

Policy of Cultural Reformation

In parts of the Encyclopedia of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), the reason for and the quality of people's uprising against 'Uthman's rule is delineated, the most important of which is standing up against administrative corruptions and economic disturbances.¹ People had been fed up with the undue extravagance and nepotism, and would not tolerate the incompetent sovereignty and inefficient statesmen who had been assigned to their posts only because of their attachment to the Caliph. From the early days of his rule, Ali (a.s.) thus started his bureaucratic and economic reforms despite all the difficulties that arose thereby.

However, the ground was not paved for accomplishment of cultural and intellectual reforms and fight against value deformations and deviations which had taken place in various dimensions in the Islamic state. Ali (a.s.) had to delay and act hesitantly, preparing the ground to begin the struggle. In other words, the endeavor required more stability and stronger establishment of his government. That was why Ali (a.s.) would say:

If my steps acquire firmness out of these slippery places, I would alter several things.²

The Imam could not easily and immediately fight against what had over a period of 25 years rooted in people's minds, tongues, souls, and characters and made them accustomed to it, building a different culture for them.

Undoubtedly, this fight would have raised widespread discontent and exacerbated the already knotty affairs, hindering the chance for other reformations. So, forbearance had to be shown until the time for plucking fruits would come up.

Anyway, Ali (a.s.) embarked on reforms on the basis of a precise planning, a clear perspective, and explicit goals aiming at restoring the community back to the prophet's sira and sunna. He took the first step toward creation and expansion of social justice and execution of administrative and economic reforms, carrying it on to the end of his life in order to lay the foundation for a thoroughly "Islamic" community based on the Qur'anic values and Divine doctrines. Evil-mindedness, ill-naturedness,

inhumanity, and tyrannies regrettably hindered that man of justice and faith from achieving all those goals.

What we deal here with is an account of most fundamental 'Alawi Reform in bureaucratic, cultural, economic, social, judicial, security, military, and international areas on the basis of historical and hadith texts, as well as an explanation of reforms principles. Undoubtedly, a thorough account of the Imam's political foundations and an interpretation of his reformation, demands more time.

One: The Foundations of Ruling over the Hearts

Islam is the religion of hukuma, which is clearly evident in the doctrines of this Divine Faith. A close study of the Islamic texts dealing with foundations of Islamic hukuma, however, indicates that Islam is a religion that rules over the people's hearts rather than over their "bodies" and dominating them with political authority. Principles of this type of ruling and statesmanship are tantamount to the political foundations of the Islamic state; and political foundations of 'Alawi [ruling] system are the very foundations of Islamic management.

Islam is the code of material and spiritual evolution of human beings. Affection is the most basic element of this code. Affection is so functional in realization of the Islamic state and the plans provided by the Divine religion for development of human society that Al-Imam al-Baqir considers the religion of Islam as nothing but affection, and asserts:

Is religion anything but affection?[3](#)

In Ali (a.s.)'s view, main pillars of Islam and its principles of evolutionary planning are based on love for Allah. He says in this respect:

This Islam is the religion which Allah has chosen for Himself, developed it before His eyes, chose it as the best among His Creation, and established its pillars on His love.[4](#)

Religious guides and true political leaders of Islamic community are manifestations of people's love for God, and people's love for them is love for God. Accordingly, Islamic hukuma is basically stationed beyond people's allegiance and decision [by voting]. Islamic hukuma is rooted in people's love, which is indeed the secret of so much emphasis given by the Qur'an and Islamic hadiths about love of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.).

On the other hand, it is evident that love is not imperative. Man can not be forced to love someone or something merely by circulars, contrary to his inner drive.

Man loves beauty, and love for beauty lies deep in his soul. He, by nature, loves all types of material and spiritual beauties. Thus, if he views a person's insight, character, and manner as beautiful he would fall in love with him; and if he finds him displeasing, he would turn his face away from him. This is man's

natural expediency, unless his inner nature shifts otherwise.

Hence, we realize that the secret of emphasis on love of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.), and the philosophy of its necessity is persuasion to achieve a real knowledge about them; for their character, conduct, and treatment of people is so beautiful and attractive that true and unbiased knowledge of them simply leads to fondness for and attachment to them. How is it possible to see and know so much beauty in Ali (a.s.)'s conduct and not to love him, unless one has lost his human conscience and defiled his pure and noble nature? This is the secret of people's such fervent love and devotion toward Ali (a.s.). Obviously, these lovers consist of various types of people throughout the history and unbounded by ideologies and beliefs, from all schools of thought; as, beauty and love for beauty has no boundaries, like love for Ali (a.s.) which is the greatest manifestation of beauty.

Ali (a.s.)'s conduct in his life span was replete with adherence to Truth, Truth-centeredness, and spreading of Truth, especially in his demonstration of the most beautiful aspect of human rule during his brief period of hukuma. Would it be possible to behold Ali (a.s.)'s comely grace and beauty and its manifestation in his hukuma and not to fall in love with it?!

Now, before we elaborate on historical and hadith text relating to 'Alawi statesmanship, we intend to review the Imam's political principles in government. This review would be very brief, within our limited ability and time. In reality, restating these principles is, in itself, revealing the secret of creation of Ali (a.s.)'s beauties and attractions, and indicating the political principles of ruling over hearts. We hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran officials do their best in familiarizing with, introducing, and approaching these beauties and try to identify the reality of their political and administrative life as well as their transient responsibility with his; hence, delineating a perspective of 'Alawi comely hukuma for the people of the world.

Two: Administrative Policies

Imam Ali (a.s.)'s managerial policies in administration may be stated in the following principles:

1. Honesty in Politics

Honesty can be considered as the most fundamental principle in Ali (a.s.)'s managerial policies. Throughout history, statesmen were mostly dishonest to people; what they have told people was not what they had thought about it or acted accordingly. Ali (a.s.) had set honesty and truthfulness to people as a steadfast principle in his sovereignty and remained faithful to it from the early days to the moment of his martyrdom. Undoubtedly, honesty has been one of the most significant everlasting attractions of Ali (a.s.)'s rule over the hearts and throughout the history, and an explicit distinction bordering line between 'Alawi and Umayyad politics.

In Umayyad culture, honesty is meaningless, with fabrication, telling lies, and imposture being the motif

of their politics. As mentioned earlier and as it is evident to those having a slight familiarity with history of politics, most statesmen of the past had no implication of politics except for inversion of reality and spreading falsehood in their interactions. Narrating a memory of the late Imam Khomeini (ra) in this respect would be much self-evident and interesting. After his first raging attack against the tyrannical monarchy, that noble figure was arrested. One of the heads of state met with the Imam (ra) and talked to him about politics. Imam (ra)'s account of what that person told is as follows:

"[He said:] Politics is maliciousness, lying, rascality and... so, you'd better leave it to us!"

Imam Khomeini (ra) goes on to say:

"He was right in that. If politics is such things, let it be theirs."⁵

Such is the professional statesmen's business; if lying, deception, and double-facedness are eliminated from politics, nothing will be left of it. 'Alawi politics is in sharp contrast with this. At first glance, honesty is the prime requirement of statesmanship. If honesty is left out of statesmen's array of actions and interactions with people, the Truth-orientedness, adherence to law, human rights, social justice, etc., would be rendered meaningless and vain. In other words, all these in the absence of honesty would be mere slogans for deception of people and instruments for further violation of their rights.

In 'Alawi politics, employing "inverting" method is permissible only in battles, within all the restrictions, exceptions, and frameworks which will be pointed out when talking about "Imam's warfare policies".

2. Truth-Orientedness

Truth-orientedness is a manifestation of political honesty in 'Alawi Rule. Adherence to Truth and Truth-orientedness is evident all through Ali (a.s.)'s short period of rule. He thought of nothing but truth and intended anything except restoring of rights. His outcry is for restoring of rights, and his silence is for preparing the grounds for safeguarding the Truth. His teaching in this respect is very thought-provoking and awakening.

There were many who spoke of Truth and Truth-orientedness; but when their personal, group and sectarian interests happened to conflict with their slogans, their interpretations and justifications would come to their aid to sacrifice the Truth. But, it is surprising how steadfast Ali (a.s.) was in his Truth-orientedness. Truth, in his view, is the "Principle". So it must be equally practiced for all – friends, near of kin, insiders, outsiders, etc.

3. Adherence to law

Law is a strong cord that brings cohesion among different social strata. It is not a matter of lawlessness, as a lawless society is a jungle rather than a human society; rather, it is a matter of law status, and the way rulers and people look at it. Respect for law, in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s view, is irrefutable. This can be

perceived throughout many texts, including the Encyclopedia of Amir al-Mu'minin, where his interaction with people in financial matters, execution of legal punishments, etc., is introduced.

Deliberation on this collection will show us that in Ali (a.s.)'s view no one transcends the law, nor anybody or any authority can hinder the execution of Divine law. Obviously, Ali (a.s.)'s position indicates that he does not regard himself as a man of authority before law.⁶ That was why he did not tolerate compromise and struggled with flattery and hypocrisy in politics, strongly disagreeing with falsehood, affected rightfulness, justifications, and [personal] interpretations that were so prevalent in Umayyad's politics.

4. Administrative Discipline

Imam Ali (a.s.) frequently and emphatically enjoined orderliness in affairs and discipline in conducts. This instruction was so important to the Imam that even in his deathbed – where he would naturally have stated his most significant and efficient instructions – he emphasized orderliness in affairs.⁷

He views orderliness in life and discipline in action as among the lofty goals of Divine revelation:

Verily, in it (the Qur'an) lies the knowledge of the future and accounts of the past, remedy to your maladies, and [establishing] orderliness among you.

Again and again he would advise his administrators to attempt in maintaining administrative discipline and not forgetting orderliness in affairs, doing whatever they plan to in their due time and not wasting their time in disorder and confusion.

5. Appointment of Competent and Capable Administrators

Administrators are the executive arms of rulers, and agents of establishing justice and spreading of law in society. Their competence, capability, steadfastness and behavioral soundness are doubtlessly most effective in organizing the society in its various dimensions. Thus, from Imam Ali (a.s.)'s viewpoint in appointing administrators only competence and merits must be the criteria, rather than kinship and relations. "Meritocracy" is the quintessence of appointment in 'Alawi politics. Moral competence, familial originality, expertise, and capability should be the criteria for being appointed, rather than kinship, causal, factional, and sectarian relations, particularly if politically weighed.

By Imam's doctrine, directors and officials are not privileged to grant governmental posts on the basis of familial or political relations. They are not privileged to consign people's affairs to those who are not of noble birth; they are not privileged to assign those who are distanced from moral virtues and good disposition; they are not privileged to employ those who do not possess the proper expertise and due cheerfulness in executive jobs. Job of an administrator is a "trust" and should not be consigned to anyone but a trustworthy person.

6. Providing the Administrators with their financial Needs

The Imam believed that the administrators must enjoy sufficient remuneration. From the viewpoint of Imam Ali (a.s.), to prevent form corruption and to prepare the ground for reformation, it is necessary that administrators be remunerated handsomely. In that case, on one hand, they will avoid clutching at the public treasury; and on the other, the officials will have the authority to punish the mutinous and treacherous and to discipline the corrupt, and the violators would not have a pretext for their violations.

7. Special Care for the Armed Forces

Armed forces are strong fortresses for guarding the sovereignty of a community. The latter's military power is undoubtedly very influential in maintaining security and preventing the enemy's intrusion, and above all, in barring even the temptation by the rebels to launch an invasion. Military forces, in Imam's view, must enjoy special care from the officials. They must interact with troops as fathers do with their children.

8. Necessity for setting up an Establishment to Monitor the Function of the Administrators

The world is a slippery abode, and the worldly attractions and glamour cause blunder and fall. The officials are to take utmost care in selecting administrators, to the extent that they appoint pure-hearted, good-tempered, and steadfast people for administrative tasks. Once they achieve this goal, they should not feel relieved of the possible administrative corruption, violation of the law, and behavioral abnormalities.

Therefore, setting up an organization for supervising the administrators' behavior and watching over the administrative violations and deviations would be mandatory. Imam Ali (a.s.) strongly forbade prying into people's privacy in a ruling system⁸; but he emphasized on surveillance over employees of an Islamic state and monitoring the administrators' behavior through certain intelligence establishments, lest they should neglect their duties or violate people's rights by means of their power and the authority at their disposal.

The part of Imam's letters in this respect and his letters to the wrongdoing administrators such as Ash'ath b. Qays, Ziyad b. Abih, 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas, Qudama b. 'Ajlan, Masqala b. Hubayra, and Mundhir b. Jarud, indicate that his holiness had employed very powerful intelligence establishments in his government to Monitor the administrators.

But what is extraordinary here is that the informants were both honest and faithful so that they would watch over carefully, follow up steadfastly, and investigate honestly on one hand, and would be veracious and faithful in their reports, on the other.

The ones that Ali (a.s.) had selected for this extremely important task were so highly endowed with

justice, veracity, and authoritativeness that their reports were the bases for administrative rewards and punishments. Those doing good were rewarded by means of the reports, and the treacherous were punished once proved guilty, and the corrupt ones were expelled from work to serve as an example for others.

9. Never Accepting any Gifts

In order to put an end to bribery in the bureaucratic system and cleanse the society of this evil and corruptive practice, he banned acceptance of gifts. Anyhow, the imposters would try to penetrate by any possible means into the administrative body of the government to utilize the state facilities. Hence, the Imam ruled the acceptance of gifts as deception (ghulul) and bribery as polytheism (shirk).

10. Decisiveness Coupled with Tolerance

Ali (a.s.)'s behavior highly represented decisiveness and tolerance. From his point of view, the administrators must practice tolerance and condescension while being decisive. He regards extreme violence as harmful to the management, as he considers too much leniency and being easygoing in administering justice in people's affairs as detrimental. In Imam's view, a successful manager would be the one who can devise a midway between decisiveness and compassion, strictness and leniency.

Wherever there is need for decisiveness, he should practice it and do not back down; and if leniency is demanded for being successful, he should not avoid using it. Decisiveness Coupled with Tolerance, and strictness joined with leniency is an 'Alawi strategy employed to prevent the rebels from turning more rebellious and the hopeful from becoming desperate. Taking a glance at the tangible examples of what was said here – and presented in this book – would be very instructive.

Three: Cultural Policies

Talking about various dimensions of cultural policies demands much wider attention. Here we bring up the issue just as an introduction to the historical and hadith texts, however briefly, as follows:

1. Development of Education

In 'Alawi system [of hukuma], cultural development precedes economic development, since beside the fact that economic development is not possible without cultural development, a slumbering society submerged in ignorance neither enjoys the economic possibilities, facilities, and blessings nor is endowed with the skills to utilize them or aware of the necessity to use them. Cultural and Educational development is a need of human soul and mind, and economic development is that of the body. It goes without saying that needs of the soul and mind precede [are more significant than] needs of the body.

Imam Ali (a.s.) considered knowledge as the origin and basis of all the physical and spiritual goodness, and a criterion for evaluation of human beings and believed that ignorance is the origin of all evils and

frustrations:

The value of every man is as high as his knowledge.[9](#)

Knowledge is the basis of all goodness, and ignorance is the origin of all evils. [10](#)

He also emphasized that people's needs for knowledge and acquisition of moral virtues are higher than their economic needs:

Verily, people need a good culture more than they need gold and silver.[11](#)

Verily, you need the acquisition of culture and courtesy (adab) more than acquisition of gold and silver.

[12](#)

Looking at this issue from another perspective, we notice that it is clearly stated in Divine doctrines that the philosophy of revelation and the secret of prophethood and the reason for hukuma in the Prophets' school is the education of human beings, removal of ignorance, and motivating the wisdoms. Similarly, Ali (a.s.), whose mind, tongue, and manners are above all else as exponents of Prophetic culture, has represented this fact very beautifully in his sermons[13](#); and clearly represented in his practical way of life the necessity of acculturating people, giving priority to education over bread and water for man, and stressing the development of culture along other dimensions of life. How beautifully he defines paganism (jahiliyya) as a symbol of spreading ignorance and stamping out knowledge. No doubt, a Divine, Prophetic, and 'Alawi community must be far beyond that.[14](#)

2. Correction of Public Culture

Included among sublime and eminent 'Alawi policies is the battle against false traditions, rude manners, unbecoming procedures, and emphasis on decent manners and befitting behaviors, or as briefly stated, rectifying the public culture. Ali (a.s.) would advise his administrators not to eliminate from the society anything on the pretext that it is left over from the past; to support the constructive and humane traditions; and to fight against evil traditions, not tolerating their perpetuation and expansion.

3. Criticism? Yes! But Never Flattery!

Criticism is a right by means of which other rights are restored and despotism – that is the most dangerous pitfall of governments – is banned.

In a society where criticism is free and people are able to disclose the rulers' deficiencies and flaws, the statesmen can better notice their own weak points, fight against corruption and injustice, and offer valuable services.

On the other hand, in the absence of criticism, the grounds will be paved for the emergence of flatterers and sycophants; the statesmen's weak points in policies, plans and steps will remain unnoticed, and thus

corruption, decadence, and injustice in governmental organizations will develop, leading to the fall of the governments.

When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) took over the hukuma, undue praise and exaggerated compliments about authorities were part of the public culture. The rulers not only did not prevent them, but also further promoted them. This way, culture of flattery and sycophancy had developed and the cunning enemies of truth, had, by flattering the commanders and authorities, achieved political and social positions without being qualified for those jobs.

On the other hand, since the authorities were never criticized, they began to consider themselves immaculate and flawless to the extent that they took the constructive and compassionate criticisms as offensive and deemed it obligatory to stand against them.

Of the most comely and exciting 'Alawi measures taken in rectification of public culture was the battle against flattery and sycophancy and stress on constructive criticism.

The Imam required his administrators to appoint their associates, consultants, and companions from among those who were more straightforward in their impartiality and to treat them in a way that they would never appeal to flattery, to evade criticism or praise [others] to excess. He would himself also openly and staunchly challenge any eulogy and responded sarcastically to the eulogists and asked people neither to praise nor to flatter him for his Divine duties, and criticize him benevolently instead if they find anything wrong with his plans or if they find his manners criticizable, and not talk to him like they talk to the tyrants.

Interestingly enough, Amir al-Mu'minin had brought up the issue of letting others criticize him not in regular circumstances but on the most critical occasions of his hukuma, i.e., amid the battle of Siffin.

It so happened that the Imam, in an exciting speech, made some remarks regarding the mutual rights of leadership and the people. One of his companions, who was very excited by these points, began as usual to praise and applaud him in details while expressing his obedience. Without being affected by his praising and applause or even being concerned about the sensitive and critical current circumstances, the Imam responded to so much adoration as follows:

In view of the Virtuous people, the worst position of rulers is that it may be thought about them that they love glory, and their affairs may be taken to be based on pride. I really hate that it may occur to your mind that I love high praises or to hear eulogies. By Grace of Allah, I am not like this. Even if I had loved to be mentioned like this, I would have given it up in submissiveness before Allah rather than accept greatness and sublimity to which He is more entitled...

And do not address me in the manner despots are addressed, do not evade me as the people of passion are (to be) evaded, do not meet me with flattery and do not think that I shall take it ill if a true thing is said to me because the person who feels disgusted when truth is said to him or a just matter is

placed before him would find it more difficult to act upon them.[15](#)

And finally, he draws the following conclusion from his words:

Therefore, do not abstain from saying a truth or pointing out a matter of justice because I do not regard myself above erring. I do not escape erring in my actions but Allah helps me in matters which He is more powerful than I.[16](#)

By these words, Imam Ali (a.s.) clearly expressed that if it were not through God's assistance and Divine infallibility, he would fall to blundering too, and despite his enjoyment of Divine immunity, he wanted the people not to be hindered by his political and spiritual status from criticizing him and stressed that if they realized anything mischievous in his government, they were to proceed to point it out to him.

In other words, by responding to the adoration of that person, the Imam firmly condemns the evil custom of eulogizing and praising the commanders and political authorities in the Muslim community on one hand, and on the other, he wants to promote in people the spirit of criticizing and delving into the actions of the Islamic state authorities, even if they were on the highest level of administration, i.e., the infallible Imam, and in effect to encourage the acceptance of constructive criticism among the Muslim community's high ranking authorities.

4. Imam Ali (a.s.)'s Reaction to Destructive Criticisms

The point which must be made at the end of this discourse is the Imam's sagacious reaction to criticisms. Taking into consideration his sira in encountering with criticisms and protests of three main political opposition trends, i.e., Nakithun (covenant breakers), Qasitun (deviators), and Mariqum (apostates) indicates that although he formally and practically asked people to express their criticism, he did not allow the seekers after power, the spiteful, and the plotters to tell and write whatever they wish to achieve their political goals on the pretext of criticism.[17](#)

5. Adherence to Truth, rather than to Personalities

However high the people soar toward the truth, the possibility of their deviation cannot be denied. Thus, it is worthwhile for the people to notice this fact when following personalities and never deem human beings as "absolute". Drawing attention to this issue and other awakening doctrines of Imam Ali (a.s.) should be viewed as the most fundamental guidelines of that holy Imam in rectifying public culture. Obviously, most political and social deviations in socio-political trends originate from absolutism about figures, and "personalism" in taking stances.

Imam Ali (a.s.) used to warn people that personalities, however great, noble, popular, or trustworthy, cannot be criteria for truth and falsehood. He tried to get the society to a stage of awareness, realization of stances and criteria and cultural consciousness so that people would assess personalities and their stances with Truth, not vice versa; to see the Truth as a criterion for getting to know personalities rather

than the other way round.

Four: Economical Policies

The people who stood up against 'Uthman's policies, proclaimed the reasons for their uprising including economical disorder, the caliph's open-handedness, undue largess, negligence of people's livelihood, and dishonesty in public treasury.

In such climate, Imam Ali (a.s.) on one hand stressed on production, and on the other gives priority to regulation of the market, and finally pays close attention to distribution of the public treasury, ruling out any kind of discrimination. Perhaps this had been the Imam's most difficult position. Principles of 'Alawi policies in economy can be enumerated as follows:

1. Promotion of Work Ethos

In 'Alawi doctrines, paying attention to striving and working enjoys a high status. From Ali (a.s.)'s point of view, economic poverty is caused by the traits of lassitude, inactivity, laziness, and inability. A community replete with cheerfulness and activity and dominated by work ethos will not be inflicted by poverty – which is the origin of many material, spiritual, individual, and social maladies. Thus, the Imam highly emphasized the necessity of work and striving, regarding work as worship, and striving for improvement of living condition as taking steps toward God.

2. Agricultural Development

Land is the source of "life". From the viewpoint of Imam Ali (a.s.) people who possess land and water and are at the same time poverty-stricken, will be far from Divine Mercy and deprived of God's favor. Ali (a.s.) emphasized on reviving the land and recommended the development of farming as a means of eliminating poverty from the community, and called people to engendering prosperity in the lands and exploiting them. Above all, he regarded attention to agriculture as a touchstone for evaluating the governments and their efficiency in rulership, viewing agricultural development as among the main duties of administrators, and troop commanders as defenders of farmers' rights.

3. Development of Crafts

The community in which Ali (a.s.) had set up his hukuma did not have the qualifications for "development of crafts", due to its climatic conditions. However, his holiness – according to the traditions quoted from him placed great importance on crafts, calling them and professions in general as "treasures". Imam Ali (a.s.) enjoined his administrators to seriously support the artisans and encouraged the latter to employ utmost producing well-made goods, and never sacrifice a product's "craftsmanship and quality" for the "speed" in production.

4. Development of Trade

In the early Islam as well as during Imam Ali (a.s.)'s hukuma, trade was most influential. Thus, on one hand he would encourage trade prosperity and on the other, would stress on supporting the merchants within governmental structure; and finally, he would explain how to practice trade, how the merchants were to deal in transactions, and in what manner trading had to be performed.

5. Direct Supervision of the Market

The market presents economic endeavors of a community. Transactions take place in the marketplace, and the marketeers are somehow associated with people. Well-being of the market would lead to well-being in transactions and people's sound exploitation of the process of economic struggles for sustenance. Doubtlessly, the prime loss due to abnormality in improper relations in market transactions would be sustained by the people.

Due to the importance of the market and its great impact on people's economical situation and livelihood, Imam Ali (a.s.) directly supervised the market and the quality of transactions there. His holiness would go to the markets of Kufa every morning and, allegedly, like "a children's teacher", instruct God-fearing as well as avoidance of selling short weight, lying, treachery and tyranny to the marketeers.

The texts reporting this direct supervision are very interesting and instructive to read. The Imam would shout among the Muslims enjoining them not to practice frauds and hoarding, to be fair and honest in offering goods as they really are, not to pretend genuineness, to treat the customers in a well-disposed manner, not to devalue the seller when they are buying goods, and not to overestimate their own goods when selling them.

All these admonitions, warnings, and instructions of the Imam given to the marketers are worth mentioning in practice of fairness, justice, human disposition, dignity, and magnanimity.

6. Fair Levy of Taxes

Government, in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s view, is for the people and for the establishment of their rights. That is why a part of the government's financial needs must be met by people who benefit from the government and engage in producing and trading under its protection. It is with such intention that taxes are levied in all ruling systems, although by different methods of collection and inclusiveness in different systems. In 'Alawi politics, stressing on levying taxes and government's responsibility in inclusiveness of receiving them from people, as well as the kind of viewing taxes and the reason for and the quality of levying them from people are worth paying attention. Trust in people, emphasis on not creating problems for people, drawing people's attention to the status and the importance of taxes are also noteworthy.

In an instruction to one of his administrators, Imam Ali (a.s.) states, "Never use whippings in collecting taxes nor put people under pressure for that". And the administrator says, "In that case I will have to

return the same way I have gone; that is, the people will not give anything." The Imam replies, "Even if that happens [i.e., even if they give nothing.]"[18](#)

A glance at 'Alawi doctrines in this respect shows that the tax organization and its agents are bound to win people's trust and to observe Islamic morality and religious behavior, while being alert and take care of safeguarding public treasure and carefully learn about the problems of taxation.

7. Not Delaying in Distribution of Public Assets

Imam Ali (a.s.) did not approve of blocking public assets in the state's treasury. Rather, he would try to deliver them to the needy. The Imam's sira indicates that he would not tolerate even one night of delay in this regard. He contended that what belonged to people had to be delivered to them the soonest possible.

8. Necessity of People's Equal Enjoyment of Public Assets

Equal distribution of the public assets among all Muslims was one of the policies in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s hukuma. This was contradictory to what had been done to people in the previous years. Therefore, it cost very dear to the well-to-do and those benefiting from the government, and the so called "large grains" (i.e., the bigwigs).

In the Imam's outlook, the Muslim's skin color, tribes and ancestors, their social and clan relations did not make any difference in their portion in public assets. Arabs and non-Arabs, the Emigrants (muhajirun) and the Helpers (ansar), the black and the white, and even the freed slaves and their former masters, were equally treated in this respect and all enjoyed equally from the public incomes.

9. Provision of Basic Needs of life for all People

The general trend of Ali (a.s.)'s economic policy is to struggle with poverty and uprooting it from the face of Islamic community. His holiness' guidelines in this respect are very thought-provoking. He insists that hunger and indigence of a group is caused by unlimited exploitation by another group and open-handedness of the well-to-do:

Whenever a destitute person remains hungry, it is because some rich person has denied (him his share).[19](#)

The Islamic state is bound to prevent the undue accumulation of riches in the hands of the opulent, to eradicate the means of exploitative benefiting of the rich, and to assist with constant attempts and accurate planning the inferiors to meet their basic needs for living. He did lead Kufa, even in that short period of his rule and despite so much clashes, intrigues, and hindrances, to a condition that he proclaimed:

Now in Kufa, all people are enjoying ease and comfort, and the most inferior of them has bread and shelter from the sunshine and enjoys water from the Euphrates.[20](#)

Imam (a.s.)'s recommendations to his administrators for paying attention to the lower classes of society and the so-called "low-income stratum", are amazing. He does not tolerate the indigence of a Christian who once had been exploited by the opulent and at his old age had been abandoned,[21](#) and commands securing his needs through public treasury. He also commands his governors to search all corners of society to identify the poor and the needy and to disentangle them from the claws of poverty.

10. Prohibition of Bestowing Gifts out of Public Assets

Governors are people's trustees and what they have at their disposal is kept with them in trust.

Government administrators are not allowed to give away gifts from the government's assets on various occasions and pretexts. Ali (a.s.) views such treatment of public treasury as tyrannical:

The administrators' open-handedness in public assets is tyranny and treachery.[22](#)

11. Never Granting Privileges to One's Kith and Kin

We said that in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s view what is at the disposal of the governors and administrators is trusted to them, being allowed to use the assets at their disposals just in administering and rendering services. They do not have the privilege to allocate certain provisions to specific groups. The sons and close relatives of political and social dignitaries in Ali (a.s.)'s hukuma as well as his own sons and relatives did not enjoy any particular privileges. Above all, the Imam showed more sensitivity towards his friends and kin, and was harder and stricter on them in using the public assets in order to set an example for others.

12. Frugality in Public Assets

Given what was said, Imam's policy in consumption of public assets, how the administrators should use them, and how the public treasury should be spent is very interesting and instructive. In order to draw the administrators' attention to utmost frugality in [spending] public incomes and preventing them from extravagance, the Imam asked them through circulars to practice frugality even in writing letters to him:

Sharpen your pens and reduce the space between lines; eliminate the redundant for [writing to] me, and hold on to the meaning and beware of verbosity in writing, for the Muslim public treasury does not tolerate loss.[23](#)

Evidently, when an administrator hears about so much carefulness in writing letters, he would no longer give lavish banquets, or ride costly horses, or try to achieve more and more welfare for himself through public assets.

The Imam's personal frugality in spending the public treasury is very amazing, too. He would not even use the lantern belonging to the public treasury in order to respond to those people who came to him at night time for personal purposes. Also in this line is the thought-provoking and instructive story of Talha and Zubayr who went to Ali (a.s.) to discuss their personal problems while he was seeing into public treasury affairs and then he turned off the public light and had another lantern brought in, unwilling to use the light from a lantern belonging to the public treasury for personal purposes even for a few moments.[24](#)

Five: Social Policies

In social issues too, Imam Ali (a.s.)'s hukuma is based on firmly founded and normative procedures and positions. The texts recounting the dimensions of his social policies are thought-provoking and noteworthy. According to such material, the Imam's principles of social policies can be recounted as follows:

1. Social Justice

Justice is the most pivotal, the firmest, the most fundamental, and the most comprehensive aspect of 'Alawi politics and rulership. The sacred name of Imam Ali (a.s.) is so intermingled with justice that Ali is associated with justice and justice is associated with Ali. Justice always prevailed the life of Ali (a.s.) who gave up his life as a martyr in the way of establishing justice and spreading equity.

Stressing on this issue is for ascertaining that only a government can claim to have followed the example of Ali (a.s.)'s hukuma and the sira of that noble Imam in a traditionalistic way, whose authorities gives more importance to justice than anything else and spare no efforts in spreading justice and development of equity, not merely in words and speech – which is the top motto of many claimants today – but in action, manners, and interaction with people from all walks of life. That justice is as rare as elixir. Only a government can claim to be spreading justice that do not sacrifice justice in favor of expedience by means of interpretation and justification.

In 'Alawi system [of hukuma], as well as in the doctrines of that "personified justice", there is no expedient higher than establishing justice. Only the ruling system can claim to be a follower of Ali (a.s.) that, through giving priority to justice over expediencies and insisting on implementing it, and despite lobbying and rabble-rousing, aims at holding a permanent rule over the "hearts", rather than a transient rule over "bodies" by preferring baseless expediencies.

2. Safeguarding People's Rights

Psychological factors in people's support of governments are as numerous as their intangible needs. One of the most important factors of popular support is the safeguarding of people's rights by governments.

One of the pivotal factors which contribute to the securing of the goodwill of the masses is the way a government views them, whether it regards them as its slaves or as its masters and guardians, whether it considers the people as possessing legitimate rights and itself only as their trustee, agent, and representative. In the first case, whatever service a government may render to people is not more than a kind of the master's care of his beast.

In the second case, every service performed is equivalent to discharging of duty by a right trustee. A state's acknowledgements of the authentic rights of the people and avoidance of any kind of action that implies negation of their right of sovereignty are the primary conditions of securing their confidence and goodwill.[25](#)

In a scholarly analysis, Ustad Shahid Mutahari (ra) regards the risky and misleading idea that responsibility before God requires irresponsibility towards masses, that "the right of God" substitutes "the right of masses", and that the right of national sovereignty equals Godlessness, as among the major materialist tendencies in recent centuries:

At the dawn of the modern age there was a movement against religion in Europe, which also affected more or less other regions outside the Christendom.

This movement was inclined towards materialism. When we examine the causes and roots of this movement, we discover that one of them was the inadequacy of the teachings of the Church from the viewpoint of political rights. The Church authorities, and some European philosophers, developed an artificial relationship and association between belief in God on one hand and stripping the people of their political rights by despotic regimes on the other. Naturally, this led to the assumption of some necessary relation between democracy on one hand and atheism on the other. It came to be believed that either we should choose the belief in God and accept the right of sovereignty bestowed by Him upon certain individuals who have otherwise no superiority over others, or deny the existence of God so as to establish our right as masters of our own political destinies.

From the point of view of religious psychology, one of the causes of decline of the influence of religion was the contradiction between religion and a natural social need, contrived by religious authorities, especially at a time when that need expressed itself strongly at the level of public consciousness. Right at a time when despotism and repression had reached their peak in European political life and the people were thirstily cherishing the ideas of liberty and people's sovereignty, the Church and its supporters made an assertion that the people had only duties and responsibilities towards the state and had no rights. This was sufficient to turn the lovers of liberty and democracy against religion and God in general and the Church in particular.

This mode of thought, in the West as well as in the East, was deeply rooted from ancient times....[26](#)

Based on this hazardous mode of thought, people have no right over the Imam and leader; and wilayat and religious leadership equals taking away people's socio-political rights; and in short, the leaders are

masters and the people are the servants! Obviously, the government that is run on this basis lacks popular support, and the leader who has this conviction about people's rights would not enjoy people's consent and support.

The Mutual Rights of People and the leadership

From Imam Ali (a.s.)'s viewpoint not only the right of community's political leader has no contradiction with people's rights within this doctrine, but his right is dependent upon his securing their rights, and the people are bound to obey and protect the leader only if their rights are secured in the system under his rule.

In this respect, Imam Ali (a.s.) has said the following:

So now, Allah has, by placing me over your affairs, created my right over you, and you too have a right over me like mine over you. A right is very vast in description but very narrow in equitability of action. It does not accrue to any person unless it accrues against him also and right does not accrue against a person unless it also accrues in his favor.[27](#)

His holiness has stated the mutual rights of people and the leader in other words as follows:

It is incumbent upon the Imam to rule as per what God has ordained and fulfill what He has trusted with him. Once he does so, it is incumbent on people to accept his words and obey his commands, and respond to him when summoned by him.[28](#)

In this discourse, not only the leader's right is dependent on discharging people's rights, but the right of Imamate, wilayat, and leadership is also considered as a right to be trustworthy about.

Throughout the history, safeguarding people's rights has never passed beyond a mere slogan; rather, it has always been a means of violating people's rights and suppressing Truth-orientedness.

Throughout the history of Islam and after the Holy Prophet's era, Ali (a.s.)'s time was an exception in establishing social justice, expansion of equity, and discharge of people's rights, which was unfortunately deprived of people as a result of the disturbances and rabble rousing; and in effect, his rule was tyrannized. Ali (a.s.) said:

If in the past people complained of the rulers' injustice, today I complain of the injustice of my own people.[29](#)

It so happened that Ali (a.s.) hastened to meet the Beloved, with a heart burdened with sorrows. With his departure, justice also departed and once again there were the hukumas and the oppressed masses, and the violations of human rights!

Now it is up to us to take an example of what came to pass in those days in order to prepare the ground

for establishment of social justice.

3. Development of Legitimate and Constructive Freedoms

Freedom is the first step on the way of realization of justice and development of respect for other people's rights; this freedom, however, is to be constructive rather than destructive, i.e., freedom from internal and external bonds and as the Qur'an puts it, deliverance from "heavy burdens":

(He releases them from their heavy burdens and from yokes that are upon them).[30](#)

Messengers of God were heralds of freedom and its advocates. Ali (a.s.) considered the philosophy of prophetic mission (bi'that) as deliverance of human beings from their bonds and taking them to the highest peaks of glory and worship of God:

Allah, the Blessed and the Exalted, raised up Muhammad (S) to deliver His servants from slavery to other slaves, to draw them close to Him... and to direct them away from friendship (wilaya) to others toward friendship to Him.[31](#)

According to the doctrines of 'Alawi school all human beings are free and should never be entrapped into slavery to others and promotion of enslavement. It is evident that what forces them into slavery to superpowers and entraps them into servitude to others in their internal bondage to their own whims and carnal desires.

Those who are internally liberated and have cut off their bondage to whims, and those who have accepted servitude to God and have deemed their status too high to fall prey to obedience to others like themselves, would never give up their independence to embrace slavery. Only such people deserve to be emancipated. As Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

The one who fulfills the requirements of servitude [to God] deserves emancipation.[32](#)

Requirement of servitude includes submission to being a servant of God and acceptance of Divine law, which has no process than real independence, freedom and liberation and evasion from it is tantamount to "enslavement", and "slavery", however appearing as freedom on the surface.

4. Caring about People

To care about people, to value people and respect them in general is a sublime manifestation of social policies of 'Alawi rule. In Imam Ali (a.s.)'s outlook, treatment of people is to be with compassionate and kindness; and rulers must respect people, their perspectives, and their ideals. The ruling statesmen often try to satisfy the "nobles" and the affectedly powerful, and in other words, the elite in the politics arena, even though to the dissatisfaction of the common people.

Contrary to this policy, Imam Ali (a.s.) has stated:

Truly, the discontent of the common people invalidates the content of favorites, and the discontent of favorites is pardoned at (the achievement of) the content of masses.

Imam Ali (a.s.) recommended the administrators to be kind to people and hold direct contacts with them, have personal meetings with them, and be informed of their problems. The Imam would say: "People have mostly suffered hardships, taken pains, and been oppressed. So, if they ever find a chance to express their sufferings and pains, they may speak coarsely." He would, therefore, advise his administrators to put up with people's rough language, and occasional ill-temper, bitterness, and unseemly reactions; never to get angry at them; to treat them with a smiling face and nice words; and if they found out blunders committed secretly and away from public's eyes by them, not to make any enquiries about them.

Imam Ali (a.s.) tried to maintain people's relation to the state as candid, transparent, and unambiguous. Hence, he would enjoin administrators to try honestly to remove the grounds for people's suspicion toward the state, and if some rabble-rousers would by chantage accuse the administrators of violating people's rights, they should try to elucidate the reasons for their actions, with honesty, face-to-face encounters, and clear explanations, and never leave any doubts about the state's affairs in people's minds. This, in reality, is an indication of people's value and significance in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s view.

5. Protection of the Oppressed

Imam Ali (a.s.) viewed taking vengeance on the oppressors on behalf of the oppressed as "Divine covenant". So, he stressed on helping the oppressed and insisted on fighting against the oppressors. Helping the oppressed and fighting the oppressors were among the last precepts bequeathed to Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.), and to all those who would hear the Imam's testament throughout the history.

Imam Ali (a.s.) took advantage of any chance to promote the culture of fighting against oppression and protecting the oppressed and sought help from people to carry out social reforms, and to make social relations and associations.

He would say:

O People! Support me despite your heart's desire. By Allah, I will take revenge for the oppressed from the oppressor and will put string in the nose of the oppressor.[33](#)

Stories of practical support of the oppressed by that paradigm of justice are very readable, and are very instructive for those who claim to be followers of that noble figure.

6. Setting up a Complaints Box (Bayt al-Qisas)

The leader of the fighters against oppression, who attempted to support the oppressed by any means

and to take vengeance on their behalf, certainly would spare no efforts in this way to see into the complaints of the oppressed.

How should the oppressed have their complaints heard by the rulers? Obviously, most often the subordinates are not able to get near the ruling system, let alone to bring up a case or raise a complaint. Many a time it has happened that when the complaint of an oppressed person been expressed it has been responded reversely, i.e., the one who should have been reprimanded, has been promoted and turned into a complainant against the person who had complained about him.

In order to remove such difficulties and solve the problem of directly expressing the complaints and pleading for justice as far as possible, Imam Ali (a.s.) set up a station called "bayt al-qisas" (complaints box) so that the people, the oppressed, and every one who had a problem and was unable to bring it up, could write his complaint and place it there to inform Ali (a.s.) about it. The Imam himself called out among the people that anyone who had a case to bring up and did not want any body else know about it in order to be immune from being identified, should write down his inquiry and drop it in the complaints box. This seems to be the first step in history toward connecting people to the ruling body.

7. Attempts in Creating Empathy and Solidarity in the Society

The leader is the link between current trends in the community; and the leadership, is the pivot of endeavors, movements, and cheerfulness. Existence of various ideas, tendencies, and trends in a society is natural and the concept of integrity in ideas and ideals in all strata and levels of society is totally erroneous and unreal. Thus, various trends, groups, and possessors of different ideas must seek for integrating ways to rescue the society from disunity; and while approving of multiplicity of ideas try to hold on to convergence in sublime ideals. The leadership plays the most significant role in this respect. Ali (a.s.) strongly emphasized the necessity of integration and empathy in society.

That noble figure considered solidarity as guaranteeing the survival of states, and differences as causing the fall of the states, thus strongly emphasized the former. Parts of the "Sermon of Disparagement" (Khutba al-Qasi'a) are regarded as among the instructive and awakening doctrines of 'Alawi hukuma. He would himself do his best in this direction to realize the roots of differences and how to achieve solidarity and empathy, and would overlook his inalienable rights so as the community would not burn in the fire of differences. He would say:

Remember that no person is more covetous than I for the unity of the followers of Muhammad (S) and their solidarity.[34](#)

The Imam stressed on the "unity of word", and regarded empathy and détente as necessary to the extent that he obliged his judiciary to avoid enforcing a ruling if it might disturb the solidarity of the community and thus prevent inciting disunity. The Imam had frequently warned that if the faithful disunited and gave up unity and solidarity, the falsehood would definitely dominate over them.

Six: Judiciary Policies

Judgment is the main pillar of ruling systems. Sound and lawful judgment play the greatest role in safeguarding a society's well-being and firmness of the community. Doctrines of Ali (a.s.)'s hukuma indicate that his holiness has been particularly attentive to the judiciary. Accounts given as to how Ali (a.s.) made judgments as well as his recommendations and emphasis in this respect are numerous and thought-provoking. What is brought up here in this volume can also be very enlightening for the judges and judiciary officials.

The principles of Imam Ali (a.s.)'s policies for judgment are enumerated as follows.

1. Appointment of the Best Judges for Juridical Posts

A judge is, undoubtedly, the main component of judgment and plays the most significant role in the judiciary establishment and in restoring people's rights and battle against oppressions and abnormalities. In judicial practice, the more steadfast, pure, and morally clean, and the stronger and the more unbending in action a judge is, the more efficient, organized, and well-founded his judgment will be.

Thus, Ali (a.s.) would enjoin Malik to select the best judges for judgment; the ones who would neither put the people under pressure nor to be obstinate in their judgment, nor easily fall into blunders; who are intelligent and deeply insightful and would not fall prey to misconceptions; who are patient, forbearing so as not to be affected by conflicting turmoil and chantage.

2. Providing for financial Needs of the Judges

Life events and needs can neither be forgotten nor passed by negligently. Even if some people are ascetic and abandon the world, it should be noted that if they take the responsibility of running a household, they will encounter some worldly demands in their lives. Natural needs of one's family are neither forgettable nor are to be neglected. It is in this respect that Imam Ali (a.s.) advises Malik al-Ashtar to select the best judges for practicing judgment, and to provide the best and the most suitable livelihood for them so that the judge never in his judgment look to other people for worldly gains and fulfillment of his needs by being seduced into corruption as a person who himself must safeguard the society against corruption.

3. Job security for the Judges

The judge passes a judgment and obviously offends some by his decisive judgment. There are very few people who would submit to a verdict against them and not to have commotion inside. Also, it is evident that the violators and lawbreakers are not always from among the lower class of society, nor do the clashes and conflicts always take place from among them; rather, it can be said that the upper class both commit most of law breaking and most conflicts do happen among them, as it is them who exert

influence and are involved in political arena and current trends. If the judge does not feel at ease while judging these people and does not see the judiciary and legal as supporting and backing him, he might falter while passing a judgment and back down in restoring rights.

In 'Alawi [ruling] system, the qualified judges enjoy a lofty status. In his distinguished instructions to Malik al-Ashtar after advising him to select the best judges for judgment, Imam Ali (a.s.) enjoins him to station the judges near himself in such high position that nobody, even his own close associates would not harbor any slanders against them in his presence. It is worth deliberating that then he draws attention to the evildoing of the ill-natured to show that the sensualists very often misuse their affinity to him [as a governor] against the judges to reap worldly gains and escape punishment.

4. Observance of Judgment Rules

The judge occupies a highly distinguished position and his duty is restoring rights and steadfast judgment. He does not stand on one side of a lawsuit and his words are clear proof for the disputes. He has to observe the rules of judgment with care. Imam Ali (a.s.)'s teaching in this respect is highly admonishing.

His holiness would warn the judges against discriminating among the clients, enjoining them not to be suspicious of either of the litigants, not to offend them with tough language and authoritarian speech, not to make decisions when angry, to lay aside avarice and not to speak out of whimsy, to maintain their dignity in the court sessions and not to underestimate the tribunal, to treat the clients kindly and equally, and not to behave in a way that the inferiors become disappointed of justly achieving their rights. His holiness discharged one of his companions from his judgment post, when asked for the reason, the Imam replied as follows:

I saw that your words were uttered louder than those of the claimant.³⁵

5. Close Supervision over the Judges' Function

Judges are the upholders of the society's well-being and the judiciary is in charge of its security. The society's well-being is, more than anything else, dependent upon the judiciary's soundness. Thus, as the Wali al-'Amr of the Muslims, Ali (a.s.) regarded himself as responsible for the judiciary's function and did not content himself with admonishing and preaching for the judges and merely warning them; rather, he would personally supervise their function and sometimes even would see into the way they issued their verdicts.

Due to the great role of judiciary in the society's well-being and correction of social problems, he would take any possible chance – despite his heavy responsibilities and numerous tasks – to call on the "Dakkat al-Qada" (Platform of Judgment) in person and would practice judgment himself so as to present a right pattern for judgment to the people and the judges.

6. Integrated Judicial Procedures

Among the things that Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) would emphasize was the consistency of judgments, or in other words, "integration of procedures" in judgments. If people notice that the judges make different judgments in similar cases, their prompt reaction would undoubtedly be mistrust in the judiciary and unbelief in the legitimacy of the judgments.

The Imam insisted that difference in judgments would disrupt the establishment of justice and create disunity in the society. He enjoins the judges to discuss and consult with each other concerning the things they disagree to achieve a consensus, or else take the issue to the leader and submit to his verdict. This means that it is in fact the responsibility of the leader to create integration of procedure in judgment.

7. Equality of all People before the Law

Imam Ali (a.s.) stressed on the equality of all people in execution of judgments. In 'Alawi system [of hukuma], all people are equal before the law and, the judiciary enjoys such high status and firm station that it can execute the law for all people who must submit to the verdicts of the judges and the judiciary irrespective of their social status.

In his doctrines, the Imam stressed on this equality and, despite his magnificence, majesty, and lofty status in knowledge and practice, he would humbly stand before his state judiciary and answer to the questions of his own appointed judges; hence indicating the importance of the judiciary and safeguarding the station of judgment as well as practically protecting people's rights so as to set an example both for the public and for the future [generations].

8. The Status of an Islamic State's Expedience in Issuing Verdicts

We said before that Imam Ali (a.s.) never sacrificed Truth for expedience, and did not take a position by relying on specific interests; but he was a leader, people's leader and a protector of a state at people's service. Hence, he placed the highest value and significance on the most superior expedience that was the protection of the state – which was for the people and at their service.

The Imam admits that in judgments the state's interests should be taken into consideration. In the 'Alawi hukuma in which nothing can hinder the execution of the genuine Islamic law in the judiciary, the state's interests have a special status in execution of ordinances. In one case due to certain social, cultural, and political circumstances, and people's specific impression from Divine law, the Imam identifies judgment based on genuinely set Islamic rules as disuniting and its execution as detrimental to the foundation of the hukuma, hence not permitting judgment to be made in order to prevent the society from falling prey to disunity. That's why he ordered Shurayh:

Make judgments as you did before, so that people's affairs are set to rights.

Seven: Security Policies

An insecure and anarchistic society is more like a lawless and chaotic jungle than a human community. In Imam Ali (a.s.)'s view, a society devoid of peace and security is the worst of lands. The Imam regards the restoration of peace and security to the society as among the most important reasons for his acceptance of hukuma. Therefore, that noble figure was highly concerned with security. His principles and procedures for security policies, and his attempts in maintaining security are listed as follows:

1. Establishing an Efficient Intelligence System

Although in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s sira no reference is made to an establishment entitled "intelligence system", there are various and dispersed texts concerning intelligence missions, and the measures taken by his holiness in his ruling days on the basis of reports gathered secretly that all in all suggest that the Imam's government enjoyed an efficient and scrupulous establishment.

Secret investigation and collection of various reports in relation to internal security, military information, and the function of the administrators were the major responsibility of this establishment. Regretfully, there is nothing in hand of the details regarding the above-mentioned organizations; but through the outcomes of Imam's decisions and the way he made them, its existence can be approved. This establishment can be regarded as one or more intelligence systems.

2. Détente

Paying attention to the changes in thoughts and positions of the enemies was among valuable Alawi doctrines. The antagonism of many enemies was rooted in their unawareness of the stances and their being uniformed about the methods and the reasons of those stances. The Imam insisted that attempts had to be made on the correction of thoughts, hence the change of positions of the opponents; and in his holiness' own words *istislah al-'ada'* and *istislah al-'addad* (finding good in the enemies and finding good in the opponents) must be carried out as a procedure in the policies of the government.

The Imam views as utmost deep-sightedness and far-sightedness the attraction of the enemies and rectifying and strengthening their positions, and stresses that it is much easier to transform the enemy's ideas and stances by means of good speech and nice treatment than by drawing the enemy to the battlefield, as the former approach will be effective in *istislah* and compelling the evil-doing enemies to do good. All this implies that the Imam had pursued the policy of *détente* towards transforming the enemy into a friend and deliberate compromise with the enemy, emphasizing on *détente* as an effective means of establishing internal security.

3. Vigilance and timeliness

Besides stressing on *détente* policy and moving toward a peaceful life and compromise with the enemy,

Imam Ali (a.s.) also emphasized on alertness and prudence in the face of the enemy. He insisted that the believers must not underestimate the enemy and be especially alert before those who do not openly express their enmity and do not fail to be prepared to encounter any unprecedented event at the right time, knowing that if they ever sink into oblivion the enemy will never remain ignorant.

4. Avoidance of Terrorization and Spread of Horror

In his government, Imam Ali (a.s.) never resorted to terrorization and spread of horror against the violators and opponents. His holiness would not employ the policy of terror, horror, and the illicit harsh actions against the violators of security, either. He never encountered people on the bases of suspicion and probability and never punished the accused or the suspects charged with actions against security.

5. Adherence to law in Dealing with Criminals

Imam Ali (a.s.)'s system of *hkuma* relied on law and in all aspects it was law rather than a person's will that ruled. Thus, he strongly emphasized on adherence to law and on law-centering in his doctrines. That was why not only the torture of the accused and the suspects of criminal actions was forbidden in his ruling system but also the criminals were never tortured or even offended; and if anyone was proved as guilty, they would be punished only according to the law.

If the executor of the law deliberately or unintentionally violated the law in enforcing a verdict, he would be punished as retaliation (*qisas*). So, when Ali (a.s.) found out that Qanbar had given three extra lashes when whipping a criminal, he gave him three lashes in return as *qisas*.³⁶

6. Tolerance towards Political Dissidents

The Imam never treated the political dissidents with harshness, either. Tolerance in 'Alawi diplomacy was an inviolable principle. This tolerance would go as far as prompting the opponent's plotting. Ali (a.s.) contended that tolerance with the opponents would cut down their vehemence and divert them from chantage and "stage managing".

That was why the Imam did not confront the Kharijites, tolerated their invectives, and didn't even cut off their stipend from the public treasury, until they committed murder and jeopardized the security of the society. His confrontation with the plotters against internal security was proportionate to the extent of their intrigue and their role in the plotting. Sometimes he would exile them, and at other times he would incarcerate them, and finally when other alternatives did not work, he would resolve the problem by military intervention.

Eight: Military Policies

Imam Ali (a.s.) was a gallant and dauntless warrior. His challenges in battlefields and his superiority in combats are historically well-known. Furthermore, he was a keen-sighted, sagacious, and prudent

warlord.

It is very regretful that Imam Ali (a.s.)'s rule, short-lived as it was, was thoroughly spent in internal battles against the intriguers. His sira in these battles, however, was replete with dignity in warfare and very instructive and enlightening. Imam Ali (a.s.)'s policies in warfare can be enumerated as follows:

1. Attempts in Martial Training and Arrangement of Troops

We said that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the most gallant warrior in the battlefield. Having spent a whole lifetime in the arenas of holy war (jihad), he doubtlessly possessed the most efficient and the greatest number of relevant experiences. Furthermore, he was matchless in his dauntlessness and gallantry, and young in the heart as well as in his knowledge of various tactics of warfare. The Imam trained his troops in person and prior to any battle he would reiterate the major points of his training while arranging the troops and arraying the combatants. When the ambushes by Mu'awiya mounted up and the opponents accused him of lacking knowledge in war tactics, the Imam said the following as complaining of some of his companions:

By disobedience and lassitude, you ruined my reputation to the extent that the Qurayshis say that the son of Abu Talib is brave but is lacking in war knowledge. May God reward their fathers! Which one of them has been in battlefields more than I have been, and experienced fighting and the battlegrounds more than I did? I was still in my teens when I stepped into the arena, and now I am over sixty; however, the one who is not obeyed, would not have command of the situation.[37](#)

In his military training of the troops, Ali (a.s.) was not negligent of even the smallest details such as: the troops should not part from their weapons; should make the most of the right chances to launch attacks on the enemy; should not stare into the enemy's eyes; the multitude of the enemy forces should not cast fear in your hearts; and instructed them what to do and how to withdraw tactically once defeated in war, etc.

2. Formation of Special Forces

The forces, however on a single battleground and with a common intention, may be varying in morale, the level of knowledge, and the extent of ability and self-sacrifice. The confrontation scenes are also varying, with each scene demanding appropriate and competent fighters and warriors. Accordingly, one of the most outstanding features in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s military policies is the formation of special troops which the Imam called Shurtat al-Khamis (the Special Forces).[38](#)

Imam Ali (a.s.)'s most efficient, self-sacrificed and most accomplished warriors were recruited for the Special Forces. This unit was astonishingly competent, and the Imam employed them for special purposes and in specific arenas. In a sermon, Imam Ali (a.s.) addressed them as follows:

You are the helpers of the Truth, my brothers in faith, shields against tribulations and hardships of the

time, and confidants apart from other people. With your help, I will beat the ones who turn their back, and I am hopeful of the obedience of the proponents. So, help me with benevolence devoid of fraud and free from suspicion, as I swear to God that I am fitter (worthier) for people than themselves.

The Special Forces, in modern terms, were the wise and proficient "fundamentalists" and "hizbullahis" (members of Allah's party) by the side of the Imam who both timely criticized and expressed their viewpoints about his policies, and remained loyal to him in the most distressing situations of his rule.

They seemed to be called "Shutat al-Khamis" because of their special insignia or due to their being in the Imam's presence through a special treaty.[39](#)

Asbagh b. Nabata was asked: "O Asbagh! How were you named Shurtat al-Khamis? He replied: "We guaranteed our self-sacrifice for him, and he guaranteed victory for us."[40](#)

3. Enhancement of the Troops' Morale

Spiritual forces and mental power undoubtedly play a decisive and astonishing role in movements and creation of valorous scenes. Therefore, the Imam greatly stressed the importance of the mental power, spiritual capability, and chivalrous spirit of his combat forces, trying through any possible way to strengthen the armed forces' morale in confrontation with the enemy, and to enhance their steadfastness before the enemy through uplifting their sense of chivalry. The Imam's speeches in this respect are highly thought-provoking and readable.

The Imam's fiery speeches, exciting words, inspiring sermons, and stimulating slogans, as well as his attractive descriptions of the end of life, explanation of the combatants' final station after life, all were intended to provide and spread such states of mind.

Once having organized the combat forces, the Imam would envisage with such eloquence and elegance the transience and undesirability of the worldly life in contrast to the excellence and everlastingness of the Hereafter, that sometimes the impact would be left on the troops for so long a time. That was why for many of them their lives were intermixed with enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, valor, bravery; and their actions were intermixed with their steadfastness, invincibility, and daring confrontation with the enemy.

Creation of a spirit of "martyrdom seeking" in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s companions was undoubtedly the outcome of his holiness' lofty sermons and doctrines.

Inculcation was among Imam Ali (a.s.)'s worthwhile tactics in battle that he would employ to strengthen the spiritual forces of his Mujahids (holy warriors). Concerning his own experience, the Imam said to his son, Muhammad b. Hanafiya:

I did not confront anyone [in war], except that I inculcated his killing in my mind; so, do inculcate victory over them with the succor from Allah.[41](#)

On the other hand, the Imam demonstrates that inculcation of weakness, apprehension, and the enemies' power is among the causes of disarrangement of the battle array and being defeated by the enemy. Once the Imam was asked:

How did you win victory over the fighters?

He replied:

I did not meet [confront] anyone except that he helped me win victory over himself.[42](#)

Ali (a.s.)'s explicit delineation of the ominous worldly and other-worldly outcome of shunning the fight with the enemy and fleeing from the battlefield was another tactic by Imam Ali (a.s.) for strengthening the spiritual power of the mujahids.

Besides what was said, the Imam also insisted that the warlords never disclose whatever of the current situation lest it would leave a bad impact on the morale of the combatants. In the thick of the battle of Siffin and amid the direst states of war, the Imam outlined the perspective and outcome of the engagement for one of his warlords and explained how the upcoming confrontation would be strenuous and would inflict heavy losses on the forces, but at the same time stressing to keep this fact as a secret and not to let it reach the troops.

4. Employing Deceitful Tactics in Battles

For achieving victory, the Imam would try all the rational tactics. Never having appealed to "deceit and fraud" in his statesmanship diplomacy and never having used it in his managerial approaches, as mentioned before, he utilized it in his battles and emphasized in this respect:

In a battle, do rely on your deceptions more than on your power.

And this is one difference between the 'Alawi and Umayyad diplomacy.

The Imam's teachings and the relevant objective examples indicate that "deception" in warfare policies is a rational option to achieve victory and as far as possible to avoid resorting to irrational actions. 'Ubayy b. Hatam is quoted as saying that amid the clashes of the battle of Siffin, Imam Ali (a.s.) said with such a loud voice for his companions to hear:

I swear by God that I will kill Mu'awiya and his companions.

Then he said with a low voice:

If God wills!

The narrator said, "I asked: O Amir al-Mu'minin! You swore and then made an exception, why is that?"

The Imam replied:

War is deception.

The Imam employed the same tactic when confronting 'Amr b. 'Abdawud and managed to kill him with the chance he got by means of this tactic.

Thus, the Imam's utilization of deception is in line with the human values and dignities and is, on the other hand, an efficient and accurate tactic in warfare.

5. Ethics of War

In 'Alawi culture, war is intended to defend the entity of the school and for the purpose of fending off tyranny, eliminating oppression, and removing the difficulties away from the way of rulership. "Wielding a sword for the sake of the Truth", he would not neglect the moral principles and human basics even amid the direst moments of war. Taking a glance at such warfare temperament and battleground moral codes in 'Alawi sira, would be instructive and enlightening. Some topics in this respect are as follows:

A. Never Initiating a War

The Imam never initiated a war; and would never draw his sword and also would enjoin his companions not to ever initiate a war unless the enemy stubbornly blocked the way for peaceful and face-to-face negotiation. As a matter of fact this policy of the Imam is a confirmation of pacifism of the 'Alawi approach to Islam, of human values, and of opposition to belligerency.

The Imam always practiced this policy emphatically. Jundub Azdi said:

Whenever in the company of Ali (a.s.) we encountered the enemy, he would order us: "Do not fight them until they start; because you are, thanks God, possessed of hujja (proof), and letting them initiate the battle is another proof of yours.[43](#)

Thus, he would show that in his culture the principle is peace and quiet, rather than belligerence and warmongering.

That was why the Imam ordered his combat forces not to initiate the war and if it was launched by the enemy and then they won the war by the help of God, they must not kill the fugitive nor assault the wounded, and must not denude or dismember the corpses either, and so forth. This shows, in Ali's war profile, that warfare in his highness' policies is an exception and the rule is stressing on human values and their development.

B. Not Calling to War

Ali (a.s.) insisted on his troops' gallantry, steadfastness, dominance in the battlefield, enthusiasm, and being hard on the enemy, and prepared them by all means for the battle; he would enjoin them, however, never to challenge the enemy to fight, since it was a way of creating terror and panic. Actually,

this too was part of the policy of opposition to belligerency. The Imam only instructed that if the enemy took up the challenge and asked for a rival in fight, you proceed to fight in order to stop the enemy's obstinacy.

C. Diplomatic Immunity of the Enemy's Envoys

Islam is a global religion and its doctrines are universal and time-embracing, hence inclusive of international and world policies. In Islam, political envoys of foreign countries enjoy diplomatic immunity in military and political confrontations (even though in the thick of the war). Ali (a.s.) had instructed this noble doctrine to the troops and wanted them to take this policy seriously, and even if some people claimed to be carrying a message from the enemy, do not confront them without first verifying the matter through sufficient inquiries.

D. Raising an Argument before Starting the War

We said that war in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s view is a means of removing the barriers to the development of truth and guidance of human beings. Thus he never failed to enlighten enemy and to take any possible chance to guide them. He would even attempt to guide the enemy amidst the battleground and in the thick of the war, frequently raising arguments to avert the war. Anyway, in 'Alawi sira, a war would not be waged unless when necessary.

E. Supplication at the Time of war

In 'Alawi sira, spiritual dimensions and development of spirituality in human beings and human society is precedent to anything else. The Imam did not forget to create and develop such a spirit even in the thick of the war. When troops were lined up and prepared to assault, he would start to speak; trying to put out the fire of war with his illuminating words; but of no avail, and obstinacy of the enemy would render the war inevitable.

At the time of war the Imam would engage in supplication and worship of God; would restore the remembrance of God in the hearts; with his mystical whispers he would make the atmosphere of his army fragrant; and would seek God's assistance. Thus, his jihad and fighting was a prelude to his love of God and a stepping stone to his approaching to God, as well as a step in the direction of actualizing Divine ideals and human values. The content of the Imam's supplications and the theme of his invocations clearly prove what was said and are very thought-provoking.

F. Starting the War in the Afternoon

The Imam would try by any arrangement and provision that the war might inflict the least damage and as far as possible the least human loss, if fighting would become inevitable. Thus, the Imam would try to get the war started in the afternoon so that by falling of the night the fighting would wind up and consequently there would be less bloodshed, the fighters would withdraw earlier, and the fugitives from

the battleground could run away.

G. Fair Treatment of the Enemy's Troops Left behind

When the battle would subside, Imam Ali (a.s.) would command that the defeated troops, the wounded, the captives, and the leftover of the enemy's army, particularly the women, be given the best of treatment. As we said before, the Imam would order not to chase the fugitives, not to kill the wounded, not to invade people's houses, not to take any of the spoils, never to molest the women even if they insulted the troops and their commanders.

Nine: International Policies

Whatever said so far was a glance at 'Alawi policies in various aspects of governing a state.

Now, we intend to recount some aspects of Imam Ali (a.s.)'s universal policies. We have selected guidelines from among the Imam's universal policies that would be fruitful and efficient for governing a state in every place and in any culture.

The guidelines listed below and the relevant material in the main part of the book include political, social, cultural, and governmental guidelines which human natural disposition (fitra) and common sense confirm their firmness and efficiency; and historical experience is a true witness to their soundness and merit. Anyone with any conviction can, by referring to the conscience and the history, simply perceive these facts and confirm their efficacy in governing a state. In chapter ten of the present book, these guidelines and principles are divided into three categories as follows:

1. Policies Perpetuating Governments

Imam Ali (a.s.) has regarded certain policies necessary for the survival of governments. We can find out, by taking a glance at 'Alawi doctrines and sira, that the Imam considers as necessary the spread of equity, social justice, development of righteousness and discretion in administering people's affairs, treating them fairly and respectfully, alertness to political trends and safeguarding them, independence, might, and whatever related to people's individual and social rights. He deems them necessary for steadfastness and perpetuity of government. The Imam's interpretation of justice is very interesting and thought-provoking.

Ali (a.s.) has identified justice with a citadel, a shield, a firmly set foundation, and a binding string, and considered the execution of justice as the best and the most efficient policy in ruling and defined it as "the adornment of politics", affirming that it is with justice that the ruler captures the hearts and attracts Divine Mercy. He is also quoted as saying that once the rules are based on the foundations of justice and rested on the pillars of wisdom, Allah would help its proponents and smash its opponents. In addition to promotion of justice, the Imam has regarded discreet administration as necessary for establishment and perpetuity of governments, benevolence as the beauty of power, and alertness and

wakefulness as indications of astuteness and decent governance.

2. Policies Causing Decline of Governments

Imam Ali (a.s.) has considered some policies as destructive and undermining. Such policies, even though effective for a short while and keeping up the government for a while longer, would eventually lead to fall and destruction. What has been deemed by Imam Ali (a.s.)'s doctrines as undermining and ruinous are: violation of people's rights; unjust bloodshed; mismanagement in handling current affairs; selfishness and appropriation; giving priority to governors, heads of government, and their cronies over others; heedlessness toward fundamental measures and tasks and dealing with trivial, fruitless, and unimportant affairs; assigning inefficient people to critical posts; and failing to employ competent individuals.

The Imam asserts that oppression and injustice, under any rubric and in any form, will cause decline [of the state]; and if injustice is allowed in a society, it will consequently lead to drawing swords and the state's authority and dignity will be marred. That is why he views oppression as the worst of policies and asserts that injustice and tyranny makes the steps unstable, the blessings transformed, and the communities and states ruined.

In his instructions to Malik al-Ashtar, Ali (a.s.) writes: Never practice bloodshed when dealing with the heterodox, as shedding unlawful blood causes blessing. Never will sovereignty set firm by bloodshed, rather, it will enfeeble and lower its authority.

He asserts that if a government is inflicted with mismanagement and does not enjoy wise and scrupulous policies, it will start to decline and will consequently topple. The state provides the best facilities for the ruler and his dominance, and instead of self-sacrifice (ithar), proceeds with selfishness and attraction of possibilities for the ruler and his cronies (isti'thar), will definitely be bound to decline. The Imam said: The rulers who deal with trivial, baseless, and transient issues instead of proceeding with fundamental tasks, basic policies, and principal planning, will slide down to decline. Those who put aside the high tasks and excellences, and deal with mean and petty work, will lead the government to decline. Pondering on such teaching of the Imam would be so necessary and helpful for the governors, officials, and heads of states.

3. Efficient International Policies

In addition to what was said, the Imam adopted certain policies and introduced ways of interaction for the governors to take into consideration when interacting with other states, nations, and countries. The following facts and policies can be extracted from among the Imam's highly valuable words and by pondering on his lifestyle (sira):

Respecting the rights of human beings regardless of their ideas and way of thinking, and maintaining human rights for them; practicing respect-orientedness in dealing with others, and avoiding any

disrespectful and belittling relation or association with governments and nations and never submitting to derogation; stressing on détente in encounters with governments, and moving toward development of genuine peace and peaceful life combined with esteem; prevention of arousing enmity; making attempts in correction of the enemy's ideas and conducts (*istislah al-'aduww*); remaining loyal to various treaties, and being trustworthy in fulfillment of people's rights; benefiting from other people's knowledge and expertise and exploiting human knowledge trends in the field of culture, yet stressing on the policy of cultural independence; warning against being absorbed in polytheistic and corrupt cultures; and finally, searching into cultures and pick out the best in them, etc.

Furthermore, there have been certain facts expressed in various sayings of Ali (a.s.) that are very illuminating in respect to international relationships. Such tenets have been presented in the "miscellaneous" section at the end of the present volume.

Summing up Imam Ali (a.s.)'s Policies

What we said so far consists of a brief glance at the content of the chapters compiled for explaining Imam Ali (a.s.)'s various policies. Deliberation on what was brought up would reveal that politics in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s view is an instrument for ruling on the basis of human rights and people's real needs, rather than for the dominance of the bullies and violators of people's rights.

From what we said, we can now respond, with a general outlook and accurate summing up, to the questions and criticisms made concerning Imam Ali (a.s.)'s policies, analyze the hows and whys of what is stated about his statesmanship, and discuss their consistency and inconsistency.

[1.](#) See The Encyclopedia of Amir al-Mu'minin, III, 157 (Causes for Uprising against 'Uthman).

[2.](#) See 2/4, hadith 73.

[3.](#) Da'a'im al-Islam: 1/71. Friendship in the Qur'an and hadith: 259.

[4.](#) Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 198.

[5.](#) Wilayat al-Faqih, pp. 192 – 3.

[6.](#) See 3/3, hadith 89.

[7.](#) See 3/5, hadith 102.

[8.](#) See Nahj al-Balagha, letter 53.

[9.](#) See Science and wisdom in the Qur'an and hadith, 1/30.

[10.](#) Ibid. For more information of the texts denoting the precedence of cultural development over economic development, see chapter two of part one of the book.

[11.](#) Ghurar al-Hikam: 3590.

[12.](#) Ibid: 3835.

[13.](#) See Nahj al-Balagha, Sermons 182.

[14.](#) Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 2.

[15.](#) See 4/5, hadith 164.

[16.](#) Ibid.

[17.](#) See, Leadership in Islam, M. Muhammadi Rayshahri, pp. 391–418.

[18.](#) See 5/8, hadith 208.

[19.](#) See 5/11, hadith 247.

- [20.](#) See 5/11, hadith 249.
- [21.](#) See 5/14, hadith 262.
- [22.](#) See 5/14, hadith 262.
- [23.](#) See 5/16, hadith 282.
- [24.](#) 5/16, hadith 283.
- [25.](#) Shahid Murtadha Mutahhari, *Sayri dar Nahjul Balagha*, (*Glimpses of Nahj al-Balagha*), p. 118.
- [26.](#) Ibid. p. 119.
- [27.](#) See, 6/2, hadith 305.
- [28.](#) *Kanz al-'Ummal*: 5/764/14313.
- [29.](#) See, *The Encyclopedia of Amir al-Mu'minin*, IX, 474 – 75, ahadith 4748 & 4749.
- [30.](#) Al-Qur'an, 7:157.
- [31.](#) See 6/3 hadith 308.
- [32.](#) See 6/3, hadith 310.
- [33.](#) See 5/11, hadith 349.
- [34.](#) See 6/14, hadith 360.
- [35.](#) See 8/4, hadith 421.
- [36.](#) See 7/10, hadith 394.
- [37.](#) *Nahj al-Balagha*, Sermon 27. Also, see *The Encyclopedia of Amir al-Mu'minin*, VII, 21.
- [38.](#) See 9/2, (Forming Special Forces).
- [39.](#) Al-Nihaya, II, 460.
- [40.](#) *Majama' al-Bahirayn*, II, 942.
- [41.](#) See 9/4, hadith 499.
- [42.](#) *Nahj al-Balagha*, Aphorism 318.
- [43.](#) See 9/6, hadith 511.

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