

Understanding Democracy and Islam in Two Political Systems

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ABSTRACT

Iran's Revolution in 1979 led to the formation of a state which was not in consistency with conventional standards in politics. Iran's religions-based sovereignty demonstrated a paradigm of politics and state which its basic foundation was spiritual and religious values, and had not earlier been introduced and discussed in political literature. The present paper aims to give insight into democracy in the framework of Velayat-Faqih in Iran sovereignty. Nowadays, democracy is one of the most applied terms in political literature, and given its increasing popularity, the extension of bedrocks for democracy in communities has become a great concern to contemporary political systems. Today, democracy has been so important that many non-democratic systems to legitimize their own political system take advantage of this term. The main question arisen in the current paper is that what is the relationship between democracy and Iran as a country founded on Velayat-Faqih? The study findings indicated that given the serious conflict between Islam religious teachings and the democracy foundations, Velayat-Faqih is at odds with the western democracy, and there exists a long lasting, deep conflict between these two institutions.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Humanism, Populism, Secularism, Theocentrism, Velayat-Faqih

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of modern social sciences, the relationship between religion and state has been one of the most focal issues which have attracted the attention of many scientists and scholars practicing in this area. The Iran's Revolution led to the emergence of a new type of religious state and strengthened need to propose and discuss theoretical subjects in this particular domain. The evolution process of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the inauguration of the Reformism Movement in 1997 attached importance to the fundamental questions arisen in such epistemic area. One of the most fundamental topics arisen in this critical period was the relation between religious state and democratic state. Nowadays, the systems that are based on democratic principles in different models are the most common political systems in the world and it appears that democracy has been converted into a universal value. Therefore, most of the countries in the world to legitimize their own political system seek to introduce it as a democratic one. Since 150 years ago which Muslims became familiar with cultural modernization and western thinking and values penetrated into Islamic countries, the issue of agreement or lack of agreement between Islamic Faith and democracy and democratic liberal system was seriously debated.

The role of people in the legitimization of state and sovereignty as one critical requirement in the area of democracy was seriously debated and challenged by Shia scholars in two periods namely the Constitution Movement and at the turn of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. At the first stage, scholars such as Allameh-Naeini and at the second stage revolutionists such as Imam Khomeini by the acknowledgment of the establishment of Islamic State attempted to specify the status and role of people in Islamic state. Iran's Revolution and the establishment of Islamic Republic of Iran made Velayat-Faqih Institution proposed by Imam Khomeini as the founding stone of the Iran Constitution. Following the establishment of the Majlis, some new concerns were introduced including the final revision of the Constitution and the formation of the new Constitution by some authorities, principles of the Constitution such as Islamic dimension of the system, contradictory nature of Republication and Islamic Faith and also the lack of consistency between Velayat-Faqih and democracy and public sovereignty. The formulators of the Constitution and more importantly, the founder of Islamic Republic of Iran believed that public participation and civil aspects of the state does not constrict the scope of religion authority and commitment to legal teachings. The fact is that divine sovereignty at any shape and model is in conflict with democracy and this issue has overshadowed Iran Constitution. For example, in a religious government based on Velayat-Faqih, Fiqh and Islamic Jurisdiction takes privilege of a legal divine status, i.e. neither public vote nor representatives of people can revoke a religious judgment or law.

The civil aspects of religious state remain under Sharia framework and do not go beyond it.

Another critical issue is the legitimacy of the divine administration. The legitimacy of Velayat-Faqih results from legitimate religious traditions and documents than people's vote and opinion. The authority of religion over society and control of social affairs by an efficient and equitable jurisprudent with sufficient competence in political arena is a legitimate act and in accordance with the essence of Islam, whether or not people accept such state. The public vote cannot determine the legitimacy and rightfulness of Velayat-Faqih and religious administration, rather it only substantiate the legitimization of such administration.

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According to Islam, in the area of religion with its effective role in linking human life to both aspects of legislation and implementation, there is no status for democracy to legitimize man's right of legislation and implementation. In this way, there is also no sign of penetration into Revelation in the field of social considerations. Islam under the guidance of the Holy Quran regards itself as the only rightful religion, while one of epistemological foundations of democracy is inability to demystify truth and the acceptance of multiplicity and relativism.

If a school or religion regards itself as the manifestation of rightfulness and truth and consider other religions as the symbols of profanity and diversion, there is either no place for democracy. Although debate on the relationship between democracy and religion is not new, this issue is one of the most important concerns of the modern man. It could be said that attempt to accommodate religion and democracy is the same endeavor to resolve the conflict between classic and modernism.

2. Democracy

The simplest and most agreeable concept of democracy is that it is a word composed of Greek words "demo" meaning people, "Kratia" meaning state, and generally means public sovereignty. Democracy has a long historical background, and has been always applied to define a type of state in which political power is at the hands of majority and minority are entitled to perform political activities to achieve majority votes.

Fundamentally, with the emergence of modernization, this idea was disseminated that man does not either need divine and religious guidance and can itself act as a legislator. Modern democracies emanating from John Bedden and Spinoza and the philosophers of Enlightenment era particularly John Lock and Jan Jacques Reissue, believe that people (demos) are entitled to the right of administration and legalization. Therefore, democracy as the belief in public authority and legislation is distinct from exclusive right of divine legislation administration. The modern democracies are mostly humanistic and see the manifestations of democracy mainly in the public participations for shaping political destiny.

Using a strategy to negate political and social function of religion in human life, The Western Industrial Revolution shifted his view from a heavenly world toward a material universe and limited its direction toward life to the tangible and perceivable world, and in turn, philosophical relativism was determined as the foundation for epistemology, secularism and liberalism and social and economic relations and humanism was proposed as the cornerstone of anthropology in the West. So the West provided man with a God-like power and placed him as the mere authoritarian force. The western capitalism which was founded on materialism and humanism denied any external force exterior to man's will and separated religion and spirituality from each other. All democratic theories reject the idea that one authorities force have right to govern other people. This is because all men are equal and have the same right to govern and administer human affairs. All members are equipped with reason and so they are eligible to judge sovereignty, and as they have such rational talent, it could be rationalized that they are free as well. In this way, triadic elements including equality, rationality and liberty are linked with democracy and democracy is a system founded absolutely on this three elements. The result is that public sovereignty is not monopolized on a certain group and it belongs to all citizens; and based on the democratic logic, public authorities and agents should be held accountable to citizens (Ansari, 2005).

Different approaches to democracy and its varied models have a similarity, that is, public participation in decision makings. A democratic government entails social multiplicity and moral and ethical relativism. One of the most significant principles and foundations of democracy include equality, freedom, civil authority, public participation and satisfaction, legislation and constitution. Liberal democracy is the product of modern political thinking and roots from ideas of modern thinkers and it is different from other systems, especially religious systems. What could be regarded as fundamental assumptions and characteristics of democratic liberal systems include emphasis on relativism in the area of epistemology and disbelief in unalterable truth, the definition of criterion to determine rightfulness of collective will and public thinking, in a fashion that majority can specify the legitimacy of system and state, emphasis on individual right and freedom and introducing extreme humanism, emphasis on legislation principle by human and independence from super-human rules, and finally belief in secularism.

3. Theoretical & Philosophical Foundations of Democracy

In terms of a theoretical foundation, it is possible to analyze intellectual base of democracy on the basis of ontological, epistemological foundations and political pillars. Concerning the foundations of ontology, it is possible to regard three main characteristics for democracy. a) corporeal originality or corporeal nature of human; b) humanism c) humanistic (corporeal) interpretation of human and authentication of its demands and needs, i.e. the authentication of man's sensual passions. Modern thinking does not believe in unseen hierarchies; it only regards the reality of corporeal hierarchy. Humanism is in odds with the substantiation of corporeality, and fundamentally humanism is founded principally on the authentication of corporeal domain, and defines human with its corporeal domain and adjective. Therefore, democracy could be regarded as authentication of corporeal and sensual desires which sometimes will be demonstrated in a personal way (liberal democracy) and sometime in a collective way (socialist democracy and nationalist democracy) (Zarshenas, 2002).

In terms of epistemological principles, democracy the following features such as relativism, pragmatism, quantitivism.

Relativism regards values as relative and subjective, and does not believe in any absolute, objective and general value which is rationally provable. Ethical relativism supports a democratic life because it highlights tolerance to differences and multiplicities in opinions and values. Relativism dismisses any absolute premise on moral issues such sanctity and naturalism in political life and defends the concepts devoid of moral and ethical significance. From this

perspective, it is unnatural to demarcate any distinction between individuals and nobody is superior to another (Bashirieh, 2002). The founders of democracy believe in relativism, and the impossibility of achieving absolute truth; so they proposed it in a relativistic way and based on the vote of majority. Such belief in the authenticity of majority's opinion highlights the principles of democracy.

Pragmatism is also a political movement that believes meaning and truth of affairs and thinking could be found in their advantages and results, so serious undertakings to achieve the truth are doomed to failure. The most fundamental benefit of theories and thinking is the most critical factor to authenticate their reality. The idea of democracy in the area of epistemology is pragmatic, i.e. it regards the practical result of a theory as a criterion to confirm its accuracy or falsity. For example, famous American pragmatist William James, on the existence of God claims that if belief in the existence of God gives meaning to your life, then God exists.

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement which believes that meaning and reality of thinking should be found in its advantages and results. So neither can nor should search for the ultimate truth. The practical advantage of theories and thoughts is their most important criterion to authenticate and evaluate them. The most significant pragmatic philosophers were Charles Pearce, William James and John Dewey. Despite the difference between them, they shared the common idea that ideas and thoughts are real if they are to make people satisfied and happy. The reality of thoughts is not known in advance but they experience such reality at a particular time and space. The significance of pragmatism and democracy is that it makes people free from adherence to thoughts and traditions as a repository of facts and justifies the occurrence of any change and innovation beneficial to the human life. The political pillars of democracy include:

- a) A humanistic interpretation of sovereignty: sovereignty is the justified right of self-sufficient man. So the theoretical foundation considered for sovereignty is neither based on the idea that only God is entitled to govern the universe, nor on the principle that man can rule the universe under the divine deputyship of God and divine legislation.
- b) Belief in the justification of the opinion of the public majority in a political system
- c) Authenticity of contract: in modern democracy it is assumed that political community and state is formulated on the basis of a social contract, so people have aggregated and established a state. The scholars such as Hubs believe that a contract is signed once forever and no one has right to transform or amend it. Meanwhile, John Lock believes that a social contract has some specific requirements and provisions and when ruler does not comply with its provisions and terms, people can revolt against him.

Social contract theory is the basis for democratic and modern thinking and its main component of which is that every human being is potentially or actually the wolf of another and as all men have sensual desires and attempt to achieve it, a war of interests happens, and the alternative solution is to all human submit social will arise from contract (Rousseau's opinion) or liberal state established by contract (Lock's opinion), with the difference that Rousseau believes that they should accept and then comply with the provisions of contract, and so transfer all their legal rights to political power as the manifestation of contract. However, Lock believes that the rights transferred to state is limited and is subject to compliance with the provisions of the contract. Mac-Iver said that the social theory indicated that human institutions receive their authority and power from people, and people are a major factor in the development of new theory of democracy and popular sovereignty (Alam, 1994).

Legislation by man: one key element of democracy is belief in human right for legislation. In religious thinking, only God is entitled to do legislation, and man has not any right to do such task, and it only is free to formulate legal regulations and instructions in the framework of divine will. However, in the modern thinking, man has right to be a legislator. One important pillar of democracy is belief in the right of public to do legislation (Alam, 1994).

Secularism: theoretically, among the different time episodes of the modern era, the Enlightenment era had greatest impact on secular institution. The secularism is a movement which considers the central role of man in the universe and highlights the autonomy of human reason in all areas. The word "secular" means the separation of religion from the world and the "secularization" denotes materialization and separation of religion from the world; however, it should be mentioned that for the Latin term "Secularism" it is better to apply the German word Wallach (from the present world). So, secularism similar to many other "ism"s in the modern era began with the religious reformation movement (Larjani, 2003). Secularism believes that human reason, independent from religion and any other epistemological source, should be able to explore objectives of human life and to provide a means to achieve the ends. So, without considering its practical outcomes, secularism theoretically and practically is a certain epistemological orientation of the autonomy of human reason and knowledge in the area of cognition and understanding (Vaezi, 2009). As in the democracy institution, secularism repudiates any necessity and the sacred presence of religion and divine powers, supports de-sanctification and materialization of affairs, and also dismisses any divine policy and religious authority in political life (Sharifi, 2009).

4. Indicators of democracy

Public sovereignty: the sovereignty of the people is one of the fundamental principles of democracy and in fact, all the principles of democracy and the principles that make democracy distinguished are overshadowed by the concept of public sovereignty. The public sovereignty fundamentally means that states achieve their identity, power and existence only through public consensus and the will of people can change the components and elements of sovereignty and even the state itself (Hashemi, 2003).

Rationality of actors and political groups: one of the main indicators of democracy in the contemporary world which should be regarded as the main requirement to implement a democratic system and structures is the rationality of actors and political groups in civil society, in such a fashion that all actors should seek to achieve collective goals resulted from the accumulation of private interests and collective effort. Obviously, this presupposition essentially is a

part of the political social cultures and it is not possible to measure and analyze it. However, because of the great influence on the formation of any type of political organization and structure, the role of rationality as an important indicator of democratic politics should be underlined (Shahramnia, 2006). Haubermass emphasized on this factor and its critical role on democracy; also he highlighted rationality whether from the aspect of democracy structure (social system) or the perspective of democracy culture. Such fundamental capabilities could be summarized in the concept of authentication of reason. The necessary factor in democracy is that its member should be logical and reasonable; otherwise self-administration through participation will fundamentally fail (Koehn, 1994).

Free elections: free elections by which an individual or group will have the possibility to seize the power is one of the important indicators of democracy. In other words, elections in which political representatives and leaders are elected could be regarded as an integral part of democracy. Free elections are one of the indicators that are used to measure the level of democracy in the political system. Election is one widely agreed criterion to compare and study the political systems in terms of the level of democracy. By extracting some indicators such as the population of voters, group competitions, organization of elections, etc. (sometimes even publicized through statistics), researchers of different disciplines have attempted to perform studies on the extent of democracy in different political systems (Shahramnia, 2006). According to Kohen, elections are conceived in terms of the significance attached to the role of majority. This is because rule of majority is main instrument of democracy. However, other critical points are the ways to hold elections and compliance or non-compliance of democratic rules in elections (Koehn, 1994).

Freedom of parties, political groups and social forces: the existence of parties in countries and competition between them to seize power encourages all parties to make people more satisfied to succeed in seizing the power or maintaining their position. The existence of powerful political parties, different political groups and various social forces represent the wanting and will of a certain group of people, in a fashion that they can freely join such groups and parties and these parties and groups have sufficient free competition with each other, and perform various actions. Therefore, in the societies which these groups and parties are precluded from any free activity, one important aspect of democracy, namely free and constructive competition will be eradicated and no one can claim the existence of a democratic system. In democratic communities, parties and groups and different social institutions all have exclusive press organs, and disseminate their thinking and viewpoints freely and legally, without any intrusion and inconvenience by another party.

Separation of Powers and monitoring of powers over each other: As all classic democratic theories emphasize on the separation of powers and power's mutual supervision, it constitutes a prerequisite for the formation of democratic structure. The existence of necessary mechanisms including prediction of a necessary law for monitoring of powers over each other and separation of powers and the creation of institutions and procedures necessary to strengthen the democratic political system are important attributes of a democratic political system.

So in different contemporary political systems, separation of powers and monitoring of powers over each other is of the utmost significance. Therefore, there are four fundamental principles in the establishment of democracy including 1- National Sovereignty 2- Separation of Powers 3- Personal rights, and 4- A formulated constitution (Koehn, 1994). Separation of powers applies to the submission of main powers of state such as Judiciary, Executioner and Legislator Institutions to different institutions. The main goal of separation of powers as one of the most significant pillars of democracy is to prevent the prevalence of authoritarian systems, power monopolization or centralization or the accomplishment of freedom. Montesquieu as one of the great founders of separation of powers idea claims that if each three powers would hold under the authority of a single person or system, all freedoms will be annihilated (Jones, 2001).

The existence of written constitution and respect for it: constitution is a set of fundamental principles and general framework for the organization of power relations in the state. Constitution is the requirement of a limited and conditional government, and it would also be a necessary condition for democracy. Constitution as an institution of democratic stabilization was born in the nineteenth century, at the wake of revolutions in America and France. Since the democratic state to manifest the demands of the subjects should have a sustainable and limited system, the constitutions admitted such responsibility. So constitution converted into an institution with the determination to guarantee and respect for people's rights.

5. Doctrine of Velayat-Faqih

Velayat-Faqih as a tradition of Shia ideology contrary to the School of Sheikh Ansari and the political jurisprudence of the Constitution Leaders is founded on the political administration and jurisdiction of a jurist (i.e. Faqih). Some of the supreme Shiite leaders in this arena are Khomeini, SahebJavaher and Molla Ahmad Naraqi, and particularly Imam Khomeini. From the Shia point of view, necessity of state is not something that is dedicated to the present era of the Immaculate (i.e. Ma'um). The Islamic Republic is an example of Islamic state which indoctrinated itself in Imam Khomeini's thinking and ideology. By critiquing sovereignty, Imam Khomeini proposed the theory of Islamic administration based on Velayat-Faqih, and while discussing on special structure of sovereignty, he introduces Islamic Republic of Iran as its consistent example. Islamic Republic of Iran is result of the orchestration of some institutions and elements such as law, Velayat-Faqih and people.

At sixty BC Imam was in Najaf, he formulated and introduced Velayat-Faqih Theory which is a Shia form of political Islam during the absence of Imam Mehdi, and aims to states that building an Islamic community without the establishment of an Islamic state is impossible. Imam Khomeini reinstates that it is not sufficient to only preserve some values, and state should survive and develop under the support of Islam itself. According to the supporters of divine administration, firstly, community could not be administered without a spiritual leadership, so only rightful state is the one which God is at its center; secondly, a state which is not under the Velayat-Faqih custody is illegitimate. The

doctrine of Velayat-Faqih alleges that the Islamic state is the best form of administration. Regarding Velayat-Faqih, Shahid Motahari expresses that Velayat-Faqih does not mean that jurisprudent (Fiqh) administer at the forefront of state and practically control affairs. The role played by a jurisprudent at an Islamic nation, i.e. a country in which Islam is acknowledged as an ideology and people are committed to it, is the role of an ideologist rather than a ruler, and the main duty of an ideologist is to monitor appropriate practice of an ideology. From his point of view, Velayat-Faqih does not mean that jurisprudents govern the country and act as rulers, especially jurisprudent is chosen by people, and so Islamic state is not a state monopolized by clergy. Islamic Republic means an Islamic community with a republic regime which is able to reflect all the divine aspects of a perfect government. Such community, in which democracy could be established in its most original form, enables human to seek a social and moral perfection and resurrection (Movassaqi, 2006).

Mohammad Baqer Sadr believes that man in a democratic system takes privilege of ownership and authority, while in the Islamic system he is held accountable to Almighty God. Therefore, the nation is the main responsible for the expedient election of the Islamic ruler. Regarding the difference between an Islamic State and Constitutional state, Baqer Sadr expresses that the Constitution in a democratic system is designed by man, and the ideal form of human jurisdiction establishes the maximum governance of majority over minority. However, regarding the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran, it should be noted that its fixed principles and regulations originate from divine legislation (Sharia) and ensures its neutrality. In fact, such difference between the Constitution of Islamic state and that of the Constitution State roots from their distinct view on the role and state of nation and its position in state system. In Islamic System, nation is the source of administration and is regarded as the representative of the God (Mohajernia, 2010).

Despite the ideas proposed by Shia scholars on sovereignty and the jurisdiction of jurisprudent, it could be said that it was first Imam Khomeini who reinstated the establishment of Islamic State is a religious obligation. He did not suffice to propose Islamic State Theory and by using all the feasible instruments in hand paved the way for accomplishing such critical idea (Zarifian-Shafii, 2006).

According to Imam Khomeini, the democratic sovereignty is a repercussion of a transition from absolute and constitutional sovereignty, and such sovereignty is the most significant obstacle to realize a developed and advanced political system. He adds that sovereignty is essentially irrelevant and baseless. He also rejects constitutional states and by a transition from Constitution state and early religious modernization proposed by Naeini & counterparts, inaugurates a new historical era namely the Islamic state. In addition, while in exile in Paris, in response to the multiple questions asked by correspondents on the approval or dismissal of the sovereignty based on the Constitution (1906), Imam Khomeini assuredly rejects the sovereignty (Mir-mohammadi, 2005). In the Islamic State Theory proposed by Imam Khomeini, political administration will not be monopolized on the administration of Imam Mehdi and it is feasible to elect another ruler to establish a legalized state. Although people play significant roles in the authentication of legitimacy, it should not be mixed up with democracy. Imam Khomeini claims that the Islamic State is not the same as the existing states, yet there are some commonalities and similar stances (Jahanbakhsh, 2001).

In *Kashf al-Asrar*, Imam Khomeini highlights that state and legislation is the right of Allah; he also rejects all political systems based on human rules and reinstates that there is no fundamental discrepancy between the Constitution, dictatorship and democracy, except in the play of words and legislators' hypocrisy. So legislator should be only God. In a five-volume book entitled "Al-Baie" as the most argumentative work of Khomeini which was published in Najaf in 1974, it is said that Islam is the founder of a state that is neither dominated by authoritarian thinking nor by constitutional and republic strategies imposed by a definite group of people in community. Rather, Islamic state is a system originated from and inspired by Divine Revelation which utilizes divine legislation at all dimensions. Islamic state is a spiritual institution in which the general structure of political power or at least the scope of rulers' practice is determined by religious legislation. This thinking is in sharp contrast to secular state which is founded on the demarcation of religion and politics, and rejects any legality of religion in political life (Firahi, 2005).

Imam Khomeini as the founder of Islamic State Theory criticized conventional political systems in the world such as democracy, and stated that such systems can only fulfill man's material requirements. While, in addition to these critical tasks, Islamic State is committed to sublimate the position of human in the world and to enhance spiritual issues as well. He adds that Islam as a divine doctrine, in contrast to material and non-theistic doctrines, has fully paid attention to all individual, social, material and spiritual aspects, and has not overlooked any point even the most trivial issues which can play roles in spiritual and material progress and training of man, society and Khomeini (1999).

The Iran Islamic Revolution at the time of the establishment of its political system resisted all the propositions made by western supporters who attempted to impose their democratic system, and Iran regarded such democratic systems as anti-human and materialist. This is because, Islam believes, a system which is founded on the basis of some components such as materialism, liberalism, secularism and rejection of religion in human domains, individualism, skeptic doctrines, divine rationality, humanism based on carnal desire, etc. cannot serve man, and Imam Khomeini believes that politics should emphasize on sublimation of humanity and the noble religion of Islam.

6. Comparative Study of Democracy Foundations in Velayat-Faqih System

The link between republic and Islamic generated a contradictory concept. The republic intended by Imam Khomeini was different from the conventional definition of republic in the political science. He believed that God is only eligible to administer the world. While in political culture, in a republic people are eligible to rule but in the republic intended by Imam Khomeini Velayat-Faqih endow this right to people (Dehghani, 2010). The principles and components of western political democracy were not regarded by Imam Khomeini as original and valid. He believed in ambiguity, transformation, multiplicity of concept and democratic regime, however he preferred clarity and superiority of Islam over

such thinking schools; Imam condemned democracy and western liberties as false, artificial, fluid and instruments in the hands of western countries to achieve their own interests. Therefore, Imam criticized the origin of western democracy and at once stated that western countries have manipulated the authentic concept of democracy to achieve their desired goals. According to Imam Khomeini, western democracy at its best form and state only could fulfill people requirements. While Islamic state regards its main mission to nurture human and to reconstruct and enhance people spiritual practices, and also to replace individualism and humanism with theocentrism.

In addition, the principle of moral and ethical relativism and unjustified freedoms endowed by democracy is condemned and dismissed in the thinking of Imam Khomeini and Islamic State. A cursory look at the Constitution in Iran clearly shows that the most fundamental principle of this democratic system is "theocentrism" In such system, God is regarded as the creator of human and world and originator of all worldly affairs which created world with its all blessing and beauties to man utilize it and finally achieve its real perfection. Therefore, in this religious democratic system, God is only eligible to rule and nobody else is entitled to achieve such position except for by its order and expedience.

Basically, democracy is a belief in the authority of human rules by collective will and the belief that man reason can distinguish right from evil; while religion and Islam believe that any action and judgment should be done on the basis of divine legislation and the only eligible legislator in the universe is God Almighty. In Islamic thinking, man cannot be defined, otherwise in the framework of a holy reason and the guidance of the Impeccable. The foundation of modern western philosophy from Descartes, and Bacon to Russell and Pauper is on self-sufficiency of man and his lack of need to a revealed guidance. And this emphasis on instrumental and self-sufficient reason and sensual methodology has led to relativism in the area of epistemology, and the claim that the opinion of the majority is the final say.

If we regard most of theories as valid, undoubtedly, the final result will be relativism. This is because the vote of the majority is variable and is essentially influenced by social-economic states and cultural transformations. While in religious presuppositions, Hagh (right) is absolute that it is feasible to achieve a part of it and such partial recognition is fixed and absolute. The detractors claim that Islamic Republic of Iran is not a democratic system and people does not play role in it.

Democracy as a political philosophy regards people as competent and eligible to control their affairs and state and grounds the existence of state on the will of nation. However, some people believe that such values will not be accomplished in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran and people do not play roles in political participation and leaders' legalization. For example, Bashirieh (2006) in a book entitled "An Introduction to Political Sociology in Iran" states that "in this complex structure, given the centrality of leadership and Velayat-Faqih Institution and central role of clergymen in the Guardianship Council, Experts' Assembly and the Ministry of Judiciary, and also given the role of leadership and the Guardianship Council in authenticating and enforcement of presidency, national sovereignty is indirectly practiced and so there are some hurdles to govern the nation in a democratic fashion (Bashirieh, 2006). In general, there is a great discrepancy between fundamental and epistemic sources of democracy and Velayat-Faqih. In Velayat-Faqih Institution, generally in Islamic State, unlike democracy, cognitive sources include reason, revealed sources and human experiences. The revelation is the most important part of divine sources in Islamic system, and divine legislation and legitimization will be established on the basis of it. However, the western democracy is the product of instrumental and individual reason and human experiences. In a democratic institution, public life regulations are formulated and enacted by individuals and it is believed that instrumental and individual reason can discriminate right from evil and this can lead to the emergence of relativism in epistemic domains.

While the democracy is based on social and individual contracts, the Islamic State believes in the servitude of man toward God and belief in divine Messengers to personally and collectively guide humanity, which this guidance will be never stopped and divine successor and messengers will continue the direction (Akbari, 2004). The western modern reason is essentially secular because it is based on sensual self-sufficiency and is emerged by the dismissal of justification and legitimacy of religion. Therefore, secularism is an integral part of western political thinking, and Islam thinking roots from the divine revelation.

From the perspective of the revelation, absolute ruling over the world is only right of the God. So the legitimacy of any ruler emanates from God's Revealed Law, and any legitimacy of state except this way is profanity and idolatry. Therefore, the most distinguished feature of a religious state and especially a system based on Velayat-Faqih is its theocentrism which is totally distinct from ideology of humanism-based democratic states.

In Islamic World view only the God Almighty is authorized to rule. In Islamic Institution, government is sanctified only when its ultimate goal is to enact Islamic regulations and the Holy Quran and also to establish equality and to eradicate oppression and corruption. Velayat-Faqih Institution is founded on the idea that Islamic political governance is a divine system in which not only the general framework and legislative strategies of a state are formulated based on religion, but also the ruler of the state will be elected through a divine source. At the early Islam the Messengers of Allah ruled the government and then twelve Shia Imams, and at the absence of Twelfth Imam, this responsibility will be transferred to qualified religious jurists [Mojtahed] (RabaniGolpaiegani, 1998).

According to Imam Khomeini, distinction between liberal democrat theories and Velayat-Faqih in Islam is a conflict between two different doctrines of theocentrism and humanism. Velayat-Faqih regards the only legitimate power to rule as the Almighty God, and the divine guidance as the only legal authority to determine the ultimate objective and life of man and finally emphasizes the integration of all the aspects of human life including worldly, divine and spiritual. While democracy institution considers the ultimate goals for human in the universe as the fulfillment of carnal obsessions and desires, dialectic evolution in the area of rationality and embodiment of will.

In this way, man is the only acknowledged agent to recognize and specify its own goals and the single criterion to evaluate the authenticity of each goal and value. Therefore, man is at the center of political life including state and sovereignty which in the form of social contract result in the formation of a democratic state. Following the Renaissance, the humanism found a distinguished position. This is because man in this period regarded itself as an independent being which continuously should cut his ties with religion and faith in order to lose its deep relationship with God. In Renaissance era, man does not either regard the God as the ultimate power over the world and no considers itself as the superior power and attempts to detach itself from all constraints and dependencies on divine source (Nasri, 2005).

According to Eric Forum and some of the western thinkers, the theocentric institution leads to the humiliation of human being and eradication of its fundamental reality and preferences. Some of the Western scholar and modern practitioners state that as the God has created the world as a subjective reason and then has abandoned it, so He is not either the survivor and originators of creatures and this is the reason why some believe that the God created the world by a systematic order and then abandoned it, and now that the God has abandoned it we should perform worldly and human affairs. While Islamic Institution condemns such idea and still legitimize absolute authority of the God Almighty all over the world and respects and disseminates theocentric ideologies as the only way of salvation for beings.

This concept is interpreted as theocentrism in Divine Lordship and one of main aspects of such Lordship is to control life of man in a general way, which to achieve this goal, religion and politics should not be separated: religion as revelation and politics as man's social affairs. Velayat-Faqih Institution regards God as the source of rights and obligations and values human right under the guidance of divine rights. However, in a democratic system, will and want of God is only the source and originator of rights. Law as the objective manifestation of rights is not something other than aggregation of individual requirements and ambitions. Naturally, in this regard, divine right has not any prominent position. According to Imam Khomainsi doctrine, all formulated regulations should not trespass the framework of divine rules. While in a democratic system, man's will is the most prominent principle and it is not possible to inflict any limitation on it (Memar, 2009).

Islam believes that God has provided man with its natural rights based on divine providence and mainly aims to help him achieve its final perfection. From the view of the supporters of Velayat-Faqih, theocentrism is the principal component of an Islamic community, and man itself cannot achieve understanding and cognition independently. The western individualism which emerged along with humanism and led to absolute utilitarian is completely dismissed in Velayat-Faqih Institution.

In a democratic society, man is free to perform any action, yet he should be held accountable to collective rationality, while in religious thinking, man is free to the extent that does not trespass religious, social and legal rights of another party. While freedom of thought and expression in a liberalist thinking has no limit, in religious thinking it is limited and has some red lines.

The theoretical foundation of democracy is humanism which considers man as a being independent from revelation, the universe and existence. In fact, man in the view of democracy is the same man as in the view of humanism. From humanism perspective, the most significant objective of a secular system is the evolution of the community toward the welfare of citizens.

Humanism reinstates that the Promised Land could be found in the universe and the criterion for recognition of values and distinction between right and evil is human itself. In humanism, all principles, rules, laws, policies and rights have a source other than religion. Therefore, man using its own reason can act as an independent being and determine the truth or falsity of phenomena in the universe. So, in this state, man finds an extreme significance and turns into the subject and interprets all things as object. Islam regards humanism as sovereignty of sensual impulses and worldly desires. In Islamic thinking, the ultimate goal is God Almighty and every action and intention revolves around a divine providence.

7. Conclusion

In the present era that democracy has found a valuable position, every system attempts to introduce its political system as democratic. Democracy today is introduced as the best governmental model in the world which institutionalizes the role of people in deciding their destiny, and guarantees people freedom and right theoretically and practically. The Islamic Republic of Iran as a model of political Islam states that its political system is a democratic constitution and on the basis of a liberal public election. Iran regards this type of democracy as religious democracy. Democracy can be divided into different models and types in terms of some factors such as public participation (direct or indirect), political trend (classic & contemporary), objective (liberal, socialist, elitist and methodology or value). This fact has led to the further intricacy and complexity of the definition of democracy. In a democratic system, all human conceptions including correct and incorrect, good and evil, and all opposing ideologies and schools of thought are respected and esteemed. On the relationship between democracy and Velayat-Faqih, it should be noted that Velayat-Faqih and generally Islam are at odds with western democracy, and one of the most critical differences between these two is that in Velayat-Faqih epistemic relativism and lack of belief in absolute reality is not accepted because in Islam there are absolute and unalterable realities and values which have been descended upon man by the Messengers of God.

According to the Holy Qur'an and a variety of traditional and rational documents, Islam regards itself as the only right religion in the world. In short, relativism and diversion from true nature of man in Islam is repudiated. However, in proportion to time and place, there are some alterable regulations in Islam, though under the boundary of fixed and regulations and laws. On the other hand, political pluralism in Islam is legitimized only when it is dedicated to Islamic values and foundations and social ethical principles. In Velayat-Faqih Institution, the divine will and decision

authenticates the legitimacy of sovereignty and state. These facts are at complete odds with democracy institution which regards the founding stone of each state and government as public vote. In Islam, to equate somebody with God in terms of institution of rules and regulations is an act of profanity. Thus, it is mentioned that as democracy institution regards the only criterion to legitimize rules and laws as public vote without intervention of religion, so it is a manifestation of profanity.

In the Islamic Institution, designation and dismissal of the Leadership is under the control of God and the one chosen, whether directly or indirectly, as the leader by God. Any opposition and disagreement to the divine leader is prohibited, while the designation and dismissal of leader in democracy is done by people and they can determine the destiny by their own determination. The theoretical foundation of democracy is nothing other than originality and centrality of man which regards him as the center of the world without any need to divine revelation. In western democracy which is found on secularism, any rule enacted by people is valid and binding, and public should show reverence to it, although it is on an illegitimate act. Islam totally rejects such claims and it regards God as the center of the world and only legitimized author to enact rules and regulations.

In the western culture, democracy and humanism are inter-related and thus to better understand democracy, humanism should be well comprehended. According to the humanist thinker Feuerbach "man is the God of itself" and the God is not anybody rather than man itself. In other words, humanism proposes the religion of man rather the religion of God. While in Islam and the holy Quran and also the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iranian Constitution the impeccable divine sovereignty or theocentric doctrines are the bedrock of Islamic Institution and this sovereignty neither could be divided, segregated nor even transferred. According to Iran Constitution, democracies which are on the basis of liberalist and humanist values are totally repudiated. However, democracy as a good strategy to elect elites and talented individuals with its own special limitation in Iran Constitution is accepted. In a religious democratic institution, the scope of the role of people is determined by religion and divine teachings; while in democratic liberal systems, there is no divine and religious authority which can restrict the role of people.

The modern liberal democratic western man, whether believes in God or not, in public and social aspects of his life, makes decisions only based on human relative logic and experience. This is because such man thinks based on humanist rationality and attitude. Therefore, while democracy in the west is mainly founded on some principles such as individualism, rationality and pluralism, democracy in Iran is based on a religious state and some fundamental parameters including theocentric doctrines, legitimism, and repudiation of individualism, humanism and secularism. The west regards the bedrock of politics as man desires and aspirations. In short, Islamic Republic of Iran is neither a theocentric nor democratic system (popular trends in the west) rather it is a Theo-democratic institution. Therefore, religious populism and democracy is defined in the same trend.

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