

A Quranic Analysis of Enemy Strategies in Hybrid Warfare, with Emphasis on Weakening Defensive Power

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary security developments indicate that modern threats, rather than relying solely on hard power, increasingly focus on undermining the will, beliefs, and perceptions of societies—a process that manifests within the framework of “hybrid warfare,” particularly in the form of “cognitive-media warfare.” Within this context, the defensive power of the Islamic society is a multidimensional concept that, in addition to military capability, encompasses soft, perceptual, and cognitive dimensions. The primary objective of the present study is to identify and analyze the enemy’s strategies in hybrid warfare with a focus on weakening defensive power and eroding collective will from the perspective of the Holy Quran. This research adopts a descriptive–analytical approach and employs conceptual analysis of Quranic verses alongside authoritative Quranic exegeses. The findings demonstrate that the Holy Quran, by elucidating the mechanisms of the war of wills, points to strategies such as psychological operations, rumor-mongering, the production of despair, religious mockery, social division, cultural infiltration, political crisis-making, and targeted economic pressure. Collectively, these strategies delineate a coherent framework of the enemy’s hybrid warfare aimed at weakening the defensive power of the Islamic society

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Introduction

Defensive power is regarded as one of the most fundamental components of the survival of societies and the preservation of national security. In contemporary conditions, the nature of threats has undergone a fundamental transformation, and the primary arena of confrontation has shifted from the hard and military domain to the realm of the minds, perceptions, and will of societies. Within this framework, instruments such as cognitive warfare, psychological operations, perception management, media infiltration, and targeted economic pressure are employed as the main components of modern threats with the aim of eroding national will and weakening social cohesion. This complex and multilayered pattern is referred to in strategic literature as “hybrid warfare.”

At the core of hybrid warfare, the “war of wills” plays a central role—a form of warfare whose ultimate objective is the imposition of the will of one front upon the opposing front through the weakening of beliefs, the creation of doubt regarding the legitimacy of resistance, and the reduction of social hope. Accordingly, defensive power is no longer limited solely to hardware and military capability; rather, it encompasses a set of soft, cultural, perceptual, and cognitive capacities that play a decisive role in the endurance and resilience of societies.

The Holy Quran, as a revelatory and strategic source, by precisely elucidating the mechanisms of the confrontation between truth and falsehood, addresses various dimensions of the war of wills and the methods of weakening faith, hope, and social cohesion. Nevertheless, a systematic examination of the enemy’s strategies in hybrid warfare and their relationship to the weakening of the defensive power of the Islamic society—particularly with an emphasis on conceptual analysis of the verses of the Holy Quran—has received limited attention in contemporary scholarly literature. Accordingly, the main research question of the present study is formulated as follows: What are the enemy’s strategies in hybrid warfare for weakening defensive power and eroding the will of the Islamic society from the perspective of the Holy Quran?

The present research adopts a descriptive–analytical approach and, by employing the method of conceptual analysis of the verses of the Holy Quran and authoritative Quranic exegeses, seeks to identify these strategies and to present a coherent framework for a Quranic understanding of hybrid warfare and its implications for defensive power.

Literature Review

The study of Quranic strategies in confronting contemporary security threats lies at the intersection of Quranic and hadith studies and strategic and national security studies. A review of the existing literature indicates that current research can be categorized into three general groups:

1. Studies centered on the Quran, soft war, and *Jihād al-Tabayīn*: Examples include Salīmī (2017) in the book *The Key to Victory in the War of Wills* [in Persian], which emphasizes “divine will” and “insight”; Baktāsh (2024) in the book *Jihād of clarification in Hybrid Warfare* [in Persian], which focuses on *Jihād of clarification* as a strategy for neutralizing distortions; and Jūshqānī (2019) in the book *Soft War from the Perspective of the Quran* [in Persian], which examines the enemy’s tools in the cultural sphere. Although these studies address psychological and cultural dimensions, they lack a comprehensive analysis of operational mechanisms in the social, economic, and informational domains and do not present a holistic strategic model.

2. Studies focused on the analysis of hybrid and cognitive warfare: For instance, Sālik ‘Alīkhānī and Muḥammadpūr (2024), in the article *An Examination of the Dimensions of Hybrid Warfare and Cognitive Warfare of Colonialism against Iran* [in Persian], emphasize the role of attitude change through prolonged pressure and social networks. Zovāreh (2020), in the article *The Strategic Model of the Defense Technological Innovation System in Hybrid Warfare* [in Persian], stresses the necessity of developing technology and innovation to confront such threats. Bakhtiyārī and Sā‘edī (2019), in the article *The Evolutionary Trend of Warfare and Hybrid Warfare (from the Perspective of Command and Control)* [in Persian], analyze the complexities of command and control in these forms of warfare. While this group provides a strong operational understanding of threats, it largely lacks a religious approach grounded in indigenous epistemological foundations and relies on Western theoretical frameworks.

3. Related international studies: These include concepts such as “hybrid warfare” (Hoffman, 2007), “soft power” (Nye, 1990), and “cognitive warfare,” all of which emphasize dominance over perceptions and beliefs. Although these studies are advanced in analyzing tactics, they adopt a secular and instrumentalist approach and lack any attention to revelatory and spiritual sources for strengthening resilience and legitimizing resistance.

The review of the literature indicates that existing studies either focus solely on a single dimension of soft war or lack an integrated analytical framework grounded in the Holy Quran. By integrating Quranic studies with the hybrid warfare framework, the present research addresses this gap and offers a comprehensive model for analyzing the weakening of defensive power.

1. Concepts

In what follows, several applied and key concepts related to the title of the article and the issues discussed therein are examined.

1.1. The Concept of Defensive Power

Defensive power is a multidimensional concept which, in contemporary security literature, encompasses hard, soft, perceptual, and cognitive capabilities and provides the capacity for comprehensive resistance against military, cultural, media, economic, cyber, and psychological threats. The hard dimension refers to military deterrence capability and security capacities; the soft dimension includes cultural capital, norms, religious values, social cohesion, and media power; the perceptual dimension focuses on distinguishing reality from distortion and on the management of collective perception; and the cognitive dimension encompasses resistance to psychological warfare, perceptual operations, and cognitive manipulation. From an analytical perspective, defensive power reaches an optimal level when its components are integrated in a systematic linkage that strengthens identity cohesion and collective will.

1.2. The Concept of the War of Wills

The war of wills focuses on the confrontation between the will and decision-making capacity of opposing sides, and the party possessing the stronger resolve ultimately prevails (Şulh Mîrzâ'î 2019, 133). The primary objective of this type of warfare is the imposition of the will of one front upon the other. This concept has a clear foundation in the Quran and the Prophetic tradition. By emphasizing human volition in choosing faith or disbelief—which reflects the volitional dimension of human existence—the Quran states: “...let anyone who wishes believe it, and let anyone who wishes disbelieve it...”¹ (Quran 18:29).

From an Islamic perspective, all historical confrontations between the prophets and the arrogant powers represent a continuation of this war of wills, since the divine prophets, as God’s vicegerents on earth and manifestations of the divine will, stood in opposition to the will of the arrogant forces of the world. The war of wills is not confined to the military arena; rather, it unfolds across cultural, psychological, media, political, and economic domains, with its primary battlefield being the human mind and belief system.

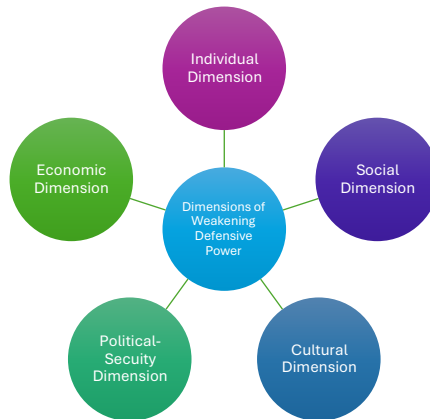
1.3. The Concept of Hybrid Warfare

The concept of *hybrid warfare* was first systematically articulated by Hoffman. He defines this type of warfare as involving the simultaneous integration of a spectrum of conventional and unconventional tools, which may include classical military capabilities, irregular tactics, terrorist actions, and even forms of organized disorder, in such a way that these elements collectively generate a synergistic and composite effect on the will and structures of the opposing side (Hoffman 2007, pp. 8-9). Within the framework of contemporary security developments, hybrid warfare is recognized as a pattern of complex threats in which actors simultaneously and in a coordinated manner employ hard and soft tools, military and non-military means, as well as symmetric and asymmetric methods. The purpose of this multilayered combination is to enhance the degree of influence over different levels of power—including material infrastructures, social cohesion, and decision-making will—on the opposing front.

¹. ﴿...فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ...﴾ (الكهف / ٢٩).

2. The Enemy's Hybrid Warfare for Weakening Defensive Power

In hybrid warfare, the enemy, with the aim of eroding the will to resist and social cohesion, targets multiple layers of society simultaneously prior to the application of hard force. This multi-level process can be examined across five principal dimensions. In the research model, the enemy's methods are depicted at the central focal point, while the dimensions of threat are represented in the surrounding concentric layers.



The present research examines the five dimensions of threat—individual, social, cultural, political-security, and economic—in hybrid warfare exclusively from the analytical perspective of the Holy Quran. Due to the breadth of the subject matter, the strengthening strategies and counteractive mechanisms against these threats will be presented in a separate article, in order to comprehensively elucidate the epistemological and strategic foundations of the Quran for confronting hybrid warfare.

2.1. The Individual Dimension: Cognitive–Media Warfare

In this dimension, the individual level pertains to all cognitive and media processes that exert influence at the level of the individual. Here, the enemy directly focuses on the perception and psyche of the believing individual. This dimension encompasses various components, some of which will be addressed in the following sections:

2.1.1. Psychological Operations and Cognitive Undermining

2.1.1.1. Psychological Exploitation of Religious Events

Within the framework of the war of wills, one of the most effective tools for weakening the defensive power of religious societies is the cognitive and psychological exploitation of sensitive doctrinal events. The issue of the delay in changing the *qiblah* in the early period of Islam constitutes a clear and historical example of such a strategy. In this case, the enemy sought to weaken the doctrinal cohesion and religious will of the Islamic community by manipulating perception and interpretation of religious events.

In the early years of the prophetic mission, the Noble Prophet (s), by divine command, performed prayer facing *Bayt al-Muqaddas* (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 1:479). This situation was opportunistically transformed by the Jews of Medina into a tool for psychological operations, to the extent that they said to the Prophet (s): ‘Return to your former *qiblah* so that we may believe in you’ (Ṭabarsī 1987, 1:412).

By exploiting this situation, the Jews attempted—through identity humiliation, the implantation of doubt, and sarcasm (Fakhr Rāzī 1999, 4:78), driven by their prejudice (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 1:317)—to undermine the religious legitimacy of the Prophet of Islam (s) and the doctrinal independence of the nascent Islamic community. The core content of this doubt was that if Islam is an independent and new religion, why is its *qiblah* identical to that of the Jews? In response, God stated: “...so turn your face towards the Holy Mosque...”² (*Quran 2:144*).

This targeted atmosphere-building contained clear components of cognitive–media warfare, as it focused on a religious symbol in an attempt to weaken individual Muslims’ trust in divine leadership and to create a form of cognitive dissonance within their beliefs. In this sense, the delay in changing the *qiblah* became a platform for the application of hybrid warfare in the psychological and propagational domain, the ultimate objective of which was the destabilization of religious will and the independent identity of the Islamic society.

². ﴿...قَوْلٌ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ...﴾ (البقرة/١٤٤)

2.1.1.2. Creating Doubt Regarding the Prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s)

Creating doubt regarding the prophethood of the Prophet (s) constituted the central axis of the psychological operations conducted by the enemies of Islam—particularly the Jews of Medina—for the purpose of weakening the will of the believers. Prior to the prophetic mission, based on the glad tidings contained in the Torah, they awaited the emergence of the promised prophet and even attributed their anticipated victory to him (see Qummī 1984, 1:33; Baḥrānī 1994, 1:276). However, with the advent of a prophet from among the Arabs, they refused to accept his mission due to ethnic and political prejudices as well as envy (Qarāʾatī 2009, 1:158).

In order to create doubt, they raised suspicions such as attributing sorcery and magic to the Prophet and the Quran (Quran 25:8; 17:47), accusing him of fabricating lies against God (Jaʿfarī 2019, 7:16), labeling the Prophet (s) as a poet (Quran 37:36; 52:30), and disregarding the miracle of the Quran by demanding tangible, material miracles (Quran 25:8; 17:91). The Quran explicitly emphasizes the People of the Book’s awareness of the signs of the Prophet (s) in verses: *“Those whom We have given the Book recognize him just as they recognize their sons. Those who have ruined their souls will not have faith”*³ (Quran 6:20) and *“And when there came to them a Book from Allah, confirming that which is with them and earlier they would pray for victory over the pagans so when there came to them what they recognized, they defied it. So may the curse of Allah be on the faithless!”*⁴ (Quran 2:89), indicating that their denial was conscious and premeditated. The objective of this action was to discredit the personality of the Prophet (s) and to weaken the social legitimacy of his mission within the nascent Islamic society. They even devised an organized plan of outwardly professing faith and then renouncing it, with the aim of destabilizing the believers’ faith—an issue that the Quran exposed in verse: *“A group of the People of the Book say,*

³ ﴿الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ الَّذِينَ حَسَبُوا أَنَّفْسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (الانعام/ ٢٠).
⁴ ﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ (البقرة/ ٨٩).

'Believe in what has been sent down to the faithful at the beginning of the day, and disbelieve at its end, so that they may turn back [from their religion]'"⁵ (Quran 3:72).

2.1.1.3. Despair-Creation, Inducing Hopelessness, and the Implantation of Strategic Deadlock

One of the most effective manifestations of psychological operations and cognitive destruction within the framework of the war of wills addressed by the Holy Quran is the creation of despair, the induction of hopelessness, and the implantation of a sense of deadlock. In this pattern, the current of hypocrisy (*nifāq*), by exploiting religious appearances and employing dualistic behavior, seeks to weaken the psychological and doctrinal trust of believers in divine promises, thereby diminishing their individual motivation and inner resilience. The Quran states: *"And when the hypocrites were saying, as well as those in whose hearts is a sickness, 'Allah and His Apostle did not promise us [anything] except delusion'"*⁶ (Quran 33:12). This verse illustrates the use of casting doubt on the credibility of divine promises as a cognitive instrument for eroding the psychological capital and defensive will of the believers.

Within the framework of the "war of wills," this strategy is pursued through a set of complementary tactics that share the common objective of inducing despair, generating cognitive disruption, and implanting a sense of strategic deadlock within Islamic society. These tactics include fomenting division and weakening social and psychological cohesion: *"Had they gone forth with you, they would have only added to your troubles, and they would have surely spread rumours in your midst, seeking to cause sedition among you. They have some spies among you, and Allah knows best the wrongdoers"*⁷ (Quran 9:47), organized deception and the duality of speech and behavior: *"They profess*

⁵. ﴿ وَقَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ آمَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَيَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجَهَ النَّهَارِ وَكَفَرُوا آخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴾ (آل عمران/ ٧٢)

⁶. ﴿ وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴾ (الاحزاب/ ١٢)

⁷. ﴿ لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ مَا زَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَأَوْضَعُوا خِلَالَكُمْ يَبْتَغُونَكُمْ الْفِتْنَةَ وَفِيكُمْ سَمَاعُونَ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴾ (التوبة/ ٤٧)

obedience] to you [, but when they go out from your presence, a group of them conspire overnight] to do [something other than what you say. But Allah records what they conspire overnight. So disregard them and put your trust in Allah, for Allah suffices as trustee”⁸ (Quran 4:81), instrumental exploitation of seemingly unity-oriented slogans to blur the boundary between truth and falsehood: “They swear by Allah that they belong to you, but they do not belong to you. Rather they are a frightened lot”⁹ (Quran 9:56), exaggerating the enemy’s power and belittling internal capabilities in order to induce a perception of structural incapacity: “And when a group of them said, ‘O people of Yathrib! [This is] not a place for you, so go back!’ And a group of them sought the Prophet’s permission, saying, ‘Our homes lie exposed [to the enemy],’ although they were not exposed. They only sought to flee”¹⁰ (Quran 33:13), spreading threatening rumors and creating psychological insecurity: “If the hypocrites do not relinquish and [also] those in whose hearts is a sickness, and the rumormongers in the city [do not give up], We will surely urge you [to take action] against them, then they will not be your neighbours in it except for a little [while]”¹¹ (Quran 33:60), outward displays of religiosity accompanied by inner hypocrisy: “And among the people are those who say, ‘We have faith in Allah and the Last Day,’ but they have no faith”¹² (Quran 2:8), and establishing ties with the enemies of Islam in opposition to the believing community: “those who take the faithless for allies instead of the faithful. Do they seek honour with them? [If so,] indeed all honour

⁸. «وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَزُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي تَقُولُ وَاللَّهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُونَ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا» (النساء/ ٨١)

⁹. «وَيَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِيَّاهُمْ لِمَنْكُمُ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرُقُونَ» (التوبة/ ٥٦)

¹⁰. «وَأِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ إِنْ يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا» (الأحزاب/ ١٣)

¹¹. «لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِبَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا» (الأحزاب/ ٦٠)

¹². «وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ» (البقرة/ ٨)

belongs to Allah”¹³ (Quran 4:139). Taken together, these components form a coherent pattern of psychological operations and cognitive erosion that operates in a targeted manner toward the depletion of social hope and the weakening of the defensive will.

2.1.1.4. Employing Mockery and Ridicule for the Erosion of Will

The use of mockery and ridicule of religious beliefs is among the oldest tools employed by enemies to weaken the will of believers, deployed with the aim of psychological attrition, the reduction of confidence in religious identity, and the weakening of inner cohesion. The Holy Quran presents this method as a recurrent pattern in the confrontation with the prophets: “Messengers were certainly derided before you. Then those who ridiculed them were besieged by what they used to deride”¹⁴ (Quran 6:10).

During the era of the Prophet Muhammad (s), this behavior was likewise pursued in an organized manner by the hypocrites. The Quran refers to their pretext-making under the guise of “jesting and play” and regards it as an instance of disbelief after faith: “The hypocrites are apprehensive lest a sūrah should be sent down against them, informing them about what is in their hearts. Say, ‘Go on deriding. Allah will indeed bring out what you are apprehensive of.’ If you question them [regarding their conduct], they will surely say, ‘We were just gossiping and amusing ourselves.’ Say, ‘Were you deriding Allah, His signs, and His apostles? Do not make excuses. You have disbelieved after your faith. ‘If We forgive a group among you, We will punish another group, for they have been guilty’”¹⁵ (Quran 9:64-66). Moreover, the ridicule of religious rites by some of the People of the Book and the disbelievers—particularly within devotional settings—was carried out with the aim of projecting the religion as lacking credibility and inducing doctrinal

¹³. «الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَيْنِئْتُونَ عَنْهُمْ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا» (النساء/ ١٣٩)

¹⁴. «وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَأُ بِرُسُلِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ» (الأنعام/ ١٠)

¹⁵. «يَخْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ قُلِ اسْتَهْزِئُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْرِجُ مَا تَخْذَرُونَ * وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ * لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ إِنَّ نَعْفَ عَنْ طَائِفَةٍ مِنْكُمْ يُعَذِّبُ طَائِفَةٌ بَأْتُهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ» (التوبة/ ٤٤-٤٦)

instability. For this reason, the Quran forbids the believers from forming bonds with those who turn religion into an object of mockery and derision: “*O you who have faith! Do not take those who take your religion in derision and play, from among those who were given the Book before you, and the infidels, as friends, and be wary of Allah, should you be faithful. When you call to prayer, they take it in derision and play. That is because they are a people who do not apply reason*”¹⁶ (Quran 5:57–58).

From a strategic analytical perspective, the mockery of religious beliefs and rituals can be understood as part of a software-oriented war of wills, which, through the use of media tools and the inculcation of a sense of inferiority, seeks the gradual transformation of religious identity and the weakening of doctrinal capital at the individual level.

2.1.2. Media and Perceptual Operations

A portion of the enemy’s cognitive warfare is conducted through media–perceptual operations, the purpose of which is targeted influence over individuals’ perceptions and attitudes. In what follows, examples of such operations are presented.

2.1.2.1. Rumor-Mongering, Fabrication, and the Production of Fake News

Guiding public opinion toward the objectives of the enemy constitutes the core component of psychological operations in the war of wills. Through propagandistic and perceptual tools, this strategy seeks to instill doubt, distort reality, and generate division, thereby weakening collective cohesion and diminishing the society’s capacity for resistance. In verse 83 of *Sūrat al-Nisā’*, the Holy Quran condemns the dissemination of unverified rumors and regards it as an instrument used by the enemy to harm the Muslims, while emphasizing the necessity of referring matters to *ulū al-amr* in order to uncover the truth.¹⁷ Verses

¹⁶ «يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَكُمْ هُزُؤًا وَلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكَافِرَ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ كُتُوبَهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ * وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمُ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ اتَّخَذُوهَا هُزُؤًا وَلَعِبًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ» (المائدة/ ٥٧-٥٨)

¹⁷ «وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَدَّاعُوا بِهِ وَ لَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَ لَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا» (النساء/ ٨٣)

60-62 of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* likewise threaten subversive groups, including the *murjifūn* (rumor-mongers).¹⁸

Rumor-mongering, as a branch of psychological warfare, is employed particularly when the enemy is incapable on the battlefield, serving to divert public opinion and destroy the reputation of the righteous. A prominent example of this is the incident of the *Ifk* (*Sūrat al-Nūr*, verses 11-16), which the Quran describes as “an obvious calumny” (*ifkun mubīn*) (*Quran 24:12*) and “a monstrous calumny” (*buhtānun ‘azīm*) (*Quran 24:16*). The Quraysh likewise sought to create public anxiety and weaken resolve through rumors, such as claiming that the Prophet (s) was taught by others (*Quran 16:103*), alleging that people were bewitched (*Quran 74:24*), and labeling the Prophet (s) a sorcerer (*Quran 38:4*).

The emergence of the party of hypocrisy (*ḥizb al-nifāq*) under the leadership of ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy in Medina represents a historical manifestation of this soft threat. By emphasizing their enmity—“...*They are the enemy, so beware of them...*”¹⁹ (*Quran 63:4*)—and pointing to their deception—“*They seek to deceive Allah and those who have faith...*”²⁰ (*Quran 2:9*)—the Quran demonstrates that the threat posed by the hypocrites is aimed at exerting psychological influence over the will and cohesion of the Muslim community.

“When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it; but had they referred it to the Messenger or to those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it. And were it not for Allah’s grace upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [all] except a few” (*Quran 4:83*)

18. ﴿لَئِن لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِبَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا * مَلْعُونِينَ أَيْنَمَا ثَقِفُوا أَخَذُوا وَقَتَلُوا تَقْتِيلًا * سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ لَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا﴾ (الأحزاب/٦٠-٦٢)

“If the hypocrites do not relinquish and [also] those in whose hearts is a sickness, and the rumormongers in the city [do not give up], We will surely urge you [to take action] against them, then they will not be your neighbours in it except for a little [while]. Accursed, they will be seized wherever they are confronted and slain violently: Allah’s precedent with those who passed away before, and you will never find any change in Allah’s precedent” (*Quran 33:60-62*)

19. ﴿...هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ...﴾ (المنافقون/٤)

20. ﴿يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...﴾ (البقرة/٩)

The Prophet (s) likewise warned of the destructive role of hypocrites in psychological operations, stating: “But I fear for you every hypocrite with a treacherous heart and an eloquent tongue”²¹ (Ḥaydarī 2008, 3:155). Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī (a) also warned against them, saying: “I warn you against the people of hypocrisy, for they are misguided and misguiding, those who slip and cause others to slip,”²² describing them as misled leaders of misguidance (Muḥammad 1987, 1:354). In another statement, he further characterized their condition by saying: “They change colors constantly” (*yatalawwanūna alwānan*) (Baḥrānī 1992, 3:18), indicating the multifaceted cognitive and psychological threats they pose within the context of hybrid warfare.

2.1.2.2. Media Deception and the Implantation of Misleading Propositions

One of the most effective media tools in the war of wills is the power of speech and oratory. In this regard, the Noble Prophet Muḥammad (s) states: “Indeed, some forms of eloquent speech are magic”²³ (Ibn Abī Jumhūr 1983, 1:71; Ibn Bābawayh 1997, 1:619), which indicates the profound impact of discourse upon human will and decision-making. Imam ‘Alī (a) likewise states: “Many a word has saved one from an onslaught”²⁴ (Majlisī 1983, 68:291; Sharīf Raḍī 1986, 545), demonstrating that the power of expression can function beyond the domain of hard warfare.

The Holy Quran identifies linguistic manipulation and the instrumental use of speech as a key characteristic of the enemies in soft warfare: “... *They please you with their mouths while their hearts spurn you...*”²⁵ (Quran 9:8), and also: “... *and if they speak, you listen to their speech...*”²⁶ (Quran 63:4). These verses indicate the role of deceptive discourse in the psychological operations of the enemy aimed at influencing perception and weakening the will of the believing society.

²¹. «وَلِكَيْ يَأْخُفَ عَلَيْكُمْ كُلُّ مُنَافِقٍ الْجَنَانِ عَالِمِ اللِّسَانِ».
²². «أَحَدُكُمْ أَهْلُ التَّفَاقِي فَإِنَّهُمْ الصَّالُونَ الْمُضْلُونَ وَالرَّالُونَ الْمُرْلُونَ».

²³. «إِنَّ مِنَ الْبَيِّنِ لَسِحْرًا».

²⁴. «رُبَّ قَوْلٍ أَنْقَذَ مِنْ صَوْلٍ».

²⁵. «... يُرْضَوْنَكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَى قُلُوبُهُمْ...» (التوبة/ ٨)

²⁶. «... وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ...» (المنافقون/ ٤)

In the early period of Islam, enemies likewise employed verbal tactics to appease the believers while harboring hostility toward them in their hearts (Muqātil ibn Sulaymān 2002, 2:158).

At the Battle of Badr, the Noble Prophet (s), in his sermon, called his companions to patience and steadfastness (Wāqidī 1989, 1:43). The *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), who are described as “*the commanders of speech*” (*umarā’ al-kalām*) (Daylamī 1987, 321), likewise employed this strategy to strengthen the will of the people. Examples include the statements of Imām Ḥusayn (a) on the road to Karbalā, which led some individuals to join the front of truth, and the sermon of Amīr al-Mu’minīn (a) at Ṣiffīn, in which he declared: “Death in your life while being subdued is life in your death while being dominant”²⁷ (Ibn Shahrāshūb 1959, 3:167).

These pieces of evidence demonstrate that the enemy, through media deception, the implantation of misleading propositions, and the exploitation of the appeal of rhetoric, directly targets the will of the Islamic society. Managing this arena, therefore, necessitates the clarification of truths and the strengthening of the cognitive and spiritual resilience of the community.

2.2. The Social Dimension

Part of the enemy’s soft warfare takes shape within the social sphere through cognitive and media actions aimed at influencing the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of society. In what follows, the most important components of this dimension are examined.

2.2.1. Social Fragmentation and Internal Front-Building

Undermining political and social cohesion and creating internal fissures through fragmentation and internal front-building constitutes one of the fundamental strategies employed by enemies to erode the defensive power and collective will of the Islamic society. Quranic logic indicates that the real strength of the Ummah is not confined to hardware and military capability alone; rather, it is rooted in ideological unity, social cohesion, and the independence of political will. Conversely, any form of internal conflict and discord directly reduces the society’s capacity for resistance and renders it vulnerable to the enemy’s psychological, cognitive, and political operations.

²⁷. «فَالْمَوْتُ فِي حَيَاتِكُمْ مَفْهُورِينَ وَ الْحَيَاةُ فِي مَوْتِكُمْ قَاهِرِينَ».

By portraying the believers as a single, interconnected body, the Holy Quran regards collective cohesion as the foundation of security and power: “*Indeed, the believers are brothers*” (Quran 49:10). Believers are considered brothers by virtue of their affiliation with the principle of faith (Qummī-Mashhadī 1990, 12:333), which brings about eternal life for all believers (Ālūsī 1994, 13:303), and thus constitutes a bond of religious brotherhood (Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah 2001, 5:149). These teachings indicate that unity is not merely a moral recommendation, but rather a defensive strategy against enemy penetration and domination in the arena of the war of wills.

The Quran presents internal discord and conflict as factors leading to the decline of power and the loss of social prestige, issuing an explicit warning: “*And obey Allah and His Apostle, and do not dispute, or you will lose heart and your power will be gone. And be patient; indeed Allah is with the patient*”²⁸ (Quran 8:46). This verse reveals a direct link between political-social conflict and the collapse of the ummah’s defensive capacity (Faḍlullāh 1998, 10:394). Since discord results in weakness in the face of the enemy (Ṭabarsī 1991, 2:24), it leads to the weakening of forces and the disintegration of unity (Marāghī, n.d., 10:10). When discord emerges, individuals, instead of focusing on the enemy, become suspicious of one another, which in turn leads to fear, lethargy in battle, and the loss of power (Baghawī 1999, 2:298). This warning even encompasses refraining from disputing with the commander (Ibn ‘Āshūr 1999, 9:123).

The Quran also introduces Pharaoh’s strategy—“*Indeed Pharaoh tyrannized over the land, reducing its people to factions...*”²⁹ (Quran 28:4)—as a classic model of “divide and rule.” In this model, society is rendered easily susceptible to domination through social fragmentation and the reinforcement of internal cleavages, a strategy that, in the contemporary era, is reproduced in the form of soft warfare and cognitive operations.

²⁸ «وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ» (الأنفال/٤٦)

²⁹ «إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا...» (القصص/٤)

2.3. The Cultural Dimension

Some other dimensions of the enemy's warfare aimed at weakening wills pertain to the cultural sphere. In what follows, several of its key aspects are addressed.

2.3.1. Promoting Corruption, Immorality, and Ethical Deviations

The destruction of values and public morality through the promotion of corruption and immorality constitutes an effective instrument in the war of wills. By weakening religious identity—especially among the younger generation—this strategy reduces the costs of hard warfare and gradually erodes the society's will to resist from within. The Holy Quran traces the roots of these deviations to satanic guidance: "*He only prompts you to [commit] evil and indecent acts, and that you attribute to Allah what you do not know*"³⁰ (Quran 2:169). This strategy is also attributed to certain groups, such as the Jews: "*...They seek to cause corruption on the earth, and Allah does not like the agents of corruption*"³¹ (Quran 5:64).

During the time of the Prophet (s), the Jews of Medina engaged in corrupting the youth by establishing wine-production workshops, centers of immorality, and pig breeding. One of the reasons behind the Jews' deceit toward the Prophet (s) and their alliance with the polytheists against him was precisely this issue: when the youth embraced faith in the Prophet (s), they no longer frequented centers of immorality and gambling houses, nor did they consume pork (Mughniyyah 2007, 1:204). Throughout history, and even in the contemporary period, the largest centers of sexual corruption and gambling have likewise been under their control (see Sāqī 2019, 25; Sanqarī, 1987, 39).

According to the verse, "*Your Lord would never destroy the townships unjustly while their inhabitants were bringing about reform*"³² (Quran 11:117), the Quran considers the destruction of societies to be the result of widespread corruption (Ṭūsī, n.d., 6:82). Throughout history, the

³⁰ ﴿إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (البقرة/١٦٩)

³¹ ﴿...وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ﴾ (المائدة/٦٤)

³² ﴿وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلِهَا مُصْلِحُونَ﴾ (هود/١١٧)

method of the world's arrogant powers has been to eliminate active forces; and if they were unable to eliminate them, they would suffocate the spirit of courage and valor by disseminating means of corruption, narcotics, the expansion of immorality and sexual licentiousness, the spread of wine and gambling, and various forms of unhealthy entertainment, so that they could continue their despotic rule with peace of mind (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 16:20-21). Moreover, the spread of sins also entails corruption in nature itself. As Imam Ṣādiq (a) stated: "The life of aquatic creatures depends on rainfall, and when rain ceases, corruption appears on land and sea; and this occurs when sins and acts of disobedience become widespread"³³ (Ḥuwayzī 1994, 4:190). This hadith indicates that sins disrupt both the natural and social order.

2.3.2. Creating Doubt, Distorting Propositions, and Fabricating False Narratives

Within the framework of the war of wills, the creation of doubt and the distortion of doctrinal propositions constitute an effective strategy for weakening epistemic foundations and diminishing the will to resist in religious societies. Through targeted doubt-casting and the manipulation of collective perception, this approach disrupts the intellectual cohesion of society. The Holy Quran reflects clear instances of this pattern in the confrontations between communities and the prophets. One of the methods employed by the disbelievers was to reduce the message of revelation to myth and to undermine its epistemic credibility: "*When Our signs are recited to them, they say, 'We have heard already. If we want, we [too] can say like this. These are nothing but myths of the ancients'*"³⁴ (Quran 8:31). This verse demonstrates that distortion is directed less toward outright denial and more toward redefining and weakening the epistemic status of the message.

Pharaoh, as a symbol of political-ideological despotism, confronted the monotheistic message of Prophet Moses (a) by distorting the most fundamental religious concept—Lordship. By claiming divinity, he

³³. قَالَ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ : «حَيَاةُ دَوَابِّ الْبَحْرِ بِالْمَطَرِ، فَإِذَا كُفَّ الْمَطَرُ ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ، وَ ذَلِكَ إِذَا كَثُرَتِ الذُّنُوبُ وَالْمَعَاصِي».

³⁴. «وَإِذَا تَتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا قَالُوا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هَذَا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ» (الانفال / 31)

called the legitimacy of revelation into question: “saying, ‘I am your exalted lord!’”³⁵ (Quran 79:24). He also accused Moses (a) of sorcery, declaring: “He is indeed your chief who has taught you magic”³⁶ (Quran 20:71).

In the early period of Islam, the polytheists of Mecca likewise sought to create doubt regarding the very prophethood of the Messenger of Allah (s) by exploiting certain outward aspects of his everyday life. Through distorted narrative-making, they prepared the ground for the gradual denial of the legitimacy of revelation in public opinion: “And they say, ‘What sort of apostle is this who eats food and walks in the marketplaces? Why has not an angel been sent down to him so as to be a warner along with him?’”³⁷ (Quran 25:7). This approach represents a clear instance of the war of wills in the epistemic domain, aimed at generating doubt and distancing people from the divine message.

The most prominent example of organized distortion is found in the actions of the Jews in altering religious texts with the aim of denying and undermining the legitimacy of the prophethood of the Messenger of Allah (s): “Among the Jews are those who pervert words from their meanings...”³⁸ (Quran 4:46), and “...a part of them would hear the word of Allah and then they would distort it after they had understood it...”³⁹ (Quran 2:75). By exposing these mechanisms, the Quran further states: “and the Jews who eavesdrop with the aim of [telling] lies [against you] and eavesdrop for other people who do not come to you. They pervert words from their meanings...”⁴⁰ (Quran 5:41), and also: “So woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, ‘This is from Allah,’ that they may sell it for a paltry gain. So woe to

³⁵ ﴿فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَى﴾ (النازعات/ ٢٤)

³⁶ ﴿...إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرِكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ...﴾ (طه/ ٧١)

³⁷ ﴿وَقَالُوا مَا لِهَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا﴾

(الفرقان/ ٧)

³⁸ ﴿مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ...﴾ (النساء/ ٤٦)

³⁹ ﴿...وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ...﴾ (البقرة/ ٧٥)

⁴⁰ ﴿...وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا سَمَاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمَاعُونَ لِقَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ لَمْ يَأْتُوكَ يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ...﴾

(المائدة/ ٤١)

them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn”⁴¹ (Quran 2:79). These verses constitute a Quranic exposition of hybrid warfare in the epistemic realm. By revealing the mechanisms of distortion, they call religious societies to cognitive vigilance and to safeguarding the authority of revelation.

2.3.3. Hypocritical Instrumentalization of Religious Symbols for Deceptive Legitimation

The misuse of religious symbols and sacred elements in a deceptive and manipulative manner can weaken social cohesion and public trust, and function as a psychological and social weapon against a society’s defensive power. A society that lacks sufficient insight and awareness in the face of such threats becomes vulnerable, and its defensive capacity against soft threats is correspondingly diminished. Oppositional and hypocritical groups, by exploiting sacred symbols, attempt to bestow a sanctified appearance upon their actions, attract followers, and direct them toward destructive objectives.

A historical example of this method in early Islam is the establishment of *Masjid al-Dirār*. The Holy Quran states in this regard: “As for those who took to a mosque for sabotage and for defiance, and to cause division among the faithful, and for the purpose of ambush] used [by those who have fought Allah and His Apostle before they will surely swear: ‘We desired nothing but good,’ and Allah bears witness that they are indeed liars”⁴² (Quran 9:107). They constructed this mosque in opposition to the Mosque of Qubā’ (Ṣādiqī Tihirānī 1985, 13:296), which demonstrates that the hypocrites, through the misuse of sacred symbols, engaged in acts of division, disbelief, and confrontation with the divine religion. They even attempted to acquire outward legitimacy by inviting the Prophet (s) to perform prayer in the Mosque of *Dirār* (Khaṭīb 2003, 6:894); however, divine revelation exposed the hidden reality and issued the command for its destruction (Ibn Kathīr 1998, 4:185).

⁴¹ «فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ» (البقرة/٧٩)

⁴² «وَ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَ كُفْرًا وَ تَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ إِزْصَادًا لِمَنْ حَارَبَ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ لِيَخْلِفُنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَى وَ اللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ» (التوبة/١٠٧)

Islamic history records similar instances of this strategy. During the Battle of Şifīn, Mu‘āwiyah raised copies of the Quran on spears (Ḥusaynī Tihirānī, 2012, 1:132), exploiting sacred symbols to provoke the emotions of the soldiers of Imam ‘Alī (a) and to steer them toward arbitration—an action that, despite the clarifications of Imam ‘Alī (a) and ‘Ammār Yāsir, resulted in sedition and deviation.

The hypocrites justified their reprehensible actions with appealing labels, as the Quran states: “*When they are told, ‘Do not cause corruption on the earth,’ they say, ‘We are only reformers!’ Look! They are themselves the agents of corruption, but they are not aware*”⁴³ (Quran 2:11-12). The root of this phenomenon lies in following Satan and the carnal self, which are the principal agents that adorn evil deeds and portray their commission as easy and acceptable (see Zamakhsharī 1986, 2:451).

2.4. The Political-Security Dimension

Some other dimensions of the enemy’s warfare aimed at weakening wills pertain to the political–security sphere. In what follows, several of these dimensions are addressed.

2.4.1. Threats and the Application of Political Pressure

Threats and political pressure constitute an effective instrument in the *war of wills*, aimed at weakening individuals’ inner resolve and instilling a sense of incapacity in the face of a dominant power. The Holy Quran presents this method as a common practice among tyrants for controlling people’s thoughts and wills. One clear example is Pharaoh’s threat against the believing magicians: “...*Surely I will cut off your hands and feet from opposite sides, and I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees. So you will know which of us can inflict a punishment severer and more lasting...*”⁴⁴ (Quran 20:71). Similar expressions appear in other verses (Quran 7:124; 26:49), which, through vivid depictions of painful punishment, reveal a form of psychological operation directed against the will and steadfastness of the believers.

⁴³ ﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ * أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾ (البقرة/١١-١٢)

⁴⁴ ﴿...فَلَا قِطْعَانَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلِكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا صُلْبَيْنَكُمْ فِي جُدُوعِ النَّخْلِ وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ أَتَيْنَا أَشَدَّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى...﴾ (طه/٧١)

In this type of warfare, the enemy seeks to dominate collective decision-making and public will through soft instruments such as harmful propaganda, fomenting division, and diplomatic pressure. Ayatullah Makārim Shīrāzī maintains that governmental restrictions imposed on the believers in Mecca led to the divine command for migration (*hijrah*) (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 16:326). He further explains that politically oppressed individuals (*al-mustad'afūn*) are those who are deprived of social and political participation, and that, conversely, the Islamic government must act decisively against destabilizing elements (ibid, 16:397). These analyses demonstrate that political pressure in the Quranic discourse is treated as a coercive mechanism employed to restrain truth-seeking movements and to impose the will of unjust systems, functioning as a central component of political–security warfare aimed at eroding resolve and resistance.

2.4.2. Political Crisis-Making and the Incitement of Sedition

Political crisis-making and the fomentation of sedition constitute a soft strategy within the *war of wills*, employed with the aim of altering elite calculations, destabilizing macro-level decision-making, and eroding public trust. By generating perceptual chaos, this approach blurs the boundaries between truth and falsehood and disrupts society's analytical capacity. The Holy Quran describes the seditious nature of hostile currents as follows: "...and they would have surely spread rumours in your midst, seeking to cause sedition among you..."⁴⁵ (*Quran 9:47*), which indicates that the enemy, by penetrating the inner layers of society, seeks to create internal rupture and agitation.

In Quranic logic, *fitnah* (sedition) is a complex process carried out through seemingly truth-seeking claims, rumor-mongering, and the distortion of realities, all of which render the decision-making environment ambiguous. This meaning is emphasized in the verse: "They certainly sought to cause sedition earlier, and upset the matters for you..."⁴⁶ (*Quran 9:48*), where the inversion of realities is introduced as a destabilizing strategy. The Quran even reports attempts to incite

⁴⁵ «...وَلَا وَضَعُوا خِلالَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ...» (التوبة/٤٧)

⁴⁶ «لَقَدْ ابْتَغُوا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ قَلْبُوا لَكَ الْأُمُورَ...» (التوبة/٤٨)

sedition against the Prophet (s): “*They were about to beguile you from what Allah has revealed to you ...*”⁴⁷ (Quran 17:73), demonstrating that sedition constitutes a continuous threat even at the highest level of leadership, although—due to divine infallibility—no real influence over the Prophet (s) was possible. Imam ‘Alī (a) states: “Indeed, Satan ... gives you division under the guise of unity, and through division he produces sedition”⁴⁸ (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 121), identifying the severing of collective bonds as a prelude to the production of sedition and the weakening of resistance.

In the contemporary era, these patterns have been reproduced in the form of hybrid warfare and cognitive operations through media, psychological, and diplomatic tools. The ultimate objective is to weaken defensive power not through direct confrontation, but by eroding cognitive cohesion, destabilizing public trust, and disrupting social will—an outcome that underscores the strategic necessity of engaging Quranic teachings to strengthen collective insight and awareness.

2.4.3. Employing Pleasant Discourse, a Self-Righteous Appearance, and Moralistic Conduct

The use of pleasant discourse, a self-righteous appearance, and ostensibly moral behavior constitutes a soft yet highly effective instrument employed by hypocritical currents to influence the perceptual pathways, trust, and decision-making processes of the target society. This method is designed such that the agent of infiltration presents himself as aligned with societal values, concerned for public interests, and a defender of truth, while his real objectives stand in fundamental contradiction to the community’s interests and the cohesion of collective will.

The Holy Quran, through a precise and analytical lens, explicates this mechanism of infiltration and warns that rhetorical attractiveness and outward claims of commitment to values do not constitute valid criteria for assessing the sincerity or soundness of political conduct. In

⁴⁷ «وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ...» (الإسراء/ ٧٣)

⁴⁸ «إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ... يُعْطِيكُمْ بِالْجَمَاعَةِ الْفُرْقَةَ وَالْفُرْقَةَ الْفِتْنَةُ.»

this regard, it states: “Among the people is he whose talk about worldly life impresses you, and he holds Allah witness to what is in his heart, though he is the staunchest of enemies”⁴⁹ (Quran 2:204). This verse clearly demonstrates that verbal deception, seemingly religious oaths, and claims of truth-seeking can serve as a cover for deep-seated and concealed hostility, and that it is precisely through this channel that infiltration into the realm of public trust and collective will takes shape.

Beyond the discursive dimension, the Quran also points to the role of outward appearance and behavioral attractiveness in the process of infiltration, stating: “When you see them, their bodies impress you, and if they speak, you listen to their speech...”⁵⁰ (Quran 63:4). According to this verse, the combination of a deceptive appearance and influential speech functions as a tool for creating superficial legitimacy and gradual penetration into social and political structures, without revealing the inner reality of the actors involved.

Historical analysis further confirms this Quranic pattern. Figures such as ‘Abd Allāh b. Ubayy represent clear examples of structural infiltration grounded in moralistic display and dual behavior; while preserving social and religious appearances, they sought to generate division, weaken internal cohesion, and erode the collective will of the Islamic community. In this same vein, Imam ‘Alī (a), with profound insight into the nature of this current, states: “Their speech is a cure, but their actions are an incurable disease; they envy ease and intensify affliction”⁵¹ (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 194). In another statement, he says: “The hypocrite’s speech is beautiful, but his action is a destructive, intrusive disease”⁵² (Tamīmī Āmudī 1989, 84; Laythī Wāsiṭī 1997, 49). These statements illustrate that the soft and appealing speech of hypocrites ultimately becomes, in practice, a destructive factor that undermines the social foundations and weakens the collective resilience of society.

⁴⁹. ﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ﴾ (البقرة/٢٠٤)

⁵⁰. ﴿وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ...﴾ (المنافقون/٤)

⁵¹. «قَوْلُهُمْ شِفَاءٌ وَفِعْلُهُمُ الدَّاءُ الْعِنَاءُ، حَسَدَةُ الرَّحَاءِ وَ مُؤَكَّدُوا الْبَلَاءِ».

⁵². «الْمُنَافِقُ قَوْلُهُ جَمِيلٌ وَفِعْلُهُ الدَّاءُ الدَّخِيلُ».

2.4.4. Disclosure of Security Matters and Strategic Plans

Within the *war of wills*, the disclosure of confidential political, military, and security information constitutes an effective instrument for structural destabilization and the weakening of the defensive power of the Islamic community. Through targeted infiltration into governmental structures and the formation of covert information networks, hypocritical actors seek access to sensitive data and its calculated dissemination in order to disrupt public security and erode social trust. By elucidating the dual nature of hypocrisy, the Holy Quran reveals the roots of this threat: "...when they are alone with their devils, they say, 'We are with you...'”⁵³ (Quran 2:14). This verse reflects the strategy of gradual infiltration and behavioral disguise employed by hypocrites, a pattern that facilitates the transfer of information to the enemy. By outwardly professing Islam, hypocrites benefited from the apparent privileges of faith and remained protected from the confrontation of Muslims; yet, in secrecy, they transmitted the Muslims' confidential information to adversaries and devised treacherous schemes, thereby inflicting harm upon the body of Islam.

The Quran also issues a clear warning regarding the uncalculated disclosure of security-related news: "When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it..."⁵⁴ (Quran 4:83). When hypocrites became aware of confidential information whose accuracy had not yet been verified, they would immediately publicize it, a practice that caused damage and corruption in Muslim decision-making processes (Şābūnī 2000, 1:268). This verse underscores the necessity of an orderly information flow, strict adherence to the principle of confidentiality, and the referral of sensitive matters to competent and authorized authorities, in order to prevent enemy exploitation and harm to collective security.

From ethical and jurisprudential perspectives, confidentiality constitutes a fundamental pillar of preserving defensive power. In this regard, Imam Şādiq (a) states: "Whoever discloses anything of our

⁵³ ﴿... إِذَا حَلَّوْا إِلَى شَيْطَانِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ...﴾ (البقرة/١٤)

⁵⁴ ﴿وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْحَوْفِ أَخَذُوْا بِهِ...﴾ (النساء/٨٣)

affairs is like one who has deliberately killed us...”⁵⁵ (Hillī 2000, 1:289; Hurr ‘Āmilī 1995, 16:251; Fayḍ Kāshānī 1985, 5:945). This statement equates the disclosure of secrets with a grave act of betrayal against the religious community. Moreover, the instrumental use of religious symbols represents another tactic employed by hypocrites within psychological operations. The Quran explicates this method in the episode of the *Masjid al-Dirār*: “As for those who took to a mosque for sabotage and for defiance, and to cause division among the faithful...”⁵⁶ (Quran 9:107). This verse demonstrates how sacred coverings and religious façades can be transformed into tools for informational infiltration and the creation of division within the community of believers.

2.5. The Economic Dimension

Some other dimensions of the enemy’s warfare aimed at weakening wills pertain to the economic sphere. In what follows, several of these dimensions are addressed.

2.5.1. Imposition of Financial and Trade Pressure

Economic pressure constitutes an effective instrument for weakening collective will and eroding the defensive power of societies. This approach, which goes beyond military confrontation, targets perceptions, beliefs, and social resilience; by generating public dissatisfaction, undermining social trust, and inducing perceptions of the inefficiency of governing structures, it prepares the ground for the weakening of the will to resist. Economic warfare is not merely a material action but forms part of the *war of wills* and cognitive warfare, as pressure on livelihoods disrupts a society’s strategic decision-making. By referring to the historical roots of this pattern, the Holy Quran presents it as a well-known method employed against the front of faith. Among these is verse 7 of *Sūrat al-Munāfiqūn*: “They are the ones who say, ‘Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger

⁵⁵. وَ عَنْ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ حُسَيْنِ بْنِ عُثْمَانَ عَمَّنْ أَخْبَرَهُ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: «مَنْ أَدَاعَ عَلَيْنَا شَيْئًا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا فَهُوَ كَمَنْ قَتَلَنَا عَمْدًا...».

⁵⁶. «وَ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَ تَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...» (التوبة/١٠٧)

of Allah until they scatter off.' Yet to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand"⁵⁷ (Quran 63:7). This verse points to the hypocrites' strategy of economic deprivation aimed at dispersing the companions of the Prophet (s) and emphasizes the believers' reliance on "the treasures of the heavens and the earth."

A historical example of this approach is the three-year siege of *Shi'b Abī Ṭālib*, which was imposed with the aim of breaking the will of the Prophet (s) and his companions through livelihood pressure, to the extent that some perished from hunger and others were overcome by illness (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 21:382). Yet, this ordeal ultimately led to the deepening of internal cohesion. In the contemporary world, this pattern has been reproduced through more sophisticated instruments such as financial sanctions, trade restrictions, and banking pressures, operating alongside negative propaganda and soft infiltration as components of hybrid warfare. Tools such as targeted sanctions, livelihood crisis-generation, and cyberattacks on financial infrastructure are designed to create public dissatisfaction and weaken faith-based beliefs.

In Medina, the hypocrites' encouragement to cut financial assistance to the companions of the Prophet (s), and in Mecca, the polytheists' three-year economic siege of *Shi'b Abī Ṭālib*, represent clear examples of this approach (Ridā'ī Iṣfahānī 2008, 21:58). In later periods, Mu'āwiyah continued the same policy by depriving the companions of Imam 'Alī (a) of access to the public treasury (*bayt al-māl*) (Qarā'atī 2009, 10:58). These measures were primarily undertaken with objectives such as weakening the morale of Muslims, dispersing the companions of the Prophet (s), and compelling them toward submission. Modern economic instruments employed by adversaries—such as banking sanctions and trade pressures—operate with the aim of spreading despair and distrust, so that the economic cohesion of society collapses and dependence on hegemonic powers increases.

⁵⁷ «هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنْفِقُوا عَلَىٰ مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّىٰ يَنْفَضُوا وَ لِلَّهِ خَزَائِنُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَ لَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ» (المنافقون/٧)

Research Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Holy Quran, by presenting a comprehensive and strategic framework, provides powerful analytical tools for understanding and confronting hybrid warfare—especially in the domain of the *war of wills*. An analysis of Quranic verses and related exegetical sources indicates that adversaries have consistently employed coordinated and multidimensional operations to target various aspects of the defensive power of Islamic society. Through weakening individual and collective will, social cohesion, and the legitimacy of the belief system, they seek to erode the capacity for resistance.

By classifying the enemy's strategies into five principal dimensions, this research offers a systematic model of hybrid warfare:

1. Individual Dimension (Cognitive–Media Warfare): The enemy seeks to undermine the internal foundations of faith and weaken individuals' psychological resilience through tools such as psychological operations, rumor-mongering, despair-inducement, mockery, and the creation of doubt regarding religious authority.

2. Social Dimension: The primary strategy is the promotion of division and the creation of fractures in social cohesion, pursued through internal front-building, the incitement of conflicts, and the negative portrayal of collective functions.

3. Cultural Dimension: By distorting values, promoting moral corruption, casting doubts on religious beliefs, and misusing sacred symbols, the enemy aims at identity transformation and destabilization of the society's epistemic foundations.

4. Political–Security Dimension: Through political pressure, crisis-making, sedition-incitement, structural infiltration, disclosure of security information, and the use of deceptively righteous appearances in behavior and speech, the legitimacy of the system is targeted and strategic decision-making is disrupted.

5. Economic Dimension: By imposing financial pressure, sanctions, economic blockades, and livelihood crises, the enemy reduces the economic resilience of society and breaks national will.

Overall, the findings indicate that defensive power from the Quranic perspective is a multidimensional, soft-oriented, and deeply cognitive concept. Victory in the *war of wills* is achieved not through superiority in armaments, but through deepening religious beliefs, strengthening collective will, and fostering social cohesion rooted in divine guidance. This Quranic model can serve as a foundation for the indigenization of defensive and national resilience discourses, as well as a cognitive and epistemic support for policymaking in the field of national security and countering emerging threats of hybrid warfare.

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