A SOCIAL SCIENCE AND ISLAMIC STUDIES APPROACH TOWARDS PROGRAMS AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE OCCURRENCE OF ECONOMIC EPIC AND RESISTANCE ECONOMY, AND ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Following his custom of determining the general trend for the country at the beginning of each new year, Iran’s Supreme Leader (May his Success Last Long) called the year 2012 (in the Persian calendar) “The Year of Political and Economic Epics”. As is customary in the Iranian media, an immediate surge of comments followed this announcement, praising such intelligent and apt naming, as well as emphasizing on this prediction’s realization. The authors of this article intend to express their views, free from any media climate, on the social challenges as well as practical solutions that have to be dealt with for realization of such epic economy. May this become a starting point for thinking along such a line. Epic acts are courageous heroic acts committed in seeking justice and demonstrating valiance, i.e., acts committed for achieving a great ideal. Epics hold a high position in the history of Iran. Epic poems and epic prose are at the peak of Persian literature, even moral and mystic literature. The history of Shiism also takes form in legend. The epic of Imam Hossein is the ultimate legend in humanity, the keystone of shiism. The legendary “holy defense” of the country for 8 years against Iraqis by brave Iranians, who looked up to Hossein as their role model, has been immortalized in history. In the Supreme Leader’s speech, two eras in the Iranian Revolution were referred to as legendary. First, the particularly enthusiastic participation of the public in the 1997 presidential elections referred to by the Leader as “a truly historical legend, and second, the particularly unrivalled presence of the public during the Dec. 31, 2009 demonstrations which actually ended 8 months of seditious instigation by internal and external enemies, and remained in history to mark the alertness exhibited by Iranian people. Now, in the New Year and after yet another political epic, namely, that of June 15, 2013, the Leader is waiting for us to create a new (economic) legend. It is our duty to do our best in this regard. No doubt, all sections of the society as well as branches of the government have a share in fulfilling this important task.

Keywords: economical epic, resistance economics, challenges, solutions

INTRODUCTION

Following his usual worthy custom of the past years, the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, due to having great insight into the global situation and requirements of the country, and taking into consideration the efforts made by the enemies of the Islamic Revolution, called the year 2012 “Year of Political and Economic Epic”. This short, but meaningful phrase refers to the fact that under the circumstances, Iran’s priority in achieving its targeted goals, i.e., protection of the Islamic regime and multilateral development of the country as well as solving the existing problems would be to create a legend in the political and economic arenas. As emphasized in dictionaries, an epic work is that which is done with courage, skill, and proficiency. Thus, a person who applies bravery and valiance for doing extraordinary and impressive things is called a legend (Sokhan Unconce Dictionary). It is obvious that calling the year 2012 “Year of Political and Economic Epic” by the Supreme Leader must be regarded as a new doctrine and a macro-strategy for Islamic discipline in political and economic affairs, which not
only determines the country’s future perspective regarding macro political and economic aspects, but also specifies a path or road map for Iranian people and Iranian authorities towards realizing this perspective. Now, for achieving the final goal, i.e., obeying the Supreme Leader and bringing about development, prosperity, and pride for Islamic Iran, we must emphasize that realization of the set goal for 2013 by the Supreme Leader requires increasing attention by people and executive authorities to the priorities determined for this purpose. In fact, the Supreme Leader has determined the way the government, people, and other executive and supervisory organizations must follow. Therefore, during this year, major political and economic programs by the government and relevant organizations must be coordinated towards realization of this goal. With due regard of the current situation in the world as well as the pressures and sanctions imposed by western countries, we can set forth numerous strategies and economic models for progressing towards growth and development and creating “economic epic” through resistance economy. Resistance economy is applied under serious sanctions and threats for the purpose of achieving targets regarding economic development. Based on this, all the stakeholders in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches must cooperate for realizing the set political and economic goals without becoming involved in politicization or other unhelpful atmospheres that might be created. The reason is that people’s participation in determining their own political and economic fate by showing their presence in the political arena (which is also reflected in the economic arena) in the Islamic society has always prevented any diversion and instigation that might occur. It is expected that, in the current year, all sections of the society, accompanied by authorities, perform, in addition to their ordinary tasks, legendary deeds in the political and economic arenas towards continuation of Islamic Revolution ideals, solving the existing problems, and resisting enemies’ acts of sabotage. To do this, they should use all available resources, capacities, and abilities that the public and the private sectors can provide. Realization of resistance economy leading to an “economic epic” requires multilateral support from various elements and factors in the economic arena. Increased cooperation and effort by people and authorities are required here.

The Main Priorities in the Islamic Economic System

In parallel with designing an economic structure in line with Islamic thinking, Islam has based its economic plans on resistance economy, and consequently, devised an economic framework for Muslims. From the Islamic perspective, resistance economy is the epiphany of individual and collective life of the revolutionary man in the field of economics where he soars and endeavors. The Islamic economic system follows five major goals, described below in the order of priority:

1. Man’s Intellectual Ascent: Islam aims to educate and refine man, and through material activities, opens the way for man’s intellectual enhancement.
2. Economic Justice: Similar to independence, justice is included in the overall goal of the Islamic system, however, it is not the ultimate goal since justice is only a tool for developing our knowledge of God and development of man. In the field of economics, the purpose of the Islamic state is economic justice through elimination of poverty and creating a balance between wealth and income.
3. Economic Independence: Independence, i.e., not being dependent on foreigners culturally, politically, and economically, is the general goal in the Islamic state since, from the Islamic perspective, economic dependence is the source of all dependencies and results from lack of self-confidence.
4. Public Welfare: Although indolence is condemned from both personal and moral perspectives, realization of equal public welfare for all is a goal in the Islamic system. Of course, welfare is not limited to material wealth and possibilities since from an Islamic viewpoint, only those whose soul is at peace possess true wealth.
5. Economic Growth: Agricultural, industrial, and commercial growth is also among the economic goals of an Islamic system. The purpose of presenting this economic plan is “improvement of
people’s livelihood” as the topmost priority in the society’s economic system. In this plan, the intention is to depend on the numerous strengths that exist at the national and international arenas in order to resist against various domestic and international threats, so as to move with long strides toward realization of progress and justice in the Islamic system.

Problem Roots: Economic experts believe that in spite of the numerous programs organized at various levels, the root of many economic problems lies in the abnormal structure of the government certain executive mechanisms of which have been inherited from the pre-Revolution era. This structure causes government officials to be driven from their idealistic notions towards routine procedures and from accountability towards arrogance, thinking that others are answerable to them. Government organizations system in such fields as budget, administrative efficiency, human resources management, resources allocation, etc., are in need of serious reconsideration in their decision-making and economic management systems, and this cannot be obtained unless through people’s alert efforts and the respectable authorities’ action.

Principles of Resistance Economy
1. Resistance, the key too progress:
2. Structural justice, in combination with progress: From the resistance economic perspective, justice and progress go hand in hand and are inseparable. Neither justice nor progress comes “first” since progress without justice would be meaningless.
3. Fighting inflation as the greatest economic injustice: Our Islamic Revolution and system of governance is religious and strongly based on Divine principles and values.
4. Production as (Economic) Jihad:
5. Economics for People, our Distinctive Model:
6. Jihadist Management, a Leap Mechanism towards Progress: Economic independence is a jihad, so it needs jihadist organization and method of thinking. Relying on the old bureaucratic and non-native organizations prevents the realization of Revolution’s high values in the decade called “Progress and Justice”.

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Ways of Realizing the Economic Epic: This problem can be addressed from different perspectives. However, perhaps the most easily understandable way is to consider certain musts and must-nots at the domestic and international levels:

   a) The “Musts” in the International Arena

Undoubtedly, the main reason for creating epics in the economic arena results from the conditions that prevail in today’s world, particularly the policies adopted by world powers which affect international relations. Needless to say, due to the present unjust colonial rules in the world which have their roots in
the foundations of the Western Civilization, we have witnessed in the past years many political, cultural, economic, social, etc. challenges in the world, particularly in large countries, leading to certain unavoidable problems in all countries including Iran. To overcome these problems, extensive measures must be taken in all areas, particularly in the economic arena.

Based on this, it would be necessary to:

1. Acquiring the necessary knowledge about the existing economic challenges in the world as well as investigation of the current plans implemented by arrogant world powers in order to make the right decisions in the domestic economic arena.

2. Identification of the tricks played by the enemies of the Islamic Revolution for harming the country, and taking timely, carefully planned measures to counterbalance them.

3. Maintaining the unity of and creating solidarity among Muslims, as well as resisting those who try to create division among Islamic countries.

4. Raising Islamic awareness in the region and aiding such movements, as well as rendering ineffective the global arrogance’s efforts to defeat the ongoing revolutions

5. Recognizing friends from enemies and obtaining knowledge about the false propaganda spread by them.

6. Identification of domestic enemy agents in the economic and other arenas who are busily creating problems through negative propaganda, and giving them their due punishment.

b) The Musts in the Domestic Arena

All the sections of the Islamic society must, while observing the rules and trainings of Islam in their individual and social lives, help in the realization of the economic epic. The musts that individuals as legal entities are to observe are as follows:

1. Obtaining the necessary knowledge on the importance of a healthy economy in realizing social progress and social ascent.

2. Obtaining the necessary knowledge on the Islamic economy and its difference with other economic systems, as well as the necessity of adhering to the principles of the Islamic economy.

3. Observe the principles of Islamic economy in individual and social arenas.

4. Having faith in the effectiveness of each positive stride taken by individuals to solve economic problems in the society.

5. Obtaining the required information on the enemies’ economic plots and resisting them.

6. Helping the domestic production to flourish.

7. Investing in economic infrastructures.

8. Correction of personal consumption and observance of subsistence living and contentment.

9. Avoiding to consume foreign products and helping to improve the quality of domestic products.

10. Helping to rid the economy of dependence on oil and other natural resources exports.

11. Supporting work/workers and promoting work culture.

12. Organizing the distribution system and preventing the spread of mediatory and Pseudo-careers.

13. Paying due attention to training in the economic and industrial arenas.

14. Modification and completion of agro-industrial tools/equipment.

15. Helping to promote public services.

16. Paying due attention to modification and establishment of economical behavior/morality in the society.

17. Observing Iran’s economic policies.

18. Helping to maintain and strengthen economic security in the society.

19. Controlling the healthy trend of economic activities in the society.
Of course, in pursuing the realization of the economic epic, individual authorities of all social ranks also are required to observe certain “musts” proportional with their responsibilities and irrespective of their legal status, as follows:

a) Identifying the actual economic situation relative to economic indexes, potential economic capacities, and establishing trust with regard to the statistics and information issued by the Central Bank, the government, and Iran Center for Statistics.

b) Identifying the relevant economic research at the religious seminary and academic levels, and implementing the best of these studies in the Iranian economy.

c) Employing a team of experts on economic management form among scholars in the fields of Islamic, institutional, and energy economics as well as those who believe in truly Islamic banking.

d) Modification of economic educational/research system in Iran and training experts/researchers who have faith in localization of economic policies and in the generation of an economic science which is compatible with Muslim societies.

e) Substituting capacities from oil revenues with potential capacities in the country.

f) Separation of the Central Bank from the government.

g) Stable management of political economy.

h) Promotion of Iran’s economic capabilities to the world through various activities by Iranian embassies abroad.

i) Preparing the ground for improving productivity/efficiency in the agro-industrial sector through targeted injection of cash flow as well as expert dedicated human resources.

j) Amendment of the existing laws and conversion of the existing non-productive banking system into a productive banking system.

k) Enhancing the value of Iranian monetary unit through stabilizing the exchange market.

l) Amending people’s economic behavior through a combined mechanism consisting of pricing, religious teachings, as well as punitive laws and incentives.

m) Setting incentives for wealth creation by different sections of the society except mediatory and speculator sections.

RESULTS
To manage their public affairs, people need to participate politically, economically, and otherwise since this is in agreement with their nature. However, for encouraging public participation, the governing system itself must be participatory, otherwise, the unfavorable damages resulting from non-participatory policies of the system shall gradually lead to total elimination of participation and its substitution with dictatorship and totalitarian method of thinking. Through placing value in people, Islam invites their participation in public political, economic, etc. affairs. Even God commands his Prophet to consult people. Imam Khomeini (R.A.) also put great stress on people’s participation and their presence in various sensitive arenas in the country.

For more than a century, the Iranian economy has been, due to its structure, dependent on oil. For this reason, Iranian economy has been suffering from the same persistent problems over the years. These problems will not go away through aimless modifications imposed by politicians. The sanctions also are directed at this weak point of the Iranian economy. In spite of frequent emphasis on the part of the Supreme Leader during the past two decades, Iranian politicians have never been willing to forego their personal material gains regarding oil revenues to concentrate on establishing a meritocratic system of management at the executive and legislative levels. Perhaps if there had been no oil revenues, the highest economic positions would have been taken by the most eligible and committed experts who would have optimally created revenues and optimally expended these revenues for the benefit of the country’s economy.
In other words, the Iranian economy with its high potentials is suffering from serious institutional problems. Without solving these problems, the creators of epic economic movements and economic jihadists will not succeed. The active politicians, economic authorities, as well as the committed legislative and judicial authorities, must make a heroic/jihadist effort to remove the existing obstacles. Only then can industrialists/production stakeholders and other people exhibit their epic role in their respective fields of activity. We can, without relying on hegemonic systems, resolve our institutional problems. The people of Iran must implement the best executive methods to remove the existing obstacles that deprive them from realization of their economic epic. The person elected by the people must, through identifying the pathology of the existing system, and by creating an atmosphere of solidarity and empathy, take the necessary measures for resolving the institutional problems in the country with the help of the ever-present people of Iran.

Based on the above discussion, it is expected that all sections of the Islamic society, in addition to their specific responsibilities and tasks, and accompanied by the authorities, participate in creating epics in various arenas, particularly the economic arena, both inside the country and abroad so as to determine their own fate: a fate that guarantees their happiness in this world and the next, as we read in the Holy Koran, “God does not change the condition of people unless they change what is in themselves” (Ra’ad Sura, Verse 11). Such endeavor must be directed at continuation of the Islamic Revolution ideals for resolving all problems and preparing the ground for proper progress as well as resist against various acts of sabotage that the enemies usually employ, and also in line with the prestige of the Iranian people and their Islamic government.

Recommendations
The imposing of new sanctions against the economic system of the Islamic Republic has created new circumstances for the country. The Persian year of 2011 (from March 20, 2012- March 20, 2013) was a special year. The atmosphere created in this year was a new untested territory with its many ups and downs. However, the regime passed this era famously. In his New Year’s address on Norooz, the Supreme Leader described certain executive achievements by the government in the course of the past year (2011). This must be regarded as an honor by the government since all these achievements were obtained under heavy pressure and sabotage by both domestic and foreign sources. Of course, since this was a new unexplored territory and in the absence of the required synergy among the branches for dealing with this situation, certain mistakes might have been committed. However, this does not mean that others, had they been allowed to act, would have shown a better performance under the circumstances. As confirmed by the Supreme Leader, “The year 2012 was an exercise for us. We can benefit from the results of this exercise in the coming year (2012) for creation of an economic epic, an epic that can strengthen the country’s economy free from foreign influence, making it resistant and impenetrable.”

1. The economic management in Iran must be centralized: In today’s conditions, if there are numerous decision-making organizations in economic matters, the country’s economy will deteriorate rather than improve, just like giving poison to a person who is already seriously ill. Obviously, various financial and economic scholars as well as managers must be consulted on these matters. However, they should not make arrogant decisions or finalize matters on their own, since decisions must be taken under the unified management of a reference authority. Frequently changing and sometimes inconsistent decisions issued by different authorities are harmful. For example, when legislation regarding such an important law as the targeted subsidies is changed more than 10 times within one year, one cannot expect it to produce any positive results or economic stability. There are numerous methods of thinking in economics, but the executive power must be convergent so that people as well as activists in this arena can be duly notified of their course of action without confusion.

2. No emotionally stirred actions are permitted under the motto of “economic epic” in this arena. All action should be fundamental and deep-rooted. A certain unchanged macro-economic policy...
must be considered for the country which will be adhered to by all. A few years ago, the former president proposed his economic development plan based on comprehensive and precise studies. However, seven sections in this plan all contain shortcomings that have become more apparent under today’s particular circumstances. These sections, i.e., targeted subsidies, monetary and banking system development, tax system development, customs office development, development in the market as well as supply-demand structure, improving productivity, and administrative system development, were all lost in the midst of the various political commotions from various sides, so that today, there is an even greater necessity for enforcing these sections than before. If, at the time, there had been better coordination between the government and the former president towards enforcement of these developments, most of our economic dependencies would have been eliminated. However, it is never too late, since our way is quite clear. The next stage of targeted subsidies must be enforced in the year 2013. No legend ever results from a subsidy-dependent economy. The banking and financial systems must be modified. The banking system must prepare itself for new conditions. Reliance on tax revenues must increase. New sources of taxation must be identified and justice in taxation must be realized. The comprehensive taxation development plan which has been stalled in Majlis must be finalized. The supply system in the market requires particular attention. All monopolies must be eliminated and the role of economic intermediaries must be highly marginalized. In the year 2012, we witnessed certain tensions in the market arising from exclusive distributions and prominent role of the intermediaries. The level of productivity in the country is low, and resources are not utilized properly. This is not limited to the government, and can be observed at various levels. If we assume we can obtain two units from each source unit, then our resources will double, and this is possible in many sectors. Increasing exports is the primary requirement in an economy without oil, and customs office has a prominent role in this regard. Customs office development which leads to increased agility and dexterity is absolutely necessary.

3. National production in various arenas must be increased: Iran has different resources which are not utilized properly. In agriculture, this is evidently seen in the undesirable productivity and production levels. Last year 2012, a new welcome movement started in agricultural development which must continue this year, albeit more vigorously. Self-sufficiency in the production of many strategic products for our basic requirements is an important step in resistance economy. There are other resources which are not utilized properly as well. On the last days of the Persian year 2012, the mining development plan was ratified by the government. Breaking the monopoly on mines and making them available for public exploitation, as well as setting forth exact control procedures and claiming the due governmental rights in this regard, are among the set goals in this development plan which can cause new economic resources to flourish in the country. Such financial resources are abundant in our economy and should be speedily utilized.

4. Special attention must be paid in the year 2013 to exports: Due to the relative stabilization of the exchange rate, there is increased motivation for exporting goods. Removing obstacles in this regard and increasing facilities for exporting goods upon meeting the domestic consumption, is necessary. Many domestic producers are ready to supply goods for domestic consumption first and export the surplus to other countries afterwards. This is particularly useful if raw materials for the exported products are to be purchased by paying in free foreign exchange. For this purpose, certain arrangements will have to be made. There are different production units in the country that do not work at full capacity, and such a scheme can cause them to operate at full capacity, thus utilizing resources efficiently.

5. Consumption of domestic products must be promoted by all cultural activists, the media, etc.: This must become a national demand. The domestic atmosphere must be prepared for consuming domestic products in spite of their possible lower quality. Through management of the domestic atmosphere, people must be made proud of buying Iranian products and buy foreign products
only if necessity requires them to do so. This would need a multilateral media and cultural coordination. All tribunes in Iran must be activated for this purpose. In the mean time, improving the quality of domestic products must be place high on the agenda. This is not limited to any particular year, but should be continued at all times.

6. Investment in Iran and Iranian capital must be protected: Such extensive regulations and complicated financial, administrative, and supporting systems are not required for protecting Iranian capital. These complications must be speedily reduced. The necessary permits must be rapidly issued within a reasonable structure. No personal preferences must be allowed, particularly by non-economic organizations in economic areas. Production must be the main focus of all policies and moves in the country. Monetary/foreign exchange policies, as well as commercial, banking and taxation policies must be regulated based on aiding production. We can only succeed if all governmental institutions take their due share in solving the problems, rather than referring the problem to each other, and particularly to the government. “Shooting the ball to the opponent’s field” is not helpful here.

7. Production of knowledge/science, converting it into technology, and finally commercializing it must be particularly supported: Economy and production that are based on domestic know-how cannot be destroyed. Today, a great part of revenues in the world as well as annual per capita income in many countries is obtained through exporting know-how. Iranian people’s intelligence and genius can be turned into a permanent source to replace oil. Universities must pioneer in this regard, moving towards sciences that have the potential and adopting educational policies for teaching students easy ways of turning science into technology. The knowledge-based companies must be supported. During the 9th and the 10th governments, many positive steps were taken in this way and much improved the situation. However, we must accept that we are in the beginning of a long way, and there are many opportunities that we must take in this field.

8. As was said before, these solutions and strategies relate to all sections of the society as well as the authorities and those in charge in the Islamic system. However, the level of involvement by various individuals/authorities depends on their abilities and their responsibilities. Naturally, they are also expected to perform at different levels. But the one common thing among all these people is that they are held accountable against whatever they do and would be answerable to God.

9. All domestic media, the national media in particular, must avoid adhering to superficial slogans towards realization of the economic epic. Rather, through constructive programs, they must offer the necessary instructions to people and authorities, and ask expert opinion for enriching their forums and conclusions, as well as removing their shortcomings.

10. All the above is only part of the measures that are necessary for realization of the economic epic. Obviously all the actions must be taken in good faith (jihadist approach), i.e., for the sake of God alone, earnestly, and tirelessly. Spiritual and religious morality must rule in the society. All sides must avoid marginal superficial issues, and adopt a united national front in doing things. Only in this case can we expect God to support this nation, its authorities, and its great Leader. So far, thank God, we have had such victorious support.

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