



# The Role of Resistance Discourse in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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## Abstract

The discourse of resistance, as one of the most fundamental components of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is based on seeking justice, anti-hegemony, and safeguarding the collective security of the Islamic nation. This study, with a descriptive-analytical approach, examines the role of this discourse in Iran's regional orientations in West Asia and analyzes the strategies of Martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani as an objective and operational embodiment of this discourse. The findings show that in the thought of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, resistance is not a sectional strategy, but a "permanent principle" and the identity pillar of Iran's foreign policy; a principle that has reached its peak of effectiveness in the field practice and network diplomacy of Martyr Soleimani and has been able to transform the axis of resistance into a coherent and effective regional system. His role in defeating Takfiri terrorism, deepening Iran's strategic depth, and establishing the new security order of West Asia confirms the soft power and identity of this discourse. These results can be explained within the framework of structuralism theory, because Iran's foreign policy is based on Shiite-Islamic values and identity, and its action makes sense against the hegemonic identity of the West. Accordingly, the discourse of resistance is not only a political strategy, but also an identity and civilizational model that has determined and established the path of Iran's foreign policy in West Asia.

**Keywords:** Discourse of resistance, Iranian foreign policy, West Asia, Martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani, structuralism.

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## Introduction:

West Asia, considered by many geopoliticians as the "heartland of the world," has always been the focus of security and ideological competition. In classical theories, the importance of this region was attributed more to its underground resources and geographical location; however, in the last three decades, the ideology of Islamic resistance has become one of the most important components shaping developments in the Middle East. This discourse, which was transferred from the margins to the context of regional politics with the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, relies on resistance, martyrdom, and religious-revolutionary identity, and is considered a component of soft power and a saving factor in Shiite political thought. Its presence in the political and social life of Muslims, especially Shiites, has played a fundamental role in the formation of their religious and cultural identity, and neglecting it has led to consequences such as backwardness and subjugation. On the contrary, the enemies, using tools such as "Islamophobia" and

“Shiaphobia,” have tried to introduce the Islamic resistance on a par with fundamentalist movements in order to mobilize regional and trans-regional powers against the axis of resistance under the guise of fighting terrorism. The manifestation of this policy was revealed in the developments in Syria; where, despite the dominance of Takfiri-Salafi groups, an attempt was made to introduce the root of the Islamic resistance, namely the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the cause of the crisis. Therefore, explaining the cultural and identity boundaries of the resistance discourse and distinguishing it from fundamentalism is a fundamental necessity to maintain the coherence of this discourse (Nazemi Ardakani, 2018: 60). With the formation of political Islam arising from the Islamic Revolution, the axis of resistance with Iran as its center and based on the thoughts of the Imams of the Revolution entered the arena. This discourse is based on anti-oppression, support for the oppressed, preservation of independence, and continuation of the mission of the prophets, and has been reproduced in the contemporary period with the Islamic Revolution. Analyzing this idea with qualitative methods, especially content analysis, allows for the disclosure of hidden themes and identity dimensions of the resistance (Qasemi, 2010: 172). The axis of resistance is a set of Islamic states and groups, including Iran, Syria, Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the revolutionaries of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and popular movements in Yemen and Bahrain, which have a common goal of defending the oppressed and confronting the arrogant (Mohammadi-Sirat and Torabi-Aghdam, 2017: 63). This axis has been able to reduce American influence, weaken the security of the Zionist regime, and achieve strategic achievements in important battles such as Palestine and Lebanon (Abolhassan Shirazi and Parse, 2014: 108–103). Reliance on independence, jihadi values, and the spirit of Ashura has been the main support for these successes.

From a conceptual perspective, resistance means standing up to factors that disrupt the natural balance of society, and this principle is also emphasized in the Quran. Islamic resistance is formed against aggression, occupation, and domination, and its goal is to preserve the rights and dignity of humans (Qasemi, 2018: 11; Rezakhah, 2013: 33). Any actor aligned with the ideology of the Islamic Revolution who confronts the system of domination and the Zionist regime is considered part of the axis of resistance; in contrast, movements such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS are tools of arrogant powers and serve their goals (Mohammadi Qarasoui, 2017). The main goals of the axis of resistance include preserving the Islamic Revolution, supporting the Palestinian people, defending the territorial integrity of countries, preserving independence, and preventing the plundering of nations’ resources. This axis is active in the political, economic, cultural and military arenas and has achieved important achievements such as defeating the myth of Israel’s invincibility, disrupting America’s calculations, forming popular resistance nuclei in various countries, and creating a vast network of revolutionary activists. Major victories in Lebanon (2000 and 2006), Gaza (2008, 2009 and 2014), the defeat of ISIS in Iraq, and continuous successes in Syria, Yemen and Palestine also confirm the dynamism and growing power of this front. Finally, the increase in the aggressions of the hegemonic system, the growing awareness of nations towards their rights and the scandal of arrogant policies have created a new wave of resistance tendencies in the Islamic world; a trend that, according to some researchers, will profoundly affect the future of the political order in the region (Mohammadi Qarasoui, 2017).

### **Statement of the problem:**

The Islamic Revolution of Iran, with its unique discourse-building ability, has been one of the most effective phenomena of the last century in the Islamic world and has played a fundamental role in shaping and strengthening the discourse of “resistance”. This discourse, which stems from the ideals and thoughts of Imam Khomeini (RA) and the wise leadership of the Supreme Leader, has today become one of the determining components in the political and security equations of the region and has a central position in the intellectual sphere of the leader (Motalebi et al., 2018: 118; Ashiri, 2018). Discourses can reach the level of “system-building” when they have internal coherence, deep epistemological foundations, and sufficient semantic power. In the view of the leadership of the revolution, national power and authority are formed when the discourse governing society has the ability to have domestic, regional, and global influence; As he emphasized in his meeting with the people of Qom on Iran’s authority in domestic and foreign policy and regional developments (Khamenei, 2010). This authority is the result of the connection between faith,

courage, certainty, logical explanation and correct propagation of religious discourse, which is considered the main tool for discourse-building in Islam (Ashiri Saeed, 2018; Khamenei, 2015). From the perspective of the Leader of the Revolution, epistemological and moral elements such as knowledge, prudence, a sense of responsibility, trust and courage are the foundations of “Islamic authority” and the pillars of the resistance discourse. These characteristics are clearly embodied in the personality of the martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani. Relying on piety, courage and self-awareness, he revived the resistance discourse in the field of action in such a way that he was able to change the balance of power in the region and inflict heavy defeats on the arrogant currents and the Zionist regime. His linking of Islamic thought, revolutionary identity and field realities elevated the discourse of resistance from a theoretical to an operational and efficient level. In order to scientifically explain this development, structuralist theory is an appropriate framework for analyzing the behavior of the Islamic Republic in the region, especially in relation to resistance; because it considers the construction of identities, goals and actions in social and historical processes (Jackson and Nexon, 2002). Based on these principles, the discourse of resistance is not a passive reaction, but an active, idealistic and at the same time realistic approach; a discourse that always emphasizes the pursuit of justice, independence, dignity and Islamism, and its success depends on the intellectual growth of society, responsibility and effective social action (Ashiri, 2018).

Considering Iran's unique role in shaping and guiding the axis of resistance and the position of Martyr Soleimani in transforming this discourse into a regional power, the main question of the research is how and to what extent has the discourse of resistance influenced the foreign policy orientations of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the West Asian region, with an emphasis on the strategies of Martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani? And how can this influence be explained within the framework of structuralist theory and soft power?

### **Research Background:**

A review of the research literature shows that the discourse of resistance and its theoretical and practical dimensions have been studied extensively in recent years. Ashiri (2018) in his study titled “Culture-Creating Discourse in the Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei” emphasizes the role of modeling and repetition of concepts in the generalization of discourses and shows that the discourse of seeking justice and resistance becomes effective when it has the ability to attract public opinion and create collective action.

Bagheri and Ali-Ahmadi (2019) examine the discourse of resistance and its impact on social altruism, considering the discourse of resistance as challenging the hegemony of the West and emphasize the Islamic-revolutionary identity as its central signifier. They believe that resistance has gained the ability to hegemonize in the civilizational arena through othering and conceptual prominence.

In another study, Shiroudi et al. (2019) analyzed the competition between the Shiite resistance discourse and the Salafi Takfiri discourse within the framework of the Copenhagen School and concluded that West Asia is a serious arena for the confrontation between these two security-building and security-destroying discourses.

Motlabi et al. (2018) examined the resistance discourse in the intellectual sphere of the Supreme Leader and showed its historical roots in the lives of the prophets, imams, and Islamic scholars. They emphasize that the Islamic Revolution has elevated this discourse to the level of governance and given it strategic coherence.

Nazimi Ardakani and Khalidian (2018) have introduced the cultural components of Islamic resistance, including religious belief, national identity, and the ideology of political Islam; components without which the resistance discourse against opposing currents will be weakened.

In his study of the impact of the Islamic Revolution on the international system, Abbasi (2018) considers the Iranian Revolution to be a phenomenon distinct from conventional revolutionary models and emphasizes the role of Islamic ideology and the leadership of Imam Khomeini (RA) in creating a new paradigm in international relations.

Mohammadi (2013) introduces Islamism as a type of socio-political discourse that, by presenting an alternative narrative of Islam, brings together forces rejected by Western modernization and organizes resistance to Western cultural and political domination. Noam Chomsky (2006) also shows in an independent study that the real focus of the United States in the Middle East is the control of energy resources and the management of the regional power structure.

Vaezi Dehnavi (2012) examines the foundations of foreign policy in the leadership's thought, relying on the principles of the constitution, and introduces the Islamic Republic as a system that has based its foreign policy on justice, support for the oppressed, independence, and the rejection of foreign domination.

Ebrahimi and Sotoudeh (2012) have evaluated the possibility of religious movements in the region following the Islamic Revolution and concluded that the Iranian Revolution, by presenting a model of religious rule and anti-hegemony, had the potential to influence popular movements; however, threats such as American pressure and the risk of deviation of the revolutionary discourse are also present.

### **Importance and Necessity of the Research:**

There is a deep and structural connection between the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Islamic Resistance discourse in the Middle East. The Islamic Republic, as the inspiring center of this discourse, was formed based on Shiite militant teachings and principles such as justice, independence, and the rejection of domination. From this perspective, strengthening the resistance discourse in the region means strengthening Iran's strategic depth and stabilizing the cultural and ideological borders of the Islamic Revolution; as Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine have been repeatedly called the "strategic depth" of the Islamic Republic (Nazemi Ardakani, 2018: 62).

The importance of studying this issue can be explained in several ways: First, a precise explanation of the resistance discourse can help strengthen the authority of the Islamic Republic in the international arena and show how this discourse has the potential to become a hegemonic discourse against regional rival discourses. Second, despite numerous studies, the operational and applied dimensions of this discourse, especially in relation to Iran's foreign policy behavior, have been less systematically analyzed. The Middle East, which many consider to be the "geopolitical heartland of the world," has witnessed the growth of the resistance discourse as one of the most fundamental drivers of political developments in recent decades. The Islamic Revolution brought this discourse from the margins to the context of regional politics and, relying on the culture of resistance and martyrdom—as a component of Islamic soft power—created a new identity among Muslim nations (Nazemi Ardakani and Khaledian, 2018: 60). In addition, the growth of political Islam gained further momentum after the Islamic Revolution and strengthened Islamic awakening in the following decades (Dabiri-Mehr, 2018).

The resistance discourse is based on two categories of components:

Negative: negation of domination, arrogance, tyranny, discrimination, aggression, and expansionism;

Positive: Justice, righteousness, peace, independence, dignity, freedom, spirituality, rationality, and realism.

These components create an internal link between the Islamic Revolution and the resistance discourse, and weakening them means that threats are approaching the ideological and security borders of the Islamic Republic.

In recent years, the role played by Martyr Lieutenant General Hajj Qassem Soleimani in organizing and strengthening the axis of resistance has revealed the importance of this discourse more than ever before. His performance showed that the resistance discourse, when embodied in the form of strategic and field behavior, can create significant achievements in the field of regional security and foreign policy. Therefore, analyzing the resistance discourse with an emphasis on the thoughts of the Supreme Leader and the behavioral method of Martyr Soleimani is essential for a better understanding of the foreign policy orientations of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Accordingly, the present study aims to explain the impact of the resistance discourse on the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Middle East, focusing on the role and strategies of martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani. It is of theoretical and practical importance and can help to theoretically preserve and practically strengthen this discourse at the regional level.

### **Definitions of words and terms:**

#### **Discourse:**

The term "discourse" is used instead of discourse analysis. In Persian, it can be referred to as "Guftar", "Guftar", "Khattab" and "Guftgo". Despite its widespread use, there is no consensus on its spatial and semantic boundaries, given its use in various fields such as linguistics, literature, philosophy and politics. This wide use has caused its semantic complexity and ambiguity (Akhavan Kazemi, 2012: 3.)

In connection with discourse, the concept of "dialogue" often appears. Dialogue is considered a prerequisite for any discourse, whether oral or written, because it is considered a social flow with its own nature, substance and social structure. Discourses are influenced by time and place and play an important role in the emergence and creation of contexts and institutions that help strengthen and disseminate them (McDonnell, 2002, 40.)

Discourse not only acts as a language used in connection with events, but also performs a "linguistic function" by using rules and conventions to shape verbal objects and subjects. As a result, discourse changes the way we discuss the world and not only reflects reality, but also conveys meaning and shapes mentalities. Discourse analysis studies texts and speech patterns and examines them in relation to social activities. Therefore, "discourse" is viewed here as a social construct (Moeini Alamdari, 2004, 99.)

#### **Resistance:**

The literal meaning of "resistance" is derived from the root "qoweh" (power) and "qiyam" (rising), which means when a person rises up to do something and takes a stand. Therefore, "resistance" means readiness to take action (Makarem Shirazi, Vol. 6, 1974: 61). It is noteworthy in the conceptual sphere that resistance implies stability and perseverance (Makarem Shirazi, Vol. 6, 1974: 79). In principle, resistance and stability mean avoiding deviation and in practice insisting on religious beliefs and convictions. The Holy Quran in verse 161 of Surah An-A'ma refers to steadfastness in the pure religion and religion of Abraham and avoiding the oppression of polytheists and false beliefs. In fact, adherence to it requires Islamic resistance against oppression, aggression, and domination of oppressors and their allies. Opposing occupation, religious hostility, protecting rights, repelling oppression, eliminating occupation, maintaining independence, preventing domination, and preserving assets based on the teachings and laws of religion are among its goals. Justice-centeredness, opposing oppression, defending the oppressed, and negating the domination of infidels are among its most important components. Internal resistance includes fighting against sensual desires, while external resistance requires fighting against aggression, invasion, and occupation (Mirqaderi, Kiani, 1391: 70).

"Resistance" is defined in the Moeen Persian dictionary as follows: "Resistance" literally means resistance, equality, opposition, insistence, steadfastness, and durability (Dehkhoda, under Resistance).

**Discourse of Resistance:** The Islamic Revolution is a unique phenomenon that conventional theories of revolution have failed to analyze. As a result, a new generation of theories of revolution emerged and prominent theorists such as Theda Scotchpool revised their theories about the revolution. The continuation of the Islamic Revolution and its future prediction cannot be analyzed with existing theories. Accordingly, the discourse of resistance is also a unique discourse of the Islamic Revolution and must be analyzed within the framework of its own criteria and principles. Basically, there is no discourse called resistance in political theories and international relations. Some theories, such as dependency theory, self-reliance or the Third World, may have similarities with resistance, but they are not comparable to it (Pourhasan and Rekabian, 1400: 238). If we define discourse as a meaningful set of linguistic and meta-linguistic signs (Tajik, 21:1382), its elements and components are: "Central core", equivalent to the central point of identity

formation around which other signs are organized (Hosseinzadeh, 20:1389). “Floating core”, whose meaning is not fixed and multiple, a category that finds new identity elements by entering a new set (Jorgensen and Phillips, 56:1389). “Othering” which leads to the creation and consolidation of political boundaries of identity. “Accessibility and credibility” means social acceptance and compatibility of values with society. “Equivalence chain and difference chain” covers diversity and differences and emphasizes similarities. However, “Logic and difference chain” focuses on differences, distinctions and variations (Hosseinzadeh, 21:1389).

Analysis of the topics: The discourse of resistance and perseverance, which has been emphasized by the Supreme Leader and the religious and revolutionary people since the beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution until today, is derived from religious teachings and the divine promise that “If you are patient and fear Allah, their (treacherous) plans will not harm you at all. Indeed, Allah encompasses what they do.” (Surah Al-Imran, verse 120) And there is no violation in this promise. God’s promise to the believers is: “O you who believe! If you help Allah, He will help you and make your feet firm.” (Surah Muhammad, verse 7) And certainly, if the believers take steps towards fulfilling Islamic laws, God’s help and support will be upon them, as has been proven many times throughout history (Muttalibi et al., 2018: 121). The Supreme Leader, warning against the destructive function of takfiri movements, emphasizes that takfirism is a tool in the service of the enemies of Islam; A trend that targets not only Shiites but also Sunnis, and by blowing up mosques and creating discord, it makes Muslims unaware of the main issue of the Islamic world, namely Palestine, and the presence of the enemy in the region (Statements in a meeting with Hajj officials, 16/06/2014). Accordingly, resistance to oppression and domination has deep roots in Quranic teachings, and fighting against the arrogant is considered as obedience to the divine command. The essence of resistance is “saying no to domination” and protecting human dignity. When resistance is carried out with divine intention and in the path of serving God, it will bring divine victory and social dignity; otherwise, society will be forced to accept humiliation and surrender. In Islamic tradition, this struggle is the same as jihad, which is considered one of the most fundamental political-religious concepts in the thought of resistance (Qasemi, 2010: 185).

In explaining the divine duty of man against oppression, Ayatollah Khamenei, citing the hadith “Whoever sees an oppressive ruler...” emphasizes that “ruler” in this narration means any oppressive power, and its modern-day examples can be seen on the Zionist and American fronts. According to this narration, anyone who witnesses public oppression and does not take a stand against it, either in word or deed, will suffer the same fate as the oppressor (cf.: 21/7/98). He concludes from this teaching that not backing down against America is a religious and moral duty. From this perspective, resistance is a general human duty against domination. In his lexical definition of resistance, Ayatollah Khamenei has considered concepts such as perseverance, patience, endurance, non-retreat, stability, and stability to be synonymous (cf.: 11/10/90; 7/26/77; 8/20/83; 5/9/87). In addition, he provides a terminological and structural definition of resistance: Resistance is when a person chooses the “path of truth” and, despite the existence of obstacles, does not stop or give up; rather, with strategy, either removes the obstacle or bypasses it and continues the movement (cf.: 8/12/97). This definition explains resistance beyond a word as a purposeful and sustainable process on the path of truth. Further, based on the philosophical analysis of movement, the concept of resistance can be made more understandable with the six pillars of movement—origin, destination, time, place, motive, and the moved. Facilitating or inhibiting factors can also affect the speed and direction of movement (Lakzai, 2010: 73). Such a framework allows resistance to be considered not simply an emotional reaction, but a rational, purposeful construct based on the conscious choice of the right path.

Table 1- Research findings

Obstacles of Resistance	Elements of Resistance	Elements of Movement	Row
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Not acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran	Governments and nations	Animated	1
	Freedom from the domination and oppression of global arrogance and international Zionism	Trigger	2
	In the international arena	Location	3
	Deterrence	Destination	4
	Permanent and permanent	Time	5
	To will and to decide	Origin	6

In explaining the concept of resistance, Ayatollah Khamenei, citing narrations, introduces three types of “patience” as the main forms of resistance: patience in obedience, patience in abandoning sin, and patience in the face of calamities (20/8/83). When these concepts are proposed on an international scale, they refer to obedience to the divine command, practicing enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong globally, and enduring the consequences and threats of the international political arena. He also categorizes resistance into four levels: cultural, political, security, and military, and considers cultural resistance to be the most fundamental level; because the collapse of the cultural fence means the loss of other areas of resistance (31/5/95). Accordingly, art and literature—especially poetry—play a decisive role in creating a cultural current (3/9/97). The “Imam Khomeini’s Doctrine of Resistance” has also been mentioned in world political literature; A doctrine that, according to Western analysts, marks the arteries of Western domination and is known as the stable line of the Islamic Revolution against the hegemonic system (8/12/97). From this perspective, resistance is not a temporary tactic, but rather the essence of the identity of the Islamic system and its sustainable logic in the global arena. On the other hand, in international relations theories, the concept of resistance is defined in direct proportion to power. Although at the theoretical level, there is no single definition of “power” (Alam, 1378: 86), in practice, power refers to “the ability to impose one’s will on another despite his resistance” (Weber, 1384: 90). Morgenthau also considers international relations to be a field of constant competition for acquiring and maintaining power (Morgenthau, 1384: 45). In such a field where threats, enticements, deception, persuasion, and propaganda are the means of exercising power, resistance becomes a strategic necessity to preserve the identity, independence, and interests of countries.

In this context, the Leader of the Revolution defines the “resistance front” as opposed to the “arrogance front”; a front whose duty is to defend the right, justice, and human dignity, and whose logic is based on love, service, and human interaction—even with the American nation, while its hostility is directed only at arrogant regimes (29/8/92). This logic is consistent with the Quranic teaching “Indeed, Allah commands justice and kindness” (An-Nahl: 90) and with the words of the Commander of the Faithful (PBUH) about kindness to humans (Nahj al-Balagha, Letter 53). The necessity of resistance in the international arena can be explained from two perspectives:

1. Narrative and divine: Narratives and verses introduce resistance as a divine duty and a condition for preserving dignity.
2. Rational and empirical: In the international system, every power tries to impose its will; Therefore, increasing the capacity for resistance is a condition for the political and security survival of states.

Accordingly, it is possible to create, consolidate, and expand resistance among nations and states through strengthening cultural identity, social cohesion, promoting soft power, training resilient elites, and creating strategic links on regional fronts (cf.: Heidarifar, 2009).

### **The importance and necessity of resistance and the discourse of resistance from the perspective of leadership**

Ayatollah Khamenei, citing verses from the Quran, considers resistance not only a definite necessity but also a continuous and enduring matter. He bases this view on the verse “Seek help from Allah and be patient” (Al-A’raf: 128) and emphasizes that it is not possible to follow the path of truth without patience, perseverance, and reliance on Allah (8/14/90; 3/31/1368). Based on these verses, two logics are rejected: first, stopping after achieving some of the goals; and second, despairing when things do not go as expected. The Quran considers both attitudes to be contrary to the logic of resistance and emphasizes continuity and persistence in resistance (5/6/92). The concept of “determination” is also one of the fundamental elements of resistance. Citing the prayer “O Allah, grant me... with a firm resolve” (Majlisi, Beta, Vol. 84: 325), he considers the path of the Islamic Revolution to require a steadfast will and steadfastness (8/18/96). Also, prayers such as “Take the sprouts upon your religion” indicate the importance of steadfastness in religion and the path of the revolution (10/13/95). Accordingly, resistance in the path of God and to achieve divine goals is an irreplaceable necessity. In analyzing the discourse of resistance, it is important to identify the central signifier and its articulation network. Ayatollah Khamenei considers “perseverance” and “not surrendering to the enemy” to be the core of this discourse and emphasizes that resistance must become a social discourse. In a meeting with the Assembly of Experts, he clarified that some officials, when problems arise, blame the resisters; while the logic of surrendering to the enemy neither resolves the problems nor preserves national dignity. Therefore, “clearly stating positions” and “non-passivity” must become a public discourse (12/15/2013). In this discourse, failure has no meaning; because the Quran has promised that if a society follows the path of truth with patience and perseverance, the final victory will be with it: “And Allah will not help whom He will help” (4/4/2013). The Leader of the Revolution says that forty years of experience of the Islamic Republic have shown that the continuation of resistance has led to the strengthening of the nation and the weakening of the enemy (3/14/2019). This is the logic of resistance that Imam Khomeini (may Allah have mercy on him). From his point of view, the most important characteristic of the Imam—which turned him into a “school”—was his perseverance and non-backsliding in the face of tyrants and difficulties, both before and after the victory of the revolution. He considers this resistance of the Imam to be the embodiment of many verses of the Quran (3/14/2019). The continuous reference of the signifier “standing” to the thought and method of Imam Khomeini (RA) guarantees the semantic continuity of the discourse of resistance and links it to the main foundations of the identity of the Islamic Republic.

### **An excerpt from the words of Ayatollah Khamenei**

From Ayatollah Khamenei’s perspective, the mosque is the core of Islamic resistance and the base of cultural, political, and social mobilization; where the method of cultural action and resistance is learned (Khamenei, 2016). He considers the “honor of the Islamic nation” to be dependent on jihad and resistance and introduces resistance as the guarantor of the independence and dignity of Muslim nations (Khamenei, 2005). In his view, today’s problems in the Islamic world, including the Yemeni disaster, are the result of pressure from enemies and necessitate the unity and resistance of the Islamic nation (Khamenei, 2018). The Leader of the Revolution emphasizes that the resistance forces, relying on faith and the people, and not just military equipment, have been able to defeat Western-equipped and supported powers and expose the inefficiency of their security mechanisms. On this basis, they warn that Iran’s defense zone should not be placed at the disposal of foreigners under the guise of “surveillance” or “inspection,” and that the development of defense power and support for the axis of resistance should not be compromised in any negotiations. In their belief, with the help of the Islamic Republic, the equation of resistance in the region changed; the elevation of “a stone in the hand of a Palestinian” to “a missile against a missile” is a symbol of this transformation. The Basij forces are also a strong pillar of resistance in the Islamic Republic, and their stability guarantees the enemy’s retreat. A clear example of this logic is the 50-day resistance in Gaza



against the Zionist regime, which led to the regime's defeat and retreat. Therefore, Palestinian fighters must strengthen their will and Muslim nations must demand serious support for Palestine. Ayatollah Khamenei also warns against the efforts of some "friendly" currents to divert the resistance from its main path and emphasizes that the Palestinian nation, as the main owner of the resistance, has the ability to reproduce it even if some groups retreat. Because if a group puts down the flag of resistance, another group from the hearts of the people will take it up. He considers the roots of civil wars, Shiite-Sunni differences, and the formation of groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS to be the enemies' efforts to divert nations from the fight against Zionism and weaken the resistance front. In his opinion, the Zionist regime has gained power over decades with the support of Britain and America, but the nations have never surrendered; this resistance has been the basis for the formation of the resistance identity in the region.

### **Characteristics of Resistance from the Leader's Perspective**

Ayatollah Khamenei, distinguishing between being good and staying good, recommends that we should try to stay good, because everyone is subject to problems. It is clear that resistance has been good in the past, but we will need this resistance again in the future. Therefore, he recommends, citing the Holy Quran, that we should take care of ourselves and others: (And advise them to the truth and advise them to patience) (Asr: 3) (cf. *ibid.*: 4/22/99) And like mountain climbers in dangerous places who connect each other with a rope so that if one person slips, the others can hold him and pull him up, you should advise each other to follow the path of truth, and to be steadfast, steadfast, and steadfast in the face of bitter events, not to slip, not to tremble, not to hesitate (cf. *ibid.*: 2/1/95). He himself acted on this verse and called the people of Tunisia and Egypt to resistance and patience during the Islamic awakening. Your enemy, by equipping security mercenaries, sends them to confront you to harass the people with insecurity and chaos. Do not be afraid of them. You are stronger than the mercenaries. You are now at a stage where God said to the Prophet and his companions: (O Prophet, urge the believers to fight. If there are twenty of you who are patient, they will overcome two. And if there are one of you, they will overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, for they are a people who do not understand.) (Anfal: 65) You can overcome any insecurity, chaos, and turmoil by relying on God and trusting your motivated youth (cf. *Ibid.*: 11/15/89).

### **Conclusion:**

The analysis of political-security developments in the West Asian region shows that the resistance discourse was one of the most influential achievements of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and was able to create a new identity among Muslim nations by relying on divine, justice-seeking, and anti-domination principles. From the beginning, the Islamic Revolution emphasized the rejection of arrogance, defense of the oppressed, justice-seeking, and independence-seeking, and these principles formed the foundation of the resistance discourse inside and outside Iran. The political-cultural strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in supporting the oppressed and confronting global hegemony have not only created a geopolitical approach in the country's peripheral environment, but have also turned Tehran into an inspiring center for resistance movements in the Islamic world. This discourse has been able to create important consequences in the regional space, such as the revival of Islamic self-confidence, the awakening of Muslim nations, the strengthening of civilizational identity, and the increase in political-social harmony among Islamic societies. At the macro level, opposition to Western hegemony, confrontation with the Zionist regime, and support for the rights of the occupied nations have been among the most important aspects of foreign policy emerging from this discourse. In this context, developments after the Islamic Awakening (Arab Spring) showed how the fall of dependent regimes and changes in traditional political orders provided space for the penetration of the resistance discourse and the weakening of Western secular models; however, these developments caused a reaction from the Salafi-Brotherhood movements and placed them in opposition to the resistance discourse. The central element of the resistance discourse from the perspective of Imam Khomeini (RA) and the Supreme Leader is the acceptance and commitment to the guardianship of the jurist; a concept that guides all intellectual, behavioral, and social dimensions of the Islamic society towards the realization of a religious and spiritual government. This discourse expresses a kind of authentic, dynamic, and indigenous political Islam that, by rejecting reactionary and static readings of religion, emphasizes dynamic *ijtihad* and consideration of the conditions of time and place. Therefore, the discourse of

resistance, unlike the Takfiri-Salafi movements, is based on rationality, justice, spirituality, and ethics, and presents a constructive plan for the presence of Islam in the world order. Citing Quranic teachings, the Supreme Leader of the Revolution considers resistance to be continuous, sustainable, and unstoppable, and emphasizes patience, perseverance, and trust as the secret to the victory of nations. From his perspective, resistance is an invincible concept, because the final victory belongs to the people of truth, even if this path comes with material and human costs. This same Quranic logic is also evident in the thought and character of Imam Khomeini (RA); a personality who stood resolutely against domination and tyranny and turned the discourse of resistance into one of the pillars of the identity and politics of the Islamic Republic. In the operational dimension, this discourse has crystallized in the form of two negative dimensions (denial of domination, arrogance, tyranny, structural violence, expansionism and discrimination) and positive dimensions (justice, freedom, independence, dignity, spirituality, rationality and realism) and has been able to present a comprehensive and multidimensional model for political action at the regional level. These characteristics have turned the resistance discourse into one of the few idealistic-realistic discourses that both insist on principles and values and take into account the requirements and realities of the international environment.

The emergence of extremist movements such as ISIS was not only not a substitute for the resistance discourse, but also tarnished the face of authentic Islam with its blind violence. In these circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the central axis of the resistance, assumed a decisive role in the fight against Takfiri terrorism. Iran's active presence in confronting ISIS in Iraq and Syria not only maintained regional stability but also prevented the spread of organized violence as a fake face of Islam.

Meanwhile, martyr Lieutenant General Hajj Qassem Soleimani played an irreplaceable role in operationalizing the principles of resistance. By combining piety, courage, resourcefulness, and spirituality, he was able to transform the elements of resistance into a coherent and efficient force at the regional level. His field presence in the fight against terrorism, organizing popular forces in West Asia, strengthening the axis of resistance, and creating a network of committed activists turned Iran into an influential power in the region. The victories achieved in Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, and the collapse of the ISIS caliphate structure, are part of his strategic legacy. By creating solidarity among diverse and multi-ethnic forces, Soleimani elevated the discourse of resistance from a theoretical level to a civilization-building level and presented a new model of "combined soft-hard power." By examining these trends within the framework of structuralist theory, we can see that the identity of states plays a decisive role in how they interact in the international arena. The colonialist identity of the West, based on hegemonic interests, is the basis for instability in the Middle East, while the Islamic-revolutionary identity of Iran emphasizes weakening hegemony, supporting nations, and resisting occupation. This identity confrontation provides a suitable framework for analyzing the role of the resistance discourse in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Structuralist theory, with its emphasis on identity, values, meaning, and discourse, is the best conceptual tool for examining the relations between Iran and the axis of resistance and the regional behavior of Martyr Soleimani, because it takes into account, on the one hand, Iran's Shiite-revolutionary identity and, on the other hand, the hegemonic nature of the West in the analysis of foreign policy. Therefore, the research findings show that the resistance discourse is not only one of the most important pillars of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy in West Asia, but also, with the role played by martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani and relying on the identity and value elements of structuralist theory, it has become a determining factor in shaping the regional security order.

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