Analytical Formulation of Cultural Engineering Based on the Views of Ayatollah Khamenei

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Cultural engineering is a systematic approach to understanding, regulating, and managing culture, representing a relatively new perspective in cultural studies. As articulated by Ayatollah Khamenei, this approach can serve as an effective strategy for advancing cultural development. The present study aims to conceptualize and formulate the notion of cultural engineering based on Ayatollah Khamenei's thought. Accordingly, the research addresses the question: What is cultural engineering, and how can it be analytically formulated in Ayatollah Khamenei's view? This study employs a documentary method for data collection and content analysis for data interpretation. The findings indicate that, from his perspective, cultural engineering comprises five interrelated and inseparable components: supervision, guidance, growth, the nature of culture, and cultural construction. These components function within a cyclical and dynamic process. Cultural supervision refers to monitoring and safeguarding cultural processes; cultural guidance involves steering culture toward the overarching goals of the Islamic system; cultural growth denotes the intellectual and spiritual development of society; the nature of culture is understood as an endogenous, quality-generating movement; and cultural construction entails creating new cultural forms aligned with societal needs. By comparing Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective with liberalist and socialist approaches, this study demonstrates that he offers an intermediate framework between complete cultural freedom and total cultural control. This approach preserves cultural liberties while, through intelligent guidance and supervision, directing culture toward the objectives of the Islamic system.

1. Introduction

Culture is one of the most complex and fundamental elements of any society, encompassing the collective customs, beliefs, language, values, and behaviors that define a people. It plays a dual role, serving both as a determinant of social direction and as a product of historical, political, and spiritual forces. In contemporary societies, the management and development of culture have become essential concerns for state governance and social planning.

Within this context, the concept of cultural engineering emerges as a systematic and strategic framework for understanding, shaping, and guiding the cultural dynamics of a nation. Among Islamic scholars, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei—the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran—has provided significant insights into the role of culture in societal development. His vision of cultural engineering does not align strictly with the binary of complete freedom (liberalism) or total control (socialism). Instead, he advocates a middle path rooted in Islamic values, emphasizing guidance, supervision, growth, and cultural innovation.

2. Problem Statement

Existing models of cultural governance tend to fall at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. On one side, liberal approaches regard culture as a free-market phenomenon that evolves naturally without government intervention. On the other side, socialist models advocate for strong state control to regulate and direct cultural content in accordance with ideological objectives. Both extremes, however, pose significant challenges: liberalism may result in cultural fragmentation and the erosion of core values, while socialism risks cultural oppression and the suppression of diversity.

In the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran—where culture is deeply intertwined with religious identity and political legitimacy—this challenge is particularly acute. The central question arises: How can an Islamic government engineer culture in a manner that both reflects its foundational values and fosters societal development, identity formation, and creative expression?

This study seeks to address this question by systematically analyzing the speeches, writings, and official positions of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei concerning culture and governance, aiming to elucidate his distinctive approach to cultural engineering.

3. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to theoretically define and structurally formulate the concept of cultural engineering based on the perspectives of Ayatollah Khamenei.

The secondary objectives are as follows:
-   To identify the dimensions and stages of cultural engineering within his framework.
-   To compare this framework with liberal and socialist models of cultural governance.
-   To develop an applicable conceptual model for cultural policy in Islamic contexts.

4. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following key questions:
1. What is the definition of cultural engineering, and how does it differ from related concepts such as cultural management and cultural policy-making?
2. What are the core components of Ayatollah Khamenei's approach to cultural engineering?
3. How should governments, particularly Islamic governments, manage and guide culture in practice according to this approach?
4. In what ways does Ayatollah Khamenei's model compare to liberal and socialist cultural governance frameworks?

5. Literature Review

A review of relevant literature indicates that, although numerous studies have examined Ayatollah Khamenei's perspectives on cultural identity and the concept of Islamic civilization, there is a paucity of research focused on the systematic formulation of cultural engineering.

Notable prior works include:

Safar Beigi et al. (2022), who explored the relationship between culture and Islamic civilization within Khamenei's discourse.

Aghasi et al. (2021), who analyzed cultural identity through a thematic examination of Khamenei's speeches.

Yousefi and Ghorbani (2020), who emphasized the role of culture in the establishment of a new Islamic civilization.

Khosravi and Bakhshi (2017), who highlighted culture as a composite yet unified social force in Khamenei's thought.

However, these studies generally lack a comparative analysis with Western models of cultural governance and do not provide a structured understanding of the stages and dimensions of cultural engineering as conceptualized by Ayatollah Khamenei.

6. Research Methodology

This qualitative study employs thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data set consists of a purposive selection of speeches and writings by Ayatollah Khamenei that focus on culture, cultural development, and national identity.

The analysis proceeded through the following stages:

1. Familiarization with the data via repeated reading.
2. Initial coding to identify key ideas and concepts.
3. Grouping codes into broader thematic categories.
4. Defining and refining the themes.
5. Mapping relationships among the themes to develop a comprehensive conceptual model.

The analysis resulted in the identification of five central themes:

- Nature of Culture
- Cultural Supervision
- Cultural Guidance
- Cultural Construction
- Cultural Growth
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7. Findings

7.1 Nature of Culture

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, culture represents the spiritual essence of a society. It is not merely a collection of rituals or symbols but rather a dynamic system encompassing both manifest elements (such as arts, language, and social norms) and latent structures (including values, beliefs, and mentalities). Culture is endogenous and transformative, serving as the foundational basis for all socio-political progress. Without a robust cultural foundation, sustainable economic and political systems cannot be established.

7.2 Cultural Supervision
Cultural supervision involves the strategic monitoring of cultural activities to prevent deviation, corruption, or foreign influence. It is distinct from censorship; instead, it entails the intelligent safeguarding of national values. This supervision aims to maintain a healthy, innovative cultural environment consistent with the Islamic worldview.

7.3 Cultural Guidance
Cultural guidance refers to the deliberate steering of culture towards a desired state that embodies Islamic teachings, national identity, and revolutionary values. This guidance must be participatory, involving collaboration among government institutions, intellectuals, and the public to foster a shared cultural vision.

7.4 Cultural Construction
Cultural construction is the process of creating or reshaping culture to address national and religious needs. Khamenei emphasizes that culture can be deliberately built—similar to cities or institutions—through visionary planning and implementation. This process includes institutional development, policy-making, and the promotion of artistic and intellectual creativity aligned with Islamic principles.

7.5 Cultural Growth
Cultural growth denotes the continuous development of both the form and substance of culture. It encompasses the enhancement of cultural literacy, spiritual depth, and social participation. For Ayatollah Khamenei, a thriving culture contributes to civilizational progress, rooted in Islamic values while remaining responsive to contemporary challenges.

8. Comparative Framework
When compared to liberal and socialist models, Ayatollah Khamenei's vision emerges as a hybrid framework that balances cultural freedom with social responsibility.

Theme	Ayatollah Khamenei	Liberalism	Socialism
Cultural Growth	Islam-centered, civilizational	Free-market, pluralistic	State-guided, ideology-based
Cultural Guidance	Direction with societal collaboration	Minimal involvement	Party-driven indoctrination
Cultural Supervision	Intelligent oversight, not repression	Legal boundaries only	Extensive ideological policing
Cultural Construction	Intentional and value-based innovation	Spontaneous and emergent	Programmatic, goal-oriented
Nature of Culture	Dynamic, spiritual essence of society	Individualistic, diverse	Reflection of material class structures

This table demonstrates that Ayatollah Khamenei's approach does not conform to either extreme. Rather, it advocates for a contextual Islamic model in which culture is simultaneously guided and dynamic, sacred and evolving.

9. Conclusion
The study concludes that Ayatollah Khamenei's model of cultural engineering presents a multi-dimensional, process-oriented, and Islamically grounded framework. Rather than imposing rigid control or relinquishing culture to market forces, this model envisions a collaborative endeavor involving the

government, intellectual elites, and society to actively engineer culture in alignment with national and religious aspirations.

Within this framework, cultural engineering transcends mere preservation or control; it involves the deliberate design and cultivation of a vibrant, values-based cultural ecosystem. This approach is both normative and pragmatic, offering a potentially adaptable model for other Islamic societies striving to achieve cultural sovereignty without resorting to isolation.

10. Recommendations

Future studies may consider the following areas:

- The role of cultural elites and civil institutions in the practical implementation of Ayatollah Khamenei's cultural engineering model.
- Comparative analyses of cultural engineering approaches in other Muslim-majority countries.
- Evaluation of the social impacts resulting from cultural engineering policies in Iran.

Development of sector-specific cultural strategies—such as in education, media, and the arts—grounded in this conceptual framework.

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