Resistance Discourse and the Ideal International System in the Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei

Alireza Koohkan[*]

Mahdi Garehdaghi[**]

Saeed Kahya[***]

Abstract

One of the key issues in international relations is the emergence of a new global order and the gradual transformation of power structures from a unipolar-multipolar system to a multipolar system. This article seeks to elucidate the ideal international system from the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei's resistance discourse and to present his strategies and approaches for achieving the envisioned outcomes in the second phase of the Islamic Revolution. From his perspective, the ideal international system is based on a just global order, democracy, and mutual cooperation, pursuing objectives such as ensuring security, peace, and the prosperity of nations.

The key endogenous strategies of the resistance discourse include the establishment of a model system, the explanation and teaching of resistance knowledge aligned with human nature, and the implementation of the resistance model in new geographical regions while considering the cultural and indigenous conditions of those areas.

Additionally, the exogenous strategies involve strengthening the connections between various centers of resistance and establishing a comprehensive, coordinated system to supervise, guide, and lead all resistance fronts.

Keywords:

* Associate professor of international relations, Allameh Tabataba'I University, Iran(Corresponding Author)   koohkan@atu.ac.ir

** Ph.d Student of regional studies, Allameh Tabataba'I University, Iran

mahdigarehdaghi@gmail.com

** Ph.d Student Public Policy, University of Tehran, Iran

saeed.kahya@gmail.com

Introduction

The international system, following World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union, has polarized the global landscape, consciously or unconsciously influencing nations worldwide. Consciously, this polarization occurs when actors deliberately choose to align with the existing unipolar international system. Unconsciously, it manifests when actors, operating within the framework of the current order, become ingrained in its rules and automatically act according to them. This dynamic shapes the structure of all actions by both small and large-scale international players. In other words, the post-unipolar global system defines the psychological perceptions of leaders and shapes their underlying assumptions.

At the national level, this system gains power by steering public opinion through public diplomacy, employing various mechanisms, and applying intense pressure on internal dynamics. Internationally, it operates by establishing global structures and fostering complex economic, political, and military dependencies, thereby managing the dominant order of the international system. This system influences the structure and framework of all actions by international players, steering them toward creating hegemonic and subjugated concepts and structures to serve the interests of power holders and capital owners.

Against this backdrop, the glorious Iranian Revolution emerged as a counterforce to this system and its corresponding structures, opposing the powers shaping the global order. During the first phase of the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran achieved remarkable success by instilling hope, empowering Islamic resistance movements, inspiring global freedom-seekers, and cultivating unified and resolute forces.

As the unipolar system struggled to exert dominance over all nations and the shift toward a multipolar order gained momentum, the resistance discourse in the second phase of the Islamic Revolution seeks to transform the existing unipolar-multipolar system. Its aim is to establish its desired international order and position itself as one of the key players on the global stage. In this context, examining the components and strategies necessary to form a new international order based on the resistance discourse is of critical importance.

1. Research Background

The concept of resistance, as a fundamental principle in Islamic literature and international relations, holds a special place in the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei. Various perspectives and texts have been published regarding the discourse of resistance and the international system. These studies reveal that resistance is not merely a military strategy but a comprehensive approach with cultural, political, economic, and social dimensions. Its aim is to

confront the system of domination, counter neo-colonialism, and achieve a just global order and a new Islamic civilization illuminated by Islamic teachings (Mahdipur, 2018 and 2019). Based on the topic under review, related sources can be categorized into five groups.

1.1. Resistance Discourse in the Islamic Revolution and Ayatollah Khamenei's Thought

In Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, resistance is a continuous strategy to counter aggression and enmity. This strategy is not confined to the military domain but seeks deterrence through various dimensions. An analysis of his speeches identifies a conceptual model of resistance that includes rejecting domination, ensuring independence, and achieving a new Islamic civilization as its pursued objectives (Mahdipur, 2018).

Other articles in this field demonstrate that resistance, on the one hand, stands against the goals of hegemonic powers striving for global dominance (Asadi, 2017) and, on the other hand, seeks to establish a just global order (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2012). Moreover, the resistance discourse of the Islamic Revolution challenges structural aspects, political systems, international actors, and the distribution of power, thereby strengthening new state and non-state actors, nations, and movements within the international framework.

Functionally, it has influenced key issues such as peace, security, and justice (Rezapur, 2014; Dadavand et al., 2018). Furthermore, models like the "Resistance Front" have been proposed as an integrated structure comprising leaders, states, and nations to confront imperialism and the hegemonic discourse (Saleh Esfahani et al., 2020).

1.2. Resistance and International Theories

Some studies have examined the theoretical impact of Islamic resistance on positivist and realist approaches in international politics. The political language of Islamic resistance in the 1980s demonstrated greater scientific efficacy and prevalence in confronting positivist approaches, structural realism, and concrete symbols in international politics.
Moreover, the Islamic Revolution undermined the effectiveness of positivist methodologies in international politics (Postinchi & Motaghi, 2012; Qadri Kangavari, 2013). These studies highlight the significant challenges posed by the resistance discourse to mainstream theories in international relations.

1.3. Resistance and Ideological and Cultural Dimensions

Other research focuses on the ideological and cultural dimensions of the Islamic resistance discourse. These studies emphasize that religious belief,

national identity, and the ideology of political Islam are cultural components of Islamic resistance, playing crucial roles in its formation, reinforcement, and continuity (Nazemi Ardakani & Khaledian, 2018).

They stress avoiding neglect of these components and underline the necessity of addressing them. The Islamism discourse itself represents a form of resistance against the dominance of Western modernity. By offering a political interpretation of Islam, it attracts those marginalized by the modernity discourse (Mohammadi, 2013; Qazal-Safli & Farkhi, 2013).

1.4. The Ideal Political System from the Perspective of the Leaders of the Islamic Revolution

Some studies, although not directly addressing the concept of resistance, have focused on the thoughts of Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, examining the Islamic state and the ideal political system from their perspective. Features such as reliance on endogenous capacities, independence, opposition to domination, and justice are emphasized as characteristics of the ideal state in their thought. These features form the foundation of resistance in the discourse of political Islam and highlight the necessity of system-building within the framework of the Islamic Revolution of Iran (Ghahraman & Keshavarz, 2016; Mehri, 2016). These studies emphasize that resistance is not merely a political or military strategy but a fundamental principle for creating an Islamic society and system based on independence, freedom, and justice.

1.5. Strategies for Expanding the Resistance Discourse

Research in this area suggests strategies for expanding the resistance discourse at various levels. The article "Cultural, Political, and Economic Resistance Strategies in the Thought and Practice of Ayatollah Khamenei" explains Ayatollah Khamenei's strategies at the national and regional levels for countering global domination and its hegemony over the Islamic world and Iran. Additionally, the study emphasizes a post-developmental discourse with a religious and national approach, which rejects all linear and classical development theories that marginalize the Global South in favor of the Global North and its development models (Faraji et al., 2020).

Moreover, Lakzaei (2020) analyzed the resistance discourse in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought on the international level, elucidating the conceptual framework of resistance and the necessity of advancing along this path based on Quranic teachings, the traditions of the Prophet's family, and rationality. This study outlines practical solutions for its realization. Similarly, Mohammadi (2022) developed a model for grassroots resistance

based on Ayatollah Khamenei's ideas, proposing the establishment of an "Umam-e Moqavem" (Resistant Nations) organization in Tehran.

Investigations reveal that significant research has not been conducted on the characteristics of the ideal international system in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought. Addressing this issue is particularly important for defining the objectives of the second phase of the Islamic Revolution. Thus, this article aims to fill the existing research gap by examining the ideal international system from Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective and outlining resistance discourse strategies for achieving this ideal in the second phase of the Islamic Revolution.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach and employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine and extract the thoughts of Ayatollah Khamenei regarding the discourse of resistance and the desired international order. As an appropriate method, Critical Discourse Analysis enables the examination of language, semantic structures, and discursive oppositions present in his statements, facilitating the identification of intellectual and strategic patterns in this domain.

The data used in this study include the Second Step of the Revolution Statement, which serves as a strategic document outlining the broad principles of his thought. Additionally, public speeches and statements from 1989 to 2023 (from the beginning of his leadership to the time of writing this article) have been analyzed. These speeches and statements were selected based on relevant topics such as resistance, global justice, and the international system. Furthermore, official messages and written documents published by credible sources, such as the official website *Khamenei.ir* and collections published by official institutions, were also considered as data sources.

The texts were selected based on their direct relevance to resistance, world order, and international relations. For example, speeches related to Quds Day, the Islamic Awakening conferences, and diplomatic meetings were prioritized. The data analysis was conducted in three stages: Open Coding, Axial Coding, and Selective Coding.

In the Open Coding stage, initial themes such as "justice-seeking," "anti-hegemony," "independence," and "Islamic unity" were identified from the texts. Then, in the Axial Coding stage, these themes were categorized within the conceptual framework of the study and linked to the concepts of resistance discourse and the desired international system. Finally, in the Selective Coding stage, the relationships between the themes were explained, and the formation of resistance discourse as a coherent semantic system was analyzed.

To ensure the validity of the findings, the triangulation method was employed. This method involves the integration of linguistic data (speeches and writings), non-linguistic data (executive policies of the Islamic Republic), and field evidence (the impact of the resistance discourse in the region). This methodological approach ensures the transparency and accuracy needed to extract Ayatollah Khamenei's thoughts.

3. Conceptual Framework

According to Laclau and Mouffe, discourse is a semantic system in which words and signs come together to create a meaningful whole. In this theory, signs include linguistic and non-linguistic data (such as writings, speeches, declarations, policies, organizations, institutions, etc.) and encompass both positive and negative aspects. For a discourse to take shape, it requires the identification of a central signifier and an appropriate semantic system, deeply tied to the historical context of its society. Acceptance of a discourse depends on its legitimacy and credibility, not merely its claims of completeness or perfection (Tajik, 1998, pp. 117–118).

Once a discourse is formed, its continuity depends on identity-forming elements within the evolving society. In Laclau and Mouffe's theory, identity is neither fixed nor predetermined but is created by discourses. Moreover, identity is inherently unstable and precarious due to the perpetual struggle and antagonism between discourses. Antagonism plays two roles: it prevents the formation of a complete, stable identity, yet it also serves as a condition for identity's existence, as identities are defined in contrast to their "others" or adversaries.

Discourses can be broadly categorized into two groups: the discourse of domination and the discourse of resistance. The semantic system of these discourses includes both negative and positive components. At the core of the resistance discourse's negative aspect is opposition to

domination, while its positive aspect centers on justice-seeking, rights advocacy, Islamism, peace-seeking, dignity, independence, freedom, spirituality, wisdom, pragmatism, idealism, and realism. Conversely, the domination discourse is characterized positively by expansionism, inequality, structural violence, and exploitation, and negatively by opposition to any form of resistance against its dominance (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2012, *khamenei.ir*).

The international system comprises international actors (states, international organizations) and global processes (alliances, revolutions, and movements), all of which interact in an organized manner to create specific behavioral patterns that serve as the basis for analyzing the dynamics and functions of the international system (Mousavi, 2005, p. 84). This system provides the environment where units of international politics operate (Ghavami, 2003, p. 29, as cited in Rasouli Sanianabadi, 2014).

Scholars offer diverse interpretations of international relations. One perspective takes a sociocultural approach, represented by constructivist theories that emphasize the role of ideational factors such as culture, norms, rules, socialization, and identity in shaping international relations (Wendt, 2007, as cited in Rasouli Sanianabadi, 2014).

Historically, the behavioral patterns of actors in the international system have been influenced by multiple discourses. Before the Cold War, the discourses of liberalism and communism dominated as hegemonic systems. After the Cold War, the unipolar system emerged, with liberalism led by the United States as the dominant global discourse.
During this period, the resistance discourse emerged as a counter-discourse to the hegemonic system, achieving notable successes in theory and practice. This has significantly contributed to the transition from a unipolar system toward a unipolar-multipolar and now a multipolar system. As a result, the resistance discourse has become a prominent and influential pole in shaping international dynamics.

Thus, there is a direct relationship between the international system and discourses. Each discourse's ability to contribute to and influence the global order corresponds to the extent of its penetration and dominance within the international system.

3.1. Impact of the Conceptual Framework on the Article's Content

This study adopts Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory as its theoretical framework. According to this theory, discourses are formed through signifiers and the creation of antagonisms, defining their identity in contrast to the "Other." In this article, the discourse of

resistance in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought is analyzed as a counter-discourse against the discourse of liberal dominance.

The concept of a "just global order" is identified as the central signifier of the resistance discourse, around which floating signifiers such as "justice-seeking," "independence," "Islamic unity," and "anti-hegemony" are organized. These signifiers are frequently emphasized in Ayatollah Khamenei's statements, particularly in the Second Step of the Revolution statement and speeches related to the global order. The resistance discourse stands in opposition to the discourse of dominance, whose central signifier is "liberal hegemony." This opposition in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought manifests as the binary of "Islam versus arrogance," positioning resistance as an active strategy to reject dominance and reconstruct the global order.

3.2. The Domination Discourse and the Existing International System

The structures of the current international system are designed to advance the system in ways that secure the interests of power holders and capitalists. As such, the concepts and structures within this system are not shaped equitably but are dominated by the central pole of the system—namely, the United States. It is important to note that the international system, with its aforementioned characteristics, emerged after World War II and, through the maneuvers of power holders, has evolved into its current state.

Thus, the international system after World War II has essentially been a system of domination, governed by the "law of the jungle," where encroachment on the pillars of nations and states to serve self-interests is deemed legitimate and lawful. More precisely, this system drives nations and states into a framework where they are either eager to embrace the American-led world order or, at the very least, feel powerless against its all-encompassing aggression. In either case, nations and states strive to improve their standing within the framework of this system, which ultimately results in the redistribution of power density within the global power network.

Consequently, not only does the foundation of this network remain intact, but the reproduction of power within it also strengthens the system's credibility and efficiency. Within this system, it makes no difference whether the actors are oppressors or just, whether they uphold human rights or not, whether democracy exists in their country or not, or even whether the concept of a parliament is familiar to their people (Khamenei, 11/01/1995). What matters is adherence to the frameworks of the existing international system.

3.3. Domination: The Core Feature of the International System

In this international system, the United States is not merely a high-density node within the network of power; rather, it is the central spirit and defining element of all relationships within the network. Only those actors who submit to domination are acceptable to this system. If a player surrenders its oil, resources, security, economy, foreign relations, and various policies to the dominator and complies with its demands, it remains definable within the system and can continue to exist. Such a player is favorable to the dominator and enjoys the support of the international system. In essence, the player becomes a part of the system's structure, both defining and being subsumed by it.

The international system is fundamentally designed to prevent any will from forming in opposition to its goals and ideals. Should a country, population, or organization of any nationality or characteristic refuse to submit to domination (Khamenei, 11/01/1995) and attempt to exercise its will outside the boundaries of the system, it encounters multiple forms of resistance from the conceptual network established within the international system. Persisting in its defined values and corresponding actions invites harsh and combative responses.

In this arena, the battle is ultimately a "war of wills" (Khamenei, 09/16/2010), requiring an iron will to break free from the conceptual prisons constructed by the current global order and to preserve and promote alternative values.

Thus, any action or intention outside the international system faces opposition and conflict from the system of domination. Clearly, the primary aim of this system is to suppress opposing wills at their inception. When this fails, it resorts to pressures and schemes to alter the nature of dissenting movements and align them with the system of domination.

Given such a complex global order, few nations muster the resolve to pursue revolutionary change. Among those that rise and lead revolutions, even fewer manage to see their endeavors through to the end, preserving their revolutionary ideals beyond mere regime changes (Khamenei, 02/11/2019).

4. Resistance Discourse and the International System

4.1. Resistance Discourse

The resistance discourse represents a semantic system where words and symbols come together to form a meaningful whole. Just as discourse encompasses linguistic and non-linguistic elements (e.g., writings, speeches, declarations, policies, organizations, institutions), it includes both negative and positive dimensions. The semantic framework of the resistance

discourse has negative components centered on opposition to domination and positive components focused on justice-seeking, rights advocacy, Islamism, peace-seeking, dignity, independence, freedom, spirituality, wisdom, pragmatism, idealism, and realism.

In contrast, the domination discourse is centered on hegemonic power and the system of domination. Therefore, resistance discourse refers to opposition against the semantic framework of domination and hegemony (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 08/18/2012).

4.2. The Nature of the System Emerging from the Resistance Discourse

The resistance system is a network of actions, movements, currents, and organized systems aimed at opposing tyranny and achieving justice, carried out by both small and large-scale actors. This network operates both reactively and proactively. Importantly, all acts of resistance are intelligent, aligned with the growth and prosperity of nations, and aimed at freeing them from the bonds of hegemonic systems.

At this stage, the hegemonic system fights for its survival against the resistance system. Hence, the realization of the resistance order requires a complex, challenging, and time-consuming process, demanding a well-documented plan, a clear strategy, and unwavering determination. The internal structure of resistance must adhere to principles of servitude, monotheism, and the goals of the Islamic Revolution to ensure compatibility with the Islamic Republic.

4.3. The Islamic Revolution: The Dawn of the Resistance Discourse Against Global Domination

The glorious Iranian Revolution undertook the monumental task of establishing new concepts rooted in religion. It dismantled the frameworks shaped by global hegemonic powers and deconstructed the mental templates entrenched in these concepts. Naturally, this movement provoked reactions from the leaders of the hegemonic system (Khamenei, 02/11/2019). Initially, efforts were made to suppress the nascent sparks of the Islamic Revolution by strengthening the Pahlavi regime. After the revolution's victory, extensive efforts were made to destroy it, divert its goals, or assimilate it into the hegemonic system.

The great achievement of Imam Khomeini (RA) was his ability to establish a robust framework for the revolution, preventing it from being absorbed into the dominant global powers and political currents. Slogans such as "Neither East nor West, the Islamic Republic" and "Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic," which Imam Khomeini instilled in the minds of the people, laid a solid foundation for this revolution.

This revolution combines justice-seeking, freedom-seeking, democracy, spirituality, and morality. Imam Khomeini established the Islamic Republic on these principles and steadfastly upheld them throughout his life. As a result, the Islamic Republic emerged as a unique phenomenon, reviving hope among Muslim communities. It demonstrated to all nations, both within and beyond the Islamic world, that it was not an imitation of unreliable slogans from Eastern or Western regimes but a new phenomenon with vitality and transformative power.

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Muslims worldwide gained new hope and momentum. This movement, initiated by Imam Khomeini, continues today under Ayatollah Khamenei's leadership, expanding and evolving. Thanks to the guidance of these two leaders and God's promise to support His religion, the Islamic Revolution has endured 40 glorious years without betraying its ideals, preserving the integrity of its slogans and resisting all seemingly irresistible temptations (Khamenei, 02/11/2019).

After the Islamic Revolution's victory, a strong counterforce emerged outside the hegemonic system, creating a third pole against the bipolar world order of the time. With the Islamic Republic's adherence to its slogans and the collapse of the Soviet Union, this counterforce grew stronger, bringing hope to oppressed nations, global freedom movements, and certain independence-seeking states.

The comprehensive opposition of the hegemonic system to the emergence of this new order and the 40-year resistance to preserve and grow the Islamic Republic created a new duality: "Islam vs. Arrogance." This phenomenon, given the structure of the international system, has become a prominent feature of contemporary global affairs and the focus of international attention (Khamenei, 02/11/2019).

4.4. The Islamic Republic: A Driving and Identity-Shaping Model of Resistance for Contemporary Islamic Movements

Despite widespread propaganda by hegemonic powers against the Islamic Republic, the Islamic Republic remains the sole progressive model for contemporary Islamic movements. It has succeeded in its fight against tyranny and upheld its Islamic slogans, enduring 40 years of resistance. It has navigated through internal challenges and imposed conspiracies, emerging victorious. This enduring hope continues to inspire Muslims worldwide. Muslim intellectuals, youth, and emerging generations across Islamic countries view the Islamic Republic as a bright and hopeful beacon (Khamenei, 02/11/2019). This is one of the greatest identity-forming aspects

of the Islamic Revolution for anti-hegemonic movements and Muslim uprisings.

The Islamic Republic has played a pivotal role in inspiring and shaping Islamic resistance movements and freedom-seekers, creating focal points outside the expansive and complex network of the international system. As previously noted, the reason for the relentless 40-year efforts of global dominant forces—particularly the United States—against the Islamic Republic is their desire to extinguish this source of hope. They recognize that as long as this spring of new thought remains alive, they cannot discourage nations from seeking justice and demanding their rights. Thus, they attempt either to eliminate this source entirely or, knowing that a vigilant and active nation cannot be subdued, aim to tarnish the nature of the Islamic Republic. They strive to alter its orientations and distort the fundamental principles and manifest truths of the Islamic Revolution and the Republic while preserving its outward appearance (Khamenei, 06/04/2002).
After 40 years of steadfast resistance against the comprehensive assaults of the hegemonic system, by divine grace, the oppressors have failed to harm the essence and foundation of this revolution.

The 40 years of resistance by the Iranian people have not only rekindled hope in Muslim movements but have also established a new order in the region based on resistance principles. Today, it is evident to all observers that resistance has influenced the international system, overcoming it in many areas. Even in instances of negotiation, resistance has played an active role. In other words, the emergence of resistance movements in regional countries reflects the expansion of the Islamic Republic's logic—the duality of Islam versus arrogance.

It is crucial to recognize that the propagation of resistance concepts and values can take the form of both projects and processes. The inherent nature of resistance slogans, rooted in human nature, ensures that even without deliberate efforts to expand Islamic and revolutionary values, these concepts naturally spread, like the fresh air or the fragrance of spring flowers, throughout global consciousness (Khamenei, 07/13/1989).

4.5. Achieving a New Global Order Through Resistance Discourse in the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution

Given current circumstances, the international system is increasingly aware of its inability to dominate all nations. Simultaneously, 40 years of resistance and struggle have cultivated a unified and resolute community of believers. The first phase of the Islamic Revolution focused on realizing the revolution, awakening the Islamic Ummah, and preserving religious governance. Its

results include nurturing intellectuals deeply committed to religion and its goals, as well as forming successful communities in various arenas, including warfare.

The second phase of the revolution involves entering a global process of Muslim and freedom-seeking nations and fundamentally transforming the establishment of a government based on truth on Earth. This preparation, forged through the sacrifices of the Muslim Ummah under the guidance of its leaders, lays the groundwork for the next step.

Resistance, as outlined in the statement of the second phase of the revolution, seeks to establish a new order in the international sphere, independent of the prior system and playing an active role. This resistance embodies the Islamic Republic's fundamental slogans—justice-seeking, freedom-seeking, democracy, spirituality, and morality.

Resistance is not merely a short-term tactic but a comprehensive strategy for designing a new order. It offers a strategic vision to reshape all national, regional, and even global actors while empowering philosophers, thinkers, and international players to break free from the constraints of the hegemonic system. With courage and boldness, they can plan freely for the realization of freedom, justice, and spirituality.

The resistance discourse has the foundational capacity to design a new international system. However, this writing does not aim to prove such a claim; further research is required to explore its dimensions. Instead, the argument here is that alongside the existing international order, resistance can establish a new system with specific slogans and values, becoming one of the poles of the new international order and an active player in the global arena.

4.6. The Ideal International System from the Perspective of the Discourse of Resistance

The failure of the discourse of domination in achieving the desired meanings and goals raises the question of how the discourse of resistance, as the "other" and adversary to Western civilization, envisions its ideal international system in order to succeed in establishing a new Islamic civilization. Initially, how does it envision this ideal system, and later, can it achieve it or not? This research aims to answer the first question, while the second question requires an independent study for feasibility assessment. In the statements of Ayatollah Khamenei on this matter, numerous characteristics have been outlined, the most important of which can be summarized as follows

4.6.1. A Just Global Order

The resistance discourse centers around a system of ideas and beliefs, with the overarching notion of a "just global order" forming its core. This concept defines and distinguishes the resistance discourse from competing frameworks (inspired by Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2012). It addresses the challenges posed by the current unjust international system, characterized by inequality and discriminatory structures and processes.

In the global system, apart from a few hegemonic powers that hypocritically speak of justice and human rights while perpetrating grave injustices, most countries and their people, especially the oppressed, advocate for justice and fairness. One of the strengths of the resistance discourse has been its emphasis on international justice from the outset. Over the years, it has consistently opposed injustice wherever it has occurred, supporting oppressed nations and often bearing significant costs in this pursuit.

For instance, its defense of the oppressed people of Palestine and its struggle against the Zionist regime illustrate this commitment. It is crucial to note that justice-seeking is not extremism but a focus on upholding the rights of people, preventing exploitation, and opposing aggression (Khamenei, 08/03/2005).

4.6.2. Denial of the Dominant and Submissive Relationship

A central tenet of the resistance-based system is the rejection of domination and subjugation, accompanied by a rational and intelligent opposition to the global hegemonic system (Khamenei, 08/21/2007).

Domestically, Iran has disrupted this dynamic of domination through wisdom and prudence, establishing itself as a center of resistance against the excessive demands of global arrogance (Khamenei, 09/18/1996). Internationally, the resistance discourse opposes the master-slave relationship and strives to institutionalize the rejection of domination and subjugation within the political frameworks of states and nations (Khamenei, 08/15/2004).

4.6.3. Grounded in Democracy

Opposition to despotism and an emphasis on democracy form another cornerstone of the ideal international system envisioned by the resistance discourse. This framework consistently highlights republicanism, emphasizing the role and will of people in determining their destiny and shaping their societies.

It rejects any imposition of will by supranational or subnational forces, entrusting the right to self-determination to the people (Khamenei, 12/28/2011). Global management, Ayatollah Khamenei asserts, should not be dictated by the United States and a few European countries but requires democratic global participation and its assurance (Khamenei, 09/03/2015).

For example, the Islamic Republic's solution to the Palestinian issue is a clear and reasonable plan rooted in democracy and principles widely accepted by global public opinion: a referendum among all Palestinians, including Muslims, Christians, Jews, and displaced Palestinians, to determine the political structure of Palestine (Khamenei, 09/29/2000).

4.6.4. Based on Mutual Cooperation, Ensuring Security, Peace, and Prosperity for Nations

Mutual cooperation with all nations—except a few tyrannical and hegemonic states—is another key feature of the ideal international system envisioned by the resistance discourse. Over the past four decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the vanguard of the resistance discourse, has sought interaction and cooperation at regional and international levels.

It has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to peace and lack of hostility toward any nation, engaging in wars only to defend its rights, borders, and independence. On a global scale, the Islamic Revolution rejects the oppressive hegemonic system while advocating for "peace, security, and prosperity for all nations," grounded in Islamic teachings. This fundamental divergence challenges the hegemonic system and underscores its inherent conflict with the Islamic system (Khamenei, 08/21/2007).

4.6.5. Based on the Principles of Dignity, Wisdom, and Prudence

Relations based on the principles of dignity, wisdom, and prudence are another hallmark of international relations in the resistance-based system. To form logical interactions between countries, three components—dignity, wisdom, and prudence—are necessary. Dignity means rejecting any form of imposition. This stems from the foundational monotheism of this discourse, which believes in the equality of all races, rich and powerful, before God. Therefore, no country should be humiliated or insulted in international relations. Wisdom in international relations means that there should be no rashness in diplomatic statements or anything related to foreign policy and global communication. Prudence refers to observing the interests of Islam, which in turn secures the well-being of all humanity (Khamenei, 21/07/2020).

4.6.6. The Pursuit of Human Rights and the Rights of Nations

From the very beginning of its confrontation with the liberalism discourse, the resistance discourse has consistently emphasized that concepts like human rights are nothing but a hollow claim. The dominant countries, with the United States at the forefront, have ideologically raised this noble concept as their flag while being the greatest violators of human rights. Although it was very difficult for almost all countries at that time to understand this point, today, it is no longer unclear to anyone in the world that these countries do not even recognize the basic rights of humans. This is evident from the numerous crimes, massacres, and violations they have committed. In this context, the resistance discourse, based on its Islamic principles, advocates for equal rights for all human beings, regardless of color, race, or wealth. Emphasizing human rights and supporting human values are among the most prominent teachings of Islam. Therefore, the human rights claimed by the West are based on false principles, and it is necessary to define and pursue Islamic human rights, with solid and rational foundations, in global public opinion and legal forums (Khamenei, 09/04/2016).

4.6.7. The Authenticity of Identity and Independence of Nations

Global hegemonies, in a misguided move contrary to the will of nations, seek to control various nations within their preferred framework and model, denying the independence of nations and the necessity for countries to adhere to a self-definition imposed by the imperialists (Khamenei, 31/03/2017). In contrast, one of the key features of the ideal international system based on the semantic system of resistance is the emphasis on the independence of nations, both intellectually and practically. All countries possess independence and unique identities, and no country or individual has the right to undermine it in any way. From the very beginning, the Islamic resistance discourse has been built on the slogan "Neither East nor West," rejecting the dominance of great powers, enduring significant costs, yet ensuring that the independence of the nation, both in its intellectual and theoretical dimensions, remains intact.

4.6.8. Pursuit of Unity

Another important feature of the ideal international system in the Islamic resistance discourse is the emphasis on unity and avoiding division among people. In numerous religious sources, unity between Islamic sects and among religions is commanded, and division is prohibited. For example, the Almighty God calls for unity between different religions in the verse: "Say,

'O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equal between us and you: that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him, and that none of us will take others as lords besides Allah'" (Aal-e-Imran, 64). Since the followers of religions believe in the divine prophets and holy scriptures, and since the call of all prophets and holy books is for monotheism, the Holy Qur'an also calls the followers of the Abrahamic religions to unite based on monotheism and the rejection of polytheism (Razvani, 2007, p. 719).

4.6.9. Sovereignty of Spiritual and Divine Values

The sovereignty of spiritual and divine values plays a fundamental and vital role in the establishment of the ideal international system in the resistance discourse. The lack of a divine religious and spiritual cultural movement in the developing scientific society leads to the very situation seen in the advanced Western societies, where, as material civilization advances, the distance from virtue, justice, and humanity also increases. Today, the most heinous human actions—ethical, sexual, and social—have become law and accepted norms in these advanced societies. Sin exists in all human societies; however, when sin becomes legal and customary, and investment is made to defend it, such a society is led to its destruction (Khamenei, 22/03/2004). What distinguishes the resistance-based system from other discourses is its emphasis on Islam and spirituality alongside scientific and material progress. In outlining the roadmap of the resistance discourse, the Supreme Leader says, "If the government becomes truly Islamic, then the country will be truly Islamic... If the country becomes Islamic, this model will shape the Islamic world, and through it, a new Islamic civilization will be formed" (Khamenei, 12/09/2000). Therefore, the God-seeking nature of the people of the world, the attraction of Islam, and its ability to bring people to worldly and eternal perfection and happiness, from the very beginning, has caused concern for Western civilization. This issue has led to the harsh and hostile confrontation of global imperialism and their propaganda apparatus with the message of Islam, giving rise to a wave of Islamophobia.

4.7. The Resistance Discourse as a Project or Process

Naturally, according to Quranic thought and in line with the verse, "And We wish to bestow favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors" (Qasas, verse 5), "Our will is that We give blessings to the oppressed and make them leaders and inheritors on Earth," the movement of this world towards the rule of the oppressed will progress, and one day the arrogant will face the consequences of their

arrogance. This dimension is the aspect of the process of victory for the Islamic system over the system of dominance. From the beginning of Islam to the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and from the victory of the Islamic Revolution to the present, where the expansion of resistance supporters can be seen in various parts of the world, is itself a testimony to the aversion and disillusionment of nations with the system of arrogance, moving toward morality, spirituality, freedom, and justice. In the aspect of being a project, we can refer to the movements of resistance that have been formed and organized with the support of the Islamic Republic. However, to clarify the relationship between the project and process in this issue, the statement of the Supreme Leader is very enlightening:

"Religion naturally progresses because it aligns with human nature and the system of creation and the world. This is a natural matter; it is an ongoing, permanent process, and the true religion is like this... The Islam that we believe in, which is correct and in accordance with human nature, has a global flow. If you avoid it today, tomorrow someone else will carry it. The Islam that aligns with the nature of the world and humanity is the same Islam that you see today, penetrating the thoughts and beliefs of people far from Islam, leaving its mark on the natural world, and attracting hearts and minds. Whenever a group drops the load, another group picks it up."

Thus, being a project only has the role of removing obstacles and accelerating this natural movement, and societies, by acting according to the rules of resistance, have responded to the call of their religious nature for which they were created. Therefore, the strategic recommendations presented must be compatible with the existential nature of resistance, which is aligned with Islam and the slogans of the Islamic Republic, and must consider the relationship between the process and the project aspects of resistance.

5. Strategies for Establishing a New International Order Based on the Resistance Discourse

To achieve the characteristics of the ideal international system based on the semantic system of resistance, it is necessary to address the strategies of this discourse to transform the existing international system into an ideal one— which is the aspiration of all countries except those maintaining the status quo. Essentially, the question of strategies for creating a new international order based on the resistance discourse is not the same as the question of how to expand resistance in the region or the role of each actor in resistance. At the same time, the aim of this writing regarding the new order of resistance in the international space at this current time is not the domination

or hegemony of resistance over the whole world, but rather the establishment of a new system with an independent identity that is aligned with its own value and normative system alongside the existing dominant system. Numerous strategies can be examined to achieve this outcome, but given the purpose of this article, which is to explain the resistance discourse and the ideal international system, this section will highlight the most important strategies to achieve this outcome. A complete analysis of this topic requires further research.

5.1. Indigenous Strategies

5.1.1. Creating a Model System

The more the ideals, slogans, and characteristics of resistance are realized in a country, the more believable it becomes for other countries and movements. Furthermore, the existence of a successful model can pave the way for its extension and spread. Therefore, creating a model is one of the ways to start and expand a movement. This strategy can be clearly seen in the actions of the Prophet (PBUH) during the establishment and global announcement of the Islamic system. The goal of the Prophet's migration to Medina was not just to fight the pagans of Mecca, but to challenge the unjust and corrupt environment. This was a global matter. The goal was for the message of religion and freedom to reach all receptive hearts. This could only be achieved by creating a model system. Therefore, the Prophet came to Medina to create this model system. Whether people continue this path depends on their determination and will, but the Prophet provides the example and offers it to all of humanity and history. He started this movement to inspire people and guide them toward such a society (Khamenei, 1393, pp. 32-34). Thus, the essence of the prophetic mission is to deliver the message, and one of the best ways to do this is by creating a community based on this thinking, manifesting its signs, and showing them to the world (Khamenei, 21/03/1387). Therefore, to the extent that the Islamic Republic can establish resistance in all areas—economic, cultural, military, and political resistance within itself—it can become an inspiring model for other countries, nations, and movements. This is one of the greatest examples of inviting to good beyond one's tradition (Khamenei, 1393, pp. 32-34).

5.1.2. Explaining and Teaching the Teachings of Resistance Based on Human Nature

After successful modeling, receptive hearts will turn toward this model. Explaining the principles of resistance and educating and intellectually

enriching nations and governments are very important strategies for embedding ideas and filling hearts with certainty about the path of resistance. Therefore, educating individuals who are committed to resistance based on the ideas of resistance is the next strategy. However, it must be noted that the main audience of the resistance movement's awakening is primarily the people, not the governments. The more nations awaken and become familiar with the teachings of resistance, the more sustainable the resistance will become, even if governments do not cooperate. This does not mean indifference to governments, but rather that the attention to governments is second in rank, not in time.

5.1.3. Implementing the Resistance Model in a New Region Considering Local Conditions

After educating capable individuals and spreading the ideology of resistance among a group of societal elites, the structure and formation of resistance should be shaped by connecting these elements. While the principles and spirit of resistance remain the same, its priorities, form, and foundation must be based on the culture and context of the region. By creating these formations and networks, a strengthened capacity for operational engagement in various areas of resistance, as well as the inclusion of new, capable, and interested individuals, will be established. In this stage, the involvement of individuals who are deeply committed to resistance and have practical experience in various fields will prove beneficial. The formation of resistance centers will occur at this stage, which will both connect people through shared faith and cover a specific geographical area.

Up until this point, indigenous strategies of resistance have been discussed. The following two strategies pertain to the external aspects of resistance.

5.2. External Strategies

5.2.1. Linking Multiple Resistance Centers and Creating Alliances

After establishing multiple resistance hubs, the next strategy is to connect these hubs to each other and create alliances and regional or, on a larger scale, international coalitions. After going through the previous stages, complex and networked relationships will emerge within countries and movements, establishing a chain of concepts that underpin the resistance ideology. Once these logic systems are interconnected, a complex and global network of resistance will form, which will both challenge the international system of dominance and possess the characteristics of a new order. As a case study in this regard, the immense capacity of the Non-Aligned

Movement and the need for its quantitative and qualitative expansion can be mentioned.

5.2.2. Coordinated Macro System for Monitoring and Strategically Directing All Resistance Hubs

After linking the resistance hubs, with the expansion of activities and areas, a strategy for creating a coordinated system among all individuals, movements, and hubs must be implemented. One of the active solutions to this is the establishment of a coordinating body for all resistance activists. This will lead to exponential growth, prevent wasted energy, foster synergy among all the parts of the newly formed resistance network, and allow for the implementation of overarching policies. It will also result in the formation of a new international resistance system, as described earlier, which can inspire all actions, movements, imaginations, and activities within itself.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the discourse of resistance in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought envisions a desirable international order that stands in contrast to the current dominance-based system. From his perspective, the ideal order is founded on five key pillars: structural justice, the sovereignty of divine values, religious democracy, multilateral cooperation, and intelligent resistance. Structural justice refers to the reform of global institutions, such as the United Nations Security Council, to ensure equality among nations. The sovereignty of divine values emphasizes ethics and spirituality in international relations. Religious democracy rejects dictatorship and foreign domination over nations' wills. Multilateral cooperation focuses on strengthening South-South ties and reducing dependency on hegemonic powers. Intelligent resistance combines soft power (cultural) and hard power (military) to reshape the existing order.
The operational strategies for achieving this ideal system include both internal and external dimensions. Internally, Iran serves as an inspirational model for other nations by implementing resistance in economic, cultural, and political spheres. Externally, emphasis is placed on networking within the resistance front and strengthening anti-hegemonic movements at regional and global levels.

      This study introduces the concept of "multi-layered resistance" (cultural, political, military) as an alternative to the liberal order,

illustrating that the resistance discourse is not merely a defensive strategy but an active project for reconstructing the international system. As a complement to Western theories of international relations, this perspective can enrich academic discussions. Future research could explore a comparative analysis of Ayatollah Khamenei's resistance discourse with other anti-hegemonic discourses and examine its impact on Iran's foreign policy.

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