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The Three-Layered Model of the Civilizational Strategy of the Great Jihad *(Jihād al-Kabīr)* in the Intellectual System of the Late Ayatullah Khamenei

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ABSTRACT

Verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Furqān* ("*So do not obey the faithless, but wage against them a great jihad with it*") has traditionally been interpreted by Quranic exegetes as referring to striving against the disbelievers through the instrumentality of the Quran. However, Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei presents an innovative hermeneutical reading in which the essence of the Great Jihad is defined as "disobedience to the disbelievers" (*ʿadam al-iṭāʿah*), thereby elevating the concept from a merely exegetical notion to a comprehensive civilizational strategy for confronting hegemonic systems. The present study aims to conceptualize the notion of the Great Jihad on the basis of Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei's interpretation of this verse and to articulate a three-layered model encompassing theoretical, strategic, and operational dimensions. Using a qualitative approach, the research conducts a content analysis of the Leader's direct statements between 2012 and 2024 and employs thematic analysis to extract the principal conceptual components. The findings indicate that, within this exegetical framework, the Great Jihad rests upon three defining characteristics: essentiality, in the sense that non-obedience itself constitutes the core of the struggle; perpetuity, indicating its continuous and sustained nature; and comprehensiveness, reflecting its wide scope across various domains of life. At the strategic level, three principal pillars emerge: vigilance and intellectual awareness regarding the enemy's schemes, refusal to comply with the enemy, and active resistance combined with steadfastness. At the operational level, three domains appear as concrete manifestations of the Great Jihad: The Resistance Economy, the Jihad of Clarification, and institutional capacity-building accompanied by the scientific documentation and theorization of revolutionary experiences. Overall, the study concludes that in Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei's intellectual framework the Great Jihad functions as a civilizational strategy for confronting hegemonic domination; grounded in the principle of "disobedience to the disbelievers" and structured around three strategic pillars and three operational domains, it offers a comprehensive, multi-layered, and actionable model for safeguarding the identity, independence, and dignity of the Islamic community in the contemporary era.

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Introduction

One of the fundamental challenges in understanding religious concepts is reducing them to their superficial meanings while neglecting their profound and strategic dimensions. The concept of "Jihad" in the Holy Quran and the tradition of the Infallibles (a) is among those concepts that in some common interpretations, has been limited solely to "military warfare" (the Lesser Jihad) or "struggle against the inciting self" (the Greater Jihad). However, the Holy Quran, in verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Furqān*, introduces another concept that transcends both of these, referring to it as the "Great Jihad" (*Jihād al-Kabīr*). Almighty God addresses the Holy Prophet (s) in this verse, saying: *"So do not obey the faithless, but wage against them a great jihad with it"*[1] *(Quran 25:52).*

The fundamental question is: what is the meaning of this "Great Jihad"? Does it refer to the same military warfare? Or does a deeper meaning lie within it? Martyr Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, in recent years, has repeatedly elucidated this concept, presenting it as a macro-strategy for the Islamic Republic in confronting the hegemonic front. Emphasizing the changing nature of enemy threats from military warfare to soft war and infiltration, he introduces the Great Jihad as the sole path for the survival and progress of the Islamic system.

The Supreme Leader's essential innovation in interpreting this verse lies in returning the pronoun "*bihī*" (with it) to "*ʿadam al-iṭāʿah*" (non-obedience); that is, the essence and truth of the Great Jihad is "disobedience to the disbelievers" itself, not merely jihad with the Quran. This innovative hermeneutical reading elevates the Great Jihad from a merely exegetical-cultural concept to a comprehensive civilizational strategy characterized by three fundamental features: "essentiality" (the Great Jihad is itself the act of non-obedience), "perpetuity" (a sustained and continuous state, unlike the Lesser Jihad), and "comprehensiveness" (encompassing all political, economic, cultural, and social dimensions).

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1. ﴿فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا﴾ (الفرقان/۵۲)

Despite the significance of this redefinition, a systematic review of previous research reveals that existing studies have largely remained at the theoretical and exegetical level, failing to present an operational model for the realization of the Great Jihad. Exegetical studies (such as Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996; Ṭabarsī, 1993; Karīmī & Bakhshī, 2020) have merely addressed the semantics of the verse. Political-strategic studies (such as Saḥrā'ī, 2018; Muravvejī Ṭabarsī et al., 2020) have been predominantly descriptive and have not achieved a structured framework or a definitive paradigmatic model. Furthermore, bibliographical studies (such as Pūr Jabbārī & ʿAlavī, 2017; Sīyāvushī & Mūsavīniyā, 2018) have contented themselves with compiling statements without providing profound scientific analysis. Moreover, the conceptual developments of recent years (particularly the emphasis on the "Jihad of Clarification" in statements from 2021 onwards) have not been reflected in these studies.

This article seeks, by centering on the innovative interpretation of Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei of verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Furqān* and through a systematic analysis of his statements from 2015 to 2024, to answer the following questions: First, what are the theoretical components and Quranic foundations of the Great Jihad from the Leader's perspective? Second, what are the strategic principles governing this concept? Third, what are the operational manifestations and concrete domains for the realization of the Great Jihad in the current context?

To answer these questions, the present article, employing a descriptive-analytical method and thematic analysis technique, examines the Leader's direct statements. Based on the extracted findings, it presents a three-layered model (theoretical, strategic, operational) of the Great Jihad. This model demonstrates that the Great Jihad in the Leader's thought constitutes a civilizational strategy against the hegemonic system, grounded on the one hand in "disobedience to the disbelievers" as its core essence, and on the other hand, realized through three operational domains: "Resistance Economy," the "Jihad of Clarification," and "institutional capacity-building alongside the scientific codification of revolutionary experiences."

Literature Review

A systematic examination of the research conducted on the "Great Jihad" (*Jihād al-Kabīr*) reveals that these studies can be primarily classified into three categories:

First Category - Exegetical Studies: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1996) and Ṭabarsī (1993), in their respective exegeses, identified the referent of the pronoun "*bihī*" (with it) as the Quran, interpreting the Great Jihad as jihad through the instrument of the Quran. Karīmī and Bakhshī (2020), in their article "Conceptualization of the Great Jihad," followed the same approach. The primary shortcoming of these works is that they remain at the theoretical and exegetical level, failing to present an operational model for confronting contemporary threats.

Second Category - Research by Muravvejī Tabasī, Riḍā'ī Iṣfahānī, and Oshrieh (2020): This research, entitled "Special Basics and Principles of Great Jihad (*Jihād-i Kabīr*) based on the Holy Quran," extracted the foundations of legitimacy and executive principles of the Great Jihad from the Quran. Their findings indicate that the Great Jihad is a "non-military solution" for confronting enemies and immunizing Islamic society. Furthermore, in another study, this group conducted a comparative exegesis of the verse from the perspective of the two major Islamic schools (Shiʿi and Sunni), demonstrating that the pronoun "*bihī*" refers, on the one hand, to "*Falā tuṭiʿi al-kāfirīn*" (do not obey the disbelievers) and, on the other hand, to the Quran.

Shortcomings of the works by Muravvejī Tabasī and colleagues: Despite the scholarly value of these studies, three fundamental shortcomings can be observed in them: (1) exclusive focus on Quranic and exegetical sources while neglecting the statements of the Supreme Leader as the primary source of contemporary theorizing about the Great Jihad; (2) failure to update with the conceptual developments of recent years (particularly the emphasis on the "Jihad of Clarification" in statements from 2021 onwards); (3) presentation of foundations and principles at a general level and failure to delineate a clear operational model for the realization of the Great Jihad in the economic, cultural, and political arenas.

Third Category - Bibliographical Studies: Pūr Jabbārī & ʿAlavī (2017) and Sīyāvushī & Mūsavīniyā (2018) compiled and categorized the Leader's statements. The main shortcoming of these works is the lack of profound scientific analysis and failure to update with the statements of recent years.

The present article, benefiting from the innovative interpretation of the Supreme Leader, according to which the essence of the Great Jihad is "disobedience to the disbelievers," addresses the shortcomings of previous research as follows:

- **Utilization of the Supreme Leader's innovative interpretation:** While Muravvejī Ṭabasī and others (2020) worked solely on the basis of exegetical sources, the present article, for the first time, centers its analysis on the Leader's innovative interpretation, demonstrating that "disobedience" (*ʿadam al-iṭāʿah*) is itself the essence of the Great Jihad, not merely its prerequisite.
- **Presentation of a three-layered model (theoretical-strategic-operational):** In contrast to the research of Muravvejī Ṭabasī and others (2020), which sufficed with general principles, this article presents a continuous model from theory to practice: the theoretical layer (interpretation of the verse), the strategic layer (three pillars: vigilance, non-compliance, resistance), and the operational layer (Resistance Economy, Jihad of Clarification, capacity-building).
- **Updating with recent conceptual developments:** Muravvejī Ṭabasī and colleagues worked largely on the basis of classical exegetical sources and did not engage with the Leader's statements. The present article, utilizing statements from 2021 to 2024, systematically explains for the first time the relationship between the "Jihad of Clarification" and the "Great Jihad."
- **Entry into new domains of governance:** This article incorporates dimensions such as capacity-building for the future and the scientific codification of revolutionary experiences into its

analysis, which are absent in the research of Muravvejī Ṭabasī and colleagues (2020) as well as in similar works.

The fundamental distinction of this research from previous works lies in its integrative approach, which bridges the boundaries between Quranic exegesis, contemporary political thought, and strategic studies. The present article, centering on the Leader's innovative interpretation and benefiting from his most up-to-date statements (up to 2024), presents a three-layered model that is theoretically profound, strategically coherent, and operationally actionable.

1. Foundations and Essence of the Great Jihad

To properly understand the "Great Jihad" in this research, one must first attend to the text of the verse and its context, examining this matter in a specialized manner.

1.1. Literal Meaning of the Word "*Kabīr*" (Great)

The word "*Kabīr*" in Arabic derives from the triliteral root "*k-b-r*," meaning "greatness in dimension, quantity, age, status, or importance." Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, in his book *Al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, defines this root as "transcending the limit in greatness" and considers it the opposite of "*ṣaghīr*" (small) (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1953, under "*k-b-r*"). Ibn Fāris, in *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, states that the root "*k-b-r*" indicates "the greatness of a thing in itself, or in its value, or in its status" (Ibn Fāris 1983, 5:140). This word is used in opposition to "*ṣaghīr*" (small) and has numerous derivatives such as "*takbīr*" (magnification), "*takabbur*" (arrogance), and "*istikbār*" (seeking greatness and domination). In morphology and syntax, "*kabīr*" is a "*ṣifat mushabbahah*" (a descriptive adjective indicating a permanent quality), indicating the constancy and stability of the meaning in the described entity; meaning that the "Great Jihad" is not a temporary or occasional jihad, but rather a permanent and intrinsic quality for this type of jihad. Additionally, the morphological pattern "*fāʿil*" in this word sometimes carries the meaning of the "active participle" (one who magnifies) and sometimes the "passive participle" (one who is magnified). From a rhetorical perspective, Suyūṭī, in *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm*

al-Qur'ān, refers to the principle of "magnification and glorification" (*al-tafkhīm wa al-taʿẓīm*), stating that the use of an indefinite noun (*nakirah*) in an affirmative context serves the purpose of "magnification and glorification" (see Suyūṭī 1974, 3:325); meaning that Almighty God intends to introduce this type of jihad as an immensely great work.

1.2. Technical Meaning in the Verse and the Leader's Quranic Thought

In Quranic and narrative terminology, the description of jihad as "*kabīr*" signifies its "hierarchical superiority and goal-orientation" (*afḍaliyyat rutbī wa ghāyat-miḥwarī*) in comparison to other types of Jihad. Some exegetes have interpreted "*kabīr*" as meaning great in terms of consequence; ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī believes that this jihad is called "*kabīr*" because it is carried out with the Quran (see Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 15:228; Ālūsī 1994, 10:32). However, in the thought of the Supreme Leader, "*kabīr*" means the essence and ultimate goal of jihad. Based on returning the pronoun "*bihī*" to "disobedience" (*ʿadam al-iṭāʿah*), he explains this description as follows: "*kabīr*" means that this jihad (disobedience to the disbelievers) is "greater" (*akbar*) and indeed "great" (*kabīr*) than the lesser jihad (*jihād aṣghar*) in terms of difficulty (because its continuity across all spheres of life requires patience and insight), permanence (in contrast to military jihad, which is episodic), consequence (because the continuation of the identity and dignity of Islamic society depends on it), and arena of action (encompassing all political, economic, and cultural spheres). In other words, the Great Jihad is the perpetual jihad of disobedience, and the attribute "*kabīr*" expresses its comprehensiveness, continuity, and ultimate nature relative to other manifestations of jihad (see Khamenei 2016, *tafsīr* of the verse of the Great Jihad).

2. Analysis of Verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Furqān*

From an exegetical perspective, the meaning of "jihad through the Quran" is that Muslims should not submit to or obey the front of disbelief; rather, relying on the Quran and its sublime concepts, they must confront the culture, values, and domination of the disbelief front. This jihad is a civilizational and cultural jihad in which the primary

weapons are logic, reasoning, clarification (*tabyīn*), and liberating minds from the fetters of modern ignorance.

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* and Ṭabarsī in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* identified the referent of the pronoun "*bihī*" as the "Quran," meaning that the jihad against the disbelievers should be carried out with the instrument of the Quran (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 15:228; Ṭabarsī 1993, 7:273). However, the Supreme Leader presents a different view. Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei interprets the Quranic phrase, *(…wa jāhidhum bihī jihādan kabīra*): *"…but wage against them a great jihad with it" (Quran 25:52)* as emphasizing resistance through non-obedience to disbelievers rather than merely referring to struggle through the Quran. He argues that the pronoun "*bihī*" can be understood as referring to the implied concept of "*ʿadam al-iṭāʿah*" (non-obedience), derived from the preceding prohibition against obeying the unbelievers (*falā tuṭiʿ al-kāfirīn*) *"So do not obey the faithless…" (Quran 25:52).* On this reading, "Great Jihad" (*al-jihād al-kabīr*) signifies a comprehensive struggle based on refusing submission to hostile powers and resisting their attempts to impose obedience. Thus, the concept is presented as a form of steadfast independence and opposition to enemy domination (Khamenei, Meeting with the Assembly of Experts, 26 May, 2016 [06/03/1395Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/33198).

This innovative interpretation by the Supreme Leader demonstrates that the essence and truth of the Great Jihad is "disobedience to the disbelievers" itself, and this disobedience itself constitutes a great jihad.

3. Definition of the Great Jihad from the Supreme Leader's Perspective

Ayatullah Khamenei, on various occasions according to the circumstances, has elaborated on this concept. He stated that although the likelihood of conventional military conflict is currently low, the obligation of jihad remains relevant in other forms. Drawing on Quranic terminology, he identifies the "Great Jihad" (*al-jihād al-kabīr*) as steadfast resistance and refusal to comply with disbelievers or hostile powers. In this interpretation, the essence of Great Jihad lies in maintaining independence, perseverance, and non-obedience in the face

of external pressure, rather than engaging solely in armed struggle. This understanding frames jihad as a broader strategy of resistance against domination and submission (Khamenei, Addressing students of Imam Husayn (a) Military Academy, May 23, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093).

These definitions indicate that from the Leader's perspective, the Great Jihad is a concept entirely distinct from military jihad. While military jihad (the Lesser Jihad) is a defensive or offensive phenomenon on the battlefield, the Great Jihad is a continuous and permanent strategy in all spheres of political, economic, and cultural life of an Islamic society.

4. The Relationship of the Great Jihad with the Lesser Jihad and the Greater Jihad

To clarify the status of the Great Jihad, it is necessary to examine its relationship with the two other concepts of jihad (the Lesser Jihad and the Greater Jihad). The Supreme Leader states in this regard: "This classification is different from the classification of the Greater Jihad (*al-jihād al-akbar*) and the Lesser Jihad (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*): The Greater Jihad, which is the hardest of all, is the struggle against the self (*jihad al-nafs*) ... The Lesser Jihad is the struggle against the enemy; however, within the Lesser Jihad, there is a jihad that God Almighty has named the 'Great Jihad,' and that is this [non-obedience]" (Khamenei, Addressing students of Imam Husayn (a) Military Academy, 23 May, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093/).

From this perspective, the Great Jihad is defined under the Lesser Jihad (struggle against the enemy), but unlike military jihad, which is limited to the battlefield, the Great Jihad encompasses all arenas of confrontation with the enemy.

In the Leader's view, these three types of jihad are not only not in conflict with each other, but rather complement one another. The Lesser Jihad cannot achieve lasting results without the backing of the Great Jihad (cultural and political resistance). Likewise, the Great Jihad would be incomplete without self-purification (the Greater Jihad) and without military preparedness (the Lesser Jihad).

Type of Jihad	Definition	Characteristics
The Lesser Jihad (*Al-Jihad al-Aṣghar*)	Military warfare against the disbelievers for the defense of the Islamic polity or the expansion of its boundaries	Limited to the battlefield, goal-oriented (finite), employs military instruments
The Greater Jihad (*Al-Jihad al-Akbar*)	Struggle against the inciting self (*jihād al-nafs*) and self-purification (*tazkiyah*)	Individual and internal, continuous, spanning an entire lifetime
The Great Jihad (*Al-Jihad al-Kabīr*)	Steadfastness and non-compliance with the front of disbelief in all arenas	Collective and social, strategic, civilizational

5. The Rationale for the Necessity of the Great Jihad in the Present Era

From the perspective of the Supreme Leader, the necessity of the Great Jihad in the present era arises from "the changing nature of enemy threats" from military warfare to "soft war," "infiltration," and "cognitive warfare." He believes that today, since the enemy has lost the possibility of traditional military confrontation, it has concentrated all its efforts on "emptying the system of its internal elements of power" and "forcing it into obedience." Under such circumstances, the Great Jihad, meaning steadfastness and disobedience to the disbelievers, is the only path for the survival and progress of the Islamic system; because if the Islamic society submits to the demands of the arrogant powers (*istikbār*), it will lose its identity, independence, and dignity. In other words, the Great Jihad is a strategic response to the enemy's all-out aggression in the political, economic, and cultural arenas, defined by the centrality of "negation of obedience" and "active resistance" (Khamenei, Addressing students of Imam Husayn (a) Military Academy, 23 May, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093/).

5.1. The Changing Nature of Enemy Threats (Soft War)

One of the main reasons for the Supreme Leader's emphasis on the Great Jihad is the changing nature of the threats from the front of arrogance against the Islamic Republic. He explicitly stated that the

probability of conventional, traditional military war is very weak (ibid). In contrast, soft war, cognitive warfare, infiltration, and cultural invasion have been the enemy's primary tools in recent decades. The enemy's goal with these tools is to prepare the ground for emptying the system of its internal elements of power. In other words, the enemy wants to dismantle the system from within without firing a single shot. This goal is pursued by creating doubt in the intellectual foundations of the revolution, weakening the religious beliefs of the young generation, changing cultural identity, and creating discord and duality in society.

5.2. The Great Jihad; The Solution to Counter Infiltration

Under such circumstances, the Great Jihad is introduced as the primary solution to counter enemy infiltration. The Supreme Leader states in this regard in a meeting with the Assembly of Experts: "[The enemies of the revolution] want to do something so that the Islamic system becomes empty and void of the elements that are within it and are the source of its power... They want to force it into obedience. This is the place for that same Great Jihad that I raised a few days ago" (Khamenei, Meeting with the Assembly of Experts, 26 May, 2016 [06/03/1395Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/33198).

The Great Jihad against infiltration means saying "no" to the illegitimate demands of the enemy, saying "no" to oppressive sanctions, saying "no" to imported models of development, and saying "no" to the Western lifestyle. These instances of saying 'no' are concrete examples of disobeying the disbelievers and polytheists, as commanded in verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Furqān*.

5.3. Indicators of Being Revolutionary and Its Relationship with the Great Jihad

The Great Jihad is not a short-term project, but rather a "long-term civilizational strategy." For this reason, training specialized, committed, and revolutionary forces to administer the country in the future and continue this path is essential. The Supreme Leader emphasizes "capacity-building for the future" as one of the requirements of the Great Jihad (Khamenei, Addressing students of

Imam Husayn (a) Military Academy, May 23, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093).

In explaining the indicators of being revolutionary, the Supreme Leader identifies sensitivity towards the enemy and his plans, and non-compliance with him as one of the five main indicators, explicitly stating that the Quran has named this non-compliance the "Great Jihad." He considers another indicator to be "commitment to the country's all-round independence, political, economic, cultural, and security independence," which is also contingent upon the realization of the Great Jihad (Khamenei, Address at the 27th Anniversary of the Demise of Imam Khomeini (r.a.), 3 June, 2016 [14/03/1395Sh], https://khl.ink/f/33259).

6. Requirements and Prerequisites for Realizing the Great Jihad

The realization of the Great Jihad in society requires prerequisites and provisions which, based on research conducted in this field, can be organized under five main axes (see Karīmī & Bakhshī, 2020; Muravvejī Tabasī et al., 2020).

6.1. Intelligence and Sincerity (*Ikhlāṣ*)

The Great Jihad will not yield results without two elements: "intelligence" and "sincerity" (*ikhlāṣ*). Intelligence means accurately recognizing the enemy's tricks, identifying the right situation and time for action, and choosing the best tools for confrontation. Sincerity means performing this jihad solely for the sake of God, not for seeking attention, gaining position, or personal interests. From the Leader's perspective, the first condition of the Great Jihad is accurate knowledge of the enemy and understanding his plan. Citing the words of Amir al-Mu'minīn (a): "…Whoever sleeps, the enemy does not sleep …"[2] (Nahj al-Balāghah, letter 62), the Supreme Leader emphasizes that Islamic society must always maintain its sensitivity, vigilance, awareness, and readiness to counter the enemy's plots (Khamenei, The Graduation Ceremony of

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2. «...من نام لم يُنم عنه...».

Imam Husayn University, 23 May, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093).

6.2. Resistance and Steadfastness

The concept of the Great Jihad, as a fundamental strategy, transcends the borders of Islamic Iran and encompasses the entire front of resistance in the Muslim world. In his message on the occasion of the martyrdom of Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrullāh (the Great Mujahid) on September 28, 2024, the Supreme Leader states: "The Great Mujahid, the standard-bearer of resistance in the region... the dear Sayyid of resistance received the reward of decades of jihad in the path of God and its hardships during a sacred struggle" (Khamenei, 2024, Message of the Supreme Leader on the Occasion of the Martyrdom of the Great Mujahid and Standard-bearer of Resistance, Hujjat al-Islam Sayyed Hasan Nasrllah, 28 September, 2024 [07/07/1403Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/27641).

In continuation of this message, he describes the existential nature of figures like Martyr Nasrullah not as individual personalities, but as a path and a school of thought. He also believes that Palestine and the Axis of Resistance stand as the most prominent practical example of "disobedience to the disbelievers" in the Muslim world. The Zionist regime, as the main representative of arrogance in the region, is the symbol of the "disbelievers and polytheists" whom the Holy Quran has forbidden Muslims from obeying. Resistance against this regime, including military resistance in Gaza and Lebanon and political and diplomatic resistance at the international level, are all concrete manifestations of the Great Jihad (ibid.).

7. Fields and Arenas of the Great Jihad

From the perspective of the Supreme Leader, the Great Jihad is not limited to a specific arena but manifests and appears in all vital arenas of the country, such as the economy (resistance economy), politics (independence and non-infiltration), culture (jihad of clarification), science and technology (knowledge-based economy), and media (revolutionary narrative-building), etc. (see Sīyāvushī & Mūsavīniyā, 2018; Pūr Jabbārī & ʿAlavī, 2017). From the Leader's perspective,

"Resistance Economy" as a symbol of jihadi management is a fundamental strategy for creating transformation in Iran's political economy against the pressures of the hegemonic system and economic sanctions (Hezāvī et al. 2014, 15). Below, some of these arenas are briefly explained:

7.1. Economic Arena: Resistance Economy

The first and perhaps most important arena of the Great Jihad in the current circumstances is the economic arena. The Supreme Leader explicitly states: "emphasizing the implementation of the Resistance Economy is the economic part of this jihad" (Khamenei, Addressing students of Imam Husayn (a) Military Academy, May 23, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093).

Resistance Economy in the Leader's thought is not merely a technical or technocratic economic model but a political-economic project against the hegemonic economic system. He explains this concept as follows: "Resistance Economy means that we have an economy that both maintains the growing economic trend in the country and reduces its vulnerability; that is, the economic situation of the country and the economic system should be such that it is less harmed and disrupted in the face of the enemies' tricks, which are continuous and come in various forms" (Khamenei, 2001, Meeting with the President and Members of the Cabinet, 23 August, 2012 [02/06/1391Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/20831)

In this view, the enemy's oppressive sanctions are seen not as an insurmountable obstacle, but as an opportunity for the flourishing of domestic talents and the reduction of dependence. Strengthening national production, supporting Iranian goods, managing consumption, making the economy knowledge-based, non-oil exports, and a knowledge-based economy are all examples of economic jihad within the framework of the Great Jihad.

7.2. Political Arena: The Jihad of Clarification (*Jihād-i Tabyīn*)

In recent years, the Supreme Leader has placed special emphasis on the concept of the "Jihad of Clarification" (*Jihād-i Tabyīn*). He introduced

the Jihad of Clarification as a "clear, definitive, and immediate" religious duty and a "type of Great Jihad" (Khamenei, Meeting with Commanders and Personnel of the Air Force and Air Defense Force, 8 February, 2022 [19/11/1400]; https://khl.ink/f/49572). The Jihad of Clarification is one of the manifestations of intellectual struggle, which, in his view, is a definitive, immediate, and public address that includes all members of society in confronting the enemies' media warfare. In the Great Jihad, time and place are irrelevant; rather, the Great Jihad is a trans-spatial and trans-border matter that is not gender-specific (see Amānī et al. 2022, 53; Muḥaqqiq 2023, 53). This jihad is a cultural jihad; that is, issues that require explanation must be made known to the people and society, and rules based on jurisprudence and law, including guiding the ignorant, national unity, and observing ethics, must be implemented in it (see Qurbānī et al. 2023, 11-31).

Ali Dhūʿilm defines the Jihad of Clarification as follows: "Clarification (*Tabyīn*) means clarifying and expressing truth and reality. In fact, what is intended in explanation is removing the dust of misunderstanding, distortion, and misinterpretation from the concepts and teachings of the Islamic Revolution..." (Dhūʿilm, 4 April, 2022 [15/01/1401Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/49982). The Supreme Leader himself states in this regard: "In this jihad that exists, in this treacherous war that exists between Islam and disbelief, between truth and falsehood, between false narrative and truth - this is a war between these - where are we positioned in this front and where are we present?" (Khamenei, Meeting with Eulogists of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), 23 January, 2022 [03/11/1400Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/49448).

The main reason for the necessity of the Jihad of Clarification is the "war of narratives" or "cognitive warfare" that the enemy has launched against the Islamic Republic. Using powerful media tools, the enemy tries to replace its own narrative of the events of the revolution, the Sacred Defense, and Iran's contemporary history with the true narrative. Distorting facts, exaggerating weaknesses, painting a bleak picture of achievements, and inducing despair and hopelessness are among the enemy's tactics in this cognitive warfare.

7.3. Cultural and Artistic Arena

From the Leader's perspective, culture is one of the most sensitive and key arenas of confrontation with the current of arrogance, because the enemy seeks to change the Islamic-Iranian identity of the youth. If a society becomes unstable in terms of cultural identity, resistance in other arenas will also weaken. In this arena, the enemy's tools include satellite networks, cyberspace, hostile media, covert cultural invasion (*tahājum-i pūshishī*), and imported lifestyle models. In contrast, the manifestations of cultural jihad include producing rich and revolutionary content in cyberspace, strengthening jihadi and popular groups, supporting revolutionary art (cinema, theater, committed music), opposing non-observance of hijab, and promoting the Iranian-Islamic lifestyle (see Khamenei, Statements in Meeting with Basijis, 26 November, 2022 [05/09/1401Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/51418; Statements in Meeting with those involved in Culture and Art, 23 July, 2001 [01/05/1380Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/speech/2129).

Pillar	Quranic Meaning	Manifestation in the Leader's Thought
Negation of Obedience	"So do not obey the faithless"	Resistance against enemy infiltration, saying no to the illegitimate demands of the arrogant front
Jihad with the Quran	against them with it	Explaining the slogans of the revolution, the Jihad of Clarification (*Jihād-i Tabyīn*), clarification against the war of narratives
Resistance Economy	Non-compliance with the economic systems of disbelief	Reliance on domestic capabilities, making the economy knowledge-based, breaking sanctions
Culture and Art	Non-compliance with Western cultural models	Spontaneous cultural activities, revolutionary art, hijab and modesty, Islamic lifestyle

8. The Three-Layered Model (Theoretical, Strategic, Operational)

In this section, based on the findings extracted from the statements of Ayatullah Khamenei, the technical analysis of the concept of the "Great Jihad" is presented, and a three-layered model is introduced. This model demonstrates that the Great Jihad is not merely an abstract Quranic concept but possesses a coherent structure that is implementable across various domains of governance.

8.1. The Theoretical Layer of the Great Jihad: Interpretation of the Verse and Quranic Foundations

At the theoretical layer, the present article is based on the Supreme Leader's innovative and novel interpretation of verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Furqān*. Contrary to traditional exegeses that considered the referent of the pronoun "*bihī*" to be the "Quran," the Leader, through deeper reflection, concluded that the pronoun "*bihī*" refers back to "disobedience" (*ʿadam al-iṭāʿah*). This interpretation is significant in several respects:

- **Essentialization of the Great Jihad:** According to this interpretation, "disobedience to the disbelievers" is itself the essence and truth of the Great Jihad, not merely a prerequisite or a tool. This means that wherever Muslims refrain from following the front of disbelief, they are realizing the Great Jihad, whether in the economic field, the cultural arena, or the political sphere.
- **Continuity and Permanence:** Since "disobedience" is a continuous and perpetual state, the Great Jihad, accordingly, is considered a "continuous" and "sustained" jihad. This characteristic contrasts with the Lesser Jihad (military warfare), which is by nature episodic and goal-terminating.
- **Comprehensiveness:** "Disobedience" is not limited to a specific arena. Any form of obedience from Muslims to the front of disbelief (whether in politics, economics, or culture) constitutes a violation of the Great Jihad.

From the perspective of Quranic foundations, this interpretation aligns with numerous verses of the Holy Quran that emphasize the "negation of dominion" (*nafy sabīl*) and the "absence of guardianship of the disbelievers over the believers." The Holy Quran states: *"…and Allah will never provide the faithless any way [to prevail] over the faithful"*[3] *(Quran 4:141)*; meaning God has never granted the disbelievers a way to dominate the believers. The Great Jihad is the concrete realization of this Quranic principle in the practical arenas of Muslim life.

8.2. The Strategic Layer: The Three Main Pillars (Intelligence, Non-Compliance, Resistance)

At the strategic layer, three main pillars are extracted from the statements of the Supreme Leader: 1. Sensitivity towards the enemy and his plans, 2. Non-compliance with the enemy, and 3. Resistance and steadfastness against the enemy. These three pillars are also emphasized in jurisprudential and exegetical sources.

8.2.1. The First Pillar: Sensitivity and Intelligence (Awareness of the Enemy's Plan)

From the Leader's perspective, the first step in the Great Jihad is "accurate knowledge of the enemy" and "understanding his plan." Citing the words of Amir al-Mu'minīn (a), who said: "…Whoever sleeps, the enemy does not sleep …" (Nahj al-Balāghah, letter 62), the Leader emphasizes that Islamic society must always be vigilant and awake regarding the enemy's plots. In current circumstances, the enemy has despaired of traditional military warfare and has concentrated all its efforts on "soft war," "cognitive warfare," and "infiltration" (Khamenei, Meeting with the Assembly of Experts, 26 May, 2016 [06/03/1395Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/33198). The enemy's goal is to empty the system of its internal elements of power and force it into obedience. Therefore, sensitivity means the timely diagnosis of these threats and the precise identification of the enemy's points of infiltration.

8.2.2. The Second Pillar: Non-Compliance with the Enemy (Negation of Obedience)

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3. ﴿...وَ لَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلاً﴾ (النساء / 141)

After identifying the enemy's plan, the next step is refraining from obedience. The Supreme Leader states in this regard: "They want to force him [the Islamic system] into obedience. This is the place for that same Great Jihad that I raised a few days ago" (Khamenei, Meeting with the Assembly of Experts, 26 May, 2016 [06/03/1395Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/33198). "Non-compliance" has numerous manifestations, the most important of which are:

- In the political arena: Rejecting the enemy's political ultimatums, non-dependence on dominated international organizations, not allowing foreign political infiltration.
- In the economic arena: Non-dependence on the dominated banking system, not accepting sanctions as normal, reliance on domestic capabilities.
- In the cultural arena: Rejecting imported lifestyle models, resisting cultural invasion, preserving the Islamic-Iranian identity.

8.2.3. The Third Pillar: Active Resistance and Steadfastness (Persistence on the Path)

The third pillar of the Great Jihad is "resistance and steadfastness." This pillar clarifies the fundamental difference between "passive non-compliance" and "active non-compliance." Non-compliance is not merely about saying "no"; it also means saying "yes" to an alternative. From the Leader's perspective, active resistance in the economic arena means "implementing the Resistance Economy" and "reliance on domestic capabilities." In the cultural arena, it means "spontaneous cultural activities" and "producing revolutionary content" (ibid). In the political arena, it means "maintaining comprehensive independence" and "sensitivity towards infiltration" (Khamenei, Addressing students of Imam Husayn (a) Military Academy, May 23, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093).

8.3. The Operational Layer: Concrete Manifestations in Three Arenas

At the operational layer, the present article extracts three main arenas for the realization of the Great Jihad from the Leader's statements:

8.3.1. The First Arena: Resistance Economy

The Supreme Leader explicitly states that emphasizing the implementation of the Resistance Economy is the economic part of this jihad. Resistance Economy means an economy that has less vulnerability against the enemies' tricks (Khamenei, 2013, Meeting with the President and Members of the cabinet, 21 March, 2013 [06/06/1392]; https://khl.ink/f/23715). Based on the analysis of the Leader's statements and contemporary jurisprudential sources, the operational components of the Resistance Economy are as follows:

- Knowledge-based production and reducing foreign dependence
- Consumption management and combating waste
- Supporting national production and Iranian goods
- Neutralizing sanctions through an endogenous economy

8.3.2. The Second Arena: The Jihad of Clarification (*Jihād-e Tabyīn*)

In recent years, the Supreme Leader has placed special emphasis on the "Jihad of Clarification" as the most important manifestation of the Great Jihad. He introduces the Jihad of Clarification as a definitive and immediate religious duty and a type of Great Jihad. The reason for this emphasis is the war of narratives or cognitive warfare that the enemy has launched against the Islamic Republic. Dhūʿilm states in this regard: "Clarification (*Tabyīn*) means clarifying and expressing truth and reality. In fact, what is intended in explanation is removing the dust of misunderstanding, distortion, and misinterpretation from the concepts and teachings of the Islamic Revolution" (Dhūʿilm, 4 April, 2022, [15/01/1401Sh]; https://khl.ink/f/49982). The operational components of the Jihad of Clarification are as follows:

- Clarifying the achievements of the revolution for the young generation
- Responding to doubts and the enemy's distorted narratives
- Using artistic and media tools to convey the message
- Training and educating specialized personnel in the field of explanation

8.3.3. The Third Arena: Capacity-Building and the Scientific Codification of Revolutionary Experiences

The third operational arena of the Great Jihad, which has been neglected in previous research, is capacity-building for the future and the scientific codification of revolutionary experiences. The Supreme Leader states in this regard: "The scientific codification of the dense experiences of the thirty-eight years of the Islamic Revolution in its astonishing ups and downs is one of the requirements of the Great Jihad" (Khamenei, Addressing students of Imam Husayn (a) Military Academy, May 23, 2016 [03/03/1395Sh]; https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/15093).

He also emphasizes training specialized, committed, and revolutionary forces to administer the country in the future as one of the necessities for the continuation of the Great Jihad (ibid.). This means that the Great Jihad is not a short-term project but a long-term civilizational strategy that requires the transfer of knowledge and experiences to future generations. What distinguishes the three-layered model of the present article is the explanation of the relationship between these three layers.

Layer	Function	Relationship with Other Layers
Theoretical Layer	Foundation and legitimizer	Without it, the other layers lack religious and rational backing
Strategic Layer	Connecting link between theory and practice	Determines the general principles governing the Great Jihad
Operational Layer	Concrete realization in tangible arenas	Demonstrates that the Great Jihad is implementable in economy, culture, and politics

Conclusion

Based on the findings derived from the analysis of Ayatullah Khamenei's statements and utilizing the three-layered model (theoretical, strategic, operational), this research has reached the following conclusions:

First. In the domain of theoretical foundations, the Supreme Leader, through his innovative interpretation of verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Furqān*,

introduces the essence and truth of the Great Jihad as "disobedience to the disbelievers" (*ʿadam al-iṭāʿah*), which stands in contrast to traditional exegeses. This redefinition possesses three fundamental characteristics: "essentialization" (the Great Jihad is itself the act of disobedience, not its prelude or instrument), "continuity" (a permanent and perpetual state, as opposed to the episodic nature of the Lesser Jihad), and "comprehensiveness" (encompassing all political, economic, and cultural dimensions).

Second. With the transformation of enemy threats from military warfare to soft war, cognitive warfare, and infiltration, the Great Jihad is introduced as the sole path for the survival and progress of the Islamic system. With the enemy aiming to empty the system of its internal elements of power and force it into obedience, the Great Jihad—centered on the negation of obedience and active resistance—constitutes a fundamental strategy for safeguarding the identity, independence, and dignity of Islamic society.

Third. Three strategic pillars of the Great Jihad were extracted from the Leader's statements: sensitivity and intelligence (accurate knowledge of the enemy and understanding his plans); non-compliance with the enemy (refraining from obedience in political, economic, and cultural arenas); and active resistance and steadfastness (persistence on the path by offering indigenous and revolutionary alternatives).

Fourth. The operational manifestations of the Great Jihad were elucidated in three arenas: the economic arena, centered on the Resistance Economy (including knowledge-based production, consumption management, support for national production, and neutralizing sanctions); the cultural arena, centered on the Jihad of Clarification (including clarifying the revolution's achievements for the younger generation, responding to doubts, utilizing artistic and media tools, and training specialized personnel); and the governance arena, centered on capacity-building for the future and the scientific codification of revolutionary experiences.

Fifth. The fundamental superiority of this research over previous works lies in presenting a three-layered model (theoretical-strategic-operational) that systematically elucidates the relationship between Quranic foundations, strategic principles, and concrete manifestations.

In this model, the theoretical layer constitutes the foundation for the other two layers, the strategic layer serves as the connecting link between theory and practice, and the operational layer represents the arena for the concrete realization of theoretical and strategic concepts.

Sixth. The Great Jihad in the Leader's thought is neither a substitute for nor a negator of the Lesser Jihad and the Greater Jihad; rather, it complements and supports them. A society without the Great Jihad cannot maintain its stability and identity, and an individual without the Greater Jihad (jihad against the self) cannot act sincerely in the Great Jihad. This bidirectional relationship demonstrates his comprehensive and systematic view of the concept of jihad.

In conclusion, the Great Jihad in Ayatullah Khamenei's thought transcends a mere religious concept or political slogan; it constitutes a "civilizational strategy" against the hegemonic system. This strategy, grounded in the interpretation of "disobedience to the disbelievers" as the essence of the Great Jihad, benefiting from the three strategic pillars of "sensitivity, non-compliance, and resistance," and realized through the three operational arenas of "Resistance Economy, Jihad of Clarification, and capacity-building," presents a comprehensive and actionable model for safeguarding the identity, independence, and dignity of Islamic society. The innovation of this research at three levels—interpretive, methodological, and content-based—represents an effective step toward systematizing the theory of the Great Jihad. Success in this jihad will guarantee the honor, independence, and progress of Islamic civilization against the hegemonic system. The following table presents a summary of the pillars and manifestations of the Great Jihad based on the Leader's thought:

Title of Conclusion	Main Content of Conclusion	Key Components
Fundamental Redefinition of the Great Jihad	The essence and truth of the Great Jihad is "disobedience to the disbelievers" (in contrast to traditional interpretations that considered it jihad with the Quran)	Essentialization, Continuity, Comprehensiveness
Strategic Necessity of the Great Jihad	With the transformation of threats from military warfare to soft and cognitive warfare, the Great Jihad is	Negation of obedience, Active resistance,

	the sole path for the survival and progress of the Islamic system	Safeguarding identity and independence
Three Strategic Pillars of the Great Jihad	The strategic framework of the Great Jihad consists of three pillars	Sensitivity and intelligence, Non-compliance with the enemy, Active resistance and steadfastness
Triple Operational Manifestations	The Great Jihad is realized in three concrete arenas	Resistance Economy, Jihad of Clarification, Capacity-building and scientific codification of experiences
Innovation of the Three-Layered Model	Presenting a model that elucidates the relationship between Quranic foundations, strategic principles, and concrete manifestations	Theoretical layer (foundation), Strategic layer (connecting link), Operational layer (concrete realization)
Relationship with Other Types of Jihad	The Great Jihad complements and supports the Lesser Jihad and the Greater Jihad	Society without the Great Jihad is unstable; the individual without the Greater Jihad lacks sincerity
Final Conclusion: Civilizational Strategy	The Great Jihad transcends a mere religious concept; it is a civilizational strategy against the hegemonic system	Disobedience (essence), Three pillars (strategy), Three arenas (action)

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