

Strategies of Political Justice in Imam Khomeini's Thought

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to examine the strategies of political justice in the thought of Imam Khomeini and to analyze how this concept is articulated as a central signifier in his political discourse. Justice occupies a central position in his thought, to the extent that other political concepts and values derive their meaning in relation to it. Imam Khomeini views justice not merely as a theoretical concept, but as a foundational principle for organizing both society and the Islamic state. From his perspective, political justice is a continuum of meanings within a monotheistic system, where the implementation of divine laws is seen as essential, with justice at its core. The central question of this research is: What are the strategies of political justice in Imam Khomeini's thought, and how are these strategies articulated within his intellectual framework? This question seeks to uncover how Imam Khomeini, from theological and jurisprudential standpoints, offers practical pathways for realizing justice in an Islamic political system. The methodology of this research is based on discourse analysis. Using this method, Imam Khomeini's texts, speeches, and writings are examined to trace how the semantic network of justice takes shape and how it connects with other key signifiers in his discourse. This analysis aims to identify the semantic markers related to political justice and determine how they are structured within his monotheistic worldview. The study's key findings reveal that political justice in Imam Khomeini's thought is articulated through three overarching strategies: (1) Structural Strategy: This strategy is reflected in the establishment of the Islamic Republic and emphasizes the creation of a political structure centered on the implementation of divine law and the realization of justice. Within this framework, *wilāyat-i faqīh* (guardianship of the jurist) and the sovereignty of divine law are presented as the main

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instruments for achieving structural justice. (2) Distributive Strategy: This approach emphasizes equal access for all to political and social opportunities, broad political participation, and meritocracy. Imam Khomeini holds that individuals should attain political and social positions based on competence and merit, free from discrimination. (3) Restorative Strategy: This strategy focuses on addressing and reducing social and political inequalities. It includes raising political awareness, eliminating deprivation, and supporting the oppressed or the underprivileged (*mustaḍ'afīn*) as fundamental measures for healing societal injustices. The study concludes that in Imam Khomeini's thought, political justice is not merely an ideal but a criterion for assessing the legitimacy of the political system. It serves as a guiding principle for all social and political transformations, as well as a foundation for governance and policymaking. By placing justice at the heart of his political discourse, Imam Khomeini presents a model in which the structure of power, distribution of resources, and redress of social harms must all serve the realization of divine justice—thus enabling all citizens to access political rights and human dignity.

Keywords

Strategies, political justice, political thought, Imam Khomeini.

Introduction

In the past century, with the growth in political, economic, social, and cultural developments, various approaches to justice have been presented, including moralism, illusionism, the transition from the state, and idealism. Political justice, as a branch of social justice, concerns the balance of power, the granting of political rights, and the observance of the law among citizens. Within this framework, conditions for free participation, freedom of speech, the right to criticize, the right to choose and be chosen, and political immunity are provided. This article examines political justice strategies as overarching policies through which power is distributed proportionally, and citizens' rights are fulfilled. In the political thought of Imam Khomeini, justice is central, and principles such as returning to true Islam, seeking independence, fighting despotism, religious democracy, equality, political participation, public security, and anti-imperialism have taken a prominent place.

Accordingly, the main question of this research, which has been conducted using discourse analysis and descriptive and analytical methods, addresses the strategies of political justice in the thought of Imam Khomeini. The hypothesis emphasizes that the central signifier of Imam Khomeini's political discourse is justice, and all other signifiers revolve around it. In this context, Imam Khomeini designs three strategies to achieve justice, each with corresponding solutions: the structural strategy, which includes measures such as the establishment of the Islamic Republic and ensuring equal access for all to political and social opportunities; the distributive strategy, with solutions like political participation of the people and meritocracy; and the corrective strategy, which involves measures like poverty alleviation through political awareness and support for the oppressed. Each of these strategies enables the Islamic society to attain its political and social rights in a proper and deserving manner.

1. Conceptual Framework and Method

1-1. The Concept of Political Justice

Justice is one of the words classified as an abstract noun. An abstract noun refers to names that represent concepts or ideas existing in the mind. In contrast, a concrete noun refers to concepts that correspond to material objects, which can be perceived through the senses.

In Islam, and among Islamic thinkers and philosophers, justice is a virtue that occupies a middle ground, standing as a balance between excess and deficiency. It holds a special position, to the extent that it is said: "By justice,

the heavens and the earth are upheld,” meaning that through justice, the heavens and earth are established, and it is in the light of justice that both the livelihood and the afterlife of humans are perfected (Jamalzadeh, 2008, p. 6). For this reason, the Almighty God commands justice and benevolence (Quran 16:90). Attention to equal opportunities and the emphasis on merit, the attainment of legitimate power, the rejection of privileges, political rights of citizens, and equal law are fundamental matters aimed at eliminating any unjust political excesses (Seyyed-Bagheri, 2013, p. 16).

Justice means fairness, balance, and the comprehensive struggle against oppression, tyranny, and despotism (Jamshidi, 2001, p. 179). Justice, in the sense of respecting others' rights in the face of oppression and aggression, is derived from the meaning of "granting every rightful claim its due" (Elahi Khorasani, 2013, p. 35). In the chosen definition, it is emphasized that political justice is one of the branches of social justice that deals with power, politics, and public participation. Political justice is a value that, when widespread, brings the affairs of society, in connection with power, into proper balance, ensuring that citizens' rights are appropriately fulfilled. With political justice, the foundation for “citizens' choice” and “limiting power” is established, and the path for society to attain their due is made clear (Seyyed-Bagheri, 2021, p. 67).

1-2. Discursive Method

Discourse analysis involves applying linguistics to the realms of culture, society, and politics to help understand and explain political phenomena. Discourse is a method that processes the relationships between discourse and social power, examining how social relationships, identity, otherness, and power are established through discourse in the dominant society. The discursive method examines concepts like history, power, and ideology. It addresses social issues and problems such as social classes, interests, justice, inequality, and others. Discourse represents the structural totality that results from the act of articulation. Laclau and Mouffe categorize discourse into three types:

- 1) Discourse is a collection of diverse positions. If articulation is possible, it is only because no discursive formation will be a closed totality.

- 2) No object emerges outside of discursive conditions, and any distinction between forms of language and behavior, conduct and social action, is considered mistaken.

- 3) Articulation arises when the logic of the discursive relation continues

without limitation until it reaches the desired outcomes. Hence, the signifier at the top of the equivalence chain becomes the dominant signifier.

Using Laclau and Mouffe's framework of discourse analysis in the study allows for a better understanding of the relationship between the structure of power and the social system (Ebtekari, 2017, pp. 64-86). The semantic system of each discourse consists of a set of signifiers that other discourses may overlook or ignore, and the emerging discourse aims to introduce and establish these signifiers to reveal and address the deficiencies of the dominant discourse while also highlighting its strengths (Moghaddami, 2011, p. 107). However, it must be noted that one of the shortcomings of discourse analysis is that it introduces relativity into the understanding of ideas, in the sense that there is no fundamental, final, or eternal meaning by which other elements are defined. Hence, mindful of this issue, we strive to analyze the strategies of political justice from the perspective of Imam Khomeini without falling into the trap of relativism. In his thought, religion, state, politics, and religiosity are intertwined; therefore, the strategies are analyzed and examined with this assumption in mind.

In Imam Khomeini's political discourse, justice is central, and concepts such as participation, republic, equality, moderation, meritocracy, and defense of the oppressed are understood as floating signifiers around it. The characteristics of his discourse include a focus on monotheism, attention to the Islamic epistemological system, politics based on religion, the superiority of jurisprudential knowledge, the centrality of *wilāyat al-faqīh* (Guardianship of the Jurist) in the structure of the Islamic Republic, and the construction of otherness in relation to secularism and Western thought to strengthen the Iranian-Islamic identity in opposition to modern identity (see Heidari Khoei et al., 2022, p. 270).

Imam Khomeini's political discourse consists of two types of structures: one is a perspectival structure, which plays a determining role and directs his thinking on politics, and the other is the internal structure of his political theory and viewpoint, which includes the collection of political norms and rules. In the first dimension, his theory is philosophical and mystical, while in the second dimension, his perspective is jurisprudential and theological (Jamshidi & Doroudi, 2010, p. 429). The outcome and presence of these two viewpoints in Imam Khomeini's justice-centered thought are such that his philosophical-mystical perspective, grounded in *ḥikmat muta'āliya* (Transcendent Philosophy) and the mysticism of Ibn 'Arabī, guides him towards a system of optimal order (*niẓām aḥsan*) of existence and justice,

which is an instrument of reason and aligned with human nature. He regards the love of justice and submission to it as part of the divine nature inherent in human beings (Khomeini, 1994, p. 113). Through rational argument, he proves the necessity of governance to achieve justice (Khomeini, 2005, p. 39). The reflection of his jurisprudential-theological viewpoint is such that he considers the establishment of a government as obligatory, based on the Quran and Sunnah, to ensure that justice prevails in society: "The goal is to establish a just system in which God's laws are enforced" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 9, p. 10). In one of his jurisprudential works, *Kitab al-Bay'*, he cites the practice of Imam al-Ṣādiq to emphasize that individuals must rise to establish an Islamic government (Khomeini, 2000, vol. 2, p. 472). Thus, we observe that both rational and traditional aspects of Imam's thought reflect justice, and his political justice discourse can be seen as a meaningful system of interconnected signs and signifiers. These floating signs and signifiers include concepts such as returning to true Islam, political and social security, defending the oppressed and the underprivileged, independence, freedom, equality, and the struggle against tyranny and imperialism.

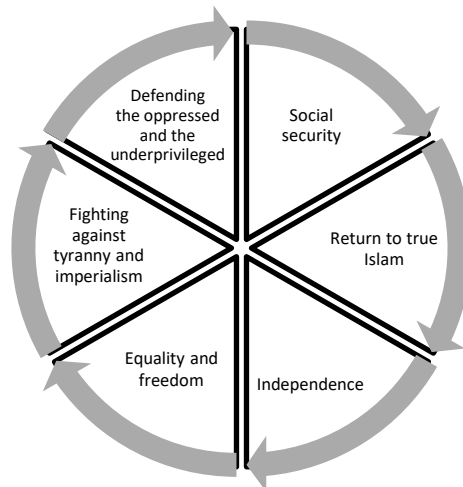


Figure 1. Floating signifiers of Imam Khomeini's justice discourse

In Imam Khomeini's discourse, the conceptual and substantive richness of Islam encompasses all aspects and dimensions of human life, intertwining politics with religion, and positioning it in the social action as a "theory guiding practice" (Tajik, 1998, pp. 90-91). In this understanding and discourse, political justice requires a comprehensive strategy and program to facilitate efficient governance and highlight rational interaction in society for all. As a

Muslim thinker, he places justice at the core of all elements of political and social discourse, as indicated in the verse “We certainly sent our messengers with clear proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that people may stand in justice” (Quran 57:25); justice and equity are understood as the goal of sending messengers, representing fairness and impartiality (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 2016, vol. 5, p. 1). In this discourse, the strategies of justice in the political realm involve the struggle against despotism, colonialism, and exploitation, with all segments of society enjoying equal rights. He considers the merits of individuals and emphasizes the implementation of law and public service, ensuring that the course of affairs benefits the deprived and oppressed (Behroozlak, 2008, p. 77). In this context, with regard to equal rights, the right to choose and be chosen is recognized for citizens. In Imam Khomeini's discourse, the right to choose is reflected in the right to vote and political participation, and he accepts and considers the majority vote as valid. He believes in the legitimacy of the majority's votes, saying that whatever the majority decide, their vote is valid, even if it goes against their own interests (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 9, p. 304). Furthermore, he asserts that no one is the guardian of the people and has no right to impose on them (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 17, p. 133). In being chosen, it is based on equality of entitlement and creating equal opportunities for all those qualified and deserving to hold a specific and prominent position. Naturally, the opportunity for leadership and the presidency is limited to a few individuals, but the foundations and equal opportunities for all candidates and qualified individuals must be made available and accessible.

2. Strategies for Attaining Political Justice in Imam Khomeini's Thought

It has been stated that in Imam Khomeini's political discourse, justice is central. In his *Sharḥ ḥadīth ‘aql wa jahl* (Elucidating the hadith on the soldiers of reason and ignorance), he declares justice as part of the army of reason and oppression as part of the army of ignorance, describing justice as an innate matter rooted in the human soul (Khomeini, 1998, p. 99). In the political realm, he frames strategies for achieving justice by establishing necessary institutions such as the formation of the government and social organizations, focusing on the distribution and division of power, and emphasizing the extent of political participation in society (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 8, p. 268). In strategies for ensuring political justice, there is often an emphasis on collective responsibility and oversight, political cooperation, councils and consultation,

and promoting meritocracy, with an emphasis on eliminating discrimination and political selection (Seyyed-Bagheri, 2013, p. 28). From Imam Khomeini's perspective, the overarching approach to justice reflects an inherent trait, a spiritual virtue, and the existence of moderation and steadfastness. In his speeches, he emphasizes that the realization of justice aligns with the declaration of independence, freedom, and the Islamic Republic, which he explains in terms of legitimacy and popular acceptance. He stresses that if the ruler is not just, they cannot act justly in the implementation of justice, the restoration of the rights of Muslims, or in the enforcement of law (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 8, p. 268). This notion leads us toward a strategy for institutionalizing justice within the hearts and worlds of the rulers, which must be addressed in due course.

Subsequently, Imam Khomeini outlines some strategies for the realization of political justice, and under each strategy, corresponding solutions are provided.

2-1. Structural Strategy

In the structural strategy, the discussion revolves around a system through which justice can be implemented and operationalized. With a just structure, the environment for citizen selection and participation is created. From this perspective, justice involves the equitable and merit-based distribution of political goods and opportunities arising from power, which is achieved today through just structures. The focus is on how to rationally and justly organize the government so that justice can be implemented within it.

Imam Khomeini endeavored to design a structure that would ensure the realization of a significant portion of justice and citizens' political rights. Below, two of the solutions under the structural strategy are discussed.

2-1-1. Establishment of the Islamic Republic System

Imam Khomeini emphasizes the establishment of an Islamic system based on the Islamic Republic, which is rooted in the will and opinion of the people, enabling them to defend their right to both choose and be chosen. According to him, all existence is under the guardianship of the Divine and the general guardianship of the Messenger of Allah, and government is a branch of the general guardianship of the Messenger of Allah. The establishment of an Islamic system is both a necessity and an obligation. Imam Khomeini uses Quranic evidence, Hadith, and reason to prove this in the era of the occultation of the infallible Imam (Khomeini, 2005, p. 39). In the clear religion of Islam,

the formation of an Islamic system is considered a necessity and a social demand, and, of course, the pursuit of justice and equity is one of the defining characteristics of the Islamic system (Javadi Amoli, 2010, p. 47). As a Muslim scholar, Imam Khomeini regards justice in political spheres as one of the most prominent actions in governance, stating, "The authentic understanding of Islam guides us to the advancement of a society full of talents, human powers, and social justice. Above all, we are committed to the social content of a political government in the future" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 4, p. 3).

Imam Khomeini, by introducing the structure of the Islamic Republic, sought to eradicate the roots of disorder and injustice. In his view, the goal of the political school of Islam is to establish social justice, and the prerequisite for its realization is the formation of an Islamic system. In his view, the Messenger of Allah established a political system in order to create justice (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 20, p. 116). Regarding the legitimacy of the Islamic government, he states, "Implement justice, act justly, speak justly, and serve the nation" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 19, pp. 388-377). From his perspective, addressing independence and freedom, political justice, ethics, the implementation of divine laws, fighting against oppression and despotism, and all forms of inequality are key factors and goals in the establishment of the Islamic system (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 7, p. 533).

In recognizing the rights of the people within the Islamic Republic system, Imam Khomeini states: "The people should be present in the arena and not be influenced by anyone; they should consult with scholars and trustworthy individuals, and then cast their vote for whomever they wish" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 18, p. 243). The right of oversight, from Imam Khomeini's perspective, is operationalized in the Islamic Republic system, and he emphasizes that "It is the people who speak the truth, they demand their rights, freedom is the right of the people, and the independence of the nation is the right of the people" (ibid., vol. 5, p. 201). On the other hand, this structure insists on the right to self-determination, and Khomeini believes that "Elections belong to all the people. The people have control over their own destiny" (ibid., vol. 18, p. 367). He further asserts, "All of you, all of us, men and women, every duty-bound person, just as they must pray, must also determine their own fate" (ibid., vol. 15, p. 28).

The struggles of the Iranian people leading to the establishment of the Islamic Republic encompass the independence and freedom of the country and the establishment of political justice. The establishment of the Islamic justice system and the implementation of justice are fundamental pillars of the

discourse of the Islamic Revolution (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 4, p. 427). In designing a just structure with the presence of the Islamic Republic, rights for the people are recognized in advance, and governmental institutions are designed in such a way that it becomes difficult to disregard the rights of the people. Thus, the separation of powers, equality before the law and adherence to it for everyone, multiple council systems, layered oversight, recognition of the right to participation, the right to criticism and protest, emphasis on meritocracy, the duty of enjoining good and forbidding wrong in the constitution, were all carefully considered, each of which can significantly guarantee the implementation of justice.

2-1-2. Equal Access to Political and Social Positions for Everyone

Imam Khomeini, in order to reform social relations within a comprehensive and sustainable system, introduces social justice and links the strategy of political justice to the type of Islamic system, its performance, and its relationship with the people. The ruler must be just in both belief and ethics in order to be able to oversee social justice. Moreover, institutions must be able to oversee one another; these dimensions are founded on the principles of power, politics, and equal participation of the people. Therefore, Imam Khomeini emphasized that the foundation of all affairs lies in the presence of the people, and that the matter is not in the hands of me or people like me, but in the hands of the nation (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 11, p. 34).

In Imam Khomeini's discourse, the Islamic system seeks to realize justice, freedom, and independence (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 6, p. 256). The realization of justice is not achieved through favoritism, but through the creation of equal opportunities for all citizens to access political positions. Therefore, he believed in widespread participation and that it is the votes of the people that govern (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 14, p. 165). With the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the grounds for the realization of merit-based equality, active participation, healthy political competition, equal political security, and equal opportunities for citizens were created, and monopoly was countered. Inspired by the Quran, Sunnah, and jurisprudence, Imam Khomeini emphasized the concepts of equality and the rejection of discrimination, considering justice, equality, and fairness as the foundation of the Islamic movement for all human beings, regardless of race, gender, or class.

In Imam Khomeini's view, inequalities should be arranged in a way that ensures the common good and provides equal opportunities for all to attain

positions and status. The necessity of political participation by the people, the foundation of the system on the people's votes, the oversight of the system by the people, and the protection of the political rights of all individuals (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 6, p. 256) can be analyzed within this framework. Along these lines, Imam believed that in the Islamic system, rulers must act in accordance with divine law and are not permitted to act in an arbitrary or dictatorial manner. In this logic, Imam refers to elections as the determinant of the fate of all people, not limited to a specific class, and regards it as a duty for everyone (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 18, p. 369).

Freedom of assembly, according to Islamic law (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 4, p. 266), is one of the key elements in Imam Khomeini's strategy for political justice (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 4, p. 492). "Islam is a religion of freedom and independence. Islam is a religion where everyone's rights are fulfilled and observes the rights of all others" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 6, p. 526). Emphasizing this logic, he believed that freedom is a divine trust (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 4, p. 400), and Islam considers a person to have authority over their own self, wealth, life, and dignity (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 2, p. 400). Ultimately, he stresses that every nation has the right to determine its own destiny (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 2, p. 166). This right naturally belongs to all people, and no one can disregard it or accept it for some while denying it for others, which leads to discrimination.

2-2. Distributive Strategy

The distribution and allocation of resources and opportunities is one of the key strategies for implementing justice, such that social justice can fundamentally be interpreted as distributive justice. This is because the primary concern of justice leaders is to prevent the accumulation of wealth and power in society, ensuring that individuals, institutions, groups, and parties cannot manipulate and accumulate these two elements for their own desires. The distributive strategy in Imam Khomeini's political discourse aimed to create a process through which a coherent set of plans, decisions, and innovations work together so that political privileges, especially in power and political positions, are distributed equally among citizens. This allows everyone to have an equal opportunity to exercise their right to vote and be elected, and to be equal before the law, whether in terms of benefits or limitations. Below, we examine two strategies that Imam Khomeini believed in as part of the distributive approach:

2-2-1. Meritocracy

"Merit" refers to the quality of possessing the necessary knowledge, skill,

and expertise in the principles of science or industry (Heidari Khoei, 2023, pp. 90-91). Meritocracy is a process through which actions such as merit assessment, selection, appointment, and nurturing of merit are achieved. Its outcome is the distancing of society and the political system from autocracy. The foundation of Imam Khomeini's political thought is based on meritocracy, which brings various practical outcomes for the political system and can serve as a fundamental basis for the distribution of opportunities, resources, power, and political privileges, ensuring that the meritorious rise to prominence and a foundational step is taken toward political justice. This strategy is a long-term plan for achieving justice based on equity and fairness, as justice is a force of reason and is grounded in human nature. Meritocracy, as a strategy for justice, is the driving force for the growth and flourishing of talents in the development of human societies, pointing toward the establishment of political justice (Jamshidi, 2001, p. 36). Meritocracy serves as the foundation for the presence of competent and skilled experts in implementing the strategic framework of political justice within an Islamic society (Mazlouni, 2012, p. 37).

The meritocratic system is rooted in the level of insight into monotheism, divine justice, and the selection of prophets and Imams. Adhering to meritocracy, along with maintaining trustworthiness and the proper execution of affairs, will guide individuals toward spiritual perfection, growth, and service to citizens (Doroudi, 2017, p. 78). From Imam Khomeini's perspective, the practice of meritocracy is intertwined with religious democracy as follows: (1) The Islamic system is founded on the principle of justice; (2) The Islamic system must be subordinate to the people; (3) The Islamic system is in the service of the people, not the other way around; (4) The duty of the Islamic system is to serve the people; (5) The principles of the Islamic system are based on the pursuit of God, with its foundation centered on divine justice (Ghazizadeh, 2006, vol. 1, p. 320).

In meritocracy, scientific, personal, and ethical abilities determine the level of merit. In an Islamic society, efforts are made to provide equal opportunities according to individual abilities. This leads to accountability, rule of law, and merit-based justice for all in the Islamic community (Rahimi, 2011, p. 62). In Imam Khomeini's political thought, meritocracy is reflected in the selection of public officials and the Islamic ruler, where the conditions of trustworthiness and competence are fundamental, opening the path to political justice. He believed that the divine trust cannot be entrusted to just anyone. "The person who wants to take on such an important position and be the guardian of the

Muslims and the deputy of the Commander of the Faithful, and intervene in people's reputation, wealth, lives, as well as incomes, legal limitations, the like, must be pure and free from worldly desires" (Khomeini, 2005, p. 199). According to the theory of *wilāyat-i faqīh* (Guardianship of the Jurist), such a person is not fit to lead the Islamic community, as they are distanced from the path of justice and the fulfillment of rights. It is crucial to note that the emergence of the meritorious through the distribution of resources, positions, and political privileges, and with the presence and participation of the people, becomes possible. Creating a space for the growth of meritorious individuals with the right to be elected is meaningful. If deserving individuals cannot present themselves for voting and election by others, there will be no space for their presence. Therefore, meritocracy, the distribution of opportunities, and the right to be elected in an Islamic society are intertwined.

2-2-2. People's Political Participation

One of the important strategies of justice is political participation, derived from the right to self-determination and strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of governments. Institutional reforms are carried out to promote the political participation of citizens. The diversity of political participation can contribute to the levels of participation and power distribution, showing that instead of political indifference, citizens transfer their activities to a broader spectrum of political engagement (Peters, 2017, p. 23). The role of participation in politics is not limited to participation in power; rather, it plays a role at all levels and in various forms, both directly and indirectly, in political life. The indirect influence of the people in political life is often more significant than their direct participation. Propaganda, popular mobilization, leadership roles, and spiritual insight all play a vital role in political participation (Bashiriyeh, 2009, pp. 255-256). Public participation in decision-making and problem-solving is of great importance. The nature of public participation has evolved over time and includes countless large and small opportunities that arise in the political arena. Emerging factors of political participation are becoming widespread in different societies and expanding within their structures (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015, p. 67). The role of political participation in the development and control of social and political institutions is crucial (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 47).

This influential element of Imam Khomeini's thought holds a special place and plays a fundamental role in the equitable distribution of the right to choose for all. In his discourse, the essential nature of political participation is

understood as a responsibility shared by all, involving voluntary actions of citizens and equal rights in participation. Awareness and participation are key elements of religious democracy as articulated in Imam Khomeini's thought (Akhavan Kazemi, 2012, p. 14). Citizens' political participation in the implementation of the system will result in the creation of security, independence, and freedom, the enhancement of the state's capacity, public welfare, the efficiency and legitimacy of the government, and the preservation of the Islamic system against both internal and external enemies (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 4, p. 248). In the same vein of distributing the right to participate, he believed that "Elections are not the exclusive domain of any one group, neither the clergy, nor political parties, nor any faction. Elections belong to all the people" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 18, p. 367). What gives identity and character to Imam Khomeini's thought is the extent of political participation and its role and place within the framework of government, based on legitimacy, efficiency, and stability in ensuring societal security, progress, and national development (Javadi Amoli, 2010, p. 83). From his perspective, the political system, based on republicanism, relies on three functions: the condition of people's votes, the necessity of acting in accordance with the will of the people, and the preservation of the system through public participation (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 5, p. 384). This leads to the maximization of people's participation, which results in outcomes such as victory and success, security and stability, independence and freedom, the advancement of both the state and the nation, and a significant influence in determining the nation's destiny and the future of society (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 8, p. 384).

In Imam Khomeini's discourse, religious democracy is understood through political participation. People's rule takes place through the votes of the majority in elections regarding the governance of the affairs of the Islamic system, which amounts to political participation in all political and social spheres (Saberian, 2007, p. 141). He emphasized the principle of political participation, political development, involving the people in the administration of society, and the right of the people to have a say. The goal in the Islamic system is to strengthen legitimate movements. Those who do not adhere to the legal principles and standards of society cannot be equated with legitimate and legal movements, as treating them equally would be an injustice to both individuals and society (Mousavi Lari, 1999, pp. 16-19). The political system emerging from Imam Khomeini's thought was shaped by the participation of the people within the framework of religious democracy. This system, by recognizing the right to both be elected and to elect, created the conditions for

the circulation of elites, preventing the accumulation of power and corruption. Political participation is the manifestation of political freedom and the foundation of meritocracy in a religious society (see Seyyed-Bagheri, 2018, p. 41). Therefore, to the extent that a person can be an elector, the possibility must also exist for them to be elected, so that ultimately they can determine their own destiny. If political freedom in Imam Khomeini's discourse is a desirable and accepted concept, and citizens have the right to choose, then naturally, the right to be chosen, which is one of the aspects of freedom, must also be recognized. If the right to elect exists, then there must be someone who is subject to the vote and opinion of the people, to be chosen.

2-3. Restorative Strategy

One of the key strategies for achieving justice is adopting methods and programs that can prevent the injustices that have existed and continue to exist, and improve the conditions for those deprived of political and social rights and the oppressed, thus compensating for their losses. This is referred to as a restorative strategy. This strategy is significant in eliminating deprivation, supporting the underprivileged, and backing the disadvantaged segments of society to prevent injustice, eliminate discrimination, and counter oppression and despotism against them. Restorative justice is established to compensate for and prevent political and social discrimination. The restorative justice strategy seeks to compensate and implement reforms for those who have been deprived of their rightful and deserving entitlements. Imam Khomeini says: "We must turn to the people for reconstruction, to repair the damage caused during the period of the Pahlavi dictatorship in this country" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 8, p. 180). In line with this, he believed that "There is no greater worship than serving the deprived and the oppressed" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 20, p. 342), and that "Only those who have tasted the pain of poverty, deprivation, and oppression will stay with us to the end" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 21, p. 287). The following explores two main approaches within restorative strategy.

2-3-1. Deprivation Removal by Raising Political Awareness

The principle of support in the capitalist system, which is a humanist and materialistic discourse, is solely based on the approach of preventing harm and maximizing profit. It is natural that, within this perspective, the threat to personal interests leads to the cessation of support. However, in contrast, the monotheistic and Islamic view holds that since human beings are the creations of the one true God and part of God's vast family, they have reciprocal rights

to support one another. This principle cannot be limited or suspended under any circumstances (Sarkheil, 2011, p. 71). In Imam Khomeini's view, justice is the assistance of God's servants, particularly the deprived and oppressed, who are wronged in Islamic society (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 16, p. 224). He addresses them, saying that you, the underprivileged, are superior to the palace dwellers (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 14, p. 261). Therefore, the discourse of the Islamic Revolution stands as a continuous movement against oppression, the removal of deprivation, and the fight against global exploitation in the pursuit of justice (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 20, p. 341). He refers to the words of Imam Ali, explaining that the reason for his acceptance of governance was because God had made it a binding commitment for the Islamic scholars to not remain silent in the face of the gluttony and pillaging of oppressors or the hunger and deprivation of the oppressed (Khomeini, 2005, p. 37):

Had it not been for the presence of the witnesses, the fulfillment of the argument through the presence of the supporters, and what Allah had taken from the scholars—that they should not remain content with the greed of the oppressor nor the hunger of the oppressed—I would have cast the reins upon its back and would have made the last drink from the cup of the first. (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 3)

In this journey, Imam Khomeini worked to eliminate the political and economic deprivation of citizens by raising the political awareness of the Iranian people, encouraging their increasing participation in various political and social affairs, and recognizing the right to vote for all, including the deprived and oppressed. Imam Khomeini's political discourse is centered on the fulfilment of rights and equal rights for all individuals in society. In his discourse, "Justice among nations means that all live equally with one another" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 3, p. 222). In this context, the deprived hold a privileged position. In Imam Khomeini's view, the general approach is that the ruler of the Islamic government is equal to the lowest person in society (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 5, p. 81), in order to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the deprived. This principle is based on awareness-raising, economic justice, and political-social rights. The realization of democracy is also dependent on the fair distribution of political and economic power, which led to the formation of popular institutions such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Basij, and the Jihad for Construction (see Baratalipour, 2015, pp. 33-56).

The goal of aid, deprivation removal, and awareness-raising is always a

form of intervention known as "superior intervention." In this intervention, the intervener, through a series of aid efforts, improves the social order of the target community and, by strengthening and correcting their thoughts, beliefs, customs, and laws, creates the conditions for the spiritual elevation and political development of the masses. These aids, beyond their usual content, include at least the driving forces, goals, ideas, and desires that a person needs in order to continue a worthy life (Fattahi, 2010, pp. 28-24). In the thought and discourse of Imam Khomeini, all of this strengthening, correction, and spiritual and material elevation occurs through awareness-raising. In his thought, defending the deprived, fighting against oppression and despotism, and preventing the superiority of the rich over the poor are central elements, and "The day will come when the oppressed of the world will be freed from the burden of the oppressors" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 15, p. 416). The goal is to reach pure Islam based on justice and to eliminate class discrimination and economic, social, and political deprivation. Awareness-raising plays a unique role in this process.

2-3-2. Supporting the Oppressed

Imam Khomeini, based on the Quran and Sunnah, considers concern for the affairs of Muslims a duty and an obligation (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 2, p. 72). From his perspective, it is an Islamic principle that every Muslim must help other Muslims. Accordingly, support for the oppressed and the nations under tyranny is considered another strategy for achieving political justice and the foundational assumptions for the establishment of an Islamic system in his political thought. The oppressed, who are frequently mentioned in his speeches and writings, are mainly those who have been weakened by tyrannical governments or capitalist powers, in terms of material resources and political power. Supporting the oppressed is something that has been emphasized in all divine religions. Imam Khomeini emphasized that "Islam came for the salvation of the oppressed" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 2, p. 212), and that "The teachings of Islam aim for no one to have superiority on earth and for the oppressors not to exploit the oppressed" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 6, p. 71). Based on this, he has articulated various forms of support for the oppressed within the framework of justice in different contexts, including the following examples:

- 1) The strategy of justice as the absence of privileges for any specific class or group (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 5, p. 388).
- 2) The strategy of justice as ensuring that in society, different classes do not

oppress the deprived (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 6, p. 461).

3) The strategy of justice as the people's uprising for justice to eliminate oppression, tyranny, and exploitation (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 15, p. 291).

4) The expansion of the strategy of justice as a fight against oppression, securing independence and freedom, and the prudent and practical redistribution of wealth, as clearly outlined in Islam (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 3, p. 323).

One of the key features of Imam Khomeini's thought and discourse was his opposition to the oppressors. It was a confrontation between the oppressed and the oppressors, justice against tyranny, and the deprived against the plunderers. He viewed the victory of the Islamic Revolution as the result of the efforts and struggles of the lower classes of society, namely the oppressed and deprived, in opposition to the tyrants (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 18, p. 387). From Imam Khomeini's perspective, rectifying class disparity, eliminating discrimination, and supporting the eradication of poverty and the fight against poverty were essential. He said: "You should come and implement divine laws. Laws must be enacted so that the rights of the deprived and the poor are restored to them. This is your duty" (Khomeini, 1999, vol. 14, p. 304).

This perspective stands in contrast to the prominent liberal viewpoint, where justice, like many other valuable concepts, ultimately takes on a profit-driven, self-interested, and power-seeking nature (Bashiriyeh, 1996, p. 40). Imam Khomeini's perspective is significant in that his defense of the oppressed is not profit-driven or temporary, but rather universal and timeless, transcending the walls of time and place.

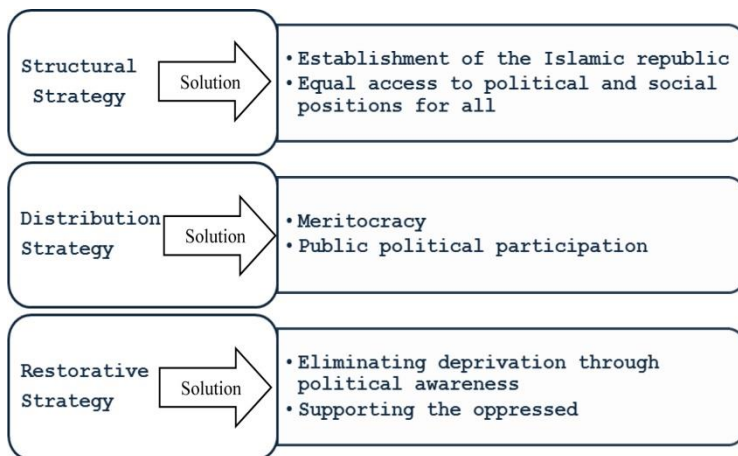


Figure 2. Strategies of political justice in Imam Khomeini's thought

Conclusion

Based on the political thought of Imam Khomeini, there are numerous emphases on the issue of justice, which are evident in his speeches, messages, and writings. He placed great importance on justice from an Islamic perspective, linking it to human freedom and choice. He firmly opposed any form of tyranny, despotism, and oppression, as well as the denial of the rights of individuals, making this a central aspect of his life. He also insisted on supporting the marginalized and disadvantaged sectors of society and rejecting class divisions. On the other hand, while advocating for human autonomy and responsibility, he rejected the unlimited freedom found in liberal systems, which often leads to the oppression of the lower classes. He also did not accept the absolute egalitarianism of socialist ideologies. The strategies of political justice in Imam Khomeini's discourse stem from the monotheistic worldview of Islam. According to Imam Khomeini's thought, strategies for achieving political justice were addressed through three main approaches: structural, distributive, and restorative, within the Islamic system. The focus on a just structure of the Islamic system in terms of republicanism involves creating equal and fair political and social opportunities for all members of society, fighting against deprivation while promoting political awareness, confronting poverty, supporting the oppressed, and recognizing the right to political participation. Additionally, meritocracy is considered one of the key solutions arising from these strategies. From a broader perspective, Imam Khomeini views justice through the lens of the primacy of monotheism and justice. This means that justice, with its divine origin, is entirely intertwined with ethics and spirituality. In essence, true justice cannot be understood without a divine intention and purpose; thus, it must not only ensure material benefits but also spiritual ones. The ultimate goal of justice is not merely to achieve greater profit and welfare, but, alongside that, justice must lay the foundation for the happiness of the Islamic community and lead to the attainment of a virtuous life. Therefore, in this understanding, justice is comprehensive, encompassing both material and spiritual interests.

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