

A Comparative Analysis of the Divine Sunnahs of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* in the Battle of the Confederates and the Developments of the Islamic Revolution in Iran: An Interpretive-Strategic Reading by Ayatollah Khamenei

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Abstract

The Holy Qur'an is understood to contain immutable divine sunan that transcend temporal and spatial limitations, elucidating the principles underlying social and historical transformations. Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, particularly verses ۹-۲۷, presents a critical episode in early Islamic history: "The Battle of the Confederates." This study investigates how the divine sunan embedded in this surah are reproduced in Ayatollah Khamenei's interpretive-strategic reading and their role in analyzing contemporary events. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical method, comparative thematic exegesis, and qualitative content analysis of Ayatollah Khamenei's statements, the study explains how the divine sunan of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* are reread to analyze the political and security developments of the Islamic Revolution from his perspective. The research hypothesizes that, within Ayatollah Khamenei's intellectual framework, the Battle of the Confederates serves as a "Living and Strategic Model" for understanding and confronting contemporary hybrid and cognitive warfare. The findings are organized around five principal themes: "The forces above and below alliance with global hegemonic powers and domestic hypocrisy; the shaking of hearts as modern psychological warfare and the spread of hopelessness; the disease in the heart" as infiltration and *Fitnah*; the strategy of digging the trench as the doctrine of active resistance and *Jihad al-Tabyīn*; and the

promise Allah repelled those who disbelieved ... as the failure of subversive projects in recent decades." The results indicate that, from Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, the divine sunan of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* continue to govern contemporary civilizational struggles, with differences between historical and modern arenas residing only in their instruments and technologies, not in the laws governing divine assistance, victory, and defeat.

Keywords: Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, Divine Sunan, Ayatollah Khamenei, *Jihad al-Tabyīn*, Modern Hypocrisy.

Introduction

The Holy Qur'an, as a book of guidance and the constitution of the good life, contains a set of "Divine Sunan" that, transcending temporal and spatial limitations elucidate the fixed principles governing historical and social transformations. The Qur'anic verse, "You will never find any change in the Sunnah of Allah, nor will you ever find any alteration in the Sunnah of Allah," (al-Fāṭir: ٤٣) explicitly affirms the immutable nature of these laws. Among the Qur'anic chapters, Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, particularly verses ٩-٢٧, constitutes one of the richest passages of revelation for elucidating the sunan associated with the "Confrontation between the front of truth and falsehood," the "Engineering of the enemy's psychological warfare," and the "Mechanisms of divine assistance." The surah provides an extensive account of the "Battle of the Confederates (the Trench)," a battle in which all the dimensions of disbelief, polytheism, and hypocrisy came together in an unprecedented alliance with the aim of completely eliminating "The City of the Prophet," only to ultimately return empty-handed. Although numerous historical and theological studies have examined the Battle of the Confederates, this study addresses a more fundamental issue: "Whether the Qur'anic narrative serves solely as a historical account or

provides a "Trans-historical strategic model" for believing communities facing major Fitnahs and civilizational sieges. The study explores how the divine sunan in Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, particularly verses ٩-٢٥, have been applied in Ayatollah Khamenei's interpretive-strategic reading to contemporary political and security developments in Iran and the Resistance Front. Among contemporary exegetes, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei offers a distinctive perspective through his theory of "Historical-Civilizational Reflection" in Qur'anic interpretation. At critical junctures in the history of the Islamic Revolution, he has consistently referenced the verses of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, employing terms such as the "New Battle of the Confederates," "Today's Trench," and the "recurrent scenario of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*." (Khamenei, ١٢/٤/١٣٩٥)

١. Research Background

Studies indicate that the subject of divine sunan in the Holy Qur'an is among the issues that have received considerable attention from Qur'anic scholars and Islamic thinkers. Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr, in "The Sunnahs of History in the Qur'an," regards the divine sunan as fixed laws governing the movement of human societies and examines their role in explaining historical transformations (Sadr, ٢٠٠٢ AD/١٣٨١ SH). Likewise, Mesbah Yazdi, in *Society and History from the Perspective of the Qur'an*, examines the relationship between human will and divine sunan and analyzes the role of these laws in shaping social transformations (Mesbah Yazdi, ٢٠١٢ AD/١٣٩١ SH). Martyr Morteza Motahhari, in his discussions of "The unseen forms of divine assistance," also addresses the influence of spiritual and divine factors on the destiny of societies and the victory of the front of truth (Motahhari, ٢٠١٠ AD/ ١٣٨٩ SH).

In the field of exegesis of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, prominent exegetes such as Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in *Tafsir al-Mīzān* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٥ AD/١٣٧٤ SH), Ṭabrisī in *Majma'*

al-Bayān (Ṭabrisī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٤١٥ AH), and Makarem Shirazi in *Tafsir Nemooneh* (Makarem Shirazi, ٢٠٠٧ AD/١٣٨٦ SH) have analyzed the historical, exegetical, and social dimensions of the verses concerning the Battle of the Confederates. In addition to explaining the historical circumstances of the battle, these works examine concepts such as the alliance of enemies, psychological warfare, the role of hypocrites, the patience and resistance of believers, and divine assistance. Nevertheless, most of these studies have focused on interpreting the verses within the historical context of early Islam and have paid comparatively less attention to their strategic and civilizational potential for analyzing contemporary issues. In recent years, some studies have comparatively examined the Battle of the Confederates and the circumstances of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nemati et al., in the article "The Conditions of the Battle of the Confederates in Today's Islamic Iran and the Factors of Victory Based on the Statements of the Leader," have sought to explain the similarities between the Battle of the Confederates and the challenges facing the Islamic Republic of Iran (Nemati et al., ٢٠٢١ AD/١٤٠٠ SH). Likewise, Khorand, in *A Comparative Analysis of the Battle of the Confederates, the Sacred Defense, and the Islamic Republic of Iran with an Emphasis on the Statements of the Supreme Leader*, examines certain comparative dimensions of this subject and addresses the role of the Battle of the Confederates as a model for understanding contemporary developments (Khorand, ٢٠٢٠ AD/١٣٩٩ SH). On the other hand, an examination of Ayatollah Khamenei's Qur'anic statements, works, and lectures indicates that, in his *Tafsir of the Holy Qur'an*, he emphasizes the social, historical, and civilizational dimensions of the Qur'anic verses and regards the Qur'an as a source of guidance for both individual and social life and as a basis for developing models for governing an Islamic society (Khamenei, ٢٠١٠ AD/ ١٣٨٩ SH; ٢٠١٧ AD/١٣٩٦ SH; ٢٠٢٣ AD/١٤٠٢ SH).

Nevertheless, an examination of the available sources indicates that relatively little attention has been given to an independent study that systematically extracts Ayatollah Khamenei's interpretive-strategic reading of the verses of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* through qualitative content analysis and explains its relationship to the political, security, and cultural developments of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The present study therefore seeks, to some extent, to address this research gap. More precisely, it seeks to demonstrate that concepts such as the "Alliance of the forces above and below," (verse ٩) the "Severe shaking of hearts," (verses ١٠-١١) the hypocrites' "Call to flee and retreat," (verse ١٣) the "Digging of a defensive trench," and ultimately the promise that "Allah repelled those who disbelieved in their rage," (verse ٢٥) are all regarded within the intellectual framework of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution not as historical propositions, but as "Operative laws governing the contemporary battlefield." According to this reading, the difference between the battlefield of early Islam and that of today lies merely in the transformation of the "Instruments," from swords and horses to sanctions, media, and missiles, while the essential nature of the "Confederates" (the alliance of disbelief and hypocrisy) remains unchanged.

The primary innovation of this study is its use of comparative thematic exegesis and content analysis of Ayatollah Khamenei's statements to reconstruct his analytical model regarding the divine sunan of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* and to examine the application of this model to concepts such as hybrid warfare, infiltration, *Jihad al-Tabyīn*, active resistance, and divine assistance.

A precise understanding of the "Battle of the Confederates" model from Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective is essential for deciphering the broader strategies of the Islamic Republic in confronting "Maximum Pressure" and "Hybrid Warfare." This comparative framework also provides criteria for identifying "Modern Hypocrisy" and for reinforcing *Jihad al-Tabyīn* as the contemporary defensive trench.

۲. Research Method

This study is qualitative in nature and employs a descriptive-analytical approach. The primary research method is comparative thematic exegesis, combined with qualitative content analysis. In the first stage, verses ۹-۲۰ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* were exegetically examined with a focus on the concepts of the "Enemy Alliance," "psychological Warfare," "Hypocrisy," "Defensive Strategy," and "Divine Assistance." In the second stage, the written and oral statements of Ayatollah Khamenei that directly or indirectly refer to Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, the Battle of the Confederates, hybrid warfare, infiltration, *Jihad al-Tabyīn*, and resistance were collected and examined. The common themes emerging from the verses and the statements were then extracted and categorized into analytical categories. Finally, the relationship between these themes and the political and security developments of the Islamic Republic of Iran was subjected to comparative analysis.

This analysis is based solely on Ayatollah Khamenei's interpretive reading and does not assert exclusivity among Qur'anic exegetes. Furthermore, a comprehensive comparative examination of all developments of the Islamic Revolution through the Surah *al-Aḥzāb* model is beyond the scope of this article; thus, only the most significant cases are addressed.

۳. Conceptual and Methodological Framework

۳.۱. The Concept of "Divine Sunnah" in the Qur'an

The word *sunnah* in Arabic carries several meanings, including an "Established way and method," a "Continuous Practice," a "Law governing the course of affairs," and a "Path or way that existed in the past and has continued." (Ibn Manẓūr, ۱۹۹۳ AD/۱۴۱۴ AH: ۱۳, ۲۲۶; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, ۱۹۹۱ AD/۱۴۱۲ AH: ۱, ۴۲۹)

In the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence, it is used to refer to the acts, statements, and tacit approvals of the impeccable Imam in contrast to obligatory acts and

innovations (Muẓaffar, ٢٠٠٩ AD/١٤٣٠ AH: ٣, ٦٤; Shawkānī, ١٩٩٨ AD/١٤١٩ AH: ١, ٩٥). The term "Sunnat Allah" refers to the set of fixed, inviolable, and recurrent laws that Almighty God has established to govern the created order, history, and human societies (Mesbah Yazdi, ٢٠١٢ AD/١٣٩١ SH: ٤٠٩; Sadr, ٢٠١٤ AD/١٣٩٣ SH: ١٦٢; Motahari, ١٩٩٥ AD/١٣٧٤ SH: ١١١). The Qur'anic verses indicate that the divine nature (al-Fāṭir:٤٣; al-Aḥzāb:٣٨), universality (al-Aḥzāb:٣٨), immunity from alteration and transformation (al-Fāṭir:٤٣; al-Isrā':٧٧; al-Aḥzāb:٦٠-٦٢; al-Faḥ:٢٣), social character (al-A'rāf:٩٦-٩٩), and potential for discovery and rereading (al-Ḥajj:٤٦; al-Nisā':٨٢) are among the prominent characteristics of the divine sunan.

٣,٢. Divine Sunnahs from the Perspective of Islamic Thinkers

The concept of sunnah is one of the foundational concepts in Islamic sciences and Qur'anic knowledge. In addition to its extensive use in hadith literature and Qur'anic exegesis, it occupies a fundamental position in explaining the systems of creation and legislation. Accordingly, throughout history, Islamic thinkers have approached the interpretation and explication of this concept from different perspectives, each illuminating various dimensions of it from a particular angle. Some exegetes have defined the divine sunnah as a "Continuous Practice" or "A method and course that operates predominantly and continuously." (Ṭabrisī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٤١٥ AH: ٨, ١٨٢; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٤١٧ AH: ١٦, ٣٤١)

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi likewise regards the divine sunnah as a set of fixed and enduring divine laws, both creational and legislative. In his view, these laws, like the fundamental principles governing the universe, operate across all times and among all peoples and are never subject to change or transformation (Makarem Shirazi, ١٩٩٥ AD/١٣٧٤ SH: ١٣, ٤٣٥).

Alongside exegetes, Muslim theologians and philosophers have also examined this issue. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, emphasizing divine wisdom, regards the systematic

nature of God's actions as the source of the formation of divine sunan. In his view, although the Holy Qur'an uses the term sunnah in many instances in connection with the punishment of sinful peoples, the concept can be extended to all divine acts, because no divine act occurs without wisdom and purpose. Moreover, these principles are not limited to creational acts but also encompass the domain of legislation (Mesbah Yazdi, ٢٠١٩ AD/١٣٩٨ SH: ٤٦٩).

Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr, adopting a historical and Qur'anic approach, maintains that the divine sunan possess the characteristics of law-governed regularity, continuity, and inviolability. He regards many divine sunan as dependent upon human behavior and choices. For example, divine assistance on the battlefield is conditional upon the believers' patience, steadfastness, and adherence to their duties (Sadr, ٢٠٠٢ AD/١٣٨١ SH: ٨٣).

Martyr Motahhari, from a philosophical perspective, likewise regards phenomena in the world as subject to causes and laws abstracted from the actual relationships among things and phenomena. He maintains that God governs the universe through a wise and law-governed order and does not act outside the framework of these laws. Accordingly, the laws governing the universe, because they are rooted in the realities of existence, do not undergo change or decline (Motahhari, ١٩٩٧ AD/١٣٧٦ SH: ١١١).

٣,٣. The Position of the "Divine Sunnahs" in Ayatollah Khamenei's Interpretive Thought

Among contemporary exegetes and thinkers, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei has opened a new perspective on the concept of divine sunan by proposing and emphasizing a "Historical-civilizational method of reflection." He maintains that Almighty God has established operative rules and laws in both the natural world and the human realm. Some, such as the law of gravity, are tangible, while others, such

as divine assistance and divine support for the God-conscious, are intangible (Khamenei, ۷/۰۴/۱۴۰۱).

The characteristics of his exegetical school in approaching the divine sunan include the following:

A) Emphasis on the "Operative Continuity" of the Sunnahs in the Present Age:

One of the deepest and most illuminating Qur'anic concepts that occupy a central and strategic position in Ayatollah Khamenei's intellectual framework is the issue of the "Continuing operation of the divine sunan throughout human history." He states: "The Qur'an is full [of divine sunan]. As I said, if you look from the beginning of the Qur'an to the end, the divine sunan are constantly explained and repeated ..." (Khamenei, ۷/۴/۱۴۰۱)

B) Explication of the Theory of "Historical Similarity": The central principle of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's interpretive thought concerning the divine sunan is the principle of "Application." He maintains that the responsibility of a Qur'anic exegete and Muslim thinker is not limited to understanding the lexical meaning of a verse; rather, they must identify the "Contemporary Manifestation" of that sunnah in the political and social arena (Khamenei, ۱۵/۰۹/۱۳۹۶; ۲۲/۰۴/۱۳۷۱).

C) Deriving a "Strategic Model" from the Divine Sunnahs: He does not study the Qur'anic sunan merely for "Increasing religious knowledge"; rather, he derives from them an "Operational Prescription" for governing society and confronting the enemy. He states: "The scene of early Islam is a model for us. ... The early Islamic period is a highly complex, artistic, and integrated tableau in which the various dimensions of the historical life of the Muslim community can be observed up to the present day and forever. If one examines

each of these dimensions and applies it to one's own time, one can understand ..." (Khamenei, ١/١٢/١٣٨٩)

D) Linking the Divine Sunnahs to the "Certain Promises of God": In his thought, knowledge of the divine sunan constitutes a principal source of "Creating Hope" and "National Self-confidence." (Khamenei, ٢٥/١/١٣٩٧)

It may be said that the method of historical application in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought stands in continuity with Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s exegetical school of "The Qur'an explaining the Qur'an" and thematic exegesis, as well as *Sayyid Quṭb*'s and Martyr Motahhari's "Social-political Exegesis." His emphasis on the "Practical Applicability" of exegetical findings to social governance and civilizational development distinguishes his approach from other methods.

٤. A Comparative Rereading of the Battle of the Confederates and the Islamic Revolution in Ayatollah Khamenei's Thought

٤,١. The "Alliance of Disbelief": A Comparative Analysis of Verse ٩ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* and the Geometry of "Hybrid Warfare" against the Islamic Revolution

According to historical evidence, the greatest confrontation between the Muslim forces and their enemies in the fifth year after the Hijrah was the "Battle of the Confederates." In this battle, a broad coalition of enemies was formed against the Muslim community. The course of this battle is described in verses ٩-٢٦ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*. The Meccan polytheists, led by *Abū Sufyān*, together with various tribes, including *Banū Naḍīr*, *Ghaṭafān*, and others, attacked Medina with a large army of approximately ١٠,٠٠٠ men with the aim of destroying the Muslims. At the suggestion of Salman Farisi, the Muslims dug a trench around Medina. The enemy laid siege to the city from above (east of Medina) and below (west of

Medina). Under these difficult circumstances, intense fear and anxiety overwhelmed the Muslims, to the extent that their eyes became fixed and their hearts reached their throats. At the same time, some entertained false notions concerning the divine promise. At this point, God caused the enemies to experience fear and confusion by sending a powerful windstorm and unseen forces (angels), dispersed them, and saved the Muslims from this great danger (Ibn Athīr: ٢, ١٧٨).

The Holy Qur'an states: "When forces came against you, We sent against them a wind and forces you could not see. And Allah sees all that you do. When they came upon you from above you and from below you, when your eyes became fixed, and your hearts reached your throats, and you entertained various thoughts about Allah." (al-Aḥzāb:٩)

That is, "Remember when armies came against you; but We sent a fierce storm against them and forces that you could not see. And Allah is ever Seeing of what you do. [Remember] when they came upon you from above and below [the city] and besieged Medina, and when the eyes became fixed from the intensity of fear, the souls reached the throats. You entertained various evil thoughts about Allah."

Ayatollah Khamenei has repeatedly emphasized that the enemies of the Islamic Revolution have reconstructed the same pattern of the "Confederates" on a global scale against the Islamic system. He states: "America, global arrogance and their extensions, Zionism, the Zionist regime, the reactionaries, the money-worshippers of the world, the pleasure-seekers among Muslims who are dependent on those powers, all of them have lined up against Islam, against the path of the Prophet ..." (Khamenei, ١٩/١٠/١٣٩٤, Remarks at a meeting with the people of Qom).

Exegetes, in interpreting the phrase "From above you and from below you," have referred to the geographical positions of the attackers (Ṭabrisī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٤١٥ AH: ٨, ١٢٤; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٩٩٤ AD/١٣٧٣ SH: ١٦, ٢٨٥).

Ayatollah Khamenei offers a distinctive interpretation of the concepts of "Above" and "Below" and employs them as a "Stable Strategic Model" for analyzing the confrontation between the front of truth and falsehood in the contemporary era.

In Ayatollah Khamenei's strategic discourse, "Above" refers to the "Great and Dominant International Powers" that have arrayed themselves against the Islamic Revolution from a position of material, military, economic, and media superiority. The prominent characteristics of "Above" in this reading include access to instruments of superior power, such as international sanctions, media hegemony, diplomatic pressure, and military threats.

He states: "Today, at the forefront of the enemies of Islam stand America and the Zionist regime. These are the same above that, with all the instruments of power at their disposal, act against the Iranian nation and the Resistance Front."^١ (Khamenei, ١٥/٠٩/١٣٩٦)

In contrast, below, in his strategic discourse, carries a more complex and dangerous meaning. Below refers to infiltration, instigating, and domestic mercenary currents that operate against the Islamic system under the guise of being "Insiders" and by exploiting the "Internal Capacities" of society^٢ (Khamenei, ٢٢/١٠/١٤٠١).

A key point in the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's analysis is the "Coordination and Synergy" between above and below. He emphasizes that

^١. The relevant source is Ayatollah Khamenei's remarks dated ١٥/٠٩/١٣٩٦.

^٢. According to his perspective, examples of "below" include currents of hypocrisy and political infiltration, terrorist and separatist groups, intimidated and Western-oriented intellectuals and elites, and hostile domestic media outlets and online figures.

domestic infiltration cannot create a crisis without the logistical, financial, and media support of foreign powers (above). Conversely, foreign powers cannot implement their regime-change projects without a domestic base (below). This, in his view, constitutes the "Strategic alliance of disbelief and hypocrisy" that the Qur'an exposes in Surah *al-Aḥzāb*. He maintains that these two terms identify two "Complementary Fronts" that emerge in every era against monotheistic and justice-seeking systems (Khamenei, ١٤/٠٣/١٤٠٢).

A comparative analysis of verse ٩ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* in relation to contemporary developments of the Islamic Revolution indicates, within this interpretive framework, that the "Alliance of disbelief and hypocrisy against the front of truth" constitutes a fixed and recurrent pattern in the historical confrontation between truth and falsehood. Recognizing this Qur'anic pattern provides a basis for understanding the "Geometry of Hostility" directed against the Islamic Revolution and the need to adopt corresponding strategies for confronting it.

٤,٢. **"The Shaking of Hearts": From the Psychological Siege of Medina to Modern "Cognitive Warfare" against the Islamic Revolution**

Following the depiction of the geometry of the siege in verse ٩ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, Almighty God describes in verses ١٠ and ١١ the "Psychological State" of the believing community at the height of the siege. These verses constitute one of the Qur'an's most precise and profound analyses of "Psychological Warfare" and its effects on the minds and hearts of believers: "... When your eyes became fixed, your hearts reached your throats, and you entertained various thoughts about Allah. It was there that the believers were tested and shaken with a severe shaking." (al-Aḥzāb: ١٠-١١)

The word "*Zāgha*" derives from the root (z-y-gh), meaning "To Deviate" or "To Turn Aside" (Ibn Manẓūr, ١٩٩٣ AD/١٤١٤ AH: ٨, ٤٣٢). The expression "*Zāghat*

al-Abṣār" (the eyes became fixed) is an allusion to a state that occurs at the height of fear and anxiety: a condition in which, because of extreme fear and astonishment, the eyes deviate from their normal course and remain fixed (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٩٩٤ AD/١٣٧٣ SH: ١٦, ٢٨٥).

"The hearts reached the throats" is one of the most expressive Qur'anic metaphors for describing the "Extreme intensity of anxiety and palpitation" that generally occurs on the verge of an imminent and potentially fatal danger. Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes in *al-Mīzān*: "This expression is an allusion to the intensity of fear and terror, as though the heart, because of the intensity of its beating, were about to leap out of the chest." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٣٧٣ SH: ١٦, ٢٨٥)

"And you entertained various thoughts about Allah"^١: This part of the verse reveals the "Deeper Layer" of the psychological crisis. Fear of the siege was not limited merely to trembling limbs and a pounding heart; rather, it penetrated the "Sphere of faith and belief."

"And they were shaken with a severe shaking": This expression represents the culmination of the Qur'an's description of the psychological crisis during the Battle of the Confederates. Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī interprets "Severe Shaking" as "Psychological anxiety and inner disturbance." He maintains that the "*Zilzāl*" mentioned in this verse refers to the shaking of hearts as a result of fear and terror, rather than an earthquake. He also understands "Various Thoughts" as doubts and hesitations that the hypocrites instilled in the hearts of the believers (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٣٧٣ SH: ١٦, ٢٨٦).

^١. "Some were saying, "Indeed, the disbelievers will triumph and gain mastery over the city." Some of them say, "Islam will be destroyed and religion will perish." Some say, "The Age of Ignorance will return just as it was." And some say, "God and His Messenger have deluded them."

Ayatollah Khamenei, drawing on the method of "Historical–civilizational reflection," employs the Qur’anic concept of "Severe Shaking" as a "Persistent sunnah of psychological and cognitive warfare" in analyzing the contemporary confrontation between the front of truth and falsehood. In this regard, he states: "The enemy seeks to gain control over minds. Control over minds is far more valuable to the enemy than control over territories. If they manage to take control of the mind of a nation, that nation will hand its own territory over to the enemy with both hands. Minds must be protected, control over minds. Some did not lie themselves, but unfortunately, they endorsed the enemy’s lies." (Khamenei, ٥/٩/١٤٠١)

It may be argued that, from his perspective, the Qur’anic "Severe Shaking" corresponds precisely to modern "Cognitive Warfare",^١ in that in both cases the primary objective is to "Weaken national will" and "Create a sense of deadlock and hopelessness." (Khamenei, ٦/٣/١٣٩٥) He regards the psychological insecurity of society as one component of soft warfare, through which the enemy shakes the hearts of the people by spreading falsehoods (Khamenei, ٦/٨/١٤٠٣). From his perspective, political currents opposed to the Islamic Republic and regional countries seek to create social and psychological turbulence and to disturb the hearts of the people (Khamenei, ٣/٧/١٣٨٢).

٤,٣. "Hypocrisy within the Trench": A Qur’anic Analysis of "Disease of the Heart" and Its Application to the Phenomenon of "Infiltration" in the Islamic Revolution

^١. Cognitive warfare is a type of psychological operation in which the enemy uses modern information technologies to disrupt people’s cognitive faculties by inducing cognitive errors in individuals’ minds. In this form of warfare, the human mind constitutes the principal battlefield, and the enemy seeks to turn public opinion away through undermining trust, generating hopelessness, instilling perceptions of governmental inefficiency, eroding the legitimacy of society, and calling the credibility of the political system and government into question.

Following the depiction of the geometry of the siege (verse ٩) and the description of the psychological shaking prevailing in the community (verses ١٠-١١), Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, in verses ١٢-٢٠, proceeds to "Dissect the phenomenon of hypocrisy." These verses expose the true face of the "Fifth Column" and the "Infiltrating Elements" operating from within the trench of Medina. Almighty God states: "And [remember] when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease said, "Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion." (al-Aḥzāb: ١٢)

That is: "[Remember] when the hypocrites and those whose hearts contained a disease [of doubt and uncertainty] said: "Allah and His Messenger have promised us nothing but deceptive promises."

On the basis of verses ١٢-٢٠ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, the principal indicators of the hypocritical current within the trench can be identified as follows: denial of the divine promises and mockery of faith (Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion); calling for flight and retreat (O! People of *Yathrib*, there is no place for you here, so return); making excuses and rationalizations for fleeing (Our houses are exposed); readiness to cooperate with the attacking enemy (If they had entered upon them ... they would have readily done so); and breaking covenants and failing to remain faithful to the divine covenant (Indeed, they had already pledged to Allah before).

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī interprets "Disease of the Heart" as "Weakness of faith and instability of belief." He states: "The hypocrites were those who were disbelievers inwardly but Muslims outwardly, whereas "those in whose hearts was a disease" were believers whose faith was weak and who could easily be influenced by the temptations of the hypocrites." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٣٧٣ SH: ١٦, ٢٨٦)

Ayatollah Khamenei, drawing on the method of "Historical-civilizational reflection," employs the Qur'anic concepts of "Hypocrisy" and "Disease of the Heart" as a "Persistent sunnah of infiltration and distortion" in analyzing the

contemporary confrontation between the front of truth and falsehood. He maintains that these verses provide a precise description of the "Infiltration Current" and the phenomenon of "Modern Hypocrisy" in the Islamic Republic. In Ayatollah Khamenei's strategic discourse, "Infiltration" constitutes the modern equivalent of Qur'anic "Hypocrisy." (Khamenei, ٢٤/٨/١٣٩٨)

From his perspective, infiltration has various dimensions and levels: "Security-intelligence infiltration (penetration of the governmental apparatus and security, military, and economic institutions); intellectual-cultural infiltration (the current of distortion), which is subtler and more gradual; and political-organizational infiltration (the presence of elements affiliated with the enemy in political parties and parliament)." (Khamenei, ٢٥/٦/١٣٩٤, ١٣)

From Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, the indicators of the "Infiltration Current" correspond remarkably closely to the Qur'anic indicators of the "Hypocrites" and those "In whose hearts is a disease": "Denying domestic capabilities and instilling a sense of inability through expressions such as it cannot be done, we cannot, and there is no way to salvation except surrender; calling for tactical and strategic retreat (retreat in missile, nuclear, and regional programs); and rationalizing fear and flight through the language of expediency." (Khamenei, ٢٤/٤/١٣٩٧)

Intellectual and organizational infiltration thus reproduces the same "Shaking from within the trench," seeking to cause decision-makers to make errors in their calculations.

٤,٤. The "Trench-Digging" Strategy (Its Application to the Doctrine of Active Resistance and *Jihad al-Tabyīn*)

One of the key dimensions of the Battle of the Confederates, which was implemented as the Prophet's (PBUH) defensive strategy at the suggestion of Salman Farisi, was the "Digging of the Trench" to create a barrier against the infiltration of the enemy's

۱۰,۰۰۰-strong coalition (Wāqidī, ۱۹۹۰ AD/۱۳۶۹ SH: ۲, ۳۳۰). This physical measure symbolized defensive rationality and the use of all available capacities to safeguard the "Dār al-Islam." In the contemporary era, trench-digging has moved beyond a merely military and physical form and has been redefined as a "Doctrine of active resistance" across various dimensions. In confronting the enemy's "Hybrid Warfare," Ayatollah Khamenei identifies several defensive-offensive trenches. First is the trench of "*Jihad al-Tabyīn*" as the principal antidote to psychological shaking and the rumors spread by the murjifun (rumor-mongers) (Khamenei, ۰۵/۰۹/۱۴۰۱); second is the trench of the "Resistance Economy" for neutralizing the economic siege and sanctions imposed by global hegemonic powers (Khamenei, ۲۹/۱۱/۱۳۹۲); and third is the trench of "Developing missile and drone capabilities" as a hard defensive barrier against the aforementioned threats (Khamenei, ۳۰/۱/۱۳۹۴; Khamenei, ۱۴/۴/۱۳۹۶).

The common feature shared by the trench in early Islam and contemporary strategies such as *Jihad al-Tabyīn*, the resistance economy, and the strengthening of deterrent capabilities is their function of deterrence and reducing the vulnerability of the Islamic community. Just as the trench prevented the enemy's military penetration of Medina, these strategies, in Ayatollah Khamenei's analysis, function as structural barriers against the enemy's cultural, economic, media, and security infiltration. Accordingly, applying the concept of the trench to these strategies is not merely a matter of superficial analogy; rather, it is based on functional and strategic similarity. From this perspective, digging the trench means establishing comprehensive protection in the scientific, cultural, economic, and military domains so that the enemy has no capacity to penetrate or surprise society in either the cognitive or material sphere.

◦. Divine Sunnahs in the Battle of the Confederates and Their Application to the Events of the Islamic Revolution Based on Ayatollah Khamenei's Views and Thought

The Battle of the Confederates (the Trench), because it presents a comprehensive scene of an all-out confrontation between the front of truth and falsehood, has consistently received attention in Islamic political discourse as a strategic model for analyzing the challenges confronting the faith-based front. Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, as a revolutionary and strategic Islamic scholar, has consistently linked his analysis of the events of the Islamic Revolution to Qur'anic and historical sunan, both in his role as a theorist and as a commander.

◦, ١. Unseen Assistance at the Height of Extreme Need

Within the epistemological framework of the Holy Qur'an, unseen assistance is one of the clearest divine sunan operating in the arena of the struggle between truth and falsehood (Motahhari, ٢٠١٠ AD/ ١٣٨٩ SH: ٣, ٣٤٤).

Lexically, "*Imdād*" means providing assistance, strengthening, and offering material and spiritual support (Muṣṭafawī: ١١, ٥٢). In Qur'anic terminology, "*Imdād*", as well as "*Naṣr*" and "*Ta'yīd*," refers to God's special assistance to the forces of truth, which operates through extraordinary means beyond ordinary human calculations (Nasehi, ٢٠٠٨ AD/ ١٣٨٧ SH: ١٧). The Holy Qur'an explains this assistance sometimes through the sending of "Unseen Forces," (al-Tawbah: ٢٦; al-Aḥzāb: ٩) sometimes through "Instilling terror in the hearts of the enemies," (Āli 'Imrān: ١٥١; al-Anfāl: ١٢) and sometimes through "Strengthening the hearts of the believers." (al-Anfāl: ١١) What occurred during the Battle of the Confederates was a combination of all these dimensions. In verse ٩ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, God describes the manner of this assistance as follows: "When forces came against you, We sent against them a wind and forces you could not see ..."

Thus, two principal elements of divine assistance are articulated in this verse: first, the "Wind"; and second, the "Forces you could not see," that is, the unseen forces. These forces are understood as divine angels or unseen powers that directly caused fear and terror to arise in the hearts of the army of disbelief (Ṭabrisī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٤١٥ AH: ٨, ١٢٤). Alongside the powerful wind, this inner terror caused the enemy to break the siege and flee without engaging in a major confrontation. The sunnah of "Divine Assistance" in the Battle of the Confederates is, in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought, an operative rule throughout history and the most fundamental governing logic of the Islamic Revolution (Khamenei, ١٠/٤/١٣٦٨). From Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, this sunnah is not merely a reassuring slogan; rather, it is a certain law conditioned upon "Revolutionary action to the point of extreme necessity." (Khamenei, ٧/٤/١٤٠١) Understanding and promoting this sunnah constitutes an important psychological and strategic resource for navigating the difficult historical turning points of the future, because it calls the believer, even under the most difficult circumstances, to "Await the great relief," that is, to maintain the same outlook toward divine assistance.

Within Ayatollah Khamenei's intellectual framework, the "Will of Nations," the "Faith of believing youth," the "Deterrent power of the Resistance Front," the "Steel-like Resolve" of believing peoples and "Divine unseen assistance" are among the manifestations of the "Forces you could not see." These "Unseen Forces" are factors that do not fit within the enemy's material calculations and therefore take the enemy by surprise.

٥,٢. The Sunnah of the "Ascendancy of the Logic of Faith over Material Calculations": The Intellectual Foundation of Resistance

In analyzing the confrontations between truth and falsehood, calculations are generally based on material factors such as troop numbers, equipment, technology,

and logistical support. The Holy Qur'an, however, in its depiction of the Battle of the Confederates, reveals another type of calculation, which Ayatollah Khamenei refers to as the "Logic of Faith." During the Battle of the Confederates, those who calculated the balance of forces, based on appearances, regarded the victory of the polytheists, *Abū Sufyān* and his coalition, as certain. Yet verse ٢٢ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* records the reaction of the true believers as follows: "And when the believers saw the Confederates, they said, "This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and it only increased them in faith and submission." In other words, the believers viewed the global coalition of disbelief against them not as a sign of defeat, but as a sign that victory and the fulfillment of the divine promise were approaching. Within Ayatollah Khamenei's intellectual framework, one of the certain divine sunan manifested in the Battle of the Confederates and subsequently repeated throughout the history of the Islamic Revolution is the sunnah of the "Ascendancy of the logic of faith over material calculations." He states: "Today, the Islamic Republic, in terms of its revolutionary, political, military, and international standing, is regarded as a victorious entity in the world. In the words of the world's political actors, your enemy has come to its knees before you, and you have attained those objectives. How did you attain these objectives? Through faith, piety, and adherence ..." (Khamenei, ٦/٦/١٣٦٩)

Ayatollah Khamenei articulates this principle as an "Intellectual Foundation" of the Islamic Revolution. This divine sunnah has served at various stages following the victory of the Islamic Revolution as a basis for the analysis of believing forces. The sunnah of the "Ascendancy of the logic of faith over material calculations" in the Battle of the Confederates constituted the basis of resistance and paved the way for unseen assistance; in the Islamic Revolution, it has likewise formed an intellectual foundation for overcoming major crises. Revolutionary believers, relying on this

sunnah, have regarded the enemy's attacks as manifestations of the fulfillment of the divine promise and the proximity of victory, and this outlook has kept them steadfast in the face of the most formidable waves of global hegemonic power. Expanding this logic throughout society will, in this view, constitute a key to the continuity and global expansion of the Islamic Revolution.

۵,۳. **The Sunnah of the "Final Victory of the Front of Truth": The Internal Collapse of the Camp of Falsehood**

At the conclusion of every historical confrontation between truth and falsehood, the fundamental question is who achieves final victory and through what mechanism this victory is determined. From a materialist perspective, military and economic power and political alliances determine the outcome. The Holy Qur'an, however, in its account of the Battle of the Confederates, reveals a sunnah that challenges material calculations: the front of falsehood collapses from within without being defeated in direct combat. In contrast, the front of truth attains divine assistance at minimal cost. This sunnah is manifested in the concluding verses of the account of the Confederates.

The Holy Qur'an depicts the outcome of the battle in two pivotal verses: "And Allah repelled those who disbelieved in their rage, without their obtaining any good. And Allah spared the believers from fighting. And Allah is Powerful, Almighty." (al-Aḥzāb:۲۰)

This verse represents the "Manifestation of absolute divine power" and the "Certain promise of assistance to the believers." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۹۰ AD/۱۳۷۴ SH: ۱۶, ۲۸۶; Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۴ AD/۱۴۱۰ AH: ۸, ۱۲۴)

Ayatollah Khamenei analyzes contemporary global developments, particularly the ups and downs of the Islamic Revolution, within the framework of this same sunnah.

In Ayatollah Khamenei's strategic discourse, the enemy's "Rage" signifies "Failure to achieve strategic objectives despite possessing material power, accompanied by suppressed anger." (Khamenei, ۲/۷/۱۳۹۸) He maintains that the "Final victory of the front of truth" is a certain promise and a historical law that cannot be violated (Khamenei, ۲۴/۱۲/۱۳۹۶).

From his perspective, first, divine assistance does not follow calculations based on the balance of power; rather, it is grounded in God's promise to believers who fulfill the conditions for its realization. Second, the process of the enemy's destruction begins from within the enemy itself. The "Casting of Terror" is not necessarily an external factor; rather, it can result from the internal contradictions, ideological emptiness, moral corruption, and social crises of the camp of falsehood. In his words: "Today, in the West, in America, the moral, social, and identity crises are signs of the same internal collapse that Almighty God has promised for the front of disbelief." (Khamenei, ۱۲/۸/۱۳۹۲)

From Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, this sunnah provides a basis for analyzing contemporary global developments and the failure of regime-change projects. He identifies the following as concrete manifestations of this sunnah in developments over recent decades:

- ۱) The humiliating withdrawal of the United States from Iraq and Afghanistan after ۲۰ years of spending trillions of dollars without achieving its objectives (Khamenei, ۲۰/۶/۱۴۰۲).
- ۲) The destruction of the "Accursed Tree" of ISIS, which, according to this interpretation, had been created with the aim of severing the regional arm of the Resistance (Khamenei, response to Martyr Qasem Soleimani concerning the end of ISIS's territorial control, ۲۰/۸/۱۳۹۶).

۳) The failure of the U.S. "Maximum Pressure" strategy against the Iranian people (Khamenei, ۲۲/۱/۱۴۰۱).

۴) The internal collapse of the former Soviet Union, presented as a concrete example of "Casting terror into their hearts" and the decay of material civilizations without direct military confrontation (Khamenei, ۱۱/۱۰/۱۳۷۰). The most explicit instance of this application appeared in the Friday Prayer sermon of ۲۷ Dey ۱۳۹۸, in which he characterized the missile response against *'Ayn al-Asad* as a clear contemporary instance of "Allah repelled those who disbelieved in their rage, without their obtaining any good," arguing that it shattered the material prestige of global hegemonic power (Khamenei, Tehran Friday Prayer sermon, ۲۷/۱۰/۱۳۹۸).

Applying this model to the analysis of the events of the Islamic Revolution indicates that crises such as the Sacred Defense, domestic disturbances, sanctions, and regional wars are, within this interpretive framework, contemporary manifestations of the same operative sunan that were manifested in the Battle of the Confederates.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of comparatively examining the divine sunan in Surah *al-Aḥzāb* in relation to the developments of the Islamic Revolution from the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei. The findings clearly indicate that, within the intellectual framework of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the Battle of the Confederates is not merely a historical episode belonging to the fifth year after the Hijrah; rather, it constitutes a "Trans-temporal and trans-spatial strategic model" for analyzing the confrontation between truth and

falsehood across different eras. A comparative analysis of his statements and the verses of Surah *al-Aḥzāb* demonstrates that the Qur'anic patterns of the "Alliance of the forces above and below," the "Shaking of Hearts," "Hypocrisy within the trench," "Digging the Trench," and "Unseen Assistance" are, within this interpretive framework, applicable to developments in the four decades of the Islamic Revolution:

- ١) In the domain of the enemy alliance: The alliance of global hegemonic powers with regional proxies and the domestic infiltration current, at times such as the imposed war, the ١٣٨٩ unrest, and the disturbances of ١٤٠١-١٤٠٤, is presented as a recurrence of the scenario of the alliance between *Quraysh* and *Banū Qurayzah*.
- ٢) In the domain of psychological warfare: The enemy's efforts to generate hopelessness among the people and undermine their faith through media and sanctions are presented as the same "Severe Shaking" mentioned in verse ١١ of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*.
- ٣) In the domain of domestic hypocrisy: The current that enters the arena with slogans such as "It cannot be done" and "We should retreat" is presented as an instance of "Those in whose hearts is a disease" and of those who proclaimed, "There is no place for you here, so return."
- ٤) In the domain of defensive strategy: The Leader's emphasis on the "Resistance Economy," "Missile Power," and "*Jihad al-Tabyīn*" is presented as modern manifestations of "Digging the Trench" against the enemy's hybrid threats.
- ٥) In the domain of the outcome of the confrontation: The defeat of ISIS, the withdrawal of the United States from the region, and the failure of the maximum-pressure strategy are presented as manifestations of the Qur'anic

promise: "And Allah repelled those who disbelieved in their rage, without their obtaining any good." (al-Aḥzāb:٢٥)

The final message of the article is that, from the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei's strategic interpretation, whenever the Iranian nation and the Resistance Front practice "Piety," "Patience," and "Trust in God," and safeguard their "Trench of Insight," the realization of the "Rage of the Disbelievers" and final victory is certain.

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