



Quranic Elucidation of Resistance Through an Assessment of Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) as the Fundamental Other

Eshagh Soltani: Assistant professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.
E_soltani@sbu.ac.ir

Abstract: The central problem of the present study is the conceptual elucidation of resistance within the intellectual framework of the Islamic Revolution. Since resistance is essentially a negative and relational concept that acquires meaning only in relation to a significant Other, understanding it requires identifying and elucidating this Other. An examination of Ayatollah Khamenei's writings reveals that the fundamental Other of resistance is Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) (arrogant domination). As a Quranic concept, this study employs a thematic analysis of the Holy Quran to elucidate its semantic and substantive dimensions, examine how arrogant domination establishes political and social authority, and clarify its methods of governance. By turning away from monotheism, arrogant domination seeks to define itself as the source of right in existence. In the social sphere, it manifests in the attempt to impose its will as the organizing axis of social life, establishing an order independent of the monotheistic order as a "natural" order governing society. Under such conditions, resistance means striving to establish an order formulated by religious law which, through its intimate association with truth, can bring about a humane order and stability. Accordingly, a deliberate and intelligent confrontation must be undertaken with all instruments that facilitate the governance of arrogant domination.

Keywords: Resistance, arrogant domination, truth, Holy Quran, governance of arrogant domination.

Introduction

The Islamic Revolution of Iran marked a starting point for the revival, emergence, and serious crystallization of the concept of “resistance” within the broader field of religious thought. Indeed, it may even be argued that the Islamic Revolution sought to give concrete form to a particular type of state that could be described as a “state of resistance.” Nevertheless, resistance is one of those concepts that appears simple yet proves difficult to define; it is a broad concept that acquires meaning across various domains and contexts. Therefore, this concept must be elucidated from different dimensions and perspectives in order to advance toward greater conceptual clarity.

One of the essential characteristics of resistance is its negative and relational nature. In other words, the uses and associations of the concept of resistance direct the mind toward the question: resistance against what? The nature of the concept is such that it inherently refers to a point of aggression and to an Other. Therefore, one important priority in elucidating this concept is to demonstrate who the Other of resistance is in Islamic thought. Clarifying the Other of resistance also contributes to clarifying the concept of resistance itself. In the discourse of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution, as some of the most important political thinkers who have also participated in governing a religious society, this Other has consistently been a Quranic concept: “Arrogant Domination(Istikbār),” or arrogant domination. The present study therefore seeks, by demonstrating the repeated emphasis of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution on the issue of arrogant domination, to formulate as one of its assumptions the proposition that, within the scope of religious thought, the fundamental Other of resistance is arrogant domination. Since Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) is a Quranic concept, discussing resistance consequently requires a Quranic elucidation of arrogant domination.

According to Allameh Tabataba’i, interpretation means explaining the meanings of the verses of the Holy Quran and uncovering their purposes and implications. In his view, a common feature among many exegetical approaches is the attempt to impose one's preferred scientific conclusions upon the Quran (Tabataba’i, 1995, Vol. 1: 9-13). This danger exists in all Quranic research and must

be addressed. One method that can help researchers avoid this danger is thematic research in the Holy Quran. Accordingly, the subject of research is initially derived from external reality – in this case, the concept of resistance – and is then presented to the Quran (Sadr, 2016: 45). Through this method, the researcher seeks, without being influenced by existing theories, to identify insights and concepts directly from the verses of the Holy Quran (Lesani & Moradi, 2014: 15). This does not conflict with consulting different Quranic commentaries in order to refine and deepen the meanings of the verses. Rather, the emphasis is that the researcher should first and directly engage in a dialogue with the Quran and determine the range of verses related to the subject.

Accordingly, the application of this method in the present research can be described as follows. First, the subject of resistance will be examined regardless of the theoretical context in which it is formulated. This stage seeks to understand the nature and semantic essence of the concept and its central problem. Second, the central problem of the research topic will be presented to the Holy Quran, and the Quranic responses will be identified. Third, all verses identified as responses will be classified, understood collectively and relationally, and presented within a coherent order.

1. Literature Review

Considerable Quranic research has been conducted concerning the concepts of resistance and arrogant domination. In their article “The Semantics of Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) in the Holy Quran,” Eftekhari and Babakhani employ a descriptive semantic approach to explain the meaning of Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) in the Holy Quran and, based on the words co-occurring with this concept in the Quran, examine its causes, roots, effects, and consequences (Eftekhari & Babakhani, 2015). Joveinipour and Pirouzfard, in “The Typology and Nature of Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) in the Holy Quran,” attempt to provide a comprehensive definition of the nature of Arrogant Domination(Istikbār), analyze its roots and types, and explain the semantic domains in which it operates (Joveinipour & Pirouzfard, 2018).

With regard to resistance, Zahedi-Tir and Amin Naji, in "An Examination of the Concept of Resistance with a Social Approach in the Verses of the Quran," investigate the foundations of resistance in the Holy Quran. By presenting resistance as an innate concept, they demonstrate that it is constituted in the Quran on the basis of principles such as monotheism and justice. Kouhyar and colleagues, in "The Nature of Resistance Governance in the Holy Quran," examine resistance at the level of governance and, by adopting a theoretical framework derived from transcendent philosophy, define resistance governance (Kouhyar, Lakzaei, & Qareh-Baqi, 2025).

Despite the valuable Quranic research conducted on resistance and arrogant domination, some of which has been mentioned above, none of the existing Quranic studies has attempted to elucidate resistance through an elucidation of arrogant domination. The novelty of the present study therefore lies in first examining the concept of resistance in a precise and thematic manner, explaining its negative and relational nature, and then undertaking thematic research in the Holy Quran to provide a Quranic elucidation of resistance.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Relational and Negative Nature of Resistance

In accordance with the research method, the first step is to examine the nature of the concept of resistance within the existing theoretical literature so that its central and fundamental problem can ultimately be understood. Resistance is one of the most widely used concepts in various fields of the human and social sciences. It has received extensive attention in areas such as political philosophy, the sociology of power, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and contemporary social theory (Baaz, Lilja, & Vinthagen, 2017). Nevertheless, despite its extensive use, there is no complete theoretical consensus regarding its precise definition, and the concept has acquired different meanings across various theoretical traditions.

2.1. Definitions of Resistance

The question that arises here is whether the various definitions allow us to identify a fundamental and constitutive semantic core within the concept of resistance. Can a single underlying meaning be attributed

to resistance? Can we speak of a central problem around which resistance acquires its meaning? Accordingly, some of the most important definitions of resistance are discussed below.

2.1.1. Resistance as Moral Disobedience

One of the earliest modern theoretical formulations of resistance can be found in the writings of Henry David Thoreau. In his famous essay "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau regards resistance as a moral act in which an individual refuses to obey laws that he considers unjust. Thus, he argues that if a law turns a person into an agent of injustice toward another, that law may be violated (Thoreau, 2004: 6). In this definition, resistance arises on the basis of an individual's moral conscience and in response to a condition of injustice. Consequently, resistance is a concept that acquires meaning only in relation to an unjust condition or structure of domination. Without such a condition, the action of which Thoreau speaks would essentially have no object.

2.1.2. Resistance as Confrontation with Power

One of the most influential redefinitions of resistance in contemporary thought can be found in the works of Michel Foucault. In his analysis of power relations, Foucault emphasizes that power is not a centralized and unidirectional phenomenon but rather a network of relations that permeates society. From this perspective, resistance is not external to power but an inseparable part of the same network of power relations. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes: "Where there is power, there is resistance; and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault, 1978: 95). Through the application of technologies of governance, processes of power take human life as their object. It is precisely the exercise of domination that generates diverse forms of resistance (Lemke, 2017: 80–81).

This formulation demonstrates that resistance in Foucault's theory is fundamentally relational because it emerges only within the context of power relations. From this perspective, resistance cannot be analyzed as an independent action separate from the structure of power. Rather, it is a reaction that emerges within the same field of forces in which power operates. This produces highly diverse forms of

resistance. Nevertheless, in all such cases resistance is intelligible only when the mechanisms of power against which it is directed are identified.

2.1.3. Resistance as Counter-Hegemonic Struggle

In Antonio Gramsci's political theory, resistance is understood through the concept of "counter-hegemonic struggle." By introducing the concept of hegemony, Gramsci demonstrates that domination in modern societies is exercised not only through coercion but also through consent and cultural control (Gramsci, 1971). From this perspective, resistance is not merely opposition to political domination but a struggle to challenge the dominant semantic and cultural order. Gramsci argues that subordinate groups must establish a form of "alternative hegemony" in order to confront the prevailing hegemony (Gramsci, 1971: 210). Within this framework, resistance can be understood only once the hegemonic order against which it is directed has been identified. Without such an order, counter-hegemonic struggle loses its meaning. Resistance is therefore fundamentally relational in Gramsci's theory as well.

2.1.4. Resistance as Opposition to Colonialism

Within postcolonial theory, the concept of resistance emerged in connection with the experience of colonialism and the struggle against it. One of the most prominent thinkers in this field is Frantz Fanon, who views resistance as a process through which the colonized subject attempts to negate colonial domination and recover his or her identity. Fanon argues that colonialism is not merely a political structure but also a profound system of cultural and psychological domination that destroys the identity of the colonized. Under such conditions, resistance refers to the process through which the colonized subject rejects this order of domination (Fanon, 1963: 35–45). Here again, resistance is inconceivable without the colonizer. The colonizer constitutes the "Other" in relation to whom resistance takes shape.

2.1.5. Resistance as a Form of Social Movements

Another field that addresses resistance is the study of movements and revolutions. In this context, certain types of movements are identified

as “resistance movements.” Such movements are generally conservative in nature and often emerge alongside and against another reform movement, seeking to prevent that reform movement from achieving its objectives. For example, the White movement in the United States can be understood as a resistance movement that emerged against the Black movement and sought to oppose its objectives. Other forms of such movements arise to resist foreign aggressors or to oppose governmental violations of citizens' rights (Panahi, 2010: 42–43). This interpretation of resistance likewise demonstrates that its essential element is the existence of an Other through confrontation with whom resistance movements acquire their identity.

2.2. Theoretical Elucidation of the Concept of Resistance

In light of the various definitions examined above, it can be affirmed that resistance is fundamentally a relational concept; that is, it is not defined independently but always in relation to a structure of domination, power, or hegemony (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004: 535). Baaz and colleagues likewise argue that resistance can be understood as an action undertaken with the aim of challenging or weakening power (Baaz, Lilja, & Vinthagen, 2017: 140). Vinthagen also emphasizes that resistance can be understood only when the relationship between actors and structures of power is analyzed (Vinthagen, 2015). These formulations highlight two important points. First, resistance is always directed against some form of power or domination; second, resistance itself is identified within the framework of this power relation.

Indeed, it appears that the concept of resistance has inherently acquired an identity such that clarifying its meaning depends upon knowing its Other. In other words, the concept possesses a negative and relational nature, and in order to understand its content within different discourses, attention must be focused on the question: who or what is the Other of resistance in that context? The very element that gives resistance its content in each discourse is precisely the element against which resistance is directed and through which it acquires concrete meaning. Resistance is therefore inherently relational, taking

shape within power relations, and it has a negative character because its meaning is determined through the negation of a condition of domination. Its central concern is standing against a specific objective and theoretical condition. Consequently, any theoretical effort to understand resistance precisely must first identify and analyze the structure or force against which resistance is formed.

2.3. The Other of Resistance in the Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei

Having discussed the nature of resistance and established that it is negative in character and acquires meaning through differentiation from an Other, it is necessary to examine what that Other is within religious thought. Since the concept of resistance has been particularly prominent in the discourse of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and since his views constitute one of the most important bodies of thought determining the semantic content of this concept in the Islamic Republic, while he is also a prominent religious thinker with a long history of leading an Islamic society, this section turns to his theoretical discourse in order to answer the question of what the Other of resistance is. Concepts such as "resistance," "state of resistance," "resistance movement," "resistance force," and "resistance front" have, through their repeated use, sustained attention, detailed interpretation, and conceptual elaboration by him, acquired a relatively specific semantic content in contemporary political discourse, particularly among Shi'a communities in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. His position on this issue therefore deserves priority and can serve as a foundational assumption of the present study.

It has also been established that, in order to elucidate resistance within any discourse, one effective approach is to examine the Other of resistance within that discourse, since deepening the meaning of that Other makes possible a deeper understanding of resistance itself. Accordingly, the question must be addressed: what is the Other of resistance in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought?

In defining the nature of resistance, he discusses its relation to the Islamic Republic and the system of domination, and more specifically the relationship between the Islamic Revolution of Iran and

the United States. He states: "This is where the word 'resistance' acquires its meaning. When we say 'resistance forces, resistance movement, resistance front,' this is what we mean: a reality called Islam has risen in the contemporary era. This great Islamic movement did not exist one hundred years ago or fifty years ago; today it exists. It has seized the system of domination by the throat and acts for freedom and justice. It has emerged, and they want to employ every power at their disposal against this [Iran] in order to push it back. This is where 'So call [to the way of your Lord] and remain steadfast' becomes relevant: both calling [people] and steadfastness are necessary; this is what resistance means" (Ayatollah Khamenei, speech, 6/9/1398).

He explicitly refers to the Islamic Republic as a "state of resistance," defining it as follows: "What does a state of resistance mean? It means not submitting to bullying, not submitting to excessive demands, and standing in a position of strength." In his view, this bullying and exercise of domination is externally manifested through "arrogant domination": "Global arrogant domination, which is characterized by excessive demands and aggression and seeks to seize all the material and spiritual resources of the peoples of the world, is opposed to every element of resistance. [Therefore] it is opposed to resistance organizations and resistant individuals. But these are one thing, and a state founded upon resistance is another. The Islamic Republic is a state of resistance: a state of resistance with policies, an economy, armed forces, international activities, and a broad sphere of influence both inside and outside the country. This is extremely important and cannot be compared with any other element of resistance. That is why hostility from every part of the world – whether from power-seekers or from their servants – is directed toward the Islamic Republic" (Ayatollah Khamenei, speech, 20/2/1396).

It has therefore become clear that, in his view, resistance acquires meaning through standing against arrogant domination. Accordingly, the fundamental Other of resistance is none other than "Arrogant Domination (Istikbār)," a point he repeatedly emphasizes: "What stands opposite the Islamic system is arrogant domination. The direction of the Islamic system's hostilities is toward the system of

arrogant domination. We oppose arrogant domination; we struggle against arrogant domination" (Ayatollah Khamenei, speech, 29/8/1392).

He further states: "We strongly oppose and struggle against arrogant domination, the system of domination, and the domination of several countries over the destiny of the world, and we will not allow them to play with the fate of the world" (Ayatollah Khamenei, speech, 28/11/1388).

But what is required in order to actively resist arrogant domination? "We must know arrogant domination; we must know its characteristics; we must know its performance and direction so that we can rationally regulate our own conduct toward it" (Ayatollah Khamenei, speech, 29/8/1392).

Arrogant domination can be understood through different avenues: at times through history, at times through its contemporary interactions, and at times at the level of theory and meaning. Ayatollah Khamenei himself offers the following brief definition: "First, let me define 'Arrogant Domination(Istikbār).' What does 'Arrogant Domination(Istikbār)' mean? When we say 'global arrogant domination,' what does 'Arrogant Domination(Istikbār)' mean? The word 'Arrogant Domination(Istikbār)' is a Quranic word; it appears in the Quran. As I have been told, the word 'Arrogant Domination(Istikbār)' and its derivatives are repeated approximately fifty times in the Quran. 'Arrogant Domination(Istikbār)' means considering oneself superior; this is the meaning of 'Arrogant Domination(Istikbār)' ... But sometimes a government, a human being, a group, a bully considers itself superior to others and gives itself the right to push others aside, encroach upon the vital interests of others, and determine obligations for others. Arrogant domination in this form is evil" (Ayatollah Khamenei, speech, 12/8/1404).

It has thus been established that, in the view of Ayatollah Khamenei, as one of the most important theorists and political actors of resistance, the Other of resistance is "Arrogant Domination(Istikbār)," and that Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) is fundamentally a Quranic concept. Accordingly, a precise elucidation of resistance within the intellectual framework of the Islamic

Revolution requires a Quranic elucidation of arrogant domination. Indeed, effective opposition to arrogant domination and proper planning for confronting it necessarily require knowledge of its nature. Since Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) is a Quranic concept, a Quranic study of arrogant domination therefore becomes particularly important from this perspective.

3. Arrogant Domination(Istikbār): Arrogant Domination

The concept of Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) will be elucidated through several interconnected steps in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the concept. After examining its linguistic dimensions, an attempt will be made to extract its semantic essence. Subsequently, the concrete and substantive manifestations of arrogant domination at two levels – political power and social leadership – will be examined.

3.1. Linguistic Analysis

The word Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) derives from the root k-b-r (kibr). This root is shared by words such as kibr (greatness), takabbur (arrogance), and Arrogant Domination(Istikbār), all of which signify greatness and superiority. Kibr refers to a state in which a person, by perceiving himself as great, considers his own being superior to others. Among the most reprehensible forms of arrogance is arrogance toward God and refusal to acknowledge the truth, which manifests itself in refusing to submit (Raghib al-Isfahani, 1982, Vol. 3: 293). Thus, Qamus al-Quran defines Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) as “claiming greatness and behaving arrogantly despite not being entitled to it” (Qureshi Banaei, 1992, Vol. 6: 74).

Morphologically, the word Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) belongs to the istif’āl form, which denotes “seeking” or “requesting.” Therefore, from a linguistic perspective, Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) means “seeking greatness” or “desiring superiority.” Although one might theoretically identify a positive and praiseworthy dimension in such a meaning, in the discourse of the Holy Quran the term is consistently used in a condemnatory sense. This is because it describes a condition in which a being seeks

superiority or excess for itself despite lacking the qualifications for such superiority. It denotes a demand for a kind of elevation beyond the limits and measure appropriate to that being.

A particularly important point emphasized in two major lexicographical works, *Majma' al-Bahrayn* and *Lisan al-'Arab*, is the relationship between Arrogant Domination (*Istikbār*) and truth. Arrogant Domination (*Istikbār*) involves seeking elevation while simultaneously implying a refusal to acknowledge the truth (Turahī, 1995, Vol. 3: 465). It encompasses rejection of truth arising from arrogance and obstinacy (Ibn Manzur, 1993, Vol. 5: 126). Thus, Arrogant Domination (*Istikbār*) may be understood as seeking elevation, superiority, and greatness despite lacking the entitlement to them, and consequently confronting the truth on the basis of this unjustified claim. Such confrontation with truth occurs because the arrogant seeks something that is not rightfully his.

3.2. Analysis of the Origin and Content of Arrogant Domination (*Istikbār*)

According to Qur'an 2:34, the origin of Arrogant Domination (*Istikbār*) should be sought in the moment when God commanded the angels to prostrate before the human being. The apparent meaning of the verses indicates that God's command was directed toward all the angels, including Gabriel and Michael; Satan, who was among the angels although not of their kind, was also included in the command (Tabarsi, 1993, Vol. 1: 189). Satan's refusal to accept this divine command is the point at which Arrogant Domination (*Istikbār*) begins in existence. In Qur'an 7:12, the Quran explains the nature of Satan's arrogance: "God said: What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you? He said: I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay."

Satan judged according to material criteria and assumed that "fire" was nobler than "clay." This materialistic analytical horizon caused him to overlook the illumination and spirit breathed into Adam and instead compare clay with fire. His refusal was, in reality, an objection to God's wisdom and justice. When he said, "I am better than him," he effectively regarded God's command as contrary to wisdom

and claimed that preferring the inferior (Adam) over the superior (Satan) was an error. This denial of God's knowledge and wisdom excluded him from the sphere of faith (Makarem Shirazi, 1992, Vol. 6: 105). Satan thus took a position against monotheism. To elucidate this rebellion more precisely, one may focus on one of the attributes by which God Himself is described.

Verses 2:147 and 3:60 address the concept of truth and introduce God as its source: "The truth is from your Lord, so do not be among the doubters," and "The truth is from your Lord, so do not be among the doubters." In Qur'an 28:75, it is stated: "Then they will know that the truth belongs to God, and what they used to fabricate will disappear from them." Here too, all truth is ultimately attributed to God, who is presented as the source of truth.

These verses make clear that whatever is true is attributed to the Almighty. In explaining this meaning, Allameh Tabataba'i states that every true proposition and judgment must be derived from the reality of existence. Yet external reality is nothing other than existence, and existence in its entirety belongs to God. Accordingly, "since God's act belongs to the category of existence, its practical form can necessarily be nothing other than truth" (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 3: 335). From this analysis, one may infer that God is not only the source of truth but is truth itself. God's act is not something separate from God. Therefore, if God is the source of truth, this also means that God Himself is truth, a meaning referred to in numerous verses.

In several verses, God Himself is described as the Truth. Qur'an 31:30, while providing the rationale for a series of discussions beginning with verse 20, states concerning God: "That is because God is the Truth, and what they invoke besides Him is falsehood, and because God is the Most High, the Most Great." These verses, through several emphases—including the use of the separating pronoun and the definite article before "truth"—confine absolute truth to God and then describe everything other than Him as falsehood. Accordingly, only God is absolute truth and free from falsehood. God alone is true in Himself; consequently, He alone is the source of truth, and every other being requires reliance upon the Truth in order to possess truth. Thus, when the aforementioned verses describe everything other than

God as falsehood, this means that nothing apart from God possesses independent reality or truth. Created beings partake of truth only insofar as they depend upon the Truth, namely God. Human beings likewise partake of truth only under the servitude of God.

It was Satan's self-assertion and self-worship that caused him to fall from divine proximity. He perceived himself as an entity independently possessing its own being, and this view of himself prevented him from submitting to the divine command. This is despite the fact that absolute greatness is a mantle appropriate to no one but God, and no creature has the capacity to rebel against God; all are submissive before Him. By claiming "I am better," Satan regarded his own essence as independent and thereby displayed arrogance directly toward God, not toward Adam (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 8: 28–29). From this perspective, Satan's Arrogant Domination (Istikbār) means that he considered himself the source of truth. He regarded himself as independently constituting a source of truth like God and therefore rebelled against the divine command, portraying God's action as inconsistent with truth.

By claiming "I am better," Satan regarded his own essence as independent and thereby displayed arrogance directly toward God, not toward Adam (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 8: 28–29). This arrogance constitutes the point of origin and source of every sin, and every act of disobedience contains, even if implicitly, an element of self-assertion and an independent conception of the self. Accordingly, every action arising from an independent conception of the human being is sinful and should be avoided. In other words, wherever an action is inconsistent with truth, and in every form of disobedience and deviation, some degree of Arrogant Domination (Istikbār) is present.

The extension of this point, in light of Qur'an 2:213, clearly demonstrates that only rules and judgments fully consistent with truth can establish a humane order in social life and resolve the conflicts, disagreements, and disputes existing within societies – truth that is reflected in divine laws. Otherwise, even if an order emerges in human social life, that order possesses an arrogant character (Soltani, 2025: 29). Divine laws are essentially legislated so that, because they contain normative commands and prohibitions and establish standards for

judgment and governance, they may resolve the natural disagreements arising in human social life in a manner consistent with justice and humanity.

These observations allow us to conclude that, in human social life, Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) emerges when actors attempt to obstruct the realization and establishment of truth. Arrogant domination emerges when actors regard themselves as the source and origin of truth and present their independent will as the basis for determining the rules and judgments that organize human social life. Such situations therefore require Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) to be traced and identified.

3.3. Agents of Arrogant Domination

The term “agents of arrogant domination” refers to actors who pursue policies and priorities associated with arrogant domination in human social life and specifically obstruct the establishment of truth. The Quran introduces these agents through two defining characteristics. First, they themselves are described as arrogant; second, they stand in opposition to truth. It is therefore necessary to examine how each of these two categories of agents pursues the policies of arrogant domination within society.

3.3.1. Arrogant Political Rulers

In the Holy Quran, arrogant rulers are repeatedly referred to as taghut. The term taghut derives from the root ṭ-gh-y, which means rebellion against truth and insolence. Tughyan derives from the same root and is used when a river exceeds its known boundaries and overflows them (Raghib al-Isfahani, 1989, Vol. 2: 488). The term taghut is used when an individual exceeds his proper limits and becomes excessive even in disbelief (Ibn Sidah, 2001, Vol. 6: 8). The taghut fails to observe its limits, transgresses them, and rebels against truth. Taghuti rulers go beyond the limits of their human status and present themselves, like God, as the determining axis of truth in human society.

This clearly indicates the presence of Arrogant Domination(Istikbār) within taghut. Arrogance toward God and rebellion against truth are among the most important characteristics of the taghuts of the world, and the root of this condition lies in their

neglect of the Resurrection: "He and his soldiers were arrogant in the land without right, and they thought that they would not be returned to Us." This opposition to truth and arrogance on the part of taghuti rulers is repeatedly evident elsewhere in the Quran, including verses 45–47 of Surah al-Mu'minun. The question, however, is how arrogant domination acts to establish its own order and oppose truth. The actions of taghuti rulers can be divided into three major activities.

First: Weakening the Society's Capacity for Understanding

One of the actions of taghuti rulers—whose most prominent Quranic example is Pharaoh—is to involve society in internal disagreement and conflict to such an extent that recognizing truth and striving to establish it cease to be meaningful concerns for society. In order for despotism to continue, the taghut needs to prevent unity and cooperation among members of society. Even limited experience of unity around truth could enable people to recognize matters consistent with their human nature, causing society to seek the expansion of truth as the basis of social unity and to oppose falsehood. For this reason, the Quran describes Pharaoh's actions as follows: "Indeed, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided its people into factions. He weakened a group among them, slaughtering their sons and keeping their women alive. Indeed, he was of the corrupters."

Tabarsi, in interpreting Pharaoh's division of his people, considers several possible meanings and writes that the expression may refer to dividing them into groups so that they would follow what Pharaoh desired; to some groups imitating others in obeying Pharaoh; or to dividing them into different factions and creating hostility among them, particularly between the Israelites and the Copts (Tabarsi, 1996, Vol. 4: 505). Although the final interpretation appears preferable, all these possibilities share one central point: the taghuti ruler employs instruments that prevent society from referring to its reason and innate disposition, thereby allowing despotism to continue.

One of the principal strategies of taghuti rulers is to weaken society and deprive it of rationality. The Quran therefore states: "So he made light of his people, and they obeyed him. Indeed, they were a defiantly disobedient people." In effect, Pharaoh degraded their

intellect and demanded from his subjects a form of obedience based on frivolity and intellectual shallowness (Fayd Kashani, 1994, Vol. 4: 395). Istikhfāf means an attempt to diminish rational thought. The taghut therefore does everything possible to reduce the people's capacity for reason so that, even when manifest truth is presented to them, they can easily be made to doubt it and lack the ability to recognize the ruler's fallacies. Such a condition can be clearly observed in the dialogue between Abraham and Nimrod concerning the ability or inability of the taghuti ruler to grant life.

Second: Casting Doubt on the Legitimacy of the Bearers of Truth

In order to prevent the call to truth delivered by God's Messenger from being recognized by the general population as an embodiment of truth, Pharaoh used accusations against the prophets, portraying them as liars and opportunists. He ordered Haman: "So kindle for me, O Haman, a fire over the clay and make for me a lofty tower that perhaps I may look at the God of Moses; and indeed, I think him to be among the liars."

In order to neutralize the effects of the signs of truth presented by Moses, Pharaoh described him as an accomplished magician. Moses had presented truth to them, but the taghut, recognizing the truth of Moses and his mission, cast doubt upon it in order to protect his despotic rule: "Moses said: Do you say, when the truth has come to you, 'Is this magic?' while magicians do not prosper?" Creating doubt regarding truth was therefore one of the central elements of their actions.

Third: Presenting Themselves as the Source of Truth

The arrogance of the taghuts and their increasingly independent conception of themselves continues to the point where figures such as Pharaoh and Nimrod regard themselves as lords of lords and compel everyone to obey them. Pharaoh therefore describes himself in different Quranic verses as saying, "I am your most exalted lord" and "O chiefs, I know of no deity for you other than myself." Nimrod likewise goes so far in his arrogance that when the Prophet Abraham identifies giving life and causing death as an exclusive attribute of God, Nimrod rejects this and claims such an attribute for himself:

“Abraham said: My Lord is the One who gives life and causes death. He said: I too give life and cause death.”

It should be noted, however, that they did not present themselves as God the Creator but rather as lords of lords. Such a claim was accepted among the people because the extent of their power, resulting from the extensive despotism of taghuti rulers, was enormous, creating conditions in which they could be regarded as the greatest deities and lords of lords. They exploited this favorable environment and presented themselves as the greatest of the gods (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 2: 534–535). They perceived themselves as the greatest agents responsible for regulating human life and regarded the formulation of rules governing human existence as entirely their right. Since they considered themselves the source of truth, they claimed that they were entitled to formulate the rules and judgments governing members of society and that their will alone should prevail.

3.3.2. Arrogant Social Elites

The body of Quranic verses that explains the position of ordinary people who oppose the prophets' call to truth reveals that ordinary people generally do not possess an independent position of their own; rather, they merely follow their leaders, prominent figures, and, in other words, the elites of the front of arrogant domination (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 7: 469). The Quran refers to these arrogant social elites, who are leaders in opposing truth, through terms such as mala', mutrafun, and akabir.

Linguistically, mala' refers to a segment of the aristocracy who possess whatever is demanded of them, and this causes them to acquire such prestige and authority in society that they capture the hearts of its members (Humayri, 2000, Vol. 9: 6367). The term refers to the nobles and prominent figures of a people whose prestige and magnificence fill the eyes of ordinary people (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 10: 571) and who become points of reference for the masses in matters of belief and conduct. The most important characteristic of the mala', repeatedly attributed to them by the Quran, is their arrogance. For example, in Surah al-A'raf, when the mala' of the peoples of Salih and Shu'ayb take a position against the prophets' call to truth, the Quran

describes them in two separate verses, using almost identical language, as arrogant: "The chiefs who were arrogant said ..."

The term *mutraf* derives from the root t-r-f and refers to a person overwhelmed by prosperity (Raghib al-Isfahani, 1989, Vol. 1: 343). These individuals have become immersed in worldly life because of excessive enjoyment of worldly blessings. Their abundant material prosperity causes them to be perceived by ordinary people as occupying a position favored by God; consequently, they become the objects of public attention and reference in collective decision-making. These elites of the front of arrogant domination, who enjoy prestige and acceptance among ordinary people, deprive the masses of opportunities to encounter and recognize truth through two sets of actions.

First: Eliminating the Opportunity for Reflection

When ordinary people encounter the call to truth presented by the prophets and consistent with human nature, these elites quickly intervene and deprive them of the opportunity to encounter, reflect upon, and awaken to the truth. To do so, they begin casting doubt upon the truth claim. More specifically, they portray the prophets as individuals whose purpose in presenting a divine mission is to acquire power and dominate everyone. Thus, after accusing Moses of being a magician, the chiefs of Pharaoh's people describe him as follows:

"The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said: Indeed, this is a learned magician who wants to expel you from your land."

In reality, the Prophet Moses' demand—to end oppression against the Children of Israel, free them, and have everyone believe in the One God—is portrayed as an attempt to dominate Pharaoh's people, thereby preventing members of society from uniting around truth.

Another strategy they employ is to insist upon absolute adherence to the traditions of their fathers and ancestors. This practice is clearly intended to conceal the irrational dimensions of popular thought and ensure their continuation. The Quran states in Surah al-Ma'idah: "And when it is said to them, 'Come to what God has revealed and to the Messenger,' they say, 'Sufficient for us is what we

found our fathers following.' What if their fathers knew nothing and were not guided?"

Certainly, not every form of imitation is blameworthy; indeed, following a knowledgeable person is entirely reasonable and common in worldly life. If someone follows a person who is ignorant but whose knowledge is derived from a learned and guided authority, reason does not regard such imitation as blameworthy, because the person being followed, even indirectly, possesses some connection to guidance. What is unequivocally blameworthy is following someone who possesses no guidance whatsoever and is genuinely ignorant (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 6: 233). The description of the ancestors in this verse as lacking reason, knowledge, and guidance demonstrates the irrationality of following people who possess neither knowledge of their own nor reliance upon another's knowledge and therefore remain in genuine ignorance. The invocation of such an argument is thus intended merely to deprive society of the opportunity for reflection and self-recovery.

Second: Consolidating a Materialistic Outlook

One of the objectives of the elites of the front of arrogant domination is to make false materialistic assumptions self-evident in the minds of ordinary people. One such assumption is that material prosperity indicates proximity to God. Thus, the prosperity of the *mutrafun* is interpreted as evidence of God's special favor toward them. Conversely, the lack of material wealth among a messenger is taken to mean that he is not favored by the Creator or the deities; therefore, how could such a person have been commissioned by God to deliver a divine mission? Through such arguments, the prophets were portrayed to the people as liars and magicians.

For this reason, when a divine prophet who has gained public acceptance introduces Saul as a ruler chosen by God, the prominent figures respond arrogantly, oppose the divine command, and deem him unworthy of the position because of his lack of material wealth: "And their prophet said to them: Indeed, God has appointed Saul as king over you. They said: How can he have kingship over us when we

are more worthy of kingship than he, and he has not been given an abundance of wealth?"

Elsewhere, these arrogant figures, because of the dominance of a materialistic understanding, ask how a being similar to themselves could be God's messenger and communicate with the higher realm. In reality, the taghuts and mala' have weakened their people and reduced their level of understanding to the point that their horizon is limited to the appearances of material life. They then exploit this limited horizon to dominate ordinary people and perpetuate their despotism: "And the chiefs of his people who disbelieved and denied the meeting of the Hereafter, whom We had given luxury in worldly life, said: 'This is only a human being like yourselves; he eats of what you eat and drinks of what you drink. And if you obey a human being like yourselves, then indeed you will be losers.'"

The mala' effectively mix truth and falsehood. They present the Messenger's call as a call to himself and therefore portray the establishment of religion as equivalent to the establishment of the Messenger as a person, who is no different from other human beings. Yet it is clear that the Messenger possesses nothing independently and judges only according to what God has commanded. Consequently, following the Messenger means following God, who is the absolute Owner and Sovereign.

By emphasizing the human nature of the prophets, they seek to deny their prophetic mission. Their argument is essentially: if attainment of such a position is possible for members of the human species, and a human being can attain such a rank, why has none of us attained it? (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 12: 41). Therefore, they claim, the prophet is not truthful in his claim and is not God's messenger. He is merely a human being like us and thus has no right to prevent us from following the traditions of our fathers.

Conclusion: Strategies of Resistance to Arrogant Domination

It has been demonstrated that resistance is fundamentally negative and relational in nature. Resistance must be examined through the fundamental Other in relation to which it acquires meaning. According to the perspective of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution, this

fundamental Other of resistance is the Quranic concept of Arrogant Domination (Istikbār), or arrogant domination. Resistance can therefore be understood through a Quranic understanding of its Other, namely arrogant domination. Once the nature of the Other – arrogant domination – is understood, and it becomes clear what resistance is fundamentally directed against, the question can be addressed as to what must be considered in preparing for resistance and confrontation with arrogant domination.

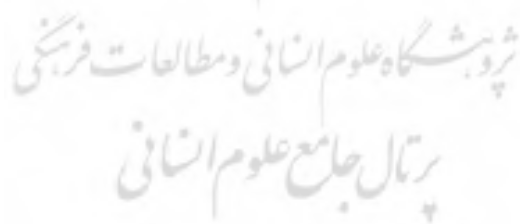
At the level of identity, resistance to arrogant domination rests upon rejecting the human tendency to regard oneself as independently constituted. The resistant human being defines resistance within the framework of establishing monotheism and rejects any independent conception of the self. The consequence of such a conception of the self emerges in the organization of social life: such a person seeks to establish an order that corresponds to the existential structure of the human being and can be realized through the establishment of truth in society. The fundamental problem posed by arrogant domination is the attempt to establish systems within human social life that arise from the independent will of the arrogant. At this point, the objective of resistance is struggle for the establishment of an order formulated within divine laws – an order that, precisely because of its complete intimacy with truth, can establish a genuinely human order in social life.

To achieve this objective, human society must be made resistant to the strategies employed by the agents of arrogant domination. Such preparedness can be achieved through efforts along three axes.

First, one of the strategies of arrogant domination is to restrict the analytical horizon of members of society to material life. Expanding this analytical horizon and elucidating the non-material and transcendent dimensions of human existence can make resistance rational within the society's system of calculation. As long as members of a society analyze reality solely within a material horizon, accepting the material costs of resistance becomes difficult, and they fail to comprehend its higher objectives.

Second is the effort to create opportunities for reflection, reconsideration, inward reference, and the search for the self. If social life does not provide opportunities for such activities, arrogant domination will fill the available spaces for humanity's self-discovery in such a way that human beings descend into complete forgetfulness of their true selves. The strategy of arrogant domination is to block every opening through which individuals can turn inward and evaluate matters fairly.

Third, resistance is founded upon rationality, while arrogant domination seeks to exploit irrationality and weaken rationality within society. A society that lacks intellectual maturity and is deprived of reason can easily become prey to arrogant domination. Such a condition may cause society, at critical historical moments, to fall willingly into the embrace of arrogant domination. A resistant society therefore requires intellectual and rational maturity.



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