordingly, the main research question is as follows: “What gaps existed between the sovereignty structure and the aforementioned governments in Iran’s foreign policy during 1979–1981?”

The hypothesis of the article is based on the proposition that these differences took shape around seven key axes:

1. The approach to international relations theories: the government’s preservation-oriented realism versus the sovereignty structure’s realistic idealism.
2. The interpretation of the strategy of “Neither East nor West”: the sovereignty structure’s non-commitment to both East and West versus the government’s non-commitment to the East and relations with the West.
3. The sovereignty structure’s support for the hostage-taking and occupation of the United States embassy versus the government’s diplomatic efforts and fear of international isolation.
4. The sovereignty structure’s emphasis on exporting the revolution based on the universalism of Islam and support for liberation movements, and the opposition of the aforementioned governments based on the principle of non-intervention.
5. The sovereignty structure’s struggle against imperial arrogance and the system of domination based on religious teachings and the Constitution, which was being drafted and was then approved by the nation, versus the indifference of the aforementioned governments toward this issue.
6. The conflict between national interests and Islamic interests: the priority of the “Islamic Ummah” from the perspective of the sovereignty structure versus the focus of the Bazargan and Banisadr governments on Iran’s interests.
7. The disagreement between Banisadr and the sovereignty structure over the management of the Iran–Iraq War.

This research has been conducted using the method of content analysis and by relying on primary sources, including the speeches and messages of the Leader and officials influential in foreign policy, legal texts, as well as secondary sources, including books, scientific articles, and other materials. The results show that these gaps led to the dismissal of the governments and directed Iran’s foreign policy toward an independent, ideological, and anti-hegemonic identity. The findings also emphasize that the confrontation between the “interest of the Ummah” and “national interests” transformed Iran into a new and revolutionary actor in the international system.

The innovation of the article lies in combining prevalent international relations theories with the discourse of the Islamic Revolution and offering a comprehensive analysis of the structural tensions of the first years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. The purpose of writing this article is to collect and analyze the gap between the sovereignty structure and the governments in foreign policy during this historical period, to achieve a deeper

understanding of the dynamics of power in revolutionary systems and the challenges of ideology in relation to the realities of foreign policy in the international system, and ultimately to produce a study in the field of foreign policy.

The most important achievements of the research are as follows:

1. Identifying two macro-discourses in Iran's foreign policy after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and distinguishing between them; namely, the "realistic idealism" of the sovereignty structure, centered on transnational interests, anti-imperialism, and the exportation of the revolution, and the discourse of "preservation-oriented realism" of the aforementioned governments, with emphasis on national interests, internal stability, and interaction with the West. This distinction also provides a theoretical framework for analyzing foreign policy tensions in the early years of the Revolution.
2. Explaining the role of the institutional gap in the instability of foreign policy, which indicates the direct impact of confrontation between sovereign institutions, including the Leadership and the Revolutionary Council, and the government as the executor of foreign policy, on the intensification of crises such as the occupation of the United States embassy and the resignation of the Bazargan government.
3. Presenting the model of "the expediency of the system" as a solution for balancing the ideological ideals of the Revolution and its practical measures.
4. Analyzing the ideological impact on international orientations by examining how revolutionary slogans, such as "Neither East nor West" and "anti-imperialism," were transformed into identity-forming components of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic and how they confronted pragmatic approaches.
5. Identifying key factors in the failure of the Bazargan and Banisadr governments, including their inability to align with the revolutionary discourse of the sovereignty structure, especially on sensitive issues such as relations with the United States, anti-imperialism, the exportation of the revolution, and similar matters, as the main causes of their downfall.
6. Proposing a framework for future research to examine the gaps between the government and the sovereignty structure through a comparative-historical approach and to compare them with similar patterns in revolutionary countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, Yemen, and Iraq.
7. Critically rereading historical documents and narratives and clarifying the role of internal and external actors in the formation of the political crises of that period.

In addition, the structure of the article is organized into three main sections:

- Theoretical foundations: explaining realism and realistic idealism.
- Examination of the gaps in the seven aforementioned axes.
- Conclusion: the impact of these differences on Iran's historical developments and foreign policy.

By combining international relations theories and historical analysis, this research shows that the complex interaction between ideology and geopolitical realities created a structural challenge in Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy. Its broader achievement is to present a model for understanding the dynamics of dual-pillar political systems, namely the sovereignty structure and the government, and the ways of managing institutional tensions in the international arena.

Theoretical Foundations

Realists consider international relations to be a struggle for gaining superiority over rivals. From their perspective, each state regards other states as rivals (1). The roots of this view date back to the fifth century BCE. The first

person to formulate a reasoned theory of international relations was Thucydides, the Greek historian (2). Realism is the most important theory of international relations. In the international arena, it regards states as the main actors and emphasizes power, national interests, and security. Realists distinguish between domestic and foreign politics and believe that if a state fails to ensure its security, it will be unable to do anything else. They regard the international environment as anarchic and consider the balance of power, rather than international organizations, to be the means of establishing and maintaining peace. They support preservation of the status quo and view diplomacy as an instrument for balancing power. They identify statism, the principle of survival, and self-help as the main axes of international relations (3).

By contrast, the principles of idealism regard the human being as a rational creature with a positive and progressive nature and assume the universal character of humanity beyond the nation-state, while distinguishing between domestic and external domains (4). Idealism also views human nature as benevolent, justice-seeking, committed to moral values, inclined toward cooperation and integration, and focused on collective security and an order based on legal authority with the aim of world peace, consisting of both state and non-state actors (4). The method used in this article is theoretical and analytical and is based on the theory of realistic idealism. The theory of realistic idealism means the realization of ideals while understanding the contemporary conditions of society and the world (5). However, it should be noted that there are differences between the idealism intended by the Islamic Republic of Iran and idealism as one of the schools of international relations (4). The model of "realistic idealism" can be considered a form of institutionalism that, while emphasizing institutionalized pacifism, also stresses the use of power in the interests of humanity and, in this way, affirms certain dimensions of both realism and idealism. The features of the model of "realistic idealism" are, in a sense, a theoretical manifestation of unity in plurality; that is, multiple methods are placed in the service of a single value. Its characteristics are grounded in expediency, the linkage of domestic politics with foreign policy, the integration of geostrategy and ideostrategy, negotiation and persuasion alongside warning and intimidation, peaceful and coercive methods, spiritual and material power, national and transnational goals, and institutionalism. It also believes in cooperation and mutual respect among states in order to ensure global peace and security in international relations (6).

The view of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran in international relations can be analyzed on the basis of the combined theory of realistic idealism, expressed through the concept of "expediency," meaning that expediency revolves around an emphasis on ideals while also taking realities into account. The acceptance of Resolution 598 should be considered the most important example of realistic idealism in Imam Khomeini's conduct (5, 6). By contrast, the foreign policy outlook of the Bazargan and Banisadr governments was shaped on the basis of preservation-oriented realism. In the chaotic conditions of the early Revolution, the Bazargan government, with attention to the preservation-oriented principle of realism, placed the preservation of the Revolution and the country against disintegration on its agenda and considered this dependent on expanding relations with the West, especially the United States (7). It may be said that the Bazargan government's relationship with the United States was intended to preserve the balance of power and ensure security against communism, while neglecting the fact that the hostility of the United States toward Iran was greater than that of the Soviet Union. Evidence for this may include General Huyser's mission to Iran to prevent the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution, the United States' refusal to extradite the Shah to Iran when he was in the United States for a period after the Revolution, and the discovery of espionage documents at the United States embassy in Tehran. From this perspective, Bazargan considered the aim and decisions of the Provisional Government to be service to Iran through Islam, whereas Imam Khomeini's

aim was service to Islam through Iran (8). These outlooks caused certain practical gaps between the sovereignty structure and the two governments of Bazargan and Banisadr during that period.

The Gap in the Application of International Relations Theories

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Provisional Government, gaps emerged in the field of foreign policy between the sovereignty structure centered on Imam Khomeini and the Provisional Government of Bazargan, as well as the Banisadr government during his presidency. One of these gaps concerned their approaches to international theories. The sovereignty structure centered on Imam Khomeini sought to implement Islamic ideals wherever the conditions and grounds for their realization were possible. Therefore, his view of international relations was pursued on the basis of a combined theory of realistic idealism, which may be interpreted through the concept of "expediency." This means that expediency revolves around an emphasis on ideals while also taking realities into account. The acceptance of Resolution 598 should be regarded as the most important example of realistic idealism in Imam Khomeini's conduct, because it occurred under conditions in which, throughout the eight years of the Sacred Defense, slogans such as "War, war until victory," "War, war until the removal of sedition from the world," and "The road to Jerusalem passes through Karbala" were constantly heard from the people and combatants. While these slogans were still present, Imam Khomeini agreed to accept Resolution 598 and stated that until a few days earlier he had believed in the same defensive method and declared positions in the war and considered the expediency of the system, the country, and the Revolution to lie in implementing them; however, due to events and factors and with regard to the views of high-ranking political and military experts of the country, whose commitment, sincerity, and honesty he trusted, he agreed to accept the resolution and the ceasefire and considered it, at that moment, to be in the interests of the Revolution and the system (5, 6). Similarly, Imam Khomeini supported the hostage-taking at the United States embassy in Tehran and later agreed to the release of the hostages. Furthermore, regarding the policy of exporting the Revolution, while opposing its export through force and the sword, he considered it possible through the expansion of religious teachings and the ideals of the Revolution gradually and over time. He stated that when "we say we want to export our Revolution, we do not mean by the sword, but by propagation" (9, 10). Imam Khomeini sought to promote justice in human society through the exportation of the Revolution. For this reason, he argued that Islamic justice meant that all governments in the world should govern according to Islamic criteria and that this would hopefully be prepared gradually (9).

By contrast, the outlook of the Provisional Government and Banisadr in foreign policy was formed on the basis of preservation-oriented realism. In the unstable conditions of the early Revolution, the Bazargan government, through the lens of preservation-oriented realism, placed the preservation of the Revolution and the country from disintegration on its agenda and considered this dependent on expanding relations with the West, especially the United States (7). Therefore, it took steps to expand relations with the West, particularly the United States, and sought to include the reduction of relations with the Soviet Union in its policy. This same policy continued under Banisadr.

Neither East nor West

The Islamic Revolution of Iran, which has an ideological nature, also has an ideological foreign policy. Western policy, too, was ideological from the beginning and sought expansion through this means. It remains ideological

today. In a statement issued by sixty American intellectuals at the beginning of the Iraq War, in which they supported Bush's attack, they argued that the war was ideological because only ideology can become global. Therefore, if war is fought for ideology, it will be an ethical war, even if unconventional weapons are used and genocide is committed for American ideology. Thus, even their war is ideological. Some have argued that because religion has an ideological character, it cannot become global, while science, because it is not ideological, is global. Therefore, civilization must be based on science, not religion. This is a misconception, because Western science is also ideological. Western science has hidden layers within which ideology is concealed (4, 9).

This Revolution occurred at a time when a bipolar order and two ideologies, communism and liberalism, dominated the world. In the words of the Supreme Leader, at a time when the world was divided between the material East and West and no one imagined the emergence of a great religious movement, the Islamic Revolution of Iran entered the arena with power and grandeur (11). Although a movement known as the Non-Aligned Movement had taken shape, the countries of the world were, in practice, dependent on one of the two blocs. Accordingly, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the foreign policy doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran shifted from union and alliance with great powers, especially the West, to "Neither East nor West," meaning non-alignment.

As the macro-policy of the Islamic Republic in the field of foreign policy, this strategy means departing from the specific rules governing relations among actors in international relations and adopting a kind of independence-seeking political orientation and behavior that entails revisionism and non-acceptance of international norms. This approach prioritizes ideology over geostrategy and regards principles such as justice-seeking and moralism as criteria for the conduct of foreign policy decision-makers (4).

In this strategy, the understanding and perspective of the sovereignty structure differed from that of the Provisional Government. The Bazargan government viewed non-alignment in terms of Mosaddegh's negative balance, which had a conservative character. As Ebrahim Yazdi, the foreign minister of the Provisional Government, stated: "We do not participate in conflicts among the superpowers... We will not participate in any alignment, and we will maintain our relations with the outside world in a desirable manner" (12, 13). The Provisional Government did not seek to change the existing order in the international system or to confront the two superpowers, and it also lacked an ideological dimension. By contrast, the non-alignment intended by Imam Khomeini and the revolutionary forces sought to change the international system and adopted an approach of struggle against the system of domination and the existing order because they considered it unjust. In addition, the Islamic Revolution had an ideological nature in opposition to communist and liberal ideologies. In other words, "the non-alignment policy of the Provisional Government had a defensive aspect, while non-alignment from the perspective of the sovereignty structure had an offensive aspect" (10). Therefore, Imam Khomeini repeatedly stated that there was no difference between the behavior of the superpowers. Both were materialistic, repressive, and domination-seeking toward the Third World. Both sought to destroy the Iranian Revolution from within (10, 12).

Despite the Provisional Government's policy of non-alignment toward East and West and despite a series of measures, such as withdrawal from CENTO, membership in the Non-Aligned Movement, and annulment of Articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 Treaty between Iran and the Soviet Union, it was, in practice, inclined toward relations with the West and the United States and held a negative view of the Eastern Bloc. This reached the point where Imam Khomeini's strategy of "Neither East nor West" was, in practice, turned by those two governments into a strategy of only saying "no" to the East and the communist system, while the West was removed from the original strategy. The Provisional Government believed that preserving and stabilizing the newly established Islamic system

depended on expanding relations with Western countries, especially the United States. On this basis, it expanded political relations with the United States from the level of chargé d'affaires to ambassador and held meetings with American leaders and advisers, including Brzezinski. The Provisional Government proposed the exchange of classified information between the two countries to counter the Soviet and communist threat (13). Banisadr, both during his term as foreign minister in the Provisional Government and during his presidency, as well as Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, his foreign minister, were close to Bazargan in terms of foreign policy (12). However, the sovereignty structure considered preservation and stabilization of the system to be dependent on independence from any foreign power (7). For this reason, Imam Khomeini's representatives, including the Revolutionary Council, given the history of United States intervention in the August 19, 1953 coup, were concerned that the Provisional Government would fall into the arms of the United States and create for the Revolution a fate similar to that of Mosaddegh. Thus, the United States' agreement to the Shah's presence in that country in October 1979 and the meeting between Bazargan, Ebrahim Yazdi, and the foreign minister with Brzezinski, Carter's national security adviser, occurred while the Shah was in the United States and while Imam Khomeini was launching his strongest attacks against the United States because of that government's insulting action. This itself was evidence of the issue (14). This meeting accelerated the seizure of the United States embassy. It should also be noted that Imam Khomeini and the revolutionary people regarded the United States as the root of Iran's problems and even those of the Third World, whereas Mehdi Bazargan and some members of his cabinet did not have the same negative view of Western colonialism as Imam Khomeini and the revolutionary forces. These two perspectives played an important role in the seizure of the United States embassy by revolutionaries and the resignation of the Provisional Government on November 5, 1979 (13).

The Occupation of the United States Embassy

November 4, 1979, marked one of the major developments in Iran–United States relations. Following the unauthorized meeting of Bazargan and Ebrahim Yazdi, the foreign minister of the Provisional Government, in Algeria with Brzezinski, the national security adviser to the president of the United States, widespread protests and demonstrations against the Provisional Government took shape and ultimately led to the occupation of the United States embassy in Tehran (15). The seizure of the United States embassy in Tehran by revolutionary students and the taking hostage of its diplomats and staff on charges of espionage in Iran constituted one of the axes of the gap between the sovereignty structure and the Bazargan and Banisadr governments. The reason for this action was the interventionist policies of the United States in Iran and the revolutionary forces' distrust of the Provisional Government's view of the West (10). Imam Khomeini and the masses supported this action, and one day after the incident he described the United States as the Great Satan and called the event the Second Revolution (10, 13).

The Supreme Leader states in this regard: "The fact that I heard Imam call this movement the Second Revolution is not meaningless," because protest against the domination of the arrogant United States government was not an issue that attracted Imam Khomeini's attention only after the victory of the Islamic Revolution; rather, it had been pursued by him from the beginning of the movement (11).

However, in reaction to the seizure of the United States embassy in Tehran by the revolutionaries, Bazargan traveled to Qom on November 5, 1979, and met with Imam Khomeini in order to obtain his approval for the release of the hostages. Imam Khomeini opposed this. After Imam Khomeini's opposition, the Bazargan government resigned on the same day (13). Thereafter, the United States decided to solve the problem through diplomacy in

order to free the hostages. Therefore, it sought to send Ramsey Clark and William Miller, two senior American officials, to Iran for negotiations, but Imam Khomeini announced that he would not negotiate with them until the United States returned the Shah and his assets to Iran (10). In subsequent measures, Kurt Waldheim, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, entered Tehran. Although he succeeded in meeting with the foreign minister and Shahid Beheshti, Imam Khomeini did not allow him to meet with him. Apart from Banisadr and Ghotbzadeh, none of the officials showed an inclination toward negotiating and resolving the hostage issue. Although Banisadr was among the opponents of the occupation of the United States embassy, he had no path for ending it (16). Banisadr was also opposed to the continuation of the hostage-taking of American diplomats and believed that this crisis would isolate Iran in the international arena. In one of his statements against hostage-taking, he said: "I am opposed to hostage-taking and the use of force, and it will not produce results. The people of Iran are impatient" (16). These statements showed that he did not seek to struggle against "imperial arrogance and imperialism." By contrast, the ruling faction, led by Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republican Party, defended the hostage-taking as a lever for pressuring the United States and consolidating the foundations of the Revolution (17). Banisadr also attempted to resolve the hostage issue through Algerian mediation, but strong opposition from the parliament and judicial institutions prevented any agreement (18).

Exportation of the Revolution

The policy of "exporting the Revolution" to the countries of the world, especially oppressed and Muslim countries, was another strategy of the Islamic Revolution. Imam Khomeini believed that the Islamic Revolution, due to its Islamic nature, had a global mission. As he stated in a message issued on the first anniversary of the victory of the Revolution: "We export our Revolution to the entire world, because our Revolution is Islamic" (9, 10). From Imam Khomeini's perspective, the idea of exporting the Revolution was a consequence of the *raison d'être* of the Islamic Revolution, which, because of its human and Islamic character, could not remain confined within the borders of the country (9). For this reason, one of the concerns of the leaders of the two superpowers of East and West after the victory of the Revolution was Imam Khomeini's "exportation of the Revolution," because the spread of such a revolution endangered their illegitimate interests and, from their perspective, caused instability in countries allied with and dependent on the West and East, especially Islamic countries. Therefore, Rouhollah Ramazani, in his book *An Analytical Framework for Examining the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, states: "Both the United States and the Soviet Union wanted to prevent the exportation of Iran's Islamic Revolution, which they regarded as destabilizing... In Moscow's perception, Iran's 'anti-Sovietism' was mainly the result of the country's struggle to expand its own revolution" (12).

Since, in the words of the Supreme Leader, "the Islamic Revolution, like a living and willful phenomenon, has always possessed flexibility..." (11), and in the interpretation of Michel Foucault, who called it "the spirit of a spiritless world," this Revolution inherently possessed the capacity to be exported. Imam Khomeini considered the universality of Islam to be the reason for exporting the Islamic Revolution, because Islam "is not for one country, for several countries, for one group, or even only for Muslims. Islam has come for humanity... Islam wants to place all humanity under the cover of its justice" (9). Saving humanity from the oppression and tyranny of the arrogant powers is part of the mission of prophets and divine leaders, and they did not seek only to save their own people or country. Imam Khomeini, as a divine leader, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, placed the expansion of the Revolution to other lands and its inspirational role on the agenda as a strategy, stating: "We must support the

oppressed of the world. We must strive to export our Revolution to the world and abandon the thought that we should not export our Revolution, because Islam makes no distinction among Muslim countries and supports all the oppressed of the world” (9, 10).

One of Imam Khomeini’s objectives in exporting the Revolution was to awaken nations in order to prevent the plundering of their material and cultural resources. In one statement, he argued that impure foreign hands had separated Muslims from one another and created discord among them in order to gain enormous benefits and destroy Muslim nations’ material and spiritual reserves. Therefore, all Muslims had to rise and remove foreign hands from their countries (9). However, Imam Khomeini’s method for exporting the Revolution was not through war and domination. He stated: “We say that we want to export our Revolution... We do not want to draw swords and guns and attack” (9, 10).

It seems that through the exportation of the Revolution, Imam Khomeini sought to establish a new order based on justice in the international system. His view of the Islamic Revolution was civilizational. As he stated, all should move forward together toward a sound civilization, not a “Mohammad Reza-style civilization,” but a divine civilization, a civilization of the Messenger of God, one that makes no distinction among human groups, Black and White, except on the basis of piety (9).

However, in practice, the outlook of Mehdi Bazargan and his foreign ministers did not align with Imam Khomeini’s policies, and they regarded this strategy as merely a slogan. “In their interpretation, they ignored the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini’s call for the creation of an Islamic world order was an expression of hope” (12). The Provisional Government adopted non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries as one of the principles of its foreign policy in order to prevent the pursuit of goals such as Imam Khomeini’s strategy of exporting the Revolution to other countries and supporting liberation movements (10). Therefore, Ebrahim Yazdi, the foreign minister of the Provisional Government, stated: “In all the answers given to the question of exporting the Revolution, we constantly emphasized this point: the government of Iran does not intend to export the Revolution... The exportation of revolution belongs to the category of government interference in the internal affairs of other countries” (19). In one of his remarks about exporting the Revolution, Bazargan said: “Is revolution like chickpeas and beans that it can be exported?” Ebrahim Yazdi also stated in October 1979: “It is the duty of our diplomacy to convince neighbors that revolution is not an exportable matter and that the government of the Islamic Republic is not seeking to export the Revolution...” (20). Banisadr also held similar positions and, in an interview with the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet*, declared: “We do not intend to export our Revolution; we only want to have our own system” (16). Banisadr was also opposed to exporting the Revolution and supporting foreign paramilitary groups, such as Palestinians, whereas revolutionary institutions considered this approach part of the ideological mission of the Islamic Republic (21). These points make clear that the Bazargan and Banisadr governments did not believe in the exportation of the Revolution, and this was one of the strategic gaps between the Bazargan government and the sovereignty structure.

Anti-Imperialism and Defense of the Oppressed

Among the governing principles of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran are anti-imperialism and moral, political, economic, and military support for the oppressed of the world. This principle is, in fact, rooted in the pursuit of peace and opposition to aggressors against the rights of nations. The importance of this issue is so great that it is explicitly stated in Articles 152 and 154 of the Constitution. Article 152 is based on the rejection of all forms of domination and submission to domination, the preservation of comprehensive independence and the territorial

integrity of the country, the defense of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with domination-seeking powers, and peaceful mutual relations with non-belligerent states. Article 154 states that the Islamic Republic of Iran considers human happiness throughout human society to be its ideal and recognizes independence, freedom, and the rule of truth and justice as the rights of all peoples of the world. Therefore, while fully refraining from any interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the rightful struggle of the oppressed against the arrogant anywhere in the world (22).

According to these two articles, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran rejects all forms of domination and submission to domination, defends the rights of Muslims, and regards human happiness, independence, freedom, and the rule of truth and justice as the rights of all peoples. While refraining from interference in the affairs of other countries, it supports the struggle of the oppressed against the arrogant. Regarding anti-imperialism and the negation of domination, there is a divine principle stating that God has never granted the unbelievers a path of domination over the believers (9). This is one of the principles of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Imam Khomeini stated in this regard that the logic of Islam is that no domination by others should be imposed on Muslims, and that Muslims should not fall under the domination of others; he also stated that “we want not to fall under domination” (10). Elsewhere, he stated: “We will neither oppress nor be oppressed” (10).

On the basis of religious teachings, Imam Khomeini considered supporting and defending Muslims oppressed by imperial arrogance to be a duty. He stated that the Islamic Republic was prepared under all circumstances to defend Islam, Islamic countries, and the independence of Islamic countries; its program was the program of Islam, the unity of Muslims, the union of Islamic countries, brotherhood with all Muslim denominations throughout the world, and alliance with all Islamic states across the world against Zionism, Israel, colonialist states, and those who plunder the resources of the poor nation without compensation (9, 10). Imam Khomeini did not limit defense of the oppressed against the arrogant to Muslims. Rather, he considered the salvation of humanity to be the mission of prophets and Islamic leaders. In a meeting with the ambassadors of the Islamic Republic in Lebanon and Syria and the Central Council of Hezbollah in Lebanon, he stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran would stand beside them, beside all Muslims, and indeed beside all the oppressed (9).

Imam Khomeini was so concerned about the oppression of the oppressed that his view was directed toward unity among them and the formation of a global party called the Party of the Oppressed. On the eve of the declaration of International Quds Day, he expressed the hope that a party called the “Party of the Oppressed” would emerge throughout the world, that all the oppressed would participate in this party, that the problems in the path of the oppressed would be removed, and that they would rise against the arrogant and the plunderers of East and West (9, 10).

However, the Provisional Government and Banisadr did not follow such a path and emphasized a moderate line, while the cultural-social context of society, influenced by despotism over several decades and even several centuries, especially the twenty-five-year despotism after the August 19, 1953 coup, was strongly receptive to revolutionary movements. The Provisional Government attempted to preserve the structures inherited from the Pahlavi era (23). Banisadr, both during his time as foreign minister in the Provisional Government and during his presidency, as well as Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, his foreign minister, were close to Bazargan in terms of foreign policy (12). During his presidency, although he made efforts to expand relations with Africa and even, in the early days of the embassy occupation, considered himself a firm supporter of the students and called their action revolutionary, his position gradually changed (16). Bazargan, regarding the atmosphere created against landowners and

capitalists who had emerged through rent-seeking and exploitation of the people, said: “Other radical ideas and goals also became the focus of attention and expectation, such as revolutionary struggle and agitation against landlordism, capitalism, and ownership under the pretext of eliminating exploitation...” Bazargan regarded this type of revolutionism as characteristic of Marxists and leftist groups and parties, and he stated that such demands were not heard in the first movement of the Revolution but, after the victory of the Revolution, came to be considered as a “reward for the deprived classes and a thanksgiving for victory over the Taghut” (8). Some intellectuals criticized the Provisional Government because of its liberal orientation and considered it a path-paver for imperialist domination (24). The Provisional Government, especially Bazargan, did not consider itself committed to defending and supporting the oppressed, even Muslims of other countries, and this was completely contrary to Imam Khomeini’s view. In one speech, Bazargan stated: “The objective adopted by the Provisional Government was service to Iran through Islam and according to Islam, whereas Mr. Khomeini, for the Revolution and for his own mission, had chosen service to Islam through Iran” (8).

The Priority of National Interests over Islamic Interests

The nature of the school of Islam is universal and is not limited to a particular nation, race, or territory. God regarded the mission of the Prophet as the guidance of all the people of the world. The relevant verse states that the Prophet was sent only to all people, both as a bearer of good news and as a warner, although most people do not know (9). Therefore, Imam Khomeini constantly emphasized this mission and reminded others of the necessity of exporting the Revolution. He stated that the Iranian movement was not and had not been specific to Iran itself, because Islam does not belong to a particular group. Islam has come for humanity, not only for Muslims and not only for Iran. The prophets were sent to human beings. Therefore, a movement undertaken for Islam cannot be confined to one country (9, 10). In brief, it can be said that the universality of Islam’s message from Imam Khomeini’s perspective does not mean establishing and expanding relations with particular nations, ethnic groups, and states; rather, it means inviting all humanity to know and follow the teachings and commands of Islam (4). On this basis, Bazargan believed that “Mr. Khomeini, for his Revolution and mission, had chosen service to Islam through Iran” (8). However, the discourse of the Provisional Government, which was based on the primacy of the nation-state and the priority of national interests, considered support for Muslims and the oppressed to be subordinate to national interests and even regarded it as a capacity for advancing national interests. In this regard, Bazargan stated: “The objective adopted by the Provisional Government was service to Iran through Islam and according to Islam” (8). Although Banisadr also tried to present himself as a defender of Islam, his attachment to the Freedom Movement and the National Front led him, like Bazargan, to have “attachment to Iran” first rather than “attachment to Islam” (16). However, the view of the founder of the Islamic Republic, according to his statements and policies, was to expand the Islamic Revolution to the Islamic world and even to the human societies oppressed by the system of domination, to liberate them from the chains of colonialism, and to support them—not merely to save Iran alone. Although the Revolution took shape in Iran with the help of the people and our country became a model for the world, what can be inferred from the practical policies and certain statements of the governments under discussion is that they gave priority to Iran’s national interests over the interests of the Islamic world. Giving priority, however, does not mean the absolute negation of their interests.

Management of the Iran–Iraq War

Regarding Iraq's attack on Iran and the defense of the sacred territory of the Islamic Republic, Banisadr, as president, believed that the war should be managed with priority given to limited military defense by the army and opposition to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and popular forces, along with international diplomacy. By contrast, revolutionary institutions, such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Islamic Republican Party, emphasized continuing the war with an ideological approach, expanding the influence of the Revolution, and defending the homeland with all military and popular capacities (25). In his memoir *Betrayal of Hope*, Banisadr called for the concentration of war command under the supervision of the army and for ending the interference of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. However, revolutionary institutions, including the IRGC and popular forces, in practice disregarded his war strategy and acted in parallel with the army (26). This was while Iran had been attacked by the Iraqi army on September 22, 1980, and until the liberation of Khorramshahr in 1982, Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 479, adopted on September 28, 1980, only called for refraining from the use of force and even used the term "situation" instead of "war," despite the legal implications of the latter. Meanwhile, issues such as threat to peace, breach of peace, occurrence of aggression, and violation of Iran's full sovereignty were not mentioned in the resolution, and for years after the war they were unwilling to recognize Iraq as the aggressor (27). However, unlike Banisadr, Imam Khomeini, at a time when the enemy had occupied a large part of the country and had the upper hand, and when the failure of Iranian forces in Operation Nasr was, in fact, a symbol of reliance on classical warfare and instrument-based warfare, took a different position. After this operation, Banisadr, having become disappointed, proposed negotiations with the Iraqis in a meeting with Imam Khomeini. Imam Khomeini not only rejected this proposal but sharply told Banisadr: "We will continue the war until the end." Saddam Hussein had extended his hand in order to make peace, but Imam Khomeini stated that "we have no peace with him"; he described him as an unbeliever, corrupt, and a corrupter, and stated that peace could not be made with such a corruptor and that the war against them would continue until the end (6, 28).

Conclusion

In the analysis of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic during the three-year period of 1979–1981, the relationship between the sovereignty structure and the Bazargan and Banisadr governments was examined, and it became clear that strategic gaps existed that had an important impact on the collapse of the first governments after the Revolution. These gaps existed between Imam Khomeini, the Revolutionary Council, and the revolutionary forces as a major part of the sovereignty structure on the one hand, and the Provisional Government of Bazargan and its cabinet members and Banisadr's presidential period centered on the president on the other. Ultimately, this study concluded that one of the obstacles to advancing the lofty goals of the Islamic Revolution of Iran during that period was a series of disagreements, including the gap in their approach to applying the desired theory in international relations. The sovereignty structure had a realistic-idealist approach and sought to pursue ideals derived from Islamic foundations, which paid attention to the interests of humanity, the establishment of justice, and the struggle against oppression and domination at the global level. The Provisional Government and Banisadr, by contrast, had a preservation-oriented realist approach that pursued only national interests and the preservation of the newly established Islamic Revolution. In their views on the strategy of "Neither East nor West" and the manner of relations with the two superpowers of East and West, the sovereignty structure believed in non-alignment and

non-dependence on those two blocs and confrontation with their unjust domination, while accepting relations only to the extent that they did not interfere. The Bazargan and Banisadr governments had a positive view of the West and the expansion of relations with it, with the difference that the Provisional Government considered relations with the United States a priority and a source of salvation, whereas Banisadr pursued this path through France. Both governments had a negative view of the East, centered on the Soviet Union, and instead of the strategy of “Neither East nor West,” they implemented in their foreign policy the strategy of opposition to the East and inclination toward the West. In the hostage issue, Imam Khomeini supported the revolutionaries, and because the government was unable to take action to release the hostages, it resigned; Banisadr was also opposed to hostage-taking. Regarding the inspiring policy of exporting the Revolution, the sovereignty structure believed in striving to implement and export the Revolution to oppressed countries, especially Islamic countries, and prioritized initial steps of political support for the Palestinian liberation movements, whereas the governments sought to reject the exportation of the Revolution under the pretext of the policy of non-interference in the affairs of other countries. Similarly, regarding the issue of support for the oppressed and anti-imperialism, the sovereignty structure regarded this principle as a duty, incorporated it into Articles 152 and 154 of the Constitution, and considered it a precondition for world peace, whereas the governments did not believe in it and sought the expansion of relations with Western domination-seeking powers, foremost among them the United States. The sovereignty structure also prioritized the interests of the Islamic Ummah and the oppressed of the world, whereas the governments prioritized the interests of the Iranian nation over the interests of the Islamic Ummah. Finally, with regard to war management, Banisadr believed that a ceasefire should be concluded with Iraq, whereas Imam Khomeini and the revolutionary forces believed that the war had to continue until the aggressor was identified.

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