

## **Islam, Science and Government According To Iranian Thinkers**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Nothing troubled the people of the Islamic world at the beginning of the twenty-first century as much as the challenge of modernity did. It had occupied a central place in the cultural and sociopolitical agendas of intellectual and social movements, and state actors in the Islamic world and Iran since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This study is a theoretical analysis of Iranian Muslim intellectuals' encounter with Islam and modernity. The two main spheres of modernity which are examined are: i) the political arena and the government structure, and ii) science and technology. The goal of this dissertation is to examine and investigate the controversial ideas of five Iranian Muslim intellectuals, namely: Ali Shariati, Abdolkarim Soroush, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Murteza Mutahhari, and Mehdi Golshani. Their ideas were then compared in order to identify the similarities and dissimilarities in their ideas on Islam and modernity. It is hoped that through this study, a contribution can be made to the current debate on Islam, science and politics, as well as creating an alternative Islamic perspective with regards to science, technology and a systematic government. This study is part of an accumulated effort towards the rejuvenation of the Islamic world in the modern era, including the field of science and technology.*

**Keywords**—*Modernity, Islamization of Knowledge, Religion Democracy, Liberal Democracy, Muslim Intellectuals, Secularism*

### **JEL Classification**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The shift in the traditional Christian doctrine during the Renaissance in the 16<sup>th</sup> century under the shadow of rationality, and the end of the Church's reign, were the significant factors which led to the end of the Middle Ages. This was the beginning of the revolution towards modernity in the following two centuries which created the foundation of modern Europe. The beginning of modernity, however, is believed to have started in the West and caused the Enlightenment in Europe as a result of which the Industrial Revolution followed. In spite of its origins being in Europe, the wave of modernity is now the most overwhelming ideology in the world about which no country has the ability to compromise. Human wisdom, which is able to criticize itself, is the basis of modernity and as a consequence its other aspects such as science, technology and politics (Wilson & Hanns Reill, 2004). In effect modernity has been at the top of the cultural and socio-political agenda of the thinkers in the Islamic world since its rise in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The spread of modernity has not been without controversies however. It has caused some clashes between a numbers of thinkers in the Islamic World. Some have attempted to draw a relationship between the modern world and Islam and some have labeled it as an anti-Islamic Western project. Some have tried to be selective and have chosen certain aspects of it in their political and social lives. Iran has been facing the wave of modernity for decades. Facing it, the Iranian people had two concerns; firstly, they have been interested in science and technology, secondly, being invaded culturally by Western modernity (Vahdat, 2002, p. 11). In its history, Iran has seen important shifts toward or away from modernity many times. Iran encountered modernity in the Nineteenth Century during the Qajar Dynasty (1785–1925). The first occasion was when the Iranian military during the Qajar Dynasty faced aggression from Russia and Britain who were equipped with modern warfare. The Iranian military was poorly equipped and this embarrassment resulted in the acceptance of such awful treaties such as The Treaty of *Gulistan* between Russia and Iran on 24 October 1813 and The Treaty of *Turkmenchay* on February 21, 1828 (Vahdat 1998, p. 57). During the Qajar Dynasty many students were sent to Europe to study modern science and technology and institutions of higher education were established, for example Darolfonoon School to train professionals. There were other actions taken to confront modernity, such as ordering technical and scientific books and journals from France. This marks the beginning of the process of modernization in Iran, which trained the first group of intellectuals in the country. The intellectuals during the Qajar Dynasty belonged mostly to the upper class of the society (Kazemi, 2004, p. 51). One of those intellectuals was Malkom Khan (1833-1908) who strongly believed in the necessity and the priority of modernity. He also believed in superiority of science over superstition. At the

same time he claimed to be able to sustain the true meaning of Islam by introducing change. As a result, he offered a reform-based system of governance based on democracy, and democratic institutions just like the one in France. This view resulted in the Persian Constitutional Revolution between 1905 and 1907. There is no doubt in the political and cultural reforms which took place in the meantime but such reforms had no real impact in the society as they had no real connection to the national identity of Iran. It is difficult to compare the outcome of Reza Shah's many cultural, technological and infrastructural steps which were taken during the 1910s with the negligible actions that had taken place in the decades before during the Qajar Dynasty. Shah Reza's era was mixed with non-democratic rule of the King to push the country forward. This oppressive state made most of his reforms temporary, having no lasting effects on the generations to come. Even the intellectuals who came back from the West were only concerned about utilizing their techniques but had no concerns about the social and political status of the country. In fact detaching the techniques from their originating mind and culture limits us only in the field of using such techniques and not understanding the background in which such advances were made. This means that during the of Shah Reza it was the practical side of modernity, i.e. instrumental modernity, which was emphasized most, not the ideological and cultural background which led to this. During the reign of Shah Mohamad Reza Pahlavi, the main concern of royalty and a class of intellectuals was to reach to the Great Civilization. Of course, this wave was miles away from the class of intellectuals and politicians who set their priority on attaining technical advances and social reconstruction. They considered civil society and democratic institutions as the only way to promote modernity. In effect, modernity turned into the pivotal point of discussions during the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. On the other hand, many of the contemporary politicians were very much inspired by *The Tudeh Party of Iran* ("Party of the Masses of Iran") which was an Iranian communist group. They considered Western ideology as satanic and colonizing. Apart from such ideologies, there were groups of thinkers who constantly and genuinely tried to return to the original Iranian identity along with their deep knowledge of the Western modernity (Azghandi, 2006, p. 68). To be named are Ali Shariati (November 23, 1933 – 1975) and Jalal Al-e-Ahmad (December 2, 1923 – September 9, 1969). They had a deep ideological view of modernity and were deeply inspired by the totalitarian Russian Marxism but at the same time believed in a revival of Islamic origins. The negative view of the Western modernity was empowered with the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. During this period all the aspects of modernity were rejected and a return to Islamic origins was offered instead. At the same time, a number of Iranian thinkers tried critically to detect the burdens on the way of modernity and offered their solutions to the crisis of identity which exists among the Iranian masses. They believe that to understand religion, people should use wisdom and to deal with the identity crisis we have to overcome religious ideology. Another group of thinkers reject the notion of accepting Western modernism without modifications but at the same time believe in a coexistence of tradition and modernity. This group of thinkers believes that attaining civil society and wisdom is only possible by deeply understanding the West and utilizing the superior bases of modernity such as science, contemporary interpretation of religion and cultural interaction (Soroush, 1987, p. 244). Abdol Karim Soroush, Iranian thinker and philosopher is one of these thinkers. It is useful to consider Iranian modern thinkers in either of the two categories: Western-minded and religious. The most prominent aspect of Western minded thinkers is their emphasis on separation of tradition and modernity. On the other hand, religious thinkers look forward to combining the two. The Western-minded thinkers believe that the most important burden on development in Islamic countries is in the Islamic culture itself. Therefore, they try to minimize the impact of religion on culture and society. The other group which is more religious put the emphasis on encountering the negative responses to modernity by the religious society. They also have the concern for maintaining the religious identity and at the same time pushing the society toward development. The rise of such religious thinkers was also simultaneous with the Persian Constitutional Revolution. Sayyid Jamal-ad-Din Asadabadi (b. 1838 - d. March 9, 1897), who was a political activist and Islamic ideologist, was also one of the first religious thinkers in this respect (Kazemi, 2004, p. 75). The rise of religious thinkers peaked in the 1940s because of several reasons. First was the abolition of Shah Reza Pahlavi's dictatorship toward the end of the Second World War as a result of which many clerics and intellectuals felt more secure to express their ideas more freely. At the same time three major social and political movements were on the move: *Tudeh* Party of Iran, which was mentioned earlier and was a Communist party, National Front who had nationalistic ideology and the Islamic Movement. In the decade before the resolution of the Islamic Republic there were a number of trends before the Islamic rule. Initially, Communist influence was strong, and then it was replaced by national movement and at the end by the Islamic movement. Islamic societies of universities around Iran had a very prominent role in resisting Marxist ideology among students and university professors. By the activities of such societies, the activities of religious thinkers came to a peak, never seen before. They tried, by publishing books, holding speeches, and writing columns and journals to re-establish the role of religion in society as well as reconnecting the religious principles with the needs of the modern world. Starting in the 1960s and mostly as a result of a harsh oppression, the activities of the Communism block radically decreased in educational and social arena in Iran. This was the beginning of the process of empowering the Islamic ideology by ideologue thinkers

such as Ali Shari'ati and Murteza Mutahhari. They invaded the Marxist ideology in occasions and their main gathering station was at the Hosseinieh Ershad (a Mosque), a religious institute in Tehran (Kazemi, 2004, p. 90). We are here at this point to define the relationship between the government actions and the process of scientific activities in the eyes of Iranian thinkers. It can be also narrated in this way: How do politician's attitudes, policies and decisions impact the scientific arena? In common wisdom, the functions of science and thinking in a closed society with a closed government is absolutely affected and is therefore canalized in the best case and even nonexistent as a result of suppression of free, independent thoughts in the worst scenario. Religious thinkers in Iran provide a different view.

## **II. ISLAM, SCIENCE AND DEMOCRACY IN THE EYES OF IRANIAN MUSLIM THINKERS**

Let us begin with Abdolkarim Soroush who is a liberal figure. He has done extensive writings on the matter of liberty and science in Islamic countries. In other words he compromises religion in comparing it with modern science and politics and takes the side of modernity in case of any conflicts. He is a pro-Western thinker and completely rejects anti-Western movements. He believes that setting religion according to modernity is not helpful and rejects it all together. He believes that although there is impartiality toward religion in secular settings, there is not enough of so toward science. He believes that liberal societies are science-centered societies in which science has the same position as religion has among religious societies. His view of democracy is not seeing a parliament and as such in a country, but he also necessitates a revised ideology toward God, religion, humanity, power, and capital for a political system to democratize it (Soroush, 1994a p. 309). He sees the world of science in liberal economies in a way in which they 'assume' that there is no God. Not that they intentionally reject the existence of God, but that its existence can be ignored. Based on this ideology he believes that in such countries there is no need to satisfy God in policies and decisions and it's just the humans who should be fulfilled.

Therefore, the modern science has an emphasis on human side of the creation. He reckons that in a religious democracy there is an endeavor to erase the line between God's and human's satisfaction, therefore paying enough attention to both physical and metaphysical aspects of humanity. He believes that educated people never accept a totalitarian rule and scientific revelations only happen in free societies. Therefore, he considers that there is a direct relationship between democracy and commitment to science and in a democratic society scientific rhetoric overwhelms any others. There will be no science without democracy and no democracy without science. He believes that respecting the scientists is both a way to promote science and to spread democracy (Soroush, 2009, p. 271). He believes that the current Iranian government is the first in its kind to constantly try to make its people more religious, but in practice it is an impossible goal since religiosity is never attained by force and therefore the real need of Iran is now a democracy (Soroush, 1996, p. 10).

It is clear from his writings that he is a supporter of a liberal democracy in which the government is not in the hands of the religious elites. He writes that the Iranian 1979 revolution was a revolution without a clear theory as a result of which a royal dictatorship was replaced by an Islamic one. The only motive for the 1979 Islamic Revolution was 'Islam' itself which has a vague meaning and has neither practical experience nor the capabilities to control a country, facing new realities and difficulties.

Now it's the time to consider two of the traditional thinkers: Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Golshani. They have mostly worked in the areas of science and religion and they have little writings on government. Golshani has a believer's view of insufficiency of science and believes that, the most popular form of science which is accepted among Muslims and Christians is the one under which physical science is defined and studied under the realm of religious metaphysics because religion tries to protect humanity from the perils of modern science and science can never answer the most fundamental questions of humanity, such as death and meaning of life.

Critics say that Golshani and Nasr have nothing to say when it comes to politics. Nasr writes that democracy is a method not an ideology and one which provides maximum possibility for the public to share power. During the Ottoman Empire there was a serious form of internal democracy which nobody notices. This can be a suitable starting point to realize it in broader sense. He believes that Muslims have to try their best to realize the best possible government.

During the past 200 years bureaucracy has only increased, resulting in a decline in traditional, social and political institutions. This has led us to follow the West in defining concepts such as politics and science. It is not a good approach since it has been set on a different civilization and they may not be universal concepts. He proposed originality and believes that in Western politics money has gained more power than individuals. He believes that the best way is a religious monarchy which roots in his Sufism and his belief in a religious guru (the monarch)(Nasr, 2010/05/23). By the way his view is not good for science since Sufism is partly responsible for scientific incompetency of the Islamic world. He is not an opponent of modernity in principle as he has suggested in one of his interviews of the need to study modern science very seriously. However, he believes that

sacred elements in the traditional science were only marginal to the mainstream modern science where profane elements predominate.

Therefore, his ideology is exactly the opposite to that of Soroush as Soroush believes that a democracy is the best option for the science to flourish and he admires modern science whereas Nasr disapproves of modern science altogether and criticizes modern concepts such as democracy and the rule of law on the basis that these are unholy creatures which have decreased the holiness of the world around us (Kazemi, 2004, p. 136).

Nasr proposes four solutions to defend the Iranian civilization against the alluring, threatening Western culture:

- A) Reviving the Iranian culture by reviving Islamic philosophy;
- B) Cautioning the Iranians about the devastating results of Western impacts on Iranian culture;
- C) Introducing the Asian powers as a moderating factor against Westernization;
- D) Creating a solution to import the Western technology and know-how without being intimidated by their civilization (Borojardi, 1998, p. 188).

These four axes of his ideology shows that he deeply believes that an Islamic monarch is required to counterbalance against the devastating effects of the Western culture and this is the government that can really make a change and lead to the reviving of Islamic Civilization, science and culture by a constant concern for defending Islamic-Iranian culture.

Murteza Mutahhari is another Iranian reformist who believes that Islamic rules should be seen in the light of modern concepts. He, like most his contemporary Muslim thinkers, believed that politics is an inseparable part of the Islamic faith and has written extensively on the subject. He then generalizes this to whole Islamic concepts and says that liberal thought are to be incorporated with the Islamic ideology (Mutahhari, 1988b, pp. 32-33). He believes that Islamic democracy is a lot better than secular one because of its emphasis on metaphysical concepts which are all absent from the secular democracy. He claims that science and democracy are not separated from Islamic government. Even in a more general expression he says that liberal values and teachings is inherent in the Islamic teachings (Mutahhari, 1988b, pp. 34-35). He believes that science in modern context is just a guarantor to physical well being of humanity whereas in the Islamic philosophy the belief in God has been mixed with practical science. Science in modern world has been practiced to dominate the world and to provide the well being and the comfort of humanity, thus losing its holiness. He then explains that in the modern world science and knowledge exists to a great extent but the problem is that it is in hands of power and wealth. He believes in the guardianship of the Jurist in the Islamic Republic's Constitution but he also believes that it should be the right of people both to choose and to remove the Supreme Leader. It is therefore under this condition that he believes the Islamic science can flourish (Mutahhari, 1988b, pp. 150-153).

Dr Ali Shari'ati criticizes both religion and modernity. He also believes that science in our world has turned to the hands of power which has made it convert to a zealous scientism. He believes that modern science has turned into a tool of power and capital (Shari'ati, 1982, pp.,62-63vol.23). He is opposed to Western democracy and he believed in "engaged democracy". He frequently refers to what Francis Bacon said in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the real concern of modern science should refocus from finding the truth to gaining power (Shari'ati, 1982, p. 76vol.24). He believes that the result of such commercialization has been this reality that it changed from its real core to a supporter of bourgeoisie and thus lost its meaning and holiness. He is proud of being famous for trying to defend democracy. He believes that democracy and other ideologies have come to an end and everyone will one day appreciate "*Manaviat*" (Spirituality) (Shari'ati, 1982, p. 63vol.24). He believes that technological breakthroughs may or may not be approved by the public and since it is the role of democracy to promote science, it might be against the will of people in such situations (Shari'ati, 1982, pp. 220-222vol.12). Democracy is a must for scientific breakthroughs but not any kind of democracy can do that. It is apparent that any government is looking forward to development and the title of a government does not necessarily define its positive or negative role in science. It is in fact partly dependent on the will of the public to try and build. In a democracy the most important concern is to remove the obstacles from the way of development. The most important obstacle on the way of scientific development is dictatorship. The fact is that although the western economies are considered to be strong, successful ones, which is of course a direct effect of constant and continued development, such development only pertains to the physical aspects. Shariati, therefore, suggests a model of government in which there are two main leaders:

- A) A charismatic ruler;
- B) A chosen ruler who is not responsible to the people, but nevertheless bound by Islamic principles. As explained earlier in chapter four, he suggested engaged democracy, in the following words:

"In the absence of a charismatic leader, the leader may not be elected by popular vote, but "selected" by the "experts" who are trusted by people and he would not be responsible to the populace, but to "principles of guidance" according to which he has to move the society towards its higher goal" (Shari'ati, 1976b, pp. 14-15; Shariati, 1979b).

Shariati and Soroush both offered a reading of modern science in which they suggest a new expression of religion which is more compatible and understandable by the modern mind. They have triggered lively discussions in the most untouched areas of religion, with their thought provoking ideas, and admonished those considered unthinking traditional religionists.

Soroush has clearly drawn the lines between science and religion as Motahari had done before him. Therefore, he does not expect religion to answer questions about science and vice versa. In the case of Shari'ati, there is no such demarcation and he blurs the boundary between science and religion in many occasions.

Nasr is an opponent of Shari'ati especially in his view of Islam as a pure ideology. Nasr is also an opponent of Soroush. Nasr is a Muslim traditionalist, but Soroush is a Modernist or Liberal. These five Iranian Muslim intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, do not share much in common in terms of their thinking on Islam, science, and democracy (Jahanbakhsh, 2004, p. 103).

Should Science come Under the Control of Religious Authority, or should it be Autonomous?

First of all we shall explore the view of Dr Shari'ati on the matter. He has a critical view of modern science but also accepts the positive influence of modern science on society. At the same time he does not consider it viable enough to replace religion. He cites the two episodes in Europe, the Enlightenment and the Renaissance and claims that the improper actions by the Church toward science and scientists caused the modern secular schools to grow all over Europe.

Although the retreat of religion and in particular the Church led to many innovations and the modern world which we are experiencing today, the world is still not without its perils. The world needs religion in today's world (Shari'ati, 1982, pp. 33-36 ,vol.31) .

Shari'ati believed that the world needs religion and in the past, weakness, paranoia and material need of human being was mixed with religion. Nowadays, many of our needs are in fact fulfilled by science, but what is not fulfilled is a higher cause, a cause which gives a meaning to our lives and reasons for our being and existence (Shari'ati, 1982, pp. 29-33,vol.14) .He also criticizes the duplication of the Western educational system and believes in the teaching methods undertaken in *Hawzahs* (religious schools) rather than universities (Shari'ati, 1982, pp. 34-35,vol.32). He said:

"I am not criticizing modern science. I am in fact aware of the holy stature that science and technology have and I am therefore criticizing the corrupt status of the world in which science and technique are captivated in a circle of corruption and selfishness" (Shari'ati, 1982, pp. 211-212,vol.25).

To him, the perfect government is a revolutionary one, one which is not limited to the conventional roles of governance and one which commits itself to upgrade the moral, spiritual, social and mental status of people from what it currently is to what it should be. In his view there is no such role for governments in the West (Shari'ati, 1982, pp. 206-208,vol.22).

Why, he asks, did the Renaissance take place in Europe?

According to him, the truth is that with the mass migrations which took place at the height of the crusader's wars, more and more Christians were touched by the Islamic notions of salvation, the aftermath and the universe. Such inspirations which mostly happened in Palestine and Syria paved the way for the rise of Protestantism in Christianity which was directly inspired by such Islamic notions.

The main reason behind this attraction was the fact that there was no politically corrupt and oppressive church in Islam and in Islamic societies there were religions scientists rather than the priests in Christianity. This was the beginning of the rise of Islam in Europe. Renaissance was the resulting event of such movements in the Christian world. But what followed was not in favor of the Islamic nations who were the source of inspiration. In Islamic societies, opposite to the West who started a technological and scientific revolution in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, due to the invasion of Turks, and Saljoughs as well as the feudalism which gripped the Islamic societies, the growth of science was halted. Based on his extensive writings on the role of governments in enhancing the scientific status of the country, science under religious authority is quite acceptable as he believes in limiting the science by Islamic standards and this is only achieved by a powerful Islamic government which has the power to control and limit science.

Mehdi Golshani believes that the Islamic societies in a near past were the main source of inspiration for the world, both in religion and in science. There were professionals in every single aspect of science and there were tight rules for interacting between such majors and proficiencies, including the philosophy of religion and empirical sciences as well. He believes that as the thinkers and scientists suggested, science and religion were compatible, leaving no space for conflicts. The separation between the two is one of the main reasons behind the underdevelopment of science in Islamic societies in recent times (Golshani, 1998, p. 15).In his view, this separation between science and religion resulted in the decline of the science altogether and this was in fact the period in time in which the Western governments started to support scientific research and the current developments in the world are the result of that period in time. In the Islamic world the scientists absorb Western science along with the cultural background which created the science itself. As a result they think that science and religion are two different entities having nothing in common (Golshani, 1998, p. 27).

They also think that as there is a scientific method for science, religion is not scientific, resulting in the idea that discussing religious science is nonsense altogether. Dr Golshani thinks that this is not true. In fact even science was religious, and had religious roots in the historical past until it became secular in the decades to come. In his view, initially there was no conflict between science and religion until the empiricists drew a line between empirical science and religion. At this very time the West invested in empirical science and developed very fast. On the other hand, the rise of empirical science led to the separation of human being from religion, losing its main source of meaning and inspiration. Also the entrance of secular science into the Islamic world made many of the thinkers to doubt their values, or some tried to prove the point that actually there are no conflicts between the two, referring to countless signs in the Quran and *Hadith*. And some even draw a clear line between science and religion arguing that they function in two different worlds, thus having nothing in common. In fact in Iran there are two main sources of education, universities and *Hawzas* as he claimed in his writings. The ever increasing separation of the two has made critical shift in the mindset of the students away from religion. Golshani believes that the two need to approach each other in order to be able to do their part in a more cooperative way, leaving more impacts on the society, both scientifically and religiously, to the benefit of the public (Golshani, 1998, p. 52). In the past two decades, important steps have been taken, but unfortunately not as seriously as it should be. His suggestion is to maintain a cooperative mindset in the members of both university and *Hawzahs* (a seminary of traditional Shiite Islamic studies), in order to end the misconception that one is the hurdle or even a blockage to the impacts of the other on the society. The future of education and scientific as well as moral and religious stature of the youth depends on this. Almost all the thinkers, whose concern is Islamization of science, think of it as considering the outside influences on science, and that the phenomenon should be explained according to Islamic ideology.

His belief is that ideology has a critical influence on scientific research, and further explains that influence on the functions and practices of science. He believes that science, if practiced according to religious principles and ideology, is a source of fulfillment and satisfaction of human needs, but if it is based upon secular values then there are no guarantees for it not to be destructive (Golshani, 1998, p. 94). His suggestion is an Islamic University in which science and technology are at its highest possible peak but at the same time the official ideology remains Islamic. The aim of such a university in his view is to provide the public with its required expertise and at the same time preparing the students for a life set upon religious values. He has a reason for the current underdeveloped status of most Islamic nations despite their golden scientific and technological past:

1. Spread of determinism;
2. Invasion of the Moguls;
3. Insufficient commitment to modern scientific and technological shifts in the recent time;
4. Invasion by the Tatars under the leadership of Teymour.
5. The rise of a theological school (namely the *Asha'aris*) which opposed science and empiricism. They rejected anything resulting from empirical data and opposed the natural sciences.

These are probably the most important factors in the rise of secular science among the Muslim scientists. His suggestion is introducing the science under religious authority in which the main concern is the compatibility of the empirical reasoning with religious world view but at the same time there is no approval of the likes of *Asha'aris*.

But what is Soroush's solution to the above mentioned question?

According to him:

the solution is to introduce an unholy explanation of religion to cope with politics; otherwise, combining a holy religion with an unholy politics is an absurd thing to do (Soroush, 1995, p. 6).

The common sense is that the production of science and creativity is in fact a bottom-up process which cannot be emphasized or even influenced by any form of policies of governments. He goes even further and suggests that basically influencing the science and culture in a country lies outside of the responsibilities of an Islamic state.

He further writes on the matter:

the only and the best service which can be done to enhance the production of science is for an Islamic state to satisfy and fulfill the needs of the public to the basic human needs so that the public will have enough opportunity to think big and start creating (Soroush, 1994b, pp. 372-373).

In Soroush's view the vital human needs are both primary, including food and shelter, and secondary or "*high needs*" which include the need for morality, art, spirituality, mentality, beauty and etc. The pre-requisite for a human to be concerned with the high needs is the fulfillment of the primary human needs.

One, who is not satisfied with the primary needs of his body, is not expected to be able to think about the higher causes and needs. In his view, a religious government is the one which has the capacity and the concern to fulfill the primary needs of the public for it to give the opportunity to the public to concern itself with the high needs. A religious government is religious in destination, not the forms and laws and alike. The

difference between a religious and non-religious government is its destination; a religious one constantly and knowingly fulfills the needs of the public and allow people to find the way to their salvation.

This is the aim of a religious government. At the same time, the method undertaken by a religious and non-religious government to fulfill the basic requirements of the public may be totally similar (Soroush, 1994b, p. 375). His conditions for a religious government include two more factors: one is that the government is actually and basically planned and controlled by believers. He believes that the form and the functions of a government are the same anywhere in the world; the important thing is the people who run the government. The other factor in a religious government is the respect for religious principles. The religiosity of a government is actually defined by its submission to religious principles and nothing else. The end which Soroush assumes for a religious government is in fact not a defining factor in the functionality and the actions of a government, because a government, whether religious or otherwise is ultimately committed to fulfilling the basic needs of the public.

What differentiates a religious and non religious government is the level of spirituality as well as values, not the material aspects. Based on this theory, any government whose concern is not in fact religious values and ideas but simply the fulfillment of the needs of the public is considered. Is this logical? Apparently not. And on the other hand, what a religious person does is not necessarily religious, and can be exactly opposite! Therefore any government which is the result of the religious public's concerns for religion is not necessarily religious. If a religious people believed in a secular government, then such religious people will be serving a secular government as a result. This hypothesis is not only possible but also achieved in practice.

According to Islamic ideology governance has nothing in common with religion except that for a religious people to be able to execute Islamic principles especially in the public arena there must be a strong factor like a powerful government. If a society wants the realization of Islamic laws in a state then there is the need for power to be in the service of religion, for it to be able to lead the society in the way it wants to; otherwise, the governments are all looking forward to fulfilling the material needs of the public, whether religious or otherwise.

Providing the citizens with the necessities of a decent life, which Soroush puts in the requirements of a religious government, is in fact the basic necessity of all forms of government, and thus cannot be considered a sole condition for an Islamic government. What he believes in the role of government in shaping the culture and science, can be summarized in this idea that he opposes any form of religious authority in science and believes that science must be independent of government, religious or otherwise.

Now it's the time to examine Ayatollah Mutahhari's views on the matter. Islam, with an emphasis on the teachings of God, has a great emphasis on science and attaining power in Quran. Since the introduction of Islam to this day, the belief is that Islam has the answer to salvation for humanity and it is holistic enough to be able to answer the modern needs of humanity. By examining Islamic thinking, we will notice that Islam has allowed any form of science as long as it is useful for the Islamic society. He mentions that: "science is limited neither by the learner, nor by the teacher nor by the time nor by place. It can be and it is a recommendation by religion"(Mutahhari, 1982b, p. 258).

He believes that by considering condition of compatibility of science with Islam, any form of science which is useful in the Islamic society is allowed:

In the prophet's saying we do not notice any recommendation for any particular science, it's just about useful science, the science which can be used to the benefit of the society and not knowing it is against the advantage of the society. Such a science is recommended and highly appreciated in Islam (Mutahhari, 1982b, p. 259).

He supports the idea of the dependence of religion and politics and believes that such dependence means that the Muslim masses consider taking part in their politics as a religious matter and responsibility. Such a dependency relationship does not actually mean the dependency of religion on politics, but the opposite, dependency of politics on Islamic rules (Mutahhari, 1999b, p. 260) .

He criticizes the power of the Church during medieval Europe and believes that one of most important reasons for the growth of materialism and secularism in Europe is the opposition of the Church to people as the representatives of God and His disciples on the earth (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 86-88).

He believes that the only classes of the society who are eligible to rule the country are the Muslim clergy and explains:

It is apparent that only those who have been taught and have grown in an Islamic atmosphere and are thus knowledgeable of the Quran and *Sunnah* and *Fiqh* who can to control science. Therefore only the Muslim clergy could possibly uphold this role(Mutahhari, 1999b, p. 67) .

He believes that the religious principles in Christianity are based on dogmatism in which any objection to the rule of the church is considered to be heresy and therefore punishable. This makes any re-understanding or reinterpretation of the principles an impossible thing to do.

This dogmatism is not limited to religious principles but even to the centrality of the earth, the position of humanity in the universe, sin, and salvation and alike:

The Church has not only dictated the religious rules, but it has also defined a number of scientific facts, mostly based on Greek philosophy to be believed in and followed without objection. The church made two mistakes: putting early beliefs about the earth and philosophy into religion, and considering any objection as heresy, and second, abandoning anyone who was ruled to be heretic by setting up a religious police which oversaw the heresy cases and scrutinized people's ideologies (Mutahhari, 1994, p. 487).

Has Islam sent upon us a number of rules and regulations for praising God and alike? Or has its ruling spread to all aspects of humanity such as social, economical, political and etc? Does Islam not want the Islamic society to be free and fair, out of the control of others? It is more than clear that Islam expects the Islamic nation to be independent, free, beloved, proud and satisfied (Mutahhari, 1994, p. 265).

By considering the needs of the modern society and its specifications he then proposes that,

In today's world, the most powerful factor is science and techniques. Without it no nation can be independent, free, beloved, proud and satisfied (Mutahhari, 1994, p. 265).

This will automatically lead us to conclude that the Muslim society should welcome any scientific research and consider all types of science as allowed and approved since without it there is little chance to develop the Islamic nation (Mutahhari, 1994, p. 266).

In Seyyed Hossein Nasr's idea, the interpretations of the *Sunnah* are the exact essence of Islam. It is unthinkable to try and find ways of compromising the Islamic traditions to cope with the modern needs of society. In fact he seeks the reshaping of the modern world according to traditions (Kazemi, 2004, p. 188). In his view, modernity is the riot against the spiritual world which has its roots in the Renaissance and has now spread all over the world. In the eyes of the traditionalists, the ideology, principles, traditions and the history of modernism is a fake, and one should oppose them and try to reverse their influence in the world. Of course the aim is not to oppose the positive aspects of development, but rather to remove the veil of illusions from the face of the reality of modern life (Nasr, 1989, pp. 157-159). He believes that the problem with modernists is that they have mistaken their own theories with the realities of the world, assuming they are the same thing. Believing in materialism, nihilism, and relativism is the result of such misconceptions. On the other hand, the main concept in all religious traditions is God which is the absolute reality and all the rest is relative. The other mistake of modernism is its ignoring the truth about revelation and wisdom (Nasr, 1993, pp. 11-12).

Nasr opposes secularism and believes that the Islamic *Sharia* (divine laws) is in fact, the law which should be followed in our lives, considering *Sharia* as a guideline to refer to in all social, personal, economical and political aspects of life. He believes that religion does not provide politics with any particular plan to set rules or policies, but it rather defines a number of basic principles to follow, the most important of which is cooperation.

Many thinkers consider the history of Islamic caliphates as examples of the Islamic politics/rule, but the fact is that the real Islamic politics is one which is ruled by the Islamic clergy and such a thing has never happened in the history of Islam except for the past three decades after the Islamic revolution in Iran (Nasr, 2004, pp. 186-187). In his view the Islamic clergy or the interpreters of Islamic *Fiqh* (the Science of Islamic jurisprudence) are in fact the students of Islamic faith who by the tool of *Hadith* (are a collection Prophet Mohammad's record of action and saying. Hadith after Quran is the most important source of Islamic *Fiqh*) and *Fiqh* interpret and translate the tradition of the prophet (Nasr, 2000, p. 210). His interpretation of religion does not approve modernism and its products such as democracy, considering it irreligious. To the question of leadership of the Islamic society he answers that he does not approve of any in the time of the absence of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam of the Shiite faith (Nasr, 2004, p. 187). At the same time he advocates rule by an absolute monarch whose actions are according to the teachings of the clergy; it cannot be a complete government but it is the nearest to an Islamic government. He thus further explains that the form of government which is accepted in Shiite faith is a form of monarchy which is approved by the clergy which is not a complete form of government but it is still the nearest one to the point of perfection. Therefore, based on the definition of religion and its role in society we can say that he accepts the idea of the dependence of politics on religion and therefore, the idea of the necessity of a science which is overseen by religious authority. An Islamic society under the supervision of an Islamic government has a great potential to start an Islamic renaissance in its own right and to restore the great Islamic Civilization of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The fact is that as long as there is no government to support the attempts of the society, the endeavors are not going anywhere. This is the reason why government is an important factor in whether a nation can attain its goals or not. Politics and government has a very defining role in whether a nation can achieve scientific and social revelation or not. A summary of the ideas of these five thinkers are tabulated for the ease of the reader below.

**Fig1. Synopsis of the Views of Soroush, Nasr, Shari'ati, Golshani and Mutahhari**

Number	Name of the Thinker	<i>Ideas on Science</i>	<i>The Preferred Mode of Governance</i>	<i>Ideology</i>
1	Abdolkarim Soroush	Science and Religion Are Conflicting Issues	Religious Democratic	Liberalism
2	Seyyed Hossain Nasr	Believer in Traditional Science	Religious Monarchy	Traditionalist
3	Ali Shariati	Critique of Modern Science	Engaged Democracy	Critical Radicalism
4	Mehdi Golshani	Approves a theistic world view underlying science	Religious Democracy	Reformist-Traditionalist
5	Murteza Mutahari	No Conflicts between science and religion	Religious Democracy	Reformist

### III. IMPLICATIONS OF IRANIAN MUSLIM INTELLECTUALS IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE IN IRAN

Iranian intellectuals have always had the same aim; political and scientific improvement in Iran. Naturally, each of them have had their own way to approach this and suggested their ideas respectively. Expectedly, because of the complicated nature of the Iranian society, no single idea can solve the problems in a satisfying way. But rather it is possible to consider all these suggestions and use them in perfect places for providing a pathway toward promoting science and research in Iran. In this part we will meet the ideas of some of such intellectuals on the matter of spreading scientific research in Iran.

Nasr, based on his support of traditional science, tries mostly to promote religious science. His main endeavor is to revitalize the original Iranian thinking based on Islamic philosophy and theosophy. He, too, warns Iranians against the devastating result of scientific invasion of the West. He therefore aims at giving the Iranian public a critical view towards the West. On the other hand, he is constantly trying to introduce the Eastern, Asian rising powers as an opponent to Western influence in Asia. His best endeavor is to protect the Iranian culture in a battle with the threatening Western influence (Nasr, October, 1982, January 1983, pp. 47-48). He aims at reviving Islamic culture, and facing the Western influence in Iran. He also believes that the Western civilization is on its way to extinction and it is a sign of pride and happiness because we can emphasize on our own capacities to give a life to the veins of local thinking based on our local traditions.

To be named from the reformist thinkers who suggest a new, modern interpretation of religion for Iran are Ali Shariati and Abdolkarim Soroush.

Shari'ati, as an ideologue, tried his best to promote Shiite Islam as a reference point to which the Iranian society should return. He believed that our society was at a historical renaissance and is therefore, at the end of its old age. He therefore, suggested that we need our own versions of Luther King to provide us with their guidelines toward an Islamic Protestantism. He elaborates:

Islamic Protestantism is a movement towards the rediscovery of a heritage with all its elements which gives back the identity of Muslims to them and enables them to rebuild their social relationships and lead their personal lives based upon this identity (Shari'ati, 1977).

He defined the drawbacks of the Islamic societies in relation to the modern humanity and to their societies in general. He has therefore emphasized on the roles of such ideologies such as social alienation, simulation, machinism and neo-scholastics (Manuchehri, 2001, p. 34). Of course he has offered solutions to each of these drawbacks. For example to face alienation, he has suggested a return to 'self' and in facing the modernism, he has offered civilization and in facing extremism he has offered responsibility towards actions. He believed the best way to fight imperialism is knowledge and the best way to fight misuse is justice

("Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," 1979; Shari'ati, 1982, pp. 50-59). He was a critique of modern science but tried to draw the religion and modern science closer, together.

Soroush is a liberal minded, modernist thinker. He warns Iranians about the repetition of religious dark ages in Europe and wants to prevent what happened in Galileo's time to be repeated in modern Iran. He wants to prevent religion to be a limiting factor to science (Soroush, 1987, p. 196). He puts the future of the Islamic ideology in the hand of the Islamic Republic and believes that its actions, if wrong, can change the directions of Islamic ideology in an unchangeable way towards secularism. He emphasizes on impartiality of science and suggests drawing a clear line between science and politics from religion. Therefore, his ideas on the matter are very different from those of his contemporaries in this field.

Golshani believes that science is a part of religion and highlights the emphasis in Islamic teachings on gaining science. He believes that scientific activities should take place in their own respective methods which is empirical and theoretical work and this is a religious virtue at the same time. So he suggests that in an Islamic country like Iran, it is one of the responsibilities of the public to promote and spread scientific research. He therefore suggests the Islamization of universities and considers it as a necessity to combine the two. The reason behind this, he believes is that the basic requirement for the promotion of scientific research is that it should have a strong local base, and it should also be compatible with the Islamic world view.

Mutahhari's visionary sight made him one of the most prominent thinkers of the Islamic Revolution who had studied the Islamic canons and ideological principles of Islam very carefully. His ideas therefore are of utmost importance to the most unsettling questions facing the future of Iran. He believed that the Islamic Republic and Iran can be led only by a single force, which is science, and giving space to rival ideologies and facing them wisely (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 17-18). He emphasized the compatibility of science and religion. He believed in the necessity of Islamic education for the younger generation but mere talk is not enough. He believed in the necessity of 'Islamic universities' and academia which are purely meant to teach theology. An academia in which the principles of Islam as well as other sciences related to Islam, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy and specially materialism are taught. Otherwise, talks are not enough at all.

From the discussion above we can see that their ideas on science and Islam are not only different, but would also have different implications for the future of science in Iran. Based on the more "liberal" and perhaps also secular, ideas of Shariati and Soroush, one would expect the development of science to be autonomous from religions and political control. However, if one were to go by the more conservative ideas of Golshani and Mutahhari, who, although favoring science in Islam, would rather science be developed within the framework of Islamic world view and religious political control. On the other hand, although Nasr's views of science is somewhat conservative, or rather "traditionalist", its implications would be quite different in the sense that following the Nasrean ideal would suggest that the development of science be mindful of Iran's religious and cultural tradition, and the symbolic cultural image of science be dewesternized.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The views of a number of Iranian thinkers on the role of government and the necessity of a religious authority on science were examined and the role of the Islamic Republic in enhancing the process was emphasized. In the end we discussed the views of a number of Iranian thinkers on the subject of the relationship between Islam, science and government. These thinkers have had different views on the matter. Shariati has radical views on the matter. He expects to put all the developments in the modern world in an Islamic context, believing that only an Islamic government can do so. Golshani has a believer's view on the matter and believes that one of the responsibilities of the government is to provide the necessities of scientific research. Soroush who is a supporter of a democratic Islamic government is also a supporter of the modern science which is mostly secular. Seyyed Hossein Nasr who is considered to be a traditionalist opposes all forms of modernity including secular, democratic science and criticizes them as he believes that such developments in the history of humanity has resulted in the separation of God and human being and it should be reversed. His preferred method of governance is an Islamic absolute monarchy. Finally Mutahhari is a supporter of a form of reform in which the Islamic way of living is combined with the modern necessities of life. He then emphasizes on the creation of an Islamic state in which the clergy rule, based on the principles of the Islamic traditions, controlling and enhancing science as well as democracy which are the inseparable parts of an Islamic society.

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