

Review and Explanation of the Causal Model of the Tradition of Victory and Defeat in the Theology of Resistance, with Emphasis on the Interpretive Perspective of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei

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Abstract

"Theology of Resistance" represents an emerging field within contemporary religious studies, aiming to elucidate the role of faith in confronting domination and oppression. This study addresses the central question: if the world is created according to truth and divine tradition is founded upon supporting the truth, why does the camp of truth sometimes experience defeat, and what factors hinder the realization of this tradition? Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology and centering on the interpretive perspective of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the research analyzes Qur'anic narratives of victory and defeat. The findings identify three principal traditions as the framework governing historical laws: "The tradition of victory, conditional upon factors such as trust in the divine promise, effort, steadfastness, ideological superiority, and divine companionship; the tradition of defeat, resulting from internal factors including worldly attachment, division, disobedience, distrust, pride from reliance on material means, neglect of divine providence, fear, and failure to recognize prevailing circumstances; and the tradition of the circulation of power, which serves as a divine mechanism for managing history and pursues objectives such as purification through trial, distinguishing true believers, and martyrdom." The primary innovation of this study is the introduction of a five-stage causal model for analyzing resistance front events, formulating the relationship between internal variables of the camp of truth and these three traditions. The study concludes that divine traditions are immutable laws, and their proper understanding enables the maintenance of hope in divine assistance and the development of theoretical frameworks within the theology of resistance.

Keywords: Theology of Resistance, Tradition of Victory, Tradition of Defeat, Tradition of the Circulation of Power, Causal Model, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei.

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Introduction

In the contemporary era, resistance has transitioned from a solely political response to a faith-based intellectual and practical framework within Islamic political thought. Consequently, research into the "Theology of Resistance," a branch of practical theology focused on the rational explanation and defense of religious beliefs in the context of confronting domination, has become essential. The theology of resistance is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

The central issue is that the natural order of the world aligns with truth and reality, while falsehood opposes this trajectory; thus, truth advances and ultimately prevails. This divine tradition favors the camp of truth. However, a fundamental question arises: 'If the world is created according to truth and divine tradition supports the truth, why does the camp of truth sometimes suffer defeat, and what factors impede the realization of this tradition?' Understanding the dynamics of victory and defeat within the resistance movement requires identifying the "Divine Traditions" that govern these outcomes, as the Holy Qur'an presents battlefield victory and defeat as subject to fixed and immutable divine laws, some of which are conditional upon human conduct.

The significance of this issue stems from the tendency of many analyses to focus exclusively on cultural, political, and military factors, often neglecting divine traditions and potentially fostering despair. Within this context, the interpretive perspective of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, as both a jurist and a system-building exegete, offers an analytical framework grounded in Qur'anic verses that elucidates the divine structure underlying victory and defeat. He emphasizes that, although divine traditions are constant, their realization is directly related to changing historical circumstances. That accurate identification of these circumstances by intellectual and social elites is essential for attaining divine assistance. Furthermore, he cautions that the system of calculation should not be limited by material considerations alone, as articulated in the Qur'an: "If Allah wills, He will support you and make your feet firm." (Muhammad:7)

That is, if you strive to revive the divine religion, God will grant you His assistance, and this tradition is unchangeable:

"And you will never find any change in the tradition of Allah." (al-Fath:23)

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to utilize the exegetical views of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei and, by focusing on the three divine traditions of victory, defeat, and the circulation of power, to propose a five-stage causal model. This model aims to articulate the relationship between internal variables within the camp of truth and these traditions, serving as a methodological tool for causal analysis of defeats and the formulation of context-appropriate strategies in contemporary resistance events.

1. Literature Review

A review of the literature on the theology of resistance and divine creational traditions indicates that existing studies can be categorized into three major approaches. The following sections introduce each approach and examine its shortcomings from the perspective of the principal concern of the present study, namely, explaining why the camp of truth experiences

defeat despite the existence of the divine tradition of assistance.

The first approach concerns the systematization of divine traditions governing the life of societies. In this regard, the book "In the Embrace of the Nile," (2024 AD/1403 SH) as an analytical and inspirational work derived from the thought of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, seeks, through an in-depth examination of the fixed and immutable laws of God, to demonstrate how these traditions, functioning as definitive rules, shape the course of historical developments and the destiny of societies.

Within this approach, thinkers such as Javadi Amoli (2020 AD/1399 SH: 15, 586), Sadr (2002 AD/1381 SH: 78-79), and Mesbah Yazdi (2012 AD/1391 SH: 414-432) have attempted to provide a broad framework for analyzing social developments by classifying divine traditions into absolute and conditional traditions. The shortcoming of this approach is that these studies have explained divine traditions at a general and philosophical level without addressing the operational distinction between the tradition of defeat and the tradition of the circulation of power.

In other words, they have not specified how, in a particular historical event, one can determine whether a defeat is the result of an internal deviation within the camp of truth or constitutes part of the divine will for purification through trial and testing. Furthermore, this approach lacks a step-by-step causal model for field-level diagnosis.

The second approach focuses on the analysis of Qur'anic themes and practical theology. The most prominent work in this area is the article by Pouramini (2025: 113), entitled "Analysis of the Quranic Themes of the Theology of Resistance," which systematically examines the theology of resistance. Using thematic analysis, the author identifies components such as faith, patience, unwavering determination, and collective steadfastness in verses 120-180 of Surah *Āli 'Imrān*.

The fundamental shortcoming of this study is its exclusive focus on the positive themes of resistance and its neglect of negative traditions, namely defeat and the circulation of power. More explicitly, the article does not answer the fundamental question, "Why does defeat sometimes occur despite the presence of these themes?" It also overlooks conditional divine traditions as key variables explaining historical fluctuations.

The third approach focuses on the theoretical foundations of political theology. In a comparative study, Hemmati (2014 AD/1393 SH: 128) delineated the boundaries between the theology of resistance and Marxist liberation theology, emphasizing its distinction in terms of its theocentric orientation. The shortcoming of this perspective is that the study remains at the macro-theoretical level and does not address the causal structure underlying the realization of victory or defeat in the field of practice.

Despite the aforementioned studies, three fundamental gaps can be identified in the existing literature. First, there is a lack of a causal model for integrating the three traditions, because previous approaches have either focused exclusively on the tradition of victory (Pouramini) or discussed divine traditions at a general level (Javadi Amoli, Sadr, and Mesbah Yazdi). None has made an operational distinction between the "Tradition of Defeat" (resulting from internal deviation) and the "Tradition of the circulation of power" (divine will for purification through trial). This omission may lead to strategic passivity or unwarranted

despair within the camp of truth.

Second, previous studies have overlooked an epistemological analysis of "Pride" within the tradition of defeat. Although some exegetical works, such as *"al-Mizan,"* have pointed to the detrimental effects of pride, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei's epistemological approach, which understands pride as a failure to recognize the divine system of causes and effects, has not been incorporated into the modeling of defeat.

Third, existing studies have failed to provide a methodological instrument for diagnosing contemporary resistance in the field. Unlike the present article, they have not proposed a step-by-step model for dissecting events and prescribing a strategy appropriate to each circumstance, whether correcting deviations or exercising strategic patience.

Ultimately, the present article seeks to address these gaps through three major innovations: "First, the presentation of a five-stage causal model for formulating the relationship between the internal variables of the camp of truth and the three traditions; second, the systematic use of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei's interpretive perspective, particularly his epistemological analysis of pride and his seven rules concerning divine traditions; and third, the operational application of the model to the analysis of contemporary resistance events, with a precise distinction between defeat resulting from internal deviations and the divine circulation of power for purification through trial and martyrdom."

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of the Study

2.1. Theology of Resistance

The theology of resistance is an emerging branch of contemporary religious studies. As a theoretical-practical framework, this approach seeks to derive a rational model for confronting systems of domination on the basis of the system of divine traditions and to apply it to the field-level guidance of the camp of truth. Unlike liberation theology, which has materialist, anthropocentric, or class-based origins, the theology of resistance organizes all its components around monotheism, divine assistance, and the immutable traditions governing history. Methodologically, by deriving divine traditions from Qur'anic verses and narrations and applying them to contemporary events, the theology of resistance seeks to provide an epistemological-practical framework for accurately identifying circumstances, diagnosing internal weaknesses within the camp of truth, and strategically restructuring action on the basis of fixed divine laws.

Within this intellectual framework, the identity of resistance moves beyond a temporary political reaction or a merely military response. It becomes a structured strategy connected to a monotheistic system and the rejection of the legitimacy of the camp of falsehood. One of the fundamental challenges of the theology of resistance is to provide a rational explanation of why, despite the divine tradition of assistance and the truthfulness of the resistance camp, battlefield defeats sometimes occur, and whether such defeats contradict the essential truth of the camp or can instead be explained within the framework of conditional divine traditions, namely, defeat and the circulation of power.

2.2. Divine Traditions and Their Characteristics

A divine tradition is a Qur'anic term referring to God's ways and laws in governing the affairs

of existence. Their modes of operation are so diverse and comprehensive that no being falls outside their scope, and in every situation one or more divine traditions encompass it. These laws are regarded as among the important and strategic teachings of Islam and occupy a distinctive position in the Islamic worldview and value system.

In explaining the lexical and technical meaning of the term, *Rāghib Isfahānī* (1991 AD/1412 AH: 426), citing the verse, "[This is] the established way of Allah which has preceded before, and you will never find any change in the way of Allah," (al-Fath:23) defines divine tradition as the way of God's wisdom and the manner of servitude. *Ibn Manẓūr* (1993 AD/1414 AH: 13, 226) regards it as God's prescriptions and prohibitions and as an established method of conveying religion to people. *Turayhī* (1995 AD/1416 AH: 2, 306), drawing upon the expression "The tradition of the former peoples," (al-Hijr:13) maintains that divine tradition refers to the manner God has employed in bringing about the destruction of previous communities.

Among contemporary Shi'i thinkers, Javadi Amoli (2020 AD/1399 SH: 15, 586) emphasizes the need for an independent discipline devoted to understanding divine traditions and considers them capable of manifesting themselves in political, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Muhammad Baqir Sadr (2002 AD/1381 SH: 78-79) likewise maintains that human beings must understand divine traditions in order to exercise control over their own destiny, because attention to these laws directly contributes to the practical transformation of both society and the individual.

Mesbah Yazdi (2012 AD/1391 SH: 414-432), adopting a systematic approach, divides divine traditions into two categories: "Absolute and Conditional." Absolute traditions are those that God sets in motion without any prerequisite, such as the tradition of general guidance of human beings (al-Nahl:36) and the tradition of testing (al-Baqarah:155). Conditional traditions, by contrast, operate in response to human conduct, such as the tradition of assisting believers (al-Rūm:47) and the tradition of succession (al-Mā'idah:54; Muḥammad:38). According to Mesbah Yazdi, the most comprehensive conditional tradition is the tradition of divine assistance, which encompasses both the people of truth and the people of falsehood.

Among the fundamental characteristics of divine traditions are their stability and immutability (and you will never find any change in the tradition of Allah), their foundation in the causal order, their universality (their applicability to all phenomena), their harmony with one another, and their conformity with human nature.

2.3. The Interpretive Approach of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei to the Analysis of Divine Traditions

Ayatollah Khamenei understands *Sunnah* as a comprehensive law and rule established by Almighty God in both the natural world and the human realm. Referring to the similarity between divine traditions and natural laws, he emphasizes that just as the movements of the sun and moon or the law of gravity are evident laws visible to everyone, there are also laws articulated in the Qur'an that not everyone is capable of understanding, such as the fact that God is with the God-conscious and that whoever strives in God's cause does so for his own

benefit. In his view, these too are laws, and God is the most truthful of all when He states that something is a law (Khamenei, 1401/04/07). Divine traditions are laws governing this world of existence, but materialists, with their limited vision, are unable to perceive them (Khamenei, 1394/10/19), whereas the Qur'an is replete with statements concerning these laws (Khamenei, 1401/04/07; 1394/10/19). Like natural laws, these traditions are stable and immutable and govern human societies as well. The difference is that natural laws are apparent to everyone, whereas social divine traditions require *Ijtihad* and a systematic methodology to be extracted from the Qur'anic verses (Khamenei, 1369/11/04; 1374/08/10). He reconceptualizes and structures historical transformations and the laws governing the phenomenon of resistance in the form of strategic principles that constitute the foundation of the movement of the camp of truth.

The first principle is the immutability of divine traditions. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that divine traditions are firm and unalterable laws (Khamenei, 1401/04/07).

The second principle is the universality of these traditions, such that all events and phenomena, from the dawn to the dusk of human history, are governed by a single set of laws and traditions (Khamenei, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 388).

The third principle is the alignment of these traditions with the movement of the universe toward truth. The universe was created on the basis of truth, and its natural course proceeds in accordance with truth. Therefore, truth advances in this world, victory belongs to it, and the divine will and laws operate in favor of the camp of truth in all places (al-Dukhān:38-39; al-Aḥqāf:3).

The fourth principle is the inevitability of divine laws. Whether human beings wish it or not and whether the powerful approve or disapprove, these laws continue to operate (Khamenei, 1372/03/12).

The fifth principle is the dependence of these laws on God's will. However, with regard to matters related to human life, God's will is generally realized through the mediation of human will. In contrast, matters unrelated to human life are realized without the mediation of human will (Khamenei, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 124).

The sixth principle is the harmony among divine traditions. For example, prayer does not necessarily violate natural laws; rather, it is answered within the framework of those laws, and the requested outcome is realized unless it conflicts with another divine law, in which case it is not answered. Likewise, the divine promise is true, but effort and action are prerequisites for its realization, and there is no guarantee that it will be fulfilled through inactivity (Khamenei, 1377/10/04).

The seventh principle is the harmony between divine traditions and human nature. The primordial covenant and natural disposition of human beings, in terms of accepting servitude to God and rejecting servitude to anything other than God, are consistent with the natural structure of the universe. Accordingly, all the legislative rulings and regulations imposed upon human beings are precisely consistent with and correspond to the movement and course of events in the created order (Khamenei, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 135).

A key point in his approach is that many divine traditions, such as the tradition of divine assistance, are conditional. That is, divine assistance depends on the conduct and commitment

of the camp of truth. The Qur'anic emphasis that God will certainly assist whoever assists Him, "And Allah will surely help those who help Him," demonstrates this conditionality (cf. also Khamenei, 1401/04/07, in his explanation of the divine laws governing social traditions). Therefore, understanding divine traditions makes it possible to analyze historical and social transformations accurately and can provide a theoretical basis for theorizing in the theology of resistance.

2.4. The Geometry of Divine Traditions: Victory, Defeat, and the Circulation of Power

Three broad categories of divine traditions operating in the historical sphere can be formulated as follows.

First, the tradition of victory, which concerns the ascendancy of the camp of truth. This means that monotheistic thought inherently possesses superiority over the camp of falsehood, and, provided that faith, righteous action, sincerity, unity, and steadfastness are preserved, this inherent superiority culminates in victory on the ground. The Qur'an emphasizes this tradition through emphatic expressions such as "And Allah will surely help those who help Him" (al-Hajj:40) and "If you support Allah, He will support you." (Muhammad:7)

Second, the tradition of defeat is an immutable law according to which any deviation from the requisite conditions of faith and action disrupts the tradition of divine assistance. In *Āli 'Imrān*:152, God attributes the Muslims' defeat at the Battle of *Uḥud* to three internal factors. A detailed analysis of this verse will be presented in Section 5.2.

Third, the tradition of the circulation of power, which, based on the verse "These days [of victory and defeat] We alternate among the people," (*Āli 'Imrān*:140) pursues objectives such as purification through trial, distinguishing true believers, and martyrdom. These objectives will be analyzed in Section 2.5.

The tradition of the circulation of power, as explained on the basis of the verse "These days [of victory and defeat] We alternate among the people," (*Āli 'Imrān*:140) pertains to the overarching structure of history and the alternation of victory and defeat among nations. In accordance with His wisdom, God causes the fortunes of the people to alternate in order to realize such wise objectives as distinguishing true believers (that Allah may make evident those who believe), purifying believers (that Allah may purify those who believe), gradually annihilating the disbelievers (and that He may destroy the disbelievers), and providing the conditions for martyrdom (and that He may take martyrs from among you).

2.5. The Causal Model: The Analytical Framework of the Study

One of the shortcomings of previous research is the absence of a systematic causal framework for determining the relationship between the "Internal performance of the camp of truth" and the realization or disruption of the three traditions. Accordingly, based on inferences drawn from Qur'anic verses and the exegetical statements of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the present study proposes a five-stage causal model to be used as an analytical tool for diagnosing events on the resistance front.

The theoretical logic of the model is as follows: "According to the immutable divine tradition, divine assistance is conditional upon adherence to a set of faith-based and practical factors." (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 414-419) Any disruption of these factors,

including attachment to worldly interests, division, disobedience, distrust, pride, failure to recognize divine providence operating behind material causes, fear, and failure to recognize prevailing circumstances, prevents the realization of the tradition of victory and causes the tradition of defeat to come into effect. At the same time, the tradition of the circulation of power, as a broader historical framework, pursues wise objectives such as purification through trial, distinguishing true believers, and martyrdom.

The function of the model is to transform divine traditions from the level of theoretical analysis into an operational tool for the timely identification of internal deviations, the analysis of the causes of delayed divine assistance, with a distinction as to whether the delay results from the tradition of defeat or the tradition of the circulation of power, and the formulation of strategic recommendations appropriate to the circumstances. A detailed presentation of the five stages and their practical application will be provided in the findings section (Section 4.5).

3. Methodology

The present study is qualitative in terms of the nature of its data and employs a descriptive-analytical strategy and the thematic analysis method. The analytical approach is integrative (deductive-inductive), meaning that although the initial framework of the study was predetermined on the basis of three principal divine traditions, victory, defeat, and the circulation of power, the more specific codes and themes were extracted directly from the Qur'anic verses and exegetical statements.

The research population encompasses three distinct domains. The first is the Holy Qur'an, with particular emphasis on *Surahs Āli 'Imrān, Muḥammad, and al-Fath*. The second consists of authoritative exegetical works such as "*Al-Mizan*" and "*Majma' al-Bayān*." The third comprises the collection of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei's exegetical statements published on his official website. Purposive sampling was employed, and all verses and statements relevant to the subject were collected and carefully examined.

The units of analysis consisted of sentences and paragraphs from the statements, as well as Qur'anic verses (or groups of verses). Data extraction was conducted in three main stages. In the first stage (open coding), all indicators and propositions related to victory, defeat, and the circulation of power were identified and labeled. In the second stage (axial coding), the initial codes were grouped into more meaningful categories. Finally, through selective coding, the three overarching themes of the article were developed. In addition, all themes were supported by independent textual evidence.

4. Findings (Data Analysis)

4.1. The Tradition of Victory

This tradition is articulated in the Holy Qur'an through definitive divine promises. Almighty God explicitly promises in several passages of the Qur'an that whoever strives in His cause will receive His assistance: "And Allah will surely help those who help Him." (al-Ḥajj:40) In the expression "*La Yanṣuranna Allāh*," several markers of emphasis are present, indicating that Almighty God will most certainly assist those who support the religion of God. Likewise, the verses "If you support Allah, He will support you and make your feet firm"

(Muḥammad:7) and "Indeed, We will surely support Our messengers and those who believe" (Ghāfir:51) emphasize the same truth.

The late Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, referring to the two traditions discussed in Surah *Āli 'Imrān*, the tradition of victory and the tradition of defeat, emphasizes that the believers' response to the enemy's intimidation following the Battle of *Uḥud* provides a complete model of the realization of the tradition of victory. Citing *Āli 'Imrān*:173, "But it only increased them in faith, and they said, "Sufficient for us is Allah, and He is the best Disposer of affairs," he explains that genuine belief in "Sufficient for us is Allah, and He is the best Disposer of affairs" and adherence to one's duties provide the conditions for divine assistance, resulting in a return accompanied by divine bounty and grace (Khamenei, 1401/04/07).

The first and most fundamental condition is trust in the divine promise and having a good opinion of God. Citing the verse "And who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah?" (al-Tawbah:111), he emphasizes that Almighty God fulfills His promise and that no one is more faithful to His covenant than God (Khamenei, 1398/11/19). The "Tranquility" and inner peace arising from trust in the divine promise are presented as among the most important factors in continuing the path and stand in opposition to "Distrust in God," which is described in verse 6 of Surah "An evil assumption" and as one of the principal obstacles to divine assistance (Khamenei, 1390/11/10). The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, referring to the miscalculation resulting from disregarding divine traditions, warns that "One of the great errors of calculation is for a person to disregard spiritual factors and divine traditions" and to rely solely on apparent causes.

The second factor is a God-centered intention and sincerity. He states: "Let us all know that as long as we work in the way of God and for God, God will help us. This is the divine promise: "If you support Allah, He will support you," and "Allah will surely help those who help Him." If you intend to support God, Almighty God will undoubtedly help you." (Khamenei, 1402/06/29) He emphasizes that a God-centered intention does not necessarily mean verbally stating "For the sake of God"; rather, serving the people, serving the country, and undertaking any action that contributes to guidance and is accompanied by sincerity constitute manifestations of such an intention (ibid.). Likewise, "The divine tradition is that sincere striving, relying on the inexhaustible power of God and valuing popular struggles, will ultimately break through barriers and bring about certain victory." (Khamenei, 1369/03/21)

The third factor is effort and striving, which constitute a sufficient condition for the realization of divine assistance. Referring to the verse "So do not weaken and do not call for peace while you are superior, and Allah is with you," (Muḥammad:35) he states that even if the objective is correct, expecting divine assistance in the absence of movement and striving is unwarranted. Centuries of Muslim humiliation, he argues, resulted from a lack of movement and striving; whenever a proper objective has been accompanied by striving, divine assistance has also certainly been realized (Khamenei, 1382/03/07). In explaining this condition, he cites several verses, including "Allah has promised those who believe among you and do righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession upon the earth," (al-Nūr:55), "And those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways," (al-

‘Ankabūt:69) and "Whoever desires the immediate [world], We hasten for him therein whatever We will, for whomever We intend," (al-Isrā’:18) indicating that God does not render any effort fruitless (Khamenei, 1377/10/04).

The fourth factor is steadfastness in the face of intimidation, as depicted in verse 173 of Surah *Āli ‘Imrān*.

The fifth factor is the superiority and ascendancy of the members of the camp of truth. Based on verse 139 of Surah *Āli ‘Imrān*, this superiority is presented not as a racial characteristic or something based on kinship with God, but as affiliation with a guiding school of thought capable of saving humanity (Khamenei, 1381/10/25). He explains that "Faith itself means ascendancy; faith is the means of ascendancy." (ibid.)

The sixth factor is divine companionship with His chosen servants. He states: "For a person to feel that God is with him, that God is beside him, that God is behind him, that God is watching over him, this is very important! Because God is the center of power and the source of honor. When God is with a particular camp, that camp will certainly and undoubtedly be victorious." (Khamenei, 1396/12/24) Citing verses such as "Indeed, Allah is with us" in the Cave of *Thawr* (al-Tawbah:40), "Indeed, my Lord is with me; He will guide me" during the crossing of the sea (al-Shu‘arā’:62), and "He said, "Do not fear; indeed, I am with you both. I hear, and I see," (Ṭāhā:46) he explains that God accompanies His chosen servants under the most difficult circumstances and that this companionship constitutes a definitive and immutable tradition (Khamenei, 1396/12/24).

Overall, the tradition of victory gives hope to the resistance movement and demonstrates that ultimate victory belongs to the truth, provided that the camp of truth makes proper use of its material and spiritual strength (Khamenei, 1382/11/08).

4.2. The Tradition of Defeat

Alongside the tradition of victory, the tradition of defeat is one of the conditional divine traditions. According to this tradition, the defeat and failure of the camp of truth are not random phenomena or merely the result of the enemy’s military superiority; rather, they are a direct consequence of the internal conduct of the camp of truth itself. Following the Muslims’ defeat at the Battle of *Uḥud*, God explicitly states: "Say, It is from yourselves." (Āli ‘Imrān:165)

Ayatollah Khamenei, emphasizing the immutability of divine traditions, warns that being Muslim or Shi‘i does not grant any privilege or exemption from divine laws, and that every group receives an outcome corresponding to its own conduct (Khamenei, 1401/04/07).

As noted in the theoretical framework (Section 3.4), Āli ‘Imrān:152, "Until when you lost courage, disputed concerning the matter, and disobeyed," identifies three factors as causes of defeat: weakness of resolve, internal conflict, and disobedience to the command of leadership. Each of these factors is examined below on the basis of Ayatollah Khamenei’s exegetical statements.

In explaining this verse, Ayatollah Khamenei states that God fulfilled the promise He had made to the believers; however, they subsequently failed to show gratitude, lost their resolve, became preoccupied with the spoils, quarreled among themselves, and disobeyed. At that

point, Almighty God applied His established tradition and caused them to be defeated (Khamenei, 1401/04/07). Another example is the Battle of *Hunayn*, in which the Muslims became overconfident because of their previous victories and relied upon their numerical superiority, saying, "Today we will not be defeated because of our few numbers." (al-Tawbah:25) This very pride, however, caused them to suffer an initial defeat.

The internal causes of defeat, in order of priority, are as follows: "Attachment to worldly interests and preference for comfort (the most important factor, to which the Qur'an refers in the verse, "Among you are those who desire this world and among you are those who desire the Hereafter" (Āli 'Imrān:152); disagreement and conflict (which consume the internal strength of society in confronting one another); disobedience to leadership (which involved violating the Prophet's explicit command regarding maintaining the assigned position); distrust in God (identified in the verse "Those who think evil thoughts about Allah" (al-Fath:6) as a major psychological obstacle); and, most importantly, self-admiration, pride, and failure to recognize divine providence, as manifested in the Battle of *Hunayn*.

Referring to the dangers of pride, Ayatollah Khamenei states: "What is important is not to become proud at moments of elevation, because pride produces ignorance." He develops this point further by treating pride not merely as an individual moral trait but as an epistemological failure to recognize the divine system of causes and effects. In his interpretation of Surah *al-Tawbah* (p. 107), he warns:

"Defeat is for arrogant people. If believers become enamored of their own numbers and equipment, fail to see the hand of divine grace behind the apparent causes, and instead of relying upon God and turning away from dependence on anything other than Him, place their trust in their own means, God leaves them to themselves so that they may taste the consequences of their negligence and realize that there is no refuge or sanctuary other than Him."

These statements indicate that, ultimately, according to the divine tradition, defeat constitutes the consequence of severing one's reliance upon God and becoming ensnared by deceptive apparent causes, thereby depriving a person of recognizing divine companionship, which is a fundamental condition of the tradition of victory.

In other statements, the late Leader of the Islamic Revolution points to two fundamental vulnerabilities that continually threaten the camp of truth: "Vulnerability is the vulnerability of pride; another is the vulnerability of passivity. These are two vulnerabilities that you must be very careful about." (Khamenei, 1401/10/23)

Pride is an instrument of Satan and can arise from various sources: sometimes from position and status, sometimes from achievements, and sometimes from becoming complacent because of divine grace and favor. The Qur'an prohibits this latter form of complacency with the expression "And do not let the Deceiver deceive you concerning Allah." (Luq mān:33) He interprets becoming complacent about God as a state of absolute self-assurance and abandonment of prudence, which he calls "Being deceived by God." In the Friday supplication of *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādīyya*, this is regarded as the most "Calamitous" form of such complacency (Khamenei, 1401/01/23).

Citing the verse "Allah had already given you victory in many regions and on the day of

Hunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all," (al-Tawbah:25) he identifies pride as a cause of defeat in the Battle of *Hunayn* and warns that pride is the prelude to downfall: it brings about an individual's internal collapse. Also, it undermines the social collective surrounding that person (Khamenei, 1401/01/23). Furthermore, pride distances a person from others, causes self-delusion, makes his errors appear insignificant to him, and deprives him of the ability to listen to well-intentioned criticism (ibid.).

The second vulnerability is passivity, which is regarded as the opposite of pride and, like pride, constitutes a dangerous illness and poison. Passivity consists of "A weak spirit, considering oneself incapable, feeling that matters have reached an impasse, and despairing of divine mercy," which is itself regarded as a major sin (Khamenei, 1401/01/23). The late Leader of the Islamic Revolution emphasizes that enemies employ various methods, meetings, negotiations, slogans, interviews, news, and operations, to instill this despair and passivity within the camp of truth. However, Almighty God clearly identifies the means of confronting such passivity in the Qur'an:

"But if you are patient and mindful of Allah, their schemes will not harm you at all." (Āli 'Imrān:120)

He interprets patience here as "Not becoming weary and not leaving the battlefield," and God-consciousness as "Complete, step-by-step vigilance: vigilance regarding the enemy, its movements, and one's own actions in response to it, and everything that might indicate negligence." (Khamenei, 1401/01/23)

Referring to the experience of the imposed war and the eight years of the Sacred Defense, he presents this divine promise as a reality that was realized in contemporary history and states that the spirit of steadfastness and freedom from anxiety demonstrated in the leadership of Imam Khomeini, as well as his steadfastness during crises, provide clear evidence of the truth of this divine tradition (ibid.).

Alongside these internal causes, external factors, such as enemy deception and conspiracy, psychological warfare, infiltration by hypocrites, and reliance on the enemy's apparent power, also operate as facilitating and testing factors. These factors do not, by themselves, cause defeat; rather, when internal weaknesses are present, they function as instruments through which the tradition of defeat is realized.

In the theology of resistance, the tradition of defeat has three fundamental functions: "Warning, by preventing pride and passivity and reminding the camp of truth that reliance on material means or a sense of impasse can pave the way for downfall; hope-building, by preventing despair, since defeat within the framework of the tradition of the circulation of power serves wise purposes and can be overcome through "Patience and God-consciousness"; and reform, by calling the camp of truth to continuously monitor its internal factors, return to reliance upon God, and remain constantly vigilant against the two afflictions of pride and passivity."

4.3. The Tradition of the Circulation of Power (*Mudāwalah*)

As noted in the theoretical framework (Section 3.4), the tradition of the circulation of power is explained on the basis of *Āli 'Imrān*:140. Through the circulation of days and fortunes, God

pursues three overarching purposes: distinguishing true believers from hypocrites "And so that Allah may know those who believe," purifying believers of impurities in their faith "And so that Allah may purify those who believe," and taking martyrs from among them "And so that He may take martyrs from among you." Each of these purposes is examined below with reference to the statements of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, followed by an explanation of the hope-generating function of this tradition in the context of the New Islamic Civilization.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, adopting a transhistorical perspective on the tradition of *Mudāwalah*, does not regard it merely as a deterministic law; rather, he describes it as a divine trust that God passes from one group to another, granting every community and generation an opportunity to choose its path by faithfully fulfilling its responsibility. He states:

"These days We alternate among the people" (Āli 'Imrān:140); that is, Almighty God passes these trusts from hand to hand. He gives us an opportunity for a few days to preserve this trust, to preserve it well, to perform our divine duty properly, and to keep God in mind (Khamenei, 1376/03/07).

This statement demonstrates that the circulation of power is not merely a deterministic historical transformation; rather, it is accompanied by duty and responsibility. Each generation is tested during the period of opportunity granted to it as to whether it has been able to properly safeguard this divine trust or has squandered it.

In explaining the hope-generating and future-oriented function of this tradition, he explicitly connects it with the New Islamic Civilization, stating that the circulation of days and fortunes has now provided Islam and Muslims with an opportunity to lay the foundations of a new civilization:

"At one time, the people of Europe, by making use of Muslim knowledge and Muslim philosophy, were able ... to lay the foundations of a civilization for themselves ... Today it is our turn; today it is the turn of Islam. 'And these days We alternate among the people.' Today it is the turn of Muslims to lay the foundations of the New Islamic Civilization through their determination." (Khamenei, 1394/10/08)

Criticizing the material civilization of the West, which, despite its technological achievements, has failed to establish justice and has plunged humanity into meaninglessness and contradiction, he emphasizes that the New Islamic Civilization does not mean conquering territories or imposing a culture. Rather, it means offering a divine gift to nations so that, through their own free choice and discernment, they may choose the right path. This perspective transforms the tradition of *Mudāwalah* from a merely historical rule into a strategic outlook for the camp of truth, because the circulation of days and fortunes is not merely a passive event but an active opportunity to build a civilization founded upon justice and spirituality.

In the theology of resistance, this tradition has three fundamental functions. First, it generates hope in the midst of defeat, demonstrating that temporary defeats are not the end of the road and may constitute part of a broader historical process of purification and preparation of the camp of truth. In the words of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, "Apparent military defeats do not destroy the authenticity of the school of thought." (Khamenei, 2023 AD/1402

SH) Second, it serves as a warning in the midst of victory, reminding the camp of truth that even temporary victories are not permanent and that one must not become proud of apparent causes. Third, it promotes reform and self-purification, calling the camp of truth to continuous self-monitoring and purification.

The fundamental difference between the tradition of the circulation of power and the tradition of defeat is that the tradition of defeat is the direct consequence of the negative conduct of the camp of truth itself and can be remedied through repentance and reform. The tradition of the circulation of power, however, may operate even when the camp of truth has avoided internal deviations, because God, in His wisdom, may cause fortunes to alternate in such a way that believers are placed in the crucible of trial so that they may become more purified. Accordingly, defeat resulting from the tradition of defeat can be remedied through repentance and a return to the requisite conditions. In contrast, the circulation arising from the tradition of the circulation of power constitutes part of the divine will for purification. It must be confronted with patience, steadfastness, and faithful stewardship, while making use of the opportunity created to lay the foundations of the New Islamic Civilization.

4.4. Moving Against the General Current of the World: The Conditionality of Duties within Divine Traditions

One of the key components of Ayatollah Khamenei's interpretive thought is his attention to changing historical circumstances and the necessity of adapting duties to prevailing conditions. Referring to the nature of the dominant current in the world, he states:

"The general current of the world is the current of arrogance and the system of domination; that is, there are some who dominate, while others submit to this domination and become subject to it. We are moving against this current. Naturally, circumstances arise for us in which we must be attentive to these circumstances, exercise greater precision, and constantly monitor and assess the various dimensions of the situation and see what is happening." (Khamenei, 1397/06/15)

From his perspective, divine traditions are fixed laws, but the manner in which they are applied and manifested varies according to circumstances.

Citing *al-Anfāl*:65-66, he explains:

"The same was true at the beginning of Islam. There, too, different exigencies and different circumstances gave rise to different duties. At one point, Almighty God says, "If there are twenty steadfast among you, they will overcome two hundred," (*al-Anfāl*:65) and at another point He says, "If there are one hundred steadfast among you, they will overcome."

This principle constitutes a fundamental bridge between the tradition of victory and the tradition of defeat: the tradition of victory is realized when the camp of truth correctly identifies the exigencies of its time and adjusts its organization accordingly; conversely, the tradition of defeat comes into effect when the camp of truth suffers from a failure of situational assessment and disregards the objective conditions of the battlefield.

4.5. Application of the Five-Stage Causal Model

In analyzing developments on the ground within the resistance movement, the theology of resistance functions as a coherent epistemological-practical framework. Relying on

immutable divine traditions, this framework prevents distortions in the system of calculation and assessment employed by the elites and the social base of the camp of truth. Within this framework, the five-stage causal model functions as a strategic methodological tool. By prioritizing a historical perspective and analyzing events in the early Islamic period, it provides a mechanism for diagnosing and correcting the course of contemporary resistance and determining whether a given defeat has resulted from the "Tradition of Defeat" (which is amenable to correction) or from the "Tradition of the circulation of power" (which requires patience and purification through trial). The concrete historical-operational application of this model can be explained step by step as follows:

Step 1: Distinguishing the Layers of the Event (Material Appearance versus Inner Reality)

This stage begins by fully distinguishing between "Apparent military and battlefield victory and defeat" and the "Inner and faith-based dimensions, namely, ultimate success and manifest loss." From a historical perspective, the clearest example of this stage is manifested in the Battle of *Uḥud*, where a severe military defeat occurred, yet at the inner level, genuine believers were distinguished from those whose faith was impure, and the authenticity of the school of thought remained unharmed.

In this regard, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei emphasizes: "Apparent military defeats do not result in the destruction of the authenticity of the school of thought." (Khamenei, 1402/01/25) In contemporary resistance as well, momentous events such as the assassination of senior leaders or extensive bombardment may constitute military defeats at the material level. However, according to the logic of history and the interpretive statements underlying the model, if the movement remains steadfast in its principles, the inner truth of the school of thought is preserved, and the event should be understood as part of a process of historical development.

Step 2: Identifying Internal Causal Variables (Diagnosing the Internal Front)

Based on the Qur'anic principle "Say, 'It is from yourselves'", (Āli 'Imrān:165) the model searches for internal causal variables within the historical context rather than simply attributing defeat to the enemy's material power. In the early Islamic period, the principal causes of defeat at the Battle of *Uḥud* were attachment to worldly interests and disobedience to the command of the Prophet (PBUH) to maintain the strategic position at the mountain pass.

The model based on the Qur'anic principle "Say, 'It is from yourselves,'" searches for internal causal variables rather than placing the blame on the enemy. At the Battle of *Hunayn*, the key variable was "Epistemic pride," which was explained in detail in Section 5.2 with reference to the interpretation of Surah *al-Tawbah*. In its contemporary application, the model uses the same indicator to diagnose the internal front of the resistance movement and determine whether the blows it has sustained have resulted from pride and being deceived by material means.

In its contemporary application, the model uses these indicators to diagnose the internal front of the resistance movement and determine whether intelligence or military setbacks have resulted from possible infiltration by a culture of comfort-seeking, division and conflict, or

miscalculation and pride arising from reliance on material and military means.

Step 3: Determining the Type of Governing Tradition (Diagnosing the Root of the Crisis)

At this stage, the causal model approaches the event through the measure of history, weighing it in order to make a precise distinction between the tradition of defeat and the tradition of the circulation of power. A historical perspective shows that the defeat at the Battle of *Uḥud* was an instance of the tradition of defeat, resulting from internal deviation and capable of being remedied through repentance. In contrast, the pressures and trials of the Meccan period resulted from the tradition of the circulation of power and divine will as a means of testing believers.

Referring to the Battle of *Uḥud*, Ayatollah Khamenei explains that God articulates two types of traditions: the tradition of victory and the tradition of defeat. He warns that if the second category of traditions, the factors leading to defeat, applies to us, defeat is inevitable (Khamenei, 1388/06/20).

In analyzing contemporary events affecting the resistance, the model examines whether a setback is the result of internal weakness. If so, the crisis is understood as arising from the tradition of defeat. However, if the camp of truth, despite steadfastness and complete reliance upon God, comes under severe pressure, the event is understood as arising from the tradition of *Mudāwalah*, which, in accordance with divine wisdom, has come into operation for purification, exposing the hypocrites, and taking martyrs in order to sustain the dynamism of history.

Step 4: Assessment According to the Final Criterion (The Measure of the Authenticity of the School of Thought)

This stage is devoted to assessing the degree to which the camp of the people of truth remains faithful to its monotheistic identity and steadfast in the face of enemy intimidation. Citing the response of the believers in the early Islamic period to enemy intimidation following the Battle of *Uḥud* (Āli ‘Imrān:173), Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei states that if, in the face of enemy intimidation, one genuinely believes that "Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best Disposer of affairs" and fulfills one's duties, the result will be divine assistance (Khamenei, 1385/07/18).

Since, through cognitive warfare, the forces of arrogance seek to induce psychological collapse within the social base of contemporary resistance, the model uses this interpretive criterion to examine whether, despite all hardships, sieges, and assassinations, the monotheistic identity, reliance upon God, and determination to stand firm have remained alive within the resistance movement. If this doctrinal authenticity has been preserved, the resistance has, according to the ultimate criterion derived from history, passed the test.

Step 5: Strategic Prescription and Reconstruction (Adjusting Duties According to Circumstances)

At the final stage, based on the type of tradition identified and in light of the historical principle of the conditionality of duties upon circumstances, the model provides an operational prescription for reconstruction. Emphasizing this principle, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali

Khamenei explains that different exigencies and circumstances in the early Islamic period gave rise to different duties and obligations, and that the elites' failure to recognize these changing historical circumstances results in setbacks (Khamenei, 1399/05/10).

In contemporary resistance, if the root of the crisis lies in the tradition of defeat, the model prescribes structural cleansing, the removal of security vulnerabilities, and repentance for material pride in accordance with divine laws. If, however, the root lies in the tradition of the circulation of power, the model recommends to resistance commanders, based on the Leader's guidance, the enhancement of strategic patience, preservation of cohesion, and modification of combat tactics, such as transitioning to a war of attrition, in accordance with new circumstances, thereby creating the conditions for the renewed operation of the tradition of divine assistance.

After completing these stages, the outcome of applying the five-stage causal model demonstrates that the identity and fundamental strength of the resistance front depend on aligning its course of action with the immutable laws of history and the unchanging divine traditions. As a coherent framework grounded in the lessons of the early Islamic period and the exegetical statements of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the model demonstrates to resistance elites that material and apparent defeats will never constitute ultimate loss so long as they do not undermine the authenticity of the school of thought, steadfastness upon the path of truth, and detachment from everything other than God. Rather, such setbacks either operate, within the framework of the "Tradition of Defeat," as a warning to rectify internal weaknesses, or, within the framework of the "Tradition of the circulation of power," constitute a wise context for purification, the refinement of believers, and preparation to receive greater forms of divine assistance.

Conclusion

The principal contribution of this study lies in presenting a threefold framework of divine traditions, victory, defeat, and the circulation of power, and subsequently transforming this framework into an operational causal model which, drawing upon the profound epistemological perspective of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, provides an effective tool for analyzing events within the resistance front.

The tradition of victory is a conditional ontological tradition whose realization depends on factors such as trust in the divine promise, sincerity, effort, steadfastness in the face of intimidation, the ascendancy of the school of truth, and divine companionship. The tradition of defeat is an immutable law according to which attachment to worldly interests, division, disobedience, distrust, pride arising from being deceived by material means, negligence of divine providence, fear, and failure to recognize circumstances disrupt the operation of the tradition of divine assistance. The tradition of the circulation of power, as a broader framework, organizes the alternation of victory and defeat within the course of history and pursues wise purposes such as purification, distinguishing true believers, and martyrdom.

A distinctive feature of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei's perspective is his emphasis on the "Ascendancy of the camp of truth" as well as his epistemological analysis of pride. He regards pride not merely as an individual moral trait, but as an epistemological failure to

recognize the divine system of causes and effects. He warns that if believers become enamored of their own numbers and resources and fail to perceive the hand of divine grace behind apparent causes, God will leave them to themselves so that they may taste the bitter consequences of negligence (Khamenei, 1399, p. 107). From his perspective, divine assistance is conditional upon action, reliance upon God, and adherence to changing historical circumstances, while the elites play a key role in identifying those circumstances and adapting duties to them.

The proposed five-stage causal model, through the differentiation of layers, identification of internal factors, with particular emphasis on signs of pride and failure to rely upon God, examination of obstacles, with a distinction between the tradition of defeat and the tradition of the circulation of power, assessment according to the final criterion, and formulation of strategic recommendations, provides an operational tool for identifying the type of defeat and correcting the course of the resistance front. While affirming the authenticity of ontological divine traditions, the findings of this study go beyond prevailing analyses by presenting a causal model, particularly through the epistemological analysis of pride in the interpretation of Surah *al-Tawbah* and the articulation of the seven principles.

The ultimate conclusion is that, within the theology of resistance, the primary criteria are steadfastness upon the path of truth, reliance upon God, and the correct identification of the three aforementioned divine traditions. As long as the camp of truth remains connected to this framework and avoids the trap of pride and being deceived by material means, it possesses victory in its essential sense, and temporary defeats, whether arising from the tradition of defeat or from the tradition of the circulation of power, will not constitute ultimate loss.

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