



A Quranic Analysis of Defensive Diplomacy (Opportunities and Threats) in the Thought of Imam Khamenei

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Abstract

Research Article

Quranic defensive diplomacy is a foundational topic that holds a special place in the intellectual framework of Imam Khamenei, and understanding it scientifically requires systematic research. The propositions indicate that part of the Leader's Quranic thoughts in the realm of diplomacy pertains to the optimal utilization of opportunities and calculated, intelligent responses to threats. Despite the Leader's particular emphasis on this issue, independent scientific work has not been found; therefore, the primary concern of this research is to fill the existing gap and understand the role of this topic in the survival and continuity of nations, governments, and organizations from the Leader's perspective. This work is organized with a foundational approach and employs a mixed-methods methodology, including exploratory, analytical, and interpretive techniques. The research outcomes indicate that, from the Leader's perspective in the field of diplomacy, in addition to the necessity of being equipped with advanced military technologies and material and combat capabilities, there should be a special emphasis on enhancing the spiritual empowerment of human capital. This is crucial for balanced growth, independence, dynamism, and the necessary flourishing of the nation. It was also found that strengthening the foundations of faith, establishing monotheistic principles in life, sincerity in action, protecting and safeguarding values, institutionalizing the spirit of self-belief, sacrifice, and martyrdom, taking into account expertise and commitment, maintaining a faithful presence guided by insight, special attention to divine assistance, possessing a revolutionary spirit, self-reliance, and resistance to hegemony, as well as a correct understanding of the capacities of democracy and the establishment of inward-looking policies while rejecting outward-looking politics, are among the influential and decisive elements in the realm of defensive diplomacy.

Keywords: Defensive diplomacy, spiritual empowerment, opportunities and threats, Imam Khamenei.

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Introduction

Defensive diplomacy represents the intersection of the traditional functions of two distinct domains: diplomacy and defense. In contemporary periods, this concept has emerged due to the convergence and overlap of various issues and epistemological and strategic approaches (see Nādir 2011). Accordingly, based on findings from religious sources, which will be elaborated upon in the body of the research, it can be articulated that defensive diplomacy, grounded in Quranic thought, constitutes a conscious choice that employs a range of preparations and actions aimed at deterring and preventing enemies and rivals from threatening or attacking life, property, beliefs, territory, honor, and reputation, with the ultimate objective of safeguarding rights through diplomatic means.

In general, defense is categorized into two types: “instinctive and conscious.” “Instinctive defense” occurs unconsciously and is common among all living beings; examples include an unplanned attack against an enemy or the rapid flight of animals from areas where they sense danger. On the other hand, “conscious defense” is unique to humans and involves the use of thought, will, and choice.

In conscious defense, individuals select their methods and types of defenses against threats in accordance with specific temporal and spatial conditions, as well as the nature of the danger, available resources, and circumstances. For this research, defense refers to this conscious form, considering the planned preparations and actions intended to counter military and cultural attacks by enemies and rivals against beliefs, values, territory, life, property, and rights.

Political, cultural, economic, and military officials of a country in the receiving state or international organization, known as “diplomats,” are responsible for pursuing this objective. In the realm of diplomatic



relations, the highest political authority in the host country is referred to as the “ambassador.”

It is noteworthy that according to Article 22 of the Vienna Convention, diplomatic and consular premises and diplomatic missions are governed by principles, protocols, and political immunity. This research aims to systematically examine the topic within the framework of Imam Khamenei’s defensive doctrine, based on divine teachings focused on opportunities and threats, and to design and present a comprehensive model.

Research Background and Literature Review

The scholarly value of research is intrinsically linked to awareness of general and specific literature, prior studies, and the articulation of its significance and distinctiveness. This section will review a synthesis of noteworthy research findings.

It is important to note that this concept was institutionalized and began to take shape in Iran during the 1380s, coinciding with the initiation of efforts to rebuild the defensive infrastructure (Nādir 2010, 31&63). Since then, several studies have been conducted, of which some of the most significant will be highlighted.

The article, “*Naqsh-i Diplomāsī-ye Defā’ī dar Amniyat-i Pāydār Mubtanī bar Dīdgāh-i Imām Khāmene’ī*” [Strategies for Achieving Sustainable Security through Defense Diplomacy Based on Imam Khamenei’s Viewpoint] (2019) by Sayyid Aṣghar Ja’farī explores strategies under titles such as trust-building and fighting terrorism, expanding defense and military cooperation with other countries, and developing interactions with regional and international organizations. Additionally, “*Diplomāsī-ye Nuvīn dar ‘Aṣr-i Digargūnī*” [Modern Diplomacy in an Era of Transformation] (Kāzīmī, 1989) and “*Amniyat-i Pāydār az Dīdgāh-i Rahbarī*” [Sustainable Security from the Perspective of the Supreme Leader] (Shāyigān, 2012) primarily focus on examining



the Supreme Leader's views on sustainable security. The article, "*Taḥarruk-Bakhshī bi Diplumāsī-ye Difā'ī dar Partuye Fursat-hā va Tahdīd-hā*" [Activating Defensive Diplomacy in Light of Opportunities and Threats] (Dhūlfaqārī and Khusravī, 2017) employs a descriptive-analytical method to elucidate the impact of opportunities and threats on Iran's defensive security.

The Works such as "*Mabānī-ye Nazārī-ye Difā'ī Muqaddas dar Qur'ān*" [The Theoretical Foundation of Holy Defense in Holy Quran] (Rustamī-Nasab, 2012) and "*Darāmadī bar Difā' dar Andīshih-ye Khamenei*" [An Introduction to Defense in Leadership Thought] (Ja'farī, 2013), among others, have extensively discussed the subject matter and general background. The findings suggest that numerous interpretations and analyses of defense diplomacy and related matters have been conducted so far, each offering valuable insights into the core meaning and objectives of the issue from different perspectives.

In summary, prior research can generally be divided into two categories: one broadly examined and clarified diplomacy and defense, while the other concentrated on specific issues within this field. The current research is significant due to its unique approach, examining the subject from the Supreme Leader's perspective with a managerial focus, utilizing data from the Quran.

Conceptual Analysis

1. Diplomacy

"Diplomacy" has Greek origin and literally means 'folded paper' or 'certificate,' and in the context of international relations, it refers to the science and art of representing countries and the skill of negotiation to manage foreign relations (Āqābakhshī 1996, 107). Essentially, diplomacy involves the management of relationships between states and communication among politicians and leaders of countries, utilizing



negotiation and bargaining methods to create mutual understanding aimed at achieving national goals and interests (Kāzīmī 1989, 61).

2. Defense

The term “Defense,” derived from the root (daf‘), means to repel harm (Dihkhudā 1994, 27:56), avert threats, and prevent danger from oneself or others (Rustamī-Nasab 2019, 99). It refers to the act of pushing something away and returning it (Qarīb 1987, 1:425). In scientific terms, it encompasses the conscious actions taken by individuals to protect and safeguard their lives, beliefs, territory, honor, reputation, rights, and property against risks and threats.

3. Defensive Diplomacy

“Defensive diplomacy” involves negotiations and other interactions between armed forces conducted by military diplomats, aimed at influencing the environment and sphere of operations (Ja‘farī 2013, 18). It entails the deliberate employment of a range of defensive measures, based on Quranic principles, utilizing diplomatic methods to address threats and repel aggressions from oppressors and adversaries against the essence of Islam, the rights of Muslims, and the oppressed and vulnerable populations of the world.

4. Opportunity

An opportunity represents a significant favorable circumstance in a company’s environment. Key trends can serve as a source of opportunities. Identification of a previously overlooked market segment, changes in competitive or regulatory circumstances, technological changes, and improved buyer or supplier relationships could represent opportunities for the firm (Pearce and Robinson 2009, 159).

5. Threat

A threat is a significant unfavorable condition in a firm’s environment. Threats hinder the firm’s current or desired position. The entrance of new



competitors, slow market growth, increased bargaining power of key buyers or suppliers, technological changes, and new or revised regulations could represent threats to a firm's success (Pearce and Robinson 2009, 159).

Research Methodology

This research, based on the presupposition of Islam's comprehensiveness and the belief in the systematic relationship between divine teachings and their internal and external harmony, employs an integrated (exploratory-analytical) approach to achieve its objectives. The reason for selecting this method is that in qualitative research, the emphasis is placed on phenomenology, exploratory studies, and similar approaches. In mixed methods, qualitative techniques are used to gain a better understanding and to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the elements and issues at hand (Nīyāzī 2012, pp. 160-184). Exploratory methodology is one of the common approaches in interdisciplinary research, primarily used in studies where the researcher encounters a phenomenon for which there is insufficient information, aiming to discover and infer the nature and truth of the phenomenon and its related issues through document analysis (Şafarī 2020, 171). Therefore, the findings can be utilized and applied across various organizations.

Conceptual Model and Research Theoretical Framework

Given that opportunities are associated with possessing advantages and favorable positions, they create the appropriate context and conditions for taking action and performing tasks effectively. Based on these opportunities, regulations and the use of tools and technologies for confronting enemies and competitors to alter the situation become possible. As clarified in the concept definition, threats are linked to unfavorable conditions, instability, and harmful obstacles to the current or future situation in the environment. Notable examples of such threats include the entry of new competitors, increased bargaining power of rivals,

and environmental or technological changes (Pearce and Robinson 2009, 159). With these considerations in mind, the conceptual model and framework are illustrated in Diagram 1.

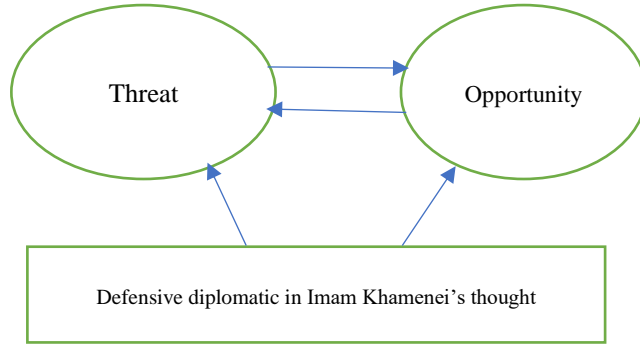


Chart 1: Conceptual Model and Research Theoretical Framework

Data Analysis

Based on the conceptual model, the elements and factors influencing the subject are categorized into two axes: “opportunities” and “threats,” and will be analyzed accordingly.

A) Elements and Factors of Opportunity in the Realm of Defensive Diplomacy

1. Deep Understanding of Divine Teachings

The term “deep understanding” refers to a special focus on the multiple layers and dimensions that can be explored and explained in any given issue. In the Quranic thought of the Supreme Leader, this aspect is given particular attention. For instance, when explaining the points in verse 157 of *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf*, which provides five reasons for the conscious followership, respectful and committed support to the Prophet (s), the Supreme Leader highlights: “*And relieves them of their burdens and the*



shackles that were upon them”⁴ (Quran 7:157), and says: “The colonial powers of the world attribute the Islamic system to the export of revolution. If the export of revolution means sending explosives and creating turmoil and chaos among nations and other countries, then this accusation is entirely unfounded in relation to the Islamic Republic. The export of evil and corruption belongs to the United States and the espionage and destructive apparatus of imperialist systems... Our export of revolution means the dissemination of the Quranic culture and the human-building essence of Islam” (The statements made during the meeting with foreign guests at the fortieth-day memorial ceremony for the passing of Imam Khomeini, 22/04/1368 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/2140>).

Based on this principle, he advocates for inspiring people to remove these heavy constraints in the light of the divine guidance revealed to the Prophet (s). He emphasizes that spreading the transformative and pure culture of divine revelation and insisting on explaining and promoting human values, is an honor, and we will do it. (Speech during a meeting with the Supreme Council of the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, 17/11/1380 Sh)

From the evidence and features presented in the verse, along with the afore-mentioned statements of the Supreme Leader, it becomes obvious that a deep understanding of Quranic teachings is one of the most significant factors that create opportunities in the realm of defensive diplomacy. It appears that colonial and arrogant powers fear this spiritual element -the Quranic culture and the strength of faith- more than they fear military capabilities. They have, both directly and indirectly, admitted that they cannot stop the global spread of the logic of divine revelation and the influence of the Islamic Revolution. This light continues to shine ever brighter and extend its reach, despite the enemies’ discontent. Many Quranic verses can be referenced in this regard. For instance, the text and

4. «وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ» (الاعراف/ ١٥٧)



content of verse 32 of *Sūrat al-Tawbah*⁵ highlight those divine teachings are like light, and light is the source of life, movement, growth, and development on earth, as well as the origin of all beauty.

The Supreme Leader clearly emphasizes that the Islamic Revolution is not something that can be exported in the conventional sense of political or diplomatic norms from one country to another. Revolution is not something that can be spread through political tools or advanced through military and security means; this notion is mistaken, and from the very beginning, we closed that path. The real issue is the replication of the noble teachings of divine revelation so that Muslims can feel a sense of identity... They should become familiar with the liberating teachings of Islam and realize that God sent the Prophets to remove the heavy burdens and the chains shackling people in unhealthy environments and the burdens caused by ignorance (Statements in a meeting with non-Iranian students of the Qom Seminary on 3/8/1389 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/10432>). From the collected data, this idea emerges as one of the most fundamental elements and opportunity-creating factors in Imam Khamenei's Quranic thought, including in the realm of defensive diplomacy.

2. Establishing Monotheistic Thought in life

⁵ . يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُنِيرَهُمْ نُورَهُ وَ لَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ (التوبة/٣٢)

“They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah is intent on perfecting His light though the faithless should be averse” (Quran 9:32)



The concept of establishing a monotheistic mindset in life refers to remaining steadfast in fulfilling religious duties and faith-based responsibilities under all circumstances, both in theory and practice. Studies show that one of the key verses in this regard is: *"Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, awing thereby the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but Allah knows them"*⁶ (Quran 8:60). This verse explicitly states that one should gather all available strength and horses to intimidate both the known and unknown enemies of Allah. It then further informs us that whatever is spent in the cause of truth will return to the individual, and no injustice will befall them: *"And whatever you spend in the way of Allah will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged"* (Quran 8:60).

According to the principle: *"If Allah helps you, no one can overcome you..."*⁷ (Quran 3:160) and *"And it was a must for Us to help the faithful"*⁸ (Quran 30: 47), in the intellectual system of the Supreme Leader, there are many subtle and detailed materials for the rule of monotheistic thought in every domain, including in the field of defensive diplomacy. For example, the Supreme Leader has stated: "Allah has promised that if you step forward with faith in the field of scientific and practical effort and struggle, He will assist and grant you victory... When Allah helps and supports you, no power can overcome you. This is the divine promise" (Statements at Imam Husayn Military Academy, 10/03/1390 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/12574>).

Based on this principle, he has said: "Any effort and struggle in pursuit of a goal will undoubtedly lead to success" (Statements at a meeting with students and youth from Qom Province, 04/08/1389 Sh,

⁶ . وَأَعِدُوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَ مِنْ رِيبَاتِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَ آخِرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ وَ مَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَ أَنْتُمْ لَا تَظْلَمُونَ (الأنفال / ٦٠)

⁷ . إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمْ اللَّهُ فَلاَ غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ... (آل عمران / ١٦٠)

⁸ . وَ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (الروم / ٤٧)



<https://khl.ink/f/10456>). Additionally, he has stated: “Today, in our view, the manifestation of effort and struggle that confronts us Muslims, the followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), is the battle against the schemes of imperialism in the Islamic region. Today, the greatest Jihad is to fight against the plans of imperialism based on Quranic thought” (Statements at a meeting with members of the World Assembly of *Ahl al-Bayt*, 26/05/1394, <https://khl.ink/f/30524>).

From these statements and similar ones, it can be concluded that establishing a monotheistic worldview in life is a central, opportunity-creating factor in the realm of defensive diplomacy. It appears that colonial and imperialist systems fear the institutionalization of this thought more than any other influencing factors and elements. The primary support for this is that they consistently spread rumors and create doubts using various methods while allocating large budgets and resources for this purpose. However, they are unaware that they cannot overcome God’s will and divine decree. As a result, not only have their efforts failed to diminish its influence, but this influence continues to grow, becoming brighter and more expansive, with its reach continually extending.

3. Patience and Endurance

In Islamic teachings, patience is of three categories: “Patience in the face of affliction, patience in obeying commands, and patience in avoiding sin”⁹ (Kulaynī 1986, 2:91). The Supreme Leader has also commented on this principle, stating: “Patience occurs sometimes in the face of obedience, sometimes in the face of disobedience, and sometimes in the face of calamities. In all cases, its core and essence are perseverance and

⁹ . مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي يَحْيَى بْنُ سُلَيْمٍ الطَّائِفِيُّ قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَمْرُو بْنُ شَمْرِ الْبِمَايِيُّ يَرْفَعُ الْحَدِيثَ إِلَى عَلِيِّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: «قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: الصَّبْرُ ثَلَاثَةٌ ثَلَاثَةٌ صَبْرٌ عِنْدَ الْمُصِيبَةِ وَ صَبْرٌ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ وَ صَبْرٌ عَنِ الْمَعْصِيَةِ...».



resilience” (Speech at the meeting of the heads of the three branches of government and the officials, 19/6/1387; <https://khl.ink/f/3783>).

In another statement, the Supreme Leader defined and elaborated on patience as follows: “Patience means staying in the field, not leaving it. Some people flee from the field; others do not flee but gradually withdraw from it. This is contrary to patience. Patience means perseverance and steadfastness, remaining in the field. Patience means fixing one’s gaze on distant goals and horizons...” (Speech at the graduation ceremony of Imam Husayn University’s students, 09/04/1397 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/40055>).

Quranic studies show that some of the most cardinal verses that have been the focus of the Supreme Leader in this regard are the following: “If you are steadfast and Godwary, your Lord will aid you ...”¹⁰ (Quran 3:125). “Indeed those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah!’ and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, [saying,] ‘Do not fear, nor be grieved!’”¹¹ (Quran 41:30). “If they are steadfast on the path [of Allah], We shall provide them with abundant water”¹² (Quran 72:16). “If the people of the towns had been faithful and Godwary, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth”¹³ (Quran 7:96).

From these verses, it can be said that those who strive on the right path will truly benefit from divine support when they exhibit patience and steadfastness. As mentioned, the Quran explicitly states that if nations, governments, and their institutions persistently safeguard divine values with patience and steadfastness, God will grant them blessings from the

¹⁰ ﴿بَلَىٰ إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُؤْمِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ﴾ (آل عمران/ ١٢٥)

¹¹ ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا...﴾ (فصلت/ ٣٠)

¹² ﴿وَأَنْ لَّوِ اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقِينَهُمْ مَاءً عَذْقًا﴾ (الجن/ ١٦)

¹³ ﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ...﴾ (الاعراف/ ٩٦)

heavens and the earth (Quran 7:96), and their steadfastness in this path will lead to them being provided with abundant water (Quran 72:16).

Based on these Quranic principles, the Supreme Leader has emphasized that if the believers rely on God and demonstrate patience and steadfastness with this mindset, neither America nor any power greater than America can do anything against them. He has emphasized that the most fundamental elements for attaining are effort, perseverance, trust, and good faith in God Almighty (Statements at the Naval Science College in Noshahr, 14/07/1388 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/8162>).

From the divine teachings and the statements of the Supreme Leader, we conclude that one must act and operate based on a calculated plan and in fulfillment of one's duty: *"So be steadfast, just as you have been commanded"*¹⁴ (Quran 11: 112). It seems that one of the important lessons drawn from the stories of the previous nations is that the Prophet and the true believers, following him, did not fear the multitude of enemies, and they did not doubt the defeat of the oppressive enemy they faced, and with patience and steadfastness, they were certain of victory.

In this regard, the statements of the Supreme Leader are abundant. For example, he has said: "Steadfastness in the Quran means standing firm, continuity, following the path, and not stopping... When a nation embarks on a path, reaching the results requires steadfastness in that path and not stopping midway" (Statements in the gathering of the people of Kangavar, 27/7/1390 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/17674>).

From the perspective of the Quran, the ultimate outcome and consequence of patience and steadfastness are entering the gardens of Paradise and the special welcome of the angels in the eternal abode: *"...and the angels will call on them from every door: 'Peace be to you, for*

¹⁴ . ﴿فَاسْتَقِيمْ كَمَا أَمَرْتُمْ...﴾ (هود/١١٢)



*your patience.' How excellent is the reward of the [ultimate] abode!''¹⁵
(Quran 13: 23-24).*

The foundation of the Supreme Leader's statement regarding the duties of the general public and military and defense officials is that the nation and officials must strive to become stronger. The Leader has emphasized in both the Second Phase Statement of the Supreme Leader and other statements that the Iranian nation should increasingly be known as a majestic, glorious, and praiseworthy symbol of perseverance against bullies, tyrants, and global arrogance, led by the villainous and criminal America.

4. Self-assurance and Selflessness

Regarding self-assurance and its influence based on the religious and conscientious mission, as well as self-sacrifice and self-achievement, both from the perspective of internal elements and external factors, a comprehensive discussion is required. However, in the most general form, it can be noted that individuals who believe in their own capabilities have confidence in their success, while those who are always concerned about failure become entangled in mental and practical problems. In management terminology, this issue is related to having a positive and realistic view of one's own resources for achieving success and the likelihood of successfully completing a specific task. This is achieved through gaining experience and gradually understanding cognitive complexity, as well as developing physical, verbal, and social skills (Riḍā'īyān 2015, 44).

Based on the presented terminology, numerous subtle and precise points can be discussed and explained from the Supreme Leader's statements in this area. The foundation of the Leader's statements is that

¹⁵ «... وَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يُدْخِلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ * سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ» (الرعد/ ۲۳-۲۴)

one should not stop in the pursuit of a goal, and while moving towards the goal, one must be vigilant about deviation and divergence, and this can be achieved through experience and attention to cognitive complexity and the acquisition of skills. According to this, the Supreme Leader states that the factors leading to this deviation from the right understanding are two-fold: 1. Internal factor, and 2. External factor. The internal factor is the aggression of carnal desires... the love of gold, silver, money, and sexual pleasure. While the external factors are the enemies, conspirators, ill-wishers, and domineering powers (Statements during the meeting with Basij members, 06/01/1385 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/3334>).

Undoubtedly, these statements are derived from divine teachings, and as an example, one of the verses clearly emphasizes the teachings of steadfastness in the religious mission, obedience to the divine leader, and the monotheistic system. In the realm of thought, a persistent effort in explaining, propagating, and promoting values, and in the realm of action, a commitment to self-assurance and self-sacrifice in order to achieve success, is this verse: *“Those to whom the people said, ‘All the people have gathered against you, so fear them.’ That only increased them in faith”*¹⁶ (Quran 3:173). This verse depicts the enemy’s conspiracy to frighten the followers of the Prophet (s); they spread the rumor that the enemy had decisively gathered and armed and that they should be afraid of this gathering and association and not go to fight them. However, the followers of the Prophet (s) not only did not fear upon hearing these rumors, but they also demonstrated self-sacrifice, and this rumor-mongering resulted in an increase in faith and decisiveness in their decision, as they said: *“Allah is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent trustee”*¹⁷ (Quran 3:173).

Supreme Leader said that in this verse, the emphasis is on expressing the characteristics of the believers of Medina and their selflessness in

¹⁶. «الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدِ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاتَّخَذْتَهُمْ فِتْنَةً أَلَّا يَخْشَوْهُمْ فَرَاذَلَهُمْ إِيْمَانًا...» (آل عمران/ ١٧٣)

¹⁷. «... حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ» (آل عمران/ ١٧٣)



relation to the emigrants and the small people, they did not only not have an attachment in their hearts to what was given to the emigrants but also put them first (over themselves) in their property: “*And do not find in their breasts any privation for that which is given to them, but prefer [the Immigrants] to themselves, though poverty be their own lot*”¹⁸ (Quran 59:9). In continuation, the key to their salvation has been introduced as immunity from exhaustion and self-restraint from avarice and greed: “*And those who are saved from their own greed—it is they who are the felicitous*” (Quran 59:9)¹⁹ (Statements after visiting the headquarters of the Army Ground Forces, 24/ 07/ 1370 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/2501>). By reflecting on this, it is evident that self-sacrifice is a crucial and decisive element in various fields, including defensive diplomacy.

In the logic of the Quran, selflessness and the reciprocation of evil with goodness, leads to influence, friendship, and empathy: “*Good and evil [conduct] are not equal. Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] he between whom and you was enmity, will then be as though he were a sympathetic friend*”²⁰ (Quran 41: 34). The Supreme Leader, based on this verse, says that good morals are necessary for great goals. Whenever a person has a great goal and task ahead of him, he should behave in this way with the people, the audience, and even with the opponents and enemies, and Imam Khomeini did this (Statements in the meeting of different strata of people, 11/12/ 1378 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/2997>).

5. Insightful and Programmatic Efforts

18. ﴿... وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ...﴾ (الحشر/ ٩)

19. ﴿... وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَحْحَ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (الحشر/ ٩)

20. ﴿وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ﴾ (فصلت/ ٣٤)



In the Leader's view: "Insight serves as a spotlight, while discernment acts as both a compass and a guiding star. A compass is essential, especially when one is confronted by an enemy. Without a compass, one may find themselves unprepared and surrounded by adversaries; at that point, there would be little one could do" (Statements from the Meeting with Students and Youth of Qom Province, 04/08/1389Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/10456>). The Supreme Leader emphasizes and specifies that the greater the responsibility and motivation, the greater the feeling, the greater the risk, and this has a significant relationship with insight. Insight means knowing the time, knowing the need, knowing the priority, knowing the enemy, knowing the friend, and knowing the means to be used against the enemy (Statements from the Meeting with Members of the Supreme Council of the Basij of the Oppressed, 06/09/1393Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/28344>).

Imam Khamenei specifically said: "In 2009, I raised the issue of insight, and some mocked it; they ridiculed the concept of insight... The meaning of insight is to not lose one's way amidst the turmoil and confusion during a crisis" (26/3/1393Sh, <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/50918>). The insight of 'Ammār in the Battle of Şiffin is that he said, I saw the people under this flag came to fight [the enemies of Islam] along with the Prophet (s) but now, they are fighting against the Prophet's legitimate successor... If a nation loses the power of analysis, it has failed (Statements from the Meeting with Various Segments of the Population, 21/06/1370Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/2442>).

In this regard, many Quranic verses can be mentioned: "Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a common word between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that some of us will not take some others as lords besides Allah'"²¹ (Quran 3:64), and other verses related to not obeying the whims and fancies, "So

²¹ «قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ» (آل عمران/ ٦٤)



do not follow [your] desires”²² (Quran 5:48). The verses expressing the duties of faith and asking for guidance to the right path, “Guide us on the straight path”²³ (Quran 1:6) and “Whoever takes recourse in Allah is certainly guided to a straight path”²⁴ (Quran 3:101), can be used.

Based on these verses, the Supreme Leader emphasizes and clarifies insightful and planned efforts in his written works and statements. For instance, he said: The commitment to step on the path of love with insight is not insane but accompanied by consciousness like the Saints of God: “O God, grant me Your love, the love of those who love You, and the love of every deed that brings me close to You”²⁵ (Majlisī 1982, 91:148).

This love and this intimacy are accompanied by insight, it is understood and known to attract gravity and magnetism... and based on “that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for, and that he will soon be shown his endeavour”²⁶ (Quran 53:39-40). Striving for ideals in any field is a valuable and ideal work. The one who strives in the field of politics and diplomacy, his work is the ideal work (Statements at the meeting of students, 06/05/1392 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/23346>).

From these statements, it can be observed that efforts everywhere with insight and with a plan are the key elements that create opportunities in the direction of growth and development and progress in the real sense of it in all fields, including in the field of defensive diplomacy.

6. Resistance against Arrogance

22. ﴿... وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ...﴾ (المائدة/ ٤٨)

23. ﴿اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ﴾ (فاتحه/ ٦)

24. ﴿مَنْ يَعْتَصِمْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ (آل عمران/ ١٠١)

25. «اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي حُبَّكَ وَ حُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ وَ حُبَّ كُلِّ عَمَلٍ يُوصلُنِي إِلَى قُرْبِكَ».

26. ﴿وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى * وَأَنْ سَعْيُهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى﴾ (نجم/ ٣٩ - ٤٠)



The Holy Quran, in analyzing and assessing arrogance (*istikbār*), sometimes addresses its internal dimension and sometimes examines it in a practical, external context (Asadī 2022, 76). There is a lot of content in the statements of the Supreme Leader based on Quranic principles in this field for the rule of Islamic thought. For example, the Supreme Leader has said: “Confronting the bullying of the oppressors has always been emphasized by Imam Khomeini as one of the most important principles and objectives of the Islamic Revolution” (The explanation of the reasons for the Iranian people’s struggle against the oppressive government of the United States based on the statements of the Supreme Leader, 16/08/1394Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/31307>). Citing the verse, “*O you who have faith! Do not take your confidants from others than yourselves...*”²⁷ (*Quran 3:118*), the Supreme Leader states that the enmity of arrogant is greater than what is openly expressed in their words or concealed in their hearts (Statements at the graduation ceremony of students of Imam Husayn University, 09/04/1397 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/40055>).

There are many such statements, and it appears that in the broader context of opportunities and threats, particularly in the domain of diplomacy, the issue of religious democracy and the enthusiastic participation of the people plays a decisive role. The selection of individuals for policy-making and executive matters is crucial because if competent, revolutionary, and determined individuals with a spirit of resistance against arrogance are placed in positions of power, threats can be transformed into opportunities. Based on this, the Supreme Leader has emphasized that with these two principles -public participation and resistance against arrogance- the nation’s objectives will be achieved, and the enemy will be discouraged. This requires identifying the enemy’s strategies, creating counter-strategies, and implementing inward-focused, revolutionary policies (Speech in a meeting with various groups of people, 25/02/1392 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/22566>).

²⁷. « يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بَطَانَةً مِنْ دُونِكُمْ... » (آل عمران/ ١١٨)



Based on these principles, the Supreme Leader has outlined key indicators of resistance against arrogance, though it is not possible to elaborate on all of them here. In one of his statements, he broadly defined the duty of Muslims today, particularly those involved in the fields of diplomacy and defense: “Today, in our view, the greatest manifestation of effort and struggle that lies before us, the Muslims, we followers of *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), is fighting against the schemes of arrogance in the Islamic region. Today, this is the greatest form of jihad. We must resist the schemes of arrogance” (Speech at the meeting with members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* World Assembly, 26/05/1394 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/30524>).

He further emphasized that the government officials and those elected to positions of responsibility must embody the verse, “*Indeed those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah!’ and then remain steadfast...*”²⁸ (*Quran 41:30*), demonstrating resilience and endurance. They adorn themselves with God’s remembrance and trust in Him as they enter the field (Statements in the Meeting with Various Social Groups, 25/02/1392Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/22566>). This requires strengthening the spirit of resistance against arrogance and creating opportunities for growth and progress in all areas, including diplomacy, through consistent effort and with this mindset. According to the Supreme Leader, this is everyone’s need, because all progress, all civilizations, are achieved through diligent, independent, and free-spirited efforts (Speech in a meeting with a group of eulogists, 11/02/1392Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/22443>).

B) Elements and Factors of Threat in the Realm of Defensive Diplomacy

1. Enemies and Rivals

In the sixth recommendation of the “Second Step Declaration” (*bayāniyah-ye gām-i duvvum*), the Supreme Leader clearly emphasizes

²⁸ . ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا﴾ (فصلت / ٣٠)

and specifies the need to recognize the enemies and rivals and demarcate boundaries with them, and in another statement about the strategy to eliminate the threats of the enemies and rivals of the Islamic system, who are actually the enemies of the United States, he stated: “We must enhance our capabilities to the extent that enemies and rivals not only dare not threaten us but also accept the reality of our strength” (Statements in the meeting of government’s officials and the guests of the Islamic Unity Conference, 04/09/1397 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/41007>).

To achieve this goal, the direction has been clearly outlined. The Supreme Leader says that a person who is focused on personal material gain and filling their own pockets will easily compromise with the enemy and commit treason. One example of this occurred in the Battle of Uhud, and more than ten verses in the *Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān* are about this very issue. The text and content of these verses indicate that when the Muslims, overwhelmed by greed for spoils, became deeply disturbed and unsettled in spirit, the result was a crushing defeat. The Quran both provided them with comfort and explained why they suffered such a loss and where this event stemmed from. It says: “*Those of you who fled on the day when the two hosts met, only Satan had made them stumble because of some of their deeds*”²⁹ (Quran 3:155). It means that you saw that some of you turned your backs on the enemy and surrendered to defeat in the battle of Uhud, the issue of these was already established (Friday prayer led by the Leader of the Revolution, 28/10/1375 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/768>).

In this regard, Imam Khamenei warns politicians, the press, and everyone to be careful, not to satisfy the enemy’s wishes based on: “*Indeed the satans inspire their friends to dispute with you; and if you obey them, you will indeed be polytheists*”³⁰ (Quran 6:121). He said: “The enemies are doing things against us by taking inspiration from each other, and there

²⁹ . ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا﴾ (آل عمران/ ١٥٥)

³⁰ . ﴿إِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لِيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ﴾ (الانعام/ ١٢١)



are undoubtedly centers, you should be alert to know the enemy's tricks and not play according to their plan... One of the enemy's actions is to make people distrust those in charge..." (Statements in the meeting of government's agents, 27/05/1389 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/9893>).

The core message is that enemies and rivals invest effort and resources in institutionalizing their plans and agendas to lead governments and nations toward dependency and greater compliance with their ideas and ideologies. For this reason, the Supreme Leader places particular emphasis on understanding the enemy, competitors, and their policies, and stresses the importance of neutralizing their plans and establishing policies based on internal resources and capacities (Statements during a meeting with various groups of people, 25/02/1392 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/22566>).

In various fields, including optimism about the future, knowledge production, promotion of spirituality, strong economy, justice, combating corruption, maintaining clear boundaries with the enemy, and lifestyle (as outlined in Recommendations from the "Second Step Declaration," *The Role and Mission of Women* 2014, 3:94), the Supreme Leader underscores the significance of healthy family structures in fostering spiritual, intellectual, and psychological growth based on religious governance. He highlights the importance of expanding chastity, dignity, and flourishing, creating an environment of goodness and blessings, and making optimal use of spiritual and emotional fulfillment to counter the turbulence and moral crises prevalent in society (ibid, 3:134-136).

2. The Negotiating Power of the Enemy and Rival

The concept of "negotiating power" refers to the ability to withstand adversaries' demands and effectively clarify differences with opponents, critics, and competitors. It involves explaining fundamental disagreements and employing various strategies and practical methods to safeguard interests. The Leader has emphasized this in the "Second Step Declaration" and other speeches. He asserts that the Iranian nation stands



as a proud symbol of resistance against tyrants, oppressors, and global imperialists, with the United States being the chief criminal among them. This resilience should become more prominent over time. He also highlights that one of the enemy's methods of infiltration and influence is undermining public trust in the government and its officials (Statements during a meeting with state officials, 27/05/1389 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/9893>).

Undoubtedly, these remarks can provide insight into negotiating power and ways to combat potential threats from adversaries and rivals at various levels. The Supreme Leader, in another statement, explicitly said: "Defensive power, economic strength, public welfare, the ease of people's livelihoods, and the ability to negotiate and safeguard national interests in the region and globally, along with culture and lifestyle, are essential for building national strength and are vital for any country" (Speech during a meeting with students from Yazd Universities, 19/12/1400 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/1575>).

On this basis, the insightful Supreme Leader has said about the elements of security and power creation: "The security and defense power of the country cannot be negotiated and bargained for, and there will be no negotiation and bargaining for the defense tools of the country and everything that provides or supports national authority" (Statements at the graduation ceremony of students of Army Officer Universities, 03/08/1396 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/38003>).

Based on the verses "*They certainly devised their plots*"³¹ (Quran 14:46) and "*And they have devised an outrageous plot*"³² (Quran 71:22), the Supreme Leader states: "The leaders of the hegemonic system are concerned about the power of the Islamic system; their proposals are

³¹. «قَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ» (ابراهيم/٤٦)

³². «وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا كَبِيرًا» (نوح/٢٢)



generally full of deceit and lies” (The statement “Second Step of the Revolution” addressed to the Iranian nation, 22/11/1397Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/41673>). As mentioned in the Quran, God protected [the believers] from the evil of their deceit, while the punishment of the Fire overtook Pharaoh’s people: “*Then Allah saved him from their evil schemes, while a terrible punishment besieged Pharaoh’s clan*”³³ (Quran 40:45). With this understanding, attention must be paid to the fact that defensive power and negotiating strength to secure national interests, regionally and globally, along with culture and lifestyle, leads to national strength and resilience (Meeting of the Members of the Assembly of Experts with the Leader of the Revolution, 19/12/1400Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/49759>).

The Supreme Leader, further, explains that today’s world is witnessing new phenomena, either realized or on the verge of appearing. These include the resurgence of the Islamic awakening based on the model of resistance against American and Zionist domination, the failure of U.S. policies in West Asia, the immobilization of their treacherous collaborators in the region, the expanding political presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in West Asia, and the widespread reflection of this presence throughout the global order. These are among the manifestations of Islamic dignity (The statement “Second Step of the Revolution” addressed to the Iranian nation, 22/11/1397Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/41673>).

3. Environmental and Technological Developments

The Supreme Leader has stated: “Transformation in human societies is a constant divine tradition. No one can stand against this transformation. One should not oppose change, but rather manage it correctly based on the conditions and demands of the time” (Remarks during a meeting with the families of martyrs and veterans from Semnan Province, 18/08/1385 Sh,

³³ «فَوَقَاهُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتٍ مَا مَكْرُوهًا وَ حَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ» (غافر/ ٤٥)



<https://khl.ink/f/3363>). He emphasizes that defensive, security, and economic strength, along with public welfare and economic comfort, as well as political acumen and bargaining power to secure national interests at the regional and global levels, are essential. Moreover, culture and lifestyle that lead to national strength and power are vital for any country (ibid).

Imam Khamenei, with a realistic view, has pointed to the rapid and decisive changes in the environment and technology. His statements guide the idea that future developments will eliminate the bubble and barrier of dependency. We must be impactful based on the conditions, demands, and ongoing transformations within the country and society. Change and transformation are inevitable, and they have two sides: transformation in the right direction and transformation in the wrong direction. We must manage these changes to ensure they move in the right direction. Influential institutions must pay attention to this, and a culture of free-thinking should be established (Remarks during a meeting with members of the Writers' Association, 08/11/1381 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/3162>).

In general, the Supreme Leader's statements suggest that the growing steadfastness of capable and talented human resources, grounded in deep faith, is the most central and hopeful capacity for transformative success in standing against the world's tyrants and oppressors, and for institutionalizing advanced Islamic system on a large scale. If you are people of hard work, effort, and seriousness, America cannot do anything; but if a nation is lazy and inactive, then can America dominate? Of course, it can (Remarks during a meeting with workers and teachers, 13/02/1374 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/2748>).

He clearly outlines in the general policies of the Seventh Five-Year Plan the importance of strengthening the defense infrastructure to enhance deterrence and acquiring empowering technologies needed for the defense and security industries, with an emphasis on the country's self-sufficiency in systems, equipment, and services. He also stresses the reinforcement of



infrastructure and the optimization of public and institutional mechanisms for safeguarding and enhancing resilience against threats, especially cyber, biological, chemical, and radiological threats, with a priority on passive defense (Seventh Five-Year Plan general policies, clauses 23-24). Undoubtedly, the roots of the Leader's ideas and thoughts are grounded in divine teachings.

Studies show that the configuration of the Leader's Quranic thought in the realm of key elements driving impactful transformations can be outlined as follows:

- Creating motivation and readiness (Quran 8:53; 11:88; 13:11; 16:36).
- Establishing a vision that strengthens overcoming challenges (Quran 2:25, 82; 7:94; 9:63,109; 11:114; 12:90; 17:81; 33:70-71; 39:53; 42:20).
- Fostering a mindset that supports transformation (Quran 7:96; 17:36; 24:19; 29:69; 94:5-6).
- Managing and maintaining the pace of change and securing resources (Quran 47: 1-3, 14, and 33).
- Establishing a support system (Quran 8:53; 49:1; 59:19).

Each of these categories draws upon significant Quranic insights. Based on this perspective, in a statement that shook the enemies, the Supreme Leader declared: "God willing, within 25 years, by divine grace, there will be nothing called the Zionist regime in the region" (Remarks during a meeting with different groups of people, 18/06/1394 Sh, <https://khl.ink/f/30716>).

Of course, there are other influential factors in creating opportunities or generating risks and threats that can be explored. The findings presented in Chart 2 depict an opportunity and threat-based model for further analysis.



Chart 2: designing the pattern of the leadership thought in the field of defensive diplomatic

Conclusion

This research aimed to examine the Quranic thoughts of the Supreme Leader in the domain of defensive diplomacy, focusing on opportunities and threats. The findings, based on the designed model, showed that the Leader has addressed this issue in his written works and speeches, identifying it as one of the most significant motivators for generating knowledge, essential for equipping oneself with the hardware and software necessary for security, growth, and progress.

The results indicated that the core elements for creating opportunities include: a deep understanding of divine teachings, patience and perseverance, selflessness and sincere openness, efforts with planning and insight, the establishment of monotheistic thought in individual and social life, and the strengthening of anti-hegemonic and self-reliance spirit.

It was also found that many elements and factors can be addressed regarding threats. However, with a comprehensive approach, these can be



categorized into: enemies and rivals, their negotiating power, and environmental and technological changes, which can be systematically analyzed and pursued. According to the model and conceptual framework of the research, a meaningful relationship exists between opportunities and threats. This means that with wisdom based on Quranic thought, threatening elements can be transformed into opportunities. On the other hand, if a person falls into arrogance, neglect, and lack of planning, the reverse is also possible. This indicates that to achieve the desired outcome, the plan and strategy for growth and progress must be clearly outlined, with the key elements identified and ways to foster hope and faith in the capacities of divine teachings and internal strengths recognized. Efforts should be made to neutralize or render ineffective external threat factors, or, if possible, turn them into smart opportunities. This can be explained and elaborated through an analysis of the past, current capabilities, and future outlook in all areas, including defense diplomacy.

Furthermore, it became clear that all the influencing factors from the Supreme Leader's perspective are rooted in divine teachings. According to the scope and capacity of the research, the most fundamental Quranic roots have been referenced, providing a roadmap for achieving balanced growth and superior progress.

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