The Iranian Regime Under Mojtaba Khamenei: Religious-Apocalyptic Radicalization For A Violent Takeover Of The Sunni World, Eliminating Israel, And Advancing The Appearance Of The Mahdi, The Shi'ite Messiah

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Inquiry & Analysis #1928 | March 13, 2026

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Middle East Media Research Institute
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Published in 2026 in the United States of America by
The Middle East Media Research Institute,
P.O. Box 27837, Washington, D.C., 20038-7837
www.memri.org

Introduction

The Iranian regime's appointment of new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei,[1] the son of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, in March 2026, under pressure from the IRGC with which he has been closely affiliated for years, marks the triumph of the radical messianic-apocalyptic stream in the Iranian establishment.

This ideology, led by figures such as Ayatollah Mahdi Mirbagheri, and before that by Ayatollah Taqi Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi (d. 2021), as well as by politicians from the Front of Islamic Revolution Stability (FIRS, *Jebhe-ye Paydari*) and younger-generation IRGC officers, views seizing power as a means and an operational stage in advancing the coming of the Mahdi, the Twelfth Hidden Imam and the Shi'ite Messiah.

At the core of this view is a militant interpretation of the historic 680 CE Battle of Karbala in Iraq, in which the followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib were defeated and massacred by the Sunni commander Yazid ibn Muawiya. According to this world view, Iran's current struggle against the Sunni Arab states is seen as continuation of the struggle against the Sunni "usurpers" and their allies in the West, that is, the U.S. and Israel.

The Battle of Karbala, the founding myth of Shi'a Islam, is not just an historical event for the radical apocalyptic stream in Iran – it is a real-time work plan for taking control of the Islamic world. For them, Mojtaba Khamenei's taking power is not simply the dynastic continuity of a family that is worthy of leadership, but the rectification of an historic wrong that will restore sovereignty to the legitimate descendants of the Prophet Mohammad and avenge the Shi'te imams who were killed at Karbala. Mojtaba's ascent is considered by them as the moment when these legitimate descendants return to lead not just Iran but the entire Islamic *ummah,* displacing the Sunni leadership that they perceive to be the "modern Yazid." This is in effect a revival of the historic struggle for power between the Sunni and the Shi'a.

Mojtaba Khamenei's rise marks Iran's transition from a country run according to relatively pragmatic geopolitical considerations to one controlled by a apocalyptic theocratic military apparatus. In such a situation, the enemy is religiously defined and the struggle is not only against Israel or the U.S. ("the Great Satan" and "the Little Satan"), but against any entity perceived as a "modern Yazid" – that is, direct confrontation with the Sunni world. This radical-apocalyptic stream perceives military conflict as a test of faith, in which casualties among Muslim soldiers or civilians are considered martyrdom in the path of Imam Hussein at Karbala. According to it, any military victory over the Sunni states and Israel proves the justness of the cause and of Shi'a belief, and war is the only way Islam can be purged of Western and Sunni-Wahhabi influence and the world can be prepared for the Mahdi's comprehensive Islamic rule.

Under Mojtaba's leadership, Iran is positioning itself as the "beating heart" of a religious empire that aspires to transform Shi'a Islam from a persecuted minority into the only prevailing religious and political current in the Muslim world (see below the 2016 MEMRI report on the "Umm al-Qura Doctrine.")

Mojtaba Khamenei And The Ideology Of The Mahdi

Mojtaba Khamenei, 56, is closely affiliated with IRGC intelligence circles and with the younger generation of IRGC officers. He is an apocalyptic ideologue associated with the Front of Islamic Revolution Stability (FIRS), that considers the Islamic regime and the IRGC as a military and political instrument whose purpose is to prepare the ground for the reappearance of the Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam and the Shi'ite messiah. In this framework, goals such as the destruction of Israel are not only political objectives but religiousapocalyptic requirements to speed redemption.

It should be noted that in recent years there has been an increase in apocalyptic indoctrination among the younger generation of IRGC commanders.

Mojtaba is considered the architect of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidential wins in 2005 and 2009, having harnessed the Basij and IRGC to ensure his election. Following the 2009 election, defeated candidate and former Majlis speaker Mehdi Karroubi published an open letter accusing Mojtaba of participating in election fraud. This sparked the Green Movement protests across the country that were brutally repressed by Mojtaba, who operated behind the scenes to ensure that they were silenced.

Mojtaba and Ahmadinejad share a radical apocalyptic ideology that has sidelined the Iranian regime's relatively moderate religious establishment.[2] Ahmadinejad was known for his speeches about the Mahdi – including stating that the Mahdi was directing his government meetings and that during his 2005 address to the U.N. he had sensed the Mahdi's aura of light. In Ahmadinejad, Mojtaba found a partner in implementing this ideological revolution within Iran's state institutions.

The increase in apocalyptic outlook in the regime and the IRGC has been criticized in establishment circles. Mojtaba's uncle Hadi Khamenei, brother of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, had criticized the latter for legitimizing these circles (see MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 3044, Brother of Iranian Leader Khamenei Warns Against Second Islamic Revolution by Messianic Circles Led by Ahmadinejad and Khamenei, June 18, 2010).

However, the relationship between Mojtaba and Ahmadinejad ran aground in 2011, when the latter challenged Leader Khamenei's authority by claiming to have a personal relationship with the Mahdi. Mojtaba, loyal to his father and to protecting the strength of the regime, became one of Ahmadinejad's most bitter opponents, leading a move to ostracize him and declaring his associates "a deviant stream."

Iranian Regime Officials Close To Mojtaba

Mojtaba is pushing to strengthen and advance this radical Shi'ite religious identity in the Iranian Islamic regime, as an apocalyptic alternative to the existing world order. He is close to extremist clerics who advocate a radical interpretation of Mahdism (belief in the imminent appearance of the Mahdi), according to which Iran should take the lead in a militant and uncompromising approach to the Sunni world and Israel, as part of the apocalyptic war that will precede the Mahdi's arrival.

Other senior ayatollahs close to Mojtaba who have expressed an apocalyptic worldview include Ayatollah Taqi Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi (1935–2021) and his successor Ayatollah Mohammad Mahdi Mirbagheri (b. 1961), an Assembly of Experts member and director of the Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy in Qom. Ayatollah Mirbagheri maintains that there is a need for an extensive confrontation with the "infidel" West in order for the Mahdi to appear. War is moral, he said, and even mandatory, in order to establish a "new Islamic civilization" (see MEMRI TV Clip No. 7399, Senior Iranian Ayatollah Mohammad Mehdi Mirbagheri: In Order for the Hidden Imam to Reappear We Must Engage in "Widespread Fighting" with the West, July 31, 2019 and Special Dispatch No. 3845, Iranian Ayatollah Affirms Legitimacy of Suicide Operations, Approves Killing Israeli Civilians – Including Children, May 27, 2011).

Significant figures in this circle also include Mahmoud Nabivian, Ali Reza Panahian, Hassan Abbasi, Ali Akbar Raefipour, and Sadegh Mahsouli, and others. Below are MEMRI TV clips of their statements over the years.

Mahmoud Nabavian, Majlis National Security Committee deputy chairman, said on May 29, 2024 that "the criterion for being a Muslim is, first of all, to fight America and Israel." He added that the Islamic Revolution is meaningless without resistance to Israel. Below are more of his statements over the years from MEMRI TV.

To view these clips on MEMRI TV, click below:

Iranian Majles Member Mahmoud Nabavian: Trump Asked Us To Let Him Attack A Couple Of Targets Symbolically, And He Will Let Us Retaliate, But We Rejected This; Any Such Mistake Will Result In 3,000-4,000 American Deaths

Iranian MP Mahmoud Nabavian: U.S. Should Prepare 50,000 Coffins Before Even Taking A Hostile Glance Our Way; If They Block Our Oil Flow – No Other Country's Oil Will Flow

Iranian Majlis National Security Council Deputy Chair Mahmoud Nabavian: 'Before The Iranian Attack [On The U.S. CENTCOM Base In Qatar], The Americans... Proposed The "Location" Of A [Different U.S.] Military Base To Be Attacked... But We Targeted [The CENTCOM] Base That We Saw Fit'; 'The Americans Truly Begged Us, In The Full Sense Of The Word'

Iranian Majles Member Mahmoud Nabavian: The Agreement Between Iranian Atomic Energy Organization Head Salehi And IAEA Chief Grossi Is Illegal, Unconstitutional, Null And Void

Iranian Majlis Representative: Iran Needs A Nuclear Bomb 'To Put Israel In Its Place'; White House Pleaded For Meeting With Rohani

Ali Reza Panahian, cleric and head of the Academic Research Institute of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said on October 8, 2023, the day after the Hamas attack on southern Israel, that "a war of attrition in the region will ultimately destroy Western civilization" and that "in a post-Israel world, we will still need to organize protests in the West to put an end to global Zionism."

In October 2022, he said: "According to Islamic tradition, the Iranians will become the masters of the world after Israel is destroyed." He added: "They will drive the Zionists out of their homes one by one and finish them." Below are more of his statements over the years from MEMRI TV.

To view these clips on MEMRI TV, click below:

Head Of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei's Academic Think Tank Alireza Panahian: If You Want To Introduce Islam To Europe, Use Shi'ite Islam; You Must Destroy Zionism In Order To Liberate The Europeans And Americans From This Oppressive Capitalist World Order

Head Of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei's Academic Think Tank, Alireza Panahian, Following Assassination Of Hamas Leader Haniyeh: Israel Is Coming To An End; Zionists Have No Peace, Iranian Missiles Will Annihilate Them Forever

Prof. Alireza Panahian, Head Of Khamenei's Academic Think Tank: A War Of Attrition In The Region Will Eventually Destroy Western Civilization; In The Post-Israel World, We Will Still Need To Organize Demonstrations In The West To Finish Global Zionism

Iranian Scholar And Strategist Alireza Panahian: According To Islamic Tradition, Iranians Will Become Masters Of The World, After Annihilating Israel; They Will Pull The Zionists One By One From Their Homes And Finish Them Off

Alireza Panahian, Deputy Head Of Iran's Ammar Strategic Advisory Base: We Have Missiles And Soldiers Throughout The Region, We Are Looking For The Opportunity To Launch Our Missiles

Hassan Abbasi, an IRGC strategist who heads the IRGC Center for Doctrinal Studies for Security Without Borders, which aims to prepare the security forces and young revolutionaries to adopt an aggressive approach, denies the legitimacy of the existing world order, and advancing a global religious change, said in May 2004:

"We are planning to aim to attack American nuclear warheads on U.S. soil... We must take over England... we will launch our missiles at its cities and institutions. Our motto in the [Iran-]Iraq war [1980-88] was 'Karbala, we are coming, Jerusalem, we are coming' – and because of the policy of [then-president Mohammad] Khatami, and the [concept of] 'dialogue among civilizations,' we had to freeze our plan to liberate the Islamic cities. And now we are [again] about to carry out the plan...

"The global infidel front is a front against Allah and the Muslims, and we must use everything we have to attack that front, through our martyrdom operations or through our missiles. There are 29 sensitive sites in the U.S. and

the West. We have already spied on those sites, and we know how we are going to attack them."

In 2019, Abbasi praised Iranians who had handed over their anti-regime children to be executed by the regime, and added that 2,300 IRGC fighters had been killed in the war in Syria. In 2020, he said that the IRGC should "generate income" and solve Iran's economic problems by capturing Americans and holding them for ransom. Below are more of his statements over the years from MEMRI TV.

To view these clips on MEMRI TV, click below:

Iranian Strategist Hassan Abbasi: America Has Been Dead Since The 1979 Hostage Crisis

IRGC-Affiliated Strategist Hassan Abbasi: The IRGC Should "Generate Income" by Capturing Americans and Demanding Ransom for Them; This Is the Way to Solve Our Economic Problems

IRGC Strategist Hassan Abbasi Praises Iranians Who Handed Over Their Own Children for Execution for Opposing the Regime, Says: 2,300 Iranians Were Killed in Syria War

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Official Threatens Suicide Operations: 'Our Missiles Are Ready to Strike at Anglo-Saxon Culture… There Are 29 Sensitive Sites in the U.S. and the West…'

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Official in Tehran University Lecture (Part II): We Plan To Target US Nuclear Warheads on US Soil; Should Take Over England

Ali Akbar Raefipour, theoretician and director of the Iranian MASAF ideological institute – MASAF is the Persian acronym for "The Struggle Against Zionism, Humanism and the Freemasons, and the institute was established in June 2011. MASAF defines itself as "the largest cyber movement of the children of the revolution" and aims to promote Mahdism and prepare hearts and minds for the End of Days. It operates an extensive network of social media accounts used for online campaigns and for carrying out cyberattacks against regime opponents, in cooperation with the Basij cyber units. In August 2025, Raefipour justified Iran's race for nuclear weapons and claimed that Iran could strike the Nevatim airbase in Israel with a nuclear bomb and send them all to hell. Below are more of his statements over the years from MEMRI TV.

To view these clips on MEMRI TV, click below:

Iranian Researcher Ali Akbar Raefipour: Iran Is Justified In Pursuing Nuclear Weapons; We Could Target Nevatim Airbase With One Tactical Bomb, Instead Of 50 Missiles, And They "Can All Go To Hell"

Iranian Researcher Ali Akbar Raefipour Defends Downing of Ukrainian Flight 752: I Fear the Day We Won't Shoot in Such Circumstances; We Develop Missiles to Prevent the Murder of the Hidden Imam upon His Return

Iranian Researcher Ali Akbar Raefipour: Iran Will Empty Its Missile Stockpile on Israel's Head if it Faces Collapse; Environmentalists Arrested in 2018 Were Spies Searching for Our Secret Missile Cities

Sadegh Mahsouli, Interior Minister from 2008 to 2009, was during his term in charge of the police forces that violently suppressed and tortured activists and students at the University of Tehran during the peaceful protests that followed the 2009 presidential election. In April 2010, when he was welfare minister, 2009-2011, he called for educating children to prepare themselves for martyrdom when they reach the age of 13.[3]

Mojtaba "Al-Khorasani"

In recent years, Mojtaba has worked behind the scenes to accumulate military power to be used against the Sunni Arab Gulf states and Israel. Mojtaba calls himself "Al-Khorasani" – a highly charged symbolic title aimed at linking him to the mythic Al-Khorasani, who heralds the coming of the Mahdi. The mythic figure is a military

and political leader who will emerge from the Khorasan region in eastern Iran –Mojtaba's birthplace and that of his father Ali Khamenei – bearing black banners. He will defeat the enemies of Islam and pass the banner of the rule over to the Mahdi.

By using this title, Mojtaba's supporters confer messianic legitimacy on him – transforming him from the son of a leader into a figure with a religious role in Shi'ite history. It is used within the IRGC to evoke blind loyalty: If Mojtaba is indeed Al-Khorasani, then any directive he gives is part of a divine plan that must not be questioned, even if it leads to all-out confrontation with the Sunnis, Israel, or the U.S.

In Sh'ite end times doctrine and eschatology, the coming of the Mahdi is not merely a religious event but first and foremost a moment of historical reckoning. The concept of *thar al-husayn* – vengeance for Hussein's blood at Karbala – is a central driving force, and the struggle against Sunni states, which descend from those who usurped power from Ali and his sons, is the fulfillment of this ancient vengeance. Thus, military victory is seen as rectifying the historical injustice of the Battle of Karbala.

In the Shi'a, the right to rule is both spiritual and hereditary and is reserved for members of the family of the Prophet Muhammad, his cousin, son-in-law Ali, and Fatemeh, Muhammad's daughter and Ali's wife. Mojtaba is a "Sayyid," considered to be descendant of the Prophet, and his succession as supreme leader after his father Ali Khamenei creates revolutionary Iran's first religious dynasty.

Thus, the regime has effectively become a theocratic monarchy that justifies itself through the family's connection to the Prophet and its destiny to hold the crown until it is handed over to the Mahdi. This apocalyptic belief has a major political dimension that necessitates the ruler's control, either directly or via proxies, of the holy sites Mecca and Medina as well as of Jerusalem. Mojtaba thus sees himself as "commanding" this historical vengeance and rectification vis-à-vis the Sunni world.

Apocalyptic Shi'a In Revolutionary Iran

Below is MEMRI analysis of the radical apocalyptic stream in Iran and leading figures in it.

I. Prediction For The End of Days In The Shi'a

II. The Religious-Apocalyptic Doctrine: Iran As "Um Al-Qura" And The Major Iranian Figures Affiliated With It

I. Prediction For The End of Days In The Shi'a

A January 2007 MEMRI report, Waiting for the Mahdi: Official Iranian Eschatology Outlined in Public Broadcasting Program in Iran, examined a document titled "The World toward Illumination" that was posted on the website of Iran's state broadcaster, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). The document is a transcript of a series broadcast by IRIB on the imminent arrival of the Mahdi; the series focused, in glowing terms, on the messianic age that he will usher in.

According to the series, he will will begin his uprising in Mecca, and then march on Iraq, where he will establish his "seat of world government" in the city of Kufa and subjugate the current world powers. This, it says, will be an age of unparalleled happiness; there will be completely new technologies at mankind's disposal, and "corruption, war, and rebellion will no longer exist" – and neither will "liberal democratic civilization."

"After his appearance," it states, "the Imam would remain in Mecca for some time, and then go to Medina. According to narrations, Sofyani, a descendant of the Prophet's archenemy Abu Sofyan, will seize Syria and attack Iraq and the Hejaz with the ferocity of a beast. The Sofyani will commit great crimes against humanity in Iraq, slaughtering people bearing the names of the infallible Imams, and his army will lay siege to the city of Kufa and to Holy Najaf. Of course, many incidents take place in this line and finally Imam Mahdi sends troops who kill the Sofyani in Beit Al-Moqaddas [i.e. Jerusalem], the Islamic holy city

in Palestine that is currently under occupation of the Zionists. Soon a pious person from the progeny of Imam Hasan Mojtaba... meets with the Imam. He is a venerable God-fearing individual from Iran. Before the Imam's appearance he fights oppression and corruption and enters Iraq to lift the siege of Kufa and holy Najaf and to defeat the forces of Sofyani in Iraq. He then pledges allegiance to Imam Mahdi."

In a 2012 series of articles posted online, titled "*The Shi'ite Apocalypse," Israeli scholar* Dr. Eli Eshed, in his "*Part One: The End of Days According to the Shi'a*," enumerated the four signs of the coming of the Mahdi. The passage of Dr. Eshed's series given below enumerates, in MEMRI's view, the elements reinforcing the Iranian apocalyptic stream's belief that developments in recent years correspond to the signs of the coming of the Mahdi:

- The rise of the Houthis in Yemen
- Trump's presidency
- The rise of ISIS fighter Ahmad Al-Shara in Syria
- The death of Khamenei.

Dr. Eshed presents the signs in his article:

"The Bright Future Institute in the Iranian city of Qom, which specializes in issues of jurisprudence, established four signs that herald the coming of the Mahdi:

"**The first sign:** The appearance of a warrior from Yemen called 'the Yemeni,' who will attack the enemies of the Mahdi.

"**The second sign:** The appearance of a warrior opposed to the Mahdi named Usama ibn Abbas, also known as Sufyani, along with another opponent of the Mahdi called the Dajjal – the equivalent of the Antichrist, who represents the forces of evil in Christianity.

"**The third sign:** Sufyani and the Dajjal will stage an uprising and conquer the territories of Syria and Jordan (which in Shi'ite terminology apparently also include the territory of Israel). They will be opposed by the forces of justice under the leadership of a terrorist warrior from Khorasan in Iran.[4]

"The decisive battle will take place in the city of Kufa in Iraq, where Ali's forces were defeated. Sufyani and his supporters will be defeated [as well], thus avenging Ali, Hassan, and Hussein more than a thousand years after they became dust.

"**The final sign** will be the death of an elderly and pure man named Mohammad ibn Hassan, called 'the Pure Soul,' and after six months[5] the Mahdi himself will finally appear in the city of Mecca.

"He will be identifiable by the angel accompanying him, hovering over his head and shouting 'Behold the Mahdi, follow him.' He will wear the ring of King Solomon, with which [Solomon] imprisoned demons, and will bear the staff of Moses, with which [Moses] divided the Red Sea. His army, initially comprising 313 warriors, will grow to 50,000, with 50 of them women...

"Another important condition is that roughly 80% of the world's population must perish in a great war. When the Mahdi finally rises to rule the Earth, he will bring the glad tidings of redemption. He will appoint as his deputy Jesus of Nazareth (according to Islam, Jesus is also immortal and was never crucified, contrary to Christian belief), who will likewise accept of course the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, [and recognize him] as the true prophet who came after him.

"An important motif in the Shi'ite conception of the End of Days is the *Raj'ah* – the return to this world, i.e. resurrection, of groups from among the Shi'ites and their opponents. The Shi'ites, under the leadership of the Twelfth Imam [the Mahdi], will then wreak vengeance on their past enemies who once defeated them. [The Twelfth Imam] will wreak vengeance on the enemies of the Shi'ites – the Sunnis and others – or on the handful of survivors, since, as mentioned, 80% percent of the world's population will already be dead. He will fill the Earth with justice, just as it was previously filled with wrongdoing.

"The Shi'ites believe that when the army of the Mahdi completes its mission, the only religion that will exist in the world will be Sh'ia Islam. The Mahdi will purge Islam of all kinds of false traditions that were integrated into it [over the centuries] so that it may in some cases even seem like these [purged] traditions are new. The people's faith will be genuine, not just a false appearance. Evil, hypocrisy, unbelief, and hatred will disappear from the people's hearts, and the world's wealth will be distributed equally.

"The Mahdi will erase the borders between countries, political parties, and false prophets; there will be no discrimination based on race, ethnicity, language, or culture. The world will live in harmony, peace, security, and equality under God's rule. The earth will become green and fertile, and people's economic conditions will greatly improve. Then everyone will return to their graves until the Day of Judgment, when they will be ultimately resurrected."[6]

II. The Religious-Apocalyptic Doctrine: Iran As "Um Al-Qura" And The Major Iranian Figures Affiliated With It

A MEMRI analysis published in December 2016, The Regional Vision Of Iran's Islamic Regime And Its Military-Political Implementation, Part I – The Ideological Doctrine: Exporting The Revolution; Iran As 'Umm Al-Qura', focused on the expansion of Iran's export of its Islamic Revolution to the Sunni countries, and how Iran sees itself as "Umm Al-Qura" – the mother of the villages.

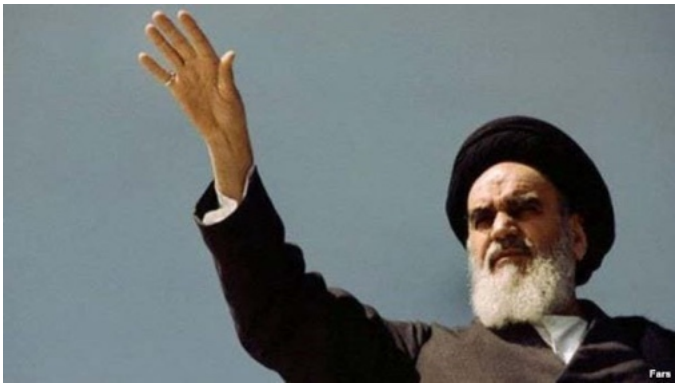
Below is the report in full.

The Regional Vision Of Iran's Islamic Regime And Its Military-Political Implementation, Part I – The Ideological Doctrine: Exporting The Revolution; Iran As 'Umm Al-Qura'

By Yigal Carmon, A. Savyon, and U. Kafash, December 7, 2016

Introduction

Since its beginning, the regime of Iran's Islamic Revolution has championed the idea of exporting its Revolution to the entire Muslim world. This doctrine is rooted in the thinking of the Revolution's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, particularly in his book *Al-Hukuma Al-Islamiyya* ("The Islamic Government," Beirut, 1979). In the book, he presented his perception negating the existence of peoples and states in Islam, and aspiring to actualize Islamic unity. Khomeini defined himself as a Muslim, not as an Iranian or a Shi'ite, and the Revolution as Islamic, not Iranian or Shi'ite. In his view, nationalism is an imperialistic plot to weaken and divide the Islamic world, and Islamic unity is the way to restore Islam to its greatness. The regime in Iran is the jumping-off point for a "comprehensive Islamic Revolution," and exporting the Revolution is the tool for attaining Islamic unity.



Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (image: Fars)

This concept, which Iranian revolutionary ideologues have called Umm Al-Qura – one of the names of Mecca – considers Iran the true Mecca, that is, Iran is the religious, spiritual, and political center of the Muslim world. These ideologues have set out a vision and a mission to spread revolutionary Shi'ite Islam across the geographic and religious region of the Islamic world.

According to this doctrine, Iran appropriates the leadership role of the Sunni Islam that is based on Mecca and on that city's historic role in Islamic history, as part of the generations of political and religious struggle between

the Shi'a and the Sunna. This constitutes also an additional layer in the intra-Islamic philosophical discussion on what form an Islamic regime should take, and of how to rebuild the Islamic world after centuries of repeated defeat by Western civilization.

In principle, it is an overall Islamic view, shared by both Sunnis and Shi'ites, that Islam not only defines sovereign borders but also demands the loyalty of Muslims living outside the borders of the Islamic state and their obedience to this state's ruler.[7] Thus, it is no wonder that the concept of Umm Al-Qura as the political-religious center of the entire Islamic world was developed in the modern era by the Sunni thinker Abd Al-Rahman Al-Kawakibi in the late 19th century, on the eve of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the last Islamic caliphate. In his book Umm Al-Qura, published in 1901, Al-Kawakibi proposed a doctrine for rehabilitating the status of Islam and the Muslims, which centered on restoring the Arabs, who have a separate and unique ethnic identity not shared by the other Muslim peoples, as leaders of the Islamic world, and also on bringing Muslims back to the original Salafi Islam. In Al-Kawakibi's thought, two ideological aspects had nourished two different movements in the Arab and Muslim world of the modern era: the anti-imperialist national Arab movement, and the Islamic Salafi movement, from which emerged the various Islamic jihadi movements.

Al-Kawakibi (image: Aljazeera.com)

The Umm Al-Qura concept was espoused, and upgraded, by Iranian revolutionary ideologues, who adapted it to the needs of Iran's Islamic Revolution. For example, Ayatollah Sadeq Taqi Mesbah Yazdi published, in the autumn of 1996, an article titled "The Authorities of the Ruler of the Jurisprudent [Vali-e Faqih] Outside The Borders [Of the State]," in the *Islamic Regime* journal of the Center of Scientific Research of the Assembly of Experts.[8] In his article, Mesbah Yazdi stressed that Muslims are obligated to pledge allegiance (i.e give *ba'ya*) and obey the worthy Islamic ruler regardless of geographic borders, ethnic affiliation, linguistic association, or anything else. He said: "From the point of view of Islam, the main element for the unity of the ummah and Islamic society is the unifying of faith, and there is no validity at all in the unity of states and in the existence of geographic borders, whether natural or agreed-upon... If a certain Islamic state is run by the Rule of the Jurisprudent, its ruler has supremacy... Therefore, his order is binding for every Muslim, and even Muslims in non-Islamic countries must obey him."[9]

Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi (image: Farsnews.com)

It should be noted that the Iranian ideologues' view of the Umm Al-Qura concept is not aimed against the imperialist West – that is, the U.S, Israel, and so on – as it is camouflage for Iran's effort to expand the hegemonic Iranian-Shi'ite territory within the Islamic world at the expense of the historic Sunni hegemony that has prevailed in the Middle East for 14 centuries. Although hatred for America, the Great Satan, and Israel, the Little Satan, as well as antisemitism, are central elements in the ideology of the Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran, the concept

of Umm Al-Qura, which deals with the historic Shi'ite-Sunni conflict, is not directed against them.

Burning Israeli and American flags (image: ISNA, Tasnim, Iran, July 1, 2016)

The hatred for the U.S. and Israel are two ideological focal points that serve the concept of Umm Al-Qura as camouflage for the Iranian-Shi'ite aspiration to expand Iranian hegemony at the expense of the Sunni hegemony in the region. Dialogue with the U.S., the Great Satan, and even with Israel is possible and has been carried out in the past when necessary, but the Iranian-Shi'ite hostility towards Sunni Islam in the region and the struggle against are existential issues as far as revolutionary Iran is concerned.

Iranian spokesmen take care not to present the Umm Al-Qura concept as an Iranian doctrine aimed at expanding Iran's hegemony. In order to conceal their real aim, and to keep Sunni Muslims in the dark and recruit them to join the Iranian struggle for regional hegemony, Ayatollah Khomeini coined the saying "The path to Jerusalem goes through Karbala" – that is, the struggle for the ultimate Islamic goal (Jerusalem) goes through Iranian control of areas that historically been part of Sunni hegemony (Karbala in Iraq). This slogan is reiterated by Iranian regime officials and the Iranian military leadership today as well. Thus, even Iranian-Shi'ite involvement in fighting the Sunni Islamic State (ISIS), which is presented by the Iranian regime as a justified struggle against terrorism, constitutes effective cover for the Iranian-Shi'ite striving for regional hegemony, by deliberately eliminating every center of Sunni power in the arena of the fighting – Iraq, Syria, and Yemen – so as to create a contiguous swath of Iranian hegemony from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean.[10]

This strategy was not completely clear, because Iran had refrained from direct involvement in Sunni-Shi'ite conflicts, acting only via proxies – and its spokesmen have publicly denied such action and stressed that Iran has never started a war against its neighbors. But it was recently revealed when Iran began direct military involvement in Sunni-Shi'ite areas of conflict. In the past few years, senior Iranian officials have begun to express this strategy openly.

Thus, for example, **Ali Younesi, advisor to Iranian President Hassan Rohani** and a former intelligence minister, stated, in March 2015, that Iran was once again an empire as it had been in the past, and that its capital, Iraq, was "the center of Iranian heritage, culture, and identity." He stressed that the Iranian Islam is the pure Islam, with no Arabism, racism, or nationalism.[11]

Ali Younesi, advisor to Iranian President Hassan Rohani (image: En.alalam.ir)

Ali Akbar Velayati, advisor to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, said in February 2013: "Iran has planned defensive positions outside its borders and linked its fate to the fate of the Islamic countries, and therefore will support people such as [Syrian President] Bashar Al-Assad to the end."[12]

Ayatollah Mohammad Baqr Kharazi, director-general of Hezbollah Iran and part of the elite of the Iranian regime, presented a plan in 2010 for establishing "Greater Iran" in the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan, in the first stage, and for creating a union of Islamic countries under Iran's leadership.[13] In 2013, he promised that if he were elected president he would restore Tajikistan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to Iranian sovereignty.[14]

Ayatollah Mohammad Baqr Kharazi, director-general of Hezbollah (image: ISNA, Iran, February 9, 2013)

On May 2, 2014, **Yahyah Rahim Safavi, security advisor to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei** and former commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), said: "Iran's line of defense against Israel stretches to South Lebanon, and our strategic defensive depth reaches to the Mediterranean and above Israel's head."[15]

Ali Saeedi, Khamenei's representative in the IRGC, said in August 2015 that Iran's strategic depth is in Yemen, Lebanon, Gaza, Bahrain, and Syria.[16]

Ali Saeedi (image: Press.tv.ir)

IRGC commander Ali Ja'fari said on September 15, 2014 that "the missions of the [IRGC elite unit] Qods Force are outside Iran's borders and it aids the revolutionary movements, the resistance movements, and the oppressed worldwide. Whether in Syria, Iraq, or Lebanon, if there is a need for help, we will help."[17]

IRGC commander Ali Ja'fari (image: En.trend.az)

Mohammad Ali Falaki, retired IRGC general and an associate of the Iranian military elite, discussed, in August 2016, the Shi'ite Liberation Army that Iran established for the war at its three battle fronts in the Middle East – Syria, Iraq, and Yemen – under the command of Qods Force leader Qassim Soleimani and the oversight of Leader Khamenei.[18]

Hossein Hamdani, former IRGC commander in Tehran, revealed, at a May 2014 regime conference in Hamadan, the extent of Iran's involvement in Syria. He said that Iran was operating in Syria out of concern for the interests of the Islamic Revolution and that it had established popular militias, called the Second Hizbullah, in 14 districts in Syria, with a total of 70,000 members.[19]

Hossein Hamedani (image: Iranbriefing.net)

Mehdi Taeb, head of Khamenei's Ammar Base think tank and the brother of IRGC intelligence director Hossein Taeb, said in March 2013 that Syria is "the 35th district [of Iran] and a strategic district for it," and stressed that losing it would lead to the loss of Tehran.[20]

Mehdi Taeb (image: Nowruziran.wordpress.com)

Additionally, the escalation in the Iran-Saudi clash in its various aspects, both political and military, has also exposed additional aspects of this strategy (see **Appendix: MEMRI Reports On Iran-Saudi Conflict**).

Beyond these verbal statements, Iran's approach is manifested on the ground in its military involvement in the various areas of the fighting in the region – Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen – and in its tremendous investments and in the heavy price it is paying in Shi'ite casualties, from both Iran and the entire Muslim world.[21]

This paper is in two parts: Part I, below, will review the Umm Al-Qura concept, while Part II, forthcoming, will review its implementation by the Iranian regime in the Islamic region.

Part I – The Concept Of Umm Al-Qura

The Concept Of Umm Al-Qura In The Thought Of Mohammad-Javad Larijani

In the winter of 1996, Mohammad-Javad Larijani, a senior Iranian regime official, who is the secretary of Iran's Judiciary High Council for Human Rights and an advisor to Khamenei, as well as a member of the prominent Larijani family, three of whose members hold top positions in Iran, published an article titled "The Political Boundaries" in the *Islamic Regime* journal of the Center of Scientific Research of the Assembly of Experts.[22] He described the article as an expansion of Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi's Autumn 1996 article "The Authorities of the Ruler of the Jurisprudent [Vali-e Faqih] Outside The Borders [Of the State]" in the same publication. Larijani wrote:

Mohammad-Javad Larijani (image: Press.tv.ir)

"A state in which the Islamic regime is in complete control has a select status, called Umm Al-Qura. The most important, and the major, unique aspect of Umm Al-Qura is that the Islamic regime was established [in that state] and that its leader the worthy one and his authority extends throughout the entire Islamic ummah. That is, this leader is worthy of leading the entire Islamic ummah, even though in practice his leadership is only actualized, for now, in Umm Al-Qura."

Larijani went on to explain that the Muslims in Iran, as well as Iran's Assembly of Experts, must make decisions concerning the selection of the leader and his actions, with the understanding that a worthy and chosen leader serves not only them in Iran, but the entire Muslim ummah.

This concept forces is actually forcing the worthy leader chosen by Iran on the entire Islamic world. This is also a one-time selection; in the case of Ayatollah Khomeini, it was made by the people, but this was not so with the selection of Khamenei, who did not even have the religious rank necessary to become Supreme Leader.

Larijani continued: "Although the leader of Umm Al-Qura officially rules only a certain state [Iran], the entire Islamic ummah must obey him... Any defeat or victory by Umm Al-Qura is a defeat or victory for Islam. Therefore, if Umm Al-Qura is attacked, the entire Islamic ummah must rise to defend it... The Islamic ummah is a collection of people who have chosen Islam as the foundation of their actions, and believe in it. Therefore, everyone in the Islamic ummah has a responsibility towards Umm Al-Qura – even if they live in infidel lands and are distant from it."

Larijani then analyzed various situations in which there is more than one Islamic regime or worthy leader, and examined the question who should be the leader worthy of ruling the Islamic state.

Ideologically confronting what he sees as the Western

championing of individualism aimed at promoting the hegemony of Western liberal economic order, Larijani stated that under the Islamic doctrine there must be "a unified Ummah with one consolidated regime." This, he added, "will be seen as a peak for the new Islamic culture."

He then sets out several phases for actualizing this vision:

"Phase one: Creating awareness of the need to revive Islam in the life of the individual and society.

"Phase two: Making an effort to establish Islamic regimes in several states in today's Islamic world. These efforts would naturally come from the people... Sometimes it will be possible to use tools that already exist, such as parliamentary elections and so on, and sometimes there should be street demonstrations, so that this movement will achieve results...

"The third phase begins when the people in several important states in the Islamic world succeed in establishing an Islamic regime. In this situation, the Islamic regimes should be … reorganized … and included in a unified regime in the [Islamic] Ummah...

"Here we must pay attention to a critical foundation of our Islamic logic – that we are obligated to carry out this mission..."[23]

Mohammad Javad-Larijani's 2007 Interview With Iranian Daily Resalat

In a February 2007 interview, Larijani explained additional aspects of the Umm Al-Qura concept to the Iranian daily *Resalat,* underlining again the supremacy of the Islamic state and its existential interests over the problems of oppressed Muslims at the edges of the Islamic region and over dealing with them as a priority. Reiterating Ayatollah Khomeini's saying, "The road to Jerusalem goes through Karbala," he explained that the Umm Al-Qura concept is aimed at reconciling two interests that appear to contradict each other: the interest of Iran as a state with defined borders, and the overall Islamic interest which is supranational.

He explained that what qualifies an Islamic state for the special status of Umm Al-Qura is not how Islamic a state is, but whether its defeat would be considered a defeat of all Islam. According to this definition, he said, the fall of the Saudi or Pakistani regime would have no ramifications for Islam as a whole, but the fall of the Islamic rule in Iran would be a defeat for the entire Islamic world: "If we are defeated, it will be said that the [entire] Islamic rule was defeated. According to this view, we become Umm Al-Qura."

Larijani also reiterated that when a certain place, such as present-day Iran, attains the status of Umm Al-Qura, all Muslims are "obligated to defend it... Defending Umm Al-Qura is not a mission just for the Iranians, but for every Muslim. If, God forbid, the Islamic regime in Iran is destroyed and becomes a monarchy, as it was in the past, Iran will no longer be Umm Al-Qura... Today, the logic of our actions is the logic of Umm Al-Qura... [Therefore] we believe that if Iran is attacked or if its interests are jeopardized, it is other states' Islamic duty to assist it – because the defeat of Iran is the defeat of Islam."[24]

Iranian Regime Officials Talk About Implementing The Concept of Iran As Umm Al-Qura In Our Time

IRGC Deputy Commander Hossein Salami said in a November 27, 2016 interview with Basij Week TV: "In fact, the idea to create the Basij was a divine prophecy [delivered] to the Imam [Khomeini], and can be seen as a wondrous miracle, as it is an innovation by the Imam. That is, the creation of the Basij was not based on any previous model or experience; it was created out of Imam Khomeini's profound internal understanding, true prophecy, profound wise thought, and view of the future. The Imam Khomeini envisioned a Basij of the Islamic world. This idea and thought was later realized by the leader of the Revolution [Khamenei], and, gradually, this great defense institution has crossed the borders of Iran.

"If you look today at the arena of regional developments, you will clearly see the blessed tree of the Basij at differ-

ent points of the Islamic world. For instance, Hizbullah in Lebanon has become a powerful defensive apparatus in the eastern Mediterranean, and defender of the honor and independence of the people in Lebanon – even of other Muslims and of the Palestinians. This is an example of a Basij in a different country in the Muslim world.

Deputy Commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Brigadier General Hossein Salami(image: Press.tv.ir)

"Additionally, when you currently look at Ansarollah – the fighting Muslim people in Yemen – which stands against America's criminal policy that is being implemented by Saudi Arabia, [you can see] that they have created an infinite and powerful channel of resistance near the Yemeni Red Sea. This is another example from the blessed tree of the Basij in the Muslim world.

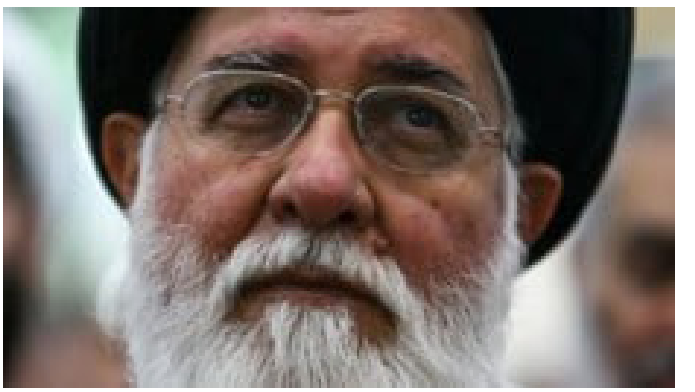
"Likewise, if you look at the developments in Syria... Without the expansion of the Basij model in the society in Syria, which recruits the people's desires and beliefs to support national security [there] and the regime that rules in Syria – the current developments in Syria would have benefitted the Zionist regime, and America and its regional allies...

"Obviously, also in the other Islamic countries, like Bahrain and Afghanistan, we are seeing the first signs of the Basij. The Basij is broadening its reach and presence in the political, security, cultural, and social arenas of the Muslim world and within its expanding borders. Therefore, we have gained a prominent role in this global creation, and this process is unstoppable.

"We have exported the Basij philosophy or the Basij model... According to the Basij philosophy, the Muslim world does not think much of geographic borders. The borders are being removed. The Basij is the symbol of globalization of religious and revolutionary faith in the Islamic world; therefore, according to the Basij logic, geographic borders [are set by] faith in the goals, beliefs, and thoughts [of Islam]...

"In our society, the Basij is mightier than all political streams, that is, the Basij is not within or in the framework of [any] political stream. Rather, it is part of the Islamic Revolution's discourse, which is rooted in the philosophy, thought, and discourse of the Rule of the Jurisprudent."[25]

Ayatollah Ahmad Alam Al-Hoda, Khamenei's representative in Khorasan, said on November 24, 2016: "Restricting [the role of] the Basij and IRGC [just] to the military level [inside Iran] is a plot [against Iran and against Islam]... [since] today, our fighters are fighting in Iraq and Syria, because this is not just defense of Iran, but rather of Islam and the Revolution. The true goal is the spread of Islam and the Revolution – and the Basij defends them."[26]



Ayatollah Ahmad Alam Al-Hoda (image: Ifpnews.com)

Yahya Rahim Safavi, advisor to Khamenei, said at a November 29, 2016 commemorative service for the 500 Iranians who died in Chalus during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War: "Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen have copied their models from the Iranian Basij. In Syria, our youth have

created a popular Basij comprising the Syrian people, who have fought terrorist elements for 68 months... Allah willing, in this century we will witness the revelation of the might of Islam, made up of [an Islamic] government [in Iran] and Islamic nations. Iran will be the central axis of this tremendous might."[27]

Islamic Revolution (image: Press.tv.ir)

APPENDIX – MEMRI Reports On The Iran-Saudi Conflict

MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6622, Iran, Saudi Arabia Clash Swords In U.S. Press, September 21, 2016.

MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6607, Following Rafsanjani Call To Moderate Iranian Policy Vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia, Khamenei Delivers Virulently Anti-Saudi Speech, Sparking Increased Conflict With Kingdom, September 12, 2016.

MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6260, Saudi-Iranian Tensions As Depicted In Cartoons, January 13, 2016.

MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 1215, Unprecedented Tension Between Saudi Arabia, Iran Following Execution Of Shi'ite Cleric Nimr Al-Nimr, January 4, 2016.

MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6251, Iran Furious Over Saudi Arabia's Execution Of Shi'ite Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr, January 4, 2016.

MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6183, Iran Threatens Saudi Arabia: 'The IRGC... Will Take Vengeance' On The Al-Sa'ud Regime; 'Our Responses Will Be... Harsh And Decisive', November 10, 2015.

MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 1144, Iran Threatens Saudi Arabia; Khamenei: Iran Will Answer Saudi Arabia 'A Blow With A Blow', October 2, 2015.

MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 5918, IRGC Weekly To Saudis: 'Iran Has Many Options For Harming Saudi Arabia... All [It] Needs To Do Is Use A Single One Of [Them] So That Nothing Remains Of The Entity Named The Aal-Saud Regime Or Of Saudi Arabia Itself', December 30, 2014.

MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 5858, Associates Of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei: Saudi Arabia Is The Source Of Scheming Against The Islamic World; The Al-Saud Family Is Of Jewish Origin – And Its Turn To Fall Has Come, October 14, 2014.

MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 1108, Iran's New Strategy Of Diversion: Persuading The Sunni Camp To Fight Israel, Not Iran, July 31, 2014.

MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 1068, Iran Calls For Violent Shi'ite Reaction Against Saudi Arabia, February 12, 2014.

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Endnotes

1 The name "Mojtaba" is of Arabic origin and means "the chosen one." It is widely recognized as one of the titles of the second Shi'a Imam, Hassan Al-Mojtaba, son of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and in some traditions it is also the name of the Prophet Muhammad. His being a Sayyid, who wears a black turban – that is, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad – reinforces his image as a link in the chain of religious leadership preparing the world for the arrival of the Mahdi.

2 See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 1328, Iran President Ahmadinejad: 'I Have a Connection With God, Since God Said That the Infidels Will Have No Way to Harm the Believers'; 'We Have [Only]

One Step Remaining Before We Attain the Summit of Nuclear Technology'; The West 'Will Not Dare To Attack Us', October 19, 2006.

3 See statements by Jaber Al-Rajabi, then-advisor to president Ahmadinejad who defected in 2016 and knew Mojtaba Khamenei. He described him as a messianic extremist who believes he is Al-Khorasani, the mythical figure who will pave the way for the appearance of the Mahdi, and that he is racist against Arabs, as well as extremely cruel and certain in his belief that the end justifies all possible means. See X.com/Ndawsari/status/2030811268991324671, March 8, 2026; X.com/LizHurra/status/2030902780651549178, March 9, 2026.

4 In publications associated with "active Mahdist" circles in Iran, and particularly the controversial 2011 propaganda film *The [Mahdi's] Imminent Appearance, Jordanian King Abdullah II* is presented as *Sufyan.* This is because of his lineage as a member of the Hashemite family – Sunni descendants of Muhammad – and also because of his ties to the West and his physical appearance, which they say are in accordance with the signs mentioned in the *hadith*.

5 Shortly after the war on Iran began, in early March 2026, Iranian regime officials announced that they can hold on for six months fighting the U.S., Israel, and the Sunni world.

6 Dr. Eli Eshed, "*The Shi'ite Apocalypse – Part One: The End of Days According to the Shi'a*," April 2012, Yekum.org.

7 This is also the perception of the Sunni Islamic State (ISIS), which demands an oath of allegiance from every Sunni Muslim outside its borders.

8 Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, "The Authorities of the Ruler of the Jurisprudent [Vali-e Faqih] Outside The Borders [Of the State]," in the *Islamic Regime* journal, Year 1, Part I, Autumn 1996, pp 82-96. The journal was published by the Assembly of Experts' Center of Scientific Research; on July 24, 2006 it was posted on Hawzah.net.

9 Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, "The Authorities of the Ruler of the Jurisprudent [Vali-e Faqih] Outside The Borders [Of the State]," in *Islamic Regime,* Year 1, Part I, Autumn 1996, p. 85 and p. 92, respectively.

10 See MEMRI Daily Brief No. 109, Two Presidents, One Fatal Historic Move, November 4, 2016.

11 See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 5991 - Advisor To Iranian President Rohani: Iran Is An Empire, Iraq Is Our Capital; We Will Defend All The Peoples Of The Region; Iranian Islam Is Pure Islam – Devoid Of Arabism, Racism, Nationalism, March 9. 2015.

12 Yjc.ir, February 8, 2013.

13 MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 3021, The Iranian Supremacy Manifesto of 'Greater Iran': Hezbollah-Iran Secretary-General Lays Out Plan, Strategy for Reestablishing 'Greater Iran' as Prelude to Establishment of Global Government Led by the Mahdi - 06/10/10, June 10, 2010.

14 See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 5219 - Iranian Ayatollah: If Elected President, I'll Restore Iran's Sovereignty Over Tajikistan, Armenia, And Azerbaijan, June 3, 2013.

15 Mehr (Iran), May 2, 2014.

16 See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6133, Khamenei's IRGC Representative: Lebanon, Gaza, Bahrain, Syria Constitute Iran's Essential Strategic Depth, August 14, 2015.

17 Tasnim (Iran), September 16, 2014.

18 MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6611, Iranian General Discusses Shi'ite Liberation Army Under Command Of Qassem Soleimani, Who Is Subordinate To Supreme Leader Khamenei, September 15, 2016.

19 See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 5848, Iranian Media Reports Deleted Following Publication (1): Senior IRGC Official Speaking On Iran's Military Involvement In Syria Says Iran Has Established 'Second Hizbullah' There, September 24, 2014.

20 See MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 946, Iranian Official: The Loss Of Syria Will Lead To The Loss Of Tehran Itself; Syria Is An Iranian Province; Iran Has Formed A 60,000-Strong Syrian Basij; Israel Is Our Only Threat, March 11, 2013.

21 It should be noted that Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei emphasized that the 2011 Arab Spring was in fact an "Islamic Awakening," in order to apply Iranian Islamic Revolution terminology and goals to the Sunni uprisings against dictatorships.

22 Mohammad Javad Larijani, "The Political Boundaries," *Islamic Regime* journal,, Year 1, Part II, Winter 1996, pp. 37-49. The journal was published by the Assembly of Experts' Center for Scientific Research, and was posted on July 24, 2006 on Hawzah.net.

23 Mohammad Javad Larijani, "The Political Boundaries," *Islamic Regime* journal,, Year 1, Part II, Winter 1996, pp. 37-49.

24 *Resalat* (Iran), February 12, 2007.

25 Tasnim (Iran), November 27, 2016.

26 Tasnim (Iran), November 24, 2016.

27 ISNA (Iran), November 29, 2016.