

**T.C  
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY  
MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE**

**USING FOREIGN POLICY AS A TOOL  
FOR SPREADING IDEOLOGY:THE CASE OF IRAN IN GHANA  
(1979-2016)**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

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## KABÜL VE ONAY SAYFASI

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is written in accordance with the scientific code of ethics. It is the true reflection of data I collected and analyzed. No part of the thesis is presented as another thesis work at this university or any other university. All written and oral sources used in it are acknowledged and properly cited. Should any misinterpretation, misrepresentations or errors be found in this thesis, I hold myself accountable for it.

Mohammed Hashiru

/ /2017

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**TTUT:** The Third Universal Theory

**LACC:** Libyan Arab Cultural Center

**ICS:** Islamic Call Society

**SNSC:** Supreme National Supreme Council

**ARD:** Agriculture and Rural Development

**NAM:** Non Aligned Movement

**OAU:** Organization of African Union

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization

**CAUR:** Comitato d'Azione per L'Universalita di Roma

**CDMA:** Centre for Development and Management of ASRI schools

**IHFG:** Imam Hussein Foundation, Ghana

**SMYA:** Shia Muslim Youth Association

**IJIC:** Imam Jawad Islamic Center

**RAB:** Rabitatu Ahlul Bayt

**IMI:** Institute Mozdahir International

**MSI:** Management Information Systems

**MIU:** Al-Mustapha International University

**IUCG:** Islamic University College, Ghana

**ABF:** Ahlul Bait Foundation

**ATTC:** Ahlul Bayt Teacher Training Centre

**ICRO:** Islamic Culture and Relations Organization

**MEC:** Mahdi Education Complex

**SWIS:** Sayyid al-Wasiyyin Islamic School

**ABIS:** Ahlul Bayt Islamic School

**IHF:** Imam Hussein Foundation

**IJSIS:** Imam Jafar Sadiq International School



**ITS:** Islamic Technical School

**MIS:** Manhaliyyah Islamic School

**AS:** Amiriyya School

**LFSHS:** Lady Fatima Senior High School

**UDS:** University for Development of Studies

**FZVC:** Fatima Zahra Vocational Centers

**FOMWAG:** Federation of Muslim Women Association of Ghana

**IRCS:** The Iranian Red Crescent Society

**NTCP:** National Tuberculosis Control Program

**NHC:** National Hajj Committee

**WAC-IUCG:** Women Affair Committee of Islamic University College, Ghana

**IKRC:** Komiteh Emdad Imam Khomeini

**IRIB:** Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting

<b>Thesis Title:</b> Using Foreign Policy as a Tool for Spreading Ideology: The Case of Iran in Ghana	
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<p>Religious ideologies are becoming crucial in today's political dispensation. The Islamic Republic of Iran is central in the discussion of religious ideology in international politics. This is because since 1979 both domestic and foreign policy of the state has been facilitated by the twelver Shia ideology it inherited from the Safavids era. The spread of Shiism became an agenda of diplomatic mission and other diplomatic corps of the Islamic Republic in many parts of the world including Africa. In some parts of Africa like Morocco, Sudan and Comoros the spread of Shiism met with strong resistance which led to closure of some embassies of the Islamic Republic. In Ghana, however, the state among other West African States has become a breeding ground for the spread of Shiism. Since, the establishment of the Iranian embassy and the cultural consulate in 1979, it has embarked on several programs such as the celebration of quds day, revolution day as well as mawlid to bring the attention of the Ghanaian Muslims to Shiism. Both the embassy and the cultural consulate have played several roles in the spread of Shiism among Ghanaian Muslims. The diplomatic mission collaborates with several structures in organizing programs of Shiism relevance. Chief among these institutions where Shiism is spread is the Ahlul Bayt Teacher Training Centre (ATTC). Ghanaian Sunni Muslims students are recruited, sponsored and trained to serve as agents of Shiism proselytization in dominant Sunni Muslim communities. The Islamic University established by the Islamic Republic also provides a platform for familiarizing the Shia ideology to non-Shiite Muslims students and workers. Both the Iranian Clinic and the Agriculture and Rural Development initiated by the Iranian state continue to aid in spreading Shiism in Ghana. The diplomatic mission continue to deny spreading Shiism in Ghana but evidence gathered from research reveals that it is involved in the act.</p>	
<b>Key words:</b> Foreign policy, Iranian Embassy, Ideology, Shiism, Ghana	

<b>Tezin Başlığı:</b> İdeolojiyi Yayımada Dış Politikayı Bir Araç Olarak Kullanma:Gana'da İran Örneği (1979-2016)	
<b>Tezin Yazarı:</b> Mohammed Hashiru	<b>Danışman:</b> Doç. Dr. Othman Ali
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<p>Dini ideolojiler günümüz siyasi şartlarında çok önemli hale gelmektedir. Uluslararası siyasette dini ideolojinin tartışılmasında İran İslam Cumhuriyeti merkezi konumdadır. Bunun nedeni, 1979'dan beri devletin iç ve dış politikası, Safevi döneminden miras kalan 12 Şii ideolojisi tarafından kolaylaştırılmasıdır. Şiiliğin yaygınlaşması, dünyanın birçok yerinde Afrika da dahil olmak üzere yabancı diplomatların ve İslam Cumhuriyeti'nin diğer diplomatik kollarının gündemi haline geldi. Afrika'nın Fas, Sudan ve Komoros gibi bazı bölgelerinde Şiiliğin yayılması güçlü bir dirençle karşılaştı ve nihayetinde bu bölgelerdeki İslam Cumhuriyeti'nin elçiliklerinin kapatılmasına neden oldu. Bununla birlikte, Gana ve diğer bazı Batı Afrika ülkeleri Şiiliğin yayılması için üreme alanı haline geldi.1979'da İran büyükelçiliğinin ve kültür konsoloslğunun kurulmasından bu yana, Gana Müslümanlarının dikkatini Şiiliğe çekmek için Kudüs Günü kutlamaları, Devrim Günü kutlamalarının yanı sıra Mevlid kutlamaları gibi çeşitli programlar da düzenlenmektedir. Elçilik ve kültür konsoloslğu, Şiiliğin Ganalı Müslümanlar arasında yayılmasında rol oynamıştır. İran devletinin avantaj sağlamak için geleneksel okul (Havza) eğitim, sağlık ve mesleki tesisler gibi yapılar kurmuştur. Bu tesisler şimdi İran devletinin Şiilik yayma gündeminde bir aracı görevi görmektedir. Diplomatik misyon da Şiilikle alâkalı programlar düzenlemek için bu yapılarla işbirliği yapmaktadır. Ganalı Sünni Müslüman öğrencilere Sünni Müslümanların yoğun olduğu topluluklarda Şii inancını yaymak amacıyla ajanlık teklif edilmekte, onlara maddi destek sağlanmakta ve eğitim verilmektedir. İslam Cumhuriyeti tarafından kurulan İslam Üniversitesi, Şii ideolojisini Şii olmayan Müslüman öğrencilere ve işçilere tanıtan bir platform da sunmaktadır. Gana'da, hem İran Klinik hem de İran devletleri tarafından başlatılan Tarım ve Kırsal Kalkınma, Şiiliğin yayılmasına yardımcı olmaya devam ediyor. Diplomatik misyon, Gana'da Şiiliğin yaygınlaştırdığını reddetse de araştırmalardan elde edilen kanıtlar diplomatik misyonun bu işi yürüttüğünü ortaya koymaktadır.</p>	
<b>Anahtar Kelimeler:</b> İran Elçiliği, Dış Politika, İdeoloji, Şiilik, Gana,	

## INTRODUCTION

In premodern times, religion was the source of political authority in the world. The Europeans depended on the monarchs who claimed to rule with divine right, the Greeks and the Romans leaned on the oracles whilst the Chinese and Indians relied heavily on the spirits and the caste system respectively. However, these authorities were neglected with time in Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was during the period popularly referred to as the period of enlightenment. This period was characterized by ideas based on reason and philosophy. Religious authorities were queried and the church separated from the state. This gave rise to secularism; independence of social rules from religious doctrines. Ideology filled the vacuum created by the abandonment of religion as new basis of law and rulership apparently became necessary. Both conservatists and liberalists shared opposing views as to how a state should be managed. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following economic and social changes, philosophical debates were stirred. New ideologies began to spring up as a result. Karl Marx (1818-1883) maintains that the plight of the working class cannot be remedied by reforms alone. Nationalism, socialism, fascism among other ideologies developed. The Western political powers were influenced by their political philosophy and economic gains to extend their political development to many parts of the world. Until mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the imperial power of Europe has made deliberate attempts to spread ideologies to the Third World through colonialism. The impact made by the British and the French in Africa for instance is the greatest. Political ideologies such as conservatism, communism, liberalism and nationalism were spread as a result of the efforts of the imperialists. When most of the Third World states gained independence, consequent governments therein leaned on the Western political ideals for government. However, the aftermath of Second World War marked the beginning of these independent states looking for political identity that is characteristic of their culture. In Africa, for instance, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania propounded the Ujamaa <sup>1</sup>(African Socialism), President Nasser of Egypt opted for an Islamic socialism, whilst Sedar

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<sup>1</sup> Ujamaa is believed to have been founded on three essentials; freedom, equality and unity based on developmental philosophy. Ujamaa meaning ‘familyhood’ in Swahili is rooted in traditional African values and thus emphasizes on communalism of traditional African societies.

Senghor of Senegal championed Negritude<sup>2</sup>, as Nkrumah of Ghana propounded secularist socialist ideology. These leaders' choices were informed by their belief that new policies must conform with cultural and indigenous identities (Westerlund 1980:3). According to Fukuyama (1992:3), the end of the cold war started an era of abandoning ideology. Ideology seemed to have ended with the exception of few Maoist beliefs that was happening in Peru and Nepal. Meanwhile as ideology was declining, religion started to take the mantle in most of the world's religion in the form of revivalism. Religion began to make a strong come back after its essence in politics was downplayed by the West when they seek to promote secular politics. Many movements and groups have since been relying on religion to revive their cultural and political identities. These groups promote their religious doctrines as an option for political ideology. Islamism for instance became the most relevant trend in the political world recently.

Just like the French revolution did to the European societies, the Iranian revolution paved way for the subscription of a new political ideology that is religious. Unlike revolutions in France, Mexico, Russia and China that sake to do away with religion in politics, the Iranian revolution masterminded by Shiite clerics in 1979 did not only see to the overthrow of the Shah Reza Pahlavi but also facilitated the formation of an Islamic state.

The birth of the new Islamic state and the restructure of its political ideology according to the "vilayet faqih" by Khomeini have since drawn the attention of political theorists and powers to the Iranian state. To ensure the prominence and entrenchment of its religious political ideology in the World, the Iranian state has since the revolution devised several measures using foreign policy as a major tool in spreading the Shiite doctrine across the world. Many parts of the world have had their experience with the introduction of Shiism into their various states through the activities of diplomatic corps from Iran. In Africa, some states like Morocco, Sudan and Comoros terminated diplomatic ties with the Iranian state in order to show their dislike for the spread of Shiism. However, the Iranian agenda seem to be alive in some West African states like Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana. As such population of Shiites in these states has begun to increase significantly.

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<sup>2</sup> Negritude is an ideological philosophy developed by Aime Cesaire, Leopold Senghor and Leon Damas. According to this concept members of the same racial group have shared culture, subjectivity and spiritual essence

In Ghana, Shiism is the less in terms of adherents as compared to Islamic religious groups like Tijaniyyah, Wahhabis and the Ahmadiyya. In this light, the Islamic republic has since made efforts to develop and promote Shiism using its diplomatic mission such as the embassy and the cultural consulate. Initially, both representing corps have dealt directly with the Ghanaian Muslims to influence them into accepting Shiism. These diplomats have used their outfits to organize programs and sponsor some other programs of Islamic relevance with the aim of luring the Ghanaian Muslims to the Shiite ideology. With the development of Shiite structures and organizations in the Ghanaian state today, the Islamic Republic through these structures continues to promote Shiism. The activities of these organizations and institutions powered by the Islamic Republic are the source of the spread of Shiism in Ghana.

### **Research Topic**

Using Foreign Policy as a tool for spreading ideology; the case of Iran in Ghana (1979-2016)

### **Significance**

The activities of Iran in spreading Shiism are not new in the Middle East. However, the interest of Iran in Africa is catching the attention of policy makers following events that led to closure of embassies of the Islamic Republic in some African states. Despite the challenges facing the Islamic republic in its mission to proselytize Shiism in some African states, there still remain some success stories to be told about their quest in other states like Ghana. The findings of this research reveal the modus operandi of Iran in Ghana and how it adds up to the realization of its agenda. This research is set to provide a deeper analysis of the role of Iranian foreign policy in spreading Shiism in Ghana. It is hoped that both academicians and policy makers may read to add to their knowledge of religious ideology and foreign policy

## **Theoretical Framework**

Following the 1979 revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran the national identity of Iranians became a topic for discussions. Shiism eventually became the social identity of the Iranians. Some intellectuals have maintained that three elements make up the national identity of Iranians. These are Pan Islamism, Pan Iranism and modernism. Pan-Islamism or Pan Shiism emphasizes on political Islam that enjoins all Muslims to strive against oppression. It was Shiism that aided the national identity of the Iranians. Shiism, therefore, becomes the source of identity formation of the state which informs its foreign and domestic actions. Pan-Iranism is the assertion that Iranian state and nationality is the major reference of the state's national identity. The philosophy of the Iranian state since beginning of the state's foundation regards human's identity as a fact. The Zoroastrian culture of the state enjoins humans to not only fight darkness but make endless endeavor to deny it from dominating the earth. Following the integration of Shia Islam and its declaration as a state religion in Iran, Shiites were commanded to strive against oppression as they stand in defense of the oppressed.

Through nationalism inspired by cultural identity the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to create a new order in the state and also attempts to change the Muslim world as well as the developing countries. The constitution of the Islamic Republic institutionalized the Shia ideological agenda as it legalizes the achievement of such goals through the usage of its foreign policy. The 1979 revolution redefined both the domestic and foreign policy of the state. Pan-shiism and nationalism have since remained components of the foreign policy of Iran. Whilst the component of language and nationalism are ethnicity and culture, the components of Pan-Islamism or Pan-shiism is global ideology which it export to other states.

Since constructivism among other theories of international relations is a theory which gives relevance to identity as a factor which shapes domestic and international politics, the most appropriate theoretical framework of this thesis is constructivism.

## **Objective**

This research work shall contribute to knowledge through the following set objectives

- Examining the spread of ideology via foreign policy
- Investigating the role of the ideology backed Iranian foreign policy and its impact in the Ghanaian state

- Looking at the activities and the ideological contribution of the Shiite community in Ghana

### **Research Methodology**

The study employs qualitative method for primary data collection and analysis. Available literature is reviewed, observation and some interviews are done as well.

### **Chapter Organization**

The study has been organized in four chapters.

The first chapter covers the spread of ideology through foreign policy, the concept of ideology, foreign policy, communism, fascism, the crusades, Wahhabism, the Third Universal Theory, the Shia ideology, the foreign policy of Iran and Shiism spread.

The second chapter discusses the main thesis. Discussions here cover the Iranian foreign policy and the spread of Shiism in Ghana, relations between Iran and Africa, diplomatic relations of Ghana with some Muslim countries, diplomatic relations between Ghana and Iran and the Iranian foreign policy and the spread of Shiism in Ghana as well as soft power of Iran.

The third chapter focuses on factors such as literature, proximity to Sufism, social factors as some reasons which aided the conversion of many Sunni Muslims to Shiism

The fourth Chapter is the concluding chapter. It gives a general summary of the work.



## CHAPTER I: SPREAD OF IDEOLOGIES VIA FOREIGN POLICY

This chapter introduces the main concepts of the thesis. Whilst discussing concepts of ideology, this chapter reveals the deliberate attempts made by political ideologues to spread their ideologies using foreign policy as a tool. Attention is given to political ideologies, like *Communism* and *Fascism* and, religious ideologies like *Wahhabism*, *The Third Universal Theory* and *Shiism* and how foreign policy is used in spreading them.

### 1.1. The Concept of Ideology

Heywood mentions that the problem confronting discussions concerning the subject matter *ideology* is that there has not been any agreed definition for it. He mentions David Mc Lellans statement which states that “ideology is the most elusive concept in the whole of social science”. L.T Sargent views ideology as a concept which bases on the value systems of various societies (Baradat 2012:7). Hans Noel (2014:38) also defines it as the result of intellectual, activists and others debating or arguing about what should be. Baradat opines that no matter what the definition of ideology is, it must be observed that ideologies are often used to convince the masses in order to achieve the state’s goals. It is also thought that ideology itself signifies and connotes political meaning since it is first and foremost a political term (Baradat 2012:10). The introductions of religious politics or religious economies in international relations studies, religious ideologies are also used. For the purpose of this study both religious ideologies and political ideologies shall connote similar terminology from different background. Political ideology,

“is a fairly coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that explain and evaluate social conditions, help people to understand their place in society and provide a program for social and political action.” (Ball and Dagger 2004: 4). Examples of political ideologies are liberalism, conservatism, socialism, fascism, communism and feminism. Religious ideologies” are commonly identified on the basis of the beliefs the group holds about religion and so forth...” a religious ideology... a set of beliefs which influences religious behavior” (Dyck, 1998: 19) 7

## 1.2. Foreign Policy

State policies are divided into domestic and foreign. Foreign policy, according to Charles Lerche, is the sum to the total of “all those courses of actions and the decisions relating to those courses of actions that states undertake in their relations with other for the purpose of achieving the derived national interest (Lerche 1958:1).

The foreign policy of any country therefore shows its views and positions with regards to development within the international system. Scholars of international relations have argued that political ideology is an essential determinant of foreign policy making. They see foreign policy a subject of ideological and partisan clashes, which occur in domestic policy making (Haass 2013:2). Almond (1950:159) mentioned that foreign policy consensus is created by basic attitudes and ideology consensus that is shared by the public and political elites. Foreign policy making patterns and trends are affected by the political elite’s ideology. Ideology is crucial due to the fact that it affects priorities of policy makers and how they must look at or do they view the world.

Foreign policy decisions are shaped by the political ideology at various levels. It is mentioned that,

“Ideology and political beliefs play significant roles in the soviet and American political systems. Ideology gives soviet leaders the frame work of organizing their vision of political development. It sets limits on the options open to them as policy makers; it defines immediate priorities and long-range goals; and shapes the methods through which problems are handled”. (Brzezinski and Huntington, 1963: 56)

However, the goal of this study is not to discuss ideology or foreign policy making in particular. This study is set to investigate the use of foreign policy by state actors as a relevant tool for spreading their ideology. By ideology I mean both political and religious ideologies. I shall discuss this topic in two spectrums. The first spectrum will be engaged with discussions of political ideologies such as communism and fascism and how foreign policy aided their spread. In the second spectrum, religious ideologies such as political Catholicism (Crusades) and Shiism and how foreign policy aids in their spread shall be discussed.

### 1.3. Communism

Baradat states that “communism is an ancient concept extending back to prehistory” (Baradat 2012:162). Evidence of early communism reveals that it was first mode of social existence of human. This means that all primitive people practiced communism. There are four compositions of communistic societies. These are rural, agrarian, collective and local in their orientations. However, in political studies communism “is the international revolutionary Marxist movement that evolves under Lenin’s leadership from the Bolshevik faction to become the ruling party of Russia after the October revolution in 1917 and created the communist international (com intern) in 1919. ([www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com), 2016)

Pipes states that attempt to spread communism abroad started at the end of World War I among the central powers that were defeated. Lenin was clear when he advocated the spread of communism. Communist countries had no intention of keeping or containing the communist ideology within their borders. This is largely because Lenin feared their revolution would be overcome by combined forces of capitalist world. In his speech delivered in the year 1920 Lenin made clear the foreign dimension of the Russian revolution. Pipes captures this statement “[In November, 1917] we knew that our victory will be lasting victory only when our undertaking will conquer the whole world, because we had launched it exclusively, counting on the world revolution” (Pipes, 2001: 94).

Though communist government was conservative inside its own borders, it acted in a radical way stirring up the masses abroad (Pipes, 2001: 34). In Hungary, Communist somewhat had greater success. This is because the communist government strived to stay in power for half of 1919. It was not a success without the promise of Soviet Russia to defend it from Roman armies’ invasion. The regime fell, however, due to the inability of Moscow to make good on the pledge.

Soviet communism under the leadership of Linen attempted to extend the communist revolution in both Germany and England. The famous Red Army of the communist in 1920 were accompanied by Soviet commissars of Polish origin made entry to Poland. Immediately, appeals were broadcasted calling on the peasant and the Polish workers to usurp the bourgeois and the landlord’s properties. The communist party was, however, crashed and scattered in the decisive battle of Warsaw. Lenin later thought that the best

chance for spreading the communist revolution abroad was to instigate another world war. This form of ideological export lacked diplomacy, and it was characterized by violence and instigation. The *communist manifesto* also contributed in making the communist ideology popular. The communist by Karl Max and Frederick Engels became the mode through which the communist views and aims were spread. It didn't only become the literature for communism but also was the reason behind the spread of communist ideology. The book was published in French, English, German, Italian, Flemish and Danish languages (Marx & Engels 1998:3).

#### **1.4.Fascism**

The word fascism appeared and was used in Italian politics in the year 1922-24 by Benito Mussolini led government. Fascist government came to power in Germany from 1933 to 1945 and in Spain from 1939 to 1975. Dictatorial regime in South America and other countries that are underdeveloped countries were referred to as *fascist* (Yahya 2003: 15). Fascism in both Italy and Germany and even elsewhere in western Europe was necessitated by certain problems found in the structure of liberal politics. These problems were the adoption of universal suffrage, the crisis of 19th century political organizations of the Bourgeois among others. Fascist promised they will arrest the economy disorder and national weakness created by liberalists, conservatists and socialists. Fascist writing therefore directly attacked the philosophical ideas socialist, liberalist and to a large extent democrats (Grigsby 2012:125).

From the inception of the fascist movement, the fascist party in power aimed at spreading the fascist ideology and influence among the Italian communities abroad. The fascist policy operated in European countries and beyond with this purpose in mind. In both USA and Argentina, the Fascist party made effort to spread fascism due to the large number of Italian immigrants in them. The policy was implemented by the "Fasci Italiani all'Estero" (Italian Fasci abroad). It was first an institution of the Fascist party and was later incorporated into one umbrella organization of the Italians Abroad that reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs after the fascist regime was integrated (Gentile 2003:166).

Despite the fascist regimes effort to justify the organization of the Fasci Abroad as its effort to protect the economic, social and judicial interest of the Italian emigrants, the

main aim of fascist policy overseas was to diffuse fascist ideology abroad. The fascist foreign policy from 1923 to 1926 was characterized by ideology. The personnel hence organized a strategy for the implementation in foreign countries. Other accounts of Mussolini's foreign policy reveal that he denied the allegation that he was trying to spread fascist ideology abroad, Mack Smith observes that Mussolini worked hard in disguise to make fascism popular among states (Smith 1994: 100).

The spread of fascism abroad was done in different stages according to Emilio Gentile (2003:110). On 1st May 1921, Mussolini declared the formation of Fasci abroad was part and parcel of fascist program. Between the year 1921 and 1922, the first fascist abroad rose extemporaneously. The Fasci abroad rapidly increased after the fascist seized power in Italy. The National Fascist party (PNF) therefore had the power to control and coordinate organization and activities of the movement. The PNF in December 1922 had to appoint delegates (delagati) in the important foreign capitals in order to control and promote the Fasci. Gentile (2003:168). Giuseppe Bastianini, the director of the institution of the "Fasci Italiani all'Estero" born in 1899 views fascism as a spiritual and a political revolution that aims at creating a new regime and also a new way of life for civilized people. In Gentile's own word: "being a revolution movement, fascism should not limit itself by the Italian boundaries, but spread its ideology all over the world. It should diffuse its principles to Italian immigrants in foreign countries, hold them together in a joint community of believers and as missionaries of the fascist political religion (Gentile, 2003: 169)

Later on, due to internal wrangling, fascism lost support due to the opposing activities of Italian embassy and consuls. Bastianini due to the allegation made about the anti-fascist activities of the diplomatic corps, ordered the Fasci abroad to take lead over the Italian communities as they direct his own foreign policy. Fascism later became unpopular due to the military and foreign policy failures. Some others have also related the collapse and fall of fascism to the problem of successorship. Consequently, Mussolini fell from power in July 1943 (Laqueur, 1978: 137).

### **1.5. Political Religious Ideology**

Whilst religion elucidates the creation and the working of the universe as it sets guidelines for human behavior, politics ascertains who gets what and why. Whereas

“divine” texts and beliefs are a source of law in religion, in politics, laws are made by whoever wins and rules. The two appear to be distinct in their nature but share important features. In pre-modern times, regardless of how rulers assume power, religion provided the premises for political authority around the world. Whilst monarchs of ruled by “divine right”, in India rulership was the mandate of the Kshatriya caste whilst the ancient Greeks and Romans resorted to their oracles for political wisdom and guidance.

The West abandoned the dependence on religious authority hence rise of *Secularism*, *Conservatism* and *Liberalism* in 17th and 18th century. Fukuyama (1992: 46) mentions in his book that the end of cold war marked the turning point of world shunning away from ideology. Apart from Maoist beliefs that lingered as a guide to rebel groups in some countries like Peru and Nepal, the era of ideology apparently came to an end. Meanwhile religion appeared to have begun emerging in a form of revivalism in many of the world’s major faiths. Among these was *Catholicism*, *Salafism* and *Shiism*. These groups backed by their religious ideologies have more or less operated as religious political economies and have been making attempts to spread their ideologies worldwide.

### **1.5.1 The Crusade**

There was a struggle regarding who should govern Europe between the Kings and the Pope. In the East before the advent of crusades, the Islamic empire was weak. Early crusaders did not outnumber the population or have greater force and fighting skills yet they emerged victorious. Crusaders were successful because of the demographic and political divisions of Muslim. The Europe, during the time of crusades in the 11<sup>th</sup> century was not well organized. It was a feudal society with a hard and difficult life. Land ownership and life sustenance was difficult. The feudal Lords unlike the commoners lived lavishly. The king gave some of the aristocrats among the knights part of his land. In the midst of this harsh living, the papacy tried to find a solution through truce called “peace of God” but it failed. The papacy realized they have to divert the warriors’ impulse to fight outside Europe in a project led by the church. This initiative only means that the power of the church was growing. The land of the church outnumbered those of the kings of Europe combined. The Seljuk Turk around the same

time were occupied by a campaign of expansion. In Byzantine, they took Emperor Romanus Diogenes IV prisoner. The successor of the abducted Emperor called for help from Western Europe.

Pope Gregory VII who was nicknamed “The Holy Satan” saw this as an opportunity to realize his dream of controlling the church of the Holy Sepulcher and of gathering all the named forces under papal leadership in a campaign he called “the Lord’s project”. Pope Gregory was reported by the Arab historians as a figure who had the idea of holy war. He was the one who conceived the idea of sending a campaign to the East to recapture the tomb of Jesus Christ from the Muslim hands. The pope believed the tomb was forcefully taken from Christians.

Arab historians believe that propaganda was started and it depicted Muslims in a negative way in order to justify attacking them. Meanwhile European people barely knew how to read or write. Arab historians claim the fanaticism as a result of the church propaganda became firm due to the illiteracy of the society. The Pope, however, died in 1085 before he could realize his project. Fortunately for the church Pope Urban, who succeeded Pope Gregory was more ambitious and considered fanatic by some historians as he believed in exporting Catholicism by militarization of Christianity. The Pope was moved by the hardship of the Christians in the East which was exaggerated by the propaganda of the Byzantine Emperor.

The Pope saw himself as the master of Christianity who also has the rights to the eastern region. The moved by the Byzantine propaganda and his visions for the church made a declaration after building a council meeting with the church. The Pope declared war against non-believers of the church and ordered crusaders to reclaim their Holy Lands. He ordered them and claimed it was the order of God and it shall be rewarded by Him. Among the brains of the holy crusaders was Peter the hermit, an eloquent speaker and whose appearance was thought by the commoners as cursed by apostolic poverty and thus inspired them. He went across Europe to gather and promote the peoples’ crusade. The army of Peter Hermit of 20,000 was crushed and then a more organized army under more brutal and ambitious commanders. Before the crusade could come to an end it was able to conquer Jerusalem and held it for 88 years. The crusades lasted between 1095 and 1291. The armies were not instructed by a state actor or were it inspired by goals of

a State. Religious politics moved them and their main aim was to capture territories and spread the catholic Christian ideology. (Hansen & Curtis 2013: 375).

### **1.5.2 Wahhabism**

Wahhabism started in Najd Saudi Arabia around 18th century as an Islamic religious revivalist movement. It was named “Wahhabism” because of the ideologue behind the movement, Mohammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab (1703-1792). The main aim behind this movement is the “purification of Islam” and saving it from syncretism. The Wahhabis aim also at restoring the true meaning of tawhid (monotheism). The campaign of this movement throughout Middle East under the name of jihad made it justifiable to wage wars and kill other Muslims. This fatal campaign later on culminated in the establishment of the Saudi modern state or kingdom. Since the creation of the modern state by Abdul Aziz Wahhabism was then changed from a movement of revolutionary jihad to a conservative, theology and political movement ([www.conflictforum.com](http://www.conflictforum.com), 2016).

Wahhabism has since been propagated by the Saudi state as a state of ideology. It has also been a foreign policy instrument of the state in modern times. The Saudi regime has made effort to export this Wahhabi ideology from the beginning of 1960 to several parts of the Muslim world. The spread of this ideology with the increased strength of petrodollar, the Saudis embarked on a campaign to export and spread Wahhabism to other Muslim states.

The campaign began in a form of giving monetary assistance to several organizations and groups in various Muslim countries. Around the 1980s the campaign became more comprehensive and sophisticated as the regime established several proxy organizations that distribute the Wahhabi literature and Qurans (Fadl 2002:118). The agenda also was to spread the Wahhabi ideology across Africa. The regime’s aim was to make the Wahhabi ideology as an alternative ideology to the Sufi dominant Sufi movement in Africa. The interconnectedness of organizations with the Saudi state and through charity, constructions of mosques, Islamic centers and other educational institutions aided the spread of Wahhabism in the Muslim world.

In Ghana, Wahhabi revivalism had taken different forms in 1960s. The revivalism was dictated by the Saudi regime through the Saudi students graduates open propagation and



the activities of the Salafi NGO. Wahhabism was used as a Saudi Arabian foreign policy tool in Ghana since 1961. This started when Saudi state started a diplomatic relation with Ghana. The Islamic Desk in the embassy served as the adjunct of the ministry of Religious Affairs. The desk coordinates matter on religious activities as well as humanitarian services with the Ghanaian Muslims (Dumbe 2008:174).

Activities of the Saudi regime as shall be mentioned later included conscious effort to impede the spread of Shiism in Ghana. The Saudi regime in collaboration with the Ghana Muslim Students' Association(GMSA) to educate the Ghanaian Muslims about the Islamic Republic of Iran's revolution in 1979 and how Shiism (a sect they abhor) could be spread as a result (Ameen 2015: 74).

### **1.5.3 The Third Universal Theory**

The Third Universal Theory was a socio-political theory Col-Muammar al-Qhadafi propounded. Al-Qhadafi assumes power in Libya due to a coup he staged on 1st September 1969. The Al-Fateh revolution masterminded by Al-Qhadafi signified the opening and beginning of new political era in Libya. He meant by the revolution a conquer backwardness, national importance, ignorance and poverty.

The philosophy of *The Third Universal Theory* (TTUT) was contained in the Green book. The green colourness of the book was seen by the proponents of the revolution as symbol of the Prophet of Islam. They see it as both Islamic alternative and an option for the aspirations of the third world. Col-Al Qhadafi emphasizes the relevance of his book in modern times because of the political theories he perceived have failed. The Chinese Little Red Book, the ideological guide of Mau Tse Tsong for a Third World Revolution was as well as the New and old Testament Bible of the Christians and Jews seem not to have resolved multitudes of problems facing humanities. The Green Book was also seen as an endeavor to replace the Marxist as well as the economy of the Capitalist in the world (Esposito, 1995: 81).

Al-Qhadafi appropriated both political and religious space to propagate the value of the book in Libya. Couple with some tenets of Islam such as some Sunnah, legal analogy and consensus rejected by Al-Qhadafi, he saw himself as an Islamic revivalist and an ideologue. He hence offered The Third Universal Theory as a religio-political

worldview option which contrasts the existing Islamic tradition in Libya and in other places (Joffe, 1988: 42).

The Green book covers 3 main areas which are politics, economics and public aspects. The book starts by rejecting capitalism, communism, democracy, parliaments and political parties as insufficient ideologies to curb problems affecting humankind. The book proposes “Natural Socialism” as a new form of socialism to replace the exploitive Marxist and the capitalist models. The natural socialism be envisaged as a model to free humanity from all forms of bond age. The teaching of the Green Book was deliberately exported to many part the world and Africa as well. In Ghana, the diplomatic relation with Libya necessitated the spread of the ideologies of the Green Book in the country.

Through the establishment of Libya Arab cultural center (LACC) and Islamic call society (ICS) offices of the Libyan state in the Ghanaian state, these institutions worked from different dimensions to promote Libyan foreign policy. The Islamic call society provide humanitarian aid to other countries and helps in the management of Islamic centers built by the Libyan state while the Culture Centre of Libya delivered the political agenda of the Libyan state. The Libyan government has donated several logistics to revamp education in the Ghanaian state. Through the donations of vehicles and constructions of educational infrastructure and the awarding of scholarship, the Libyan state reduced the burden of the Ghanaian state.

However, the library controlled by the diplomatic corps of the Libyan state was filled with literature that contained the teaching of Green Book. Later on, Ghana center of study of the Green Book was formed as a platform for dissemination Libyan Political ideas. Despite the attempts made to export the ideas of the Green Book in the sub-Saharan Africa by making Ghana as a center of dissemination, scholars like Saint John states that the agenda of Green Book in the sub-Saharan Africa was a failure. He links the failure to the incredibility of the Libyan leader’s political and ideological agenda in the Sub-Saharan Africa (Dumbe 2013: 22).

## **1.6.The Shia Ideology**

Shiism is an Islamic sect which emerged after the demise of the Prophet of Islam and became an organized political institution in Islam after the Battle of Siffin<sup>3</sup> Shiism became the new identity of those who expressed loyalty to Ali. It was this political allegiance that later culminated into a religious doctrine. These people were hence referred to as Shiites. In the course of time Shiism got divided into groups such the Ismailiyah, Zaydiyya and the Imamiyya<sup>4</sup> (Ithna Ashariyya). The Imamiyya is today, the most active and populous Shiite group in the world. This is partially because Iran as a state is a custodian of this group and are advancing several measures to spread this brand throughout the world (encyclopedia Britannica)

### **1.6.1 The Iranian Shia Ideology**

The Arabs from the west invaded Iran in the 7th century AD. Islam was therefore introduced to the new invaded land (January 2008: 4). Since the early 16th century, the Safavids converted the majority of the Persians to Shia Islam. Under the Qajar Dynasty (1795-1925) Shia Muslims formed the majority of the country. Ever since, the Shia religious establishment especially the Ayatollahs were very instrumental in various rebel movements such as the protest movement of 1890-1891, the constitutional revolution of 1905-1911, the oil nationalization crisis of 1951-1953 up to the grand Islamic Revolution of 1979 (Salamey & Othman 2011: 197).

The 1979 revolution brought many changes which includes the institutionalization of the clerically dominated Islamic republic and the political and social establishment of the revolution. After 1979, political power structure became centralized and materialized. The Shia clericals rose from a diffuse religious and socio-political force to a powerful and organized body having a formalized hierarchy, an educational apparatus that is strong and an influential political and religious network. This transformation did not end with an organizational aspect of religious institutions but sailed through religious teachings and doctrines. The fact that Islam was the Corner stone of the revolution also led to the sanctification of the state and the constitution (Moazami 2013:

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<sup>3</sup> It was not only Shiism that emerged after the battle of Siffin but *Kharijites* as well

<sup>4</sup> Also known as Ithna Ashariyya is a group of Shiites who believe in the succession of Ali and other 11 grandchildren of Prophet Muhammad.

120). Opinions in scholarship are that, among the prominent social theorists of the Iranian revolution are Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Mahmud Taliqani and Ali Shari'ati. Ali Shari'ati is described by Cleveland (2009: 426) as the most influential ideologue in the Byzargans wing of the Freedom Movement. Though Ali Shari'ati died before the climax of the revolution in 1979, his activities contributed largely in inciting the masses towards a revolution. Despite being barricaded from teaching in the university upon his return to Iran, he lectured in a religious meeting hall in Tehran. Lectures he delivered between 1967 and 1972 when he was arrested were disseminated widely in cassettes and prints. The doctrine Shari'ati advanced was a combination of Marxism, Shiism, Revolutionism and Iranian patriotism. Basically, Shari'ati's messages conveyed the understanding that Shiism was an activist faith that called for opposition of injustice and the assertion of cultural heritage in the face of Western development models. His doctrines through religious orientation did not tolerate the clerics whose religious scholasticism appeared stagnant. His proposed doctrine was seen as: "secular faith" that was both inspiring and dynamic and also called for change. His calls for actions were convincing and immensely popular because it is "an ideology that fulfilled both the desire to remain loyal to their faith and their urge to undertake a revolution" (Cleveland, 2009: 426).

Besides Shari'ati, Ayatollah Taliqani's contribution is considered laudable towards the Iranian revolution. Taliqani despite his religious upbringing involved in politics at the age of 27. The Shah imprisoned him for opposing his rulership after the cleric held a public lecture on Islam. Taliqani was seen by many as an excellent mediator between disagreeing parties. He was also seen as a seasoned veteran of the struggle against the Shah. His engagement with politics gave him enough skills in organizing and gunning the support of Iranians. Though a contemporary of Khomeini he is considered influential but not like him (Khomeini). Taliqani was instrumental in the political struggle that led to the Iranian revolution. In the time of revolution Taliqani was the chairman of "secretive" revolutionary council. For Taliqani colonialism is the reason for totalitarianism and dictatorship in several countries. Nationalism and ideology according to Taliqani are the means by which the people could resist colonialists (Fischer & Abedi 1990: 172).

Ayatollah Khomeini is considered by many as the outstanding hero of the Islamic Republic's revolution. According to Mohammed Jawad Maqhniya, a prominent writer and scholar of Lebanese descent, Khomeini has been prophesied in the Shia literature years ago. He quotes the Shia 7th imam, Musa Ibn Jafar saying that "a man will out from Qum, summoning the people to right. They will rally him people resembling pieces of iron, not to be shaken by violent winds, indefatigable, unsparing (in their effort) and relying upon God" (Piscatori 1983: 168)

Also among other prophesies on the revolution to be spearheaded by Khomeini is the poem Jalal a Din Mohammad Mulawi Balkhi. A verse in his poem which states that "power of the wine will break the bottle" is often interpreted by proponents of Khomeini as a metaphor that symbolizes the revolution (Piscatori 1986: 165). Khomeini was arrested in 1963 and in 1964 was exile for publicly criticizing the Shah's government. His recorded lectures and summons were smuggled and circulated in Iran. In 1960s to 1970s he rose to prominence among the Iranian religious circles.

Khomeini's politico-religious or political philosophy is contained in a series of lectures published in 1971 as a book. This book is called *Vilayet-i-faqih* (Cleveland 2009:427). *Vilayet-i-Faqih*: The core message of the book is that religion and state should not be separated and that the jurist should be the custodians of absolute political power to be able to manage the affairs of the state based on Quran and Sunnah. Khomeini sees the 1979 revolution as a beginning of Islamic era. The book was also a handbook for the revolution. The spiritual leader argued in the book that an Islamic state based on the Quran and Prophet's traditions could be created and also religious men due to their knowledge of law must be in helm of affairs of the state. While shunning and condemning the monarchical system of government, Khomeini called for the overthrow of the Shah's regime as he proposes the creation of parallel Islamic government that will incite the population to stand against tyranny and injustice. The spiritual leaders program drew an attention of many supporters as the revolution gained momentum (Cleveland 2009:429).

Despite the immense support received by Khomeini's *Vilayet al Faqih*, several other pundits and scholars stood against the law. One of such critics of Khomeini Ironically was his ardent supporters, Maghniya. According to Maghniya, the position of the Jurist guardian is virtually equated to the position of the infallible Imam. He argues that the

faqih has the mandate extracting religious rules from the sources for new event in a form comprehensible to the people, but has no superiority over his predecessor. The faqih being a mortal is liable to be conceited, mistaken or forgetful has the competence and the duty to be the guardian of certain areas of social life and all categories of Muslims. Scholars such as Murtada Ansari, Sayyid Muhammad Bahr al-Ulum and Mirza-yi Naini shared the same opinion (Piscatori 1983: 165).

Many writers and experts of Iranian policies since the revolution have mentioned that promoting and spreading the revolutionary Islam was primarily the foreign policy objective of Iran since the beginning of 1979. By unity, it aims at uniting the Islamic world and the extension of sovereignty of God throughout the world. The Muslims of the Arab state and beyond were appealed by the broadcast of Iran's "voice of the Islamic Revolution" "to rise up against their states (Esposito 1990:22).

Activities of Khomeini in his bid to export the revolution, however, made a number of Muslim governments nervous. In Iraq for instant, where 60% of the population was Shia, the Baath Socialist government of Saddam Hussein was disturbed by eruption in Karbala, Khufa and Najd. Sadam and Khomeini have both shown distaste for each other. While Sadam denounces Khomeini, Khomeini also condemned Saddam as an atheist and called for his overthrow. The offshoots of the Iranian party supporters in Iraq such as Ayatollah Sadr were executed in 1980 as a result.

According to Esposito, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca was also used by Iran propagate its revolutionary message. Khomeini and his loyal clerics refused to recognize the Saudis as the custodians of the Holy sites. During pilgrimages to Mecca, Pilgrims from Iran displayed posters of Khomeini as they chant slogans against the Soviet Union, Israel, and United States. Saudi security forces in June 1982 clashed with the pilgrims. In 1987, more than four hundred people lost their lives as result of a confrontation between the Saudi forces and the Iranian pilgrims. In Bahrein and Kuwait Shia unrest threatened the State. The government of Bahrein in 1981 foiled an Iranian backed coup by the Islamic Liberation of Bahrein Front. Kuwait, with a 30% Shia population was troubled due to the car bombing of the French and U.S embassies in 1983. This led to the crack down on Shia unrest in the years 1987 and 1989.

## 1.7.The Foreign Policy Of Iran And Shiism Spread

According to Mirbaghari (2004:6), accounting for the impact of Shiism on the foreign policy of Iran involves a review of its impact on domestic politics. This work is interested in the foreign policy of Iran and the spread of Shiism since 1979. Eva Patricia Rakel writes that:

“post-revolutionary Iran’s foreign policy approach can be summarized as follows: in the first ten years after the revolution, when Khomeini was the Supreme leader, it was dominated by two main ideological principles: 1. Neither East nor West but the Islamic Republic, “which translated in Particular into an aversion to Western (US) influence; and 2. “Export of the revolution” in other to free Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries from their oppressive and corruptive rulers” (2007: 3)

This means that during the first ten years after the revolution, foreign policy orientation was mainly driven by ideology. The presidency of Rafsanjani (1989-1997) witnessed an approach towards post Iran-Iraq war economic reconstruction and the reintegration of the country into the international economy. Rafsanjani’s main priority with regards to foreign policy was the improvement of Iran’s relations with Persian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and the newly independent states of Central Eurasia and Russia. Between 1997 and 2005, Khomeini also aimed to proceed with Rafsanjani’s foreign policy towards its neighbors in addition to improving relations with the European Union and its member countries. Rakel (2007:5) observes that Shia ideological doctrine even during these two presidencies was fixed in a nationalist yearning that rejects Westernization of the country and the Iranian people. Ahmadinejad’s presidency was characterized by a more hostile attitude towards the West and Israel. It was Ahmadinejad who became the first Iranian president to pay a courtesy call on Egypt since 1979. His visit to Cairo and the meeting with the leading Sunni Muslims scholar sheikh Ahmed al Tayeb was interpreted to have a religious connotation (<http://www.al-monitor.com>, 2015)

According to Fakhreddin Soltani (2010:3), the Islamic Republic of Iran has pursued several policies since its 1979 revolution in order to achieve its goals. The goal of the Islamic Republic had been dangling between the interest of the state and the interest of the Islamic world. Principles of Islam have dominated the foreign policy of Iran; however, different conditions have compelled the government to change its priorities of

foreign policy. For instance, article 154 of the constitution states that, “the Islamic Republic of Iran is concerned with the welfare of humanity as a whole and takes independence, liberty and sovereignty of justice and righteousness as the right of people in the world” (Esposito, 1990: 64).

Ramazani also notes that the constitutional demand for spreading and realizing this goal shapes the Iranian foreign policy since the 1979 revolution. The diverse actors employed by the Iranian state in its quest to fulfil its constitutional mandate is the soldiers, other liberation movements, students, athletes, foreign clergy and diplomats (Esposito 1990: 42).

Practically there have been four theoretical approaches of Iranian foreign policy since 1979. These include realist, ideological, pragmatist and reformist approaches (Soltani, 2010:3). Mehdi Barzagaan started the realist approach where Iran foreign policy was based on national interest and not ideological priorities. This approach, which tries to respect international regularities by avoiding interventionist policy in other countries in order to improve the state’s relation with others failed because the differences in attitude of Barzagaan and Khomeini.

The ideological approach was dominant in the Iranian foreign policy between 1981 and 1989. This approach has it that foreign policies must be built on principles and assumptions of Islam. This meant that politicians and decision makers had to behave within the tenets of ideological values. Proponents of this approach hoped that they will be able to spread the assumptions of Islamic Revolution of Iran in other countries. Proponents of these assumptions followed the interventionist approach. This approach, however, gave birth to hostility between the Islamic Republic and other countries especially Persian Gulf states.

Hashem Rafsanjani, between the years 1989-1997 pursued the pragmatic approach. By this approach, Iran endeavored to reconstruct post war-Iran, in order to normalize its relations with other states. The state declared its willing to respect international regularities and organizations. The eight years of Hashem Rafsanjani was characterized by geographical necessities that gave less attention to ideological assumptions.

The reformist approach also had some similarities with the pragmatist approach. It is only that it has political differences in domestic affairs. Khatami from 1997 until 2005 followed the reformist approach. Domestically, values such as civil society, freedom of



speech, rule of law and pluralism were adhered to by politicians. The state tried to improve its reputation in international society. During this period, the Iranian foreign policy mostly objectives were dialogues and peaceful co-existence with other countries. Mahmood Ahmadinejad's foreign policy, however, was considered a flashback to the principles and values of early years of the Islamic state. He criticized the status quo of the international state. Ahmadinejad declared that "Islamic Republic of Iran will never withdraw from goals of Islamic revolution and will respond to schemes of West and East" (Soltani, 2010: 6).

A careful study of the political trends and policies of the Islamic Republic reveals that Shiism, despite the approach used by past and present leadership is an influential factor in Iran's foreign policy. Rakel (2007:5) has mentioned that the main bodies responsible for the conduct of foreign policy are the supreme leadership, the presidency, the council of the Guardian and the foreign minister, the SNSC and the Majles. Decision making processes goes through the foreign minister, to the president and then to the SNSC and finally endorsed by the Supreme Leader.

According to Butcha (2000: 46), the Supreme leader has the final say on matters of foreign policy decision-making. As far as the Islamic Republic of Iran is concerned information gathered from abroad from embassies of Iran, security agents, media sources, libraries, individual citizens of other countries, scholars think tanks, cultural attachés of the Islamic culture and communications organization (ICRO) is the source for foreign policy development. Spreading the revolution since 1979 was a top priority of the Islamic state. The export of the revolution was under the principle "Neither East nor West" Rajaei mentions that not all the aspects of Iran's foreign policy shows this motto.

It is difficult to distinguish between the pursuit of interest by the Islamic republic and the implementation of revolutionary principles. Again, due to the culture nature of the revolution, concentrating on the cultural aspects of the revolution gives an insightful channel for understanding the impact of the dominant ideology on the exportation issue. Several institutions have been established for the implementation of the cultural export of the revolution. Some of these are the organization for the propagation of Islam (SazemaneTablighat Eslami), Hujjatiyeh Seminary in Qum, the Andishe Foundation (Bonyade Andishe) and Farabi foundation. These institutions are all related to the

government in one way or the other but have autonomy because they are mostly funded by private individuals or bodies (Esposito, 1990: 6). The organization for the propagation of Islam, founded in 1981, is the channel through which the new Islamic resurgence is transmitted within and without Iran. The organization writes and disseminates books in French, Arabic, English, German, Turkish, Kurdish, Hindi, Urdu and other languages. It also publishes Al-Tawhid, a quarterly journal which introduces the basic tenets of Islam whilst stressing on the significance of unity among Muslims. It also makes videos and movies on various topics. It also participates in Islamic conferences, seminars among others.

The Hujjatiyeh (Medreseye Hujjatiyeh) on the other hand is an education center established by Ayatollah Hujjat. Ayatollah Montaziri later on turned it into an international religious school after the revolution. Students came from all over the world particularly from African states in the early days of the revolution. The objective of the school is to export the revolution through educational training.

The Andishe Foundation is also an institution that operates with the support of the Ministry of Guidance (Vizarate Ershad). The main aim of this institution is to become the focal point for the propagation of Islam through publication of Journals and books.

Lastly the Farabi Foundation is partly a private institution which takes the responsibility of film production. The foundation aims at projecting Shia Islamic values and revolutionary ideas through its movies. Rajaei comments that all the four organizations aim at making models and letting Islam and the revolution speak for itself (Esposito, 1990: 7)

Politically in the year 1981 the low state formation of Ali Rajai which led to the state facing internal and external threats from both domestic as well as opponents from USA and the Soviet compelled the Islamic Republic to pursue a foreign policy in Africa. The policy was based on self-help, power balancing, making alliances through ideological propagation and military building. Eric Lob writes:

“ideological, the radicals interpreted and framed their efforts to export the revolution to Africa and elsewhere as fulfilling the revolutionary and the anti-imperialists, global mission of “recognizing, attracting, educating and organizing the destitute and oppressed masses (Mahrumin va mustazafin)” to develop common interest in the fight against mustakbirin) (Lob 2016: 318)

In the 1980s backed by its agenda of Africa, Iran aligned with radical African rulers such as Julius Nyerere (1965-1985) of Tanzania, Jerry John Rawlings (1981-2001) of Ghana, Saidu Momoh (1985-1992) of Sierra Leone, and Sudan's Umar Al-Bashir (1989-). These alliances were inspired by Iran's foreign policy in Africa. These African leaders and many citizens of the African States had some sort of inspiration and were impelled by Khomeini and many citizens of the Islamic Republic's revolution.

When the conservatives took power in 1984, they displaced the radicals and eventually caused their decline in Iran. The effect of the change resulted in the shift of the Iranian foreign policy in Africa. Though the conservatives are moved by stability and the formation of the new alliances and business partners, they pursued religious proselytization and ideological propagation in Africa. This marred the diplomatic and commercial relations between the Iran Iranian state and other African state like Senegal, Morocco and Sudan. The influence and the result of the proselytization in Africa is not like in other Middle Eastern countries where the majority are Muslims.

In some African states, the Iranian government collaborates with African states regimes and eventually succeeds in exporting and spreading the religious agenda in the state. In Ghana, activities of the cultural consulate, Iranian embassy, the Iranian Medical Missions, Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), the Iranian educational centers and university among others contributed largely to the spread of Shia ideology in Ghana.

### **1.8.Conclusion**

This Chapter started with explaining concepts like political and religious ideologies like Communism, Fascism, Wahhabism, Third Universal Theory and Christian Crusaders. These are ideologies got spread through the usage of foreign policy instrument. Communists and Fascists held the view that their ideology could be stronger when other states subscribe to their usage.

Religious ideologies like the one commenced by the Christian Crusaders was set to spread the Christian ideology by penetrating the Islamic societies with Army of the Lord. Islamic religious ideologies have come to prominence in the modern world with stronger economies like Saudi Arabia and Iran using their ideologies as their state governing tool. Like Fascism and other ideologies, these Islamic states are still using

their ideologies as a state agenda. The agenda of these states are to spread and have so many people, groups, societies and states leaning on them for political guidance. By so doing, these political ideologies like the Third Universal Theory of Muammer Qhadafi were to serve as alternatives for other state ideologies.

However, the Iranian vision since the revolution in 1979 seems to be the most active among all other religious political ideologies. In Iran, Ulama have taken over the mantle of the state to spread their influence through the export of its Shia revolutionary ideology to other parts of the world. Iranian agenda is becoming more apparent in the state's foreign policy.

The next chapter concentrates on the spread of this Shia ideology in Africa. Attention is given to Ghana. The next chapter discusses how Shiism spread through the activities of the Iranian mission the Ghanaian state.

## **CHAPTER II: THE IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE SPREAD OF SHIISM IN GHANA**

This chapter starts with discussions on the relationship between Africa and Iran. It further looks at the diplomatic relations between Ghana and the Islamic economies such as Saudi Arabia, Libya and the Islamic Republic of Iran. As the central theme of this work, this chapter looks in to the activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran inspired by its foreign policy, in the spread of Shia ideology in Ghana. Institutions such the embassy and consulate, Shiite schools (both secular and religious), the Agriculture and Rural Development, The Iranian Red Crescent Society among other are the Shiite tunnels through which the ideology is spread.

### **2. 1. The Relations between Iran and Africa**

It is documented that Iranians have been in contact with some parts of Africa from ancient times. The Persians ruled Egypt in 524 since it was conquered by Achaemenid emperor, Cambyses. The Persians rules the land for 200 years. The connection between Africa and Iran in the era of Islam concentrated largely on the eastern coast. Before the Gulf oil boom, traders and sailors from Iran came down to East Africa in their ships. These sailors docked at Somalia, Tanzania, and Mozambique. Those who settled at Zanzibar are represented today by the ‘shirazis’. These are the descendants of Shirazi from Iran who settled in Zanzibar about 800 years ago.

From the 20th century, Iran focused on Africa for diplomatic ties in the 1950s to 1970s. Generally, in the 1950s and 60s the attention of Iranians was on the anti-colonial movement. Iran was at that time active in the Special Committee on Decolonization set up by the United Nations. This was partly because of the state’s experience with colonial masters. Iran’s interest in this part of the continent called the horn of Africa by 1960 was attributed to the growing security concerns that resulted from increased Soviet inroad in it. It was the worrying influence of the Soviet Union that precipitated the Shah’s government’s increasing assistance which included military. This was to ensure the safety of the maritime oil-export routes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Shirazis are the African-Persian population who were converted to Islam in the Zanzibar region of Tanzania

In the first decade of the Islamic regime, three factors influenced the Iranian interest in Africa. These factors are,

- The Islamic Republic had undergone difficulty with traditional trade and economic partners in Europe and some part of Asia.
- The Islamic Republic needed support from the Third World states to strengthen its war campaign against Iraq.
- To gain access to the large Muslim populations so as to convert them to the Shia Islamic ideology.

During these times as Iran explores Africa, there was a remarkable increment of Iranian embassies in the continent, diplomatic visits and support for some African states. During those times, Ali Khamenei visited and toured Africa in 1986. Getting to the end of the 1980s, there were efforts by the Islamic Republic to market its military hardware as part of its manufacturing goods.

Experts have observed that the foreign policy results of Iran in Africa were mixed. In politics, the Islamic Republic failed to garner the maximum support of the African nations in its war with Iraq. Also, activities of the Islamic Republic to spread revolutionary ideology created problems in its relations with some African states like Senegal. This led to the falling-out of diplomatic relations with Dakar in 1984. The Senegalese authorities accused the Iranian diplomats of involving in activities that violated international norms and diplomacy. The diplomats were suspected of involvement in fundamentalist propaganda in among the Muslim associations in of Senegal.

The character exhibited by the Islamic Republic from the beginning, its ideological appeal in Africa has reduced. Iran's efforts to promote its ideology culminated into hosting countries accusing them of wanting to convert the Muslim in Africa to Shiism. In Nigeria and some parts of Africa for instance, the Islamic Revolution increased Shia Islam appeal. Nigeria is currently the African country with the most Shia population in Africa. Before 1980, Shiism had no significant representation in Nigeria. However, there are not less than 3.5 million Shiites in the state now. Some other sources have accorded them much more figure. In Africa Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania have most Shiites respectively. Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky is the most prominent Shia pundit in Nigeria.

Though he is currently under detention by the Nigerian government, his influence spreads up to Ghana, with several Shiites calling for his release.

### **2.1.1 Iran-Africa Relations during Rafsanjani and Khatami Regimes**

Foreign policy of Iran during the 1989 and 1995, according to experts reveals that it was occupied by improvement of relations with the West, getting used to the new Russia as well as expanding relations with Asians. Africa stood as a continent Iran had not given priority to. This was due to the domestic criticisms of the government. Sudan remained the only African state which expanded its relations with the Islamic Republic in the late 1980s to 1990s. In 1991, President Rafsanjani visited the Sudanese state with his large delegation. Following his visit Arab and Western sources have accused Iran of training military forces as well as exploiting its military presence in the State to gather intelligence and spread its ideologies. A number of African leaders like Ali Hassan (President of Tanzania), Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Nelson Mandela have all visited Iran between the years 1988 to 1994. This is an indication that the relationship between the Islamic Republic and the rest of the African was not completely ignored.

There was a strong come back in strengthening relations between the Islamic Republic and Africa in 1996 when the United States imposed trade sanctions on Iran. President Rafsanjani toured Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa in 1996 to reestablish relations with them. In 2004, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that the amount of South African investment in Iran was up to \$1.5 billion and also the investment of Iran in South Africa had reached \$150 million. This was as a result of diplomatic ties that ensued between the two states. Trade and investments between the two states had since expanded.

In the time of Khatami, relations between the Iran and Africa expanded. Khatami, for instance, in 1998 hosted Daniel Arap Moi, the prime minister of Kenya. More improvement was witnessed in the Africa and Iran relations when Khatami toured seven African states which include Senegal, Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Uganda in 2005. The visit by Khatami was an indication of another beginning of bilateral relations. Kamal Kharazi, the foreign minister of Iran visited Ghana where he signed an agreement donating \$1.5 million for budgetary support.

### **2.1.2 Ahmadinejad and Africa**

The presidency of Ahmadinejad since 2005 was characterized by the return to the values and principles of the early years of Khomeini's revolution in both the domestic and foreign policies. This means that Ahmadinejad's greater concern would have been the expansion of relations with developing states, but factors like Western pressure, imposition of economic sanctions among others contributed to the shift of Iranian policy. Iran therefore needed Third World states which include African states to sympathize with it. Rising prices of oil however saw the improvement of the Islamic Republic's financial conditions. This made Iran more attractive partner for African states. Ahmadinejad's activities with the African continent earned him the status of an observer at Organization of African Unity (OAU) currently African Union (AU) summit in Banjul in the year 2006.

Other visits made by both the Sudanese president, Abdoulaye Wade and Omar Al Bashir of Sudan have recorded improvement in the relations between these states and Iran. In 2006 Omar Al Bashir visited Tehran and in 2007 Ahmadinejad in return visited Sudan. Iran established a car assembly factory to boost and expand economic relations with Sudan. The Islamic Republic also helped in other projects in the Sudanese State. Again, the two states also signed an agreement on military cooperation when the Iranian defense minister, Mustafa Mohammed Najjar paid a courtesy call to the Sudanese state. In June 2006, Abdoulaye Wade, the Senegalese president visited Iran. Economic ties between the two states were strengthened. His two-consequent visits in 2009 further saw the involvement of Iran in a number of projects. As part of the expansion, Iran got involved with an establishment of a car factory which was to produce Samand made by Khodro of Iran. Ahmadinejad also visited Senegal. Ahmadinejad's visit to the state was to grace the occasion of the 11th summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2008.

Other African states like Gambia, Tanzania, Gabon, Djibouti and Malawi among others have been visited by the Islamic Republic in its attempt to solicit support for respective projects in their countries. Iran's visit to the Mali where it had already built a medical facility in Bamako also helped in building the Kanai dam. The foreign minister, Muttaki who made the trip expressed the willingness of the Islamic Republic to assist the Malian state in fields such as energy, agriculture, water and some building factories.



Ahmadinejad, when he again visited Africa in 2009, he made official visits to states like Comoros, Kenya and Djibouti. It was during this trip that the Iranian President signed five economic cooperation agreements. In Kenya, another agreement was signed to ensure a direct air link between Tehran and Kenya as well as the setting up of shipping line from Mombasa to Bandar Abbas.

Despite the massive entry and several agreements made between the Iranian government and the African states, it can be said that the Iranian mission in Africa is only partially achieved. In the area of economics despite the immense attempts, investments are limited with the exception of the large inroads made in South Africa with about \$ 1 billion in trade and investment. Politically also, Iran made equally a limited gain. South Africa for instance who appeared to be the friendliest state to Iran even voted cautiously in the vote of Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology. They even abstained during the voting in the IAEA. Several setbacks came when other African states' officials accused the Iranian government of promoting Shiism.

## **2.2. Diplomatic Relations of Ghana with Some Muslim Countries**

Discussing the diplomatic relations of the Ghanaian state with Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, Libya and the Islamic Republic of Iran will give a holistic view of its diplomatic relations. According to Satow (Freeman 2010: 70) foreign relation commences when a state is either sovereign or gains independence. States that have not gained independence do not enjoy diplomatic relations.

Ghana, formerly known as Gold Coast by its colonial masters, gained independence in 1957. The attainment of independence triggered her diplomatic engagements with other sovereign states. These states included Muslims States. Some of these states were near Arab African states like Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan and Middle Eastern States like Iran, Saudi Arabia among other states. Ghana, just like other African states formed relations with these states due to strategic interest it had in them. It was this interest that gave birth to the development of Islam in Ghana. The strategy employed by the government at that time did not deliberately consider it could lead to the development of Islam and Muslims in the Ghanaian state. There are two factors underline the Ghanaian state's diplomatic relations with the Muslim states; internal and external.

Ghana's first foreign policy as a sovereign and independent state was dictated and outlined by its first president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The basic tenets of Nkrumah's foreign policy were decolonization, African unity, positive neutrality and non-alignment, membership of strategic international organizations and economic emancipation of Ghana. With the Arab countries, Nkrumah adopted a strategy to deal with the strongest and most influential Arab Muslim countries in order to have access to deal with other strong Muslim countries. Due to the personality of Gamal Abdel Nasser that endeared him to most Arab countries at that time, Nkrumah was also compelled by that to establish ties with the Egyptian leader. This is evidence that the established relations were necessitated by Nkrumah's ambition of allying with other Arab states. Both Nkrumah and Nasser were then two charismatic leaders in the African continent who were appeared potential leaders of the continent (Hunwick 1990: 45). Also at that time, Egypt had role as both a leading Arab state and Muslim world.

The Casablanca Bloc, which was composed of some large Muslim countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia, aided the improvement of the ties between Ghana and Egypt. The formation of the Casablanca group was facilitated by Gamal Nasser in the early post-colonial period. The fact that Gamal Nasser sided with Nkrumah compelled most of the Arab nations to do same. This gradually gives birth to alliances with the Ghanaian state. Nkrumah saw this as an opportunity for him to forward his African unity policy with the Arab and the Muslim world. This eventually served as a common ground of cooperation between the Ghanaian leader and the Muslim world. It is important to mention that African unity was naturally a concern of every African leader during the time but how to achieve it was the problem the leaders couldn't ascertain.

Decolonization policy by Nkrumah was also shared by all the African leaders. This created yet another platform of cooperation with the Arab and the Islamic world. The fact that the alien forces had dominated the continent and had since affected the political, economic and social visions for the continents future made it an opportune period in the history of Africa. Gradually, African unity and decolonization policy of Kwame Nkrumah expedited the moves by African state leaders to extend relations with other states at that historically important time of Africa.

When the Ghanaian leader had the opportunity of forming relations with the other Arab states, he exploited his influence among the leaders. He therefore gradually introduced other aspects of his foreign policy such as positive neutrality and non-alignment, membership of strategic international organization and decolonization. Nkrumah could be said to be partially successful with his policy with the Arab states due his achievement of emancipation movement and the non-aligned project.

International political alliance was one major factor that influenced Ghana's relations with the Muslim states. This reflected in her membership of continental organizations such as the Non-aligned Movement (NAM), the Organization of African unity (OAU) and the Economic community of African States among others. It is worth noting that Nkrumah was part of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the era of the cold war. Indeed in 1991, Ghana hosted the Ministerial Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This summit strengthened the friendship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ghana. This newly established friendship as would be discussed later facilitated the activities of Iranian institutions such as Iranian consulate and embassy, Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), the Iranian Medical Missions and the Islamic University of Ghana.

The abundant oil reserves in the Islamic world among other factors can be considered as one of the reasons Ghana had ties with them. Oil without doubt is the major source of energy that made the Muslim states politically and economically powerful. As a result, the third made sure they had ties with them to benefit from the oil. Muslim countries such as Libya, Iran and the Saudi state are among the Middle Eastern states with abundant oil reserve. These states due to their economic wealth gotten from the oil had some influence in some states in Africa. Around that time Ghana was making gains from cocoa price bonanza in international market by 1977. However, a high initial crisis of oil as well as economic crisis compelled the Ghanaian state to align with some Middle East and North African oil producing states (Le Vine et all 1979: 40).

Also, the revolutionary climate in Libya in 1969, Iran in 1979 and Ghana in 1981 also created the avenue for co-operation among the states. Just before there was revolution in Ghana, there was already a revolution in Iran spearheaded by Khomeini in 1979. In Libya also, Qhadafi was extending his revolutionary contained in his Third Universal Theory. These states considered themselves as sharing the common experience and

could therefore cooperate and operate in diverse ways. In Ghana, Libya's foreign policy for instance was partly dictated the perception of the radical and progressive background of the 31st December revolution leaders on the Ghanaian state.

Another important factor is the tendency that existed among Islamic states to compete each other. This factor is relevant to this study. This is because it is within this factor that the state under study, as well as other states like Saudi Arabia seeks to extend their religious influence to other states. The competition among these states is to extend their cultural and religious influences across their borders to the Muslims, non- Arabic speaking states and non-Muslims as well. The Ghanaian state as such witnessed some increased activities among states like Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iran in their attempt to extend their cultural and sectarian influences. These states happen to be major Islamic doctrinal and ideological hubs with strong government support and influence. Both Wahhabism and Shiism happen to be the religious doctrinal orientation of Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively. The Libyan leader on the other hand was extending his brand of Islamic socialism and political ideology to other parts of the world including Ghana.

The governments of these states have since made deliberate efforts to advance their ideological influences among states in all part of the world (Eickelman et al 1996: 151). Their activities through diplomatic relations with the Ghanaian state have since affected the doctrinal orientations of the Muslims in Ghana.

### **2.3. The Diplomatic Relations between Ghana and Iran**

Ghana foreign Ministry reveals that that there was no significant relations between Iran (Persian Empire) and the Ghanaian state until the Khomeini led revolution. Following the revolution of the Persian Empire and the consequent change of its name to the Islamic Republic, diplomatic relations between the two states commenced. The Ghanaian state started its relations with the Islamic Republic in the year 1979. Both hosting and sending representatives were appointed in 1979 by both States. However, the Ghanaian states due to a general cost cutting exercise closed down its mission in the Islamic Republic in 1984 (Foreign Affair Ministry, 2005)

The Ghana-Iran Joint Commission is one of the most important machinery of bilateral cooperation which transpires between the two states. The Joint commission was inaugurated in November 1990 and was reactivated in reactivated in June 2002

subsequently. Kamal Kjianazzi, the then Iranian Foreign Minister, in March 2004 visited Ghana and made a contribution towards development of the Ghana state with an amount of \$1.5 million. Also, the two states signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Development Assistance. The agreement aimed at facilitating commercial exchanges between the two countries. Moreover, according to the Ministry of Foreign affairs Ghana continues to enjoy benefits in areas of agriculture, health, education and culture from the Islamic Republic. Like will be discussed in detailed later, the major Iranian institutions which facilitate economic cooperation in Ghana are the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), the Islamic university college, Ghana and the Red Crescent society among others.

Though the aim was to ensure trade between the two states, the agreement signed between the states in 2002 indicates the Islamic Republic of Iran is favored by the balance of trade. The direction and trend of exports as well as imports between the two states is an evident of balance of trade in favor of the Islamic Republic between 2002 and 2003. The Iranian state pushed more resources into the Ghanaian economy whereas the Ghanaian economy registered zero investment in Iran (Foreign Affairs Ministry, 2005). Ghana-Iran Services Ltd, Kleen Export Company Ltd and AEM industrial Company Ltd are among the companies which have seized the opportunity of the agreement to explore the Ghanaian market. Information at the Ministry of foreign Affairs has it that Ghana previously signed oil agreement which includes the importation of 500,000 barrels of crude oil from the Islamic Republic. Helping by cooperating with the Ghanaian state to refine and explore oil and gas as well as gold was also an integral part of the Ghana-Iran agreement.

The relations of Ghana Iran improved not without the contribution of some Ghanaian Muslim personalities. Though the two states handled their relations diplomatically at states level, activities of some Muslim personalities have also aided in improving it. Both Ameen (2015:59) and Dumbe (2013:99) have mentioned that Abdul Salam Abdul Hamid Bansi, who founded the Shiite community in Ghana, is the foremost Ghana Muslim whose activities aided the relationship between the two states. The Shia pundit upon his graduation from an Iranian higher institution in 1988 has made contacts with the Iranians for which reason the Shiite community was born. And since spreading Shiism has been part of the Iranian foreign policy, the Iranian diplomatic corps joined

forces with the local Shiite pundit. Though their activities were geared towards looking for space for Shiites to operate in the Ghanaian State, it improved the relations between Ghana and Iran. This Shia pundit created a religious constituency in Ghana which continues to serve as the tie of religious relations between some Ghanaian Muslims and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Dumbe (2013:104) observes that the intertwined nature of the Iranian Islam with political orientation formed part of the identity of the followers of this new Islamic orientation in Ghana. The activities of the Iranian NGOs also helped in the improvement of Ghana-Iran relations. These NGOs serve as a tunnel through which the relations between Ghana and Iran manifest. This is because the NGOs have always had one or two connections with the Iranian embassy or consulate. Imam Hussein Foundation established in 1988 by the first leader of the Shiite community, Abdul Salam Bansi. This NGO aims at distributing Shiite literature in the Muslim community.

#### **2.4. Iranian Foreign Policy and the Spread of Shiism in Ghana**

Diplomatic mission represents an important function in the international system of states. Despite the fact that diplomacy can be achieved by other means, the ambassador or *charge d'affaires* is greatly useful in the management of relations between states as well as between states and other actors (Barston 2006:1)

Accordingly, via diplomatic mission, states promulgate their political and economic interests. They also negotiate, co-ordinate as well as solve problems on behalf of their states. They gather research and gather publicly available information. It can be deduced from the sentence that information gathering as well as ensuring the safety and welfare of the embassy's citizens in diaspora is as well crucial. So, if a misconception that goes against the tenets and aims of the sending mission is spread or if its citizens engage in acts that defames the states (both host and sending) it is apparently the responsibility of the embassy to act properly on behalf of its state to rectify it. However, if the embassy which is acting on behalf of its nation remains unconcerned about it, it would not be appropriate to accuse it of inciting it. Since the embassy represents the goals and aspiration of the state as well as the policies it has in place for the hosting embassy, their actions in the country they operate are very crucial to their states.

Sometimes some states make use of their embassies to spread and advocate their ideologies in the hosting states. Like Mussolini, some embassies or diplomatic missions, during the Italian fascist era were used to spread fascism. Italians in diaspora did not only organize themselves with the motive of spreading the fascist ideology but also, the diplomatic missions of Italy supported them in spreading it. In Senegal for instance, Leichtman (2006:40) notes there was no Shiite representation until the founding of the Lebanese Islamic Institute in 1978. The goal was not only to restore religious identity to Lebanese Muslims but also to guide the theological development as well as the numerical growth of newly converting Senegalese Shiites.

The leader Sheikh El-Zein hid his goal and was supported and given help by the Iranian embassy. According to Leichtman, during the time of the Shah the embassy operated and was closed subsequently in 1984 due to the spread of propaganda. In 1990s however it was reopened and it continued more subtly to promote Shiism. It is remarked by the researcher also that both the Iranian embassy and the Lebanese sheikh worked hand in hand to ensure the spread of Shiism. It is worth noting however that tensions and dispute among states cannot only deteriorate the relationship of two states but also can lead to the closure of the sending state embassy, or the hosting state embassy or better still both states embassies and diplomatic missions. For instance, circumstances that lead to the closure of the Iranian embassy in 1984 was related to the spread of Islamic propaganda by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Also in 2009, Morocco severed its ties with Iran which led to the eventual closure of the Iranian embassy in the hosting country. This was largely influenced by what the regime referred to as “Shia ideology threat”. Morocco accused Iran of using its embassy to spread Shiism in the country. The spread, Morocco government distorts and interferes with the country's ideology. Though a Sunni dominated Arab country would not tolerate such an infiltration, the most important thing here is, the regime's use of its embassy to achieve its hidden goal (Morocco Foreign Policy 2007: 110). Though Iran has always dismissed claims its regime is using its diplomatic missions to spread Shia ideology, remnants of the opposite seem evidence.

Also, in Comoros, the regime suffered yet another diplomatic dispute when President Othman Ghazali ordered the closure of all Iranian offices and organizations in the country. According to the government of Comoros, the Iranian organizations were

spreading and extending the Shia ideology in the country under the pretext of charity organizations (ww.trackpersia.com). Looking at the structure and design in Iran after the 1979 revolution, it is evident that major strategies were put in place to ensure the propagation of Islam not only in Iran, middle east or Asia only but the whole world at large (Esposito 1990: 2).

Against this background a ministry called “Ministry of culture and Islamic propagation” has taken upon itself the responsibility of propagating Islam (subtly).The ministry operates in several countries through the Iranian “cultural centers” that is within the Iranian embassies (Bar 2009:5).Though Bar recounts that these tenets and functions added to the responsibilities of the embassies we found particularly active in the Muslim world, several literature reveal those activities can equally be found in the lesser dominated Muslim countries and even Africa states like Senegal, Nigeria and Sudan among others. All these seem to have been skipped by earlier writers of international relation theories.

However, contemporary writers and researchers have deemed it necessarily to show the relevance of religion in today’s internal religions politics. To describe and explain occurrences and many intricate political issues of the 21st century, they note there is the need for something new. By “something new” they seek to explain that many 21st century issues and problems are related to religion. Religion had been relegated and not deemed crucial in the world politics (Kubalkova 2013:5). With Iran taking much attention in world politics with its religious backed political dynamics, there is the need to take religious ideologies seriously in today’s world politics. Though like mentioned previously Iran has denied its foreign policy or diplomatic missions have interest in spreading the Shia ideology. The embassy and cultural consulate of Iran promote diplomatic relations between Ghana and Islamic republic of Iran on socio-cultural grounds. The claim that it is aiding in the spread of Shiism is not misplaced. This is because Shiism, since the Dynasty of Safavids in 1501 AD to contemporary times, is the official religion, civilization and the foundation of the political philosophy of the Islamic Republic.

Iran, through organizations in diaspora has been promoting diplomatic relations between Ghana and Islamic Republic of Iran through the tenets of soft power characterized by the exchange of political, medical, economic, religious and cultural



ideas. It can be noted also that several attempts in the name of aid, assistance and exchange of packages Iran is soft power oriented. It is exhausting all political avenues and consequently spread Shia ideology. According to Dumbe, the Iranian consulate, embassy and other outfit aid immensely in the spread of the Shia ideology in Ghana. He notes that four organizations of the Iranian government, from the broader perspective engaged in various activities with overlapping functions in spreading and promoting both the political and religious agenda of Iran in Ghana (Dumbe 2013:91). The Iranian Embassy, Cultural consulate, the Agriculture and Rural Development and the Iranian Medical mission. These structures already met a conducive space for political co-operation. This is largely because there was a revolution in 1981 by the People's National Defense Council which the Iranian revolution had already taken shape since 1979. The positive political climate seemed to have provided the atmosphere for Shia influence in Ghana. There are several outlets through which the Shiite ideology spreads. All the outlets seem to have something small or a sort of link to the diplomatic missions. As those outlets mode of exporting and spreading ideology is looked at, their relations to the diplomatic missions shall be considered.

#### **2.4.1 The Role of Iranian Embassy & Cultural Consulate**

The Iranian Embassy in Ghana was established in 1982. Upon the establishment, bilateral and cultural agreement ensued between the countries. The agreement aimed at the promotion of economic, political co-operation as well as cultural exchange. Dumbe notes that Shia religious ideas were deliberately interconnected with the cultural exchanges Iran promoted in Ghana. The consulate, aims at promoting cultural and religious relations, was established in the early 1980s. The institution did not only serve as a cultural bridge between the two countries but also strives to fulfil the religious agenda of Iran. Since the Iranian culture is overlapped with Islam, the lesser Muslim community was identified as partners in this cultural collaboration. This therefore paved way for the extension of the Shia religious view in the Muslim community. The formation of the Ghana-Iran permanent Joint commission for co-operation during the 1990s precipitated the receipt of some support in the areas of education, agriculture and health by Ghana.

In April 2013 Ghana signed a memorandum of understanding upon the visit of the Islamic Republic's former President, Ahmadinejad to promote bilateral co-operation between the two states in education, agriculture and tourism among other areas. Apart from the formal activities of the Iranian diplomatic mission, Shia groups have also provided services in theology, education, health and agriculture. Dumbo (2013:93) observes that the consulate's agenda to spread the Shia ideology and values to a large extent depend on the mode it adopts. The consulate unlike the Salafists whose religious ideology attracts the Western-educated Muslims provided employment for such Muslims. Deliberate acts of the consulate saw these Western-educated Muslims recruited to serve as a connect to the Muslims in Ghana. He cites an example of a lecturer Shaikh Seebaway, a Muslim with Sufi orientation as instrumental in the initial establishment of the Iranian embassy and its initial activities. He was later appointed to work with the consular.

Ameen (2015:115) also cites that the consulate collaborated with the center for development and management for ASRI schools (CDMA) solicited assistance in terms of literature and capacity building for some Shia basic schools from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition to that, in March 2013, three Iranian diplomats came from the Islamic republic of Iran. The mission of the three-member delegation was to train the teaching and the non-teaching staff in the Shia schools. The delegates did not only organize a three-day workshop for Mathematics and Science teachers from the basic schools but also donated logistics for teaching it. Initially around the time Iran was taking shape after the revolution, the consulate conscious of the Ghanaian political climate integrated its activities within the shared political revolution spirit of the two countries. A local journal was founded by the consulate. It was called the *Revolutionary Review*. This was a conscious effort to gain acceptability of the Shia ideology by the larger Ghanaian Muslim society.

These activities of the consulate can be equated to the fascists spread of fascism propaganda. Around the time, Mussolini was keen is spreading fascism in Europe, fascists movements were sponsored and documents of fascists ideology was spread through the diplomatic missions. Just like fascism, Shiism in Ghana was the ideology to be spread. Western-educated under the leadership of Seebaway Zakaria Armiya Shuaib and Abdul Salam Adam all with Western educational background, became editors and

writers of articles of this journal. The magazine gave a platform for addressing issues of the consulate interest. The consulate agenda promulgated in the journal included matters of the relevance of Islamic sharia, Islam and modern education, bribery and corruption, the role of women in Islam (Dumbe 2013:92).

Closely related to that was formation of (CAUR) Comitato d'Azione per L'Universalita di Roma. It was spearheaded by Eugenio Coselschi in 1933 who was a nationalist poet and had worked in various propaganda and cultural agencies. The aims of the Action Committee for the University of Rome was to co-ordinate and standardize the various fascist youth initiative and act as the regimes propaganda agency for the spread of fascism abroad. Their activities included writing in a fascist style to spread the ideas of the fascism regime abroad. Looking at the two ideologies just like Marxism and Communism, there is a relentless effort to use mission abroad in spreading their ideology (Morgan 2003: 168).

Dumbe observed that though the writers aren't Shiites, the articles they produced were heavily surrounded by the Shiite theological literature. The consulate extended much support to the writers and even sponsored the ideological writing to be published in national dailies such as the *Ghanaian Times*, and the weekly spectator. In the two national dailies issues, relevant to the consulate agenda were published. The writers further extended their write ups to respond to the polemics of other religious groups against Muslims in those platforms (national dailies and the *Revolution Review*). He writes that "The activities of the consulate were thus viewed as a cultural renaissance in Ghana, though they depended heavily on the skills of the Western-educated Muslim elites" (Dumbe 2013: 93).

This means that they used the Muslim elites to achieve the agenda of the consulate. Public lectures, events such as the Quds day, Ashura, the Islamic Revolution commemoration among others were organized.

#### **2.4.2 The Islamic Revolution Commemoration**

The anniversary celebration of the Iranian revolution had also exposed the Ghanaians and the Muslims especially to the political and cultural ideologies of the Shia. In February 2014 for instance, Ameen (2015:134) notes, the presence of politicians such as the Speaker of Parliament and the Members of Parliament and Ministers of State. Some

religious leaders as well as the larger Shiite sympathizers were present. The 35th anniversary celebration of the Iranian Revolution was at the residence of the Iranian ambassador in Accra. The speech made by the ambassador portrayed Imam Khomeini as a political and religious leader whose leadership aspirations must be emulated. A former minister of state, who doubled as the representative of the President remarked the ideological and economic benefits Ghana had gained from the Islamic Republic after Khomeini's Revolution. A guest speaker, Samia Nkrumah attempted to relate some political ideologies of Nkrumah, a pan Africanist and the first President of Ghana and the Iranian Revolutionist, Khomeini. Khomeini's character celebrated at the events such as the Islamic Revolution celebration undoubtedly had exposed Ghanaians to the Shia political philosophy.

This political philosophy is based on the character of Khomeini and his "Vilayet faqih" legacy. Both his character and the legacy on the politics of Iranian state are embodiment of Shia Islam. During such programs, the celebration of the ideals of the revolution and the character of Imam Khomeini expose the audience to Shia ideology and Iranian culture and politics. Dumba observe also that these events are organized to educate and showcase the relevance of the Iranian Revolution for emancipation of Muslims and its role to fight and barricade the Western culture influence of Muslim lands (2013:93). Esposito remarks that the very hidden key in the Iranian foreign policy is shiism or Shia ideology. Eickelman also writes that the 1979 Iranian identified Shiism as its foreign policy (1996:151).

Katzman also stated that the ideology of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution continues to infuse the foreign policy of Iran. For him the investment of ultimate power in a supreme leader who doubles as a political and religious authority tells a lot about the state's foreign policy direction. And according to Katzman in the early years of the Islamic Republic's revolution, Iran strived to export its revolution to the nearby Muslim states. Esposito adds that the export of revolution was not limited to immediate Muslim states but went down to even Africa with countries like Nigeria teaching the breeze of the revolution.

In countries like Sudan the impact of the Islamic Republic's Revolution nearly caused another revolution. Esposito writes:

“Its friends and foes agree that the Iranian revolution has had a major impact upon the Muslim world and the Iranian Revolution. For some it has been a source of inspiration and motivation. For others, revolutionary Iran has symbolized an ominous threat to the stability of the Middle-East and the security of the West because it has been associated with terrorism, hostage taking attacks on embassies and the promotion of revolutionary activities.” (Esposito 1990: 316)

This means that there were mixed feelings during the revolution. Some were inspired whilst others were agitated and disturbed. The West was equally afraid of the revolution as they saw values of illegal relevance that could be repeated or exported to their sovereign states. Exporting the revolution is not a claim but truly stated by the Islamic Republic of Iran from its earliest days to export of the revolution as a cornerstone of the state’s foreign policy (Esposito 1990:5).

Esposito (1990: 317) mentions that the claim that Iranian revolution is narrowly sectarian is a common misconception. According to him the revolution even from its earliest days deliberately projected a global image, as Khomeini emphasized that the revolution has its spaces in the common tenet of Islam. Esposito quotes the 11th principle of the Iranian constitution which states that “The Islamic Republic of Iran is to base its overall policy on the coalition and unity of the Islamic nation. Furthermore, it should extend continuous efforts until political, economic and cultural unity is realized in the Islamic world” (Esposito, 1990: 319).

The aftermath of the revolution witnessed many Islamic students’ activists irrespective of their sectarian affiliation looking up to Iran as an example. Accordingly, he mentioned Khomeini’s saying that the Islamic Republic wants Islam to spread everywhere and also ordered that if government submit and behave with the tenets of Islam Iran should support them but if they do the opposite, they should be fought without fear of anyone. Katzman also relates that Iranian leaders appear to weigh the relative imperative of their revolution and religious ideology constantly against the demands of Iran’s national interest.

Though in the initial years in the aftermath of the revolution so many deliberate attempts by the regime was to export the revolution, Katzman mentions that in the late 1990s Iran gave up on the goal (of exporting) largely because promoting it succeeded only in producing resistance to Iran in the region. However, the role of the annual celebration of the Islamic revolution in reminding and drawing attention of the world towards the revolution as well as the Shia ideology cannot be ignored. This is largely

because, during the celebration, the struggle of Khomeini in justifying an Islamic revolution and the political Islamic ideology disguised in “Vilayet faqih” as they are mentioned and discussed.

During these celebrations, Iran does not only endear and entice its sharia ideology but show and advocate its support to the Palestinians among other things. Holding these celebrations at the embassies therefore has some remnants of spreading Shia Islam. The Islamic Republic of Iran tends to propagate Shia ideology through the diplomatic business in Iranian embassies abroad. These diplomatic businesses and the Iranian embassies play a remarkable role in exporting revolution and spreading Shia ideology in the Western countries. Though celebrations of events such as the Islamic revolution the embassies and the other diplomatic representatives disseminate Islamic slogans as they support various Sunni movement organization. Through that Iran propagate Islamic slogans such as Islamic unity claims to support Islamic courses like the Palestinian course. While supporting opponent movement, Sunni liberation movement such as Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Hamas, Iran seeks to polish its image as it promotes its model and spread Shia ideology among Sunnis (Bar, 2010). Iran appears to invest human resources in ensuring it creates awareness to the larger Muslim Sunni community of the Shia ideology.

Already the revolution that happened in 1979 was popular and had come to the attracted the attention of many Muslims. So, its annual celebration may make it more appealing and may eventually make people embrace the Shia ideology. Gambari observes that Khomeini’s leadership and the idea behind the Islamic revolution touch responsive chords in the Islamic communities in Nigeria, more especially the downtrodden Muslims in the northern part of the country. Gambari cites an example of a Nigerian Islamic revivalist groups leader who in identifying with the Islamic revolution that Iran is the only one in the world today that acts based on the Quran and the hadith. The leader reveals that the Ayatollah is also an outstanding figure who tirelessly works to realize the liberation of Masjid- al-Aqsa from the Jews in Jerusalem (Esposito 1990: 302).

Same can be said about Ghana at the earlier stage of the aftermath of the revolution. A Ghanaian Muslim who joined Shia Islam reveals that, it was a constant repetition of Khomeini’s name and his legacy on occasions like the celebration of Iranian revolution

that attracted him to the Shiite ideology. Also, not only Khomeini but the Ayatollah system guided by the Vilayet Faqih gives him hope for the future of Islam (Interview, Yakub Yusuf).

A Shiite cleric, who works at the consulate as the head of the government business and also the founder of Al-Yaseen, in an interview told that reveals that-Ghana must look up to Iranian by exemplifying what he called “pure self-government” as preached by Khomeini”. It is only when Ghana realizes its position as a relevant actor in the international umbrella of politics shall it heed to the advice of Khomeini (Interview with Sheikh Idris Toppoh). He relates the Khomeini’s “*neither east nor west*” ideology to that of Nkrumah who neither looked at the West or East. The only difference is the fact that Khomeini adds that “our revolution is the movement of the oppressed and it is Islamic before belonging to any particular religion”.

The cleric denies any effort by his outfit (i.e. the Iranian Consulate). In his own words “My office is purely a diplomatic mission and we don’t delve into issues relating to religion”. Our main aim is to help and foster a good and sound bilateral relationship between the republic of Ghana and the Islamic Republic of Iran” (Interview with Sheikh Idris Toppoh).

However, in Sudan for instance, President AL Bashir accused Iran in January, 2016 for spreading Shiism just like Morocco and Comoros did. According to the President

“Of course, there is evidence of them spreading Shiism in Sudan. We have done an entire study about their efforts not only in Sudan, but also in Africa. There are efforts to spread Shiism throughout Africa. There are Hawza (seminaries where Shiite clerics are trained) and Husseiniyas (Shiite place of worship and social gathering) and activities hosted by Iranian cultural centers such as panel discussions and lectures. Initially we thought of it purely as cultural, but then we discovered their attempts to attract youth and other demographics as part of a broader effort to promote Shiism”.

He added also “In Sudan we have enough problems. We don’t need new ones.” (Majidyar [www.mei.edu](http://www.mei.edu))

This accusation led to severing of the diplomatic relations of the two states in January 2016. Accusations by Khartoum that Iran is spreading Shiism had always been a source of tension between the two countries. In 2014 also, the Iranian cultural centers throughout the country were closed following the same accusation by the hosting country that the cultural centers were pursuing the agenda of propagating Shia ideology

in the larger Sunni Muslim community (www.mei.edu). Though, like Katzman mentioned, the Islamic Republic of Iran has constantly denied such allegations, hosting countries consistently seem to find evidence opposite their claim. Like I mentioned earlier, Morocco and Comoros severed ties with Iran due to the same accusation.

To an extent however it can be said it is difficult to separate the Shiite ideology from the Iranian political system and orientation, non-deliberate effort by the Islamic Republic to showcase some of its cultural traits may be thought to mean propagation of Shiism. In the same spectrum, Vilayet faqih setting the basis of the state's political philosophy and the Safavids dynasty conscious conversation of the Sunni territory in the 16th century inform the total lifestyle of the Iranian. They identify with Shiites everywhere in the world as a family. Their diplomatic mission may not refuse to assist a Shiite group or organization because they identify with them. A Shiite cleric mentioned to the researcher that Iranians in diaspora have considered him as a close relative ever since he revealed his religious identity to them (Shia religious identity). This is not limited to only Iranians but the Lebanese in the country who are Shiites (Interview, Musharudeen Maiga). In the same vein at the states level, Johnson writes that the main aim behind the support given by Iran to the Syrian Assad regime is the proximity of the Alawi Syrian government to the Shia ideology (Johnson 2012:163).

Alawites are known in the religious circles as ardent followers and supports of Ali, the 4th Caliph. In the same instance Iran, Ibrahim Fraihat (2016:224) relates that the Houthis have been accused of receiving both military and financial support from the Iranian government largely because Iran identifies with the Houthis ideologically. All these are evident to the fact that closeness or proximity of ideology may attract support towards an individual or group. Though the mode of attraction cannot be completely justified, the fact that Iran is helping Shiites and consequently making it attractive to the non-Shiite is related to some extent the issue of identity. As mentioned already the identity is a cluster of religious ideology, history and geography.

### **2.4.3 Other Religious Events**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is known for many religious events. Apart from non-religious holidays, the Shiite state is noted for the celebration of the Martyrdom of Fatima, Birthday of Imam Ali, (the 4th Caliph), Imam Mahdi's birthday (The Imam in



seclusion), Martyrdom of Imam Ali, Martyrdom of Imam Sadiq, Eidul Ghadir, Ashura, Martyrdom of Imam Reza, the birthday of Prophet Mohammed. Apart from the birthday of Prophet which is equally celebrated worldwide by the Muslims of Sufi Orientation, the rest of the events are celebrated by the Shiite Muslims all over the world. In Africa also, many countries with some significant number of Shia Muslims honor such religious important event. In Senegal for instance, whilst the Lebanese invite storytellers from Lebanon to join them in celebrating or honoring events such as the Martyrdom of Imam Hussein (the grandson of Prophet Mohammed), the Senegalese Shiite would prefer to organize theirs separately. Leichtman (2006:40) explains that the organization of the program separately was due to the fact that Lebanese prefer to speak their standard language which the Shiite in Senegal would not understand. The Senegalese Shiites speak standard Arabic fluently and so will organize theirs separately as well.

In Nigeria also, Shiites under the leadership of Al-Zakzaky occasionally embark on religious exercises to commemorate and observe Shia religious rites. Though the Shiites are the minority Muslim sect in Nigeria, they mark these occasions in a grand style to the extent that they are heard of everywhere in the State. It was during the occasion of Ashura (commemoration of the death of Hussein at Karbala) in 2015 that a number of Shiite Muslims were brutalized by the Nigerian army. More than 1000 civilians lost their lives. The deputy national Imam of Shiite died as well as his wife and child. The national Imam has since then been arrested and detained by the state authority. Doukhan writes that though the Iranian government has called on the Nigerian authorities to respect religious rights of the Shiites, the Mohammadu Buhari government has done nothing to pacify the victims of the brutality and release the national Imam who is in detention (2016:4).

In Ghana, among the celebrated events by the Shiite fraternity is the Quds day. The Quds day is a religious event organized by the Iranian consulate on the Israel occupation of the third Holy land of the Muslims (Jerusalem Mosque). It is commemorated in Ghana as well as in other Shiite fraternities in the world. Dumbe (2013:93) mentions that the event attracts not only Muslims but politicians and journalist as well who share similar aspirations with the Palestinians. This platform endeared and made the consulate attractive and honorable among the larger Ghanaians who seek to fight injustice in the world. These programs by the Shiites create awareness of the sect as well as sell the

faith to the larger Sunni Muslims. Unlike in Nigeria where the commemoration was met with brutality, the Shiites in Ghana put measures in place to ensure members match peacefully as they observe the religious rites. Aside the national Imam's office, Shiite organizations in Ghana put themselves to task of organizing religious programs during which members meet, preach and chant religious words.

Though these local organizations such as Imam Hussein Foundation, Ghana (IHFG), Shia Muslim Youth Association (SMYA), Imam Jawad Islamic Center (IJIC) and Rabitatu Alu Bayt (RAB) among others are not instigated by the diplomatic missions to organize these programs, the mission however support them in organizing it. The diplomatic mission especially the cultural consulate meets the budget of some of these programs. It should be noted that the Shiite mission could claim it is not propagating Shiism as these key events are nationalistic and observing them rather qualifies one as a patriotic citizen. During these events, the participation of the clerics as well as the diplomats adds to the strength and hope of the Ghanaian Shiites that Iran shares the same feelings with them. Speeches and comments by the Iranian diplomats during these programs especially Ashura projects the Shia ideology as the ideology of a true Muslim. During these programs, resources are exhausted towards making sure the events are properly organized. Just like Leichtman says in the case of Senegal, same can be said about Ghana. Abundant food and drinks are shared during the events.

The researcher in 2013 recalls his participation in *Ashura*. Many students participated in the events because the rich nature of the food package. Though the motive of the Sunni attendees was the food, listening to the lectures by powerful orators of the Shia fraternity won the heart of some. The sharing of food items and drinks come just at the end of the lecture session. The Ashura for instance is commemorated sometimes in a week long packed with several activities and lectures. These lecture series are carefully prepared to enlighten, remind the attendees as well as share the grief the martyrs of the fateful Karbala massacre. A Shiite pundit recalls that the diplomatic representatives sometimes miss some of these programs due to diplomatic engagements and responsibilities but would hardly forgo *Ashura* program. As such other programs of the fraternity could be organized well but not as well as the Ashura event.

A researcher related the Ashura celebration as stronger in some West African communities. Leichtman mentions that in Senegal, Institute Mozdahir International

(IMI) organized a conference during Ashura event. The theme of the conference was “Ashura: A day of celebration or mourning?” The conference papers were published in a French translation on January 27, 2007. Speakers came from different West African countries in both the Shiite and Sunni traditions were invited from Senegal, Mauritania and other West African countries. The Shiites in Senegal and Ghana as well believe that sensitizing the Masses to the sadness of this date of Ashura help in avoiding conflicts. Though there are opposing view among the Sunni pundits in Ghana, the fact that Ghana is a secular state cleared the imminence for any future violent confrontation during these events. The Shiite in the capital city parade the Muslim dominated areas as they chant and read Arabic word *Masir*. As they parade the streets, they share their grief whilst crying and hitting their chests with their palms. These exercises sometimes do not go well with the Saudis influenced Wahhabi followers. The Wahhabi Muslims do not seem to recognize the Shiite ideology as legitimate and the Shiite Muslims as true Muslims. In some cases, the Wahhabi scholars would organize preaching (Da’wah) during around the same time of the Shiite program to lessen the number of attention the Shiites get as they parade the city.

## **2.5. Shiite Oriented Institutions**

Activities of Shiite educational centres both national accredited and non-accredited established by the consulate contributes to the spread of Shiism in Ghana. Dumba (2013: 91) observes that the growth of Shiism through education in Ghana was initially exploited by the diplomatic representatives to extend their influence to other countries in Africa. Whereas Shiite students from other West African countries are recruited and enrolled in Shiite educational institutions, some other graduates from the theological institutes serve as missionaries to other African countries. Meanwhile non-Shiite students who are attracted to these institutions are consequently exposed to the ideas and influences of Shiism.

### **2.5.1 The Islamic University College**

The Islamic university is one of such institutions. The university was established in 2000 by Ahlul Bayt Foundation. The Ahlul Bayt by establishing this university aimed at expanding its educational programme from the basic and theological education level to

the tertiary, secular level of education. The original intention of the Ahlul Bayt Foundation was to found a university for the mainstream Shiite seminaries in West Africa. This would enable graduates from the seminaries to get direct access to a home-based university without having to go through the hassle of traveling to Iran for further studies. The management of ATTC rescinded its initial plan upon consulting a Ghanaian Sufi scholar. The management heeded the advice of the scholar and consequently a university which came to be called Islamic University was established (Ameen 2015:116).

Dumbe states that “By defining its objectives within the Ghanaian secular political sphere, this university offers opportunities for the numerous students, while Shiism thrives in its agenda and academic programs” (Dumbe, 2013: 101). Though the university was established in 2000, accreditation from National Accreditation Board was granted to the Islamic University College in January 2001. The university was given accreditation to run programmes in Bachelor of Arts in Religious studies. In 2002, it received its second accreditation to commence another Bachelor programme in Business Administration with Accounting, Banking and Finance, Management Information Systems (MSI), Marketing and Human Resource Management (HRM). Further accreditation was granted to the university to start a programme in communication studies with options in Journalism, Public Relations and Advertising. Consequently, MPhil programme was started in 2010 in Religious studies with specialisation in Quranic Sciences and Tafsir (Exegesis). The MPhil programme was however halted partly because students were not taking it seriously and also due to inadequate preparation on the part of the administrators. As a mandatory requirement for newly established universities, the Islamic University, Ghana affiliated to the University of Ghana, Legon since its establishment till date.

The University of Ghana has been responsible for the awards of degrees and certificates to the students of Islamic University. The university management entrusted the responsibility of supervising the university, to Al-Mustapha University (MIU) in Qum. By the mandate, the management of Al-Mustapha appoint principal officers of the university such as President and Director of Finance who always have been Iranians. However, most lecturers in the universities are Ghanaians who have adequate

qualifications to tutor in universities. Visiting lectures come from Iran sometimes to take up teaching positions in the university as well.

I recall in 2008 whilst a student in the university, two visiting lectures from Iran were serving in the university. Dr Daolatadi Hosseini and the then president of the university Dr Ali Ghane were both tutors in the Religious department. University lecturers were paid with the fees paid by the students. Ahlul Bayt Foundation gives some financial support to the workers of the institution. As of January 2014, the population of the university was about 1200 students and 70 teaching and non-teaching staff. According to the university website, the educational philosophy of the Islamic University College Ghana has its basis on the vision of its founders. With the philosophy, the university aims at inculcating moral values and honesty, integrity, peaceful co-existence, fear of and trust in Allah. The university pursuing its vision and mission statements had assisted students in accessing education through admitting both Muslim and non-Muslim qualified applicants. Besides, the Islamic University College Ghana Al-Mustapha current operates 24 other universities in the World which includes 10 in Africa (Al-Mustapha university website).

According to the Islamic University College website, Al-Mustapha International University in Iran is the sole sponsor of IUCG ([www.iug.edu.gh](http://www.iug.edu.gh), 2016). Also from the year 2007, the Ahlul Bait Foundation educational wing was reconstituted as it was merged into one university with Al-Mustapha international university (MIU). The MIU supervises a total of 50 seminaries and universities in other countries worldwide. Moreover, the students who go through the seminaries are granted scholarships to study in the university. Dumbe observes that the university since its establishment has represented the Shia Imamiyya crescent in Sub-Saharan Africa. Other Shiite students from the neighbouring English speaking countries in West Africa such as Gambia and Sierra Leone are offered scholarships to continue their education there. He also observes that Shia youth sympathisers in South Africa were encouraged to accept scholarship opportunities.

The researcher observes that Islamic University as an institution of studies has been one of the instrumental of not successful medium for exporting Shiism in Ghana. This is largely because it is arguably the largest platform the Shiites have to trade Shiism in the country with a population of 1200 students from across the country and beyond. This

platform for education, as provided to the Shiite community is grossly exhausted to pursue the Iranian agenda. Amongst all the structures and facilities that promote Shiism in the school is the religious studies department and program. Firstly, all the students admitted to the Islamic University of Ghana during their first and second semester irrespective of the programs they are pursuing are made to take a compulsory course such as *Introduction to Islam*, *Introduction to Islamic Commerce and Banking*, and *Introduction to Christianity*.

In previous years, courses like *Islamic Jurisprudence*, *Orthodox Caliphate* among other courses were the compulsory courses for all beginners. Tutors of these courses are sometimes Iranian visiting lecturers. For instance, in the 2008 academic year, fresh student of the university admitted to study in the university had to take a compulsory course in *Islamic Jurisprudence*. Dr. Dolatadi was the master in charge of the course. Through him I and my colleagues got to know Shiite Jurisprudence. This was because the course outline was prepared with the Shiite ideology in mind.

With students, not less 200 in the class, from different theological orientation and background across the country teaching Shiism in the first year was a crucial strategic objective in pursuing the Iranian agenda. Also during the second semester of the same year a course, *Orthodox Caliphate* was introduced to the students. Even though the lecturer of the course was a Sunni Muslim, his presentation of the events that occurred after the demise of the Prophet of Islam started a debate among students. Out of curiosity, and upon proper convincement, some of these students subscribed to the Shia ideology. This is so because the traditional Sunni society in Ghana does not attach importance to the immediate occurrences after the demise of the prophet of Islam and hence does not care to educate the Muslims on them.

This problem is endemic in many Sunni Muslim societies. Scholars who have read the historical accounts have convictions that historical accounts of the immediate occurrences of the Prophet of Islam could only breed unnecessary division among the Ummah and hence must be disregarded. A level two hundred student of Islamic university mentions that it was the unravelling of such historical accounts through some of the courses students take in their first year that reverted some of her friend to Shia Islam. She noticed that the newly converts tend to engage with Shia practices on the

campus and have since been praising the Islamic Republic of Iran (Interview with Jamila Idris)

Secondly, students who enrol as religious studies students are more prone to Shia exposure. This is partly because they take many courses that are Shiite biased and meet with lectures from Shiite ideological background that blend Shiism in their presentation in class. Besides those factors, it is rather in the religious studies department that many graduate students of ATTC are enrolled. This makes it possible for new students to have direct contact with colleagues who are Shiite and thus could aid in the conversion of some of them. Dumbe writes

“However, in keeping with its ideological agenda most of the scholarship awardees, including the foreign students, were restricted for Religious studies. The overall agenda of awarding the scholarship to foreign student to undertake Religious studies is to export Shiism to their respective countries  
“(Dumbe, 2013: 102)

Though Dumbe’s account may be true at the time he carried the research, an interview with an administrator told the researcher that students from ATTC who have good High school diploma are allowed to pursue courses of their interest with the same scholarship. However, these students contribute their quota to the missionary activities of their sponsors by being regular at Shia relevant functions organised by the Shia groups. These students again represent the Shiite community at various events in the various societies. They organise programs with the help of their sponsors and attend meetings to keep up with the aims and aspiration of their organization. These programmes organized in collaboration with the Cultural Consulate expose the students more to the Shiite doctrine. The university serves as a better platform for the Shiite to exhaust all avenues in making it enticing for non-Shiite students to accept the ideology. The structure and activities of the mosque also aid in the spreading of the Shia ideology (interview with Jamila Idris).

Dumbe adds that the campus of the university is considered as a conducive space for Shia propagation among the students irrespective of their academic background (2013). In other words, it provides a platform for students to mingle and discuss general issues as well debate issues of religious and doctrinal difference. It is this discussion and students’ interaction that sometimes aid in the conversion of some non-Shiite to Shiism.

Again, during programs of Shiite Muslims, non-Shiites who voluntarily attend get to hear more about the Shia ideology. Iranian mission in Ghana such as the ambassador the Cultural Consular heads of other Iranian institution frequently visits the university during programs.

In April 2013 for instance, the former President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as part of his three nation Africa tour visited the Islamic University, College, Ghana. The former President visits attracted many people to the Campus where an event was organised for his reception to the country. Various Shiite organisations prior to his arrival together with students of the Islamic University College gathered themselves at the airport to witness his coming as they sing Shiite songs and chant the names of revered Shiite Imams. A Shiite cleric, Musharudeen mentioned during an interview that he sees the liberator of mankind in the personality of the former President. The former Iranian leader during his speech at the Islamic university campus promised to give an undisclosed amount of money as grant to help in building more infrastructures for the university. The university showed its gratitude by conferring on him, the title “Otomfuo” of the University College (the paramount chief of the university).

On some occasions, programs are co-organized by the university and the Diplomatic corps of Iran. The frequent patronization of Iranian diplomats of the made some students of the university think that Iranian government is fully behind the establishment of the university. Among the programs attended by the Diplomatic corps and the ambassador of the Islamic Republic was the event organised by the university to give special awards to four distinguished personalities in Ghana. Among them was the former Minister of Education, Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyeman (IUCG website). Sometimes also, the programs organised by the Iranian diplomatic missions in Ghana are attended by the management of the University in solidarity. For instance, IUCG took part in the exhibition organised by Iranian diplomatic mission to celebrate the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The event witnessed the presence of the management of both the Iranian clinic and Agricultural and Rural Development (ARD) as well as several politicians of Ghana.

The mother organisation of all the cultural consulates of Iran, the Islamic culture and Relations Organisation (ICRO), stated during a visit to Al-Mustapha International University “The introduction of true Islam is one of the valuable and influential



capacities of the University” ([www.iug.edu.gh](http://www.iug.edu.gh)). This “true Islam” mentioned here can be said to be the Shia Islam that the Iranian clerics in conjunction with the foreign policy of Iran are trying to spread through several tunnels across the world. It is in this light that the Islamic University has long opened an office called “cultural and religious affairs office”. This office’s activity is subdivided into 4 units.

The first unit is the “Daarul Quran” unit (Home of Quran). This unit is in charge of teaching Quran to students who are willing to take up Quranic reading courses. As of April 2017, the unit has registered 44 students. These students are in different levels of Quran reading practice. The tutor who happens to be the officer in charge of the cultural and religious office remarked that students from different sectarian background are enrolled to study the Quran. During Ramadan (fasting period), the Daarul Quran unit is in charge of tafsir in the mosque of the university.

The second unit is the centre for Islamic studies and consultancy. This unit is responsible for general response to enquiries about Islamic issues. This unit serves as an official outlet for general enquiries about Islam. In some cases, the print media visit this unit for Islamic information such as issues pertaining to fasting and so on. It is this centre that organizes short courses or programs for Imams of various communities across the country. This Imamship program is a free program for all Imams who wish to participate. Several measures are put in place by the organizers to ensure continuity of the program as well as make it attractive for more people to participate. Some of the programs or subjects studied at the class are *Arabic language, Islamic Jurisprudence, computer skills, Mosque management, Methodology of Dawah* (preaching) and *Fund Raising Technique*.

The main idea according to the organizers is not to spread Shiism but Imams who undergo this program cannot escape being introduced to the Shia ideology. Some of the Imams get to be enlightened on certain modern knowledge system such as computer skills. The institution rather benefits more since it creates for itself a platform that will repair the tarnished image of the Shia community by the mainstream Wahhabi adherents in the country. Some Imams who may not convert to Shiism may however reconcile and accept Shiite as a sect in Islam instead of condemning it. At the end of the program these leaders carry the messages to their various communities and mosques. This appears to be another way the Shiite community familiarize and help spread the Shiite

doctrine across the country. The Imams who go through programs get to graduate at a ceremony organised by the university. During this ceremony, the cultural consular of Iran and other diplomatic corps attend to show their support for the program. In 2015, for instance the Iranian consular Mr. Epakchi Hassan attended the graduation of 17 Imams at the Islamic university premises.

The Islamic studies and consultancy centre also facilitates short courses and programs for the chiefs of the Muslim communities as well. These activities of cultural and Religious centre of the Islamic University resembles what Dumbe describes as a strategy applied by the consulate to win the hearts of the Sufi clerics and other people in the Muslim community. He narrates that through various engagements with the Sufi clericals, the consulate further sponsors them to visit the Islamic Republic during the celebration of important events. More importantly, the consulate supports these leading Sufi clericals as groups to organize refresher courses for the Muslims on religious activities (Dumbe 2013). The Imamship course and the teaching activities done by the religious and cultural affairs office is guided by the Shia curriculum, hence it serves as an avenue for introducing Shiism to the Muslims who participate.

The third unit of the religious and cultural affairs office is the scholarship and charity unit. This unit is responsible for awarding scholarships to graduates of ATTC to pursue their tertiary programs of the university. Also, the unit has signed a memorandum of understanding with the national Imam of the country to admit up to 7 brilliant but needy students from the office of the national chief Imam. The scholarships however do not cover everything as they come in percentages. The same opportunity is given to Imams of other sects. This unit further extends its services to prisoners at the largest prison in the country (Nsawam prisons). This unit makes donations and preach to the prisoners as well.

Moreover, the unit has made contributions in forms of donations to orphanages and leprosarium. These donations are increased during the months of Ramadan. The Islamic literature centre is the last unit of the centre. Though not yet fully developed, this unit is set to take charge of videos and audios of preaching made by invited scholars to the radio studios on the university premises. These recorded audios shall be disseminated from the centre to various places. These include videos and audios of lecture series of religious importance as well. The head of the Religious and cultural centre though

denies that the centre has any affiliation with the Iranian cultural consulate he admitted that various activities of the centre may contribute to the indirect spreading of the Shia ideology in the country.

Also as the Imam of the university, he remarks that it is his duty to make clarification of certain distortions about Shia ideology and Islam in general. Besides the activities and programs that are deliberately structured to spread the ideology to the students in classes, especially in the religion class, the Cultural and Religious centres activities are considered powerful and powering the Shia agenda not only in the university but throughout the country. Like remarks Dumbé, many students despite the rigorous effort to introduce them to the Shia ideology could not withstand the condemnation of the 3 Caliphs of Islam (Abubakar, Umar and Othman) by the Shia clericals.

In another spectrum, some students find the Shiite ideology convincing and Iran as the truest Islamic nation any Muslim should look up to. In some cases, also, outside the university premises, Sufi clericals who rejected many efforts by the Shia community to convert them however have high hopes for Iran as a Muslim nation and the best as well. The activities of the Shiite community have reduced the condemnation of the sect and have led to its toleration in the Muslim community as a sect. Students who could not revert to the Shia faith have developed some kind of soft heart towards the sect (Interview Imam Mujeeb, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

A Sunni alumnus of the university told the researcher that he had defended the faiths in many instances when misconceptions are discussed as truth about the Shiite ideology in the community. He however added that he remains a committed Sunni but would not condone any condemnation of the Shiite sect, all thanks to the enlightenment he had during his education at the school (interview with Kamil Adams). I often encounter such cases as I conducted my interviews with the alumni and some continuing students of the university who have not reverted to the Shiite faith. Moreover, it is difficult to come out without having a soft spot for the faith even if one has not accepted it. This I realize is a consolation the Shiite community gets for establishing a platform for its Shia activities as they offer secular education to the Muslim community.

### 2.5.2 Other Shia Secular Schools

Ameen relates that the Shiite secular schools were necessitated by the difficulties faced by graduates of the Shiite seminaries in the Ghanaian job market. The Fathul Mubeen incorporated the secular curriculum to start the primary and Junior High School in 1995 and Senior High School in 2004. In 1994, the Ahlul Bayt Foundation established *Madrasat Itrat Ali* in the northern region of Ghana. The school is from primary to Junior High School and is adopted as a public school by the Ghana education service. Arabic and Islamic studies tutors in these schools are paid by Ahlul Bayt Foundation. Other Shiite schools like Islam Mahdi Education Complex (MEC), Sayyid al-Wasiyyin Islamic School (SWIS) and Ahlul Bayt Islamic School (ABIS) (Primary & JHS) are all established by the Ahlul Bayt Assembly of Ghana through Ahlul Bayt Foundation.

The Imam Hussein Foundation (IHF) also sponsored the foundation of schools such as Imam Mahdi Educational complex in the middle part of Ghana and Imam Jafar Sadiq International School (IJSIS) in the Central Region of Ghana. Like in other private schools, the teachers are paid with the fees paid by the students since it is a private school. Though it cannot be mentioned with certainty that the Iranian government institutions in the Ghanaian State have directly sponsored the erection of these educational facilities and some other schools such as *Islamic Technical School (ITS)* in Accra, and *Manhaliyyah Islamic school* and Amiriyya School in Tamale (Northern Ghana), but were directly sponsored by the Iranian Cultural Consulate and the Agricultural Rural Development (ARD) organisation in Ghana. Through the inculcation of Islamic moral values in the pupils, the Shiite tutors in these schools introduce the Shiite ideology to them. The centre for Development and Management of Asri Schools (CDMA), an association founded by three Shia teachers in collaboration with the Cultural Consulate of Iran in Ghana to solicit assistance from the Islamic Republic for the provision of literature and capacity building.

Ameen (2015:72) mentions that in March 2013, three-member delegation from Iran visited the Ghanaian state to aid in the training of teaching and non-teaching staff of Shiite schools. Logistics and learning materials were donated by the delegates to five Shia schools in the country. Furthermore, in 2015, the Lady Fatima Senior High School (LFSHS) was established as a private High School by the Islamic University College Ghana, the vision of the High School is to provide secondary education to the poor and

marginalized Muslim and non-Muslim girls in the country. Currently the High School runs two main programs which are Business Management studies and the General Arts studies.

The School also adds Islamic Quranic studies and Arabic Language to enhance the studies of Islam so as to facilitate a good moral behaviour among the girl child in the country. The researcher finds that no effort is spared by the sponsors of these educational facilities to install facets for spreading the Shiite ideology. For instance, the newly established Lady Fatima Senior High School students engage in the celebration of Shiite Mawlid where they are exposed to more Shiite influence and ideology. Since its establishment, many of such programs are organized in the school premises. The same applies to the other secular institutions.

According to the information provided by Ameen (2015) in his work, there about 14 main Shiite Schools which are secular in Ghana. Though he calls the list “selected school” it is difficult to find other Shiite based secular school besides what he has presented. These schools, for instances Lady Fatima school have had assistance from the diplomatic missions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. On Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup> 2016 for instance, according to the School’s website, the Iranian ambassador promised to help the school grow.

As part of its humanitarian services, the Iranian institutions render free humanitarian services to the Shiite communities and institutions in the country. For instance, in February 2016 the Iranian ambassador in fulfilment of his promise he made to the Lady Fatima SHS collaborated with the Iranian clinic to offer free medical screening for the whole students. After the medical screening students were put on health insurance with the university with which students can visit the hospital from time to time for free medical services.

### **2.5.3 The Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD)**

Another avenue for spreading Shiism in Ghana is the activities of the Agricultural and Rural Development (ARD) NGO. Though an NGO it also is the representative office of the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture by maintaining a section in the Iranian Embassy in Ghana. The ARD was established following series of talks between Ghana and the Islamic Republic on agriculture, economic and technical cooperation. A memorandum

of understanding was signed in 1989 by the two states with the aim of alleviating rural and urban poor citizens' poverty. This move was facilitated by the virtue of Khomeini that states that political independence ceases to be meaningful until it is connected to cultural and economic independence. ARD has been rendering services to the Ghanaian populace in *agriculture, education information technology, cottage industry, hand dug wells, grinding mills, mosques and health delivery*. Looking at the areas the ARD renders services to some poor populace, one can hardly identify areas of the Shia ideology spread with exception of education and mosque. Activities of the ARD are scattered all over the Ghanaian state.

However, Dumbe finds that Shiism thrives through the sum of these activities of ARD. In the area of vocational centre established as part of its program, apprenticeship in dress making and electronic engineering is offered to the volunteers. These centres provide an employment vantages for the underprivileged citizens of Ghana. As at the time of his studies, Dumbe finds that there were about 37,700 people who had benefited from these facilities. Some of these centres are Fatima Zahra Dressmaking Centre in Accra and a vocational training centre in Tamale. A list provided by Ameen (2015) indicates that these centres are scattered in mostly three (3) regions of Ghana which are Central, Northern and Greater Accra regions. These projects are named *under computing, dressmaking, beekeeping, pottery, Agriculture, tractor repairing, electricity, carpentry* among others.

These programs singlehandedly initiated by the Iranian consulate and embassy have in a way contributed to the spread of Shia ideology. Dumbe finds that some of these centres are given basic Islamic Shia-blended education. Besides the education some of the citizens under training are often invited to participate in programs organized by the Iranian mission such as the cultural consulate and the embassy. The embassy sometimes donates training accoutrements such as computers and gives financial supports to the students. The function of the ARD isn't limited to the vocational training of the vulnerable and the needy. They sometimes go religious by executing some sectarian duties to aid the growth of the Shiite community. For instance, the ARD aided the Muslims in the Kasoa (a town in the central region of Ghana) to build Imamiyya Islamic school. Again, the ARD and the Iranian embassy in 1996 constructed a computer-training centre in one of the universities in Ghana, University for Development of

Studies (UDS). This facility was crucial to the personal skill development of the lecturers as computer literacy was scarce at the time of the establishment. The ARD and the Iranian embassy have constructed computer training centres which aim at equipping both the lecturers and the students some level of computer skills. Previous research done by Dumbre reveals that about 37, 700 people as at 2008 have benefitted for the ARD centres.

The embassy aims at imparting knowledge through the ARD. This help by the embassy is facilitated by two main motives. The first motive is the fact that there is still much to be done in the Ghanaian education centre for which reason Ghanaians especially the Ghanaian Muslims are lagging behind. The second motive is that the creating diverse opportunities for Muslim everywhere in the world in order to make them equal to others are part of the philosophic foundation of the Iranian foundation. However, the brain behind all these establishment have created some structures through which people who receive these philanthropic goods get to familiarize themselves with the Shiite doctrines. Closely related to the activities of the ARD is the women empowerment program initiated by the Cultural Consulate to address problems of women in Ghana. The Consulate identified that one of the problems women encounter in Ghana especially the rural and semi-rural settlers is the lack of job. To address their need the consulate have put in place some measures to promote the occupation of some selected small-scale businesses such as corn milling, yam weaving and shea butter extraction. Most beneficiaries of this support for the consulate are women who reside in the Northern region of Ghana. Studies have revealed that Muslim women are the sole beneficiaries of this program. In some other vocational centres set up to empower women, like Fatima Zahra Vocational Centres teaching skills such as weaving and home economics taught to the women who enrol.

Also, the cultural consulate assists Federation of Muslim Women Association of Ghana (FOMWAG) to organize programs in honour of Fatima Zahra. Fatima Zahra, who double as he daughter of the Prophet and the wife of Ali the fourth Caliphate is showcased as a role model of the participants of the program. That is to say wherever the diplomatic corps find any avenue to promote Shiism they take that as an opportunity to make it happen by putting in all their available resources and support. In other training schools for the women empowerment programs, like mentioned before,

religious programs are structured according to the Shiite doctrine to be taught to the learners (Dumbe 2013:103). However, these strategies seem not to have won the hearts of many women especially the FOMWAG women. This is because, for instance, some of these women were just aware of the role of Fatima Zahra but would not attach any importance to how the Shiites revere her personality. Also since these women have the chance of participating in such as program only once in a year means that they don't get much exposure to the Shia ideology.

#### **2.5.4 The Iranian Red Crescent Society**

The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) established in 1922 is a rescue, relief and medical aid organization in Iran. Since the formation of the Red Crescent it began its activities independently. Donations from the people met the bulk of its financial demands. This society since its formation has taken part in many public activities such as the establishment of maternity hospitals, setting up clinics that offer free services, supplying water as well as helping centres of army health. The Society has been to establish hospitals and medical centres, nursing schools, road relief cites and drugstores up to 1979. The Society is currently the Iranian state's main humanitarian organization as well one of the most active members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Currently the Society's main activities are geared towards rendering relief services to the victims of disasters (<http://www.ifrc.org> 2016)

Iran clinic was established by the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic in 1990. This medical facility was built to render affordable medical services to Ghanaians. Ameen observes that services rendered at the clinic are cheaper when compared by the other private and public health centres. According to the clinic report found on the cultural consulate's website, the clinic has joined the National Tuberculosis Control Program (NTCP). It has also made it possible for patients to use their National Health Insurance to access medical services in the clinic. Coping with its social and religious services, the clinic management for instance, during Hajj, donates drugs to the National Hajj Committee (NHC). This is done to help cater for the Ghanaian pilgrims' health needs in Saudi Arabia (Ameen 2015:129).

The clinic pay visits to orphanages, prisons, poor settlements to offer free medical services and donate required drugs to the needy. Sometimes, the management of the



clinic collaborate with other Iranian institutions to render services to the people. For instant, in November 2015, the clinic collaborated with the Women Affair Committee (WAC- IUCG) to host a health seminar to create awareness of dangers of cervical cancer. During such programs discussion is often skewed towards Shia ideology. It is usual to find these Iranian institutions collaborating with each other in several occasions. For instance, during the 37<sup>rd</sup> anniversary celebration of the Iranian Revolution, the occasion brought together by the Ahlul Bayt Teacher Training Centre, the Iran clinic, the Agriculture and Rural Development, the Islamic university among other institutions. Each institution exhibited its institutional project and activities. Pictures and regalia of the Iranian culture as well as giant images of Khomeini were displayed. These serve as a significant value yet for exploiting the participants to reconcile with the Shiite ideology ([www.iug.edu.gh](http://www.iug.edu.gh) 2015). As part of its humanitarian services, the Iranian institutions render free humanitarian services to the Shiite communities and institutions in the country.

William Bullock Jenkins, mentions that a lot has been documented about the hard power might of the Islamic Republic of Iran but less attention has been given to the its soft power. According to him, the rhetorical lexicon of politicians, policymakers and academics in the Islamic Republic has been occupied by soft power. Policy makers in Iran view soft power as fundamental to foreign policy of Iran. In 2013, in his presidential campaign, Hassan Rouhani stated explicitly that ‘Iran needs soft power (Akbarzadeh & Conduit 2016: 154).

Soft power generally refers to the capability of an entity or a state to influence the action of others through persuasion but not threat or coercion. This is achieved when a state or an actor uses culture, ideals of politics and policies. According to Nye, a state’s soft power is enhanced when its policies are regarded legitimate in the eyes of others. Soft power is the third way of achieving what we want but through persuasion and the ability to attract (Nye 2004:4).

It is believed that religious soft power expands the use of soft power terminology beyond Nye’s original argument. This is because Nye originally believed that a state government uses soft power to influence another state in order to achieve its goals. Nye however came to accept the credibility of a non-state actor that has soft power. Using Hezbollah as an example, Nye mentions that the concept of soft power may also consist

of cultural and religious actors of a non-state who seek to influence policy by inducing policymakers to incorporate into their religious beliefs, values and norms. Religious actors through establishing cross-border networks make deliberate efforts to spread influence. Transnational religious actors such as Al-Qaeda, Roman Catholic have sought to apply soft power in order to encourage religious and political changes (Haynes 2012: 454).

There is no doubt that Iranian foreign policy hovers around Islamic context. Like mentioned in previous pages, cultural diplomacy in the 1980s was concerned primarily with revolution export. As part of its goal, the Islamic Republic aimed at a universalistic concept of Islamic solidarity. For that matter, every corner of the world received their share of the export in one way or the other. Westridge (2014:4) mentions that Jafarpanahi and Mirahmadi observe that this period was seen appropriate for Iran for the world to know of this brand of Iranian culture and also expand its influence of culture beyond borders. These researchers argue that foreign policy under the supervision of Khomeini was a practicable soft power resource most importantly in the Islamic world. Both Mohammed Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have utilized cultural diplomacy elements in their foreign policies. They did it either through dialogue or the use of cultural links to enhance relationships. According to the mentioned researchers, through the cultural exchange and outreach activities of ICRO, Iran operationalizes some of its soft power.

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### **2.6.1 Islamic Culture & Relations Organization (ICRO)**

Formed in 1995, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) is viewed as a key instrument of Iran's cultural diplomacy. The organization serves as a channel of

regulating the multifarious cultural diplomacy networks of the Islamic Republic. ICRO like the British council and Goethe or Confucius institution is responsible for coordinating the bilateral cultural initiatives of Iran with other states. This organization is affiliated to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It operates under the guidance of the Supreme Leader. The appointment of the ruling council is the responsibility of the Supreme Leader. This organization aims at promoting the ideals of the revolution, encouraging Islamic unity and strengthening relations with Muslims countries. It is important to note that this organization is powerful as far as Iran's soft power is concerned. This is because it is the body that appoints the senior cultural consular serving abroad. Though the consulate works independently, it sometimes collaborates with the Iranian embassies. Like mentioned earlier, in Ghana, the two offices sometimes collaborate to organize a program of ideological or national interest. In every part of the world it finds itself, the representatives to keep up with the soft power outreach of Iran will often rely on the state in question, but will involve in organization of cultural weeks/exhibitions and religious events for Iranians in diaspora as well building relations with cultural institution in the host states and the promotion of Persian language. The Al-Hoda international is also run by ICRO. The Al-Hoda is an international publishing house responsible for the publication of Islamic literature on the Islamic Republic and the Iranian culture in not less than 25 languages. It also supplies much of these literature ICRO public libraries. Offices of ICRO are scattered around the world including several European capitals, and in Pakistan and Turkey. In Ghana, the website of the cultural consulate is the same as that of ICRO. The ICRO, the cultural consulate and the Iranian embassy collaborate in organization of programs such as revolution day celebration, Quds day, and cultural exhibition among others. Though increased activities of ICRO are more witnessed in Islamic countries, some other non-Islamic countries like Ghana have had their share of ICRO activities.

### **2.6.2 Bonyads**

William Bullock Jenkins (Akbarzadeh & Conduit 2016: 156) notes that the Bonyads are vital as well as effective mediators of Iranian soft power. They emblemize and spread the Iranian revolutionary discourses, Persian identity abroad through business, secular and religious philanthropy and media. Before the revolution, the Bonyads were used by

the Shah as tool for personal, political or cultural goals. After the revolution Bonyad-e-Mostazafin va Janbazan (foundation for the oppressed and Disabled), Bonyad-e-shahid va Isargaran (Martyr's and Veterans' Foundation), Astan-e Qods-e Razavi, Komiteh-ye Emdad-e Tablighat-e Eslami (Islamic Propagation Organization) and Bonyad-e Panzdah-e Khordad (15 Khordad Foundation). These arms of the Bonyad are a robust foreign policy instrument that spread the Iranian influence in terms of cultural and revolutionary identity. The Bonyads promote ideology and culture of Iran. They often give social welfare and commercial activities as domestic and transnational charitable foundation. The Bonyad Mosta'zafin is designed with the ideological mandate of assisting the oppressed. The soft power that is wielded by the bonyads comes from revolutionary origins, identity, and ideological and cultural mandates. Bonyads is estimated to have been receiving close to 58% of the national budget as it accounts for between 30 to 40% of the Iranian economy.

Earlier discussions have indicated that soft power constitutes assets such as political values, culture and institutions, legitimate and moral authority policies. Effective generators of soft power are nonstate and parastatal actors. One of the bodies that has been communicating the cultural and political ideas outside state independently is bonyads. One of Iranian soft power tool is facilitated by sanad-e chesm-andaz-e bist saleh (twenty-year vision document). This is a wide range blueprint policy of Iranian strategy. This document visualizes Iran as an economic, technological, scientific regional spearhead with the identity of the Islamic revolution. It is Bonyads that forms the basis of the economic and technological spheres of that part of the document which stresses the need for strengthening the identity of the Islamic-Iranian (Shia ideology). It promotes the Islamic Republic's political, cultural and economic achievements and experiences as well as the understanding of the culture, art, and civilization and religious democracy of Persia. In this regard, Bonyads are role players in achieving those set goals. It is an exceptional tool of soft power with economic motivated by religion that represents the Iranian political identity. The soft power view of the Islamic Republic rests of three main principles. These are the community, homogeneity and government responsibility.

The first precept also known as ham-yari deals with religious organizations and philanthropic works as well as bonyads as state-sponsored instruments of charity and

philanthropy. Homogeneity (ham-geni) is related to the necessity of concentrating on the societies that identify with the Islamic Republic. These are the Shiite communities which are accessible via networks of traditional transnational. The government responsibility also known as (masu'uliyat-paziri-ye dowlat), stresses the states has the responsibility of coordinating soft power. These three facets form the weight of foreign policy tools with the inclusion of bonyads as the soft actualizing body. Through its role as economic pressure groups, media and religious cultural centers and institutions Bonyad employ direct influence over the foreign policy of the Iranian state. Though not quite apparent in its activities sometimes, Bonyads appears to influence both domestic and foreign policy of Iran. Hossein Dehghan, A defense Minister under Rouhani is Bonyad-e Shahid's former head.

Bonyads gather religious alms and state funds to help the oppressed and the dispossessed. They also pacify international veterans and martyrs and thus contribute to Iranian soft power. They have the mandate of helping Muslims everywhere, around the world. In some urgent cases in discharging their international duties, the bonyads receives funding from Komiteh Emdad Imam Khomeini (IKRC) and coordinates with the Ministry of Foreign Ministry. The IKRC has the responsibility of collecting alms which includes zakat, khoums, and sadaqat and redistributing them within and without Iran. These funds are sometimes sent to aid the building of Shiite structures in places like Africa where branch offices coordinate the distribution. In Comoros for instance this outfit has an office. In 2012 for instance, 30000 vulnerable people were beneficiaries of such funds dispensed by the offices (Akbarzadeh & Conduit 2016: 170).

### **2.6.3 The International Media of Iran**

The international Media of Iran serve as a conduit the state uses to extend its soft power outreach. The Iranian international broadcast media is controlled by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). In accordance with the constitution the Supreme Leader appoints the head of the IRIB after every five years. The IRIB aims at promoting the Iranian culture and civilization by expounding the worldview of the Islamic Republic to an international audience. The IRIB operates five different international news channels. These include, Al- Alam, Al-kowthar, Press Tv, Hispan Tv and Al-Manar. Al-Alam became Iran's first 24 hours foreign language channel, which is

international. It began in 2003 with news coverage from Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran and Africa launched in 2006, Al-Kowthar is also the second Iranian Arabic Channel that concentrates on broadcasting religious programs for the Arab Shiite communities in the Arab world. Al-Manar also provides program of the IRIB. It serves as a media outlet in Lebanon. Arguably, the most known Iranian media outlet in the West is the Press TV. This television channel offers a 24-hour English language news programs. It was launched internationally in 2007.

Press TV appears as an alternative which gives its viewers another news perspective not given by CNN, Aljazeera and BBC among others. Hispan TV was also launched as a Spanish-language television channel which broadcasts news to the Latin America and Spain. This was vital during the Ahmadinejad's regime. Hispan television channel reflected the ties between Iran and Latin American States like Venezuela and Cuba. Hispan TV like Press TV was removed from the main satellite in 2013 when Iran was sanctioned. The most popular Media outlet in African countries is however the Press TV. It can be observed that the Press TV has successfully caught the attention of Muslim and anti-imperialists in Ghana. The researcher observes that Mr Kwesi Pratt, a Ghanaian ace journalist, anti-imperialist and a strong advocate of the Iran, during a program in April 2008 on the premises of Islamic University, encouraged students to adopt Press TV as an alternative for CNN, BBC and Aljazeera. The Ace Journalist blamed the Western Media for their imperialistic and ideological broadcast.

Shiism to some people also means Iranian interest. Both King Abdullah in 2004 and Hosni Mubarak have accused many Shiite-Arab communities in the Gulf region for showing more loyalty to the Islamic Republic of Iran instead of their own states. This study finds, as mentioned above, that some interviewees show more loyalty to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Some of these people contend that Iran is more appealing to them as a true Islamic state than their home state. More important is the fact that some of these people have not yet embraced Shiism. They maintain their faith as Sunni Muslims but have soft spot for Iran. This means that Iran is gradually making inroads in the Ghanaian Muslim community.

In the Middle East for instance the Iranian regime uses its religious soft power to develop multilayered- spiritual, cultural, religious, economic and political relations with the Shia populations' movements throughout the region. The same can be said about

some African states including Ghana. From the family level, these sympathizers and Shiite reverts have named their offspring and association after some important figures in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, some of them appear to monitor political and religious affairs of the Islamic Republic. They do not only follow the *marj'a* in Iran but also have keen interest in Iranian politics as well as give great reverence to the Spiritual leaders (AYATOLLAHS). Many Shiite adherents have abandoned the Western Media and have subscribed to watching Press TV. Also, the researcher has also observed that even Muslim who aren't Shiites have also taken to watching Press TV.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The Iranian mission in Ghana's and its contribution to spread of Shiism was obvious from the beginning. This is because before the establishment of its embassy and the cultural consulate in Ghana, there was little or no knowledge of the Shiite ideology in the Ghanaian state. This made the early missions/ diplomatic corps involve in the direct spread of the Shiite doctrine following the Iranian revolution. Ameen finds that an Iranian diplomat, Hussein Kashani who came to Ghana to search for space to establish the Iranian embassy, gave Shia literature to some Ghanaian Muslim students. A student among the recipients of the literature reverted to Shiism.

The early activities of the Shiite diplomats were direct as they involved in organizing political programs targeted at indoctrinating the Muslims Shiism. Though those moves were partially unsuccessful like Dumbo observes, with the introduction of more Shiite institutions and activities sponsored by these diplomatic corps. The embassy and the cultural consulate appear to have been hiding behind these institutions as they sponsor and empower them to continue the spread of Shiism. Among these institutions is the Islamic university, the Ahlul Bayt Teacher training centre, the ARD and the Iranian Red Crescent's Iranian clinic. These institutions though may claim they are not directly involved in the spreading of Shia ideology, their activities observed by this study reveal the opposite. For instant, Sheikh Mujeeb, the head of the culture and Religious affairs of the Islamic university denies his outfit is directly involved in spreading the Shia ideology. He, however, admits that the office activities could be considered as an outfit for direct access of Shiite ideology.



Three facets of the Iranian soft power outreach which are the media, the Bonyads and ICRO appear to be a conduit for the spread of Shia ideological influence in the world. The shores of Africa have had its share of this influence. Through organization and celebration of annual revolutionary ideals, cultural exhibition in partnership with host states cultural outfits, helping and sponsoring the weak, poor and vulnerable the Islamic Republic is making inroads in its agenda of spreading its influence in other places including Ghana. More over the Iranian media like Press TV, though not very effective in the Ghanaian Muslim communities, is gradually making impact as some people including non-Muslim have chosen it as alternative for the Western Media.

## **CHAPTER III: FACTORS THAT ASSIST THE CONVERSION TO SHIISM**

This chapter discusses the factors responsible for the conversion of the Sunni Muslims through their contacts and engagements with Shiite mission which is sponsored and inspired by the activities of the Iranian diplomats, NGO's among others. Several factors and circumstances seem to have aided the convictions of so many non-Shiites to embrace the Shiite ideology. Research, through interaction and observation of the Muslims in the Ghanaian Communities reveals that several reasons and circumstances lead to the consequent reversion of Muslims to the Shiite faith. These factors and circumstances compliments the efforts being made by the Shiite community in Ghana. These are economic and social factors, proximity to existent faith, unnecessary condemnation and lambast, and excessive literature in circulation as well as growing population of the Islamic Republic in Africa and the world at large.

### **3.1. The Religious Groups in Ghana**

Ghana's 1992 constitution prohibits religious discrimination as it gives right for freedom of worship to all its citizens. Information available at the Ghana statistical service as at 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2016, reveals that the total population of Ghana stood at 28,308,301 (Ghana statistical service, 2017). As at 2010, the population distribution of religion has it that 71% of Ghanaians were Christians (catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal/ and other Christian groups), 17.6% were Muslims<sup>6</sup> whilst 5.2% were Traditionalists. 5.3% however have no religious affiliation.

#### **3.1.1 The Muslims**

Islam is believed to have entered West Africa through trans-Saharan trade routes. The traders<sup>7</sup> who settled in the Begho forest near Wenchi in 15<sup>th</sup> century are responsible for Islamizing the Gold Coast (Ghana) settlers. Sufism (Tijaniyyah & Qadiriyya), Wahhabism, Shiism and Ahmadi are the main Islamic religious sects in Ghana. Below

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<sup>6</sup> Information available at [peacefmonline.com](http://peacefmonline.com) has it that some Muslim leaders and groups have rejected the 17% allocated as the population of Muslims in the country.

<sup>7</sup> These traders are the *Mande* from Mali who double as the agents of the spread of Islam in West Africa.

are their brief accounts. Since Shiism is the sect under study this section does not give any briefing about it.

### **3.1.2 The Sufis**

The Sufis are believed to have been the first Muslim groups in Ghana. The Qadiriyya and the later on the Tijaniyyah were the earlier pioneers of Islam in Ghana. Later on, the Qadiriyya lost its appeal and then the Tijaniyyah took over as the most appealing Islamic group. The Tijaniyyah movement was derived from its founder's name, Sheikh Ahmad Tijani (1737-1815). The Tijaniyyah unlike the Qadiriyya group gradually became popular in Ghana since its introduction. Arguably the Tijaniyyah is the largest Muslim group with the largest population of adherents not only Ghana, but in West Africa at large.

Melton & Baumann (2010:2869) have estimated that the population of Tijaniyyah adherents in West Africa to be as high as 60 million. Their rise to popularity was largely attributed to the activities of their scholars in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. One amongst those scholars was Umar Futi who initiated one Abbas Mohammed. The current national Imam of Muslims in Ghana, Sheikh Nuhu Sharubutu also became a Tijaniyyah through his uncle Abbas Mohammed. Also, the vice Imam, Sheikh AL hajj Kamaludeen was believed to have been converted to Tijaniyyah through Ahmadu Futa who was also converted by Umar Futi. However, Umar Karki<sup>8</sup>, a former Qadiriyya adherent, remains the most influential scholar in Ghana during the colonial era to have aided the spread of Tijaniyyah in Ghana.

Ibrahim Niass of Senegal (1900-1975) is the scholar who championed the Tijaniyyah course in Ghana. He popularized the Tijaniyyah movement in Ghana. Most renowned Sufi leaders in Ghana today have had contacts with these Tijaniyyah sheikhs to create an atmosphere for more Tijaniyyah practices in the country. The Sheikh who died in 1975 was involved in African liberation struggle when wrote a book "Ifriqiyya lil-ifriqiyiin" (Africa for Africans). He was also known for his friendship<sup>9</sup> with the First Ghanaian President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

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<sup>8</sup> Umar Karki, a Qadiriyya Sufi scholar abandoned his sect and accepted Tijaniyyah when he met Alfa Hashim in 1913 during Hajj.

<sup>9</sup> It is believed that the first president also sought spiritual guidance from Niass in independence struggle, building of the electricity dam among others.

The Tijaniyyah in Ghana like other Tijaniyyah groups in Africa go through initiation, *azkar* and *mawlid*<sup>10</sup>. Through the organization of mammoth *mawlids*, this movement attracts many followers. Though this movement has many internal problems such as leadership, it remains the most vibrant Islamic group in Ghana. The advent of the Salafists/Wahhabis in Ghana became a major challenge for the Tijaniyyah movement in Ghana. The Salafists pressure was borne out of the over concern they have to revive what they consider as the right Sunnah of Prophet.

### **3.1.3 The Salafist**

The Salafist made their entry in Ghana some years after the state had its independence. This group, since its inception, has pursued several strategies to hinder the activities of the Sufi groups which they think do not conform to the basic teachings of Islam. The Salafism in question is the brand of extreme Islamic heritage of Mohammed Abdul Wahhab known as Wahhabism. Wahhabism propagated by the Saudi Arabia regime as an ideology of the state and instrument of its foreign policy have made effort to export its ideology to many parts of the world as an alternative for Sufism.

In 1961, Salafism was introduced to Ghana. The Islamic Desk headed by Kamali Khalid was in charge of the Desk and also was responsible for the initiation Islamic studies in the Central Mosque of Accra in 1967. It was through this program that Salafism started making headways in the Ghanaian Muslim communities. Through the activities of the higher studies in Islam both in Ghana and in the Middle East, and through the sponsorship of the Saudi Wahhabi regime, Salafism became the second most powerful Islamic group in Ghana whose activities are skewed towards hindering distortions spearheaded by the Sufis.

Sheikh Umar Ibrahim has the credit of the first Ghanaian graduate from the Saudi Arabia in 1968 whose activities aided the spread of the Saudi ideology. This scholar was the initiator of an organization known as Islamic Research and Reformation Centre (IRRC) in 1969. Early activities of the IRRC were directed towards halting the so called heretic practices of the Sufi adherents in the Ghanaian state. Though the missionary activities received popularity among the local Ulama who reverted to Wahhabism,

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<sup>10</sup> Every member is supposed to do their personal recitation of litanies and they are required to participate in group recitation after Maghrib prayer.

growing number of graduates from Saudi Arabia during the 1980 contributed to rapid spread of the Salafism in Ghana. These graduates were equally sponsored by their masters in the Middle East countries (Dumbe 2008:160)

Later on, disagreements among the leaders of the Salafi movement led to the formation of the Ahlu-sunna Wal- Jama'a (ASWAJ) in 1997. Despite the internal wrangling, the aim was to dismantle the distortions created by the Sufis and bring back the original Islam practiced during the time of the companions of Prophet Mohammed. One important factor that aided the spread of Salafism in Ghana besides proselytism and the setting up of educational centers is the humanitarian services sponsored mainly by the Saudi regime through Wahhabi NGOs.

The Saudi regime have initiated schemes like the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) funded by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) among others to help in offering scholarships to needy but intelligent students. According a report, as mentioned in Dumbe's thesis (Dumbe 2008:151) until 2006, USD \$ 3,762,000 had been spent on students in Ghana only. However, many Salafi structures have benefitted from these Saudi structures. For instance, Salafi educational center in Accra received some funding from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). The Salafist in coping with the Saudi agenda have condemned the Sufis, Shiites and the Ahmadiyya groups in Ghana. They consider these groups as infidels.

#### **3.1.4 The Ahmadiyya**

The Ahmadiyya Movement was started by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who was born in 1835 in British India, the current day Pakistan. His group was formed as a result of his continues strive to revive Islam. Mirza Ghulam saw himself as Mahdi (reviver) whose followers come to regard as a Prophet. In 1880, Ghulam witnessed a decline in Islam due to attacks from religions like Christianity. Those attacks inspired Ahmad to write books in defense of his religion. Amongst his books is Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya which was published in 1880. He expressed his position in the book as a personality called by Allah to guide the infidels (Christians and Pagans) unto the right path. In 1889 Ghulam officially founded the Ahmadiyya also called Qadiani movement in Islam. By the time he died in 1908 Ghulam had already gotten a lot of followers. The movement, since its

establishment has been able to establish itself in more than 190 countries (Melton & Baumann 2010: 55).

Less than a decade since its foundation, the movement, through a formal invitation of an Ahmadi in Lahore called AL haj Abdul Rahman Nayyar by some Muslims in the Central Region of Ghana Qadiyaniyya was introduced in the country. The coming of this visitor from Lahore marked the beginning of the activities of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Ghana. The Sufis were the first to condemn the Ahmadiyya as infidels and distorters of Islam. It took the intervention of the political authority in the state to rescue the early Ahmadiyya adherents from molestation in the hands of Sunni Muslims. The Ahmadiyya despite a gross rejection from the other Muslim groups in Ghana have had so many to show as their contribution to the socio-economic development of Ghana. Their contribution includes educational centers, clinics and hospitals built in some parts of the country (Ameen 2015: 47).

More importantly, despite the gross rejection, many Muslims consider them as organized and a more appealing Islamic group in the Ghanaian state. This is largely because they are the only Islamic group who engage in proselytism in order to attract non-Muslims to the Islamic faith. As a reward for their effort they can boast of many reverts who came from other religious groups like Christianity and the Traditional religion. Their approach, is not like that of the other Islamic groups (Tijaniyyah, Wahhabis & Shiites), who concentrate on attracting members from within the Muslim fraternity. The late Maulvi Wahhab Adam was the leader of the Mission who was popular in the Ghanaian state for his Charismatic personality.

## **3.2. Factors for Conversion to Shiism**

### **3.2.1 Social and Economic Factors**

It is observed by foreign researchers that the modern Ghanaian state is politically stable. The relative political stability, however, seem not to have connected to the economic development of the populace. Poverty in Ghana has been studied to be a phenomenon in the rural savannah. Though strategies such as the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) are being put in place to remedy the situation, its effect on the rural folks are yet to be realized. Coping with the strategies put together to combat poverty among the

set aside groups in the State, Muslim population of Ghana appears to be slapped largely due to its marginalized position in the Ghanaian society. Despite the rejection of the “poverty claim” by the Ghanaian Muslim Community; by the Muslim individuals and leaders, situations in some of the communities confirm the claim (Weiss 2007: 27).

It is in this light that the new government of the state has designated a full ministry in the name of “Zongo and Inner-City Ministry” with a Muslim Minister (Abubakar Boniface) spearheading it. The Zongo is the name given to Muslim dominated areas in West Africa and beyond ([www.graphic.com.gh](http://www.graphic.com.gh)). Prior to the several but unsuccessful attempts by governments to alleviate poverty and develop the Muslim society, religion has played a role in realizing same. The only problem of intervention by religion has always been the undeniable interest of the indoctrination of the people. Christianity has previously exploited the vulnerability of the Muslim communities in the Northern region of Ghana to convert them to Christianity.

Within the Muslim communities also, the advent of Wahhabi Islam witnessed some socio-economic development of the Muslim community with indoctrination agenda. In extending his political agenda in Africa, the late Libyan leader, Muammer Gaddafi also contributed his quota to the development of the Muslim community of Ghana. The Libyan president through his embassy offered logistics for the Islamic education unit in Ghana and offered scholarship as well. These agenda-inspired humanitarian services increased their support base in the state. The main focus here is the one being done by the Shia and how it helps convinced the non-Shiite Muslims.

The Shiites, as finds Ameen (2015), have exploited the plight of Muslim Youth who have not reached their goals by giving them scholarships to study the Shiite facilities whilst feeding them and providing monthly allowance to them. This socio-economic service helps in swift conversion of these Muslims to Shiism. Also, the technical and vocational centers beneficiaries could be informed and convinced to switch to the Shia ideology since the sponsors have contributed to their livelihood. An interview with Hamza, a student of ATTC reveals that some students like him were rather convinced by the assistance provided instead of lectures they received from the seminary. The vulnerability of the Muslim communities leaves space for religious maneuvering.

As part of the social factors, marriages that ensued between some Shiite pundits and the Sunni women automatically converts them to Shiism. For instance, the wife of the

former national Imam of the Shia community, Hajia Radiyya and other women in the Shiite community accepted Shiism as a marriage consolation. By that virtue and the virtue of reproduction, children born in this union are automatically born as Shia Muslims in the Ghanaian Muslim community (Ameen 2015: 73)

### **3.2.2 Literature**

It is easy to find Shia literature in the Muslim community of Ghana ever since the Shia made an entry into the community. Like mentioned earlier, the Shia diplomats who came to the country to search for space to set up the Iranian embassy came along with a literature through which Professor Peligah embraced the Shiism. On campus of Islamic university also such pieces of literature are circulated sometime, these papers and books seem to help the conversion of some students.

Dumbe (2013:42) also finds that early activities of the Shiite diplomats included the distribution and writing of enjoinders to help spread the Shiite ideology. Ameen also related the same instances of the diplomats sharing literature which includes calendar of the Islamic Republic and books containing the Shiite ideology. For instant, a former prominent Tijaniyyah pundit, Sheikh Adam Suleiman accepted Shiism after reading a book entitled *Then I was guided*. It was revealed that early distribution of Shiite literature was necessitated by the activities of the Saudi Arabian embassy. The embassy is reported to have collaborated with the Ghana Muslim Students' Association (GMSA) to educate the Ghanaian Muslims about the Iranian Revolution and how it could lead to the spread of Shiism in the country. The GMSA executives received literature from the Saudi embassy. It was meant for their reading and understanding and educating the Muslim community about the possibility of the spread of Shiism.

On the local level, when a book written by a Sunni Muslim historian, Sheikh Osman Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims in Ghana*, appear to have criticized and ridiculed some Shia practices such mut'ah and taqiyya, the book was not only rejected in the Islamic university's library but also attracted a response from the current Imam of the Shiite community. A rejoinder written by Sheikh Abubakar Kamaludeen entitled *A Response to the Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana* was seeking to attract the attention of Sheikh Bari negligence of Shia sources in preparing his document.



Again, Shia libraries were built in Kumasi, Accra and Tamale. These libraries are named after Imam Khomeini and other prominent Shia clerics. These libraries are piled with Shiite literature for reader's consumption. Sometimes such some literature sparks debate among the Muslims. These debates prepare the grounds for possible conversion of some Sunni Muslims.

According to Sheikh Ahmad, who upon graduating from the Shiite seminary in Iran became a lecturer in ATTC, the most powerful tool in convincing the Sunni Muslims to either embrace Shiism or tolerate it as a valid sect in Islam is the distribution of an easy-to-understand Shiite literature in the Muslim societies. Reading the books will provoke debates and will eventually give them the opportunity to school the Muslims about Shiism. The researcher recalls instances where Sheikh Ahmad distributed some Shia books to some Sunni Muslims in a certain community. Though he succeeded in creating awareness of the Shia sect in the community, many Muslims could not embrace the sect. In some cases, also he invited some Wahhabi clericals for discussions. As a teacher at the seminary, many Muslims in the community rather consider him a spy of the Islamic Republic of Iran instead of a teacher. Many visit him for discussions on the military might of Iran but would not give him a listening ear when issues of Shiism surfaces.

### **3.2.3 Conduciveness of the Ghanaian State**

Several factors in the Ghanaian state aid the successful operations of the Iranian establishment in their quest to export and spread Shia ideology in Ghana. Economic crises in Ghanaian state, common political aspiration shared by both states; the membership of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the positive religious climate created by peaceful; coexistence of religious groups among others facilitates the swift execution of the Iranian agenda in Ghana. Both Lobb (2016) and Dumbe (2013) acknowledge that economic crises faced by the Ghanaian State in the 1980s compelled policy makers to rely on some Middle Eastern countries for bilateral relations. The Ghanaian state did not only agree with Iran for only bilateral relations but accepted the help offered by Iran to help it explore its oil fields (Dumbe 2008: 117).

Lobb (2016) also mentions that ambassadors from African States including Ghana pushed by economic crises would deliberately seek help from the Iranian government to revamp their ailing economies. These helps include the implementation of agricultural

and rural development projects. Countries like Ghana and Tanzania are some of the beneficiary States of this Iranian project in 1989 and 1987 respectively. Like mentioned in previous chapters, the Ghanaian State through agriculture, vocational and training initiated by the Islamic Republic of Iran received socio-economic goods. These include rice cultivation, poultry farming, field management, beehives donation among others (Ameen 2015). The direct recipients of these socio-economic goods are introduced to the Shia ideology through programs organized by the Shia bodies and structures in the Ghanaian state.

Moreover, the common political aspiration shared by both the Iranian State and many African states paved a way for a stronger tie that paved way for further diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic. Many African states threatened by the new global rivalry between East and West Capitalism and communism after the cold war joined forces with other third world countries to form Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). According to Dumbe (2008:98) religious identities was the most resilient factor that shaped the aspiration of most Muslim States at that time. Couple with that and the membership of Iran and Ghana in NAM, the two states improved relations appears to have contributed to the swift execution of Iranian activities in Ghana. Ghana had the opportunity of hosting the NAM Ministerial summit in 1991. The summit made it possible for Ghana to share some ideas and strengthen diplomatic relation with some Muslim State which attended. The summit strengthened the relationship between Ghana and the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result of the good ties, countless calls were made by some Wahhabi groups to ensure the closure of Shia schools like the Islamic university in the early 2000s, did not fall in the on any listening ears of the Ghanaian state officials (Interview, Musharudeen).

Also, unlike in other African states where Iranian activities are hampered by State officials, Iran appears to be a very important partner of Ghana with possibly a better prospect of improvement in relations. In some African countries like Comoros, Sudan and Morocco the Iranian diplomat activities were halted due to the hosting states allegation that the Iranian state's agenda is interfering with their States' affairs. The case is not the same in Ghana.

The positive religious climate is also a factor that makes Ghana conducive for the Iranian agenda. Intra religious conflict in some African states like Nigeria has been

hindering some activities of Shia in the state. Like mentioned earlier, the larger Sunni dominated African states sometimes makes Iran struggle in search for space. Persecution of Shiites in some states also disturbs the activities of the Islamic Republic. According to presstv.com the current leader of Shiites in Nigeria, Sheikh Al Zakzaky has been in detention after he was shot and his house raided. The Nigerian State officials have charged the Shia cleric with criminal conspiracy and disturbance incitation. More than 300 people were reported brutalized and killed including two children of the cleric in detention whilst 700 more were not accounted for. It is worth mentioning also that some skirmishes sometimes arise between the Wahhabi and the Shia in Nigeria. In Ghana, however such incidences hardly occur. This is largely due to the positive intra religious climate that exists in the state among other reasons.

Despite the resistance from other religious groups with different orientations in the Ghanaian state, violence has not been resorted to in confronting the Shiites. Sometimes tensions are high when the Shiite clerics appear to preach against the revered caliphs (Abu-Bakr, Umar and 'Uthman) and sometimes Aisha (the wife of Prophet Mohammed). Despite that, the level of tolerance inherent in the young Muslim populace does not permit them to resort to violence. Intermarriages, tribal relation, family ties and good neighborliness have provided a positive intrareligious climate in the Ghanaian state.

#### **3.2.4 Proximity to Sufism**

Many sources have indicated that Sufi brotherhoods were the first to introduce Islam in Ghana. Earlier Sufi groups such as Qadiriyya and Tijaniyyah have impact on the doctrinal shape of the Muslim populace in Ghana. Early scholars who were prominent in the spread of Islam in the 18th century were Mohammed Al Ghamba, Al-Haji Umar al-Salgawi and Umar of Kete-krachi. These Muslims scholars were Sufi Muslims and adherents of the Imam Malik school of thought. Their background influences the spread and distribution of Muslims with regards to doctrines in the country.

Despite the emergence of other groups such as the Ahlu-sunna (the Wahhabi sect), Ahmadiyya and Shia, the Sufi group (Tijaniyyah) appears to be the most dominant group in the Muslim population. Other groups such as the Wahhabi and the Shia group have as a fruit of their effort attracted some Muslims from the Tijaniyyah sect to their

faith. The researcher observes that besides the activities of the Ahmadiyya group that seems to attract non-Muslims to their faith, other Muslim groups rather strive to attract the Sufi sect. With an estimation of 17.6 percent of the total Muslims population, out of the 24.5 million populations of Ghanaians in 2010, the trend is almost the same with regards to proselytization in the Muslim societies ([www.statsghana.gov.gh](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh))

Shiism since its inception in looking for space in the Ghanaian Muslim community has relied on certain Sufi pundits like Sheikh Seebaway to ensure smooth operation. Shiism has been able to attract many people from the Tijaniyyah Sufi members. Dumbe relates that the attraction is largely due to shared religious values between the two sects. Mawlid anniversary organized by the early Shiite diplomats in collaboration with the Tijaniyyah ulama appear to have won friendship from the Tijaniyyah Sufi members to the consulate. These Sufi leaders hence joined the Iranian-diplomats in annual celebrations such as *Quds day*, *Revolution day*, *Mawlids of Hassan, Hussein and Fatima* among others. This was facilitated by the regards the Sufi sect has for the household of the Prophet of Islam.

The Iranian had since been attending honoring the invitation of the Sufi order to attend their Mawlid also. The Iranian diplomats in 2015 under the leadership of cultural consular attended a grand Mawlid of the Tijaniyyah sect in Prang (in the northern part of Ghana). The leader of the Tijaniyyah sect also paid a courtesy call visit to the cultural consular of Iran to thank the representatives of the Islamic republic for their attendance. The consular Mr. Mohammed Epakchi assured the group its support of annual Mawlids (<http://accra.icro.ir>). As observed Kramer (1997), the consular further sponsored some religious activities of the Tijaniyyah clericals.

The Tijaniyyah Sufi sect founder Sheikh Ahmed Tijani is believed to be a grandson of the Holy Prophet .The Tijaniyyah Sufi masters love for the progeny of Prophet Mohammed as written in his *al-ahzab wal al-awrad* became a point of attraction for some Tijaniyyah Sufi members who switched to Shiism. In Ghanaian Muslim community today, there exists a new Muslim religious identity known as the Tijaniyyah-Shiite group. These are Tijaniyyah Muslims became Shiites but would want to maintain their Sufi Identity. However, some Tijaniyyah adherents who have joined the Shiite group have totally abandoned their Sufi sect. These groups (Tijaniyyah-Shiite) still maintain they belong to the Shia yet sympathize with the Tijaniyyah and

adhere to its creeds. These new group practice and recite some litanies of the Sufi group..

I observed during my stay as a student at the campus of the Islamic university that some students, who these Tijaniyyah-Shiite students, would abandon the daily evening litanies of the Tijaniyyah on Tuesdays and Thursdays for Shiite recitation of *dua kumayl*<sup>11</sup>. Meanwhile some of them would attend all the Tijaniyyah spiritual exercise and abandon. Imam Mujeeb confirms to the researcher that as a former Tijaniyyah member, he still observes some of the creeds and share some believes of the Tijaniyyah. It is common to find a Shiite-Tijaniyyah group who proclaim “*Tijaniyya-Tariqatan*” and “*Shia Mazhaban*” (Tijaniyyah as Sufi sect and Shia as a school of thought).

### **3.2.5 Condemnation and Lambast**

The advent of Wahhabi Ulama in Ghana was not only a hurdle for the Tijaniyyah Sufi order in particular but for other Muslim groups such as Ahmadiyya and Shia as well. The aim is not to justify the condemnation or criticize it. I aim by this point trying to reveal how the lambast and condemnation of the Shia sect by the activities of the Wahhabi Muslims encouraged some Sunni Muslims to research into Shiism which eventually aided in their conversion. This lambast, according Sani Mohammad, a Wahhabi pundit, I interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016, was necessitated by the Shiites denigration of some of the companions of the Holy Prophet. He thinks people who subject elements of ridicule to the companions of the Holy Prophet should not be entertained or allowed in the Muslim community. In some cases, the Wahhabi Muslims have called for unity between the their group and Tijaniyyah in order to fight the Shiites. To them the Shiites are the infidels in the community.

The researcher observed that some videos and pictures of Shiite Sheikhs involving in acts such as drinking of alcohol, smoking in the mosque etc. were circulated in town by the anti-Shia Muslims. The circulation of videos and pictures which were meant to tarnish the image of Shiism rather drew the attention of the some Muslim to research into Shiism. Also, some information and rumor circulating in town had it that Shiites were non-Muslims who vouch for Ali as real Prophet of Islam and as such they (Shiites)

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<sup>11</sup> The supplication of Kumayl is believed to be one of the prayers from Imam Ali taught to his close companion called Kumayl. The Shiites are encouraged to recite it at least once during Thursday nights.

disregard the Prophet Hood of Mohammed by accusing him of usurping it from Ali. Other accusations such as eating of pork, Shiite pundits sleeping with underage girls, worshipping of graves among others seems to have aided the swift reversion of some of the Muslims to Shiism upon research. When those Muslims found out those criticisms are rather exasperated and messaged, they turned to sympathize with the Shiite sect.

During an interview with a student of Islamic university collage of Ghana, Abdul Karim (interview) mentioned that he started as a sympathizer of the sect and upon further research he embraced Shiism. Though Shia structures such as the University, the activities of the cultural consulate on the university campus aided his conversion, the exaggerated criticism of Shia sect pushed him to first sympathize with and later on embrace the sect. There are some few examples of some more of people who joined the sect because they thought their pundits have fed them with fallacious information about the sect literature.

It is easy to find Shia literature in the Muslim community of Ghana ever since the Shia made an entry into the community. Like mentioned earlier, the Shia diplomats who came to the country to search for space to set up the Iranian embassy came along with a literature through which *Professor Peligah* embraced the Shiism. On campus of Islamic university also such pieces of literature are circulated sometime, these papers and books seem to help the conversion of some students. Dumba (2013) also find that early activities of the Shiite diplomats included the distribution and writing of enjoinders to help spread the Shiite ideology. Ameen also related the same instances of the diplomats sharing literature which includes calendars of the Islamic Republic and books containing the Shiite ideology. For instant, a former prominent Tijaniyyah pundit, Sheikh Adam Suleiman accepted Shiism after reading a book entitled “Then I was guided”.

It was revealed that early distribution of Shiite literature was necessitated by the activities of the Saudi Arabian embassy. The embassy is reported to have collaborated with the Ghana Muslim Students’ Association (GMSA) to educate the Ghanaian Muslims about the Iranian Revolution and how it could lead to the spread of Shiism in the country. The GMSA executives received literature from the Saudi embassy. It was meant for their reading and understanding and educating the Muslim community about the possibility of the spread of Shiism. Like I mentioned earlier,, when a book written

by a Sunni Muslim historian, Sheikh Osman Bari, a comprehensive History of Muslims in Ghana, appear to have criticize and ridiculed some Shia practices such mut'ah and taqiyya, the book was not only rejected in the Islamic university's library but also attracted criticisms from the current Imam of the Shiite community.

It was followed by a rejoinder written by Sheikh Abubakar Kamaludeen entitled "*A Response to the Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*" was seeking to attract the attention of Sheikh Bari negligence of Shia sources in preparing his document. Again, the libraries were built in Kumasi, Accra and Tamale. The libraries are named after Imam Khomeini. These libraries are piled with Shiite literature for reader's consumption. Sometimes such literatures spark debate among the Muslims. These debates prepare the grounds for possible conversion of some Sunni Muslims.

In all, among the important tool for the Iranians in Ghana in their quest to export and spread the Shia ideology is the soft power it wields in the Ghanaian state.

### **3.3. Conclusion**

This chapter brought into discussion the other Islamic religious group in Ghana which is the Sufi groups, Wahhabis and Ahmadiyya. This will help in the understanding of the Islamic religious groups, and how their competitor in religious ideology, Shiism, is making inroads in its quest to revert these groups to their faith.

Shiism has been able to make some progress in Ghanaian Muslim communities also because conditions and factors in the Ghanaian state aided it. These are social and economic factors, widespread of Shia literature and proximity to Sufism. Also, the condemnation and condemnation of the sect by the mainstream Wahhabi Ulama appear to have made some Muslims curious about the Shia ideology with some others consequently embracing it. The Sufis who initially thought the Shiites were sharing some practices like Mawlid with them, later on distant themselves from Shiism, but some few others who embraced the faith still keep double identity of Shia-Tijaniyyah in the Ghanaian Muslim community.

## CHAPTER IV: GENERAL CONCLUSION

This chapter gives the concluding remarks by summarizing the major findings of the research. It also gives some challenges encountered during the collection of data.

Since this research concentrates on the activities of the Iranian government in spreading its Shia state agenda in one of the West African states called Ghana, prominence was not given to the humanitarian services the Islamic Republic does in the hosting country. This research rather investigates the motives behind the establishment of these humanitarian services. Though a previous research by an MPhil student, Mohammed Ameen, enumerates the contribution of Shiism to the socio-economic development of Ghana, he concentrates mostly on what he finds as the contribution of the Iranian state and the Shiite community not only to the Ghanaian Muslim societies but the nation at large. Various establishments such as the Iranian clinic, educational centers (both secular and religious), Agricultural and vocational projects among others are among what appear to be socio-economic contribution of the Shiite community in Ghana. Though these contributions are real and can be cited as a contribution, this research from the beginning makes effort to reveal the ideological motive behind them.

To reveal the ideological motives behind these contributions, this research begins with investigating the activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1979. This research is guided by a research question and some research objectives. The first objective was to examine the spread of ideology through foreign policy. To achieve this, the first chapter was dedicated to researching communism, fascism, Wahhabism, the green theory (TTUT) and Shiism and how they spread throughout the world by the use of foreign policy as an instrument. The second chapter investigates the role played by the ideology backed foreign policy of the Iranian state since 1979 and its impact in the Ghana- Iran relationship which addresses the second objective. These were done with the use of related previous research done on Shiism, some related literature on the topic and interviews for primary data. Theoretical framework approach of this thesis is the social constructivists' theory of identity. Besides observation made by the researcher 25 people were selected for interviews. The selected number of people gave the researcher much information in his investigation.



#### 4.1. Summary & Conclusion

Before the first chapter this thesis gave an introduction, research topic and objective, theoretical framework and chapter organization.

The first chapter gave a general introduction of ideology. Though it is agreed by political science scholars that the word ideology itself connotes politics, I chose to use the political ideology so that I can use political religious ideology to explain the Islamic economies. Since the following chapters will be concerned with both ideology and foreign policy, brief discussions into both concepts have been made first. Discussion of foreign policy followed that of ideology. After defining communism as a revolutionary Marxist movement under Lenin's leadership, the goal of spreading it after the First World War is discussed. After discussing communism, fascism of Benito Mussolini, which started between the years 1922-24 as dictatorial regime, is discussed also. Formation of Fasci movement abroad and popularization of its tenets to cope with Mussolini's goal of making his ideology popular followed in discussion. Mussolini in keeping up with diplomacy and avoiding diplomatic distortions denied employing measures to spread fascism even though evidence of his activities were apparent in the dealings his representative embassies. Though many problems nearly stunted the influence of fascism, abroad fascism was able to make impact some states before Mussolini's death in 1943.

Ideology connotes political meaning but for differentiating it from religious ideology there was the need to call one political ideology and the religious political ideology. At this point, religious ideology is deemed important due to its increasing appearance in today's international politics. Historically, the bloody adventure of the crusaders inspired by the orders of the Catholic popes is considered as deliberate attempt by the church to spread catholic influence throughout the Middle East. Then came, Mohammad Abdul Wahhab wielding sword and fighting what he calls syncretism in Islam, inspired by the Islamic word *Jihad* waged war to spread what came to be called the Wahhabism. Wahhabism gained grounds in its political influence when the Saudi state, from the beginning of 1960, made it the state religion as its exhaust the state foreign policy to spread to every part of the world. This included building and sponsoring students all over the world to undertake Islamic programs in Saudi Arabia, building mosque and religious centers, opening desks in the embassy which takes

charge of coordinating the spread of Wahhabism, printing and distributing Wahhabi literature among other activities. The Third Universal Theory as an alternative for other political ideologies was also propounded by the government of Col- Muammar Al-Qhadafi. The philosophy of this theory was contained in the green book. To ensure that his political thoughts are spread, the former Libyan leader embarked several foreign policy strategies. The book proposes natural socialism. Though this ideology did not receive much acceptance, the Libyan embassies and cultural consulate appear to have done much to spread the book. In Ghana, several measures put in place by the diplomatic representatives appear to have failed in making the third universal theory popular.

Shiism became active in world politics after the famous Iranian revolution. The Islamic Republic since 1979 has made Shiism part and parcel of both its domestic and foreign policy. The brand of Shiism pursued and spread by the Islamic Republic (Ithna Ashariyya) is gaining grounds in many Islamic societies throughout the world. The uniqueness of the Iranian political make up inspired by earlier pundits like Ali Shari'ati and Imam Khomeini is gradually making the influence of religious politics in the international spheres. The Khomeini's political ideas contained in his series sermon later became the basis of the state's political guide. The Vilayet-e Faqih provides a political role of the jurists. It marked the beginning of the Ulama (Ayatollahs) rulership in Iran with Imam Khomeini as the first grand Ayatollah to spearhead the affairs of the state. Though the Vilayet faqih has in it a portion of presidency, the ultimate political power rests in the hand of the Ayatollah. Following the successful revolution and the constitutional change of the new Islamic Republic, the next action taken by the law makers of the Islamic Republic was to export the revolution to all parts of the world. The reason for the export was to ensure other civilizations are freed from the external interference. Thus, the Islamic Republic constitution dictates that the nation must support the Mustazafin (oppressed). Exporting then revolution to the neighboring Middle Eastern countries faced stronger resistance. In some parts of Africa like Morocco, Comoros, Senegal and Sudan also, the Iranian ideology spread lead to break of diplomatic ties between the states and the Islamic Republic. States like Morocco and Sudan accused the Islamic Republic of striving spread Shia ideology in their larger Sunni communities. Though studies made into the foreign policy structure of Iran from

Rafsanjani to Ahmadinejad reveals that several conditions, both internal and external affected policy making of the Islamic Republic, Shiism remain an important factor in all policies of consequent governments. Institutions such as Sezmane Tablighat, Hujjatiyeh Seminary, Andishe and Farabi foundation have played several key roles in exporting the Shia ideology throughout the world.

The second chapter, which entails the larger and most important aspect of the thesis, concentrates on the Iranian foreign policy and the spread of Shiism in Ghana. It throws light on the relationship between African States and the Islamic Republic. Attention was also given to the diplomatic relations between Ghana and Islamic states like Libya, Saudi Arabia before the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was discussed that three main factors influenced the interest of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Africa. These are the difficulty faced by the Islamic Republic in terms of trade with partners in Europe and some Asian states; the need to solicit the support of the third world countries to strengthen the state support against Iraq; and, the need to gain access to larger Muslim states so as to convert them to Shiism.

Discussing the relationship between Ghana and some Muslim countries like Libya and Saudi Arabia and then Iran reveals that it has been the tradition of these states to exploit their diplomatic missions in pursuing their states agenda. As far as the relationship foreign policy of the Ghana is concerned Nkrumah, its first leader was the architect who saw the need to have a good tie with the Arab world through his special relations with Gamal Abdul Nasser. Both Libya and Saudi Arabia established their diplomatic relations with Ghana and since then they have among other things involved themselves with spreading the Third Universal Theory and the Wahhabi doctrine respectively. Though the embassies have engaged in several humanitarian services to the Ghanaian state, their ideological contributions have some effects in the Islamic communities. Ghana-Iran relations began in 1979. Since then several bilateral cooperation ensured close relation between the two countries since 1979. Iranian businesses such as Kleen Export Company Ltd, Ghana-Iran Services Ltd and AEM industrial Company Ltd opened in Ghana as a result of the bilateral cooperation. As time went by, the relationship between Ghana and Iran improved. One of the reasons for the improvement of the relationship is the first Imam of the Shiite community.

The first Imam, Abdul Salam Bansi partnership with the Iranian mission to create climate for the development of Shia doctrine in the Ghanaian Muslim community aided the improvement of Ghana-Iran relations. The Iranian NGOs such as the Imam Hussein Foundation also helped in the improvement of the relations. As far as the foreign policy of Iran and the spread of Shiism in Ghana is concerned, Iranian structures such the embassy, Cultural consulate, the Medical mission, Educational centers and the Agricultural Rural Development are among the effective outfits. The Iranian embassy though is established maintains that its activities are not skewed towards promoting the Shiite ideology, this research finds that by sponsoring and supporting Shiite programs in the Ghanaian state, the embassy is discreetly spreading Shiism.

Even from the inception, the Iranian diplomat who embarked on a mission to Ghana to look for a space to set up the embassy came along with some Shiite literature. This Shiite literature aided the conversion of one Dr. Peligah. To struggle for a space in the Ghanaian Muslim community, the embassy and the cultural consulate had engaged in series of direct activities to lure many Sunni Sufi Muslims to Shiism. These Sufi Muslims were invited to the embassies and the cultural consulate for Shiite program. Later on, some few “Western educated scholars” amongst them were employed as writers and editors of a journal. It was in this journal that the revolutionary ideals of the Islamic Republic are promoted. Some of these employed scholars wrote articles which were published in newspapers too. Though initial attempts were not quite successful despite the direct engagement, later on, with increment of Shiite local organization, the embassy seemed to have withdrawn from direct engagement as it stayed behind and sponsored the activities their activities. The sponsorship has been in different forms. Sometime these organizations get financial support from the diplomatic corps. In other times, the diplomats graced such occasions. They partner with some of these organizations to organize Mawlid and other programs of the Islamic Republics’ interest. Also, though, both the Iranian Medical Mission and the ARD were established to cater for the need of the Ghanaian state, they remain a structure that had aided the spread of the Iranian ideology in Ghana. The Iranian Medical mission and the ARD sometimes partner with the Iranian embassy and the cultural consulate to engage in services that seek to invite the Ghanaian Muslims to Shiism. The Shiite educational centers (both secular and religious) are important tools for the spread of Shiism in

Ghana today. This is because teaching and learning take place in these centers. The Ahlul Bayt Teacher Training Center (ATTC) for instance is a traditional institution set up to train preachers of Shiism. Ghanaian Sunni Muslim who go through this educational facility barely escapes from being a Shiite. The favorable conditions in ATTC attract many Muslim youth in the country. These youth upon becoming Shiites look up to Iran for both political and religious guidance. They take up Iranian culture as well as names. These students organize themselves into groups with the aim of spreading Shiism in their various communities through the organization of Mawlid and several other Shiite festivals. Some of these graduates are put on a payroll by the larger association in Iran.

The Islamic university established in 2000 by the Ahlul Bayt Assembly is also found by the researcher as a fertile ground for spreading the Shiite ideology. Previous researches have revealed that the Shiite institution is one of the tunnels of Shiism spread. This research rather sees it as second most effective structure in pursuing the Shiite agenda. I also mentioned that the first stage is the course structure for the first-year students in the university which includes subjects that introduce the beginner to Shia ideology. These subjects are either taught by visiting Shia lecturers from the Islamic Republic or local Shiite lecturers.

The second stage is the programs or Shia lecture series organized on the university campus which expose the new student more to Shia ideology. The third stage is the availability of the Shiite graduates from ATTC. These students stir debates and engage the Sunni Muslims in discussions with their skills in logic and philosophy. Students barely escape from being convinced by them. Moreover, the activities of the cultural affairs office of the Islamic university are also found as a conduit for the spread of Shia ideology. The office organizes exegesis for students in the Mosque, teaches students who are willing to study the Quran and more importantly encourages the students to bring in their questions or misunderstanding with regards to Shia Islam for them to be addressed. The programs organized by the Cultural office include a section for training various community Imams. These Sunni Imams register and get trained for six months for free. The course structure is Shiite oriented. The Islamic university is currently the Shiite oriented education unit with a larger Muslim population from different doctrinal background. Though getting students to revert to Shiism is not massive, many students

who have not accepted the Shiite faith tend to sympathize with and tolerate the sect. These students have high hopes for the Islamic Republic of Iran as a true representative of Muslim economy with a good political system. The former President Ahmadinejad, many ambassadors and consular officials as well as government dignitaries from the Islamic Republic have frequented the university Campus. These diplomatic corps in many cases have sponsored the organization of programs, given speeches at Shiite functions as well as encouraged the acceptance of Shiism.

The Shiite established secular institutions in Ghana also serve as a ground for the introduction of the Shiite to students. Though the name secular means that it is devoid of any religiosity, the deliberate employment of ATTC graduates to teach Islamic subjects speaks the otherwise. Students indirectly get exposed to Shiism. My observation informs me that though the High school students may not embrace shiism through their Islamic teachers, they get to familiarize with the Shiite doctrine. Since the ATTC is not an accredited educational center most of its graduates engaged in teaching are paid by the Shiite community. The Shiite community takes responsibility of them. These teachers collaborated with the Cultural consulate to form what was called CDMA. This association aimed as soliciting for assistance in terms of logistics and literature from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran sent three-member delegation who gave aid, trained the teaching and non-teaching staff of the Shiite secular schools.

Moreover, the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) and the Iranian Medical Mission have been engaging in activities that spreads the Shia ideology in the Ghanaian state. Though these two outfits have been rendering services to the Ghanaian populace, their activities have aided the spread of Shiism in Ghana. It is observed that citizens who enroll to be trained by the ARD in areas like dressmaking, and electronic engineering are also given some basic Shiite education. Besides that, some of these students often, by invitation, participate in programs organized by the embassy and the cultural consulate. The ARD has helped in building the Imamiyya Islamic School in the central region of Ghana. The Iranian Medical Mission under the name Iranian Clinic established by the Red Crescent Society of Iran in 1990 has also played its part in spreading the Shia agenda. The clinic has been donating drugs to the National Hajj Committee. Other Shiite institutions collaborate with the Iranian clinic to render free

clinical services to the Muslims. During occasions of celebrating Mawlid, revolution day among other program, the Iranian clinic render free screening services to those who attend hence attracting people to the venue.

The Iranian soft power conduit in Ghana is explained by three main organizations. These are the ICRO, the Bonyads and the media. The ICRO is an umbrella association of cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic. As far as the soft power of the Islamic Republic of Iran is concerned, ICRO remains the most powerful outfit. This is because it is responsible for the appointment of the Cultural consular serving abroad. The ICRO supplies literature to public libraries published by Al-Hoda in not less than 25 languages. In Ghana, the Cultural consulate website is run by the sub branch of ICRO called ICRO Ghana. The Bonyads are also vital and effective mediators of the Iranian soft power. The Bonyads give social welfare and commercial activities as domestic and transnational charitable foundation. The soft power wielded by the Bonyads comes from revolutionary origins, identity and ideological and cultural mandates. Funds from Bonyads are used to sponsor many Shiite activities in Ghana. The International Media of Iran such as the Press TV have penetrated several parts of the world as an alternative for other Western Media like BBC, CNN and Aljazeera. Many people including non-Shiites in Ghana have adopted the Press TV as an alternative for other Western Media. To some of them the Iranian Media is preferable to other Media.

The third chapter gave the religious representation of the Ghanaian societies. Though Muslims are among the least represented religious groups in the Ghanaian state, four main Islamic groups are found. These are the Sufi (Tijaniyyah & Qadiriyya), the Ahmadiyya, Wahhabis and the Shiites. Whilst the Sufi groups are accredited for introducing Islam in the country, the Ahmadiyya, the Wahhabis and the Shiites later came to attract many of these Sufi group members to their sects. Despite that, the Sufi group remains as the most populous Islamic sect in Ghana. Strategically, the Shiites found them friendly and had since collaborated with them to organize programs of mutual interest such as Mawlid. It is surprising that many fellowship enjoyed by Shiism in Ghana came from the Sufi groups.

The Wahhabis and the Salafist on the other hand have also exported the Middle East rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran as it tries to hinder the activities of Shiites in Ghana. Both Salafists and the Sufis have lost some members to Shiites. The Saudi

Arabian embassy was found by this research as the first outfit to try impeding the spread of Shiism in Ghana. The Tijaniyyah Sufi members who joined Shiism and yet want to maintain their Tijaniyyah identity have created a new group called the Tijaniyyah Shiites. The Ahmadiyya group appears to be the only group to have attracted many non-Muslims to their brand of Islam. Besides them, the Shiites and Wahhabis do a lot to attract Muslims from other sects instead of Non-Muslims from Christianity and other traditional religious groups in Ghana.

To understand why the Muslims from other groups have in one way or the other accepted Shiism, some few factors are considered. These factors are social and economic, availability of literature, proximity to Sufism, conduciveness of the Ghanaian state and condemnation and lambast have all contributed to the acceptance of the Shiite faith in Ghana. Socially and economically, intermarriages and the economic assistance have aided the increment of the Shiite population. Also, the Shiites massive engagement in distributing Shiite literature to the Muslims aided the reversion of some Muslims. Previously, many anti Shiite crusaders have spread several documents, and electronic materials which portrays Shiites as distorters of Islam. Many groups also have condemned the group even before getting to know them. Upon reading the Shiite literature, they rescinded their minds and even embraced Shiism.

#### **4.2.1 Research challenges**

It is normal to have some challenges in conducting a research especially case study projects. In conducting this research finding related literature was not a problem as some closely related works have already been conducted. The major problem was rather the attitude of the respondents towards answering some questions. For instance, many Shiite students I interviewed shunned away from questions like; *Do you think the Islamic Republic of Iran's Embassy is helping in the spread of Shiism in Ghana?* Some respondents opted to skip the question. Some other Shiite students after several attempts I made to get them interviewed ended up declining the offer upon knowing about the research topic.

I made a special trip to Ghana from Turkey to interview some diplomatic corps. Two of such diplomats declined to be interviewed. One claimed that it may not serve the interest of the Iranian state as the other refused to give reason for his refusal. Some



Sunni students who have special relations also were reluctant when questions like, *how does the Islamic Republic's embassy and Cultural Consulate promote Shiism in Ghana*. Some of them, due to their dislike they have for the sect didn't want to discuss anything with regards to Shiism.

Despite the challenges I managed to get some other people whose responses were relevant to the research . The lack of interest and refusal exhibited by both the Sunni and Shiite students compelled me to move from one student to another. Instead of the 25 selected students to be interviewed I ended up engaging with close to almost 65 students, out of which only 25 responded. In the Cultural Consulate, also, for instance Sheikh Idris Toppo's interview helped in getting information from the diplomatic mission, though his revelations tried to deny the involvement of the embassy and Cultural consulate in the spread of Shiism. My observation during my studies in the Shiite institution were helpful in documenting what I think is the true representation of the case.

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## APPENDIX 1

### INTERVIEW FOR SUNNI STUDENTS

1. Kindly introduce yourself?
2. What was your experience with Shiism?
3. Who introduced you to the Shiites?
4. What was your reaction towards the Shiites?
5. Were you convinced by to embrace Shiism? Why?
6. Which of the Iranian outfit do you think is active in proselytizing Shiism
7. What is your feeling towards Iran?
8. Do you attend programs organized by Shiites?
9. If yes have you ever sighted any Iranian diplomatic corps at that function?
10. What do you think about the Iranian diplomatic mission and the spread of Shiism in the country?
11. What is your general take about Shiism and Shiites in Ghana?
12. Do you have anything to add with regards to Shiism, Shiites or Iran?
13. Do you follow any Iranian Media?



## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW FOR SHIITE STUDENTS

1. Can you introduce yourself?
2. What was your sectarian affiliation before Shiism?
3. How did you become a Shiite?
4. Who introduced you to Shiism?
5. Can you name any Shiite outfit whether from within Ghana or outside it which aided your conversion?
6. Where do get your Shia education from?
7. Do you get any monthly stipend from any Shia organization?
8. Do you belong to any Shiite organization?
9. Have you ever been involved in any Shiism proselytization?
10. Do you get any sort of support from the diplomatic mission from Iran?
11. Do you get invitation to attend programs organized by the Iranian diplomatic corps?
12. What are some of the programs the diplomatic corps grace, finance or sponsor?
13. Have you ever been to Iran? If no, do you wish to visit one day?
14. What are your feelings towards Iran?
15. Do you follow any Muqallad in Iran?
16. Has your affiliation to Shiism brought you closer to the Iranian mission in Ghana?
17. Generally do you think the Iranian diplomats have been involved in any activity to attract people to join Shiism?
18. Do you follow any Iranian Media?

### APPENDIX 3

#### INTERVIEW FOR ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

1. Can you introduce yourself?
2. What was your first encounter with Shiism?
3. Why did you choose to study in the Islamic University?
4. Has your perception about Shiism changed when you started your studies in the university?
5. What are some of the Shiite oriented courses you have taken in the university?
6. Who are the tutors of those courses?
7. Have you embraced Shiism? If yes, what is your basis informed your acceptance of Shiism? If no why weren't you convinced?
8. Do you know anyone from the university who has converted to Shiism?
9. What do you think they reverted to Shiism?
10. Besides the Shiism oriented courses you take what are some of the facets of the university that proselytize Shiism to the students?
11. Do you encounter any Shiite preachers on the school premises?
12. What are some of the Shiite programs organized on the school premises?
13. How often do you find or see the Iranian diplomats during those programs?
14. Do you think the Iranian diplomats are in anyway involved in the spread of Shiism in the country?
15. What are your feelings towards Iran?
16. Do you follow any Iranian Media?

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Mohammed Hashiru is a Ghanaian born in a small town called Nsawam on 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1986. Upon graduating from High school Mohammed had to stay home due financial constraints before he headed for the university where graduated in 2008 with B.A in Religious studies in the Islamic University College of Ghana established by the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a matter of national obligation upon all graduates, Mohammed did one year national service. Due to his hard work, the university selected him as one of the best students who would serve as Teaching Assistants in the college. After a year's service, Mohammed continued his education in the Middle East Institute of Sakarya University in Turkey. Mohammed can speak 3 international languages which are Turkish, Arabic and English. Besides these languages Mohammed can 6 other Ghanaian languages which are Twi, Hausa, Kotokoli, Ga, Mo and Fante. In the nearest future Mohammed is looking at doing research in Religion and Foreign Policy.