



Contexts and Factors of Global Arrogance Decline in Ayatullah Khamenei's Defensive Thought: Quranic Analysis

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Abstract

Research Article

In contemporary Muslim literature, the term “global arrogance” is used to describe the cultural and economic hegemony of powerful nations over other countries. The primary aim of this research is to explore the contexts and factors contributing to the decline of global arrogance within the framework of Ayatullah Khamenei's defensive thought, analyzed through a Quranic lens. The study began with a theoretical framework focusing on the conceptual analysis of some related terms, the position of defense in Ayatullah Khamenei's political thought, and the Quranic basics of Imam Khamenei's defensive thought. Using a descriptive and analytical method, this research has examined based on the Quran, the contexts and factors of the global arrogance decline as explained by His Eminence to reach the research outcome. The findings revealed that several factors contribute to the decline of global arrogance, including a lack of spirituality, arrogance itself, family breakdowns, and social injustice. Additionally, moral and cultural erosion, social decay, economic downturns, political challenges, the global Islamic awakening, and the emergence of a new world order are significant influences on this decline. The paper concludes that Ayatullah Khamenei's defensive thought provides a robust framework for understanding resistance to global arrogance, advocating for a strategic approach that combines spiritual conviction and political action to combat oppression, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on anti-imperialism in contemporary geopolitical contexts.

Keywords: Ayatullah Khamenei, Contexts of decline, Defensive thought, Factors of decline, Global arrogance, Quranic analysis.

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Introduction

Islam is a comprehensive heavenly religion, that promotes peace, liberty, and justice and strictly forbids any form of injustice, or oppression among the people irrespective of their colors, religions, or geographical locations.

Arrogance is considered one of the greater sins and among such attributes that is strongly condemned in Islam. According to Quranic reports, Satan became an accursed one and was demoted from the rank of the Angels as a result of his haughtiness and arrogance (Quran 2:34, 38:74,75). Similarly, the Pharaoh (Quran 8:54, 10:75, 23:46), the Children of Israel (Quran 2: 87, 17: 4-7), and other great rulers in history (Quran 10:75, 23:46, 41:15) were condemned due to their cruelty and arrogance in the land” (Īmānī 1997, 7:135, Makārim Shīrāzī 2000, 6:412).

The Quran in clear terms strongly opposes colonialism, exploitation, and oppression. The Muslims are, therefore, enjoined to stand firmly against any form of oppression on the earth and to assist their brethren, who were entangled in the shackles of the oppressors: “*Why should you not fight in the way of Allah and the oppressed men, women, and children, who say, ‘Our Lord, bring us out of this town whose people are oppressors, and appoint for us a guardian from Yourself, and appoint for us a helper from Yourself?’*”⁴ (Quran 4:75).

Following the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the adoption of an Islamic government in Iran, the terms arrogance and oppressed are firmly rooted social concepts that were revived and redefined. The term “Arrogance” has been one of the most widely used words in the literature of the Islamic Revolution and the statements of the Leaders of this Revolution. Interestingly, one of the features of the Islamic government in

⁴ « وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا (النساء/ ٧٥) »

Iran is its confrontation with the arrogance and haughtiness of the global powers (Khamenei 2000, 46)

Explaining verse 75 of Quran 10, Ayatullah Īmānī writes: “Fighting against arrogant autocrats has been a major activity of the prophets, for they fight the causes of corruption not only what is caused by it” (Īmānī 1997, 7:135)

Ayatullah Khamenei while discussing the goal of the Prophets' appointment, categorically stated that the Prophets of Allah were raised to fight against arrogance: “...The Holy Quran has specified the direction: “For We assuredly sent amongst every people an apostle, with the command, ‘serve Allah and shun Ṭāghūt [idol, devil, and every rebellious creature]”⁵ (Quran 16:36). The first goal is to worship God, which means defining life based on divine commands and edicts. The second goal is to shun “Ṭāghūt” (idol, devil, and every rebellious creature). Who is Ṭāghūt? Ṭāghūt is comprised of all oppressors and evil kings. In the present time, it includes all presidents who exist in countries such as the US and some other countries” (Khamenei, The Islamic republic is the continuation of the holy Prophet’s Bi‘that, April 3, 2019, <https://B2n.ir/s11450>).

The concept of American decline has been extensively discussed by scholars, historians, and political commentators for over a century. Numerous authors have examined this theme from various perspectives, emphasizing the economic, military, political, and cultural factors that contribute to the perception of the United States’ decline.

A two-volume work “The Decline of the West” by Oswald Spengler (the first volume published in 1918 and the second volume in 1922) was originally written in German by Oswald Spengler and translated by Charles Francis Atkinson and first published in 1926 by Random Shack. The book provides one of the earliest theoretical frameworks on

⁵ . «وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ» (النحل/ ٣٦)



civilizational decline. Though not exclusively focused on America, Spengler argues that Western civilization, including the United States, is in a late phase of development characterized by materialism and cultural decay. His cyclical theory has influenced many later discussions of American decline, suggesting that decline is inevitable as part of a broader historical process (Spengler, 2014).

In 1987, Paul Kennedy in his book, “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers,” argued that economic and military overextension have been the downfall of empires, and he warned that the U.S. could follow a similar path if it fails to manage its global commitments (Kennedy, 1987). In 1996, Samuel P. Huntington in his “The Clash of Civilizations” predicted that the cultural and civilizational conflicts would shape global politics post-Cold War, implying that the rise of non-Western powers like China and Islamic states signals the waning of American dominance (Huntington, 1996).

In 2003, Noam Chomsky wrote “Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance” where he criticizes U.S. foreign policy, arguing that America’s pursuit of global dominance through military and economic power has destabilized the world and created enemies. He warns that America’s aggressive pursuit of hegemony will ultimately lead to its decline, as it alienates allies and provokes resistance from rising powers. Chomsky advocates for a more just and peaceful foreign policy to prevent further decline (Chomsky, 2003).

In 2008, “The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism” was written by Andrew Bacevich, a former U.S. military officer. He critiques American exceptionalism, asserting that the U.S. is in decline due to overreliance on military solutions and economic mismanagement, emphasizing the need for a more realistic approach to power. He suggests that the pursuit of global dominance is unsustainable and that the U.S. must recognize the limits of its power (Bacevich, 2008). Similarly, Fareed Zakaria’s “The Post-American World” suggests that while the U.S. is not

necessarily in decline, it is no longer the sole dominant power as countries like China and India rise (Zakaria, 2008).

In 2010, a legal scholar and political theorist, Bruce Ackerman delivered a lecture titled "The Decline and Fall of the American Republic" at Tanner Lecture on Human Values, Princeton University. He argued that the American political system is at risk of a fundamental breakdown, primarily due to the erosion of constitutional safeguards and the increasing concentration of power in the presidency. (Ackerman, 2010). In 2011, an article titled "The End of the American Era" written by Stephen M. Walt and published in "The National Interest", argues that the United States is in decline as it could no longer exert the same level of global dominance, due to both internal economic challenges and the rise of other nations, marking a significant transition in international politics. (Walt, 2011, 6-16)

It is pertinent to mention that Western scholars generally focus on material causes (economic, military, and political) and the internal dynamics of U.S. foreign policy. On the contrary, Ayatullah Khamenei's analysis is rooted in spiritual, moral, and religious principles, emphasizing the importance of spirituality and social justice. In addition, he also highlights some external factors like the rise of Islamic movements and new global alignments as contributors to the American decline.

Theoretical Framework

A) Conceptual Analysis

In this section, for a proper understanding of the theoretical framework of this research, we shall endeavor to give the definitions of some significant and relevant terms such as arrogance, defense, defensive thought, and decline.

1. Arrogance



There have been various definitions of the term “Arrogance” among English lexicographers. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the term “arrogance” is defined as the “behavior of a person when they feel that they are more important than other people so that they are rude to them or do not consider them” (Hornby 2000, 52). According to Merriam-Webster, it is defined thus: “an attitude of superiority manifested in an overbearing manner or presumptuous claims or assumptions” (Merriam-Webster 2003, 68).

In his definition of the term “arrogance,” Ayatullah Khamenei said: “In our culture, arrogance is used to refer to powers that exploit and exert pressure on large groups of human beings - that is, nations and governments - in favor of themselves through bullying and humiliating domination. Relying on their political, military, scientific, and economic capabilities and being inspired by a discriminatory outlook on humanity, they interfere in the affairs of nations and governments, plunder their wealth, oppress nations, and stigmatize cultures and traditions” (Khamenei, Leader’s OIC Inaugural Address, December 9, 1997, <https://B2n.ir/g94848>).

In contemporary Muslim literature, the term “arrogance” is a concept used to describe an oppressive system while the term “global arrogance” is used to describe the cultural and economic hegemony of powerful nations, particularly the United States of America over other countries.

2. Defense

The term “defense” [noun] is the “act of protecting somebody or something from attack, or criticism” (Hornby 2000, 304). The term “Thought” in politics and science refers to the “ideas in politics, science, etc., connected with a particular person, group or period of history” (Hornby 2000, 1247). In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it is defined as the “act or action of defending” [i.e., driving danger or attack away].



Alternatively, “means or methods of defending or protecting oneself, one’s team, or another” (Merriam-Webster 2003, 326)

On the other hand, the term “defensive” is an adjective, which means “protecting somebody or something against attack” (Hornby 2000, 305). Consequently, “Defensive thought” is an idea connected with a particular person or group of people on how to protect someone or a group of people (such as a nation) in a particular geographical area from attack.

3. Decline

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the term “decline” [noun] is a continuous decrease in the number, value, quality, etc. of something (Hornby 2000, 302). From Webster’s Dictionary, the term “decline” is defined as the process of decline, that is, a gradual physical or mental sinking and wasting away or a change to a lower state or level [e.g., the decline of the aristocracy]. Alternatively, the period during which something is deteriorating or approaching its end (e.g., an empire in decline) (Merriam-Webster, 2003, 323)

From the political perspective, the term “decline” is used in relation to the nation, society, or power that is heading towards diminishing in terms of its geopolitical influence, military power, financial and economic outstanding, social, moral, spiritual, and cultural decadence.

In light of this, what is meant by the “global arrogance decline” in this research is the diminishing of both the soft and hard powers of the United States of America, which has become the topic of debate among scholars and political experts. In other words, “global arrogance decline” is the idea that the hegemonic power of the United States of America is diminishing geopolitically, militarily, economically, socially, culturally, morally, spiritually, in matters of healthcare, and/or on environmental issues (Friedman & Hertz, 2015).

B) The Position of Defense in Ayatullah Khamenei’s Political Thought



Defense is an instinct present in the existence of all creatures, including human beings and it is considered one of the motives of Jihad in Islam. According to the glorious Quran, defense is one of the important bases that stabilizes society and if there is no defense, corruption will surely take over the earth. Verse 251 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* states: “...Were it not for Allah’s repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would surely have been corrupted...”⁶ (*Quran 2:251*). Similarly, verse 40 of *Sūrat al-Hajj* says: “...Had not Allah repulsed the people from one another, ruin would have befallen the monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which Allah’s Name is much invoked...”⁷ (*Quran 22:40*).

In light of this, defense is among the most important elements for the safety and survival of any society or nation, and the leaders and the political strategists of the country usually formulate the defense strategies of a nation. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the Commander-in-chief and the highest official of the country, plays a vital role as a leader and political strategist in the formulation and application of the defensive strategies of the country.

In his religious verdicts in the “Book of Jihad,” Ayatullah Khamenei considered the defense of Islam and Muslims an obligatory duty that does not require the consent of the parents: “Defending Islam and Muslims is obligatory and does not depend on the parents’ permission. However, he should strive to obtain their consent no matter what” (Khamenei 2004, 1:316 [Question No: 1052]).

In addition, in a meeting with the government officials, the Supreme Leader pointed out that defense of the Islamic or Muslim territory during an attack is unanimously considered an obligatory duty by the entire

⁶ . «وَلَوْلَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (البقره/٢٥١)»
⁷ . «وَلَوْلَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا» (الحج/٤٠)



Muslim schools of thought: “No school from among the Islamic schools of thought doubts that when the Islamic territory, the Muslim territory, is attacked, it is an obligation for all Muslims to defend it. All Islamic religions believe in this, This is not a point of dispute” (Khamenei 2022, 42).

Ayatullah Khamenei considers defense an integral identity of a living nation: “Defense is a part of an identity of a living nation. Any nation that cannot defend itself is not alive. Any nation that does not think about defending itself and does not prepare itself, is not alive. Any nation that does not understand the importance of defense is not alive in a sense. We cannot have the eyes, power of analysis, and see the deep and obstinate conspiracy of arrogance against Islam, the revolution, and the Islamic system, but at the same time not think about defense” (ibid, 40)

On another occasion, he declared that a society or nation that lacks a defense mechanism is bound to lose its sovereignty: “If society and country are devoid of the spirit of being prepared to stand up against evil and to show resistance on the path of the truth, that society will be ruined. Being ruined does not mean that it will be completely eradicated, it rather means that, it will lose its honor, dignity, independence, and reliance on its willpower and that it will be others who will rule over its fate. Such societies and countries will either suffer from domestic dictatorship or foreign interference. This spirit of resistance and steadfastness is very important” (Khamenei, A society devoid of the spirit of resistance on the path of the truth, will be ruined: Imam Khamenei, December 16, 2019, <https://B2n.ir/e46763>).

Meanwhile, it is pertinent to mention at this juncture that the defensive thought of the Supreme Leader, Ayatullah Khamenei is a multidimensional defense strategy that has to do with the protection of all the oppressed people of the world in general and the Islamic Republic of Iran and its people, in particular against the attacks of the enemies in the

political, economic, socio-cultural, and military affairs based on the material and spiritual facilities of the country.

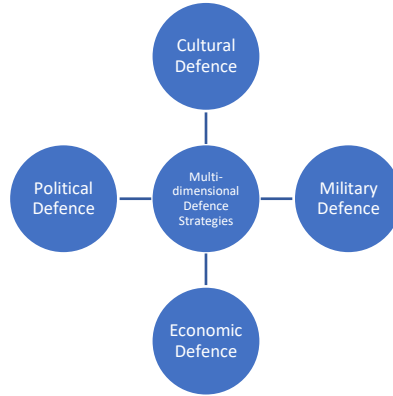


Figure 1: Ayatullah Khamenei's Multi-Dimensional Defense Strategies

In light of this, it is clear that, according to Ayatullah Khamenei, defense is an obligatory duty for every Muslim and serves as a vital component of a living and sovereign nation. Any nation that lacks the spirit of defense is destined for destruction. Furthermore, His Eminence's approach to defense is multi-dimensional, encompassing not only military defense but also cultural, economic, and political aspects.

C) Quranic Basics of Imam Khamenei's Defensive Thought

One of the important concepts of the religion of Islam is the issue of defense and security, the foundation of which could be found and extracted from the glorious Quran and the Sunna of the Infallibles (a).

The principles and foundations of Ayatullah Khamenei's defensive thought are derived from the theoretical principles of Islam. These principles serve as the enduring foundation for all dimensions of the Islamic system and its institutions, including the armed forces (Ṭālibpūr et al. 2024, 226). Thus, we shall briefly discuss in this section, the most significant Quranic basics of the defensive thought of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah Khamenei, as follows:



1. Rejection of Foreign Domination

The rejection of foreign domination is one of the important basics of the Supreme Leader's defensive thought, which is also emphasized in the Quran. It is considered one of the dominant principles in the interaction of the Islamic Republic of Iran with other countries of the world. One of the Quranic verses that clearly indicates the basis of the defense of his Eminence is verse 256 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* when he said: "Rejection of evil ones is a requirement of faith, and the U.S. is the greatest of all evils. There is another holy verse that says, "Therefore, whoever disbelieves in the *Tāghūt* [idol, devil, and every rebellious creature] and believes in Allah he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off"⁸ (*Quran 2:256*). This verse interprets the previous verse for us. What is the right way to hold fast to the covenant of Allah? Through having faith in God and rejecting *Tāghūt*. ... Today the regime of the United States of America is the greatest *Tāghūt* in the world. ... Without rejecting *Tāghūt*, it is not possible to lay hold "on the firmest handle, which shall not break off" (*Quran 2:256*)" (Leader's Speech to Participants of 19th International Conference on Islamic Unity, August 21, 2006, <https://B2n.ir/e57936>).

In light of this, the preservation of the dignity of the Muslims and the independence of the Islamic country is considered a basic principle and in fact, an important goal. Therefore, any relationships and interactions that enhance foreign influence in Islamic society, and thereby undermine the country's independence and sovereignty, are regarded as prohibited.

2. Negation of an inclination to the oppressor

According to a clear Quranic injunction, Muslims are instructed not to lean towards or depend on the oppressor, otherwise, they will face the same dire consequences. In verse 113 of *Sūra Hūd*, it is said: "Do not incline toward

8. «فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنِ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ»
(البقرة/٢٥٦)



the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should touch you, and you will not have any friend besides Allah, then you will not be helped”⁹ (Quran 11:113).

Ayatullah Khamenei, like his predecessor Imam Khomeini, has strongly opposed any inclination toward or reliance on oppressors and global arrogant powers in both domestic and international matters. This stance is clearly reflected in the popular slogan of the Islamic Revolution: “Neither the East nor the West.” In his speech delivered at the UN General Assembly in 1987, Ayatullah Khamenei categorically mentioned the non-reliance of the Islamic Revolution in Iran on any of the global powers as one of its distinctive characteristics: “... Another unique characteristic of this Revolution was its independence from the east and the west, and currently, this is the basic policy of our revolutionary system. This is one of the manifestations of faith and reliance on God in all aspects of our personal and social life. Today the idea that is dominant over the world of politics globally is that it is not possible to survive in the arena of contemporary politics without relying on one of the two poles of power” (Leader’s Speech at UN General Assembly, September 22, 1987, <https://B2n.ir/d57205>).

3. Resistance Against Arrogance

Opposing injustice is one of the distinctive responsibilities of all the Apostles of Allah without any exception. Resistance against arrogance is one of the fundamental principles of the Supreme Leader, which is based on divine teaching. His Eminence while explaining the need to resist every scheme of arrogance cited this verse: “O you who have faith! Do not take your confidants from others than yourselves...”¹⁰ (Quran 3:118) which negates the guardianship of the non-believers of the believers (Khamenei,

⁹. ﴿وَلَا تَزْكُتُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ﴾ (هود/113)

¹⁰. ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بَطَانَةَ مَن دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا﴾ (آل عمران / 118)

Enemies' plan to create a rift between the Islamic Republic and nation stems from ignorance, June 30, 2018, <https://B2n.ir/d20040>).

During a meeting with high school and University students on “National Day of Fighting Against Global Arrogance”, the Supreme Leader said: “...*Fighting against arrogance means the refusal of a nation to give in to the interference and imposition of an arrogant power, individual or government. ... The people of Iran consider themselves to be fighters against arrogance because they have not given in to the imposition of the government of America*” (Leader Meets with Students on “National Day of Fighting Against Global Arrogance,” November 3, 2013, <https://B2n.ir/n32293>).

On another occasion, he said: “...We are not opposed to any people as a nation. We are not opposed to any race and any nation. We are only opposed to arrogance, oppression, and transgression against human and divine values. Today, the US is the manifestation of these qualities: it is the manifestation of oppression and arrogance and that is why it is hated in the world” (Khamenei, Like the Titanic, the U.S. will sink!, February 18, 2020, <https://B2n.ir/g11319>).

4. Supporting the Oppressed People

Islam enjoins Muslims to support every oppressed and downtrodden people, irrespective of their colours, religious inclinations, or geographical locations. The Quran says: “*Why should you not fight in the way of Allah and the oppressed men, women, and children, who say, ‘Our Lord, bring us out of this town whose people are oppressors and appoint for us a guardian from Yourself, and appoint for us a helper from Yourself’?*”¹¹ (Quran 4:75).

¹¹ «وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَوْلِيَاهَا مَا جَعَلْنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا» (النساء/ ٧٥)



Without any doubt, the Islamic Republic of Iran under the guardianship of Ayatullah Khamenei is a keen supporter and an advocate for the liberation of the oppressed people of the world, irrespective of their colours, religious inclinations, or geographical locations. Article 3, Chapter 16 (under the heading “General Principles”) of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, states: “Framing the foreign policy of the country on the basis of Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all Muslims, and unsparing support to the freedom fighters of the world” (Alhoda Publishers 2011, 8).

It is on this basis that Ayatullah Khamenei just like his predecessor, Imam Khomeini expressed his solitary and continuous support to the oppressed people of Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar Afghanistan, Nigeria, and other parts of the world.

The Contexts and Factors Contributing to the Decline of Global Arrogance

Contrary to the opinions of those who argue against the American decline and consider it a myth, the decline of American global hegemony—just like that of previous powerful nations—is a reality.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah Khamenei, on different occasions has depicted the decline and weakness of the U.S.’s power in different areas including political, economic, social, military, security, ethical, regional, and international levels.

In the first instance, his Eminence believes that the fall or decline of any civilization is indisputable and he has buttressed the American decline in his speeches. For instance, he said: “There is nobody in the world who doubts the fact that over the past thirty years, America has declined more than thirty levels in terms of power and global credibility. Everybody knows this. Even the Americans themselves admit this” (Khamenei, Leader Meets with Students, October 31, 2012, <https://B2n.ir/n79879>).



In addition, he also pointed to the gradual decline of the American and European hegemonic powers in one of his ethics classes: “The decline of nations is not sudden – it is gradual. The keen eyes of Western intellectuals in America and Europe have noticed this gradual decline. The decline of civilizations is the result of deviations. When civilizations reach their peak, they start to decline due to their weaknesses, shortcomings, and deviations” (Khamenei, Ethics and Man, March 20, 2011, <https://B2n.ir/n77828>).

A. Contexts of Global Arrogance Decline

In this section, we shall examine some of the speeches and writings of Ayatullah Khamenei in an attempt to uncover some of the backgrounds that are responsible for the gradual decline of global arrogance.

1. Absence of spirituality

Western civilization after Second World War II is characterized by an attachment to physical and material stuff and a lack of spirituality. American society is considered the most advanced society in terms of its scientific, industrial, financial, economic, and political endeavours but it does not pay much attention to spirituality. His Eminence while pointing to this reality in one of his discussions, said: “Today you see the peak of material civilization in terms of science, wealth, military power, political effort, and diplomacy in America. America is a country with wealth and legendary military power and extraordinary political mobility, but you also see the height of distance from humanity, spirituality, morality, and virtue in this American society, which has not been seen in any other society before...” (Leader’s Speech in Meeting with the Clergy of Ayatullah Mujtahidī Seminary, June 11, 2004, <https://B2n.ir/s76275>). Likewise, he said: “Today we can see the signs of this decline in Western civilization, which is the civilization of science without ethics, material life without spirituality, and religion and power without justice” (Khamenei, Ethics and Man, March 20, 2011, <https://B2n.ir/n77828>).



According to the Quran, a life devoid of spiritual purpose, meaning, and direction often results in existential discomfort and dissatisfaction. Material wealth or worldly success cannot bring peace to the heart that is disconnected from God. This “wretched life” does not necessarily refer to material poverty or hardship but to an internal state of misery, regardless of one’s external conditions: “*But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection*”¹² (Quran 20:124).

2. Arrogance

Throughout history, arrogance has been one of the moral vices which have led to the collapse of many civilizations and powers in the past. In the Quran, verses (such as Quran 6: 6) remind us of the numerous civilizations that were blessed with power and resources, but due to their arrogance, sins, and injustice, they were destroyed and replaced.

It is on this basis that Ayatullah Khamenei considered the American government as an arrogant government, which is bound to decline: “The US is truly an arrogant power. ... Americans show this spirit of arrogance in all parts of the world” (Leader’s Address to Students on the Occasion of 13th of Aban, November 3, 2009, <https://B2n.ir/q47124>).

The Quran repeatedly warns against arrogance, tyranny, and oppression, which lead to the downfall of nations and leaders. Powers that engage in injustice, exploitation, and disregard for divine guidance are destined for political and societal decline. The Quranic narratives of past civilizations and leaders like Pharaoh illustrate that even the most powerful political entities face divine consequences when they act arrogantly and unjustly: “*The ground for action is only against those who oppress the*

¹². «وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى» (طه/ ١٢٤)



people and commit tyranny in the land in violation of justice. For such there will be a painful punishment”¹³ (Quran 42:42).

3. Family Setup Collapse

Marriage and the family have been the building blocks of society. The Quran emphasizes the importance of the family as the foundation of society. When family values are undermined, it leads to moral and social decay, which can ultimately destroy societies. For instance, verse 32 of *Sūrat al-Isrā'* warns against adultery and fornication, which are significant causes of family breakdown. The collapse of the family due to infidelity and the loss of moral boundaries leads to widespread corruption and societal decline.

In a society where the growing freedom and laxity in spouses' morals, men and women transgress and practice adultery and unfaithfulness in their marriages, and the family setup suffers. According to a report, divorce statistics in Western nations, particularly the United States remain sobering: “In the United States, between 35%-50% of first-time marriages end in divorce, increasing to approximately 60% for second marriages and 70+% for marriages after the second. This gives the US one of the highest divorce rates in the world” (World Population Review, 2024, <https://B2n.ir/f59719>).

His Eminence while referring to this, said: “Break-up of the family is an inevitable consequence of carnal desires, decadence, and moral corruption. And if moral corruption continues, then the consequence will be the same thing that has happened in Western countries” (Khamenei, *Ethics and Man*, March 20, 2011, <https://B2n.ir/n77828>).

The Quran condemns those who sever relationships that God has commanded to be upheld, including family ties. The breaking of family

¹³ ﴿إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾
(الشورى/ ٤٢)



ties leads to corruption in society, which is considered a prelude to societal decline: *"But as for those who break Allah's compact after having pledged it solemnly, and sever what Allah has commanded to be joined, and cause corruption in the earth—it is such on whom the curse will lie, and for them will be the ills of the [ultimate] abode"*¹⁴ (Quran 13:25).

4. Loss of credibility among its citizens

After decades of domination over the world and interference in the domestic affairs of many countries, America is not just only losing its credibility among other nations of the world but its credibility among its citizens is under threat. In a meeting with the students of Kermanshah province, Ayatullah Khamenei said: "It is clear what will happen to a government whose credibility is undermined in the eyes of its own people, like the Soviet Union. As it happens, certain Western intellectuals said a few days ago that today the situation of America and the West is like the situation of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, which resulted in its collapse. That is to say, when a government falls from favour among its own people in terms of its logic and discourse, it will have no chance for survival" (Leader's Speech to Students of Kermanshah Province, October 16, 2011, <https://B2n.ir/n30298>).

B. Factors Leading to the Decline of Global Arrogance

In this section, we shall examine the perspective of Ayatullah Khamenei on the major factors that are responsible for the gradual decline of America. From the viewpoint of his Eminence, he believed that the factors are long-time ones which have been over the decades: "The factor and element which has brought about such a condition for the Americans is a long-term factor. They have created a condition in the course of history, which has led to the current situation, and it cannot be cured so easily. ...

¹⁴ . ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ﴾ (الرعد/٢٥)

This is a divine tradition. They are condemned to decline, destruction, and disappearance from the scene of global power” (The Islamic Republic has defeated the U.S., continuously, for 40 Years, November 3, 2018, <https://B2n.ir/p76394>). Furthermore, according to His Eminence, those factors responsible for the gradual decline of America are multidimensional: “America is suffering from weakness, both economic and financial weakness, and political weakness. This is also a fact” (Leader’s Friday Prayer Address, February 3, 2012, <https://B2n.ir/q21928>).

1. Moral and Cultural Decline

Another thing that can be noticed in present-day American society is the peak of moral decadence, where immorality has become a norm and has even been legalized by the government. America is indeed an advocate of immoralities such as same-sex marriage and homosexuality in general, abortion, pornography, alcoholism, gambling etc., and it promotes all of these through various means such as Hollywood and its media outlets. His Eminence while pointing to this dreadful state of American society, said: “Today, the most reprehensible human, moral, sexual, and social actions have become accepted laws and customs in this advanced society and societies like it. There is a crime in every human society, but a situation when a crime becomes a custom and a law and is invested in and defended, that is a unique deviation” (Leader’s Speech in Meeting with the Clergy of Ayatullah Mujtahidī Seminary, June 11, 2004, <https://B2n.ir/s76275>).

In verse 16 of *Sūrat al-Isrā’*, “*And when We desire to destroy a town We command its affluent ones [to obey Allah]. But they commit transgression in it, and so the word becomes due against it, and We destroy it utterly*”¹⁵ (*Quran 17:16*), Almighty Allah describes how moral and cultural decline often begins with the wealthy and powerful, who, through

¹⁵ «وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَاَهَا تَدْمِيرًا» (الإسراء/ ١٦)



their arrogance and disregard for God’s commandments, bring ruin to their societies.

2. Social Decline

The United States does not have a level playing field for its citizens. Rather, everything is being done to benefit the very wealthy, and little is being done for the working poor. His Eminence said: “Today, class inequalities in the US are more visible than ever. This is not my claim, rather this is something acknowledged by one of the political personalities in the US who is a member of the ruling class in that country. ...He says that in the Trump administration, which has been holding office for the past three years, more than 100 billion dollars have been added to the wealth of the five richest individuals in the US. The wealth of three of these five individuals is equal to that of half the people of the US! Notice how big the gap is- it means that the wealth of three individuals equals that of 160 million people (February 18, 2020, <https://B2n.ir/g11319>).

The Quran emphasizes the dangers of moral corruption as a cause of societal decline: “*Corruption has appeared in land and sea because of the doings of the people’s hands, that He may make them taste something of what they have done, so that they may come back*”¹⁶ (Quran 30:41). This verse describes the widespread corruption that emerges as a result of people’s actions, reflecting a collective moral decline that leads to disorder and instability.

3. Economic Decline

The US has long been by far the richest country in the world but in recent times, the reality that cannot be denied at least by those who are not wilfully blind is that America is in serious economic problems and it is

¹⁶ «ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ»
(الروم/٤١)

considered the most indebted government in the world. Ayatullah Khamenei said: “They claim that they are the wealthiest nation and government in the world... But the performance of their politicians has been so bad that today America is the most indebted government in the world” (Leader Meets with Students, October 31, 2012, <https://B2n.ir/n79879>).

On another occasion, he said: “Today, America’s public debts amount to over 15 trillion dollars or more [with the total public debts outstanding at over 21 trillion!] --This is a grotesque figure! Their debts amount to 15 trillion USD! And their budget deficit is about 800 billion dollars in the current year. These are, in fact, their economic deficiencies. This is the hard power of the US” (Khamenei, The election of Donald Trump is a clear sign of the political and moral decline of the U.S., June 4, 2019, <https://B2n.ir/m90655>).

According to the Quran, those individuals or nations that neglect or reject God’s guidance and fail to live according to His teachings, such individuals or nation shall leave a wretched or miserable life: “*But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection*”¹⁷ (Quran 20:124).

The financial and economic decline of global arrogance is tied to their deviation from ethical practices, exploitation, greed, and hoarding of wealth. These practices result in divine retribution and the eventual downfall of societies that prioritize material gain over moral integrity.

4. Political Decline

Due to America’s wrong policies and exploitation in most of her colonized countries, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, there is an increase in resentment and hatred towards America and its values in every part of the world. Ayatullah Khamenei in one of his speeches said: “The arrogant

¹⁷. «وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى» (طه/١٢٤)



outlook which the Americans have adopted and which has continued since decades ago until today has made all nations in the world have a feeling of mistrust and hatred towards the government of America” (Leader Meets with Students on “National Day of Fighting Against Global Arrogance,” November 3, 2013, <https://B2n.ir/n32293>).

In addition, the personality of the leaders elected by the people to run the affairs of the country is considered by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the factors that accelerated the decline of America: “The people who are currently in power in America are making decisions the way drunken people would. They have no idea what they are doing. They are far away from the realities of the world. ... Their websites and press are full of such comments. They say that these people are bringing America to the point of decline and collapse, and that is the truth of the situation. Their existence is probably divine revenge on America” (Khamenei, Leader’s Speech to Government Officials, October 30, 2005, <https://B2n.ir/g19953>).

His Eminence referred to the appointment of Donald Trump as the American President as a sign of its political decline, he said: “American power has declined in the area of politics as well. I will tell you that if there is only one reason to evidence the political decline of the US, which I will mention – this would be enough: the election of someone of the calibre of Mr. Donald Trump! This election in itself is a sign of the political decline of the US. The fate of three hundred-plus million individuals is in the hands of someone with these qualities: this is a sign of the political decline of the US! When someone becomes the president of a country about whose psychological, mental and moral stability there are many questions, this is a sign of the decline of that country - a political and moral decline.” (Khamenei, the election of Donald Trump is a clear sign of the political and moral decline of the U.S. June 4, 2019, <https://B2n.ir/m90655>).

In the Quranic viewpoint, tyrannical rulers who oppress and exploit their people cannot escape divine justice, which often manifests as political

decline and collapse: *"The ground for action is only against those who oppress the people and commit tyranny in the land in violation of justice. For such there will be a painful punishment"*¹⁸ (Quran 42:42). Meanwhile, political decline, according to the Quran, is not merely a result of external factors but is deeply tied to the moral and ethical failures of the leadership and the society itself.

5. Global Islamic Awakening

Following the 1979 victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the establishment of an Islamic government under the leadership of the late Imam Khomeini (the Leader of the Islamic Revolution) and his successor, Ayatullah Khamenei, this government has challenged the power of America and it has indeed checked the excesses, aggression and arrogant nature of America not only in the Middle Eastern countries but throughout the world. This has created an awakening in the Middle East in particular and in the world in general. The emergence of this unprecedented wave has weakened and led to the collapse of several puppet dictators of imperialism in the region.

His Eminence said: "The Revolution is a thought, a philosophy, a roadmap. If it is accepted and cherished by a nation, it will welcome it on its own. ...Resistance was accepted by other nations on its own. ...Today in our region – West Asia – the common word among nations is resistance. Everyone agrees with resistance. ...The recent defeats that the Americans suffered in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and other such countries were an outcome of the resistance of Resistance groups. The Resistance camp is a strong camp today" (Khamenei, Today, Khomeini's doctrine of resistance is a well-known discourse. June 4, 2019, <https://B2n.ir/m81217>).

¹⁸ «إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ»
(الشورى/ ٤٢)



6. The Emergence of New World Order

The phrase “new world order” was used in the period toward the end of the first world war when Woodrow Wilson called for a league of nations to prevent aggression and conflict (see Qanbarī Ālāniq 2023, 2). After World War II, the American government was at the height of its power and influence in almost every part of the world, but finally, after several decades, the growth of countries such as China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran has reduced the monopoly of America. In other words, the rise of new powers is bringing the short-lived “unipolar moment” to an end. While attesting to this reality, a Professor of International Affairs at Harvard University, Stephen M. Walt, said: “The past two decades have witnessed the emergence of new power centres in several key regions. The most obvious example is China, whose explosive economic growth is undoubtedly the most significant geopolitical development in decades. The United States has been the world’s largest economy since roughly 1900, but China is likely to overtake America in the total economic output no later than 2025” (Walt 2011, 9).

While describing the current situation in the world, Ayatullah Khamenei stated, “Today, the world is on the threshold of a new international order which is being formed after [the failure of] the bipolar order and unipolar theory [as alleged by the Americans]. Of course, the US is becoming weaker on a daily basis” (Khamenei, Today the world is on the threshold of a new world order, April 26, 2022, <https://B2n.ir/j48192>).

It is pertinent to mention that one of the divine traditions mentioned in the Quran is the tradition of replacement. According to this tradition, throughout history, individuals and nations have been replaced to achieve the emergence of prominent people who are unique in every way. This replacement is made in line with the purpose of creation. *“O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, [who will be] humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, waging jihad in the way of Allah, not*

fearing the blame of any blamer”¹⁹ (Quran 5:54). Similarly, He said: “... and if you turn away, He will replace you with another people, and they will not be like you”²⁰ (Quran 47:38).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research underscores the significant contributions of Ayatullah Khamenei's defensive thought in addressing the issue of global arrogance within the modern geopolitical landscape. In Ayatullah Khamenei's defensive thought, the decline of global arrogance is viewed as an inevitable process supported by Quranic principles.

By employing a Quranic framework, the study highlights the multifaceted contexts and factors that lead to the decline of global arrogance, emphasizing the interplay between spirituality, social structures, and systemic injustices. The findings reveal that both the internal factors, such as the weakening of moral and familial foundations, and external dynamics, like the emergence of a new world order and global Islamic awakening, play crucial roles in this decline.

Ayatullah Khamenei's perspective critiques the prevailing hegemonic systems and offers a comprehensive strategy that combines spiritual resurgence with proactive political engagement. This approach encourages collective resistance, advancing the notion that a spiritually grounded and united front among oppressed nations is essential for dismantling powerful states' cultural and economic dominion, thus enriching the discourse on anti-imperialism.

¹⁹ «يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَزِدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ» (المائدة/ ٥٤)

²⁰ «وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبَدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالِكُمْ» (محمد/ ٣٨)



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