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A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TWELVERS: AHMADINEJAD'S ISLAM

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A Brief Overview of 'The Twelvers': Ahmadinejad's Islam
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With the regime in Iran moving from rhetorical saber-rattling to attaining the wherewithal to threaten the region, if not the world, it is smart to acquaint ourselves with the theocratic philosophy of Iran's ruling mullah class – including their governmental figurehead Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the faction of Shi'a Islam known as "The Twelvers."

It is important to understand the belief system of the Twelvers because it gives us insight into the motives for the actions of the Iranian mullahs' today: in their quest for dominance in the Middle East; in their pursuit of an Islamic global Caliphate; in their vicious approach to the State of Israel; and in their determination to acquire nuclear technology, including the weaponization of that technology.

[Imami Shi'a Islam](#) [1], the clinical name for the form of Islam practiced by *The Twelvers*, is the largest faction in Shi'a Islam. The term "Twelvers," is derived from their conviction in twelve divinely ordained Islamic leaders, known as the Twelve Imams. The Twelvers believe that the [Mahdi](#) [2] will present in the returned of the Twelfth Imam, who, it is believed, disappeared and is to be in occultation.

The Mahdi, is believed to be divine by all sects in Islam. But the Twelvers hold the Mahdi in higher esteem. They believe that the Mahdi is the prophesied redeemer of Islam who will rule for a period of time, culminating in the "Day of Judgment" and, alongside Jesus Christ, will rid the world of wrongdoing, injustice and tyranny.

For Twelvers, the Mahdi figure has developed into a powerful central religious idea. Twelvers believe that the Mahdi is, in fact, Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam, born in 869AD and hidden by God at the age of five in 874AD. Twelvers, and less zealously Shi'a Muslims in general, believe the Mahdi is still alive but in "occultation" – or in a hidden or concealed state – awaiting the time that God has decreed for his return. Twelvers believe that when the Mahdi comes, he has promised that no one who wants happiness would be denied and no one who has believed in him will be left behind.

According to Iranian-born Dr. Moojan Momen, a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and a member of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, Shia traditions state that the Mahdi be "a young man of medium stature with a handsome face" and black hair and beard. "He will not come in an odd year...will appear in Mecca between the corner of the Kaaba and the station of Abraham and people will witness him there."

The Twelfth Imam will return as the Mahdi with "a company of his chosen ones," and his enemies will be led by the one-eyed Antichrist and the "Sufyani," an evil, apocryphal character of Islamic eschatology who will emerge before the Mahdi from the depths of Damascus. The two armies will fight "one final apocalyptic battle" where the Mahdi and his forces will prevail over evil. After the Mahdi has ruled Earth for a number of years, Isa will return," Isa being Jesus Christ in the Islamic faith.

Approximately 85% of the Shi'a Sect identify as Twelvers; the term Shi'a Muslim, as commonly used in English, usually refers to Twelvers only.

Twelvers share many tenets of Shi'a Islam with the related sects, such as the belief in Imams. Twelvers differ in their belief from the Isma'ili sect (the second largest branch of Shia Islam) and Zaydi Shi'a sect (which has unique similarities with orthodox Sunni Islam). Each believes in a different number of Imams and, differ in their beliefs about the path of succession regarding the Imamate. They differ in their beliefs regarding the role and overall definition of an Imam as well.

The Twelver sect is the majority Islamic belief system in countries like Iran, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, and Lebanon. The Alevis in Turkey and Albania, and the Alawis of Syria also identify themselves as Twelvers, but hold significantly different core beliefs from mainstream Twelver Shiites.

The Twelver Islamic sect also counts a large minority in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia. Smaller numbers of Twelvers also exist in Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Indonesia, Malaysia, as well as in much smaller numbers in other countries of the world, including Europe and the Americas.

In regard to theocratic law, Twelvers [do not accept](#) [3] the *Hadiths*, regarded by traditional Islamic schools of jurisprudence as important tools for understanding the Quran and in matters of jurisprudence. Many scholars on Islam and fundamentalist Islamism believe it is impossible to truly understand the Quran without reading it in tandem with the Hadiths.

Twelvers believe the Hadiths were transmitted by enemies of the Imams – the inner aspect of the belief system denoting a believer's faith in the metaphysical realities of Islam – such as 'A'isha, one of Muhammad's wives, and, instead make use of the sayings of the Imams.

In addition to the Shi'a regulations for the prayer call and ablutions – the symbolic act of washing before prayer, they embrace and employ the doctrine of [taqiyya](#) [4], defined literally as:

"...[the] concealing or disguising of one's Islamic beliefs, convictions, ideas, feelings, opinions, and/or strategies at a time of eminent danger, whether now or later in time, to save oneself from physical and/or mental injury."

Twelvers also retain the peculiar institution of legal temporary marriage between a free man and woman for *mut'a*, or pleasure.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a Twelver, as are an overwhelming majority of those who participated in the overthrow of the Iranian Persian government in 1979. And while many pundits and potentates opine that Mr. Ahmadinejad exists in a compromised mental state, those who are familiar with Twelver Islam understand that Mr. Ahmadinejad is actually ultra-orthodox in his belief; he is devout to the point of being pro-active in his desire to facilitate the return of the Mahdi.

Many experts have opined that Mr. Ahmadinejad and his like-minded faithful believe they can affect the return of the Mahdi by providing the chaos here on Earth that would serve as the fomentation of the "one final apocalyptic battle." It has been theorized that this chaos will come in the form of Iranian aggression in the Middle East, most likely targeting Israel and other Western aligned States, which will then spill over into North Africa and Asia, and eventually Europe.

With the Iranian regime's advancements in [missile technology](#) [5], and their unfettered acquisition of nuclear technology – but for the efforts of a very few from the West and Western sympathetic factions within Iran itself, the probability of violent and catastrophic aggression at the hands of the group that served as the genesis for the 1979 Islamic Revolution Iran – the Twelvers – is very high.

And while Western leaders have made it clear that the Iranian acquisition of a nuclear weapon is unacceptable, they have done little but establish international sanctions – which are routinely usurped by Russia, China, North Korea and Socialist nation state entities in the Caribbean and South America – and offer rhetoric as a deterrent, rhetoric viewed by Mr. Ahmadinejad and his colleagues as comical.

Understanding the dogma of the Twelvers helps us to understand the actions and motives of Mr. Ahmadinejad and his cohorts. We in the Western World, we in the free world, must hold to the hope that our leaders are wise enough to understand these motives and the agenda being pursued before it is too late to circumvent a violent and catastrophic event.

Footnotes:

[1] [Twelver | Wikipedia](#)

[2] [Mahdi | Wikipedia](#)

[3] [GlobalSecurity.org | Islam Ithna Ashari](#)

[4] [BasicsProject.org | Al Taqiyya](#)

[5] [Iran Test Fires Missiles, Shows Secret Silos](#)

About the Author

Frank Salvato is the Executive Director for BasicsProject.org a non-partisan, 501(c)(3) research and education initiative focusing on Constitutional Literacy and the threats of Islamic jihadism and Progressive neo-Marxism. His writing has been recognized by the US House International Relations Committee and the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention. His organization, BasicsProject.org, partnered in producing the original national symposium series addressing the root causes of radical Islamist terrorism. He is a member of the [International Analyst Network](#) and has been a featured guest on al Jazeera's [Listening Post](#) and on [Russia Today](#). He also serves as the managing editor for [The New Media Journal](#). Mr. Salvato has appeared on The O'Reilly Factor on FOX News Channel, and was featured in the documentary, "[Ezekiel and the MidEast 'Piece' Process: Israel's Neighbor States](#)." He is a regular guest on talk radio including on The Captain's America Radio Show, nationally syndicated by the Genesis and Phoenix Broadcasting Networks, catering to the US Armed Forces around the world. Mr. Salvato is also heard weekly on The Roth Show with Dr. Laurie Roth syndicated nationally on the IRN-USA Radio Network. Mr. Salvato has been interviewed on Radio Belgrade One. His opinion-editorials have been published by The American Enterprise Institute, The Washington Times, Accuracy in Media, Human Events, and are syndicated nationally. He is a featured political writer for [EducationNews.org](#), [BigGovernment.com](#) and [Examiner.com](#) and is occasionally quoted in The Federalist. Mr. Salvato is available for public speaking engagements. He can be contacted at contact@basicsproject.org.

About BasicsProject.org

BasicsProject.org is a non-profit, non-partisan 501(c)(3) research and educational initiative whose mission is to re-introduce the American public to the basic elements of our constitutional heritage while providing non-partisan, fact-based information on relevant socio-political issues important to our country, specifically the threats of aggressive Islamofascism and the Progressive Movement, or the American Fifth Column..

BasicsProject.org works to educate the American people using primary source materials and culling qualified opinions from both governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as congressional testimonies and the analysis of internationally recognized experts and think tanks proven credible. BasicsProject.org's goal is the liberation of the American people from what James Madison called "factions" and special interests in government.

Through educational advocacy for our citizenry and providing access to reliable information via our publications and events, BasicsProject.org fosters the re-emergence of civic responsibility and active, responsible participation of citizens in their government.

We, the American people one and all, need to have a cursory – if not a comprehensive – understanding of why the Founders and Framers found so much worth in our nation's creation and why they valued this endeavor enough to risk dying for it.

Our Methods

BasicsProject.org achieves its goals in, primarily, several ways:

- Through the grassroots education of both the citizenry and our elected officials.
- By the "pushing" of information and issues into the mainstream media by way of "grassroots buzz" in the new media and social networking.
- By creating informational and educational resources for organizations and institutions.
- By directly educating uninformed private sector entities of their potential involvement with threat pillar entities that aren't always transparent about their motives.
- By producing and distributing multimedia projects that appeal to a wide and inclusive demographic both here in the United States and around the world.
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