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The Domination of International Zionism in the Islamic World: From the Words of Ayatollah Khamenei

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Abstract: Zionism is a political movement that has sought to garner international support in pursuit of its ultimate goal: the establishment of a Jewish nation-state. In this context, the materialistic and capitalist nature of the modern West—along with its hegemonic ambitions—aligns politically, culturally, economically, and strategically with the objectives of Zionism. This convergence gives rise to the phenomenon of "International Zionism," which, in tandem with the expansionist aims of major Western powers, exploits nations of the Global South—particularly in the Islamic world. In his statements, the former Leader of the Islamic Revolution has repeatedly highlighted this issue, characterizing the Zionist regime as a "base for the West—the enemy of Islam"—in the Islamic world. This article seeks to answer the question: "How has the military and cultural domination of international Zionism in the Islamic world been sustained according to the discourse of Ayatollah Khamenei?" Textual analysis reveals that the establishment and support of the illegitimate Israeli regime, the destabilization of and incitement of discord within Muslim nations, the sowing of division among Muslims and Islamic countries, the promotion of inhumane and ungodly values, the spread of terrorism, and a military presence in the region are among the strategies that have led to the continued dominance of Zionism and the West in the Islamic world.

Keywords: Ayatollah Khamenei, Domination, International Zionism, Islamic World, Modern Western Civilization.

Introduction

The contemporary history of the West Asia region has witnessed the incursions, colonialism, occupation, and military, economic, and cultural influence of the modern West. Amidst its internal contradictions, modern Western civilization ultimately crystallized into a macro-social formation: capitalism. In its historical evolution, capitalism—which intellectually emerged from the materialist philosophy of liberalism (the primary layer of this secular civilization's humanist core)—is compelled to export and displace its internal dilemmas and crises onto other lands to ensure its own material and spiritual continuity. Consequently, Western powers have consistently sought—through various means and by extending their supremacy and hegemony over key strategic regions of the globe, including West Asia—to perpetuate their existence (which hinges on this domination) and to dismantle any form of resistance against such supremacy.

The money-driven, capitalist nature of the modern West aligns—politically, culturally, economically, and strategically—with the objectives of Zionism as a political movement seeking to realize its aspirations (namely, the establishment of a Jewish nation-state), giving rise to the phenomenon known as "International Zionism." Aligned with the hegemonic ambitions of major Western powers, this phenomenon engages in the exploitation of nations in the Global South—particularly in West Asia—to the extent that the illegitimate Israeli regime, acting as an "international criminal syndicate," stops at nothing—violating ethics, norms, and international law—whenever Western interests so require. At the same time, due to this movement's dominance over global mainstream media—including news agencies, film studios, and social media platforms—it seeks to suppress any forces that stand against the hegemony of Western civilization, attempting to crush this "courageous and humane resistance" by branding it with labels such as "terrorism."

Given this context, identifying and exposing the "position" and "role" of international Zionism within the discourse of Ayatollah Khamenei—the world's foremost contemporary anti-Zionist political-religious leader—is considered a matter of significant importance. Within this framework, and following the definition of the study's key concepts, we employ a conceptual model derived from two other primary models to analyze and represent the theme of domination in relation to international Zionism as it appears in the discourse of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

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1. Definition of Concepts

1.1. Zionism

This term is derived from Zion, a hill near the city of Jerusalem. *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Zionism as a Jewish nationalist movement aimed at establishing and supporting a Jewish national state in Palestine—the ancient land of the Jews (the Land of Israel). Although Zionism originated in Eastern and Central Europe during the late 19th century, in many respects, it represents a continuation of the ancient attachment of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion to the historical region of Palestine. According to Jewish teachings, Zion—one of the hills of ancient Jerusalem—is the place where God dwells (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025). This definition reflects the prevailing perception of Zionism in the West. Most pro-Israel Western

scholars regard Zionism as a Jewish nationalist movement. Halpern and Reinharz believe that Israel's political independence is an expression of the fundamental Zionist idea. Although a wide range of social, economic, and cultural institutions emerged [in the occupied Palestinian territories] with the establishment of Israel in 1948, these institutions were based on ideas and practices that had been developed much earlier by the Zionist Organization and its affiliated bodies (Halpern & Reinharz, 1987: 151-152).

However, Zionism is not merely a modern political ideology; rather, it is essentially a continuation of certain fundamental elements of historical Judaism. Consequently, it cannot be classified simply as a nationalist movement. Zionism is a modern expression of "political Judaism" which, grounded in the concept of racial superiority and the notion of being a "chosen people," has consistently sought to establish dominance and expand its influence over the entire world and humanity. Thus, it is political Judaism that is authentic, significant, and historically operative; Zionism merely refers to the more recent manifestations of this same political Judaism (Tahaei, 2019). Therefore, Zionism is a political movement that, as a continuation of historical Judaism, has made the establishment of a Jewish state its central objective.

1.2. International Zionism

International Zionism is a powerful global movement of which the Zionist regime is merely one component. The convergence of the interests and objectives of the Zionist movement with the modern capitalist system gave rise to this movement. Thus, international Zionism is a modern phenomenon that matured within the framework of European colonial interests and objectives.

In addition to the Zionist regime—which views itself as a state—other components constituting the phenomenon of international Zionism include certain international organizations,

influential strategic think tanks in the United States and Europe, major mainstream international media outlets, prominent multinational corporations, specific politicians, and certain global figures of great wealth. In his renowned book “Global Zionism”, Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqqad writes: "The implementation of the Zionist [plan] in Palestine undoubtedly stems from the power of global Zionism. Yet, this global Zionism does not enter the arena alone; rather, it operates alongside two other, greater forces: colonial interests and intense prejudice against Islam" (al-Aqqad, 2001: 36). Consequently, from a discursive perspective, the construction of an "Other"—specifically Islam and the symbols of Islamic discourse—by the international Zionist movement serves colonial objectives.

1.3. Domination

The terms "power," "domination," and "hegemony" are closely related in political literature; however, each carries a distinct semantic nuance. Unlike power, domination is characterized by an institutionalized form of social asymmetry embedded in a stable structure. Domination can be examined historically through distinct forms; for instance, modern domination is distinguished by its abstract and impersonal nature. This characteristic entails consequences that serve as a basis for critiquing domination. Such critique focuses not on specific, identifiable individuals (those holding power) but rather on social relations—or more precisely, on the element of domination within them—especially insofar as modern society views its social order as the product of its own actions and practices. Classical critical theories of modern society reveal the impersonal nature of modern domination by employing concepts such as the capital (class) relationship, the modern state and its associated bureaucracy, technology, and rationality. Critical approaches have also added ethnicity and gender to this list (Bruch and Naron, 1999: 33).

The category of domination encompasses various dimensions—political, military, cultural, economic, and so forth. Consequently, one can identify and separately examine forms such as political, military, cultural, and economic domination. Political domination, for example, is a situation in which an individual, party, or institution exercises significant and sustained control over political power, decision-making, and the political landscape. This is often achieved through a combination of strategies—such as persuasion, resource control, and explicit or implicit threats, sanctions, or violence. Such domination can be observed at various scales; From a single party that consistently wins elections within a dominant one-party system to a state that exerts power over others in international relations. (Sustainability Directory, 2025)

1.3.1. Military Domination

Military domination is the most conspicuous form of dominance; it manifests either within a specific geographic territory (a country)—often characterized by a militaristic political system—or over external territories through forms such as military occupation, colonialism, and the like.

1.3.2. Political Domination

In practice, political domination manifests in various forms: the first that comes to mind is the exercise of domination through authoritarian regimes. In the second form, political leaders fall under the influence of foreign powers. This influence is not limited merely to the level of the state but is also exerted through intermediary institutions, the business sector, and non-state blocs (Adhikary and Adhikari 2026: 10). In this article, "political domination" encompasses both direct political control and influence over the political leaders of Muslim countries.

1.3.3. Cultural Domination

Cultural domination refers to the prevalence and influence of a specific culture's beliefs, values, and practices over other cultures within a society or on a global scale, often impacting institutions such as the media, government, and education. It occurs when a more powerful group shapes norms, behaviors, and language—establishing them as the standard—thereby potentially marginalizing or assimilating minority cultures. Understanding cultural domination is crucial, as it can lead to inequalities and affect social integration and even cultural identity on a broader scale. Cultural domination describes a network of shared values, behaviors, and beliefs that function as the "default settings" of a society. It represents a quiet, collective consensus regarding what is considered normal, desirable, and simply the "status quo." These are the unwritten rules that guide our daily lives, influencing everything from career aspirations and definitions of success to our dietary choices and social interactions. (Sustainability Directory, 2025)

In academic literature, cultural domination is understood more precisely through the lens of "cultural hegemony"—a concept developed by the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony is a form of social control in which the ruling class establishes its own values, beliefs, and norms as the universal and "natural" standard for society as a whole. This is achieved not primarily through force, but through the generation of consent. Consequently, if international Zionism is viewed as a powerful force on the global stage, cultural domination becomes a significant and pertinent concept in relation to it.

2. Research Methodology and Conceptual Model

When examining key categories and themes within the intellectual frameworks of political thinkers, three distinct levels must generally be differentiated: the level of description (articulating "what is"), the

level of explanation and interpretation (articulating "why"—causes and reasons), and the level of prescription (articulating "oughts" and "ought-nots"). Based on this logic, scholars of political thought have developed theoretical and conceptual frameworks to facilitate the understanding of thinkers' political ideas. For instance, in his book "Understanding Political Theory" (Spragens,1991), Thomas Spragens employed a "crisis-oriented" model to propose a framework for understanding the political thought of thinkers and philosophers; this approach interprets their ideas in the context of the crises of their times—viewing their work, in effect, as a response to those crises.

Spragens' model is founded on the answers to four questions and comprises four stages. The theorist begins with the political crises facing their society; indeed, most theorists wrote their works at times when they increasingly perceived their society to be in crisis. Thus, the initial step involves observing and identifying the societal problem (Spragens, 1991: 45). Observing disorder stirs human reason and emotion, propelling the individual toward the second stage: diagnosing the causes. In the third stage, the thinker mentally reconstructs their ideal political society (envisioning a utopia). Finally, taking into account existing realities and constraints, the theorist proposes a solution or remedial prescription (Spragens, 1991: 235).

In his book "Beyond Suffering and Dream" (Manouchehri, 2016), Abbas Manouchehri—after critically reviewing various approaches to understanding political thought—proposes a five-stage model aimed at uncovering the fivefold implications of political ideas. From Manouchehri's perspective, one can achieve an understanding of thinkers' political thought through a "narrative of implications." After briefly examining key approaches to understanding political thought—such as Spragens' "contextualist" approach and Strauss's "universalist" approach—he argues that it is possible to view the shared characteristics of political schools and ideas differently and to explain their practical implications through this lens of signification.

From this standpoint, an explanatory account based on implications posits that "political thought is a practical discursive system containing a theoretical blueprint for a virtuous social order." Every political thought, as a discursive system, comprises several types of interconnected and coherent propositions that ultimately—by delineating a possible or desirable state of affairs in place of the status quo—determine the path to achieving it. In the words of Manouchehri, "These propositions may be termed 'significations,' for discursively, they explain the 'existing crisis,' define 'individual and collective good and interest,' outline 'desirable human relations' (norms), and lay the groundwork for an 'appropriate model of authority.'" Thus, "every political thought is a system of significations—each addressing an aspect of the political realm (public/civic life)—which ultimately coalesce into a conceptual-theoretical framework forming a political school of thought that articulates how a good life may be realized." (Manouchehri, 1395, Vol. 1: 44)

The first implication is the historical-situational one. Political reflection begins with the thinker's encounter with dilemmas or crises inherent in their specific context and era. They articulate the society's major dilemma in socio-historical terms—explaining the reasons for and the manner in which the prevailing situation emerged. The second implication is the foundational one. "Human happiness" and the "public interest" are the core categories within the foundational dimension of any political thought; they are linked to two identities: the individual human identity and the shared identity (the state or the public sphere). This appears to be a realm of knowledge and epistemology. The third implication is the normative one. Here, "norm" refers to the standard relationships governing society and human conduct within the public sphere. Throughout the history of political thought, fundamental norms such as justice, liberty, and rights have held prominence. The fourth implication comprises strategic implications. These are recommended based on the other

dimensions and serve to realize the foundational dimension. In effect, this is the realm of strategies devised by a thinker to advance their objectives; these strategies act, in a sense, as frameworks for categorizing norms. For instance, concepts such as democracy, government oversight, and the elective nature of office are proposed to secure the norm of liberty. The fifth implication consists of practical, applied implications. This constitutes the realm of policymaking. (Manouchehri, 1395, Vol. 1: 44–45).

Spragens and Manouchehri both strive to understand the political thought of thinkers regarding the political totality. Their efforts are grounded in a framework comprising the stages of description, explanation/interpretation, and prescription. Roughly speaking, the first two implications in Manouchehri's model—the explanatory and the foundational—correspond to Spragens' first and second stages. Similarly, the normative implication aligns with the third stage, while the strategic and applied implications correspond to the fourth. Thus, drawing on the aforementioned patterns, one can adopt a tripartite model: "situational analysis" (explaining the status quo), "visionary analysis" (delineating the desired state based on specific criteria and norms), and "strategic analysis" (encompassing recommendations and prescriptions). Consequently, the conceptual model of this study can be formulated based on how a thinker addresses three key questions—centered on their core concepts and terminology—as follows:

Conceptual model of the research



Source: Authors

Based on the aforementioned model, one can trace the status and role of international Zionism in relation to the dynamics of domination within the aforementioned triad—specifically, the contextual factors that enable (military and cultural) domination, as well as the intervening factors that precipitate it.

3. Findings

3.1. Situational Analysis

3.1.1. The Civilizational Challenge of Modern the West

Western civilization is undergoing a transformation and facing challenges, encountering global resistance to its drive for hegemony. In this context, its most significant civilizational rival and adversary emerged with the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. From the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei, the Islamic Republic occupies a historical position of civilizational confrontation with the materialist civilization of the West; indeed, he views the conflict as being at the civilizational level. Modern the West stands in fundamental contradiction to the concept of religion and its role in human social life. Therefore, given that the core of Western civilizational identity rests on the separation of religion from progress, "the Islamic Republic has taken aim precisely at this center, fired, and

hit the target. The Islamic Republic entered the arena with the slogan of religion... Through its very existence and presence, the Islamic Republic has refuted and challenged the central identity of Western civilization." (Khamenei, Remarks, July 27, 2022)

In his historical analysis of the dominance of international Zionism, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution posits that the victorious powers of World War I, feeling a need for a secure base in the heart of West Asia to ensure their perpetual hegemony, collaborated with wealthy Jewish elites. Britain played a prominent role in this process, paving the way for Zionism's influence through the Balfour Declaration. Having gradually laid the groundwork for their dominance via Zionism, these governments "finally—following the Second World War and taking advantage of the negligence and preoccupations of regional states—dealt their blow and proclaimed the existence of the fake Zionist regime and a state without a nation. The primary target of this blow was the Palestinian nation, followed by all the nations of the region." (Khamenei, Remarks, May 22, 2020)

Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, explicitly portrayed the establishment of the State of Israel in his book "The Jewish State" (Der Judenstaat) as the West's frontline against "Asia and barbarism"—referring to Muslims: "There we [in Palestine] shall form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. We should as a neutral State remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence." (Herzl, 1917: 12) In the late 19th century, Herzl succeeded in establishing extensive connections with wealthy Jewish capitalists and convened the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. From the very outset, he sought to forge a link between Zionism and colonialism. In this regard, he engaged in extensive correspondence with prominent colonialist figures—most notably the Englishman Cecil Rhodes—and in one such exchange, he revealed that his plan to establish a Jewish homeland was, in fact, a colonial project. Herzl

understood that the creation of the illegitimate state of Israel would be impossible without a colonial scheme and the elimination of the indigenous inhabitants of the land he coveted. (Mehr News Agency, December 24, 2023).

As explicitly stated by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the military occupation of Palestinian territory—based on the plan to establish Israel—was fundamentally: "...part of a complex, multilateral scheme aimed at preventing Muslim unity and cohesion, and forestalling the re-establishment of powerful Muslim governments. There is evidence indicating that Zionists maintained close ties with the German Nazis; furthermore, the presentation of exaggerated statistics regarding the killing of Jews served as a means to garner public sympathy, pave the way for the occupation of Palestine, and justify Zionist atrocities. There is even evidence that non-Jewish thugs and riffraff from Eastern Europe were relocated to Palestine under the guise of being Jewish—all to establish an anti-Islamic government in the heart of the Islamic world under the pretext of supporting victims of racism, thereby creating a rift between the eastern and western parts of the Islamic world after thirteen centuries." (Khamenei, Remarks, April 24, 2001)

3.1.2. The Absence of the Islamic Ummah

Citing the example of the Prophet (PBUH), Ayatollah Khamenei regards the formation of an "Islamic Ummah" (community) as essential and believes that the Islamic world currently suffers from the absence of such a unified body: "Today, we lack an Islamic Ummah. There are many Islamic countries, and nearly two billion Muslims live in the world, yet this collective cannot be termed an 'Ummah' because they lack coordination and a unified direction. An 'Ummah' signifies a collective of people moving in the same direction, toward the same goal, and driven by the same motivation; this is not the case for us—we are fragmented." He holds that the consequence of this

fragmentation is "the domination of Islam's enemies, which manifests in various forms. The unprecedented genocide of the oppressed people of Gaza today at the hands of the criminal Zionist gang—carried out under the protection of Western nations and amidst the inaction of international bodies—is merely one of the devastating repercussions of the absence of an 'Islamic Ummah'" (Khamenei, Remarks, September 21, 2024).

3.1.2.1. Destabilization of the Islamic World

In Ayatollah Khamenei's discourse, we observe an analysis of the internal environment regarding the fundamental factors and implications of the Islamic world's "current situation," grounded in Quranic and Islamic teachings and the tenets of Islamic discourse. Nevertheless, he remains consistently attentive to the external environment and the "Other" in relation to the Islamic world's identity. He believes that the primary cause of our problems—and those of many other regions across the globe—is "Global Arrogance" (Istikbar-e Jahani). As explicitly stated by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution: Today, the world is witnessing widespread oppression perpetrated by usurping global powers; observe how our region—and many other parts of the world—are currently grappling with problems manufactured by global arrogance. We speak about these oppressive global powers with complete candor and without reservation. The policy adopted today by the forces of arrogance—led by the unjust and oppressive United States—is a malevolent one; they have anchored their interests in fostering instability across many regions of the world, particularly in our own—the West Asia region. This is their policy; they have defined their interests in terms of war and civil conflict within this region—inciting brothers to turn against one another and allowing terrorism to spread in horrific forms. This is the policy the United States is pursuing today, aided by the Zionist regime and,

regrettably, by certain countries within the region (Khamenei, Remarks, September 9, 2018).

3.1.2.2. Sowing discord among Muslims and Islamic nations

From Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, "Today, the policy of Global Arrogance consists of creating rifts and discord among Muslim nations—and even within those nations, among the individuals themselves; that is the policy today. And this is a scheme devised by the planners and conspirators of criminal America and the Zionists for our region—which is one of the most important Islamic regions." Hence, "...the Zionist regime... was fundamentally planted in this region—in the heart of the Islamic world—to sow discord, to incite strife, and to manufacture crises." (Khamenei, Remarks, June 15, 2018)

3.1.2.3. Instigating Strife Within Muslim Countries

In addition to sowing discord and creating rifts among Muslims, international Zionism seeks to instigate strife within Muslim countries so that these societies remain perpetually unstable and unable to stand up against them. In the words of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution: The primary objective of US policy in this region today is to ensure the region never experiences tranquility; the aim is for the governments and nations of the region to be preoccupied with their own internal affairs, preventing them from even considering opposition to the malevolent agent of Global Arrogance in this region—namely, Zionism. That is one goal. Another goal is for America to justify its own presence [here]. When there is insecurity in Afghanistan, America justifies its presence by claiming, "Yes, we want to come here to establish security," even though they themselves created that insecurity; the events in Afghanistan—whether directly or indirectly—have been perpetrated by American agents over the past twenty-plus years; meaning, it was they who caused these sectarian-fueled massacres in the region; They are continuing to do the same thing now;

they want the [region] to remain in a state of turmoil so they can secure their own presence here and advance their political and economic agendas. May God's curse be upon Global Arrogance, upon the agents of Global Arrogance, and upon the malicious, criminal Zionist regime, the United States, and their agents—who are destroying the people and Muslims in this manner. (Khamenei, Dars-e Kharej, January 30, 2018)

In the intellectual system of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, there is a strategic identity between modern Western civilization and international Zionism. In his words, otherness is based on civilization; a new Islamic civilization in which there is solidarity and unity among Muslim nations and countries, as opposed to modern Western civilization. Therefore, at the level of strategic implications, any action and strategy that is contrary to the issue of "unity among Muslims" is in line with the enemy's will. From this perspective, the establishment of the Zionist regime as "the base of the West, the enemy of Islam" in the West Asian region is the creation of "a corrupt seed of a cancerous cell" to undermine the strategy of unity among Muslims. In his words: ...that day they divided the vast Ottoman state, destroyed it, divided it into several countries, they should have had a base here so that they could constantly occupy it, prevent the achievement of noble goals in this region; This base was the oppressed Palestine that brought these evil, corrupt, murderous, and ruthless Zionists here, established a fake government, created a fake nation for this purpose. Well, the Muslims were also aware; now [the enemies] are doing something to make this harmful existence, this mature cancer cell, go beyond the title of "hostility" and create more differences between the countries of the region. They are occupying everywhere; this normalization is one of the greatest betrayals that is being committed against Islam and Muslims; creating division, creating differences. This is how the enemy is; the enemy is constantly busy. (Khamenei, Remarks, 22/07/1401).

3.1.3. Spread of terrorism and manipulation of information

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution holds the view that the very foundation of Israel rests on terrorism; it is essentially a terrorist outpost established by the West and international Zionism to serve their own objectives. In his words: "From day one, the Zionists have turned usurped Palestine into a base for terrorism. Israel is not a country but a terrorist garrison directed against the Palestinian people and other Muslim nations. The struggle against this bloodthirsty regime is a struggle against oppression and terrorism; it is a universal duty" (Khamenei, Remarks, May 7, 2021).

From Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, Western civilization is undergoing a transformation and facing challenges, encountering global resistance to its hegemonic ambitions. Consequently, while it instigates and expands terrorism whenever its interests and goals dictate, it simultaneously labels any force resisting its dominance—regardless of its nature—as "terrorist." In this context, alongside utilizing political-diplomatic and international legal mechanisms rooted in dominant Western norms, it employs media tools to invert the roles of "oppressor and oppressed" and "executioner and victim." As the Leader of the Islamic Revolution stated: The leaders of international Zionism—who own or control through money and bribery the vast majority of media conglomerates in the United States and Europe—have branded this humane and courageous resistance as terrorism! Is a nation that defends itself against the crimes of Zionist occupiers on its own land truly terrorist? And is providing humanitarian aid to this nation and strengthening its resolve considered aiding terrorism? (Khamenei, Remarks, May 30, 2024).

Thus, the international Zionist movement engages in the manipulation of information to justify wars and fabricate assessments. Indeed, the colonial approach of Western civilization employs unreal and deceptive means to advance its objectives. The Leader of the Revolution explicitly invokes the historical memory of the region's people: The historical memory of the nations in our region will never

forget how colonialist governments—in order to usurp Palestine and drive its oppressed people from their homes and hearths—organized ruthless terrorist groups such as the international Zionist agency and more than ten other similar groups, thereby instigating the Deir Yassin massacre and similar atrocities. From its inception to the present day, the Zionist regime has openly persisted in terrorist conduct—both within and outside Palestine—and has even shamelessly proclaimed these actions. Past and present leaders of the Zionist regime openly take pride in their history of terrorism and, in some instances, even in their personal participation in assassination operations. ... In the view of the leaders of the hegemonic system, terrorism is defined as anything that threatens their illegitimate interests. They label as terrorists those fighters who exercise their legitimate right to resist occupiers and interlopers, yet they refuse to classify their own malicious, mercenary cells—which plague the lives and security of innocent people—as terrorists. (Khamenei, Writings, June 24, 2011)

3.1.4. Direct military presence in the region

The military presence of Western colonialism in the Islamic world—and particularly in West Asia—has persisted in various forms for numerous reasons, ranging from direct military occupation and the fragmentation of Muslim nations to the establishment of military bases. The creation of the Zionist entity, its "de jure" recognition by colonial powers, its admission to the United Nations, and its subsequent arming—alongside support for the regime's territorial expansionism (such as the occupation of parts of Egypt [Sinai] and Syria [the Golan Heights])—constitute a continuation of the military presence of the West and international Zionism in the region. As Ayatollah Khamenei has stated: By arming Israel while simultaneously urging Muslim and Arab nations to exercise restraint, engage in dialogue, and compromise, Western powers have consistently sought to maintain the regime's military superiority and dominance.

Furthermore, they have provided political and legal support for Israel in international forums and utilized media outlets under their influence to justify Israel's crimes. (Khamenei, Remarks, April 24, 2001).

Moreover, the military presence of international Zionism is evident through American, British, and French forces—and, more broadly, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—across the globe, including in various Muslim countries. The occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria serve as examples of this hegemonic policy over the past two decades—a subject frequently highlighted in the statements of Ayatollah Khamenei.

3.2. Perspective Analysis

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution regards the Islamic Republic as an ideal model of governance for the contemporary era and views the values stemming from the Islamic Revolution—specifically the return to spirituality alongside progress—as a solution for contemporary societies. Consequently, the political theory of "religious democracy" constitutes a key element of his political thought. In this context, the concept of domination stands in discursive opposition to the discourse of religious democracy. Religious democracy—which serves as a modern interpretation of the Islamic Republic, has been frequently articulated by the Leader, and has had its various facets illuminated through discussions of its foundations and principles—represents a novel theory within the realm of contemporary Islamic political thought. The underlying premise here is that the source of the propositions outlining the principles and foundations of government and society is the religion of Islam, and specifically Shi'a teachings; thus, it stands in fundamental conflict with secularism. Within this framework, regarding relations among Muslim nations (the Islamic "Ummah"), the traditional tendency to construct an "other" out of the Sunni majority is discarded; instead, a rapprochement-oriented

reading—positioned in opposition to the modern materialist world—infuses meaning into the concepts and signifiers of the Islamic Republic's discourse. Consequently, an identity—or at the very least, a convergence—is established between Iran's national interests (a signifier within the modern nation-state discourse) and the interests of the Islamic "Ummah" (a signifier within classical Islamic discourse).
The fundamental—and ultimately, the definitive—image within the discourse of the Islamic Revolution (which has crystallized into the Islamic Republic) is the establishment of a government grounded in justice, following the methodology and conduct of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (AS). Alongside the Revolution's core slogan—"Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic"—this concept shapes the primary norms of the theory of "religious democracy" and elucidates its normative implications. Consequently, when contrasted with the counter-discourse to the Islamic Revolution—namely, the macro-discourse of the modern West—the concept of "independence" emerges as a pivotal signifier, defined normatively in relation to "Global Arrogance" (Istikbar), "International Zionism," and the "superpowers." Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes the Quranic doctrine of "shunning "Taghut"" (tyrannical defiance of the Divine); as a pivotal signifier, this concept of Taghut generates semantic fields wherein key signifiers such as "oppression" (zulm), "rebellion/transgression" (tughyan), and "arrogance" (istikbar) are interpreted through their association with the concept of domination. In his words: "What we oppose is the rule of oppression, rebellion, and arrogance; when we speak of 'America,' this is what we mean—and it is not limited to America alone. Today, of course, the pinnacle of rebellion, arrogance, and Taghut is America—which is, in reality, being steered by Zionists (not merely the Zionist state, but wealthy Zionist individuals and corporate magnates). Any other country that adopts this same behavior falls into the same category. We harbor no opposition to any nation as a people—to any race or nationality; rather, we oppose

arrogance, we oppose oppression, and we oppose rebellion against human and divine values." Today, America is the embodiment of these things; it is the embodiment of oppression and arrogance, and that is why it is reviled across the world (Khamenei, Remarks, February 18, 2020).

From this perspective, the Islamic Revolution seeks to raise the "banner of justice and spirituality" [and to confront oppression and arrogance]. Therefore, "it is natural that in a world where behavior is based on force and thought is based on materialism—that is, the exact opposite of justice and spirituality—it provokes a reaction." Championing spirituality in a world where "everything is based on materialism and all the world's concepts are reduced to money" has led to "opposition and confrontation by the world of arrogance and the world of domination against the movement of the Islamic Republic"—a development that is "natural and inevitable" (Khamenei, Remarks, September 3, 2022).

It is within this framework of meaning—derived from Quranic teachings—that he holds the view that Israel will not be an enduring entity; for this regime falls into the semantic category of "falsehood" (bātil), and by the definitive decree of the Holy Quran, falsehood is destined to perish (Holy Quran, Surah Al-Isra [17], Verse 81). He has also repeatedly emphasized this point from a historical perspective. For instance: And the Zionist regime is not enduring either; all historical experiences definitively dictate and demonstrate this to us. The Zionist regime suffers from a fundamental problem. Today, the Americans, the agents of the Zionist regime themselves, and certain weak-willed governments that follow America imagine that by establishing diplomatic relations—whether overt or covert—with the Zionist regime, they can solve its problem; No, the problem facing the Zionist regime is not a matter of the existence or absence of diplomatic relations with governments—such that if two or three governments (or more or fewer) were to establish ties, thereby breaking the taboo of

relations with Israel and shaking hands with the Zionist regime, the regime's problem would be solved. No, the fundamental problem of the Zionist regime is its lack of legitimacy. The Zionist regime is illegitimate; its establishment was based on a false premise... and undoubtedly, this regime, founded upon falsehood, will—by the grace of God and through the resolve of Muslim nations—be destroyed and cease to exist. (Khamenei, Remarks, June 15, 2018)

3.3. Strategic Analysis

The ideal of Muslim unity against belligerent infidels (Western colonialism and international Zionism) is a reactive one, serving as a response to modern-era colonialism—although a civilizational conflict between the Christian West and Islamic societies has existed in the past, most notably during the Crusades. Nevertheless, the contemporary conflict has persisted amidst the decline and stagnation of Muslim societies; this has prompted Muslim nations to adopt a reactive stance in response to the actions of the capitalist West—a West characterized by the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. These reactions have varied across the Islamic world. One of the most significant strategies is the strategy of resistance. In the discourse of Ayatollah Khamenei, the strategy of resistance is fundamentally central, and he himself is regarded as a key figure within the discourse of resistance.

3.3.1. The Strategy of Resistance

"Resistance" is a pivotal concept within the discourse and intellectual framework of Ayatollah Khamenei. Indeed, resistance—acting as a counter-concept to domination—has consistently been emphasized by him as a strategy across various domains, such as resistance against "cultural invasion and cultural ambush," the "resistance economy," and so forth.

Our policy is to stand firm against the crimes of the system of domination; this angers them, and consequently, they level accusations against the Islamic Republic. Everyone must be vigilant not to align themselves with this arrogant policy of the United States. Whatever actions they take—in my view, based on my analysis—stem from powerlessness and incapacity. The assassinations that occur and the bizarre propaganda campaigns they wage happen because they are helpless and unable to achieve their goals. The inherent nature of the situation is the progress of the Islamic Republic; the inherent nature of the situation is the evident and remarkable success of the Islamic system's slogans. This is the nature of the matter—it has been so, and it will remain so—and they are compelled to retreat step by step. Well, this is the nature of the situation, and this is how it will unfold; they feel compelled to take some action in response, so they resort to assassinations, such propaganda, and the like. At times, they even encourage figures like Saddam to launch attacks—this has been the case since the very beginning of the Revolution—or they incite despicable individuals to hurl insults at the luminous figures of the Islamic world(Khamenei, Remarks, September 3, 2022).

3.3.1.1. Solidarity among Islamic societies

One of the most significant strategic and practical imperatives emphasized by the leaders of the Islamic Revolution—as well as other contemporary Muslim revivalists and reformers—is the fostering of solidarity among Muslim societies. Given that the political unification of Muslim states is considered a nearly impossible task, the solidarity of Muslim peoples themselves is a matter of great importance. As Ayatollah Khamenei has stated: The late Imam (may God be pleased with him) taught everyone to cast aside the dividing lines existing among the members of Muslim societies; there is only one dividing line, and that is the line separating faith and Islam on one side from disbelief and arrogance (istikbar) on the other—this is what the Imam

taught everyone. The dividing lines the Imam taught us to discard were those based on sect, ethnicity, race, political party, and the like; he said to put these aside. There is but one dividing line: the line between the realization of Islam—along with the Islamic system and the political embodiment of Islam—and the hegemonic system led by the United States. This is the dividing line that must be highlighted, and the Imam highlighted it from the very first day—not merely from the inception of the Islamic Revolution, but from the very first day of the movement itself; that is, from the moment the Imam launched the movement, fifteen years prior to the Revolution's victory. (Khamenei, Remarks, September 3, 2022).

3.3.1.2. Promoting Divine Values

Since the modern West promotes inhumane and ungodly values to maintain and expand its cultural hegemony—seeking to perpetuate that dominance through the reproduction of these very values—a key strategy within the overarching framework of "Resistance" is the promotion of divine values, the true embodiment of which is found in authentic Islamic teachings. In its drive to subjugate individuals and societies, International Zionism steers people toward "individualism" and "isolation," aiming to mold them into submissive subjects who serve its own interests and objectives. This is achieved by weakening and dismantling the primary, most vital, and fundamental social unit: the family. Consequently, from the perspective of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, strengthening the institution of the family stands as one of the most crucial bastions of the Resistance front against International Zionism: I emphasize—and you must emphasize—the issue of the family at this juncture in time. The enemy—not merely an enemy of Iran or the Revolution, but an enemy of humanity itself—has resolved to destroy the family system among mankind. The family is a divine tradition. The enemy of humanity—namely, the currents of international capitalism and Zionism—decided nearly a century ago to

eradicate the family among human beings; and in some places, they succeeded. They succeeded in places that had drifted far from God; in other places—including our Islamic Iran—they have not succeeded, though they continue to strive to do so. These difficult marriages, these delayed marriages, the low birth rates, and those unions—wrongly and hideously termed 'white marriages' (which are, in fact, the darkest form of marital life)—all serve the aim of destroying the family. (Khamenei, Remarks, February 26, 2019).

3.3.1.3. The Authenticity of the People and Land of Palestine

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution has repeatedly advocated for a political and democratic solution to the Palestinian issue—indeed, he was the one who originally proposed it. This proposal constitutes the official position of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the Palestinian issue. In his words: Like all free nations of the world, the people of Palestine—the genuine Palestinians—must be consulted; whether Muslim, Christian, or Jewish—those who are truly Palestinian, not those who have entered Palestine from elsewhere. The votes of those who are Palestinian must be sought, their opinions canvassed, and they must determine the system of government for the country of Palestine; that system of government will then make decisions regarding those who have entered this region—namely, the Zionists, their leaders, and the rest. There is no other solution for Palestine(Khamenei, Remarks, June 15, 2018).

Conclusion

International Zionism is a phenomenon aligned with the hegemonic ambitions of major Western powers to exploit the nations of the Global South—particularly the West Asia region—and has found institutional embodiment in the wake of Israel's establishment and declaration of existence. Although the Zionist regime is ostensibly promoted as the incarnation of a Jewish nation-state, international Zionism constitutes

a powerful global movement of which that regime is merely one component. The convergence of Zionist interests and objectives with the modern capitalist system gave rise to this movement; thus, international Zionism is a modern phenomenon that matured within the framework of European colonial interests and goals.

Ayatollah Khamenei—a preeminent global religious and political leader who defines his discourse through a civilizational confrontation with a materialistic and plutocratic West—has consistently warned against the dangers of international Zionism. From the perspective of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the Zionist regime serves as a "base for the West—the enemy of Islam"—in West Asia; in order to preserve Western hegemony, it employs various means—including military force and cultural infiltration—to obstruct "Muslim unity," which is the crucial strategy for ending Western dominance and paving the way for a new Islamic civilization.

This study sought to identify and expose the "position" and "role" of international Zionism within the discourse of Ayatollah Khamenei, focusing on the dimensions of military and cultural domination. Utilizing a tripartite conceptual model, his views were analyzed across three categories: situational analysis, perspective/outlook, and strategic analysis. The study reveals that modern Western civilization—of which international Zionism is a component of its macro-trends—has endeavored to perpetuate its cultural and military hegemony in the face of emerging challenges and the rise of resistance movements, aiming to avert its own decline and prevent the victory of resistance forces.

The absence of a unified Islamic Ummah—acting as a critical contextual factor—combined with interventionist tactics such as destabilizing the Islamic world (by sowing discord among Muslims and nations and inciting internal strife), the spread of terrorism, information manipulation, direct military presence, and the promotion of inhumane and ungodly values, has facilitated the cultural and

military domination of international Zionism in West Asia. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, a bright future awaits the region, as modern Western civilization is in decline and the Zionist regime—a key component of international Zionism—is ultimately destined for collapse.

Consequently, the primary strategy for countering the hegemony of international Zionism is the strategy of resistance. Solidarity among Islamic societies and the promotion of divine values constitute the core pillars of this resistance strategy.

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