The role of Imamat and Leadership Strategy in the Modern society

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Abstract

The discussion on strategical subjects, specially in political-social field, has faced with an increasing growth. With a practical-strategical look to the Leadership of the society, from the view point of Imam Reza (a.s.), we can realize that, the Imamat is considered to be a complete and covering method and program that is based on religion and the techniques for the usage of all capacities and capabilities; either spiritual or worldly matters, for organizing and cooperation among the parts for the better use are gathered. The strategy for Imamat is based on the everlasting Holy Quran, that Imam Reza (a.s.) emphasizes specially on it. Imam Reza (a.s.) has explicated the scientific, and legality position of the Imam base on this saying that ‘the Imam knows the politics; is eligible for Leadership and is to be followed’. Based on the Razavi words, the Imamat strategy can be an irreplaceable system of government and politics and management, that has the most benefits and the least side damages; and that by cooperating among small cultural, economical and political factors, show the way to felicity and perfection both individually and to the society. Finally, the clarification and expansion of this strategy among people of the world and explaining its results and standards in small cultural, economical and political factors, brings enthusiasm and eagerness in people toward this system of government. It can be a step to pave the ground for the rising of the friend’s government.

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1. Introduction

With the ever-increasing expansion of the domains and boundaries of human life, the necessity to develop fundamental and strategic plans is growing. One of these domains is the leadership and macro-management of the society which not only has not got obsolete by passage of time, but also discussions about its philosophy and functions have been thriving. Every political system and government tries to direct people’s beliefs based on the value system of that society through designing a favorable and comprehensive strategy of leadership and political philosophy, and by provision of all-inclusive analyses and updated answers to the problems, direct the people toward its objectives. In the political systems throughout the world, there are different models and strategies that can specify how to govern people and also indicate their rights and duties.

Undoubtedly, one of the main functions of the society leadership is its psychological and spiritual effects on the society, because, if people are blessed with a good and comprehensive leadership and administration system, they would enjoy some sort of cognitive and psychological tranquility. That is, the kind of leadership and road map in a
country will increase the national trust and will boost people’s psychological and spiritual vivacity. In Islamic thought system, the leadership and Imamat of the society is not just a political model, but is also a meta-political issue that is interrelated with people’s Faith and beliefs, and includes functions and indicators far more than a political model. In this article, the topic of leadership strategy is examined through Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (peace be upon him). Imam Reza is a descendent of the Holy Prophet of Islam and is the son of Imam Musa Kazem, and is one of the Imams of the Prophet’s Household (peace be upon them) school. He had pure and perfect knowledge, practice, and spiritual purity.

2. Discussion
Strategy can be defined as the art and model (plan) of using the available facilities and capacities in order to achieve a certain goal, which consists of three parts of designing the goals, knowing the conditions and facilities, and conducting the best plan and method. It should be noted that strategy is considered a science and like other sciences, it might be used in good or evil way. This point requires the strategy to be based on religion and ethics. That is, we need religious and Islamic strategies. Religious strategy is “a system and plan that is designed based on religion to attain certain goals”. In this plan, the art of using different capacities has been taken into account, and the origin, source, domain, and parts of the plan are all based on religion. These in sum, provide a religious strategy.

The present century should be regarded as the century of human returning to religion and religious strategies in social and psychological domains, because the true bliss, security, and welfare is rooted in returning to religion and conduction of pure religious and Islamic strategies. In a thought provoking note, Alvin Toffler writes as following:
The list of problems facing our society (the West) is infinite. While we see the successive drowning of the fighting industrial civilization institutes in the whirlpool of inefficacies and corruptions, the stink of its moral decadence also bothers the taste. Therefore, the despondency and pressure for change has filled the air. Thousands of designs and plans are offered in response to these pressures, all of which claiming that they are fundamental or even revolutionary. However, again and again the new rules and regulations, plans, and guidelines – which have been devised to solve the problems – bounce and add to our problems. They are useless and ineffective. This feeling is very dangerous for any democratic system and intensifies the urgent need for the advent of the fabulous man riding the horse. (Haeri Pur et el, 2010, p.127).

This note entails two key points. One of them is that the strategies and plans designed by western systems not only have not been successful, but have also exacerbated the situations. The second point is that the necessity of religion and religious strategies has appeared through the words of such elites like Toffler – though in a figurative manner – and they, too, consider adherence to religion and the divine savior as the only way out of the present atmosphere. So, it is necessary to use the capacity of religion in different social and political domains. One of these domains is the leadership and Imamat of the society. In administration terminology, leadership is defined as affecting people to willingly perform their duties ( Alvani,1989, p.109). Another definition is affecting people to accomplish a common goal ( Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, 2000, p.71). Still other definitions – with administrative and strategic viewpoints – consider the leadership of the society as the art of mobilization and better arrangement and controlling of the human forces ( Motahari, 1985,p.235) However, religiously, the leadership and Imamat of the society has been defined as the general supervision and superintendence of people in religious and mundane affairs in vicegerency of the Prophetii or as guardianship in nation’s religious and mundane affairs.(Abd Al-Jabbar Motazeli, 1408 AH, p. 750).

Imamat strategy and specification of its indicators

Through a strategic viewpoint toward the society leadership, we can consider this phenomenon as a comprehensive system and plan that is formed based on religion and aims at certain goals. In this plan, the art of using all spiritual and worldly capacititates and facilities in the best possible way has been taken into account, and arrangement and coordination of the components and processes of the plan can be encountered in the highest level.
As the concepts of consistency and order of the components and constituents are present in the term Imamat, as in the Imamat strategy, all existential and humanistic capacities are collected and used in a consistent and ordered way.

One of the terms and descriptions that Imam Reza uses about Imamat is system. Imam Reza says, “Verily Imam is the incumbent of the religion, organizer of the Muslims, the virtue of the world, and the honor of the Faithful people” (Nomani, dateless. p.226; Tabarsi, 1368 AH, p. 227; Bahrani, dateless, p. 314). that is, the Imamat system and strategy is the line that connects and orders the God’s servants and the cord that connects them, the God, and the whole existence together.

From Imam Reza’s viewpoint, the Imamat system and strategy should have the following components and constituents:

Theocentrism

The foundation of the Imamat strategy should be based on monotheism. Without consideration of the monotheism principle, this system and strategy will collapse. That is, Imam and leader should both take their essence and identity from God and invite people toward God. In other words, the beginning and endpoint of the Imamat strategy recurs to monotheism and theocentrism. From Imam Reza’s point of view, the Imamat system (i.e. the path) and the Imam (i.e. the leader) come to invite the human toward God.

Goal-orientation

If we consider strategy as a kind of pattern to accomplish the decisions and goals, then the model and the plan are designed, based on the type of the respective goal(s). In the Imamat strategy and system, the goals should be pursued in three levels: 1) fundamental and ultimate; 2) medial; and 3) basic.

Regarding the basic goals of the Imamat strategy, there are cases such as justice, security, welfare, and cultivation. That is to say, the favorable leadership system should regard provision of welfare, development, and security for people. These are the basic and preliminary goals of the leadership system. With regard to the medial goals of the Imamat strategy, provision of the conditions needed for submission to and worship of God in intended. Finally, concerning the ultimate goal, the leadership system should try to get the individual and the society to the perfection and nearness to God, that is, it should try to set the ground for this goal to happen.

Sociocentrism

Anyone with a little familiarity with religion would not deny that religion has arranged plans to provide the eternal bliss of the human and that the ultimate goal of religion is to guide the human toward otherworldly bliss; but one of the dimensions of religion is the sociopolitical aspect of it in which lies people’s religious and worldly bliss. In Imam Reza’s (peace be upon him) idea, it is not true to limit religion to church or temple and consider anything out of them (i.e. social and economic domains) as irrelevant to religion, unholy, and purely mundane. But rather, it is not acceptable to separate religion from worldly life. On the other hand, religion provides the human with the needed capacity to arrange all his activities based on it. Therefore, the leadership system of the society can guide people to their personal and social goals based on religion and set the grounds for them to achieve their worldly and otherworldly bliss and comfort.

Procedure-orientation

In the leadership and Imamat strategy of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), the Noble Quran should be considered the executive charter and document of Imam and leader, and all subsystems of the society should be formed and ordered based on it. Before introduction of Imamat issue, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) emphasizes the comprehensiveness of Quran and perfection of [Islam] religion, and mentions that the Most High God has taken into account all needs of a nation in his book and has specified them. His Holiness then cautions that having belief in the comprehensiveness and perfection of religion and the Noble Quran is necessary, and anyone who denies this fact is denier of Quran and has entered the realm of atheism. (Ibn Shobeh Harani, 1404 AH, p. 437; Horr Ameli, 1418 AH, p.491).
In other words, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) introduces the executive charter and document of the Imamat strategy (i.e. the Noble Quran) as firm, perfect, clarifier, and away from any fault or defect. Moreover, today the importance and numerous functions of a comprehensive plan are not unknown for strategists throughout the world. Therefore, the roadmap that is at the disposal of Imam and the society is an incomparable one, because it is taken from the Noble Quran. However, this unique plan and map needs an incomparable executor and administrator. Here, some of his characteristics are specified.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) in a precious note, specifies the scientific, legal, and judicial status of the society Imam and leader as following: expert in politics, rightful for supervision, and necessary to be obeyed ( Ibn Shobeh Harani, 1404 AH,p.441); that is, Imam should be someone who is an expert in politics and administration of the society and no fault should be seen in his plans. From legal standpoint, too, Imam is rightful for leadership, that is to say, his Imamat and leadership is a right endowed to him by God of the whole universe through religion. Therefore, obeying Imam becomes necessary, that is, intellectually and judicially, obeying him turns into a necessary and compulsory act.

It is worth noting that the superb instance and perfect model of the Imamat and leadership strategy will be executed by Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his glad advent) during the Last Days era. He will come and will get the world to the worldly and otherworldly bliss and comfort by his unique administration leadership. This issue is the common point among religions sects of Islam. In his era, people and the society will be in their best psychological and social form and mode, and it will be proved that the competent leader and leadership system can be highly effective in and beneficial to the improvement of the society conditions and its psychological comfort.

From Imam Reza’s viewpoint, the Last Days savior – i.e. Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) – has the conditions and necessities of the comprehensive and ideal leader. Two important characteristics in this regard are knowledge and infallibility. These two conditions will boost the functions and capabilities of the “Imam-nation” system and will dramatically decrease the possible damages and negative consequences.

In this regard, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) says that Imamat is a prominent and valuable favor that is superior than the positions and statuses of prophethood and friendship (to be friend of God), and even the prophet Ibrahim, after being endowed with the Imamat status, asks enthusiastically that whether his children would receive this great status. However he receives God’s response as my vow does not go to the evil-doers ( The Cow chapter, verse 124).

That is, Imamat is a vow and treaty that God gets from Imams and society leaders, and this vow is not endowed to evil-doers (doing wrong to God, to himself/herself, or to others). Imam Reza (peace be upon him) then concludes that “through this verse, the Most High God negated the Imamat and leadership of any incompetent and evil-doer till the Judgment Day and sets it just among the Infallibles and the sincere ones”(Ibn Shobeh Harani,1404 AH,p.440). Imam Reza (peace be upon him) describes the perfect human as someone away from sins and defects, who is endowed with the special knowledge, and patience is one of his evident characteristics.

Undoubtedly, one of the inevitable principles in the scientific methodology and the administration system of the contemporary world is the principle “first obtain the right and enough knowledge, and then issue the decree”. As strategists will put it, if we consider analysis as the username of strategy, then its password will be data (information)(Crainer, 2002, p.124). That is, knowledge regarding the respective affairs is a fundamental principle, an issue that is the most evident indicator in the Imamat strategy and its highest status is witnessed in Imam.

Imam Reza states the philosophy behind the need of the Imamat strategy to knowledge and infallibility of the leader in this way that God put these characteristics in Imam to make him a proof for people and an evidence and witness for them, and so, to disallow them to raise any excuse and pretext. An then, Imam Reza asks this question that if people have the ability to design such a strategy and bring such an Imam (and administrator)?(Ibn Shobeh Harani,1404 AH, p.441).
In Imam Reza’s idea, people should try to design their leadership and social system based on the indicators and features of the leadership strategy of Imam Mahdi. On the other hand, the leader and administrator of a country should also try to behave based on the manner and characteristics of the perfect human – i.e. the promised Mahdi. He should be the trustee of the people so that the system under his leadership trusts him and performs its duties with psychological peace and comfort. One more characteristic is that he should consider the system under his control as a kind and sympathetic father so as to have the power to go through their hearts. This will lead to improvement in the members’ motivation to work. Another characteristic is that the administrator and leader should be a person to whom the members of the organization and system can take refuge. He should have the role of a resort and a shelter under whose power and spirituality all respective people can attain comfort (Majlisi, 1403 AH, p.123). In Imam Reza’s words, the presence of such a leader and Imam can be found just in the Imamat strategy, and no comparable case might be found in the similar political and administrative systems. (Azizollah Atarodi, 1406 AH, p.98).

Conclusion
The Imamat strategy “is a comprehensive plan and system that is designed based on religious indicators in order to achieve certain goals”. In this plan, the art of using different capacities has been taken into account, and all of the principles of the strategy related to the origin, final goal, domain, and solution are based on religion, which together present a religious strategy. The indicators and advantages of the Imamat strategic system has led to its shining as a unique model in the political and administrative systems of the world, and has made it to have the most advantages and functions as well as the least damages and defects. This system is a comprehensive plan and model that has paved the way toward individual and social bliss and perfection for contemporary human beings through using all available epistemological, ontological, and anthropological capacities. Finally, specification of Imam Reza’s (peace be upon him) strategy and explaining its functions and indicators in cultural, economic, and political subsystems can increase the enthusiasm of all people throughout the world to the religious leadership system, and set the grounds for the advent of the Last Days savior, the promised Mahdi.

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Endnotes

i. quoted from Alvin Toffler, the Third Wave. [the Persian equivalent was translated back to English due to unavailability of the original English text].

ii. Imamat is the supervision of all people by a person from among the people in religion and world affairs”, Ibn Meitham Bahrani, Al-Najah fi Al-Qyamah, p. 41.

iii. The word نیظام (Arabic for system) literally means a thread or cord that is used to bead the pearl or suchlike beads (taken from Lesan Al-Arab, under the entry نازم).