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Unraveling the Components of Sustainable Security in Afghanistan: A Fuzzy Hierarchical Decision-Making Perspective

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Abstract

Despite a complex history marred by security disputes, the quest for sustainable security in Afghanistan is still an intricate puzzle. A multitude of influential factors and dynamic shifts in political leadership have shaped and characterized this puzzle. This study leverages the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP) technique to identify and rank the crucial components that construct the sustainable security landscape in Afghanistan. Our meticulous examination places political and social elements at the forefront of this landscape. Among political factors, regional cooperation, strategic international relations policies, and the tenacious political will of ruling elites emerge as pivotal. Economically, the spotlight falls on poverty alleviation initiatives and intense economic drive, termed 'economic jihad'. From a social perspective, bolstering internal solidarity across ethnic and religious lines and encouraging citizen participation in security provisions are deemed essential. Concerning cultural parameters, our findings stress the importance of amplifying educational standards and fostering citizens' trust in government. Collectively, these components constitute the bedrock for sustainable security in Afghanistan. This study offers fresh insights into the diverse dimensions of security, providing valuable reference points for policymakers and stakeholders invested in Afghanistan's peacebuilding journey.

Keywords: Sustainable Security, Afghanistan, Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process, Poverty Alleviation, Public Participation.



Introduction

Despite a complex history marred by security disputes, the quest for sustainable security in Afghanistan is still an intricate puzzle. A multitude of influential factors and dynamic shifts in political leadership have shaped and characterized this puzzle. (UNDP, 1994). This fundamental concept not only shapes the quality of life but also directs the trajectory of societal growth. At its core, security acts as a bastion against fear, anxiety, danger, and doubt, fostering a sense of safety, serenity, and certainty, thereby facilitating the unhampered exercise of human rights and freedoms (Ajdari et al., 2011). However, security is a multi-faceted and dynamic construct, with interpretations that are fluid and alter over time and space, reflecting the complex socio-political and economic realities of different societies.

Broadly speaking, security can be understood at different levels: individual (human security), national (national security), or global (international security) (Buzan et al., 1998). Each level has its own referent object, scope, and challenges. For instance, human security focuses on the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities, while national security emphasizes the preservation and promotion of the state's interests and sovereignty, and international security deals with the maintenance and enhancement of global order and stability (Kaldor, 2007). However, these levels are not mutually exclusive or isolated, but rather interdependent and interconnected, as threats or opportunities at one level can affect or influence others.

Within this context, the concept of sustainable security emerges as a compelling strategy to address the interplay and mutual influence among political, social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape the security landscape (Oxford Research Group, 2012). Sustainable security goes beyond the traditional notions of security that focus solely on military power or state-centric threats. It embraces a holistic and preventive approach, addressing the root causes of insecurity rather than just its symptoms. Moreover, it acknowledges the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to essential resources and protect against environmental disasters, all in a climate of peace and political stability (UN-Water, 2013).

Afghanistan, nestled in Central Asia, serves as an apt case study, exemplifying the paramount role of security in determining a nation's trajectory. Over the years, Afghanistan has endured political unrest, civil wars, and foreign interventions, leading to protracted

instability and insecurity (Sargana and Bokhari, 2020). Challenges such as narcotics production, ideological extremism, arms trade, and terrorism have further compounded the country's insecurity and chaos (Faraji Rad et al., 1390).

Given these considerations, the pursuit of sustainable security in Afghanistan demands a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of its multifaceted challenges. This study aims to unravel the components of sustainable security in Afghanistan and rank these components, ultimately contributing to informed policy decisions and robust strategies for the nation's future. The research goal is to identify and rank the key components of sustainable security in Afghanistan. The central research question guiding this study is: What are the key components of sustainable security in Afghanistan, and how should they be ranked to contribute towards the nation's sustainable development?

Hypothesis: Economic development, political stability, and societal cohesion are just some of the factors that determine sustainable security in Afghanistan. The successful ranking and implementation of these components can significantly contribute to achieving sustainable security in the country.

To address this research question and test our hypothesis, we will adopt a comprehensive mixed-method approach. This approach will combine qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, providing a holistic understanding of sustainable security in Afghanistan.

By investigating this hypothesis through comprehensive research and analysis, this article aims to provide valuable insights for informed policy decisions and the formulation of robust strategies to ensure a secure and sustainable future for Afghanistan.

1. Literature Review

Afghanistan's geopolitical context has continually been the subject of diverse studies, given its effects on regional and international security. Omrani and Elhami (1399) analyzed the US's post-9/11 military engagement in Afghanistan, illustrating this as an attempt to democratize the region and further long-term interests. This notion aligns with Seifi et al.'s (1396) research on sustainable security, emphasizing the crucial roles of political and economic factors in shaping sustainable security.

Jalalian et al. (2017) expanded on this, accentuating local factors such as border markets, police supervision, and cultural familiarity in enhancing sustainable security in border areas. The study

highlighted the importance of comprehensive development strategies for promoting sustainable security. This concept resonates with broader discussions on how local politics and socioeconomic conditions impact security (Böhmelt et al., 2020).

On the other hand, Ghadermazi et al. (1396) and Farzanehpour et al. (1396) underscored the external influences, such as government involvement and proximity to volatile regions, on security stability. These studies enrich the wider narrative that geopolitics and international interventions significantly shape regional security scenarios.

In recent times, separate studies by Ahmad (2022), Varma (2022), and De Jong (2022) have spotlighted non-traditional security challenges arising from the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, including potential civil war and resettlement issues. These concerns align with the emerging scholarly focus on non-traditional security threats in geopolitical studies (Burgess, 2020).

Applying Barry Buzan's regional complex security theory, Sargana and Bokhari (2020) examined the intricacies of the Afghan peace process, accentuating the importance of trust in conflict resolution (Fey & Ramsay, 2010). Meanwhile, Barfield's (2018) political and cultural history of Afghanistan offers practical insights for organizations striving towards sustainable security, underscoring the importance of historical understanding in conflict management (Lederach, 2015).

Further to this, the works of Collins (2016) and Cooper (2013) highlighted the interplay of internal dynamics, such as power divisions among Mujahideen groups and the illicit poppy trade, in molding Afghanistan's geopolitical context. The importance of these internal dynamics is often understated, yet they are crucial to understanding Afghanistan's sustained instability (Goodhand, 2008).

Lastly, Stevekol's (2008) "Ghost War" offers an account of intelligence activities in Afghanistan, mirroring the broadly acknowledged influence of international politics and clandestine operations on the country's stability (Coll, 2004).

In summary, the reviewed literature illuminates a broad array of factors contributing to Afghanistan's geopolitical instability, including economic, political, cultural, historical, and international elements. Grasping this intricate interplay is crucial to crafting effective strategies for sustainable peace and security.

2. Navigating Sustainable Security in Afghanistan

Afghanistan, a landlocked country in Central Asia, holds a historical

legacy that has shaped its security landscape over the centuries. Its strategic location has made it a coveted prize for empires seeking to expand their influence (Hastrup, 2019). From Alexander the Great's conquests in the 4th century BCE to the British Empire's attempts to assert control in the 19th century, Afghanistan has witnessed invasions and struggles for dominance, often resulting in protracted conflicts.

This tumultuous history has earned Afghanistan the reputation of being the "Graveyard of Empires," highlighting its resilience and ability to resist foreign invasions (Hastrup, 2019). However, this historical context also underscores the complexity of Afghanistan's security challenges. External interventions have not only caused immense suffering for its people but have also left lasting scars on the country's political and social fabric.

The most recent example of foreign intervention was the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s. The Soviet Union's invasion triggered fierce resistance from Afghan Mujahideen fighters, who received substantial support from international actors, including the United States. The war lasted for nearly a decade, resulting in a significant loss of life and leaving the country in a state of turmoil (Rashid, 2000).

The aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan War saw the rise of militant groups, including the Taliban. These groups capitalized on the power vacuum and political instability to establish their presence and pursue their extremist agendas. Afghanistan became a breeding ground for terrorism, posing a threat not only to its security but also to the stability of the entire region (Gopal, 2019).

In the early 2000s, a U.S.-led coalition, with the support of NATO allies, intervened in Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime and dismantle terrorist networks, most notably Al-Qaeda (Jones, 2019). The military intervention achieved initial success in toppling the Taliban government, but it also led to complex challenges in terms of governance, nation-building, and counterinsurgency.

One of the persistent challenges for sustainable security in Afghanistan is the prevalence of ethnic and sectarian divisions within the country. These divisions have been exploited by various militant groups to fuel their insurgency and gain support from marginalized communities (Kugelman, 2014). Achieving national unity and inclusivity in governance remains a daunting task.

Another crucial security issue in Afghanistan is the opium trade, which has become a major source of funding for insurgent groups and criminal networks. The illicit drug trade not only finances terrorism but also undermines the rule of law and fuels corruption

(Felbab-Brown, 2016). Addressing this problem requires concerted efforts to provide alternative livelihoods for opium farmers and disrupt the drug supply chain.

To achieve sustainable security in Afghanistan, a comprehensive and multifaceted approach is essential. This approach must go beyond military solutions and address the root causes of instability (Mansfield, 2012). Nation-building efforts should focus on strengthening state institutions and promoting the rule of law, while also combatting corruption and ensuring accountability.

Economic development is vital in providing opportunities for the Afghan people, particularly the youth, who are vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups due to limited prospects (Kugelman, 2014). Investment in education, infrastructure, and vocational training can offer alternative paths to a stable and prosperous future.

Furthermore, regional cooperation plays a pivotal role in Afghanistan's security. The country shares borders with several neighboring nations, and the security challenges are often intertwined (Rasul, 2016). Engaging in dialogue and cooperation with neighboring countries can help address cross-border issues and create a conducive environment for stability.

Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts must remain a priority, but they should be part of a broader strategy that emphasizes diplomacy, development, and good governance. A clear exit plan and transition strategy should also be in place to ensure a responsible withdrawal of foreign military forces while supporting the Afghan government in its efforts to maintain security (Jones, 2019).

In conclusion, sustainable security in Afghanistan is a multifaceted and complex undertaking. It requires a deep understanding of its historical context, a logical analysis of the challenges it faces, and a conceptual framework that focuses on nation-building, economic development, regional cooperation, and targeted counterterrorism efforts. By acknowledging these factors and working collaboratively, Afghanistan and the international community can strive towards a more secure and stable future for the country and the region at large.

3. Methodology

The present study is an applied research endeavor, adopting a descriptive-analytical approach to explore the complex phenomenon of sustainable security in Afghanistan. The research procedure

entails both primary and secondary data collection. Primary data was collected through field studies utilizing questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data was obtained from theoretical-conceptual frameworks, official documents, and prior research.

3-1. Research Process

The research process began with a comprehensive literature review to gather knowledge about the topic, guiding the design of the research questionnaire. Field studies followed, involving surveys and interviews for data collection.

An integral component of our methodology was the Delphi method. The opinions of distinguished experts, scholars, and political thinkers were incorporated to identify and categorize the components of Afghanistan's sustainable security. The Delphi method also facilitated finalizing the indicators and criteria. The Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was then employed to ascertain the weight of these criteria.

3-2. Research Tools

The study employed a range of tools, including academic books and articles, past research projects for the library method as well as researcher-designed for the questionnaires for the survey method. The questionnaires captured demographic information about the respondents and were administered to research participants for completion.

3-3. Statistical Population

The statistical population for this study comprised university professors, policy experts, political experts, security experts, and staff of peace institutions in Afghanistan. A selection of 30 specialists from this population was chosen for participation, and the researcher-made questionnaire was distributed amongst them.

3-4. Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)

A typical AHP problem involves three levels: the overarching goal (level one), the evaluation criteria (level two), and the potential alternatives (level three). Each level's components are compared in pairs to determine the relative preference of each concerning the alternatives. The overall weight factor for each alternative, according to the main goal, is calculated, with the alternative possessing the highest weight being chosen as the optimal option.

3-5. Fuzzy AHP

The Fuzzy AHP method was developed to manage the inherent uncertainty in preferential judgments, which complicates the prioritization of alternatives and consensus on priorities. Fuzzy triangular values replace ambiguous data based on the answers provided by decision-makers to specific questions. For each pairwise comparison in the fuzzy logic approach, the intersection point is determined, and its membership value is equated to its weight.

3-6. Software Usage

The AHP analysis and pairwise comparisons were performed using Microsoft Excel, coded with MATLAB. This software, extensively used across diverse scientific disciplines, including management science, is particularly prevalent in Iran for AHP analysis. Therefore, it serves as a crucial tool for researchers looking to conduct AHP analysis and paired comparison questionnaire analysis in the region.

4. Findings

This research study focused on identifying the elements of Afghanistan's sustainable security from the perspective of political experts and scholars. A comprehensive approach was adopted, involving both library studies, including articles, dissertations, and books, and primary data collection through a Delphi questionnaire distributed among the expert panel.

The expert panel consisted of university professors, political analysts, security specialists, and peacekeepers in Afghanistan, all possessing extensive experience in their respective fields. Elements with a mean of less than 3 on a 5-point scale were omitted from the questionnaire and the experts did not propose new ones, which led to the determination of the elements for sustainable security of Afghanistan based on their consensus

The Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP) equations were used to determine the weight and importance of each factor. MATLAB software was employed for hierarchical analysis and pairwise comparisons to analyze the data and draw meaningful conclusions.

Table (1): Final Elements of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security

	Indicator	Research Questions	Spectrum of Importance				
			Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)
1	Political factors	Government attention to internal security issues	1	2	3	4	5
2		Government attention to security issues in border areas	1	2	3	4	5
3		Increasing military security capabilities	1	2	3	4	5
4		Involving people in political affairs	1	2	3	4	5
5		Developing a comprehensive public security policy	1	2	3	4	5
6	Economic factors	Poverty alleviation	1	2	3	4	5
7		Implementation of the regional development plan with existing capacity	1	2	3	4	5
8		No hesitation in the face of external shocks	1	2	3	4	5
9		Economic Jihad (redoubled effort)	1	2	3	4	5
10		Attention and support for private sector investment	1	2	3	4	5
11		Stability of government markets	1	2	3	4	5
12		Free trade	1	2	3	4	5
13	Social factors	Avoiding and dealing with speculative attacks on the market	1	2	3	4	5
14		People's participation in providing security	1	2	3	4	5
15		Strengthening correlations or internal links (ethnic, religious)	1	2	3	4	5
16		Increasing popular institutions	1	2	3	4	5
17		Creating a sense of national belonging between groups and individuals in society	1	2	3	4	5
18		Having respect for the ethnic and social capacities of society	1	2	3	4	5
19	Cultural	Economically balanced society and social facilities	1	2	3	4	5
20		Increasing the level of education	1	2	3	4	5

Indicator	Research Questions	Spectrum of Importance				
		Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)
21	Self-confidence and self-reliance	1	2	3	4	5
22	Strengthening national identity through the wisdom of cultures	1	2	3	4	5
23	Holding bonding rituals	1	2	3	4	5
24	Using the media for public education	1	2	3	4	5
25	Global cultural communication	1	2	3	4	5

The FAHP method allowed the researchers to determine the weight and rank of each factor, providing valuable insights into the relative importance of components for Afghanistan's sustainable security. The main indicators' weights were calculated using FAHP, as depicted in Table 2 and Table 3. The degree of probability for each μ_i surpassing other μ_j s, represented as $d'(A_i)$, was also calculated (Table 5).

Table (2): Matrix of Pairwise Comparisons of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Indicators

	Political factors	Economic factors	Social factors	Cultural factors
Political factors	1, 1, 1	3.1, 3.7, 4.1	1.5, 2.1, 2.6	2.2, 2.8, 3.3
Economic factors	0.24, 0.27, 0.32	1, 1, 1	0.45, 0.55, 0.6	0.38, 0.28, 0.32
Social factors	0.38, 0.47, 0.66	1.7, 1.8, 2.2	1, 1, 1	1.3, 1.8, 2.1
Cultural factors	0.30, 0.36, 0.45	2.6, 3.1, 3.6	0.48, 0.55, 0.77	1, 1, 1

Table (3): Total Matrix of Pairwise Comparisons of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Indicators

	The Sum of the Matrix of Pairwise Comparisons of the Main Indicators
Political factors	(7/8.9/6.11/00)
Economic factors	(1/97.2/14.2/30)

The Sum of the Matrix of Pairwise Comparisons of the Main Indicators	
Social factors	(4/38.5/07.5/96)
Cultural factors	(4/38.5/01.5/82)
Sum	(18/53.21/82.25/08)

Table (4): Normalizing the sum of row

Normalize the sum of rows	
Political factors	(0/311, 0/440, 0/593)
Economic factors	(0/078.0/098.0/124)
Social factors	(0/174.0/232.0/322)
Cultural factors	(0/175.0/229.0/314)

The subsequent step involved calculating the degree of probability that each μ_i surpasses other μ_j s, represented as $d'(A_i)$.

Table (5): Calculate the Degree of Priority of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Indicators

	Political factors	Economic factors	Social factors	Cultural factors
Political factors	-	1	1	1
Economic factors		-	1	0.801
Social factors	0.048	1	-	1
Cultural factors	0.014	1	0.980	-

The weight vector was normalized to obtain the normalized weights, and the final ranking of Afghanistan's sustainable security indicators was determined based on the software output and expert analysis (Table 6).

Table (6): Final Ranking of Afghanistan Sustainable Security Indicators

Indicators	Weight	Rank
Political factors	0.31	1
Economic factors	0.19	4
Social factors	0.27	2
Cultural factors	0.23	3

Similarly, the sub-indices of political factors were analyzed using the FAHP method, following the steps described previously. Pairwise comparison matrices were created for the sub-indices of political factors (Tables 7 & 8). The degree of probability for each μ_i outperforming other μ_j s was also calculated (Table 10).

Table (7): Paired Comparisons Corresponding to the Sub-Indices of Political Factors

Main Indicators	Regional cooperation and international relations policies	Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	Increase military security capabilities	Involving people in political affairs	Develop a comprehensive public security policy	The will of the elite
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	1,1,1	0.19,0.21,0.24	0.24,0.29,0.32	0.22,0.26,0.28	0.21,0.23,0.26	0.31,0.34,0.38
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	4.1,4.7,5.1	1,1,1	1.5,1.8,2.1	1.3,1.6,1.9	1.1,1.4,1.7	2.3,2.8,3.2
Increasing military security capabilities	3.1,3.4,4.2	0.47,0.55,0.66	1,1,1	0.76,0.81,0.83	0.82,0.85,0.89	1.4,1.7,2.1
Involving people in political affairs	3.5,3.9,4.5	0.52,0.62,0.76	1.2,1.24,1.31	1,1,1	0.75,0.81,0.88	1.6,1.9,2.3
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	3.8,4.3,4.7	0.58,0.71,0.9	1.12,1.17,1.21	1.13,1.23,1.33	1,1,1	1.7,2.1,2.5
The will of the elite	2.6,2.9,3.2	0.31,0.36,0.43	0.47,0.58,0.71	0.43,0.52,0.62	0.4,0.47,0.58	1,1,1

Table (8): Total Matrix Comparisons of the Main Indicators

Main Indicators	Total Matrix Comparisons
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	(2/96.3/28.3/72)
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	(17/6.20/7,23.3)
Increasing military security capabilities	(12/25.13/81, 28/16)
Involving people in political affairs	(13/47.15/17.17/35)
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	(14/43.16/61.18/64)
The will of the elite	(8/41.9/93.11/14)
Sum	(79/52.92/01, 104/97)

Table (9): Normalizes the Sum of Rows

Main Indicators	Total Matrix Comparisons
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	0.0282, 0.0356, 0.0468
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	0.1677, 0.2250, 0.2930
Increasing military security capabilities	0.1167, 0.1501, 0.2047
Involving people in political affairs	0.1283, 0.1649, 0.2182
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	0.1375, 0.1805, 0.2344
The will of the elite	0.0801, 0.1079, 0.1401

The degree of probability for each μ_i surpassing other μ_j s was calculated, represented as $d'(A_i)$.

Table (10): Calculate the degree of preference for options over the target

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
B1	1	0	0	0	0	0
B2	1	1	1	1	1	1
B3	1	0.331	1	0.837	0.688	1
B4	1	0.456	1	1	0.837	1
B5	1	0.600	1	1	1	1
B6	1	0	0.356	0.171	0.034	1

The weight preference matrix for each factor was determined as the minimum of each row.

Table (11): Normalization of Total Rows

Main Indicators	weight
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	0.289
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	1
Increasing military security capabilities	0.331
Involving people in political affairs	0.456
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	0.600
The will of the elite	0.356

By normalizing the weight vector, the normalized weights for the sub-indices of political factors were obtained, and the final ranking of the components concerning the purpose of the indicators was determined based on the software output and expert analysis (Table 12).

Table (12): The final ranking of the components concerning the purpose of the indicators

indicators	weight	rank
Regional cooperation and international relations policies	0.24	1
Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	0.19	3
Increasing military security capabilities	0.15	4
Involving people in political affairs	0.09	6
Developing a comprehensive public security policy	0.12	5
The will of the elite	0.21	2

The findings highlighted the critical elements that contribute to Afghanistan's sustainable security and provided policymakers and stakeholders with valuable insights for formulating effective strategies and policies to ensure lasting peace and stability in the country.

5. Analysis and Discussion

Development and progress in nations hinge upon their citizens' sense of mental security. Indeed, security and stability act as steppingstones towards a flourishing society, an improved governance, enhanced economy, and ultimately, sustainable development. Thus, sustainable security serves as a pivotal factor and source of societal development and excellence. Evidence suggests that modern and developed societies are characterized by enduring security and lasting peace. Conversely, countries lacking sustainable peace and security often rank among the world's third-world countries, grappling with various challenges such as poverty, government dictatorship, illegitimate political systems, ethnic divides, and human rights violations.

Afghanistan, given its vital geostrategic position in proximity to critical and unstable regions like the Middle East, India, Pakistan, and Central Asia, holds significant global relevance. Over time, this relevance has grown due to Central Asia's massive oil and gas reserves, almost equivalent to those of the North Sea. Thus, Afghanistan has become a crucial intermediary for accessing these resources on international markets. Additionally, Afghanistan serves as a vital link between Central Asia and South Asia. However, the country has also emerged as a hindrance to the regional development process due to its status as a source of narcotics and a breeding ground for ideological fundamentalism, extremism, arms trade, and terrorism.

Afghanistan has always had a weak government due to its inability to control a strong social structure and dominant tribal systems. The tribal divisions in Afghan society have traditionally held elements of power, including the population, an independent economy and land, without foreign or central government sovereignty. These tribal divisions also form the ethnic roots of the government. The presence of warlords, who currently pose the most significant threat to Afghanistan's stability post-terrorism, contributes to the country's chronic insecurity. Therefore, security in Afghanistan is a scarce commodity that everyone seeks.

Studies by Seifi et al. (1396) stated that political and economic factors play a significant role in shaping sustainable citizenship security. To create and promote sustainable citizenship security, reforms in these areas are essential. Other contributing factors, such as social, health, food, and environmental elements, also play a vital role due to their interconnectedness. The individual factor in this system remains passive and is influenced by other factors relating to the concept of sustainable citizenship security.

Table (13): Final Components of Afghanistan's Sustainable Security Delphi Method Output

Indicator	Sub-index	Abundance	Percentage of frequency	The first round of Delphi
Political factors	Regional cooperation and international relations policies	3	20	4.47
	Regional cooperation and international and cross-border relations policies	4	26.7	4.46
	Increasing military security capabilities	5	33.3	4.33
	Involving people in political affairs	2	13.3	3.46
	Developing a comprehensive public security policy	1	6.7	4.00
Economic factors	Poverty alleviation	3	20	3.80
	Implementation of the regional development plan with existing capacity	6	40	3.53
	No hesitation in the face of external shocks	8	53.3	2.20
	Economic Jihad (redoubled effort)	7	46.7	3.73
	Attention and support for private sector investment	10	66.7	2.93
	Stability of government markets	9	60	3.13
	Free trade	15	100	2.73
Social factors	Avoiding and dealing with speculative attacks on the market	5	33.3	2.20
	People's participation in providing security	5	33.3	4.66
	Strengthening correlations or internal links (ethnic, religious)	6	40	4.80
	Increasing popular institutions	7	46.7	3.26
	Creating a sense of national belonging between groups and individuals in society	9	60	4.13
	Having respect for the ethnic and social capacities of society	11	73.3	4.53
Cultural factors	Economically balanced society and social facilities	12	80	3.00
	Increasing the level of education	12	80	4.40
	Self-confidence and self-reliance	11	73.3	3.46
	Strengthening national identity through the wisdom of cultures	8	53.3	3.93
	Holding bonding rituals	9	60	3.13
	Using the media for public education	10	66.7	4.13
	Global cultural communication	7	46.7	4.13

Further studies by Ghadermazi et al. (1396) indicated that there is a direct and significant relationship between research variables in the study area. These components and indicators have a substantial impact on the regional balance and stability of border areas. It was found that government involvement, the evolution of border function, and accessibility significantly increase the security stability of border areas. More government investment in border cities and the creation of large industrial projects have led to a greater population and retention in these cities, resulting in increased border and internal protection and enhancing citizens' sense of security.

This research also draws upon the works of authors such as Cooper (2013), Cole (2008), and Nickelsberg (2013), which delve into various aspects of Afghanistan's historical and current predicaments, including the opium trade, terrorist activities, and the impact of various regional and international players.

In this study, the most influential factors are found to be political factors with a weight of 0.31, followed by social factors with a weight of 0.27. Among political factors, regional cooperation and international relations policies rank first with a weight of 0.24, followed by the will of elites with a weight of 0.21. Among economic factors, poverty alleviation ranks first with a weight of 0.28, followed by economic jihad (double effort) with a weight of 0.24. Within social indicators, strengthening solidarity or internal ties (ethnic, religious) ranks first with a weight of 0.26, followed by people's participation in security provision with a weight of 0.21. Finally, in cultural factors, increasing the level of education ranks first with a weight of 0.21, followed by the nation's trust in government with a weight of 0.17.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study undertook the complex task of investigating the key components of sustainable security in Afghanistan and how these elements might be ranked to contribute to the nation's sustainable development. Our research question was centered around discerning these components and their significance in the larger security landscape. Our hypothesis assumes that sustainable security in Afghanistan is influenced by various factors, including economic development, political stability as well as social cohesion; and that its successful classification and implementation could significantly contribute to achieving sustainable security.

Our findings corroborate the hypothesis and provide valuable insights into the intricate web of components that shape

Afghanistan's sustainable security landscape. Political factors emerged as the most influential component, demonstrating the centrality of regional cooperation, international relations policies, and the political will of ruling elites to security dynamics. The social factor, underscored by strengthening solidarity across ethnic and religious lines and promoting citizen participation in security provision, was the second most influential factor, underlying the crucial role of societal cohesion and harmony in security matters.

Economic factors, especially poverty alleviation initiatives and the commitment to economic growth, or 'economic jihad', also stood out as significant, reaffirming the correlation between economic stability and security. The cultural parameters, specifically enhancing educational standards and nurturing citizens' trust in government, were critical as well, indicating the role of cultural values and practices in shaping security.

Through our rigorous analysis, it becomes clear that sustainable security in Afghanistan is a multifaceted concept, necessitating a balanced and comprehensive approach to address the different components holistically. The importance of social, economic, and cultural factors cannot be undermined despite the fact the political factors hold the highest weight. Therefore, in shaping policies and strategies for Afghanistan's security, these diverse components must be considered and ranked appropriately.

Furthermore, the complexity of Afghanistan's socio-political landscape, characterized by tribal divisions, weak governance structures and the presence of warlords, highlights the challenges of achieving sustainable security in the region. It underscores the urgent need for reformative actions that bolster political stability, encourage economic development, enhance societal cohesion, and build cultural trust in government.

In conclusion, this study affirms the interplay and mutual influence among political, social, economic, and cultural factors in shaping Afghanistan's sustainable security. It underscores the need for a balanced and integrated approach that acknowledges and addresses these elements to achieve sustainable security. By investigating these multifaceted components and their interrelations, the study provides a robust framework that can guide policymakers and stakeholders invested in Afghanistan's peacebuilding journey. Thus, this research makes a valuable contribution to understanding sustainable security in Afghanistan and offers a way forward for informed policy decisions and strategic planning for a secure and prosperous future for the nation.

Limitations and Future Research

This research was carried out under certain constraints, limiting the scope of the study. Firstly, the research focused primarily on Afghanistan, and hence the findings may not be directly applicable to other countries with differing socio-political contexts. Secondly, the selection of the expert panel might have introduced biases in the study. Future research should aim to involve a more diverse group of participants, including women, minorities, and representatives from various socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, this study only took into account political, social, economic, and cultural factors. Future research should examine other potential influences on sustainable security, such as technological advancements, infrastructure, healthcare availability, or gender equality.

It would also be beneficial to conduct comparative studies, examining how these factors play out in different countries or regions. This could provide further insight into the dynamics of sustainable security and identify best practices for achieving this goal.

Finally, it's important to note that while this research has identified key factors affecting sustainable security in Afghanistan, it does not provide a definitive blueprint for action. Instead, it should be viewed as a starting point for further discussion and research, with the aim of informing policy-making and practice in this vital area.

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The “Counter-Terrorism” Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the West Asia


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Abstract

Peace and security are blessings that God has given to mankind for the sake of the growth and development of human societies. What is certain is that peace is a human ideal, and all human beings need peace and comfort in their daily lives to work, strive, and to realize their material and spiritual abilities. Terrorism, as an old phenomenon with a new form and nature, is one of the most important and challenging problems in our world. Meanwhile, it is so brutal, outrageous, scary, and reprehensible that it can be called “cancer of our modern world”. Terrorism by itself does not determine the system of action and reaction. Dealing with terrorism must follow a logical order— an order that is defined against all anti-peace phenomena and lies in natural, divine, and human values. The international system lacks a clear and comprehensive strategy against security threats and peace violations. Therefore, the counter-terrorism mechanisms and measures stipulated in the existing international documents have sometimes taken a direction that is not necessarily compatible with other measures that have been established regarding other categories of world peace. Rather, their contradictions and incompatibilities are clearly visible in practice. With innovative action, especially in the last decade, the Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted a strategy to eradicate terrorism. In this regard, while dealing with the roots and intellectual and religious foundations of terrorism, Iran has simultaneously, tactically, and operationally tried to fight with the manifestations of terrorism and prevent the expansion of terrorist attacks. In this field, it has had extensive cooperation with international and regional organizations and their executive bodies, such as Interpol.

Keywords: Strategy, Islamic Republic, Terror, Terrorism and West Asia.



Introduction

Over the past 40 years, the Islamic Republic has tried to strengthen its security and power in the region by taking advantage of these two factors. Expanding its role in the region provides Iran with this opportunity to maximize power in order to both find the possibility of challenging the US threat and increase its bargaining power over issues related to its regional rivals. In order to expand its influence, Tehran uses various policies, such as supporting Syria along with non-governmental or semi-governmental actors such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Houthis, and Hashd al-Shaabi. On the other hand, balancing against competitors and enemies is another variable that is one of the key components of Iran's foreign policy. This balancing, in essence, is both domestic and international. In fact, since the actors of the international system pursue self-help and your friend today may be your enemy tomorrow, Tehran prefers to employ its domestic capacities to balance against its competitors.

Security is a complex and controversial concept that is deeply influenced by values. The security issue arises when a person, group or government threatens the independence or survival of another. Meanwhile, ISIS or, "the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria," is one of the groups that formed in the Levant and became a serious challenge to West Asia security. Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the key power center of the region, has become the most influential actor throughout the West Asia. In this regard, Iran cannot be excluded from the ongoing regional dynamics. In light of the recent movements that Takfiri groups have formed in the Levant with the aim of establishing an Islamic caliphate, it can be said that one of the gravest security-political crises in the West Asia has evolved. Also, Iran's foreign policy goals and strategies are more defensive and pragmatic, and above all, Tehran tries to eliminate the security challenges caused by new political and security developments in the region. In the past years, crises, wars, and tensions in the region have been costly and a source of instability for Iran. According to recent developments, employing alliance-making in Iran's regional foreign policy is not just an attempt to increase power in region, but a defensive reaction to deal with the existing security threats.

Concepts

A) The Concept of Strategy

The word "راهبرد" has been used for a long time to express the

knowledge and art used by a commander-in-chief. The English equivalent of the word “راهبرد”, which is also widely used in Persian, is “strategy”. This word is derived from the Greek word “stratigos” and was first used in the 18th century for describing a “military general's art” or “the art of organizing military units”. However, a strategy is a long-term operational plan designed to achieve a specific goal. The United States Department of Defense officially defines strategy as follows:

“Strategy is a theory or set of thoughtful ideas about employing the national power capabilities to be used in a coordinated and consistent manner for achieving national and multi-national goals.”

In 1963, the Association for Advanced Military Studies affiliated with the Pentagon proposed a similar definition of strategy:

“Strategy is the science and art of development and application of the nation's political, economic, cultural, and military might during peace and war in order to provide the maximum support for national policies, increase the probability of victory, and reduce the probability of failure.”

Carl von Clausewitz, known as the father of modern strategic studies, defines military strategy as the use of existing capabilities in order to achieve the ultimate victory in war. The view of these authors is suitable for explaining the role of strategy in conventional conflicts, but today various actors have entered the battlefield. Actors such as terrorist groups, mafia, rebels, militias, and the like have made the scene of conflicts much different and more complicated than before. Because of these recent complexities, US military doctrine has introduced a different view on the definition of strategy. In this doctrine, the strategy is “the art and science of development, application, and coordination between different aspects of national power (diplomatic, economic, cultural, military, and information) for achieving the goals that lead to the maintenance of national security”. It is different and more comprehensive than the previous definitions because, in addition to the military element, it also pays attention to other dimensions of power necessary to achieve the goals. Therefore, in this article, strategy is a coherent, comprehensive, sustainable, and scientific planning designed by Iran to counter with terrorism.

B) Terrorism

There are a variety of definitions for terrorism. Terrorism is a term on which there is no agreement among governments or academics,

but it is used almost negatively in various ways to describe the brutal actions of self-made, self-proclaimed supranational groups with political motivations against innocent lives.

Terrorism, in the sense of the terrorist struggle of revolutionary intellectuals apart from the masses, is a petite-bourgeoisie movement that appeared at a stage of the revolutionary struggles in Europe. In this line, terrorism is in favor of the active heroic theory of the inactive masses who are waiting for these honorable public figures. (Aghabakhshi, 1379, p. 583)

Terrorism refers to systematic and organized acts of terror. It is not only carried out by using tools that can harm people's lives and security, but also through the violent destruction of public services or infrastructure belonging to a group of people. (Ian McLean, 1381, p. 808)

Terrorism is derived from the Latin root "Terror" and refers to the behavior and actions of an individual or a group who want to achieve their political goals through creating fear and terror among the public.

Terrorism is a collection of activities by state and non-state actors who employ violent methods and means in their efforts to achieve their political goals.

Terrorism can also be the method of governments that repress and intimidate opponents by arresting, torturing, killing, and other kinds of illegitimate harassment through the secret political police. It can be the method of both the right and left extremes of the political spectrum who engage in assassinations, kidnappings, and vandalism to overthrow or scare the government. Terrorism is also defined as a way of governing through terror.

Additionally, the encyclopedia of political science offers the following different definitions of terrorism:

- A system of governance through terror and the belief in the necessity of murdering and creating fear among the public. An intellectual system that allows any kind of action to achieve a political goal.
- The systematic use of terror as a means of coercion or legitimizing actions of terrorizing nature in the minds of the public.

In general, it can be said that terrorism means the regular and organized use of terror. Although terror is an illegitimate and unacceptable way to achieve political goals, it is used anyway. If an individual, group, or government uses terrorist tactics in a systematic, orderly, and organized manner to achieve their political

goals, this type of behavior and phenomenon will be called terrorism.

Terrorism is one of the ambiguous terms in the IR literature, and due to the complexity in its definition, one can face a "crisis of meaning" in its concept and practical instances. "Terrorism" is one of the words that people, along with governmental and non-governmental organizations, use repeatedly, but each of them has their own understanding of it, which is different from others in many aspects. In the political encyclopedia, the violent and illegal actions of governments to suppress their opponents and scare the public are called terror, as well as the brutal behavior of militant groups that aim to achieve their goals through violence. Therefore, terrorism is usually interpreted as an act that causes fear. Although the ontological and even epistemological conflicts between the states, along with the existence of different perceptions of national interests and security, makes it hard to define terrorism, scientists, lawyers, writers, governmental and non-governmental organizations, conventions, and individuals have introduced their unique definitions of it in different ways. One of them is referred to as "terrorism" is a violent and frightening act (due to its sudden and surprising nature), which at the same time is conscious and organized, with generally political and (ideological) goals and objectives. Furthermore, in some cases, even economic and socio-cultural motives can instigate people to embrace terrorist sentiments. Terrorism is carried out both individually and socially by any possible means against an innocent population. It is worth noting that often the victims of terror are not the main target. terrorism Also has purposeful principles and rules with the organization of a specific and theoretical framework. Therefore, it can be differentiated from terror, which mostly includes sporadic, violent, surprising, and purposeful acts.

Therefore, it can be said that terrorism is caused by a type of conduct that, unlike terror, which is an individual and striking act and is usually carried out in a short period of time, is an organized and consistent sort of action implemented by a certain group that covers more diverse goals. Therefore, terrorism can be placed in the position of a kind of political or even military strategy. In this sense, terrorism is a movement that tries to advance its views and narratives through fear-mongering and violence. Another factor that differentiates terrorism from terror is the type and purpose of the chosen targets. In this line, terror is a kind of surprise and sudden action to eliminate the opponent and enemy, whereas terrorism is

defined by its political and social essence beyond a simple surprise assassination plot. In fact, in terrorism, killing or intimidation is not necessarily aimed at the victim population. Instead, terrorism is based on this principle; to attack or offend a small group of people in order to achieve its goals and make the larger population face fear and pursue passivity. Another distinguishing factor of terrorism is its mobility. This factor should be considered in any counter-terrorist operation. This means that unlike governments that have specific territorial boundaries and only have the power to move within those boundaries, the lack of sense of belonging to a territory has provided the terrorists with the ability to move swiftly from one country to another to pursue their goals. Therefore, it is very difficult to attack such an actor who lacks a sense of territorial belonging. (Nemati Marujani, 2015, p. 32)

C) Counter-Terrorism

Countering terrorism is defined as defensive measures that are carried out to reduce individual and social vulnerabilities from terrorist acts by employing local and civil military forces. (Dod, 2009:39) However, while responding to the effects (terrorist actions), counter-terrorism also pays attention to the causes and roots of terrorism. From this perspective, counter-terrorism refers to the techniques, tactics, and strategies that governments, armed forces, and police use in order to prevent, contain, and respond to terrorist threats. (Nacos, 2008, pp. 169-218)

But in elaborating on counter-terrorism, the concept of anti-terrorism should also be addressed, and the boundaries between these two should be properly delineated. Therefore, we will first discuss the concept of anti-terrorism and then provide the conclusion and definition.

Anti-terrorism includes a full range of offensive measures to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. It is considered the last step in the fight against terrorism. Anti-terrorism is a reactive action and gives a legal aspect to the extensive measures of preparation, planning, and response that are included in action plans against terrorism (Sarmestani, 2019, p. 4); In other words, anti-terrorism deals with the effects and not the main causes of terrorist acts.

“Anti-terrorism” sometimes comes in contrast to “counter-terrorism”. As stated by James Derderian, there is a fundamental difference between “anti-terrorist” and “counter-terrorist” policies. These differences are mainly focused on their ultimate goals. Although both policies seek to curb terrorism, the first seeks to

achieve the goal using power resources, while the second seeks to achieve the same by providing an alternative to it. Based on this, “counter-terrorism” necessarily leads to the production of alternative phenomena for “terrorism”. (Derderian, 132, pp. 110-93).

Considering all these issues, the basis of the author's definition and analysis of fighting against terrorism is a combination of the two concepts of “anti-terrorism” and “counter-terrorism”. Therefore, it includes both concepts and is on the side of the main research question and hypothesis.

History of terrorism in the West Asia

One of the currents that has played a significant role in the regional politics of the West Asia in recent years, especially after the developments and the extent of its influence in the region is expanding every day, is Takfiri terrorist Salafism. At the very beginning, we must mention that Takfiri Salafists are groups of Muslims who have been called “Takfiri” by their opponents because of their ideological differences. The main origins of these groups can be traced back to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. But they had also gradually spread to other Muslim countries as well. After the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate and its collapse in 1924, along with the occurrence of some cultural, political, and economic developments in Egypt, the idea of forming an Islamic government as an alternative to the institution of the Caliphate was gradually raised among Muslim scholars who had found their identity in danger. These groups, which were mainly branches of the Muslim Brotherhood and were inspired by its doctrines, influenced the social and political atmosphere of Egypt in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

In the second half of the 20th century, the Salafist and Takfiri sentiments expanded their sphere of influence beyond Saudi Arabia and Egypt and penetrated other West Asiaern countries. One of the common excuses for accepting the Salafist discourse was to confront Israel regime. These groups were revived in the 1980s to stand against Soviet communism and form a united front against the Soviet Union along with other countries of the Persian Gulf and in coordination with the Western powers. Even al-Qaeda was able to gain power in Afghanistan in cooperation with the Taliban. But after the events of September 11, international pressures on Salafi Takfiri groups intensified. This led to the entry of the United States into the scene through its invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. The most recent developments surrounding terrorist Takfiri groups go

back to the so-called “Arab Uprising” events, the clear examples of which have been manifested in the rise of “the Islamic State of Iraq” or “the Islamic State” known as ISIS in the Levant. They derive their ideological thoughts directly from Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Tamimi Najdi. Salafism acquired a political form and structure after Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab. Meanwhile, he and his companionship with Muhammad bin Saud, the founder of the Al-Saud dynasty in Saudi Arabia, accelerated this process. However, the relationship between the religious scholars and the Saudi rulers has gradually changed, and the Wahhabi sheikhs have lost some of their powers, including their authority to issue arrest warrants or judicial orders. Nevertheless, they still enjoy a good status and position in the Saudi political hierarchy. In addition to the Hejaz, Egypt was also not spared from ideological shifts. The Egyptian Salafists experienced a new trend in Sunni religious teachings thanks to the teachings of Hasan al-Bana and the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, new chapters were opened for these groups to develop the limited boundaries of Islamic Ijtihad.

But with the sudden death of Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood was influenced by the thoughts of two other personalities, Abul-Ali Maududi and Sayyed Qutb. In this regard, while establishing the method of adherence to religious texts based on their specific jurisprudential views, they introduced the view of takfir. Among the most important contemporary terrorist Takfiri groups are Hassan Basri Brigade, Zubair Bin Awam Brigade, Abu-Ayman Group, Yaran Ahl-al-Sunnah, the Organization of the Rule of Jihad in Bilad al-Rafdin, the Organization of Al-Finiyah Al-Askariyyah, Jamaah Al-Muslimin or Jamaat al-Takfir and Al-Hijra, Jamaah Al-Jihad, the Fatah al-Islam group, and others throughout the West Asia.

Theoretical Framework

A) Regional Security Theory

Copenhagen School of International Relations: The Copenhagen School is a term that Bill McSweeney applied to the works and views of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, De Wilde, and others. Considering that the focus of this school is based on security, it can be considered one of the first approaches to establishing an independent place for security studies in international relations. In other words, this school has separated security studies, which is a feature of the post-Cold War academia, from post-Cold War

academic field of strategic studies. Instead, the Copenhagen School placed security studies in the field of international relations. These efforts by Buzan and his colleagues drew their attention to removing security issues from the narrow military circle (Ebrahimi, 2006, p. 443). One of the other epistemological features of the Copenhagen School in the analysis of international security is its emphasis on the existence of different narratives regarding intersubjective international phenomena from different historical perspectives. In other words, the historical beliefs of Iranians, Arabs, Turks, and Greeks, from Buzan's point of view, significantly contribute to their current hostilities and make the existing conflicts an effect of the past dynamics. (Nasri, 2004, p. 568).

Barry Buzan believes that security should be defined as freedom from threat. In other words, security, in his opinion, is understood in the absence of a threat. Barry Buzan's definition of security is close to the narrow-minded, one-dimensional, and Morgenthau's definition of security in the Cold War era. But since the end of the Cold War, Buzan himself no longer defines security as the absence of traditional threats. He says, "Security should be viewed as multi-dimensional, which overshadows different aspects such as immigration, national and transnational criminal organizations, the environment, and economic well-being". According to Buzan, the government is no longer the only source of security. In this line, individuals, transnational groups, sub-national and non-governmental organizations, media, and terrorism should all be considered as other sources of security as well. (Ebrahimi, 2006, p. 448). Based on Barry Buzan's opinion, security analysis is done at three international, regional, and domestic levels. At the international level, more attention is paid to the analysis of the dynamics of great power politics. At the regional level, the scope and boundaries of the analysis are limited in a way that only includes regional trends and powers. Finally, it is at the domestic level that the impacts of domestic conditions, politics, and dynamics on security will be examined. While paying attention to all three levels of analysis, the Copenhagen School believes that regionalism has strengthened compared to the Cold War era. In addition, the importance of security systems has also increased, and accordingly, this school pays more attention to the regional level because it believes that every region has its own special security characteristics and that security analysis should be done differently from others.

Buzan and Wæver's main thesis is regional security complex

theory, which assumes that the end of the Cold War was the beginning of widespread insecurities that have been rooted in the shortcomings of the realist school of thought. One of the limitations in defining security dimensions for the realist school is that it still considers the states as the only source of security. Meanwhile, the globalist school has also neglected the recent unconventional developments at the regional level by considering the international system as the only credible level of analysis for security. Therefore, to provide a proper understanding of the nature of security, it is necessary to pay attention to the regional security architectures and the characteristics of the countries that are in those regions and share similar security concerns about. To achieve an accurate analysis of regional security, Buzan mixed the model of friendship and enmity between states with the power based relations and proposed the regional security complex theory. In this theory, governments are considered the most important unit of analysis. Meanwhile, the military, and political sectors are emphasized as the main domains of security relations. Regional systems and the framework to deal with them would be examined in terms of security, while the relative independence of regional security relations would also be analyzed properly (Buzan, 1378, p. 118). According to this school, the regional security complex is a security system that the countries located in it have similar security concerns. Secondly, these countries have relatively common memories or a common destiny in terms of history, geography, and culture. The governments within a regional security complex, according to their concerns and their unique understandings and perceptions of threats, adhere to specific rules and mechanisms for preserving their security.

In 1998, Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, in the book “Security: A New Framework for Analysis,” examined five military, political, economic, environmental, and social components to enhance their ability to explain security developments. According to these points, five criteria can be proposed for the existence of a security complex:

- Security interdependence
- Pattern of friendship or enmity
- Geographical proximity
- The presence of at least two effective actors
- Relative independence (Dadandish and Kozegar Kaleji, 2009, p. 79).

Although numerous endeavors have been dedicated to the theoretical exploration of security systems, yet it is undeniable that

the most comprehensive body of work in this domain has been assembled by Barry Buzan. He defined security analysis based on the security environment. According to Buzan, each region has its own special security formula, and due to the unique characteristics of every region, the method of resolving conflicts in a region cannot be generalized to others. Therefore, the West Asia, like the western hemisphere, Europe, etc., has its own unique security formula. He sees the similarities within a region very strongly and believes that factors such as the interference of ethnic, national, religious, and international currents have quickly and easily made the West Asia a hotbed of security conflicts. (Nasri, 1389) In his opinion, identifying the historical, economic, or cultural roots of the regions and then examining their security dynamics of them will provide a clear picture of the security politics and strategies of the regional actors. He believes that since the national and international levels of analysis cannot be suitable for the analysis of issues related to regions, therefore, the existence of an intermediate level of analysis will be necessary for this purpose. (Buzan, 1387, p. 212) Based on this theoretical foundation, Buzan defines the regional security complex as follows: a set of state actors whose perceptions and security concerns are so closely related to each other that their security problems can't be analyzed or resolved separate from other state actors in that complex. Interactions between states within the regional security complexes are described as deep-rooted, while durable security interdependence in a coherent geographical grouping is another reality of interstate relations in a regional security complex.

Buzan considers the presence of several elements vital for the stability of a regional security complex. The first element is security interdependence between a group of countries. He states that in the framework of a security complex, there is a network of strong security relations among the states, which has interconnected their security and separated them from the others in that complex. It is noteworthy that with Iran's persistence on advancing in its nuclear program and the effective functioning of the Shia government in Iraq, Syria gains more influence in the region. Furthermore, Hezbollah and Hamas will also be more equipped and, in addition to their previous defensive measures, will initiate offensive measures either way. Therefore, the number of Israeli military strikes will be reduced. On the other hand, whenever the international pressure on Iran increases due to its nuclear program, Syria reduces its activism in the region and tends to compromise with other Arab countries.

On the other hand, Hezbollah would be more conservative in arranging its regional behavior. The interference of regional and extra-regional powers in Syria and Iraq, along with the continuation of regional developments in Bahrain and Yemen, means the interference of those actors in the entire regional security complex. The disintegration of Iraq, the expansion of ISIS influence throughout the region, and the collapse of Assad's government would also signal the intensification of an already-existing insecurity for Iran and Hezbollah.

B) Theory of Defensive Realism

One of the most important steps taken in understanding international dynamics is the type of effort that has been made since the beginning of this century to understand the necessity of theories. During this time, almost a relative consensus has been reached in the field of international relations that, without coherent and comprehensive theories, it is not possible to understand international developments in a systematic way. (Seifzadeh, 1369, p. 17) Therefore, many believe that the theory of international relations is a systematic study of observable phenomena that tries to explain and describe various behaviors through the analysis of major variables and the coordinates of various types of relations between state units. IR theories examine and analyze international politics from different and sometimes unconventional perspectives. Therefore, each of them describes and explains only a certain part of reality. With this introduction, to explain Iran's foreign policy strategy towards the Syrian crisis, perhaps the theoretical framework of defensive realism (Walt's balance of threat theory) can be a suitable option. In 1987, Walt introduced his definition of balance of threat theory as a major modification of Waltz's classical approach. In the framework of defensive realism, the overall distribution of power is less important than the level and direction of threats. However, Stephen Walt's "balance of threat" theory claims that states do not react to threats, but rather react to their perception of threat.

The level of threat posed by a state depends not only on its overall power but also on its geographical proximity, military capabilities, and aggressive intentions. (Yazdan Pham, 2006, pp. 731-730) According to the balance of threat theory, states create a balance not against power but against those states that appear particularly threatening to them. This theory tries to modify the balance of power theory by taking other factors into account. But

the balance of threat theory can hardly be tested because it is difficult to estimate and measure these factors. According to Waltz, a threat consists of overall power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intentions. The overall power is the sum of a state's resources. A state with more resources can naturally pose a more serious threat than a state with less. Geographical proximity is also important because, other than being equal, states that are geographically closer to each other are often considered more threatening than distant ones. Offensive capabilities consist of those abilities that one state owns to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another at an acceptable cost. Finally, states with a history of aggression are more likely to be a real threat than other states. Aggressive intentions define the willingness of a particular state to force another country to react-a situation that can be exemplified by Nazi Germany. In his theory, Walt emphasizes the importance of aggressive intentions over material sources of power.

According to Walt, compared to variables such as power or threat, the variable of ideology is less decisive in motivating the formation of balancing alliances. Walt has interpreted many ideological alliances as a form of balancing behavior. His findings show that the importance of ideological differences decreases when the level of threat increases. However, when ideological factors and security considerations reinforce each other, the strength of the alliance increases. In short, Walt argues that governments tend to balance rather than bandwagon. In his opinion, ideology plays an important but limited role in alliance-making. Also, Walt says: "Foreign and political aids as well as economic influence, by themselves, play a small role in the formation of alliance options but may help the interests of aligned countries." (Niakoui, Ismaili & Sotoudeh, 1392, p. 124)

3. Causes of Terrorism

Several views have been proposed about the causes of terrorism. Some researchers believe that two types of factors motivate terrorists: the pressuring factor, which includes negative and unfavorable situations such as ethnic, religious, and social dissatisfaction, neo-colonialism, systematic discrimination, etc., and the pulling factor, which includes favorable situations such as profit-seeking by the individual in question.

Currently, scientific ideas and theories about the causes of terrorism can be analyzed in four categories:

- 1- Researchers who only consider the role of internal factors as important, such as biological, nervous, and hormonal factors, as well as the need for respect along with the instinct of fame;
- 2- Researchers who consider only the role of internal factors to be effective in provoking terrorist behavior;
- 3- Researchers who place less value on psychological factors and emphasize environmental factors;
- 4- Experts who consider a combination of internal, psychological, and environmental factors to be the cause of terrorism.

A) The Role of Internal Factors in the Occurrence of Terrorism

In elaborating on the roots of terrorism, different factors are proposed by researchers, which include hormonal, biological, neural, and chemical factors.

The Role of Hormonal Factors

In the research carried out to discover the impact of physiological and biological factors on terrorism, some researchers have mentioned male sexual hormones as one of the factors related to instigating terrorist behavior. Although the effect of these hormones is weaker than expected, there is no doubt that men can demonstrate more violent and aggressive behavior than women due to the sexual hormone testosterone. The high amount of this hormone in the blood leads to an increase in aggression. About 385 studies on 230 men also emphasize the significant but small relationship between testosterone and violence.

The Role of Neural Factors

The discovery of serotonin in the brain and other organs has led to the emergence of this hypothesis. There are similarities in the chemical compounds between serotonin, LSD, and adrenochrome, where the presence of one can neutralize the action of a similar substance. Serotonin plays an important role in the transmission of neural waves, so as the amount of serotonin in the body decreases, the stimulation of neural waves will increase which, ultimately can lead to aggressive behavior.

In those mental patients who have schizophrenia and Parkinson, the amount of dopamine is often higher than usual. Although most of the research in this field has been related to schizophrenia, later research showed that patients with neuroticism are constantly under intense tension and fear.

The Role of Chemical Agents

Chemical factors can also affect the functioning of the neural system. In this context, the chemical-biological factors of taraxin and adrenaline have been considered in the occurrence of schizophrenia. reacts with other chemical elements of the body to form a toxic compound that disrupts brain activity. When the patient is under pressure, these chemical interactions will increase and cause a disturbance in the individual’s neural system.

Some claim that “norepinephrine” and “noradrenaline” cause the sympathetic nerve to respond physically in situations where people are available. Also, the chemical “acetylcholine” in the brains of terrorists, which is produced by parasympathetic nerves, causes people to respond with norepinephrine.

The Role of Biological Factors

At the time of the presentation of the “born criminal” theory by Cesare Lombroso in the 1870s, which considered the roots of criminality to be natural and innate, terrorism in Italy had a significant growth and prevalence, to the extent that Lombroso tried to identify the causes of this prevalence. In this regard, he considered the existence of a type of disease called “pellagra” along with several other diseases caused by vitamin deficiency in a person as the reason for demonstrating terrorist behavior (Raish, 2010, p. 490). He believed that pellagra vitamin deficiency in humans would instigate violence.

Several decades later, the biological approach re-entered the field of etiology with newer ideas. This time, a psychologist declared the cause of terrorism to be a malfunction of the vestibulocochlear nerve.

The Role of Internal Factors

The first important publication in the psychology of terrorism was from a psychiatrist named Friedrich Hecker, who emphasized the diversity of motives in his analysis of terrorism. Although considering the various motivations that cause terrorists to commit criminal acts, no obvious signs of mental disorders or anxiety have been observed in groups that mainly enter the field of terrorism with political, national, and separatist motives.

In any case, it seems that a range of factors can lead to violence, among which the following can be mentioned:

- Personality disorders
- The role of paranoids in the narcissism of psychopathic

personalities

- Nonsocial and antisocial personalities
- Signs of abnormal behavior
- Thinking disorder
- Concrete thinking
- Delusions of guilt, delusions of existence, denial, and delusions of self-conceit
- Satisfying needs such as the need for truth, goodness, beauty, and unity

In this regard, the hierarchy of needs introduced by the famous American psychologist Abraham Maslow should also be taken into account. It is natural that until the needs of the base of the pyramid are not met, the needs of the top of the pyramid will not be met either, and all these factors can lead to violence and terror.

B) The Role of Social Factors in the Occurrence of Terrorism

The social environment is divided into two categories: “personal social environment” and “macrosocial environment”. The personal social environment in which the criminals' acquaintances are present is categorized at the level of the individual, while the macrosocial environment consists of all the general conditions of the society and therefore brings the same results to all members of the society. The personal social environment itself can be divided into inevitable, accidental, selective, and forced environments; however, in the macrosocial environment, concepts such as the political environment, the imperialist environment, or the role of colonial systems, the reduction of the role of governments, a lack of democracy, and population growth can be found.

The Role of Personal Environment

The personal social environment, or, in other words, the “center of growth” of a human being, is divided into several categories based on Dugrove's theory..

Inevitable Environment

The inevitable environment is an environment in which a person is inevitably placed and has no role in its emergence. The family is the first environment where an individual is placed and gets to know the good and bad of actions and deeds.

Usually, terrorists grow up in families whose parents were also members of terrorist groups, and even according to some analysts,

the endeavors of rehabilitation for these people are almost futile because there is enmity and hatred in their blood.

According to the research results, out of 1100 convicted terrorists in Turkey, about one-third had no father or paternal guardian, and this shows how much influence families have in shaping the behavior of children.

The Role of Selective Environments

Selective environments are those in which the presence of a person takes place by his own will and choice. If this chosen environment is decent and healthy, it will lead to the excellence of the person, and if the environment is impure and corrupt, it will lead to the decline and delinquency of the person's personality.

If an individual joins a terrorist group, usually the leaders of such groups, in the process of terrorist cultivation, pursue some measures such as brainwashing through which brutal actions would look good in a way that doing them not only does not make the agents feel guilty but even makes them proud. Of course, there are many tricks in this field. The mechanism of justification, especially the moral justification, the technique of responsibility transfer, the technique of minimizing or downplaying, and the mechanism of responsibility distribution are among those methods that people in such groups are taught.

The Role of the Accidental Environment

It is also called the environment of the "first social contacts", which includes different places such as the environment in which an individual undergoes education or the environment in which an individual should perform their military service. The information obtained from more than 350 terrorists and leaders of 18 terrorist groups from 1966-76 shows that these people are generally 22-25 years old, male, mostly single, living in big cities, and believing in the political philosophy of anarchism, Marxism, Leninism, etc. Of course, such environments should not be considered dangerous, but they can affect people and, along with other conditions, lead a person to accept terrorist tendencies.

The Role of the Imposed Environment

Criminals are placed in the imposed environment after arrest, trial, and conviction. This environment is not solely limited to prison; instead, it is a collection formed by the criminal justice system (Raymond, 1376, p. 190). This environment may not only help to correct the criminals, but it may also be effective in getting the

criminals to get to know each other. It can be a cause for intensifying the motive of revenge and even the proliferation of new methods of terrorism. According to available data, 7.5% of the 1100 convicted terrorists in Turkish prisons have acknowledged being influenced by individuals they encountered during their time in prison, leading to the adoption of terrorist motives.

C) The Role of the Macrosocial Environment in the Occurrence of Terrorism

Macrosocial environment means the overall political, economic, cultural, and social situation governing a country.

The Role of the Political Environment

The political environment is one of the most important factors in the occurrence of terrorism in today's world. Perhaps the most important player in the political environment can be called, "the society structure". Conflicts and tensions between structures at the national or international level, civil wars, elections, autocracy and democracy, ethnic, religious, and sectarian conflicts, political inequalities, inequality in the distribution of power, inequality in the distribution of wealth, poverty, the existence of guerrilla groups, the rift between the state and the nation, and separatist demands are among the things that can play a role in intensifying terrorist tendencies in people.

Decline in the Role of Governments

Terrorism can be the result of the gradual decline in the role of governments in maintaining the authority and territorial sovereignty of a country. With the beginning of this decline, the vulnerability of governments has increased, while the level of loyalty of citizens to the government has decreased. Furthermore, national identities have been weakened, whereas receiving training and necessary orders, along with exchanging weapons from abroad, are also facilitated. The existence of such conditions has caused some people to consider the existence of weak and failed states as a definite reason for the occurrence of terrorism.

In today's world, the monopoly of acting in the field of international relations is out of the hands of governments. With the entry of new actors in the name of multinational companies and non-governmental groups to the scene of IR, the governments have inevitably transferred some of their authorities and powers to them, both willingly and unwillingly.

The Role of Democracy Deficiency

In democratic societies, due to the open political climate, the lawful circulation of elites, holding open and free elections, observing civil liberties, the functioning of different groups, associations, organizations, and parties in a peaceful atmosphere, and the responsibility of the government to be accountable to public demands, a threatful atmosphere does not exist.

However, in non-democratic societies, different causes, such as the authoritarian nature of the political system, the state’s promotion of a culture of unquestionable obedience, a lack of civil liberties, the unaccountability of the government, the accumulation of power in the hands of a certain group, and a lack of suitable space for the formation of civil groups, force individuals and opposition groups to choose violence to pursue their interests. Under these circumstances, unsatisfied groups try to demand fundamental changes from the state through underground activities and the formation of guerilla groups while declaring their opposition to the government. Therefore, the lack of space and opportunity to express dissatisfaction, along with the lack of political freedoms in the society can lead to terrorism.

The Role of Population Growth and Gender

In the field of social environments, we can refer to categories such as population growth and gender type. According to FBI information, 90% of the people whose names are on the terrorist lists were males who were between the ages of 22 and 34. Also, the growth of the urban population, unemployment, reduction of job opportunities, etc., cause some people to turn towards terrorist tendencies. Violent acts are more common among young people than others. (Aghaei, 1378, p. 116). The ongoing population growth and the lack of credible action or failure to curb this process have terrible consequences in the political field, in a way that can lead to increasing instability and violence (Attarzadeh, 2017, p. 78).

D) The Role of the Cultural Environment in the Occurrence of Terrorism

A very wide collection of literature, ethics, beliefs, values, norms, customs, ideals, symbols, lifestyles, beliefs, attitudes, etc. are considered among the cultural elements of any society, and due to their impact on all areas of social life, the role of cultural factors along with cultural experiences and even political and behavioral cultures is considered important in this field.

The Role of the Clash of Civilizations

Western analysts attribute the causes of terrorist incidents, believed to be perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists, to two key factors: First, because Islamic civilization does not have the ability to solve its challenges, it blames the West for its failures and tries to take revenge on the West through terrorism. Second, according to Esposito, Jihad, as one of the characteristics of Islam, can be a leverage by which the leaders of extremist groups try to pursue their goals. In this line, they play a role in carrying out terrorist attacks by inciting individuals and issuing religious fatwas.

Culture is a set of values, norms, and lifestyles that allow people to distinguish between good and bad or right and wrong behavior (Akhavan Zanjani, 1381, p. 118). The relationship between the political system and society is like a vase placed on a table. The sturdiness and stability of the vase depend on the sturdiness of the table, and the stability of the table also depends on the nuts and bolts that connect its components (Naghizadeh, 2011, p. 311).

Civilization is also a product of culture, and on the other hand, culture is enriched in the context of civilization. Between cultures and civilizations, there are relationships and interconnectedness. However, Huntington's introduction of the theory of clash of civilizations was an outcome of a variety of causes, such as his pessimistic attitude towards other civilizations, his emphasis on the theory of the hypothetical enemy, the existence of various crises within the US political structure and its ruling factions, and the intellectual gaps in international relations that intensified after the collapse of the Soviet Union. (Sahranavard, 1379, p. 33) He predicted that future challenges would manifest themselves in the form of the confrontation of different cultural groups, something that he theorized would be the clash of civilizations. (Naghizadeh, 1381, p. 50).

This theory is based on a growing confrontation among different civilizations. He believes that the faultline between civilizations will be the future clash points, the causes of the future conflicts, and a substitute for existing ideological borders. (Sahranavard, 2019, p. 32). Therefore, to defeat the rising yellow dragon and contain the ongoing Islamic renaissance, the western world must find other solutions.

4. The Origin of Terrorism in the West Asia

The protest movements that have covered the West Asia and North Africa since 2011 can be analyzed from different perspectives.

Some researchers have discussed the causes of these developments and their ontology, and others have pointed to their regional and geopolitical consequences.

In the meantime, the important point is that many researchers have evaluated the recent developments from the perspective of the fourth wave of democracy. In this regard, they tried to invalidate those theories that promote democratic exceptionalism in the West Asia.

On the other hand, some researchers spoke optimistically about the reconciliation of democracy and religious movements in the Islamic world, emphasizing post-Islamism or the formation of Islamic democratic movements. However, it didn't take long for such optimism to practically fade away. The Muslim democratic movements failed to endure the upcoming regionally harsh developments, while Takfiri and extremist ideology succeeded in expanding their sphere of influence so that, in less than four years after the beginning of the Arab Spring, dozens of Takfiri groups were formed. In this regard, large parts of Syria and Iraq are currently in the hands of groups such as Daesh, al-Nusra, or other aligned Takfiri groups. Even in some periods of time, the areas under the control of these movements have been larger than the areas under the control of the legitimate governments of Iraq and Syria. Apart from these, the deep influence of ISIS in the Sinai desert and the allegiance of many Takfiri groups in this region to this group, along with its control over large areas of Libya, are also important developments in the past years. Of course, the influence of Takfiri movements is very deep and wide and now covers a significant part of the world. Groups like Boko Haram and al-Qaeda continue to attract new forces. According to the above, the main questions raised by this research are as follows: What factors caused the spread of takfiri movements and religious extremism after the beginning of the Arab Spring? What effects has the spread of the above trends had? Of course, considering that the cradle of Takfiri movements is in Iraq and Syria, this research deals with the causes of the spread of Takfiri movements in the Levant.

It should be noted that various studies has been conducted in relation to Takfiri movements. Most of the research have dealt with the intellectual foundations of Takfiri thoughts. For example, Gholamreza Khosravi (2005) has dealt with the intellectual foundations of Islamic fundamentalism and its major thinkers in research titled *Introduction to Islamic Fundamentalism*. Bakhshi Sheikh Ahmed, and others (1392) have also studied the intellectual

foundations of ISIS ideology in a paper titled *Studying the Ideology of the Takfiri-Wahhabi Group of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*. These studies have a different field and basically do not deal with the causes of the spread of Takfiri movements.

Some studies have also examined the foreign policy of great powers, especially the United States, regarding Takfiri movements such as ISIS. In this regard, we can refer to Christopher Blanchard and Carla Humud's research entitled *the United States and the Islamic State* (Blanchard & Humud, 2015). These studies mainly analyze the approach of a specific actor and do not investigate the reasons for the spread of takfiri currents alone.

Apart from these, some research directly deals with the future of Takfiri groups in Iraq and Syria, paying attention to various political and social components. For example, Alireza Samiei Esfahani and Mohsen Shafii Seifabadi, in an article entitled *the Future of Takfiri Groups and Solutions for the Stability of the Governments in Syria and Iraq* examines the process of the formation of Takfiri movements in the Levant. The same article, in the framework of future studies, has examined the possible and probable scenarios regarding the future of Takfiri groups (Samiei Esfahani & Seifabadi, 2014). Although this research has a good study on takfiri groups in the West Asia, it does not provide a comprehensive explanation of why these currents occur along with various factors affecting them. Ali Karimi and Reza Garshasbi have also studied the political nature of Takfiri movements in Syria. After elaborating on the domestic causes of the formation of Takfiri groups, this research has addressed the characteristics of these currents, including their non-popular, instrumental, and multinational nature (Karimi & Garshasbi, 2014). Although the above study has useful insights about takfiri movements in Syria, it mainly deals with their political nature along with the characteristics of these movements and has not directly examined the causes of their expansion. At the same time, the mentioned research only deals with the takfiri movements in Syria, while the strengthening of the takfiri movements should be investigated in the broader area of the Levant and the West Asia.

A) Identity and Geopolitical Competitions in the West Asia Region

September 11 and the subsequent US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq have had significant impacts on the balance of power in the West Asia. The occupation of Iraq caused the formation of a process, after which the Shiites in Iraq took high political power. In

fact, Iran has never been able to remain indifferent to the situation of Shiites in different countries, such as Iraq or Lebanon, even in pre-revolutionary times. Instead, it has used this element in its foreign policy throughout history to the extent that the connection between the national interests of Iran and Shiism could be recognized even by other countries (Farji Rad, 2004, pp. 80-81). The statements of the king of Jordan regarding the formation of the Shiite crescent in the region and the statements of former Egyptian president Mubarak regarding the loyalty of the Shiites of the region to the Islamic Republic can be evaluated from this point of view (Barzegar, 2007, p. 43). It should be noted that up until the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad, there had always been a deep rivalry between Iran and Iraq. However, the fall of Saddam Hussein allowed the Iraqi Shia majority to rise to the highest levels of the political hierarchy of that country. One of the groups that has played a significant role in Iraqi politics since 2001 was Hizb al-Dawa, which is known for its deep intellectual sympathies with the 1979 Revolution of Iran. Nonetheless, these developments seemed practically unbearable for Iran's regional rivals, especially Saudi Arabia. For the past two decades, before the US invasion of Iraq, Baghdad was the biggest regional rival for Tehran. According to Barry Buzan's theory, the security structure of a region is such that the weakening of one actor makes another actor stronger.

Buzan also adds that in the West Asia, the friendship of actor A with actor B necessarily implies enmity with actor C. (Harati, Soleimani, and Ebadi, 1394, p. 177) A careful examination of Saudi foreign policy indicates that this country has used the Takfiri Sunni groups, the remnants of the Iraqi Baath Party, as well as those tribes aligned with it, in various ways to weaken the Iraqi Shiite government. Saudi Arabia's reluctance to recognize Iraq's new government has been to the point that after its formation, Riyadh even refused to extend a congratulatory message to the Iraqi authorities. In this way, the hostile behavior of Saudi Arabia towards the Iraqi government has been clear even from the beginning and during the transitional government of Ibrahim Jafari (Shuja', 1385, p. 47). The Saudi kingdom has tried to distort the process of institutionalization and stabilization of the new Iraqi political system, which was based on demographic realities, through various strategies such as supporting the Baathist and Takfiri groups and opposition movements such as Tariq al-Hashemi. These policies have played an effective role in the continuous insecurity in Iraq, as the Iraqi authorities have also pointed out that Saudi Arabia

has been the perpetrator of many bloody explosions in Iraq with its financial aid along with the educational and intellectual promotion of Wahhabism. It seems that the main goals of Saudi Arabia were to counter Iran's political-religious influence in Iraq and make the Iraqi government ineffective. In fact, Saudi Arabia's support for Takfiri movements with the aim of confronting the Shiites and limiting Iran's influence in Iraq to create a breach in the so-called Shiite Crescent is very significant (Niakoui, 1392).

In the meantime, the Islamic Awakening caused the intensification of regional rivalries in a more complicated manner. The beginning of the Syrian uprising in 2011 created a suitable opportunity for Saudi Arabia and Turkey to think about expanding their sphere of influence to Syria and try to limit Iran's influence on Damascus. In fact, after the Arab Spring, the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia reached its highest level, in such a way that Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, and Syria became the scene of a significant, unprecedented proxy war. In fact, Saudi Arabia has been trying to take advantage of the unrest in Syria to weaken Assad's government by providing financial, logistical, and intelligence support to the opposition groups and Salafists and expanding its sphere of influence throughout the region. In the meantime, the developments in Syria created an attractive opportunity for Turkey to seek to expand its influence in the West Asia by following the Neo-Ottomanist doctrine. In recent years, especially after the issues that prevented Turkey from joining the European Union, Ankara has tried to strengthen relations with its West Asia neighbors in addition to paying attention to Europe. In the framework of its foreign policy in the West Asia-Neo-Ottomanism-Ankara is trying to achieve goals such as closer ties with its neighbors and taking over the leadership of the region (Omidi and Rezaei, 2010, p. 255). This idea, which comes from the "strategic depth" doctrine of Ahmet Davutoğlu, the architect of Turkey's new foreign policy (Aras, 2009), puts this country against Iran. In this regard, Turkey supports some takfiri and fundamentalist movements such as Jaish al-Islam and Ahrar al-Sham. There is also some evidence about Ankara's support for ISIS and al-Nusra, along with Turkey's procurement of oil from ISIS.

In a paper that elaborates on the goals of Turkey and Saudi Arabia in Syria, it is pointed out that countering Iran's influence is the common goal of these two actors (Niakoui & Behmanesh, 2011); meanwhile, Ankara and Riyadh pursue this goal by providing direct and indirect support for Takfiri movements.

The sectarian atmosphere in Syria, as well as the support of

Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey for the sectarian mentality in that country, has convinced tens of thousands of fundamentalists from various regions, from Tunisia and Libya to Central Asia, to go to Syria to fight against the Assad government. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey also provide strong diplomatic and media support to the opposition groups in addition to financial and military support. In general, fighting Iran's influence is a common goal that has brought Turkey and Saudi Arabia very close to each other and made them support the Sunni opposition to weaken the Iranian-backed government in Damascus.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah, on the other hand, have been trying to maintain the survival of Assad's government in different ways, from deploying thousands of military personnel and volunteers to providing financial, advisory, and diplomatic support (Simbar & Ghasemian, 1393, pp. 170-170 & 174)

B) Great Powers and the Spread of Terrorism in the West Asia

Finally, it is important to examine the reaction of great powers, especially the United States, Russia, and the European Union, to the security developments in Iraq and Syria, as well as the expansion of takfiri groups. In this regard, after September 11, the United States placed a special emphasis on the West Asia. So, in addition to the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, titles such as the "Greater West Asia" doctrine and the democratization of the region were repeated many times in the statements of American neoconservatives. Affected by the emotional atmosphere of September 11, terrorism and Islamism were considered major threats to US national interests in such a way that even allies such as Saudi Arabia were pressured to implement democratic reforms. In fact, under the Bush administration, the democratization of the West Asia, unilateralism, the use of military power, and disregard for international institutions and regimes have completely been on the agenda of American foreign policy. The occupation of Afghanistan, along with the invasion of Iraq without the permission of the Security Council and the promotion of regime change in Iran, can be evaluated from this point of view. In this regard, one can find elements of democratic peace theory in the worldview of the neoconservative elites of the Bush administration. (Niakoui, 2014, p. 91) However, after Obama's inauguration, major changes occurred in America's West Asia policy. Emphasizing multilateralism and respect for international institutions, as well as avoiding military intervention in the West Asia, have been some of the most important features of Obama's

West Asia policy. (Niakoui, 2014, p. 91) Such an agenda has also been well reflected in the Syrian crisis. Until 2014, the United States mainly provided financial support to Assad's opponents and provided them with weaponry. Along with supporting opposition groups such as the Free Syrian Army, the US also tried to provide the groundwork for the collapse of Assad's government through the Security Council. However, Russia's resistance against the United States as well as its implementation of the soft balancing policy practically hindered the efforts of the United States (Niakoui, 2013).

Of course, as it was said, the United States also put aside unilateralism under the Obama administration. In this line, in the matter of withdrawing chemical weapons from Syria, the Americans accepted an equal role for Russia. This policy indicates that the United States, unlike the previous practices of the post-Cold War era, has considered an equal position for one of its competitors (Hedayati & Pinkeftsev, 2016, p. 80).

In the meantime, the importance of the West Asia in US foreign policy has undoubtedly declined. Walt argues that whenever the US has intervened in the West Asia, the situation has worsened, and considering that the strategic importance of the region along with the US demand for West Asia energy has decreased, the US desire to withdraw from the region has naturally soared. According to Walt, the strategic importance of the region is declining, and none of America's traditional allies in the region deserve full American support. In such a situation, America's actions only lead to the anger of its friends and enemies in the West Asia, so the time has come for the US to stop trying to solve problems that it has neither the ability nor the interest to solve (Waltz, 2016). In this background, Obama's foreign policy regarding the developments in Syria and Iraq and the strengthening of Takfiri movements can be better analyzed.

In fact, he considered the failure to carry out extensive military and even diplomatic measures against the security developments in Syria and Iraq because of not having any vital interests, along with the possible unnecessary costs. The increasing strength of the Takfiri groups, especially ISIS and al-Nusra, in Syria and the spillover of these dynamics to Iraq, which practically put half of Iraq and Syria under the control of the Takfiris, were never accompanied by a serious, coordinated, and proportionate response from the West, especially the United States. However, the United States has played a role in retaking some areas, such as Kobani, by supporting the local forces, such as the Kurds as well as the Iraqi

army. The US also boasts about its actions to contain ISIS with limited and occasional airstrikes as well as the deployment of a few special forces. (Blancherd & Humud, 2015:26) However, the growing strength of the Takfiri groups between 2013 and 2015 was never met with a serious response from the West so a number of analysts believe that Takfiri groups in Syria are used as leverage by the United States in order to achieve geopolitical and geostrategic goals such as weakening the resistance front, fighting Russian influence in the region, maintaining the security of Israel, and ensuring the continuity of the energy flow (Karimi and Garshasbi 1394, p. 117).

There are two different positions in the political climate in Washington regarding the way to deal with Takfiri groups. On the one hand, some pragmatists in the Pentagon believe that Assad should be supported against the Takfiris. In this regard, several pieces of evidence even indicate some assistance and intelligence cooperation provided by West to the Assad's government. On the other hand, most of the American political elites believe that the survival of Assad's government has caused the strengthening of sectarian sentiments as well as the Takfiri discourse in Syria, and only by removing Assad from power can the roots of Takfiri movements such as ISIS and al-Nusra be dried up. (Blancherd, Humud, & Nikitin, 2015, p. 1) In general, the United States has mostly acted passively against the rise of takfiri groups such as ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra and has not made a serious and proportionate effort to deal with these movements. Failure to block the financial networks of these groups, failure to create an international military alliance to fight ISIS, failure to carry out heavy and sustained attacks on Takfiri positions, and finally failure to put pressure on regional allies to avoid supporting Takfiri groups are some aspects of this passivity. The reasons for this passivity have been summarized in components such as the reduction of the strategic importance of the region for the US, the lack of vital interests in regional crises, the usefulness of these groups as a leverage in weakening the Iran-backed resistance front, and the internal contradictions in Obama's foreign policy. In any case, the West's lack of appropriate response to the Takfiri uprising provided the basis for the expansion of the activities of such groups.

In the meantime, it is important to examine Russia's foreign policy towards takfiris and opposition groups in Syria. Until 2015, Russia continued to provide financial, diplomatic, and military support to Assad's government and hindered American efforts to

overthrow his government through its veto power in the UN Security Council. However, since September 2015, with the expansion of the power of the opposition movements and the subsequent growing possibility of the fall of Assad's government, Russia has launched large-scale airstrikes against the opposition groups. (Kabalan, 2015) With these efforts, the balance of power in Syria changed in favor of Assad, so that Takfiri opponents such as Ahrar al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra retreated from many areas in January 2019. In general, there are a variety of incentives for Moscow to actively support the Syrian government:

- Containing Takfiri movements in Syria due to their Chechen and Central Asian Jihadists and the fear of the spread of these movements to Russia;
- Efforts to restore Russia's position as a world power through effective intervention in Syria;
- Maintaining the Tartus naval facility
- Expanding Russian strategic sphere of influence throughout the West Asia;
- Maintaining Syria as the only Russian remaining ally in the West Asia;
- Using Syria as a bargaining chip in the process of negotiations with the West on issues such as the Ukraine crisis and the expansion of NATO. (Hedayati & Pinkeftsev, 2014).

Russia's approach to Syria has provided the basis for a wide conflict between Moscow on the one hand and Riyadh and Ankara on the other. Meanwhile, the nuclear deal between Iran and the West practically provided the groundwork for reducing the conflicts between Iran and the United States and even brought the views of Iran and the United States closer to each other. Currently, the main difference regarding the Geneva negotiations is regarding the possibility of Assad's nomination for the upcoming elections and the composition of the opposition groups. Meanwhile, it seems that the United States has come closer to the positions of Iran and Russia to some extent. In any case, although the passivity of the international community provided the basis for the expansion of Takfiri movements, events, such as the terrorist attacks in Paris and the escalation of the migrant crisis in Europe as well as the extensive Russian airstrikes against ISIS and other Takfiri opponents, have had significant impacts on the battlefield in Syria. It seems that the possibility of a global consensus against the takfiris in the region is not far from imagination anymore. It is important to pay attention to the fact that the prominent role played by Iran's Quds force along

with Iraqi and Afghan Shiite forces alongside Lebanon's Hezbollah in the liberation of Aleppo, as well as Russia's military airstrikes, legitimize the Takfiri mentality in a way that can provide terrorists with enough justification for their unity. It may also create grounds for the legitimization of Takfiri sentiments among the Sunnis and fuel the sectarian aspects of the ongoing developments in the West Asia. Undoubtedly, regional developments are very fluid, and issues such as the US presidential election can also have an impact on them.

The Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Dealing with Terrorism

Terrorism has existed throughout the history of mankind and has taken the lives of innocent people. The Islamic Republic of Iran is no exception to this rule. As mentioned in the introduction and as the main question of this research, this article tries to explain the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in dealing with terrorism. In this regard, according to the theoretical framework of the research and global strategies that exist in dealing with terrorism, we will find that Iran has also followed these strategies and has employed various strategies, including prevention, suppression, etc.

The author's basis for this research is the classification of the strategies that Iran employs in countering terrorism into three different categories: preventive, repressive, and aggressive strategies. Notwithstanding the lack of official documents regarding Iran's counter-terrorism strategies, this essay considers the following three documents as the roadmap for counter-terrorism and part of the practical measures taken in this field.

First, the Convention of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; second, *the Anti-Terrorism Bill of the Islamic Republic of Iran*; and third, the reports of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council. In addition to these three documents, statements, positions, interviews, and reports of the decision-making authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as the Supreme National Security Council, have also been taken into account.

A) The Preventive Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Countering Terrorism

The Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference is known as one of the strategic documents for countering terrorism for all Islamic countries, including Iran. Therefore, the membership

of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this convention is one of the key steps in this field. On the preventive and precautionary measures of the signatory states, this convention implies:

“By announcing their commitment to preventing and fighting terrorist crimes and in compliance with their domestic laws, the signatory states should consider the following points regarding the implementation of preventive measures:

- preventing their lands from being a place for planning, and executing terrorist crimes in any form.
- preventing the infiltration of terrorist cells into their territories.
- avoiding providing terrorist agents with asylum or residence at both collective and individual levels.
- avoiding hosting, training, arming, or financing terrorist cells or providing facilities to them under any circumstances.
- cooperation and coordination with other signatories, especially neighboring countries where common or similar terrorist crimes have taken place in the past.
- developing and strengthening necessary procedures for cross-border transit monitoring and inspection, as well as strengthening customs controls, in order to prevent arms smuggling among the signatory countries.
- developing and strengthening the necessary facilities and procedures in order to prevent terrorist infiltration from aerial, maritime, and land border crossings.
- strengthening systems and procedures to ensure the health and protection of individuals, critical facilities, and public transportation.
- further intensifying the protection and security of diplomats along with consular and diplomatic missions based in the signatories in accordance with the conventions and regulations of international law.
- promoting security operations along with coordination with the security operations of other signatories in line with the signatories' security interests, with the aim of revealing the goals of terrorist groups, neutralizing their plans, and exposing their danger.
- establishing a database by each of the signatory states to collect and analyze data regarding terrorist organizations, movements, groupings, and agents to curb terrorism and develop successful experiences in fighting it. The signatory state shall update this information and exchange it with the competent authorities of

other signatory states in accordance with the legal restrictions and regulations of its own country.” (Bouzorgmehri, 2015, pp. 52-53)

In addition to the above, for curbing terrorism, the convention encourages the exchange of information, research and investigation, training, and the exchange of experts between the signatory states.

The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has repeatedly warned the Iraqi government about providing terrorist groups such as the MEK with safe haven or training, assisting, and inciting them to continue terrorist activities, and has demanded that these activities should stop. (5th report of the Islamic Republic of Iran to CTC, 1390, p. 19)

The police and intelligence agencies have formed a working group to discuss the requirements and potentials of establishing a database, along with other mechanisms for greater cooperation in the collection, compilation, and analysis of relevant information, analyzing terrorist groups, advancing the best measures to prevent or curb terrorist attacks, and finally choosing the best practical solutions (The Fifth Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the CTC, 2010, p. 19).

The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken important measures to combat arms smuggling. Arms smuggling, especially after the conclusion of the 8-year war with the former Iraqi regime, has been one of Iran's major crises in the post-revolutionary period. Currently, due to the critical conditions of Iran's neighboring countries and the presence of extra-regional military forces there, the smuggling of weapons, ammunition, and hunting rifles from some of these countries to Iran is still going on. Since most of these weapons are illegal and end up in the hands of murderers, thieves, drug traffickers, and security disruptors, it has been one of the priorities of the directorate of the Supreme National Security Council and the Central Commission for the Supervision of Arms and Ammunition. So far, important plans have been implemented with the cooperation of Iran's security, military, and law enforcement forces, which include the following:

The legislation, which was approved on February 15, 1971, provides more severe punishment for arms and ammunition smugglers as well as armed smugglers. It also regulates the purchase, sale, storage, import, and export of weapons, ammunition, explosives, and inflammatory materials (Second Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the CTC, 1390, p. 10).

According to paragraphs 7 and 8 of Article 4, the collection of

illegal weapons, ammunition, equipment, the issuance of licenses to own and carry personal weapons to individuals, and the supervision of authorized storage and use of incendiary substances are within the scope of law enforcement forces.

Owners of illegal weapons and ammunition were given a national amnesty in 1997, which led to the collection of about 270,000 weapons of various types, including 90,000 firearms and 160,000 hunting rifles.

The implementation of the second phase of the plan to collect illegal weapons and ammunition, which was approved by the Supreme National Security Council in 2000 and revised in 2004, led to the collection of about 90,000 weapons, ammunition, and military equipment of various types. These weapons and ammunition were confiscated, and the relevant suspects were handed over to the judicial authorities.

The implementation of a special plan, approved by the Supreme National Security Council in 2005, aimed at combating arms trafficking. This plan successfully led to the identification and dismantling of numerous arms trafficking gangs. Additionally, approximately 45,000 weapons and various types of ammunition were confiscated as a result of these efforts.

A proposed amendment to the legislation on arms and ammunition smuggling has been introduced to the parliament for approval. This amendment suggests stricter punishments for those involved in the production and ownership of illegal explosives, inflammatory substances, chemical, confusing, numbing, and tear gas (the Second Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the CTC, 2010, pp. 10-11).

Regarding Iran's efforts to strengthen border protection, the following can be mentioned:

- strict monitoring of borders;
- exercising more control over border movements through establishing security checkpoints and deploying sophisticated security equipment along the eastern and western borders of the country. (such as Nabi Akram's headquarters)
- the construction and development of security walls along the eastern borders, including concrete walls, digging border canals, establishing A2/AD, laying border barbed wire, and blocking the border as much as possible (5th report of the Islamic Republic of Iran to (CTC, 2013, p. 28).

Among other measures that the Islamic Republic has taken into account in order to design its preventive strategy for countering

terrorism is the holding of the "Global Fight against Terrorism" international summit. This conference was held at the initiative of Iran and was a suitable opportunity to convey the message of the Islamic Republic and all other freedom-seeking countries that seek the real eradication of terrorism. According to the head of the Center for Communications, Information, and Public Relations of Iran's presidential administration, some of the main goals of this conference were to provide an opportunity to exchange opinions on various aspects of counter-terrorism and examine the causes of the growing trend of terrorist activities around the world. Examining the challenges and obstacles in the way of fighting terrorism and how to strengthen the appropriate solutions and mechanisms to deal with terrorism at bilateral, regional, and international levels have also been announced in this conference.

B) Iran's Strategy of Applying Legal Punishment to Counter Terrorism

One of the counter-terrorism strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran is applying legal punishment in accordance with human rights necessities, which is in line with Iran's goals of respecting human rights. The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken various actions in this field and followed various national and international policies. At the same time, Tehran has paid special attention to human rights in dealing with terrorism, so that in the way of countering terrorism, basic human rights would not be jeopardized and these actions would not lead to the possible escalation of terrorist actions.

Some of these policies that are mentioned in this section are related to the legal measures and policies for countering terrorism, which are to be employed in a way for both the prevention and eradication of the main causes of terrorism. But there is also a need to counteract the practical manifestation of terrorism in the form of terrorist attacks. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran has paid attention to both aspects.

In other words, when the preventive measures at the first stage did not work and terrorist acts were carried out, Iran would try to curb the spread of terrorist acts through the application of legal punishment and strict implementation.

C) Iran's Strategy of Suppression in Countering Terrorism

During the last three decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has benefited from the employment of a suppressing strategy of terrorism to deal with individuals and terrorist groups such as the

Kurdistan Democratic Party, the People's Fedayee Guerrillas, MEK, the PJAK, the Jundullah, and so on. In this line, regarding various documents, including the Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which recommends military operation in Article 2, Part (b), Tehran has arranged its military and security policies to curb terrorism, which in this context have involved huge human and financial costs.

Of course, in military logic, it can be emphasized that those individuals who are proven to be terrorists and are recognized as terrorists by both national and international institutions should be suppressed in any situation where military operations are possible.

Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has given importance to the suppression strategy and has resorted to military measures in order to curb terrorism, it has not forgotten to deal with the causes and roots of terrorism at any stage. Therefore, even with Iran's seriousness about the employment of the suppression strategy, it has not blocked the way for the penitent individuals to leave their past and reform, and each of them, at whatever stage they are, can still leave the terrorist cells and start their new lives in peace and security.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of terrorism is one of the challenges facing our world. Terrorist groups seriously threaten global peace and security. Terrorism means the use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to achieve a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or threat. Despite the continued spread of terrorism and the occurrence of numerous terrorist attacks all over the world, the tip of the arrow of insecurity is currently in the West Asia. Today's West Asia is so involved in complex and expanding crises and conflicts that the achievement of any comprehensive and lasting peace and stability from the perspective of its security system has dimmed, at least in the short term. To effectively address the security challenges of the West Asia at hand, the first step is a calculated and comprehensive understanding of the nature of those challenges so that a step can be taken in order to solve them. In order to solve the ongoing crisis, the Islamic Republic of Iran has paid attention to strategic mechanisms as well as security-building in the region. However, unlike Iran, the rivals on the opposite front have considered sanctions and the military option as fruitful, regardless of the importance of negotiations and diplomatic initiatives.

Suggestions

Since today terrorism is associated with concepts such as globalization, identity, media, psychological warfare, suicide operations, and mass victims, the way to deal with it is also different compared to previous waves of terrorism. This difference, more than anything else, comes back to distinguishing the new terrorism from the previous types, which can be seen as a psychological operation against the whole society with religious and ideological justification.

- 1- The will to deal with terrorism should be both psychologically unbreakable and at the level of the political administration of society. In other words, the political commitment to fight terrorism is the most fundamental motivation behind all anti-terrorist activities.
- 2- Based on this, taking clear political decisions, especially in the field of media, along with clear and transparent differentiation between extreme and rational views of religion, plays an important role in anti-terrorism management.
- 3- Politicians are primarily responsible for controlling and supporting anti-terrorist tools. They can also reduce the impact of psychological operations on public opinion by insisting on the decision to fight terrorism and sending clear signals to extremist groups.
- 4- At the same time, politicians should have the support of strong thinktanks that include current and former members of the anti-terrorism community, as well as those who can provide a combination of their views.

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Iran, the Pioneer of Nuclear Energy in the Persian Gulf: An Insight to 2030

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Abstract

The global nuclear energy scene is changing rapidly. Some countries are phasing out nuclear technology. Some are in the nuclear renaissance, planning to promote the most ambitious new construction program. Statesmen make the proper decision in nuclear policy, striking the best balance between domestic energy policies, energy-concerned foreign policies, and the dynamism of international relations. This study tries to analyze the political aspects of nuclear program in foreign policies and international relations in the Persian Gulf region.

The study examines the reasons why oil and gas producing states want to acquire nuclear energy. It reviews the structural, psychological, and technological dimensions of nuclear politics in a neoclassical realism paradigm to find balancing energy strategies. The research examines policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran. Different states' power and different perceptions of the international system allow for explaining various role players in foreign policy and energy politics.

The theoretical starting point of this thesis is Neoclassical Realism in the literature of international relations. This theory offers venues for the analysis of energy diplomacy. The theory concentrates on material power and underlines the importance of state domestic structure as well as the statesmen's perception of the international system. These aspects create the opportunity to explain the different positions of energy choices in the foreign policies of different states.

Keywords: Persian Gulf, Energy Security, Energy Transition, Iran Nuclear Program, International Relations.

Introduction

The world doesn't have access to common ground about nuclear energy. In a domestic policy view, energy security inside a country underpins nuclear power through the diversification of energy resources. In the foreign policy view, there are exogenous factors outside a country, such as military conflict, global or regional hegemony, and perceived threats.

This study examines the reasons why oil and gas producing states want to acquire nuclear energy. Therefore, this research addresses the fundamental challenge confronting those who seek to understand the nuclear policy in a regional area, namely, to identify, evaluate, and extrapolate nuclear options of the neighboring countries, with a focus on the geopolitical context of the Persian Gulf.

The study tends to structure and disentangle the complexity of the nature of Iran's nuclear strategy at the nexus of international relations. The following questions will guide this study.

- 1- In what way is Iran's perception of insecurity and vulnerability changing, and is a regional balance of power evolving?
- 2- What role could Iran play in the context of the geopolitical dynamics of regional countries striving for nuclear power?
- 3- Based on the empirical analysis, which factors influence Iran's nuclear policy?
- 4- What are the main uncertainties and complexities Iran must deal with?
- 5- If low-carbon energy– and nuclear power in particular– is to play an important role in Iran's energy diversification, how does Iran's perception of the international political system affect the feasibility of regional acceptance?

this study will elaborate on the developments in Iran's nuclear program that have taken place for the last three decades, where the Islamic Republic of Iran (henceforth IRI or simply Iran) was somehow excluded from the global club and its place in the international system is still uncertain.

1. Where is the Persian Gulf?

Geopolitically, Iran is located at the crossroads of multiple sub-regions of the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia. Iranian foreign policy has constantly been determined by the interaction between domestic politics and changes in the regional geopolitical environment (Perteghella, 2019). According to the definition provided by Buzan, Wæver, and Nolte, regional power consists of the status possessed by those actors that can alter the regional

balance of power on their own and define the polarity of their regional complex (Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Nolte, 2010). Such regional leaders employ material assets such as military, economic, demographic, technological, and human resources, as well as ideational assets such as norms and values, to influence the regional security agenda (Perteghella, 2019).

The IR scholars call the Persian Gulf a (sub)regional security complex, centered on a triangular rivalry among Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (Ulrichsen, 2021). The GCC is an alliance of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates and is set up as a regional security complex. Security interdependence is organized into regional clusters called regional security complexes (RSCs). Most relevant here are works in a regional security complex, which Buzan and Wæver formulated as a ‘set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another.’ (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 491). This paper aims to address the central challenges of evolving civil nuclear energy and the challenges the Persian Gulf countries face with concerning nuclear power threats. Thus, this work attempts to connect the conceptual and empirical variables behind the Iran nuclear policy process.

2. Nuclear Energy or Nuclear Weapons?

The World Wars spawned the French nuclear program. Charles de Gaulle justified the French nuclear program because it would liberate the republic from the “yoke of double hegemony” by setting France on its own, independent technological pathway, making it an international superpower similar to the Soviet Union or the United States (Sovacool, Brown, & Valentine, 2016, p. 249). The history of nuclear industries shows a significant linkage between civil nuclear power and nuclear military ambitions. The enthusiastic pioneers of civil nuclear energy entertained early nuclear weapons, e.g., Canada, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland. Even the ambitions of non-civilian nuclear programs can be found in the histories of non-nuclear military states like Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea. It is an essential point that all the states skillfully commercialized in civil nuclear power have parallel capabilities to access nuclear weapons capabilities. For instance, all the major nuclear-armed states: China, the US, France, Russia, and the UK. At the end of World War II and the early Cold War, most of the industrial efforts were dedicated to military aims, even under the

umbrella of Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace Program. With this background, the rapid deployment of nuclear power reactors originated in military industries, and all the civil and military industries shared similar infrastructures for uranium enrichment and fuel reprocessing. Economists have called this phenomenon "economics of scope" (von Hirschhausen, 2017). In the emerging nuclear energy states, like India and Pakistan, all the civil and military nuclear programs were extremely shared and strongly similar. Likewise, such links are well-acknowledged in the politics around the nuclear programs of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. *The Economist*, for instance, argues for Saudi Arabia's potential nuclear new-build program and its high cost of capital (The Economist, 2018). Mohammed bin Salman stated that "without a doubt, if Iran develops a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible." With this expression, he put Saudi's nuclear program directly into a military context (CBS News, 2018). Civil nuclear program in Egypt, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates are held to be among the countries "most poised to seek advanced nuclear capabilities in response to a resurgent nuclear Iran" (Burkhard, Wenig, Albright, & Stricker, 2017). Inside the Middle East, the first main nuclear reactor was constructed in Bushehr, Iran on the north coast of the Persian Gulf. The construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant started officially in 1975, but it began to generate electricity in 2011, the first in the region.

To whatever degree, there can be little doubt that the superpowers and international society have a shared concern about the Iran nuclear program. Iran is one of the most sanctioned countries in the world supposing Iran was seeking to develop nuclear weapons. In his inauguration, President Ebrahim Raisi committed to supporting any diplomatic initiative that results in lifting the sanctions (Al-Alam, 2021). It was a signal of willingness to restore the JCPOA or Iran's nuclear deal. Despite the negotiators meeting in Vienna in August 2022, at the time of writing, no deal has been revived (Reuters, 2022). However, the balancing strategies predominates the region starting 2022. Iran and Saudi Arabia will restore diplomatic relations in March 2023. Other Persian Gulf states have had direct talks with Iran to restore relations. In August 2022, Iran resumed diplomatic relations with the UAE, as did Kuwait. Qatar previously announced the return of its ambassador to Iran in 2017, when it was blocked by other Arab countries (Loft, 2023).

3. Neoclassical Realism as the Theory of Foreign Policy

The international system, as well as domestic actors and structures, influence a state's foreign policy. In Neoclassical Realism, foreign policy is a dependent variable, as it incorporates the relative power capabilities of the state and the perception of leaders about relative power capabilities (Kim & James, 2016). Leaders need the freedom to direct the state's resources in the direction found necessary. Based on the Neoclassical Realism Theory, the main actors in the international system are not just states but state leaders and statesmen. Zakaria underlines in his book *From Wealth to Power* that "statesmen, not nations, confront the international system" (Zakaria, 1999, p. 35). Statesmen also construct the architecture of the international system.

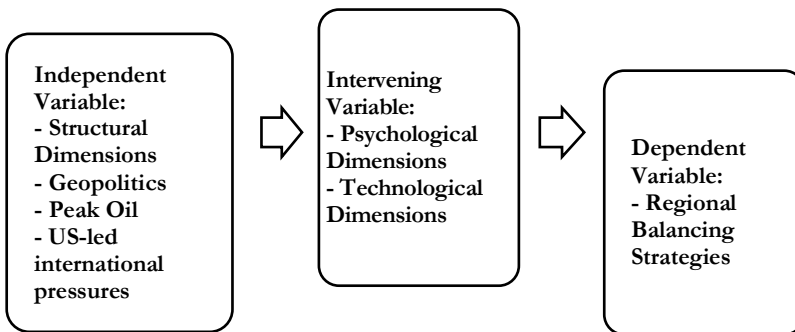
Taliaferro suggests that the power of states to emulate internal balancing is a function of the level of external vulnerability as mediated through the "extractive and mobilization capacity of existing state institutions" (Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016, p. 145; Taliaferro, 2006). On the other side, the state's vulnerability to external threats is a function of social fragmentation. In other words, the degree of state-sponsored nationalism, or the extractive capacity of society, and embedded statist (or anti-statist) ideology shape the state response to the external vulnerability by emulating new offset strategies or persisting in existing strategies (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 79; Taliaferro, 2006). Energy resources are employed more frequently in foreign policy to realize foreign interests in states where the energy sector is more closely tied to the government than in states where the energy sector is more separate from the government. According to Orban, states expand because of material resource expansion. Statesmen cannot use all the power of the state, regardless of what it is: military, economic, or resource capabilities (Orban, 2008, p. 21). When the energy sector has a more distinct type of governmental structure, it is more difficult to transfer energy resources from national power to state power. This explains why countries far away from democracy employ energy resources as their policy tools.¹ Moreover, while the state is potentially autonomous of societal forces, it is not necessarily so. Depending on domestic political arrangements, states vary in their ability both to

1. Česnakas explains that namely Norway, Netherlands, Canada, and Mexico cannot acquire state power from energy resources when expanding their influence abroad efficiently enough. While it is much easier for Saudi Arabia, Russia, Venezuela, and Iran. Although in my view, each case deserves separate research because of their differentiation at the unit level. (Česnakas, 2010, pp. 39, 48)

enact policy responses to international challenges and to raise revenue and resources to implement policy choices (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 166).

The term neoclassical realism first appeared to designate works that sought to explain state behavior by referring to independent variables that are located at the structural level (like power distribution among states) and intervening variables placed at the unit or domestic level (such as the perception of decision-makers and state extractive and mobilization capacity) (Rose, 1998, pp. 144–177). Taliaferro suggests that the power of states to emulate internal balancing is a function of the level of external vulnerability as mediated through the ‘extractive and mobilization capacity of existing state institutions’ (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 145; Taliaferro, 2006). Neoclassical realism seeks to bridge the different levels of analysis to understand the processes and outcomes of foreign policy decision-making. The intervening domestic-level variable allows exploring the internal processes by which the state arrives at policies and decides an action in response to objective external circumstances. Source: Taliaferro, “Neoclassical Realism and Resource Extraction: State Building for Future War,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 213, fig. 7.2. Source: Taliaferro, “Neoclassical Realism and Resource Extraction: State Building for Future War,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 213, fig. 7.2.

Figure shows the causal model adopted by Taliaferro with an emphasis on resource-extractive states (Taliaferro, 2006, 2009). The article identifies three theoretically informed key dimensions of Iran’s nuclear program: the structural dimension, the psychological dimension, and the technological dimension.



Source: Taliaferro, "Neoclassical Realism and Resource Extraction: State Building for Future War," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 213, fig. 7.2.

Figure (1): The Neoclassical Realist Model of Resource-Extractive States

Dependent Variables: In terms of dependent variables, neoclassical realism concentrates mainly on global and regional geostrategic strained relations and disputes and the inter-state hostilities that stem from these and pays less care to local and economic/commercial disputes and to collaborative arrangements (Dannreuther, 2010, 2015). The bunch of dependent variables includes geographical proximity and geopolitics, peak oil and the decline in energy production, and political and economic isolation caused by US-led international pressures.

Independent Variables: In terms of independent variables, neoclassical realism pays high attention to the geographical distribution and position of energy resources. It concentrates on the geopolitical spread of power and the value of resources. Two intervening variables are selected here for discussion: psychological and technological.

Intervening variables: In terms of intervening variables, neoclassical realism focuses more on the reasons for disputes considered to be found mainly in local circumstances rather than at the global and regional levels of inter-state disputes. The article adds the technological and psychological dimensions to the intervening variable because of the changing technological face of international politics as well as the changing perceptions of Iran manifested regionally in recent years.

The advantage of framing the question with the neoclassical realism model is that it suggests a simple approach to domestic politics without the need to analyze Innenpolitik in detail. In cases

of changes in decision-making groups or changes in threat perception or leader images, they could be expected to explain the changes in foreign policy or the state's interests in the international system without needing a deep domestic analysis that would distort the focus on foreign policy analysis (Česnakas, 2010, p. 47). It is important to remember that any choice of framework or variables will be specifically designed for the purposes set out in this article.

4. Structural Dimensions: Iran Nuclear Program

The Iranian nuclear program has many interconnected factors. Iran is the most complex and difficult issue due to the high risk of energy and foreign policy interests colliding (Yergin, 2012). In the mid-1980s, amid the Iran-Iraq War. It obtained know-how and technology from the Pakistani A. Q. Khan network (Bosch, 2006, p. 7). Russia and China helped calm down the Security Council members regarding the Iranian nuclear issue. The UNSCR 1696 was passed, mandating Iran to stop uranium enrichment by August 31, 2006, or face potential economic or diplomatic sanctions. However, it was only under Article 40, which didn't authorize the military as the next logical step (Mason, 2015). Since December 2006, four UN sanctions have been imposed on Iran under Chapter VII and Article 41 because of its nuclear program. The Sanctions Committee was formed at the same time as the first resolution, and the international community is required to enforce all the UN Security Council sanctions (Ghavam, 2014). The timeline of the Iran's nuclear program is summarized and depicted in Table in the years between the 1950s and 2021.

Table (1): Timeline of the Iran Nuclear Program 1950-2022

Year (s)	Iran Nuclear Program
1950s	On a minor scale, by Mohammadreza Shah Pahlavi under America's Atoms for Peace, was aimed at developing atomic power.
1975-6	Construction of Bushehr-1 and -2 had started.
1978	Suspended at the beginning of the Iranian Revolution by the supplier, Siemens.
1980s	Amid Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian government made the decision to seek nuclear weapons capability. It obtained know-how and technology from the Pakistani A. Q. Khan network.
1996	Construction of Bushehr-1 restarted.
2003	Under the pressure of the IAEA, Iran temporarily halted its enrichment program.

Year (s)	Iran Nuclear Program
2004	Russian nuclear export agency- Atomstroyexport took over the completion of the Bushehr power station in Iran from the German company Siemens, but this is now suspended. It sold two reactors to China for the Lianyungang power plant and two reactors to India for the Kudankulam power plant.
2006	President Ahmadinejad restarted enrichment and accelerated the development of missiles, some of which would carry nuclear payloads.
2006	Ali Larijani, the speaker of Iran's Parliament, declared that Iran needs its nuclear program because "fossil fuels are coming to an end. We know the expiration of our reserves."
2006	Activation of many centrifuges to enrich uranium ¹
2010	In September 2009, Iran informed the Agency that it was constructing the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP), located near the city of Qom (The IAEA Director General, 2010).
2010	Iran announced that it had reached the 20% level.
2010	Bushehr-1 nuclear reactor went online.
2011	Iran, as the 31 st country in the world, finally started operating its first reactor that had been under construction at Bushehr since 1975. In the 25 years since the accident at Chornobyl, only four countries—Mexico, China, Romania, and Iran—have started new nuclear power programs.
2013	Iran's Bushehr power plant entered commercial operation in the third quarter of 2013.
2014	In April 2014, the Iranian government announced it had reached an agreement with Russia for the supply of two reactors, with the first construction at the Bushehr site, starting in 2014. The deal has never been effective.
2015	Under the JCPOA, Iran has committed not to reprocess spent nuclear fuel and to send it to Russia.
2016	Iran boosted output by 85 percent after the load factor of its single reactor almost doubled and by successfully overcoming technical issues during startup. Consequently, the nuclear share in electricity production increased from 1.3 percent to 2.1 percent.
2017	After increasing electricity production by 7.6 percent, the nuclear share increased again slightly, from 2.1 percent to 2.2 percent in 2017. Iran removed excess centrifuges and infrastructure from the

1. Enrichment is the process by which the ratio of the U-235 isotope to the far more common U-238 is increased. A 3% to 5% U-235 concentration is required to provide the fuel for a civilian nuclear reactor. A 20% level is needed for medical purposes. An atomic bomb needs 90%.

Year (s)	Iran Nuclear Program
	FFEP in line with its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA (IAEA, 2017).
2018	The US announced its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.
2019	Construction of the Bushehr-2 reactor started.
2021	Iran and the US agree on the path back to the nuclear deal.
2022	In August 2022, negotiators met in Vienna in talks to restore the agreement (Reuters, 2022).
	The talks have stalled since September 2022 (Loft, 2023).

Sources: (Mason, 2015; Schneider, Froggatt, Hazemann, Tadaihiro, & Thomas, 2015; Schneider et al., 2014; Schneider, Froggatt, & Hazemann, 2012; Schneider et al., 2017, 2018; Schneider & Froggatt, 2004; Yergin, 2012) compiled by the author)

With all its ups and downs, nuclear politics is well-established and has a complex and meaningful correlation with regional geopolitics. Iran faces unprecedented challenges as well as opportunities regarding its endogenous nuclear knowledge. However, Iran will need to reconcile its domestic political agenda with its economic interests in the nuclear program.

5. Geopolitics

Geographical proximity is one of the crucial elements in determining whether an issue ought to be securitized or not with the other side. There is “more security interaction among neighbors than among states located in different areas potent for security because many threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). For instance, the EU’s heavy dependence on Russia and its feeling of a threat go hand-in-hand with geographical proximity (Sharples, 2012). Among the major actors, the geopolitics of Russia and China are different from each other and totally different from the EU and the USA. Iran’s geopolitics have also been an important factor in the continuity of its nuclear activities. According to Lacoste’s point of view, geopolitics is an agent or an approach that relates to the ontology of a phenomenon. Geopolitics in its present sense focuses on the evolution of the interconnected political world as an interconnected and interdependent system at local, national, and international levels and draws attention to other geopolitical studies, namely transnational economic, social, and political forces (Ó Tuathail, 1994). Iran is living in an unstable and stormy region. The countries that have faced international military invasions are in the neighborhood, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The geopolitical problems, combined with security threats and rivalries

for regional hegemony, form the basis of Iran's regional policies (Ehteshami, 2014).

6. Peak Oil

It has been more than a century since oil was discovered in Iran. Anglo Persian Oil Company (APOC) was founded in 1908 following the discovery of a large oil field in Masjid-e-Suleiman, Iran.¹ Since 1954, the Persian Gulf has been one of the primary hubs of energy, especially oil and gas production. As Iranian history has been locked into hydrocarbon-based energy systems, its economy at the macro-level returns to scale increasingly in an endogenous path-dependent manner. Hubbert (1956) predicted for the US that the oil reserves would be depleted in 50 years or a “foreseeable future.” He explained the world situation with respect to the requirements and supply of fossil fuels and whether nuclear energy from uranium and thorium will be able to replace that from fossil fuels as the latter approach their inevitable exhaustion. Iran's initial nuclear program, launched in the 1950s on a minor scale by the Shah under America's Atoms for Peace, was aimed at developing atomic power. It was driven intensively in the 1970s by the Shah's conviction that Iran's oil and gas resources would be exhausted within three decades. In 2006, Ali Larijani, the speaker of Iran's Parliament, declared that Iran needs its nuclear program as a reliable energy source for electricity generation. He pointed to the end of the fossil fuel age and the fact that the future development of countries is related to nuclear fuel and nuclear knowledge (Mehr, 2006). Decision-making based on the peak oil view can create risks of its own. Such an expression was surprising for Western countries because they knew Iran as a country with the world's second-largest conventional natural gas reserves and among the world's largest oil reserves. They categorized the risks within the Persian Gulf as terrorism, the stability of societies, Iran's nuclear program, and its drive to dominate the region. The main reason for considering Iran's nuclear program as a risk is that the program could upset the balance of power in the Persian Gulf Region. After the Iraq War and the shock of 9/11, the Iraqi military got weakened, and regime Zionist was much more worried about the Iranian nuclear program (Yergin, 2012).

Making decisions based on the “Peak Oil” perspective can create

1. In 1935, APOC has renamed the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). In 1954, after the nationalization of Iran oil industries, it became the British Petroleum Company or BP.

its own risks. The point of believing in "Peak Oil" is well described by Schneider-Myerson (2015), who shows how believers in this idea are politically prepared for this event. Some even suggest a strategy, including stocking up on food, weapons, and ammunition in anticipation of the imminent depletion of fossil fuels. This theory did not endear the peak oil view to statesmen and key decision-makers. Bardi (2019) concludes that the peak oil predictions are incompatible with the common views that consider economic growth as always necessary and desirable and resource depletion or fossil fuel consumption as marginal factors that can be overcome with technological progress. It was for this reason that the idea of the oil peak became a victim of the "clash of the absolutes" with the mainstream view of the economic system and was abandoned. In this conflict, belief in peak oil was the loser, not because it was "wrong", but because it was a minority opinion.

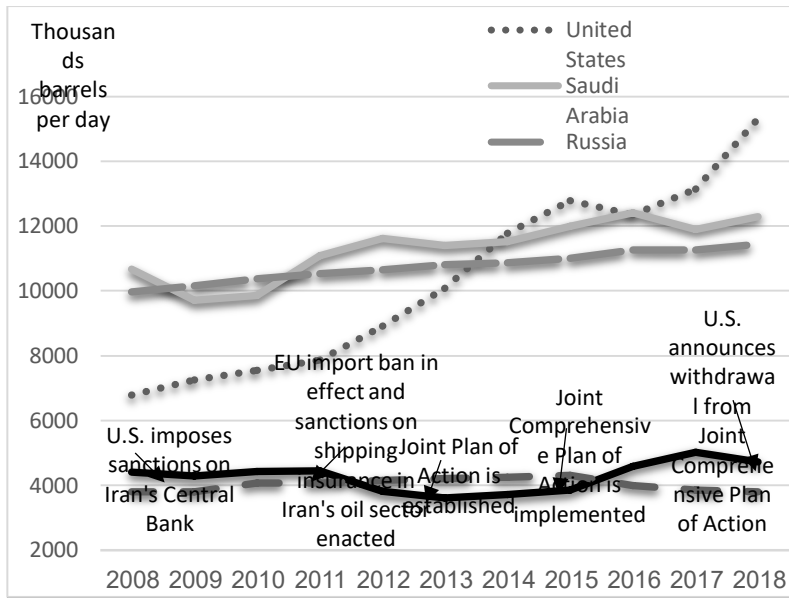
Following Hubbert's main idea in Peak Oil in 1956 and Campbell and Laherrere's report about the ending of cheap oil in 1998, Bardi describes that 'Peak Oil' is a minority idea and it must be convolved and explained with two other effective phenomena, 'Climate Change,' and 'Limits to Growth' (Bardi, 2019; Campbell & Laherrere, 1998; Hubbert, 1956). These three issues are related to each other and have in common the fact that the peak oil models on which they are based predict the unavoidable decline of the world's economy or, at least, the impossibility of it to keep growing for a long time. The future will bring new data, and with it, the concept of peak oil might regain popularity for a second time, just as it did for the first time with the work of Campbell and Laherrere.

7. The US-Led International Pressures

Against this background, Iran's geographic location in the Middle East, along with its huge reserves and potential petroleum resources, make the country attractive as a supplier of fuel energy. The concerns of Iran's government relating to international oil markets have two components. First, Iran dislikes the volatile and unpredictable nature of the energy market. Second, the government distrusts what is perceived as the undue influence that a few producers, especially those in the United States, have on the market. Iran's President Khatami from 1997 to 2005, called for repairing the mistrust with the US by introducing the policy of Dialogue Among Civilizations (Amanpour, 1998). In his public talks, Khatami continued to emphasize Islamic and revolutionary values and promoted "interfaith dialogue" and "faith-based movements". Although Khatami has opted

for cooperation, the ‘axis of evil’ label (created by the US) has raised perceptions of coercion, isolation, and alienation, as well as concerns over regime change. To balance against the US, Iran started to pursue an opaque policy in its nuclear development. While rejecting claims about its nuclear intentions, Iran kept the nature of its nuclear activities ambiguous by not ratifying the Additional Protocol of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and providing partial access to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors (IAEA, 2022). This was a way of challenging the US in non-military ways and indicating the possibility of prospective military action (Bayar, 2019; Kim & James, 2016).

Figure shows the oil production level of Iran’s crude oil and NGL from 2008 to 2018 in comparison with the production levels in the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and China. The mid-2010s offered Iran a ‘window of opportunity’ on the international stage under JCPOA and the sanctions were lifted in January 2016. In 2017, the major growth in oil production was seen in Iran (+8.2%). In 2017, Iran’s production reached its highest level since 2007 at 268 Mtoe; i.e. 5,024 thousand barrels on average per day (IEA, 2019). In 2016, Tehran used this window of opportunity to introduce a new fiscal framework, the Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC), to offer international oil companies (IOCs) more attractive terms than the previous contractual framework, the buyback scheme (Jalilvand, 2019). At the time, Iran was still the third-largest oil exporter in the world. The EU gradually halted all its imports from the country, while the US put in place financial sanctions against any potential buyer of Iranian oil. These sanctions were quite effective in curbing Iran’s oil exports. The oil sanctions against Iran were consequently lifted, but in 2018, US President Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and re-imposed oil-related financial sanctions (Van De Graaf & Sovacool, 2020). However, Iran’s vulnerability to US sanctions continues. Iran’s crude oil exports and production have declined again since the May 2018 announcement by the US that it would withdraw from the JCPOA and reinstate sanctions against Iran (EIA, 2020).



Source: (Own elaborations based on BP statistical review 2019)

Source of Data: (BP, 2019; EIA, 2020)

Figure (2): The US, Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, and Iran Average Crude Oil Production per Day in Thousand Barrels between 2008 and 2018, Data from the BP Statistical Review, 2019, Inspired by the Iran Report by the US EIA, 2020.

Due to the mounting threat of climate change and concerns related to energy security across the world, policymakers are increasingly looking for alternative energy sources to diversify their energy supplies. As a cleaner-burning alternative to coal and oil for electric power generation, nuclear energy is an attractive ‘transition fuel’ towards a low-emission global energy basket. As will be shown, nuclear energy will represent a crucial and integral systemic component for the transition to a renewable energy basket. Consequentially, nuclear energy is rapidly gaining in geopolitical importance. The geopolitical dynamics will only increase Iran’s paramount geostrategic position in a world eager for new clean energy resources, and natural gas, in particular. With growing demand, energy security and diversification of resources are of growing importance to both consumers and producers as two sides of the same coin, as neither is immune to any sort of disruption in the international energy markets. The quest for energy security becomes an overall global phenomenon; therefore, it is a central element in the foreign policy agendas of all actors-state and non-state.

8. Psychological Dimensions: Threat Perception

The international community perceives Iran's nuclear program as a source of threat, while the Iranian public supports their government's stance on peaceful nuclear energy as part of Iran's indisputable right to modernize (Urquhart, 2009). As Jervis states, war deterrence depends on perceptions; if one actor's behavior is to influence another, it must be perceived (Jervis, 2017).

One of the main drives for Iran's Persian Gulf policy is the desire to reduce the US-sponsored balance of power and the actual US involvement in the region, and, related to this, to be recognized as an indispensable regional actor. Consequently, Iran has traditionally been calling for a "regionalization" of collective security, that is, the creation of a mechanism for cooperation on shared security issues.

Throughout Rouhani's presidency, the government has consequently introduced a few concrete initiatives of constructive engagement, such as WAVE and HOPE, as well as a few strategies of discursive persuasion to build confidence and increase Iran's regional and international legitimacy. These initiatives aimed at normalizing of relations not only with neighboring Persian Gulf states but also with the international community in general. However, despite the overall positive reception of WAVE and the positive reception of HOPE by some Persian Gulf states, the initiatives have not yet delivered the expected results. The realization of the proposed treaties has constantly been hindered by the rivalry that cuts the region into two: the Saudi-Iranian rivalry (Perteghella, 2019).

Actors' perceptions often diverge from two sources: (1) objective reality and (2) the perceptions of other actors. In other words, international pressures are counterproductive when a country desires to protect itself against attacks; the threats heighten the perceived danger (Jervis, 2013). This reality can explain why Iran's foreign minister clearly defends ballistic missile tests in front of a press conference in Australia in 2016 and says Iran reserves its right to defend itself. Before that, Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister and chief negotiator in the 2013–15 nuclear talks, echoed many of the same motifs in a YouTube video just a few days before the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was concluded. In the video, he criticized international powers for what he described as their misplaced focus on maintaining the sanctions on Iran: "[My negotiating partners] have seen that eight years of aggression by Saddam Hussein and all his patrons did not bring the Iranian nation—that stood all alone—to its knees. And now, they realize that

the most indiscriminate and unjust economic sanctions against my country have achieved absolutely none of their declared objectives but instead have harmed innocents” (Tabatabai & Samuel, 2016; Zarif, 2015). Making promises credible is generally harder than making threats credible, and the history of mutual mistrust between the United States and Iran has made it even harder (Jervis, 2013; Pillar, 2016).

The different and conflicting nature of the actors involved in the Iranian nuclear crisis has led to their paradoxical behaviors. Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States perceive it as a big threat, while China and Russia classify it as moderate (Shayan, 2011). The difference between the Iranian political system and all the other 5+1 actors has blurred Iran's real intentions and could potentially exacerbate the nuclear tension (Ghavam, 2014). The fact that P5+1 and Iranians would describe the issue differently from one another highlights the importance of perception and bias. Thus, nuclear energy provides a unique empirical case, as the internal Iranian state and its political structure (polity) are a big conundrum for many outsiders and Iranians alike. This underscores the need for scholarly research on this subject.

9. Technological Dimensions

Nuclear power accounts for 10.2% of global primary energy supply (WNA, 2020), and it tends to dominate debates on energy and climate policy. Nuclear power is a technology that brings with it both risks and rewards (Sovacool et al., 2016). This is partly because the issues raised by nuclear power are especially complex, multidimensional, and uncertain.

They include:

- Radiation, safety, and human health
- Nuclear weapons proliferation
- Nuclear waste disposal and inter-generational equity
- Technology choice and performance
- Public support for large-scale, capital intensive investments with long lifetimes
- The mix of benefits for and threats to national energy security

As the argument goes, if Saudi Arabia is at risk due to Iran's nuclear program, the added risk of continuing with its own domestic program is negligible. Such a decision can also alter the strategic decisions being made within any given country. As mentioned in the introduction, nuclear energy in France was a strategic decision to counter the hegemony of the Soviet Union and the US superpowers.

The nuclear energy in the Persian Gulf seems ready for significant growth in nuclear electricity. The first main 1000 MW nuclear reactor was constructed by Iran in Bushehr, which is also the first in the Middle East. It has been connected to the grid and started power generation on September 3, 2011, after many years of construction (Dolat, 2020). Two further designed units are planned for Bushehr powerplant, Bushehr-2 commenced construction in December 2016 (Dolat, 2017, 2019). According to the World Nuclear Association, Tehran has plans or proposals to build six nuclear reactors near the coasts of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman (WNA, 2021a). Saudi Arabia has announced plans to provide 15% of electricity from nuclear power plants by 2040 (WNA, 2021b). The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has two nuclear reactors in operation and two under construction at the Barakah nuclear power plant. The two units will be put into operation in August 2020 (WNA, 2021c). Egypt, Turkey, and Jordan are trying to develop nuclear power at their own pace.

Though nuclear energy in the Middle East has not taken off as expected, it is unlikely to grow or spread rapidly. The main reason is the high capital costs that make electricity generation by a nuclear reactor more expensive per kilowatt/hour to generate with natural gas or coal (Lister & Qiblawi, 2019). The cost is not a big obstacle for energy exporters and the oil-rich countries. Instead, the security and proliferation risks associated with nuclear power are very real, especially in the Middle East, where technology learning by practice is growing in the region and elsewhere. Overcoming the obstacles to nuclear power will require large investments in technology, regulatory institutions, education, and training. Besides all the, unprecedented regional cooperation will also be needed. In current political circumstances, such cooperation remains a distant prospect.

After the Fukushima accident on March 11, 2011, fears for nuclear safety reached the Middle East, making them more realistic. The accident at the Fukushima NPP did not change the interest in the benefits of nuclear energy in response to rising energy demand, low-carbon environmental governance, and diversification of energy sources. Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait abandoned their nuclear plans. The NPP plans were already problematic in these tiny countries; for instance, Bahrain's territory is half as large as the evacuation zone set up in Japan after the Fukushima accident (Khlopkov, 2017). The governments of Jordan and Egypt halted their nuclear development in the face of significant public opposition, although in both cases the projects were resumed. In the

same year, the Bushehr-1 reactor started up to reach its first power and was grid-connected in early September (WNA, 2021a).

A significant risk of nuclear activity is that nuclear facilities are also military targets. This region has experienced severe wars in recent years, including the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and the overthrow of Saddam in 2003. Another negative factor for the development of nuclear energy in the region is the emergence of the ISIS government in 2013 in Iraq and Syria, with widespread influence in the entire region. These wars have in most cases backfired, and there is no regional dialogue forum on protecting nuclear power plants from attacks, and terrorist attacks or other regional security issues. Even today, plans to attack Iran's nuclear facilities are undoubtedly pending at more than one or two military headquarters. A list of these actions from May 2022 to the present can be found in one of the reports of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP, 2023).

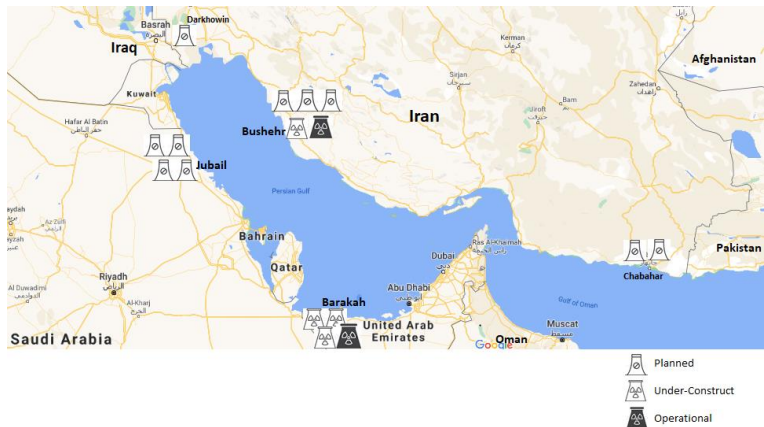
Table illustrates an overall view of the reactors in the Persian Gulf region at present and in the near future. The long-vision outlooks are not tabulated here in a conservative scenario with 16 reactors. The location of these units by 2030 is shown in (WNA Information 2021 on Google Map by the Author)

Figure.

Table (2): Nuclear Reactors around the Persian Gulf: operational, under construction, and planned units BY 20230

Country	Name	Nuclear Reactors Capacity in MWe		
		Operational	Under-construction	Planned
Iran	Bushehr-1	915		
	Bushehr-2		1,057	
	Bushehr-3			1,057
	Bushehr-4			1,100
	Bushehr-5			1,100
	Chabahar (Makran)-1			110
	Chabahar (Makran)-2			110
	Darkhowin-1			360
Iran Sub-Total		915	1,057	3,817
United Arab Emirates	Barakah-1	1,345		
	Barakah-2		1,400	
	Barakah-3		1,400	
	Barakah-4		1,400	
UAE Sub-Total		1,345	5,200	
Saudi Arabia	Jubail			<2,900 (not finalized)
Total		2,260	6,257	(3,817 to 6,717)

Source: (WNA information 2021 (WNA, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c))



(WNA Information 2021 on Google Map by the Author)

Figure (3): An Overall View of the Nuclear Reactors Around the Persian Gulf Region by 2030

The fear of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East is closely related to the troubled history of nuclear weapons programs in the region. Israel, which has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), allegedly acquired nuclear weapons in the late 1960s. For decades, all the states in the region have allegedly supported the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly to demand the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD). But progress toward that goal has been thwarted almost every time by the major players (Malin, 2017).

10. Regional Balancing Strategies

A zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is an important but distant goal. Cooperation in strengthening nuclear safety and security through regional workshops and peer review of the provisions already in force, discussions on regional management of nuclear waste, and the creation of coordinated response agencies to disasters that develop maneuvers in nuclear accidents and terrorism scenarios would be a good starting point.

A central irony of the failure of Saudi Arabia and Iran to improve their relationship and settle outstanding disputes is that the two nations are in many ways well suited to be strategic and economic partners. Saudi Arabia and Iran share several important interests, including the entirely free flow of oil in the Persian Gulf in the past 40 years, stability in Iraq and Yemen, and the

exploitation and secure transit of oil and gas resources. In many ways, these shared interests outweigh areas where the two states' interests are opposed.

The Saudi-Iranian relationship is now at a critical junction: choices that are made in the coming months and years about the situation in the Persian Gulf, North Syria, Yemen, and other urgent issues will shape what is possible in the relationship over the longer term. A nuclear-armed Iran or relationships with third parties, especially Israel, will also have a critical impact on the future course of Saudi-Iran relations.

Substantial perceptual biases complicate any effort to improve regional relations. Any significant improvement in the relationship will require a sustained effort by leaders on both sides, the dedication of state resources and political capital to the task, and a great deal of good luck. The payoffs from this effort, however, could be great. Several observers, in fact, view such an outcome as inevitable, whether shortly or over the longer term. Such a conflict would almost certainly prove to be very costly for both sides. It would also set back Iranian relations even further while greatly reducing the chances of a rapprochement in the foreseeable future. However, the identification of the different sources of perceptual bias in the volume helps to illuminate several promising paths forward.

Identifying and better emphasizing these can help overcome the tendency of both sides to portray the Iran-US conflict in the dual format of "either with us or against us" (Carnegie, 2002). The states have passed up several important opportunities to improve relations by failing to acknowledge these commonalities. Interpersonal ties and networking among nations' cultural, scientific, and political elites play an important role in international relations. Such contacts helped to establish regional networks, or "epistemic communities," that spread ideas and helped to reshape misperceptions and poorly informed assumptions. The regional countries purposely promoted such contacts and exchanges in the belief that greater openness would not only promote improved understanding but could spread democratic political values more effectively than coercion and conflict (Haas, 1992). In addition, such an exchange could help to improve each side's knowledge about how the other's political system operates. Establishing direct lines of communication and enhanced diplomatic channels.

Where large-scale cooperation is too difficult to achieve, smaller confidence-building measures can be used to promote an

atmosphere of cooperation, foster diplomatic contacts, lower domestic political barriers to negotiation, and reduce suspicions. Confidence-building measures should be pursued as a routine part of any effort to improve regional relations and reduce sources of perceptual bias.

11. Conclusion

This paper focuses on Iran's nuclear program in the geopolitical environment of the Persian Gulf. This study offers new contributions in two areas: first, in the study of Iranian nuclear energy, and second, in international relations. With these distinctions, the dimensions of the causal model depicted in Source: *Taliaferro, "Neoclassical Realism and Resource Extraction: State Building for Future War," in Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 213, fig. 7.2.*

Figure frame what suggest the policy trends or strategies of Iran's nuclear diplomacy towards the Persian Gulf. This is an illustration of the cause-and-effect approach in the Neoclassical Realism scheme applicable in this article, which shows externally the structural, technological, and psychological dimensions.

Empirically, the study has been synthesized into three key variables in which neoclassical realist linkages are particularly significant in a causal approach: the level of vulnerability of the countries as the independent variable (geopolitics, peak oil, and US-led international pressures), the foreign policy induced by the distribution of power as the dependent variable (regional balancing strategies), and technological and psychological support for collective hegemony impacts on decision-makers as an intervening variable. The author considers this theoretical framework as a lens through which Iran's foreign policy and the political dynamics that drive it can be better understood and explained.

The main contribution was a discussion over diplomacy focused on regional energy competition and cooperation: bilateral energy diplomacy, the increasing necessity of multilateral energy diplomacy and regional governance, major international mechanisms, the present context and features of Iranian nuclear diplomacy, the gradual maturity for deep participation in regional nuclear governance, and Iran's growing power role in regional nuclear governance.

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The International Court of Justice and its Role in Relations Between Iran and the United States

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Abstract

This article explores the role of the International Court of Justice (hereafter ICJ) in the relations between Iran and the United States (hereafter U.S.), with reference to the last disputes between the two countries over the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights. The article argues that the ICJ has both jurisdiction (*Ratione Materiae*) and substantive competence (*Merits*) to adjudicate the case, based on the trans-analytical method. The article draws on the past judgments of the ICJ in similar cases between Iran and the U.S., such as the Case Concerning US Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran, the Case Concerning the Aerial Incident, and the Case Concerning Oil Platforms, to support its findings. The article also discusses the implications of the U.S. decision to terminate the Treaty of Amity and to challenge the ICJ's jurisdiction. The article predicts that the ICJ will establish its judgment based on Article 10 of the Treaty of Amity, which affirms the principle of free trade, and conclude that the U.S. sanctions violate the Treaty of Amity.

Keywords: Treaty of Amity Economic Relations and Consular Rights of 1955, International Court of Justice (ICJ), Certain Iranian Assets Case, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Legal disputes between Iran and the United States..



A Brief Background

The Treaty of Amity was signed between Iran and the United States on August 15, 1955, and after signing and exchanging copies in Tehran, it entered into force on May 16, 1957. The treaty consists of an introduction and 23 articles. The goal of making such a treaty was to solidify amicable relations between the two nations and facilitate trade between them.

Treaties of amity are live tools, meaning particular and contractual treaties like treaties of amity and cooperation turn into customary laws. Such treaties are therefore counted among the customary law, which is one of the sources of international law. Therefore, the violation of such treaties has international consequences for the offending country.

Apart from being live tools in international law, those treaties are highly valid in domestic law as well. According to Article 6 of the US Constitution, "... and all treaties made or to be made under the authority of the United States shall be the supreme law of the land. Judges in every state shall be bound, notwithstanding anything contained in the constitution or laws of any state"(Ziai Bigdeli, 2013, p. 82). There are similar laws in Iran with respect to such international treaties. According to principles 77 and 125 of the Constitution of Iran and Article 9 of the Civil Code, "the terms of the agreements concluded between the Iranian government and other foreign governments based on the constitution are considered law." (ibid, 84). Therefore, formal treaties of this kind, both in international law and in domestic law, have a very high validity, and the violation of their provisions entails serious international responsibilities for the offending state(s).

According to the binding note provided in Article 21 (2) of the Treaty of Amity, in the event of any dispute between the parties regarding the interpretation or implementation of the treaty, the ICJ will have jurisdiction over the case, provided that those disputes cannot be solved and settled by diplomacy. According to the above article, since the signing of the treaty, five cases have been submitted to the ICJ, four of which are related to the Islamic Republic of Iran (hereafter Iran) and one of which is related to the United States. For registration at the ICJ, these five cases are:

- 1- The United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran (United States of America v. Iran, 1979)
- 2- Aerial Incident of July 3, 1988 (Iran v. United States of America, 1989)
- 3- Oil Platforms (Iran v. United States of America, 1992)

- 4- Certain Iranian Assets (Iran v. United States of America, 2016)
- 5- Alleged Violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights (Iran v. United States of America, 2018)

The present article focuses on the last of the above cases referred to the ICJ, namely the alleged violation by the United States of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights.

Hypothesis and Research Methodology

The purpose of this article is to review and analyze the jurisdiction of the ICJ, the roots of the dispute, and the actions and arguments of the parties. The hypothesis is that US violations of international laws and the treaty of amity, which are considered live tools¹ and among the sources of international law according to Article 38 of the ICJ statute², are obvious. Also, the jurisdiction of the ICJ in hearing the above case is obvious based on previous cases and trends, and eventually the United States will be required to compensate Iran for its unlawful actions.

It should be noted that studying and helping to resolve existing conflicts and tensions may be of particular importance. It should also be noted that the ICJ verdict may have a very positive and remarkable influence on the living standards and economic conditions of the Iranian people, and it may even remove serious obstacles imposed regarding the provision of sanitary supplies, food, medicine, and the maintenance of the country's aging aircraft fleet. From this point of view, the addressees of this article are Iranian legal experts and their international colleagues.

This article has a trans-analytical approach to research. The information used in the article is obtained from notes prepared from academic books and articles, as well as other first-hand sources such as ICJ reports and judgments of previous and similar cases.

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1. Judge Cancado named the treaty of amity as a live tool in his separate opinion about the verdict on security measures on October 3, 2018 (Alleged violations of the Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights 1955, 2018, P 9).
 2. The Court, whose function is to decide in accordance with international law such disputes as are submitted to it, shall apply: a. international conventions, whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognized by the contesting states; b. international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law; c. the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations; d. subject to the provisions of Article 59, judicial decisions and the teachings of the most highly qualified publicists of the various nations, as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law (Statute of the International Court of Justice, 1946).

1. Reviewing Iran's Previous Cases at the ICJ Based on the 1955 Treaty of Amity

Since the ICJ uses jurisprudence in some of its judgments, which is quite common in common law systems¹, it becomes very important to review previous judgments in similar cases. Now that we are relatively familiar with the Treaty of Amity of 1955, it is necessary to address the ambiguities in this treaty in this article and clarify that this treaty remains in force until October 3, 2018. We shall then proceed to review the cases handled by the ICJ in the past that were based on the 1955 Treaty of Amity and in which Iran was either a plaintiff or defendant, to get a deeper understanding, look at the last item of this article, and find a precise legal answer to the discussion questions.

All cases handled by the ICJ based on the 1955 Treaty of Amity happened after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Since, according to Articles 62 and 63 of the 1969 Convention on the Law of Treaties², the occurrence of fundamental changes in the conditions of signing a treaty, as well as fundamental changes in the objectives of a treaty, lead to the termination of that treaty, the question that remains is: how did this treaty not be terminated after the Islamic Revolution in Iran?

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1. In common law systems, judicial records constitute one of the main sources of law. In such systems, a judge has to use the previous judicial decisions in similar situations. The use of case law as a trend has not been covered in the statute of the International Court of Justice, and it has only used it in some cases (Ramezani Ghavam Abadi, 2011, P 97).
 2. Article 62: Fundamental change of circumstances: (1) A fundamental change of circumstances which has occurred with regard to those existing at the time of the conclusion of a treaty, and which was not foreseen by the parties, may not be invoked as a ground for terminating or withdrawing from the treaty unless: (a) the existence of those circumstances constituted an essential basis of the consent of the parties to be bound by the treaty; and (b) the effect of the change is radically to transform the extent of obligations still to be performed under the treaty. 2. A fundamental change of circumstances may not be invoked as a ground for terminating or withdrawing from a treaty: (a) if the treaty establishes a boundary; or (b) if the fundamental change is the result of a breach by the party invoking it either of an obligation under the treaty or of any other international obligation owed to any other party to the treaty. 3. If, under the foregoing paragraphs, a party may invoke a fundamental change of circumstances as a ground for terminating or withdrawing from a treaty it may also invoke the change as a ground for suspending the operation of the treaty. Article 63: Severance of diplomatic or consular relations: The severance of diplomatic or consular relations between parties to a treaty does not affect the legal relations established between them by the treaty except insofar as the existence of diplomatic or consular relations is indispensable for the application of the treaty (Convention on the Law of the Treaties, 1969).

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, relations between Iran and the United States changed fundamentally. After the hostage crisis at the US Embassy in Tehran, the two nations also severed their consular relations, but considering the approach of the two governments after the Iranian revolution, it is quite clear that there was never a strong will on the part of either side to terminate that treaty. Also, based on international law, the Convention of the Law of Treaties, and the estoppel rule¹, this type of behavior is interpreted as the withdrawal of both parties from using the fundamental changes of conditions for such a purpose (termination of the treaty until October 3, 2018).

Also, the severance of diplomatic relations based on Article 63 of the Convention on the Law of Treaties does not harm the friendship treaty because its purpose is to facilitate economic relations; thus, one cannot use this as a basis for the termination of the treaty. Moreover, it must be noted that the 1988-1989 book of the US State Department has included the Treaty of Amity in its list of valid US treaties, and this date is well beyond the Iranian revolution (Rostami Amani, 2002, p. 191).

According to Article 23 (2) of the Treaty of Amity², a specific date has been set for the expiration of the treaty. 55 years after the date specifically mentioned in this treaty, why do Iran and the United States continue to use it as a basis for their claims? Regarding the terms of termination of the treaty, such as expiry, it must be said that according to Article 23 it was supposed to remain valid for 10 years after its signing, and after that, each of the parties could use paragraph 3 of this last article to terminate the agreement by giving a written notice of one year to the other party.

It is obvious that before Iran's recent case was filed in the ICJ, none of the parties took any action to terminate the treaty according to Article 23 (3). After the Provisional Measures of the ICJ, it was on October 3, 2018, that the US Secretary of State³ spoke about his

1. Estoppel Rule: when a country has accepted something by its behavior and displayed implicit satisfaction through its actions.

2. Article 23: 1. The present Treaty shall be ratified, and the ratifications thereof shall be exchanged at Tehran as soon as possible. 2. The present Treaty shall enter into force one month after the day of exchange of ratifications. It shall remain in force for ten years and shall continue in force thereafter until terminated as provided herein. 3. Either High Contracting Party may, by giving one year's written notice to the other High Contracting Party, terminate the present Treaty at the end of the initial ten-year period or at any time thereafter (Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights, 1955).

3. Mike Pompeo, 70th US Secretary of State, March 13, 2018 to January 2021.

country's intention to withdraw from the Treaty of Amity and then officially withdrew from it. Since the basis for ICJ's handling of the case is the date on which the petition was filed, and as Iran's petition preceded the date of the US's withdrawal from the treaty (after the Provisional Measures), that withdrawal shall have no effect on ICJ's competence and right to hear the case.

Another important point is the common opinion and approach of the ICJ in previous cases, what approach it had to the above issues, etc. We shall therefore review those cases to establish the ICJ's jurisdiction and competence:

The US Embassy Crisis Case Against Iran

US filed a lawsuit against Iran on November 29, 1979, based on the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, the 1955 Treaty of Amity, the 1973 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including diplomats, and the UN Charter (United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran, 1979, p. 13)¹.

After the hostage taking of the American embassy staff in Tehran, consular and diplomatic relations between the parties were practically cut off, and Iran was faced with a series of sanctions. In this way, it was possible to sever the relations between the two nations, and this would have provided the conditions for the cancellation of the Treaty of Amity, but the parties did not do so because they did not want to cancel the treaty, so the treaty remained.

The Court's opinion regarding the termination of diplomatic relations and the validity of the friendship treaty was since despite the termination of consular relations and the problems that have arisen during the full implementation of the agreement, the provisions of this agreement are still valid in the relations between the two countries; therefore, the agreement has legal validity. (United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran, 1980,

1. Articles 27, 31, 33, 34, 36, 40 of 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Articles 22, 24, 27, 29, 31, 37 and 47 of 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Articles (4)2, 8, 18, 19 of 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights between Iran and USA effective as of June 16, 1957, Articles 4 and 7 of 1973 Vienna Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Internationally-Protected Persons Including Diplomatic Agents, Articles 3(2), 4(2) and 33 of UN Charter.

p.28). This was the first time the treaty of amity was used as a legal basis, and the ICJ gave itself jurisdiction to hear the case over the existing disputes.

Pursuant to Article 41 of the Statute¹, as soon as the petition was filed, the United States requested the issuance of provisional measures due to the urgency of the case, and only 16 days later, on December 15, 1979, the Provisional Measures were issued. That order consisted of two sections:

A)

- 1- The US Embassy premises be delivered to the government protecting the US interests in Iran (i.e., Switzerland),
- 2- All US citizens and diplomatic staff held hostage in Iran are protected by the Iranian government and are immediately released and allowed to leave Iran.
- 3- The laws governing diplomatic and consular relations are guaranteed by Iran, and US citizens and diplomatic employees enjoy the corresponding protections and immunities.

B)

- 1- Iran and the US refrain from any action that would further complicate the situation (United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran, 1979, p.18).

The case followed its course up to the issuance of its final verdict on May 24, 1980. The ICJ assumed jurisdiction based on Article 2 (4) and Article 21 (2) of the Treaty of Amity² and the fact that all of the US's efforts to negotiate with Iran had failed; and later it sentenced Iran based on Article 2 (4) of the Treaty of Amity (and the 1963 and 1961 Vienna Conventions) to indemnify the United

1. Article 41: 1. The Court shall have the power to indicate, if it considers that circumstances so require, any provisional measures which ought to be taken to preserve the respective rights of either party. 2. Pending the final decision, notice of the measures suggested shall forthwith be given to the parties and to the Security Council.

2. Article 2 (4): Nationals of either High Contracting Party shall receive the most constant protection and security within the territories of the other High Contracting Party. When any such national is in custody, he shall in every respect receive reasonable and humane treatment; and, on his demand, the diplomatic or consular representative of his country shall without unnecessary delay be notified and accorded full opportunity to safeguard his interests. He shall be promptly informed of the accusations against him, allowed all facilities reasonably necessary to his defense and given a prompt and impartial disposition of his case. Article 21 (2): Any dispute between the High Contracting Parties as to the interpretation or application of the present Treaty, not satisfactorily adjusted by diplomacy, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice, unless the High Contracting Parties agree to settlement by some other pacific means.

States (United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran, 1980, p. 45).

Finally, on January 19, 1981, Iran and the United States reached an agreement in Algiers regarding the payment of compensation by Iran and the release of the hostages, which became known as the Algiers Agreement. On May 12, 1981, the case was closed with statements of the parties and was excluded from the ICJ's statistics (United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran, 1981, p. 5)¹.

The important point was the complete disregard of the United States for provisional measures. On April 25, 1980, the United States sent military forces to Iran to free the hostages, an operation that later became known as the Tabas incident. Are the rulings of the ICJ without enforcement? And can the parties to disputes refrain from the terms of such orders? By examining the opposing opinions of two judges in this case, the answer is negative:

1- Judge Morozov argues that despite Iran's complaint against the United States for violating the Provisional Measures and the country's military invasion of Iranian territory, there were enough reasons for the court to consider the case, and the court should have considered it because the court had clearly prohibited both parties from taking actions that would further complicate the situation. Thus, a government that freely assumes some obligations at the international level shall be liable to compensate any damage in case of breaching those obligations (Dissenting opinion of Judge Morozov, 1980, p. 52). Judge Morozov also points to other US actions such as sanctions, blocking Iranian assets, etc., which he considers to be against the Treaty of Amity.

2- With a dissenting opinion, Judge Tarazi points out the actions taken before and after the filing of the lawsuit, which affected the case but were ignored by the court in favor of imposing responsibility on Iran. One of these sanctions measures is the blocking of Iran's assets in the United States, as well as the military invasion of Iran, which makes the United States responsible for Iran. Of course, due to Iran's failure to submit a petition, this issue was not addressed (Dissenting opinion of Judge Tarazi, 1980, p. 64).

According to the statements of these two judges, two points are obvious. First, after a case reaches its end and its final verdict is

1. Withdraw of Proceedings: According to Article 89 (1) of the ICJ internal codes, withdrawal of proceedings causes the case to be closed and the petition to be ruled out of the ICJ agenda (Rules of the Court, 1978).

issued, the party or parties breaching the terms of court orders should be held responsible for damages inflicted on the other party, and the orders issued by the court are enforceable and cannot be aerial. Second, as noted earlier, the ICJ considered itself competent and assumed jurisdiction to hear the case according to the 1955 Treaty of Amity.

The Case of Iran Against the United States for the Downing of the Iranian Passenger Plane

On July 3, 1988, two USS missiles were fired from the USS Vincennes in the Persian Gulf towards the Iranian passenger plane with flight number 655, which was heading towards Dubai, and while shooting down the plane, it killed all 290 passengers and crew. Once its efforts failed at ICAO¹, Iran took its case to the ICJ on May 17, 1989, based on articles 36 and 38 of the ICJ statute² and the disputes arising from the interpretation and execution of the 1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation, the 1971 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation, and the 1955 Treaty of Amity.

Finally, with the parties' agreement on the case and reconciliation³ on February 22, 1996, the court closed the case, citing Article 48 of the statute and Article 88 of its statute⁴ for

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1. International Civil Aviation Organization is a specialized UN institution formed on December 7, 1944 after the signing of the Chicago convention. Iran joined the Chicago convention, and thus ICAO, in 1948. Iran's lawsuit was submitted to ICAO on March 17, 1989.
 2. Article 36-1: The jurisdiction of the Court comprises all cases which the parties refer to it and all matters specially provided for in the Charter of the United Nations or in treaties and conventions in force.
Article 38: 1. The Court, whose function is to decide in accordance with international law such disputes as are submitted to it, shall apply: (a) international conventions, whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognized by the contesting states; (b) international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law; (c) the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations; (d) subject to the provisions of Article 59, judicial decisions and the teachings of the most highly qualified publicists of the various nations, as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law. 2. This provision shall not prejudice the power of the Court to decide a case *ex aequo et bono*, if the parties agree thereto.
 3. US accepted to pay USD 55 million to families of the victims and USD 40 million for the aircraft to the Iranian government (Black Box of Airbus Shooting, 2017).
 4. Article 48 of Statute: The Court shall make orders for the conduct of the case, shall decide the form and time in which each party must conclude its arguments, and make all arrangements connected with the taking of evidence.
Article 88 of Rules of Court: If at any time before the final judgment on the merits has been delivered the parties, either jointly or separately, notify the Court in

amicable settlement of the dispute (Aerial Incident, 1989, P 4).

Although the articles used by the ICJ and Article 21 (2) of the 1955 Treaty of Amity on dispute settlement state that, "any dispute arising from interpretation or execution of the treaty that cannot be settled by diplomacy shall be referred to the ICJ" for the purpose of the case to be presented to an end before ICJ, this must be said in view of the fact that shooting down a passenger aircraft has nothing to do with friendship and amity and is in blatant contradiction to the spirit of the treaty, and since there was no chance of settling the issue through diplomatic channels due to the closure of embassies and the termination of diplomatic relations following the seizing of US Embassy in Tehran, and also given the precedent-setting approach of the International Court of Justice in the hostage-taking crisis case, if the parties had not consent, the ICJ would have reconsidered its decision on jurisdiction to hear the case and would even entered the substantive phase.

The Case of Iran Against the United States for the Destruction of Oil Platforms

On October 19, 1987, the United States attacked the oil facilities of "Rashhadat" and "Resalat" with four destroyers and F-14 fighters due to the Iranian silkworm missiles hitting the oil tanker US Isle City¹. Iran denied the attack on the oil tanker and said that the missiles were fired by Iraq. The second attack occurred on April 18, 1988. The targets were the "Nasr" and "Salman" oil platforms, which were attacked by three ships of the US Navy. The platforms were destroyed by naval cannons and planted with explosives. The pretext of this attack was the claims that Iran planted mines in the international waterways inside the Persian Gulf, because of which the USS Samuel Roberts collided with a mine and several of its employees were killed or injured. Iran rejected the allegations and filed a petition at the ICJ on November 2, 1992, based on articles 4 and 10 of the 1955 Treaty of Amity². The ICJ rejected the defense provided by the US on December 12, 1996, based on Article 21 (2) and Article 10 (1), considering itself competent and with full jurisdiction over the case, and passed its final verdict on November

writing that they have agreed to discontinue the proceedings, the Court shall make an order recording the discontinuance and directing that the case be removed from the list.

1. A Kuwaiti vessel with a US flag.
2. Article 10 (1): Between the territories of the two High Contracting Parties there shall be freedom of commerce and navigation.

6, 2003 (Oil Platforms, 1992).

The Court's opinion regarding Iran's understanding of Article 10 and freedom of trade is as follows: "Trade in this article has a general meaning and includes not only maritime trade but also unlimited trade without territorial restrictions. Also, commerce does not only mean selling and buying but also includes all previous operations required to prepare commodities. The court also pointed out that commerce did not mean only buying and selling but included a set of deals for import and export, exchange, purchase or sales, transportation, and international financial operations; and it did not just mean commerce but the freedom of commerce, and thus any action that undermines the freedom of commerce is forbidden (Rostami Amani, 2002, p. 199)."

It also implicitly stated that: "If in its final demand Iran wished to question the legitimacy of the executive order of the US President (Ronald Reagan)¹ imposing sanctions on the purchase of Iranian oil and asked for a ruling that it was in contradiction of Article 10 of the Treaty of Amity, the court would then approach the US military attacks against the oil platforms from another perspective (Mirfakhraei & Piri, 2016, p. 121)."

The court, however, did not find the US attacks on Iran's oil platforms as a violation of the 1955 Treaty of Amity and freedom of commerce. This was because during the first attack, the platforms were under maintenance and hence not operational, and there was no business going on at that time. And for the second strike, the court argued that since the United States imposed sanctions on Iran's oil purchases, there has been essentially no business that Iran can claim to have violated.

The Case of Iran's Frozen Assets in the United States

On June 14, 2016, Iran presented a case against the United States based on the 1955 Treaty of Amity for the freezing of its assets and sanctions imposed on its central bank to the ICJ². Iran based its claims on articles 3 (1) (2), 4 (1) (2), 5 (1), 7 (1), 10 (1), and 11 (4) of the 1955 Treaty of Amity. The United States objected to the case, raising two objections to the admissibility of that case and three objections to the jurisdiction of the court to hear these cases, which will now be discussed (Certain Iranian Assets, 2016, pp. 13-14).

1. Executive Order No. 12613

2. Based on Article 36 (1) of the Statute of International Court of Justice and Article 21 (1) (2) of the Treaty of Amity 1955.

1- Objection to the Acceptance of the Claim (Admissibility)

- A) The United States argues that Iran has unclean hands, and based on this doctrine of international law, since Iran supports international terrorists and conducts destabilizing operations contrary to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, including the manufacturing and testing of ballistic missiles and arms trafficking, as well as the violation of anti-terrorism obligations, it is not appropriate to present such claims and cases in the ICJ.
- B) From America's point of view, Iran seeks to draw the attention of the ICJ to its claim to move the case towards its goals of continuing to support terrorism, and this is a violation of rights that ultimately leads to the abuse of legal procedures. Iran's response to US claims is that the United States accusations of Iran's unclean hands cannot be considered a violation of the Treaty of Amity, as the case is based on that treaty and an investigation of clean hands has not been foreseen and included in the treaty as a pretext for taking legal action before the court.

The court has also reaffirmed Iran's response and stated that the US has failed to prove that Iran's unclean hands have gone beyond just an insult and has failed to establish Iran's violation of the Treaty of Amity. Also, abuse or legal formalities can prevent formalities only in exceptional circumstances, and such exceptional circumstances do not exist in the present case. Therefore, the ICJ rejected America's objections to this case (ibid, p. 8).

2- Objection to (the Subject-Matter) Jurisdiction of the ICJ

- A) The United States does not consider its actions in freezing Iran's assets outside the scope of clauses "c" and "d" under Article 20 (1) of the Treaty of Amity¹; in other words, the US claims that its actions fall within that article. Therefore, from a US perspective, the ICJ should not handle this case because there has been no violation by the US. The court responded to these claims by saying that, "Article 20 of the Treaty of Amity does not limit the court's jurisdiction but protects the rights of the parties". So, the court rejects the first objection to its jurisdiction.

1. The present Treaty shall not preclude the application of measures: (a) regulating the importation or exportation of gold or silver; (b) relating to fissionable materials, the radio-active by-products thereof, or the sources thereof; (c) regulating the production of or traffic in arms, ammunition and implements of war, or traffic in other materials carried on directly or indirectly for the purpose of supplying a military establishment; and (d) necessary to fulfill the obligations of a High Contracting Party for the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security, or necessary to protect its essential security interests.

B) From the perspective of the United States, the articles on which Iran bases its claims are violations of sovereign immunity, not commercial violations, so the court is not competent to hear the case under Article 21 (2).

The court argues in this case, that the purpose of the Treaty of Amity is trade and mutual investment in such a way that the citizens and economic enterprises of both parties can and have the necessary motivation for investment and trade. The court therefore concludes that the goal of the treaty is not to establish sovereignty immunities. In other words, it cannot be expected that the parties will give immunity to government institutions from each other, but the main goal is to support companies and enterprises with a commercial nature and economic activity and keep them immune. The Court therefore sustains the United States' second objection.

C) The US argues that the central bank of Iran is not included in the interpretation of firm or company per articles 3, 4, and 5 of the Treaty of Amity but is rather a totally governmental institute affiliated with the Iranian state and governed directly by it, and its activities can by no means be described as commercial or economic. Therefore, the bank and its assets are not covered by sovereignty immunities or the Treaty of Amity.

On the other hand, the Court provides its opinion on the United States' interpretation of those cases in its objections, eventually rejecting US claims about the issue of the central bank of Iran being a firm or company, arguing that it does not see that objection to be consistent with the case (*ibid*, Pp. 5 & 6 & 7).

On February 13, 2019, the ICJ finally concluded that there was no chance of resolving the dispute through diplomacy. The US withdrawal from the Treaty of Amity has no effect on the court's jurisdiction or competence, and disputes have arisen out of Article 21. Since the ICJ already addressed the issue of its jurisdiction and the meaning of commerce in Article 10 of the treaty in the oil platforms case, the court found itself competent to hear the case and entered the substantive phase (*ibid*, Pp. 41 & 42).

3- The Case of Violating the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights and the Establishment of the ICJ Jurisdiction in Hearing the Case

This legal dispute is rooted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (hereafter JCPOA). The US government considers its unilateral sanctions legal and the basis of its recent sanctions, put in place as of May 8, 2018 by executive order 13846 (Executive Order No. 13846, 2018), based on Iran's violations as well as Iran's actions

that are against the JCPOA as well as the interests and national security of the United States. On the other hand, Iran has once again emphasized its adherence to the JCPOA based on IAEA reports (Yadegarian 2019, P. 97) and considers the sanctions and US withdrawal from the JCPOA illegal.

Therefore, Iran completed its request based on Article 21 (2) of the Treaty of Amity and demanded the cancellation of unilateral sanctions and the payment of compensation to Iran for the violation of the 1955 Treaty and the economic losses caused by the sanctions. Iran, considering the emergency situation and based on Article 41 of the Statute¹ and Articles 73 and 75 of the Rules of the ICJ², issued a request to issue a provisional measure. Based on Iran's request and Article 41 of its statute, the court issued provisional measures on October 3, 2018. Iran's reasons for this request were the existence of emergency conditions caused by US sanctions, which would worsen the conditions for the Iranian people and economy. The Provisional Measures of October 3, 2018 included the following terms (Summary of the Order of October 3, 2018, 2018, p. 7):

A) The ban on the export of the following goods to Iran should be lifted:

- Drugs and medical supplies
- Food materials, and agricultural goods, and machineries
- Goods and services needed for the safety and security of civil aviation, such as spare parts, equipment and related services.

B) Not imposing financial restrictions or bans on the above

1. Article 41: 1. The Court shall have the power to indicate, if it considers that circumstances so require, any provisional measures which ought to be taken to preserve the respective rights of either party. 2. Pending the final decision, notice of the measures suggested shall forthwith be given to the parties and to the Security Council.

2. Article 73: 1. A written request for the indication of provisional measures may be made by a party at any time during the course of the proceedings in the case in connection with which the request is made. 2. The request shall specify the reasons therefor, the possible consequences if it is not granted, and the measures requested. A certified copy shall forthwith be transmitted by the Registrar to the other party. Article 75: 1. The Court may at any time decide to examine proprio motu whether the circumstances of the case require the indication of provisional measures which ought to be taken or complied with by any or all of the parties. 2. When a request for provisional measures has been made, the Court may indicate measures that are in whole or in part other than those requested, or that ought to be taken or complied with by the party which has itself made the request. 3. The rejection of a request for the indication of provisional measures shall not prevent the party which made it from making a fresh request in the same case based on new facts.

activities.

C) The parties shall refrain from any actions that contribute to the complexity and escalation of disputes and make the final resolution of disputes more difficult.

The court also quotes the following two issues:

A. Provisional measures have binding effect and are considered an international obligation for both parties.

B. An order for provisional measures does not mean that the court has jurisdiction or substantive jurisdiction to hear the case.

The provisional measures shall remain in force until a final verdict is passed, and afterwards the court may attach the order to the final verdict to make its binding nature more obvious.

However, on the issue of violating the terms of the provisional measures, the US claims that according to Section 2(e) of Executive Order 13846, none of the sections quoted in the provisional measures are subject to sanctions, and all of the items are among the exceptions to the executive order issued by President Donald Trump (*ibid*, p. 2).

But this claim is far from reality. According to the court, although food, medicine, and medical equipment are exempt from US sanctions, it is impossible for Iran to access or receive those goods due to the bans imposed by the US on the activities and international transactions of Iranian people and companies. (*ibid*, p. 5).

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, "Sanctions have severed Iran's relations with global trade and financial systems (Alleged violations of the Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights 1955, 2018, p. 11).

Therefore, it should not be far from expected that such a trend will cause a sharp decrease in the value of the Iranian currency, a shortage of medicine, medical equipment, and an increase in the price of vital products and food.

Since the lack of medicine in Iran threatens the lives of sick and elderly people, the worn-out air fleet of the country, which has been affected by US sanctions, continues to threaten the lives of many people. According to the executive order of the President of the United States, two contracts concluded with Iran regarding the purchase of Airbus and Boeing airplanes and their parts were canceled. The first contract with Boeing included the purchase of 140 aircraft worth \$24 billion, and the second contract with Airbus included the purchase of 171 aircraft worth \$30 billion. (*ibid*, p. 14).

After the executive order of May 8, 2018 and once the 90-day period expired on August 6, 2018, the sanctions were executed, and

except for the few aircraft that were delivered to Iran after JCPOA and before the sanctions, all contracts were cancelled, and the companies refrained from selling any kind of necessary or vital parts related to civil aviation, transportation, or flight security. According to Iranian officials, “the risk of US sanctions against the aerial fleet of Iran has been officially recognized by independent experts in 2006” (IBID, p. 15).

Under Article 22 of the JCPOA, the United States pledged to allow the sale of passenger aircraft to the Iranian government, and according to Section VIII (Preamble), Articles 21, 26, 28, 29, and 30 of the JCPOA, the United States and other parties to the JCPOA undertook to implement the JCPOA in good faith and refrain from reimposing the canceled sanctions or imposing new unilateral and national sanctions against Iran (JCPOA, 2015).

But due to the nature of the JCPOA and the fact that it was not legally binding on the President of the United States, Donald Trump easily walked away from it and violated all its provisions, as mentioned. The important point, however, is paragraph 2 of United Nations Security Council (hereafter UNSC) Resolution 2231¹, related to avoiding taking measures that are not in line with the JCPOA, and paragraphs 14 and 15 of RES 2231².

This paragraph clearly states that sanctions cannot be applied

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1. paragraph 2: Calls upon all Members States, regional organizations, and international organizations to take such actions as may be appropriate to support the implementation of the JCPOA, including by taking actions commensurate with the implementation plan set out in the JCPOA and this resolution and by refraining from actions that undermine implementation of commitments under the JCPOA (Resolution 2231, 2015).
 2. paragraph 14 of RES2231: Affirms that the application of the provisions of previous resolutions pursuant to paragraph 12 do not apply with retroactive effect to contracts signed between any party and Iran or Iranian individuals and entities prior to the date of application, provided that the activities contemplated under and execution of such contracts are consistent with the JCPOA, this resolution and the previous resolutions; paragraph 15: Affirms that any application of the provisions of previous resolutions pursuant to paragraph 12 is not intended to harm individuals and entities that, prior to that application of those provisions, engaged in business with Iran or Iranian individuals and entities that is consistent with the JCPOA and this resolution, encourages Member States to consult with each other with regard to such harm, and to take action to mitigate such unintended harm for these individuals and entities, and decides if the provisions of previous resolutions are applied pursuant to paragraph 12 not to impose measures with retroactive effect on individuals and entities for business activities with Iran that were consistent with the JCPOA, this resolution and the previous resolutions prior to the application of these provisions (Resolution 2231, 2015), non-retroactive nature of sanctions quoted under Clause 37 of JCPOA.

retroactively to contracts signed after and within the framework of the JCPOA¹. Thus, Iran's agreements with companies and other countries, according to the JCPOA, including the contracts for the purchase of civilian aircraft, are immune to the snapback of sanctions.

It can therefore be concluded that though the United States was allowed to exit the JCPOA, it still had to remain committed to RES 2231 of the UNSC which was issued with the purpose of protecting international peace and security, and according to Article 25 of the UN Charter², all member nations must obey the decisions of the security council. Also, obligations rising from the UN Charter (e.g., resolutions) have priority over other contractual obligations (e.g., JCPOA) according to Article 103 of the charter³, and naturally, the violation of such obligations will bring heavy consequences for the violators.

Once the Provisional Measures was issued, the United States announced that it was exiting the 1955 Treaty of Amity, still insisting that the ICJ had no jurisdiction to hear the case brought forward by Iran. The United States posed three basic issues in its defense statements:

1- Objection to (Subject-Matter) Jurisdiction of the ICJ

A) Iran's petition is rooted in the JCPOA and not the 1955 Treaty of Amity. The United States considers the root of this dispute to be of a political nature and therefore does not consider the ICJ competent to deal with this case. In relation to such claims, i.e., the legal or political nature of a dispute, the ICJ argues that the political nature of a dispute does not prevent it from hearing a case. (Mirzaei Yengjeh, 1987, p.815).

On the other hand, intervening in the JCPOA in the current conflicts will somehow benefit Iran because, despite the existence of a dispute resolution mechanism in the JCPOA, i.e., Article 36⁴,

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2231, (2015).

2. Article 25: The Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter (Charter of the United Nations, 1945).

3. Article 103: In the event of a conflict between the obligations of the Members of the United Nations under the present Charter and their obligations under any other international agreement, their obligations under the present Charter shall prevail.

4. If Iran believed that any or all the E3/EU+3 were not meeting their commitments under this JCPOA, Iran could refer the issue to the Joint Commission for resolution; similarly, if any of the E3/EU+3 believed that Iran was not meeting its commitments under this JCPOA, any of the E3/EU+3 could do the same. The Joint Commission would have 15 days to resolve the issue, unless the period was

the United States ignored this mechanism and unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA, and imposed very severe and cruel sanctions against Iran and violated UNSC 2231. As a result, parts of the Treaty of Amity related to free commerce between Iran, the United States, and other countries were ignored, which generally made the conditions for Iran's trade with other countries extremely difficult.

B) The United States argues that the 1955 Treaty of Amity only covers trade between Iran and the US, and US sanctions have only targeted some companies and third-party affiliates, so technically there is no relation between sanctions against such groups and the Treaty of Amity, and the ICJ is therefore without jurisdiction or competence to hear cases related to such matters.

In the case of Iranian oil platforms too, the ICJ's conclusion was in favor of a more general sense of the term "commerce" as quoted in Article 10 of the Treaty of Amity, and it did not recognize the freedom of commerce to be limited to surrounding territories and announced any action that would undermine such freedoms as a violation of the treaty.

Also, as the US Department of the Treasury and US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), punish and sanction any US or non-US affiliate company or individual who would do trade with Iran, and since according to official statements of US officials, the goal of sanctions is to weaken the Iranian economy, it must be said that this is completely contrary to the spirit of the Treaty of Amity, and such actions are actually a violation of the aforementioned treaty and the ICJ has full jurisdiction over it. It is because disputes

extended by consensus. After Joint Commission consideration, any participant could refer the issue to Ministers of Foreign Affairs, if it believed the compliance issue had not been resolved. Ministers would have 15 days to resolve the issue, unless the period was extended by consensus. After Joint Commission consideration-in parallel with (or in lieu of) review at the Ministerial level - either the complaining participant or the participant whose performance is in question could request that the issue be considered by an Advisory Board, which would consist of three members (one each appointed by the participants in the dispute and a third independent member). The Advisory Board should provide a non-binding opinion on the compliance issue within 15 days. If, after this 30-day process the issue is not resolved, the Joint Commission would consider the opinion of the Advisory Board for no more than 5 days to resolve the issue. If the issue still has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complaining participant, and if the complaining participant deems the issue to constitute significant non-performance, then that participant could treat the unresolved issue as grounds to cease performing its commitments under this JCPOA in whole or in part and/or notify the UN Security Council that it believes the issue constitutes significant non-performance.

have arisen between the parties that cannot be settled by diplomacy, and according to Article 21 (2) of the treaty, the ICJ is the competent legal authority to process and settle such disputes.

2- Objection to Admission of the Case (Admissibility):

The United States believes that Iran seeks to abuse the judicial process, and the ICJ's decision gives Iran the winning card in its nuclear program and legitimizes Iran's countermeasures in reducing its nuclear commitments. This would represent a flagrant violation of the principles and procedures governing the judicial process, thereby engendering adverse consequences for both the court system and the global community at large. As the ICJ argues about Iran's frozen assets against the American claim of Iran's unclean hands, it is quite clear that such claims and accusations require convincing evidence and clear examples, and the lack of concepts such as good faith also requires proof of the claimant. There is no doubt that Iran's petition is rooted in the nuclear agreement, and the ICJ is totally aware and has confirmed this fact (Summary of the order of October 3, 2018, 2018, p. 2), but as ICJ said earlier, disputes cannot be left unchecked only because political and legal issues get entangled.

3- Objection based on Article 79 of the ICJ Rules of Court¹

The United States raised some fundamental objections to the jurisdiction of the ICJ in this case under the above article. This article covers some of the issues that the court must consider before entering the substantive decision stage. Based on paragraphs "b" and "d" Article 20 (1) of the Treaty of Amity, the United States argues that since the nature of Iran's petition falls within these two paragraphs, i.e., concerning nuclear material and US national security, it is therefore outside the jurisdiction of the ICJ. As the court had given its reasoning on these claims in respect of frozen assets, it considered that provision to include only the right of defense for the parties and not the limitation of jurisdiction, and as the court finally recognized itself competent to handle that case, it can be concluded that the same thing will happen for this objection as well. The ICJ also noted in its judgment in the Nicaragua case on

1. When the Court has not taken any decision under Article 79, an objection by the respondent to the jurisdiction of the Court or to the admissibility of the application, or other objection the decision upon which is requested before any further proceedings on the merits, shall be made in writing as soon as possible, and not later than three months after the delivery of the Memorial. Any such objection made by a party other than the respondent shall be filed within the time-limit fixed for the delivery of that party's first pleading.

the United States' claim of national security and interest: "Economic sanctions cannot be considered legitimate vital measures to protect national interests." (Mirzaei Yengjeh, 1987, P. 826).

As discussed, in all the above cases, the parties objected to the jurisdiction of the ICJ to deal with cases and disputes arising from the Treaty of Amity, and in all of the above cases, as observed, the ICJ decided in favor of its jurisdiction.

Other than the ICJ, there have been many references to the Treaty of Amity in the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal¹, major among which are the "Pheleps Dodge"² and "SEDCO"³ cases, in both of which it was emphasized that the Treaty of Amity was binding on the parties. Another thing in favor of the validity of the Treaty of Amity before the US announced its exit is the going trend in the United States and its courts, particularly the District of Columbia. One can also point to the Treaty of Amity being quoted in the official journal of the US State Department (binding treaties) (Movasagh, 2005, p. 155).

In view of the court's approach and the history of the parties, what becomes obvious and established is the court's jurisdiction to hear cases based on violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity. Also, considering the implied opinion of the court that Iran does not resort to sanctions in the case of oil platforms, it can be inferred that now, citing Article 10 of the Treaty of Amity and other arguments presented so far, the court has jurisdiction in the substantive stage as well.

1. After conclusion of Algiers Accords (January 19, 1981), the Iran United States Claims Tribunal was formed to handle disputes of the two parties and their citizens against the other party government.

2. In the case of "Pheleps Dodge", Judge Bahrami while emphasizing on the legal validity of the Treaty of Amity for the legal relationships of the parties, points out that it is necessary that this document is analyzed also in relation to other mutual obligations of the parties. In this case, section 27 of ICJ's verdict reads: "None of the parties, i.e. Iran or US, has proceeded to terminate this legal instrument based on its terms." (Shahbazi, 2012, P. 66).

3. In SEDCO case of 1987: The Iran United States Claims Tribunal expressly stated: "The Treaty of Amity remains as a law applicable to the legal relationships of the parties, and its terms remain binding." (Shahbazi, 2012, P. 67).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that in the present case and based on the following evidence, other than jurisdiction, the ICJ also has substantive competence, and its final verdict will be issued in favor of Iran:

- A) ICJ's interpretation of a general meaning under Article 10 of the Treaty of Amity in connection with free commerce and commercial freedom and the violation of that article by the US in the oil platform case, and its implicit hinting at Iran's failure to sue the US based on the economic sanctions that were in violation of the treaty.
- B) ICJ's verdict in the Nicaragua case pointing out that a country cannot be put under full sanctions based on vital actions and national interests or following a particular line in its domestic or foreign policy and the unjustified nature of such actions (object of the United States based on Article 21 of the 1956 Treaty in the Nicaragua vs. US case and Article 21 (2) of the 1955 Treaty of Amity in Iran vs. US case).
- C) Jurisdiction decision of the ICJ and its entering the substantive phase of judgement in the case of Iran's frozen assets, and rejection of all similar US objections to the case of violating the 1955 Treaty of Amity.
- D) Many articles and clauses of numerous international laws, treaties, and conventions are frequently violated by the United States by imposing unilateral and human rights sanctions against a nation, all of which were discussed in detail and for which the ICJ has jurisdiction to hear claims and petitions in view of the significance of the issues.

To get better enforcement in future agreements than joint commissions, Iran should accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ and designate it as the competent authority for dispute resolution. Also, apart from these conditions, it is better to approve the agreements of the parliament of the two parties to convert these contracts and political agreements into official treaties, so that in case of violation, they will face the highest level of sanctions. If this were the case, the US would have to act through the ICJ for any claim or issue and could not exit the agreement unilaterally.

Another suggestion regarding the acceptance of the mandatory jurisdiction of the ICJ is the approval of its declaration by the Iranian government and parliament. Iran, as its foreign minister announced in a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations on July 9, 1951, rejected and returned the declaration of acceptance

of the mandatory jurisdiction of the ICJ (October 1, 1930). Basically, there was no such term for dealing with Iran's international disputes in the ICJ. Also, considering the announced end of the friendship treaty and the expiration of the one-year deadline, no other request from Iran based on that treaty will be heard. Therefore, Iran will do better by accepting the mandatory jurisdiction of the ICJ (Article 36 (2) of the Statute of the ICJ)¹ against countries that have ratified such declarations (the reciprocity clause) to allow themselves to be sued at the ICJ in the future.

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1. Article 36 (2): The states parties to the present Statute may at any time declare that they recognize as compulsory ipso facto and without special agreement, in relation to any other state accepting the same obligation, the jurisdiction of the Court in all legal disputes concerning:
the interpretation of a treaty; A) the interpretation of a treaty; B) any question of international law; C) the existence of any fact which, if established, would constitute a breach of an international obligation; D) the nature or extent of the reparation to be made for the breach of an international obligation.

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Maximum Pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran as Multi-Layered Hybrid Warfare: An American Narrative

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Abstract

Over time, various foreign policy and international relations scholars have offered different themes and arguments on foreign policy. The necessity to review these themes and definitions is due to the continuity of foreign policy as a continuum, in which foreign policy and its different terms take shape and are formed. This study conducts research on how the maximum pressure campaign was applied to Iran in the form of hybrid warfare and how it affected regional order afterwards. Since it is argued that it was a new term and policy enforced by the Trump administration, it reviews different tools of American statecraft and argues that the maximum pressure campaign was multilayered hybrid warfare with repercussions. In this regard, historically, the American security arrangement in Western Asia has undergone various stages. In the 1970s, it was based on the Twin Pillars of Nixon, while later, it was based on confrontation, which was adopted under different terms such as dual containment and containment. In this study, through a contextual analysis, it is inferred that the campaign against Iran was an American example of multi-layered hybrid warfare. In addition, it is argued that this multi-layered hybrid warfare created an unstable region. This development, along with the American pivot to Asia, has created a regional arrangement that involves great power competition and is inclined towards Chinese and Russian intervention and mediation. Thus, an increased third-party foothold and a destabilized regional order are the outcomes of the maximum campaign, which ostensibly contradict the American pivot to Asia.

Keywords: American Foreign Policy, Western Asia, China, Russia, Great Power Competition.

Introduction

The Persian Gulf region is undergoing security changes and transformations. However, this is not a new event. Various security arrangements have been made in the region through partnerships between regional powers and great powers. These security arrangements were mostly based on a balance of power and confrontation. As historical events unfolded, the balance of power went through various changes. The Iranian-American relationship has gone from alliance to enmity. As these developments occurred, Iran and the United States each developed modes of operation and adapted to the new realities. The United States formulated a confrontational strategy versus Iran, which took place under different terms such as dual containment and containment. Nevertheless, the gist of the policy remained confrontational over time. This study investigates these modes of operation from an American perspective, from the twin pillars to containment. Afterwards, it is argued that multi-layered hybrid warfare is the most advanced form of confrontation that has ever taken place till now. This study deals with how hybrid warfare was waged against Iran and investigates how it triggered change in a regional context afterwards.

In this regard, contextual analysis is used to identify and analyze the contextual factors that contributed to this campaign of maximum pressure, which itself is an example of hybrid warfare. The factors that shaped the maximum pressure campaign are detected, investigated, and expressed in the order of a structure designed to wage hybrid warfare. The historical stages and context that led to this campaign of hybrid warfare are also identified, which shows how US policy transformed with the passage of time. Eventually, it is argued that maximum pressure didn't yield the desired goals, and its outcome affected regional order in a very different manner than what the perpetrators had intended.

1. Containment and its Roots; Departure From Twin Pillars

The American system for the Persian Gulf used to be one of twin pillars. One in which Saudi Arabia and Iran were defenders of American interests. The US, as a superpower with limited regional power projection, relied on a determined regional power which, in this case was Iran. Cooperating against communist forces and utilizing pan-Monarchists to suppress Arab revolutionaries, Iran and Saudi Arabia put down the Dhofar rebellion in the 1970s. In this arrangement, the Iranian pillar was defined by population, industrial

base, oil revenue, and military hardware. However, the Saudi pillar was defined solely by oil. Thus, Iran was the senior partner in this distribution of power. After the fall of the Shah, support for Saudi security formed the basis for American actions in the region, only to come second after Israel's security. The US tilt towards Iraq in the aftermath of the Iran-Contra affair and even before endured until 1991 and the Persian Gulf War. In the aftermath of the war, America tried to devise a new twin-pillar strategy by getting Syria and Egypt involved in the security of the GCC. However, the reluctance of the aforementioned states puts the responsibility solely on American forces (Brannon, 1994).

After the end of the Cold War, the United States devoted its Western Asian policy to state building based on American values and interests. The US committed itself to neutralizing, containing, and applying pressure to elicit these changes, even eyeing a transformation or regime change in certain states too. The common denominator among these "backlash states" in the American response was the American interest in deterring and responding to these states through military threats and alliances. Also, isolating and pressuring these states through an international coalition of American allies was considered. The balance of power defined to enforce dual containment took into account the demise of the Soviet Union. So, the US didn't face any strategic competition. However, the improvement of ties with other military powers in the region depended on progress made in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Consequently, the US no longer depends on Iran or Iraq. Iraq was unable to sell large quotas of oil, but the disenchanted elite never overthrew their overlords (Lake, 1994). Therefore, the much-expected hopes of an insurrection against Saddam never materialized.

During dual containment, Iran was accused of seeking weapons of mass destruction, missile technology, and being the world's foremost state supporting terrorism. Accusations that the United States has not abandoned yet, despite the Iranian state not acquiring nuclear weapons after 3 decades and the occurrence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which were perpetrated by non-Iranians, the regional activities of Iran were also under focus during the dual containment policy. Therefore, in many aspects, American grudges with Tehran have contextually remained the same since dual containment. However, dual containment suffered from the lack of global consensus and international support in the case of Iran, which made containing Iran a far more difficult task than Iraq. In the Persian Gulf, the United States tried to create partnerships that were

supposed to prevent Iran from pursuing its nuclear and conventional military programs. The aim was to secure the region's then - favorable security arrangements (Lake, 1994). Attempts to maintain this arrangement and balance of power are reappearing themes in American military and national security doctrines. Especially since Iran has been accused of seeking regional dominance, America has been at the forefront of pushing back Iran in the Persian Gulf and beyond. The proclaimed goal of the doctrine was to increase the costs Tehran and Baghdad paid for their policies. Recurring themes of this approach can be noticed in previous American foreign policy-making circles where George Kennan famously declared creating strains over Soviet power in order to either break it up or fade Soviet power away (Lake, 1994).

However, the dual containment of Iran and Iraq didn't yield tangible results, partially due to the non-identical threat perceived by America from Iran and Iraq. Different American administrations tried to keep Iran and Iraq sidelined in regional affairs. Through the Madrid conference and beyond, they tried to strike peace deals that preceded the Abraham Accords Declaration but were essentially more of the same.

2. Complex Containment

During the Trump administration, the United States was actively engaged in a destabilization campaign against Iran, which also bore in mind regime change. In addition, seeking an Arab alliance against Iran had a predecessor here too. (Holland, Mason, & Landay, 2018; Nasr, 2018). The maximum pressure campaign pursued by the White House national security team focused on food riots in major cities, instability and ethnic strife at border areas, and the depreciation of the Iranian currency (Brennan, 2018). On the next stage, a reduction of Iranian foreign ties and targeting Iranian foreign trade and business were the main priorities of the campaign. These, in its turn, would lead to a decrease in the legitimacy of the Iranian government and an increase in its cost of governance. Regional consequences of the policy aimed at gray zone conflict against Iranian allies in the region (Frantzman, 2018). Discrediting the Iranian government in human rights, eliminating its deterrence power, and limiting military escalations were on the agenda too (Porter & Gareth, 2018).

Regional players played a role in dismantling the Iran nuclear deal too. Influential lobbyists on both sides of the aisle were devoted to dismantling and tearing apart the Iran deal. Among them,

the quartet of Saudi Prince Mohammad bin Salman, Muhammad Bin Zaed, Jared Kushner, and Benjamin Netanyahu were the most prominent figures and officeholders, either passively or actively calling for the tearing up of the deal (Bolton, 2017; Kalin, 2018). Influential right-wing think tanks also lobbied to tear up the Iran deal. Lobbies such as United against Nuclear Iran (UANI) and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) were the top lobbies bidding against Iran (Clifton & Davison, 2018).

To roll back Iranian influence across the region, the Israelis advocated certain policies, which were later adopted by America and her other regional allies. Confronting Iran-supported groups, supporting US allies, conducting reconnaissance operations against Iran, stationing anti-missile systems in the region, and supporting US cyber security against Iran were among the Israeli recommendations to America (Frantzman, 2018). Meanwhile, by labeling Iran as the world's prime supporter of terrorism, the Trump administration reinforced its case against Iran (Harris, 2018).

In this contextual analytical study, in an attempt to establish meaning from American actions during the maximum pressure campaign, hybrid warfare theory is used. Hybrid warfare causes a blurring of lines of conflict. It utilizes integrated military and non-military means of power. According to scholars, hybrid warfare's objectives can be categorized into four domains: political, economic, military, and societal and informational. The battlespaces of hybrid warfare are numerous, as are the tools and means. Weaponization of information, disinformation, and spreading polarizing messages are other tools available to the hybrid actor. These elements are integrated into common military strategy as well, leading to an increasingly complex environment. Hybrid warfare avoids full-scale conflict while trying to achieve goals. A continuum of actions encompasses hybrid warfare with different levels of violence. Engaging adversaries with a combination of political, economic, and subversive techniques is prevalent in hybrid warfare. Weakening alliances, delegitimizing adversaries, and spreading of discord are among the techniques used by hybrid warfare actors. (Abdyraeva, 2020). The United States utilized various hybrid warfare techniques through the maximum pressure campaign. Economic coercion, diplomatic pressure, informational war, and military action were all enmeshed in the American multi-layered hybrid warfare, against Iran. These steps go well beyond political warfare which is suggested in containment (Kennan, 1991).

3. Maximum Pressure in Multi-Layered Hybrid Warfare

In order to contain and roll back Iranian influence in the region, Richard Goldberg suggested a three-step policy. Goldberg was later appointed to the White House as a national security team director. He executed his policy recommendations through joint cooperation with Bolton and Pompeo. Goldberg had suggested a wind-down period after decertifying the Iran deal. In this winding down, the strictest economic sanctions in history were to be enforced on the Iranian economy, including the financial sector. Goldberg recommended that the US avoid any formalities in waiting for allies but rather go down with the sanctions rollback and enforce additional ones to impose a Cuba-style embargo on Iran. Goldberg believed that any Iranian exit from the deal would lead to destabilization of Iran. The decertification plan had considered to destabilizing Iran before it could bring back its nuclear program to full capacity. Though not specifying what the destabilization meant, apparently Goldberg had the downfall of the Iranian government in mind (Weiss, 2017).

The maximum pressure campaign applied blanket sanctions to Iran rather than smart ones, thus targeting the whole Iranian state. Therefore, these sanctions affected Iran massively and intensely. Some economists believe that the sanctions had little to do with Iran's behavior and were on the track of a whole breakdown of the Iranian state through an outright economic war (Bezhan, 2018). Alongside economic warfare, the sanctions are supposed to provide time for finding innovative military solutions against Iran. In addition, a sanctioned Iranian state was assumed to change its behavior under the burden of sanctions (Weiss, 2017; Winter & De Luce, 2017).

In order to formulate a multi-layered hybrid threat against Iran that was not solely economic, making new allegations against the Iranian nuclear program based on the Israeli-obtained archive was among the actions taken by the US. Furthermore, in anticipation of Iranian escalation through cyberattacks and actual attacks, the US must have lowered its tolerance and benchmark against Iran regarding alleged and actual military actions attributed to Iran. Whether through Iraqi groups or elsewhere, this new approach could have disabled Iran from reciprocating the maximum pressure campaign. Also, the presence of US naval forces and carrier strike groups in the Persian Gulf could strengthen US deterrence against Iran and shield it from any Iranian retaliation for the sanctions reinforcement (Hannah, 2018). In order to realize this, the US sent

the John C. Stennis after an unprecedented absence of carriers in the Persian Gulf (Youssef, 2018). On the economic side, the maximum pressure campaign that was put forward by the Trump administration (Weiss, 2017; Winter & De Luce, 2017) demonstrated itself through IMF forecasts of the Iranian economy. In November 2018, the IMF predicted negative economic growth for Iran, a contraction of the Iranian economy, and a widening budget deficit. In addition, Iranian exporters had to cease their presence in various energy markets and hand them over to their rivals (Nasseri & Pacheco, 2018).

Alongside economic coercion, the US and Israel coordinated their actions to internally pressure Iran too. Pressuring Iran through internal strife and encouraging domestic protests (Ravid, 2018).

In addition to economic coercion, the maximum pressure campaign had other traits of hybrid warfare too. In the military realm, during the campaign between the wars conducted by Israel (Eisenkoat & Siboni, 2019), America's chief regional ally tried to rollback Iranian influence. The epitome of the military rollback against Iran was the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani (Dagher & Kaltenthaler, 2020).

4. Regional Strategic Implications

Alongside the maximum pressure campaign, the United States had adopted a new vision for the Persian Gulf's security due to its strategic competition with China and pivot to Asia. In order to allocate more resources to the ongoing competition with China, the US must optimize its presence in other regions (Ross, 2013). One of the regions with a paramount American presence is Western Asia. The US has been actively securing its interests and protecting its allies, at least since the time of the adaptation of the Carter doctrine. The necessity of ingraining the element of force in the Carter doctrine led to an increasing American presence in Western Asia. However, the Persian Gulf region's significance in American foreign policy in terms of great power competition decreased with the demise of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, due to the ongoing hostility in Iranian relations with the US and Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq, the US remained militarily active in the region (Brannon, 1994).

The American strategy of pivoting to Asia has been met with suspicion by American allies. American attempts to maintain a smart presence in the region in order to safeguard American interests and materialize American security commitments across the region require optimizing the stationing and usage of military assets (Wasser &

Stein, 2020). Specifically, since American allies in the region have certain doubts regarding American resolve in upholding her security commitments, especially due to the urge America feels to face strategic competition with China and Russia (Gardner, 2022). American policymakers reiterate the acuteness of Russian threats while echoing the long-term threat from China (Insinna, 2022).

During the maximum pressure campaign, the US resorted to a policy of rollback. This rollback policy was reminiscent of the NSC68 since its advocates argued that the US's reluctance to resort to force in Western Asia, specifically against Iran and its allies, would lead to an expansion of Iranian influence and more countries falling into Iran's sphere (Von Rennenkampff, 2019).

The American attempt to rollback Iranian influence in Western Asia demonstrated itself through various times and spaces. Therefore, the US focus on rolling back Iran can be categorized into three military elements. These elements include the regional sphere of influence called the Axis of Resistance by Iran, the aerial space, including Iranian drone and missile programs, and the waters of the Persian Gulf. The American policy ingrained political aspects with an anti-access and area denial military strategy (IranWatch, 2022). Through area denial, the operational environment of Western Asia, specifically within the Iranian arc of influence, would be less secure for Iran. In such circumstances, area denial would lead to limiting Iranian space for occupation and navigation (Nadimi, 2021). This access denial would in turn limit Iran's asymmetrical capabilities, and deny Iran the right to resort to gray zone warfare, and eliminate of plausible deniability on the Iranian side.

Meanwhile, the United States seeks to reduce its regional responsibilities in order to dedicate more resources to confronting China and containing Russia. Yet, the United States is firmly committed to Israel's security and qualitative edge (CRS, 2020). In addition, maritime security, and a smooth flow of energy from the Persian Gulf are part of US interests in the region too. In order to achieve these two goals while keeping pace with China, the US is relegating parts of its security responsibilities to its allies (Feierstein, Saab, & Young, 2022).

Such responsibility and the integration of aerial and maritime capabilities throughout the region require the active participation of various states, regardless of whether they are stakeholders in confronting Iran or not. The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) is a military platform led by America that is utilized in order to achieve the integration of several offensive and defensive

capabilities and realize the access denial that was mentioned earlier (Gordon, 2022). The share of artificial intelligence in realizing this policy can be coined as a 2nd revolution in military affairs, in which integrated aerial and sea defense and unmanned machinery are ingrained with artificial intelligence in order to create an integrated network of intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance.

The scope of smartening the US presence in Western Asia is not limited to the land or skies. In both the waters of the Persian Gulf and the high seas, the US is transforming its approach too. By establishing naval task forces and missions with European and regional allies, the US is facilitating its transfer of force to blue waters and Far East Asia (Katz, 2022). These taskforces expedite the better organization of forces from various nationalities to focus on specific goals such as detecting arms transfers and gray zone military operations in their dedicated spaces. The US will still bear the responsibilities of organization and leadership, yet the resources it has to allocate will drop significantly.

In order to deal with what America perceives as destabilizing Iranian actions, the United States is rapidly developing an integrated military arrangement against Iran. This is stated in the Detering Enemy Forces and Enabling National Defenses Act of 2022 (Ernst, 2022). The integrated air defense will deal with various projectiles and flying vehicles, specifically drones and missiles. American technological edge, leadership, and resolve are used to facilitate this integration, which aims to counter the repercussions of what it deems the proliferation of missile technology in the region. American allies will allocate human resources, finance, and base facilities too.

Also, specific American allies have been feeling missile threats, for the last couple years. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Israel all face adversaries with a varied inventory of missiles. The quality and quantity of the missile threats, in addition to the cost imposition curve, which slides in favor of the Iranian axis, are all incentivizing this integration. The required arrangement in order to create a holistic environment, collaborative military forces, and political commitment is done through the Pentagon. The United States expects to create a regional military setting versus Iran through a joint effort, with the allocation of minimum resources on the American side (Gordon, 2022). However, the United States will still maintain its role in political and military leadership. This, in its turn, facilitates the regional convergence of states at both a regional

and global level. Defining a common defense and security plan and command and control structure, exchanging technology and human resources, and establishing new economic ties based on the mentioned commonalities are among the benefits of this policy.

Although there are cons to the policy on the American side too, an increasingly militarized environment in the Persian Gulf doesn't necessarily solve the problem of contested deterrence in the Persian Gulf and beyond. The ensuing arms race, following an increased purchase of weaponry by US allies, will further add to the security dilemma in the region. It would lead to a belligerent Iran prepared to spend more on upgrading drone and missile technology. Thus, the created dilemma would make the whole Persian Gulf a tinderbox. This would be a setback for the very purpose the Arab states sought by contributing to the joint military effort. In addition, the Iranian drone and missile programs will be further scrutinized, leading to an increased share of Chinese and Russian technology in the Iranian missile and drone programs, thus drawing Tehran closer to Washington's rivals.

Global Implications

Meanwhile, a more militarized region would draw Chinese attention closer to the region due to China's vast economic interests in the region. If the current path of contested deterrence carries on, with the US being a patron of one party, Beijing would enjoy becoming a mediator between Iran and the GCC countries. Therefore, a result of the American-sponsored joint defense efforts would be China becoming a key broker and mediator in the region (Marks, 2022), which is undesirable for Washington. This, in its own turn, combined with current economic relations, adds to the leverage China holds over Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries in the region. In the meantime, China may get access to American and Israeli hardware and technology through its increasing leverage over the region (Mezher, 2021).

Overall, a more militarized region will increase the chances of conflicts while providing Beijing with a new role in the region through strong ties with all parties. Thus, this would be a major flaw of the American regional design, which emboldens China into performing a more serious role in the Persian Gulf and beyond. Furthermore, the chances of long-term encroachment into the Persian Gulf would be a total abandonment of the Carter doctrine. Also, a Chinese intermediation between Iran and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and even beyond could facilitate an increasing

Chinese footprint in the region, which the United States despises, unless the US hopes to cripple China by tying it to regional quarrels.

Beijing's increasing trade ties with the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and Israel will eventually have spillovers in defense and security cooperation too. Dealings with the Chinese communication giant Huawei are intertwined with other fields of cooperation with China and its One Belt, One Road initiative (Mezher, 2021). Thus, even though the core of Saudi or Persian Gulf Cooperation Council cooperation with China is energy, spillovers will occur in the realms of trade, technology, and even military defense. Specifically, due to ongoing cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia in missile procurement and missile engine developments, it is worth bearing in mind that the Saudi missiles are nuclear-capable, a feature that could worry the Americans too. In addition, Saudi interest in uranium enrichment and relevant technologies can be a matter for discussion between China and Saudi Arabia (Masterson, 2022).

Integration into *One Belt, One Road* initiatives can provide China with backdoor access to American technology too. Since all Persian Gulf Cooperation Council members and Israel's military are American-based, the Haifa port terminal project, which is Chinese operated has already raised eyebrows in Washington. Haifa has the potential to become a regional hub of trade while all this trade passes through Chinese technology, something that would displease the United States (Rabinovitch, 2021).

Therefore, with the decreasing size of the Iranian economy due to US sanctions, China is on the verge of becoming the region's number one trade partner. Due to Chinese belief in the relativity of human rights, China is less of a norms-based player too. With autocratic tendencies on the rise in the region, China will be a preferred partner in the region. In addition, China gains access to valuable Arab and Israeli lobbying potential in Washington too.

Strategic Consequences

To conclude, a firm sanctions regime and a joint regional integrated air defense and naval command will not necessarily increase deterrence or shoulder off current American security commitments while having various repercussions, such as increasing American entanglement in the region and giving China a stronger regional foothold.

The smaller a system is and the more players there are, considering the closed nature of the system, it has the potential to be driven towards chaos. This could be the case with the Chinese presence in the Persian Gulf and its periphery. Meanwhile, Iranian

plausible deniability is decreased by the partial departure of the US and its increasing usage of artificial intelligence in the region to compensate for the lack of sheer numbers. In addition, Chinese interests are non-legitimate targets for Tehran considering the amicable relations Tehran has with Beijing. Therefore, as this closed system faces more complexity in terms of possible collisions, there is an increasing chance of chaos.

Conclusion

American hybrid warfare against Iran was waged in a manner to affect the strategic calculus of Iran through affecting elements of Iranian comprehensive national power. The campaign was waged in the context of political, economic, diplomatic, and regional areas. It was designed to change the behavior and nature of the Iranian state through containment and destabilization by affecting the elements of Iranian national power. Therefore, this study tried to offer a comprehensive model of American hybrid warfare against Iran and how it was developed overtime. Nevertheless, as argued, this campaign of hybrid warfare didn't yield the desired policy changes throughout the life of the US administration that waged it. It rather had some spillovers in regional order, which are analyzed and explained too.

Overall, the maximum pressure campaign, which is intertwined with a reduced US regional presence, has led Iran to react and escalate on its own terms. Iran means to demonstrate that maritime safety and energy supply lines cannot be secured while Iran is excluded from the regional order and its entailing arrangements. Meanwhile, due to the escalation, US allies are going on a shopping spree for American arms and trying to tie down America in the region. Also, both Arabs and Israelis try to diversify their foreign policy choices by developing relations with Russia and China. Thus, the US maximum pressure campaign has not so far changed Iranian behavior, but it has led to the formation of a regional tinderbox and the increased presence of China and Russia in western Asia. This, in its own turn, invalidates the prerequisite of strategic competition with Russia and China since it ironically deepens the Russian and Chinese foothold in the region while the US seeks to pivot to Asia. Overall, the multi-layered hybrid warfare has made the region more violent and militarized, disenchanted US allies from traditionally trusting the US, and led Iran to act more hostile towards the US, which all contradict great power competition with China and Russia.

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Impacts of Zionist regime-Azerbaijan Relations on Iran's National Security


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Abstract

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan, fearing Russia's presence and expansionism, constantly pursued an anti-Russian policy in the region. Along with other worries at home and abroad (like the Karabakh conflict), this concern drove Azerbaijan towards cooperation and alliances with the Zionist regime and the United States. Recently, this relationship has emerged in varied domains, including the military and intelligence. Alternatively, as the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), the southern neighbor of Azerbaijan, enjoys close relations with the state, either geographically or culturally- societally, any move by Azerbaijan could bear destructive consequences for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Accordingly, this article deals with "the effective factors in the development of Azerbaijan-Israel relations and their consequences for the Islamic Republic of Iran's national security" as a question and seeks to multidimensionally study the roots and consequences of the mentioned theme as to the Islamic Republic of Iran's national security with a realistic approach in the frame of alliance and security balance theory and description.

Keywords: Cooperation, Alliance, Zionist Regime, Azerbaijan and Iran.



Introduction

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, some newly independent Caucasian republics attempted to launch bilateral relations with major and powerful states. Azerbaijan, a prominent state in the region, has the greatest Caucasian economy with stabilized energy reserves of 7 billion barrels of petroleum. Given the bitter experience of sovereignty and independence violations in past, Baku considers the West and its allies the best option to meet its economic and security aims. Intermittently, the development of Azerbaijan-Israel relations has been defined as a means to attain Zionist lobby support in the USA, the expansion of ties with Washington, and consequently, the meeting of Baku's weaponry and economic requirements (Bassist, 2022).

On the other hand, the Zionist regime, aiming to hinder IRI's influence in the region, seeks to develop ties with Azerbaijan. As it relates to politics, culture, and economy, Azerbaijan is Iran's sphere of influence. Given the Tehran- Tel Aviv strategic animosity, the Israeli presence and influence in the neighboring countries could threaten Iran's interests and national security; hence, Israel's political, military-intelligence, and economic presence in Azerbaijan poses a considerable threat to Iran's national security in politico-military, economic, and security domains. The article bears significance as the mentioned theme is one of the security afflictions of Iran's strategic environment, and it appropriately estimates the security threats posed by the Zionist regime in Azerbaijan. In line with political, economic, and defensive-military pacts between the two, it delivers the results to the military academies, researchers in security, and those interested in political-security issues. Furthermore, doing this study could help with the revision of the Islamic Republic of Iran's national security, diplomacy, and macro plans, and it could lead to the adoption of appropriate strategies towards Azerbaijan and national security protection. Likewise, this article seeks to delve into the security, military, intelligence, and economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel and the consequences for the Islamic Republic of Iran's national security with the concerned facts. To that end, it exploits Alliance Theory in the frame of realism and the balance of power theory and explains the cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Zionist regime, along with the consequences for Iranian national security.

1. The Concept of Strategic Alliance

International relations theorists have provided many definitions for

the concept of strategic alliance. In one definition, the alliance includes the relations of two or more states based on the alliance agreement for the purpose of joint cooperation and integration of military, political, and economic forces and facing a common threat. This type of inclusion, while determining the military feature, includes non-aggression agreements, defense treaties, unilateral guarantees, and collective security treaties. In another definition, it means the coalition of states and the coordination of their actions to achieve their goals. This group of definitions includes any type of international cooperation of states, including the military alliances, diplomatic alliances, peace and cooperation missions, federations and confederations, and unions. Others, while emphasizing the military nature of the alliance, believe that the alliance inherently deals with a strategic issue, leading to common or conflicting interests. Stephen Walt defines alliances as formal or informal security cooperation arrangements between two or more independent states, and Morgenthau considers alliances a special form of international cooperation with a written and formal agreement between two or more states for a certain period with the aim of advancing their interests; particularly, they arise in line with national security.

George Liska acknowledges the definitions, but places particular emphasis on the establishment of an alliance as a response to the potential threat presented by another state (Liska, 2017). According to Waltz, the alliance includes formal and informal agreements. Although states tend to cooperate, signing an agreement does not suffice, so the presence or absence of a formal agreement often fails to reflect the reality of commitment between the parties (Waltz, 1987: 12-13). According to Schueller, an alliance is a reaction to threats or opportunities and a means to gain profit and prevent loss. Distinguishing the concept of security-friendly and greedy states, Schueller believes that some states act apart from the sphere of security creation and countering threats and cooperate with powerful revisionist states or towards the establishment of a coalition with revisionist governments (Schweller, 2013, p. 16).

Anyway, strategic relations are directly related to the perception of national interests and the prioritization of actors, which is configured as focused on national interests. First off, as long as common security concerns exist, the positive aspect of strategic relations, i.e., seeking cooperation in different forms, is considered the main goal of the relations; however, with the change of priorities, the competition of actors becomes more shaped than

strategic relations, and their interests are affected by this competition. In general, strategic relationships between political units are defined by characteristics such as:

- 1- The existence of strategic interests and goals in common areas;
- 2- Enemies, competitors, or common threats;
- 3- Understanding the international system and the acting rules;
- 4- The political will of leaders;
- 5- Positive historical experiences of joint communication;
- 6- The institutionalization of relations in various fields (Siraj and Bakare, 2022, p. 100).

In the following, by examining some important components in the relations between the Zionist regime and the Republic of Azerbaijan, we will explain their goals and strategies in various fields of cooperation:

2. Zionist Regime's Goals and Strategies in Azerbaijan

The Zionist regime's strategy in the development of ties with Azerbaijan could be defined within the framework of macro-policies adopted by the regime. Simplistically speaking, the policy could be found in the words of Ben Guryon, the first Israeli prime minister. He held that the foreign policy adopted by the Zionist regime relies on the far non-Arab states; as Israel is surrounded by the antagonistic Arab states, it could not develop ties with neighbors. Consequently, to get rid of the siege in the 1950s, Israel established an alliance with non-Arab Muslim states in the region, such as Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia, and it developed ties with them to make up a non-Arab Middle East. Following this, the goals of Israel were realized, and solidarity and coherence disappeared between the Muslim states in the region; however, this alliance came to failure in 1979 with the rise of the Islamic revolution in Iran. It was in the frame of this alliance that the regime of Shah supplied oil to Israel; however, it was stopped in the post-Soviet disintegration, and Israel turned to common-wealth states, particularly Azerbaijan, a suitable substitute for Iran; therefore, Israel expanded her clout in the region and exploited varied means to reach her aims. Likewise, given Azerbaijan's proximity to Iran, Israel took a strategic look at her expansion of clout in the region with a meticulous clandestine plan. As regards Azerbaijan's geopolitical, geostrategic, and socioeconomic status, this country is multifacetedly of considerable importance for Israel in the following ways:

- 1- Exploiting the Azerbaijani Jewish community as a society through which it could penetrate political, economic, and cultural entities with the Israeli efforts in the past three years,

the Zionist regime managed to organize the Azeri Jewish immigrating to Israel in the Israel-Azerbaijan International Association and operationally provide for a series of acts and plans in Azerbaijan. According to the census, more than two-thirds of immigrants to Israel were from the Soviet satellite states, of whom a considerable number were from Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. In effect, Israel launched an alliance and formal political relations with Azerbaijan as the first state in the region to play an active role in the region;

- 2- Magnifying Iran and Islamism as a threat, exploiting bilateral and multilateral threats, and resorting to politico-propaganda tactics;
- 3- Exercising cultural clout in Shiite Azerbaijan, operating cultural tools and methods, including the Israeli Film Festival in Baku as well as book fairs for children and adults on various occasions (Ismailzade, 2020);
- 4- Developing political clout in Caucasian states; exploiting domestic disputes in the former republics of the Soviet Union, such as the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and Georgian home disputes with Abkhazian secessionists, etc.;
- 5- Employing political and economic experts of the societies by giving direct or indirect financial aid to some Azerbaijani parties and journalists. These gazettes are tasked with affecting and fascinating Azerbaijani public opinion and officials (Ranjbar, 2013, p. 19).
- 6- Utilizing US agents and those in other friendly countries to strengthen its position in Azerbaijan The regime, besides the tools that it exploits directly, uses US capabilities and facilities.
- 7- Deployment in Iran's north borders is a paramount goal pursued by this regime in her relations with Azerbaijan. (Jalalpoor, 2019, p. 10)
- 8- Despite the rise of international pressure and the effort to ramp up US pressures on Iran for nuclear issues, Tel Aviv seeks to establish clandestine and stable relations with some countries that rest outside of US interests, i.e., the Israeli relation is not only restricted to Azerbaijan but also includes other countries in which US interests require that they not be disclosed (Mammadov, 2022, p. 515)

3. Geopolitical Balance of the Zionist Regime's Foreign Policy with Azerbaijan

The foreign policy of the Zionist regime is constantly affected by

her geopolitical status, conflict with Arabs, and the problem of her existence and legitimacy being recognized by Muslim and Arab states. Israel is a small regime with a population of 7 million, of whom 1.5 million are Muslims (Niakouiee and Karimipour, 2018, p. 19). Since its onset, it has posed many problems for neighbors. Not being recognized by neighbors, along with numerous wars with them, is a clear sign of serious conflict between them. In such conditions, to politico-diplomatic isolation has been a model pursued by its leaders since the onset; accordingly, the regional coalition has been on the agenda of Israeli politicians. The periphery doctrine underpins the foreign policy and security that have been planned by Bin Guryon and other Israeli officials to get out of isolation and siege by Arab states (Jalalpoor, 2019, p. 10).

Based on this doctrine, the Zionist regime should establish strong friendly relations at high echelons with non-Arab states that are geographically close to it in such a way as to create a balance of power against Arab states. This plan first encompassed states like Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia. The development of the periphery doctrine was structured in a manner that relied on strong connections with non-Arab Muslim states in West Asia. In pre-revolution, Iran and Turkey were at the same time contained in this policy. However, the rise of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the triumph of the Islamists in Turkey (i.e., the Justice and Development Party), severely challenged peripheral alliance doctrine. In such conditions, from the view of Tel Aviv, Ankara is a non-friend state of the best status, and Tehran is a terrible threat (Faghani, 1999, p. 41). Consequently, Israel searched for new allies to progress the Alliance of the Periphery Doctrine. Due to related conditions and problems, Azerbaijan is one of the actors that could be considered by the Zionist regime officials in this respect. At the same time, with the fall of the Soviet Union, Israel, having understood the conditions of Azerbaijan, sought to establish the Alliance of the Periphery Doctrine with the country (Tavasoli Roknabadi, 2010, p. 42). Since independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has adopted a foreign policy based on geopolitical balance. The geopolitical balance is to establish a balance between antagonistic political and geographic powers. This policy aims at four essential goals, including: taking back Nagorno Karabakh through diplomacy, and military balance; not provoking Russia; adopting good neighboring policies with neighbors (except Armenia); and creepy convergence with the West, particularly Turkey and Israel, in the past two decades. This policy has well proven her not-

provoking Russia strategy. Baku considers Russian sensitivity, and it has adopted a peaceful, cautious position in this respect and prefers not to act clumsily like Georgia until the time of annexation to the West. This diplomacy has impeded Russia from adopting any invasive strategy towards Azerbaijan. For this reason, Baku took a silence position during the limited Georgia-Russia war, as no event had happened (Ismailzade, 2020). In an interview with the Financial Times, Azerbaijani foreign minister stated, “We seek to have amicable relations with all to meet our national interests”. This strategy requires the distinction of subjects with respect to the concerned parties, which means keeping relations while having disputes. For example, Baku emphasizes relations with Iran, but it severely treats the members of the Azerbaijan Islamic Party and Taleshies for espionage in favor of Iran. After the fall of the Soviet Union and given the events in the region, Azerbaijan took proximity to the West as a long-term strategy; intermittently, Israel could be an expediting variable. One of the aims of this strategy is to bring hope to the West's aid in taking back Nagoro Karabakh from Armenia with diplomacy. Azerbaijan is one of the six former Soviet republics that has signed a cooperative agreement with the West, under which it has committed politico-economic reforms. The European Union has recognized Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, the south neighbor of Azerbaijan- i.e., Iran- should not be taken for granted. The two countries have a common border of 618 km. along with a common border in the Caspian Sea and other cultural commonalties. Azerbaijan is the 2nd Shiite country after Iran (in respect of population), and like Iran, it is an ECO member. Baku therefore may not overlook Iran given her geopolitical requirements, as Iran has to take Azerbaijan into consideration in her estimates. Nonetheless, Baku pursues relations with Iran in respect of the West's sensitivities, one of which is good ties with the Zionist regime (Ismailzade, 2020). To meet its geopolitical requirements and restrictions, Azerbaijan took the following:

- 1- Bilateral cooperation with numerous countries;
- 2- Cooperation with numerous international organizations, including those concerned with Islam, the West, and the East;
- 3- Close cooperation with Turkey (Turkey is the major strategic partner of Baku in that they symbolize a nation in the form of two governments. The clear example is Turkey's military contribution to Baku and blocking common borders with Armenia in the Karabakh War).

Accordingly, Azerbaijan has adopted a pragmatic foreign policy

in tandem with the global powers and its national interests (Niakouiee & Karimipour, 2018, p. 37).

4. Azerbaijan's Goals in the Development of Ties With the Zionist Regime

Azerbaijan's strategy in close relation to the Zionist regime refers to her dire needs. Since independence, this country has been suffering from a political-economic weakness it seeks to get rid of. Azeri officials pursue the following goals in close relation to Israel:

- 1- Forging ties with the United States and other European countries through Israel;
- 2- Exploiting Israel's investment in Azerbaijan, restoring the war ruins, and fighting poverty and unemployment (Ebrahimi & Osuli, 2023, p. 27).
- 3- Exercising the Jewish lobby against Armenia in the US Congress to impede Act 907, approved in April 1992 under Armenian pressure on Azerbaijan in the US Congress, for the violation of human rights in war with Armenia;
- 4- Countering Islamism and terrorism;
- 5- Applying modern technology, restoring industries, and training techno-medical staff;
- 6- The Zionist regime's participation in securing Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and probably Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines;
- 7- Strengthening Azerbaijan's military with the Zionist regime's capabilities. This regime is the second buyer of Azerbaijan's petroleum; instead, it exports military equipment to Azerbaijan. (Jalalpoor, 2019, p. 10)

4. Israel-Azerbaijan Cooperation: Dimensions and Facts

4-1. Military Cooperation

Since independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has been occasionally embroiled in conflict with Armenia. In the conflicts, Armenia managed to occupy the mountainous Karabakh and its seven surrounding areas, along with the recognition of international societies. Admittedly, the most serious challenge for Baku in terms of security is the Armenian aggression on Azerbaijan. Indeed, the occupation of 16% of its territory by Armenian forces, resulting from this act of aggression, continues to afflict and impact Azerbaijan to this day. Likewise, 586,000 of Azeris settling in Azerbaijan wandered around due to the aggression. While the Security Council has condemned the Karabakh occupation with four resolutions, including 822, 538, 874, and 884, and has called for the

Armenian evacuation from the occupied lands, the Minsk group, composed of Russia, France, and the USA, has so far taken no measure for the liberation of the occupied lands (Ahmadi & Piran, 2017: 62). Conditionally, to establish balance in front of Russia's political pressures on the one hand and the liberation of the occupied lands from Armenia on the other hand, Azerbaijan has adopted a stronger alliance with Turkey, the West, and its ally, Israel (Omidi & Kheiri, 2018, p. 15). Having ties with Israel is an important issue for Baku because this regime, together with Turkey, supports Azerbaijan over the mountainous Karabakh conflict. From the viewpoint of Azerbaijani officials, cooperation with Israel is subject to multiple considerations as follows: 1- Advancing intelligence cooperation with Israel and obtaining modern military technology; 2- modernizing Azerbaijan's military; 3- exercising the Jewish and Zionist lobby in the USA to fight the Armenian one that acts against Azerbaijan. During a trip to the USA in 1997, Heydar Aliyev called for a visit to Jewish organizations; 4- exercising the Zionist and Jewish lobby to develop relations with the USA and the West and obtaining further support from the United States. In effect, training, and modernizing Azerbaijan's army is a paramount part of military-security cooperation between Baku and Tel Aviv. Shortly after the Azerbaijan-Armenia war, Israel embroiled the military training of Azerbaijani forces. They gradually modernized the Azerbaijani army with military equipment such as modern tanks and weapons of infantry. In 1992-1994, which is reminiscent of the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, Israel secured military support for Azerbaijan with Stinger missiles and other weapons.

In the war, the Jewish population of Azerbaijan fought alongside the Shiite Azeris. In 1997, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, took an informal trip to Azerbaijan, in which he did some negotiations with Heydar Aliev on mutual relations and the threats posed by Iran. Following, the military relations between the two entered a new stage in that some experts deemed it the launch of an alliance between the two states. After the death of Heydar Aliyev, the policy was pursued by Ilham Aliyev. In 2009, Shimon Peres, the new Israeli prime minister, arrived in Baku, and in a visit with Ilham Aliyev, the parties emphasized the development of ties in the political, economic, and security spheres. In February 2012, a contract valued at \$1.6 billion was signed as part of a military cooperation agreement between Baku and Tel Aviv in which Azerbaijan received modern weaponry from Tel Aviv. Based on the contract, the Zionist military industries delivered modern anti-tank,

air, and air-defense systems and anti-infantry equipment to Azerbaijan's army (Omidi & Kheiri, 2018: 29). Likewise, Israel helps Azerbaijan in the production of air drones. In 2012, the weaponry trade between the two was estimated at \$4 billion. Israel also plays a dramatic role in equipping Azerbaijan's navy. The sale of 12 warships to protect Azerbaijani shores in the Caspian Sea in 2014 is part of the military cooperation between the two in the marine domain. In 2016, the Israeli papers reported on the delivery of a series of air drones to Baku by Tel Aviv that played a key part in the April 2014 battle against Armenia and the success of Azerbaijani forces, which led to Armenian protests in Tel Aviv. By the same token, Baku recognized herself as the second-largest market for Israeli military products.

The Second Armenia-Azerbaijan War, which took place over 44 days in fall 2020, shed light on the actual military alignments involving the states of the South Caucasus region. Azerbaijan's military proficiency during the war revealed the results of the long-term strategic cooperation between Israel and Azerbaijan and, indeed, the strategic nature of defense cooperation between the Two actors. The cooperation between Israel and Azerbaijan in the military sphere extends beyond arms sales. Rather, Israeli security and military cooperation have played a significant role in the building of Azerbaijan's military capabilities and the establishment in Azerbaijan of a home-grown defense industry. Israeli specialists have also engaged in the training of Azerbaijani military experts on the operation of various armaments, the development of organizational methods, and the formulation of military doctrine. In the 2020 war, Azerbaijan demonstrated an innovative use of Israeli arms and the integration of Turkish and Israeli Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), as well as a novel use of UAVs, which included carrying out multiple tasks and their integration with other armaments on the battlefield (Shaffer, 2022).

In terms of military cooperation, Israel is ranked second among the states supplying military equipment to the Republic of Azerbaijan, with a share of about 27%. Of course, about 69% of this 27% share has been created since 2016. The point worth noting in relation to the motivations for buying this country from Israel was the arms race and balance orientation against Armenia, not the expansionist goals against Iran. For example, when Russia provided Iskander missiles with a range of more than 300 km to Armenia in 2016, the Republic of Azerbaijan bought Laura missiles with a range of 430 km from Israel in 2018 in an arms race and to balance

against Armenia (SIPRI, 2022). Therefore, there is a direct relationship and positive dependence between the increase in confrontation, however incomplete, and peace in the region and the tendency of the Republic of Azerbaijan towards Israel to provide strategic weapons for balance.

4-2. Intelligence-Security Cooperation

Intelligence-security cooperation is of critical significance in Azerbaijan-Israel relations. In October 2001, a visit was made between Heydar Aliyev and the then Zionist ambassador to Azerbaijan, in which the parties emphasized their same position on terrorist groups; they also discussed intelligence analysis, satellite information, and training intelligence-security services as the bases of cooperation between the parties (Asadi Kia, 2013, p. 72). One of Israel's priorities in security cooperation with Azerbaijan is to fight against Iran's intelligence network in the newly independent Caucasian states.

In 2007, Azerbaijani officials claimed the arrest of 15 people, accused of espionage over Israel and the West's activities against Iran (Islami, 2010, p. 31). In contrast, Iran announced, "Azerbaijan has harbored Israel's agents and spies in her territory, the ones who crossed Iran's border and assassinated the nuclear scientists" (Motafaker, 2012: 26).

The main goal of Israel's military-intelligence cooperation with Baku is to observe and, lastly, blast Iran's nuclear and missile programs. After the rise of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, both governments cut off and looked at each other as enemies; accordingly, relations between the two were exacerbated over Iran's nuclear and missile program (Ismailzade, 2020). The former Israeli president believed that Israel was not threatened by any country except Iran. He announced Iran as the biggest threat to Israel's existence and security. Consequentially, Israel strongly followed the operation to destroy or at least stop Iran's nuclear and missile program, which was formerly conducted over Iraq and Syria. Undoubtedly, Iran essentially differs from the mentioned countries in respect of its response to Israel's measures and distance. Iran's nuclear facility is far from Israel, and this encourages Israel to adopt the periphery doctrine.

Information sources warn of electronic eavesdrop stations of the Zionist regime along the shores of the Caspian Sea and Iran's borders. Indeed, the Israeli company *Baxel* administers the cellphone operator, which is a vital communication system in

Azerbaijan. This control by Israel enables the regime to carry out its espionage activities in Azerbaijan effectively (Omidi & Kheiri, 2018, p. 53). In 2021, the US magazine *Foreign Policy* reported on Azerbaijan's permit to Israel for access to its airfields. This claim, if right, is an essential step in terms of the likely attack by Israel on the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear facilities. However, both Azeri and Israeli officials have denied this matter. Therefore, Israel will likely use the bases in Azerbaijan to attack Iranian nuclear facility if the conflict with Iran is exacerbated. (Ebrahimi & Osuli, 2023, p. 27) Nonetheless, there is no substantiated evidence that Azerbaijan has given Israel such a permit.

4-3. Economic Cooperation

The level of Azerbaijan-Israel cooperation is considerable. The Baku-Tel Aviv trade in 2015 was valued at \$5 billion, which was more than the one between France and Israel (Omidi & Kheiri, 2018, p. 35). Azerbaijan's dire need for modern technology, economic progress, and foreign investment, as well as the lack of facilities in the Caucasian region, has convinced the Azerbaijani officials to cultivate relations with Israel and enhance their economy. The huge reserves of energy in Azerbaijan's shores, which are about 7 billion crude oil barrels and 35 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, have turned the country into a considerable actor in the market for energy. (Ebrahimi & Osuli, 2023, p. 27) The Zionist regime has made many diplomatic efforts for investment in Azerbaijan's oil and gas fields, where the lion share of the Tel Aviv-Baku trade belongs to energy. After Italy, Australia is the second importer of oil from Azerbaijan in such a way that it imported 40% of its oil from Baku in 2015. In August 1997, Benjamin Netanyahu, the then Israel prime minister described the supply of oil through Azerbaijan as in line with the interests of Israel. In such conditions, Zionist companies play an active part in Azerbaijan's energy industry. For example, the Madek Company, which supplies modern technology in the oil and gas industries, possesses active branches in Azerbaijan. Having a 40% market share in Israel is very important to Baku, as 90% of Azerbaijan's exports are composed of gas and oil. Ideological animosity with Israel and her uncertainty of energy supply by Persian Gulf states have called the attention of Israeli intelligence officials to the Caspian Sea oil and gas reserves for investment and energy import in the long term, and this inclination toward economic relations in the long term is one of the reasons behind the regime's strategic alliance with Azerbaijan (Omidi & Kheiri, 2022, p. 38).

5. Azerbaijan-Israel Relations and Consequences for Iran's National Security

Azerbaijan-Israel relationship has negatively affected the Baku-Tehran relationship. However, if, under the theory of Barry Buzan, security and threat are classified into five spheres, including the military, policy, economy, society, and environment, the threats derived from Baku-Tel Aviv ties will affect national security in two military and political sectors. This regime seeks to enhance her position in front of Iran using modern radar systems, and eavesdrop stations near Iran's borders, and espionage, prepare herself for a strike on Iran, and ramp up Iran's vulnerability (Ahmadi & Piran, 2017: 62). For this reason, Iranian officials have many times expressed their concern over Israel-Azerbaijan relations and have accused Baku of cooperation with Israeli spies and terrorists. In Iran's media, many debates have been discussed over Israel's espionage against Iran through Azerbaijan. In September 2014, Iran targeted the Israeli air drone over Natanz, announcing the origin to be Nakhichevan (Kazemi, 2018, p. 76).

In 2018, *Foreign Policy* reported on Baku's permit to the Zionist regime to use Azerbaijan's airfields for bombing Iran in case of embroilment between Tehran and Tel Aviv; however, the Azerbaijani officials denied the claim. In the view of the Zionist officials, the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear program is not only considered a danger by the regime but also the whole of West Asia. Thus, before the measures by the Security Council, all types of methods should have been used to blast or stop the program because Iran is the first and foremost enemy of Israel. Israel's national security strategy is based on impeding West Asian states from becoming nuclear. Therefore, Israel deems Iran the first and foremost threat against her national security and existence; she fears nuclear Iran, and she has even warned that if there is no measure taken by the Security Council to prevent Iran from being nuclear, she will strike Iran's nuclear facilities on her own (Ismailzade, 2020). Moreover, Tel Aviv's military-security presence in Azerbaijan, given her strategic animosity towards Iran, could enter military space into exacerbation in the region, which, while creating a political-security divergence between Azerbaijan and Iran, poses a serious challenge for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On the other hand, Israel may provide for NATO and the USA's presence in the south Caucasus (Niakouiee and Karimpour, 2018, p. 41). All these issues pose a threat to the Islamic Republic of Iran. In Israeli national security, economic clout precedes political clout.

Shimon Peres' statements on Tel Aviv's power being based on science and technology and not the army indicate the significance of the economy in the view of Israeli officials; hence, the regime pursues an increase in its economic power while weakening the economies of other states, particularly that of Iran. Military balance requires a strong economy. Tel Aviv's widespread lobbying to impose further sanctions by the West on Iran is substantial evidence for this claim. In such a condition, Israel's prime strategy in the development of economic-diplomatic ties with Central Asia and the Caucasus is to hinder Iran's clout and participation in economic projects, particularly those concerned with oil and gas. Tel Aviv-Baku political-economic cooperation weakens the Islamic Republic of Iran's influence in Azerbaijan. Israel's economic presence in various sectors of Azerbaijan's economy, while providing for other cooperation, severely reduces cooperation with Iran on water, leads to Iran's economic disadvantage, and reduces Iran's political clout in the region (Asadi Kia, 2013: 41). On the other hand, securing the Zionist regime's energy could strengthen her security and reduce her vulnerability in front of enemies like Iran. (Ebrahimi & Osuli, 2023, p. 27)

Another goal of this regime in Azerbaijan is to fight Iran's influence and hinder a regional order in favor of Iran in the Caucasus. To that end, Israel constantly introduces the Islamic Republic of Iran as a threat to the national security and domestic stability of the regional states and propagates the danger of Islamic fundamentalism's development. Iranophobia is the other goal pursued by Israel (Ranjbar, 2013, p. 59). Statements like "Azerbaijani-Israeli interest in each other is rooted in their fear of Iran", and "their existence is threatened by Iran", are examples of Israel's attempt at Iranophobia. Israel propagates that Iran supports terrorism and Islamist movements in the world; hence, Iran's influence has to be hindered in any way. The establishment of varied cultural centers in Azerbaijan by the Zionist regime for the Jews and the development of cultural ties with countries in the region are examples of Israel's preventive measures against Iran. Israel's activity in Azerbaijan's cultural sector through the Jewish community and influence in the media and press should be taken into consideration; in effect, the Jews are hugely active in Azerbaijan's cultural centers (Kazemi, 2018, p. 32). This position provides for the propagation of Iranophobia in the region, particularly in Azerbaijan. Consequently, when the West and its regional allies, such as Israel, seek to accuse Iran of supporting

Islamic fundamentalism and other terrorist groups and then create a negative mindset in relation to Iran among experts and public opinion in the Caucasus and particularly in Azerbaijan, the issue should not be overlooked.

Another scenario that is discussed in terms of Israel's development of ties with Azerbaijan and its consequences for the Islamic Republic of Iran's national security is Israel's probable attack on Iran from Azerbaijan. In research by Sam Gardiner, the retired Swedish air force colonel, for a think-tank of the Defense Ministry, the feasible scenarios were analyzed. Gardiner believes that with the permit given by Azerbaijan, the fuel problem for Israeli fighters is eliminated. If the fighters take off from Azerbaijan, they could take much less fuel and instead be loaded with more missiles, which increases the success of a strike. Conversely, as Azerbaijan knows that Iran is her neighbor with long frontiers and economic dependencies, as far as security, she has to be careful. Given Iran's foreign policy towards Israel, and as regards Iran-Azerbaijan divergence in home and foreign policy as well as Iran's factual rows with the West and particularly the USA and many Muslim states in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, in practice, an unwritten contract between the states and Iran has been made in the software and hardware domains. Occasionally, Azerbaijan, concerned about the spread of political Islam and Iran's potential influence, may collaborate with Israel to counter Iran, based on shared objectives. This cooperation is particularly notable as both countries are aware of the support they receive from the USA.. Accordingly, Israel will apply all her means and equipment in the world, in the region, and in the countries neighboring Iran to fight against the clout of Iran; however, how far Azerbaijan cooperates with this regime remains a question.

Conclusion

The Soviet disintegration provided a good opportunity for the Zionist regime to exploit the security vacuum in the region and deploy her forces near Iran's borders. Azerbaijan is a particular target for Israel. Due to the shape of the Iran-Azerbaijan border, underdevelopment, and demographic features, the Zionist regime is encouraged more for sabotage and espionage measures as well as for anti-government moves in Iran. The West and the USA's support of Israel in the Caucasus and particularly in Azerbaijan is for the control of Russia and access to energy reserves in the Caspian Sea, as well as for pressure on Iran. This issue has caused Iran to be

confronted with a coalition of states across her northern borders, the consequences of which raise the costs for Iran in politics, security, military, and economy; on the other hand, it affects Iran's relations with other states in the region and challenges Iran's access to a collective security order in the presence of regional actors. Nonetheless, Iran could exploit the existing potentials in the region, including historical, cultural, and religious commonalities, and reinforce public diplomacy to finally turn threat into opportunity; meanwhile, the increase of economic, political, and cultural exchanges and further attempts to deliver practical solutions to settle regional disputes, particularly those in Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia, will encourage regional convergence and bring about success for the Islamic Republic of Iran's national security and interests.

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Iran and the Emerging New World Order: A Strategic Realignment Toward the SCO and BRICS

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Abstract

This article offers a thorough examination of Iran's strategic realignment toward the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS bloc within the evolving international political landscape. Utilizing a neoclassical realist framework, the research delves into the systemic pressures and intrinsic state-level factors that influence Iran's foreign policy decisions. The research method adopted encompasses both qualitative analysis and a review of primary and secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the geopolitical recalibration. Key findings suggest that a blend of economic, diplomatic, and strategic imperatives propels Iran's shift. Economically, affiliations with the SCO and BRICS present Iran with enhanced trade opportunities, investment prospects, and alternative financing mechanisms in the backdrop of Western sanctions. Diplomatically, these affiliations enhance Iran's regional and global standing, providing platforms for constructive dialogue and strategic cooperation. Strategically, the realignment has profound implications for both West Asian power dynamics and the broader global power structures, hinting at a transition toward a more multipolar world order. However, the research also uncovers multifaceted challenges that Iran confronts in this strategic pivot, ranging from managing diverse priorities within the SCO and BRICS to reconciling domestic objectives with global aspirations. In essence, the article sheds light on Iran's adaptive foreign policy strategy amidst a changing global order. By answering questions related to the motivations, benefits, and challenges of Iran's strategic realignment, this research provides valuable insights into the future trajectory of geopolitical dynamics in West Asia and beyond.

Keywords: Iran, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, West Asian Power Dynamics, Multipolar World Order, Foreign Policy, Economic Diplomacy, Global Power Structures.

Introduction

The early 21st century has witnessed tectonic shifts in global power dynamics marked by the steady erosion of the Western-dominated world order and the emergence of a new multipolar configuration (Abushanab, 2023, pp. 125-126; Moyo, 2021, p. 14). The rise of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS bloc exemplifies this transition, fundamentally challenging prevailing unipolar structures by offering alternative platforms for cooperation, development, and global governance (Zhang, 2022, pp. 368-369). Within this evolving landscape, the Islamic Republic of Iran has initiated a strategic realignment aimed at forging closer ties with the SCO and BRICS, reflecting its agency in navigating the emerging multipolar order (Seifi & Khorramshad, 2019, pp. 38-39; Sabet-Saeidi, 2012, p. 70).

Iran's foreign policy posture has undergone significant evolution since the 1979 Revolution, balancing ideology and pragmatism. However, its resistance identity vis-à-vis Western imperialism remains a constant, even as tactical orientations transform based on threat perceptions and national interests (Barzegar, 2013, p. 141). In this vein, Iran's outreach to the SCO and BRICS signifies a strategy of diversifying partnerships to dilute US hegemony while advancing its vision of a just world order. Deeper integration with the SCO and BRICS allows Iran to leverage the geopolitical influence and economic might of these rising powers to neutralize sanctions pressure and expand its regional clout.

Formed in 2001, the SCO originated from the Shanghai Five, established in 1996. It expanded in June 2017 to include India and Pakistan, thereby augmenting its influence in Eurasian geopolitics (Lanteigne, 2018, pp. 124-125). In July 2023, Iran further bolstered the organization's stature by joining its ranks. On the other hand, the BRICS alliance, known for its significant sway in international systems owing to the demographic and economic strength of its members, has invited Iran and other nations, with official membership set to begin on January 1st, 2024 (Pinto, 2023). As a newly inducted member of the SCO and a prospective member of BRICS, Iran envisions leveraging these affiliations to its advantage, aligning with these pivotal organizations that are instrumental in sculpting the emerging multipolar world order.

Yet, Iran's strategic pivot is not without complexities. The nation grapples with challenges like U.S. sanctions, regional rivalries, and the task of aligning its interests with the diverse and sometimes conflicting priorities of SCO and BRICS members. Furthermore, as

Tehran navigates this intricate geopolitical terrain, it must also judiciously manage its relationships with key regional actors, notably China and Russia, ensuring that its regional security posture and global position are not compromised.

In light of these complexities, this article offers a comprehensive analysis of Iran's strategic realignment, probing its underlying motivations and assessing the ensuing opportunities, challenges, and broader implications. To enrich this analysis and provide a structured theoretical backdrop, the article harnesses neoclassical realism theory. This theoretical approach, a synthesis of classical realism and neorealism, elucidates how states' foreign policies are influenced by both overarching systemic factors, such as power distribution and threat landscapes, and intrinsic domestic elements, including the perceptions, interests, and ideologies of political elites (Rose, 1998, pp. 146-147).

Neoclassical realism posits that states, as rational actors, strive to maximize their security and interests in an anarchic world. However, their behavior is shaped by relative capabilities, external environment, and internal characteristics. This perspective aids in comprehending how Iran's strategic realignment is impacted by the evolving dynamics of the international system and the internal features of its political system.

In particular, neoclassical realism can help us address the following questions:

- How does Iran perceive its relative power position and its external threats in the emerging multipolar world order?
- How does Iran balance its relations with different actors in the SCO and BRICS, as well as with other regional and global powers?

To delve into these issues, the forthcoming section of this article will review the literature on the emerging multipolar world order, the role of the SCO and BRICS, and Iran's foreign policy orientation. Following that, we will introduce neoclassical realism theory and explain how it can help us understand Iran's strategic realignment. Then, we will apply the neoclassical realism framework to analyze Iran's relations with each of the SCO and BRICS countries and its participation in their initiatives. Finally, we will evaluate the benefits and challenges that Iran faces in its strategic realignment toward the SCO and BRICS, as well as the implications for regional stability and global power dynamics.

Adopting a qualitative approach, the article will thematically analyze pertinent books, articles, reports, documents, speeches,

statements, and media coverage to holistically assess Iran's evolving role in the emerging new world order.

1. Review of Previous Research

The purpose of this section is to review the most important existing literature on the emerging multipolar world order, the role of the SCO and BRICS, and Iran's foreign policy orientation. These themes are relevant for understanding Iran's strategic realignment toward the SCO and BRICS, as well as its challenges and implications. The literature review will also identify the gaps and limitations that our article aims to address.

The emerging multipolar world order

As the post-Cold War era of US unipolar dominance wanes, there's a discernible shift toward a multipolar global order. This redistribution of power, characterized by the ascent of nations like China, India, and Russia, as well as influential blocs such as the EU and BRICS, is challenging the hitherto prevalent American hegemony (Ikenberry, 2018; Haass, 2008; Zakaria, 2020). While scholars like Layne (2012) and Wohlforth & Brooks (2016) engage in debates about the stability and extent of this emerging multipolarity, there's a general consensus that the global power landscape is undergoing a significant transformation.

Iran and the global power transition

Amidst the shifting global power dynamics, Iran's strategic position is capturing significant attention. Abedi and Aslani (2021) emphasize that, despite facing pressure from the West, Tehran views the multipolar transition as a strategic opportunity. The nation is keen on strengthening its security and international standing, particularly by fostering ties with emergent powers like China. Yet, this alignment comes with its own set of challenges, most notably US sanctions, historical animosities, and the nuances in Iran-US relations. Abedi and Aslani (2021) suggest that Iran's optimal pathway involves a pragmatic engagement with ascending powers and global institutions, contingent on resolving nuclear and sanctions dilemmas with the West.

This view aligns with the recent scholarship of Papageorgiou et al. (2021), which highlights an emerging strategic triangle among China, Iran, and Russia. This formation is seen as a response to counterbalance the United States' dominance. The convergence of these states is driven by factors such as US unilateralism,

manifested in actions like NATO's eastward expansion, sanctions on Russia following the annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine, and the US trade war with China. Additionally, Iran's own sanctions history and the broader US posture during the COVID-19 pandemic have further intensified this realignment.

Papageorgiou et al. (2021) employs the soft balancing theory to elucidate the strategies these nations adopt against US power. Their findings reveal an inclination toward soft balancing mechanisms, predominantly economic strengthening, and intricate diplomacy within international institutions. Moreover, territorial denial, given the regional significance of this strategic triangle, has been pursued on several fronts. Such insights expand our understanding of Iran's strategic position, suggesting not just a pivot toward emergent powers but a more complex, triangular balancing act that may lean toward hard-balancing strategies in the long term. Concurrently, scholars such as Fathollah-Nejad (2021) emphasize the blend of systemic and domestic factors shaping Iran's foreign policy decisions, underscoring the intricate balance Tehran must strike in its affiliations with global entities like the SCO, BRICS, and other stakeholders.

The SCO and BRICS in the new world order

Organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS are emblematic of the rise of alternative power centers in the multipolar world. The SCO, encompassing major Eurasian nations, has evolved into a pivotal bloc focusing on security and economic collaboration. According to Lanteigne (2020), the SCO has become a key regional institution that reflects China's and Russia's interests and influence in Central Asia and beyond. Similarly, BRICS, as Armijo and Roberts (2014) emphasize, offers a platform for emerging economies to coordinate on global governance issues. However, the academic discourse also underscores the challenges these organizations face, particularly in reconciling the varied interests of their members. As Holt (2022) highlights, the China-led Belt and Road Initiative faces obstacles in Central Asia due to misaligned economic interests and security concerns between China and local regimes. This exemplifies the difficulties faced by organizations like the SCO and BRICS in bridging divergent internal priorities.

Iran's foreign policy orientation

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the dynamism of Iran's foreign

policy, oscillating between ideology and pragmatism, has been a focal point for experts. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the dynamism of Iran's foreign policy, oscillating between ideology and pragmatism, has been a focal point for experts. While Esfandiary and Tabatabai (2019) provide a comprehensive account of Iran's relations with China and Russia as its key partners in the multipolar order, analyses by scholars such as Juneau (2014) highlight the pragmatic shifts, albeit within the contours of its Islamist ideology. Understanding these nuanced drivers is essential to contextualizing Iran's strategic realignment in the multipolar era.

In essence, the literature paints a portrait of a world in flux, with the rise of new power centers and the relative decline of established hegemons. This backdrop is crucial in analyzing Iran's strategic calculus and its engagement with entities like the SCO and BRICS.

2. Theoretical Framework: Neoclassical Realism and Iran's Strategic Realignment

In the realm of international relations, theoretical frameworks serve as guiding lenses to unpack and interpret intricate geopolitical phenomena. In this context, our article turns to neoclassical realism to shed light on Iran's strategic realignment in the emerging multipolar world order.

Emerging as a response to perceived gaps in the post-Cold War era, neoclassical realism bridges classical realism and structural neorealism. While neorealism focuses heavily on the anarchic structure of the international system and power distribution as driving state behavior, it often falls short of explaining variations in state foreign policies. Neoclassical realism fills this void by factoring in domestic variables and state-level considerations (Ripsman et al., 2016, pp. 16-17).

The core of neoclassical realism rests on three intertwined variables: the systemic environment, cognitive processes, and domestic dynamics. Systemically, it acknowledges the anarchic nature of international relations, much like its neorealist counterpart. However, it differentiates by emphasizing the subjective perceptions of power and threats by state leaders, suggesting that states might not uniformly respond to systemic pressures due to their interpretations of external environments (Rose, 1998, pp. 152-153).

Cognitively, neoclassical realism accentuates the significance of perception in foreign policy decision-making. It posits that leaders often operate with incomplete or skewed information, which can catalyze miscalculations or overreactions. Individual beliefs,

ideologies, biases, and even emotions further color their decision-making processes (Rose, 1998, pp. 154-155).

Lastly, at the domestic front, neoclassical realism recognizes the interplay of state institutions, elites, and societal actors in shaping a state's external behavior (Schweller, 2004: 61). It suggests that crafting foreign policies involves considering not only external threats but also internal dynamics, constraints, and opportunities. This framework brings into focus the state's power potential, its ability to mobilize resources, and the myriad domestic pressures that can sway policy directions (Rose, 1998, pp. 156-157).

Applying this multi-dimensional lens of neoclassical realism to Iran offers a nuanced understanding of its strategic pivot toward the SCO and BRICS. This framework will guide the ensuing analysis, allowing us to delve deeper into Iran's relations with member countries and its participation in their initiatives, all the while considering both its external and internal motivations.

3. Iran's Strategic Adaptation: A Neoclassical Realist Perspective

The global transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order has ushered in a complex tapestry of geopolitical shifts, redefining inter-state relationships and challenging traditional power structures. In this transformative setting, states are recalibrating their strategic inclinations to better align with the emerging dynamics. Iran, a nation historically positioned at the crossroads of East and West, stands at a pivotal juncture. Its foreign policy, deeply rooted in its historical experiences and resistance identity, is undergoing a strategic adaptation, seeking to diversify its alliances and minimize dependency on the West.

While the neoclassical realism framework posits that states respond to systemic pressures, it emphasizes the significant role of domestic variables and state-level perceptions in shaping foreign policy. Within this theoretical milieu, Iran's strategic realignment can be understood as a nuanced interplay of its perceptions of the international system, the geopolitical shifts, its regional ambitions, and domestic imperatives.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS bloc, as symbols of the emerging multipolar world, offer Iran avenues for diplomatic, economic, and strategic collaboration. These organizations, while challenging Western hegemony, represent opportunities for Iran to bolster its regional influence, mitigate the impact of sanctions, and articulate its vision of global governance. However, this eastward pivot is not merely a pragmatic

adjustment; it's a reflection of Iran's broader strategic calculus, considering both its aspirations as a regional power and its challenges on the global stage.

As we navigate through this section, we shall intricately explore the various facets of Iran's strategic adaptation. From understanding its responses to changing geopolitics to analyzing its engagements with pivotal international organizations, and from assessing the regional implications of its realignment to delving into the domestic drivers of its foreign policy, we aim to offer a comprehensive neoclassical realist perspective on Iran's strategic maneuvers in the evolving multipolar world.

With this overarching description setting the stage, the subsequent subsections will delve deeper into the specifics of Iran's strategic choices, its engagements with the SCO and BRICS, the broader regional and global implications, and the domestic determinants influencing its foreign policy orientation.

3-1. Adapting Foreign Policy to Shifting Geopolitics

The steady transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order has compelled Iran to significantly recalibrate its foreign policy strategy. Iran envisions an opportunity to reshape its strategic posture and pursue greater self-reliance as the global landscape undergoes transformation, characterized by the decline of US hegemony and the rise of alternative power centers in Eurasia. This subsection will analyze how Iran is adapting its foreign policy orientation in response to the shifting geopolitical dynamics in the emerging multipolar era.

According to the neoclassical realist perspective, systemic pressures impel states to adapt their foreign policies based on changed threat perceptions and power realities (Kitchen, 2010, p. 117). However, leaders subjectively interpret global shifts and balance internal and external imperatives influencing adaptation (Ripsman et al., 2016, pp. 6-7). In Iran's case, its strategic culture, rooted in anti-imperialism, and its revolutionary ethos reinforce the leadership's desire to leverage the multipolar transition to diversify its alliances and dilute Western dominance (Juneau, 2014, p. 23).

As the SCO and BRICS emerge as centers of influence, Tehran has initiated an eastern-oriented strategic pivot (Lanteigne, 2020, p. 125). This not only expands its room for diplomatic maneuvering but also intertwines with its vision of a just global order and desire to uplift the developing world. Joining these organizations provides Iran avenues to resist coercive pressures from the West, shape

global governance norms, and articulate an anti-hegemonic agenda. The lifting of UN sanctions on Iran in 2023 has further accelerated this shift by removing constraints on its economic integration and regional influence.

However, Iran faces challenges in harmonizing the priorities of SCO and BRICS members, many of whom maintain close ties with the West (Jahangiri & Vafaei Sa'di, 2018, p. 142). Its balancing strategy requires nuanced engagement, leveraging convergences on issues like terrorism while circumventing discord over Middle East tensions. Adapting to multipolarity also entails the risk of overextending Iran's strategic commitments as it seeks to project power abroad. Nevertheless, recalibrating its foreign policy enables Tehran to claim greater strategic autonomy and reshape its role as a pivotal Eurasian actor in the emerging world order.

3-2. Engaging with the SCO and BRICS

The evolution toward a multipolar world order, marked by the emergence of new geopolitical power centers and a diminishing US hegemony, has revealed new strategic avenues for Iran. Recognizing the shifting global dynamics, Iran, positioned as a crucial Eurasian player, has actively sought to recalibrate its foreign policy. Central to this recalibration is its engagement with influential organizations like the SCO and BRICS, which stand as viable alternatives to the traditionally Western-dominated international landscape. This subsection delves into Iran's motivations, challenges, and the depth of its participation within these blocs, offering insights into how these affiliations align with Tehran's broader foreign policy vision and interests.

Drawing from the lens of neoclassical realism, which posits that while systemic pressures influence state actions, the subjective perceptions of leadership and internal dynamics equally shape foreign policy decisions (Korolev & Portyakov, 2018, p. 416). In the context of Iran, strengthening ties with the SCO and BRICS is not merely a response to systemic shifts. Instead, it aligns with the leadership's perception of these entities as potent platforms to counterbalance US influence, resist Western pressures, and articulate an alternative vision of global governance.

The SCO, enhanced by its inclusion of significant players like India and Pakistan, has fortified its standing in Eurasian geopolitics. For Iran, this association serves multiple purposes: it diversifies Tehran's strategic alliances in its vicinity, paves the way for economic integration, counteracts the challenges posed by

sanctions, and solidifies its identity as a core Eurasian entity. However, certain regional complexities, such as divergent views on issues like Syria and Afghanistan, demand adept diplomatic maneuvering on Iran's part.

On a similar note, Iran's alignment with BRICS resonates with its aspirations to champion the causes of the Global South and advocate for a democratized global governance system (Simbar et al., 2020, p. 166). The collaborative endeavors, such as the New Development Bank (NDB) of BRICS and engagements on platforms like the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), not only enhance Iran's economic prospects but also amplify its diplomatic influence. Yet, geopolitical complexities, such as the Sino-Iranian dynamics in Central Asia and the nuanced Sino-Russian rivalry, necessitate a careful balancing strategy from Tehran.

In essence, Iran's proactive engagements with the SCO and BRICS epitomize its strategic adaptation to the evolving multipolar world. These affiliations provide Tehran with much-needed diplomatic leverage, avenues for economic diversification, and a platform to champion its vision of a just global order. However, the path is strewn with challenges as Iran seeks to synchronize its anti-imperialistic ethos with the pragmatic requisites of diplomacy, all while harmonizing its interests amidst the diverse priorities of member states. As we journey forward, it becomes evident that Iran's strategic associations with these blocs are both an opportunity and a testament to its diplomatic agility in the current global order.

3-3. Regional Stability and Global Power Dynamics

The global shift from a unipolar to a multipolar order has dramatically transformed the geopolitical landscape, prompting nations like Iran, strategically positioned at the nexus of East and West, to recalibrate their foreign policy. This recalibration, notably Iran's pivot toward the SCO and BRICS, resonates deeply not only within its borders but also across West Asia and the broader international arena.

West Asia, a region characterized by historical complexities, sectarian divides, and intricate geopolitical rivalries, stands as a testament to the ripple effects of Iran's strategic decisions (Esmailzadeh, 2023, pp. 50-53). Rooted in the tenets of neoclassical realism, Iran's foreign policy choices, driven by systemic pressures and state-specific imperatives, promise to reshape regional dynamics. By diversifying its alliances and seeking alternatives to Western-centric platforms, Iran challenges traditional power

paradigms, opening potential avenues for dialogue and collaboration. This strategic recalibration, while potentially alleviating regional pressures, also carries the risk of introducing new dynamics and tensions.

On a regional scale, Iran's deeper affiliations with the SCO and BRICS could foster a climate conducive to cooperation, especially if Iran adopts a conciliatory stance. The SCO and BRICS provide Tehran with an important mechanism to achieve some foreign policy goals, especially the "Look to the East" policy (Hamyani & Sajjadpour, 2022, p. 71). Such engagements might pave the way for constructive dialogues on pressing issues, like the Syrian crisis, and mitigate pressures from neighboring states. However, if perceived as a move to intensify regional rivalries or an arms race, it might inadvertently exacerbate existing tensions.

Iran's strategic choices also promise to recalibrate the balance of power in West Asia. Historically characterized by a tug-of-war between regional powerhouses, Iran's strengthening ties with emerging global blocs could potentially shift the prevailing status quo, prompting other actors to reevaluate their diplomatic postures.

Globally, Iran's alignment with the SCO and BRICS not only bolsters its position against Western hegemony but also contributes to the broader shift toward a multipolar world. However, while Iran's influence grows, it remains somewhat overshadowed by established powers, and its ambitions to shape international governance could face challenges due to concerns about disrupting the global status quo.

Despite the potential benefits, Iran's strategic realignment is not devoid of challenges. It might amplify existing geopolitical tensions and give rise to new flashpoints, manifesting in various forms like proxy conflicts or economic rivalries.

In essence, Iran's strategic adaptation, informed by neoclassical realism, unfolds as a nuanced interplay of systemic pressures, regional goals, and its unique domestic imperatives. While this strategic pivot offers a promise of enhanced regional cooperation and a more balanced power distribution, the potential for renewed tensions remains. As the international community closely observes Iran's maneuvers in this shifting geopolitical environment, the broader implications of its decisions on regional stability and global power dynamics will be under keen scrutiny.

3-4. Domestic Determinants

Iran's foreign policy, influenced by systemic pressures and opportunities in the international system, is also profoundly shaped by various domestic factors and dynamics. According to neoclassical realism, states are not unitary actors but complex entities composed of different political institutions, strategic cultures, public opinions, and economic conditions that shape their foreign policy choices (Becker et al., 2015, p. 117). In this subsection, we will examine how these domestic determinants affect Iran's strategic adaptation to the multipolar world order.

3-4-1. Political Institutions

Iran's political system is a theocratic-republican hybrid, with a supreme leader who holds ultimate authority and an elected president. The supreme leader appoints key officials such as the head of the judiciary, the commander of the armed forces, and the members of the Guardian Council, which vets candidates for elections and reviews legislation. The president appoints the cabinet and heads the executive branch. The parliament (Majlis), elected by the people, has the power to pass laws and approve the budget. The political system also includes various informal networks of influence, such as clerical factions, revolutionary guards, bonyads (charitable foundations), and civil society groups.

Like many countries, Iran has a complex political system with multiple centers of power that shape its foreign policy decisions and implementation. The involvement of various institutions and factions, such as the supreme leader, president, parliament, revolutionary guards, and clerical networks, allows for diverse perspectives but can also lead to inconsistencies at times. However, this diversity enables dialogue and compromise among different political actors, which can facilitate foreign policy adaptation. For instance, the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal required cooperation between the moderately reformist government and pragmatic support from other stakeholders. On the other hand, aspects like ideological differences or institutional constraints can pose challenges for policy implementation and accountability. Overall, Iran's multifaceted political landscape both facilitates and hinders aspects of its foreign policy formulation.

3-4-2. Strategic Culture

Rooted in its rich history, ideological convictions, national identity, and geopolitical context, Iran's strategic culture is multifaceted. It

embodies a deep sense of pride stemming from its ancient civilization and illustrious cultural heritage. Concurrently, it carries a sense of vulnerability, given Iran's past experiences with foreign interventions and dominations. A pivotal aspect of this culture is its resistance identity-manifested in its establishment as an Islamic Republic that stood up against Western imperialism, pioneering a distinct political system anchored in Shia Islam (Barzegar, 2013, pp. 140-141).

This strategic culture has profound implications for Iran's foreign policy, as follows:

- **Perception of the external environment:** Iran's strategic culture shapes its worldview, especially its understanding of threats and opportunities. It sees itself encircled by adversaries, notably Israel and the US, which it believes aim to compromise its sovereignty and security. Moreover, Iran considers itself a beacon for nations oppressed by Western dominance, advocating for a challenge against Western hegemony and perceived injustices.
- **Strategic preferences:** Influenced by its strategic culture, Iran leans toward self-reliance, often prioritizing its innate capabilities over external dependencies (Gholampour et al., 2021, p. 64). In terms of military strategy, there's a preference for asymmetric warfare, leveraging strategic partnerships, and employing supportive intermediaries, as opposed to conventional military engagements, to further its interests and deter potential threats.
- **Guiding values in foreign policy:** Iran's foreign policy rests on values of independence, sovereignty, justice, dignity, and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, Islamic principles play a significant role in shaping its interactions with other Muslim nations and entities.
- **Public opinion:** Factors like education, media exposure, social movements, economic conditions, and political events collectively shape Iran's public opinion. However, this opinion isn't monolithic; it mirrors the diversity and dynamism inherent in Iranian society. The public's sentiment significantly influences foreign policy-it can both empower and restrict decision-makers, and it plays a crucial role in establishing the legitimacy and efficacy of their actions.

Drawing from various surveys and studies, the nuances of Iran's public opinion in relation to foreign policy can be outlined as follows:

- **SCO and BRICS engagement:** There is a general inclination in Iran's public opinion toward its involvement with the SCO and BRICS. These organizations are perceived as avenues for

economic prospects, diplomatic acknowledgment, and strategic independence. Moreover, they are viewed as being more respectful of Iran's sovereignty compared to Western-centric institutions (Masoumi, 2023; Ansari, 2023).

- **Views on US and Israel:** The public sentiment in Iran tends to be critical of US policies and displays aversion toward Israel, primarily because they are seen as threats to Iran's security and self-respect. There's also a general reluctance to make concessions on issues like the nuclear program or regional roles, which are deemed essential for national interests (Iran Poll, 2019).
- **Stance on China and Russia:** The public sentiment is favorable toward China and Russia. They are perceived as strategic allies, and their support, especially in opposition to US sanctions and backing Iran's nuclear ambitions, is appreciated (Hadian, 2023; DW, 2021).
- **Perspective on India, Pakistan, and Turkey:** Public opinion shows ambivalence when it comes to India (Baruah, 2022), Pakistan (Karim, 2023), and Turkey (Stein & Bleek, 2012, p. 149; Kanat, 2016). Relations with these countries span both cooperative and competitive dimensions. In general, it is also logically obvious that public sentiments vary based on specific issues such as trade, energy, security, or regional disputes that affect Iran's interests and influence in the region.
- **Opinion on Brazil and South Africa:** The general sentiment toward Brazil and South Africa is positive, or at least not negative. They are recognized as rising powers with shared global aspirations and challenges. Their solidarity on issues like human rights and development is valued.

To conclude, public opinion in Iran acts as a key domestic factor influencing its foreign policy decisions. Representing the diverse preferences and values of Iranian society, it steers Iran's strategic adaptation within the evolving multipolar global scenario. Yet, this opinion isn't fixed-it evolves with changing situations, necessitating continuous observation and assessment to comprehend its bearings on Iran's foreign policy.

4. Analysis of Findings: Evaluating Iran's Strategic Realignment

This section provides a comprehensive evaluation of Iran's strategic realignment toward the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS bloc. It assesses the multifaceted benefits, risks, and complex challenges associated with Iran's eastward pivot and integration into these organizations.

The analysis also elucidates the far-reaching implications of Iran's shifting foreign policy alignment, examining its impacts on regional power dynamics in West Asia as well as broader transformations in global power structures.

As Iran charts its course in an evolving multipolar order, it must strike a delicate balance between its domestic priorities and global ambitions. This section will highlight the nuanced strategic decisions and trade-offs required as Tehran reconciles its internal and external imperatives.

Applying insights from the neoclassical realist perspective, the evaluation highlights that Iran's strategic realignment is shaped by both systemic pressures and intrinsic state-level factors. The concluding analysis sums up the key opportunities and dilemmas for Iran as it adapts its foreign policy strategy to the emerging global landscape.

4-1. Harnessing the Potentials of SCO and BRICS Engagement

In the intricate landscape of global geopolitics, Iran's strategic alignment with the SCO and BRICS emerges as a significant recalibration. Drawing inspiration from neoclassical realism, a framework that suggests nations are guided by systemic pressures while their foreign policies are also influenced by internal dynamics and leadership perceptions (Rose, 1998: 148; Smith, 2016, p. 316).

- **Economically**, the SCO and BRICS, entities that collectively wield substantial influence on global economic trajectories (Kirton & Larionova, 2022), present Iran with multifarious opportunities. From fostering trade collaborations to energy partnerships, the potential avenues are vast. Especially against the backdrop of Western sanctions, financial mechanisms like the NDB of BRICS and strategic projects like China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) manifest as pivotal channels for Iran, offering both financial solace and strategic connectivity. Recent statistics underscore the significant economic promise of Iran's BRICS membership, highlighting robust trade interactions, particularly in exports, which affirm the strategic importance of this alignment in Iran's economic diplomacy (Mehr News, 2023).
- **Diplomatically**, affiliations with these organizations amplify Iran's position on the international stage, providing platforms for dialogue on crucial issues ranging from security to sustainable development. They enhance Iran's diplomatic leverage, as evidenced by consistent stances against unilateral actions pertaining to Iran's nuclear program and endorsements of its

peaceful nuclear endeavors within international frameworks.

- **Politically**, Iran's BRICS membership is anticipated to foster subtle shifts in regional alignments and diplomatic relations. It is viewed as a potential conduit for easing regional tensions, promoting reconciliation processes, and navigating nuanced foreign policies, reflecting the multifaceted influence of this membership beyond economic considerations.
- **Strategically**, alignment with the SCO and BRICS augments Iran's position against a predominantly Western-centric world order, resonating with its vision of a multipolar global order anchored in mutual respect and equity. This strategic recalibration enhances Iran's security and influence, promoting a more inclusive approach in global governance arenas, such as advocating for UNSC reforms.

4-2. Traversing the Realignment Challenges

In the realm of international relations, strategic realignments, while presenting new avenues of opportunity, often usher in a set of inherent challenges. For Iran, the pivot toward the SCO and BRICS, while being a reflection of its broader strategic recalibration in the face of an evolving multipolar world, is not devoid of its share of intricacies.

A primary concern lies in managing relations amidst diverse membership priorities within the SCO and BRICS. These organizations, while unified in certain broader objectives, consist of member states with their own distinct national interests and geopolitical aspirations. For instance, while both Russia and China advocate a multipolar world, their strategies in Central Asia might diverge. Similarly, India's approach to regional connectivity might differ from China's Belt and Road Initiative. Navigating these intricate dynamics necessitates a nuanced understanding and adept diplomatic maneuvering on Iran's part to ensure its interests are safeguarded while contributing constructively to the collective objectives of these organizations.

Moreover, regional dynamics present another layer of complexity. Iran's relations with neighboring countries and traditional rivals will inevitably influence its engagements within the SCO and BRICS frameworks. Balancing these regional dynamics, especially with countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel, while fostering productive relationships within the SCO and BRICS, will be a tightrope walk for Tehran.

Domestically, the alignment with SCO and BRICS might be

subjected to varied perceptions. While certain factions might view it as a step toward breaking away from Western hegemony and sanctions, others might express concerns over the potential over-reliance on these eastern blocs. Addressing these domestic sentiments, ensuring transparency, and building a national consensus will be pivotal for the success of this realignment.

Lastly, potential resistance from traditional Western allies and institutions can't be overlooked. The West, especially the United States and its European allies, might perceive Iran's eastward pivot as a move to counter Western influence, potentially leading to diplomatic pushbacks and intensified efforts to curtail Iran's rise in these new frameworks.

Drawing from neoclassical realism, it becomes evident that Iran's move toward the SCO and BRICS is driven by systemic pressures, but its strategies within these frameworks will be deeply influenced by its perception of the internal and external environment. The interplay of these factors will dictate how Iran maneuvers through the challenges of its strategic realignment, ensuring that it doesn't merely react to global shifts but actively shapes its destiny within them.

4-3. Reframing West Asian Power Equilibrium

West Asia, often recognized as a hotspot of geopolitical contestations, has long been characterized by shifting allegiances, power struggles, and enduring rivalries. Within this complex matrix, Iran emerges as a pivotal player, with its strategic realignment promising to bring about substantive changes to the regional power dynamics.

Iran's deeper engagement with the SCO and BRICS not only impacts its bilateral relations with member countries but also holds profound implications for the broader West Asian region. Neoclassical realism posits that while systemic pressures influence foreign policy choices, it's the interplay of these pressures with state-level perceptions and capabilities that shapes the outcomes. In the context of West Asia, Iran's realignment can be seen as a response to both systemic pressures and its intrinsic quest for greater regional influence.

One of the immediate outcomes of this realignment is the potential shift in regional alliances. Traditional allies might reassess their positions, while erstwhile rivals could explore avenues of cooperation with Iran. This fluidity in alliances could lead to the emergence of new blocs within West Asia, driven by economic, strategic, and security considerations.

The balance of power within the region is also poised for recalibration. With Iran leveraging the economic, diplomatic, and strategic potentials of its affiliations with the SCO and BRICS, it stands to enhance its regional stature. This enhanced position could act as a counterweight to other regional powers, potentially reducing the asymmetry in power dynamics. Such shifts could alter conflict dynamics, especially in areas where Iran has vested interests, potentially leading to new conflict resolution mechanisms or the escalation of existing disputes.

Furthermore, Iran's key relationships within West Asia, especially with countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey, will inevitably experience the ripple effects of its strategic realignment. While perceived geopolitical competition might strain some relationships, others could find common ground driven by mutual interests and changing regional dynamics.

In essence, Iran's strategic pivot toward the SCO and BRICS is not just an isolated foreign policy choice; it is a decision that reverberates across the West Asian region. The ramifications of this choice will shape the region's geopolitical landscape, influencing alliance structures, power balances, and regional stability. Through the lens of neoclassical realism, it becomes evident that Iran's strategic choices, while influenced by broader global shifts, deeply intertwine with its aspirations and perceived challenges within the West Asian context.

4-4. Reshaping Global Power Structures

The global stage is a realm of constant flux, with nations continually vying for influence and dominance. Traditional power centers, especially the Western hegemony led by the United States, have long shaped the contours of international politics. However, the winds of change are blowing, and multipolarity is increasingly becoming the defining characteristic of the contemporary world order. Within this transformative landscape, Iran's strategic realignment toward the SCO and BRICS carries implications that extend far beyond its regional confines.

Drawing from neoclassical realism, while systemic pressures undoubtedly play a role in shaping foreign policy choices, it's the amalgamation of these external pressures with state-level perceptions and capabilities that truly steers outcomes. Iran's pivot, in this context, can be viewed as a manifestation of its ambitions to be a pivotal player in this shifting global matrix.

One of the most profound implications of Iran's realignment is

the challenge it poses to Western dominance. The SCO and BRICS, as collective entities, represent a significant portion of the world's population, GDP, and resources. Their collective might, both economically and strategically, is a counterbalance to the traditionally Western-centric global order. With Iran augmenting this bloc's strength, the challenge to Western hegemony becomes even more pronounced. This doesn't just signify a shift in power dynamics but also portends a potential transformation in global norms, values, and governance structures, especially if these organizations start playing more active roles in global institutions.

The realignment also fosters the growth of multipolarity. With countries like China and Russia at the helm of these organizations, and with Iran's added weight, the global balance of power witnesses further distribution. This not only dilutes the unilateral decision-making capacities of any single power center but also ensures that global decisions are more representative of diverse interests. In a sense, the world moves toward a more egalitarian governance model, where power is more diffused and shared among a wider set of actors.

Furthermore, Iran's realignment could catalyze a broader reshuffling of global alliances. Countries that traditionally aligned with the West might reassess their positions, weighing the benefits of aligning with a rising East against the traditional security and economic guarantees offered by the West. This could lead to the creation of new global blocs or alliances, or even the strengthening of existing ones, based on shared interests and mutual benefits.

In essence, Iran's strategic pivot toward the SCO and BRICS is not a mere recalibration of its foreign policy; it's a move that has the potential to alter the very fabric of the global political order. By challenging the established norms and tilting toward a multipolar world, Iran's decisions could usher in a new chapter in international relations, where power dynamics are more balanced, alliances are more fluid, and global governance is more inclusive and representative.

4-5. Navigating Domestic Goals and Global Aspirations

In the realm of international relations, every nation must reconcile its domestic imperatives with its global aspirations. This interplay between internal objectives and external commitments is a complex dance, fraught with challenges but also replete with opportunities. For Iran, especially in the wake of its strategic realignment toward the SCO and BRICS, this balance becomes even more critical.

According to neoclassical realism, statesmen are also influenced

by domestic considerations as they respond to systemic pressures. These internal factors, be they economic necessities, political dynamics, or societal demands, often temper a state's response to external stimuli. For Iran, this interplay has been particularly pronounced.

Domestically, Iran has its own unique set of challenges and priorities. From the economic aspirations of its burgeoning youth population to the sociopolitical demands of its diverse ethnic and religious groups, Tehran has to ensure that its foreign policy decisions resonate well at home. The benefits of aligning with the SCO and BRICS, for instance, need to be tangible enough to justify any compromises or trade-offs on the domestic front.

On the global stage, Iran's aspirations are clear: to be a pivotal player in the emerging multipolar world order. This requires not just strategic partnerships, like those with the SCO and BRICS, but also a careful navigation of its relations with traditional allies and adversaries. Iran's global ambitions, therefore, necessitate a dynamic foreign policy that can adapt to changing global realities while ensuring that core national interests are not compromised.

One of the most significant challenges in this navigation is ensuring that domestic imperatives do not unduly hinder global aspirations. For instance, while Iran's economic needs might necessitate closer ties with certain nations, its ideological or political stance might require a more cautious approach. Similarly, while global dynamics might suggest a pivot in a particular direction, domestic political considerations could mandate restraint.

However, this interplay is not just about challenges. It's also about opportunities. By effectively leveraging its domestic strengths, be it its rich cultural heritage, its strategic location, or its vast natural resources, Iran can enhance its global standing. Conversely, its global engagements can also be used to drive domestic growth, development, and stability.

In essence, for Iran, the path forward is not about choosing between domestic goals and global aspirations. It's about synthesizing the two and creating a coherent strategy where one complements the other. It's about recognizing that in today's interconnected world, domestic and global are not isolated realms but two sides of the same coin. And for a nation like Iran, with its rich history and promising future, this synthesis can be the key to a prosperous and influential position in the global order.

Conclusion

The international political landscape is in a state of flux, with traditional power dynamics being challenged and new alliances emerging. Central to this transformation is Iran's strategic realignment toward the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS bloc. Using the neoclassical realist perspective, this article delved deep into the multifaceted dimensions of Iran's recalibration of foreign policy.

One of the key findings of this research is the economic impetus behind Iran's strategic shift. The potential for enhanced trade, investment opportunities, and access to alternative financing mechanisms, such as the New Development Bank, positions Iran favorably in the face of Western sanctions. Diplomatically, affiliations with the SCO and BRICS bolster Iran's regional and international stature, providing platforms for dialogue and strategic cooperation.

Moreover, our study highlighted the profound implications of this realignment for West Asian power dynamics. Iran's renewed engagements contribute to reshaping regional power structures, potentially leading to a more balanced power equilibrium. At the global level, Iran's pivot challenges the Western-dominated order, hinting at a more multipolar world order.

Yet, the path isn't devoid of challenges. Navigating the diverse priorities of SCO and BRICS members, addressing domestic sentiments, and anticipating potential resistance from the West require astute diplomacy and foresight. A crucial aspect that emerged from our analysis is the intricate balancing act that Iran must perform to reconcile its domestic objectives with global aspirations.

The neoclassical realist framework that underpins this research proved instrumental in providing nuanced insights into Iran's strategic decisions. By emphasizing both systemic pressures and intrinsic state-level factors, it allowed for a comprehensive understanding of Tehran's motivations and strategies. This theoretical lens underscored how leadership perceptions, national capabilities, and external constraints collectively shape Iran's foreign policy trajectory.

In essence, Iran's strategic realignment, as illuminated by this study, is a testament to its adaptive foreign policy strategy. While the road ahead is fraught with challenges, the opportunities for Iran in the emerging global landscape are significant. As the international system continues to evolve, Iran's role and the choices it makes will undoubtedly be pivotal in shaping the future geopolitical order.

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Air Pollution: Sanctions' Effect and Rival Hypotheses

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Abstract

Tehran has been grappling with irritating air pollution for a couple of years, and the challenge seems to be getting worse. However, what is the main reason for this? To answer the question, many studies have concentrated on the primary chemical ingredients, like CO, and others have focused on where such pollutants are produced, like factories. Nevertheless, we have selected a higher level of analysis by reviewing socio-economic hypotheses (including sanctions, population, mismanagement, and global climate change) from 1999 to 2023 while using descriptive and inferential statistics. We know that petrol is one of the main exported products of Iran. Thus, to evaluate sanctions as the central hypothesis, we surveyed the rate of crude oil exports, and as an assumption, there is a negative relationship between sanctions and such exportation. At this stage, we studied the relationship between sanctions and AQI (one of the best scales for calculating air pollution), and on the other hand, sanctions and the main toxic gases. For rival hypotheses, we analyzed the relationship between AQI and them (population, mismanagement, and global climate change). All in all, among them, the results demonstrate only the correlation of sanctions with CO (-.916), NO₂ (.718), and SO₂ (-.687). Meanwhile, it is assumed that by using some methods and applying standards, the government could manage the amount of CO and SO₂, whereas, due to the need of mazut to maintain the economy of energy, NO₂ has increased.

Keywords: International Sanctions, AQI, Clean Air, the USA, Iran, PM₁₀, O₃, FGD.

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Introduction

Tehran, the capital city of Iran, is afflicted by a multitude of environmental challenges, like waste disposal (Zand& Heir, 2020), water contamination (Nahid & Moslehi, 2008), and water scarcity (Jahani & Reyhani, 2007). However, air pollution is seen as one of the most dangerous obstacles responsible for the deaths of 5000 citizens (Iranian Diplomacy, December 5, 2016). Moreover, economically, air pollution costs the country at least \$2.6 billion annually (Heger & Sarraf, 2018, p. 7). Thus, questions about attitudes toward air pollution (Mohammadkhah et al., 2017), mechanisms to control it (Delavar et al., 2019; Motlagh et al., 2021), and its adverse ramifications (Yousefi et al., 2018; Hosseinpour et al., 2005; Dehghan et al., 2018) have been studied by many scholars.

Nevertheless, we are going to focus on the causes of this stumbling block because, without analyzing the reasons, finding solutions that are both effective and durable seems problematic. However, many scholars, as you can see in the next sections, focus on the main sources of pollutants like factories, automobiles, and agricultural activities. Although these are important, we are going to conduct our research to find other sources. In other words, the article concentrates on sanctions, climate change, mismanagement, and population. These sources are different from common knowledge in two ways:

- 1) They are more fundamental and could result in institutionalizing common sources of air pollution, like vehicles.
- 2) In terms of the humanities, they are closer to social, political, and economic aspects, while the common sources are more related to engineering and chemistry. Thus, our study is interdisciplinary research between social science and environmental science.

In addition, some experts are of the opinion that there is a link between this problem and sanctions. For instance, they put an emphasis on the role of sanctions on Iran's industry (Feghe Majidi& Zarouni, 2020). In this term, sanctions have deprived the country of using cutting-edge devices that are eco-friendlier compared with the old ones, and wittingly or unwittingly, they have had a negative impact on the environment (Madani, 2020). Furthermore, sanctions force politicians to make wrong decisions, for example, by waiving diesel particulate filters on diesel trucks, which could deteriorate the environment (Madani, 2021, p. 237). Therefore, we will select the correlation between sanctions and Tehran's air pollution as the main

hypothesis of the article. To assess the main and rival hypotheses, we first describe the main hypotheses. In this section, we can get familiar with the literature review related to every hypothesis as well. Then methodology will explain, and hypotheses are evaluated by applying descriptive and inferential statistics.

Hypotheses About Tehran's Air Pollution

The relationship between sanctions and air pollution is not as direct as many residents assume. The debates were split into various categories, which could be seen as rival hypotheses. Nevertheless, none of them has been tested until now in a comprehensive study.

On the one hand many scholars and politicians share the viewpoint that sanctions are the main cause of air pollution. Sanctions by reducing access to modern technology, especially new eco-friendly devices, and using fewer fossil fuels directly contribute to boosting air contamination (Ghouchani et al., 2021). In addition, Iran is subject to a lack of financial transactions, which is mainly rooted in the fear of secondary sanctions. It deteriorates the normal trade to access such technologies. The government has been compelled to use out-of-date instruments and materials to sustain its economy, especially in the oil industry. Substituting mazut as the main fuel source for factories, in particular, the power plant, is said to be the main reason for pollutants (Hosseini, Stefaniec, 2019).

On the other side, the rising population is seen as a major challenge for air quality. It could result in overusing natural resources as well as producing more toxic gases (Chen et al., 2020; Neumayer & Cole, 2004; Norton 2000; Molina & Molina, 2004). These categories demonstrate the “unidirectional causality” between population growth and toxic emissions (Khan et al., 2021). Research in this category can find out the contribution of the population to air pollution. For example, population growth has led to an increasing food system. Subsequently, its “production, processing, packaging, transport, retail, consumption, and disposal” are responsible for making 10% to 90% of air pollutants (Crippa et al., 2022).

Many people, struggling with money to make ends meet or more wealth, have an eye on natural resources at the cost of the environment, and we summarize all of them in a group called mismanagement (Hasan & Mulamoottil, 1994; Chandrappa & Kulshrestha, 2015; Zhang et al., 2022). Statistics show that the more a government focuses on the environment, the fewer toxic gases it releases (Bao & Liu, 2022). In this category, controlling methane emissions, natural resources, and urbanization by the public sector

are pivotal to having clear air (Hanif et al., 2022).

Global climate change is another hypothesis, bringing up more concerns in terms of nature. Global and regional warming affect the air quality in all cities, and changing climate patterns lead to unpredictable weather. Global warming could increase pollutants like NO_x (Wu et al., 2022). In this sphere, Tehran's air pollution is said to be caused by external factors rather than interior ones. Some experts opine those environmental problems in Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq are prominent factors in Iran's air quality (Hosseini & Shahbazi, 2016; Khoshnevisan et al., 2016; Al-Dabbas et al., 2012). These views all fall under the category of climate change.

Nevertheless, none of the research in all branches can illustrate the main cause of air pollution since the results are ambiguous. In addition, they have selected different methods, levels of analysis, and various scopes of study. While they can calculate the portion of one factor affecting air pollution, they are not engaged in testing rival hypotheses.

Methodology

Despite the claims, finding the best way to control intervening variables is intricate. In addition, valid data related to factors polluting Tehran is hardly available. The only data is the air quality index, and it has covered just a few years. Moreover, lack of experts, having professionals in all related dimensions, and the intrinsic forgetfulness of related data for many years led us to reject surveys as a preferential way for data gathering. To harness these limitations, we conduct our work using a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis in various phases, as explained below.

1- Gathering data related to air pollution from the Air Quality Control Company (AQCC)¹: The data is written based on the solar year. But the data for other variables is settled on the Georgian calendar. Thus, we converted the solar into the Georgian year. Each year comprises the duration between January 1st and December 31st. We need to collect two different categories:

I. The number of days in terms of the descriptive condition of the Air Quality Index (AQI)²: This class is defined into six groups

1 Tehran municipality, Air Quality Control Company (AQCC)

2 The AQI (Air Quality Index) is the average of six major air pollutants. Think of the AQI as a yardstick that runs from 0 to 500. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern.

- by the company, which could be named special days: Good Days, Moderate Days, Unhealthy Days for Sensitive Groups, Unhealthy Days, Very Unhealthy Days, and Hazardous Days
- II. The number of days in terms of sub-variables related to AQI: This class is defined into six major pollutants by the company: CO, O₃, NO₂, SO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.¹ Notwithstanding the availability of data for all days, the company does not provide the annual average of each pollutant. Therefore, we use a simple average equation.
- 2- Selecting the time duration for other variables: Since the data for the air quality of Tehran is our dependent variable, the time scope for other independent variables is limited to the independent variable. Thus, due to the available data related to the dependent variable, our time scope will be 1999-2021.
 - 3- Gathering data related to Tehran's population to study the impact of the variable on Tehran's air pollution
 - 4- Gathering data related to global climate change to study the impact of the variable on Tehran's air pollution
 - 5- Gathering data related to Sanction's pressure: due to different kinds of sanctions (direct/indirect, primary/secondary, conventional/smart), their scope (individuals, parties, national), the level of cooperation to implement them (international, multilateral, unilateral), their subjected sections (economic/political/military, governmental/nongovernmental), and the difference between the sanction's law and its real commitment, we cannot count on the list and the number of sanctions annually. On the other hand, it would be hard to correlate the situation of the whole economy with sanctions because sometimes sanctions can influence some segments in a positive way. However, it is common knowledge that Iran is one

AQI Values	Levels of Health Concern	Colors
0-50	Good Days (GD)	Green
51-100	Moderate Days (MD)	Yellow
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (UDS)	Orange
151-200	Unhealthy Days (UD)	Red
201-300	Very Unhealthy Days (VUD)	Purple
301-500	Hazardous Days (HD)	Maroon

Source: Air Now, Air Quality Index (AQI) Basics

1. Carbon Oxide, Ozone, Nitrogen Dioxide, Sulfur Dioxide, Particular Matter having different sizes.

of the main exporters of crude oil, and if sanctions want to put pressure on the country's economy, this area is the first target. In addition, it would be possible that some oil-related and other sections of the industry, like farming, could take advantage of sanctions on crude oil to increase their exports. Thus, the volume of other exports might not allow us to draw a link between the intensity of sanctions and their data. Moreover, for sure, Iran has been trying to find informal ways to sell crude oil (Katzman, 2014; Samadi et al., 2021). However, the data is inaccessible. Overall, the formal data about the amount of COE¹ might be the best criteria to weigh up the stringency of sanctions.

- 1- Gathering data related to management to study the impact of the variable on Tehran's air pollution: Despite the existence of direct indexes, for example, Natural Resource Management (NRM) and the Climate Change Performance Index, and some indirect indexes like Government Effectiveness Index, and Resource Governance Index, due to their novelty, none of them can cover the dependent time of our research. On the other hand, if we were going to gather the related data by applying a standard questionnaire and its indicators, it would be genuinely difficult for the people to answer all relevant questions precisely since many years have passed, and despite the possibility of general evaluation, it would be impossible to evaluate all indicators for all years. However, we select Government Effectiveness as a measure to calculate the general performance of government management on natural resources. This data covers the related years. Meanwhile, due to the role and power of government, Iran seems to be a state-centered country (Fakhraei, 2018). Thus, we can draw a link between the government's capability to manage public services and the overall management of the country. On the other hand, the assumption is that a higher score indicates better management in terms of the environment.
- 2- Categorizing variables based on hypotheses
- 3- Analyzing by comparing descriptive statistics: we do it by drawing tables and comparing the data with the COE and AQI in two groups:
 - I. Data relevant to air pollution: this category is separated into two sub-categories. In the first category, toxic gases and AQI will be compare with the COE, and in the second category, we will compare special days and the COE.

1. Crude Oil Export

II. Data related to rival hypotheses: in this phase, we will compare TP¹, GCC², and GEF³ with the AQI as the best indicator showing the air situation.

4- Analyzing by using inferential statistics: To fulfill this task, we will carry out the below steps:

I. *Normality test*: in this section, each category is computed to see whether the relation between dependent and independent variables is parametric or non-parametric. We study Skewness and Kurtosis as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) tests to survey normality. The formulas are:

$$\text{skewness} = \frac{\sum(X_i - \mu)^3}{N\sigma^3} \quad \text{Kurtosis} = \frac{\sum(X_i - \mu)^4}{N\sigma^4} - 3$$

where X_i = random variable, μ = mean of the distribution, N = number of population, σ = standard deviation (Cohen, 2008: 85-86).

$$K - S = \frac{\text{Sup} |\bar{F}_n(x) - F_x|}{x \in (-\infty, \infty)} \quad S - W = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^n a_i x_{(i)})^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$$

where:

$x_{(i)}$ = the ordered random sample values,

a_i = constants generated from the covariances, variances and means of the sample (size n) from a normally distributed sample,

\bar{x} = mean of random sample,

(Razali et al., 2011: 25).

where:

$\bar{F}_n(x)$ = the Cumulative Distribution Function of the hypothesized distribution,

F_x = the *empirical distribution function* of your observed data,

(Efromovich, 2008: 99).

II. *The correlation tests*: we use Spearman for nonparametric and Pearson correlation for parametric categories. The formulas are:

$$\text{Spearman} = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n - (n^2 - 1)}$$

where d_i = difference between the two ranks of each observation, n = number of observations (Calmorin, 1997: 129).

1. Tehran's Population
2. Global Climate Change
3. Government Effectiveness

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Pearson} \\
 & = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (T_{act(i)} - \bar{x}_{T_{act(i)}})(MM_{y(i)} - \bar{x}_{MM_{y(i)}})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (T_{act(i)} - \bar{x}_{T_{act(i)}})^2 \sum_{i=1}^n (MM_{y(i)} - \bar{x}_{MM_{y(i)}})^2}}
 \end{aligned}$$

where i = data sample, $MM_{(y)(i)}$ = estimated joint torque using mathematical model, $y=1,2,3,\dots$, $T_{act(i)}$ = actual joint torque, $\bar{x}_{T_{act(i)}}$ = mean of actual joint torque, $\bar{x}_{MM_{y(i)}}$ = mean of estimated joint torque (Rodrigues et al., 2016: 456-457).

III. *Study the possibility of regression:* Firstly, we have to study the existence of four conditions: (1) linearity, (2) nearly normal residuals, (3) constant variability, and (4) uncorrelated error (Bishnu & Bhattacharjef, 2018, p. 184). Secondly, if they are present, we can use the formula of linear regression:

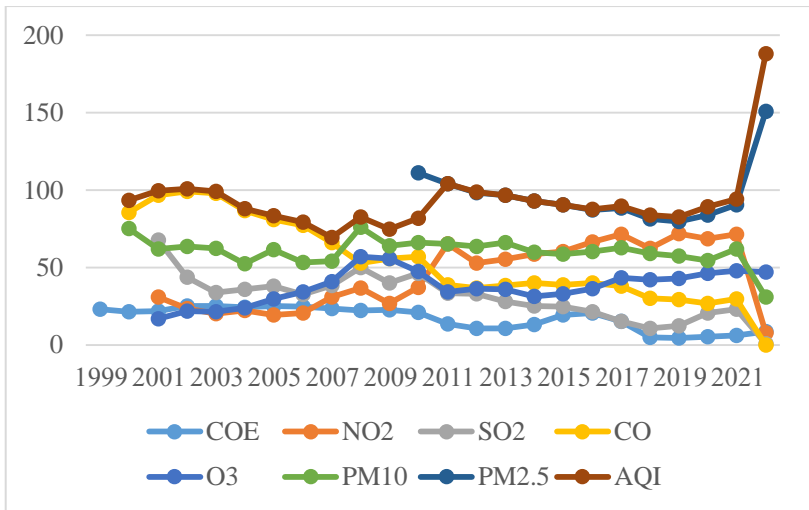
$$Y = B_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_nx_n$$

where Y = the dependent variable, x_i = the independent variable, b_i = the slope of the line, B_0 = the intercept (the value of y when $x = 0$) (Anderson et al., 2020, p. 687).

Subsequent to data collection, we present a comparative analysis in tabular form. It should be noted that the scoring methods for the corresponding scales differ. However, in order to facilitate comparison within the table, the numerical values are standardized. As an example, if the scores of one variable range from 1 to 100, while another variable ranges from 0 to 1, we transformed all the data to a common scoring range of 1 to 100.

Toxic Gases, AQI and COE

In the case of CO, 2002 experienced the highest and 2020 the lowest. In addition, there is a diminishing trend since 2003. However, NO and SO are the two gases that could indicate the impact of sanctions.



Source: Tehran unicity, Air Quality Control Company (AQCC); Fred Economic Data

Table (1): The Trends of Toxic Gases, AQI and COE

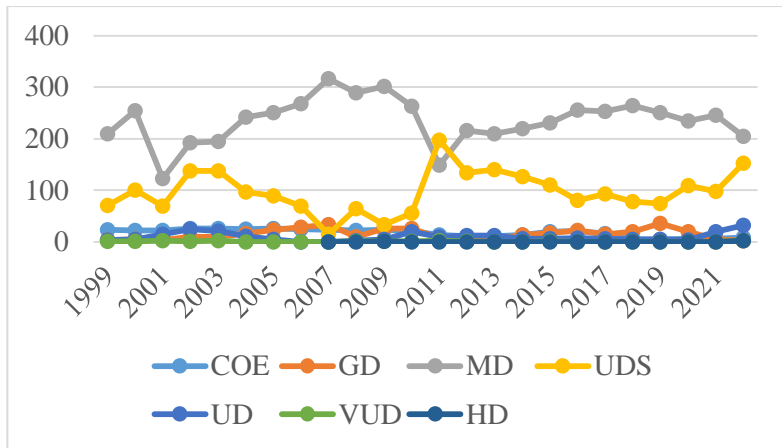
As we see, in terms of SO_2 and NO_2 , two years (1999-2000) are missed. Moreover, over the years the COE, SO_2 , and CO decreased, while, NO_2 , O_3 , $PM_{2.5}$, and AQI increased. The highest and lowest amounts of SO_2 were, respectively, in 2001 and 2022. Furthermore, the highest and lowest amounts of NO_2 were, respectively, in 2021 and 2022. In addition, the highest and lowest amounts of COE were respectively in 2003 and 2019. Thus, despite some similarities in trends, there is no overlapping between COE with NO_2 and SO_2 . For other variables, we have:

- 1- $PM_{2.5}$: 2022 is the highest, and 2019 is the lowest.
- 2- AQI: 2022 is the highest, and 2007 is the lowest.
- 3- PM_{10} : 2008 is the highest, and 2022 is the lowest.
- 4- O_3 : 2008 is the highest, and 2001 is the lowest.

Overall, the only point of overlapping between COE and other variables is in 2019, when both COE and $PM_{2.5}$ are at their lowest levels.

Special Days and COE

The trends of COE and special days could give us a hand in analyzing their relationships.



Source: Tehran Municipality, *Air Quality Control Company* (AQCC); Fred Economic Data

Table (2): The Trends of Special Days and COE

In terms of special days on which their names are linked to a particular air situation, we have:

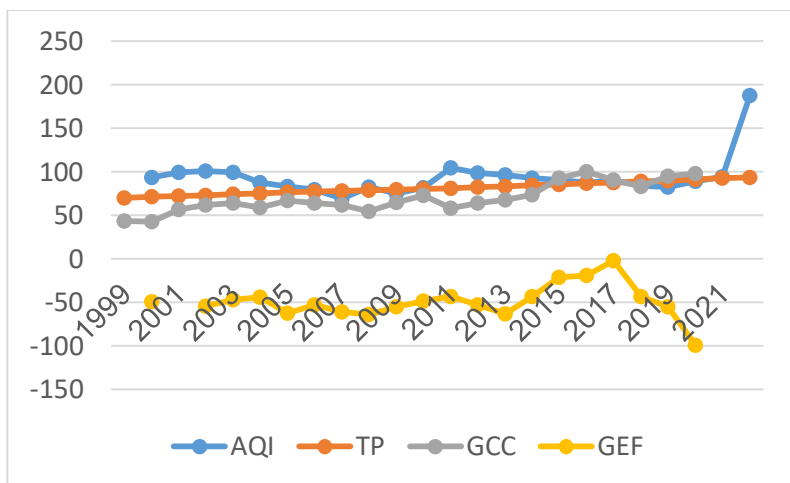
- 1- **MD**: 2007 is the highest, and 2001 is the lowest.
- 2- **UDS**: 2011 is the highest, and 2007 is the lowest.
- 3- **UD**: 2022 is the highest, whereas 2006 and 2007 are the lowest.
- 4- **GD**: 2019 is the highest, whereas 2012 and 2022 are the lowest.
- 5- **VUD**: the years 2001, 2003, 2011, and 2022 are the highest, whereas the years 2004 to 2007, 2013 to 2014, and 2016 to 2021 are the lowest.
- 6- **HD**: the year 2022 stands out as having the highest value, specifically with 2 occurrences per year, while all other years exhibit a value of 0.
- 7- **COE**: 2003 is the highest, and 2019 is the lowest

Overall, in 2003, COE and VUD are at the highest levels. In addition, in 2019, COE and VUD are the lowest while GD is the highest.

TP, GCC, and GEF

The data about other hypotheses and their relations with the TAP (Tehran Air Pollution) is also critical. We compare them with AQI because AQI is the most important variable among the sub-variables of TAS¹.

1. Tehran Air Situation



Source: World Population Review; Jaganmohan (2021); theglobeconomy.com; Tehran Municipality, Air Quality Control Company (AQCC)

Table (3): The Trends of TP, GCC, GEF and AQI

In the above graph, we have:

- 1- **TP**: 2022 is the highest, and 1999 is the lowest.
- 2- **GCC**: 2016 is the highest, and 2000 is the lowest.
- 3- **GEF**: 2017 is the highest, and 2020 is the lowest.
- 4- **AQI**: 2022 is the highest, and 2007 is the lowest.

Overall, in 2022, AQI and TP are in their highest points.

Inferential Statistics

As we noticed, descriptive statistics is neither enough nor scientific to calculate different hypotheses. Therefore, in this phase, we study the normality and then the correlation below.

Table (4): Normality Test by Studying Skewness and Kurtosis

Hypotheses	Variable	Sub-variable	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
COE-TAS						
Main Hypothesis	TAS	crude oil export (COE)	-.589	.472	-1.243	.918
		AQI	3.623	.481	15.662	.935
		CO	.263	.481	-.789	.953
		O ₃	-.116	.491	-.477	.935
		NO ₂	-.107	.491	-1.602	.935
		SO ₂	.316	.491	.846	.935
		PM ₁₀	-1.485	.481	5.629	.935
		PM _{2,5}	2.317	.616	6.365	1.191

Hypotheses	Variable	Sub-variable	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
		COE-QD				
		crude oil export (COE)	-589	.472	-1.243	.918
		Good Days (GD)	.491	.472	-.807	.918
		Moderate Days (MD)	-.631	.472	.999	.918
		Unhealthy Days for Sensitive Groups (UDS)	.324	.472	.507	.918
	QD ¹	Unhealthy Days (UD)	1.213	.472	1.006	.918
		Very Unhealthy Days (VUD)	.669	.472	-.896	.918
		Hazardous Days (HD)	3.873	.564	9.093	1.091
		AQI-TP				
		Air Quality Index (AQI)	3.623	.481	15.662	.935
		Tehran's population (TP)	.126	.472	-1.030	.918
		AQI-GCC				
		Air Quality Index (AQI)	3.623	.481	15.662	.935
		Global Climate Change	.471	.491	-.631	.935
		AQI-GEF				
		Air Quality Index (AQI)	3.623	.481	15.662	.935
		Government effectiveness (GEF)	-.424	.501	1.204	.972

As you see, we have categorized the relationship between different variables and COE. If the results of the Skewness and Kurtosis tests for all variables in each category are between (-2, 2), then the relation is normal. Thus, at first glance, none of the hypotheses are normal since some data in those categories, which are within italics, are not between this range.

Nevertheless, if we study sub-variables, we can realize that in just two categories, some correlations are normal, as below:

1- In COE-TAS group: the data related to COE-CO, COE-O₃, COE-NO₂, and COE-SO₂ are normal (parametric), and COE-PM_{2.5}, and COE-PM₁₀ are abnormal (non-parametric).

2- In COE-QD group: the data related to COE-GD, COE-MD, COE-UDS, COE-UD, and COE-VUD is normal while COE-HD is the exemption.

Nevertheless, the examination of Skewness and Kurtosis alone does not provide sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis of normality. It is advisable to further investigate the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests across all categories in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding

1. QD (Quality of Days)

Table (5): Normality Test by Studying Kolmogorov-Smirnov, & Shapiro-Wilk

Hypotheses	Variable	Sub-variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk			
			Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Main Hypotheses	COE-TAS							
		crude oil export (COE)	.145	13	.200*	.917	13	.227
		AQI	.344	13	.000	.532	13	.000
		CO	.243	13	.035	.826	13	.014
		O ₃	.200	13	.162	.900	13	.133
		NO ₂	.236	13	.046	.758	13	.002
		SO ₂	.118	13	.200*	.984	13	.993
		PM ₁₀	.272	13	.009	.676	13	.000
		PM _{2.5}	.227	13	.066	.956	13	.002
		COE-QD						
		Crude Oil Export (COE)	.163	16	.200*	.907	16	.105
		Good Days (GD)	.113	16	.200*	.945	16	.420
		Moderate Days (MD)	.123	16	.200*	.973	16	.884
		Unhealthy Days for Sensitive Groups (UDS)	.084	16	.200*	.990	16	.999
	Unhealthy Days (UD)	.227	16	.027	.831	16	.007	
	Very Unhealthy Days (VUD)	.309	16	.000	.738	16	.000	
	Hazardous Days (HD)	.510	16	.000	.405	16	.000	
Rival Hypotheses	AQI-TP							
		Air Quality Index (AQI)	.283	23	.000	.595	23	.000
		Tehran's Population (TP)	.066	23	.200*	.967	23	.621
		AQI-GCC						
		Air Quality Index (AQI)	.094	21	.200*	.977	21	.872
		Global Climate Change	.198	21	.031	.910	21	.055
		AQI-GEF						
		Air Quality Index (AQI)	.094	21	.200*	.977	21	.872
		Government Effectiveness (GEF)	.198	21	.031	.910	21	.055

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As in the previous table, we have categorized the relationship between different variables and COE. In both Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, if all variables' sig \geq 0.05, then the variables are normal. Regarding the results, the normal hypothesis for all categories (COE-TAS, COE-QD, AQI-TP, AQI-GCC, and AQI-GEF) is not proved since sig $<$ 0.05 for some data, which are in italics in those categories.

Nonetheless, by scrutinizing sub-variables, it is visible that in both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, some correlations are normal, as below:

1- In COE-TAS group: the data related to COE-O₃ and COE-SO₂

are parametric, and COE-CO, COE-NO₂, COE-PM_{2.5}, and COE-PM₁₀ are non-parametric.

2- In COE-QD group: the data related to COE-GD, COE-MD, and COE-UDS are normal, while COE-UD, COE-VUD, and COE-HD are abnormal.

In addition, AQI-GCC and AQI-GEF have been proven to be normal based on the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table (6): Normal Correlations Based on Three Different Tests

Skewness and Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
COE-CO	-	-
COE-O ₃	COE-O ₃	COE-O ₃
COE-NO ₂	-	-
COE-SO ₂	COE-SO ₂	COE-SO ₂
COE-GD	COE-GD	COE-GD
COE-MD	COE-MD	COE-MD
COE-UDS	COE-UDS	COE-UDS
COE-UD	-	-
COE-VUD	-	-
-	-	AQI-GCC
-	-	AQI-GEF

Table 6 demonstrates the differences between various tests. However, in small samples, the best normality test is the Shapiro-Wilk test (Ahad et al., 2011). Thus, for normal correlations proved in the Shapiro-Wilk test, we can use Pearson’s test to find out the correlation, and for others, we can use Spearman’s test.

Table (7): Correlation’s Tests for Hypotheses

Correlation with	Variable	Type of correlation test	Sub-variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
COE	TAS	Spearman	AQI	-.178	.417	23
		Spearman	CO	.916**	.000	23
		Pearson	O ₃	-.385	.077	22
		Spearman	NO ₂	-.718**	.000	22
		Pearson	SO ₂	.687**	.000	22
		Spearman	PM ₁₀	.138	.592	23
		Spearman	PM _{2.5}	.418	.156	13
	QD	Pearson	Good Days (GD)	.107	.618	24
		Pearson	Moderate Days (MD)	.096	.657	24
		Pearson	Unhealthy Days for Sensitive Groups (UDS)	-.323	.124	24
		Spearman	Unhealthy Days (UD)	-.095	.659	24
		Spearman	Very Unhealthy Days (VUD)	.217	.308	24
		Spearman	Hazardous Days (HD)	.097	.720	16

AQI	Pearson	Global Climate Change (GCC)	-.164	.477	21
	Spearman	Government Effectiveness (GEF)	.169	.465	21
	Spearman	Tehran's population (TP)	.019	.932	23

In the above table, for the main hypothesis, we study the correlation between COE and variables, and for rival hypotheses, we analyze the correlation between AQI and other variables. In addition, for both Spearman's and Pearson's tests, if $\text{sig} < 0.05$, then the correlation is meaningful. Therefore, it demonstrates that some variables, which are in italics, are not meaningful. The meaningful ones are COE-CO, COE-NO₂, and COE-SO₂. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients for each of these variables are as follows: .916, -.718, and .687.

It shows that the linear relationship between COE-CO, and COE-SO₂ is direct or positive. In other words, if COE increases, then CO and SO₂ will increase and vice versa, or if COE decreases, then CO and SO₂ will decrease and vice versa.

Moreover, the relationship between COE-NO₂ is indirect. In other words, if COE increases, then NO₂ will decrease and vice versa, or if COE decreases, then NO₂ will increase and vice versa. Furthermore, the correlations between COE and CO are very strong, and the correlations between COE, NO₂, and SO₂ are strong (Johnson et al., 2000).

Mazut

On January 2nd, 2019, a musty odor overwhelmed many parts of Tehran, and the phenomenon has repeated itself several times, especially when the temperature drops. Whereas there were various hypotheses, many people have pointed out mazut since it was criticized rigorously even a few years ago by conservationists. They opine that in recent years the usage of mazut has increased in the industrial section. Another sign to empower the hypothesis is the fact that, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, the number of cars on the streets has reduced by about 2 years. However, the air pollution had remained, and even the heaviest rainfalls could not mitigate it unless for a few hours (Financial Tribune, 2020).

The country decided to reduce the usage of mazut from 24 to 10 percent by enacting "The Clean Air Law" in July 2017 and improving the refineries with cooperation from other countries. However, the new sanctions imposed by the United States after its

withdrawal from JCPOA¹ disrupted the hope. Furthermore, while the country used to export mazut or utilize it for ships, sanctions have disrupted the process by banning shipping and refinery exports. On the other hand, the internal demand for energy has gradually increased. The problems of renovating the industries, exporting the refineries, and increasing the energy demand, have forced the government to license the usage of mazut or at least lower its supervisory role to safeguard the environmental standards in the industry (Bakhtiar, 2021).

The findings of our research reveal the correlation between sanctions and the levels of CO, SO₂ and NO₂. Our findings reveal an interesting pattern, wherein sanctions exhibit a positive correlation with NO₂, while demonstrating a negative correlation with CO and SO₂. The underlying reasons for the positive correlation between sanctions and NO₂, as well as the negative correlation between sanctions and CO and SO₂, warrant further investigation. In this study, we assume responsibility for examining the potential sources of these pollutants to shed light on the observed correlations. Among different sources, on-road vehicles with 56% are the main sources of CO; interestingly, the role of industry is the lowest with 4% (Lee, 2011), and the energy sector is the main participant in SO₂ with 68.6%, while intriguingly, the share of on-road vehicles is subtle with 0.7% (European Environment Agency, 2012). For NO₂, both on-road vehicles and the energy sector have the main share with 31% (Tzvetkova et al., 2016).

During the years, Iranian politicians answered the concerns about CO by increasing the standards of the fuel system of cars, produced mainly internally, and increasing the standard of fuel used in automobiles to EU4 in Tehran (Financial Tribune, 2021). These could result in reducing CO even under sanctions. What about the other gases?

Previous research has provided evidence indicating that mazut is a significant contributor to the emission of NO_x and SO_x pollutants (Kouravand & Kermani, 2018). However, we observed a negative correlation between sanctions and SO₂ and a direct one with NO₂. The simultaneous increase in both gases due to the escalated usage of mazut raises an intriguing observation, prompting further consideration regarding the potential rejection of the hypothesis.

Drawing a definitive conclusion at this stage would be premature, as there exist various approaches to mitigate the adverse

1. Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015)

impacts of mazut. Nano-emulsion could lessen NO_x and SO_x respectively, by 30.8 and 42.2%. In addition, wet FGD¹ systems could cut the amount of SO_x by 80.3% while having no influence on NO_x . A mixture of two methods is the best way because it could reduce NO_x and SO_x , respectively, up to 79.8 and 78.3% (Kouravand & Kermani, 2018). Meanwhile, the combination is expensive and needs advanced technologies, which are far beyond the government's capacity in this situation. On the flip side, the governors have been going to mitigate the adverse ramifications while managing the economy of energy under sanction, and from the mentioned methods, they selected so-called wet FGD because SO_x is slightly more controversial than NO_x .

Conclusion

Finding the roots of air pollution in Tehran is neither simple nor clear. Data related to that is vague as well as limited. In addition, despite some views trying to make a link between sanctions and this problem, rival hypotheses make it difficult to accept these claims. For these, we planned a program to diminish the challenges and survey the main hypothesis, which emphasizes the direct correlation between international sanctions and the degradation of air quality in the capital city of Iran. In addition, due to technical obstacles, we pointed out that Iran's COE could indicate the sanctions' effect better than other variables.

In terms of descriptive statistics, our findings were not able to confirm a meaningful relationship between COE and toxic gases. Among them, only $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ in 2019 accompanied COE since both were at the lowest levels. The result is very similar to special days. Only in 2003 were COE and VUD simultaneously at their highest levels. In addition, in 2019, COE and VUD are the lowest, while GD is the highest.

However, based on descriptive statistics, the relation between AQI and rival hypotheses- TP, GCC, and GEF- seemed more controversial, as the only overlapping point is in 2022, when AQI and TP are at their highest levels.

According to the inferential statistics, among all variables and sub-variables, only carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and sulphur dioxide can be linked with sanctions or the level of Iran's crude oil export.

In other words, there is a very strong yet indirect correlation

1. Flue Gas Desulfurization

between sanctions and carbon dioxide (-.916); a strong and direct correlation between sanctions and nitrogen dioxide (.718); and a strong and indirect correlation between sanctions and the level of sulphur dioxide in Tehran (-.687). Regrettably, in terms of regression, none of the variables have the same conditions, and therefore, the regression model was not meaningful.

The results revealed that while sanctions go up, CO and SO₂ diminish, and vice versa. However, while sanctions exacerbate, NO₂ increases, and vice versa. We assumed that by using some methods and applying standards, the country could manage the amount of CO and SO₂, whereas, due to the need for mazut to maintain the economy of energy, NO₂ has increased. Nevertheless, the last sentence could be seen as just a hypothesis needing further research.

Conflicts of Interest Statement

Manuscript title: Sanction's Contribution to Air Pollution

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This statement is signed by the author to indicate agreement that the above information is true and correct:

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Ali Bogheiry		2022-12-18

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China's Influence Expansion Strategy in Africa (1993-2021)

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Abstract

Smart power is one of the concepts and terms derived from the western discourse and the order of liberal democracy, which have specific meanings and indicators in this discourse. What is emphasized in this article is a different narrative from the Chinese perspective on smart power. Statistical data, documents, and current trends all confirm that despite the dominance of the liberal order and its mechanisms on the political and economic structures of the world, Beijing has increasingly expanded its role and influence in different regions of the world, including Africa. This country has become a key country in the international system by taking advantage of the international opportunities provided by globalization along with the fundamental redefinition of national principles and interests. What enables a deep analysis in the text of this apparent conflict is the Chinese narrative of smart power, which is rooted in Chinese culture and thoughts, contemporary historical developments, and ultimately the consensus of the country's elites. Therefore, the main question of this article can be posed as follows: what are the coordinates of Chinese smart power, and how can the development and influence of China in Africa be justified based on the concepts and coordinates of this concept of soft power?

Keywords: China, African Continent, Smart Power, Chinese Culture, Influence.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, China's influence in Africa has become more pronounced, and between 1998 and 2010, African goods exports to China increased from a low level to more than 60-fold, compared to five-fold and three-fold increases for the United States, respectively. The United States and the European Union are surprising. In this way, in just one decade, China's share of exports to Africa grew from 1% to about 15%, and on the other hand, although the share of the United States increased slightly, the European Union saw a decrease in its share of exports to Africa from 36 The percentage was 23%. Chinese investment in Africa increased from \$70 million in 2003 to \$5.5 billion in 2008. However, since 2005, China accounted for only 5% of the annual FDI inflows to the continent on average, and the United States and the European Union together accounted for more than 30% of the annual FDI inflows to Africa, but since the second decade of the current century, this trend has been reversed (Bokhris, 2020, p.14).

Although this expansion of the level of relations with Africa can be examined from different perspectives and causes but it seems that its correct understanding requires examining the issue in deeper layers of explanation that tend to the reason and not the cause. This layer, which is somewhat close to the discourse layer, is the cause itself. What we are trying to explain in the following article by relying on this layer is the Chinese influence in Africa in the form of a new redefinition of the term smart power, which can be described in the Chinese discourse in the form of Chinese smart power with special coordinates. Therefore, the main question of this article can be posed as follows: what are the coordinates of Chinese smart power, and how can the development and influence of China in Africa be justified based on the concepts and coordinates of this concept of soft power?

Theoretical Framework: Smart Power Strategy with Chinese Characteristics

China has not reached its current position in the international system by just opening the doors of its economy to the world. Rather, this is a result of the integration and combination of several components and indicators, which can be generally classified into three categories: internal foundations (including Chinese culture and ideas), contemporary historical developments, and finally the consensus of the elites of this country. Triplets are the basis of Chinese smart power.

First: Chinese Culture, Thought, and Worldview

The concept of smart power is rooted in Chinese culture. In the political dimension, soft power has a meaning in the framework of regulating the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, between power, the state, and the individual. This concept shows itself in the military dimension, in the art of war. In the philosophical framework, smart power represents a civilizational heritage in accordance with Confucianism. According to Confucius, a successful ruler is someone who wins the hearts and minds of subordinates and governs them based on the values of love and virtue, not by using force (Kazem, 2017, p. 29). In Chinese culture and thought, there are fundamental principles that can be considered the foundations of smart power; they also form the traditional principles of Chinese politics:

- 1- The idea of the unity of the world and society: Based on this principle, which some call organic materialism, the world and society, the realm of nature, and the realm of man are not only based on common laws, but the combination of these two spheres makes it possible to create a complete organic set. Among the examples of this harmony, we can mention the harmony of the five elements of nature, namely water, fire, earth, wood, and metal. In this principle, the key point lies in the relationship between objects and humans, not in their individual personalities, and humans are formed by “five relationships”: emperor-subject; father-son; husband-wife; older brother-younger brother; and friend-friend. This universalism obliges a person to comply with the moral norms that apply to all phenomena, such as smells, virtues, colors, calligraphy, and even the naming of people, for example, in choosing a name or a single word. It does not state the issue of the proposed form; rather, it returns to the essence, and the right word is a sign of perfection deepened between the social essence and the general content (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, p. 19).
- 2- Yin and Yang principle: based on this principle, the world is not based on unity and has stability; all social and natural phenomena represent two opposite and complete aspects (day and night, male and female, summer and winter, moon and sun, etc.). The functions of yin and yang alternately and mutually cause movement in the world. As a result, based on this principle, it can be said that not only is the world in a state of stability and freezing, but it is also moving dynamically, moving in a more suitable and favorable direction. This ancient

understanding of the essential dialectic between yin and yang can be seen in Marxism. Such a transcendental understanding of the conflicting dependence between the elements of nature and human societies is called, *Wuwei* in Chinese philosophy. Therefore, one should not change the natural flow of phenomena with unskillful and premature intervention. This ancient and remote understanding of the natural world and the human world had an impact on social relations in such a way that “a good leader does not need direct intervention to move his country forward” (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, pp. 19-20).

It seems that there is a connection between the principles of yin and yang as well as another concept called *Molovi* in terms of the necessity of creating harmony between opposites and managing opposites. In Chinese social philosophy, there is the concept of *Malawi*. This word is roughly translated as “super-planning”, which means a special form of wisdom that focuses on conflict in its broader sense. *Molie* means working with different conflict situations, which includes analyzing and evaluating opportunities. In traditional Chinese literature, strategists were praised for taking advantage of advantageous factors and minimizing the opportunities that their competitors might take. During the legendary period of the Three Kingdoms, Shu Han actively used non-violent tactics that were supposed to weaken the enemy's combat effectiveness. Since ancient times, the Chinese valued the negotiation skills of leaders to weaken the opponent's self-confidence and, as a result, to gain psychological (if not material) superiority (Podyapolskiy, 2014:349). Therefore, it is a special humanitarian technology for preparing and making strategic decisions. In the contemporary era, China's policy still follows this principle.

3- Heavenly decree and its revocation: In Chinese philosophical thought, the position of the empire is very prominent. He is the son of the sky, who is the intermediary between nature and society and is responsible for human relations with the world. Mediation between two forces—nature and society—lies in a concept called “heavenly command” which is manifested in the role-word “king”. The intermediary role is so important that even spring planting is done by the emperor himself, and even the basis of the calendar is calculated at the beginning of the period of each empire. Therefore, the role of “heavenly command”—the king or emperor—is current and obvious in all issues and aspects of nature and society. At the same time, the political tradition in

China considered the decree of heaven to be revocable and allowed a place for popular uprisings, such as those that weakened the foundations of imperial power in the transition of 1850-1860. Rebellions arise from both natural signs such as famine and floods and social signs such as the incompetence of bureaucrats, corruption of rulers and others, etc., and are mostly aimed at re-establishing social rules. In the state of rebellion, the leader of the rebels considers himself the manifestation of the heavenly command and sits on the throne of power as the founder of a new dynasty, like the Tang and Ming dynasties (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, pp. 20-21).

- 4- Public services and rights: As Wuwei's principle says, a statesman does not interfere directly in affairs as much as possible, and his main role is to maintain the harmony between the natural system and the social system. In the discussion of rights in China, the principle was to maintain social harmony, and heresy and individualism were blamed. Even if there was a criminal trial between two people and one of these two people was found to be the right person, personal rights were still not in question, and the court's effort was more focused on creating an acceptable compromise between the parties. The principles of trials relied more on social impact than individual justice, and the role of the judge was more arbitral. In China, there was practically no independent and permanent judicial system, and government officials performed judgments in addition to other duties. The Chinese judgment method, which was rooted in the depths of their imagination and understanding of nature and society, seemed strange and incomprehensible to the Westerners who sought to stay in the "free ports" of China after the opium wars, and soon, using the prevailing atmosphere, they could obtain "legal exemptions" from the Chinese judicial system, an issue that caused the Chinese judicial cooperation to be questioned (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, p. 24).
- 5- International relations: The definition and development of China's foreign relations with other countries, like other characteristics such as imperial power, public services, and rights, are rooted in the political principles of Chinese philosophy. In Chinese thinking, the world is square and the sky is circular, and under the rays of the sky is the "emperor's realm" and the emperor is the "son of the sky". It is only the emperor who benefits from heavenly blessings, and there are four categories outside the circle and realm of the under heaven,

which include the four seas, foreign barbarians, monsters, and sea giants. According to the stated rule, the leaders of the barbarians outside the circle are not able to establish an equal relationship with the emperor, the son of the sky, and thus the existence of a concept called international relations is meaningless. As a result, there is no place left to create a ministry of foreign affairs. Agents choose barbarians to manage barbarians. In this way, they avoid direct interference in the affairs of the barbarians as much as possible and act only by monitoring and influencing from a distance. The relationship between the Chinese and their neighbors is necessarily unequal, and symbolically, it means sending tribute to Beijing and, in return, gaining China's support for itself (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, p. 25).

Second: Contemporary Historical Developments

In the nineteenth century, after the Opium War, China entered a period of cultural conquest. The Opium War (1839) is the first series of defeats that was not only a shock in the military and political fields but also a great shock to traditional Chinese culture. (Benn, 1996, pp. 24-25). During this period, the Chinese fell into anxiety and worry that they did not know before and lost their psycho-social balance.

In the Second Opium War (1856), when France joined England, China was conquered, and the Chinese were forced to recognize the right to trade opium and sell it to the Chinese and to allow religious missionaries to enter their country to the spread of Christianity should prepare the ground for the Chinese to become Christians. In addition, foreign ships were allowed to sail on all Chinese rivers. This colonial situation continued until 1912 and the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. After this date and the fall of the Qing Dynasty, chaos engulfed China in such a way that not only the civil war between the warlords started, but other countries, such as Japan, also took advantage of China's internal weakness and attacked China in 1937 and occupied parts of this country. This humiliation was contrasted with the proud feeling that China's past aroused in its people. In fact, China's severe economic and political decline is a product of the recent centuries. After more than 70 years since the Chinese Revolution, the 20th century is known as the century of humiliation in the historical memory of the Chinese nation (Allison, 2019, p. 197).

Therefore, one of China's goals in the world is to improve

Beijing's status as a great power. For China's leaders, it is very important to maintain internal security and ensure the continuity of the Communist Party's rule. Because the persistence of the Communist Party in power by portraying itself as the permanent defender of China's interests means maintaining its political legitimacy and political control. The promotion of the Chinese dream by the leaders of the fifth generation, which is the most obvious domestic manifestation of the attention to Chinese history and culture, is actually a collective effort by the Chinese government and people to enter a new era that heals the bitter and broken era of this country. It is a boon and a harbinger of a new era in the political life of this country. In other words, China's dream about the tangible achievement of “national rejuvenation” is under the wise and visionary guidance of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and is intended to inspire the Chinese people (Scobell, 2020, p. 10).

Leadership Dimension: Elite Consensus

Although China had achieved extensive growth at a certain speed before 1978, nevertheless, in terms of employment, the population was still agricultural and heavy and light industries were neglected. Approximately 75% of industrial production was generated by state-owned enterprises under centralized control, aligning with the objectives of centralized production. In this period, the main goal of the Chinese government was economic self-sufficiency. Private sector activity and foreign investment were prohibited, and foreign trade was generally limited to obtaining those goods that could not be manufactured or procured in China. As a result, there was little incentive for companies, workers, and farmers to become more productive or pay attention to their quality. Because they were often focused on production targets set by the government, they only focused on production. The cultural revolution from 1966 to 1976 caused great damage to society and pushed the national economy to the brink of collapse. (CRS, 2019, p. 2)

The massive failure of the Great Leap Forward created tensions within the Chinese Communist Party, which in turn led to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which continued until Mao's death. During the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1962 (which resulted in a massive famine and a reported 45 million deaths) and the Cultural Revolution, China suffered a significant economic downturn. During this period, Chinese living standards decreased by 20.3% compared to Western countries, such as Japan,

and decreased by 9.6% from 1966 to 1968. (CRS, 2019, p. 1)

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 made it possible to implement a new strategy of economic and social development. Of course, it should be added that it was difficult for the new leaders to completely reject the planned economy because they were first-generation revolutionaries and participated in the implementation of the “retreat strategy” and traditional formation. If Mao's successors suddenly abandoned the planning system, their legitimacy would be jeopardized. As a result, the new leaders after the Cultural Revolution could only choose another approach to reforming the existing planning system. People's communes were abolished, and jobs, schools, and health care for rural residents were no longer automatically provided by the government. Urban residents used to pay for their welfare all the time, but now both urban and rural residents have to provide for themselves. (Assbring, 2012, p. 4)

Changing the leadership style after Mao's death to organize the contracted economic structure and government system that had been created and institutionalized since the 1949 revolution was one of Xiao Ping's most important actions. He understood the fact that the current process of economic management in China does not only fulfill the ideals of the party; rather, it is moving toward contraction and blockage, which started China's economic dynamism. The fact that he was considered one of the old leaders of the party and was still paying attention to communist goals became an intermediary link for reforms to convince both the party's senior officials and the masses of the people toward their development plans. to encourage

It can be said that Xi and the leaders of the fifth generation know that although economic weight and military power are important for the ruling regime to maintain power in the 21st century, they cannot ignore the promotion of lofty principles and inspiring ideals. Therefore, their leadership can be considered smart; Especially in the post-Mao era (i.e., since 1976), the Chinese Communist Party emphasized political pragmatism and materialistic motivations, emphasizing the establishment of China's hard power (starting with the economy) and then turning to national defense. (Scobell, 2020, p. 8).

The more dangerous expansion of this concentration is the extensive use of influence operations or political warfare beyond China's borders (Scobell, 2020, p. 9). Perhaps this is the reason why Henry Kissinger, the national security advisor and former secretary of state of the United States, who is known as the architect of Sino-American relations, has named cultural influence as the main factor

and element in classical Chinese foreign policy. Allison, 2019, p. 195). The cultural influence of China has been so profound that even conquerors and invaders, like the Mongols and Manchus, assimilated and embraced the cultural and religious aspects of China upon conquering the country, ultimately succumbing to its cultural prowess. Indeed, it has been a way of infiltration (Kissinger, 2018, p. 255).

A Comparative Study of Smart Power From Two Perspectives

Although the Western and Chinese have smart power, in the initial examination, there are many similarities in terms of persuasion and trying to gain favorability and influence over the decisions of others; But inside, they have some basic differences, some of which are mentioned here:

First, while smart power is used in the American narrative as a tool to improve the position of the United States in the international system, this concept is holistic in the Chinese narrative and looks at internal and external aspects as an organic whole (Glaser and Murphy, 2009, p. 20). For example, the idea of creating a harmonious society and a harmonious world expresses a harmonious framework of the above attitude, and such an attitude also originates from the worldview of Chinese culture and thought. Chinese elites believe that China should not only strive to improve its smart power through peaceful development, public diplomacy, and Chinese culture; rather, it should also help the development of political, economic, and cultural values.

Second, for the Chinese, soft power means “anything outside the military and security spheres, encompassing not only popular culture and public diplomacy but also coercive economic and diplomatic levers such as aid and investment”. China's soft power in Southeast Asia is predominantly attributed to its substantial contributions as a major source of foreign aid and trade, as emphasized in a report (Traoré, 2021, p. 617). It is important to note that since China lacks strategic allies like the United States, its diplomacy relies on material incentives and deterrents, such as punitive trade measures, to advance its interests based on smart power (Fravel, Glaser & Medeiros, 2021, p. 23). In other words, Chinese scholars commonly perceive the prevailing global trend as one characterized by peace and cooperation, aligning closely with the fundamental principles of contemporary Chinese diplomacy, namely the pursuit of peace, development, and cooperation (Liqun, 2010, p. 36). On the other hand, the fact that the United States is the

world's largest military power, and this produces a unique soft power for this country that can act as a stable model to influence the thoughts of other countries, is undeniable. This is something that China has benefited little from until now (Godement, 2015, p. 3).

Third, another crucial distinction between Chinese and Western smart power lies in their respective values. In Western smart power frameworks, political values are considered a fundamental pillar, as emphasized by Narimani et al. (2017, p. 168). This implies that commercial and economic engagements, as well as investments, are seen as significant indicators for evaluating the scope and effectiveness of Chinese smart power. In contrast, Chinese smart power places greater emphasis on economic influence and tangible outcomes, with political values playing a relatively lesser role in their approach. This divergence in values underscores the contrasting strategies employed by China and the West in their pursuit of smart power..

Fourth, the tremendous impact of Chinese culture and civilization on the world view and its foreign relations with the Western systemic view of the world is another facet of the difference between the smart power from the above two perspectives. As mentioned, concepts such as yin and yang, *Molvi*, and *Wui* are among the basic concepts in Chinese culture, which have made it possible for China to cooperate and interact in conflict situations with other countries. These principles, which are tolerantly considered a type of super planning, are different from the western system and plan, and this is the reason for the difference in their external behavior with others.

China's Use of Smart Power to Penetrate Africa

China, as a country with a distinct cultural and civilizational identity, has quietly intensified its entry into the African continent since the beginning of the current millennium. Due to the bitter experience of African nation-states with respect to Western colonialism, China raised the slogan “friendship and partnership without exploitation” in order to avoid provoking a wave of hostility against itself. Although relations between China and Africa have ancient historical roots, in the contemporary period, China has diversified its tools when entering the African continent, including economic, political, cultural, and military tools. Considering the trend of relations between China and Africa, it comes to mind whether China's entry into the African continent is only from the point of view of hard power, soft power, or a combination of the

two, i.e., smart power. To examine this issue, several points can be mentioned: First, that; In 2007, former Chinese President Hu Jintao said at the 17th Congress of the Communist Party that China needs to increase its soft power. If your hard power is increasing, you are likely to intimidate your neighbors, but if you increase your soft power at the same time, they are less likely to collude against you. In this sense, the goal is a smart power policy. This combination is supported by Confucian values, which emphasize mutual respect, coexistence, and harmony.

Second, current Chinese President Xi Jinping announced at the 2015 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in South Africa that China-Africa relations have reached a stage of development "unprecedented in history". The statement came with a large aid package. This was a manifestation of China's skillful use of hard, soft, and smart power, which included \$60 billion in loans, financial aid, special funds, and various assistance in industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, financial services, trade, and facilitation. Investment was poverty reduction as well as peace and security. In addition, this aid package includes the training of 200,000 African technicians, 1,000 media specialists, 40,000 opportunities for Africans in China, 2,000 degree or diploma opportunities, and 30,000 government scholarships. China also promised the heads of African countries to establish several local vocational training centers and the capacity to build several colleges in Africa (Leslie, 2016, p. 2).

Third, in contrast to Western smart power, which, along with the granting of humanitarian aid, brings its own values, including democracy and human rights, China's smart power plan revolves around the concept of tolerance. This increases Beijing's attractiveness to African governments and other developing countries that are far from Western standards (Kiliptari, 2013, p. 90).

In his speech at the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017, Xi argued that China's system "offers a new option for other countries and nations that want to accelerate their development while maintaining their independence" (Denyer, 2017). In introducing itself as a popular economic model close to the African model, in which the employment of manpower is more than machines and machines and is based on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, China has played all aspects of this smart power. China has been able to encourage African business partners to develop their country's economy through trade and investment in infrastructure and community institutions without

imposing political conditions or economic reforms (Bokharis, 2020, p. 16).

China's Areas of Influence in Africa

A) Access to Reliable and Widespread Sources of Energy

Hydrocarbon resources are the most urgent raw materials needed by China, and the country's search for resources and raw materials is extensive and endless throughout the world, but nowhere is it as energetic or concentrated as in Africa, where authoritarian regimes and leaders of different countries have created friendship and used smart diplomatic approaches along with a progressive economic situation. Today, about a third of China's oil imports are from the African continent, and Chinese companies, like European and American companies, have increased their scope of activity on this continent (Marshall, 2020, p. 157).

B) Expanding Business Relations and Gaining Large Markets for Exporting Goods

Seeking markets for Chinese goods and services in Africa is one of the fundamental elements of China's policy. This includes identifying and creating new markets for a variety of manufactured goods, from the simplest consumer items such as textiles, clothing, shoes, household goods, and kitchen appliances, which have a high labor force, to more complex products such as tools, machinery, and transportation equipment, and the transportation of weapons and military equipment. Another aspect of business is services, often related to the construction of infrastructure, from roads, railways, municipal buildings, and housing projects to schools, hospitals, water systems, dams, and power plants. The Chinese do such projects quickly and often, using imported technicians and labor groups from China at very competitive prices (Suddenly, 2008).

Related to the new markets for Chinese goods and services is the side benefit that both Chinese goods and services are often composed of Chinese labor content, so this strategy seeks to create jobs for Chinese citizens inside and outside the country. Providing employment is crucial to maintaining social and political stability in China and the long-term survival of the ruling Communist Party of China. Therefore, one of the benefits of creating African markets for Chinese imported products is the creation of jobs in China (for example, factory jobs for export manufacturers) and Africa—for example, through the migration of Chinese traders, salespeople, and entrepreneurs to Africa to do business. (Harman, 2007).

According to statistics, the volume of trade between China and the countries of the Black Continent increased from \$100 billion to \$200 billion between 2000 and 2015, and the number of Chinese workers in Africa increased from nearly 200 thousand people in 2009 to more than 250 thousand people in 2015. It arrived in 2015. The volume of trade between China and African countries in 2019 was more than \$208 billion, which shows a 2.2% growth compared to the previous year (Ministry of Commerce of China: 2019). Between 1998 and 2012, China has signed trade agreements with more than 40 countries (out of 54 countries) in Africa, of which Nigeria is at the top with 240 agreements, and South Africa, Zambia, and Ethiopia are in the second, third and fourth ranks, respectively. Compared to China, trade with China is very important for African countries. China-Africa trade accounts for 15% of the total trade of African countries, while this figure accounts for 5% of the total trade in China. Therol; 2015, p. 2).

C) Investment Presence in African Infrastructure

China is emerging as a major source of capital. The vast majority of Chinese investments and loans are based on joint and mutual benefits. For example, in countries such as Sudan and Angola, China has been very successful in creating important positions in the purchase of oil, and this is possible through loans and cooperation with the host governments in order to use its oil purchase money for aid. To build or rebuild damaged infrastructure such as roads, railways, port facilities, pipelines, hospitals, schools, municipal buildings, residential water supply systems, and stadiums. Chinese workers usually work several shifts around the clock, and therefore they can complete their projects quickly and efficiently compared to other foreign contractors (Thorul, 2015, p. 3).

During the last few decades, China's investments in Africa have been focused on five sectors: extractive industries, construction projects, financial services, agriculture, telecommunications, and, of course, the military and security sectors. In some countries, these sections are implemented in parallel. The primary motivation behind China's extractive industry involvement in Africa is to supply raw materials for its industries. Then, through the international growth and expansion of China's economy and industries, investment in large construction projects follows. According to statistics, the volume of Chinese investments in Africa has exceeded \$60 billion, and in contrast to American investments, they constitute 15% to 20% of this amount, which is mostly in

Algeria and the Gulf of Guinea. Today, China's investment and trade with Africa constitute 3% and 5% of global investment and trade, respectively (ibid).

D) Development of Financial Relations in Africa

Understanding the role that China plays in the development of international financial affairs is an issue that is of common concern among policymakers and academics. This issue has become more acute in a situation where many OECD countries are facing a reduction in foreign aid budgets, the United States has a budget deficit and does not have the former role, and in parallel, China has become more confident about its role. Is. Not only does China continue its bilateral financial development abroad through its policy banks, such as the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank, but now there are new multilateral institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank. this is why some commentators consider China to replace the United States as a global financial leader (Gallagher, 2017).

The amount of money that flows from China to Africa is very impressive; according to AidData statistics, between 2000 and 2014, nearly \$97 billion, and from 2010 on, about \$12 billion of money have been sent from China to Africa. China's imports plan to invest a total of more than one trillion dollars in Africa by 2025 alone, which shows the rapid growth of China's official development financial resources in recent years (AidData: 2017). China's annual financial commitment now equals that of the United States, once the largest bilateral donor in Africa, and has significantly exceeded it in recent years.

E) Granting Loans to African Countries

Along with trade and investment, lending is another part of China's economic development network on the Dark Continent. According to statistics, China's share of the world's annual aid to Africa is 5%, and 13% of the loans provided to Africa are made through China. These loans are in various fields, including transportation (\$24.2 billion), energy (\$17.6 billion), mining (\$9 billion), etc.

China's lending rate to Africa increased from a total of \$800 million in 2005 to a commitment of \$10 billion between 2009 and 2012. The increase in the amount of the loan takes place while the annual loan of the World Bank to Africa has reached an average annual value of \$4.5 billion since 2006 (Alorfili, 2018). One of the

reasons why most African governments favor Chinese banks is the fewer restrictions and easier conditions in the latter country. In other words, due to the disagreement between African recipients and the World Bank on the conditionality of lending, many African countries have turned away from traditional lenders such as the World Bank and turned toward China. Unlike the World Bank and, to a lesser extent, the African Development Bank, China's financial affairs involve minimal safeguard reviews limited to the approval of the relevant recipient government ministry, and procurement is easier because often before the start of the projects, the necessary arrangements are made with the Export and Import Bank of China as a financial provider, which saves considerable paperwork. Although the quality of Chinese infrastructure, especially roads, is sometimes lower, African governments praise the speed of Chinese work because it makes these governments show the quick results of their progress to the respective populations (Humphrey, 2018, p. 25).

F) Cooperation in the Field of Communication and Telecommunications

Along with increasing its economic presence in Africa, Beijing also has the development of media-communication cooperation on its agenda. Chinese companies Sagam, Huawei, and ZTA are active in supplying equipment and building networks. China Wall Industry Company has signed a contract with the Nigerian government to build the NigCOMSat1 communication satellite. Chinese communication industry companies have also won important contracts in Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya (Li and Rønning, 2013, p. 2). Marine projects, especially submarine cables, are one of the main elements of the Chinese focus in the field of communications. In 2009, the Chinese company Huawei Submarine Networks built the undersea cable Hannibal cable, which connects Tunisia to Italy, and in 2010, it delivered another cable connecting Libya to Greece (Abdel Ghaffar & Jacobs, 2019, p. 8).

G) Participation in the Military-Security Field

China's first significant military mobilization in the military field occurred in 2011, following the beginning of the crisis in Libya, when the People's Liberation Army of China pulled out 10,000 Chinese workers from Libya. Holding a joint exercise with Russia in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 was another manifestation of the expansion of China's military presence in North Africa. The opening of the first military base in one of the countries with a strategic

position in the Horn of Africa, namely Djibouti, in 2017 is one of the other areas of China's military presence on the African continent. Strategically located at the main geopolitical and geoeconomic link of the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, the Horn of Africa has about 6,960 kilometers of coastline with deep natural harbors and a busy sea space that connects Africa, the Far East, the Middle East, and Europe. In addition to being close to the US base, where drone attacks against al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda are often carried out, the port of Djibouti has the capacity to host Chinese airplanes. Chinese weapons have spread across the African continent, from Liberia to Somalia (Allam Seyed, 2021, p. 69).

Protection and support of China's economic and investment projects in Africa can be considered an indicator of the security goal. In this sense, a kind of link between the principle of peace support, military power, and the economy can be traced. The desire of China and its people to gain credibility and be seen as a great power by other governments has led to more intervention in the region in the past few decades. One of the clear examples of this happened in 2011, during which the air and sea units of the People's Liberation Army of China, for the first time, played a limited but important role in the evacuation of more than 35 thousand Chinese citizens from Libya. This military presence in the region may have been accidental, but its driving force was the growing expectations of the people from the Communist Party to act decisively to protect vulnerable Chinese citizens on the other side of the world. (Abdul Ghaffar and Jacobs, 2019, p. 2).

H) Promoting the Chinese Governance Model

The promotion of the Chinese model against the Western models can be considered the ideological goal of the Yellow Dragon Land (Sun, 2014, p. 3). China's relations with North African countries, especially Egypt and Algeria, began during the anti-colonial movements. During this period, the People's Republic of China was one of the main ideological supporters of the liberation uprisings. In the next stage, that is, after the stabilization of the independence of African countries, China put aid and investment on the agenda in order to rebuild the destruction and backwardness caused by colonialism in the mentioned countries. For example, the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia railway in the 1970s was a symbol of China's support for African countries, which Chinese leader Mao Zedong had talked about at the Bandung Conference in 1955 (Stahl, 2016, pp. 2-3).

In the framework of Chinese diplomacy, participation in economic, investment, and infrastructure projects is not only for the government and companies; rather, presence at the level of individuals is also important. For this reason, more than 50,000 Chinese workers are currently present in various African countries as part of the communities there (Abdul Ghafar & Jacobs, 2019: 5). These people are actually the Chinese diaspora population who, as representatives of Chinese Confucian culture, implement Beijing's soft diplomacy in Africa (Jamal, 2020, p. 118).

African trade and economic relations have often been based on an exploitative economy in which cheap raw materials were sent to modern European factories. On the other hand, Chinese authorities believe that their relations with Africa are based on respect for sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and granting loans and infrastructure assistance (Hogwe & Banda, 2017:238). As a result, African governments are satisfied with China's non-interference in their internal affairs, unlike Westerners, and this has had a great effect on the development of China's economic influence on this continent. The continuation of lending and huge investments in the infrastructure of African countries has greatly helped to paint a suitable and positive image of China on the Dark Continent (Mohammed Younes, 2021). Today, China's penetration rate in Africa is 63%, and it is the second-best development model in Africa after the United States. In addition, after the past colonial powers, China is considered the most influential country on the African continent today (Cook, 2020).

J) Offering Annual Scholarship and Educational Programs

Beijing's annual scholarship for African students in Chinese universities has left a very positive impact on China's soft power in Africa. This, while creating a relationship between African students as future politicians and managers, has greatly contributed to the transfer of Chinese history, culture, and customs to Africa. Between 2000 and 2015, China provided training courses for 86,000 African officials.

In 2011, China provided educational courses for 539 officials from developing countries, of which 139 were from Africa and 73 were for French Africans. In 2013, within the framework of the training program for political party leaders, China trained 200 party youth from different countries in Africa, such as the People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in Ethiopia, the People's Organization in Southwest Africa in Namibia, the National

Congress Party in Sudan, the Communist Party in South Africa, and the South African National Congress. In 2015, Chinese authorities targeted their program to train 1,000 young leaders in Africa within the framework of the development program by 2018 (Jamal, 2020, p. 119).

Conclusion

In this article, China's plans and policies in Africa are outlined in several general categories, including: strengthening international diplomatic and political support for China and the one China policy of that country; the search for resources, especially energy, for a rapidly growing economy; and the creation of new markets for Chinese products to help its continued industrial growth and create jobs for the country's huge population. China has been able to establish successful political relations with almost all (49) of the 53 independent African countries and convince them to support the One China policy at the United Nations.

As China enters the 21st century, this country has several strategic goals. First, its people and government want to see this country regain its rightful role as a great and respected civilization and world power. One aspect of this is to unify and strengthen all the territories of the country that China believes belong to it, and this includes the island of Taiwan. Second, China's political leaders and its ruling Communist Party want to legitimize their role in running the country while ensuring its continued economic growth and development. These goals are intertwined, as economic growth is the key to maintaining political and social stability, and this is a fundamental principle of successful governance in China.

Non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and generous aid and loan packages, as well as aggressive trade activities that link China with local African economies, create great opportunities. Where poverty and slow growth have hampered the ability of African countries to repay loans or aid, China has been generous in granting loans or grants. China's often-declared policy in dealing with African countries emphasizes the concept of mutual benefits, and for several decades, this country has presented itself as an important partner in solidarity with African countries and in opposition to colonialism and economic dependence.

On the economic and trade side, China has been aggressively pursuing mineral and energy resources and has aggressively penetrated several countries through investments in various oil exploration and extraction activities as well as mineral investments.

The purchase of oil has been one of the most significant, and China has moved closer to Angola and Sudan, where it has become the main consumer of energy resources from these two countries. Here, the issue of security is raised, especially for continuous and long-term energy supply. For this reason, regular and senior-level contact with Chinese and African leaders to predict and prevent conflict on the African continent is one of the strategies that are jointly pursued by China and African leaders.

China will undoubtedly continue its efforts to expand African purchases of metals, minerals, and other commodities, such as timber and forest products, wherever they can be found. In the meantime, Africa will be one of several key regions of the world where China continues to seriously look for materials to fuel its huge industries and factories.

It goes without saying that mastery in international affairs requires more than economic leverage. A government should not only have economic power but also have the skill to use economic tools effectively. Here is the importance of soft and smart power: In the absence of political levers, China uses economic tools as smart power mechanisms. How to use these tools should be searched for in the Chinese attitude and approach to the world, an attitude rooted in Eastern culture and thought.

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Legal Aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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Abstract

Branches of international law closely concern international and non-international armed conflicts. So, these principles are trying to be operationalized in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. From the point of view of international law, the disputed region is recognized as a part of the territory of Azerbaijan, and no country has recognized the self-proclaimed Republic of Armenia there. The Nagorno-Karabakh region belongs to Azerbaijan from the perspective of international law and based on the resolutions of the Security Council. This study is conducted to examine the legal aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, seeking an answer to its legal implications. According to the results, Azerbaijan's rights to maintain its territorial integrity are undeniable and legitimate. However, the actions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, even in the context of defending its territorial integrity, should not pose a threat to the Armenian people of Karabakh. Referring to the acceptance of the principle of territorial integrity regarding the right of nations to self-determination in international law, any action against this principle is not legitimate, and the right to self-determination is accepted as long as the said principle is not violated.

Keywords: Territorial Integrity, Self-Determination, International Law, Nagorno-Karabakh.



Introduction

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continues while the parties have expressed their claims in accordance with international law. Armenia and Azerbaijan have been in a fierce conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region on their borders since 1991. Armenia has tacitly supported the region to some extent. The conflict has resulted in thousands of deaths. However, no real progress has been made on this front (Mantazeran, 2020, p. 3). Azerbaijan adheres to the principle of territorial integrity, which is included in the United Nations Charter and international conventions and treaties. On the other hand, Armenia insists on its right to self-determination. However, according to international law, the right to self-determination for minorities does not include separatism and secession but includes participation in various elections, other civil and political affairs, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The United Nations has issued several resolutions, including resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884, regarding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. The most recent resolution, issued in 1993, recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as part of the territory of Azerbaijan. These resolutions reflect the official stance of the United Nations on the matter. The evidence indicates that the legal foundations and international law for the territorial separation of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan are weak, but historical experiences such as Kosovo and Crimea should not be ignored. However, the conflicts in this region are endless and may not end for a long time. We should wait for the United Nations and the great powers to take a serious step in this regard. From the point of view of international law, the commitment and emphasis on territorial integrity prevail over the recognition of the separatist rights of the people of Karabakh (Azizpour, 2012, p. 50).

1. The status of the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh in terms of international law

In Article 1 of the United Nations General Assembly resolution approved in 1974, aggression is the use of force against the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of any state, and in Article 2 of this resolution, any state that resorts to force for the first time is considered an aggressor at first sight. The Security Council can consider the act committed not aggression, depending on the case and the specific circumstances. According to Article 3 of this resolution, several acts are aggression, including invasion or attack, occupation or annexation of the territory or a part of the territory of a state, bombing, siege, use of military force in the territory of a

state in a manner not specified in an agreement, the sending of regular or irregular armed groups by a state or in the name of a state to carry out severe military acts against another state, or to intervene in such acts (Beigzadeh, 1993, p. 318). Accordingly, as the most important decision-making pillar of the United Nations, the Security Council published four resolutions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1993. Although most of the permanent members of the Security Council support Armenia and the political goals of the members are involved in the decisions of this council, a look at the provisions of this resolution partially reflects the conditions of the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh in terms of international law. While expressing its concern about the intensification of armed military operations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, including the attack of Armenian forces on the Kalbajar District of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the relocation of a large number of civilians in the region, On April 30, 1993, in Resolution 822, which was unanimously approved in the 3205th session, the Security Council announced that it once again emphasized the right of national sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the region, the inviolability of borders recognized in the international arena, and the inadmissibility of using force to acquire land (UN, 2014, p. 2).

In this resolution, the United Nations Security Council acknowledges that the borders of Azerbaijan have been violated through aggression. It calls for an immediate end to all military operations and hostile actions to establish a lasting ceasefire. The resolution also emphasizes the need for the withdrawal of occupying forces from the Kalbajar District of Azerbaijan, the resumption of negotiations, and the unhindered provision of humanitarian aid in the region. The resolution expresses support for peace negotiations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Besides, two months later, on July 29, 1993, in Resolution 853, which was unanimously approved in the 3259th session, the Security Council expressed great concern over the intensification of military operations, including the seizure of the Ağdam District of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and that the existence of such a situation threatens peace and security in the region. The Security Council has not mentioned Armenia as an aggressor in any of its four resolutions. Nevertheless, it described the actions of the Armenian militias as occupying part of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, emphasizing the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the inadmissibility of violating the inviolability of international borders. The Security Council's emphasis on the immediate and

unilateral withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including Ağdam, Füzuli, Zəngilan, and Horadiz, showed that the justifications of the Armenian separatists of Karabakh for the use of force were not acceptable to the UN Security Council. At the same time, not only did the Security Council not mention in any of its resolutions the situation of Armenians in Karabagh and the claim that the Republic of Azerbaijan has violated their rights, but it also confirmed the violation of the rights of civilians and refugees. Acknowledging the reality of Azerbaijan's land occupation in four Security Council resolutions is a great achievement for Baku, which strengthens the legal and political position of this country. Baku could not use the opportunity of its membership as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, including the one-month chairmanship of this council at the end of 2013, to re-introduce the issue of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the Security Council due to these objections. The facts of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be understood regardless of the political noises of the beneficiaries of the current conflict on the northern borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran and by looking at the legal claims of the parties to the conflict and the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

1-1. The Claims of the Republic of Armenia

Adhering to the principle of the right to self-determination, Armenia claims that the majority of Armenians living in the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh gained independence from the Republic of Azerbaijan through a referendum and that they consider themselves not a party to the conflict but only supporters of the autonomous republic of Karabakh.

1-2. The Claims of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Against the legal claims of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan has identified Armenia as an occupying country by insisting on the principle of prohibiting land acquisition by force and the principle of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries. Moreover, according to the argument of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the right to self-determination belongs to an entire nation. If a referendum were held for the independence of the Autonomous Republic of Karabakh, it should have been held in the entire territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and it is invalid because it was held during the occupation and against the wishes of the government of Azerbaijan as the legitimate ruler of those lands.

1-3. The Full Logistic Support of Turkey and the Intelligence and Operational Support of the Zionist Regime in Azerbaijan

The most important international source of the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia is the competition and conflict of interests of regional and extra-regional actors. These conflicts have complicated the issues and prevented an urgent solution (Abasov, 2004, p. 26). The Russian Federation, America, the Minsk Group, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Turkey are the main actors in this issue (Vaezi, 2010, p. 74). On the other hand, the Republic of Azerbaijan was pushed into another military confrontation as a result of its military incapacity and desperation in recapturing its occupied territories from Armenia through negotiations and mediation. On the other hand, the Republic of Azerbaijan gained the necessary preparation for a serious confrontation with Armenia and managed to seriously enter the battle with Armenia by turning its foreign policy, establishing strategic relations with the West, Turkey, and the Zionist regime, and resorting to a sharp increase in its oil revenues and economic prosperity in recent years, while taking into account past tactical and weapon weaknesses and extensive military purchases, especially in the drone fields, under the support of Turkey and the Zionist regime's intelligence and advisory arms (Avdaliani, 2021).

1-4. Agreements between the heads of the two countries centered on Russia to establish a ceasefire

The Russian Federation is one of the main actors in analyzing the role of competition between regional and extra-regional actors in the continuation of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis. Above all, this country seeks to restore its long-standing influence in the South Caucasus due to its sense of belonging to the region (Koulaei 2006, p. 173). Being superior in the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, it tries to marginalize other actors in this scene. Russia seeks to play a dominant role in the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis. So, it has openly and covertly supported Armenia in such a way that the Republic of Azerbaijan claims that Russia has given Armenia free-of-charge heavy weapons worth more than one billion dollars, including missiles that have a range up to Baku, between 1996 and 2000 (Abasov, 2004, p. 27). Russia has focused a lot on the South Caucasus in general and Karabagh in particular due to facing two major challenges: the growing influence of America and the Islamic world (Cornell, 1999: 55). It should be noted that the wars between Azerbaijan and Armenia, apart from the initial period from 1994 to

1998, always lasted three to five days and were mostly border wars. International organizations and numerous countries have conducted numerous negotiations and mediations since then to peacefully resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the past 28 years, but they have not brought satisfactory results to the countries of the region. However, a ceasefire was established on November 10 with a tripartite agreement between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia and the prime minister of Armenia in the recent clashes between the two countries that lasted 44 days after causing massive casualties. As a result of this war, Azerbaijan took back 70% of the occupied areas and took over 30% of the other areas based on the agreement. The Nagorno-Karabakh tripartite ceasefire agreement came into effect at midnight on November 10, Moscow time. The agreement was signed by Ilham Aliyev- the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Nikol Pashinyan- the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia; and Vladimir Putin- the President of the Russian Federation. Arayik Harutyunyan, the self-proclaimed president of Artsakh, agreed to end the war as well. According to this agreement, the two sides agreed to end the military conflict, return a part of the disputed areas under the control of Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan until the beginning of December, station two thousand Russian peacekeeping forces at the Lachin Canal for at least five years, and open a road from the Siunik Province of Armenia for the access of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, which would be protected by Russian forces too.

2. Violation of the UN Security Council Resolution

As an institution that maintains global peace and security, the United Nations Security Council issued four resolutions concerning the Karabakh conflict in 1993. Although none of these resolutions mentioned the Armenian government as the occupier, they asked it to refrain from helping the so-called autonomous republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. Furthermore, the resolutions of the Security Council have repeatedly emphasized the right to national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the occupation of cities by Armenian militias. So, the continuous military presence of the Armenian army in Nagorno-Karabakh is a violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 884 dated November 12, 1993. This is why Baku is superior to Yerevan in the field of international law. At the same time, the current world is governed by the logic of power, not the

power of logic, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is strong evidence of the ineffectiveness of the structures and the sanctions arising from international law, including the Security Council, which is in the hands of the political elites of the permanent members of the Council with an unfair combination.

3. Referring to the Principle of the Right to Self-Determination

Referring to the principle of the right to self-determination is among the most prominent legal solutions for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the last three decades so that the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh can decide about the future of their political destiny, including the continuation of the state of autonomy in the Republic of Azerbaijan (the same as during the rule of the Soviet Union), independence in the form of the Republic of Artsakh (the de facto state of the past three decades), or annexation to Armenia. However, the implementation of this principle in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is faced with numerous legal and executive complications, some of which include the opposition of the reference to the legal principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Republic of Azerbaijan against the principle of the right to self-determination by the Armenians, the reference of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Almaty Declaration on December 21, 1991 concerning the non-change of the borders of the Soviet republics (such as the non-return of the Tajik-inhabited cities of Samarkand and Bukhara from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan despite the historical dissatisfaction of the Tajiks) against Armenia's reference to the Law Arrangements for the resolution of issues related to the withdrawal of the (autonomous) Soviet Republic from the Soviet Union approved on April 3, 1990, ambiguity and differences in the geography of holding a referendum on the right to self-determination due to Azerbaijan's reference to the geographical area of Karabakh (not seven surrounding cities) and Armenia's reference to the geographical area of the Republic of Artsakh (Karabakh plus all its surrounding areas), and ambiguity and differences in "who are entitled to participate in the referendum on the right to self-determination" due to the reference of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the participation of Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh before the war of the early 1990s, in addition to Azeri immigrants and refugees living in this region who were driven out as a result of the war against Armenia's reference to the participation of the only Armenians of Karabakh and its surrounding areas (before and after the war). The fact is that the

Republic of Azerbaijan and the international community will not agree to hold a referendum on the right to self-determination in Karabakh without clarifying the situation of the seven cities around the Nagorno-Karabakh region and returning them to the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan, just as none of the referendums on self-determination, changing the name of the Republic of Karabakh to the Republic of Artsakh, or the presidential and parliamentary elections in this region have been recognized by any country in the international community in the last three decades, and even the Republic of Armenia has not recognized the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, holding a referendum on the right to self-determination in Nagorno-Karabakh requires determining the situation of its seven surrounding regions. This has been proposed in many Karabakh peace plans, including the 1+1+5 plan (Robert Kocharyan and Ilham Aliyev's talks in 2005), the Madrid Principles plan (the OSCE in 2007), and the Kazan Action plan (Russian Federation in 2011). According to the above, this study aims to provide a better understanding of the legal and executive complications of referring to the principle of the right to self-determination in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Kuzegar Kaleji, 2020, p. 10). From the legal point of view, like other ethno-territorial conflicts such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, the Crimean Peninsula, Kashmir, and the Kurdistan region, we are faced with the legal principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principle of the right to self-determination in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The legal principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity is always invoked by the country from which these regions are separated. In this way, this principle is invoked by Georgia concerning Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Moldova concerning Terence Dniester, Ukraine concerning the Crimean Peninsula, India concerning Kashmir, Iraq concerning the Kurdistan Region, and the Republic of Azerbaijan concerning Nagorno-Karabakh. These countries believe that the above regions, with any history and background and any ethnic, linguistic, and religious composition, are part of their land and national sovereignty and that they cannot be separated and independent without the consent of the central government and by adopting different methods, including holding a referendum and foreign military intervention.

The solution proposed by all these countries is to grant autonomy, within the framework of which the desired area has the authority to approve and implement its regulations in political,

economic, cultural, social, religious, linguistic, and educational affairs, except for defense and foreign policy matters, which are under the authority of the central government. The Republic of Azerbaijan has always called for the granting of the highest level of autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh, which was granted the status of autonomy during the Soviet Union, citing the legal principle of “national sovereignty and territorial integrity” (Kuzegar Kaleji, 2020, p. 10).

In contrast, regions such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, the Crimean Peninsula, Kashmir, the Kurdistan Region, and Nagorno-Karabakh invoke the legal principle of the right to self-determination. In line with this principle, they emphasize that their placement under the sovereignty and territory of the country in question (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Pakistan, Iraq, and the Republic of Azerbaijan) was imposed from the beginning without the consent of the people and elites of these regions. Therefore, the residents of these areas have the right to decide on their status, such as remaining under the rule of the same previous country, dismemberment and declaration of independence, or joining another country by referring to the legal principle of the right to self-determination. Accordingly, the Armenians living in Karabakh and, in a sense, the Armenians of Artsakh also want to invoke the legal principle of the right to self-determination by referring to the historical records of this region being under the rule of the Republic of Azerbaijan during the Soviet era.

Referring to the Almaty Declaration and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) statute, of which both the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia are members, the Republic of Azerbaijan emphasizes the immutability of the Soviet-era borders and considers Nagorno-Karabakh to be a part of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan based on the legal principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Baku argues that dissatisfaction with the imposed borders and divisions of the Soviet era cannot become the legal basis for the separation and independence of different regions of the republics, as the historical and Tajik cities of Samarkand and Bukhara were placed inside the borders of Uzbekistan despite the protests and dissatisfaction of the Tajiks during the Soviet era, and there was no change in the geographical borders of the two countries even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, in line with the legal principle of determining the right of destiny, the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh and

the Republic of Armenia refer to this principle in the law of the Soviet Union dated April 3, 1990, entitled *Arrangements for the Resolution of Issues Related to the Withdrawal of the (Autonomous) Soviet Republic from the Soviet Union*, which states that the people of the autonomous units have the right to solve the question of their existence in the USSR and raise the question of their state-legal identity if any of the autonomous republics of the Soviet Union withdraws from the USSR. From a historical point of view, Armenians undermine the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan over the Karabakh region in addition to providing such an interpretation of the law of the Soviet Union dated April 3, 1990.

According to the Armenians, Nagorno-Karabakh was not considered part of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic when it was formed in 1918-1920. They argue that when the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved the Declaration on the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on August 30, 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh was not included in the territory of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic established during that time by Mahammad Amin Rasulzade. So, Baku's reference to the principle of the immutability of Soviet-era borders and the Almaty Declaration is invalid. On the other hand, the Republic of Azerbaijan considers the consolidated and stabilized state of the borders of the republics during the seventy years of Soviet rule as the basis of the Almaty Declaration and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). By referring to it, it emphasizes the principle of immutability of Soviet-era borders, the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the sovereignty of Georgia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Moldova over Transnistria, Ukraine over Crimea, and Uzbekistan over Samarkand and Bukhara (Kuzegar Kaleji, 2020, p. 10).

Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh recognize all of these regions as the Republic of Artsakh and have held all referendums on the right to self-determination and the presidential and parliamentary elections in this region (without international recognition). However, the Republic of Azerbaijan only believes in granting autonomy to the main part of Nagorno-Karabakh, that is, the same area of about 40,000 km², and considers the seven cities around this region, such as Kalbajar, Qubadlı, Cəbrayıl, Füzuli, Zəngilan, Ağdam, Laçın, Tartar, and Shusha, to be part of the mainland of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which cannot be granted autonomy or cannot hold a referendum on the right to self-determination. In this way, the disputes over the geography of

holding the referendum on the right to self-determination are other complications of the legal settlement of the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Another complication is the ambiguity and dispute over “who should participate in the referendum on the right to self-determination” in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. More than 35,000 people were killed, and more than 800,000 people were displaced and forced into exile in the disputed areas as a result of this long and erosive war. Thus, all Azeris living in Armenia, Karabakh, and its seven surrounding cities were forced to migrate, and many of them have been living in very poor conditions in Baku and other cities of the Republic of Azerbaijan for more than three decades. On the other hand, all the Armenians living in Baku and other cities of the Republic of Azerbaijan for many years were forced to leave their homes and immigrate to Russia, Armenia, or other countries.

Under such conditions, the Republic of Azerbaijan suggests that if a referendum on the right to self-determination is to be held, only Armenians and Azeris living in the region before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the comprehensive war, their survivors and children, and Azeri immigrants who were forced to leave this region during the war can participate in this referendum in the geographical area of Nagorno-Karabakh (4,000 km) and that the immigrant Armenians who came from Armenia and other countries in recent years and from Syria in recent years will not have the right to participate in the referendum. According to the Armenian perspective, they believe that the areas in question have been historically inhabited by Armenians. They argue that only Armenians residing in Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding areas should have the right to participate in any referendum or decision-making process regarding the region. Additionally, Armenians claim that the Azerbaijani government intentionally resettled Azeris in the area to alter the demographic composition of the population. This viewpoint highlights the belief that the population dynamics in the region have been influenced by deliberate actions taken by the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Finally, the most important point is how to implement the results of the referendum on the right to self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh. Even if all the above problems, including the different legal interpretations of Azerbaijan, the geography of the referendum, and the participants in the referendum, are assumed to be solved, which is a very difficult and complicated task, the bigger and more important problem is how to implement it. The Republic

of Azerbaijan and the international community will not agree to hold a referendum on the right to self-determination in Karabakh without clarifying the situation of the seven cities around the Nagorno-Karabakh region and returning them to the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan, just as none of the referendums on self-determination, changing the name of the Republic of Karabakh to the Republic of Artsakh, and the presidential and parliamentary elections in this region have been recognized by any country in the international community in the last three decades, and even the Republic of Armenia has not recognized the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Accordingly, holding a referendum on the right to self-determination in Nagorno-Karabakh requires determining the situation of its seven surrounding regions. This has been proposed in many Karabakh peace plans in the past three decades. Another important point to consider is that if a referendum on the right to self-determination is conducted in Karabakh, and the Armenian population votes for independence and annexation to Armenia or Russia, the consent and cooperation of the Azerbaijani government are crucial for the implementation of the referendum results. This is necessary for the international community to accept and recognize the outcome of the self-determination referendum. According to Article 2, Clause 4 of the United Nations Charter, “all members must refrain from any threat or use of force that is against the territorial integrity or political independence of a country or is contrary to the purposes of the United Nations in their international relations.”

Consistent with international law, even though this region receives support from Armenia, it does not have the legal status to function as an independent country and engage in diplomatic relations with other nations. If it wants to join Armenia, a question arises from the legal point of view and international law: has Armenia invaded Azerbaijan? This situation has similarities to Russia's occupation of Crimea, although Russia claims that this occupation is legal because the people of Crimea voted to join Russia. However, international rules consider Crimea's accession to Russia illegal. If this comparison with the crises in Azerbaijan and Armenia is assumed to be true, there is a possibility of an indictment for illegal occupation.

However, if Armenia has legally occupied this land, punishments such as sanctions will be considered for it, following international law. They seem to be a little weak considering Armenia's allies,

such as Russia, and the possibility of its veto on the one hand and the reluctance of some countries to sanction the country on the other. However, the conflicts in this region are endless and may not end for a long time. We should wait for the United Nations and the great powers to take a serious step in this regard. From the point of view of international law, the commitment and emphasis on territorial integrity prevail over the recognition of the separatist rights of the people of Karabakh (Azizpour, 2012, p. 50).

4. Humanitarian Rights Violations in the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis

Humanitarian rights are among the most important and profound concepts in the international system, whose purpose is to regulate the rules of war so that war does not become uncontrollable and reduce the suffering of war. The concept of humanitarian rights, including protecting ambassadors, children, women, and holy places, has been raised throughout the history of mankind in different ways, although different from the contemporary era. There have always been rules in the civilizations of ancient Greece and Islam to control the dimensions and scope of war. A group of philosophers and legal experts have recently tried to regulate the rules of war, the leader of which is perhaps Hugo Grotius, who divided the war into just and unjust. Although many efforts have been made by humanity, unfortunately, the animal nature of man sometimes overcomes it, and there are still wars and conflicts in the current world. One of the wars in the contemporary world is the Nagorno-Karabakh war, whose humanitarian issues are of great importance. Examining the human aspects of this war from the point of view of humanitarian law rules reveals important points and cases of human rights violations. On the other hand, each of the Western countries has a specific approach and view to this war (Zarei, 2014, p. 1).

5. The geopolitical consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis for the relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Caucasus

Iran's geopolitical atmosphere in the north of Aras will be narrower if the decision on Nagorno-Karabakh proceeds based on the current agreement. Iran is still a silent observer of the current developments and will continue the security, economic, and political relations and mechanisms of the north of Aras that have been abandoned in the past three decades. Trying to remove the US from the Caucasus

region, Turkey and Russia gradually became strategic partners. Turkey has the ultimate goal of turning regions into the sphere of influence of Russia and Libya in the Mediterranean, despite recent riots in Syria and the Caucasus.

America once played a more important role in the Caucasus. American and European influence in this region decreased after Georgia was left alone in the war of 2008. American intervention in the Caucasus ended with the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The goal was to restore Russia as a mediator in the Caucasus and clear the region of Western influence. The Caspian Energy Corridor, which was the focus of England and Israel, will reach from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to the south of Baku and from there to Zanglan and Nakhichevan. Iran will surrender in this energy battle. If any energy and rail corridor is established along Iran's borders, it will create geopolitical security for the companies and countries that own it and impose a new geopolitical atmosphere on the country. The north of Aras will be opened to the Ottoman gate for Turkey to enter the Caspian Sea area; Turkey will become an active player in the Caspian Sea area; and Iran will face a strategic and geopolitical disaster if Turkey enters the Republic of Azerbaijan through Nakhichevan. Iran will then have to face a new actor who can very well attract the cooperation of Turkic-speaking countries, including Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, in the field of Caspian Sea relations.

Another damage will be done to Iran's geopolitical position if the new Caucasus Corridor is formed in the southern axis, i.e., Iran's borders, the energy axis is created in a way that is detrimental to Iran, and a gas pipeline is laid in this region. It should be noted that this is not just a gas pipe but a strategic corridor that makes the countries contributing to this path find a geopolitical position with each other. The shareholders of this corridor— we don't know which countries they are—will be Iran's new neighbors.

6. International Mediation in the Geopolitical Crisis of Nagorno-Karabakh

The nature of international mediation in the framework of the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is discussed here.

6-1. Mediation by the United Nations

The United Nations was established after the Second World War to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations, and ensure international cooperation. Following this

principle, the United Nations has the right to resolve disputes between two governments to achieve peace. The United Nations did not have the right to directly interfere in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union during the development of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, that is, from 1988 to 1991, when the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia were still part of the Soviet Union.

When the parties involved in a dispute, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, became official members of the United Nations by declaring independence, the United Nations gained the authority to investigate and mediate the conflicts between them. This allowed for a potential pathway towards peace to be explored and pursued under the auspices of the United Nations. Therefore, the United Nations pursued the management and resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis for the first time with the statements of the President of the Security Council on July 29 and April 6, 1993, about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on April 14, 1993, about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the worsening of the situation in the region and the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia to the Security Council following the request of Azerbaijan and Turkey to the United Nations to deal with the aggression of Armenians on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Vali Gholizadeh, 2012, p. 82). The efforts of the United Nations to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis can be evaluated in two parts: the efforts of the Security Council and the efforts of the United Nations General Assembly.

6-2. United Nations Security Council

According to Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is one of the main organs of the United Nations and is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, and the members of the United Nations have agreed that the Security Council should act on their behalf in the implementation of the duties that it is responsible for. The Security Council must perform its duties in the form of peaceful intervention in resolving disputes that may endanger international peace and security and provide the conditions for resolving disputes, coercive intervention or adopting coercive methods (Mosazadeh, 2004, p. 106).

6-3. UN General Assembly

Although the Assembly has made an effective contribution to maintaining international peace and security by electing non-permanent members of the Security Council, the role of the UN

General Assembly in maintaining international peace and security increased significantly with the adoption of the United Nations Resolution for Peace on November 3, 1950, by the Assembly. According to this resolution, if the Security Council fails to take action to deal with peace violations or aggression, the General Assembly will decide during an extraordinary meeting to send military forces to critical areas (Hashemi, 2003, p. 134).

6-4. The Mediation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The philosophy of the role of Europeans in the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis is rooted in their strategic goals to penetrate the South Caucasus. Since the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, the Europeans have been active mediators in the management and resolution of the crisis. To facilitate crisis management, they made Azerbaijan and Armenia members of the OSCE at its second meeting on January 31, 1992, in Prague. In this meeting, it was decided to send a delegation from the Organization to investigate the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the possibility of establishing a ceasefire. This delegation was sent to the region on February 18. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the OSCE then decided at the Helsinki meeting on March 24, 1992, that the Minsk Group should be formed to manage and resolve the crisis. The serious efforts of the OSCE to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis reached their peak with the formation of the Minsk Group and the delegation of these efforts through the UN Security Council in resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884 (Khaliov, 2008, p. 92).

The Nagorno-Karabakh region belongs to Azerbaijan from the perspective of international law and based on the resolutions of the Security Council. So, Azerbaijan's rights to maintain its territorial integrity are undeniable and legitimate. However, the actions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, even within the framework of defending its territorial integrity, should not pose a threat to the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh because the people of Nagorno-Karabakh have the characteristics of a people from the perspective of human geography and history and have the right to self-determination, as stipulated in international law, even though the previous separatist elections of these people were unacceptable by the United Nations and the OSCE as the most important custodians of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. So, the possibility of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh resorting to the doctrine of remedial separation and their legitimate separation from Azerbaijan will be raised if

Azerbaijan's actions lead to the threat of mass killing of Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh. The most similar case realized concerning the right to self-determination was the advisory theory obtained from the International Court of Justice about Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, in which Kosovo's separatist action was not considered contrary to international law. In the meantime, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes respecting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, human rights, and the right to self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia because it looks at the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from the perspective of international law.

7. The Legal Justifications of Both Parties to the Conflict Over Nagorno-Karabakh

The Republic of Azerbaijan argues that the Security Council has declared Nagorno-Karabakh as the territory of Azerbaijan by issuing four consecutive resolutions, including Resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884, and emphasized the withdrawal of Armenian forces from it. The authorities of Azerbaijan refer to the last resolution of this council concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since 1993, i.e., Resolution 884, which explicitly calls for the unilateral withdrawal of the occupying forces from Zəngilan and the occupied parts of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

8. International Law and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Territorial Integrity or the Right to Self-determination

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continues while the parties have expressed their claims in line with international law. Armenia and Azerbaijan have been in a fierce conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region on their borders since 1991. Armenia has tacitly supported the region, in part because it includes an Armenian majority. Azerbaijan opposes the recognition of this region as separate because it is officially located in Azerbaijan. This conflict has led to thousands of deaths. Despite the initially violent nature of the conflict, the dispute has reached a deadlock. However, the violence has made life difficult for the people of this region. The two countries have been inactive and silent when it comes to finding solutions. Many Western powers, including Russia and the United States, as well as regional powers like Iran, have been encouraging the two countries to come to a permanent agreement. These influential nations and regional players have been actively supporting and urging the involved parties to reach a lasting

resolution. However, no real progress has been made on this front. Azerbaijan adheres to the principle of territorial integrity, which is included in the United Nations Charter and international conventions and treaties. On the other hand, Armenia insists on its right to self-determination. However, according to international law, the right to self-determination for minorities does not include separatism and secession but includes participation in various elections, other civil and political affairs, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Several resolutions, such as resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884, have been issued by the United Nations, the last of which, in 1993, considered Nagorno-Karabakh to be part of the territory of Azerbaijan. Territorial integrity and political independence are the two main elements of statehood. Territorial integrity refers to the country's territorial integrity. As a norm of international law, it protects the territorial framework of the sovereign state and is the foundation for the sovereignty of countries.

Territorial integrity in international law is a principle that demands respect for the territory of other countries in the international arena. This principle states that the territory of a country should never be violated, invaded, or illegally divided. The principle of territorial integrity means that the country's territory as a whole is safe and indivisible and cannot be changed or divided by resorting to external force. According to Article 2, Clause 4 of the United Nations Charter, all members must refrain from any threat or use of force that is against the territorial integrity or political independence of a country or is contrary to the purposes of the United Nations in their international relations. Any military, economic, political, etc. pressure against the territorial integrity of a state is unjust. A country's territory should never be occupied militarily. Any domination over land or its occupation as a result of the use of force or threats is illegal. It is worth noting that changing the territory based on the agreement of governments or the right of people to determine their destiny is legal in some cases. According to international law, people have the right to take charge of their destiny if their rights are violated. People can form a separate government or join another government as a result of exercising the right to self-determination in a land. Moreover, several independent states may emerge from a single state in the same territory. Although Azerbaijan's claim to preserve its territorial integrity is correct, it should not be denied that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh are somewhat willing to support separatism and hold

previous separatist elections. The United Nations has not declared Kosovo's separatist actions against international law in some cases. Concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it has not recognized such separatist actions and elections so far but insists on respecting human rights and the right to determine the fate of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The evidence indicates that the legal foundations and international law for the territorial separation of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan are weak, but historical experiences such as Kosovo and Crimea should not be ignored. Although this region is supported by Armenia, it cannot form an independent country in terms of international law and communicate with other countries as a state or country. We should wait for the United Nations and the great powers to take a serious step in this regard. From the point of view of international law, the commitment and emphasis on territorial integrity prevail over the recognition of the separatist rights of the people of Karabakh (Khalghinejad and Kakavandi, 2021, p. 2).

9. The Agreements Between the Parties After the War and the Plan to Create the Zangezur Corridor

The 44-day Nagorno-Karabakh war in the Caucasus region, the tensions between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan following the recapture of the regions by Baku, and the competition of regional and extra-regional actors brought this area into a new phase of development. Some issues that have made the future of the South Caucasus region unclear are Turkey's view of the region, the role of Russia as a powerful actor, the Minsk Group, and NATO. Tensions and unrest have reigned recently in Kazakhstan, a big country in Central Asia. An important controversial issue in the relations between Iran and the countries of this region is the “fake Zangezur Corridor” and the threats arising from it, i.e., the occupation of the border between Iran and Armenia. The issue of the opening of the Zangezur Corridor by the Republic of Azerbaijan, despite the opposition of Armenia, has been raised many times in the last two to three years. By changing the political geography of the Caucasus region, the resolution of the tension and the second Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan caused the Republic of Azerbaijan to quickly launch the Zangezur Corridor. However, it will connect the country and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic through Armenia, Russia, and Turkey, creating a route from Asia to Europe and the Middle East. Elham

Aliyev did not shy away from his alleged position, trying to launch this corridor even despite the negotiations between the authorities of the two countries. He argues that this project will not only bring many economic opportunities but will also create long-term peace in the Caucasus region. The establishment of this corridor will permanently cut the border between Iran and Armenia and will give Baku unimpeded access to the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic. Besides, Iran will be deprived of the economic and geopolitical benefits of exiting the nuclear deal deadlock just as it seeks to become an alternative energy supplier to Europe. Meanwhile, extensive measures are being taken to open the Zangezur Corridor with the construction of railways and motor roads. By opening this corridor, the Republic of Azerbaijan has proven its firm commitment; everything is going according to plan, and its construction will be completed by 2024. However, Iran is not satisfied with the prospect of opening this corridor to reconnect the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia with Turkey, while hindering Iran's trade relations with Armenia and weakening its influence as a transit route in the region. Iran has expressed its opposition to the establishment of this corridor. On the other hand, Iran seeks to reduce the strategic losses of reducing or cutting close cooperation and communication with Armenia and the decline of its strategic position in the region in the event of launching this corridor. This issue is raised while the economic and commercial relations between Iran and Armenia have improved significantly since last year. Armenia is the only member of the Eurasian Economic Union that shares a border with Iran, and trade between the two countries increased significantly in the first half of 2022.

Conclusion

A country's territory should never be occupied militarily. Any domination over land or its occupation as a result of the use of force or threats is illegal. It is worth noting that changing the territory based on the agreement of governments or the right of people to determine their destiny is legal in some cases. According to international law, people have the right to take charge of their destiny if their rights are violated. People can form a separate government or join another government as a result of exercising the right to self-determination in a land. Moreover, several independent states may emerge from a single state in the same territory. Although Azerbaijan's claim to preserve its territorial integrity is correct, it should not be denied that the people of Nagorno-

Karabakh are somewhat willing to support separatism and hold previous separatist elections. The United Nations has not declared Kosovo's separatist actions against international law in some cases. Concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it has not recognized such separatist actions and elections so far but insists on respecting human rights and the right to determine the fate of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. The evidence indicates that the legal foundations and international law for the territorial separation of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan are weak, but historical experiences such as Kosovo and Crimea should not be ignored. It can be argued that one of the reasons for the non-ending of this military-political conflict is the adherence of each of the parties involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to one of the important principles of international law and the use of these principles to justify their positions in the conflict. Meanwhile, the separatists of Nagorno-Karabakh rely on the right to self-determination as one of the principles of international law as a legal justification. To justify their separatism, the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh say that the overwhelming majority of the residents of Nagorno-Karabakh are Armenians who do not want to be under the rule of a government that oppresses them religiously and tries to deny their rights and gradually eliminate them among the majority of the people of the Republic of Azerbaijan ethnically. Accordingly, they held an independence referendum and parliamentary, presidential, and even local elections and formed a government based on the presidential system called the Republic of Artsakh, which was officially known as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and was a de facto independent state with an Armenian majority.

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The United States' Role in the Networked Containment Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the West Asia Region: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract

Changes in the security order of the regions cause changes in the control systems and containment of the threats of extra-regional intervening powers. This evolution can be seen in the dimensions of the units, the type of relationships, the layers of the units' communication with each other, and the way the units function to ensure their security interests. In the region of West Asia, which has gone through three periods of regulation, we are witnessing significant developments in the field of regulation. Simple and linear security systems, complex security systems and network security systems are three periods of regulation in which there are three types of control and containment systems. Containment of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a regional security threat has always been discussed in US foreign policy since the victory of the Islamic Revolution. In this framework, the following research question is raised: What evolution has the American control and restraint system undergone against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and how has this evolution been? In response to the above question, the following hypothesis is proposed: the change in the security order of the West Asian region has caused American control system to become a network control system, and this system is a four-layer network (geopolitics, geoeconomics, geoenergy, and geoculture) against which the Islamic Republic of Iran operates. The research method in this article is descriptive-explanatory, and documentary and library methods were used to collect the materials.

Keywords: Network Security Order, West Asia, the United States, Control Strategy, Islamic Republic of Iran.

Introduction

One of the most important areas of international relations research and regional studies is the study of security discipline and patterns of deterrence and control of security behaviors. In most of the structural and environment-oriented theories, security systems are considered an independent variable that forms the behavior of security units in security systems. The multiplicity of variables that make up the security and control behavior of government units has caused theories of international relations and regional studies to deal with a part of the variables and formulate their analysis format based on a number of variables. The security behaviors of government units affected by security regulations have been proposed in the structuralist theories of realism and in the works of thinkers such as Waltz, Gilpin, and Kaplan.

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to the classic and simple nature of the international system, the strategies of the great powers were also linear and simple, and mainly the model of the world order was also shown in a smaller format in the regional orders. But over time, with the change of the system from simple to complex and chaotic and the multifaceted development of the main security concepts of the system, such as security and threats, the former security strategies are not effective in the new security environment. As a result, in order to have an effective and low-cost presence and control the security campaigns of new regional orders, the great powers are designing and implementing security strategies that are appropriate for complex and chaotic systems.

The new global security order is the result of regional orders, and each of the great powers tries to have the greatest impact on the formation of regional orders by designing and implementing effective security strategies in order to improve their position in the global system emerging from regional orders. With the increasing complexity of security systems and the pressures of the strategic environment as an independent variable in the regional strategies of great powers, we are witnessing a change in the control systems of global powers in different geographical regions. The security system of the West Asian region has benefited from fundamental changes with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the beginning of the security competition with the United States. As a result, the containment of Iran's regional behavior model has also undergone a remarkable transformation for the United States. The commonality of both the control models of Iran and the United States is the lack of direct military conflict in the form of full-scale

war, and the difference between the control models of both security units is the difference in the level of national capabilities and regional access.

In this article, the author seeks to explain the new model of control and containment of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United States. What is important in this development and how to carry out and follow up on the new model of containment is the reason for the formation of the new model and how it works. In the framework of pursuing the above issue, the following research question is raised: What evolution has the American control and restraint system undergone against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and how has this evolution been? In response to the above question, the following hypothesis is proposed: the change in the security order of the West Asian region has caused the American control system to become a network control system, and this system is a four-layer network (geopolitics, geoeconomics, geoenergy, and geoculture) against which the Islamic Republic of Iran operates. The research method in this article is descriptive-explanatory, and documentary and library methods were used to collect the materials.

Research Background

The literature related to the field of regional orders and control systems can be divided into two categories: Persian language and English language literature. Farhad Ghasemi (2017), in *Theory of Complexity: Chaos and War in International Relations*, examines the transfer of order from simple and linear to complex and non-linear control systems, such as individual control, multiple control, and single-base control against collective control. The base has been examined. Ghasemi and Shokri (2008), in an article entitled *Attitude Toward the Regional Deterrence System in International Relations: A Case Study of Iran and the United States* discussed the deterrence of Iran and America against each other in the order of the West Asian region. Sotoudeh and Mohammadi Zia (2016), in the article *American Strategy and the Middle East Regional Order: From Classic Hegemony to Soft Hegemony*, have gathered some information about the American alliance and coalition strategy to manage the threats in the order of the West Asian region. In another study, Torabi and Taherizadeh (2018) discussed the issue of regulation in West Asia. In the regulation considered by the authors of the article, transnational divergent forces are considered one of the most important reasons for the divergence and instability of security systems in the West Asian region.

In the section of English-language works, at the level of explaining geo-economic orders, Wallerstein divides the layers of the world economic order into three layers: the center, the periphery, and the semi-periphery of different countries based on the division of global labor in each of the aforementioned categories. In explaining the global order and its divisions, capital accumulation and profit are considered two major forces in the dynamics related to it. Is. Waltz (1979) and Mearsheimer (2001) explained the power distribution in the behavior of government units to explain the impact of power-based orders on the dynamics of world politics. At the level of geocultural orders, Huntington (2003) proposed the concept of the war of civilizations, considered order-making at the global level as a function of conflicting cultures clashing with each other, and considered future order-making conflicts to be of a cultural type. There is a pyramidal and hierarchical view of organization in the works of Modelski (1984) and Organski (1968). The constant competition of governments with each other to be at the top of the power cycle is the most important factor in the dynamics of hierarchical orders at the global level. At the regional level, Lemke (Lemke, 2001) also acknowledges with a pyramidal view the construction of order at the middle level against the dial of regional powers in order to be placed at the upper points of the power cycle.

In the form of using the complexity approach in explaining the behavioral patterns of government units, Santo Banerjee (Banerjee, 2014) has discussed the ambiguous effect of complexity on global policy interactions and the increase of uncertainty by using the theory of complexity in global orders. In another work, “Herd” (2010) in the book *Great Powers and Stabilization Strategy in the 21st Century* focuses on the element of national power over regional regulation by world powers. Herd (2010) considers extra-regional intervening powers as one of the most important factors in creating regional orders. The difference between the present article and the above research works is in the link between the networked order and the control and restraint systems of the big powers in the regional networked orders. The mentioned link will be operationalized in the form of the theoretical framework of the research on the containment strategy of The United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical model has been designed using a realism

approach and the network analysis method. In the following model, the change in security order and its periods will be explained first, and then the cause of said change will be explained in the form of the independent variable effect of the change in security order on the control system and its types.

Transformation in Regional Orders

The network of the geopolitical order of the regions contains diversified existential and harm threats for the regional and extra-regional units. The fluidity, complexity, and dynamism of this network have caused unpredictability and uncertainty to always be raised as two essential principles in this kind of network. The link between threats and regional orders is linear and direct in simple orders and causally recursive in complex and chaotic networked orders. Kawalski summarized complexity in the form of the concept of non-linearity into four characteristics. Bounded rationality, limited unpredictability, evolutionary change, and giving less importance to the concepts of progress and knowledge due to uncertainty are among these. On the opposite point, in the approach of simple order, which has its roots in the period of enlightenment and modernity, there are rationality, predictability, determinism, and no limitations in human knowledge or the idea of progress. (Kavalski, 2007, p. 438) In a nonlinear explanation, minor changes lead to large and unpredictable outputs. (Barry, 2013). Prigozhin considers the difference between a simple and a complex system to be the difference between the formation of an equilibrium state in a simple system and moving away from the equilibrium state. (Sim, 2007, p. 12)

In the global hierarchical network, regional networks have a high position in the competition of great powers to be at the upper levels of power. Due to the strategic importance of the regions and the competition of units that maintain the status quo and challengers of the status quo, the regions have fluctuations related to security competitions. Regional networks affected by intra-network and extra-regional network factors show different rules in their security formulations. Regional order is often drawn and explained in a hierarchical manner with the focus of regional powers due to the dissimilarity of the actors' powers. Most of the building blocks of regional interactions are made by regional powers. The distribution of power in the regions and the response of the regional units to the power of the hegemon in the region and the extra region are important in the construction of order. (Acharya, 2014, p. 36)

Regional orders have experienced three generations of order building, and as a result, in all three types of order, the way threats are formed and the dynamics of regional threats have been highly diverse. In the initial stage of regional order, the key characteristics of a simple order have been the presence of influential government entities capable of effectively managing security crises, along with the predictable linear and causal connections among the various components of the order.. In this type of order, security and geopolitical threats appear in the form of predictable damage with a specific scope of destruction. In the second phase of regularization, with the complexity of the regional order, the links among the units have become multi-level and complicated. The complexity of the adversarial and cooperative communication links among regional units has led to the unpredictability and uncertainty of the structural outputs. Threats arising from complex order have two characteristics: emerging and unpredictability. Also, the high fluidity and dynamism of complex systems have caused the level and depth of security crises to be unpredictable in comparison to simple and linear systems.

With the entry of regional orders into the third phase, a transformation has taken place in the essence of communication, and the formulation of relations based on power, and the formation of threats and changes. In the third phase of regularization, with the physical construction of orders being networked and the essence of interactions becoming chaotic, multiple bodies and the quick access of communication nodes to each other are among the most important features of this type of order. The formation of a networked order has caused the emergence of crises and threats among modern and cross-border people, who simply violate traditional borders and multiply themselves in multi-dimensional and multi-layered ways.

Evolution in the Management and Containment of Threats

Deterrence is the most important strategic tool for government units to deal with regional and extra-regional threats. The concept of deterrence, in its essence, benefits from the concept of defense-offensive balance. The defense-offense balance is like a scale that gets lighter as each side gets heavier. The security strategy of the units in the order hierarchy of the global hierarchy network is formed in connection and interaction with each other based on the principle of deterrence based on the defense-offensive balance, which is rooted in environmental threats. Global and regional

geopolitical threats make the positions of the units in the power cycle hierarchy face security and political challenges. Therefore, by using the power of communication and interference in subordinate regional systems, governments seek to ward off threats and increase their level of deterrence in the hierarchy of the power cycle in the world order network compared to their other global and regional competitors. Not all hegemonies seek to suppress the potential hegemon by interfering in the regions, but rather give some units superiority. (Barden Montgomery, 2016, p. 76)

American international relations researchers have begun to theorize in the form of a strategy to reduce the costs of containing threats. Mearsheimer, an American strategist and researcher, emphasizes the discussion of balance from a distance and non-interference directly in the governance of countries. He considers handing over the affairs to local actors and selective intervention as the most appropriate options to contain existing threats. (Mearsheimer, 2019: 10) In this framework, Mearsheimer and Walt, in a joint work, prescribe to American politicians that the United States can control Iran's hegemony and the balance of the Persian Gulf through Saudi Arabia and terrorist groups such as ISIS. While terrorist groups are still a serious threat to the countries in the region, they are considered a small problem for The United States. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2016, p. 80)

With the increase in national capabilities and increasing threat perception, the units will move toward making the attack base heavier, and in the meantime, they will use threat control strategies according to the existing order. With the transformation of the structure and content of regional orders, deterrence centered on defense-offensive balance has changed from a simple and linear state to a complex and networked one based on communication management. The control strategies of extra-regional and regional powers have undergone a transformation in order to establish a balance between defense and aggression.

In the first phase of regularization and in the simple control system, due to the simple order and linearity of regional order links, the control system uses simple hardware tactics, such as the use of military power, to manage limited and spotty threats. In network control systems, with the complexity of regional orders and the unpredictability of their outputs, control systems have retreated from claims of direct hardware intervention and have turned to the use of proxy tools and regional allies. In the simple system of controlling the input and output of the existing resources in the

complex systems of the region, it is out of the scope and dominion of the government powers, and the cost of managing crises and threats will increase chronically.

In network control, regional threats with a network and the chaos of regional orders require regional and extra-regional units to seek to manage regional threats based on the manipulation and management of chaotic communications. In this generation of control, the use of intra-network links and communications in order to intensify and neutralize regional threats by using intra-network capacities with maximum distance and minimal direct intervention is the most important tactics. Emerging security threats appear at three levels of geopolitics, geoculture, and geoeconomy, and with their irregular and unpredictable expansion in geographic clusters, they challenge traditional management. In network systems, threats do not disappear but continue to exist in a chronic form, and the controlling units only deal with the network control of threats.

The United States' Network Containment Strategy

In the design of the United States' containment strategy in the West Asian region, two factors— reducing costs and looking at competition with other powers in the world power cycle— have been adopted. Due to the increase in the costs of direct intervention in crisis management, such as military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the economic and strategic competition in the Far East with China, the control and containment system of American threats in West Asia has undergone a transformation. Networked regional order is another factor that has had the greatest impact on the networked control system of the United States.

Evolution of the Containment Strategy in US Foreign Policy Documents

The strategy of the American foreign policy elites against environmental threats and how to manage them can be seen in the national security and foreign policy documents published by the presidents. National security and foreign policy documents in the United States are designed in a process based on a new understanding of the security environment and proposed solutions to deal with threats. Identifying and prioritizing threats are important parts of the aforementioned design. Different eras of foreign policy and presidents in the United States indicate the types of threats and threat management in the form of national security documents and other foreign policy documents.

American national security documents show the evolution in the perception of the threat environment and the strategies to deal with it. The Bush administration, focusing on the dangers and threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, proposed the use of hardware and manual power. During this period, the militaristic hardware control system formed the axis of the United States' strategic behavior, which reached its peak in the form of the 2001 Afghanistan and 2003 Iraq wars. The National Security Strategy of 2006 went so far as to consider the preservation of American freedom as dependent on the success of freedom abroad. This means a significant expansion in the depth and breadth of the United States' effort to export its values. (Doyle, 2007, p. 627)

With the increase in the costs of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama's presidency began with a change in the United States' security doctrine. The swamps of Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the great economic recession of 2008, prompted the Obama administration to take a different approach in its strategic view. Therefore, in 2010, the definition of the problem was viewed as a topic for national reconstruction. Obama's first national security strategy, accepting the ongoing wars and the threat of terrorism, announced that the United States must pursue a strategy of national reconstruction and global leadership, a strategy that rebuilds the foundations of American power and influence. (US National Security Strategy, 2010)

The 2010 National Security Strategy states that the US approach begins with a commitment to building a stronger foundation for American leadership. Because what happens inside our borders determines our power and influence outside them. The security landscape has changed significantly between 2010 and the next national security strategy published in 2015, especially in the Middle East. The Arab uprisings (Islamic Awakening) and their consequences, especially the Libyan crisis and the internationalized civil war in Syria, challenged the Obama administration to determine the boundaries of security and the extent of American intervention. Obama's doctrine, which in various situations received nicknames such as restraint or guidance, and this approach came back to doubts about the effectiveness of military force and caution from foreign interventions to avoid long-term commitments (Cohen, 2015), from strategic commitment to strong leadership, was gaining strength. (National Security Strategy, 2015)

In the 2010 National Security Strategy document, it is clearly stated that multilateralism will strengthen those who move along

international standards and isolate and weaken those who do not. In this document, threats are managed in the form of a network control system with the help of proxy actors and a network-type control system using communication nodes. In this period, like the Bush era, the United States was implementing its management system in the form of global leadership in order to deal with threats. The three modes of leadership reflect the themes that emerged in the 2010 National Security Strategy: targeted leadership, power-based leadership, and exemplary leadership. The fourth mode refers to a type of leadership accompanied by capable partners, including allies of international institutions and the private sector. Although the centrality of leadership is new in this document, this national security strategy is not much different in terms of substance from the national security strategies of the Bush era, which emphasized the importance of cooperation with others to resolve regional conflicts.

In 2015, Obama's second National Security Strategy stated that the United States is taking the lead with a long-term vision of changing the distribution of global power. The new developments were beyond the security paradigm after September 11, which the Obama administration accepted. This includes developments that redistribute power to new focal points in the global environment, such as sub-state and non-state actors, and among networked transnational agents. (Jahanian, 2019, p. 122) Trump's national security strategy, emphasizing the terrorist threats and mass killings of the previous eras and focusing on the network-type control system without direct hardware intervention, sought to use the regional security order network to contain the threats. The introduction to Trump's 2017 strategy begins with the introduction of an extremely dangerous world populated by transnational terrorists and recalcitrant and errant states. (National Security Strategy, 2017) Trump's national security strategy declares that China and Russia want to build a world opposite to the values and interests of the United States. (Weaver, 2018, p. 69) The increase in the costs of the US military presence in the West Asian region had caused Trump's visa to pay attention to the network-type control system.

A network approach in the US national security strategy document in 2022 with the focus on strengthening multi-dimensional ties with regional allies and the simultaneous use of all political and economic tools and internal access to support internal opponents and develop internal conflicts in the Islamic Republic of Iran It is being operationalized. The network view of the regional containment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this document is summarized by the

following principles: The first principle is that the United States will strengthen its partnership with countries that adhere to the international law-based order and ensure that those countries are able to defend themselves against foreign threats. Second, the United States will not allow foreign or regional powers to remember the freedom of navigation through the Middle East passages, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab. Third, while trying to reduce threats and establish regional stability, the United States will seek to reduce tensions and end conflicts through various means, including diplomacy. Fourth, the United States will seek to strengthen integration in the region by building political, economic, and security ties. Fifth, the United States will always seek to promote human rights and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The aforementioned series of claims are being pursued against the regional activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the security network of West Asia. In the new US national security documents, the emphasis on diplomacy, cooperation with allies to contain regional threats, and the selective use of unilateral military tools are among the components of emphasizing the use of the network containment system.

American Network Area Control in Triple Clusters

The new approach of containment of Iran by the United States is carried out in the form of a multi-layered network with the focus on reducing Iran's regional deterrence with the help of manipulating the communication nodes. In the three clusters of the Levant, the East and Persian Gulf, governmental and non-governmental units affected by the United States' behavior are seeking to intensify regional competition with Iran, and these competitions have continued in the fields of geopolitics, geoenergy, geoculture, and geoeconomics.

Persian Gulf Cluster

The geopolitical cluster of the Persian Gulf has been used as a strategic cluster to deal with Iran's threats in different layers due to the existence of high economic, energy, and security capacities for the United States. The most important threat facing the United States in the security network of West Asia and the Persian Gulf cluster is formed by the axis of resistance centered on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Utilization of the network of regional allies is pursued in different layers to harness the capabilities of the resistance axis and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the geopolitical

layer of the United States' control and containment network against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf cluster, the United States' regional allies, and the United States' arms support nodes, and intelligence and security support are located.

The United States' direct presence in the Persian Gulf has decreased, and a limited military presence is ongoing to establish security coordination in the form of advisory support and military bases (Torabi, 2018, p. 55). The United States has seven military bases in the Persian Gulf region, which include al-Adeed Air Base in Qatar, Tumerit Air Base in Oman, Bahrain's Fifth Fleet Base, Ali al-Salem Air Base in Kuwait, Sheikh Isa Air Base in Bahrain, Ahmed al-Jaber Air Base in Kuwait, and al-Dhafra Air Base in Emirates. (McCarthy, 2017, p. 11) About 54,000 US military forces are present in 12 West Asian countries. In the meantime, about 11,000 American soldiers are stationed at the Al-Adeed base in Qatar, more than 10,000 at the Al-Doha military base in Kuwait, about 5,000 at Al-Dhafra Air Base, and more than 4,000 soldiers at the Fifth Fleet of the US Navy in Bahrain. (Yenisafak, 2018, p. 55) In 2017, NATO opened its first regional office outside its borders in Kuwait. (Aluwaisheg, 2018, p. 21)

During the war in Yemen, the intelligence assistance of the United States and the Zionist regime made it possible for Saudi Arabia and Yemen to easily destroy ground targets with the help of airplanes purchased from the United States. (Mohsani, 1400, p. 21) The Patriot air defense missile systems and their newer generation against Iranian mid-range and long-range missiles are one of the other US military nodes to strengthen the military support network for the Persian Gulf Arabs. The integrated and multilateral air and missile defense system is one of the network defense plans that the Americans and the Zionists are seeking to establish against the Islamic Republic of Iran. This coalition is being pursued in the form of the Red Sands project. In the field of maritime defense, the 59th Special Group is deployed by the US 5th Fleet in Bahrain. (What is the Story of Group 59?, 140) In addition to this project, the creation of a network of 100 unmanned surveillance vessels is on the agenda of the American military authorities in the Persian Gulf. Vision 2040 is another security goal based on which security cooperation between the US and the Persian Gulf Arabs will have greater convergence in the next two decades. (The United States' Plan to Deploy 100 Unmanned Vessels in the Persian Gulf, 1401)

In the field of geo-economics and geo-energy of the Persian Gulf cluster, we see that the Persian Gulf Arabs are complying with US

sanctions, and joint oil and gas projects with high investment volumes have not been carried out. Although the United Arab Emirates is one of the most important business partners of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this country is only responsible for the transfer of goods and has not made joint economic and energy investments with Iran. In the field of manipulation in the sub-state perception network, the Americans, with the help of Saudi Arabia, in the form of networks like Iran International, have always sought to create inflammation and reduce the acceptability of the government among Iranian citizens.

Eastern Cluster

With the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban to power, the control of the Islamic Republic of Iran's network in the eastern cluster has gone from a direct mode based on military presence to exploitation through the perceptual and security gaps between Iran and the Taliban government. The hydropolitical and security disputes arising from the turmoil and confusion of the political and economic structures of Afghanistan under Taliban rule have caused the American network control in this cluster in a negative way and in the form of the loss of opportunities for bilateral cooperation between Iran and its eastern neighbor to take a new form. Before leaving Afghanistan completely on April 14, 2021, in a speech about the future of Afghanistan, Biden pointed out the change in the quality of the threat in Afghanistan and said, "Our reasons for staying in Afghanistan are becoming increasingly unclear; even the terrorist threat that we went to fight has changed. The threat is dispersed. With the spread of terrorism in many places, maintaining thousands of military forces stationed and concentrated in just one country at a cost of billions of dollars does not seem justified to me and our leaders." (White House Press, 2021)

During this period, the US used the Shindand base in western Afghanistan to spy on the eastern borders of Iran using spy planes (Bagheri, 2013, p. 120). The United States' use of regional allies such as Turkey and the countries bordering the Persian Gulf and the economic sanctions on the Taliban to increase the security and political gaps between this group and the Islamic Republic of Iran is another means of curbing Iran's network in the eastern cluster. The United States' attempt to not transfer the Peace Pipeline to Pakistan (gas pipeline) and opposition to electricity transmission projects to Pakistan's Quetta in the form of an "everyone except Iran" policy is considered to be network containment in the field of geoenergy.

(Yosefzahi, 2018, p. 214) The presence of terrorists and security damage in the borders of Iran and Pakistan have always been affected by the intelligence and political support of the United States and its regional allies. According to the official statistics of the government of Pakistan, about 11 thousand religious schools are active in this country, of which about five thousand are not officially registered. These schools, by cultivating extremist forces, make hardware confrontations ineffective. (Shahidani, 2019, p. 292)

The US Cluster

The containment and control of the axis of resistance in the Levant cluster have been very costly for the United States and the Zionist regime. At the end of 2015, in order to reduce Iran's influence in Iraq and make Iraq's power structure dependent on the United States, this country spent about \$90 billion on training and equipping the Iraqi and Afghan army and police. The United States also spent nearly \$104 billion from 2001 to 2017 to help rebuild Afghanistan, and from 2003 to 2017, about \$60 billion to rebuild Iraq (Thrall, 2017, p. 3). The cost of curbing the axis of resistance through hardware curbs in Syria and Iraq showed that the United States is looking to use a network approach to curb this flow. Qatar's \$12 million in aid to the rebels in 2012 and the cancellation of Syria's membership in the Arab League in favor of the United States in order to curb the axis of resistance ended.

In the field of geopolitical containment of the resistance axis, the use of regional allies along with the selective use of military power in the form of air and intelligence superiority in the Levant cluster is used to contain the military forces of Hezbollah, Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and scattered military units of the resistance axis. The support of the anti-Assad regime militias in Syria took place in the form of an arms and economic support network. The direct military removal of Assad for the United States had many costs, like Iraq during Saddam's era (Qorbanzadah Soavar, 2019, p. 170). Hence, the agenda of the American authorities involves the strategic objective of weakening and removing Assad through the establishment of a multi-layered network with the assistance of regional allies.

The use of advanced technologies to eliminate key anti-American elements in the West Asian region has grown significantly in the last two decades. The assassinations of Martyr Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad airport were carried out within the framework of American network control with

the help of advanced satellites and information networks. Selective military action with the help of the intelligence services of the Zionist regime against the Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) forces is considered one of the other components of the transformation in the strategy of controlling regional threats by the United States. The air attack of the Zionist regime on some resistance positions in Syria and the strengthening of the Kurds in Iraq and Syria are carried out in order to strike a balance between the central government and the centrifugal forces in this framework (Salimi, 1400, p. 147).

In the realm of geo-economics, efforts to weaken the financial and economic capabilities of the resistance axis have been observed through measures such as the imposition of Caesar sanctions against Syria following the defeat of ISIS in the country, as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran's seizure of funds from energy sales to Iraq. These actions aim to exert control over dollar transactions through network containment and control. In the first three years of Trump's presidency, the US Treasury Department has added an average of 1,070 names to its main sanctions list every year. While Obama had 533, and during Bush's presidency, this number was 435. More than 20% of the sanctions list of the Trump administration is related to Iran and four Arab countries (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen), where Iran has more influence. (Economist, 2020, p. 4)

It is possible for Americans to monitor the transfer of dollars to Iran by controlling the currency transactions of Iraqi banks that work with dollars. Increasing American pressure on Iraqi banks to prohibit the transfer of dollars to Iran is done in the form of pressure on the Central Bank of Iraq and the imposition of fines on the offending banks. American officials have stated that these pressures are aimed at limiting the use of the Iraqi banking system to smuggle dollars to Tehran, Damascus, and money laundering havens throughout the Middle East. For years, US officials have pressured Iraq to strengthen its control over banks. In 2015, Iraqi officials announced that the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department temporarily blocked the transfer of billions of dollars to Iraq's central bank out of concern that the currency would be transferred to Iranian banks (New Rules of the US Treasury in Iraq to Prevent the Transfer of Dollars to Iran, 1401).

According to Iraqi authorities and court documents, the Central Bank of Iraq has prohibited four banks, "al-Ansari, al-Sharq al-Awsat, al-Qabid, and Asia," from doing any dollar transactions. The impact of the stricter controls adopted can be seen in the sharp

decline in dollar transactions by Iraqi banks that the central bank records on its website. According to the data, on October 17, 2021, before the new rules came into effect, daily transfers from Iraqi official accounts at the New York Federal Reserve and other institutions abroad were \$225 million. But on January 17, this figure was \$30 million, which decreased by nearly 90%. (New American Laws to Prevent the Transfer of Dollars to Iran, 1401)

Conclusion

The intervention of great powers in regional systems to meet strategic goals is one of the most important subjects of international relations studies. Regional presence and intervention by world powers are done through deterrence systems and regional control systems. Deterrence is the key concept in determining the security strategy of the units, and accordingly, their security behavior. Deterrence against environmental risks and threats to maintain basic values is a basic political unit in the design of security strategies. In the design of the security strategy of the units, calculations related to the defense-offensive balance in deterrence against threats have always been prominently noticed by researchers and designers of security strategies. Maintaining the defensive balance against threats and increasing the offensive balance to compensate for losses and ward off upcoming threats using communication power tools is the connecting point of power dynamics and the security strategy of the units.

The American control system in the Southwest Asia region underwent a transformation based on the evolution of the security order in this region. Due to the change in the security order and its networking and the increase in the costs of containing regional threats, the American control system has enjoyed three generations. The geopolitical landscape of the Southwest Asia region has been influenced by the rivalry between three Salafi currents, namely the Axis of Resistance and the Ikhwani Current. . These complications have caused the cost of managing threats to global powers, especially the United States, to increase and Iraq and Afghanistan to become quagmires of American forces. However, according to the statement in the American national security documents regarding the strategic importance of the Middle East and the threats in it, the complete liberation of Southwest Asia has not happened in the foreign policy of the United States. Rather, the threat control and management system of this country has changed.

In the United States' network control strategy against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the goal is to reduce the regional influence and

deterrence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Manipulation in the communication nodes of the strategic environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran is done in the form of creating regional alliances, cutting Iran's strategic links, and strengthening geopolitical faults in the Levant, Persian Gulf, and Eastern clusters in the framework of network containment. Simultaneity and hybridity are among the characteristics of network strategy. Blocking financial assets and financial sanctions are part of the multilateral containment network of Iran at the regional and global level by the US.

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Analyzing the Variables Affecting France's Artistic Diplomacy Toward Iran in the 20th Century; Reflecting on James N. Rosenau Theory

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Abstract

This paper employs the theoretical framework proposed by James Rosenau to examine the factors that shaped French art diplomacy towards Iran during the 20th century. The purpose of this study is to understand the complex dynamics of cultural exchange between these two countries and shed light on the broader concept of art diplomacy in the 20th century. Rosenau's theory emphasizes the importance of multiple variables in shaping diplomatic relations and highlights the role of non-state actors in this process. The findings highlight the multidimensional nature of French art diplomacy toward Iran and emphasize the importance of political motives, cultural affinity, and economic considerations in shaping these relations. In dealing with Rosenau's variables, the question is: which variable or variables have been effective in the success of France's artistic diplomacy in interaction with Iran in the 20th century? To answer this question, the document study method should be used to collect data. Therefore, Rosenau's continuity model has been used to test the present research. In explaining the main problem, the thematic analysis method (Brown and Clark) has been used. In sum, this article presents a comprehensive analysis of the variables affecting French artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century. Using Rosenau's theoretical framework, the authors provide a rich understanding of the dynamics of this diplomatic practice and its implications for international relations.

Keywords: Artistic Diplomacy, Continuum Model, James N. Rosenau, France, Iran.



Introduction

In the framework of international relations, relations between independent governments are formed through the mechanism of “diplomacy” in order to create a close, good, and mutual relationship between sovereign governments. This relationship, with the mediation of diplomatic offices and officials located inside or outside the country, officially guides the mutual relations and communication between the two countries. One of the important forms of diplomacy is “cultural diplomacy,” in which art plays an important role as a tool of diplomatic communication and interaction. In this type of diplomacy, art can be considered a special and unique form of diplomacy because, through art, a nation is able not only to promote its national achievements but also to create a special form of society, that is, “society” make “artistic” in both (Walden, 2019, p. 354). France's artistic diplomacy has played an important role in strengthening cultural exchange and diplomatic relations with other nations throughout the art and cultural history of this country. In the 20th century, France's engagement with Iran through artistic endeavors served as a vital avenue for mutual understanding and cooperation. Art diplomacy, often recognized as an attractive tool in foreign policy, is of vital importance for France in expanding its cultural influence and gaining greater political influence globally as well as locally, and this is true of with the art of French diplomats. Employing characters and performing artistic actions appropriate to the social conditions of Iranian society as a goal of diplomatic interaction made sense (Samimi, 2018, p. 46).

Artistic diplomacy refers to the use of artistic and cultural exchanges as a tool to strengthen diplomatic relations and promote the soft power of a country. This article critically analyzes the factors that influence French artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century, utilizing the theoretical framework proposed by James Rosenau.20 have been affected. The author's goal in this article is to identify the key variables that have influenced these diplomatic relations and examine how they have evolved over time. Analyzing these variables through the lens of Rosenau's theory, the authors seek a detailed understanding of the dynamics and results of French art diplomacy toward Iran. In this article, the authors try to show that French diplomats have always sought to create a more suitable platform for the promotion of France's soft power through art institutions, the establishment of French schools, the establishment of multi-purpose galleries, the holding of music concerts in Iran, and the release of art films. In this regard, they have been able to

achieve significant achievements in applying soft power and promoting French culture and art in Iranian society in the 20th century. For this purpose, the works of writers and theorists in the field of French cultural and artistic diplomacy have been taken into consideration. As an example, Philip Lane's (2011) book titled *France's Presence in the World: Cultural and Scientific Action*, analyzes the development of French cultural diplomacy from a historical perspective, as well as considering recent institutional reforms and examining specific examples of educational cooperation with other countries. The head of the French Institute, Xavier Darcus, distinguished this study as a very timely study and even wrote a special introduction about it, claiming that France should "strengthen its power of seduction through ideas, knowledge, and its culture" and also take good care of "other power factors". According to Lin, the best way to explain how the French cultural and artistic diplomacy model has worked in relation to the approval of the new law is to pay attention to the most important areas of activity and to emphasize the results of a series of important institutional reforms in the last few decades (Kessler, 2010, p. 30). The temporary director of research at the National Center for Scientific Research—Marie-Christine Kessler, in a report titled *The Contribution of Culture in Economic Diplomacy*, by analyzing the use of the first principle of French cultural diplomacy, believes that the existing model of diplomacy, due to its obvious dependence And without challenging the functioning of the government and diplomatic system, it is sometimes discussed. According to him, the greats of French cultural diplomacy have always been encouraged to rely on strictly controlled methods and properly use a series of administrative tools instead of dedicating space for unrestricted actions to non-governmental organizations and capital. Independent investors should be employed. *Gold in the Forest: The Role of the French in the Popularization of Modern Iranian Cinema in the 90s* is the title of research that examines the role of the French in the popularization of "Modern Iranian Cinema" in the 1990s and takes a critical look at the nature of the post-colonial relations between Iran and France. This book examines the motivations of the French to get involved and the impact of their actions on the success of "New Iranian Cinema".

In general, the five variables that are analyzed in the formation of foreign policy are individual variables, role variables, government variables, society variables and environmental variables (international system). The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate

the relative strength of each of these variables and their impact on France's art diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century and provide an insight into the dynamics of cultural relations between France and Iran in that time period.

Research Methodology

Thematic analysis is a widely used method for analyzing qualitative data. This method involves identifying patterns of meaning in a data set and developing themes that encompass these patterns. Thematic analysis is often used in qualitative research and is known as a precise and methodical approach to data analysis (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 26). One of the key aspects of thematic analysis is ensuring accuracy and reliability in the process. This feature involves recording, systematizing, and disclosing the analysis methods in sufficient detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is valid or not. Researchers should also recognize the researcher's mindset and consider it a part of the analysis process (Campbell et al., 2015, p. 2021).

Thematic analysis is a useful method for qualitative data analysis and can provide valuable insights about patterns of meaning in a data set (Cernasev & Axon, 2023, p. 753). Thematic analysis methods in this research include several steps:

- 1- Data identification
- 2- Generating primary codes
- 3- Searching for secondary and main themes
- 4- Check the themes
- 5- Defining and naming themes
- 6- Preparation of reports.

Tables 1 and 2 show the data, main and sub-themes, and their general description.

Table (1)

Data	Description
Variables of the James N. Rosenau Continuity Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variables of James Rosenau's theoretical model at micro and macro levels. • Variables include the individual, role, and government at the micro level, and the variables of society and the international system at the macro level.
Influence factors through variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors affecting the methods and the degree of influence of the variables at two micro and macro levels are effective, which include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The actor's political power 2) Economic status of the actor

Data	Description
	3) Open or closed nature of social structure 4) Penetration or impenetrability of the cultural structure 5) Different subject areas
Artistic diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting and preserving cultural heritage, traditions, and artistic practices. • Purpose: to build bridges and strengthen communication between people of different backgrounds through the universal language of art. • A tool for countries to demonstrate their soft power and strengthen their public diplomacy efforts. • Has the potential to promote peace and reconciliation between two or more countries with different cultural, political, and social characteristics.
The tool of France's interaction with Iran	Tools of art, literature, music, cinema, and philosophy.
Key aspects of France's interaction with Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ancient cultural and artistic capacities •A cultural and artistic approach based on ancient heritage •Artistic traditions and the presence of international artists •Exposure to art movements and the development of modern art •Intellectual and scientific exchanges

Table (2): Codes, Main and Sub-themes

Main themes	Sub-themes	coding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Actions and views of key people •Personal beliefs and interests •Artists and key people •Diplomats •The political atmosphere of people's relationships •Economic interests of artists and cultural ambassadors •Diplomats and cultural figures 	Individual variable	Theoretical variables about French artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20 th century
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Government officials of the participating countries •The role of politicians and prominent personalities •Artists, intellectuals, and prominent figures of art and culture •Personal communication •Between politicians and prominent 	Role variable	

Main themes	Sub-themes	coding
personalities from both countries		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cultural initiatives and artistic exchanges •Educational and academic exchanges •Protection of cultural heritage •Promotion of language and culture •Development of artistic diplomacy policies •Promoting national culture and values on the world stage •Shaping the process of modernization and the establishment of cultural centers 	State variable	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attitudes and behaviors of individuals and groups in both countries •The political atmosphere of both countries •Economic relations between the two countries •Culture and cultural values of the two countries •Cultural heritage, culture, and interactive spirit of people 	community variable	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cultural exchange and valuing and promoting culture and art outside the borders •Political motives in international and regional interactions •Economic interests abroad •Global power dynamics •Transnational actors •Globalization 	The variables of the international system and the campaigns of the international environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of French trade in the Persian Gulf • Making strategic decisions in the field of cultural exchanges, artistic collaborations, and promoting French art and culture in Iran • Introducing French artistic movements and ideas to Iran • Strengthening artistic dialogue • Introducing modernist art to Iran • Supporting cultural exchange programs • The establishment of the French cultural center in Tehran in 1974 • Strengthen mutual understanding 	Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Political •Cultural •Economic •Social •Artistic •Educational and scientific 	France's actions in art diplomacy toward Iran in the 20 th century

Main themes	Sub-themes	coding
<p>and appreciation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing exhibitions, and providing funding for artistic initiatives • Establishment of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts • Compilation of artistic diplomacy policies of the French government toward Iran • Shaping the process of modernization and westernization in Iran under the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi • In the post-revolution era in Iran, the formation of cultural exchange between the two countries • Establishment of the French Cultural Center in Tehran in 1974 • Educational and academic exchanges between France and Iran • Student exchange, university conferences, and joint research projects • Preserving Iran's cultural heritage • Holding language courses and cultural events • Investment of French companies in Iran's oil and gas industry • Financing cultural exchange programs and art projects • Promotion of French art, literature, music, and cinema • Maintaining influence in the Middle East • Supporting cultural diversity and dialogue • Promoting French products, attracting Iranian investments, or securing favorable commercial contracts • Proving oneself on the international scene through cultural and artistic influence • The role of transnational actors • Art galleries, museums, cultural foundations, and art societies • Facilitating artistic collaborations, exhibitions, and cultural events • Exchange of ideas and aesthetics 		

Main themes	Sub-themes	coding
between the two countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of French art and culture in Iran and vice versa • Digital platforms and international art markets • Promotion of French language and culture • Support visual arts • Supporting artists and avant-garde movements such as Cubism and Surrealism • Promoting the literary works of André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus in several languages •concert holding • Supporting international tours of French musicians • Promotion of French classical music • Supporting production in the French film industry, known as “Cinema France”, internationally renowned filmmakers • Screening of French films at international festivals • Publishing the works of philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault in intellectual circles 		

Theoretical Framework

James Rosenau, in his book titled *The Study of World Politics: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges* proposed a continuous approach for foreign policy analysis. Based on this approach, five variables should be examined to understand the formation of foreign policy (Rosenau, 2006, pp. 200-201). as follows:

- 1- The individual variable: the beliefs, values, and experiences of decision-makers can influence foreign policy decisions.
- 2- Role variable: The position and role of policymakers within the political system can shape their decision-making process and priorities.
- 3- Government variables: The structure and organization of the government can be influential in formulating and implementing foreign policy.
- 4- Society variables: the values and social norms prevalent in a

country can influence foreign policy choices.

5- Environmental variables (international system): The international system and actions of other countries can shape foreign policy decisions.

The degree of influence of each of these variables in his theory depends on five important factors, which include:

- 1- The actor's political power (big and small)
- 2- Economic status of the actor (developed and backward)
- 3- The open or closed nature of the social structure (indicating the presence or absence of changes in society's elites at different levels)
- 4- Penetrability or impenetrability of the cultural structure (a penetrable country is a country that reacts positively to the flow of receiving information from outside).
- 5- Different subject areas (Rosenau, 1971, pp. 110)

Artistic Diplomacy in Theory and Practice

Artistic diplomacy is also known as a form of soft power that includes the use of cultural-artistic activities and creative expression as a tool to strengthen dialogue, foster mutual respect, and promote the values and interests of a nation (Poplavska, 2022, p. 34). International Relations The first person to use the concept of artistic diplomacy is often attributed to Leonardo da Vinci. During his time as a court artist for the Duke of Milan, da Vinci used his artistic skills not only to create magnificent works of art but also to build relationships and create communication channels (Mussari, 2023:5-6). André Malraux is credited with introducing the concept of artistic diplomacy in France. He was a novelist, art theorist, and French Minister of Culture from 1959 to 1969. During the tenure of the Ministry of Culture, he promoted the idea of using art and cultural cooperation as a tool to strengthen dialogue, understanding, and peaceful relations between nations (Liu, 2006, p. 27). and refers to the exchange of ideas by the French government to promote its national interests and influence abroad. This approach has been an integral part of French foreign policy, and its purpose is to show France as a cultural power and maintain its global influence (Kovács, 2008, p. 12).

Twentieth Century; A Century of Interaction and Evolution in the Relations Between France and Iran

In the 20th century, France was always known as one of the leading soft power countries in the world. This country and its culture have been admired in many parts of the world for centuries. According to

Thomas Jefferson, "Every man has two countries: his own country and France" (Portland, July 17, 2015).

Traveling to Iran to fulfill political goals provides an extraordinary opportunity for artists to collect visual information about Iran's cultural, social, and political systems, its army, its people, and its various regions. For example, Eugene Flandin, an Italian-born artist who lived in Paris, and Pascal Coste, a French artist, were sent to Iran in 1840 with the aim of carrying out a mission to collect information about the political atmosphere of Iran under the rule of Mohammad Shah. In 1884, Edward Sersi, the leader of this mission, was recalled to France by his respective government due to inefficiency in performing his political and diplomatic duties in Iran. Eugen Flandin and Kost stayed in Iran in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and traveled to Hamadan, Kermanshah, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Persepolis. After two and a half years, they returned to France and published a six-volume album about Iran in 1851. Also, Jules Verne traveled to Iran and Turkey on a government mission in July 1947, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. Verne prepared many sketches and paintings of people and landscapes during his mission to Iran. He returned to Paris in 1950, and the advantage he had over other artists was that he was allowed to paint the face of the royal princess, the Shah's aunt, Farah, the wife of Mohammad Reza Shah of Iran, in the Shah's private harem during the Pahlavi era. This was an opportunity for him to get information about the harem life. (Thornton, 1983, p. 80)

Due to the lack of historical documents remaining in the archives of the Iranian Document Center and the loss of many of them during the last two centuries, it is impossible to find the exact and scientific date of the beginning of cultural and effective relations between Iran and France based on historical documents. Some reports and documents speak of the cultural influence of France in Iran since the end of the Safavid period, and the presence of the French Capuchin minorities in all parts of Iran in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and the subsequent presence of the Society of Jesus in the Afshar and Zandiye periods. The last Shah of Iran, during the last years of his reign, during a ceremony that was held in Paris Municipal Palace to welcome him, considered the history of cultural relations between Iran and France to be 300 years old and emphasized that these relations are related to the development of transportation vehicles. It has expanded since the beginning of the Qajar period. (Lauzon, 2014, pp. 350-351) In the Qajar era, the use of European languages, especially French, increased in Iran, and

European words, especially English and French, spread in Persian. The influence of the French language was such that the names of many European countries, such as Finland, were borrowed in Persian (Norway, Sweden, Germany, etc. with French pronunciation). During the Naseri period, more French schools were established in Tehran, and the number of Iranian students in these modern schools increased. Even some of these new schools established by foreign missionaries received money from the Shah of Iran. For example, one of the schools of *the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul*, which taught Iranian girls, received a hundred tomans from Naseruddin Shah annually (Klawans, 2001, p. 192).

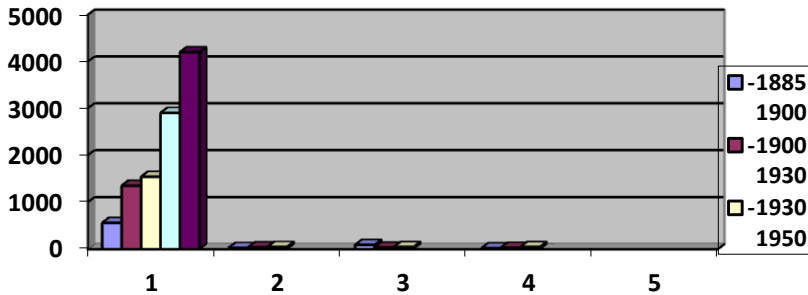
Simultaneously, with the expansion of modern and national schools after the constitutional revolution, French language education also increased in Iran's public schools. These schools were mostly founded by Qajar aristocrats (male and female) and large patriotic families who taught non-religious textbooks and foreign languages, especially French, to children. Among other things, during the period of Ahmad Shah Qajar, new high schools were established, including the medical high school and the law school. French schools expanded significantly during the Pahlavi period. Among the French schools at this time in Tehran were *Madame Maria*, *Taraneh Nou*, *Mademoiselle Marcy* and *Jeanne d'Arc*, as well as Razi Boys' School and French Kindergarten. Many of the professors working in Tehran University during the period of Reza Shah Pahlavi were French, and many magazines and books were sent from France to Iran (Documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1940. Code 26: 8), and Iranian academics and intellectuals used them. The model of education at Tehran University was based on the principles of French higher education. For example, courses such as history and geography were a single course. (Sefatgol, 2008, p. 24)

In the same way, the scientific, cultural, and artistic cooperation between Iran and France continued during the Pahlavi period, and during Reza Shah's period, about two-thirds of Iranian immigrants to Europe traveled to France (Abrahamian, 1401, p. 44). Based on the available documents, especially during the second Pahlavi period, a significant number of French artists and people who traveled to Iran in the fields of tourism, culture, and art between 1885 and 2000 are shown in Table 3.

Table (3): French Tourists in Iran During the Late 19th and 20th Centuries

Row	Duration of Stay	The Name of the Main Destination City	The Number of Foreign Tourists and Iranian Tourists	Year
1	1-6 months	Tehran-Mashhad-Shiraz-Isfahan	56	1885-1900
2	1-6 months	Tabriz - Tehran - Mashhad - Isfahan - Shiraz	135	1900-1930
3	1-6 months	Tehran- Tabriz-Isfahan- Shiraz-Mashhad	254	1930-1950
4	1-6 months	Tehran- Shiraz-Isfahan- Mashhad-Tabriz	325	1950-1970
5	1-6 months	Tehran- Tabriz-Isfahan- Shiraz-Mashhad	675	1970-2000

(Statistics Source: Documents in the Archives of the National Library)



(Statistics Source: Documents in the National Library archive)

Chart of the Number of French Tourists in Iran in the Late 19th and 20th Centuries

Chart (1): French Tourists in Iran During the Late 19th and 20th Centuries

It should be noted that the number of French teachers abroad increased during the years after World War II, from about 3,000 in 1960 to approximately 4,400 in 1980. During this period, France ranked third in the world in terms of the number of expatriates (after the United States and England).

- 1- Artistic activities of Jean-Michel Damascen, musician
- 2- Career activities in the field of art of some French nationals in museums and art institutions (document related to the employment regulations of foreign nationals, 1340–1346, National Library of Iran archive)
- 3- Performing and holding symphonic orchestras in Iran's music halls¹ (document related to the performance of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra in Roudaki Hall, 1354: Archives of the National Library of Iran).
- 4- Expansion of the French language in Iran: Since the return of Kamal al-Molk from his trip to France (1939 AD/1318 SH), French artistic words have begun to enter the Iranian artistic and original culture. First, eight to ten words of composition, figure, motif, age, abstract, decor, nuance, tone and tonality, balance, and equilibrium that the teachers of his school taught them to their students (Ayatollahi, 2009, p. 2-3)
- 5- The establishment of art clubs and the launch of monthly art magazines to counter the influence of modernism in Iranian art were other measures that the French took with the help of the Iranians themselves. This caused real modernism to penetrate the field of Iranian art in the 20th century. With the exhibition of pseudo-cubist or expressionist and even abstract canvases in the first Tehran art shows, a public debate about the merits of modern art began, which continued with the “modern versus classical poetry” controversy. For a time, from the mid-1950s on, Iranian modernists received official encouragement through the General Directorate of Fine Arts (later to become the Ministry of Arts and Culture).
- 6- Establishment of galleries in Kandariz, Saba, Negar, and Burka Mes; Sihun Gallery; and later Zand and Seman. For several years in the 1960s, it was important as a place where ideas were traded between painters, musicians, and writers. The interest and encouragement of the Pahlavi leaders were one of the factors that helped the modern art movement grow beyond their basic support. Artists were sent to study abroad, and the necessary facilities were provided to participate in art exhibitions such as the Autumn Exhibition in Paris and the Venice Biennale. Government ministries were encouraged to assign public commissions to these artists. Finally, a number of museums

1. To read other documents and access their content, the full text of these documents, refer to the archive of the National Library of Iran: <http://www.nlai.ir/>

related to modern art were established. In addition, in the 1960s, the number of private collectors of modern Iranian art was increasing, and in the 1970s, even corporate collectors appeared (government and role variableS) (Ball & Gardin, 1982, p. 126).

Dynamics of Diplomatic Relations and Modern Variables

The bilateral relationship between France and Iran during the 20th century was shaped by the influence of five distinct daily variables., including:

1- Individual Variable

Individual variables include the actions and views of key people, such as artists, intellectuals, diplomats, and cultural figures, who played a role in promoting cultural exchange and artistic initiatives between the two countries (Whiskin & Bagot, 2019, p. 64).

In his studies, Rosenau provides insights into the influence of individuals in international relations and their interaction with broader structural factors (Hägel, 2020, p. 19). Individual variables include French artists, diplomats, cultural ambassadors, and Iranian counterparts who Their beliefs, interests, and personal interactions have many roles in the formation of artistic exchanges and cultural relations between the two countries, which include:

- **Personal beliefs and interests:** The personal beliefs and interests of artists, diplomats, cultural ambassadors, and French Iranian counterparts could influence their participation in artistic diplomacy toward Iran. For example, if a French artist had a particular fascination with Iranian culture, he could have an incentive to actively participate in artistic exchanges between the two countries (Preud'homme, 2023, p. 221).
- **Cultural exchange:** the level of cultural exchange between France and Iran in the 20th century played a significant role in the formation of French artistic diplomacy. Increasing cultural exchange could lead to artistic cooperation and greater understanding between the two nations (Tabrizi et al., 2018, p. 24).
- **Diplomatic interactions:** the interaction of French diplomats and their Iranian counterparts could influence the direction and extent of artistic diplomacy. Negotiations, dialogues, and diplomatic agreements may have paved the way for artistic collaborations and initiatives (Tabrizi et al., 2018, p. 27).
- **Political atmosphere:** The political atmosphere between France and Iran during the 20th century was one of the important factors influencing French artistic diplomacy. Political tensions or

diplomatic relations between two countries could affect their willingness and ability to participate in artistic exchanges (Therme, 2023, p. 120).

- **Economic interests:** Economic interests, such as business relations and business strategies, could influence the artistic diplomacy of France toward Iran. French artists and cultural ambassadors may have been sent to Iran to promote French commercial interests by using artistic efforts as a tool of cultural diplomacy (Preud'homme, 2023, p. 246).

Considering the individual variable, the most important people as decision-makers in France's art diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century are:

- **Jean-François Xavier Rousseau:** Jean-François Xavier Rousseau was the agent of the French East India Company in Basra. He wrote a memoir titled, *The Present State of the Kingdom of Iran* whose purpose was to promote French trade in the Persian Gulf. His memoirs shed light on France's commercial strategy toward Iran and the social relations of European merchants, diplomats, local rulers, and the Zand court in the 18th century (Preud'homme, 2023, p. 218).
- **Government officials:** Government officials, including diplomats and cultural ambassadors, have played a role in shaping France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran. They had the authority to make strategic decisions in the fields of cultural exchanges, artistic collaborations, and promoting French art and culture in Iran. It can be claimed that their decisions were influenced by political considerations, national interests, and the wider geopolitical context (Gmurczyk-Wrońska, 2014, p. 48).
- **French artists and intellectuals** played a decisive role in shaping France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran. They acted as cultural ambassadors, and introduced French artistic movements and ideas to Iran, and strengthened the artistic dialogue. For example, artists like Paul Gauguin and Henri Matisse were influential in introducing modernist art to Iran and encouraging Iranian artists to experiment with new styles and techniques. Their works were exhibited in Iran, which helped the cultural exchange between the two countries (Grigor, 2014, p. 105).
- **Diplomats and cultural figures** played a vital role in France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran. The French Cultural Center in Tehran, which was established in 1974, was a platform for promoting French culture and facilitating artistic interactions between French and Iranian artists (Pourarian & Badr, 2017, p. 22).

2- Role Variable

The role of politicians and prominent figures had a significant impact on France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century. The most important roles influencing French artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century include:

- **French government officials:** overnment officials, including diplomats and cultural ambassadors, had the authority to make strategic decisions in the field of cultural exchanges, artistic cooperation, and the promotion of French art and culture in Iran. The decision-making process of the involved parties was influenced by political considerations, national interests, and the wider geopolitical context (Farmanfarmaian, 2003, p. 72).
- **Iranian government officials:** The involvement of Iranian government officials in shaping France's artistic diplomacy towards Iran highlights how political factors, national interests, and the broader geopolitical landscape influence the decision-making process of relevant actors (Keshavarzian, 2011, p. 178).
- **The role of politicians and prominent figures:** French politicians, including presidents and ministers of culture, played a key role in promoting cultural exchanges and artistic initiatives with Iran. For example, in 1967, the French government funded the establishment of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, which became one of the most important cultural institutions in Iran (Farmanfarmaian, 2003, p. 41).
- **Prominent figures of art and culture** also played a vital role in France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran. For example, French artist Henri Matisse encouraged Iranian artists to experiment with new styles and techniques (Dorn & Harpaz: 153). He was sent to Iran in 1858. He made hundreds of quick pen and ink sketches and watercolor paintings of soldiers and their weapons, men and women of different ethnicities, Naser al-Din Shah and his courtiers, servants, shrines, bridges, mountains, lakes, and cities. Even,He produced *Gates of the Cities* (Farman-Farmayan, 1977, p. 9). Another artist, Alberto Pacini, traveled to Iran in 1851 on an official mission to counter Russian influence. This artist returned to Italy in 1856 and sent his paintings from Iran, Arabia, Azerbaijan, and Syria to Paris salons (Thornton, 1983, pp. 124-125).
- **Personal connections** In addition, personal relationships and connections between politicians and prominent personalities of both countries, personal friendships, and professional networks allowed the sharing of ideas, works of art, and exhibitions, and

contributed to the cultural dialogue between France and Iran (Devictor, 2009, p. 39).

3- State Variable

Rosenau's perspective also provides insights into the role of government variables in shaping foreign policy decisions and the dynamics of change and continuity in international relations (Holsti & Rosenau, 1979, p. 43). The changing dimensions of the government's influence on the artistic diplomacy of the French government toward Iran in the 20th century include:

- **Cultural initiatives and artistic exchanges:** The French government used cultural initiatives and artistic exchanges, including exhibitions, performances, and other cultural events, as a tool to strengthen diplomatic relations, promote soft power, and create a positive international image (Preud'homme, 2023, p. 248)
- **Educational and academic exchanges:** The French government facilitated educational and academic exchanges between France and Iran in order to promote mutual understanding and cultural exchange. This included student exchange, academic conferences, and joint research projects (Klawans, 2001, p. 213).
- **Protection of cultural heritage:** referring to the French government's support for Iran's cultural heritage, restoration projects, cultural heritage protection initiatives, and cooperation with cultural institutions of the last two decades of the 20th century in Iran can be mentioned (Akhgar & Moulis, 2021, p. 952)
- **Promotion of French language and culture:** The French government promoted the French language and culture in Iran through language courses, cultural events, and other initiatives. This action could be aimed at increasing French cultural influence and promoting mutual understanding between the two countries (Faure, 2008, p. 35).

4- Community Variable

In the early 20th century, French society was characterized by a growing interest in modernism and individual expression in art. This movement was closely related to social and political changes in France, including the rise of socialism and the feminist movement (Getashvili, 2022, p. 13).

However, the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 led to a renewed interest in traditional Iranian arts such as calligraphy, miniature painting, and carpet weaving, as well as a commitment to promote Islamic art and culture on the world stage

(Zabolinezhad & Shad Qazvini, 2022, p. 286). France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century was formed under the influence of various social variables, including political, cultural, and economic factors.

- **Political environment:** One of the key social variables that influenced France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran was the political environment of both countries. In the early 20th century, Iran witnessed the emergence of a new generation of artists and intellectuals who were influenced by Western modernization (Motamedi & Amini, 2016:55). France, as a major cultural and political power in Europe, was considered a model for this modernization process. (Kolaković, 2020, p. 141)
- **Economic relations:** France has long been a major trading partner with Iran, and these economic relations have facilitated cultural exchange between the two countries. French companies have invested in Iran's oil and gas industry, and this has helped finance cultural exchange programs and art projects (Pourarian & Badr, 2017, p. 20).
- **Cultural factors:** culture and cultural values also played a significant role in the formation of France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran. Therefore, French artists played an important role in introducing modernist art to Iran, and this had a significant impact on the development of Iranian art in the 20th century (Pourarian & Badr, 2017, p. 27).

Therefore, in the 20th century, France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran was in the direction of promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the two countries.

5- International System Variable

The international system refers to the complex network of political, economic, and social relations between countries and can have a significant impact on cultural exchange and artistic diplomacy (Rosenau, 1970, p. 28).

France's artistic diplomacy towards Iran in the 20th century can be analyzed through several key variables within the international system. These variables include cultural exchange, political motivations, economic interests, and global power dynamics.

- **Cultural exchange:** France has a long history of valuing and promoting culture and art. During the 20th century, France sought to strengthen cultural exchange with Iran by promoting French art, literature, music, and cinema (Mehling, 2022, p. 1520).
- **Political motives:** In the early 20th century, artistic

collaborations and cultural events were used as a tool to strengthen political relations and promote the image of France as a supporter of cultural diversity and dialogue (Preud'homme, 2023, p. 220).

- **Economic interests:** French interaction with the Iranian art scene often had an underlying economic dimension, such as promoting French products, attracting Iranian investments, or securing favorable commercial contracts. France sought to create a positive atmosphere for economic cooperation between the two countries by using artistic diplomacy (Preud'homme, 2023, p. 225).
- **Dynamics of world power:** France, as a great world power, used its cultural and artistic influence to prove itself on the international stage. Interaction with Iran's artistic community helped France to show its soft power and position itself as a leading cultural force (Van Tol, 2021, p. 317).
- **Transnational actors:** Transnational actors such as art galleries, museums, cultural foundations, and art societies played an important role in France's art diplomacy toward Iran. They facilitated artistic collaborations, exhibitions, and cultural events and helped exchange ideas and aesthetics between the two countries (Pinto, 2007, p. 119).
- **Globalization:** Globalization affected the flow of ideas, artistic trends, and cultural practices between two countries. Globalization also created new ways for artistic interactions, such as digital platforms and international art markets (Karimi, 2017, p. 18).

Despite the political tensions arising from the international system during the 20th century, the French government remained dedicated to fostering cultural exchange and mutual understanding between France and Iran, aligning with its national and international objectives and interests.

Conclusion

In the final summary of this article, the analysis of variables affecting French artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century, based on the theory of James N. Rosenau, reveals several key points about French artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century:

First, the policies and cultural initiatives of the French government played a significant role in the formation of artistic diplomacy toward Iran. France used its cultural institutions, such as the Institut de France, to promote French culture and establish cultural links with Iran. This cultural diplomacy was seen as a tool

to strengthen France's soft power and influence in the region.

Second, economic interests also played a decisive role in the formation of artistic diplomacy. France, a major exporter of cultural goods, sought to use artistic exchanges with Iran to bolster economic interests. This was particularly evident in the field of cinema, where French films became popular in Iran and helped strengthen economic ties between the two countries.

Third, political factors had a great influence on France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran. The political relations between France and Iran fluctuated between periods of cooperation and tension in the 20th century. France used artistic exchanges as a means of channeling these political dynamics and sometimes used cultural events to improve diplomatic relations or reduce conflicts.

Fourth, social and cultural variables were important factors in artistic diplomacy. Interest in Iranian art and culture among French intellectuals and artists facilitated artistic exchanges between the two countries. At the same time, cultural differences and misunderstandings between the French and Iranian communities created challenges for effective artistic diplomacy.

Fifth, individual agencies and personal networks played an important role in the formation of French artistic diplomacy toward Iran. Artists, art professionals, diplomats, and cultural mediators acted as vital factors in facilitating the exchange of trends, ideas, and artistic collaborations between the two countries.

These points and the analysis of variables affecting French artistic diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century; based on the theory of James N. Rosenau, show the multifaceted nature of artistic diplomacy. Understanding these variables provides insights into the complex dynamics of art diplomacy and its impact on international relations.

In this research, the category of art is known as the most important concept of French diplomacy in the 20th century, therefore, several results can be obtained that confirm the concept of art as a bridge:

- 1. Art as a cultural interface:** The analysis shows that art can act as a bridge between different cultures and societies. The aim of France's artistic diplomacy toward Iran was to strengthen cultural relations by promoting French art and artists in Iran and facilitating cultural exchange. This aligns with Rosenau's theory of diplomacy, which emphasizes the importance of cultural interactions in diplomacy.
- 2. Diplomatic goals:** The analysis shows that French art

diplomacy toward Iran had specific diplomatic goals. These included strengthening political alliances, improving economic relations, and projecting a positive national image. This observation demonstrates the utilization of art as a means to accomplish diplomatic objectives, aligning with Rosenau's theory that views diplomacy as a tool for governance.

3. Historical Context: This analysis highlights the influence of historical context on artistic diplomacy. France's cultural interaction with Iran was affected by political events such as post-war reconstruction, decolonization, and geopolitical considerations. This suggests that the motivations and strategies of artistic diplomacy, as Rosenau argues in his theory, are situated in a broader historical context.

4. Perceptions and reception: The analysis shows that the success of art diplomacy depends on the perceptions and reception of art in the target country. The impact of French artistic initiatives in Iran varied based on the local audience's understanding of French art. This is in line with Rosenau's theory, which emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding and acceptance in diplomacy.

5. Artistic Agency: This analysis highlights the agency of artists and cultural activists in shaping artistic diplomacy. French artists played an active role in promoting French culture in Iran by collaborating with domestic artists and carrying out cultural exchanges. According to Rosenau's theory of diplomacy as a form of self-expression, the involvement of artists in artistic diplomacy implies that it encompasses their agency and creativity.

In sum, the thematic analysis of French art diplomacy toward Iran in the 20th century by highlighting the role of cultural interactions, diplomatic goals, historical contexts, perceptions, reception, and artistic agency in the concept of art as a bridge supports James Rosenau's theory of diplomacy.

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